

The Guardian

卫报

2022.03.07 - 2022.03.13

- [2022.03.13 - Opinion](#)
- [Headlines](#)
- [2022.03.07 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.03.07 - Coronavirus](#)
- [2022.03.07 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.03.07 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines](#)
- [2022.03.12 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.03.12 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.03.12 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines](#)
- [2022.03.08 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.03.08 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.03.08 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines](#)
- [2022.03.11 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.03.11 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.03.11 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines](#)
- [2022.03.10 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.03.10 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.03.10 - Around the world](#)

2022.03.13 - Opinion

- [The Observer view on Rishi Sunak and rising energy bills](#)
- [The Observer view on Russia's crimes against humanity in Ukraine](#)
- [The UK government's hypocrisy is keeping Jack Letts and his mother in purgatory](#)
- [The grim reaper confronts Vladimir Putin – cartoon](#)
- [John Bercow is rightly damned as a bully and liar. But he was not alone in the Commons](#)
- [Heat Waves proves patience is a virtue, especially when it comes to megahits](#)
- [Letters: vulnerable Ukrainians need non-Nato support](#)
- [For the record](#)
- [The Tories claim we are worse than we are – and it's the Ukrainians who suffer](#)

Opinion**Energy bills**

The Observer view on Rishi Sunak and rising energy bills

[Observer editorial](#)

The chancellor can and must do more in his next budget to save us from crushing fuel poverty



With UK energy bills soaring, a repayable £200 discount in October is ‘mean in its thinking and self-defeating in practice’. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

Sun 13 Mar 2022 01.30 EST

Four-fifths of British homes are heated by gas and almost half of our electricity is produced by burning gas. British energy policy, in thrall to the notion that the market never makes mistakes and governments always do, has left us uniquely exposed to the more than doubling in gas prices first driven by Covid and now by the war in Ukraine.

British households spent £36bn on gas consumption in 2021-22, according to energy consultants Aurora Energy Research. They project this will rise to £74bn in the next financial year 2022-23 – a rise of £38bn.

Put another way, the average household will have paid £1,277 a year to this April for its gas, when the price cap will be lifted, and then more than £3,000 in October. These are unparalleled swingeing increases.

Of course the government should have insisted on more diversified sources of supply, intensified the transition to renewables and accelerated rather than turned back the improved insulation of our homes. The country is paying a huge price for the government's blind faith in the wisdom of markets. The question is what to do now.

Just keeping public sector pay level in real terms would mean expanding the spending by £10bn in 2022-23

However, the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, has signalled that he intends to do nothing in the spring statement on 23 March. Instead, he will stand by the measures he has already put in place – a £200 discount in every household's energy bill earmarked for October this year that will be recovered in annual £40 instalments over the next five years, along with a non-repayable £150 rebate in council tax payments for homes in bands A to D.

In the context of energy bills that are expected to rise by approaching £2,000 in six months, this is nugatory, mean in its thinking and self-defeating in practice.

It is part and parcel with Sunak's wider approach. In the next financial year, the rate of inflation alone is projected to be 4% higher than the forecasts on which cash spending was calculated at the time of the autumn statement in 2021. His do-nothing inclination will be to ask departments to keep within that cash envelope, so there will be an enormous cut in real terms for the delivery of services and the pay of public sector workers – as savage as any imposed at the height of austerity. The Institute for Fiscal Studies calculates

that just keeping public sector pay level in real terms would mean expanding the spending by £10bn in 2022-23.

There is enough cash. Energy companies are now receiving an enormous unearned boost to their income – not from enterprise, hard work or initiative but because Putin launched his war. Following the EU’s lead, a windfall profits tax should be levied on them, which would raise approaching £10bn. More generally, the chancellor’s plans to freeze allowances for four years from 2022-23 will mean a spectacular increase in income tax receipts.

Sitting on a potential revenue bonanza and on top of having the option to borrow 25-, 50- and even 100-year debt, the chancellor has a unique opportunity to alleviate potential economic and social distress. The energy rebate in October should be lifted to £1,000 per household with no requirement for repayment. He should commit to maintain public spending in real terms. And he should counter recession by supporting levelling up and the green transition, committing substantial resources for both.

