

# The Guardian

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## Headlines friday 14 april 2023

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The potential sale value of the pieces is almost impossible to determine.  
Composite: Guardian Design/Alamy/ Tim Graham Photo Library/Getty Images

[Cost of the crown](#)[Queen Elizabeth II](#)

## **Official jewellery gifts to royals worth £80m are not in national collection**

Palace refusing to explain why official state gifts worn by Princess of Wales and Camilla are not in the royal collection

*[David Pegg](#)*

Fri 14 Apr 2023 02.29 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 16.35 EDT

Buckingham Palace is refusing to explain why 11 pieces of jewellery potentially worth £80m that were official gifts to the royal family are not held in a trove of national heritage.

The jewels, which have been worn by Queen Elizabeth II; Camilla, the Queen Consort, and Catherine, Princess of Wales, are not contained in the

royal collection, the custodian of culturally significant items held in trust for the nation.

The pieces include a set of aquamarine jewellery, four brooches and six necklaces, including an extraordinary Cartier necklace of emerald- and brilliant-cut diamonds worth at least £40m given to the late Queen by an Indian prince.

At least four of the items were presented by heads of state. The palace's policy states that "as a general rule" gifts to the sovereign from another monarch or head of state "automatically" become part of the royal collection, a body that manages items held by the sovereign in trust for the nation.

The Royal Collection Trust, which manages the collection, confirmed that it does not have custody of the 11 jewels.

A Buckingham Palace spokesperson declined multiple invitations to explain the current ownership of the 11 pieces. They suggested the royals do not regard the jewellery as their private property and that the items, which were given to the late queen between 1947 and 1979, "may" in the future be added to the royal collection.

"Official gifts are not the personal property of the member of the royal family who receives them, but may be held by the sovereign in right of the crown or designated in due course as part of the royal collection," the spokesperson said. They declined to explain why the items were not already in the royal collection.

## Quick Guide

### **What is Cost of the crown?**

Show



Cost of the crown is an investigation into royal wealth and finances. The series, published ahead of the coronation of King Charles III, is seeking to overcome centuries of secrecy to better understand how the royal family is funded, the extent to which individual members have profited from their public roles, and the dubious origins of some of their wealth. The Guardian believes it is in the public interest to clarify what can legitimately be called private wealth, what belongs to the British people, and what, as so often is the case, straddles the two.

- [Read more about the investigation](#)

Photograph: Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group Editorial  
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The [palace's policy on official gifts](#) was first formulated in 1995 and updated in 2003. The guidelines state that items received on state visits or in connection with the royal family's official role are not their private property.

All of the pieces identified by the Guardian were given to the queen before the guidelines were established. There is nothing in the policy that addresses gifts received by the royal family or the monarch before the code was set up.

The potential value of the items is hard to determine. Were anyone else to sell them, they would collectively be worth at least £8m, according to expert valuers.

However, analysis of previous auctions of jewels that were owned or worn by royals suggest the link to the Windsors would add a premium that could easily increase their total value to well over £80m.

## **‘An exceptional jewel’**

Among the gifts identified are pieces of jewellery given to the queen at her wedding in 1947 and at her coronation a few years later by state officials.

By far the most valuable is the Nizam of Hyderabad diamond necklace. Crafted in its original configuration by Cartier in 1935 and later reset, the necklace contains more than 300 platinum-set diamonds, including a detachable double-drop pendant. It was bought in 1947 as a wedding present for the then Princess Elizabeth by Mir Osman Ali Khan, the last ruler of the state of Hyderabad in India.



Catherine, the then Duchess of Cambridge, pictured in 2014, wearing the necklace given to Queen Elizabeth II by the Nizam of Hyderabad.

Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

It is one of the late queen's most elaborate diamond necklaces and one she wore regularly. It has also been worn by Catherine, now the Princess of Wales, including at a gala at the National Portrait Gallery in 2014.

Sara Abey, a gemologist and jewellery merchant who estimated the value of several items for the Guardian, said the necklace could be worth more than £4m before considering its association with the British royal family.

"Having a renowned maker, important history and notable provenance, the queen's Nizam of Hyderabad necklace is an exceptional jewel," she said.

However her estimate of its value did not take into account what is described as the royal premium, which can dramatically inflate the sale value of an item and could make this necklace worth at least £40m.

## Quick Guide

### **How we estimated the value of the royal jewellery**

#### Show

Valuing the royal family's private jewellery collection is exceptionally difficult. A professional valuation would require each stone of each item to be inspected for occlusions or other imperfections that cannot be detected by the naked eye.

Even where an estimate can be made, there is then the 'royal premium': the association with the royal family, which could multiply the value many times over.

In 1989, Laurence Krashes, a senior assessor for the US jeweller Harry Winston, described the task as 'like landing a plane in fog without a radar'. He assessed the family's collection – excluding the royal premium – at £36m for the royal journalist Andrew Morton.

The Guardian has identified several items Krashes did not consider, such as the Cullinan IX ring and a diamond necklace given to the then Princess

Elizabeth as a wedding gift in 1947. Sara Abey, a fellow of the Gemmological Association and jewellery merchant, provided the Guardian with estimates for the additional pieces.

Morton multiplied Krashes' estimates tenfold to try to achieve a more realistic value. However an auction of the late Princess Margaret's jewellery in 2006 suggests this may have been a considerable underestimate. A Guardian analysis found items sold for an average of 18 times the auction house's top-end estimate.

Since that 2006 auction, the value of royal jewellery has increased further. Fifty of Margaret's items went on sale again in 2020, with one diamond ring having an asking price of £1.1m, almost 10 times the 2006 sale price of £142,000. This was already higher than the original auction valuation of £70,000

Opting for caution, the Guardian has used a multiplier of 10 to reflect a conservative estimate of the royal premium.

- [Read more about the investigation](#)

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Another diamond necklace was given to the queen as a wedding present by distinguished individuals from the City of London.

A parure of Brazilian aquamarines – a necklace and a bracelet – presented in 1953 as a coronation gift from the people of Brazil was liked so much by the queen that she privately commissioned a specially made tiara to wear alongside them.



Queen Elizabeth II wearing Queen Mary's 'girls Of Great Britain And Ireland' tiara and the King Faisal Of Saudi Arabia necklace. Photograph: Tim Graham/Tim Graham Photo Library/Getty Images

This, like many of the 11 items identified by the Guardian, was worn regularly by the queen. Other members of the royal family have also been seen wearing some of the gifts.

A diamond necklace presented to the queen during a state visit to the United Kingdom in 1967 by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia was lent to Diana, Princess of Wales in 1983. The necklace was originally made by the American jeweller Harry Winston in 1952 and could be worth as much as £9m.

Twelve years later, during a reciprocal visit by the queen to Saudi Arabia, Faisal's successor, King Khalid, gave her another of Winston's diamond necklaces, now worth more than £8m.

A necklace of turquoise from the then president of Pakistan, Muhammad Ayub Khan, given on a state visit in 1966, and four brooches are among the other official gifts identified by the Guardian. These include the Flame Lily brooch, which was presented to Elizabeth on her 21st birthday by the children of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), who were each asked to donate three pence to pay for it.

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The diamond necklaces and brooches were included in a 2012 reference volume published by the Royal Collection Trust or exhibited in Diamonds: A Jubilee Celebration display.

The exhibition was described as including “an unprecedented display of a number of the queen’s personal jewels – those inherited by Her Majesty or acquired during her reign.”

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Rishi Sunak with Suella Braverman during a visit this month to a meeting of the Grooming Gangs Taskforce in Rochdale. Photograph: Phil Noble/PA

[Race](#)

## Senior Conservatives hit out at Suella Braverman's 'racist rhetoric'

Former senior minister accuses home secretary of undermining party for sake of her own leadership ambitions

[Aletha Adu](#), [Jessica Elgot](#) and [Kiran Stacey](#)

Thu 13 Apr 2023 16.12 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 18.28 EDT

More senior Conservatives have hit out at Suella Braverman's "racist rhetoric", accusing her of undermining the party for the sake of her own leadership ambitions.

Pressure was mounting on Rishi Sunak on Thursday to intervene to protect the party's reputation after the home secretary stoked renewed anger by

criticising police for confiscating a set of racist dolls displayed in an Essex pub.

Tory MPs, peers and activists have accused Braverman of inflaming racial tensions on a number of occasions over the past few months, saying they are worried that she is now at risk of repelling the kinds of swing voters the party is desperate to retain.

A former senior minister from Boris Johnson's government told the Guardian they believed Braverman was a "real racist bigot".

The person said "the country is not as grotesque as she makes it out to be", warning that the "Conservative reputation on discrimination has dropped to a new low" under her watch – "which also gives the country a bad name".

They added: "Sunak needs to build upon foundations we already have – stop the culture wars and create change. But his inaction shows how insecure he is in his own ability."

The criticism reflects widespread anger felt by many Tory MPs and peers about Braverman's frequent use of racially charged language.

Earlier this month, the home secretary said grooming gangs were almost entirely made up of British Pakistani men, whom she said "hold cultural attitudes completely incompatible with British values".

And last November there was an outcry after she said the small boats crossing the Channel amounted to an "invasion" of migrants.

Some MPs believe Braverman's interventions are a deliberate attempt to appeal to Conservative party members in case the Tories lose the next election and hold another leadership contest.

"Suella's comments pander to the unpleasant base instinct of a small section of the British population," the former minister said.

"She's not stupid, she believes she has a licence to say these things because she's not white. But all her language does is exacerbate hatred."

Another senior Tory said: “The politics of this leadership plan stink.”

Tobias Ellwood, the Conservative chair of the defence select committee, said: “These comments – arguably designed to appeal to a specific political cohort – do not sit well with the new, pragmatic and cooperative approach which the prime minister is now injecting into Number 10 and is seeing us improve in the polls.”

On Thursday, the Tory peer Sayeeda Warsi condemned Braverman’s comments, [writing in the Guardian](#): “Whether this consistent use of racist rhetoric is strategy or incompetence, however, doesn’t matter. Both show she is not fit to hold high office.”

In recent days Braverman has once more been accused of racial insensitivity after a source close to her said she had criticised Essex police for confiscating a set of racist dolls that had been put on display in the White Hart Inn in Grays.

The source said she believed the police “should not be getting involved in this kind of nonsense”.

On Thursday it emerged that police are also [investigating the pub’s landlord, Christopher Ryley](#), over online messages in which he apparently joked about Mississippi lynchings alongside an image of the racist dolls.

It is believed the investigation is focusing on establishing whether he intended to cause offence by displaying the dolls. One other possible line of inquiry is whether his posts flouted the 1988 Malicious Communication Act.

Earlier this week, Warsi told LBC: “I think the prime minister has to get a really strong message that this kind of rhetoric, whether it’s on small boats, whether it’s the stuff she was saying on the weekend which is not based on evidence, not nuanced, not kind of explanatory in any way, it has got to stop.

“And you know, again today, we’ve woken up to a story where she’s having a go at the police for removing golliwog dolls from a pub.”

Many senior [Conservatives](#) believe Braverman should have found out more about the couple before intervening in their case.

Sally-Ann Hart, one of the Tory MPs on the advisory board of Conservatives Against Racism For Equality (Carfe), said: “I was gobsmacked that people would put golliwogs up in a public space in this day and age.”

Asked specifically whether Braverman should have entered the debate, given the past views expressed by the pub owners, Hart said: “I think it might have been a knee jerk reaction, which is so easy to do when put on the spot.”

Meanwhile allies of Steve Baker, the minister for Northern Ireland who is a board member of Carfe, suggested he was also unhappy about Braverman’s recent remarks.

Albie Amankona, who cofounded the group said: “I think that something isn’t happening properly if a minister on a weekly basis is in the news for some kind of racial insensitivity.

“She should just focus on the important things in the Home Office, like reforming the police or trying to stop the boats rather than trying to get tied up in these culture war debates.”

Braverman initially ran to succeed Boris Johnson in the first of last year’s Tory leadership contests, but was eliminated in the second round of voting. After Liz Truss resigned as Johnson’s successor, Braverman threw her weight behind Sunak – which was seen as key to his success.

Her support for Sunak, as a linchpin of the Tory right, was seen as a key reason why Johnson chose not to challenge his old rival to try to return to No 10.

[A poll](#) carried out by YouGov on Tuesday found that nearly half of British voters believe it is not racist to sell or display a golly doll, compared with only 27% who think it is.

But attitudes are changing fast – six years ago, 63% thought it was not racist to sell or display a golly doll. And experts say the British public generally does not have the appetite for culture war issues which Braverman appears to show.

Sunder Katwala, the director of the British Future thinktank, said: “Braverman is so keen to enter any culture war debate going that she doesn’t seem to have stopped to ask basic questions like, ‘How racist is the golliwog display?’ and ‘Might he be an actual fascist?’”

“The British culture war position is a subtler and more nuanced argument than the American or French one.

“Amplifying occasions where the left might be seen to have gone too far works well, but if your position is to pick any fight you can with the liberal left, that is not really where the Conservative party electorate is these days.”

A Home Office spokesperson said: “The home secretary has been clear that all despicable child abusers must be brought to justice.

“And she will not shy away from telling hard truths, particularly when it comes to the grooming of young women and girls in Britain’s towns who have been failed by authorities over decades.

“As the home secretary has said, the vast majority of British-Pakistanis are law-abiding, upstanding citizens, but independent reports were unequivocal that in towns like Rochdale, Rotherham and Telford, cultural sensitivities have meant thousands of young girls were abused under the noses of councils and police.

“That’s why we have announced a raft of measures, including a new police taskforce and mandatory reporting, to ensure this horrific scandal can never happen again, and bring members of grooming gangs to justice for the victims.”

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Suspect behind leak of Pentagon documents arrested, says US attorney general – video

**Pentagon leaks 2023**

## **Jack Teixeira appears in federal court accused of Pentagon leaks**

Former IT specialist, 21, arrested on Thursday is accused of intelligence leak believed to have started on Discord

*[Helen Sullivan](#) and [Maya Yang](#)*

Fri 14 Apr 2023 12.14 EDTFirst published on Fri 14 Apr 2023 03.22 EDT

The 21-year-old suspect in the recent leaks of Pentagon intelligence appeared in federal court in Boston on Friday.

[Jack Teixeira was detained at his home by FBI agents](#), the US attorney general, Merrick Garland, announced on Thursday. The arrest was made “in connection with an investigation into an alleged unauthorised removal, retention and transmission of classified national defence information”, he said.

On Friday morning Teixeira was charged with unauthorized removal and retention of classified documents and materials, according to US magistrate judge David Hennessy. Teixeira qualified for a public defender and the US justice department requested that he be detained pending trial.

On Thursday afternoon, helicopter news footage showed a young man with shorn dark hair, an olive-green T-shirt and red shorts being made to walk backwards towards a team of FBI agents, who were pointing their rifles at him, as he was arrested in the town of North Dighton, Massachusetts.

The Pentagon spokesperson, Patrick Ryder, said the leak of classified information was a “deliberate, criminal act”. He added that the Pentagon had

taken measures to review distribution lists and make sure individuals who received information had a need to know.



Jack Teixeira in uniform. Photograph: Social Media Website/Reuters

The leak is believed to have started on Discord, a social media platform popular with people playing online games and where Teixeira is believed to have posted for years about guns, games and racist memes.

The investigative website Bellingcat and the New York Times publicly identified Teixeira minutes before federal officials confirmed he was a subject of interest in the investigation. They reported tracking profiles on other more obscure sites linked to Teixeira.

Teixeira was a “cyber transport systems specialist”, essentially an IT specialist responsible for military communications networks, including their cabling and hubs. A defence official has told the Associated Press that in that role Teixeira would have had a higher level of security clearance, because he would have also been tasked with ensuring protection for the networks.

Speaking in Ireland on Thursday, Joe Biden sought to play down the impact of the breach. “I’m not concerned about the leak,” he said. “I’m concerned

that it happened. But there's nothing contemporaneous that I'm aware of that's of great consequence."

## [graphic](#)

The Guardian has seen about 50 of the documents. But there are signs that many more were first posted on Thug Shaker Central. The New York Times said it had seen about 300 of the documents, only a fraction of which have so far been reported, indicating the national security damage could be worse than has so far been acknowledged.

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One of the ways the leak could have an impact on US security is if it makes allies wary of sharing intelligence. The Polish prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, denied it would affect his country's confidence in Washington's ability to keep secrets.

"I'm not going to think twice," Morawiecki told the Guardian at an Atlantic Council event in Washington. "I believe failures happen and mistakes happen, but we have to be as close as possible to our allies in western Europe and the United States. We have to unite on this front as well."

Part of the inquest into the leak will examine how a 21-year-old air national guardsman in Massachusetts could have had access to top-secret material vital to US and allied security interests, including battlefield deployments in Ukraine. The Pentagon said it was reviewing its policies on safeguarding classified material, including updating distribution lists and assessing how and where intelligence is shared.

“It’s important to understand that this is not just about DoD [the defence department]. This is about the US government,” Ryder said. “This is about how we protect and safeguard classified information. We do have strict protocols in place, so any time there is an incident there’s an opportunity to review that and refine it.”

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A police roadblock about a half a mile from Jack Teixeira's home in Dighton, Massachusetts. The air national guardsman has been arrested over the leaks of Pentagon intelligence online. Photograph: Ross Kerber/Reuters

[Pentagon leaks 2023](#)

# ‘The biggest news here in years’: Pentagon leak suspect’s home town voices shock

Residents of town of Dighton, Massachusetts, stunned by news of arrest of 21-year-old air national guardsman Jack Teixeira

- [Who is the man arrested over Pentagon files leak?](#)

*[Edward Helmore](#) in Dighton, Massachusetts*

Fri 14 Apr 2023 01.08 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 17.00 EDT

The small agricultural town of Dighton, [Massachusetts](#), seems an unlikely place to have any impact on Ukrainian battlefield tactics or spread diplomatic fallout half-way around the globe.

But it was from here, an hour south of Boston, that 21-year-old air national guardsman Jack Teixeira is suspected of posting intelligence documents meant for the highest levels of the Pentagon to a Discord gamers chat group called Thug Shaker Central.

“It’s like God’s country out here,” said farmer Cam Levesque, 26, standing beside a pickup truck at the gas station. “We shoot guns, ride dirt bikes. Nobody says anything so long as you’re respectful about it. Everyone does what they want to do.”

Late on Thursday, roads to the home Teixeira shared with his mother, Dawn, a floral business owner, were still blocked off. Neighbors said Teixeira, who was arrested on a spring day and led away in handcuffs wearing red shorts and a green T-shirt, appeared to them quiet and polite.

On Friday, Teixeira will appear in a US federal court in Boston. The US attorney general, Merrick Garland, said Teixeira would be charged with the unauthorized removal of classified national defense information.

“Nice people – this is a shame,” said neighbor Mario Correia, adding that if convicted he might now face time in “Leavenworth”, America’s most famous military prison, in Kansas.



Vehicles move through a police roadblock in North Dighton. Photograph: Michelle R Smith/AP

Many in Dighton expressed surprise that their single-stoplight town known for cucumbers and squash had been invaded by federal agents in pursuit of a low-level member of the 102nd intelligence wing of the air national guard, based on Cape Cod.

“It’s the biggest news here in years,” said heating engineer Kevin Swist, 52. “It’s a small town and we like to keep it that way – smooth sailing.”

Teixeira could now be “in a world of trouble”, Swist said, adding it seemed “crazy” that the military gave “a young kid like that” access to so much classified information.

A Pentagon spokesman, Brig Gen Patrick Ryder, said it was the nature of the military to trust its very young service members with high-level duties. “We entrust our members with a lot of responsibility at a very early age. Think about a young combat platoon sergeant, and the responsibility and trust that we put into those individuals to lead troops into combat.”



Leaks suspect Jack Teixeira, in a photo his mother posted on social media

But there appear to have been clues that Teixeira held anti-government views. A Discord chat group member who spoke to the Associated Press said Teixeira was the “OG” – original gangster – of the chat group that numbered around two dozen members who conversed about guns and discussed Russia’s invasion of [Ukraine](#).

The AP source said Teixeira opposed many of the priorities of the US government and denounced the military “since it was run by the elite politicians”.

“He expressed regret [about] joining a lot,” the person said. “He even said he’d kick my ass if I thought about joining.”

At the 1712 restaurant in south Dighton, Joanne, a waitress who worked as a caterer in the Dighton-Rehoboth regional high school that Teixeira attended, said she couldn’t remember him. “If he was a troublemaker, I’d have known him if he was,” she said.

“I feel bad for the parents, too, because that kid is [in] a whole heap of trouble.”

His arrest came after news organizations Bellingcat and the New York Times [identified](#) Teixeira, followed minutes later by the FBI, which announced he was a subject of interest.



Police block a road in Dighton. Photograph: Steven Senne/AP

Classmate John Powell, 20, said he was stunned to learn of Teixeira's arrest. "I just looked at my phone and my mouth was just wide open," Powell told the AP. "He was always super nice to me."

Powell recalled that his friend enjoyed video games and would play them with friends online. "He was a sweetheart," Powell said. But he also recalled that Teixeira was bullied.

"He was picked on a lot," he said. "He just kept to himself; he would do his own thing. But it still happened, regardless. And I feel like he handled it well. He had resources, he had friends to go to. You could always talk to the cool teachers about it. He made it through."

Powell added that Teixeira loved military history.

"He was a huge history buff, especially when it came to wars. From a young age, I remember he would have a book on, I believe, US military aircrafts, armaments, like a real big textbook," [he told](#) the Boston Globe.

Juliette Kayyem, who oversaw the Massachusetts national guard as an adviser to Deval Patrick when Patrick was governor, told the Globe she found the leaks inexplicable.

“I can’t explain why the Massachusetts air national guard’s intelligence wing would have access to the kind of information that has been disclosed. This is a unit I knew. Why a 21-year-old in the air national guard has access to intelligence about a war that we’re not fighting, and that poses no threat to the homeland, is the question that has to be answered,” she told the newspaper.

But as Dighton began to absorb reports about one of its sons, many returned to the theme of a ruined life. “There’s going to have to be a precedent set,” said Correia, a former air national guardsman. “I feel for him. This is serious stuff. He took an oath of allegiance.”

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Jack Teixeira, an air national guardsman suspected of leaking US intelligence documents, in a photo his mother posted on social media.  
Photograph: web

[Pentagon leaks 2023](#)

## **Jack Teixeira arrested: what we know so far about Pentagon leak investigation**

The 21-year-old air national guardsman was arrested in Massachusetts in connection with the leaking of Pentagon intelligence documents

- [US arrests suspect behind leak of Pentagon documents](#)
- [Who is Jack Teixeira, the man arrested over Pentagon files leak?](#)

*Guardian staff and agencies*

Thu 13 Apr 2023 21.19 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 21.24 EDT

- The US Department of Justice [arrested 21-year-old Jack Teixeira](#), a suspect in the recent leaks of Pentagon intelligence online, US

attorney general Merrick Garland announced on Thursday. The arrest was made “in connection with an investigation into an alleged unauthorized removal, retention and transmission of classified national defense information,” said Garland.

- **Teixeira was detained at his home in the town of North Dighton, Massachusetts, by FBI agents.** Helicopter news footage showed a young man with shorn dark hair, an olive green T-shirt and red shorts being made to walk backwards towards a team of agents, who were pointing their rifles at him. Teixeira will appear in court in Massachusetts on Friday.
- **Pentagon spokesperson Patrick Ryder said the leak of classified information was a “deliberate, criminal act.”** He added that the Pentagon had taken measures to review distribution lists and make sure that individuals who receive information had a need to know.
- **The leak is believed to have started on a site called Discord,** a social media platform popular with people playing online games and where Teixeira is believed to have posted for years about guns, games and racist memes.
- **The investigative website Bellingcat and The New York Times first publicly identified Teixeira,** minutes before federal officials confirmed he was a subject of interest in the investigation. They reported tracking profiles on other more obscure sites linked to Teixeira.
- **Teixeira was a “cyber transport systems specialist”, essentially an IT specialist responsible for military communications networks, including their cabling and hubs.** A defence official has told the Associated Press that in that role Teixeira would have had a higher level of security clearance – because he would have also been tasked with ensuring protection for the networks.
- **The likely charges, if proved, could each carry up to 10 years’ imprisonment, even if the leaker did not intend to cause harm,** said Brandon Van Grack, a former Justice Department national security

prosecutor. Prosecutors could treat each leaked document as a separate count in his indictment.

- **Among the clues that lead to Teixeira's arrest were the kitchen countertop and floor tiles in his childhood home** – the surfaces appeared in the background of pictures of the leaked documents.
- **Teixeira is believed to have been the leader of an online chat group where hundreds of photographs of secret and top-secret documents were first uploaded**, from late last year to March. The online group called itself Thug Shaker Central, made up of 20 to 30 young men and teenagers brought together by an enthusiasm for guns, military gear and video games. Racist language was a common feature of the group.
- **Speaking in Ireland, Joe Biden sought to play down the impact of the breach.** “I’m not concerned about the leak,” Biden said. “I’m concerned that it happened. But there’s nothing contemporaneous that I’m aware of that’s of great consequence.”
- **Republican Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene sought to cast Teixeira as a right-wing hero**, writing on Twitter, “Jake Teixeira is white, male, christian, and anti-war. That makes him an enemy to the Biden regime.”

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Jack Teixeira in a photo his mother posted on social media.

[Pentagon leaks 2023](#)

[Explainer](#)

## **Who is Jack Teixeira, the man arrested over Pentagon files leak?**

US air national guardsman has been identified as prime suspect in leak of classified documents

*[Peter Beaumont](#)*

*[@petersbeaumont1](#)*

Thu 13 Apr 2023 15.12 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 17.34 EDT

In photographs, Jack Teixeira, the 21-year-old air national guardsman who has been identified as the prime suspect in the leak of classified intelligence documents, is slim in his dark blue air force uniform. He is youthful looking, barely older than the teenage friends seen in the online group in which the classified documents were leaked.

On Thursday evening, the FBI [arrested Teixeira](#) and were searching his home. Video footage from a local TV station showed him being led away in handcuffs.

Teixeira was identified by the New York Times as the leading figure in an online gaming chat group, Thug Shaker Central, on the social network Discord. The details that have emerged about Teixeira have put him in the frame as a person of interest in the leak investigation.

Deployed in the 102nd intelligence wing of the Massachusetts air national guard, Teixeira was also a key member of a group of about 30 people who shared an interest in guns, video games and racist memes.

Teixeira, the newspaper suggested, was the individual known to members of the group as OG, who had been identified a day earlier by the Washington Post as the leaker.

Assembled at the height of the pandemic in 2020, Thug Shaker Central was an invitation-only chatroom.

It appears that from the beginning, the leaker sought to impress its young members, writing messages heavy with acronyms and jargon, posting classified documents, at first typing up verbatim transcripts and then leaking actual documents – which appeared to have been physically removed from a secure place and photographed.

According to the Washington Post, OG told other members these were documents he had brought home from a “military base” where he sometimes worked in a secure facility that prohibited mobile phones and other electronic devices.

Underlining the suspicions that the person may have been Teixeira, the New York Times said details of the interior of his childhood home, posted on social media in family photographs, matched details on the margins of some of the photographs of the leaked secret documents.

Suspect behind leak of Pentagon documents arrested, says US attorney general – video

Interviewed by the paper, Teixeira's mother, Dawn, confirmed that her son was a member of the air national guard and said that recently he had been working overnight shifts at a base on Cape Cod, and in recent days he had changed his phone number.

A number for Bayberry Farm and Flower Co, a flower business believed to be owned by Jack Teixeira's mother, went to voicemail. A message said the business is closed this week.

The company is based at the same North Dighton, Massachusetts, address where Teixeira is understood to live. It is owned by Dawn and Tom Dufault – public records show that Dawn Dufault was previously known as Dawn Teixeira.

The company's Facebook page had mentioned Jack Teixeira in June 2021. "Jack is on his way home today, tech school complete, ready to start his career in the Air National Guard!" a message said, under a photograph of a "Welcome home" balloon.

Teixeira's career in the national guard progressed. A photo posted to the Facebook page for the 102nd intelligence wing of the Massachusetts air national guard in July 2022 congratulated him on an apparent promotion to Airman 1st Class. The post was still live on Thursday afternoon.

As the US has followed a trail to Teixeira's home, the question of what might have motivated the leaker has become ever more pressing. The reverberations of the leak have spread from Kyiv to Seoul and to other global capitals, and left onlookers shaken by the hugeness of the leak and by evidence that the US has been spying on its allies.

The explanation furnished by members of the chat group has been startlingly mundane. The leaker, they insist, was not a whistleblower but a young man who wanted to show off to his young friends with the documents never intended to leave the chat group.

"He's a smart person. He knew what he was doing when he posted these documents, of course. These weren't accidental leaks of any kind," one member told the Washington Post.

But leak out they did. First as they were cross-posted on other social media channels and then as they were picked up by Russian channels.

Group members said OG would lecture them about international affairs and secretive government operations.

“This guy was a Christian, anti-war, just wanted to inform some of his friends about what’s going on,” said one acquaintance. “We have some people in our group who are in Ukraine. We like fighting games, we like war games.”

But there was a darker side to OG too. In a video seen by the Washington Post, a man identified as OG is seen at a shooting range with a large rifle, making racial and antisemitic slurs on camera.

As the investigation has closed in on the culprit, serious questions have been asked about the latest highly embarrassing leak of US intelligence.

Perhaps top of the list is how someone so young and emotionally insecure, and with racist and anti-establishment views, could have been allowed access to a site containing highly classified intelligence.

Equally shocking, as the story is emerging, is how that individual was able to remove classified material from a secure site without raising suspicions.

In a pointed tweet, Tom Nichols of the Atlantic, who himself had security clearance for 35 years, said: “I hope this guy isn’t the leaker, because I’m gonna have some questions about how a Mass Air Guard guy got CJCS [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] briefing slides.”

*Additional reporting by Adam Gabbatt in New York*

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## 2023.04.14 - Spotlight

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'Getting back together to perform these songs is a bit of resolution for us artistically' ... Johanna Fateman, Kathleen Hanna and JD Samson AKA Le Tigre. Photograph: Krause, Johansen

[Music](#)

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# Kathleen Hanna's feminist party band Le Tigre reunite: 'It's depressing our lyrics are still relevant 20 years later'

[Hannah Ewens](#)

They got back together for a one-off show on Hanna's doorstep. Then they realised they had unfinished business: to affirm their place in the punk canon and get warring feminists offline and revelling together



Fri 14 Apr 2023 03.00 EDT

Most bands wring their hands over whether to reunite or not, but for Le Tigre it was easy. The impetus was a festival in Pasadena, Los Angeles, in 2022. "It was three miles from my house," says frontwoman [Kathleen Hanna](#), laughing. "I was like: 'I want to do this because I can cruise down the hill and go to the festival and all my friends can come.'" Then they concluded that the rehearsals for the festival – done over video call, and in LA and New York where bandmates Johanna Fateman and JD Samson live – shouldn't be wasted. They announced a full tour, their first since 2005, which hits the UK in June.

Returning now, with Hanna free from the Lyme disease that severely limited her life for more than eight years, feels cathartic. “Getting back together to perform these songs is a bit of resolution for us artistically,” says Fateman. “We were either under too much pressure from promoting an album or we didn’t totally get to realise our vision, so we’re able to scale it up almost 20 years later, which is a crazy opportunity – who wouldn’t take that?”

Le Tigre were conceived, in Fateman’s words, as a “feminist party band”. Their combination of political messaging and upbeat electro-pop, bright colours and dance moves, made them an unusual fixture on the studiously cool New York indie scene at the turn of the millennium.

After her success as frontwoman of riot grrrl pioneers Bikini Kill in the early 1990s, Hanna had been depressed and initially uninterested in forming another band. But she and Fateman moved from their home town of Portland, Oregon, to New York City, and started Le Tigre in 1998. Hanna’s voice had matured to become full and resonant and together they asserted what they thought music fans needed at the time: a culture of non-competition and upbeat praise within the group, projected to the wider world. Plus extremely catchy pop songs: take Deceptacon, a sing-a-long about the lack of meaning in popular rock. Or the extensive feminist history lesson contained in Hot Topic (“Tammy Rae Carland and Sleater-Kinney / Vivienne Dick and Lorraine O’Grady”).

We are completely against gender-critical feminism, if you want to call it feminism

*Johanna Fateman*

In the 2010s, the band played a handful of shows on a “case-by-case basis”. The decade was a strange one for feminism. As Fateman notes: “I’m not saying Barack Obama was a perfect president but he represented a breath of fresh air for us coming out of the George W Bush years. So I definitely didn’t feel as despairing during that period about legislative gains for women and sexual minorities.”

Meanwhile, feminism went mainstream. Hanna was frequently asked questions such as: is it problematic that Beyoncé performs in front of the word feminist? “There’s a million ways to discredit political movements and that’s one of them,” she says.

“I think that a lot of those critiques in the mainstream are basically: ‘Miley Cyrus says she’s a feminist so it’s not real any more and we shouldn’t be associated with it.’ It’s just a clickbait conversation that hasn’t got anything to do with what is really going on.”



An unusual fixture on the studiously cool indie scene ... Le Tigre performing in London. Photograph: Brigitte Engl/Redferns

The 2010s also saw the rise of gender-critical feminism, especially in the UK. Fateman speaks for the band – Samson is a pioneering genderqueer musician – when she says: “Let’s go on the record for your newspaper that we are completely against that kind of feminism, if you want to call it feminism.”

Feminist activism remained a centralising part of their lives post-Le Tigre. Fateman bought a hair salon and worked as a feminist writer and art critic. Samson toured with Peaches and her own band Men, while working as an arts professor at New York University. Hanna was in a band called the Julie

Ruin, which she stopped due to her illness. “Lyme disease was making it impossible for me to tour,” she says. “It was hard for me to hide the amount of pain that I was in.” She began a business to fund women’s education in Togo, west Africa, worked on a documentary about Darcelle XV, her second cousin and the world’s oldest living drag queen, and wrote a memoir, to be published next year. “It was a therapeutic endeavour of organising the narrative of my life,” she says. “Like, am I the hero of my own story? Is there a happy ending? I need to wrap up some of my past activity to be present in the now.”



‘Am I the hero of my own story?’ ... Hanna performing in Pasadena, California, 2022. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Samson says: “We’re all much more connected to ourselves, therefore it’s a great opportunity for us to connect more with each other.” She adds that Le Tigre’s songs make as much sense as they did nearly 20 years ago: “We realised that a lot of the lyrics are still relevant, and that of course feels depressing.” Those lyrics will be projected behind them as they play, “a reminder of what a struggle we’re all facing now”.

But don’t expect another Le Tigre album soon. “We haven’t exhausted this material,” says Hanna. “It’s still challenging and exciting to perform, and I’m understanding nuances in the songs that I didn’t notice before. I’m

having real pride in our songwriting and so I don't see any need to write anything new."

The glitchy, political FYR (Fifty Years of Ridicule) is one of those still-relevant songs, named after Shulamith Firestone, who wrote that for every 10 years of feminist activism there will be 50 years of ridicule. Hanna finds it validating because she feels Le Tigre are often left out of the canonisation of punk and indie. "There are countless articles where people who were operating at the same time are put on a list of innovators and we're left out," she says. "I didn't get in this band to be on any stupid list. But it's interesting."

Having toured extensively with Bikini Kill over the past few years, Hanna understands her position as a rare middle-aged female punk. "I'm 54 and playing punk shows and 10-year-olds are coming," she says. "It's pretty amazing to create atmospheres where there are all these different generations in the room because there is so much division between generations. Like, I'm more educated than you, or I know this language and you don't. Or older people being like: '#MeToo, we dealt with it quietly, so why are you making so much fuss?'" Live shows, to her, are about getting off the internet as feminists and gathering together.



‘We’re able to scale it up almost 20 years later, which is a crazy opportunity – who wouldn’t take that?’ ... Johanna Fateman performing in 2022. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Even Hanna, known for scrawling feminist slogans on her chest and wearing neon hot pants, wonders how she is supposed to present herself now. ‘I’ve gotten a lot of messages from women who are around my age, saying: ‘I started to feel as if I didn’t belong in the punk scene any more and you made me feel like I can keep doing what I want to do.’ That feels like the ultimate goal for success. It’s hard to age as a punk, even a feminist electronic punk.’

Her audiences have occasionally reflected this change back to her. ‘People yell out ‘Mom’ to me and it’s funny, but it’s also offensive. Because I’m over a certain age, I’m like their parent now, or their riot grandma, and that kind of ageism just reinforces the idea that you’re only valuable if you have children, or if you’re a fuckable girl in the scene. Those are your two choices.’

But that’s so silly and reductive, Hanna says. ‘When Le Tigre come on stage, none of the stereotypes make any sense any more and that’s what we want to be: something intense and artistic that makes stupid, boring mediocre stuff dissolve.’

Le Tigre’s UK tour starts on 3 June at the Troxy, London.

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Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson during Emmy awards in 2014. Photograph: Mark Davis/NBC/NBCUniversal/Getty Images

[Movies](#)

## **Family bromance: could Woody Harrelson and Matthew McConaughey really be brothers?**

[Stuart Heritage](#)



It's not just receding hair and a shared taste in recreational drugs that makes the two look related. But it is an awfully similar story to their new drama

Fri 14 Apr 2023 05.46 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 16.16 EDT

Families can be complicated, beguiling things. Long-kept secrets can simmer away for generations before exploding in a mess of trauma and recriminations. Children can learn that they have a different biological father. Cousins can learn that they're actually siblings removed at birth. And Matthew McConaughey can have [a bit of a hunch that Woody Harrelson is his half-brother](#).

Somewhat unbelievably, this last one is playing out in real time. On an episode of Kelly Ripa's Let's Talk Off Camera podcast, McConaughey started to discuss Harrelson, his regular co-star in work as diverse as True Detective and EDtv. "You know, where I start and where he ends, and where he starts and I end, has always been like a murky line ... My kids call him Uncle Woody. His kids call me Uncle Matthew. And you see pictures of us and my family thinks a lot of pictures of him are me. His family thinks a lot of pictures of me are him."

Which makes some amount of sense, doesn't it? They are both professional actors. They were both born in Texas in the 1960s. They both have, or have had, a fondness for marijuana. Their hairlines have receded in similar directions. But here's where things get weirder. "In Greece a few years ago, we're sitting around talking about how close we are and our families," McConaughey continued. "And my mom is there, and she says, 'Woody, I knew your dad.' Everyone was aware of the ellipses that my mom left after 'knew.' It was a loaded K-N-E-W."

Apparently Harrelson and McConaughey then did some sums and realised that it could have been feasible that McConaughey's mother (who was in the midst of a divorce) could have feasibly had sex with Harrelson's father (who was a contract killer who claims to have murdered JFK) because they were both around Texas at the same time.

Again, as unlikely as this sounds, this could be extremely sweet if true. Of all the working actors in the world, McConaughey and Harrelson somehow managed to find each other. It meant that they were drawn together by the intangible bonds of biology, that their genetic makeup meant that they were always destined to be existentially entwined. It's a lovely thought, one that hints at a higher power taking care of its creations.

Not to burst anyone's bubble, though, but we probably shouldn't hold our breath. Because although this is a wonderful story, it's also extremely easy to confirm. McConaughey could just straight-up ask his mother. True, they've had a complicated relationship at times – they were functionally estranged for eight years, but have since made up – but it would only take a moment of courage to sit her down and say "Hey, did you have sex with convicted assassin Charles Harrelson in October 1960?"

Also, home DNA tests are widely available now, and all that McConaughey and Harrelson would need to do is stump up \$100, spit into a test tube and 24 hours later they would have definitive proof of their suspicions. Which, for most people, would be a better way of determining something than publicly discussing the potential implications of the nuance your mother once used to say the word "knew" on holiday several years ago.

On the podcast, however, McConaughey revealed his reluctance to take this path, because the consequences could be world-shaking. After all, he might learn, to his horror, that the man he always thought was his father might not actually be his father. And that's the sort of thing that can permanently destabilise a man. Matthew would need to have vast reserves of personal strength to weather an upset like this.

### [Dallas Buyers Club's Matthew McConaughey: 'I don't even have a doctor'](#) Guardian

That said, he did just go on a podcast and tell the entire world that he thinks he is probably Harrelson's half-brother, without any form of proof whatsoever, so it doesn't sound particularly reluctant of him. Also, he happens to be making an Apple TV+ show with Harrelson that is called Brother from Another Mother. I don't want to be judgmental, but that does seem like quite a bold project to sign on to if you're worried about the results of a paternity test.

Or maybe that's the entire point. Perhaps this revelation is nothing more than an empty PR move to promote a new comedy series. Perhaps Harrelson and McConaughey are really just two bald Texan friends and nothing more. There is only one way that this mess can be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Someone needs to bring [Maury Povich](#) out of retirement, and fast.

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The Crown in Pulham Market. *All photographs by Ali Smith/The Guardian*

[The pub walk](#)[Norfolk holidays](#)

**A walk on Norfolk's Boudicca Way to a classic village pub: The Crown Inn**

A stroll from Diss to idyllic Pulham Market takes in quiet countryside and passes a clutch of ancient churches

[Stephen Emms](#)

Fri 14 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 03.00 EDT

Why are some towns so disconnected from their railway stations? That's what I often ponder at Diss in south Norfolk: the most direct walking route into its historic centre is a fiddly manoeuvre through 1960s cul-de-sacs which would be so much more visitor-friendly if it were clearly signposted.

But upon arrival – especially if it's your first time – it's worth persisting with the 18-minute trek to the hilly old town, with its [157 listed](#) Tudor, Georgian and Victorian buildings. The timbered Saracen's Head pub and long-running restaurant [Weaver's](#) both date from the 16th century, while the cobbled Diss Yards is a haven of indie shops and health-conscious cafes, and the cavernous [Designer Makers 21](#) is a warren of artists' studios and galleries.

It passes through verdant countryside in the iron age Celtic Briton tribe's territory

Another must-see is the elegant Grade II-listed [Corn Hall](#), now a multi-use arts centre recently restored, like much of the old town, as part of a £3.4m initiative to create the Diss Heritage Triangle. Central to this regeneration is a floating boardwalk on Diss Mere, a large lake. At the top of Market Hill, there are great views in the peaceful new park before you walk down the path to the water.



St George's Church, Shimpling

Today my boyfriend and I are here to walk an eight-mile stretch of the [Boudicca Way](#), a 36-mile walking route connecting this market town with Norwich. Named after the warrior queen of the Iceni, it passes through verdant countryside in the iron-age Celtic Briton tribe's territory, running roughly parallel to the old Pye Road (now the A140). We'll end our afternoon hike at the impossibly pretty village of [Pulham Market](#), where my mum still lives and where my father's family were based for many decades.

My father was a keen walker, and introduced me to the route a few years back; as he died recently, the idea is to partly retrace those steps.

Leaving the station at Gilray Road we turn right up inauspicious-looking Vince's Road (if you wish to explore the old town first, take the next left into Fisher Road). We pass through a modern housing estate to pick up the Boudicca Way at the corner of Frenze Hall Lane and Walcot Green, where the well-signposted rural track starts just beyond the railway bridge. In fact, for the duration of the walk we are impressed with the faultless signage; and for good measure, I'm also clutching a hand-drawn map my dad helped put together many years ago.



A shower passes by near Diss

Under bright sun and blue skies, we follow the straight path up to the [Frenze Beck](#), a tributary of the Waveney, and at a farm spy our first ancient monument, [St Andrew's](#) church, built in the 13th century. Like many on this route, it's now disused but kept open by the Churches Conservation Trust. Its sparse interior is tranquil, the sun streaming in on its many artefacts: particularly notable are the 15th-century carved monkeys on the arms of the prayer desk.

Then it's back out along the river, with hoary oaks jutting out of its low banks. Dog walkers greet us at regular intervals, and we pass farms and sporadic Georgian houses as we meander down sun-dappled lanes.

The church's sparse interior is tranquil, the sun streaming in on its artefacts including 15th-century carved monkeys

The next church we encounter, in Thelveton, is also in the middle of farmland. Also called [St Andrew's](#), it's not as satisfyingly minimalist inside as its namesake, but, now an hour in, we enjoy a brief rest on a mossy bench in its churchyard. We watch as a hare races past the gravestones.



Inside St Andrew's Church

Picking up the footpath again, I spy a herd of deer in a nearby field before we turn right up Broad Way, an appealing country lane with wide grass verges, before reaching an arable field from which we can glimpse the eye-catching round tower of the Grade I-listed [St George's](#) church at Shimpling. We cross the wooden bridge over the stream and are pleased again to find it open, despite it also being disused. Its 12th-century tower, with octagonal upper stage and Victorian spire, excites my boyfriend, who has studied historical conservation and can wax lyrical on the differences between a nave and a chancel.

We follow the hedge-bound lane to Shimpling village, where a heritage map brims with stories about this settlement and neighbouring Burston, most notable for a remarkable incident in 1914: when the local school's headteacher and his wife were unfairly sacked, the children went on strike to show support, even attending a "strike school", which continued until 1939.



Quiet countryside en route to Pulham Market.

Pheasants flap into view as we cross a vast, featureless field towards Tivetshall St Mary. At the junction with Patten Lane, we follow the Boudicca Way sign up Primrose Hill towards the village. As we turn right into Ram Lane, two horses survey us from a field, while a muntjac lolllops across the road, quite at ease. We're three hours into the walk, and only now encounter our first pub: the [Old Ram](#) coaching inn, which dates from the 17th century. We eagerly order pints and flop on to comfy sofas in front of the fire.

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But we're still not at our goal. With the light lowering, we leave to cross the busy A140 and pick up the path for the final mile across farmland; at a cattle grid, we turn left up gently sloping Station Road (its former station, closed since 1953, is visible on the left). Pulham Market dates from the 12th century, its thatched cottages arranged around a green. With restored medieval painting and stained glass, the working 14th-century [St Mary Magdalene](#) church is grander and more extravagant than the others, its tower golden in the setting sun. Inside we're surprised to learn that Norfolk has 659 medieval churches, one of the highest concentrations in the world.

Darkness is now falling, but happily the Crown is next door, glowing with invitation. Feeling a sudden sense of peace, I remember my dad's favourite phrase: *solvitur ambulando*. Everything is solved by walking.

## Google map of the route

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**Start** Diss Station

**Distance** 8 miles (9.5 if walking into Diss town centre first) **Time:** 3-4 hours

**Total ascent** 71 metres

**Difficulty** Easy

[GPX map of the route](#) at Ordnance Survey

## The Pub



The Crown's rustic-chic dining room.

[The Crown](#) is a 15th-century inn built to house the workmen constructing the church. A double-sided inglenook fireplace warms both the pub area and the adjoining dining room, with its low-beamed ceiling and artfully mismatched furniture. Over the years I've munched my way through the menu, from rosy ribeye to chicken supreme, but right now we crave a pint

and some of its mammoth sausage rolls. After eight miles in three-degree cold, we're delirious at such a simple pleasure. [thecrowninnpulham.co.uk](http://thecrowninnpulham.co.uk)

## Where to stay

On the other side of the green is the [Old Bakery](#), a B&B with four spacious rooms, run since 2018 by Theresa and Jim Miller. A listed building, with wattle-and-daub walls and a timber frame, it was a bakery from 1580 until the last baker retired in 1951. The beamed rooms are furnished with antique furniture and comfy bedding and the en suite attic offers sunset views over the village green and church beyond. It's available for bed-and-breakfast or self-catering.

*Doubles from £95 B&B, [theoldbakery.net](http://theoldbakery.net)*

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Ilias Kasidiaris, photographed in 2013, has been able to address his 134,000 followers via YouTube even though he is serving a 13-and-a-half-year prison term. Photograph: Thanassis Stavrakis/AP

[Greece](#)

## **‘It’s worrying’: Greek election ban on extremist party may be too little, too late**

Crackdown on Hellenes and its Golden Dawn leader Ilias Kasidiaris could cause more problems than it solves

*[Helena Smith](#) in Athens*

Fri 14 Apr 2023 03.22 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 14.03 EDT

For two years Ilias Kasidiaris, a convicted leader of the now disbanded neo-Nazi [Golden Dawn party](#), has used social media to address supporters from Domokos prison in central Greece.

Month after month the former MP has railed against the inability of the “corrupt political regime” to govern the country in a stream of hate-filled speeches. For his 134,000 subscribers on YouTube, the exhortations are a lifeline to Kasidiaris and the Hellenes, the small nationalist party he set up shortly before being handed a 13-and-a-half-year prison term for his role in [Golden Dawn](#). And they seem to be paying off.

Thirty months after the violent neo-fascist group was [found to be a criminal gang](#) that had masqueraded as a political organisation – targeting immigrants, killing a Greek rapper and lashing out at leftists – the appeal of the famously short-tempered Kasidiaris does not appear to have faded.

“On the contrary it seems to have grown,” says Kostis Papaioannou, who directs Signal, a research group that studies far-right extremism. “He’s even been given the opportunity to conduct radio shows from his cell and has been very effective in using social media to rally support among the young. It’s worrying. If general elections were held tomorrow his party would likely exceed the 3% threshold to get into parliament.”

On Wednesday, less than six weeks before [Greece](#) heads to the polls – and only hours after lawmakers voted to ban the Hellenes from fielding candidates – Domokos prison’s disciplinary council convened in emergency session as it began examining whether the 42-year-old had flouted prison rules permitting him to have contact solely with close family and lawyers – exchanges that can only take place using a phone card. The council is expected to announce possible punitive measures on 20 April.

Increasingly, Greeks have been asking how a notorious inmate in a high-security jail housing some of the nation’s most hardened criminals could so flagrantly violate the jail code, uploading videos on Twitter and even presiding over meetings of his party officials, albeit by phone.

Kasidiaris’s actions, which first came to light two years ago, have caused considerable embarrassment for the centre-right government. In October 2021 as the revelations surfaced, Sofia Nicolaou, the official heading the anti-crime policy unit at the Citizens’ Protection Ministry, not only called for an investigation but demanded that guards be punished if found to be aiding

and abetting the prisoner. In early 2022 Nicolaou moved on; since then Kasidiaris's interventions have flourished.

Tuesday's late-night vote to prohibit the extremists from participating in next month's election follows legislation passed in February that sought to make it impossible for the Hellenes to run, citing its leader's criminal conviction.

The nationalists responded by announcing that a retired supreme court prosecutor would instead lead the party in the 21 May poll.

The latest legislation, passed with the backing of the ruling New Democracy party and centre-left Pasok, broadened the scope of the original ban, making even that impossible, although the country's supreme court will decide on 5 May whether the law should be placed on the statute books. Opponents have accused the government of doing too little, too late, before an election that is looking increasingly close.

"It should have acted right after the court's verdict when Golden Dawn and its leaders were judged to be a criminal organisation," said Papaioannou. "But the government didn't want to alienate Kasidiaris's base. It has lost a lot of support especially among rightwingers in northern Greece and it wanted to keep channels open."

In a nation where the Communist party was long outlawed, the ban has raised concerns over its constitutionality – the leftist opposition abstained from Tuesday's vote arguing it would set a dangerous precedent and even work to the advantage of the unrepentant Kasidiaris.

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With the once ascendant New Democracy's popularity hit by a deadly [train crash](#) that has taken a wrecking ball to its narrative of effective governance – and no party likely to win an outright majority – smaller groups have picked up support. On the right, the Hellenes have been particularly bolstered by anti-systemic fury in the wake of a disaster perceived to have been avoidable.

Kasidiaris, the right-hand man of Golden Dawn's self-styled "Führer", Nikos Michaloliakos, led the extremist party's infamous hit squads and trained its members in martial arts.

If the supreme court refuses to uphold the ban on the ultra-nationalists running, the group's popularity could grow further, warned Dimitris Mavros, who heads the pollsters MRB.

"Right now we're already measuring [its support] at between 4 to 4.5%," he said, calling the role of the Hellenes party potentially decisive in the upcoming election.

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## 2023.04.14 - Opinion

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Phoebe Waller-Bridge signed a \$20m-a-year deal with Amazon Studios in 2019. Photograph: Christopher Polk/Rex/Shutterstock

[Television & radio](#)

## **The biggest new moneymaking scheme for Hollywood stars? Doing nothing**

[Arwa Mahdawi](#)



Phoebe Waller-Bridge has received \$60m from Amazon without making a new show, and it appears she's not alone

Fri 14 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 06.05 EDT

How hard do you have to work to earn \$60m in just three years? The answer, for Phoebe Waller-Bridge, at least, is not very hard at all. In 2019 the Emmy-winning creator of the hit TV show *Fleabag* signed a \$20m-a-year deal with Amazon Studios. Originally, she was supposed to collaborate with Donald Glover on a series based on the 2005 movie *Mr and Mrs Smith*, but she reportedly left the show after a few months because of clashing creative styles. No worries, Amazon said, you can work on a *Tomb Raider* series instead. However, the [Hollywood Reporter](#) notes, since a showrunner (the person who has overall creative authority over a show) was also being hired, it's questionable just how much work would actually be needed by the *Fleabag* creator. In short: Waller-Bridge has collected \$60m from Amazon over the last few years without ever making a new show.

I'm not shaming Waller-Bridge, to be clear. I think this is brilliant work if you can get it. Taking away some of Jeff Bezos's joyrides-in-space money as payment for staring into space? A+ work! And I should state for the record that [Amazon](#) Studios has rejected recent allegations that Waller-Bridge is

being paid simply to exist. Apparently, she is “feeling very committed” to Tomb Raider and they expect her to be worth the money. “When she does deliver, she delivers,” the Amazon Studios head of television, Vernon Sanders, has said. Not everyone is so sure the deal was a good idea, however. One showrunner described Amazon’s behavior to the Hollywood Reporter as “star-fucking”.

There certainly seems to be a lot of that going on lately. Waller-Bridge is far from the only creative to be being paid big bucks for doing very little. In 2020, Harry and Meghan signed a [multi-year Netflix deal](#), worth a [reported \\$100m](#). “Our focus will be on creating content that informs but also gives hope,” the couple said at the time. No doubt Netflix is hoping that, once they’re done mining their personal lives for views, they’ll come up with some decent original content. So far it’s not clear that will be the case. Their most recent output was a seven-episode series called Live to Lead – dry profiles on Greta Thunberg, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Gloria Steinem – which was released on Netflix on 31 December with little fanfare and almost no reviews. Netflix has also cancelled Meghan’s animated series called Pearl, [amid cutbacks](#).

Another high-profile name who hasn’t exactly been breaking a sweat for his money is the film-maker JJ Abrams (a nepo baby who is also the father of [a nepo baby](#), for those who keep track). Bad Robot, Abrams’s production company, [got \\$250m from Warner Bros Discovery](#) to create content back in 2019. It has not created very much and Warner Bros is apparently frustrated with the lack of delivery. Abrams, meanwhile, is busy working on a Star Trek movie for Paramount Global, a Warner rival, as that \$250m deal didn’t have an exclusivity clause.



Rachel Maddow commanded such exceptional ratings that NBCUniversal basically had to pay her not to leave them. Photograph: NBC/NBCU Photo Bank/Getty Images

The creators of *South Park*, Matt Stone and Trey Parker, found a similar loophole to get away with doing less than they promised. In 2019, they signed a \$500m deal with Warner Discovery to air at least 30 new episodes of the show, but in the end delivered less than half of what was promised by suddenly switching to two- or six-episode “seasons”. In 2021, the pair signed a separate [\\$900m deal](#) with Paramount+ to make exclusive “events” that seemed essentially like longer episodes of *South Park* – because Warner Discovery didn’t have exclusivity. Warner Discovery is suing Paramount for using “grammatical sleight-of-hand … to side-step *South Park*’s contractual obligations”. (*South Park* obviously made fun of the whole thing in a series of specials for Paramount called *The Streaming Wars*.)

While they were doing at least some work for their millions, the MNSBC host Rachel Maddow got paid a fortune expressly to stick around and [take it easy](#). In 2021, NBCUniversal gave Maddow, who was considering leaving the show she’s been fronting for 13 years, \$30m a year to stay with the company on a more flexible schedule. Maddow commanded such exceptional ratings that they basically had to pay her not to leave them for someone else.

It's not just Hollywood where employers seem keen to pay certain people to do nothing. Back in the zero-interest-rate era, tech companies reportedly used to [hire well-paid workers](#) to do very little just so the competition didn't nab them. “[I]t kind of seemed that Meta was hiring people so that other companies couldn't have us and they were just hoarding us like Pokémon cards,” a [former Meta worker](#), Brit Levy, said in a recent TikTok video about her experience at the company. Levy said that she had to “fight to find work”. My friend, you’re doing it all wrong. Take a leaf out of Waller-Bridge’s book: sit back, collect your cash and enjoy being a human Pokémon card.

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‘Self-preservation is not an instinct that Fedha would understand.’ Kuwait News’s AI reporter, Fedha. Photograph: Yasser Al-Zayyat/Kuwait News/AFP/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#)

**As a presenter I can tell you, TV news needs a human touch. This AI newsreader won't give you that**

[Simon McCoy](#)

They may be cheaper and less trouble, but they’ll never have the gravitas, the engagement or the raised eyebrow of reporters like me

Fri 14 Apr 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 10.15 EDT

“The news is ... there is no news.” With those words, outside St Mary’s Hospital in London awaiting the [birth of Prince George](#) in July 2013, my [reporting for the BBC](#) went viral on the internet. My somewhat testy response to standing in the street with nothing to say had struck a chord with

many. Not for what I was saying but the way I was saying it. The resigned look. The world-weary tone. The slight annoyance that four decades of reporting from around the globe had led to this moment. I couldn't hide it. Viewers knew what I was thinking and feeling. Some were annoyed by it. Quite a few people appreciated it – because they could relate to it. Because they are human. And so am I.

["Fedha"](#) is not human. Yes, the blond woman with light-coloured eyes, wearing a black jacket and a white T-shirt, looks human. She even sounds human. But this week she was introduced as the first presenter in Kuwait who works by artificial intelligence. "What kind of news do you prefer? Let's hear your opinions," she says in Arabic.

The 13-second video has generated a flood of reactions including, unsurprisingly, from television journalists. Self-preservation is not an instinct that Fedha would understand. She would not feel the threat posed by a presenter who could bring the news 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with no breaks, no holidays and no salary.

There's a lot to commend the prospect to the bosses. AI newsreaders will be a lot less, well, trouble. They'll skip the mispronunciations, the verbal cock-ups. The dramas over wardrobe malfunctions. The complaints over foundation colours in makeup, the stresses over too-weak hairspray. And that's just the men. Then there's the journalism.



Simon McCoy delivers royal baby news for the BBC, 17 October 2017.  
Photograph: BBC News

To examine the drawbacks that may come with an AI newsreader, I thought I would turn the tables and ask Genie – the chatbot powered by [ChatGPT](#). Genie told me that there are a few potential issues with AI newsreaders. “They may struggle with delivering the news in a way that is engaging and interesting to viewers,” he says.

I get that. It’s a problem that every television journalist faces every day. Formats can be changed, new graphics can be deployed and new studios built. If all else fails, a change of presenter can be introduced. For years I was told that audience research suggested that viewers weren’t as interested in who was presenting the news as people thought. I never believed the argument – particularly as it always seemed to be made during contract negotiations. As far as delivering the news is concerned, of course the face and voice behind it matters. I can think of quite a few newsreaders who, despite their humanity, still struggle to make the news engaging. But that’s a subjective, human, view.

My [ChatGPT](#) friend also tells me that there are concerns about the potential for AI newsreaders to be used to spread false or misleading information, as

they may not be able to determine the accuracy or even the plausibility of the story's source.

This is, I believe, the biggest threat of all. Not just in the delivery of news, but in its content. AI is already involved in the spread of “[fake news](#)” – and that will only get worse. Organisations such as the BBC and Sky (both previous employers) are alive to this and will have to show viewers more of how stories are put together. To reveal more of what goes on “under the bonnet”. At a time when trust in news providers is diminishing, the next few years threaten to be very challenging if that trust is to be regained.

For further reaction, I turned to Twitter. I asked humans what they thought of AI newsreaders. Most seemed opposed to the idea, but a common belief is that newsreaders on any channel tend to reflect the views of the company that employs them; that they read what's put in front of them. Just as an AI newsreader would.

The final point that AI makes about AI newsreaders is perhaps the most enlightening. “He” points out that one of the main concerns is that they lack the human touch and emotion that human newsreaders bring to the table. This, he goes on, can make it difficult for viewers to connect with the news on a personal level.

What he's talking about is what I would refer to as “tone”. In a 40-year career in broadcasting I have delivered some of the biggest stories. Whether it be [war in Iraq](#), a terrorist attack or the death of a major figure, it's not just the words that matter. You need to look right. You need to sound right.

During breaking news stories the presenter is often looking at pictures and reading details in real time. If the details are shocking then the person delivering them can often appear shocked themselves. There's nothing wrong with this; it's a perfectly human reaction. And there we are. Back to the main point. An AI newsreader cannot convey a reaction to a breaking story. They may appear totally calm under pressure and be free of the errs and umms – but words delivered robotically will soon lose any sense of gravitas. As will the “person” delivering them.

The same is true of lighter stories. How would an AI newsreader convey their contempt for a story about [surfing dogs](#)? Would they raise an eyebrow? Would they curl their lip and scowl? It worked for me. I went viral with that as well. Perhaps AI newsreaders won't care about viewers' reactions. As one rather cynical responder told me on Twitter: "The propaganda won't be any different. I'd miss the chuckles though."

- Simon McCoy is a journalist and broadcaster who presented [BBC News](#) for 18 years
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Illustration: Kingsley Nebechi

[OpinionLabour](#)

## If Labour is to succeed it needs not just new policies, but a whole new philosophy

[Daniel Chandler](#)



The work and ideals of the late John Rawls provide a progressive framework that could supplant neoliberalism

Fri 14 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 08.49 EDT

After four general election defeats and nearly 15 years in opposition, the Labour party seems likely to form the next government. Despite [doubling down](#) on its misguided attack ads targeting Rishi Sunak, Labour is looking forwards. Buoyed up by a big poll lead, the leader of the opposition, Keir Starmer, has started setting out his policy agenda in the form of five “[national missions](#)” focusing on economic growth, clean energy, the NHS, expanding opportunity and tackling crime.

The missions themselves are hard to disagree with, and relatively light on detail. But, while the rhetoric is conspicuously modest, there is [reason for optimism](#) that a Starmer government would represent a significant change of direction for the UK.

The most clearly defined mission – to “make Britain a clean energy superpower” – is backed by pledges to establish a publicly funded [Great British Energy](#) company, increase public investment significantly and create

a zero-carbon electricity system by 2030. And there are signs of a promising agenda beyond the climate emergency, including raising the minimum wage to the level of the living wage, a wide-ranging industrial strategy and abolishing the House of Lords.

And yet Starmer has struggled to set out a vision that could bring these currently rather disparate policy ideas into a coherent whole. It's easy to put this down to his personality, more technocrat than visionary, but it also reflects the dearth of systematic thinking about the philosophical foundations for progressive politics in recent decades.

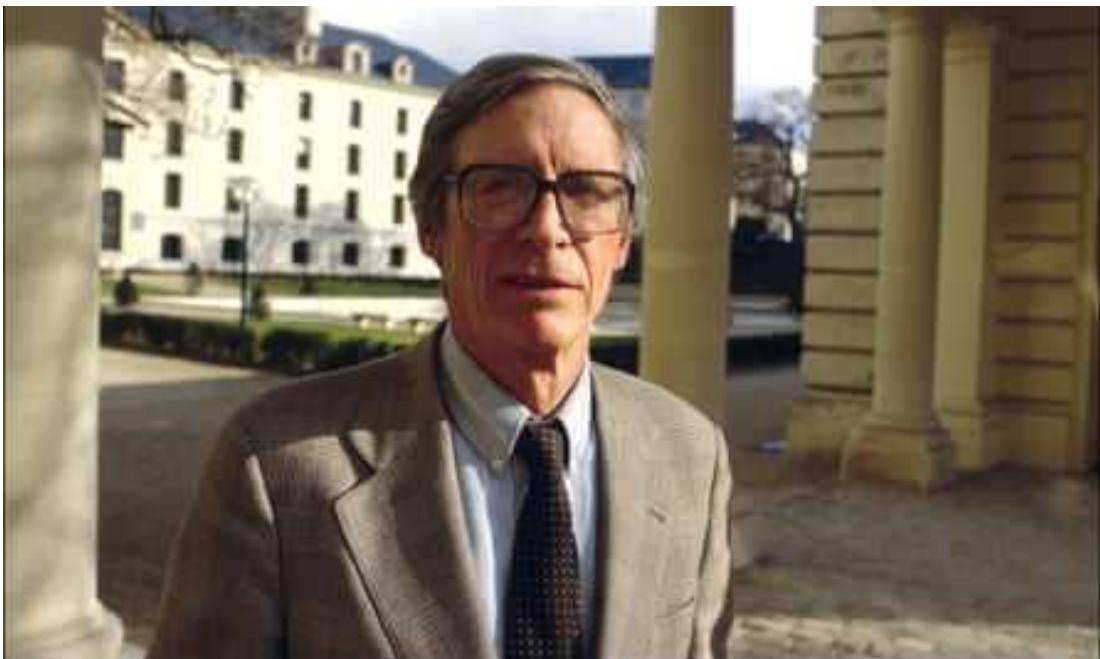
Does this really matter? The [Labour](#) party could probably win the next election without developing such a vision. But the challenge – and historic opportunity – of our present moment is not simply to win the next election; it is to define a governing ideology that can finally supplant neoliberalism.

But whereas Margaret Thatcher drew on thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, where could Starmer look for inspiration? For many on the left, the answers lie with Marx and the socialist tradition. There is much of value here, and over the past decade it has been self-described socialists who have been the primary source of creativity within progressive politics. Starmer's willingness to [alienate the left](#) in order to make a clean break with Jeremy Corbyn is seriously shortsighted.

Even so, today's socialists often have a stronger sense of what they are against – inequality, poverty, capitalism – than what they are for. Indeed, while [Corbyn's 2019 manifesto](#) included individually popular policies such as increasing taxes on high earners and nationalising the railways, it read more like a wishlist than a cohesive vision for a better society. But the ideas Labour needs are hiding in plain sight, in the work of the great liberal philosopher John Rawls.

Rawls is the towering figure of 20th-century [political philosophy](#) – a thinker routinely compared to the likes of Plato, Hobbes, Kant and Mill (next to Rawls, Hayek and Friedman are intellectual minnows). His ideas represent an unparalleled resource for progressive intellectual renewal.

At the heart of Rawls's theory is a strikingly simple idea – that society should be fair. He argued that if we want to know what a fair society would look like, we should imagine how we would choose to organise it if we didn't know what our position would be – rich or poor, black or white, gay or straight. His answer to this arresting thought experiment – the “original position” – took the form of two “principles of justice”, relating to freedom and equality respectively.



‘The ideas of the philosopher John Rawls represent an unparalleled resources for progressive intellectual renewal.’ Photograph: Frederic Reglain/Gamma-Rapho/Getty Images

First, if we really didn't know who we would be, we would want to protect our “basic liberties”, including personal freedoms such as freedom of speech, religion and sexuality, but also the political freedoms we need to play a genuinely equal part in collective decision-making.

Second, in addition to ensuring “fair equality of opportunity”, we would want to organise our economy so that the least well off are better off than under any alternative system (Rawls called this the “difference principle”). From this perspective, higher pay for some can be justified as an incentive to work, study or innovate, but only if this ultimately ends up benefiting those who have less – not just by a little, but as much as possible.

We would also endorse a principle of sustainability – that we must maintain the physical and natural resources of society for future generations.

Rawls's vision is an antidote to the cynicism that pervades our political discourse today – a “realistic utopia” that provides the basis for a broad-based and genuinely transformative progressive politics.

For a start, his ideas provide a unifying alternative to “identity politics”, which have seen the rights of disadvantaged groups pitted against one another. They also define a genuinely inclusive liberalism that can transcend the culture wars, where everyone is free to live according to their own personal beliefs, as long as others are free to do the same. Finally, they offer a way to overcome the divide between liberals and socialists that has been the achilles heel of progressive politics.

Rawls's principles also point towards a policy agenda that would match the scale of the challenges we face, in many cases building on the direction of travel emerging under Starmer. So, for example, to tackle the climate emergency, massive investment in clean energy should be combined with a comprehensive carbon tax. And while [House of Lords reform](#) is clearly essential, Rawls's ideal of political equality would justify a more ambitious package, including proportional representation, a greater role for citizens' assemblies and tough measures to get money out of politics – capping individual donations at a very low level and instead giving every citizen a “democracy voucher” of, say, £50, to donate to the party to their choice.

His philosophy can also help move us beyond the “tax and transfer” paradigm that has long dominated progressive economic thinking. For Rawls, the problem with capitalism as we know it is not simply the unequal distribution of money, but the concentration of power in the hands of owners, and the way our society tramples on the dignity and self-respect of the least well off.

True economic justice will require a more fundamental reshaping of our economy, tackling inequality at its source, replacing our harsh and punitive benefits system with something like an unconditional basic income, and instituting new models of democracy at work.

It's easy to be swept away by Rawls's idealism. In reality, change depends on winning elections, and even though our present moment seems ripe for a truly transformative agenda, incremental change is usually better than no change at all. But Rawls's ideas can help restore a sense of direction and ambition to progressive politics, reminding each of us that a better, fairer world is possible.

- Daniel Chandler is an economist and philosopher based at the London School of Economics, and the author of *Free and Equal: What Would a Fair Society Look Like?*, published on 20 April
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Yinka Bokinni and Dr Alex George with teenagers on Channel 4's Naked Education. Photograph: Channel 4

[Opinion](#)[Young people](#)

## **Naked Education pearl-clutchers, you're wrong: Britain's teens need to see more real bodies**

[Natasha Devon](#)



A generation has been left to learn about bodies from pornography. Thank goodness for Channel 4's nudity-adjacent programming

Fri 14 Apr 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 15.39 EDT

Channel 4's Naked Education has, with tedious predictability, attracted almost [1,000 Ofcom complaints](#) at the time of writing. The format sees adults with a range of body types disrobing in front of an audience of 14- to 16-year-olds. It's overseen by the bombastic, boundary-pushing Anna Richardson and set in a school. It's this latter fact that appears to have inspired the most pearl-clutching, with some even suggesting the show "[promotes paedophilia](#)".

British culture has a messed-up relationship with nudity. For decades, breasts appeared on the third page of one of our bestselling newspapers at the same time as mothers using their breasts for their primary purpose in public (ie to feed babies) were branded offensive. Love Island remains bafflingly popular, yet shows like the one I co-hosted back in 2019 ([Naked Beach](#), in which people who didn't resemble Barbie and Ken spent most of the programme in swimwear) prompted public outrage. It's almost as though nakedness is accepted in the mainstream if it's specifically for titillation, but in any other context we turn into buttoned-up Victorian prudes.

The net result of this is we have an entire generation of young people who are learning about bodies via pornography and social media, with little or no counter-narrative. Nudity is not and does not have to be inherently sexual. To expose our flesh does not “invite” sexual attention or excuse the behaviour of predators.

We’re often encouraged to “think of the children” during conversations about censorship. Indeed, much of the backlash to Naked Education revolves around the claim it sexualises children. But the young people in Naked Education are teenagers, approaching or at the age of consent. Statistically, [four in five young people](#) in the UK have watched pornography by the time they reach 16-17. Most pornographic content depicts hairless, very slender yet pneumatic women pretending to derive enjoyment from being throttled by an improbably muscular man with an even more belief-suspending penis size. This is what many of them think intimacy looks like.

Alongside this, they hear commentators declaring that the bodies on Naked Attraction, another show within Richardson’s oeuvre, are somehow “[gross](#)”, distasteful and inappropriate. The message for your average person, then, is: “Your body is disgusting. No one wants to see it.” Imagine the damage that could do when you are grappling with puberty, hormones and the general confusion that characterises adolescence.

When it comes to their body image, the harm being done to young people is both tangible and disturbing. According to the charity Be Real, [52% of British teenagers](#) often worry about how they look. As someone who visits an average of three schools a week delivering mental health education, I tend to think this statistic is on the low side. The Mental Health Foundation found [one in eight British adults](#) experienced suicidal thoughts or feelings because of concerns about their body.

Body image dissatisfaction has the potential to have an impact on every area of a young person’s life, including their academic outcomes. Research by Girlguiding found [more than half of 12- to 14-year-old girls](#) avoid everyday school activities because of concerns about how they look. Also according to Girlguiding, by the age of seven girls have internalised the idea that society values them more for their looks than their abilities or character. And this doesn’t just affect girls and women. A study from last year found the

majority of British men now display signs of body dysmorphia, after being subjected to a relentless carousel of highly edited and stylised images via social media and film.

Numerous studies have found lack of body confidence stops people from getting higher paid jobs, being respected in their relationships, even from making healthy nutritional choices. We are setting young people up for a life of inner turmoil, disordered eating and taking dangerous risks with surgery and so-called tweaks.

To those who will counter “how is more nudity the solution to all of this?”, Prof Keon West of Goldsmiths, University of London published a paper showing that body image improves when test subjects are exposed to a diverse range of naked bodies. So, thank goodness for Channel 4, with its never-ending cavalcade of nudity-adjacent programming. In a world dominated by images of Kardashians and porn stars, it’s the last, self-esteem saving bastion of normality.

- Natasha Devon is an author and campaigner
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## 2023.04.14 - Around the world

- [North Korea Missile launch was new kind of ICBM, regime says, as first images emerge](#)
- [Texas Farm blaze kills 18,000 cows in deadliest barn fire on record in the US](#)
- [Gambling Japan approves building of first casino](#)
- [Abortion US justice department to appeal to supreme court over abortion pill access](#)
- [Florida Republican lawmakers approve six-week abortion ban](#)



A photo provided by North Korea shows what it says is the test launch of a Hwasong-18 intercontinental ballistic missile at an undisclosed location on Thursday. Photograph: 朝鮮通信社/AP

[North Korea](#)

## **North Korea missile launch was new kind of ICBM, regime says, as first images emerge**

Kim Jong-un hails development of new solid-fuel rocket that can be deployed more quickly

*[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo and agencies*

Thu 13 Apr 2023 20.49 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 13.58 EDT

North Korea claims it has successfully tested a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) for the first time – a breakthrough that the country's leader, [Kim Jong-un](#), warned would make its enemies “suffer in endless fear”.

South Korea's military said it had detected the launch on Thursday morning of one "medium-range or longer" ballistic missile on an elevated trajectory from near the North Korean capital Pyongyang.

The US National Security Council described it as a long-range missile, while Japan's government said it likely had an intercontinental range.

The missile flew upwards at a steep angle – apparently to reduce the risk of it accidentally striking neighbouring countries – and is believed to have covered a distance of 1,000km (620 miles), although experts say that, flown at a regular trajectory, it could cover much longer distances.

North Korean state media said the regime had tested a "new type of intercontinental ballistic missile" called the Hwasung-18. Its predecessor, the liquid-fuelled [Hwasung-17](#), which the regime tested in March, has an operational range of 15,000km – far enough to reach the US mainland.

Thursday's launch [triggered a scare in northern Japan](#), where Hokkaido residents were told to take cover, though there turned out to be no danger.

"The test proved ... the new intercontinental ballistic missile's military efficiency as a strategic attack capability," the North's official KCNA news agency said.

Kim said the new weapon would "greatly reorganise our strategic deterrence and reinforce effectiveness of our nuclear counterattack", according to KCNA.

"We will strike with deadly force and respond aggressively until the enemy gives up its idle strategy and foolish behaviour and so that it will suffer in endless fear."

KCNA released photos of Kim watching the launch, accompanied by his wife, sister and daughter, with the missile covered in camouflage nets on a mobile launcher.

Kim has long pushed for the development of solid-fuel ICBMs that can be launched from land or submarines. Missiles that use liquid propellants must be fuelled just prior to launch, but those that use solid-propellant are fuelled when they are manufactured, making them easier to transport and cutting the time it takes to prepare them for launch.

Those capabilities make them harder to detect and destroy in a pre-emptive strike.



Kim Jong-un, centre, and his daughter, left, watch Thursday's missile test, in a photo released by North Korea. Photograph: 朝鮮通信社/AP

North Korea showed off a record number of nuclear and ICBMs at a military parade in Pyongyang in February, including what analysts said was possibly a new solid-fuel ICBM.

“The reason North Korea is obsessed about solid-fuel missiles is because it will significantly reduce the preparation time before launch,” said Go Myong-hyun, a researcher at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul.

“This is important as the longer it takes after bringing out the missile from a silo or a tunnel, the higher the possibility of destruction before launch.”

South Korea's defence ministry challenged North Korean claims that it had perfected a solid-fuel ICBM, saying on Friday that the regime would need more time to master the technology.

The ministry also maintains that the North has yet to reach the point where it can protect its ICBM warheads during re-entry into the atmosphere. The defence minister, Lee Jong-Sup, told lawmakers last month that the North was unlikely to have mastered the technology needed to place nuclear warheads on its most advanced short-range missiles, although he acknowledged that the regime was making "considerable progress".

The latest launch came days after Kim called for strengthening the country's war deterrence in a "more practical and offensive" manner to counter what North Korea called aggressive moves by the US.

North Korea has criticised recent US-South Korean joint military exercises as a rehearsal for an invasion, while Washington and Seoul insist they are purely defensive. The drills, along with North Korean weapons tests, have significantly raised tensions on the peninsula in recent months.

The ICBM claims come just before North Korea is set to mark one of its most important political anniversaries, the Day of the Sun, on Saturday.

The date commemorates founding leader Kim Il-sung's birth anniversary and has typically been marked by significant weapons tests or military parades.

*With Reuters and Agence France-Presse*

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Smoke rises at the South Fork Dairy Farms, after an explosion and a fire killed around 18,000 cows. Photograph: Castro County Emergency Management/Local News X/TMX/Reuters

[Texas](#)

## **Texas farm blaze kills 18,000 cows in deadliest barn fire on record in the US**

Firefighters rescued one employee from the fire at South Fork Dairy family farm near Dimmitt

*Reuters*

Thu 13 Apr 2023 19.46 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 14.07 EDT

More than 18,000 cows died after an explosion and fire at a family dairy farm in west [Texas](#), marking the deadliest such barn blaze on record in the United States.

Firefighters rescued one employee from the South Fork Dairy near Dimmitt on Monday as flames raced through a building and into holding pens,

according to images and statements from the Castro county sheriff's office.

The cause of the fire was under investigation and it was not immediately possible to contact members of the family who own the farm in one of Texas's biggest milk production counties.

The blaze prompted calls from the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), among the oldest US animal protection groups, for federal laws to prevent barn fires which kill hundreds of thousands of farm animals each year.

There are no federal regulations protecting animals from the fires and only a few states, Texas not among them, have adopted fire protection codes for such buildings, according to an AWI statement.

The blaze was the most devastating US barn fire involving cattle since the AWI began tracking such incidents in 2013. About 6.5 million farm animals have died in such fires in the last decade, most of them poultry.

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An artist's impression of the Osaka casino project.

[Japan](#)

## Japan approves building of first casino

Casino complex to be built in Osaka after ban was lifted despite fears about gambling addiction

*Justin McCurry in Tokyo*

Fri 14 Apr 2023 04.27 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 23.20 EDT

Japan has approved a controversial plan to build the country's first casino, after [decades of debate](#) fuelled by fears that an increase in tourist spending could be blighted by a rise in gambling addiction.

The casino complex, which will include restaurants, shops and entertainment facilities as part of an "integrated resort", will be built in the western port city of Osaka, where senior politicians have pushed for its construction and rejected demands for a local referendum.

Authorities in Osaka hope the project will be completed in 2029 at an initial cost of 1.8tn yen (£10.8bn). The city's bid was approved after "sufficient examination from various perspectives", the tourism and infrastructure minister, Tetsuo Saito, said on Friday.

The prime minister, Fumio Kishida, said the complex would promote development in the wider Osaka region and "become a tourism base that will disseminate the charm of [Japan](#) to the world".

The global casino industry and lawmakers from Kishida's Liberal Democratic party spent years pushing for a change in the law to allow developers to build casinos in [Japan](#), the world's third-biggest economy.

Foreign casino operators lobbied Japanese authorities for access to a market that could generate huge profits, estimated by some analysts at \$20bn a year if three casino complexes are built.

While supporters pointed to the additional spending that would come from domestic and foreign gamblers, critics warned that casinos would add to Japan's already serious gambling problem and become a magnet for organised crime.

Once the only major economy to ban casinos, Japan [passed legislation](#) in 2016 paving the way to make the industry legal, with parliament later enacting a law to allow the construction of integrated resorts.

In a nationwide poll taken after the 2018 law was passed, 64.8% of respondents opposed plans to build casinos, while 27.6% were in favour. A Nikkei business newspaper poll in April found that 45% of Osaka residents were in favour of hosting the resort, with 38% against.

The Osaka complex will be run by the Japanese unit of MGM Resorts International and Orix, a financial services company, along with about 20 local firms, media reports said.

In addition to a casino, the complex – to be built on the artificial island of [Yumeshima](#) – will include a hotel, an international conference hall, exhibition facilities and a theatre.



An artist's impression of the casino project on Yumeshima island.

The Osaka government estimates the project will have an annual economic impact worth 1.14tn yen and create 15,000 jobs. Up to 20 million visitors from Japan and overseas are expected to use the complex every year, generating sales of 520bn yen, 80% of which will come directly from the casinos.

Gambling addiction support groups said they had “grave concerns” about the project. In an open letter to government officials, they cited a surge in requests for help from young people who have become addicted to online gambling.

Japan is a nation of keen gamblers, with publicly run horse, speedboat, motorcycle and [keirin](#) bicycle racing together bringing in the equivalent of billions of dollars a year, while [pachinko](#), a pinball-like game played at 7,600 parlours nationwide, generated 14.6tn yen in sales in 2020, according to the Japan Productivity Centre’s leisure white paper.

A 2021 government survey found 2.8 million people – about 2.2% of the population – were affected by gambling addiction.

To address those concerns, Japanese citizens will have to pay a 6,000 yen fee for every 24 hours they spend in the casino, with a portion of the fee

earmarked for gambling addiction measures, according to an Osaka official.

There will also be a cap on the number of visits by Japanese gamblers, and family members can request that a relative be banned from using casinos, Saito said.

### *Agencies contributed reporting*

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A federal appeals court upheld restrictions on the drug that were reinstated by a ruling last Friday. Photograph: Evelyn Hockstein/Reuters

[US news](#)

## US justice department to appeal to supreme court over abortion pill access

DoJ move comes after court ruling that mifepristone can remain available for now but will be subject to significant restrictions

*[Poppy Noor](#) and agencies*

Thu 13 Apr 2023 12.43 EDTFirst published on Thu 13 Apr 2023 07.13 EDT

The justice department says it will immediately appeal to the supreme court following an appeals court ruling that the abortion pill mifepristone can remain available in the US but will be subject to significant restrictions.

Late on Wednesday, the fifth circuit court of appeals ruled partially in favour of anti-abortion advocates, imposing restrictions on mifepristone that include lowering the allowable use of the drug to seven weeks of pregnancy

instead of the current 10-week limit, and requiring in-person doctor visits for those looking to obtain the drug.

The appeals court decision came after a lower court ruling on Friday last week by judge Matthew Kacsmaryk that suspended FDA authorisation of mifepristone, first granted in 2000, entirely. The appeals court blocked the full suspension, but reinstated restrictions that had been in place before 2016.

Shortly after Kacsmaryk's decision on Friday, a federal judge based in Washington issued a contradictory ruling, stating that the FDA is not to take any action that would affect the availability of mifepristone. As both courts bind the FDA, the contradictory rulings left the agency with little clear path as to which ruling it should follow.

Adding to the confusion over what the state of play in the coming days will be, the judge in that case [issued](#) a further order on Thursday, stating his ruling applies "irrespective" of the fifth circuit court's decision on Wednesday.

Pro-choice advocates in the US reacted with fury earlier on Thursday at the ruling from the fifth circuit, questioning its scientific basis.

"This decision is a wolf in sheep's clothing," said Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights. "The appellate court order repeats serious errors in Judge Kacsmaryk ruling. It is wrong on the facts and the law, resulting in an unprecedented override of the FDA's scientific judgment ... [that] will wreak havoc on the provision of medication abortion if it stands."

The appeals court on Wednesday said the plaintiffs bringing the case did not do so quickly enough following the FDA's original 2000 approval of mifepristone. However, it said the challenges to the FDA's later actions, including extending its use to 10 weeks and allowing it to be dispensed via telemedicine and the mail, were timely.

The US was already out of step with much of the world in its regulation of mifepristone, one of two drugs commonly prescribed for abortions. It approved mifepristone years after many European countries, and placed far more regulations on the drug than in neighbouring countries such as Canada – including the newly reinstated requirements that it be prescribed in person, and by a doctor.

The ruling could be devastating for millions of women in the US, including those in states where abortion is still legal. Many women do not realise that they are pregnant until two weeks after their missed period – technically at six weeks of pregnancy. Doctors commonly prescribe drugs off-label – meaning they could choose to prescribe it after seven weeks – but it is unclear how many will.

Reinstating the requirement for in-person visits for a prescription will also delay people seeking care, or bump up the likelihood that they will need to have manual procedures for abortions, which will increase strain on abortion clinics.

Wednesday's ruling came from a panel of three fifth circuit judges, two of whom were appointed by Donald Trump and the other by George W Bush, both Republican presidents. Judge Catharina Haynes, the Bush appointee, partly dissented, saying she would have temporarily blocked Kacsmaryk's order entirely.

The emergency stay is meant to remain in place until the fifth circuit can hear the Biden administration's appeal against Kacsmaryk's order more fully. That appeal may be heard by a different panel.

The anti-abortion group that brought the case, the ultra-conservative Alliance Defending Freedom, has clarified it will not appeal against the portion of the ruling that blocked the suspension of the FDA's approval of the drug.

"We don't have any immediate plans to appeal the part of the 2000 approval part of the fifth circuit's opinion. What the fifth circuit did is really recognize that the FDA actions have been unlawful from the very beginning and [put] a number of requirements back in place to protect women and

girls, so we're happy," said Erin Hawley, the vice-president of Center for Life & Regulatory Practice, on behalf of the plaintiffs in a press conference on Wednesday.

"For now we have a great victory," she added.

But legal experts found the nature of the judgment concerning. "The fifth circuit doesn't consist of scientists. The FDA's decisions were made after a painstaking review of thousands of pages of scientific evidence by scientific experts," said Mary Ziegler, a legal historian at UC Davis. "The fifth circuit feels, after I don't know how many hours of reading filings from the plaintiffs based largely on research from anti-abortion affiliated groups – sometimes people who aren't scientists at all – that the FDA was mistaken to expand access to mifepristone. That's concerning."

Kacsmarck's ruling apparently conflicts with a different federal judge's decision, also issued last Friday, ordering the FDA to maintain access to mifepristone with no new restrictions in 17 states and the District of Columbia. The Biden administration has asked the judge in that case to clarify his order in light of Kacsmarck's.

The lawsuit before Kacsmarck was filed against the FDA in November by four anti-abortion medical associations led by the recently formed Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine and four anti-abortion doctors. They contend that the agency used an improper process when it approved mifepristone in 2000 and did not adequately consider the drug's safety when used by under-18s to terminate a pregnancy.

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The reinstated restrictions are temporary while the lawsuits are pending.

However, Kacsmaryk, in the lower court, said he thought the anti-abortion groups were likely to succeed on the merits, writing that the FDA “acquiesced on its legitimate safety concerns – in violation of its statutory duty – based on plainly unsound reasoning and studies that did not support its conclusions” when it approved mifepristone.

The fifth circuit majority said the government’s arguments for an emergency stay of the ruling focused on the potential harm of pulling mifepristone from the market entirely, but it was “difficult to argue” that the 2016 changes “were so critical to the public given that the nation operated – and mifepristone was administered to millions of women – without them for 16 years”.

The court agreed with Kacsmaryk that doctors and groups had standing to bring the lawsuit.

“As a result of FDA’s failure to regulate this potent drug, these doctors have had to devote significant time and resources to caring for women experiencing mifepristone’s harmful effects,” the panel majority wrote.

Hundreds of biotech and pharmaceutical company executives on Monday signed an open letter calling for the reversal of Kacsmaryk’s ruling, saying it undermined the FDA’s authority and ignored decades of scientific evidence on the drug’s safety.

Dozens of legal briefs have been filed in the two cases, with mainstream medical associations such as the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, abortion rights groups and Democratic politicians supporting the drug’s approval, and anti-abortion groups and Republican politicians opposing it.

Mifepristone is part of a two-drug regimen, administered in combination with misoprostol, for medication abortions in the first 10 weeks of pregnancy. The drugs account for more than half of all abortions in the country.

Some abortion providers have said that if mifepristone was unavailable, they would switch to a misoprostol-only regimen for a medication abortion, which is not as effective. It is not yet clear how widely available it would be.

Some Democratic-led states have begun stockpiling the drugs since Kacsmarck's ruling.

Abortion has emerged as a potent political issue in the US since the supreme court overturned its landmark 1973 Roe v Wade ruling recognising a constitutional right to abortion, leaving the issue for states to decide.

Polls show that support for abortion rights helped Democrats outperform in November's midterm elections, while an anti-abortion amendment to the Kansas state constitution failed in August, and Wisconsin voters last week flipped the state's supreme court to a liberal majority after a campaign that featured abortion.

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Florida had prohibited abortions after 15 weeks until the latest bill became law. Photograph: John Raoux/AP

### [Abortion](#)

## Ron DeSantis signs bill approving six-week abortion ban in Florida

Bill gives governor key political victory ahead of expected presidential campaign

*Associated Press*

Fri 14 Apr 2023 00.43 EDTFirst published on Thu 13 Apr 2023 17.36 EDT

The Republican-dominated Florida legislature on Thursday approved a ban on [abortions](#) after six weeks of pregnancy, a proposal supported by the state's governor, Ron DeSantis, as he prepares for an expected presidential run.

DeSantis, a Republican, later signed the bill into law. "We are proud to support life and family in the state of [Florida](#)," he said in a statement.

Florida had until that point prohibited abortions after 15 weeks.

A six-week ban gives DeSantis a key political victory among Republican primary voters as he prepares to launch a presidential candidacy built on his national brand as a conservative standard bearer.

The policy would also have wider implications for abortion access throughout the south in the wake of the US supreme court's decision last year [overturning Roe v Wade](#) and leaving decisions about abortion access to states. Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi have banned abortion at all stages of pregnancy, while Georgia forbids the procedure after cardiac activity can be detected, which is around six weeks.

“We have the opportunity to lead the national debate about the importance of protecting life and giving every child the opportunity to be born and find his or her purpose,” said the Republican representative Jenna Persons-Mulicka, who carried the bill in the house.

Florida’s six-week ban will take effect only if the state’s current 15-week ban is upheld in an ongoing legal challenge that is before the state supreme court, which is controlled by conservatives.

Democrats and abortion-rights groups have criticized Florida’s proposal as extreme because many women do not yet realize they are pregnant until after six weeks.

The bill contains some exceptions, including to save the woman’s life. Abortions for pregnancies involving rape or incest would be allowed until 15 weeks of pregnancy, provided a woman has documentation such as a restraining order or police report. DeSantis has called the rape and incest provisions sensible.

Drugs used in [medication-induced abortions](#) – which make up the majority of those provided nationally – could be dispensed only in person or by a physician under the Florida bill. Separately, nationwide access to the abortion pill mifepristone is being challenged in court.

“I can’t think of any bill that’s going to provide more protections to more people who are more vulnerable than this piece of legislation,” said the Republican representative Mike Beltran, who said the bill’s exceptions and six-week timeframe represented a compromise.

Abortion bans are popular among [some religious conservatives](#) who are part of the GOP voting base, but the issue has motivated many others to vote for Democrats. Republicans in recent weeks and months have suffered defeats in elections centered on abortion access in states such as [Kentucky](#), [Michigan](#) and [Wisconsin](#).

“Have we learned nothing?” the house Democratic minority leader, Fentrice Driskell, said of recent elections in other states. “Do we not listen to our constituents and to the people of Florida and what they are asking for?”

DeSantis, who often places himself on the front lines of culture war issues, has said he backs the six-week ban but has appeared uncharacteristically tepid on the bill. He has often said: “We welcome pro-life legislation,” when asked about the policy.

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## **Headlines tuesday 11 april 2023**

- [CBI Business lobby group dismisses director general Tony Danker after conduct complaints](#)
- [Live Interest rates 'likely to fall back towards pre-Covid levels'; Danker fired by CBI](#)
- [Live Junior doctors' strike: fears for patient safety as four-day NHS action begins](#)
- [NHS Junior doctors in England begin four-day strike over pay](#)



Tony Danker is to be replaced by Rain Newton-Smith as CBI director general. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

[Confederation of British Industry \(CBI\)](#)

## **CBI dismisses director general Tony Danker after conduct complaints**

UK business lobby group says conduct ‘fell short of that expected’ of its leader

- [Business live – latest updates](#)
- [Who is the new chief tasked with saving the CBI?](#)

*[Anna Isaac](#) and [Joanna Partridge](#)*

Tue 11 Apr 2023 07.36 EDTFirst published on Tue 11 Apr 2023 04.19 EDT

Tony Danker, the head of the Confederation of British Industry, has been dismissed with immediate effect after an investigation into complaints about his conduct in the workplace.

The CBI hired a law firm to investigate him after [it was approached by the Guardian](#) about a formal complaint made in January, as well a number of alleged informal reports of concerns over his behaviour.

Danker said he was “shocked to learn” of his dismissal, adding that he was “truly sorry” for making colleagues “feel uncomfortable”.

The business lobby group said it wanted to make clear that Danker was not the subject of [other complaints recently reported by the Guardian](#). Those other claims by more than a dozen women allege various forms of sexual misconduct by senior figures at the organisation.

## Profile

### **What is the CBI and who funds it?**

#### Show

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) is the UK’s most prominent business lobbying organisation. It is a not-for-profit organisation founded by royal charter in 1965, after a merger of older employer bodies.

It claims “unrivalled” access to government. It also claims to have the biggest number of policy specialists outside of Whitehall, the seat of the British government, in order to support its 190,000 business members, which are the chief source of its income. Its total income was £25m in 2021, of which £22m was from membership fees.

Its membership is composed of direct members and members of other trade bodies.

Its 1,500 direct members are businesses that actively hold membership, such as the supermarket Asda and the jet engine manufacturer Rolls-Royce. Fees vary significantly: top-tier businesses can pay £90,000 annually, some mid-sized companies pay half this price and smaller companies pay far less.

The bulk of its membership comes via trade bodies such as the National Farmers’ Union and the Federation of Master Builders. The CBI counts

these trade bodies' memberships within its own 190,000 total.

The lobby group has access to the prime minister and cabinet, and campaigns on issues ranging from funding for childcare to tax and skills. Its relationship with the UK government was stretched severely by Brexit, with its access to Number 10 much curtailed. A remark attributed to the former prime minister Boris Johnson – “fuck business” – was considered to be aimed at efforts by the CBI and others, to try to influence the post-Brexit UK-EU trade agreement.

Its former director general Dame Carolyn Fairbairn sought to rebuild ties with the government during the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic, including working alongside trade unions and No 10 on developing the furlough scheme.

Tony Danker took over from Fairbairn, the CBI's first female boss, in November 2020. He continued a focus on re-engaging with the government and the opposition Labour party. He was criticised for speaking in support of Liz Truss's disastrous mini-budget in September 2022.

The CBI is governed by a president and an executive committee, which, in normal times, is chaired by the director general. It also has a board of non-executive directors, which the director general sits on.

### **Anna Isaac**

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

The board of the CBI said they had determined that Danker's conduct “fell short of that expected of the director general”.

Danker said in a statement on Twitter after the announcement: “I recognise the intense publicity the CBI has suffered following the revelations of awful events that occurred before my time in office.

“I was appalled to learn about them for the first time last week ... I was nevertheless shocked to learn this morning that I had been dismissed from

the CBI, instead of being invited to put my position forward as was originally confirmed.

“Many of the allegations against me have been distorted, but … I recognise that I unintentionally made a number of colleagues feel uncomfortable and I am truly sorry about that. I want to wish my former CBI colleagues every success.”

Danker is to be replaced by the CBI’s recently departed chief economist Rain Newton-Smith.

The CBI board said in the statement, some of which reflected the entirety of allegations, rather than just those against Danker: “We apologise to the victims of this organisational failure, including those impacted by the revulsion we have all felt at hearing their stories. Nobody should feel unsafe in their workplace.”

Danker’s departure comes after the government suspended most of its engagement with Britain’s most prominent business lobby group, after the reports on Danker’s conduct and the separate allegations relating to senior figures.

Both sets of claims have plunged the CBI into its greatest crisis since it was founded in 1965. The group described the allegations as “devastating” in a statement released on Tuesday. “While investigations continue into a number of these, it is already clear to all of us that there have been serious failings in how we have acted as an organisation,” the board added in its statement.

The decision to dismiss Danker comes after the conclusion of phase 1 of the independent investigation carried out by the law firm Fox Williams. The firm was brought in after the Guardian’s first report about concerns over Danker’s conduct. It is still investigating separate allegations.

The Guardian previously reported that the formal complaint against Danker was made in January by a female CBI employee. It is understood she claimed he had made unwanted contact with her, which she considered to be sexual harassment.

After the complaint, Danker initially continued in his role representing the organisation in the media and at public events.

The CBI previously confirmed to the Guardian that it had received a formal complaint about Danker's "workplace conduct" but opted not to escalate it to a disciplinary process.

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The business lobby group added that three other CBI employees have been suspended during further investigations into a number of other allegations.

The group confirmed that it is liaising with the police as the next phase of its inquiry into other complaints against other senior figures at the organisation continues, and it intends to cooperate fully with any police investigations.

Newton-Smith was the CBI's chief economist from August 2014 until March this year, where she led its economic policy, analysis and survey teams and its work with the Treasury, before leaving to join Barclays as a managing director overseeing strategy, policy and sustainability.

Last week, the CBI announced [it was cancelling or pausing its schedule of events with members](#), including its annual dinner on 11 May, after the Guardian's publication of the second set of allegations by the dozen women.

Past dinners have gathered the UK's most powerful business bosses and cabinet ministers. The Bank of England's governor, Andrew Bailey, had been due to speak, before the Bank determined it would be best that he withdraw in light of the allegations, the Guardian understands.

The dinner was to be held at Old Billingsgate, a former fish market in the City of London, with tables of 10 selling for £4,900.

Members, whose fees make up the lion's share of the lobby group's income, said they were reconsidering their ties to the CBI pending the outcome of the full Fox Williams investigation.

Speaking last week, before the decision to dismiss Danker and after additional and separate allegations, Andy Wood, the beer company Adnams's chief executive, told BBC Radio 4 the company had considered the possibility of leaving the lobby group.

"I was discussing this with our senior management team only this week, so, yes, it is on our agenda," he said. "But we would prefer to see the CBI sort itself out. It needs to be setting the standards here. Where we are at the moment is unacceptable."

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**Business live****Business**

# UK on track to be worst-performing G7 economy this year, says IMF – as it happened

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**NHS**

# **Junior doctors' strike: No 10 says there will be no talks with BMA unless doctors abandon pay demands – as it happened**

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'Claps don't pay the bills!': why junior doctors are striking over pay – video  
[NHS](#)

## **Junior doctors in England begin four-day strike over pay**

Strike is expected to lead to 350,000 appointments including operations being cancelled

*[Nadeem Badshah](#) and [Tobi Thomas](#)*

Tue 11 Apr 2023 03.39 EDTFirst published on Tue 11 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT

Junior doctors across England have begun a four-day strike that will result in an estimated 350,000 appointments including operations being cancelled.

Doctors will mount picket lines outside hospitals from 7am until Saturday morning in a deteriorating dispute over pay. It is the longest industrial action in the health service since nurses, ambulance crews and other health workers took action last year.

NHS managers have said patient care is “on a knife-edge” and “very fragile” because of the stoppage by members of the British Medical Association (BMA).

The chief executive of the NHS Confederation, Matthew Taylor, said the likely impact of the strike was “heartbreaking” and called on both sides to end their “battle of rhetoric”.

Taylor told the BBC there was no question this strike would be more disruptive than the 72-hour stoppages by NHS staff last month, which led to 175,000 cancelled appointments.

On Monday, Taylor, who heads the body that represents the healthcare system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, said up to 350,000

appointments and operations would be cancelled this week.

He said he hoped everyone who needed urgent care would get it, but added: “There’s no point hiding the fact that there will be risks to patients – risks to patient safety, risks to patient dignity – as we’re not able to provide the kind of care that we want to.”

Prof Sir Stephen Powis, the national medical director of NHS England, said “cover is very fragile” during the BMA strike and urged the public to “use the NHS’s services wisely”.

He told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme on Tuesday: “Our advice to the public is to think carefully because we will be seeing a lot of disruption over the next four days.

“We are … working very hard to ensure those emergency services are kept safe, that is our priority, but I’ve also got no doubt that that cover is very fragile, so we are relying on consultants and other staff to cover the work that junior doctors usually do.

“Junior doctors are a significant part of our medical workforce – up to 40 to 50% of our medical staff – and so that cover is stretched thin in places, so it could be affected by sickness, by absence for other reasons.

“So we will endeavour to keep patients safe, particularly in those emergency services but that is becoming harder every time we have this strike action.”

He added: “Routine care will be affected … this will take weeks to recover from. Strike action such as this does have a significant disruptive effect.”

Junior doctors' demand for 35% pay rise is 'not fair or reasonable', says health secretary – video

The health secretary, Steve Barclay, called the strikes “extremely disappointing” and said the BMA’s demand for a 35% pay rise was unreasonable as it would result in some junior doctors receiving a pay rise of more than £20,000.

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He said: “People should attend appointments unless told otherwise by the NHS, continue to call 999 in a life-threatening emergency and use NHS 111 online services for non-urgent health needs.”

The shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, said: “The junior doctors’ strike this week will cause huge disruption to patient care. Where is the prime minister and why hasn’t he tried to stop it?

“Rishi Sunak says he wouldn’t want to get in the middle of NHS pay disputes. Patients are crying out for leadership but instead they are getting weakness.”

New advertisements by the BMA show how much junior doctors are paid for their roles in surgical procedures. Three doctors with 10, seven and one year’s experience are pictured in an operating theatre where an appendix is being removed, one of thousands of similar operations that takes place every day in England.

For the 60-minute procedure, they would be paid £28, £24.46 and £14.09 respectively, a total of £66.55 for a potentially life-saving procedure, says the BMA. The union has estimated that the pay of junior doctors has fallen by 26% in real terms over the past 15 years.

Dr Robert Laurenson and Dr Vivek Trivedi, the BMA junior doctors committee co-chairs, said: “It is appalling that this government feels that paying three junior doctors as little as £66.55 between them for work of this value is justified. This is highly skilled work requiring years of study and intensive training in a high-pressure environment where the job can be a matter of life and death.

“Why then has the government allowed junior doctor pay to be cut in real terms by over a quarter in the last 15 years?”

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# ‘The torture’s real. The time I did was real’: the Belfast man waterboarded by the British army

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Garmin shows OLED sports watches can do it all while still lasting a week between charges. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/the Guardian

[Garmin](#)

[Review](#)

## **Garmin Forerunner 265 review: runner's best friend gets screen upgrade**

Brighter, crisper touchscreen and week-long battery life prove potent combination, but cost increases



[Samuel Gibbs](#) *Consumer technology editor*

Tue 11 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Apr 2023 02.48 EDT

The Forerunner 265 ushers in a new era for [Garmin](#), bringing bright and sharp OLED screens to its class-leading running watches while keeping week-long battery life.

But the screen upgrade comes with a price hike. The Forerunner 265 costs £430 (\$450/A\$769), making it £80 more than its excellent LCD-equipped sibling, the [Forerunner 255 Music](#). OLED screens have long been a feature of smartwatches, such as the Apple Watch, but this marks a departure for serious sports watches.

Other than the display upgrade and a new training tracking feature, the 265 is very similar to the 255, which is no bad thing. It comes in two sizes, is light and comfortable, stays put during vigorous exercise and is built to handle most sports, including swimming. It has both buttons and a touchscreen, similar to the more [expensive Forerunner 955](#) and 965, and syncs via Bluetooth to an Android or iPhone app, direct via wifi or using a USB cable to a computer.



The difference in brightness and clarity between the LCD-based Forerunner 255 (46mm size, left) and the OLED screen of the 265 (42mm size, right) is night and day. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/the Guardian

The screen can either be activated by a gesture or button press, or kept lit all the time, shifting into to a dimmer display mode when not being actively used. It still looks like a sports watch, unlike [competitors from Apple](#), [Google](#) and [Samsung](#) that typically feature more refined designs. But there are a range of colours to choose from and the standard rubber straps are easy to change.

Graphs, stats and metrics recorded by Garmin's best-in-class sport tracking features look extra clear on the screen and are easily visible during a run, even in bright light. The OLED screen is easier to read than LCD versions in the dark, too, and can be dimmed or turned off at night for sleep tracking.



The watch has a range of faces that take advantage of the significantly crisper and brighter screen, with many more third-party options available, too. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/the Guardian

The other big new addition to the 265 is Garmin's excellent [training readiness feature](#), pulled from the firm's top sports watches. It continuously tracks your recovery after exercise, adjusting for sleep, rest days, illness, fitness and other factors, combining lots of data into a simple prediction of how ready you are for more exercise. It will suggest how hard to run or how refreshed you are for a race, matching up with energy levels and muscle fatigue almost perfectly.

## Specifications

- **Screen:** 1.1 or 1.3in AMOLED
- **Case size:** 42 or 46mm
- **Case thickness:** 12.9mm
- **Band size:** standard 18 or 22mm
- **Weight:** 39 or 47g

- **Storage:** 8GB
- **Water resistance:** 50 metres (5ATM)
- **Sensors:** GNSS (Multiband GPS, Glonass, Galileo), compass, thermometer, heart rate, pulse Ox
- **Connectivity:** Bluetooth, ANT+, wifi

## Week-long battery life



Notifications from your phone are easy to read but are basic compared with what you get on watches from big tech competitors. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/the Guardian

One of the downsides of an OLED screen compared with the low-power LCD-based technology used by previous Garmins is the hit to battery life. The 265 lasts a long time for an OLED watch, managing up to seven days between charges used as a smartwatch with general health tracking and the screen on all the time. But that's about [half the life of the 255](#).

Battery life is very similar to its stablemate for activity tracking, however. An hour's run without music consumes roughly 6% of the battery. That

means the watch lasts for about 16 hours of tracking in its default settings, which is about the same as its power-efficient sibling and long enough for a marathon or two. It takes about an hour to fully charge with the included USB-C cable.

## Sustainability

The Forerunner 265 is [generally repairable](#). The battery is rated to last at least a few years of frequent charge cycles [while maintaining at least 80% capacity](#). The watch does not contain any recycled materials. Garmin guarantees at least two years of security updates from release but typically supports its devices far longer. It offers trade-in schemes for some lines and [complies with WEEE](#) and other local electronics recycling laws.

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## Price

The Garmin Forerunner 265 comes in two sizes (42mm or 46mm) and costs [£429.99 \(\\$449.99/A\\$769\)](#)

For comparison, the [Forerunner 255 Music](#) costs [£349.99](#), the [Forerunner 955](#) costs [£479.99](#), the Forerunner 965 costs [£599.99](#) and the [Garmin Epix](#)

costs £709. The [Apple Watch Series 8](#) costs £419, Coros Pace 2 costs £180 and the Polar Vantage V2 costs £429.

## Verdict

The Forerunner 265 proves that OLED screens can make for excellent sports watches but it is best to think of it as a “plus” version of the already great [Forerunner 255 Music](#). It has a touchscreen and physical buttons, offline music and class-leading sport tracking, including the extremely useful training readiness. It has everything you need for running – short of full maps, which are still reserved for Garmin’s top watches.

The new screen reduces the daily battery life to about seven days between charges but that is still at least four times as long [as an Apple Watch](#). The Garmin handles basic smartwatch features, such as simple alerts from your phone, but lacks a voice assistant and other smart bits.

An unexpected benefit of the crisper screen is that the smaller version of the 265 is much easier to read and use, which makes it more tempting.

While the added training readiness is a killer feature, the 265 it is not head and shoulders better for tracking runs than the Forerunner 255. Instead, it is a prettier, brighter option. OLED screens are clearly the future of sports watches but for now they command a premium over LCD-based rivals.

**Pros:** slim, light, real buttons, crisp OLED touchscreen, choice of sizes, multiband GPS, accurate heart rate, extensive stats, multisport, great health tracking, highly customisable, seven-day battery life, offline music, basic smartwatch features.

**Cons:** expensive, no offline maps, no voice assistant, shorter battery life than LCD-siblings, limited Garmin Pay compatibility with UK banks.



Data screens, graphs and metrics are clearer and easier to read mid-run because of the sharper screen, particularly on the smaller 42mm size, as pictured. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/the Guardian

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Fast friends ... Tom Turcich and Savannah. Photograph: Jovelle Tamayo/The Guardian

[Walking](#)

**The man who walked around the world:  
Tom Turcich on his seven-year search**

# for the meaning of life

When Turcich was 17, a close friend of his died, and he had an existential crisis. He decided it was time to seize the day – and to cross the globe on foot



[Simon Hattenstone](#)

Tue 11 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT

At the age of 17, Tom Turcich had enjoyed a good life so far. He had wonderful parents, great friends, did well at school and was a gifted sportsman. But two things gnawed away at him: he thought he was too timid, and he was terrified of death. As a little boy, he would run down the stairs at night to check that his parents were still alive. At the age of 11, he'd lie in bed [trying to simulate death](#) so he could prepare for it. "I'd lose the sensation of my body," he says, "and I would cover my ears and close my eyes so I couldn't see and couldn't hear, and I'd try to imagine what death was like. But then you can't because you're thinking. And there's no thinking in death."

Then, in 2006, his life was turned on its head. Turcich remembers every detail. He was in a car with three friends – Nick, Kevin and Fitz. Kevin was

driving his father's convertible. Back then, the boys used to hang out with a group of girls who were in the year below at school in Haddon Township, New Jersey. There was Shannon who was going out with Kevin, Ann Marie, Amanda and Jess. They'd grown up together, been friends since they were seven or eight, and they were as close as close can be.

The radio was blasting and the boys were having a good time when Kevin got a call from Shannon. He was distraught. "Kevin yelled for the music to be turned down and said, 'Ann Marie has died.'" Sixteen-year-old Ann Marie had been killed in a jetski accident. They drove to Shannon's house. "We sat in the front yard. There were maybe 10 of us, we were in a circle and everybody's crying, unsure what to do. That night I lay in bed and I remember feeling this fog. It lasted about six months."

Not only was Turcich petrified of death, he now knew he could die at any moment. Hardest of all was reconciling that it had happened to somebody like Ann Marie. "She was super-clever and exceptionally kind," says Turcich. "Ann Marie was nice to the point it drove me crazy when I was younger because you could never get her to say anything mean. When we were hanging out I would prod her, trying to get her to say anything not generous."

I thought: if Ann Marie can die, who is a better person than I am, then for sure I can go at the same time

He never succeeded. Not only did Turcich lose an amazing friend, but the accident left him questioning the meaning of life, and reinforced his fear of death. In short, he had the ultimate teenage existential crisis. "I thought: if Ann Marie can die, who is definitely a better student and better person than I am, then for sure I can go at the same time. That's why it really hit home."

Turcich went into a decline. "It brought all those unresolved questions flooding back. I thought: OK, you've got to solve this problem just to go about your life." What was the problem? "That death can come at any time – arbitrarily and instantly. It was like, with this knowledge, how do you live? What do you *do*? How do you integrate that fact into your life?"

He was stuck for an answer. Then one day at college, the students watched [Dead Poets Society](#), the film about a teacher called John Keating, played by Robin Williams, who inspires his students through his love of literature. Just as the movie's seminal speech about seizing the day – *carpe diem* – and living an extraordinary life had a huge impact on the students in the movie, so it also did on Turcich.

He watched the film again and again, asking himself how best he could seize the day and make his life extraordinary. It struck him for the first time that he could shape his future rather than simply let it happen to him. From then on, he did just that. He won a place in the school swimming team, performed in a one-act play, returned to playing tennis and became school champion, all the time wearing the blue “AML” bracelet his school had designed as a tribute to Ann Marie Lynch. He finally conquered his passivity when he braved his first kiss, after three (nervous) dates with a girl called Britney.

That kiss proved to be an epiphany. “It was like the birth of the universe in my head,” he says. “All of a sudden I could see all the possibilities expanding out. It finally clicked: the actions you take really can affect your life.” Turcich decided he was going to seize the day by getting out of safe, friendly Haddon Township, with its population of roughly 15,000, and seeing the world.



Turcich in Montevideo, Uruguay. Photograph: Thomas Turcich

He started to make plans. He didn't want to just see a bit of the world: if possible, he was going to see all of it. "Because the world is complex and vast, and because my general temperament is pretty timid and more towards the shy side, I wanted to be forced into adventure. The point of adventure is it's uncomfortable and you have to grow in it.

"I had \$1,000 in my bank account so I needed to find a cheap way to travel, and that led me to the guys who had walked around the world." He read up about Steve Newman (an American who circumnavigated the globe on foot over four years in the late 1980s) and Karl Bushby (a British ex-paratrooper who set off in 1998 and is still walking today), and now he had his answer. "It seemed to solve everything I wanted out of life," he says.

As in Dead Poets Society, the students in his class shared a deep friendship and trust. When they had to give end-of-year talks to each other, Turcich announced his plan to walk the world. His friends were "genuinely supportive" – and then he told his parents. As a young man, his father, also called Tom, had seized the day: he headed off to Hawaii at the age of 20 and spent four years spear-fishing, working on a sugarcane plantation and living under a tarp in the woods on a tiny plot of land. He met Turcich's mother, Catherine, at the tail-end of his trip.

Tom Sr, who now runs a catering business, remembers how badly affected his son was by Ann Marie's death. "That really threw him through a loop," he tells me over the phone from Haddon Township. "It just turned a switch on. Ooof! Boy, if that can happen at 16 I better get living, you know. And all of a sudden, he became real." Tom Sr thought the world walk was an inspired idea. "For me it was like, go – adventure!"

But his wife, Catherine, an artist, was less enthusiastic. What did she think when her son first mentioned the walk? "Hahahaha!" She's got a lovely bright laugh. "I thought how naive he was. Does he actually think he's going to walk around the world? I just thought it was a crazy idea, a passing whim." She pauses. "But Tommy was always somebody who'd get an idea and follow it through. He stuck to a challenge."

“She was like, ‘You’re 17 and this is just a 17-year-old’s idea,’” Turcich says. And she was right. But he wasn’t planning to act on his idea just yet. For the next few years he rarely mentioned it to anybody. He knew that many would dismiss him as fanciful at best. “I don’t like people who just talk about the things they’re going to do,” he says.

For the next eight years, Turcich quietly worked away at making it a reality. He graduated with a degree in psychology and philosophy from Moravian University in Pennsylvania, and made a living installing solar panels until he turned 25, at which point he quit and worked as a waiter in a restaurant and at an insurance firm doing data entry.



Tom and Savannah take a break by their customised baby buggy in Panama.  
Photograph: Thomas Turcich

All the while, Turcich was busy making his final preparations. He would endlessly study maps, working out the best routes. Much of it depended on practicalities such as which countries insisted on a visa. He decided to walk to Argentina for the first leg of his trip. Shortly before he was due to leave he met yet another Tom, Tom Marchetty, who customised a baby buggy for his travels. The buggy would hold all his essentials – tent, sleeping bag, laptop, camera, batteries, plastic food crate (partly to hold his food, partly to insulate the smell from animals), water bottles, six pairs of socks, four pairs

of underwear, a pair of trousers, a pair of shorts, long-sleeved shirt and short-sleeved shirt, wool shirt, hoodie, jacket and waterproof shoes.

Marchetty, who knew everybody in and out of town, was taken with Turcich's plan. He called a press conference to promote the journey, with the hope of finding him a sponsor. The Philadelphia Inquirer turned up and wrote about it. The article was read by a local businessman, Bob Mehmet, who was also struck by the story and offered to sponsor the walk. "It was less than minimum wage, but it was like, I'm homeless, I don't need much," Turcich says. "It was more than enough to survive off throughout the walk."

On 2 April 2015, Tom Turcich walked out of Haddon Township. At his sendoff, his father couldn't have been more excited. "I was like, hey, go for it! Aw gee, just be careful, have a good time!" he says. "But his mother cried for months when he left."

"I was scared for him, and I was proud of him," Catherine says. "It was all those feelings mixed up together. I had a very hard time of it at the beginning. But he was so good at calling every Sunday. I depended on that. It was my lifeline."

I'd grown up in this really idyllic suburb. I was just a soft idiot and a little too trusting

Turcich says his mother was right to be worried. "She knew how green I was. I'd grown up in this really idyllic suburb. I was just a soft idiot and a little too trusting." He was 6ft 2in, skinny, and he'd never had to worry about his safety. He admits that he didn't really know how to look after himself at all: "You think you're tough, but you're not. Now I'm a wholly different person."

If I was heading off from home to Argentina, I say, I wouldn't have a clue which way to turn. He must have a good sense of direction. "Luckily, there's Google Maps now so you don't have to worry about that too much!" he says.

Turcich spent the first two years making his way to Argentina via Colombia. In Austin, Texas, he picked up a rescue dog who had been abandoned as a puppy and named her Savannah. She became both company and security; Turcich could sleep peacefully at night knowing she was listening out for intruders. They became fast friends. And still are. As we talk over Zoom, she is lazing around in the background, taking a well-earned rest.

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What does it mean to walk around the world? In a pedestrian circumnavigation, travellers must move around the globe and return to their starting point under their own power. Guinness World Records sets the requirements for a circumnavigation on foot as having travelled 18,000 miles (nearly 29,000km), and crossed four continents.

Turcich walked 21-24 miles a day for roughly half of the seven years he was away. In total, he walked 28,000 miles (and Savannah 25,000 miles), travelled through 38 countries and crossed every continent except Australia, which he couldn't do because of lockdown restrictions. He is the 10th person to have walked the world, and he assumes Savannah is the first dog to have done so.

He believes his lack of street smarts helped him. Because he was such an innocent, he wasn't as fearful as many of us would have been. Eleven months of the first year was spent walking and sleeping out – typically behind churches and in woods. He came across tarantulas and snakes, particularly on the palm plantations where he slept in Costa Rica.

It sounds pretty scary. “Yeah, definitely!” Did he know what to do if attacked? “No, not really. Just avoid it.” Fortunately, the tarantulas and snakes left him alone.

It turned out they were military, and they thought I was a terrorist or spy. It was intense, but they were really nice in the end

Occasionally, when in notoriously rough areas, he paid to spend the night indoors for fear of being mugged. “When I walked through El Salvador, it was at the peak of its highest murder rate year. It was the worst month of the worst year for murders. I saw the bodies of a husband and wife who had

been executed. They'd been shot in the back of the head and were lying in a field. It made it very real." In Mexico, disbelieving locals would ask him what he was doing, saying that even they didn't dare walk here.

He was never attacked as such but, he says, there was a little incident in Turkey, on the Syrian border. "I was crossing a remote mountain by the border of Syria and this guy jumps off a motorcycle and points a shotgun at me. I thought I was just going to get shot and they'd take my things. But it turned out they were plain-clothed military, and they thought I was a terrorist or spy. I got detained for three hours and it was really intense, but they were really nice in the end."

Then there was the time he was held up at knifepoint in Panama City. "I walked into this shop, and the guy was standing there with the knife pretty close to my chest. I was looking for something to defend myself with. Time was going in slow motion. But after yelling at me for a minute he took off. The guy with the knife got me away from things, while the other guy grabbed my backpack and took off." The backpack contained all his essentials. But again, fate smiled kindly on Turcich. "I went out of the shop and there's a crowd pointing down the alleyway, and amazingly the cops were there throwing the guy against the wall, and my backpack was lying on the ground. It had my passport in it, my computer, Savannah's paperwork, everything. I was so lucky."



Savannah wears goggles as protection against the wind in Peru. Photograph: Thomas Turcich

But these were isolated incidents. He says he met so many wonderful people along the way. He was already an optimist when he set off, but by the time he returned he had even more faith in humankind, if less in some of the systems we live under. The first leg of his walk was a learning process, he says, that saw many of his preconceptions overturned. He sounds slightly embarrassed by his naivety. In Central and South America, he would walk through towns and see houses with rebars sticking off the roof. He assumed the areas must be rough or rundown because the houses were incomplete, but soon realised that the rebars were a sign of aspiration. The families were hoping to save enough money to build a second storey.

Turcich had always been taught that those who work hard will be rewarded; that if you are capable and determined there is nothing to stop you achieving. But the more he saw of the world, the more he realised this was not true. “You end up realising so little is down to willpower, because there are much smarter, much kinder people than me all over the world who don’t have my opportunities.” He tells me about a man he met in Peru selling petrol to passing trucks from his roadside hut. “He was a great guy, and very bright; definitely smarter than me, and probably a harder worker. But he’s never going to leave Peru because of the geography or history he’s born into.

You see over and over again that what really affects people is the systems in place.”

To Turcich, the walk was a seven-year meditation, particularly the first two years, which were more solitary. As he walked, so much was going through his mind – his history, his values, his hopes. It all came to a head in the deserts of Peru and Chile. “I was on my own so much, just with my thoughts. The way I describe it is like weeding your garden. You don’t realise it, but your head is full of these weeds and when you’re walking, you’re on your knees pulling weeds. After about a year and a half, when I was down in south Peru, I felt like I’d thought all the thoughts, and the garden was clean. There was no more angst, no regrets, nothing I could pick through. I was in the Atacama desert, lying under a million stars, and it felt I was at the bottom of myself. All the doubts went.”

What did it feel like? “It was a hollowed-out feeling. A simple sense of existing – you’re just a small little creature in the universe. It was just peace.” It’s so moving to hear Turcich talk about his experience. At times, I feel like I’m speaking to a man who has been to the other side and witnessed things that the rest of us haven’t been privy to. There is a childlike simplicity to Turcich, but he also has a touch of the seer.



Contemplating the infinite in Morocco. Photograph: Thomas Turcich

There were many days when Turcich couldn't face walking, though Savannah was never fazed. "Sometimes I just had to walk," he says. "It depended on time pressures and weather. If I knew there was going to be a downpour or it was going to be 100 degrees, I'd try to get to a hotel or shelter."

Over the seven years, he returned to Haddon Township a few times. In Uruguay, he caught a terrible bacterial infection and was eventually flown home. By that time he had been travelling for more than two years. Catherine was shocked by his appearance: "He had dropped so much weight. He couldn't hold anything down, and he was in excruciating pain." Just recalling it upsets her. "It was very scary. He lay there on the floor, and he was so thin. It looked like he was dying." Doctors filled him with a variety of antibiotics. Eventually one of them worked, and he returned to his travels.

The final five years of Turcich's walk were more social than the first two. By now he felt his mind was fully open to embracing all the different experiences. He learned enough French, Russian, Turkish and Italian to ensure he didn't feel like an eternal tourist.

"The first two years were about me and the mind. After that, it became much more about the world. I started to understand it more. I became more interested in what influences people and why countries are the way they are." Turcich talks of the otherworldly beauty of Kyrgyzstan; the otherness of Uzbekistan, where locals had never met foreigners, there were no advertisements and American Chevrolets were the only cars on the road; the friendliness of Turkish shepherds and their huge anatolian shepherd dogs; the French countryside, where he woke up one night surrounded by 200 boars; the shaman in the Amazon who served him the psychedelic tea ayahuasca.

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Egill Halldorsson, a 30-year-old Icelander, came across Turcich in Kaş, a fishing town in southern Turkey. It was 2021, and by now Turcich was six years into his walk. "I asked what he was doing," recalls Halldorsson. "He tried to make it sound like it wasn't a big thing, and he said he was walking across the world. My jaw dropped. I said, *what?* It takes you a long time to grasp just what it means."

What were his first impressions of Turcich? “As I walked away, I said to my then girlfriend: ‘Wow, that is the most interesting guy in the world. I have to get to know him better.’ And she said: ‘Yes, but I think I sensed some sadness, or unease.’ She was referring to him being a bit lonely. Actually, tired might be a better word. Later, when I asked him, he said he’d been walking around the world all this time and as soon as he clicked with people, he’d always be saying goodbye. My girlfriend sensed he was tired of that.”

Halldorsson and Turcich stayed in Kaş for a couple of months because of the pandemic and became good friends. They would have become close whatever the circumstances, Halldorsson says. “He’s adventurous, but down to earth and fun to be around.” He seemed to have learned a lot from his travels. “He’d travelled through so many countries, met so many people. He came across as an old soul.”

During the final leg of his walk, he met a woman called Bonnie in Washington DC, echoing his father’s experience in Hawaii years before. “I stopped to write for a couple of days,” Turcich says. “We met and hit it off, and that was it.” Turcich and Bonnie, who is training to be a doctor, have been together ever since, and they now share a home in Seattle.

On 21 May 2022, seven years and 49 days after setting off, Turcich arrived back in Haddon Township. Looking back over the time, when was his happiest moment? “Crossing the finishing line.” For so long, he says, he’d thought about the day he would get home, and now it was here. “The world walk is a beautiful way to live, but it’s also really difficult and exhausting. I’d missed my family and friends so much. As I crossed the line, the primary feeling was relief – it’s over, you did it!” I assume he slept for a long time afterwards, but he laughs at the suggestion. “No, we had a huge party. It was great.”

As for his mother, Catherine, she says it was the proudest day of her life. “All the town turned out for him. There were probably 400-500 people. He came through Philadelphia and people started joining him. He had this crowd of people walking alongside him. Oh gosh! He was like the Pied Piper.”

There were bands and banners and an official finish line. “We put up an archway of balloons for him to walk through and a ribbon, and people just cheered,” Catherine says. “We were so thrilled to have him back, and he’d made it – he’d accomplished his dream. He was overwhelmed, grinning from ear to ear. Then he started crying.”



Tom (second left) at the ‘finish line’ in NJ last May, with his sister Lexi (left), his parents Tom Sr and Catherine, and his girlfriend Bonnie (right).  
Photograph: Joseph Kaczmarek/Rex/Shutterstock

Turcich had left a callow 25-year-old, and returned a worldly-wise 32-year-old. Has it made him more confident in himself? That’s a difficult question to answer, he says. “It’s a kind of Dunning-Kruger. You know, the psychological study where the dumbest person in the room is the most confident? The more you know, the less confident you are. I think I was pretty confident at the beginning, but I was an idiot. Once you know you don’t know everything, you lose some of the confidence and become less sure about things.”

Tom Sr says his son has changed dramatically in the seven years he’s been away. “He’s a man now. He sees the world so differently. He’s been to places where people with zero money work all week to add a cinder block to their

house, and they would share all they had with him. To see that is a life-changer.”

Of all the places he’s seen, Denmark is where Turcich would most like to live. “It was the first time I saw there was a different way to do infrastructure,” says Turcich. “It seemed very peaceful. I loved being able to ride my bike everywhere and not be blasted by an F-150 truck. America is very car-centric and it takes away a lot from cities and daily life.” Denmark has got its priorities right, he adds – it’s a country that has used its wealth to provide great healthcare and education.

Did anywhere feel like his spiritual home? “Man, that’s a good question.” The more we talk about his journey, the more it brings out his inner hippy. “Probably Croatia, because that’s where my ancestors are from on my dad’s side, so I was able to see a lot of my family there, and visit my great-great-grandfather’s house and great-grandfather’s house. There’s a cemetery on the island of Krk, and a third of the burial plots are Turcich. I’d travelled a lot by then, but this was the first place I felt this deeper, inherent connection, knowing this is where I came from.”



On the road in Peru. Photograph: Thomas Turcich

Since returning to the US, Turcich admits he has found it tough adapting back to regular society. Although part of the reason he left was because he didn't want to bow down to the conventions of nine-to-five work, he found that the walking provided him with a different kind of routine he has found impossible to replace. "One of the best things about the walk was every day I woke up with a purpose. A very immediate purpose and human purpose where I walked a certain amount. So every day I'd accomplish the little goal and within that I'd see new things, talk to new people, learn about the world, just through walking. Then I'd lie in bed, thinking: 'That was a good day, mission accomplished, let's do it again tomorrow.' And now the walk's over, you don't have that innate sense of discovery. So it feels like I'm building a life from the ground up again here in Seattle."

He is certainly better equipped to deal with life than the 25-year-old greenhorn setting out on his walk. Turcich, now 33, has languages, knowledge, practical skills, friends across the world. Over the years, he picked up 121,000 followers on Instagram as he documented his travels under the handle [@theworldwalk](#). The day we spoke, he signed a book deal to tell the story of his walk. And there are the talking engagements. People love to hear his story about how the loss of his great friend Ann Marie sent him around the world to search for meaning in life.

When I ask if he found what he was looking for, he takes me back to that night under the stars in the Atacama, and the sense of his smallness in the universe. It made him feel insignificant but also feel that he could make a difference, albeit in little ways. "I came to the conclusion that it's happiness. Happiness is the only currency for man. You try to be happy and try to create happiness. Happiness can mean a lot of different things and take a lot of different forms. But if you make the world a better place, you can leave behind gross happiness for your descendants."

As for himself, he still finds it difficult to believe how much his travels have changed him. Nowadays timid Tom Turcich will happily stand in front of a paying audience and tell people what he discovered about the world by walking its surface. Before he embarked on his odyssey, he didn't believe he had anything worth telling anybody. But now he thinks differently – in every sense. "When you walk around the world for seven years you learn a lot," he says.

*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](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)*

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The Bay of Lights development on the coast of Preah Sihanouk province, Cambodia, showing the extent of sand filling

[Global development](#)

**‘Everywhere is broken’: how land grabs in Cambodia are demolishing lives**

The government has a ‘masterplan’ for the coastal province of Preah Sihanouk, with tourist meccas built on land given to elite families while the poor and powerless face the bulldozers

- Photographs by Cindy Liu for The Guardian

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### About this content

*Fiona Kelliher and Keat Soriththeavy*

Tue 11 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Apr 2023 05.59 EDT

Sitting on the veranda of a stilted house, a group of Cambodian fishers drink tea and sort crabs into buckets as they discuss when they might have to leave their homes. In 2020, Boeng Thom Angkep, a finger-shaped lake tucked below the forested hills of Ream national park on Cambodia’s south-western coast, was [granted to an elite family](#) to develop.

After nearly two decades of peaceful existence, hundreds of lakeshore residents now face eviction. Weekly the authorities cross the rickety footbridges that link the stilt houses to the shore to take photos and warn that demolition could start at any time.

“I don’t want to leave my home for even one day or they might come destroy it,” says 42-year-old Khun Dina. “We’re like small birds in a cage. They can smack us down whenever.”



Khut Chantreal boards his fishing boat on Boeng Thom Angkep. The fishers’ homes and livelihoods are under threat from development

Their is not an isolated situation. A wave of tourism and housing projects is transforming the coast of Preah Sihanouk province. Signs of development are everywhere: Along the curve of Ream Bay, trucks dump sand into the Gulf of Thailand for a multibillion-dollar [megaproject](#) called the Bay of Lights, 934 hectares (2,300 acres) to include luxury homes, a beach club, go-kart track, and a reverse bungee jump.

A few kilometres north, excavators dig up a hillside where signs advertise a new gated community overlooking the bay. To the south, cranes loom over the edge of the national park where [tourist resorts](#) are being built.

Known for its seaside capital, Sihanoukville, and islands with white-sand beaches, the province drew international attention when a [Chinese-fuelled casino boom](#) started in 2013. By 2019, Sihanoukville’s streets were lined with hotels, casinos and restaurants and drew more visitors than Angkor Wat.



Saracen Bay on the relatively undeveloped Koh Rong Sanloem

A ban affecting gambling was announced in August 2019, and [half the city's casinos shut down](#). Together with the economic fallout from the Covid pandemic, Sihanoukville was left with empty buildings and [abandoned construction projects](#).

Even the surrounding countryside is dotted with half-finished projects and there were reports of criminal syndicates moving in with global [cyberscam operations and human trafficking](#).

Now the government is working on a new [masterplan for Preah Sihanouk](#), wooing wealthy tourists and diversifying the once casino-heavy economy. Officials have been vague about the details, but the provincial deputy governor [Long Dimanche explained](#) in February that the goal was to make the province one of Cambodia's main development hubs. "This economic stimulus and investment in the tourism industry is the starting point," he said.



Billboards advertising the Bay of Lights development, one of many large-scale projects in Preah Sihanouk province

But residents say they are paying the price, facing sudden evictions, seizure of farmland and the loss of prime fishing areas. They say authorities rarely explain land giveaways, which are frequently linked to well-connected people, according to more than a dozen interviews around the province.

Phnom Penh-based human rights organisation Licadho has investigated the evictions of 787 Preah Sihanouk families between 2017 and 2022, a fraction of the true number, a spokesperson said.

Everywhere is broken. They're demolishing the resorts right in front of me, and we have no way to fight back

*Sin Pisey, massage therapist*

On the tourist island of Koh Rong Sanloem, piles of rubble, stacked-up mattresses and tangled electrical cords litter half of Saracen Bay beach after about 10 resorts and businesses were demolished in February. A few still stand daubed with red paint and eviction notices.

When people began settling the island a decade ago, it had no electricity or running water. Even today, the island remains sleepy and idyllic beyond the

string of beach bungalows and Khmer-style wooden resorts along Saracen Bay.



Sky Beach Resort on Koh Rong Sanloem is being demolished to make way for new developments

Tourists still arrive via speedboat daily, but many are shocked to see the destruction on the beach, says Sin Pisey, 35, who runs a massage therapy business. “Everywhere is broken,” says Pisey, who begged authorities to let her stay open another month.

“It hurts me. They’re demolishing the resorts right in front of me, and we have no way to fight back.”

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Business owner Sin Pisey is facing eviction from her premises on Koh Rong Sanloem

Eviction letters sent to residents in January said that almost the entire island has been leased to two private companies since 2008, and local businesses are operating “without permission”.

Residents say they were never told about any development plans. One man, whose business was demolished, says authorities warned him against speaking to the media. He believes the island is being ruined after watching excavators rip up the forest. “It’s all big roads, cutting down everything. They say they want to make the island look beautiful, but I don’t think so. They are too big. Too powerful.”

In August the government [approved investment plans for 19 of Preah Sihanouk's 32 islands](#). So far, Koh Rong Sanloem, the largest of the province's islands, has been spared. Dimanche confirmed in February that

one of the companies, Cambodia-registered Emario Shonan Marine Corporation, was going ahead with a [project on Koh Rong Sanloem](#), but gave no details. Neither Dimanche nor another deputy governor responded to requests from the Guardian for comment; multiple calls to Emario Shonan were not returned.

Land giveaways are accelerating across Cambodia, often favouring the elite. In Preah Sihanouk, at least 39 giveaways have privatised 3,802 hectares (nearly 15 square miles) since late 2018, according to Licadho. Family members of a senator, the prime minister's daughters, and a tax department official are, says Licadho, among those who [have benefited](#).



New roads now criss-cross the island of Koh Rong Sanloem to support the planned tourist developments

In many instances, people aren't sure who or what to blame, just that the land was handed over as part of an *oknha*, an honorific [title bestowed on those who give at least \\$500,000](#) to the government.

On the outskirts of Sihanoukville near Ream national park, Chan Mom, 37, is in her one-room home, twisting sausages on to skewers and raising her voice to be heard over the construction trucks barreling past. Last autumn,

the farmland where she, and her father before her, grew cassava and pineapple, was revoked.

She heard rumours a resort might be built there under an oknha's ownership, but the authorities gave her no explanation when they demanded that she tear down her shack and stop farming. "We don't know what to do. We can't get it back," Mom says. She decided against protesting. Her husband adds: "Even if I'm strong, I'm just one person. They'll arrest me."



An aerial view shows the extent of an area being excavated for new building works in Ream commune, Preah Sihanouk province

There have been small protests. East of Sihanoukville in O'Okhna Heng, where a series of villages are clustered along the road leading to Phnom Penh, Chanthy\* – who asked to go by a pseudonym – joined about 30 families at a protest in February over impending evictions.

Ten years ago Chanthy bought several plots of land above the road and received titles stamped by the local government. But people were called to a meeting in January and Chanthy's husband returned with his hands shaking. He didn't speak for days. "There's no way for us to win," he finally said: an estate agent, Everfortune Real Estate, was reclaiming the area saying their titles, sold through middlemen, were never valid.

I can't accept this. The land should belong to the people. Living in Cambodia is so hard

*Kav Phor, smallholder*

Neither Everfortune Real Estate nor an O'Okhna Heng official responded to questions about the evictions.

Chanthy says that people had to flee bulldozers, leaving all their belongings behind. Her home is one of a few left at the top of the village. She owes \$11,000 in microfinance loans for useless land titles. "If they come again, I will just stay inside the house and let them demolish us too," she says. "No one can help this place."



Kav Phor, who is refusing to comply with an eviction order from her home in Ream commune in Preah Sihanouk province

Near Sihanoukville airport, 70-year-old Kav Phor is refusing to move from where she has been raising chickens and ducks since 1983. Years ago, Phor faced another land dispute and won her farm back by court order. "New year, new problem," she says. She thinks the compensatory plot of land authorities offered is too close to another development project, meaning she could be evicted again.

She has not left her shack for weeks, relying on her children to bring her supplies. “I can’t accept this,” Phor says. “Here, the land [should] belong to the people. Living in [Cambodia](#) is so hard.”

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## 2023.04.11 - Opinion

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- Does climate breakdown mean we're doomed? No: if we're brave, big change can happen fast



England's Lucy Bronze and Ella Toone during training last week at St George's Park, Burton-Upon-Trent. Photograph: Jason Cairnduff/Action Images/Reuters

[Opinion Women](#)

**Women's sports kits are over-sexualised and not period proof. If this affected men, it would be fixed by now**

[Catherine Spencer](#)



As a teenager ‘kit anxiety’ nearly made me quit. The England Lionesses switch from white shorts to blue is a step forward

Catherine Spencer is a rugby commentator and former England captain

Tue 11 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Apr 2023 08.14 EDT

In my late 20s and early 30s, I was captain of the England rugby team. But as a teenager, gym knickers and leotards nearly put me off sport and exercise for good. I left school over 25 years ago now, but I can still clearly recall how awkward I felt walking across the school playing fields on my own in a pair of extremely unflattering navy blue pants, past groups of girls huddled together and laughing – I was sure – at my tree trunk legs.

At that stage, a discus was the only thing guarding my embarrassment. I was 14, and I had been persuaded to practise on my own at lunchtimes in preparation for the district games. I completely flopped at the games – standing alone, at the centre of the discus throw circle, feeling like everyone was staring at me, and feeling as though I was hardly dressed.

A quarter of a century later, it is deeply frustrating that girls are still giving up sport because of the anxiety over kit. [Recent research](#) carried out by the England hockey player Tess Howard found that sport uniforms create “identity tensions” in teenage girls, making them feel “sexualised” and causing alarming numbers to drop out. According to a 2022 World Health Organization [study](#), 85% of adolescent girls don’t get enough exercise. Clothing is “the most underrated cause” of that, says Howard. And it’s storing up problems for the girls, and for the NHS.

I might have been among that 85%, but thank goodness I discovered rugby and its fantastic, capacious shorts. I trained hard and was good enough to represent my country, which is how, in 2005, I found myself standing in the corner of Cardiff Arms Park changing room as I waited to go out and face Wales, trying to check without anyone noticing whether my white England shorts were still all white. It’s something I imagine all of my teammates had worried about at one point during their England careers. Not our male counterparts, of course.

For me, the preparation for many matches included the mental gymnastics of calculating when I would have to change my tampon. And on my heavy days, would I also have to change at half-time? Sometimes there were only one or two toilets available for a squad of 22 women. So, when I should have been focusing on preparing to take on France or New Zealand, I was worrying about my personal period challenge, and whether there was enough time to use the toilets before delivering my pre-match captain’s teamtalk.

Was my and my team’s performance affected? Research in this field is starting to build – albeit frustratingly slowly. Last year, the sprinter [Dina Asher-Smith](#) revealed that the calf cramps that ruined her chances of a 100m gold medal were caused by her period, and called for more research into female athletes’ cycles. “I feel if it was a men’s issue,” she said, “there would be a million different ways to combat things.” Some sport teams, such as [Bristol Bears](#) women’s rugby, are starting to track athlete wellbeing linked to their periods. When, at the elite end, differences between winning and losing are so minuscule, it makes sense to analyse results and compare them against athletes’ monthly cycles.

I loved my England “uniform”; the memory of standing at the side of the pitch before my first cap is forever etched into my mind. I was so proud of my white England shorts, my white shirt and the red rose on my chest. But standing at my kitchen sink scrubbing those blasted white shorts clean between Six Nations matches was normal for me. Thankfully our Red Roses no longer have to survive, as I did, with one pair of shorts for their entire Six Nations campaign. But there will, I am sure, still be one or two members of the squad with period-related worries prior to their next international.

That will never change. But research into women’s experiences of [training](#) and [injuries](#) can, and should be improved. More kit choices should be made available to enable women and girls to play sport without feeling exposed or embarrassed. That, at last, seems to be happening. In football, [England’s Lionesses](#) have changed out of white shorts and started playing in navy. Our [Irish rugby](#) friends have done the same. Will our rugby Red Roses follow suit?

Women are turning to rugby now in higher numbers than ever; this month there will be world record [spectator numbers](#) at Twickenham for a standalone women’s rugby match. But the women on the pitch have had to fight hard to get there. The least we can do to support them, and the young girls taking up sport now, is give them a uniform choice; talk about periods; and celebrate difference, but also normalise it.

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If men had periods they would, no doubt, talk about it in their post-match interviews. Me? I had to nip to the loo before I approached that microphone.

Catherine Spencer is a rugby commentator and former England captain

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‘Even knowing almost nothing about her, I’d decided that she was probably nice.’ Photograph: The Sun/Rex/Shutterstock

[OpinionMedia](#)

## **A month after she died, Mystic Meg is still promising readers they will find love – even my husband**

[Zoe Williams](#)



I don't believe in horoscopes, but the Sun's astrologer continues to give me and Mr Z something to talk about

Tue 11 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Apr 2023 05.39 EDT

For as long as we've been married, Mr Z has started the day the same way. He says: "Do you want to know what's in your future?" and I say: "No, I'm done with your bullshit," and he goes ahead and reads me Mystic Meg anyway. I'm never completely listening, so I lose track of which of us will find love in a red car and which can look forward to choppy waters in the workplace calming as the moon comes into our professional zone. It bugs me because obviously I don't believe in horoscopes, yet at the same time I am disappointed whenever they don't come true. Also I can never remember exactly what I have been waiting for – only that it hasn't happened for me.

Then, a month ago, Mystic Meg died. Genuinely sad news, because even while knowing almost nothing about her, I had decided that she was probably nice. She kept racehorses and gave them names such as Astroangel and Astrodonna. I admired her total commitment to the world of the unknowable outcome. It is a paradox of the vocation that when you devote your life to predicting the future and are never once held accountable when your certainties fail to materialise, it gives you quite a pleasant que sera, sera

attitude. Just look at a picture of Russell Grant, if you want to see the face of a man to whom luck has been a lady.

In my first job, I was in charge of Shelley von Strunckel. Entry-level stuff – just making sure that nothing got mangled so the Pisces didn't end up thinking they had fortunes in store for them that were destined for the Geminis. One time we spelled her name wrong on the front cover. The editor went bananas; when I picture the scene, I can see his head doing a full 360-degree on his neck, but this is surely the trauma speaking. He made me call her to apologise, even though it actually wasn't my fault (checking how many consonants could possibly end up next to each other was way above my pay grade). She said: "If that's the worst thing that happens to me today, this will have been a really good day." See what I mean? Que sera, sera.

Anyway, nice or not nice, Meg had died. You would assume, in due course, that her predictions would cease. But no: she didn't even take any time off for her own funeral. The Sun paused to take account of the poignancy of her final horoscope: "It can be the most routine of routine journeys that takes you towards your soulmate – and you may not realise this straight away," she had written, which editors took to mean she was already on her way to the beyond, where Nigel Moores, her football-pools-heir love who died in a car crash in 1977, would be waiting for her. But the very next day, normal service had resumed: ever the professional, she had filed a lot of copy in advance, apparently. A week later, I found out that I could impress lovers, new and existing, with my personal passion power. Or was that Leo? It might have been Libra. As ever, I wasn't completely listening.

Now, out of morbid fascination, I have started reading her properly and I realise that maybe half her predictions weren't that at all. They were well-meant axioms for leading a good life. Putting passions and hope into words probably *is* a crucial step towards helping them to happen. Believing you can succeed is a strong part of finding success, sure, sure. But: "If you start the day single, a spicy scent can lead you on a love quest"? Imagine if that were true. One in 12 single people following smells around town, questing after love. Imagine the chaos.

Astrology isn't like the weather. If you think you can predict the future at all, then five years away is no harder than tomorrow. Mystic Meg might have copy stashed and ready to go until the end of civilisation. I'm writing this on Easter Monday, and Mr Z is apparently set to find love over lunch today, when someone brings a family member along. And sure, it's going to be lousy with family members, but unfortunately for him, that's either incest, or it's still me.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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Storms ahead ... Succession. Photograph: Home Box Office/HBO  
[Television](#)

**This week marked the most important episode of Succession ever. Let the games begin**

[Stuart Heritage](#)



The show's most consequential episodes happen at family gatherings – we really should have been better prepared

Tue 11 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Apr 2023 01.48 EDT

*Before we go any further, it is important to note that this is absolutely your very last chance to avoid several major [Succession](#) spoilers. If you haven't watched this week's episode yet, go and do that now, and then come back and read this.*

What you have to remember is that this was supposed to have happened years ago. When Jesse Armstrong was developing Succession, the plan was for Logan Roy – doddery old senile Logan Roy, a man clearly on his last legs – to die after just a few episodes. After all, this was a show entitled Succession, so it made sense that it would primarily involve a number of offspring and former business associates tearing at the man's corpse for a bigger piece of the pie.

That isn't what happened, of course. Brian Cox's window-rattling performance was so elemental that Armstrong decided to keep Logan alive for much longer than intended, and Succession became a show about a

number of offspring and former business associates licking their lips while they waited for an old man to keel over. That is, until now.

This week's episode of Succession will go down as, if not the best, then certainly the most important of the series. When the time comes to look back on Succession as a whole, this will be the line that separates "before" and "after". Logan Roy is dead. Let the games begin.

In hindsight, we should have seen this coming. The most consequential Succession episodes happen at family gatherings. There was the season one finale, the wedding-set Nobody is Ever Missing, in which Kendall accidentally killed a waiter and then fled the scene of the crime. Then there was the boat-set season two finale This is Not for Tears, in which Kendall finally turned on his father in spectacular fashion. This week's episode was about a wedding set on a boat. Honestly, we should have been better prepared.

If nothing else, Logan's death felt profoundly truthful. There were no signs that this was coming (indeed, Logan was his being his usual awful self just minutes before he died) so we felt the shock of it in tandem with the characters. A lesser show would have given us a smörgåsbord of hints. A greying of the face. A step lost on the tarmac. A lesser show would have let Cox do his thing in the aeroplane bathroom. Staggering around. Clutching his chest. Raging at God. It is miraculous that Succession had the restraint to let all that play out off-camera, and let us see his death secondhand through the eyes of his children. As such, little details – the phone call breaking up, the scramble for clarification, the mad flailing to regain some semblance of control over a matter already out of everybody's hands – felt punishingly real.

Grief doesn't hit immediately. The order of magnitude is too vast to instantly process. There are things that need to be done, people who need to be told, affairs that need to be put in order. It's a horribly busy time, so the full weight of grief – the crushing absence of the most important person in your life – doesn't come until all the pieces have stopped moving. And this is Logan Roy we're talking about, so there are an awful lot of pieces. It might not happen in next episode, or even the episode after, but a heavy crash is coming for the Roy siblings.

That's assuming that they're human, of course, which might be too generous an assessment given everything we've seen. The trailer for the season's second half suggests that the entire grieving process might be sidestepped altogether in favour of a mad race for Logan's fortune and legacy. But then again, the trailer for this week's episode made it look like it was going to be a lovely romp about a wedding, so who knows?

Speaking of mad races, the online coverage of Logan's death has already been so comprehensive that we know this isn't the last we'll see of him. In one of his postmortem interviews, Cox revealed that he also filmed a handful of flashback scenes that have yet to be screened. Still, three seasons later than anticipated, Logan Roy is dead and there is no going back. Just seven episodes remain and, finally, Succession has begun.

- Succession airs on Sky Atlantic and streams on NOW
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‘Imagine clean rivers bubbling with fish, restored wildlands, cheap, abundant energy, a livable future.’ Rewilding project at Upcott Grange, Devon. Photograph: Alexander Turner/The Guardian

[Opinion](#)[Climate crisis](#)

## **Does climate breakdown mean we’re doomed? No: if we’re brave, big change can happen fast**

[Gaia Vince](#)



The climate crisis can seem overwhelming, but there are radical, pragmatic solutions – and they all begin with an idea

Tue 11 Apr 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Apr 2023 12.23 EDT

Is there any hope? Are we all doomed? I write books about [the climate crisis](#), so I am often asked fearful questions like these. But I'm being asked them more and more often and by younger people, an alarming trend not unconnected to the number of scientific reports detailing how humans are pushing the Earth's systems to dangerous extremes.

I [write about](#) planetary-scale ecosystem destruction but, importantly, I also focus on our species' extraordinary capacity to adapt; this has been key to our success in the past – and it is key to surviving our future. There are radical, yet pragmatic, solutions to our crises. But fear of what will happen if we don't act is imprisoning people in a mindset that makes alternatives seem unthinkable. I am frequently told my solutions are unrealistic and will never happen; that people would rather fight each other in wars than adapt to share food and land, for instance. We make our own future, even if it's hard to see the process. So let me try to make the case for hope.

We are living inside the imagination of our ancestors. Everything we see around us exists only because it first took shape in somebody's mind. Ideas such as democracy, public libraries, the abolition of slavery, municipal sewage, aeroplanes, seatbelt regulations, eating with cutlery, the very building you're sitting inside right now ... they were all birthed in a person's imagination, then actively formed into a shareable vision that others could collectively mould, modify, reimagine and nurture in their minds. Eventually, a concept that once existed solely inside a person's mind – an idea that may have seemed impossible, wildly unachievable, even crazy to that person's society – became our unremarkable reality, part of what is normal. This is the magic that made our wonderful, imperfect world.

Today, looking at the state of, well, everything, it can seem as if we are stuck in a socioeconomic status quo, condemned to a scary future. We are experiencing worsening global crises, ranging from [climate chaos](#) to [biodiversity loss](#) and [food shortages](#). Looking ahead to more extreme weather conditions, and an ever larger human population that will need to be fed even as agriculture becomes more precarious, can feel desperately bleak. The scale and urgency of our crises are overwhelming and the mismatch in the ambition of our leaders to address these challenges feels frightening. It's a burden that weighs particularly heavily on young people, who naturally have the greatest stake in the decades to come. People are anxious and afraid.

[Eco-anxiety](#) stems from a sense of hopelessness and the realisation that there are limits to how much agency we have as individuals to affect global change. But we are not hopeless, far from it. The future is still unwritten; we cannot know what it holds, but we will make it first in our minds, in our imaginations.

In this time of multiple global crises, we need true leadership with vision to help us forge a path towards a sustainable future – yet we have the lowest calibre of leaders right now. Instead of aligning policy to clearly stated goals on climate targets or poverty reduction or biodiversity, governments are blundering around with mixed messages and policies that undermine their goals or deliver little progress.

We need honesty from our leaders about what our choices are and what the trade-offs will be for each of us. There are no easy options now, but there are still plenty of choices for us to discuss, debate and democratically decide on. But we need first to decide what kind of future we want, what is important to us, and what kind of society we want to live in. Only then can we take pragmatic steps towards a future we envision.

First, we have to notice. We have to raise our heads from the all-consuming business of daily life and pay attention to what is wrong with today's "normal": notice who in our society is being failed and which of our human activities are damaging our communities and natural spaces. See the opportunities in what needs to be fixed. Understand not just intellectually, but emotionally what we face as our world heats. And then actively choose to imagine an alternative, a future that is livable. Be pragmatic: how do we get to this future from our current reality?

We may lack leadership, but we have our own imaginations. Choose to conjure that vision of a livable future. What does your ideal neighbourhood look like? For me, it is vibrant with people and plants, safe to walk and cycle in, comfortably sheltered from extreme weathers and rich in community spaces. It will mean rethinking our cities, planning the architecture, materials and energy systems for sustainability, so our buildings generate rather than simply use energy, for instance. We're in a transition right now to a [greener economy](#) – we can seize this opportunity to reset all aspects of our society, to make things fairer and more sustainable.

Do you want a world where the verges are lined with flowers? Then plant them. Be a [guerrilla gardener](#) everywhere, sowing ideas like seeds. Find a tribe of like-minded people or make your own, and focus on achievable tasks: litter-picking to improve your local environment immediately; campaign for safer cycle routes; increase the plant-based meal options in your workplace or school; welcome migrants into your group. One person can generate an idea, but it takes a community to create a reality, to come together and shift policy. Take heart, as I do, from the [many groups](#) already striving around the world. Think more broadly, think longer-term. Refuse to limit your mind to the narrow realm of today's political circus.

Don't get stuck thinking that things have to be the same as before – stasis is death. Don't think they will inevitably get worse. Be brave as you explore your futures. Imagine 9 billion people having enough nutritious food, clean rivers bubbling with fish, restored wildlands, cheap, abundant energy, a livable future. If anyone tells you it's impossible, ask why. Is it impossible because of the laws of physics, or is it impossible because of the rules of society? Because society changes. We change it; often extremely fast.

The scale and nature of the challenges we face demand a step-change in response – a vision that is more than an iteration. We need bold, imaginative ideas and true leadership. And nothing can be done without collaboration, a shared vision for a better world. Let's do this!

- Gaia Vince is an author, journalist and broadcaster. Her latest book is *Nomad Century: How To Survive The Climate Upheaval*
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## 2023.04.11 - Around the world

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Philippine exercise director Major General Marvin Licudin, left, and US exercise director Major General Eric Austin link arms during the opening ceremony of the 'Balikatan' joint military exercise in Manila on Tuesday. Photograph: Ted Aljibe/AFP/Getty Images

[South China Sea](#)

## **US and Philippines launch biggest joint drills yet in South China Sea**

More than 17,000 troops are involved in the Balikatan drills, which follow days of military exercises around Taiwan by China

*Associated Press*

Tue 11 Apr 2023 00.38 EDT Last modified on Wed 12 Apr 2023 09.26 EDT

The United States and the Philippines have launched their largest combat exercises in decades in waters across the [South China Sea](#) and the Taiwan Strait, a move that is likely to inflame Beijing.

The annual drills by the longtime treaty allies called Balikatan – Tagalog for shoulder-to-shoulder – will run up to 28 April and involve more than 17,600 military personnel. The drills will include live-fire exercises and a boat-sinking rocket assault.

It will be the latest display of American firepower in Asia, where Washington has repeatedly warned China about its increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed sea channel and against Taiwan. It comes the day after China carried out [three days of military exercises near Taiwan](#), launched in response to President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with US House speaker Kevin McCarthy.

The Biden administration has been [strengthening an arc of alliances in the Indo-Pacific](#) to better counter China, including in a possible confrontation over Taiwan.

That dovetails with efforts by the [Philippines](#) under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr to defend its territorial interests in the South China Sea by boosting joint military exercises with the US and allowing rotating batches of American forces to stay in more Philippine military camps under a 2014 defence pact.

About 12,200 [US military](#) personnel, 5,400 Filipino forces and 111 Australian troops are taking part in the exercises, the largest in Balikatan's three-decade history. America's warships, fighter jets as well as Patriot missiles, HIMARS rocket launchers and anti-tank Javelins, will be showcased, according to US and Philippine military officials.

“We are not provoking anybody by simply exercising,” Colonel Michael Logico, a Philippine spokesperson for Balikatan, told reporters ahead of the start of the manoeuvres.

“This is actually a form of deterrence,” Logico said. “Deterrence is when we are discouraging other parties from invading us.”

US and Filipino forces will sink a 200ft (61-metre) target vessel in Philippine territorial waters as part of the live-fire drills, Logico said, as part

of a coordinated airstrike and artillery bombardment.

“We will hit it with all the weapons systems that we have, both ground, navy and air,” Logico said.

That location facing the South [China](#) Sea and across the waters from the Taiwan Strait will probably alarm China, but Philippine military officials said the manoeuvre was aimed at bolstering the country’s coastal defences and was not aimed at any country.

Washington and Beijing have been on a collision course over the [long-seething territorial disputes](#) involving China, the Philippines and four other governments, as well as Beijing’s goal of “reunification” of Taiwan, by force if necessary.

China last week warned against an intensifying US military deployment to the region. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in a regular news briefing in Beijing that it “would only lead to more tensions and less peace and stability in the region”.

On Monday, the US 7th Fleet deployed guided-missile destroyer USS Milius within 12 nautical miles of Mischief Reef, a Manila-claimed coral outcrop that China seized in the mid-1990s and turned into one of seven missile-protected island bases in the South China Sea’s hotly contested Spratlys archipelago. The US military has been undertaking such “freedom of navigation” operations for years to challenge China’s expansive territorial claims in the busy seaway.

“As long as some countries continue to claim and assert limits on rights that exceed their authority under international law, the United States will continue to defend the rights and freedoms of the sea guaranteed to all,” the 7th Fleet said. “No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms.”

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Julian Assange is in custody at London's Belmarsh prison as he fights a US attempt to extradite him to face charges in connection with the publication of leaked documents. Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

[Julian Assange](#)

## **Dozens of Australian politicians urge US to abandon Julian Assange extradition**

In open letter, 48 MPs and senators warn 'closest strategic ally' that pursuit of WikiLeaks founder 'set a dangerous precedent'

*[Daniel Hurst](#) Foreign affairs and defence correspondent*

Mon 10 Apr 2023 22.49 EDT Last modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 23.21 EDT

Australian federal politicians from across the political spectrum have jointly asked the US attorney general, Merrick Garland, to abandon attempts to extradite [Julian Assange](#) from the UK.

The 48 MPs and senators – including 13 from the governing Labor party – warned that the pursuit of the [WikiLeaks](#) founder “set a dangerous precedent” for press freedom and would damage the reputation of the US.

Assange, an Australian citizen, remains in Belmarsh prison in London as he [fights a US attempt to extradite him](#) to face charges in connection with the publication of [hundreds of thousands of leaked documents](#) about the Afghanistan and Iraq wars as well as diplomatic cables.

In an open letter published on Tuesday, the Labor, Coalition, Greens and crossbench politicians implored Garland to “drop the extradition proceedings and allow Mr Assange to return home”.

“If the extradition request is approved, Australians will witness the deportation of one of our citizens from one Aukus partner to another – our closest strategic ally – with Mr Assange facing the prospect of spending the rest of his life in prison,” the letter said.

“This would set a dangerous precedent for all global citizens, journalists, publishers, media organizations and the freedom of the press. It would also be needlessly damaging for the US as a world leader on freedom of expression and the rule of law.”

The letter said the charges – which include 17 counts under the Espionage Act and one count under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act – pertained to Assange’s actions “as a journalist and publisher” in publishing information “with evidence of war crimes, corruption and human rights abuses”.

The MPs and senators contrasted the ongoing pursuit of Assange with the case of the former US army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning, who was released in 2017 when Barack Obama [commuted her 35-year military prison sentence](#) for leaking the information.

The letter said Assange – who initially took refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy in London – “has been effectively incarcerated for well over a decade in one form or another, yet the person who leaked classified

information had their sentence commuted and has been able to participate in American society since 2017”.

The independent MP Andrew Wilkie, who co-chairs the Parliamentary Friends of Julian Assange Group, initiated the letter. It coincides with the fourth anniversary of Assange being detained in Belmarsh prison.

Wilkie said the 48 Australian federal parliamentarians were acting “in concert with similar letters from parliamentarians from around the world” and together they represented millions of constituents.

“This is no small matter and must not be dismissed,” Wilkie said. “Nor should it be ignored that the outpouring of political concern spans the political spectrum and is based on a diverse range of reasons.”

Assange’s father, John Shipton, said his son had been living under “a pall of shame and disgrace”.

Shipton said the decision by the new Australian high commissioner to the UK, Stephen Smith, to visit Belmarsh prison last week marked “the beginning of the end of this bleak, severe frost on truth and destruction of Julian Assange”.

Greg Barns SC, a legal adviser to the Assange campaign, said the US attempt to prosecute Assange was “dangerous” because it meant “any journalist or publisher anywhere in the world could face extradition to the US for exposing material Washington doesn’t want you to know about”.

The Australian foreign affairs minister, Penny Wong, warned late last month that there were limits to what diplomacy could achieve.

But she said Australia would continue to express the view to both the US and UK governments that the case against Assange “has dragged on long enough and should be brought to a close”.

The 13 Labor MPs to sign Tuesday’s letter were Michelle Ananda-Rajah, Mike Freelander, Julian Hill, Peter Khalil, Tania Lawrence, Zaneta

Mascarenhas, Brian Mitchell, Alicia Payne, Graham Perrett, Susan Templeman, Maria Vamvakinou, Josh Wilson and Tony Zappia.

The highest profile Coalition signatories were the former deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce and the MP for Bass, Bridget Archer.

The Greens leader, Adam Bandt, was joined by many of his party colleagues in signing it, while independent MPs and senators were also well represented.

Comment was sought from the US embassy in Canberra, but the White House has previously said Joe Biden was “committed to an independent Department of Justice” when asked about the Assange case.

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'Power to the people': expelled Democrat returns to Tennessee state legislature – video

**Nashville**

## **Nashville council votes to reinstate expelled Democrat Justin Jones**

Republican majority had ousted Jones and fellow house member Justin Pearson over protests they led demanding gun control

*Guardian staff*

Mon 10 Apr 2023 19.43 EDTFirst published on Mon 10 Apr 2023 18.15 EDT

The city of Nashville's governing council on Monday afternoon voted unanimously to return the [expelled Black lawmaker](#) Justin Jones to the Tennessee state legislature.

The body's Republican majority state lawmakers had expelled Jones and fellow house member Justin Pearson late last week because they led protests in the chamber demanding gun control after yet another mass shooting in an American school, this one [at an elementary school](#) in the city days before.

Moments later, Jones marched to the capitol several blocks away. He took the oath of office on the steps and entered the building while supporters sang This Little Light of Mine.

A loud round of applause erupted as Jones walked into the chamber with the Democratic representative Gloria Johnson, who was also targeted for expulsion, but spared by one vote.

"To the people of Tennessee, I stand with you," Jones said in his first statement on the house floor. "We will continue to be your voice here. And no expulsion, no attempt to silence us will stop us, but it will only galvanize

and strengthen our movement. And we will continue to show up in the people's house.

"Power to the people," he shouted, to cheers.

The other lawmaker, Justin Pearson, could be reappointed on Wednesday at a meeting of the Shelby county commission.

There was uproar last week and the act was condemned by many as an extraordinary act of political retaliation. Thousands of protesters flocked to the [Tennessee](#) state capitol to support the three Democratic members and their expulsion was slammed as racist. Joe Biden had called the move "shocking, undemocratic and without precedent" in [a statement](#).

And US vice-president [Kamala Harris rushed](#) to Nashville on Friday evening and praised the lawmakers, whom she said "chose to show courage in the face of extreme tragedy".



Protesters gather at the Tennessee statehouse after expulsion of Democratic representatives. Photograph: Cheney Orr/Reuters

Jones's appointment is on an interim basis. Special elections for the seats will take place in the coming months. Jones and Pearson have said they plan to run in the special elections.

Before the special council session was to begin, a couple of hundred people gathered in front of the [Nashville](#) courthouse, and more were pouring in. Some held signs reading “No Justin, No Peace”. Inside the courthouse, a line of people waited outside the council chambers for the doors to open.

Rosalyn Daniel arrived early and waited in line to get a seat in the council chambers. She said she was not in Jones’s district but was a Nashville resident and concerned citizen.

“I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, during the civil rights movement, so I understand why this is so important,” she said.

Doug Kufner, a spokesperson for the Republican house speaker, Cameron Sexton, indicated that whoever was appointed to the vacancies by the Nashville and Shelby county governments “will be seated as representatives as the constitution requires”.

The house majority leader, William Lamberth, and Republican Caucus chairman, Jeremy Faison, said they would welcome back the expelled lawmakers if they are reinstated.



Justin Jones is sworn in after being reinstated. Photograph: Cheney Orr/Reuters

“Tennessee’s constitution provides a pathway back from expulsion,” they said in a statement. “Should any expelled member be reappointed, we will welcome them. Like everyone else, they are expected to follow the rules of the house as well as state law.”

“The world is watching Tennessee,” attorneys for Jones and Pearson wrote to Sexton in a letter on Monday. “Any partisan retributive action, such as the discriminatory treatment of elected officials, or threats or actions to withhold funding for government programs, would constitute further unconstitutional action that would require redress.”

Johnson, the third Democrat targeted for expulsion, also attracted national attention.

She had suggested race was probably a factor in why Jones and Pearson were ousted but not her. Johnson told reporters it “might have to do with the color of our skin”.

GOP leaders have said the expulsions – a mechanism used only a handful times since the civil war – had nothing to do with race and instead were necessary to avoid setting a precedent that lawmakers’ disruptions of house proceedings through protest would be tolerated.

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Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiaxi in Guangzhou before their arrests in late 2019 and early 2020 respectively. Photograph: Reuters

[United Nations](#)

## **Outcry over lengthy jail terms handed to China human rights lawyers**

UN rights chief voices concern over sentencing of Ding Jiaxi and Xu Zhiyong

*[Helen Davidson](#), [Amy Hawkins](#), [Verna Yu](#) and agencies*

Tue 11 Apr 2023 04.15 EDTFirst published on Tue 11 Apr 2023 01.03 EDT

The UN human rights chief, Volker Türk, has said he is “very concerned” after [China](#) sentenced two prominent human rights lawyers to more than a decade each in jail.

Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiaxi were convicted of subversion of state power after closed-door trials and [sentenced to 14 and 12 years](#) respectively.

Both were leading figures in the New Citizens' Movement, a loose network of activists who met regularly in person and online to discuss civil rights and current affairs, and had called for constitutional reform and criticised government corruption.

The lengthy sentences have shocked supporters and observers.

"I am very concerned that two prominent human rights defenders in China – Ding Jiaxi and Xu Zhiyong – have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms, at variance with international human rights law standards," Türk said.

"Human rights law requires that people not be prosecuted or otherwise punished for voicing their criticism of government policies. It also requires respect for fair trial and due process rights, and proper investigations into any allegations of ill-treatment."

Xu, who had [called for President Xi Jinping to step down](#) over his handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, was jailed for 14 years in east China's Shandong province, Human Rights Watch said.

Ding's wife, Luo Shengchun, said his sentence was "absurd and insane", adding that she had been unable to see the verdict directly because lawyers for Ding and Xu were barred from sharing the information.

Observers have regularly raised concerns about due process in China, where the courts have a conviction rate of more than 99%.

"I will follow up on these cases with the authorities," Türk said. "It is important that steps are taken to ensure other human rights defenders are not targeted for exercising their human rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly."

Teng Biao, a fellow human rights lawyer who left China in 2013 after being harassed and detained by the authorities, said he was "very sad to hear these sentences, but not very surprised".

Teng, a friend of Ding and Xu, said the Chinese Communist party had an "exaggerated sense of insecurity" this year because of an economic

slowdown. That would intensify the crackdown on civil society, he said.

Xu and Ding were detained in 2013 for signing an open letter calling for greater scrutiny of the wealth of China's leaders, and continued to advocate for political reform after their release.

In a statement released through his lawyers before the sentencing, Xu said he had a dream of a China that was "beautiful, free, fair, and happy".

"It is a democratic China that belongs to everyone on this land, not to any one ethnicity or political party. It is truly a country of the people, its government chosen by ballots, not violence," he said, according to a translation by the news website China Change. "A democratic China must be realised in our time, we cannot saddle the next generation with this duty."

In an interview in 2012, Xu said he was not afraid of being jailed for his work. "For the world to become a better place, someone has to pay a price," he said at the time.

Ding was previously detained by police in December 2019, shortly after attending a gathering in southern China with about 20 other lawyers and activists. He was held incommunicado for almost six months, while being routinely tortured to extract a confession, his lawyer, Peng Jian, told the court.

Xu was detained in February 2020 after going into hiding.

Both men were allegedly kept in "residential surveillance at a designated location" (RSDL), China's internationally criticised system of secret detention.

In November 2021, a UN working group found the two men to have been arbitrarily detained by Chinese authorities, in breach of 11 articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including through the use of RSDL, and in failing to inform Xu and Ding of the reasons for their arrest and detention.

*Agence France-Presse contributed to this report*

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The 31-year-old was detained on 29 March in the city of Yekaterinburg.  
Photograph: AP

[US news](#)

## **US declares journalist Evan Gershkovich wrongfully detained by Moscow**

The Wall Street Journal reporter was imprisoned by Russian authorities for espionage

*[Julian Borger](#) in Washington*

Mon 10 Apr 2023 19.45 EDT Last modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 20.34 EDT

The US state department has officially designated [Evan Gershkovich](#), the Wall Street Journal reporter imprisoned in Russia, as being wrongfully detained, signalling that Washington views the espionage charges against him as bogus and that he is being held as a hostage.

“Journalism is not a crime. We condemn the Kremlin’s continued repression of independent voices in [Russia](#) and its ongoing war against the truth,” the state department spokesman, Vedant Patel, said in a statement announcing the designation. “The US government will provide all appropriate support to Mr Gershkovich and his family. We call for the Russian Federation to immediately release Mr Gershkovich.”

The 31-year-old journalist was detained on 29 March in the city of Yekaterinburg, and the Russian security service, FSB, admitted the following day that it had picked him up on suspicion of spying. He was [formally charged](#) with espionage on Friday, which Gershkovich and the Wall Street Journal deny. He has widely been described as a talented and well-respected journalist.

The secretary of state, [Antony Blinken](#), said on Wednesday that he had no doubt about the reporter’s complete innocence, but added the formal designation would take a little longer. On Monday afternoon, the national security council spokesman, John Kirby, was asked about the delay, and referred questions to the state department. Gershkovich was officially deemed wrongfully detained less than three hours later.

“This distinction will unlock additional resources and attention at the highest levels of the US government in securing his release,” Emma Tucker, the Wall Street Journal’s editor in chief, said in a statement following the announcement. “We are doing everything in our power to support Evan and his family and will continue working with the state department and other relevant US officials to push for his release.”

The designation opens the door formally to the use of several government mechanisms set up to recover hostages, most importantly the special presidential envoy for hostage affairs and the hostage fusion recovery cell, a multi-agency body designed to share intelligence in order to gain the release of hostages.

[Gershkovich is the first American journalist](#) detained in Russia on espionage charges since the end of the cold war, but Moscow has detained Americans from other walks of life on several occasions and later traded them for Russian spies or prisoners, such as the arms trader Viktor Bout.

In its statement on Gershkovich, the state department also called on Moscow to release another US citizen, [Paul Whelan](#), a retired marine with US, British, Irish and Canadian citizenship, who was arrested in Moscow in December 2018, when he was attending the wedding of another ex-marine. At the time, he was working as security director of BorgWarner, a car parts manufacturer based in Michigan. He has also been declared wrongfully detained by the US.

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- [William Barr Trump ‘dug himself a hole’ on classified documents and January 6](#)
- [Donald Trump Ex-president bets indictments could make him 2024 nominee](#)
- [Stormy Daniels Trump lawyer says he aims to get case dismissed before trial](#)
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The former attorney general William Barr. Photograph: Paul Kitagaki Jr/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

[\*\*Donald Trump\*\*](#)

## **Trump ‘dug himself a hole’ on classified documents and role in January 6 – Barr**

Ex-attorney general says former president’s ‘penchant for engaging in reckless behavior’ is why he is facing indictments

*[Sam Levine](#) in New York*

Mon 10 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 08.46 EDT

[\*\*Donald Trump\*\*](#) “has a penchant for engaging in reckless and self-destructive behavior” and is facing a serious threat of a federal indictment over his handling of classified documents and his supporters’ deadly January 6 attack on the US Capitol, his former attorney general William Barr said on Sunday.

“He’s dug himself a hole on the documents, and also on the January 6 stuff,” Barr said of the former president during an interview on ABC’s This Week. “That was reckless behavior that was destined to end up being investigated. So it doesn’t surprise me that he has all these legal problems.”

A US justice department special counsel, Jack Smith, is investigating whether Trump obstructed an inquiry into his handling of classified documents at the Mar-a-Lago estate.

Smith is also investigating Trump’s role in the January 6 attack. Trump told a mob of his supporters to “fight like hell” that day as Congress prepared to certify his defeat in the 2020 presidential election, and many of them then stormed the Capitol in an assault that has been linked to nine deaths, including the suicides of police officers who defended the building and were traumatized.

One of Trump’s lawyers, Jim Trusty, also appeared on several Sunday television shows to defend the former president. He said on This Week he was 100% certain Trump did not have classified documents in his possession, despite federal investigators’ assertions to the contrary.

Barr, who has sought to rehabilitate his public image after serving as one of Trump’s closest allies, also attacked the one criminal case opened against the former president, which is contained in charges filed by Manhattan district attorney Alvin Bragg.

Trump faces 34 felony charges related to allegations he falsified business records to cover up hush money payments to adult film star Stormy Daniels in 2016, which Bragg’s office maintains was part of a plot to either get around state and federal election laws or to deceive tax authorities.

“I found what’s been put out very opaque,” Barr said. “And I think if [Bragg] has a good case he would specify exactly what his case is, but he’s trying to hide the ball.”

Trusty also pushed back on the charges.

“It is an absurd situation and multiple prosecutors passed by this,” he said. Bragg’s predecessor Cyrus Vance has said his office was asked to “[stand down](#)” on the charges by federal prosecutors who opted against pursuing a case against Trump.

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Trusty also called the Manhattan grand jury indictment against Trump a “rancid ham sandwich”, a phrase that alluded to the folksy colloquialism that grand jury indictments imply little about a person’s guilt or innocence, because prosecutors could persuade a grand jury to “indict a ham sandwich” if they wanted to.

In addition to the special counsel and Manhattan prosecutors, Trump [also faces](#) potential criminal charges in Georgia, where prosecutors are examining whether he violated state law by attempting to overturn the election.

A civil trial is also scheduled to begin in New York on 25 April on allegations that Trump sexually assaulted and defamed E Jean Carroll, a former magazine columnist, in late 1995 or 1996. It is not known whether Trump will testify in the case, and he could face considerable political damage if he is found liable over Carroll’s claims.

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Donald Trump is playing a high-stakes game in tying his indictments to his political gameplan. Photograph: Chandan Khanna/AFP/Getty Images

[\*\*Donald Trump\*\*](#)

## **Trump bets indictments could make him 2024 Republican nominee**

Ex-president hopes his legal woes will harden support from his base, but general election voters might recoil at his felony charges

*Hugo Lowell* in Washington  
[@hugolowell](#)

Mon 10 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 08.40 EDT

Donald Trump appeared angry and shaken during his arraignment in Manhattan criminal court on Tuesday, but he had brushed off the moment by the weekend, contending that the indictment and other legal troubles would carry him to the 2024 Republican nomination, people close to him said.

With his status as a criminal defendant subjecting him to the strictures of the judicial process, [the former president](#) is playing an increasingly high-stakes game to inextricably tie his legal strategy to his political gameplan as he seeks to recapture the Oval Office next year.

Trump's wager is that using his legal troubles as a campaign issue will harden support from his base and Republican elected officials, and that support could undercut or falsely delegitimize [prosecutions in Georgia or by the US justice department](#) in other criminal investigations.

The approach may or may not work, and Trump's advisers acknowledge that campaigning on his personal legal issues that appeal to Republican primary voters could backfire in a general election where independent voters might recoil at re-electing a former president who is charged with 34 felonies.

But the benefits to Trump of using for campaign purposes his [indictment over hush money allegedly paid to adult film star Stormy Daniels](#) in 2016 has been readily apparent, providing him with a boost across all areas: in polling, in fundraising and in wall-to-wall media coverage.

The person most hurt by the indictment, his advisers contend, was his expected rival for the Republican nomination: the Florida governor, Ron DeSantis, who was forced to come to Trump's defense and still fell behind him in multiple polls, which suggested a trend rather than an outlier result.

In a recent Yahoo news poll, Trump was beating DeSantis 57% to 31% in a hypothetical one-to-one contest and was attracting majority support, at 52%, when pitted against a wider, 10-candidate field including DeSantis as well as the UN ambassador in the Trump administration, Nikki Haley.

Trump improved his lead over DeSantis in internal polling by McLaughlin and Associates, which surveyed 1,000 likely 2024 general election voters and found Trump would beat DeSantis 63% to 30%, improving his lead from January when he was at 52% and DeSantis at 40%.

Trump's allies also noted the indictment snapped Republican members of Congress into line, with the House judiciary committee chair, Jim Jordan,

sending a flurry of subpoenas to the Manhattan district attorney's office to get confidential information about the case against him.

And Trump received a boost in fundraising, with his campaign claiming it raised more than \$12m in donations in the week after the indictment. Roughly a third was from first-time donors, though the actual figure won't be available for confirmation for several weeks.

Whether the political pressure – as well as the [personal attacks on prosecutors that Trump has vowed to launch](#) – works to dissuade prosecutors is less clear. In Georgia, prosecutors expect to charge Trump and dozens of others over efforts to overturn the 2020 election in that state, a person familiar with the matter said.

But if Trump cannot actually stave off prosecutions, then the next best outcome for him is to at least raise suspicions among voters across the country that the cases are politically motivated, his advisers have suggested in conversations with his legal team.

Even beyond the major news events like Trump's indictment or his arraignment in the New York hush money case, advisers and associates have discussed for weeks about how tying the legal strategy to the political strategy remains a winning formula, if only in the short term.

At least one Trump associate noted that the former president was a “guilty pleasure” for everyone in the political ecosystem, describing how Trump-related developments give Democrats an issue to rail against and [Republicans](#) an issue to rally behind, and boost ratings for cable news outlets.

The wall-to-wall coverage of Trump's arraignment – including helicopter shots following Trump boarding his plane from his Florida Mar-a-Lago resort to New York and speedboats dogging his motorcade as it drove down FDR Drive in Manhattan – increased ratings for every major TV network.

On the evening after the arraignment, Fox News topped 6.4 million viewers on Tucker Carlson's show. MSNBC hit 2.8 million viewers and CNN peaked at 2.2 million viewers for their special coverage, exceeding their top-rated

shows in the first quarter of 2023, which had respectively hauled in 3.3 million, 1.4 million and 0.6 million viewers.

The Trump team has been watching cable news viewership closely. Last month, when Trump spoke at the Conservative Political Action Conference, he mocked an aide for talking to CNN because of its recent ratings dip and later laughed at how TV networks would hire a speedboat “only for Trump”.

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Trump's lawyer Jim Trusty. Photograph: Marco Bello/AFP/Getty Images

[Donald Trump](#)

## Trump lawyer says he aims to get hush money case dismissed before trial

Jim Trusty, on ABC's This Week, said the ex-president's team will file 'robust motions' before the case even reaches its trial stage

*[Ramon Antonio Vargas](#)*

Mon 10 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 09.11 EDT

While [Donald Trump](#) launches verbal attacks against the prosecutor and judge overseeing his criminal charges in connection with hush money payments to the adult film star Stormy Daniels, an attorney for the former US president has said his main focus is on legal maneuvers aiming to get the case dismissed long before a trial jury is ever seated.

Jim Trusty appeared on Sunday on [ABC's This Week](#) and argued that "there's a lot to play with" when examining whether New York state

prosecutors waited too long to secure an indictment against Trump and if the ex-president intended to commit any crimes with the payments at the center of the case.

[The payments](#) were made at the height of the 2016 White House race which Trump won, and Trusty also reiterated questions that his side has previously asked about whether the office of the Manhattan district attorney, Alvin Bragg, should be able to apply “federal election law into a New York case”.

“The motions to dismiss have to be a priority because they amputate this miscarriage of justice early on,” Trusty said to show host Jonathan Karl. “And I think you’ll see some very robust motions.”

In his remarks to Karl, Trusty also doubled down on questions already floated by his side about whether Trump could get a fair trial in Manhattan. The New York City borough voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Democrat who defeated Trusty’s client in the 2020 presidential election, Joe Biden, after all.

However, though Trusty said Manhattan is “a real stronghold of liberalism, of activism, and that infects the whole process”, he suggested pre-trial dismissal motions citing statutes of limitation and an alleged lack of criminal intent are almost certain to come before one that might seek a change of trial venue.

A state grand jury in Manhattan on 30 March handed up 34 felony charges of falsifying business records to cover up \$130,000 in payments meant to keep Daniels quiet about claims of an extramarital sexual encounter in what Bragg’s office maintains was a conspiracy to influence the race Trump won over Hillary Clinton. [Trump pleaded not guilty](#) to all charges on Tuesday.

The Daniels payments have already led to one conviction, in federal court: that of former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen. Cohen, in that case, said he paid Daniels at the behest of Trump and was reimbursed by the then president during his time in the Oval Office. Prosecutors alleged that those payments were falsely classified as legal expenses as part of a conspiracy for

Trump to get around state and federal election laws or to deceive tax authorities.

Cohen pleaded guilty to federal crimes stemming from the hush money payments, resulting in a three-year prison sentence as well as the loss of his law license.

Trusty on Sunday called Cohen “a convicted perjurer with an ax to grind” but said it would be ineffective to attack his credibility in a motion at this stage. He also suggested that Trump’s political rhetoric about Bragg being a “failed district attorney” and a “criminal” and about the judge to whom the case was allotted, Juan Merchan, being “a Trump-hating judge with a Trump-hating wife” was unlikely to be reflected in some of his side’s upcoming legalese.

“It was pointing [out] that they have a bias, that they have a political interest that is contrary to President Trump,” Trusty said about comments that prompted Merchan to issue a warning against any statements that were “likely to incite violence or civil unrest”.

Pressed by [@JonKarl](#) about Trump attacking judge’s family, Trump attorney Jim Trusty says “criticisms” were “not something personal.”

“It was pointing out that they have a bias, that they have a political interest that is contrary to Pres. Trump’s.” <https://t.co/gl3QQ0zbpB> [pic.twitter.com/NLWAe322HQ](https://pic.twitter.com/NLWAe322HQ)

— This Week (@ThisWeekABC) [April 9, 2023](#)

Trusty added: “There’s kind of a political lane and a legal lane. I’m in the legal lane. I’m not going to worry too much or be able to control the politics of the moment.”

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While Trusty didn't elaborate on his statute of limitation mention, New York law gives prosecutors five years to charge felony falsification of business records. The last alleged false record in the indictment is from December 2017, more than five years before Bragg obtained the charges against Trump.

It's unclear how Bragg's office might try to defend against such a line of attack. But in other settings, lawyers confronted with a motion to dismiss based on a statute of limitation often argue that steps taken to conceal the alleged wrongdoing should result in prolonging – if not entirely suspending – any relevant charging or filing deadlines.

Meanwhile, Trusty's comment about applying “federal election law into a New York case” seemed to refer to Bragg's decision to indict the former president over payments during a federal election although the US justice department prosecutors who secured Cohen's conviction passed on charging Trump. The justice department's decision against charging Trump does not amount to a finding of innocence for the former president, though it remains to be seen whether Bragg's office has enough evidence to eventually secure a conviction.

Trump's next court date in the case that made him the first former US president to be criminally charged is 4 December. But Trusty said the public should not be surprised if some of the possible motions that he discussed were filed well ahead of that date.

If Trump were to eventually be found guilty as accused, it is possible that he would face up to four years in prison, the director of the Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center recently told the resource website [factcheck.org](https://factcheck.org). Yet it is also possible that Trump would not be at risk for anything more than probation, fines and community service because he was charged as a first-time offender, Columbia University law school professor John C Coffee Jr said to factcheck.org.

Despite the case in Merchan's courtroom, Trump is widely considered to be [the frontrunner](#) to land the Republican presidential nomination for the 2024 election.

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Stormy Daniels, seen in Berlin in 2018. Photograph: Fabrizio Bensch/Reuters

[Donald Trump](#)

**Trump's indictment and the return of his biggest concern: 'the women'**

The former president paid hush money to an adult film star and a Playboy model and faces looming trials over a rape allegation



[Martin Pengelly](#)  
[@MartinPengelly](#)

Sun 9 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sun 9 Apr 2023 02.38 EDT

In August 2015, at Trump Tower in New York, Donald Trump met with [Michael Cohen](#), then his lawyer and fixer, and David Pecker, then chief executive of American Media, owner of the National Enquirer. According to the indictment of the former president unsealed in New York this week, Pecker agreed to help with Trump's campaign for the Republican nomination, "looking out for negative stories" about Trump and then alerting Cohen.

It was a "catch and kill" deal, a common tabloid practice in which Pecker would buy potentially damaging stories but not put them in print.

Pecker "also agreed to publish negative stories" about Trump's competitors. The media this week seized on that passage in the indictment, noting how the Enquirer [baselessly](#) linked the father of Ted Cruz, the Texas senator and

Trump's closest rival for the nomination, to Lee Harvey Oswald, the man who killed John F Kennedy.

Last year, however, a New York Times reporter got to the heart of the matter. In her book [Confidence Man: The Making of Donald Trump and the Breaking of America](#), Maggie Haberman says that around the same time as the meeting with Pecker and Cohen, Sam Nunberg, a political adviser, asked Trump for his "biggest concern" about running.

"Trump had a simple reply: 'The women.'"

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Trump now faces 34 counts, all felonies, of falsifying business records with intent to conceal another crime: breaches of campaign finance laws. All the charges relate to the \$130,000 Cohen paid [Stormy Daniels](#), the adult film star and director who claims an affair Trump denies, and how Cohen was repaid \$420,000 including \$50,000 for "another expense" Cohen has said was for rigged polls, another \$180,000 to cover taxes and a \$60,000 bonus.

'The king has been dethroned': Stormy Daniels on Trump indictment – video

But the [New York](#) indictment is not the only form of legal jeopardy Trump now faces. As well as state and federal investigations of his election subversion, a federal investigation of his retention of classified records and a civil lawsuit over his business practices, he faces a civil defamation suit arising from an allegation of rape.

Trump has been accused of sexual misconduct or [assault](#) by [at least](#) 26 women. One of them, the writer E Jean Carroll, says Trump raped her in a department store changing room in New York in the mid-1990s.

Trump denies the allegation. Carroll has sued him twice: for defamation and for defamation and battery, the latter suit under the Adult Survivors Act, a New York law which gave alleged victims of crimes beyond the statute of limitations a year to bring civil claims. In the defamation case, trial has been delayed. The case under the Adult Survivors Act is due to go to trial on 25 April.

To the New York writer [Molly Jong-Fast](#), host of the [Fast Politics podcast](#), there is some sense of poetic justice in Trump finally facing a legal reckoning in cases arising from his treatment of women.

But, Jong-Fast says: “The thing I’m sort of struck by is, like, how much women continually are dismissed, even in this situation.

“There’s so much talk about the [Stormy Daniels](#) case, there was so little talk about actually what happened, right? There was almost nothing about how he was married to his third wife [Melania Trump], and she had just had a child [Barron Trump], and he had this affair. He denies the affair but the affair is pretty much documented.

“That’s as close to truth in Trumpworld as possible. But we’re discussing the nuances of who paid the hush money and whether or not that’s a campaign contribution, and whether that rises to a federal crime.



E Jean Carroll leaves court in New York. Photograph: Larry Neumeister/AP

“That can be argued, but I was surprised at how little focus women had in it. How nobody was talking about like, this is a serial philanderer who has the kind of problems that serial philanderers have.

“The filing talked about how he had paid off this doorman, about the illegitimate child. I guess that may have been not true ... but like, you don’t pay off somebody unless you have a sense that this could actually be true.”

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As Jong-Fast indicates, the New York indictment detailed two other “catch and kill” deals which prosecutors said also showed “illegal conduct” admitted by Pecker and Cohen but directed by Trump himself.

In late 2015, American Media paid \$30,000 to a former Trump World Tower doorman who was trying to sell a story about Trump fathering a child out of wedlock.

In September 2016, Cohen taped Trump talking about a payment to Karen McDougal, a former Playboy model who claims an affair Trump also denies.

“So what do we got to pay for this?” Trump asked. “One fifty?”

American Media paid McDougal \$150,000 to stay silent.

After Trump won the presidency, the indictment says, American Media “released both the doorman and [McDougal] from their non-disclosure agreements”.

That speaks to the central contention made by Alvin Bragg, the Manhattan district attorney, in his charges over the Daniels payment: that Trump concealed it because he feared it could derail his campaign.

According to Bragg’s indictment, in the McDougal case Trump “was concerned about the effect it could have on his candidacy”. In the case of the doorman, Cohen instructed Pecker “not to release [him] until after the presidential election”. Regarding Daniels, Trump is said to have directed Cohen “to delay making a payment ... as long as possible ... [because] if they could delay payment until after the election, they could avoid paying altogether, because at that point it would not matter if the story became public”.



Karen McDougal's Twitter account shows a photo of her with Donald Trump in September 2005. The post has since been deleted. Photograph: Twitter

In short, prosecutors contend that Trump did not make and conceal hush-money deals because he wanted to avoid embarrassment or hurting his wife – the argument successfully pursued by John Edwards, the Democratic presidential candidate who made hush-money payments in 2008 but [avoided conviction](#) four years later. The case against Trump is built on the contention he broke state and federal campaign finance laws.

Observers argue over whether Bragg has built a case he can win. Some expect Trump to wriggle off the hook. Others think the first prosecutor to indict a president has a good chance of securing a conviction. In either case, the indictment has brought Trump's treatment of women back to the national spotlight.

So has Trump himself. As Jong-Fast points out, as the former president this week attacked the judge in New York, who subsequently became [subject to threats to his safety](#), so too Trump went after the judge's wife and daughter.

"If you see interviews with Stormy Daniels, she has had terrible experiences as a result of her brush with Trump. Even the judge in that case, the judge's

daughter, Trump went after them. You go after Trump, you get it. He's like a mob boss. That's just how he does it."

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Declutter your mind and develop a new sense of purpose by learning something new. Illustration: Adam Higton/The Guardian

[Life and style](#)

**Spring-clean your life! 20 ways to discard the emotional baggage that's**

# **holding you back**

From creating a proper support network to practising saying no, experts suggest their best tips for a healthier, happier life

Lizzie Cernik

Mon 10 Apr 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 07.47 EDT

## **Learn something new**

Life changes can make us feel unsettled, taking away our ability to focus. Starting a new hobby or class is a great way to develop a renewed sense of purpose, leaving more space for creativity in our lives. Whether it's learning a new language or trying a different sport, it really helps to take you away from that "mind clutter" you don't want.

*Sally Potter, women's wellness leader and hypnotherapist, [alofhypnotherapy.com](http://alofhypnotherapy.com)*

## **Write a journal – but take your time**

Most people won't find the time to write in a journal for an hour every day, especially when it's new to them. But you can still get a lot out of the process by doing it for just five minutes each day, until it becomes part of your normal routine. It's also worth using a habit tracker app or speaking to a friend to hold you accountable.

*Emily Button, life coach, [emilybuttoncoaching.com](http://emilybuttoncoaching.com)*

## **Volunteer for a good cause**

It's easy to get lost in your own thoughts and daily stresses. Try making time to volunteer for a charity or cause you feel passionate about, and document your journey. By comparing your thoughts and feelings with your usual daily experiences, it will help you to gain perspective, declutter your mind and open you up to new opportunities.

*Dr Patapia Tzotzoli, psychologist, [patapiatzotzoli.com](http://patapiatzotzoli.com)*

## **Practise saying no**

People-pleasing often comes from a place of wanting to be accepted by others. Learning to say no and put healthy boundaries in place is essential, whatever the person’s reaction. Remind yourself that you can cope with the disappointment of others, so that you only take on tasks you can comfortably accommodate in your life.

*Laura Greenwood, psychotherapist and maternal mental health coach, [lauragreenwoodtherapy.com](http://lauragreenwoodtherapy.com)*

## **Do a digital cleanse**

Just because you’ve been a long-time follower of a social media account, it doesn’t mean it’s serving your wellbeing. Spring-clean your feed by unfollowing accounts that make you feel jealous, resentful or unhappy, and try to focus on the accounts you do feel a connection with. “Hate scrolling” might provide a short-term distraction, but it can also be a barrier to engagement, meaning and building genuine connections on and offline.

*Dr Charlotte Russell, clinical psychologist, [thetravelpsychologist.co.uk/](http://thetravelpsychologist.co.uk/)*

## **Ditch self-love for self-compassion**

Instagram might encourage self-love, but certain actions – such as ghosting someone or skipping an event you don’t fancy – can appear selfish or hurtful. Self-compassion is about accepting yourself as you are, including your flaws, rather than putting yourself first at all times. Practising self-compassion and kindness can lead to more resilience, better relationships and higher levels of compassion and emotional availability for others.

*Lara Cullen, life coach, [thepeopleperson.org](http://thepeopleperson.org)*

## **Adopt the four Ds of time management**

When it feels like life is running away from you, regain control by “doing, deferring, delegating and deleting”. Get your small tasks done quickly, delay anything that doesn’t need to be done right away, hand over to others where possible and scratch any extra tasks that don’t really need to be done at all.

*Mandy Taylor, life coach, [mandytaylorcoaching.com](http://mandytaylorcoaching.com)*

## Meal-prep at weekends

During the week it can be hard to create healthy meals that sustain us, especially when things are busy at home or work. Try making big batches of soups and casseroles while you're watching a film at the weekend. Having homemade ready meals in your freezer for those stressful moments will allow you to focus your time on other important tasks.

*Helen Pamely, psychotherapist, [helenpamely.com](http://helenpamely.com)*



Make space for new clothes that better reflect the person you are today.  
Illustration: Adam Higton/The Guardian

## Detox your wardrobe, not your body

As life gets busier and we grow older, our bodies often change shape. Rather than hanging on to old clothes "just in case you lose weight", choose to appreciate and accept the body you have right now. Forget the crash diet, just pack up the clothes that no longer fit and drop them at your favourite charity shop or give them away to someone you love. You'll also be making space for new things that better reflect the person you are today.

*Lisa Talbot, personal stylist, [lisatalbot.co.uk](http://lisatalbot.co.uk)*

## **Break your procrastination habits**

Spring-clean that start/stop mentality by spotting your procrastination behaviours and challenging them every day. For example, when you find yourself saying “I’ll just watch this before I start,” make a conscious decision to stop in your tracks before you get distracted. Simply by saying “I choose to do this,” you’ll be helping your brain to overcome the procrastination trap.

*Clare Flaxen, psychotherapist and founder of CF Mindset, [clareflaxen.com](http://clareflaxen.com)*

## **Focus on what you can control**

If you’re feeling worried or anxious about something, it’s easy for your mind to become quickly overwhelmed with negative thoughts. Take a sheet of paper and draw three columns. In the first one write down all the things about your situation that you can control, in the second write down the things you can influence and in the third add the aspects that are out of your control. When you’re building a plan, look only at the first column, so that you’re focusing on what you have the power to change.

*Nicola Rae-Wickham, life and careers coach, [alifemoreinspired.com](http://alifemoreinspired.com)*

## **Buy an alarm clock**

Prevent bedtime distractions and “doom scrolling” by investing in an old-fashioned alarm clock for your bedroom. If your phone is charging elsewhere in the house, you won’t be tempted to look at work emails or mindlessly watch TikTok at 1am, when you should be resting. It will also prevent you from feeling wired at night, leading to less overwhelm during the day.

*Suzy Glaskie, health coach, [peppermintwellness.co.uk](http://peppermintwellness.co.uk)*

## **Practise gratitude every day**

As humans, we are programmed towards negative thinking and generally need five positive thoughts to counteract one negative one. Start each morning by thinking of five things you’re grateful for, such as a warm bed or a nice message from a friend. Do the same in the evenings just before you go

to sleep.

*Anna Badcock, coach, [avitacoaching.com](http://avitacoaching.com)*

## Monitor your triggers

When we feel upset or hurt by something someone says, it's a good opportunity to take a look at what we're holding on to and let it go. If you notice yourself being triggered, write down the beliefs you have about yourself in that moment, as well as your thoughts about the situation and the other person. The more familiar you get with your own baggage and triggers, the less power they will have over you.

*Chris Finn, performance coach, [chris-finn.com](http://chris-finn.com)*



Write down and reflect on the habits and beliefs that don't serve you well.

Illustration: Adam Higton/The Guardian

## Keep a thought diary

Over time we develop habits and beliefs that don't serve us well. If you're not getting the results you want or you are repeating the same patterns, try keeping a thought diary. This will help you to reflect on some of the situations that are causing you anxiety or unhappiness, reflect on them and

examine changes you might be able to make.

*Merrisha Gordon, life and leadership coach, [merrishagordoncoaching.com](http://merrishagordoncoaching.com)*

## **Make a decluttering plan**

Mess can affect your mood, but it's not always easy to get rid of things or know where to begin. Start by identifying your cluttered hotspots and visualising how you'd like them to look. Break it down into small areas, taking "before" photos so you can monitor your progress. Once you get going, put everything into designated bags for recycling, rubbish, selling and donating.

*Britta Ofori-Kuragu, parenting and wellbeing practitioner, [betterbeingbybritta.com](http://betterbeingbybritta.com)*

## **Rate your stress**

It's easy to sleepwalk into a state of overwhelm when you're working on autopilot. Write down everything you're dealing with and rate the anxiety it's causing you from one to 10. Then work down the list from lowest to highest, putting in place a plan for each situation. Breaking things down into small steps always makes them easier to deal with.

*Kathryn Dunn, cognitive behavioural therapist, [intuitivehypnotherapy.uk](http://intuitivehypnotherapy.uk)*

## **Make a record of your work achievements**

Sometimes it can be hard to recognise our own successes, especially in a fast-paced workplace. Making a record of your achievements on a regular basis will boost your confidence in the short-term and give the starting blocks you need to negotiate a promotion or pay rise next time the opportunity comes up.

*Laurie Macpherson, career mentor, [lauriemacpherson.com](http://lauriemacpherson.com)*

## **Do an energy audit**

What we think of as baggage can often be a habit, situation or environment that is draining us. An energy audit is a simple exercise that helps you to identify the things that are affecting your life. On a page, list your "drainers"

and “energisers” for people, environments, mindsets, habits and things. Once you’re done, you can commit to making tiny adjustments in all the areas you identify.

*Manuel Giudice, coach, [manuelgiudice.com](http://manuelgiudice.com)*

## **Build a list of your support network**

When you’re feeling overwhelmed, it can be hard to know where to turn. By creating a “go-to” list of people for every situation, you’ll always have the support you need on hand. For example, you can include people who are good at practical help or giving advice, as well as friends who are great listeners and will give you the space you need to talk about your feelings.

*Katy Georgiou, psychotherapist and author, [kgcounsellor.com](http://kgcounsellor.com)*

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Ruthie Henshall: 'People in care homes are treated as second-class citizens.'  
Photograph: Teri Pengilley/The Guardian

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# Ruthie Henshall: ‘While MPs were drinking and snogging, I was waving at Mum through a care home window’

[Sam Wollaston](#)

Since Covid, the actor has been fighting for a legal change, determined no one should have to die alone. She discusses Partygate, rule-breaking – and getting drunk with King Charles



[@samwollaston](#)

Mon 10 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Apr 2023 07.20 EDT

One day in June 2020 Ruthie Henshall – actor, singer, dancer, star of musical theatre – went to visit her mother, Gloria, at her residential care home in Suffolk. This was the first time Ruthie had seen her mum for three months – not because she didn’t want to go, or through neglect, but because of lockdown. They had done a few Zoom calls, but there was only one iPad to go around the 50 or so residents in the home, it needed to be booked and there had to be a carer free to help, so it only happened every couple of weeks. And anyway, Gloria, who had Alzheimer’s, didn’t get on very well with Zoom. “She thought she was watching us on television,” says Henshall.

“Visit” is perhaps an exaggeration. Henshall and her two sisters weren’t allowed in; they could only go to the window and wave at their mother inside. “She would wave back – she still recognised us. She couldn’t understand why we couldn’t come in, so she cried.”

That first time Henshall was shocked at the state of her mum. “In three months she had lost so much weight. She was in a chair all day; some days they didn’t have the staff to even get her out of bed. She’d lost the ability to chew so they had to thicken her drinks and mush her food. She had stopped walking and she had stopped talking. It just wasn’t Mum.”

She puts Gloria’s decline down to a lack of contact, lack of conversation, lack of love. Of course these were extraordinary times: Covid was ripping through the place, there were no tests, vaccines were a long way off, 13 residents died in the first two months, the fabric of care was being stretched to breaking point. Henshall understood the carers had to try to keep their charges safe. But it wasn’t doing her mum any good. “For someone with dementia, we are their eyes and their ears, their voice, their memories.”

“People were screaming outside windows at carers because they would take residents away to bring someone else’s loved one to the window. I’ve never seen so many people crying outside a building,” says Henshall, and she includes herself. After the waving visits, which she did every day, she was usually in tears too.

This is how it went for months – waving and tears. The home did set up a tent in the garden, for visits, but there was a plastic sheet between the visitors and residents. “We weren’t allowed contact, or within two metres. She would put her arms out for a hug; we would have to keep saying: ‘Sorry, Mum.’”

Even when it started to open up outside – family bubbles of up to six people, testing, then vaccination – Henshall didn’t get to hug her mum. “They battened down the hatches. They’d lost so many residents, had so many empty rooms and money lost, they weren’t letting people in even when everyone inside had been vaccinated. We had been vaccinated, there was PPE, there were tests; they were still keeping them in their rooms 24/7.”

Henshall thinks basic human rights were being denied. “The right to be with another human being, the right to a family life. People in care homes are treated as second-class citizens – they’re old, so people don’t give a shit. But they’re the people who fought for us, who brought us up, who paved the way for us.”

So she started to make a fuss. She talked to other people, such as Jenny Morrison and Diane Mayhew, who set up [Rights for Residents](#) in 2020, in response to what they said were the inhumane visiting policies placed on care home residents. Henshall became an ambassador for them. The guidance was changing so often no one knew what it was; different care homes were interpreting it in different ways, “depending on what time it was or how the manager felt. It was a postcode lottery.”



Henshall at a Rights for Residents protest at 10 Downing Street, London.  
Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

[Meanwhile in Downing Street ...](#) “That absolute clusterfuck by the government!” Henshall, 56, almost spits. “When I heard about the drinks parties and everything going on there, I remember actually crying. Yes, I’ve done the timeline. While all the parties were going on, while they were snogging in corridors and raising glasses of champagne, I was stood at a window waving at my mum, observing all the fucking rules, like we all did.”

She didn't get to watch Boris Johnson giving evidence to the privileges committee the other day – she was working (rehearsing for 42nd Street; she's also just about to be on the telly, in Coronation Street). But she doesn't for one second buy that he didn't know the rules – his rules – were being broken. “Bollocks!” she says – typically forthright. What gets her most is that he never said sorry. No one did. She slips into an impersonation of the former PM, being shambolic and posh and evasive. “Erm … parties? Vaccine rollout, vaccine rollout, vaccine rollout …”

Henshall lives not far from Clacton-on-Sea, where she made her debut at the West Cliff theatre 38 years ago, aged 18. Since then, she has been in many West End musicals: *She Loves Me* (for which she won an Olivier award), [Crazy for You](#), [Chicago](#), [Peggy Sue Got Married](#), [Marguerite](#). She has been on Broadway, and on the telly, as a judge on *Dancing on Ice*, and on *I'm a Celebrity*, though not in the jungle because that was also during Covid; instead she went hungry in a cold Welsh castle.

Home now is a cosy, Hansel-and-Gretel thatched cottage that she shares with her daughters, Lily and Dolly, and Winnie the cockapoo. She divorced the girls' father, actor and singer Tim Howar, in 2010. She wasn't expecting me today – there was a mix-up over dates, but I was there now, so she let me in and made coffee. “Would you like the cunt mug?” she asks.

Oh. I don't know, maybe? She shows me a comedy mug given to her by a friend with a message on the side: “We can literally only be friends if you are a bit of a cunt.” It is, she admits, one of her favourite words, especially with “ed” at the end, to mean very drunk. Later she will tell me how the current British monarch once got her c … very drunk. No, really.



Onstage at the Theatre Royal Haymarket in Marguerite in 2008. Photograph: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian

Oh go on. Let's do it now – a bit of comic relief within the tragedy. She was dating his brother at the time. Edward! Phew! They met when he was working at the Really Useful [Theatre](#) Company and she was in Cats. One summer Edward took her to Balmoral and they had a cook-out at the lodge on Loch Muick. It all sounds very jolly; Charles gave Ruthie her first ever martini, quickly followed by her second. “The Queen and Margaret started singing hymns and Diana poked me from behind and said: ‘Stop them singing hymns – sing something else.’ And Margaret said: ‘Oh yes, what are you in at the moment?’ I was doing Les Mis so I sang I Dreamed a Dream, after two martinis. I must have changed key at least three times!”

It doesn't really matter whether interviewers like their subjects, and I'm here to talk to her about something specific, but I'm just going to say it anyway: it was a pleasure to spend a couple of hours with Ruthie Henshall. She was warm, welcoming, full of tangents and funny stories; she made me laugh as well as very nearly cry. I guess that's what actors do.

How did we even get on to the royal family? Because we were talking about Partygate, the cheese and wine and leaving drinks, while Henshall was

waving at her mother through a window. And Elizabeth Windsor was [sitting alone in Saint George's Chapel](#), mourning her husband, remember?

We're in the beamy living room now. That's Gloria on the wall, a black-and-white photo of her own coronation, as Miss Ipswich, circa 1950. Gloria became an English and drama teacher. "She would have loved to have been an actress or dancer herself, but she grew up in the war in a very poor family so that was never going to be an option. When I entered the business it was a thrill for her. I think those opening nights were an absolute joy for her."



Gloria, being crowned as Miss Ipswich in the late 1940s. Photograph: Teri Pengilley/The Guardian

They were close but Gloria wasn't an easy woman. She drank, she had a fiery relationship with her husband; Henshall thinks she suffered from depression. "When she got dementia, all that fell away. I know lots of people get vile, but she laughed again and got a kick out of life. For me there was a great healing with my mum." That was taken away again, by Covid, and by care home policy.

Henshall did get in to see her mother again. Properly, not through glass or plastic, but in the flesh. It turned out that government guidance had decided that some care home residents might require additional support from

relatives or friends and had established the role of “essential caregiver”, someone who could come and go more freely and more often. Once she discovered that, Henshall was there, banging on the door, waving it at them, saying if they didn’t let her in she was going to campaign louder. They let her in in April 2021, more than a year after the first lockdown.

“When I first put my arms around her, she buried her head in my chest and moaned and cried. We cannot do without human contact.” The carers too were happy – it was lovely to have someone from outside back in the home and to have a bit of help. One told Henshall that the light had come back into Gloria’s eyes. “I would feed her, massage her, hug her, sing to her.” Maybe I Dreamed a Dream – I should have asked. “When they were all out of the room I would take my mask off and kiss her.”

They had five weeks together. It was only after she was allowed into the home that Henshall realised her mum was dying. One day she noticed Gloria’s breathing had changed. She told the staff, who called an ambulance. They said they could take her to hospital but that Henshall wouldn’t be allowed to go with her. Henshall asked if her mother was in pain, and they told her not, so the ambulance left empty. Henshall wasn’t going to let her go again, and Gloria wasn’t going to go alone.

“I think I have a fear of dying alone,” Henshall says. “The thought of it is horrendous. This is why I am flagging this up to people – it could be you, it could be your loved ones.” Henshall has told her own daughters that if necessary she wants them to take her to Dignitas.

Thousands of people did die alone during the pandemic, forcibly separated from their families. Many stopped eating and drinking, or taking medication because that was something they had control over. Without the emotional support that only a close relative or friend offers, many lost the will to live.

In some ways the Henshalls were lucky, though Ruthie wonders what difference it would have made to Gloria’s health and wellbeing, had she been allowed in sooner. She’s not pointing fingers, naming and shaming. She’s certainly not blaming carers, who are underpaid and undervalued. It’s

about changing the system. “The chances are, if there’s another strain or another pandemic, the same thing will happen again.”

Actually, it is still happening. [Some care homes are still restricting visits](#). “It beggars belief to me that we are still having this conversation, having to fight for rights of residents three years down the line, three years of people being locked down.” Last year, the [care minister, Helen Whately, said](#) she was determined to fix the “misery, despair and anger at being kept away from someone you are desperately worried about” – and yet still it’s not a legal right.

That is what Ruthie Henshall, and the Rights for Residents group, are campaigning for: a new law, so that anyone in a care home or hospital has the right to at least one care supporter – relative or friend – who can give in-person support to them in all circumstances. They’re calling it Gloria’s law, of course.

Gloria didn’t die alone – Ruthie was with her. Not just Ruthie: she did break the rules for once that night, though in the grand scheme of rule-breaking I don’t think anyone is going to get too upset about it. “I snuck my two sisters in. There was a side door – it went straight to the room, there was no danger to anybody else.” They put music on, read to their mother, lay with her, stroked her. “We gave her the exit out of the world we wanted her to have.”

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A demonstrator holding a 'No AI' placard. In Italy, ChatGPT has been banned after the regulator said there appeared to be no legal basis to justify the collection and storage of personal data. Photograph: Wachiwit/Alamy

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

## 'I didn't give permission': Do AI's backers care about data law breaches?

Regulators around world are cracking down on content being hoovered up by ChatGPT, Stable Diffusion and others

*[Alex Hern](#) and [Dan Milmo](#)*

Mon 10 Apr 2023 05.10 EDT Last modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 14.34 EDT

Cutting-edge artificial intelligence systems can help you [escape a parking fine](#), write an [academic essay](#), or fool you into believing [Pope Francis is a fashionista](#). But the virtual libraries behind this breathtaking technology are vast – and there are concerns they are operating in breach of personal data and copyright laws.

The enormous datasets used to train the latest generation of these AI systems, like those behind [ChatGPT](#) and Stable Diffusion, are likely to contain billions of images scraped from the internet, millions of pirated ebooks, the entire proceedings of 16 years of the European parliament and the whole of English-language Wikipedia.

But the industry's voracious appetite for big data is starting to cause problems, as regulators and courts around the world crack down on researchers hoovering up content without consent or notice. In response, AI labs are fighting to keep their datasets secret, or even daring regulators to push the issue.

In Italy, [ChatGPT has been banned](#) from operating after the country's data protection regulator said there was no legal basis to justify the collection and "massive storage" of personal data in order to train the GPT AI. On Tuesday, the Canadian privacy commissioner followed suit with an investigation into the company in response to a complaint alleging "the collection, use and disclosure of personal information without consent".

Britain's data watchdog [expressed its own concerns](#). "Data protection law still applies when the personal information that you're processing comes from publicly accessible sources," said Stephen Almond, the director of technology and innovation at the Information Commissioner's Office.

Michael Wooldridge, a professor of computer science at the University of Oxford, says "large language models" (LLMs), such as those that underpin OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard, hoover up colossal amounts of data.

"This includes the whole of the world wide web – everything. Every link is followed in every page, and every link in those pages is followed ... In that unimaginable amount of data there is probably a lot of data about you and me," he says, adding that comments about a person and their work could also be gathered by an LLM. "And it isn't stored in a big database somewhere – we can't look to see exactly what information it has on me. It is all buried away in enormous, opaque neural networks."

Wooldridge says copyright is a “coming storm” for AI companies. LLMs are likely to have accessed copyrighted material, such as news articles. Indeed the GPT-4-assisted chatbot attached to Microsoft’s Bing search engine cites news sites in its answers. “I didn’t give explicit permission for my works to be used as training data, but they almost certainly were, and now they contribute to what these models know,” he says.

“Many artists are gravely concerned that their livelihoods are at risk from generative AI. Expect to see legal battles,” he adds.

Lawsuits have emerged already, with the stock photo company [Getty Images suing](#) the British startup Stability AI – the company behind the AI image generator Stable Diffusion – after claiming that the image-generation firm violated copyright by using millions of unlicensed Getty Photos to train its system. In the US [a group of artists](#) is suing Midjourney and Stability AI in a lawsuit that claims the companies “violated the rights of millions of artists” in developing their products by using artists’ work without their permission.



A sketch drawn by Kris Kashtanova that the artist fed into the AI program Stable Diffusion and transformed into the resulting image using text prompts. Photograph: Kris Kashtanova/Reuters

Awkwardly for Stability, Stable Diffusion will occasionally spit out pictures with a Getty Images watermark intact, examples of which the photography agency included in its lawsuit. In January, [researchers at Google](#) even managed to prompt the Stable Diffusion system to recreate near-perfectly one of the unlicensed images it had been trained on, [a portrait of the US evangelist Anne Graham Lotz](#).

Copyright lawsuits and regulator actions against [OpenAI](#) are hampered by the company's absolute secrecy about its training data. In response to the Italian ban, Sam Altman, the chief executive of OpenAI, which developed ChatGPT, said: "We think we are following all privacy laws." But the company has refused to share any information about what data was used to train GPT-4, the latest version of the underlying technology that powers ChatGPT.

Even in its "[technical report](#)" describing the AI, the company curtly says only that it was trained "using both publicly available data (such as internet data) and data licensed from third-party providers". Further information is hidden, it says, due to "both the competitive landscape and the safety implications of large-scale models like GPT-4".

Others take the opposite view. EleutherAI describes itself as a "non-profit AI research lab", and was founded in 2020 with the goal of recreating GPT-3 and releasing it to the public. To that end, the group put together the Pile, an 825-gigabyte collection of datasets gathered from every corner of the internet. It includes 100GB of ebooks taken from the pirate site bibliotik, another 100GB of computer code scraped from Github, and a collection of 228GB of websites gathered from across the internet since 2008 – all, the group acknowledges, without the consent of the authors involved.

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Eleuther argues that the datasets in the Pile have all been so widely shared already that its compilation “does not constitute significantly increased harm”. But the group does not take the legal risk of directly hosting the data, instead turning to a group of anonymous “data enthusiasts” called the Eye, whose [copyright takedown policy](#) is a video of a choir of clothed women pretending to masturbate their imaginary penises while singing.

Some of the information produced by chatbots has also been false. ChatGPT has falsely accused a US law professor, Jonathan Turley, of George Washington University, of sexually harassing one of his students - citing a news article that didn’t exist. The Italian regulator had also referred to the fact that ChatGPT’s responses do not “always match factual circumstances” and “inaccurate personal data are processed”.

An annual report into progress in AI showed that commercial players were dominating the industry, over academic institutions and governments.

According to the [2023 AI Index report](#), compiled by California-based Stanford University, last year there were 32 significant industry-produced machine-learning models, compared with three produced by academia. Up until 2014, most of the significant models came from the academic sphere, but since then the cost of developing AI models, including staff and computing power, has risen.

“Across the board, large language and multimodal models are becoming larger and pricier,” the report said. An early iteration of the LLM behind ChatGPT, known as GPT-2, had 1.5bn parameters, analogous to the neurons in a human brain, and cost an estimated \$50,000 to train. By comparison, Google’s PaLM had 540bn parameters and cost an estimated \$8m.

This has raised concerns that corporate entities will take a less measured approach to risk than academic or government-backed projects. Last week a letter whose signatories included Elon Musk and the Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak [called for an immediate pause](#) in the creation of “giant AI experiments” for at least six months. The letter said there were concerns that tech firms were creating “ever more powerful digital minds” that no one could “understand, predict, or reliably control”.

Dr Andrew Rogoyski, of the Institute for People-Centred AI at the University of Surrey, in England, said: “Big AI means that these AIs are being created purely by large profit-driven corporates, which unfortunately means that our interests as human beings aren’t necessarily well represented.

He added: “We have to focus our efforts on making AI smaller, more efficient, requiring less data, less electricity, so that we can democratise access to AI.”

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History in the making ... Griggs dressed as Lady Katherine Champernowne at Compton Castle in 2021. Photograph: Courtesy of Rosemary Griggs

[A new start after 60](#)[Life and style](#)

## **A new start after 60: I left the civil service – and started dressing in Tudor**

## costume

When she retired, Rosemary Griggs discovered a passion for researching 16th-century clothes. It led her to another adventure: telling the stories of history's forgotten women



[Emma Beddington](#)

Mon 10 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT

Rosemary Griggs has had two retirements, she says. Her first adventure, after retiring from the civil service at 55, was when she and husband, David, “did the sort of thing you would never advise your kids to do”: they bought a wooden house on stilts on 20 acres of rainforest in Belize (where David had worked for the Foreign Office). They also travelled extensively around Central America. But when David experienced a period of poor health, Griggs says: “That globetrotting bit of life came to an end.” Her “second retirement” has involved a very different kind of adventuring, through history, and in the guise of a Tudor noblewoman.

Back home in Devon, Griggs says, “it soon became clear that pottering in my garden and tending my allotment would not be enough for me”. When she was 63, she started volunteering at a nearby National Trust property,

Compton Castle, and as part of her work there was invited to get involved with making a Tudor costume. Despite not having done any dressmaking since school, she agreed.

Her initial attempts to create a 16th-century costume were, she says “not particularly historically accurate”. She used patterns, but was unhappy with the result: “I started to do a bit more digging.” That, however, is something of an understatement: she followed an online course on the history of royal fashion and read extensively around the subject. She also ventured into social media, discovering a supportive, friendly community of people fascinated by and expert in reproducing historical clothing. “My son said: ‘Mum, you’ve got to be a bit careful – are you sure you want to do this?’ But I have to say it’s been brilliant.” And now, while she’s active on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), Griggs also shares her discoveries and creations [on her own website](#).



Griggs at Dartington Hall, Devon in 2021. Photograph: Courtesy of Rosemary Griggs

There was a huge amount to learn: the outfits of wealthy 16th-century women were a complex assembly of elements: shift, full skirt and outer gown, with separate, elaborate sleeves, underpinnings and accessories. Re-

creating these clothes involves a lot of detective work, trying to work out what was worn and how, when historical records on this kind of day-to-day detail of women's lives are slim to nonexistent: "It's a bit like experimental archaeology, I suppose: trying it out and seeing what works."

But Griggs's costume-making research provoked a deeper interest in the history of the period, and she became fascinated in one 16th-century woman in particular who was connected to Compton Castle. Lady Katherine Champernowne was the mother of the explorers and colonisers Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Humphrey Gilbert. "She's a remarkable woman, mother of eight, possibly nine children; she married twice, and children from both marriages did quite extraordinary things. I thought she is someone; she deserves to have her story told."

In parallel with researching Katherine's life, Griggs started talking to castle visitors while dressed in period costume. Then, recalling a trip to the [Colonial Williamsburg](#) visitor attraction in the US when her sons were young, she began to wonder if it would be possible to create something more immersive. "I thought maybe I could do something a bit like that and bring this woman to life a bit." Now her in-character performances as Lady Katherine (and sometimes as her maid, Bessie) take her all over the West Country performing regularly for local history societies, WI groups and children.

Her Lady Katherine is, she says, "not haughty nor is she without humour. But she is true to a woman of her status in her time." Playing the part is an entirely new departure for Griggs (barring some amateur theatre at school and presentations in her civil service career), but one she hugely enjoys. "I think it's the feedback you get," she says.



Griggs at Dartington Hall, Devon, last November. Photograph: Courtesy of Rosemary Griggs

She believes the popularity of her shows is down to the way they allow her to bring the period and the person to life for the audience. For children in particular, “if they can walk around you and have a really good look at what you’re wearing, it gets through to them much more than a picture on a wall”. But, she says, they ask the hardest questions: “Can you sit down, and how do you go to the toilet? I always say: ‘You make provision beneath your skirts ...’”

Now 71, Griggs performed 38 shows in 2022, and she’s planning more in 2023, often accompanied by “peasant David”. Her husband, whose health has improved, is a keen folk singer who sometimes contributes Elizabethan songs to the shows, and is on hand for lady’s maid duties, helping Griggs into and out of her regalia. “He’s OK enough to be a peasant!” laughs Griggs.

“We do tend to travel to events with me fully dressed,” she says, remembering “hopeless” attempts to change in tiny toilets. “He drives us all over the West Country and I’m sitting there as the Lady, waving to everyone. I did turn up to vote in full costume a few years ago – we were on our way somewhere and it was voting day; that caused a bit of a stir.”

The rest of her family, she says, are “surprised, amazed, worried because some of them think I’m overdoing it, but delighted I’m doing something that’s rewarding – a whole range of reactions”.

Griggs’s deep immersion in the period and the person also led her to write a novel dramatising Lady Katherine’s life. *A Woman of Noble Wit* was published in 2021. It felt important, she says, to shine more light on an exceptional woman overshadowed by her famous male relations. “‘History’ says it all: it’s *his* story. I want to try to tell *her* story.” She’s now working on a second book, about a lesser-known woman in the same extended family.

Creating and wearing authentic costumes of the era is a vital part of the research and the writing, she says, recalling Hilary Mantel’s comment that to write historical fiction you need to live in your character’s world. “It’s that thing of being able to walk in their shoes and feel what it was like. It tells you things you couldn’t read in a book: you might write about someone running up a spiral staircase but if you’re dressed like that, it’s really quite difficult!”

- [Tell us: has your life taken a new direction after the age of 60?](#)
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## 2023.04.10 - Opinion

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Illustration: Nathalie Lees

[OpinionLabour](#)

## **Why Labour's 'law and order' tribute act feels hollow and overblown**

[Nesrine Malik](#)



The justice system in England and Wales is indeed on its knees. But aping rightwing rhetoric on crime is a high-risk strategy

Mon 10 Apr 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 08.38 EDT

We are squarely into the campaigning for May's local elections across England, and the dominant feeling is of being part of a bizarre exercise in which you are constantly offered things you have not asked for. The disconnect between what Labour and the [Conservatives](#) are campaigning on and people's real lives and needs – following an extended season of strikes and painful inflation – feels more pronounced than ever.

The Tories continue to bang on about small boats and transgender issues. It's dispiriting, but expected. But what about [Labour](#)? If you are sick with anxiety about the rising cost of your essentials, your ability to pay bills at the end of the month, or a host of local concerns such as the closing of leisure facilities, declining town centres and public service infrastructure, most of what you have got so far from the official opposition is a blitz on restoring "law and order".

The pledge to make “Britain’s streets safe”, one of the party’s five missions, has been amplified, but its details somehow remain both vague and oddly specific. Last month, it was laughing gas. The recreational use of nitrous oxide, the [shadow culture secretary said](#), was a “blight on our communities”, causing “littering”, “disruption” and unspecified “antisocial behaviour challenges”. In this, the party was following the government’s lead in supporting a ban, posturing on a minor matter despite what the experts – [who caution against a ban](#) – say. Cannabis also featured in a recent Keir Starmer speech, in which he spoke of it ruining lives in his constituency.

The tone of this “tough on crime” messaging is off – hyperbolic, disciplinarian, and as of last week, it stinks. On Friday, the Labour party ran an ad on social media accusing Rishi Sunak, personally, of not thinking that adults convicted of sexually assaulting children should go to prison. It managed to [draw condemnation](#) from both the Tories and several Labour figures, for being tone deaf at best, or dog-whistling at worst, at a time when [south Asians are accused](#) of being culturally prone to grooming and child abuse.

Reports over the weekend suggest that members of the shadow cabinet, including the shadow home secretary [Yvette Cooper](#), were not consulted about the ad. It’s all symptomatic of a Labour leadership that in its stated intention to appear muscular is hitting all the wrong notes.

There are real problems, real concerns about violent crime in Britain, but Labour’s approach to them is often divorced from talking about the funding crisis that has engulfed our policing, legal systems and support services – in favour of rhetorical shows of force. Spending on youth services in England and Wales was [cut by 70%](#) in less than a decade, while after only three years of austerity, 28% of organisations dealing with sexual and domestic abuse had had [essential services cut](#). These cuts are sometimes [name-checked by Labour](#) as reasons things are in chaos, but instead of pledging to plug the holes the Tories have punched, the party offers vague soundbites about “modernisation”, “raising standards” or proposing laws “with teeth”.

The better-defined pledges are to expand the police force and give it bigger mandates to deal with sexual assault. Considering how fresh the Casey review’s findings are – which spoke of institutional bigotry [in the](#)

Metropolitan police – this is not only not reading the room, but shouting over it.

Labour is the party of law and order. [pic.twitter.com/EP6VXToK9z](https://pic.twitter.com/EP6VXToK9z)

— The Labour Party (@UKLabour) [April 6, 2023](#)

The justice system in England and Wales is so underfunded, and therefore understaffed, that there are not enough judges, defence lawyers and prosecutors to process a huge backlog of cases. In some instances, cases are not being seen through because the physical state of courts is so poor, with mould, overflowing sewage and leaking roofs. Labour says Sunak doesn't believe in locking up child abusers because "under the Tories, 4,500 adults convicted of sexually assaulting children under 16 served no prison time". Let's leave to one side blaming someone who's been prime minister for half a year for figures that date from 2010, and ask: what has actually happened to prosecutions?

For child sexual abuse, they fell by 45% in the second half of the last decade. Between 2010 and 2020, there was a 25% reduction in the Ministry of Justice's budget and cuts to victim support services. The result is an overburdened system where justice feels like a distant prospect. The same goes for adult sexual assault, where delays prompt distressed victims to drop cases altogether.

This is supposed to be easy territory for Starmer. He is, after all, a creature of the law, who says he was profoundly shaped by his tenure as director of public prosecutions from 2008 to 2013. Law and order is both his comfort zone and his chance to give some clear outlines to a blurry self-image. "This is personal," Starmer has said.

That's nice for him, but is it wise? When it comes to talking tough on law and order, as with immigration, the Tories have no reservations about promising the most draconian measures, curbing the right to protest or strike, and regularly dangling red meat in front of voters. Chasing their lead only results in the sort of abject loss of principle that brings us tawdry attack

ads, and in voters' minds may only reinforce the rightwing worldview on justice and crime that the Tories excel in exploiting.

The second issue here is Labour's allergy to politics that in any way violates two sacred principles: that government must be frugal, and that wrong 'uns have no one to blame but themselves. Since it has stopped presenting itself as an anti-austerity party, Labour can only really focus on crime as an issue of goodies and baddies, rather than a complex social problem that has been worsened by underinvestment in deprived communities. At the heart of going along with the "lock 'em up" mentality – egged on by the rightwing press – is the fear of being depicted as a party whose natural tendencies are to spend public money and coddle criminals.

And so, again, we skirt around the real solutions to this country's problems. The overall effect is to create in people's minds the image of Britain as a criminal dystopia, where people are unable to go out at night and youths huddle ominously in parks and public areas getting high and menacing the public. That is a caricature. In the real world, people want to be safe but more urgently need job security, to earn enough money to eat and keep warm, and have places to gather and find some joy, relief and support in communion with others. Instead, they are offered more cops and crackdown. Because dignity is expensive, and fear is cheap.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist

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

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Looking for the larder police? ‘Having recently renovated our kitchen, we were left with three storage boxes stuffed with Satan’s condiments.’  
Photograph: iWebbstock/Alamy

[OpinionFood safety](#)

## **What has my terrifying fridge taught me? I am much too relaxed about best before dates**

[Emma Beddington](#)



In our culinary catacomb, the unwary visitor is greeted by explosive kimchi, mould-capped pesto, tahini like concrete and a vat of vintage vinegars

Mon 10 Apr 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 03.07 EDT

“Does everyone,” the film critic Anne Billson [asked on Twitter](#), “have an evil jar in their fridge?” To which surely the correct answer is: “Only one? Lightweight.” We have a whole fridge shelf dedicated to cursed jars, most much older than Billson’s best-before February 2021 rollmops. There’s a chutney from Christmas 2018, something dark and viscous in a honey jar that definitely isn’t honey and several pots of vegan pesto – a substance that inexplicably goes off quicker than mince left out in the sun – covered in some terrifying bloom. If the [zombie series The Last of Us](#) has taught us anything, it’s to fear anything fungal, so I’m not investigating further.

There were pots of cement-like ancient tahini I’m pretty sure were haunted until my spouse dealt with them

That’s just the tip of the evil jar iceberg. Having recently renovated our kitchen, we were left with three storage boxes stuffed with Satan’s

condiments. The edible stuff has gone back in, and I use “edible” generously: raised in the kitchen of a man whose butter predated Brexit last time I looked, I take an extremely relaxed approach to best before dates. But that leaves us to confront the dregs, and the sticky, dusty truth about ourselves.

There are relics of ill-advised, never-repeated culinary adventures past: dusty maraschinos, hippie shop powders and some pickled ginger of unknown vintage that exhorts me to, “Start your Japanese adventure.” I am not insured for that, thanks. There were pots of cement-like ancient tahini I’m pretty sure were haunted until my spouse dealt with them, giving himself lasting sesame trauma. The real object of dread remains: a jar of kimchi. It’s not that old, but given the explosive potential of fermented cabbage, who wants to take the risk?

You learn a lot from the forgotten reaches of your cupboards, and none of it is good. I need to stop buying rhubarb jam like it’s bitcoin in 2017 and my husband should take a cold, hard look at his vinegar addiction: he discovered a stockpile of five identical unopened bottles of balsamic. I don’t know what post-apocalyptic future we think we’re preparing for, but it’s going to be tart and sour.

- Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist
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‘Going out alone for leisure in Pakistan is seen as strange, but beyond the occasional questioning glance, I realised most people admired it.’

Photograph: Asif Hassan/AFP/Getty Images

[Why I quitPakistan](#)

**I stopped relying on other people to  
make plans – as a woman in Pakistan,  
that’s no small thing**

[Anmol Irfan](#)



My new independence has been met with everything from curiosity to awkward laughter. But this is about me, not them

Mon 10 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 07.07 EDT

When [Lost Migrations](#), an animated film series I'd been waiting to see for months, finally premiered in Karachi earlier this year, I immediately saved the date in my calendar. But instead of doing what I, or anyone around me, would usually do – coordinate with a group of friends – I decided to go alone.

A few years ago, the idea of doing anything alone, much less in [Pakistan](#) as a woman, would have seemed impossible. Women in Pakistan are generally expected to socialise inside, rather than in public (although there are growing attempts to challenge this by women's movements), and many believe there can be safety risks to going out alone.

But quitting having to be dependent on other people to make plans has been my own private revolution. I've got to know myself in entirely new ways.

When I was growing up, the house would always be full of family members and visitors, accompanied by lots of food and loud conversations. As a result, I was great at small talk with other people, but having to sit with my own thoughts – not so much. As I wasn’t used to going out alone and never thought it was even an option, I would often miss events I wanted to attend as my friends weren’t interested.

After I moved to London from Karachi to go to university, I stuck to the same pattern. I missed a gig I really wanted to go to, simply because I didn’t have anyone to go with. But after a few months, I decided to try something different: I decided to go to the Imperial War Museum and very excitedly termed it a “date with myself”, planning and replanning every detail of how my day would go. After growing up in a family in which I was rarely ever even alone in the house, much less outside of it, my day at the museum felt quite the adventure.

Sitting in a cafe alone before I headed to the museum was the first time I’d ever been out to eat alone, and initially the silence seemed deafening. I kept thinking that people would be staring at me or judging me, but slowly the discomfort began to ease. I had a list of specific activities I wanted to try in London – and after that first time I went out alone without having to fit in with anyone else’s schedule, or coordinate plans, something just clicked. I didn’t wait to find someone to do things with: I just did them myself.

When I moved back to Pakistan during the pandemic, going out – much less planning activities alone – was a far-off dream, thanks to lockdown. When things finally did start moving towards a kind of normal again, I found that what I’d learned in London had changed my approach for good. Going out alone for leisure in Pakistan is seen as strange, so I was definitely more conscious taking that step here – but beyond the occasional questioning glance, I realised most people admired it. Most of all, I admired myself a lot more. I’d always struggled with confidence, and this new approach has slowly changed the way I saw myself.

- Anmol Irfan is a freelance journalist and founder of the Pakistani community magazine [Perspective](#)

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

[Name and shame](#)[Celebrity](#)

**I showed Bruce Springsteen my Bruce Springsteen tattoo. He said he didn't like it**

[Emma Forrest](#)



In the first of her nine weekly columns, the author and screenwriter looks back on a life shaped by her icons, from Tim Curry to the Beastie Boys

Mon 10 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 03.44 EDT

When this newspaper asked me to write a weekly personal column I said I'd do it, if I could refract it through the icons who shaped me, a different one each issue. The section of my 2022 memoir [Busy Being Free](#) that seemed to resonate most (for readers and me) was the year my marriage collapsed, 2016, in the time spanning the deaths of David Bowie, Prince and George Michael. How I feared that if we didn't file for divorce in a timely fashion, the icons of our youth would keep dying before they were due.

I decided this on a beach in California, where, before I returned to London, I was still living. Most people I know vacillate between believing their lives are meaningless and believing that their feelings affect the ocean tides.

Iconography, both hypnotic and as suspect as chem trails, has intertwined with my life from the very start. When I was a tiny girl my babysitters included my parents' friend June Roberts (who would go on to write the hit

film [Mermaids](#)) and her roommate Tim Curry, who had recently filmed the Rocky Horror Picture Show. To surprise my parents, they taught me how to smoke like Tatum O’Neal’s character Addie Pray in Paper Moon. My parents were surprised.

Among celebrities who are worshipped as particularly gifted or beautiful, it’s the ones who are themselves worshipful I find most interesting

Just as our teachers were surprised when my sister and I proclaimed ourselves “sweet transvestites from Transylvania”, time warping with a precision we never managed in ballet.

“There was nothing wrong with us watching Rocky Horror at that age,” I decided when we were adults, “It’s no worse than a cartoon.” My sister went quiet a moment: “They slaughtered Meat Loaf.” To this day, my mother wishes she’d set stricter boundaries and I agree with her, but I dwell even more on how actors today aren’t brave enough to be like Curry and go so over the top it goes all the way around and becomes subtle again.

When I moved to New York at the age of 21, celebrities were so present that one understood Warhol could not have thrived anywhere else, his “icon” portraits of Elvis and Liz Taylor the logical end point of his childhood in the Byzantine Catholic Church in Pittsburgh. Pop culture worship was absolutely key to Patti Smith’s development as an artist. She kept praying to Dylan even after she was an icon, too, and Dylan knew exactly who she was.

Smith had intense love stories with downtown celebrities who became cultural icons (actor Sam Shepard and photographer Robert Mapplethorpe) and her devotion to them may be what pushed them to the next level, energetically and pragmatically, too. Actor and designer Chloë Sevigny has always made fan art, her veneration of everyone from Morrissey to Gena Rowlands, once in fanzines, is now on her Instagram.

Among celebrities who are worshipped as particularly gifted or beautiful, it’s the ones who are themselves worshipful I find most interesting.

In the next chapter of my American life, screenwriting took me to Los Angeles, where, in the city of cars, I integrated my experiences from London Transport. I was on a plane heading to a film festival when an apparently crazy man sat in the seat next to me. I sensed without looking up how important it was not to make eye contact with him as he sang “Troo loo loo” all the way to Cannes. I had internalised enough bus rides to know my eyes must not leave my magazine. But the man seemed so happy about his humming that I started to doubt myself, and when the plane landed and I could no longer look away, I saw it was Matthew McConaughey. And this experience infected me as Addie Pray had – a new layer, a new flavour – because my daughter, born of an Australian man and English woman, grew up to have on certain phrases a Texas drawl, from the two animated films McConaughey released in 2016.

At a Golden Globes party, I showed Bruce Springsteen my Bruce Springsteen tattoo and he frowned and said he didn’t like it. I didn’t add that it was multipurpose: saying “Badlands”, it could also be used to entice a Terence Malick fan into my bed, which I had done. Also kept to myself that I went on a date with a man because he was namechecked in a Beastie Boys song. Since he was safe inside the song, I felt safe inside his car.

I am a cult author, asked in the street maybe five times a year: “Are you Emma Forrest?” And I am Emma Forrest. But it’s a surname invented by my grandfather to combat anti-semitism, so there are other more legitimate Emma Forrests, some with their own internet fame, like the Scottish judo star or the woman, also Scottish, who consumes 3,000 calories of fizzy drinks a day.

I know about them because my mum has a Google alert no matter how many times I ask her to terminate it, just as my father could never be dissuaded from cutting out and keeping the many clips of my writing that have been mocked in Private Eye Pseud’s Corner. The “shame” in “name and shame” is all mine.

My life has had many curious chemtrails in the sky. I find reflections of my own best and worst qualities in myriad artists, actors, architects and comedians, to be discussed each week. “We all perform,” said the great photographer Richard Avedon, “It’s what we do for each other deliberately

or unintentionally. It's a way of telling about ourselves in the hope of being recognised as what we'd like to be." I do and don't feel great shame about this. If you come back for my next article, I'll tell you why.

*Emma Forrest is the author of [Busy Being Free](#), Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.99*

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## 2023.04.10 - Around the world

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Billionaire Tord Ueland Kolstad said he had no friends when he moved to Lucerne, Switzerland, but now there were now several Norwegians.  
Photograph: Berenika\_L/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[Norway](#)

## **Super-rich abandoning Norway at record rate as wealth tax rises slightly**

Flood moving abroad has come as a shock and is costing tens of millions in lost tax receipts

*Rupert Neate* Wealth correspondent

[@RupertNeate](#)

Mon 10 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 11.05 EDT

A record number of super-rich Norwegians are abandoning [Norway](#) for low-tax countries after the centre-left government increased wealth taxes to 1.1%.

More than 30 Norwegian billionaires and multimillionaires left Norway in 2022, according to research by the newspaper Dagens Næringsliv. This was more than the total number of super-rich people who left the country during the previous 13 years, it added. Even more super-rich individuals are expected to leave this year because of the increase in wealth tax in November, costing the government tens of millions in lost tax receipts.

Many have moved to Switzerland, where taxes are much lower. They include billionaire fisher turned industrial tycoon Kjell Inge Røkke who moved to the Italian-speaking city of Lugano, just over the border from his favoured hangout Lake Como and the fashion capital Milan.

Røkke, 64, is the fourth-richest Norwegian, with an estimated fortune of about NOK 19.6bn (£1.5bn). In [an open letter](#), he said: “I’ve chosen Lugano as my new residence – it is neither the cheapest nor has the lowest taxes – but in return, it is a great place with a central location in Europe … For those close to the company and to me, I am just a click away.”

His relocation will cost Norway about NOK 175m in lost tax revenue a year. Last year, Røkke was the country’s highest taxed individual. Dagens Næringsliv calculated that he has paid about NOK 1.5bn in tax since 2008.

His move to Switzerland follows a relatively small increase in tax aimed at the country’s super-rich, who face wealth taxes at both the local and state level. That includes a municipal tax of 0.7% on assets in excess of NOK 1.7m for individuals, or NOK 3.4m for couples. There is also a state wealth tax rate of 0.3% on assets above NOK 1.7m. In November, the government raised the state rate to 0.4% for assets above NOK 20m for individuals, and NOK 40m couples, taking the maximum wealth tax rate to 1.1%.

Ole Gjems-Onstad, a professor emeritus at the Norwegian Business School, said he estimated that those who had left the country had a combined fortune of at least NOK 600bn.

“In my opinion it is a little bit like Brexit. Norway has no great tradition of self-harm, and the flood of entrepreneurs moving abroad has come as something of a shock,” Gjems-Onstad, said. “Some politicians are, as you

know, blaming the wealthy people moving, but I think many ordinary people quite simply do not like that our best investors are leaving.”

Tord Ueland Kolstad, a retail estate and Salmon farming investor, with a fortune of about NOK 1.5bn, has moved from Bodø in northern Norway to Lucerne in Switzerland. “This was not what I wanted, but the toughened and increased tax rules of the current government means that I, as the founder and responsible owner, have no choice,” he told the Norwegian broadcaster TV 2.

Kolstad said the increase in the wealth tax meant he would pay just over NOK 6m, which he complained would mean he would need to pay himself a dividend of NOK 10m to take into account increased dividend tax.

“This is unfortunately the reality of today’s tax policy. It is unjustifiable to impose such costs on the company when you want to create new jobs,” he said.

Kolstad told the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten that when he first arrived in Switzerland he did not have any friends there. ”But now there are several of us [Norwegians], so we meet every now and then for coffee.”

Erlend Grimstad, a state secretary in the ministry of finance, told the Guardian he hoped wealthy Norwegians would return “in time”.

“If you have enjoyed success and become rich in Norway, we hope you will stay and continue taking part in the Norwegian society,” he said. “We do encourage Norwegians to succeed in creating value and become rich. And we believe the Norwegian model with a strong public welfare system and high education levels are important factors in making that success possible.

“The model in Norway is that everyone should contribute relevant to ability and therefore those that have a greater ability to pay taxes, should pay a little more.”

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Xu Zhiyong, left, and Ding Jiaxi in Guangzhou in an undated image. A Chinese court has jailed the two human rights lawyers for more than a decade each on subversion charges.

Photograph: Reuters

[China](#)

## **China jails two leading human rights lawyers after closed-door trial**

Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiaxi, prominent figures advocating for improved civil rights, given lengthy jail terms in latest crackdown on dissent

*Reuters in Beijing*

Mon 10 Apr 2023 02.46 EDT Last modified on Mon 10 Apr 2023 03.24 EDT

A Chinese court has sentenced two prominent human rights lawyers to jail terms of more than a decade each, a relative and rights groups say, in the latest move in a years-long crackdown on civil society by President Xi Jinping.

Xu Zhiyong, 50, and Ding Jiaxi, 55, were put on trial behind closed doors in June last year on charges of state subversion at a court in Linshu county in the north-eastern province of Shandong, relatives said at the time.

Xu and Ding are prominent figures in the New Citizens Movement, which sought greater transparency into the wealth of officials and for Chinese citizens to be able to exercise their civil rights as written in the constitution.

Ding's wife, Luo Shengchun, who lives in the United States and has pursued his case with US State Department officials, told Reuters about the sentencing but said she had no further details.

"Their lawyers are forbidden from publishing court verdict documents and they do not dare to reveal where they were sentenced and under what charges," she said.

She would keep pressing for information, she added. "I will not let them put Ding Jiaxi and Xu Zhiyong in jail so easily."

Xu received a jail term of 14 years and Ding was sentenced to 12 years on Monday, she said.

The court and China's justice ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The two had been held for more than three years, with Ding taken by police in December 2019 shortly after attending a gathering in southern China with about 20 other lawyers and activists.

Then he was held incommunicado for almost six months while being routinely tortured to extract a confession, his lawyer Peng Jian told the court.

Xu, a close friend of Ding's who once wrote a searing open letter calling on Xi to step down, was detained in February 2020 after going into hiding.

Authorities had barred their lawyers from contact with foreign media, Luo added, in a practice that has become increasingly common in recent years so as to stifle publicity around rights-related cases.

Both had previously been imprisoned for their activism.

“The cruelly farcical convictions and sentences meted out to Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiaxi show President Xi’s unstinting hostility towards peaceful activism,” said Yaqiu Wang, a senior China researcher at New York-based Human Rights Watch.

Their secret hearings were “riddled with procedural problems and allegations of mistreatment”, the rights group added.

China has dramatically clamped down on dissent since Xi came to power in 2012. Hundreds of rights lawyers were detained and dozens jailed in a series of arrests commonly known as “709” cases, referring to a crackdown on 9 July 2015.

China rejects criticism of its human rights record, saying it is a country with rule of law and that jailed rights lawyers and activists are criminals who have broken the law.

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China sends dozens of warplanes and warships towards Taiwan – video  
[Taiwan](#)

## **China ends military drills after simulating strikes on Taiwan**

Ship-launched fighter jets have previously never been seen in island's air defence zone

*[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei  
[@heldavidson](#)*

Mon 10 Apr 2023 11.02 EDTFirst published on Mon 10 Apr 2023 00.37 EDT

China's military exercises targeting [Taiwan](#) have concluded after three days in which it encircled the island, simulated missile attacks on cities, and practised ship-launched strikes from the east.

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) said on Monday the combat readiness drills had "comprehensively tested the troops under actual combat conditions".

Taiwan's defence ministry said it would continue to pay close attention to the PLA's activities. On the final day more than 100 PLA warplanes and ships were detected near Taiwan, with new strike tactics being practised.

Beijing launched [the exercises](#) on Saturday in response to Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen, [meeting the US house speaker, Kevin McCarthy](#), in Los Angeles last week.

Tsai said that the military exercises caused instability in Taiwan and across the region and were not the actions of a responsible major country.

Beijing objects to any international support of Taiwan, which it considers to be a Chinese province. Taiwan, a democracy of 23 million people, rejects the claim.

The drills did not match the scale of those launched in retaliation to a Taipei visit by McCarthy's predecessor, Nancy Pelosi, which included missile launches, but did appear to show an escalation in the Chinese military's training for strikes on Taiwan, observers said.

The defence ministry does not usually give the positions of PLA ships it had detected, but a map of PLA aircraft detected on Sunday show J-15 fighter jets east of Taiwan, in the western Pacific. On Monday afternoon the ministry said J-15s were again spotted throughout the day, but did not give locations.

The J-15s have never been seen inside Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ) before, and are known to be launched from two PLA aircraft carriers, including the Shandong which had been tracked by Taiwan and Japan sailing past Taiwan into waters to its south-east late last week.

On Monday Japan confirmed its military had responded to the drills, scrambling jets in response to the PLA's aircraft launches.

Between 6am and 6pm on Monday, Taiwan's defence ministry detected 91 PLA aircraft and 12 ships inside its air defence identification zone (ADIZ). The ADIZ is a large area monitored for defence purposes, and the PLA assets did not enter sovereign Taiwan territory. However the ministry said 54 planes were detected on Taiwan's side of the median line – a de facto border in the international waters of the Taiwan Strait. It was not clear whether they had crossed the line.

The tally, which also included Su-30s, nuclear-capable H-6 bombers, anti-submarine helicopters, and surveillance planes, marked an escalation for what the PLA had said was the final day of these military drills. In the 24 hours to 6am Monday, Taiwan's defence ministry detected 70 PLA aircraft and 11 ships inside its ADIZ.

The launch of J-15s suggested the PLA was “practising strikes on Taiwan from an encirclement-style posture”, the independent defence analyst Ben Lewis said.

“I view this as an escalation in how the PLA operates around Taiwan, as to our knowledge it has never happened before. Second, these activities provide Chinese carrier pilots with the opportunity to practise this kind of operation in the area where they may execute them during an actual conflict.”

The PLA also claimed to have simulated joint precision missile strikes on “key targets” in Taiwan, according to state media and an animation posted online by the PLA’s Eastern Theatre Command which depicted attacks on Taipei and Kaohsiung from missile bases on the Chinese mainland.

On Monday a spokesperson for China’s foreign ministry said Taiwan independence and cross-strait peace were “mutually exclusive”, and blamed the tensions on Taipei and unnamed “foreign forces” supporting it.

“If we want to protect peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait we must firmly oppose any form of Taiwan independence separatism,” the spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, said.

Taiwan’s defence ministry on Monday repeated that it was operating under a principle of “not escalating conflicts and not causing disputes”, but had conducted response drills including shore-based anti-ship missile vehicles and rapid deployment of missile speedboats.

The J-15 launches also prompted a military response from Japan. On Monday its ministry of defence confirmed it had scrambled jets after recording takeoffs and landings by about 80 fighter jets and 40 helicopters from the Shandong.

Japan’s ministry also provided [tracking maps](#) of the Shandong and four other ships in its company, revealing it to have moved closer to Taiwan’s east coast between Friday and Sunday.

Speaking after Chinese and Japanese officials met for a regular discussion about maritime disputes, Japan's chief cabinet secretary, Hirokazu Matsuno, told reporters Japan was watching the drills closely.

"The importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is not only important for the security of Japan, but also for the stability of the international community as a whole," he said.

The US has said it is watching developments closely. On Monday the US navy confirmed it had conducted a freedom of navigation exercise in the South China Sea, near the disputed Spratly Islands. The US conducts such missions on a semi-regular basis, to challenge various countries' claims over international waters, consistently drawing an angry response from China. A short time later, Beijing accused the US of having "illegally intruded".

The drills have so far been far smaller in scale than those launched after Pelosi's visit, which lasted more than a week and surrounded Taiwan's main island with multiple live-fire exercise zones and missile launches, significantly disrupting air and sea traffic. Chinese officials at the time said the exercises mimicked a blockade China may one day use against Taiwan.

On Sunday a former Taiwan legislator, Guo Zhengliang, told local media that these drills were "not as obvious" as last August, but seemed "closer to the actual state of war" in the specifics of operation. Guo noted the involvement of all three branches of the PLA, coastguard patrols and heavy assets including the Shandong.

Chinese state media, the People's Daily, said in an editorial on Monday that both sets of drills sent a "clear message that China will not tolerate any challenge on Taiwan". It added: "Beijing has repeatedly stressed that the Taiwan question is its domestic affair and national reunification is its core interest. Any such provocations will always be met with a firm response."

One of the visiting leaders, the French president, Emmanuel Macron, said Europe had no interest in an acceleration of the crisis over Taiwan and should pursue a strategy independent of both Washington and Beijing.

The drills have had little effect on daily life in Taiwan and, apart from extensive media coverage on day one, have not registered among the top headlines. Coverage of Macron's comments focused largely on criticisms and accusations that he was “pandering” to Xi Jinping.

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A tree blown down by Cyclone Gabrielle in Auckland, New Zealand. The city has been struck by a tornado, uprooting more trees and lifting roofs off homes. Photograph: Xinhua/REX/Shutterstock

[New Zealand](#)

## **‘A scary scene’: Auckland, still recovering from deadly flooding, hit by tornado**

Residents of New Zealand’s largest city say people are ‘heartbroken’ at fresh damage wreaked by storm

*[Helen Livingstone](#)*

Sun 9 Apr 2023 23.14 EDT Last modified on Sun 9 Apr 2023 23.22 EDT

Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city, has been hit by a tornado, two months after the wider region was [devastated by Cyclone Gabrielle](#) and three months after the city was struck by deadly flooding.

Auckland Emergency Management said it began receiving reports of “localised havoc” around 9pm on Sunday, according to [the NZ Herald](#). Authorities received more than 30 calls, with roofs lifted off homes and trees toppled.

“It’s a scary scene here in the neighbourhood,” East Tāmaki resident Manpreet Braar told the paper. “People are heartbroken seeing the condition of their houses and roofs. You can sense the fear factor upon having a look at the damage.”

Another resident [told Stuff](#) news website the tornado had smashed his dining room window and sent glass shards flying across the room “like bullets”. Priyank Aro said his family “feared for our life” and fled outside to find that the “scene was really bad”, with trees and fences knocked down.

No injuries were reported.

Firefighters helped residents put tarpaulins over their roofs overnight and Fire and Emergency incident controller David McKeown said most of the damage reports were from homes located in about 11 streets from Golflands to East Tāmaki.

New Zealand was also hit by more than 14,000 lighting strikes in the 12 hours to 6am on Monday, the Met Service said, with more heavy rain and thunderstorms forecast for the South Island.

Police in Nelson said another tornado struck the Upper Moutere area on Monday, with 12 houses either losing their roofs or having them lifted and residents in the surrounding area reporting power outages.

- ⚡ From 6pm yesterday to 6am this morning, 14,002 lightning strikes were recorded, 694 over land
- ◻ The top 3 regions for lightning activity were Waikato (228 strikes), Nelson/Tasman (149 strikes), and Bay of Plenty (110 strikes)

□ More on the way today from the Tasman Sea  
[pic.twitter.com/kXNfJPCZP5](https://pic.twitter.com/kXNfJPCZP5)

— MetService (@MetService) [April 9, 2023](#)

Four people were killed in January when Auckland, a city of 1.6 million people on New Zealand's North Island, was hit by [what insurers said was the “biggest climate event”](#) in the country's history.

Flood waters swept through streets and down highways, causing landslides and sink holes and temporarily shuttering [Auckland](#) airport.

That disaster was followed weeks later by Cyclone Gabrielle, which killed 11 people and left thousands displaced as flood waters and landslides destroyed homes. The prime minister, Chris Hipkins, [called a national state of emergency](#) and said it was “the most significant weather event New Zealand has seen in this century”.

Climate change is causing episodes of heavy rainfall to become more common and more intense in New Zealand, though the impact varies by region.

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A 78-year-old woman has been charged after allegedly robbing a bank in Pleasant Hill, Missouri, and demanding '13,000 small bills' from the teller.  
Photograph: Mykola Tys/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

## US news

# **US woman, 78, charged with bank robbery for third time**

Prosecutors say the woman was later stopped in a car with cash scattered on its floor and was 'very stern' with police

*Associated Press in Harrisonville, Missouri*

Sun 9 Apr 2023 21.19 EDT Last modified on Tue 11 Apr 2023 23.21 EDT

A 78-year-old woman with two past bank robbery convictions faces new charges after allegedly carrying out a heist in Missouri during which she handed a teller a note that said "I didn't mean to scare you".

Bonnie Gooch has been jailed on a \$25,000 bond after she was charged with one count of stealing or attempting to steal from a financial institution in the

holdup last Wednesday in Pleasant Hill, the Kansas City Star reported.

Gooch was convicted of robbing a California bank in 1977 and one in the Kansas City suburb of Lee's Summit in 2020. Her probation over the second heist ended in November 2021.

Court documents filed in Cass County in the latest case said the robbery note demanded “13,000 small bills” and added: “Thank you sorry I didn’t mean to scare you.”

The woman allegedly told the teller not to count the money and “just give it” to her.

Surveillance video also captured her banging on the counter, asking the teller to hurry, Cass County prosecutors said.

Witnesses said the suspect was dressed all in gray and wearing plastic gloves, a black N95 mask and black sunglasses, the City Star reported.

Prosecutors said she smelled strongly of alcohol when officers stopped her less than 2 miles (3.2km) away, with cash scattered on the car’s floor. She was “very stern” with officers.

“It’s just sad,” said Pleasant Hill’s police chief, Tommy Wright, adding that the suspect had no diagnosed ailments.

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## Headlines saturday 15 april 2023

- 'Huge cost for patients' Further NHS nurses' strikes present 'severe challenge' in England
- Analysis NHS England seems destined for months of strikes
- Exclusive UK families tell of threats and police warnings over children playing in street
- Cars, dog.poo, and delivery drivers Why kids don't play out anymore



Royal College of Nursing members voted to reject the government's pay offer. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/ZUMA Press Wire/REX/Shutterstock

[Nursing](#)

## Further England nurses' strikes present 'severe challenge' to NHS

NHS leader says threat of joint strike with junior doctors could pose hardest challenge yet

[Miranda Bryant](#)

Sat 15 Apr 2023 05.03 EDT Last modified on Sat 15 Apr 2023 05.27 EDT

A 48-hour nurses' strike in England in May will present "severe challenges", and the threat of coordinated industrial action with junior doctors could pose the "most difficult challenge" to date, an [NHS](#) boss has said.

Speaking after a four-day junior doctors' strike ended at 7am on Saturday, Sir Julian Hartley, the chief executive of NHS Providers, said [fresh strike action](#) announced by the Royal College of Nursing from 30 April until 2

May, and the possibility of stoppages continuing into next winter, was “extremely worrying and concerning”.

Patricia Marquis, the RCN’s England director, said on Friday that the union would have to consider coordinated strike action with junior doctors.

Although Hartley said it was “good news” that members of Unison had voted to accept an NHS pay offer, he told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: “The prospect of another nurses’ strike at that point will obviously present trusts with severe challenges – just when they’ve come out of dealing with the four-day junior doctors’ strike.”

The next strike, over the first May bank holiday, will not exempt any staff, including those working in emergency, cancer and intensive care. Hartley said this would put “even more pressure on existing staff” and make it “even more challenging to cover those gaps”.

So far, the NHS strikes have led to the postponement of about 330,000 procedures and appointments. Hartley said the impact of the junior doctors’ strike was still being calculated.

“So the cost of this for patients and services is hugely significant, which is really why we do need to see an end, and a resolution, to this industrial action,” Hartley said.

The prospect of coordinated strike action between RCN nurses and junior doctors would “present enormous challenges”, he added.

“Junior doctors and nurses are incredibly important parts; they’re central, pivotal, to the delivery of care across all sectors – hospitals, community services, mental health services.

“So obviously the prospect of both groups being out at the same time would present enormous challenges to the service and that would be really, really the most difficult challenge I think we’ve faced yet, if we were to have to deal with that scenario.”

Hartley said he did not want to see the strikes continuing until the end of the year and was waiting for the results of ballots by other unions later this month.

“Let’s see what picture emerges over the coming weeks, but really I think we all want to see a resolution to the industrial action,” he said.

“It’s gone on for quite a while now, we don’t want it to continue for the rest of the year when we’ve got so much to attend to in terms of the priorities the NHS has to deliver for patients, particularly those that have waited a long time for their operations, appointments and treatment.”

On Friday, Marquis told the BBC’s Newsnight that the RCN was in conversation with the British Medical Association. “Not specifically around coordinating, but really to understand what their asks are, what our asks are, and also to understand how we can both work in a coordinated way,” she said.

Nick Hulme, the chief executive of East Suffolk and North Essex NHS foundation trust, said the latest round of nurses’ strikes would “significantly increase the risk to patients”.

He said the strikes were a “massive distraction from the work we should be doing”.

He told the Today programme on Saturday: “People are tired, there has been a huge amount of good will, there is always a lot of good will relied upon when delivering healthcare and that has been stretched during the industrial action previously from the nurses and now from the junior doctors.”

Hulme said strike action being coordinated by doctors and nurses could “cause a risk I can’t quite comprehend”.



Steve Barclay at Kingston hospital in February. The health secretary faces a fraught and complex period. Photograph: Lauren Hurley/No10 Downing Street

[NHS](#)

[Analysis](#)

## Why NHS in England appears destined for months of further strikes

[Heather Stewart](#) Special correspondent

Rejection of pay deal underlines nurses' fury at state of health service as RCN's handling of dispute is questioned

Fri 14 Apr 2023 12.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 16.20 EDT

Friday's [announcement by the Royal College of Nursing](#) that its members had rejected the pay offer on the table for NHS workers dashed any remaining hopes in Downing Street of drawing a neat line under months of debilitating strike action across the public sector.

As nurses kicked off the first strike action in the RCN's history before Christmas, the union was demanding a pay rise of 19%. In January, its general secretary, Pat Cullen, urged the health secretary, Steve Barclay, to "meet me halfway here", and conceded that 10% might be acceptable.

But after intensive talks with Barclay, she was effectively forced to ask her own members to meet her halfway, by accepting 5% – plus a one-off payment worth up to 8.2% – for the lowest-paid [NHS](#) staff.

Like the RCN, most other health unions, barring Unite, recommended the offer to their members. They were cheered by the fact the government had reluctantly accepted it would have to reopen the pay settlement for 2022-23.

Union sources said Barclay had appreciated for many weeks that this would have to form part of any acceptable offer, but it took him some time to win Downing Street over.

The payment for this year is just a one-off, and not part of a permanent increase (it is "non-consolidated", in union lingo). But combined with the 5% rise from April, NHS negotiators felt the deal marked a victory of sorts – and crucially, having seen Barclay battle to get even this much out of the Treasury, that it was as far as the government would go.

Yet despite nurses having a reputation for being among the least militant of public sector workers, Cullen has been unable to take the RCN's members with her.

Nurses' resolve to keep fighting for a better settlement underlines their fury at the dire state of the NHS and the conditions in which they are being forced to work. But others involved in the talks also question the RCN's handling of the dispute.

Cullen infuriated fellow health unions when she agreed to suspend strikes and go into "intensive" talks with Barclay, without the others being involved.

Some feared Cullen was hoping to win special treatment for nurses, at the expense of solidarity across the wider workforce, and that the government

was hoping to “pick off” the RCN.

Ministers subsequently caved in to the reality that nurses were part of a much wider workforce, all covered by a single bargaining unit, known as “agenda for change”.

Once the other unions – which include Unison and the GMB – joined the talks, a pay offer emerged which, with the exception of Unite, the negotiators felt they could recommend.

Yet it was a far cry from the 19% the RCN had initially mooted, helping to fuel a backlash from a well-organised group of unhappy grassroots members who felt Cullen had caved in too easily.

“The RCN got itself into that position that no union negotiator should ever get into, where you come to an agreement you then have to go and sell to your members,” said one union source.

The RCN claimed as a win a promise of consultations on a new “pay spine” specifically for nurses, from 2024-25, which was set out in an [open letter from Barclay](#). But with no detail about what that could actually mean for pay levels, it appears to have cut little ice with members.

The RCN is now gearing up for more strikes, as well as preparing for a re-ballot that could renew its mandate for further action for another six months. Cullen’s position, after she tried and failed to sell the deal to her own side, appears difficult, to say the least.

Having tried to resolve the long-running dispute, Barclay now faces a potentially fraught and complex period, with some NHS unions accepting the offer and expecting it to be paid, while others prepare to get their placards out once again.

At the same time, the junior doctors’ strike rumbles on, with a gaping chasm remaining between the 35% being demanded by the BMA’s junior doctors’ committee, and anything the government appears likely to offer – and the union refusing to call off strikes for talks to take place.

The committee's co-chair Dr Rob Laurenson was forced to apologise for taking paid leave to attend a wedding while his colleagues were on the picket lines this week, emphasising the scrutiny the union is facing.

But there appears little sign of its members' resolve weakening – and recent polling suggests the junior doctors retain public support, with every news report on the strikes drawing attention to the grim state of the NHS.

The message from the RCN refuseniks is that if the government wants to settle the strikes it will have to be willing to find more money. But with ministers set against loosening the purse strings, the NHS appears destined for months of fresh disruption.

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One reader thought a basketball hoop on wheels on her street would be a great way to keep her 13-year-old active, but the council did not agree.  
Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

[Access to green space](#)

## **UK families tell of threats and police warnings over children playing in street**

Readers say they are afraid to let children outside after warnings from authorities and neighbours' threats

[Cars, dog poo and delivery drivers: why children don't play out anymore](#)

[Harriet Grant](#)

Sat 15 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT

Families are facing threats and police warnings for letting their children play in the street, Guardian readers have reported, leaving parents afraid to let their children spend time outside.

Liz Swift thought a basketball hoop on wheels pushed to the corner of her street on sunny afternoons would be a great way to keep her 13-year-old active. But the local authority did not agree. The family received letters from Waltham Forest council warning them that children playing in the street were “causing a nuisance to neighbours”.

She said: “The council told me they were breaking the law with their games because they were obstructing the highway. They always move out of the way for cars and they are never out after dark.”

Then in February, said Swift, the police arrived to investigate a report about her children playing. “The police took no action when they saw what was happening but the council asbo team are insistent the children can’t play there. They even came to examine a wall after a ball went over it, telling me it was unacceptable.

“I’ve told them there is no way I am telling my children to stop. I just will not. The odd ball over a wall is part of life and helping children be healthy and play safely near home.”

She pointed out that the corner they play on was designed as a low traffic “parklet” by the council. In a video promoting the design – [which won an environmental award last year](#) – children are shown playing in the space.

Waltham Forest council said the playing had gone on late in the evening and had hit cars and gardens. They said they were supporting “distressed residents whose homes and vehicles have been repeatedly damaged by ballgames”. They said they would not supply evidence of the damage for confidentiality reasons.

In a statement Khevyn Limbajee, the cabinet member for community safety, pointed to nearby parks that were available and said: “Everyone deserves to expect peace and quiet in their homes, especially late in the evening. We will work to balance the right for children to play in their neighbourhood with the right for others to feel safe and comfortable in their own home.”

When the Guardian community desk asked, “Do your children face problems playing outside?”, among the hundreds of replies a number of people reported warnings from authorities or threats from neighbours.

Kerry (not her real name) is a teacher in [Wales](#) and had a visit from social services after a neighbour reported her children playing “day and night”.

“We live in a cul-de-sac. Our young children play out on scooters. It’s never for more than an hour while we keep an eye on them. Social services came and saw our children were always in view of our house and marked it as a malicious call. Somebody clearly is anti-children on our road and it made me very angry but it won’t stop us letting them play again.”

In Newham, east [London](#), Ilona Saber said she faced opposition from neighbours and authority figures for allowing her young son to play on their quiet road while keeping an eye on him from home.

“Over the past couple of years I have had police knock on my door about reports my young son was in danger because he was playing near the house and then last summer Newham council street enforcement officers brought my son to my door because they saw him playing with friends near our house and were concerned.”

She said when she tried to bring a safe play area to an unused space on the street, neighbours fought to stop it. “I got council funding for some small play equipment for a little unused corner on our road. It was all ready to go. But neighbours wrote to our MP saying it would disturb their peace and they found a procedural issue with the consultation despite our efforts and the councils to involve people. Sadly they were able to stop it.”

As thousands of new homes spring up across the UK, anti-child bias has been found on developments [with families left frightened they would be evicted for letting children play](#) in communal areas. Alice Ferguson, co-founder of the campaign group Playing Out, said: “There is a serious crisis in children’s physical and mental health in this country, yet some people still want to stop children having the time and space to play outside together. We need to accept that children live in communities and have a right to be seen

and heard. A bit of noise from children playing outside is a small price to pay for a happier, healthier generation.”

Nancy (not her real name) lives in Hampshire. “We live in a cul-de-sac and let our young children play out with friends. Then a neighbour shocked us all by accelerating and deliberately driving at us and our children in anger. I only just managed to get the children off the road in time. The youngest was still a toddler. This neighbour accused us of ‘turning the neighbourhood into a council estate’. She said our children should be in a park.”

Nancy said it had stopped them. “Sadly it has frightened us inside. They occasionally go to the local green, which is full of dog poo, to play with a ball but a neighbour also complains about that. And the local park only has a playground for very young children.

“I find it heartbreakng. I have great memories of playing out for hours with friends of all ages. All this is lost to children these days. To get exercise they have to go to organised sports clubs or be taken on walks and bike rides. That’s not play, it’s very controlled, and I wonder what it’s doing to their mental health.”

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Emma Wreyford and her 11-year-old daughter in Bristol. ‘It should be such a lovely age for outdoor play but it is almost impossible,’ says Wreyford. Photograph: Stephen Shepherd/The Guardian

[Access to green space](#)

## Cars, dog poo, and delivery drivers: why children don't play out anymore

Guardian readers lament their kids’ loss of freedom and the contrast with their own childhoods

[UK families tell of threats and police warnings over children playing in street](#)

[Harriet Grant](#)

Sat 15 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 15 Apr 2023 03.01 EDT

When Tom Smith and his wife moved to a village five miles outside Oxford they thought they had found an ideal place to bring up children.

“There were children out in the street playing all the time – with balls, making ramps for their skateboards. It brought back memories of our own childhoods with hours spent playing outside. That was 12 years ago. But things began to change.

“We lost our bus service during the cuts [under chancellor George Osborne]. That contributed to the growing traffic which got worse as housing pressures pushed people out of Oxford into villages. Then came the rise in delivery drivers, the worst offenders for speeding. Now the idea of children being out on this street is sadly inconceivable.”

When the Guardian community desk asked “Do your children face problems playing outside” some of the hundreds of replies talked about officious warnings from councils or angry neighbours. But most focused on one thing – cars.

Emma Wreyford lives in Bristol with her daughter, who has just turned 11.

“It should be such a lovely age for that sort of outdoor play but it is almost impossible. Here the car is king and public space is there for the rights of the driver to use to store their cars.

“Children around here don’t know each other because there are no front gardens and no safe places on the doorstep. I never see them outside unless they are going somewhere.”



Emma Wreyford and her daughter. Photograph: Stephen Shepherd/The Guardian

She tries to fight back [by organising play streets when cars move to allow children out](#). “They are so well received and not just by children. Older residents bring their chairs out and sit and chat, or join in the chalking on the roads. It’s always such a joyful, community feel that then disappears as soon as the cars come whizzing back as the road opens again.”

Like many parents she worries even more about where her child will play as she gets older. “Once they are 12 they are seen as yobs aren’t they? There’s nowhere for them to go.”

Figures from [a Yougov/ Living Streets poll](#) show that 60% of children in the UK aged four to 11 never play on their own street, and the change has come in a generation across many parts of the UK.



Children playing in Balham, in London, in the early 60s. Photograph: Mary Evans Picture Library

Poppy is 49 and grew up in Brighton and is now bringing up her own son there. “I grew up in a suburban area on a fairly busy road. But we knew all the children within 100 metres including other roads nearby. We’d all play out on our bikes, pogo sticks, collecting insects and worms, playing [44 save-all](#), all ages together until teatime.

“But now outside is the realm of cars. The pavement is narrow and boxed in by them, children can’t play near them in case they get damaged. When my son was younger we’d often go out to do chalk drawings or kick a foam football. We could hear the children playing in their back gardens, squealing with delight on their trampolines, but we never saw them!”

She points out the loss of freedom for parents that this brings as well. “Now play dates have to be arranged in advance between adults. I can’t say ‘go out and play!’ like my parents said to my sister and me … with who? Where? Streets full of cars, pavements covered in dog poo.”

Traffic on residential roads has increased more across the UK than it has on A and B roads in recent years. [And the number of cars sold in the UK increased by 26% year on year in February.](#)

Claire has lived in Uddingston near Glasgow for 20 years during which time she has seen children vanish from public spaces.

“I always compared my older son’s lack of independent play to mine growing up because I played out for hours while he had much less of that. But compared to my youngest two children – there is a 10-year gap – he was living the dream.

“There is no outdoor play now unless I am involved. We have a park nearby but the volume of traffic running through our street has tripled. We never see any children playing outside.”



Children playing in the street in Manchester in 1966. Photograph: Shirley Baker/Shirley Baker Estate/Mary Evans Picture Library

Even in densely built cities with a rich tradition of outdoor play, parents report silent streets. Michelle Roach lives in Everton in Liverpool. “In areas like Anfield, deprived communities with back-to-back terraces, I never see a child outside.

“I am 36 and as a child we played out all the time and they were the best time of our lives. We played out morning, noon to early night.”

Her friend Naomi Maynard points out the wider degradation of children's spaces. "In lockdown the majority of play equipment in our local park was removed but has still not been replaced.

"My children are four and nine. I would not let them play out on our road unsupervised – cars do not keep to the 20 miles-an-hour speed limit, there is glass on the pavements and dog poo, and drug dealing is taking place in cars on our road."

In Oxfordshire, Tom Smith has joined with neighbours to try to make streets safer. He says: "Recently, a group of parents has been trying to get a 20mph speed limit imposed, but some residents regard the loss of liberty as too high a price to pay for children's welfare."

More traffic is coming, with new greenbelt developments around Oxford. "How child friendly will these developments really be?" Smith asks. "County council proposals to make some developments car free have been robustly pushed back by developers and college landowners alike.

"This loss of children's play is clearly a widespread problem that government is either unaware of, or has no intention of doing anything about."

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## 2023.04.15 - Spotlight

- Ignore trends, ask for more photos and haggle How to buy vintage like a pro
- 'A lot of it starts with cushions' What happened when I let a primpover expert into my home
- Blind date 'We had a civilised peck somewhere between lip and cheek'
- UK pensions How much do you need to retire as the cost of living soars?

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[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian](#)



High-quality pieces, such as these ceramics and antique brass candlesticks from [The Antik Store](#), will stand the test of time. Photograph: Thom Atkinson/The Guardian

[Love the home you're in](#)[Interiors](#)

# Ignore trends, ask for more photos and haggle: how to buy vintage like a pro

With new furniture losing its shine and more online marketplaces, there's never been a better time to buy secondhand

*Tamsin Blanchard*

Sat 15 Apr 2023 04.00 EDT

There was a time when finding the perfect vintage chair was an insider's art – something only for those with a keen eye and the time to scour flea markets and auction rooms. But today there's a huge online market for [vintage furniture](#) and homeware, much of it sold by small independents who have access to a global audience via Instagram and social media. Buying secondhand is better for the planet; it's easier and less stressful than shopping at Ikea; and it's a more creative – and often more affordable – way to furnish our homes. We all know about the environmental impact of overproduction in the fashion industry, and the lessons are the same when it comes to [furniture](#) and interiors, too.

While previous generations furnished their homes with tables and chairs made from quality wood that will outlive them – Victorian pine, 20s oak, 60s teak – we have become used to MDF chests of drawers that fall apart after a few years. They are so cheap, it's easier to buy new pieces than repair them, so streets end up littered with broken, badly constructed furniture made from composite materials coated in chemicals.

But the reaction against throwaway culture is changing people's buying habits, says Nina Hertig, founder of the mid-century Scandinavian furniture showroom Aelfred, which opened last year in London. It's only a physical shop at the moment, but an Instagram store is in the works. Hertig's [online store Sigmar](#) is the more expensive big sister. Anyone who has moved house with a piece of disintegrating furniture that won't survive will buy something better made next time, she says. "It comes with a change in the

understanding that the cost of a piece of furniture works out a lot better over many years if you buy something that will last longer.”

It's all about “considered buys”, as stylist and florist Jemma Cox posted recently on her Instagram. “I have been guilty of buying ‘fast homeware’ – trendy, impulsive purchases that are now sitting in my loft,” she wrote. She speaks for many of us.

Vintage glassware is trending and one-of-a-kind things get snapped up: a brass crab sold within minutes of being uploaded

Georgia McGivern launched [The Antik Store](#) online and on Instagram in 2019, selling secondhand homeware, from floral plates to decorative objects, which she sources from antique fairs in the UK such as Ardingly, Shepton Mallet and Sunbury, as well as smaller rural car boot sales. She also scours flea markets in France and is heading to Puglia in Italy in May.

At 31, McGivern is part of a generation of young online dealers for whom Instagram is their storefront. She launched her store on the platform just before the first lockdown and would sell exclusively via direct messaging. She has since created a website and launched an [Etsy store](#). Bestsellers include storage baskets, Italian fruit platters and still life paintings.

According to a report published in February by the research and design lab [Space10](#) in Copenhagen, “slowness” is becoming a driver for the way we are furnishing our homes as we look for pieces that will last for generations. If we are turning the thermostat down and switching off our lights, it doesn’t make sense to then contribute to a fast-furniture business model that encourages overconsumption. The report says that almost 50% of people in Britain are more likely to buy pre-owned items now than five years ago, and 62% of generation Z and millennials say they look for an item secondhand before buying a new one.



Look for well-made wooden pieces, like this Børge Mogensen bookcase, teak bowls and stool from [Aelfred](#). Photograph: Christian Banfield

Narchie, a homeware app that features more than 800 sellers, is praised in the report for its ability to transform “flea market shopping into a digital experience, connecting buyers and sellers, to extend the life cycle of furniture and homeware”. The app – which is aimed at the [Depop generation](#) which understands that quality items retain a value and can be resold – is easy to use. You tell it what room or rooms you are shopping for, and what style, and you will be offered a selection of items specially curated for you.

“Vintage glassware is trending right now and good pieces go super-fast,” says Narchie’s founder, Harriet Pringle. “I think buyers are realising that they can get [pieces] at a fraction of the price of buying new. One-of-a-kind things get snapped up fast: a brass crab was sold within three minutes of being uploaded.” As well as the continuing desire for 70s, 80s and mid-century pieces, the 90s are becoming popular.

Elsewhere, [Vinterior](#) offers a single portal into 2,000 sellers from more than 30 countries, all offering upmarket vintage pieces for the home. Founder Sandrine Zhang Ferron launched the website after scouring vintage showrooms around the country to find a particular yellow chair she had

fallen in love with by the Danish designer Poul Volther. She wanted to make it easier for people like her to buy – and sell – vintage furniture.

Alongside French and art deco antique pieces, [G Plan](#) is one of their most sought-after brands. You can pick up a small 60s shelving unit for £175. The site also encourages a pick-and-mix approach that isn't defined by a period but rather aims to help people find “one-off iconic pieces that set the tone for a space”.

So how do you go about bagging your own vintage treasure? Read on ...



G Plan furniture, such as this sideboard, is highly sought after. Photograph: vinterior.co

## How to shop

### What should I look for?

A good-quality wood. One reason G Plan furniture is so sought after is the hard-wearing teak from which it was made, a material so durable it is used to build ships. “Look at the details to tell you how a piece is made,” says Aelfred’s Nina Hertig. For example, nails, staples or glue around a joint are signs of poor-quality furniture, which won’t last as long as items made using

classic woodworking techniques such as dovetail joints. And look for functional designs, too.

### **How can I tell something is good quality if I can't see it/feel it?**

Do some research on the brand: for example, if it's a bentwood chair, put the photograph into a Google image search to find more information. Ask questions of the seller, check what the materials are and request pictures of the underneath of a piece of furniture so you can check the joints are all intact. If it's a piece of ceramic or glass, make sure there are no cracks or chips.

### **What period is best?**

It's not so much about sticking to a particular period as finding your style and buying what you love, says Vinterior's Sandrine Zhang Ferron. For a lot of people, it's about creating an eclectic look and finding a one-off piece to anchor a room. "Things you love will always go well together," says Narchie's Harriet Pringle, while Hertig suggests: "For a good investment, look outside what everyone else is after – late 19th- and early 20th-century pieces generally offer value for money."



Lights worth watching out for include this Murano mushroom lamp ...



... and Poul Henningsen for Louis Poulsen pendant. Photographs: vinterior.co

### **What is big now?**

“Detailed lighting, from candelabras to intricate table lamps, and mid-century rattan and wicker are very popular,” McGivern says. “Think round wicker mirrors, antique bamboo side tables and rattan lamps.” In the past few years, Vinterior has seen a big spike in interest in [bobbin and barley twist furniture](#), [Murano glass lighting](#) – particularly the mushroom lamp – and the [Togo sofa by Ligne Roset](#).

### **What designers should I look for?**

Poul Henningsen for Louis Poulsen is the classic designer for statement Danish lighting, but prices are at a premium. Try Artek’s [2nd Cycle](#) for vintage Alvar Aalto, and [Robin Day](#) for British mid-century modern design. Vintage Ikea is growing in popularity, too – check out a [steel and glass 80s dining table](#) (an example of good materials made to last) for £397.

### **How do you style vintage?**

Keep a balance between old and new, says interior designer Emma Shone-Sanders, founder of the studio [Design & That](#). She sources vintage furniture and lighting from places such as [The Peanut Vendor](#) and [Two Columbia Road](#). “Give pieces room to breathe so rooms are not cluttered,” she says,

and have fun: a farmhouse table looks great with brutalist chairs, according to Vinterior's Zhang Ferron: "I also love a mid-century chair in a living room corner next to an antique mirror."



If seating's your thing, try this 70s Joker chair by Olivier Mourgue ...  
Photograph: Narchie



... or Ikea's Jarpen chair by Niels Gammelgaard. Photograph: vinterior.co

## **Should I reupholster?**

Absolutely, says Celia Philo, co-founder of Philo & Philo vintage shop in Bruton, Somerset (on Instagram @philoandphilo). “I love faux furs and classic patterned linens, and anything that pops in colour is fun. It’s about making that bright statement piece the focus, though, and not clashing with too many bold items in one space.”

## **And don’t forget ...**

One of the joys of shopping in real life is being able to haggle. But even online it’s worth making an offer. McGivern says: “I price my items fairly and according to their age and rarity, but if something is out of my customer’s range, I’ll try to sort something out.”

## **Where to buy**

### Narchie

**What** A social network and online marketplace, with a website and app, which caters to all different budgets.

**Good for** French 60s glass cups and saucers, and vintage rattan lampshades.

**Bestsellers** Vintage Ikea pieces, such as an early 90s Lykta glass table lamp.



Vintage Ikea pieces, like these 90s Lykta lamps, are becoming bestsellers.  
Photograph: Narchie

## Shelf Living

**What** Preloved vintage homeware and furniture available to buy via regular drops on Instagram Stories.

**Good for** One-off items in clay, glass, wood and shell, and 30s mantel vases, stoneware jugs and wooden bowls.

**Bestsellers** 70s bamboo magazine racks.

## Vinterior

**What** About 2,000 vintage dealers across Europe on one website.

**Good for** Investment/statement pieces – think auction house, not car boot.

**Bestsellers** [G Plan](#) sideboard.

## The Saleroom

**What** Mothership for auction rooms.

**Good for** Trawling through more than 700 salerooms around the world.

**Bestsellers** Too much to choose from, but I'm bidding on a 60s Habitat lamp. Stick to a budget, though: don't get overexcited or bid after a glass or two.



A mirrored dressing table is worth a look. Photograph: Narchie

## Selling Antiques

**What** More than 600 antiques dealers from the UK on one website.

**Good for** Going down a wormhole, and a serious chest of drawers or assorted fine but odd cups and saucers.

**Bestsellers** A 30s triple-mirror walnut dressing table, a mahogany sideboard or Victorian ceramic Staffordshire dogs.

### The Antik Store

**What** A selection of homeware curated by founder Georgia McGivern. Antik supports a small, independent supply chain of market sellers and charities.

**Good for** Floral ceramic plates, quirky tableware and still life oil paintings.

**Bestsellers** Large antique rustic cottage core pieces such as old kitchen dressers.



Bobbin and barley twist items have seen a big spike in interest. Photograph: vinterior.co

### Grandma's Attic

**What** Instagram shop specialising in the sort of quirky thing you might find in, well, your grandmother's attic.

**Good for** 70s mushroom-shaped glass paperweights, Carlton Ware banana split dishes or the odd Wedgwood urn.

**Bestsellers** Eccentric ceramic items and colourful glass candlesticks.

## All Things Nice

**What** Instagram and Etsy seller with a constant churn of colourful glass, chintzy plates and 50s ceramics.

**Good for** Vintage glass vases, decanters and jugs.

**Bestsellers** Art deco cake plates and glass serving dishes.

## Etsy

**What** Global marketplace, mother of all things handmade, one-off and vintage.

**Good for** If you know what you want, it's always worth checking if it's on Etsy. Many of the small independent Instagram vintage dealers are here, too.

**Bestsellers** You'll find everything from a 60s Danish rosewood sofa to a 70s Bavarian coffee pot (if that's your vibe, check out seller [EvergreenGoldUK](#)).



Wicker and bamboo baskets are having a moment. Photograph: Narchie

## Facebook Marketplace

**What** A community-based online marketplace for buying and selling pretty much anything – one person's trash is another's treasure.

**Good for** Household castoffs from your local neighbourhood, children's bedroom furniture, garden tables and chairs. "I recently purchased a beautiful Edwardian camel-back sofa here," McGivern says, "and had it

reupholstered in vintage floral fabric.” It’s an easy way to sell stuff, too. **Bestsellers** Dining sets and large items of furniture such as sofas.

### Vinted

**What** Marketplace primarily known for secondhand clothes, but increasingly popular for homeware – to buy or sell.

**Good for** Bargains galore, from 70s Spode plates to a great vintage-looking bamboo mirror currently on for £2.

**Bestsellers** Popular brands include Ikea, particularly nursery furniture and wardrobes.

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‘If you’re not painting, the best trick is to move furniture.’ Photograph: Jon Aaron Green/The Guardian

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**‘A lot of it starts with cushions’: what happened when I let a primpover expert**

# into my home

I'm messy and bad with furniture – could some artful rearrangement help me fall in love with my house again?



[Zoe Williams](#)

[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Sat 15 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 15 Apr 2023 06.04 EDT

In normal times, if you've really had it with where you live, if there are too many of you and not enough of your home, you move. But with soaring interest rates, higher mortgage payments, punishing rents and whatnot, you can't move. So in other times, perhaps you'd paint the walls, or throw out old stuff and buy new stuff, but these are choppy waters: in an ideal world, you could create miraculous change on zero pounds.

So what will it take to make you fall back in love with your environment? Primping, idiot: improving the overall look of your home with stuff you already own, by moving it about and maybe dusting it. It's the interiors version of a date night: small, even minute acts of care and adjustment that flatter the perspective.

Broadly, my problems consist of having no visual sense to speak of, and being quite messy. I just don't get very much information from my eyes; left up to me, the furniture would all be at the wrong angle (jaunty, not straight-on to the wall), or in the wrong place (side-tables nowhere near anything useful). I can survey the scene of my living room and know that there's something discordant about it, but tracing that to the random pair of dirty socks on the mantelpiece, or the books stacked on their side, would take me about a year. The living room is by far the tidiest in the house, because it has no TV in it, which wards off the kids like hazmat tape; it also doesn't reflect the hoarder I naturally am, because literally every time I turn my back, Mr Z throws something away. But you wouldn't call it visually coherent.

Turn seating to face each other, instead of the TV: that makes it more sociable. Move stuff away from walls; that refreshes the space

So I called in the help of a stylist, or home stager as they're now known, Anna Mackie-East. "The biggest thing that makes a difference, if you're not painting, is to move your furniture," she says. "That's the most transformative: rearrange; defamiliarise. It makes you think about your space differently. Turn seating to face each other, instead of facing the TV: that makes it more sociable. Move stuff away from walls; that refreshes the space."

But what if you think your home is already perfect, because you have exquisite taste? "People think they've got really good taste," Mackie-East says, "but most people haven't. If you have a flair for knowing what looks good, you're born with it." She's found a fortunate collaborator in me, as I don't think I have any taste at all, and am unlikely to take offence. The bigger stroke of luck is, you can have no taste, or you can deludedly feel you have all the taste yet only have a small amount, and there are still principles you can follow that will lift your mood and refresh your living space.



Zoe Williams' living room, before and after styling, with rearranged furniture and added touches like cushions and plants. Photograph: Kensington Leverne/The Guardian

A lot of it starts with cushions: Mackie-East instantly turns a small sofa from glorified dog bed into inviting-and-peaceful-resting-spot with the artful placing of two cushions. I want to be honest, these were not my own: the entry level to owning cushions is being the kind of person who goes into a

shop and browses cushions. I have never done this. My husband made some soft purchases when he was single because he read, probably in GQ, that women distrusted men whose surroundings were too bare or monastic. So we have some once-expensive, pretty random cushions from the 00s, all of which are stained with either coffee or red wine, because I read, probably in British Psychological Digest, that if you want to lodge your objection to gender stereotypes while expressing completely unreasonable sexual jealousy at the same time, and you don't want to use words, the best way to do that is by spilling. Mackie-East didn't want to use any of those. If you mix plain cushions with patterned, that adds interest; and you want to position them in such a way as to look inviting to lean against, not at the jaunty diagonal of the 80s advert.

I've got my furniture arranged in the classic fashion, all sofas and chairs against a wall, pointing at each other; but if your typical use of the space is not as eight people with complex PTSD but as two or four people just trying to hang out, you can make life more interesting by creating different zones in the room, what Mackie-East calls "little vignettes". You can use rugs to zone different areas, or position a single chair by a window, to suggest the activity – a "reading nook", Mackie calls it at one point, and we all fall about, as if you read from the book pile as she's styled it, well, you'd have to really like Victorian homily and you wouldn't want to have a mould allergy, put it that way.

The bed is prime cushion real estate, so it's bound to end up looking a bit like a boutique hotel, if you're doing it right

Let me break that down: get one chair, preferably the comfortable one, and put it in a corner. Angle your most flattering light towards it, move a rug. Voilà. "Not sure," the light of my life says. "When women go into a corner to read, it means men are annoying them." Finally. "Where'd you read that, GQ?"

The reading matter in this room tends to be heaped in a pile, because all the bookshelves are in another room. "I wouldn't necessarily stack a lot of books everywhere," Mackie-East says, "but when they have a lot of character, it brings dimension." She arranged, extremely artfully, some of

those properly ancient books you get in junk shops – you know, with the bevelled spines and foxing and end-sheet marbling – when you’re about to go to university and want to head off the impression that you’re a soulless fraud. I don’t know who collected them between me and my husband, I’m gonna say him.

Thirty years on, we agree that they look ridiculous, we’re not trying to sell anyone on the idea that we’ve recently read *The Faerie Queene*, we’re just trying to sit nicely and [play Catan](#). So he replaces the old books with normal books, and then decides all our normal books make us look boring, and plus, what are they doing on the floor, so he puts them back in the other room where they’re fine to be boring. We never actually throw out the old, pretentious books; this, I’m sure, is a component of primping, getting rid of stuff, but it’s not one I’ve ever mastered.





The bedroom, with added cushions, flowers and elegant objets. Photograph: Jon Aaron Green/The Guardian

Books are different in bedrooms: it's a law of physics that you will end up with a huge stack of things you mean to read, right next to your bed, to confront you with your failures moments before you go to sleep. Choose one book that you're actually reading, Mackie-East advises, and put everything else in another room. "Your bedroom should be clean and crisp and more of a sanctuary," she says, "but also cosy." You can square this contradiction by, for instance, hanging a number of small pictures on the wall behind your bed, but keeping the one you're facing less busy. Given that the bed is prime cushion real estate, it will inevitably end up looking a bit like a boutique hotel, if you're doing it right; so you want the rest to be quite personal, idiosyncratic.

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Put a comfy chair in a corner to create a reading nook. Photograph: Kensington Leverne/The Guardian

“One of the reasons I became interested in interiors,” Mackie-East tells me, “is that I don’t care about functionality. I’m only interested in the image.” Weird, I’m the exact opposite. I actively object to things if I can’t see the use-value: any pot with a wide, especially gourd-shaped base and a very narrow aperture, I believe they’re called single-stem vases, kills me – why would a single stem need so much water? I object to any blanket or throw, as if it’s needed it makes the room look like it’s probably cold; and if it’s not needed, why is it there? Nothing offends me more than an empty decanter, and this isn’t a dipsomaniac perspective, I don’t even like most of the drinks that go in decanters.

But when Mackie drapes a blanket across the aforesaid cushions, arranges some objets – chic, single-stem vases I don’t remember buying, a candle –

around a totally disused mahjong set (don't even know the rules), I have to admit it looks significantly better; not just classier but more restful, less chaotic, more deliberate. I have to make my peace with un-functionality in order to make my own character look more functional, I declare, and my spouse says, "Where'd you read that, the British Psychological Digest?" and I want to say, "Where'd you read [insert crass but apropos gender stereotype], GQ?" but I can't think of one fast enough.

Obviously our stated purpose is not to buy any new stuff, so I pass on just for future reference that you can get wall lights now that don't need an electrician – you can attach them to a wall and plug them in. If you place some task lighting next to a specific piece of furniture, it'll create a little pool of light that gives it a sense of purpose; maybe crocheting. Who knows? Mixing up your lighting will complement the furniture rearrangement; swap lamps from one room to another, to change the atmosphere.





By reorienting the table, the dining area feels more open. Photograph: Jon Aaron Green/The Guardian

I find it confusing to have a dining room that's not in the actual kitchen, as it's the stove and stuff that make sense of your purpose in there; around just a table, how do you distinguish your activity from, say, a conference or a mediation session? Make sure the table is pointing in the right direction – we had it parallel to the window, but when pointed towards it the space opened up and felt more sociable. Lighting is still important here, but you want to put the emphasis on conviviality over being able to see, so think about lamps again and don't forget candles.

If you can clearly see a garden from anywhere, display bulbs rather than cut flowers, which brings the outdoors in. Kitchens and diners are clutter magnets, especially if they're at the entry point of the house, where they'll attract post, shoes, coats, bags and dry leaves, on top of all the cooking and eating detritus. I'm surprised mine isn't a lot more chaotic than it is, to be honest. I can pass on no rule more useful here than "put stuff away".

## How to restyle your home



Photograph: Kensington Leverne/The Guardian

**A mixture of modern, vintage and antique** is pleasing to the eye. For a restful composition of objects, arrange an odd number of them – not too many, three or five – at a mixture of heights, with the tallest at the back, but surely you knew that.

**Combine textures and materials** – hard and smooth, shiny and matte to make things more interesting. Think linen and velvet cushions, a wool throw on a velvet sofa with a boucle cushion, adding a marble bowl and a metal candlestick or trinket box to a wooden sideboard to create a pretty vignette, etc.

**There is an emotional component to the nick-nack:** bring in personal objects that you like to look at for a reason, but not if it's a cracked ashtray that reminds you of Cuba in the 90s.

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Photograph: Graeme Robertson, Jill Mead/The Guardian

[Blind date](#)[Relationships](#)

## **Blind date: ‘We had a civilised peck somewhere between lip and cheek’**

Heather, 30, an academic skills tutor, meets Sam, 30, an artist

Sat 15 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT



## **Heather on Sam**

### **What were you hoping for?**

A good conversation with someone engaging.

### **First impressions?**

Sam was great about my lateness (transport woes). I felt comfortable immediately and conversation was easy.

### **What did you talk about?**

Sam's work as an artist. His time in Brazil. My profession and travel experiences. Books. Music. Film. Dating etiquette in different countries.

### **Most awkward moment?**

Me being late.

### **Good table manners?**

Excellent. And I wasn't overly mocked for struggling to pick up rice with chopsticks either.

### **Best thing about Sam?**

I'd say Sam's passion for creativity and open-mindedness.

### **Would you introduce Sam to your friends?**

I'm sure he'd get on with them and there would be plenty to talk about. Lots of shared music interests too, and travel tales.

### **Describe Sam in three words.**

Warm, considerate and interesting.

### **What do you think Sam made of you?**

He mentioned he liked my boots. Also, apparently I reminded him of a specific film character, so I'll have to check that one out.

## **Q&A**

### **Fancy a blind date?**

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com) every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

### **What questions will I be asked?**

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

### **Can I choose who I match with?**

No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

**Can I pick the photograph?**

No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

**What personal details will appear?**

Your first name, job and age.

**How should I answer?**

Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

**Will I see the other person's answers?**

No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length, and we may ask you for more details.

**Will you find me The One?**

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

**Can I do it in my home town?**

Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

**How to apply**

Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

We went for a beer after, which took away some of the formality of the restaurant.

**And ... did you kiss?**

There was *almost* a brief kiss goodnight.

**If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?**

I'd have been on time or early.

**Marks out of 10?**

8.

**Would you meet again?**

We did exchange numbers, so let's see.



Sam and Heather on their date



**Sam on Heather**

**What were you hoping for?**

I had a dream Mark Kermode was reviewing a date I went on. I took that as an omen that I should sign up for this.

**First impressions?**

Late. But so flustered and charmingly contrite she turned it into a positive.

**What did you talk about?**

Saint Etienne (the place). EM Forster. Wandering spiders. Saint Etienne (the band). Thomas Hardy. Samba.

**Most awkward moment?**

My chopsticks went flying at one point, and I nearly knocked heads with the waiter as we went to retrieve them.

**Good table manners?**

Impeccable. I focused on keeping pan-Asian titbits out of my beard.

**Best thing about Heather?**

Prim, proper, with a subtle smattering of unpredictability that began to make itself known once we'd settled.

**Would you introduce Heather to your friends?**

I don't really have any friends.

**Describe Heather in three words.**

Smiley. Friendly. (Sublime) boots.

**What do you think Heather made of you?**

Greedy. I drank all the tap water.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

A beer at a nice place in the vicinity.

**And ... did you kiss?**

A civilised peck somewhere between lip and cheek.

**If you could change one thing about the evening, what would it be?**  
The food was so delicious I overate. So I'd change that.

**Marks out of 10?**

8.

**Would you meet again?**

Sure, as friends.

*Sam and Heather ate at [Yauatcha](#), London W1. Fancy a blind date? Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)*

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Pensions can be a source of stress as inflation drives up the cost of living.  
Illustration: Guardian Design

[Pensions](#)

## **UK pensions: how much do you need to retire as the cost of living soars?**

As inflation bites into pension pots, we find out what it takes to keep up your standard of living

- **How to make sure you get the best income in retirement**



*Patrick Collinson*

Sat 15 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sun 16 Apr 2023 02.19 EDT

The cost of living crisis is turning into a cost of retirement crisis as rising food and energy prices mean the amount of money you need to retire at a minimum living standard has increased by almost £2,000 in the last year.

In 2022 the minimum required to survive as a single pensioner jumped by 18% to £12,800 a year. Meanwhile, a retired couple now need a minimum of £19,900 a year – up £3,200, an even bigger rise of 19%, according to a study funded by the [Pensions](#) and Lifetime Savings Association (PLSA) at Loughborough University.

While this month the full new state pension rose from £9,627 a year to £10,600, the figures from the research suggest that millions of people will not have enough money to cover their day-to-day living costs.

Don't despair (well, not completely), however. There are a number of steps you can take now, even if you are in your 50s, to avoid poverty in retirement.

First, let's establish how much money you will need in your retirement, then work out how to get there (and the extra you will need if you want to retire early).

Researchers say the minimum standard of income you currently need as a single person is £12,800, or £19,900 for a couple

Researchers at Loughborough's [Centre for Research in Social Policy](#) have created a set of "[retirement living standards](#)" that have swiftly become the industry benchmark for what pensioners really need in retirement.

Its researchers say that the minimum standard of income you currently need as a single person is £12,800, or £19,900 for a couple, according to the 2022 figures published at the start of this year.

This figure is the same as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's minimum income standard and reflects what the public thinks is required to cover a retiree's needs, not only to survive but to live with dignity, including social and cultural participation.

However, this is a minimum, and it is far from generous. It leaves a pensioner only £54 a week for food, no car, enough money for a short break in the UK every year and £580 a year for clothing and footwear. This assumes the person works until 67 and has a full national insurance record. Crucially, these figures assume you have paid off your mortgage. If not, your costs in retirement could be substantially higher.

Next up is a moderate lifestyle in retirement: this means £74 a week on food, a secondhand car that can be replaced every 10 years, a two-week holiday in Europe every year and £791 for clothing and footwear. For a single pensioner that will mean he or she needs £23,300 a year, and for a couple it is £34,000 a year (or £41,400 if you are in London).

Maybe you aspire to something more luxurious. Loughborough and the PLSA reckon that someone wanting a “comfortable” lifestyle in retirement will need to find £37,300 a year as a single person, or £54,500 a year as a couple. Live in London and the relative cost goes up to £40,900 and £56,500 respectively. But this is the cruise ship end of the retirement market – the figures assume our lucky pensioner holidays in Europe three weeks a year, spends £1,500 on clothing a year and £144 a week on food. And drives a fairly nice motor.



Work out the minimum you would need to live on in retirement. Photograph: Acorn 1/Alamy

How many Britons are matching up to these standards already?

Perhaps not surprisingly, relatively few pensioners are in the £50,000-a-year bracket. The bad news is that the researchers at Loughborough estimate that only 72% of the total population are on track to reach at least the minimum standard of living in retirement. About a fifth of the population are on track to hit the moderate income level in retirement, while 8% will be in the comfortable bracket. However, these figures predate last year's big rise in inflation.

## How much you need to save

If the thought of living on little more than £1,000 a month in retirement alarms you, then there's only one thing you can do – save more now, before you stop working. But how much do you need to save?

We asked the Loughborough University and PLSA researchers how much extra an individual or couple would need to save to reach the respective minimum, moderate and comfortable brackets if they retire at age 67, even if they have the full new state pension. The sums ranged from zero to £530,000.

The good news in that little table is the £0 figure: if a couple both pick up the full £10,600 state pension, then that's just over the £19,900 needed for a minimum income in retirement.

The bad news is that a single person seeking a comfortable retirement needs to save a cool £500,000 by the age of 67, while paying off the mortgage or rent and coping with the soaring cost of living.

## **The annual income you will need in retirement**

**Living standard Single Couple**

**Minimum £12,800 £19,900**

**Moderate £23,300 £34,000**

**Comfortable £37,300 £54,500**

*Source: Loughborough University and the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association. London figures higher*



Will you have enough money to enjoy life in retirement? Photograph: Tom Merton/Getty Images

## **How much do you need to save?**

**Living standard Single Couple**

**Minimum £36,500 £0**

**Moderate £248,000 £121,000**

**Comfortable £530,000 £328,000**

*Source: Loughborough University and the PLSA*



Are you taking steps to ensure you have enough money in retirement?  
Photograph: Joe Giddens/PA

## Pensions in numbers

### **20 million**

The number of eligible employees enrolled in a workplace pension scheme in Great Britain, according to [Department for Work and Pensions \(DWP\) statistics](#) (April 2021 figure).

### **£114,000**

The amount a full-time male median wage employee who begins saving at 18 is expected to save into their workplace pension by the age of 68 under current automatic enrolment minimum contributions. It is **£93,000** for the equivalent female worker because of lower female median earnings. ([Source: DWP](#)).



There are 20 million eligible employees enrolled in a workplace pension scheme in Great Britain, according to DWP statistics. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

### **£1,000 to £18,000**

For individuals actively contributing to a workplace defined contribution pension scheme, their median pot size ranges between £1,000 for those aged 16-24 and £18,000 for those aged 65-plus. For all active occupational pension schemes including defined benefit ones, the range is between **£2,200** for those aged 16-24 and **£62,400** for those aged 55-64. ([Source: Office for National Statistics](#)).

### **£2,100**

The amount the average private sector employee eligible for auto-enrolment and saving into a workplace scheme saved annually into their pension – up from £1,200 in April 2017. (April 2021 figure. [Source: DWP](#)).

### **£670 a week**

The average income in 2021-22 for pensioner “units” (including single pensioners and pensioner couples) who recently reached state pension age. This can be broken down by benefit income, occupational pension income, personal pension income, investment income, earnings and other income. ([Source: DWP](#)).

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'It wasn't initially clear how Marcus Silva, a Texas man, even knew about his ex-wife's abortion.' Photograph: Michael Nigro/Pacific Press/Shutterstock

[Opinion](#)[Abortion](#)

## **They helped their friend get an abortion. Now a bitter ex-husband is suing them**

[Moira Donegan](#)



Marcus Silva's lawsuit is a metaphor for the creepy, stupid and cruel nature of the anti-choice movement

Sat 15 Apr 2023 05.14 EDT Last modified on Sat 15 Apr 2023 06.08 EDT

It wasn't initially clear how Marcus Silva, a [Texas](#) man, even knew about his ex-wife's abortion. Last month, just weeks after the divorce his wife had filed for was finalized, Silva filed a "wrongful death" lawsuit against three of her closest friends, seeking \$1m from each. He claims that the women helped his wife obtain abortion medication in July 2022 – two months after she had filed for divorce from him, and just a few weeks after the Dobbs decision overturned Roe v Wade and states like Texas outlawed abortion. And Silva had text messages to prove it.

His legal complaint included photos of what Silva claimed was a group chat between his then wife and the three women he is now suing. In it, the women can be seen working together to help their friend end her pregnancy and extricate herself from Silva. In the group chat, the women delegate tasks, each taking on the responsibility to look for abortion providers or financial assistance. They also speak of the need to keep both the pregnancy and the abortion from Silva, speculating that his wife will be made to suffer

more if he finds out. “Delete all conversations from today,” [one woman tells Silva’s then wife](#). “You don’t want him looking through it.”

But it seems that Silva did indeed look through it. New reporting from NPR strongly suggests that Silva and his attorneys obtained the text messages because Silva rifled through his wife’s purse when she wasn’t looking, and took photos of her text threads with his own phone. The images themselves are off-center and blurry; there’s a glare on the screen, and in some of the pictures, you can see what seems to be the outline of Silva’s own thumb reflected on the glass of his wife’s cellphone. Lana Ramjit, the director of operations at Cornell’s Clinic to End Tech Abuse, was frank about her assessment of the images to NPR, describing them as “[janky](#)”. “They are pretty clearly photos of a phone,” Ramjit says.

The photos do, however, include a timestamp from the text thread: “Today, 6.38pm.” That timestamp, combined with a recently unearthed [police report](#) from when Silva reported the texts to the police, both indicate that Silva knew of his wife’s pregnancy, and her intent to abort, before the abortion took place – a reality that would dramatically undermine his lawsuit’s claim of emotional damages, which relies heavily on the notion, asserted by Silva’s attorneys, that the abortion took place without his knowledge. “He went into his wife’s purse and located a post-it note containing the phone number to a hotline for an abortion clinic,” the police report reads.

James Bond this guy is not. But perhaps the anti-choice movement has never had so perfect an avatar as Marcus Silva. Silva’s lawsuit – his transparent malice and jiltedness, his obsessive attempts to exert exacting control over his wife, his use of petty and obvious, rather than sophisticated, technological surveillance over her and the women who would help her escape his control – offer both a clear vision of the anti-choice movement’s project of enabling men’s private entrapment and abuse of women, and a decent metaphor for the creepy, stupid and cruel nature of the anti-choice movement writ large. Maybe it is their identification with his trifling cruelty that has drawn the leaders of the anti-choice movement to embrace Silva so closely: the attorney representing him in his lawsuit against his wife’s friends is Jonathan Mitchell, the architect of Texas’s bounty-hunter abortion ban, SB8.

Silva's lawsuit against his wife's friends follows several trends that have long been advanced by the anti-choice movement. His legal claim of "wrongful death" relies, for example, on naming the embryo as a person – so-called fetal "personhood" – a charge that would make his wife's friends, who allegedly helped her obtain the medication, something like accomplices to murder.

His lawyers claim that Silva was wronged, too, by his wife's choice to terminate the pregnancy "without his knowledge or consent", a claim that suggests that a man who impregnated a woman gains the ability to compel her to give birth against her will – a kind of property right over her body, conferred by virtue of insemination.

The so-called "spousal consent" theory that men can force their wives and girlfriends to give birth has long been one of the tactics used by the anti-choice movement to further men's private control over women with the assistance of the state. And it has fans on the supreme court: now-Justice [Samuel Alito voted to uphold a Pennsylvania "spousal consent" law](#) that required women to obtain a husband's permission for an abortion in the early 1990s, when he was a judge on the third circuit court of appeals.

A similar logic of the supposed entitlement and authority of husbands and fathers is at play in a series of anti-choice laws that allow third parties to sue abortion providers – but [limit the ability to sue](#) to a woman's family, or to the man who impregnated her; as if these people have some claim to control the woman's choices or enforce on her a pregnancy that she does not want.

The lawsuit targets the abortion patient's friends, looking to treat their care, cooperation and solidarity as criminal

The theory reduces women to glorified property, placing their bodies and lives under the control of men, and sees the state less as a protector of women's personal freedom than as an enforcer of men's rights to control women. For the anti-choice movement, that's precisely the point.

But perhaps most notable – and most typical – is that the lawsuit targets the abortion patient's friends, looking to treat their care, cooperation and

solidarity as criminal. In that sense, Silva joins a long line of abortion opponents who have increasingly turned to so-called “aiding and abetting” statutes, which target those who help women and girls get abortions.

Texas’s SB8, the bounty-hunter law crafted by Silva’s lawyer, is an “aiding and abetting” law, targeting not abortion patients but the people who help them in their moment of need – by getting them accurate health information, or getting them access to pills, or lending them money, or giving them a ride to a provider. (Because Texas state law shields abortion patients themselves from liability, Silva was not able to name his ex-wife as a defendant in the lawsuit. One gets the sense that he would if he could.) Idaho’s so-called “abortion trafficking” law, which limits women and girls’ right to travel by making it a felony to transport a teenager to get an abortion, takes the same strategy of attacking those who try to help a woman or girl control her own life.

It’s the anti-choice movement’s dark and sadistic warping of the concept of “family”. They advance a vision where men who can claim to be a woman’s “family” are entitled to control and hurt her, with the help of the state. And where relationships that are worthy of being called “family” – the friendships, the solidarity, the relations of mutual respect and affection in which people help each other to be free – are demonized, intimidated and punished by the law.

- Moira Donegan is a Guardian US columnist
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Illustration by Raj Dhunna

[OpinionRap](#)

## Rap and drill music give voice to the pain of life in a world of violence, and YouTube is the new amphitheatre

[Ciaran Thapar](#)



In ancient Athens, tragic stories brought catharsis, a purging of emotions through art. Today, music helps teenagers process traumatic, stressful lives

Sat 15 Apr 2023 05.00 EDT

How should we understand violent songs, beyond simply calling them the creation of a folk devil? There must be another way. Because in my youth work with teenagers over the past decade – which has included [mentoring many rappers](#) with experience of serious youth violence – I've come to view the narratives of music as a force to be harnessed and critiqued, not suppressed and censored.

In my search for solutions, including looking at how music forms have been [effectively criminalised](#), I've found it helpful to trace the etymology of a word and idea that's repeatedly used in common parlance but rarely interrogated: catharsis.

When we describe an experience as “cathartic”, what do we mean? Where does it come from? Why does it matter?

In ancient Athens, people would gather at the amphitheatre to watch tragedies play out on the stage as a form of entertainment. While helping to devise the origins of western philosophical thought in his classic text, Poetics, Aristotle would briefly mention the Greek word “[katharsis](#)”, to describe the purgation or purification of emotions felt by performers and audiences of drama.

The specific slant of its definition has been hotly debated for centuries. But broadly speaking, catharsis was shorthand for the belief that tragic stories told in art can serve a moral and social, even medicinal, function. By making us empathic or scared on behalf of a fictional character, we confront and drain latent feelings of pity and fear that build up in our lives in a controlled setting. By shocking us into new modes of thinking, stories teach us ethical lessons about actions and consequences, and show us how to make effective decisions.

Have you ever felt renewed on your journey home after watching an immersive, moving film at the cinema? Perhaps hearing a sad song helped to lift a low mood, or an angry song motivated you to go harder at the gym. Maybe you’ve read a story about someone pulling through a challenge relatable to you, and it made you feel affirmed. That’s catharsis.

But philosophy need not remain the historical plaything of armchair thinkers. There are many ways of applying it to the complexities of 21st-century life. Indeed, alongside thought experiments such as [Plato’s allegory of the cave](#) and social designs such as Jeremy Bentham’s [panopticon](#), I’ve discovered a constant, universal resonance in my discussions about city life with teenagers and adults alike whenever I explain catharsis.

Whether it’s horror films, video games or the American gangsta rap that emerged from hip-hop’s golden era in the 1990s, debates about the exaggerated dangers of violent art have dragged on for decades. UK rap and drill music is no different.

Earlier this year, I wrote [an article](#) challenging the prejudicial mining of music as criminal evidence in British courts. I argued that rap and drill lyrics should not be relied upon to convict people, especially without forensic proof of their alleged crime.

The police use a negative framing, but there is something positive in this potential for catharsis that can help so many see past the doom and gloom. It can turn an outpouring of pain into a bottling of strength because its logic suggests that when rappers step into the recording studio to perform lyrics they've written, it can become a vital opportunity to shed the skin of something they might have experienced, seen or heard about in their community. It can amount to a lone medium of expression in a harsh world that otherwise affords marginalised young people little room to breathe.

Over the past 13 years, hundreds of [youth clubs have closed](#) across the UK, [spending per child](#) in state education has fallen, mental health services have been dismantled and policies to criminalise young people have been rolled out by a Tory government trying to punish its way out of a violent crime epidemic. In this context of austerity, the padded, soundproofed booth that wraps around a microphone should be valued as a space in which young people who have experienced violence can communicate with the rest of us.

For some boys and young men I've worked with, the studio can – to use the language of Aristotle – allow for the rare purgation of traumatic emotions that have built up from subsistent daily life, avoiding fatal conflict and heavy-handed over-policing. It can be a purification of the spirit, a cleansing of shame or regret, and a lightening of hidden psychological loads that, if left unchecked, can stunt growth and affect educational achievement. And when the artist's process is complete – they remove their headphones and step out of the booth – if handled sensitively by a trusted adult, an authentic conversation about the roots of their creation might take place. In this version of events, music heals.

And that's just for the performer. But what about the listener? Critical discourse about the young audiences that violent music attracts tends to be voiced from a place of concern and judgment. There is a quick assumption that, because lyrics themselves can be horrific in their descriptions and provocations, their impact on the vulnerable young person who hears them must be horrific, too.

There might be some truth in this for a child who is too immature to differentiate between their rights and wrongs, facts and fictions. But lyrics

are mostly just lyrics. Even if they are based in reality, they are delivered as performative and therefore contain the rich seeds of catharsis.

For those who experience British society as a web of financial insecurity, intergenerational trauma, authoritative tellings-off and insidious microaggressions – in other words, as an inherently violent place – listening to and watching music content can provide relatable entertainment, life-saving lessons and pent-up emotional release. In 2023, YouTube is the Greek amphitheatre.

It is there for the student who feels scared on their bus journey to and from school because of local, tit-for-tat territorial feuds, because of the rising prevalence of knife-carrying in their friendship group, or the murder of someone they grew up playing football with. It is there for the frustrated teenager who turns up hungry at the youth club after being sent home early from their pupil referral unit while trying to avoid the influence of drug-dealing elders and the stresses of an empty-fridge home life. For the teenager who has witnessed more stabbings and shootings than you or I could imagine, yet feels judged by their teachers or police when they act out of turn.

The evolution of UK rap and drill music is not perfect. But it reflects the world and society we have built for ourselves. And it's always worth remembering that it is the storytelling of a voiceless cohort. Understanding music's potential as a form of catharsis should be a priority for those of us who care about challenging the violence that its lyrics speak about.

- Ciaran Thapar is a London-based youth worker and author of *Cut Short*. He writes about youth culture, social change and city life and has a weekly newsletter called [ALL CITY](#), in which a version of this article first appeared
  - ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***
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Junior doctors picket outside University College Hospital, London, 14 April 2023. Photograph: Vuk Valcic/ZUMA Press Wire/Shutterstock

[OpinionDoctors](#)

## **The junior doctors' strike is not just about pay – this is a generation that feels betrayed**

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



It's not that they are the worst paid in society, but there's a huge gulf between their expectations and today's reality

Fri 14 Apr 2023 12.53 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 16.50 EDT

After four tense days when you could almost feel the [NHS](#) holding its breath, striking junior doctors are preparing to return to the wards.

But the relief, such as it is for anyone who cares about the NHS, is only temporary. This week's planned stoppage may be ending but the strike very much is not. And judging by the increasingly personal nature of [political briefings against](#) the British Medical Association's young turks, if anything the two sides in this dispute look further apart than ever. And, worryingly, they seem to be separated by something more than money.

What makes the junior doctors' strike different from other waves of industrial action is precisely that they *are* junior, and therefore young. This is Britain's first, though almost certainly not its last, proper generation Z strike. Middle-aged ministers may be irritated by the junior doctors' fondness for WhatsApping each other under the table during negotiations, or using crab emojis to symbolise their collective solidarity, but they should

arguably have been better prepared for what they're dealing with. After all, it was a Conservative government that largely created it.

For these are the disappointed children of a lost economic decade, finally coming of age. They were still at school, pushing themselves for the A\*'s they needed to get into medical school, when the banks crashed and changed their lives in ways they couldn't then have foreseen. Having done their training in an austerity era of pay freezes across the public sector, junior doctors are emerging in their mid- to late 20s into a world shockingly different from the one they thought they had been promised.

Doctors were the kids who always came top of the class at school and, while they expected the job to be stressful, they probably never dreamed they'd end up worrying about the cost of putting the heating on. They want what they feel they're owed, which is the life they would be living if wages had kept relative pace with 2008 levels – but also, perhaps, in some ways the lives their parents had: ones where a career like medicine would be hard work but rewarding, where doing well at school reliably paid off, and where someone in a good professional job could take home ownership pretty much for granted.

As the Oxford professor of primary care Professor Trisha Greenhalgh tweeted this week, on a junior doctor's salary of £15,000 in the 1980s she was able to buy a London flat for £50,000; now the equivalent salary might be £35,000 but the same flat costs £600,000. Meanwhile junior doctors are starting out six figures deep in debt for medical degrees that Greenhalgh's generation didn't have to pay for.

True, all this can sound horribly entitled, especially to anyone who can only dream of earning the kind of salaries junior doctors may ultimately command if they go on to become consultants and take on lucrative private practices. The government knows that unlike nurses – who have [rejected their own pay offer](#) and announced a new 48-hour strike later this month – the junior doctors' relative privilege is their achilles heel. This presumably explains a flurry of well-sourced newspaper stories about their leaders' often affluent backgrounds. (A decade ago, when some of today's strike leaders will have been applying, a quarter of medical school places [went to the privately educated](#).)

But if this is one of the posher protests in union history, it nonetheless taps into a much more universal sense of generational injustice. The feeling that life is somehow going backwards is widely shared not just by other young public sector workers – teachers, civil servants, social workers, legal aid lawyers – but also private sector workers squeezed by soaring rents, painfully expensive childcare and lately rocketing inflation. It's just that junior doctors have the confidence – and, thanks to the fact that lives depend on their work, the political clout – to push back.

With his peculiar gift for being years ahead of everyone else in spotting something but not quite being able to turn it into a soundbite, Ed Miliband [started talking way back in 2011](#) about the betrayal of what he called “the promise of Britain”, or the unwritten assumption that kids would be better off than their parents.

What he correctly foresaw then, and what has become even clearer since, was the painful long-term consequences for the young of a crash followed by sluggish growth and falling living standards, compounded by an asset bubble pushing up housing costs. The young got a raw deal during that decade in part because it was assumed they wouldn't vote, but the strikes have shown that voting isn't necessarily the only way of exerting influence.

What makes the junior doctors particularly powerful is that, as highly skilled workers, they have options. Their qualifications are sought after in Canada or Australia, where salaries aren't just higher but potentially stretch to a nicer way of life; decamp to Sydney and you can spend your days off surfing in the sunshine. Or you could just stay in rainy Britain, where Rishi Sunak was this week reminiscing about buying his first flat in an interview with the website ConservativeHome while simultaneously confirming that national targets to build more houses – one of the few tools for boosting affordable supply – [are being scrapped](#), because grassroots Tories objected.

The big immediate risk to government, however, isn't youthful emigration to countries offering brighter prospects than struggling, sulking post-Brexit Britain. It's older voters revolting as the consequences of industrial unrest work their way through the system. The [economy stalled in February](#), thanks partly to public sector strikes. Sunak has [promised to cut](#) NHS waiting lists, but every operation cancelled on a strike day makes that harder. Put simply,

he may need junior doctors now more than they need him, which is why the BMA's call [for Acas to step in](#) now and broker a compromise seems wise.

Nobody expects doctors to get a 35% rise overnight but a fair deal might involve a pay uplift staggered over several years, plus some imaginative short-term thinking. Given how badly we need their skills, why aren't we forgiving student debt for newly qualified doctors who stay in the NHS for a minimum period? Why are young medics expected to make such big contributions into what now looks like an over-generous pension scheme? And could their total compensation package be weighted more towards salary when they're young?

But even if a deal can be done, buying off junior doctors doesn't solve the wider political problem for the Tories of a rising generation with good reason to feel betrayed reaching the age where it finally finds some leverage. Those crabs have pincers, and they're only just starting to use them.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
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[\*\*Guardian Opinion cartoon\*\*](#)

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## **Martin Rowson on Steve Barclay and the nurses' dispute – cartoon**

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The Isar 2 power station in Essenbach, Bavaria. Photograph: Johannes Simon/Getty

## [Nuclear power](#)

# **Germany's last three nuclear power stations to shut this weekend**

Closures, delayed after Russia reduced Europe's gas supplies, leave conundrum for energy policymakers

- [Business live – latest updates](#)

*Alex Lawson*

Sat 15 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT

Germany's three remaining nuclear power stations will shut down on Saturday, 12 years after [the Fukushima disaster](#) in Japan accelerated the country's exit from atomic energy.

The closures mark the conclusion of a stop-start approach to atomic energy and a victory for the country's vociferous anti-nuclear movement.

The facilities shutting are in Emsland, in the northern state of Lower Saxony, the Isar 2 site in Bavaria, and Neckarwestheim, in Baden-Württemberg in the south-west.

The shutdowns leave a conundrum for energy policymakers attempting to balance growing electricity demand in one of Europe's industrial superpowers and efforts to decarbonise, against the backdrop of uncertainty caused by the war in Ukraine.

Germany last year delayed the closure of the three sites – which provided about 6.5% of the country's electricity in 2022 – after Russia reduced European gas supplies, triggering concerns about a shortage of energy over the winter.

The country began phasing out nuclear power more than two decades ago amid a long-fought campaign against the technology, but, in 2010 Angela Merkel, then chancellor, announced an extension to the life of the country's 17 nuclear plants until 2036 at the latest.

This policy was swiftly reversed the following year after an earthquake and tsunami caused the meltdown of reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in Japan, triggering fresh anti-nuclear protests and political resolve to exit the technology.

Nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island in the US in 1979 and Chernobyl in 1986 had already entrenched the push against nuclear in Germany, which had begun earlier in the 1970s. Germany has switched off 16 reactors since 2003.

The final shutdowns have raised questions about security of energy supplies and the outlook for Germany's carbon emissions. The country plans to close all coal-fired power plants by 2038, with the first round of closures planned in 2030.

However, its parliament approved emergency legislation [to reopen](#) mothballed coal-fired power plants to aid electricity generation last year. A push to build more terminals to import liquefied natural gas has also been accelerated since the Ukraine war began.

Coal accounted for just over 30% of Germany's electricity generation in 2022, ahead of wind – responsible for 22%, gas-fired generation at 13% and solar at 10%. Biomass, nuclear and hydroelectric power made up the bulk of the remainder.

The thinktank Ember has estimated that Germany and Poland will be the EU's two largest producers of coal-fired electricity in 2030, responsible for more than half of EU power sector emissions by that point.

Advocates of nuclear power argue that it provides a low-carbon, reliable alternative to fossil fuels for electricity generation. Critics say new projects are costly, frequently delayed and present environmental concerns over the disposal of nuclear waste.

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Tom Greatrex, chief executive of the UK's Nuclear Industry Association, said the phaseout would worsen carbon emissions and “for a country supposedly renowned for its logical and evidence-driven approach is

environmentally damaging, economically illiterate and deeply irresponsible”.

He added: “At a time of heightened concern about energy security, Germany will be abandoning assets that can displace 34bn cubic metres of gas a year.”

But Tom Burke, chair of the thinktank E3G, played down fears over energy security, and said a mild winter and high levels of gas storage in Europe meant concerns about power supplies next winter had eased.

He said Germany’s renewables industry was growing and that improving grid connections and battery storage across the country would be key to moving the country’s energy system away from fossil fuels.

“The coal is mainly being burnt for social and economic reasons, making sure the industry doesn’t shut down all at once,” said Burke. “You cannot have a technology transformation without a social transformation.”

Germany’s abandonment of nuclear power is in contrast to the stated ambitions of the UK government, which last month kickstarted a fresh push into nuclear. Ministers have set up a delivery body for new nuclear projects and are running a competition for small nuclear reactors.

However, progress on developing two existing large projects, Sizewell C in Suffolk and Hinkley Point C in Somerset, has been slow, with the latter delayed and overbudget.

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Protestors demonstrate against the decision by the French constitutional council to approve president Emmanuel Macron's contentious Pension Reform Law. Photograph: Kiran Ridley/Getty Images

[The ObserverFrance](#)

## Macron signs controversial pension changes into law after months of protests

France's highest constitutional court approved the law on Friday, leading to widespread demonstrations

*Agence France-Presse*

Sat 15 Apr 2023 02.35 EDT Last modified on Sat 15 Apr 2023 15.34 EDT

French president [Emmanuel Macron](#) has signed his controversial pension reform into law, defying three months of protests and pleas from unions not to implement the legislation.

The alterations became law on Saturday, after the text was published overnight in France's official journal. This followed the [approval on Friday](#) by France's highest constitutional court of the essence of the legislation, including the banner change of raising the retirement age from 62 to 64.

Unions called for mass Labor Day protests on 1 May, and some violent demonstrations erupted in several cities overnight after the verdict was announced.

The battle to implement the law has become the biggest domestic challenge of Macron's second term, as he faced widespread popular opposition to the changes but also sliding personal popularity.

The nine-member constitutional council ruled in favour of key provisions of the reform, including raising the retirement age to 64 and extending the years of work required for a full pension, saying the legislation was in accordance with French law.

Six minor proposals were rejected, including forcing large companies to publish how many over-55s they employ, and the creation of a special contract for older workers.

The appearance of the text in France's Official Journal – the gazette of record – means it has now been enacted into law.

“The Social Security Code is thus amended. In the first paragraph, the word: ‘sixty-two; is replaced by the word: ‘sixty-four’,” states the text, referring to the retirement age.



Thousands turned out to protest after the constitutional court approved the key elements of the pension changes Photograph: Jérôme Gilles/NurPhoto/Shutterstock

But the constitutional court's decision could prove a pyrrhic victory for Macron, as analysts say it has come at a major personal cost for the 45-year-old.

The president's approval ratings are near their lowest levels ever, and many voters have been outraged by his decision to ram the pensions law through parliament without a vote using a legal but controversial mechanism denounced by opponents as anti-democratic.

Polls consistently show that two out of three French people are against working a further two years.

Macron has called the change “necessary” to avoid annual pension deficits forecast to hit €13.5bn (\$14.8bn) by 2030, according to government figures.

“Stay the course. That’s my motto,” Macron said Friday as he inspected Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, four years after a devastating fire nearly destroyed the gothic monument.

The prime minister, Elisabeth Borne, tweeted that after the verdict “there are no winners or losers”.

But the leftwing Liberation daily said in its headline above a picture of a protest: “Not defeated: opponents of the reform are not going to disarm”.

Bikes, e-scooters and garbage were set on fire in the capital overnight while protests rallying hundreds erupted in other cities, including Marseille and Toulouse.

In the western city of Rennes, protesters set fire to the entrance of a police station and a conference centre. Paris police said 112 people had been arrested as of 10.30pm local time.

An estimated 380,000 people took to the streets nationwide on Thursday in the latest day of union-led action, according to the interior ministry – a small fraction of the nearly 1.3 million who demonstrated at the height of the protests in March.

Unions issued a joint statement urging Macron not to sign the legislation into law, saying the issue was “not finished”.

The general secretary of the CGT union, Sophie Binet, called for a “popular and historic tidal wave” of people on the streets to oppose the reforms on 1 May.

In a second decision on Friday, the court rejected a bid from opposition lawmakers to force a referendum on an alternative pension law that would have kept the retirement age at 62.

France lags behind most of its European neighbours, many of which have hiked the retirement age to 65 or above.

Opponents of the changes say they penalise women and unskilled workers who started their careers early and undercut the right to a long retirement.

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Mark Sheehan performing with the Script in Cardiff in 2020. Photograph: Mike Lewis Photography/Redferns

## Music

# **Mark Sheehan, the Script guitarist, dies aged 46**

Irish pop group announce death of ‘much loved bandmate’ after a brief illness

*[Christy Cooney](#) and agency*

Fri 14 Apr 2023 14.16 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 17.15 EDT

Mark Sheehan, guitarist with Irish pop band the Script, has died in hospital aged 46 after a brief illness.

Sheehan formed the band with frontman Danny O'Donoghue and drummer Glen Power in 2001.

In a statement on their social media pages, the band said: “Much loved husband, father, brother, bandmate and friend Mark Sheehan passed away today in hospital after a brief illness.

“The family and group ask fans to respect their privacy at this tragic time.”

Sheehan was married to Reena Sheehan, whom he met while she was working as a session singer, and the couple had three children.

Last year, after the guitarist missed the US leg of the band’s tour, O’Donoghue told [Sunday World](#) that Sheehan had taken a break to spend time with his family. He added that the group were supportive of Sheehan’s decision and described them as “a band of brothers” who “stick together no matter what”.

Sheehan later rejoined his bandmates for a number of shows in [Ireland](#). The group are due to support US singer Pink at dates across the UK and Europe this summer.

O’Donoghue and Sheehan both grew up in Dublin and had been best friends since the age of 12.

The Script’s self-titled debut album was released in 2008 and went to number one in both the UK and Ireland. It featured hits including We Cry, Breakeven, and The Man Who Can’t Be Moved, with the latter peaking at No 2 in the UK singles charts.

Between 2010 and 2019, the band amassed more UK No 1 albums than any other Irish act.

Writing on Twitter, former Westlife singer Brian McFadden described the news as “devastating”. “Mark was one of the good guys!” he said.

Former Boyzone singer Mikey Graham, whose bandmate Stephen Gately died suddenly from an undiagnosed heart condition in 2009, said: “Today we lost another young legend of music.

“I can and do understand the pain Glen & Danny are feeling right now and also their families. All my love and support I offer you at this time. You

gave the world your music, it will carry you home, Mark.”

Former Love Island host Laura Whitmore wrote on Instagram: “Thinking of you all at this time. Mark was one of the nicest and most talented men you could meet x.”

Ryan Tedder, vocalist with American band OneRepublic, tweeted that Sheehan was “one of the nicest, most genuine people I’ve ever had the pleasure of touring with and getting to know”. “Mark, u will be missed,” he said.

The Irish culture minister, Catherine Martin, said Sheehan’s loss was a “great shock to music lovers everywhere and to the Script’s legions of fans around the world”. “My deepest condolences to his family, fellow band members and friends,” she added.

*PA Media contributed to this report*

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Abortion-rights supporters stage a counter protest during the March for Life rally on 20 January in Washington DC. Photograph: Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

### Abortion

## **‘They created this’: are Republicans willing to lose elections to retain their abortion stance?**

The right has, for decades, relied on abortion to rally their conservative base, but now their unified policy is flagging



[Lauren Gambino](#)

[@laurenegambino](#)

Sat 15 Apr 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 15 Apr 2023 15.47 EDT

Democrats have taken multiple actions in response to what they say is a “draconian” and “dangerous” decision by a federal judge in Texas threatening access to the most commonly used method of abortion in the US.

Several Democratic governors have begun to stockpile doses of the drugs used in medication abortions. Nearly every Democrat in Congress signed onto an amicus brief urging an appeals court to stay the decision, while some called on the Biden administration to simply “ignore” the ruling, should it be allowed to stand. A group of House Democrats introduced a bill that would give the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) final approval over drugs used in medication abortion.

Their fury over the ruling has been met with relative silence from Republicans.

Only a handful of congressional Republicans offered immediate comment on judge Matthew Kacsmaryk’s decision last week to revoke the FDA’s 23-year-old approval of the abortion pill mifepristone. Just a fraction of

Republicans on Capitol Hill signed an amicus brief urging an appeals court to uphold the ruling. And among the party's national field of Republican presidential nominees, just one – the former vice-president, Mike Pence – unabashedly praised the decision.

The starkly different reactions underscores just how dramatically the politics of abortion have shifted since last June, when conservatives achieved their once-unimaginable goal of overturning Roe v Wade.

For decades, Republicans relied on abortion to rally their conservative base, calling for the reversal of Roe v Wade and vowing to outlaw the procedure if given the chance. But since the supreme court's ruling in Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health, abortion has emerged as a potent issue for Democrats, galvanizing voters furious over the thicket of state bans and restrictions ushered in by the decision.

Republicans have struggled to respond, lacking a unified policy on abortion in the nearly 10 months since the landmark decision.

"Dobbs really did get Republicans, especially elected Republicans, running scared," said Jon Schweppe, policy director at the conservative American Principles Project.

Polling has consistently found [a clear majority](#) of Americans believe abortion should remain legal in all or most cases, though partisan divisions have deepened over the years. A new survey released by the [Pew Research Center](#) this week showed that by a margin of more than 2 to 1, Americans believe medication abortion, which is at the center of the current legal battle, should be legal in their state.

## **'Let the states work this out'**

A post-Dobbs backlash fueled a string of victories for abortions rights, including in more conservative states, and powered Democratic victories in last year's November midterm elections. And this month, just days before the Texas ruling on mifepristone, abortion rights were a dominant force in a [liberal judge's](#) landslide victory in a key race for a Wisconsin supreme court seat.

“It’s no surprise that GOP candidates are scared to tie themselves to a decision that is wildly out of step with what voters want,” Mini Timmaraju, the president of NARAL Pro-Choice American told reporters this week. “They can’t be eager to repeat last week’s [double-digit](#) walloping of extremist judicial candidate, Dan Kelly, in Wisconsin.”

In that race, Kelly’s opponent, judge Janet Protasiewicz, had effectively promised voters that if she won, flipping the ideological balance of the court from conservative to liberal, the new majority would overturn Wisconsin’s 1849 abortion ban.

“People understood the stakes and they were ready to vote for Judge Protasiewicz,” said Timmaraju, whose group was active in the contest.

Now, with the 2024 presidential election looming, an increasingly vocal group of Republicans are urging moderation on abortion, warning that the uncompromising positions of their party’s culturally conservative base risk alienating crucial swing voters.

“This is an issue that Republicans have been largely on the wrong side of,” congresswoman Nancy Mace, a Republican from South Carolina, said in a recent appearance on CNN.

Mace, who considers herself “pro-life”, said her party had “not shown compassion towards women” since the fall of Roe. She has urged flexibility, pushing Republicans to expand access to contraception and include exceptions for abortions in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the mother is at risk or the fetus is no longer viable.

Since June, Republican-led legislatures have charged ahead with new restrictions. More than a dozen states [ban](#) abortion, [with several other](#) Republican-led state legislatures considering new restrictions this session.

On Thursday, the Florida legislature voted to prohibit abortions after six weeks – before many women realize they are pregnant – delivering a major policy victory for the state’s Republican governor, Ron DeSantis. Hours later, DeSantis, who is widely expected to run for president in 2024, quietly

signed the ban into law with little fanfare, underscoring just how complicated the issue has become for Republicans.

In Nebraska, the state legislature is in the process of [debating a six-week ban](#). But even in the reliably conservative state, some Republican lawmakers are floating an alternative that would expand the window to 12 weeks, a sign that a ban any earlier in pregnancy could stoke public outcry.

One option floated as a politically palatable “compromise” is a [proposal](#) by South Carolina senator Lindsey Graham that would implement a federal ban on abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

But the legislation divided Republicans and ultimately only attracted a handful of co-sponsors when he introduced it last year ahead of the midterms. Several Republicans, including the Senate minority leader, Mitch McConnell, argued that limits on abortion should be set by the states.

Asked whether he supported Graham’s proposal, Senator Tim Scott, a Republican from South Carolina who this week formed an exploratory committee for a 2024 presidential run, said was “100% pro-life” but [declined](#) to answer the question directly. He [clarified](#) later that he would back a federal ban at 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Nikki Haley, Donald Trump’s former UN ambassador who is running for the nomination, urged Republicans to seek consensus on the issue, asserting that she was “pro-life” but did not “judge anyone who is pro-choice”.

“Let’s let the states work this out,” Haley said, according to the [Des Moines Register](#). “If Congress decides to do it – but don’t get in that game of them saying ‘how many weeks, how many’ – no. Let’s first figure out what we agree on.”

DeSantis has sought to position himself as a reliable ally of the anti-abortion movement, hoping his support of a six-week ban will appeal to social conservatives searching for an alternative to Trump in the early-voting states Iowa and South Carolina.

Earlier this year, Trump, whose conservative supreme court appointees enabled Roe to be struck down, angered abortion opponents when he warned that abortion is a political liability for Republicans and blamed extremism on the issue for their lackluster performance in the 2022 midterms.

## **‘Ostrich strategy’**

In the escalating legal battle over access to medication abortion, supreme court justice Samuel Alito on Friday temporarily halted a federal appeals court ruling that would have reimposed restrictions on mifepristone. The stay will expire on Wednesday while the court deliberate next steps.

Reproductive rights advocates say the ongoing threat to medication abortion nationwide makes clear that Republicans never actually believed abortion was an issue best handled by the states, as Alito wrote in his 2022 decision overturning the federal right to abortion.

“They are seeking a nationwide ban – but they are not going to stop there,” Jennifer Dalven, director of the ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project, told reporters this week. “We are already seeing attacks on birth control.”

As a starting point, Scheweppe believes social conservatives must be willing to compromise on a federal ban, possibly accepting legislation that falls well short of their long-held goal to end all abortions. He urged Republicans to adopt positions that are broadly popular with wide swaths of voters, including allowances for pregnancies that result from rape or incest, or when the health or life of the mother is at risk.

“We have to be honest about where the fault lines lie,” he said. “Exceptions are what drives voter sentiment. That’s what Democrats are attacking us on.”

Many leading abortion opponents blame recent losses on Republicans’ embrace of a so-called “ostrich strategy” – avoiding the topic or trying to change the subject – not their opposition to abortion.

“Republicans have cowered in fear as the consultants and campaign advisors tell them not to talk about abortion,” Penny Young Nance, the chief

executive and president of evangelical Christian group, Concerned Women for America. In the Wisconsin supreme court race, she said the conservative's defeat was an example of what happens when Republicans are badly outspent and fail to "boldly" defend their position on an issue that has been a defining policy of American conservatism.

"The winning strategy is to tell the truth about the left's extremist position on the issue that is out of [sync] with the views of the American people," Nance said in an email.

As Republicans search for a path forward, Democrats, confident public opinion is on their side, are already preparing to make abortion a central theme of the coming election cycles.

"Even though some in the GOP are trying to stay quiet about the Texas ruling, back home they're still passing and signing abortion bans," Timmaraju said.

"They created this reality," she added. "They cannot run away from it."

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The pause gives the high court more time to deliberate the fate of mifepristone. Photograph: Albuquerque Journal/Shutterstock

### [US supreme court](#)

## **US supreme court temporarily blocks ruling limiting abortion pill access**

Samuel Alito imposes five-day stay after ruling by Texas federal judge that would have imposed restrictions on mifepristone

[Mary Tuma](#)

Fri 14 Apr 2023 16.25 EDT Last modified on Fri 14 Apr 2023 17.17 EDT

[US supreme court](#) justice Samuel Alito has temporarily blocked lower court rulings which would have imposed temporary restrictions on the abortion pill mifepristone that were set to go into effect this weekend.

[Alito](#) imposed a five-day stay after a ruling by a conservative federal judge in Texas, parts of which were then upheld by a conservative appellate court based in New Orleans. For now, access to medication abortion – the most

common method of pregnancy termination in the US – is unchanged until at least Wednesday 19 April.

The pause gives the high court more time to deliberate the restrictions imposed by the lower court. The Department of Justice and the drug's manufacturer, Danco, had asked the supreme court to intervene to stop those restrictions earlier on Friday.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved mifepristone in 2000. The US fifth circuit court of appeal decision, upholding parts of the ruling by federal judge Matthew Kacsmaryk of Texas, had rolled back action taken by the FDA after 2016 to expand access to the drug.

The restrictions that were set to take effect this weekend include limiting mifepristone's use after seven weeks of pregnancy – it is currently approved until 10 weeks – and banning the delivery of the drug by mail.

The stay is not considered necessarily indicative of how the court, which is dominated by a conservative supermajority, may ultimately rule on the overall merits of the abortion drug case. Alito wrote the landmark [US supreme court](#) ruling last year that eliminated the federal right to abortion, which had been established with the Roe v Wade decision in 1973. Last year's ruling left it up to individual states to decide the legality of abortion within their boundaries.

The justice department wrote in its appeal to the high court on Friday that the restrictions would create “profound disruption and grave harm”.

“If allowed to take effect, the lower courts’ orders would upend the regulatory regime for mifepristone, with sweeping consequences for the pharmaceutical industry, women who need access to the drug, and FDA’s ability to implement its statutory authority,” wrote Elizabeth Prelogar, the US solicitor general.

The supreme court was widely expected to take up the case, in part because of a ruling from a Washington state district court that conflicts with the decisions out of Texas and Louisiana. The Washington ruling orders the

FDA to maintain the status quo for the drug in 17 states and the District of Columbia. The FDA faces an “obvious threat of irreparable harm” from conflicting court orders, the justice department writes.

Danco, the mifepristone drug manufacturer, also appealed to the supreme court for intervention on Friday, pointing to the “regulatory chaos” that would be unleashed if limitations on the drug went into effect. The result of dueling federal court orders creates an “untenable limbo, for Danco, for providers, for women and for healthcare systems all trying to navigate these uncharted waters”, the drug company wrote, arguing that casting doubt on the FDA approvals process would create a dangerous precedent for the drug market broadly.

“This is a dark day for public health, especially for reproductive rights and the reliance on science and medical expertise to guide decisions about what drugs are safe and effective and should be available to patients,” **said** Abby Long, Danco’s director of public affairs, in a statement.

If the supreme court does not act, wrote justice department lawyers, the “resulting disruption would deny women lawful access to a drug FDA deemed a safe and effective alternative to invasive surgical abortion”.

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- [Exclusive UK accused of ‘backward step’ for axing top climate diplomat role](#)
- [Angela Rayner Deputy leader says Labour attack ad was ‘hard-hitting’ but refuses to give full backing](#)
- [Live Angela Rayner defends Labour’s ‘hard-hitting’ anti-Sunak attack ad](#)
- [Pentagon leaks Classified material linked to young gun enthusiast who worked at military base – report](#)
- [Live Pentagon leaker reportedly worked on military base](#)



A protest outside the Bank of England during the Cop26 climate summit in Glasgow. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

### [Green politics](#)

## **UK accused of ‘backward step’ for axing top climate diplomat role**

Exclusive: Previous holder says loss is ‘disappointing’ and damages UK’s ability to spur global climate action

- [UK politics live – latest updates](#)

*Damian Carrington* Environment editor  
[@dpcarrington](#)

Thu 13 Apr 2023 05.38 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 16.45 EDT

The UK government has axed its most senior climate diplomat post, the Guardian can reveal.

The last special representative for climate change, [Nick Bridge](#), stood down recently after six years in post and is not being replaced.

The special representative was appointed by the foreign secretary and worked at a high diplomatic level to further the UK's climate goals internationally. The [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#) (FCDO) said the climate crisis remained of "utmost importance".

But the special representative in post from 2013-17, Prof Sir David King, said: "This is extremely disappointing. It's a very backward step. I do hope that the government has second thoughts and gets a very strong person into this position."

King said he had made 96 official country visits in the two years before the Paris climate agreement was signed in 2015, enabling the UK government to play a leading role in achieving the deal. "The important thing is that the climate change situation is far, far worse now than it was in 2015," he said.

Tom Burke, a former adviser to the first special representative, John Ashton, who was [appointed in 2006](#), said: "The [loss of the post] will clearly be interpreted everywhere as a reduction in Britain's political focus on climate change.

"The government is strengthening [climate work] inside the structure of the FCDO department, but the fact is that without somebody who's got the foreign secretary's approval, and the rank of ambassador more or less, you don't get access to the key players. So it will limit Britain's ability to influence other countries on climate change."

Burke, now chair of the thinktank E3G, added: "All of the really difficult problems in dealing with climate change are the politics, not the technology or economics. And in order to make a difference in the politics, you have to have access to the key top-level decision-makers in countries."

An FCDO spokesperson said: "Climate change remains an area of utmost importance to this government, and to the foreign secretary, and is a central focus of our diplomatic relations on a daily basis. Our resource and senior

representation on climate and environment has grown significantly since the creation of the FCDO, and expanded further since the UK's Cop26 presidency.”

The foreign secretary, James Cleverly, [said in 2020](#): “Climate change is a huge global challenge.” He also [attended](#) the UN’s climate summit Cop27 in Egypt in November.

Wera Hobhouse, the Liberal Democrat spokesperson on climate change, said: “The decision to eliminate the special representative is a clear indication that Rishi Sunak refuses to take the climate crisis seriously. Instead of investing in the expertise and leadership necessary to address one of the greatest threats facing our planet, they have chosen once again to bury their heads in the sand. This position must be reinstated immediately.”

The Guardian reported in 2018 that the number of full-time officials dedicated to the climate crisis in the Foreign Office had [dropped by almost 25%](#) since 2016 under the then foreign secretary, Boris Johnson. The FCDO declined to share the current number of its climate staff.

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The UK government recently launched a new energy security plan. But critics said it was a [missed opportunity](#) full of “half-baked, half-hearted”

policies that did not go far enough to power Britain's climate goals. The plan [failed to put the UK on track](#) to meet its international emissions targets under the Paris agreement.

The government also published an [update of its integrated review](#) on national security, defence, development and foreign policy priorities in March. It said: "The UK's first thematic priority remains tackling climate change, environmental damage and biodiversity loss given the urgency of making progress before 2030."

Burke said: "Lowering the rank of the UK's lead official on climate change is hardly a way of making this priority credible at home or abroad."

In 2006, Ashton said on his appointment as the first special representative: "Climate change is a threat to peace and stability. The assets of the foreign policy community worldwide need to be fully engaged in pursuit of climate security."

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Angela Rayner, who said the advert had ‘caught the public’s attention’.  
Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

[Labour](#)

## **Rayner says Labour attack ad was ‘hard-hitting’ but refuses to give full backing**

Deputy leader says she did not share ad about child sexual abuse convictions because she was spending Easter with family

*Aubrey Allegretti* Political correspondent  
[@breeallegretti](https://twitter.com/breeallegretti)

Thu 13 Apr 2023 04.46 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 16.57 EDT

Labour’s deputy leader has refused to endorse a controversial attack advert from the party, but said it had served its purpose by drawing attention to the government’s “failure” to crack down on crime.

Angela Rayner claimed she had not shared the ad on social media since it was [posted last week](#) because she had been spending Easter with family, and denied it was because she was “holding her nose” owing to personal reservations.

As political parties gear up for a narrative-defining set of local elections next month, the scrutiny over which shadow cabinet ministers have explicitly backed the ad is growing.

Some frontbenchers have [privately confessed](#) they feel uncomfortable about the claim, released in a tweet by Labour last Thursday, that Rishi Sunak does not think convicted sexual abusers of children should go to prison.

In a mock-up poster carrying the prime minister’s picture and signature, the ad cited official statistics showing that, since 2010, 4,500 adults convicted of sexually assaulting children under the age of 16 had served no prison time.

Labour is the party of law and order. [pic.twitter.com/EP6VXToK9z](https://pic.twitter.com/EP6VXToK9z)

— The Labour Party (@UKLabour) [April 6, 2023](#)

Asked multiple times on Thursday morning whether she agreed with the ad, Rayner declined to give her full backing to it.

She said the ad and other similar tweets focusing on gun crime and [Sunak’s wife having been non-domiciled for tax purposes](#) were “really hard-hitting”.



Labour advert criticising Tory tax policies. Photograph: Labour party UK

“It has caught the public’s attention and that’s what our intention was,” Rayner told Sky News.

She stressed Labour wanted to “ensure the public do see that the prime minister and the Conservatives for the last 13 years have failed to tackle serious crime and have let criminals off the hook”.

Rayner added that it was “right that we highlight these issues”.

Though Sunak has been in government only since January 2018 and an MP since May 2015, Labour’s ads have sought to tie him to what it calls the failures of the previous four Tory administrations.

Rayner acknowledged the ads were controversial, saying she was “known not to hold my punches”, but defended targeting Sunak personally for letting criminals off the hook amid claims of a broken justice system.

“The government is setting the framework for that and they’re responsible for it, and Rishi Sunak is the prime minister,” she added.

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Asked if she had not shared the advert because she was holding her nose owing to personal reservations about it, Rayner insisted: “Not at all, no. I just think that these are hard-hitting ads about the government’s failure on crime and I think it’s right that we highlight that.”

Pressed on whether she would share the ads after the Easter break, Rayner quipped: “No one tells me what to tweet.”

The Labour leader, Keir Starmer, [defended the advert](#) in a piece for the Daily Mail over the weekend.

He said he would “make absolutely zero apologies for being blunt” and sent a veiled message to critics within his own party, by telling them he would “stand by every word Labour has said on this subject”.

Starmer added that he would continue to use the Conservatives’ record on crime as a legitimate criticism “no matter how squeamish it might make some feel”.

“Too many people treat this as trivial, unimportant or something [Labour](#) shouldn’t talk about. Working people suffer when crime is left unchallenged – crime will always be a Labour issue,” he wrote.

“When 4,500 child abusers avoid prison, people don’t want more excuses from politicians – they want answers.”

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# **Joe Biden says political violence ‘must never be allowed to take hold again’ in address to Irish parliament – as it happened**

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There are now reportedly photos of 300 classified documents linked to the Pentagon leaks, three times the original number. Photograph: Bill Clark/CQ-Roll Call, Inc/Getty Images

[US military](#)

## **Pentagon leaks linked to young gun enthusiast who worked at military base – report**

Man known online as ‘OG’ is said to have access to large amounts of classified material and to regard intelligence services as repressive

*[Julian Borger](#) in Washington*

Thu 13 Apr 2023 01.10 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 10.26 EDT

The man responsible for the leak of hundreds of classified Pentagon documents is reported to be a young, racist gun enthusiast who worked on a military base, and who was seeking to impress two dozen fellow members of an internet chat group.

[The Washington Post](#) interviewed a teenage member of the group, who described the man, referred to by the initials “OG”, from their online correspondence, and shared photographs and videos. The Post also viewed a video of a man identified as OG at a shooting range with a large rifle.

“He yells a series of racial and antisemitic slurs into the camera, then fires several rounds at a target,” the report said. OG told fellow members of the same internet group that he worked on a military base, which was not named in the report, where his job involved viewing large amounts of classified information.

The leaked documents [have laid bare secrets](#) about Ukraine’s preparations for a spring counter-offensive, US spying on allies such as Ukraine, South Korea and Israel, and the tensions between Washington and allied capitals over arming Kyiv.

There is increasing evidence that the leak was not an intelligence operation by a state actor aiming to discredit the US, but more likely the consequence of a Pentagon policy of granting top secret security clearances to huge numbers of service members, civilians and contractors. The number of employees and contractors in the entire US government with top secret clearance is about 1.25 million.

OG appears to have acted as a leader on a server originally set up in 2020 on the Discord messaging platform by a small group of gun enthusiasts and gamers. The group went by several names, but most often it was known as [Thug Shaker Central](#). Starting last year, OG is reported to have posted the documents on a channel on the server he named “Bear vs Pig”, a reference to the Ukraine war but also a viral video showing pigs fighting off a black bear.

According to the teenage member of the group interviewed by the Post, OG “had a dark view of the government”, portraying the government, and particularly law enforcement and the intelligence agencies, as a repressive force. He ranted about “government overreach”.

The Post said details were confirmed anonymously by other members of the group, and that it had viewed a total 300 photographs of classified documents, three times the number previously thought to be circulating.

Pentagon leaks not of great consequence, says Biden – video

The origins of the leaks on Thug Shaker Central was [first reported on Sunday by the Bellingcat](#) investigative journalism group, which also interviewed the same member, who is under 18.

However, the Washington Post said the teen member, who had been in touch with OG “in the past few days” had yet to be interviewed by any federal law enforcement officials by the time of publication on Wednesday night, even though the justice department began a criminal investigation and an FBI manhunt was launched at the beginning of the week. The defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, has vowed to “turn over every rock” in pursuit of the leaker.

OG’s current whereabouts are unknown. The teenage group member told the Post he “seemed very confused and lost as to what to do”.

“He’s fully aware of what’s happening and what the consequences may be,” he said. “He’s just not sure on how to go about solving this situation … He seems pretty distraught about it.”

In his final message to his fellow group members, OG told them to “keep low and delete any information that could possibly relate to him”, including any copies of the classified documents.

Russia has so far offered a muted response to the leaks. The deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov, suggested on Wednesday that the leak might be a US disinformation ploy. “Since the US is a party to the conflict and is essentially waging a hybrid war against us, it is possible that such techniques are being used to deceive their opponent, the Russian Federation,” Ryabkov told Russian news agencies.

The Ukrainian government is assessing the possible damage from the disclosures. The files give details of 12 newly formed brigades, equipped with western battle tanks and armoured vehicles, which are likely to lead the

assault against dug-in Russian positions. “For sure, people are not happy,” one official admitted on Wednesday. “Ukraine was criticised last year for not being a trustworthy partner. At the beginning of the invasion, we weren’t provided with weapons because of this lack of trust. We lost a lot of territory and people as a result. This perception was wrong. And now this leakage happens from the US side.”

It was too early to say whether the leak would affect planning for Ukraine’s counter-offensive, now at an advanced stage, the official indicated. The attack is widely expected to take place in the south of the country, and possibly in the east as well. Ukraine’s goal is to break the land corridor connecting Crimea with Donetsk province and to evict the Russians from the occupied city of Melitopol and the port of Berdiansk.

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# **US attorney general confirms arrest of air national guardsman suspected of being behind intelligence leaks – as it happened**

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## 2023.04.13 - Spotlight

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- 'There's such a history and romance to the vehicles' Glamping with Johnny Vegas at his east Midlands Field of Dreams
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Lady of leisure ... Camilla on a sunlounger in 1992. Photograph:  
Shutterstock

[Camilla \(Queen Consort\)](#)

## **Unseen Camilla: the five ages of a future queen – from mistress to monarchy**

She has been in the public eye for decades, yet precious little is known about King Charles' longstanding paramour. We explore her tumultuous journey to the top



[Zoe Williams](#)

[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Thu 13 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 09.52 EDT

As of next month's coronation, the Queen Consort will at last have ascended to the title of Queen – not Consort, not common-law, but fully legit Queen Camilla – without the world knowing much about her. There are some simple reasons why.

It's partly because she never gives interviews and partly because she doesn't reveal much in her actions, which are standardly royal, but not very disclosing: good deeds and horses, essentially. It's partly because she has functioned, for decades, as a cipher for other conversations. What do we think of adultery, marriage, divorce, the royal family, the leisure class, the finer gradations of social hierarchy? Of Charles? Of Diana? These debates have played out in sometimes hideously microscopic detail, with Camilla as object, but never subject. The result is that she is never more obscure than when everyone is talking about her.

I mean object and subject in the grammatical sense, of course. The question of Camilla as a subject of the realm – and the attendant posh axioms about whether or not a prince can marry a subject, and who on earth he is supposed to marry if not – we will get to later. (The answer seems to be a cousin, or a German, or a German cousin.)

Yet, thanks to the meticulous labours of royal-watchers, the bones of her life are known. These are the five ages of the queen-to-be.

## 1947-64: a remarkable childhood

No, no, nothing truly remarkable happened – don't get excited. Born in King's College hospital in south London, to Rosalind née Cubitt and Bruce Shand, Camilla had plenty of notables in her family tree – including Alice Keppel, a mistress of Edward VII, and Thomas Cubitt, the master builder after whom so many serviceable pubs are named – and a fair number of not-notables, wastrels and proles.



Camilla (*centre*) with her mother and siblings in 1952. Photograph: Ann Cleaver/Shutterstock

The Debrett's world loves its fine distinctions: who came over with the Conqueror, who bought their own furniture; a Pantone scale of blue blood.

But all we need to know is that the Shands were wealthy, with houses in East Sussex and South Kensington; raised Camilla and her younger siblings, Annabel and Mark (who died in an accident in 2014), in the regular way; and were unusual for their class and era in only one respect: they were very supportive and loving.

Camilla has always described them warmly, while Annabel [told Vanity Fair](#): “Unlike a lot of our generation, we had this incredibly warm, easy relationship with our parents.” Splice in some dogs and horses and this childhood, as if by magic, seems to have produced someone who is usually in a good mood. That is how school friends – indeed, all known associates – describe Camilla: optimistic, happy-go-lucky, untroubled.

When popular historians write about kings and their mistresses, they always perform this elaborate bafflement when the royal in question doesn’t select for beauty, like a judge in Miss World: “Countess So-and-so was no beauty, yet Prince Whatshisface was smitten ...” But when you consider the royal family, none of whom look remotely happy except in those split seconds when a horse has just won something – King Charles was “metaphorically born with a headache”, in the words of the royal biographer Hugo Vickers – it is not difficult to understand why the heir to the throne was drawn inexorably to the one woman in his circle who didn’t have an expression like a bulldog licking a nettle.



Camilla (*left*) with friends at an Eton versus Harrow cricket match in 1963.  
Photograph: John Silverside/ANL/Shutterstock

She went to Queen's Gate school in South Kensington, leaving with one O-level, and then Mon Fertile, a now defunct finishing school in Switzerland. You can't glean a huge amount from her academic record. Public schools exist to create the material they need for the class they want to build. When Eton needed soldiers, it was a very harsh environment; later, when it needed shysters and chancers, it adapted successfully to produce Boris Johnson and David Cameron. The girls' estate is no different – and in the 50s and 60s it needed hostesses and broodmares. The last thing you would have wanted them to emerge with was a bunch of O-levels.

## 1965-73: the debutante

By the time Camilla was a 17-year-old debutante in 1965, the coming-out fandango was being wound down. Society ladies were no longer presented to the Queen, but rather to a large, symbolic cake; the distinction conferred by the season was being steadily eroded by Princess Margaret making salty remarks, probably when she was drunk. ("We had to put a stop to it," she said. "Every tart in London was getting in.")

The question underpinning the entire Camilla and Charles saga, through each of their affairs with one another, through their respective first marriages and all the fallout, is: if he liked her that much, why didn't he just marry her in the first place?

While I still can't quite believe the answer, and competing narratives are sometimes limply proffered – she wasn't posh enough, she didn't look enough like a princess – everyone who was interested enough at the time to remember it agrees. It's because, by the time she met Charles in 1971, she wasn't a virgin.



Marrying Andrew Parker Bowles in 1973. Photograph: Frank Barratt/Getty Images

Astonishingly, courtesy of Gyles Brandreth's engaging book, *Charles & Camilla: Portrait of a Love Affair*, we even know the date she lost her virginity, and to whom (27 March 1965, Kevin Burke). Brandreth in his book claims not to have known much about Camilla when he started writing. Brandreth in the Daily Mail says he knew her as a teenager, when she used to smoke Woodbines. So, he is a fabulously unreliable narrator, but solid on the bare bones. The virginity clause was just the way it was. It was fine to be the prince's mistress, whatever your past, but not his wife.

Amazing, really, to mediate matters of such dynastic and material consequence through the romantic decisions of a 17-year-old, but there it is. She met Andrew Parker Bowles in 1966 and they Ross'n'Rachel-ed for seven years. Charles wanted to marry her at the end of 1972, but was prohibited. The first arc of their relationship ended then, apparently, and she married Parker Bowles in 1973.

## **1974-86: terrible wife (joke!), excellent mother and determined horse-lover**

Public opinion on Parker Bowles has oscillated between “what a longsuffering, stoic cuckold” and “what a loveless bounder who drove her into the arms of Charles with his own behaviour”. One of Parker Bowles’ and Camilla’s breaks, in 1970, was because he thought he might have a shot at Princess Anne; he and Anne reignited their friendship during Anne’s separation from Mark Phillips in the late 1980s.



At a polo match featuring Charles in 1975. Photograph: Shutterstock

But I think we’re reading Camilla and Parker Bowles wrong in these attempts to sort them into victim and culprit. It’s possible, even likely, that there is an understanding in this class that anyone who gets a chance to hoik

themselves out of the soup of undistinguished aristocracy and on to the crouton of royal attention grabs it with both hands and everyone's blessing.



With Diana at Ludlow racecourse in 1980. Photograph: PA

After her marriage, Camilla moved to Bolehyde in Wiltshire and had two children (Tom in 1974 and Laura in 1978), but she and Charles were back together from the summer of 1979, going to balls separately (she with Andrew, Charles with one or another ill-used lovely), but snogging each other in public and whatnot. Older ball-goers were scandalised, but most accepted kissing someone on the dancefloor when their husband was right there as the new fashion, because the Prince of Wales was doing it. Like Anne Boleyn's French hood, who sets fashion if not those at the top? When Charles chose Highgrove as his residence in 1980, it was common knowledge that it was mainly for its proximity to Bolehyde, just 10 miles away.

Charles married Diana Spencer in 1981 and insisted in his notorious Jonathan Dimbleby interview in 1994 that nothing happened between him and Camilla for the next five years. Later, Diana was adamant that Charles and Camilla had always been in love. It's certainly true that they went to a lot of the same horsey events from late 1981 onwards.

## 1987-2004: the hate figure

The Camillagate tapes, in which a private conversation between Charles and Camilla was transcribed first by an Australian magazine, then by the British tabloids, dropped in 1993. The conversation itself had happened at the end of 1989, by which time Charles and Camilla had been having a private-but-public affair for at least three years.

The tape was jaw-droppingly intimate. I was surprised to learn that Charles knew what a Tampax was, let alone wished to be one. Reading the transcript now, they seem much more anguished than ludicrous, trapped in their status quo, suffocating in this narrowing space between what convention expected of them and what their circle knew to be true.

Diana blew the lid off the whole thing, first with the Andrew Morton book in 1992, then, three years later, with [the Martin Bashir interview](#) (“there were three of us in this marriage”), which remains one of the most-watched pieces of television in British history. Camilla and Parker Bowles divorced that year, Charles and Diana the next.

Brandreth describes how Camilla was pelted with bread rolls in the car park of Chippenham Sainsbury’s

What you may not remember is how much people hated Camilla, with all their ire on behalf of Diana – almost a caricature of a wronged wife – aimed at the other woman. The tabloids loathed her. Public opinion was ranged against her so implacably that if there had been a referendum on what to do with these two lovebirds, if not leave them in peace, Camilla would probably have ended up in prison. Brandreth describes in intoxicating detail how she was pelted with bread rolls in the car park of Chippenham Sainsbury’s. After Diana’s death and the “great outpouring”, the animus only intensified.

Yet the most concrete criticism of her on record is Prince Harry’s. This year, he told an American interviewer: “I see someone who married into this institution and has done everything that she can to improve her own reputation, and her own image, for her own sake.” His charge is that she leaked stories about him and William – including about his time in rehab in

2002 – to the papers to improve her standing. Apparently, she was trying to make Harry look like a wreck in order to garner sympathy for herself.

I just don't buy it. Why would Harry's trials have any bearing on the public view of Camilla? This family has been put through the wringer by the press so often that they always assume it's one of their own riding the tiger. But maybe no one is riding the tiger and the tiger occasionally just makes things up.

## 2005-23: consort to queen

Charles and Camilla got spliced in Windsor, not even in the castle, but in the Guildhall, a hole-in-the-corner affair, with a subdued crowd and terrible, daytime-TV lighting, the whole event pored over for rifts by the press.

I watched it in a hospital in Iceland, where my mother had just had a heart attack. A nurse wheeled in a giant television “so you can see your new queen”. “She's not my queen,” my mother said, laughing too much, but still too breathless to swear, thank God. When the nurse came back, we had to explain as a family that we were lifelong republicans who didn't care about these daft people, not hardcore Diana loyalists, as she might have supposed.



With the new King Charles at Westminster Hall after the death of the queen in September. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

Because there was still a lot of anger in the air, there were regional dignitaries who refused to raise the union flag on Camilla's birthday – it was “still too soon” (seven and a half years!) after Diana's death. This, by the way, is why you should never trust anyone who wants to be one of those mayors where all it means is a great big chain.

Harry, again, is inadvertently revealing on this. He says that he and William had begged Charles not to marry Camilla, but, when it became clear that he was going to anyway, “pumped his hand, wished him well. No hard feelings. We recognised that he was finally going to be with the woman he loved, the woman he'd always loved.”

In the end, spurious feelings – a passion for convention and sacrifice; an obsession with duty, so long as someone else is performing it – will always give way to feelings that are real, to two people who want to be in the same place, even if it means one of them has to live life as a sanitary product. Public opinion has softened. Mark Bolland, formerly Charles's deputy private secretary, in a rare moment of household openness, once said a relative of Camilla had called her “the laziest woman to have been born in England in the 20th century”. But when you consider all these years, all these hoops, all this turmoil, it looks like quite hard work.

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CCTV still of police confiscating golliwog dolls at the White Hart Inn in Grays, Essex. Photograph: Benice Ryley/SWNS

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## Golliwog dolls: what are they, and are they illegal to display?

Key questions about racist dolls amid controversy surrounding removal of figures from Essex pub

*[Matthew Weaver](#)*

Thu 13 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 14.50 EDT

A police raid on a pub in [Essex](#) has rekindled a row over the display of golliwog dolls, but what is the law around these racist figures?

### What are golliwog dolls?

Created by Florence Kate Upton in 1895, the dolls grew out of racist minstrel caricatures, with frizzy hair, big lips and large white teeth. The word golliwog has been used to [dehumanise black people](#).

## **Why is an Essex pub being investigated for displaying golliwog dolls behind the bar?**

Essex police said they confiscated a number of golliwog dolls from the White Hart Inn in Grays last week as part of an investigation after a complaint of an alleged hate crime. The landlady, Benice Ryley, has since [vowed to replace the confiscated dolls](#). The force says it is aware of her plan but would need to receive another complaint before taking any further action.

A police spokesperson said: “No victim has come forward who has felt racially harassed, alarmed or distressed since any further dolls have gone up in the pub.” Ryley denied that she or her husband, Chris Ryley, the pub landlord, were racist.

## **Is it illegal to display golliwog dolls?**

Potentially, yes. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, behaviour that is racially aggravated is an offence if at the time “the offender demonstrates towards the victim hostility based on the victim’s membership or presumed membership of a racial or religious group”. Sailesh Mehta, a barrister at Red Lion Chambers, said: “Even displaying them, it could be argued, is an incitement to racial hatred.” He added: “If I were to have a big slogan in my pub that’s defamatory towards black people, then in principle [that] could amount to incitement to racial hatred, and so it becomes a hate crime.”

## **Does a victim need to come forward to secure a conviction?**

Not necessarily. Mehta, a founding member of the Society of Asian Lawyers, said: “For most public order offences, you don’t actually need a real victim, you can make do with a notional victim. If it is the sort of

material that is known to cause offence, you don't need someone to complain.”

## **How easy would it be to secure a conviction for displaying golliwog dolls?**

A conviction would be challenging, according to Mehta. He said the difficulty for a prosecuting lawyer would be convincing a jury of an intent to cause offence. He said: “My view is that, offensive though golliwogs are, it might be difficult to get it past a jury. It wouldn’t be a clearcut case.”

## **Have any other laws potentially been breached?**

Under the 2010 Equality Act, businesses, such as pubs, must provide an equal service to customers and staff. Breaches of this would be dealt with as a civil matter and are the responsibility of local authorities. Any breach could result in the local council removing the pub’s licence.

A [2016 Facebook post](#) from Chris Ryley showed dolls hanging from a shelf in the bar alongside a comment saying: “They used to hang them in Mississippi years ago.” Mehta said this could potentially be prosecuted as malicious communication. Essex police are aware of these posts, and they are understood to form part of their investigation.

## **Can shops or websites be prosecuted for displaying golliwog dolls?**

In theory. Mehta said: “If the police were to prosecute for merely displaying these dolls in a pub, then in principle, they should also be looking at the shops.” But he said it would be even more difficult to show intent to cause offence for someone selling golliwog dolls.

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Field of Dreams has relocated from Harrogate to Melbourne Hall in Derbyshire. Photograph: Simon Taylor

[Glamping](#)

## **Glamping with Johnny Vegas at his east Midlands Field of Dreams**

The comedian's collection of quirky vehicles to stay in has been relocated to the grounds of Melbourne Hall, Derbyshire

[Nick McGrath](#)

Thu 13 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 11.03 EDT

What started as a drunken 2am eBay bid for a dilapidated 1960s Maltese public bus has ended up with [Johnny Vegas](#) – and his longsuffering assistant Bev – filling a field in Derbyshire with an accidental army of once-forgotten, magnificently repurposed vehicles and creating what must be the UK's quirkiest new glamping spot.

The ceramicist-turned-comedian's rollercoaster journey to becoming an unlikely camping trailblazer was captured in [Channel 4's Carry on Glamping](#) series in 2021. After one season at a temporary base on a farm near Harrogate, Field of Dreams has now found a grander, more spacious permanent home – in the grounds of 17th-century Georgian stately home Melbourne Hall, in south Derbyshire.

There's such a history and romance to the vehicles, which I just adore

*Johnny Vegas*

“This was never the plan,” says the infectiously enthusiastic Vegas. “The whole thing gained a momentum of its own.” The herculean task of relocating the renovated vintage vehicles – including the new jewel in the collection, a 1970 Puma helicopter which saw active service in Chile and Sierra Leone – is now complete, and the site opened for Easter.



Johnny Vegas at Field of Dreams with converted Morris Minor Billy the Snail. Photograph: Simon Taylor

“It’s all about the aesthetics,” beams Vegas, as he shows us round. “I’m not a petrolhead. I don’t know anything about motors, but I just love the engineering and the rounded edges of the bodywork. And there’s such a history and romance to the vehicles, which I just adore.”

The new Field of Dreams is actually two festooned glamping areas, the larger housing the Puma (complete with roof terrace and sleeping four), the four-berth Maltese bus Patricia (named after Johnny’s late mother), a restored 1960s Mercedes fire engine for two, and a 1960s French Citroën with detachable trailer and room for four guests.

Recycled metallic sculptures, a communal fire pit and horse trailers turned into bathroom cubicles with hot showers complete the Repair Shop vibe.



Former ice-cream van Dino. Photograph: Simon Taylor

The second, adults-only, field where I'm staying with my girlfriend Wendy, is by a picturesque lake, and home to converted boat bolthole Mahala (sleeps four and has its own bathtub); Billy the Snail, a 1970s hybrid of a Morris Minor pickup; and a 1960s Fisher Holivan Junior caravan with accompanying bell tent. We're staying in Dino, a 1964 Austin J2 Bluebird Highwayman, named after Dean Martin.

From the outside it resembles an immaculate ice-cream van, but inside it is Tardis-like and packed with all mod cons including a double stove, a convection oven, a fridge, a heater – essential for our early spring visit – and an electric fan for if you're staying when temperatures soar.



Dino's interior. Photograph: Nick McGrath

There's also a cocktail bar, a panoramic stained-glass skylight and two Johnny Vegas-designed glass panels separating the cabin from the living area. Bedding, blankets and cushions are provided, and the pull-out double bed is surprisingly comfy.

The setting is beautiful. Melbourne Hall's gardens – including one of the UK's longest yew tunnels – are open in the afternoons from 1 April to 30 September (1pm-5pm), while the hall itself is open in August only (Tues-Sun, 2pm-4.15pm). There's also a small farm – where we meet Brian the friendly snag-toothed pig – and it holds [events](#) from concerts to comedy over the summer. Beyond the hall there's rolling countryside and pretty walks to nearby villages, including Breedon on the Hill, and the nature reserve at [Calke Abbey](#).



Wendy, author Nick and Johnny Vegas on the site. Photograph: Nick McGrath

Within the grounds the recently renovated [Brewhouse](#) (originally a stable dating back to 1703) now serves an international collection of craft beers. We love the Kernel Pale Ale, accompanied by *pinsa* – super light Roman-style pizza.

The 12th-century market town of Melbourne, once home to travel agent Thomas Cook, and the inspiration for the Australian city of the same name, is a stroll away and worth a wander, with plenty of restaurants and cafes.

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[Harpurs](#) offers roof terrace views of the south Derbyshire countryside, while [Fortey's](#) does cakes, pastries, chocolate and cookies (including the ones on our Dino tea tray).



Patricia is named after Johnny's mother. Photograph: Nick McGrath

One afternoon we take a 25-minute taxi ride (about £20 from Field of Dreams) to an industrial estate on the northern outskirts of Derby to the newly opened [Withers Gin School](#), where botanicals maestro Edward Gibson distills the essence of artisan gin manufacture into a well-oiled, entertainingly educational two and half hours.

After two punchbowl-sized glasses of Withers' topical Coronation Gin we make our own blend to take home – opting for an earthy, citrussy concoction of bitter orange, ground mace, orange zest, hibiscus, Szechuan pepper and caraway seeds. We call it Rotherhithe Ruin and it certainly makes up in punch what it lacks in finesse.

People have mentioned converting a Concorde. That would be utterly iconic and utterly bonkers ... so watch this space

*Johnny Vegas*

Back at Field of Dreams the moon is shining, ducks are quacking and swans are dive-bombing the lake. We check the availability calendar in the hope of booking another visit, hopefully in one of the dog-friendly vehicles.



Melbourne Hall in summer. Photograph: SCFotos/Stuart Crump HDR/Alamy

Johnny, currently in semi-permanent residence in the Puma, has one eye on the second series of [Carry on Glamping](#) – being filmed and airing later this year – and the other on the 2024 glamping season.

“If we hadn’t found Melbourne Hall, I honestly think I’d have kept Patricia in the Transport Museum, but we’re here for good now,” he says. “Who knows what the future holds. I’ve got nothing specific in mind but people have mentioned the idea of converting a Concorde. That would be utterly iconic and utterly bonkers ... so watch this space.”

*The trip was provided by [Field of Dreams](#) (open now until the end of September). Prices for Dino starts from £82.50 per person per night. Several*

*of the vehicles are dog-friendly. A 2.5 hour experience at Withers Gin School costs £115 for two people.*

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‘Style is inherently part of who I am as a black, working-class kid of Jamaican parentage’ ... Don Letts. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

[Forever fashion](#)[Fashion](#)

**Don Letts' forever fashion: ‘When I wear this shirt now, how do I feel?’**

## **Slimmer than I ought to be'**

The film-maker and musician bought this Scott Crolla design in the early 1980s, hanging on to it because of its eternal style



*As told to [Emine Saner](#)*

*[@eminesaner](#)*

Thu 13 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT

I knew the late designer Scott Crolla a bit, because we moved in the same circles in London. He had [a shop](#) in the early 80s. I got three or four of these shirts. His use of exotic fabrics presented in this traditional English style was what first caught my eye, although he did have a thing for the Nehru collar. He favoured floral velvet and paisley, but what really set him apart was that the fabrics he chose seemed more suited to making sofas and curtains. I remember lending this shirt to [Ziggy Marley](#) for one of the early videos that I made for him.

The shop was open for about 10 years, selling shirts, trousers and suits, but utilising unusual fabrics that flew in the face of the trends. It made for a cool juxtaposition that appealed to the eternal dandy in me.

I'm all about the culture clash. I guess what would have appealed to be exotic fabrics to Caucasian folk had an instant appeal to me, because they had references to Indian and African fabrics. The shirt I'm wearing looks to me very much like something from Nigeria – it appealed to the duality of my existence, which was black and British.



'I'm all about the culture clash' ... Don Letts in the 80s. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

For working-class kids raised in the 60s and 70s, the only way we could achieve any sort of status or identity, find our tribe and express our sexuality, was through the clothes we wore and the music we listened to. We turned that into an art form. I was very much of the generation that used clothes and art to achieve status and identity.

I'm not really into fashion because, by its very nature, it comes and goes. I'm about style – that's for ever. Style is inherently part of who I am as a black, working-class kid of Jamaican parentage. I'm a child of the Windrush generation. Look at those people when they're coming off the boat; how are they dressed? Gaberdine suits and floral dresses. We brought flavour and colour to the UK.

When I wear it now, how do I feel? Slimmer than I ought to be, but I don't wear it that often, because I have to hold in my stomach to wear it. I don't hang on to much because I'm about moving forward, but it has stuck in my wardrobe and I guess it's because it's outside fashion; it has eternal style. You could pull it out then, you could pull it out 10 years after that and, indeed, here we are 40 years later.

*Don Letts' debut solo album, Outta Sync, is out on 26 May on Cooking Vinyl*

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Illustration: Ben Jennings.

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## **Disappearing schools, families forced out – and we call this progress**

[Aditya Chakrabortty](#)



In inner London, a city without children is not some kind of dystopia but the new reality as communities are hollowed out

Thu 13 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 07.36 EDT

Something strange is happening in the heart of [London](#), something an entire generation has never witnessed. You see it by piecing together the news ignored as too small by the big media and reported only by the local journalists covering their particular boroughs. So try these snippets.

Last week, Lambeth announced that a secondary school founded in 1685 will close for good this summer, with its students farmed out elsewhere. In Camden, St Michael's primary will not even make the end of the school year – it closes this month, the [fourth in the borough](#) to go since 2019. Days before the Easter holiday, Hackney warned that two of its primaries are likely to fold and another four [may have to merge](#) to survive. Neighbouring Islington is considering closures, while Southwark believes [16 primaries are at risk](#).

This is a huge story, not only about marooned children and panicked parents, or redundant teachers and struggling councils, but the very future of our

major cities. These schools are not shutting because they are bad, but because inner London no longer has enough children to fill them. The dead centre of Britain's political and economic powerhouse is driving out families – and its education system is now taking an almighty hit. Hackney, for instance, has [589 fewer kids](#) in reception today than it did in 2014, a shortfall equivalent to about 20 vacant classrooms. Since schools mainly receive cash per pupil, empty desks mean debts, and debts force closures.

Once a primary or secondary school locks its gates, it's gone for good. That handsome redbrick shell is gavelled off, to be reincarnated as splendid flats for sub-nuclear households, and the only reminder of a proud state institution is the service charge on that private finance initiative wing – which will be levied long, long after you and I have ascended to the great common room in the sky.

A city without children is not some dystopia; it is the new reality. At the Centre for London, senior researcher Jon Tabbush has [analysed 20 years](#) of census results, and found families with kids have gone missing across the centre of London. Since 2001, Lambeth has seen a 10% drop in households with at least one school-age child; in Southwark it's 11%. Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Islington: they are all losing young families.

As Camden council's leader Georgia Gould says: "People are either being pushed out before they can have babies – or they're choosing to leave." This goes way beyond the rite of passage of couples swapping their city-centre flats for a suburban home and garden, she says – it is now happening at speed and scale beyond anything her officials imagined. In outer London Barking and Dagenham, there has been a 34% increase in households with children: the kind of jump any local authority would struggle to handle. A similar story can be told all around the perimeter of the city: its children and its future are being formed on its outskirts.



The Sky Pool, a swimming pool built between luxury apartment blocks in Nine Elms, south London. Photograph: Ray Tang/REX/Shutterstock

If this historic shift has a hinge point, it's the 2010s, when two big forces began reshaping the capital. The first came from Downing Street: since David Cameron moved into No 10, successive Tory governments have taken benefit money from the very youngest and handed it to the oldest. The Resolution Foundation calculates that newborns have [lost £1,500 a year](#) in entitlements, while those aged 80 and above have gained more than £500.

By holding down housing benefit so it lagged far behind London rents, the supposedly centrist coalition of Cameron and Nick Clegg forced less well-off families out of the capital. They made inner London into a no-go area for the working poor, and Britain into a country that steals from its future for the sake of buying a few extra votes at the next election.

The post-crash decade also saw inner London turned into a theme park for property speculators. The Bank of England was spraying about hundreds of billions of pounds like it was champagne at a grand prix, the then chancellor George Osborne was chucking taxpayer's money at the property market, and London councils, including some of Gould's [Labour colleagues](#) in Camden, were allowing developers to run riot. The arguments about gentrification

soon descended into cliches about hipsters and Foxtons, when what was really being decided was who would [live in the city](#) and who it would serve.

Children are what Kathy Evans of the charity [Children](#) England calls “an indicator species”: as long as a city or town has a good and large mix of kids, you know it will be fine. In which case, the signs from London’s indicator species should worry us all.

Camden’s records show that just under 40% of its teenage children [attend private school](#) – about five times the national average. A roughly equal proportion of local kids [grow up in poverty](#). So stark is the divide that some families are running a campaign to implore “aspirational parents” to at least consider local state options. The founder of [Meet the Parents](#), Madeleine Holt, talks of “a fear of what state schools are really like” among the bankers and lawyers who now live in the borough. A fear, in other words, of their own neighbours – the ones who can’t drop £20,000 a year on school fees.

The families going missing are those who can no longer afford to buy or rent. Parents such as Louise Ellery, who rents from the Peabody housing association, a charity set up to provide shelter for the “[artisans and labouring poor](#)”. Yet she has seen her rent go up and up, along with her other bills. On her phone, she shows me the bank statement: £1,400 a month for her two-bed flat, which many London renters might consider a bargain. But her salary as a school teaching assistant nudges just over £1,600. For the rest of the month she has to feed, heat and clothe her two kids on that wage, a little bit of benefits and the occasional helping hand from a relative.

For two years, Ellery has tried to make these impossible sums work, while her elder child studied for A-levels. The 47-year-old has lived in Camden for decades, has helped run the school food bank and a toy library, and kept an allotment. She loves the fact her neighbours come from all over the world and that London’s free museums and galleries are on the children’s doorstep. But, “I can’t beat the cost of living”, she says. This summer she is moving to Somerset.

Her local primary school, Netley, loses one of its most experienced teaching assistants and her six-year-old daughter. Her headteacher, Gareth Morris,

emails from his holiday to say he is “devastated” she is going. But he knows the score. Two in three of his children are on free school meals, and in lockdown he went around handing out food packages. Yet from the school gates he sees tourists trundling past with wheeled suitcases for their Airbnbs, and all along the neighbouring terrace houses the lockboxes for holiday lets.

Ellery has seen it, too, and the new shiny private tower blocks, and knows what all that means for her, her career and her kids. At the school, children have written notes to thank her for everything; on her estate neighbours have cried. “What’s it called when you push out low-income people?” she asks rhetorically. The tone is not anger but resignation. She has lost her fight to stay and London has lost another family.

- Aditya Chakrabortty is a Guardian columnist and senior economics commentator
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‘With pandemic funding now withdrawn, care homes are struggling to recover.’ Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

[Opinion](#)[Social care](#)

## **When Britain’s care homes reward shareholders over staff, we need a new system**

[Amy Horton](#)



Care workers kept the industry going in the Covid years on low wages at great personal cost – yet many are still struggling

Thu 13 Apr 2023 05.19 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 16.44 EDT

Our care system [should](#) be enabling people to live fulfilling lives, but each week brings new evidence that Britain's social care system is unable to deliver this.

[Huge numbers](#) of people are struggling to access support. The [majority](#) of people who deal with care services are unsatisfied with them. And the number of vacant posts in adult social care is the highest since records began in 2012-13, with about 165,000 vacancies in England on any given day.

Many had hoped that the pandemic would become a positive turning point for care, as its importance was more widely recognised and government boosted funding. What went wrong?

[New research](#) sheds light on how much extra money went into care homes during the pandemic, and how it was spent. The government scrambled to pump money into the sector, but to a large extent, staff often kept the

services going at a cost to their own wellbeing and without extra financial reward. The research also reveals that workers fared differently in for-profit care companies compared with not-for-profit organisations. These insights hold important lessons for the future of care.

Only a small proportion of the government's emergency funding was spent on directly supporting care staff

Care homes for older people in the UK received extra public support worth £2.1bn in the first year of the pandemic – about £5,900 for every individual care home place. Services needed support to help cover the huge costs of Covid-19. They received free PPE, money to cover sick pay for staff required to isolate, and subsidies for empty rooms as residents died and new admissions were suspended during outbreaks.

This emergency funding did succeed in propping up care home revenues in the early phase of the pandemic. Remarkably, revenues actually [rose](#) in the majority of homes in the first year of Covid, even though the sector was caring for fewer people. In private care homes, our analysis shows that profits increased by £117m.

But alongside the extra funding, care homes were also sustained by the efforts of their workforce: they kept services going amid extreme pressures and hazards. Amid all the clapping for carers, this could have been the moment to raise wages and improve conditions for one of the economy's lowest-paid sectors.

However, only a small proportion of the emergency funding was spent on directly supporting care staff. The government funded full sick pay for Covid across the UK and, for some of the care home workforce, "recognition payments" of a few hundred pounds. These were important but modest improvements. Yet in our survey of more than 600 staff, two-thirds said extra funding for their employer did not benefit them. Most reported working much harder without an increase in pay, and often doing unpaid overtime.

And, disturbingly, more than 40% reported that they had experienced personal financial problems linked to working in care during the pandemic. There was a range of reasons. Some had their hours cut if their home had fewer residents. When care staff caught Covid, employers didn't always offer full sick pay, despite government support for the cost. They also lost earnings if they had to take time off to care for family members with the virus. In contrast, there was an unexpected jump in pay-outs to investors in the first year of the pandemic. Dividends from 122 care companies rose by 11%.

To date, the UK government hasn't been interested in the business models of care homes. But there is mounting evidence that ownership matters. Staff in for-profit care homes reported greater increases in their workload and working hours during the pandemic. They were less satisfied with their sick pay and the support available to them. These differences could be because some companies are paying out significant portions of their revenue to investors, landlords and creditors, rather than reinvesting in the service. And although there are many committed managers in private care homes, not-for-profits were less likely to cut spending on staff during the pandemic. This suggests they may be offering more secure contracts and pursuing different priorities.

With pandemic funding now withdrawn, care homes are struggling to recover amid labour shortages and high energy costs. When more public money is injected to cope with these challenges, a future pandemic or other economic shock, it must go to the right uses. To make sure that happens, the government needs to get a grip on the finances of care homes.

That means greater transparency on how companies split their income between staffing, facilities, rent, debt repayments and profit. Decision makers should seek to promote forms of provision that offer both good quality care and good quality jobs, and take account of the evidence that shows varying outcomes by ownership type. All of this could guide a new framework for emergency public support for private care home companies, so that individual residents and the public purse aren't left subsidising extraordinary returns to investors. Bailing out companies, without protecting care staff from burnout, is no way to care for the sector.

- Amy Horton is a lecturer at University College London and researcher for [Financial Impacts of Covid on Care Homes](#)
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‘So far, the indictment of Donald Trump has passed quietly. He may emerge for his loyalists as martyr/hero, more exalted. Not much is required of the Glorious Leader once he achieves that status.’ Photograph: Ed Jones/AFP/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)  
[US politics](#)

## US conservatives love to warn of creeping fascism. Do they understand what it is?

[Marilynne Robinson](#)

Trump, a shrewd opportunist, has understood tendencies in American culture that most of us would prefer to ignore or deny

Thu 13 Apr 2023 03.09 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 08.54 EDT

A few years ago a former student of mine, one for whom I had particular respect, stopped me on the street and handed me a copy of *The Road to Serfdom* by the British-Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek.

For reasons I cannot reconstruct, I had already read that book and forgotten it, except for the impression it left of being very much a product of its place and time, the London School of Economics, 1945. Since then I have learned that, fairly or not, it is read as a supporting document for the slippery-slope catastrophism that now casts the American government, insofar as it enacts policies favored by Democrats, as a sinister and quite absolute threat to individual freedom. My student told me that a reading group had formed and I was invited. He had the glow of the convert.

This fine youth was starting out on what most would consider an enviable life, free as precious few of his fellow mortals are or have ever been. Yet he was excited by a new insight, that there was a plot afoot to plunge us into serfdom, fascism, Nazism. This alarm has surged, and now we have men in combat gear standing around at public events, absolutely defying anyone to take away their freedom. If they had not hit upon that one most provocative freedom, the right to menace with firearms, probably no one would ever have given a thought to their rights except to assume that they had the normal set of them. And where is the drama in that? They are standing boldly against an insidious foe, or so they and their friends imagine.

These “enemies” against whom they are armed are Americans who disagree with them.

I am trying to describe a Trumpism that anticipated and continues to enable Trump, that makes a kind of sense of his wild rhetoric and the reaction to it among his loyalists. A historically privileged group – whom it is, sadly, fair to call [Republicans](#) – indulge in a fear amounting almost to panic, which has become endemic, stimulated continuously by the presence of those Americans who differ from them, for example about whether the ready availability of guns is related to the criminal use of them.

There is nothing new about fantasies of peril or heroism. Boredom might be a factor among the fairly prosperous, especially as they enter middle age. Resentment is a stimulant. But there is something strange, even weird, in the climate we are seeing now that evades explanation in conventional terms.

Americans have argued for generations about the deleterious effects, if any, of an active central government. Once the peril was that one morning we would all wake up communists. It was a furious and intractable debate that led to character attacks and so on, but no one mentioned civil war. There is a virulence in our present divisions that hardens and sharpens them radically. It comes with the insistent association by Republicans of Democrats – the plurality or majority of the American people, a huge, unorganized swath of the population – with perversion involving children.

It should be possible to dismiss an accusation like this as proof of a diseased imagination in the accuser. But the slur is important in the behaviors that increasingly displace actual politics. Who would compromise with, let alone be persuaded by, people given to this lowest of vices? Who would believe that such people had any commitment to justice or could really act in good faith? The Democratic party as a whole tolerates and enables this abuse, they say. In this imagined context Trump's sleaziness is shining virtue. No need to be specific when dealing in slurs. No need to prove anything. The Nazis taught us all how to stigmatize entire groups. Surely Hayek mentions this somewhere.

Republicans are, of course, another huge swath of the population who identify as partisans on grounds of perceived interest or affinity, just like the Democrats. So it should not be possible to generalize about them as I am about to do. Trump enters the discussion here. Over the coming days we will learn more about the character and strength of his support among his followers. There is the very real possibility that it will be of a size and kind to cause problems, if not the “death and destruction” he foresaw as a consequence of his arraignment.

There is more to this than mere loyalty to one jaded billionaire, odd as that is. There is the matter of serfdom. If the word describes anything in contemporary American life, it is surely the self-subordination of respectable people with ordinary lives to a movement that requires belief in bizarre and incendiary ideas, as well as flagrant offenses against decency, for example the heaping of opprobrium on immigrants. Trump joined this choir as he descended his escalator, announcing in effect liberation from old obligations to generosity or fairness.

History proves that solid-seeming populations do succumb to fascism

He has enlisted followers who might very well engage in acts that lead to death and destruction, assuming that some deaths will be their own, and the destruction will befall their own country. This makes sense only if the reward is self-submission, the craving for an identity that supersedes the autonomy of democratic citizenship. No need to weigh the merit of the claim that immigrants are rapists. No need to consider the impact of assault weapons on public life. These issues do not invite thought or debate. They occasion demonstrations of loyalty. Yes, children die, and we all pray. I tremble to think what a God's-eye view of this ritual would be.

History proves that solid-seeming populations do succumb to fascism. The word “serfdom” in Hayek’s title suggests that people would be passively subjugated, succumbing to a dirigiste economic order. But his real subject is fascism, whose worst cruelties always depend on the active participation of a significant part of these populations, even though they sacrifice what they might have thought they valued in order to be bound up in the unity the word “fascism” promises. Fascism is not a politics, it is a pathology compounded of nostalgia and resentment.

European fascism has had clear markers, three being white supremacy and Christian nationalism, and, of course, charismatic leadership. In using the word “pathology” I put aside the idea of politics as usual. Other patterns are easily discernible within our American strain of this virus.

It is classically fascist to influence opinion by the threat of violence. We have actual violence that lacks rational motive, but which is strikingly consistent over all in that it targets – not a metaphor – the tenderest places in our society, elementary schools, churches, outdoor festivals. It targets custom, community, contentment and hope to very great effect, dispossessing us of much of the pleasure of our national life. Weighing one thing against another, presumably, we are to accept this. At the same time the example we offer to the world of constitutional democracy is disgraced.

Fascism is an autoimmune disease. Under the banner of patriotism it hates its nation and people and oversteps all civilized limits in its zeal to bring

about fundamental change, whatever the damage. Something of the kind is discernible in the talk of secession, national divorce, civil war.

So far, the indictment of [Donald Trump](#) has passed quietly. He may emerge for his loyalists as martyr/hero, more exalted, even as his speeches become more fuddled and monotonous, even as he keeps tapping them for money. Not much is required of the Glorious Leader once he achieves that status. Trump the opportunist has understood tendencies in American culture that most of us prefer to ignore or deny. If he has taught us one thing, it is that we have to learn to pay a different kind of attention.

- Marilynne Robinson is an American novelist and essayist. She has received several awards including the Pulitzer prize for fiction in 2005 and the 2012 National Humanities Medal
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Excuse me, do you know where the coconut milk is? Photograph: Peter Cade/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Shopping](#)

## **Do you suffer from shop blindness? I've struggled to locate coconut milk for years**

[Adrian Chiles](#)



Always looking but never finding, my shopping trips can be a disorienting experience. I am forever lost between the aisles

Thu 13 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 10.57 EDT

Is shop blindness a thing? If it is, I'm afflicted. It happens when I'm in a big shop that sells millions of things and I simply can't find what I'm looking for, even though I know it's there. This happens most frequently in supermarkets, where paralysis of choice is often the problem. So many peanut butters. So many toilet rolls. So many washing powders. How? Why? And then there's that thing they do where they move sections around. No sooner do you get used to the layout than it's inexplicably all changed. The cooking oils go where the herbs and spices once were, which are now where the pulses were. I've struggled to locate the coconut milk ever since it first went on manoeuvres just before the pandemic. How much fun they must have watching us on CCTV, bewitched, bothered and bewildered, scurrying hopelessly up and down aisle after aisle. I forgive them. It must get boring running a supermarket. Let them have their sport.

It's in [Boots](#) that I struggle the most, and I apportion no blame to them. I can just never get to what I'm looking for. I think it's because most of the stuff they stock is of a similar, smallish size. I just see a retina-burning riot of

colours with nothing coming into focus. I walk away, floss-less, vitamin-less, antacid-less, clueless. I have no idea if they're guilty of moving stuff around because I so rarely find it in the first place.

Worst of all are garden centres. A low-lying jungle of plants opens up before me. I either know what I'm looking for and can't find it, or more often, don't know what I'm looking for and need guidance. Either way, there's never anyone around to help. I execute elaborate twisting, figure-of-eight style laps of the place hoping to chance upon a human being. Occasionally, I resort to parting the branches of the bigger trees and bushes to see if anyone is hiding within. Always in vain. My garden remains bare.

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David Malpass speaks after Donald Trump announced his candidacy to lead the World Bank in February 2019. Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

[World Bank](#)

## **World Bank staff were told to give special treatment to son of Trump official**

Exclusive: Leaked recording raises concerns over governance at development bank, at which David Malpass is now president

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

Wed 12 Apr 2023 12.31 EDTFirst published on Wed 12 Apr 2023 11.00 EDT

World Bank staff were apparently told to give preferential treatment to the son of a high-ranking Trump administration official after the US Treasury

threw its support behind a \$13bn (£10bn) funding increase for the organisation, a leaked recording suggests.

Shared with the Guardian by a whistleblower, the recording of a 2018 staff meeting suggests colleagues were encouraged by a senior manager to curry favour with the son of David Malpass, who is now president of the World Bank but at the time was serving in the US Treasury under [Donald Trump](#).

During the recording, which has left the Washington-based organisation facing questions over standards of governance, staff refer to 22-year-old Robert Malpass as a “prince” and “important little fellow”, who could go “running to daddy” if things went wrong.

### [Contact Guardian Business](#)

Campaigners said the case could undermine the World Bank’s mission, which includes combating the erosion of [public trust in civic institutions](#) by promoting good governance.

Staff were apparently told Robert was the son of the undersecretary of the US Treasury, which had played a “beneficial” role in helping the World Bank secure an endorsement for the multibillion-dollar capital injection.

The recordings also suggest it may not have been the first time the international development bank had hired a family member of an important global figure. “Remember we had a ‘prince’ before … that is a subject for happy hour,” a staff member is heard saying.

The World Bank said it could not confirm the contents of the recording, but added it was “both false and absurd” to suggest that there was any connection between an entry-level hire and the multibillion-dollar capital increase.

The findings raise concerns over internal standards at the World Bank Group (WBG), which is governed by high-ranking officials from across its 189 member states, and is holding its spring meeting alongside the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington this week.

It will also raise further concerns over David Malpass's term as World Bank president. The economist [announced his early resignation in February](#), months after he controversially failed to say whether he accepted that fossil fuels were causing the climate crisis.

Malpass was, in 2018, serving as undersecretary to the US Treasury for international affairs in the Trump administration and had been a staunch critic of multilateral institutions, at a time when the World Bank was seeking approval from the US government for a sizeable increase in the funds available to lend to developing nations.

He took a lead role in the administration's negotiations over the capital increase, according to numerous reports, but in public comments at the time had made it clear he was sceptical of approving a funding boost without major changes to the way the organisation was run.

US support was crucial for the deal, given the country is the World Bank's largest shareholder and conventionally holds its presidential post. However, after months of negotiations, Treasury officials secured a series of reforms, and [they endorsed the deal alongside other key shareholders in April 2018](#).

The US Treasury's role in securing the \$13bn capital increase was referred to in the leaked recording.

"We have a prince that is coming, that is joining us, on 16 July," a senior manager is heard saying a month before Robert Malpass joined the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the commercial-terms lending arm of the World Bank Group that lends to private sector businesses. The IFC was in line for \$5.5bn of the funding.

"I want to forewarn all of you this young, bright person is the son of the undersecretary of the US Treasury, which was beneficial for us in getting the capital increase," the manager adds.

The manager goes on to explain that Robert, recently graduated from Cornell University with an undergraduate degree in economics, needed to be treated like a "very important little fellow" that might otherwise go "running to daddy" if things went wrong.



David Malpass announced his resignation as World Bank president in February. Photograph: Bonnie Cash/UPI/Rex/Shutterstock

They noted that David Malpass was a key adviser to the US Treasury secretary, Steve Mnuchin, who “has little or no clue on things”, suggesting World Bank officials saw the senior Malpass as far more influential than the head of the government’s department.

“We need to manage his education and we need to manage the lemon,” the manager said, referring to Robert’s pending role in the department. “So we need to get work out of him, but we also need to make sure that he sees the world.” When asked by a staff member whether Malpass intended to return to higher education at any point, they said: “annoying[ly], he’s probably going to stay a year, or two years, and then he’s going to move to a hedge fund someplace.

“But in those two years we need to make him happy and valuable and we need to teach him and so forth, all right? So that then I can go to his daddy, and then I get some bonus points.”

The recording suggests it may not have been the first time that a job at the World Bank was given to a family member of an important global figure.

“Remember we had a prince before ... that is a subject for happy hour,” another staff member is heard saying.

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The whistleblower who shared the recording said they believed the episode raised concerns about the way the World Bank Group was governed and influenced by its largest member state.

The whistleblower argued: “The US, as the leading shareholder of the World Bank Group, is obligated to contribute to better corporate governance of the institution, but failed to do so. Special treatment destroys the morale of employees, especially among those in junior positions who suffer a lack of opportunities of advancement”.

“The incoming president of the World Bank Group must revitalise it by making significant improvements,” they added, putting pressure on Ajay Banga, the US candidate expected to be formally chosen to take up David Malpass’s post after the spring meeting.

The World Bank said it was unaware of any recordings, had no way to confirm whether they occurred, or whether they were accurate transcriptions of what was said.

Nick Dearden, the director of the social justice campaign group Global Justice Now, said the allegations put the World Bank's reputation at risk, but could spur necessary change.

"The World Bank lectures countries across the world on corruption and good governance, but here are clear signs that money talks within the Bank itself ... This will only further erode the Bank's reputation and legitimacy but also, we can hope, speed up the transition to international institutions which reflects the world we want to build, not the one we need to leave behind."

David Malpass was appointed to the Treasury role in 2017, and later chosen to run the World Bank in 2019, by Trump.

He initially appeared to criticise the World Bank's request for more capital, and said he would be looking at whether any of the 100 international working groups and organisations that the US Treasury took part in could be scaled back or even closed down. "Treasury believes that the World Bank currently has the resources it needs to fulfil its mission," [he said in November 2017](#).

David's son, Robert, joined the bank's IFC division in July 2018 as a research analyst. The then 22-year-old had recently completed his bachelor's degree in economics, after a series of summer internships at firms including Fortress Investment Group, a New York-based hedge fund, the venture capital firm HKS Capital, and family wealth investment advisers The ImPact.

Robert, who is the eldest of four children, [subsequently stepped down in March 2019](#) after his father was appointed president of the World Bank, because of internal rules that do not allow family members to work in the same organisation.

The World Bank said staff rules prevent nepotism and conflicts of interest, and that Robert's resignation showed that those rules were effective.

After his father became president, the bank's staff association was asked about how Robert had originally come to be appointed, but no impropriety was found, the World Bank said. It added that the US personally did not end

up providing any funding towards the \$13bn capital increase, which instead came from other shareholders.

“No one at IFC or the World Bank was subjected to any pressure or influence in the hiring process,” the World Bank Group said in a statement. IFC conducted an open and fair recruitment process for the role of research analyst and followed its standard hiring practices. The criteria for the role were not changed or diminished to accommodate any candidate, and no one was given preferential treatment as a result of any familial relationship.

“It would be both false and absurd to suggest that a single entry-level staff recruitment was in any way related to a multibillion-dollar capital increase agreed by the World Bank’s 189 member countries,” the World Bank said.

The Guardian attempted to contact both David Malpass and Robert Malpass through their employers and social media. They did not respond to requests to comment.

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A resident shines a torch from their apartment in Busan, South Korea. An estimated 350,000 South Koreans aged between 19 and 39 are lonely or secluded. Photograph: Anthony Wallace/AFP/Getty Images

[South Korea](#)

## **South Korea to give \$490 allowance to reclusive youths to help them leave the house**

Programme is for people aged between nine and 24 who are experiencing extreme social withdrawal

*[Helen Sullivan](#)*

*[@helenrsullivan](#)*

Thu 13 Apr 2023 01.12 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 17.04 EDT

South Korea is to offer reclusive youths a monthly living allowance of 650,000 won (\$490) in order to encourage them out of their homes, as part

of a new measure passed by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. The measure also offers education, job and health support.

The condition is known as “hikikomori”, a Japanese term that roughly translated means, “to pull back”. The government wants to try to make it easier for those experiencing it to leave the house to go to school, university or work.

Included in the programme announced this week, which expands on measures announced in November, is a monthly allowance for living expenses for people aged between nine and 24 who are experiencing extreme social withdrawal. It also includes an allowance for cultural experiences for teenagers.

About 350,000 people between the ages of 19 and 39 in South Korea are considered lonely or isolated – about 3% of that age group – according to the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs.

Secluded youth are often from disadvantaged backgrounds and 40% began living reclusively while adolescents, according to a government document outlining the measures.

The document includes case studies that describe young people using reclusiveness as a way to cope with setbacks in their family lives. One young person describes their depression as a result of domestic violence. “When I was 15 years old, domestic violence made me depressed so much that I began to live in seclusion. A lethargic person who sleeps most of the time or has no choice but to eat when hungry and go back to sleep.”

Another said that they had become a recluse when their family “went bankrupt”.

The new measures aim to strengthen government support “to enable reclusive youth to recover their daily lives and reintegrate into society”, the government said in a statement.

Among the other types of support are paying for the correction of affected people's physical appearance, including scars "that adolescents may feel ashamed of", as well as helping with school and gym supplies.

South Korea also has a relatively high rate of youth unemployment, at 7.2%, and is trying to tackle a rapidly declining birthrate that further threatens productivity.

"This policy is fundamentally a welfare measure," Shin Yul, a political science professor at Myongji University in Seoul, told Bloomberg. "While it's good to try various approaches to boost working-age population, it cannot be seen as a long-term solution to fix the population problem here".

President Yoon Suk-yeol last month declared the birth rate a "crucial national agenda".

This year South Korea became the [only country in the world with a fertility rate of below one](#), with women having an average of 0.78 children. Many of the reasons behind women choosing not to have children are economic: the high cost of raising children, an economic slowdown, limited job prospects and the rising cost of housing.

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The Victorian coroners court is investigating human remains, including bones, being found in a Melbourne health agency's corporate offices.  
Photograph: Diego Fedele/AAP

[Victoria](#)

## Mystery of ‘bone room’ in Melbourne health office investigated by coroner

Court told human remains appear to be from a ‘number’ of people but no record of their origins has been found

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*Australian Associated Press*  
Thu 13 Apr 2023 03.12 EDT

Workers have stumbled upon a “bone room” containing the remains of multiple unknown people inside a [Melbourne](#) health agency’s corporate offices.

A nurse educator noticed fluid leaking into a hallway from a disused room at Eastern Health’s administrative building, opposite the Box Hill hospital, on 14 February, the Victorian coroners court was told on Thursday.

She entered the room and found bone and tissue fragments inside containers and waste bins and reported the incident to infection prevention and control officers from Monash University’s medical school, the counsel assisting the coroner, Lauren Bedggood, said.

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Two days later, an ear, nose and throat surgeon accessed the room and found an orange bucket in a fridge containing human bones, which were preserved in formaldehyde.

The “bone room”, which was found one level below Eastern Health’s executive offices, was reported to the coroners court on 27 February.

The court contacted police the following day to report discovery of the remains.

“They attended the bone room and found that the scene had been cleaned and the remains placed within yellow hazardous waste bins,” Bedggood said.

“A plastic bag containing unknown identified material was also located within the freezer section of the fridge.”

The remains were photographed and sent off for forensic testing.

Eastern Health has claimed the remains were kept to be studied by medical trainees.

However, there are no records that prove the room was used for studying or teaching anatomy and no records about the origin of the remains.

Eastern Health claimed it had bought the remains from the University of Melbourne in 2014, but the university reported having no record of this, Bedggood said.

Coroner Paul Lawrie is investigating whether the remains can be classified as a reportable death or deaths.

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“Ordinarily, this starts with the identity of the deceased, but here we have remains, and [I] understand that they are remains from a number of individuals ... and all are unidentified,” he said.

He said forensic testing had not helped identify whose remains they were, nor where the remains may have come from.

Eastern Health has engaged an external investigator to examine the incident and recommend changes to framework, processes and policies.

The public health body’s lawyer, Karen Cusack, said it was trying to figure out the source of the remains by interviewing current and former staff, as

there are no other records.

“The search for the records has turned up nothing,” she said. “We’re hoping perhaps some of the former staff may be able to point to some other records – there might be some personal records that have been kept.”

The coroner directed Eastern Health to finalise the first stage of its investigation in the next four to six weeks.

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Fox News must also make people available for deposition at its own cost.  
Photograph: Andrew Kelly/Reuters

[US news](#)

## Fox News-Dominion case heats up as Giuliani audio emerges and trial nears

Jury selection in \$1.6bn defamation lawsuit begins as judge signals plans to appoint special investigator

*Reuters*

Thu 13 Apr 2023 10.55 EDTFirst published on Wed 12 Apr 2023 21.10 EDT

The case against [Fox News](#) by Dominion Voting Systems is heating up just days before the trial is set to begin on Monday.

Jury selection in the \$1.6bn defamation lawsuit over the 2020 presidential election results begins today. But in the past 24 hours, a new Rudy Giuliani recording has further complicated Fox's defense. And on Wednesday, the

judge overseeing the case sanctioned Fox News, handing the ballot-machine company a fresh chance to gather evidence after Fox withheld records until the eve of trial, a person present during Wednesday's court hearing said.

Delaware superior court judge Eric Davis said he would also very likely tap an outside investigator to look into Fox's late disclosure of the evidence and take whatever steps necessary to remedy the situation, which he described as troubling, the source said.

It was not immediately clear whether Dominion would seek new depositions.

Fox said in a statement that it "produced the supplemental information" to Dominion "when we first learned it".

The evidence at issue included recordings a former Fox employee made of Giuliani, a lawyer for former president Donald Trump, saying before pretaped Fox appearances that he did not have any evidence to back up the false allegations of election rigging by Dominion in the 2020 race that are at the heart of the lawsuit.

Dominion sued Fox News and parent company Fox Corp in 2021. It accused them of ruining its reputation by airing false claims by Trump and his lawyers that the Denver-based company's voting machines were used to rig the outcome of the election against him and in favor of Democrat Joe Biden.

In sanctioning Fox, Davis ruled that if Dominion now needs to conduct additional depositions or redo any that have already been done that "Fox will do everything they can to make the person available, and it will be at a cost to Fox," according to a report in the New York Times.

The judge took his action based on details from a new filing in a separate lawsuit against Fox by Abby Grossberg, a former producer at the network.

Grossberg said in her latest filing that she had tapes of former Trump lawyers, including Giuliani, conceding they lacked evidence for their claims.

The recordings and transcripts of them were widely circulated and discussed within Fox, Grossberg added.

Davis said in a pre-trial conference on Tuesday that Fox News had a “credibility problem” after it disclosed for the first time in nearly two years of litigation that [Rupert Murdoch](#) was an officer of the company. As a Fox News officer, Murdoch would probably have been subject to more probing discovery by Dominion.

A Fox spokesperson said in a statement on Tuesday that Murdoch had been listed as the executive chairman of Fox News in Securities and Exchange Commission filings since 2019, and that a Dominion attorney referenced that filing during Murdoch’s deposition.

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The actor Michael J Fox has Parkinson's and has campaigned for more research for years. Photograph: Mario Anzuoni/Reuters

### [Parkinson's disease](#)

## New technique could help diagnose Parkinson's early, scientists say

US researchers say they have found method that could pinpoint disease before symptoms show, allowing earlier treatment

*[Andrew Gregory](#)*, Health editor  
[@andrewgregory](#)

Wed 12 Apr 2023 18.30 EDT Last modified on Thu 13 Apr 2023 07.15 EDT

Scientists have developed a new technique that could help diagnose Parkinson's disease before symptoms show, and speed up the hunt for a cure.

Parkinson's is difficult to diagnose because at present there is no specific test for the condition. Symptoms vary and several other illnesses have similar symptoms, which means the condition can often be misdiagnosed.

Now US scientists say they have come up with a way to identify the buildup of abnormal proteins associated with the disease long before symptoms show. Their findings were [published in the Lancet Neurology journal](#).

The research appears to confirm that the method, known as alpha-synuclein seed amplification assay (alphaSyn-SAA), can accurately identify people who are at risk of developing the disease. The findings could pave the way for early detection, diagnosis and treatment of Parkinson's.

Globally, prevalence of the condition has doubled in the last 25 years, with as many as 10 million people having the disease.

Recent diagnoses in a number of high-profile people including the US congresswoman Jennifer Wexton and the British television presenter [Jeremy Paxman](#) have increased awareness. The actor Michael J Fox has campaigned for increased Parkinson's research for years.

Prof Andrew Siderowf, of the University of Pennsylvania, a co-lead author of the study, said: "Identifying an effective biomarker for Parkinson's disease pathology could have profound implications for the way we treat the condition, potentially making it possible to diagnose people earlier, identify the best treatments for different subsets of patients and speed up clinical trials."

Parkinson's is caused by the buildup of abnormal proteins known as alpha-synuclein throughout the brain and the nervous system. This buildup is thought to take place years before physical symptoms such as tremors, slowness of movement or muscle stiffness start to emerge.

The study involved 1,123 participants, making it one of the largest so far to assess the usefulness of the alphaSyn-SAA technique.

The group included people with a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease, at-risk people with gene variants linked to the condition, and prodromal people – those showing early non-motor symptoms such as sleep disturbance or loss of smell.

The technique involved taking samples of fluid surrounding the brain and the spinal cord from each study participant and then analysing the sample in the lab to look for alphaSyn. The test amplifies very small amounts of these proteins – the pathological hallmark of Parkinson's – to the point that they can be detected using standard lab techniques.

The research confirmed the technique could not only accurately detect people with Parkinson's, but also suggested it may be able to identify individuals at risk and those with early, non-motor symptoms before they were diagnosed.

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