Hoarding his cash for pre-election tax cuts, pretending that his hands are fiscally tied, is cynical, deceitful and wrong. The economy and the public need action now.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/13/observer-view-on-rishi-sunak-and-rising-energy-bills>

OpinionUkraine

The Observer view on Russia's crimes against humanity in Ukraine

[Observer editorial](#)

Vladimir Putin's regime will be held to account for the atrocities it is meting out to defenceless civilians



A pregnant woman is carried on a stretcher as she is evacuated from a maternity hospital in Mariupol, south-eastern Ukraine, following a Russia army bombardment on 9 March, 2022. Photograph: EyePress News/REX/Shutterstock

Sun 13 Mar 2022 01.00 EST

The war in Ukraine has entered its third week, yet still Russia's once vaunted armed forces are struggling to control much of the country. These blundering heirs to the Red Army are said to be [tightening their grip on Kyiv](#), but the outcome remains deeply uncertain. The aura of invincibility that once enveloped Russia's military is destroyed. Its reputation lies in

ruins amid the rubble of invasion. Frustration over the slow pace of advance has led to a change in tactics. Instead of directly engaging the resistance, the Russians have besieged major cities and taken to long-range shelling and bombing by artillery, missiles and air strikes. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy says more Ukrainian civilians than soldiers are being killed as a result.

This cowardly, reckless policy has inevitably led to atrocities, such as last week's lethal attack on a maternity hospital in [Mariupol](#). That vile act and the often repeated, deliberate, indiscriminate targeting of civilian areas and the humanitarian corridors supposedly protected by local ceasefires self-evidently constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Compounding its offence, Russia has resorted to the use in urban areas of mass-casualty weapons such as cluster munitions, which scatter hundreds of small, delayed-action bomblets. The UK's Ministry of Defence alleges Russia is also firing [thermobaric rockets](#), known as vacuum bombs, which suck oxygen from the air (and people's lungs) to generate an explosion.

It is vitally important that the UN, western governments and human rights groups gather evidence of Russian actions

This barbaric approach to fighting, previously seen in Chechnya and Syria's civil war, and Russia's unprovoked war of aggression breach international law as codified in 1949 by the Geneva Conventions and the UN charter, and upheld, in theory, by the UN security council and the international court of justice in The Hague.

It is vitally important, as was the case in Syria and before that in Bosnia, that the UN, western governments and human rights groups gather evidence and records of Russian actions in order that political leaders with "command responsibility" and soldiers on the ground may be held to account. Prosecutors at the international criminal court have [already begun this process](#).

Many of the organisational and logistical difficulties facing the invaders are of their own making. Contradicting President Vladimir Putin's denials, Moscow now admits inexperienced, ill-trained conscripts have been thrown into battle. Thousands have died. This is another crime – committed by Putin against his own people. Yet it is the valiant, unexpectedly effective resistance mounted by Ukraine's armed forces and civilian volunteers that has caused the biggest problems for Russian troops. They were told by Kremlin propagandists they would be welcomed as liberators. The opposite is happening. Putin's big lie, that Ukrainians lack freedom, is exploded. Instead, they are fighting to be free of him.

Putin's frustration and impatience now appear to be taking an even more sinister turn. Western officials warned last week that, judging by its previous actions in [Syria](#) and recent intelligence, Russia could soon resort to illegal use of non-conventional weapons – meaning chemical, biological or low-yield, tactical nuclear weapons – to break Ukraine's resistance.

Chemical weapons, notably the sarin nerve agent and chlorine gas, delivered by rockets or dropped as bombs, were repeatedly used against Syrian civilians. In Ghouta, outside Damascus, as many as 1,700 people died in [sarin attacks](#) in 2013. The Syrian and Russian governments denied responsibility and described the atrocity as an opposition "false flag" operation to discredit them.

US and British officials fear history may be repeating itself following fabricated claims by the Kremlin, irresponsibly repeated by China, that the US is [secretly operating bio-weapons laboratories](#) in Ukraine. Russia is now suggesting any release, deliberate or accidental, of chemical or biological agents during the fighting would thus be America's fault.

The fear is that the convoluted lies at the heart of this latest "false flag" operation are intended to obscure the imminent use of banned chemical or biological weapons by Russia itself. The terrible injuries to victims aside, such weapons have proven capacity to terrorise entire populations. This is their true value to a mass killer such as Putin, desperate to prevail by any means.

However deluded or crazed he may be, Putin must be made to understand how unacceptable any such escalation would be. Possibly he recalls Barack Obama's lamentable [failure in 2013](#), after the Ghouta attack, to impose the "enormous consequences" he had threatened if his "red line" opposing chemical weapons use was crossed. Possibly Putin thinks the west will bottle it again.

Boris Johnson and Joe Biden evidently remember the "red line" fiasco, too. While expressing grave concern, Britain and the US have refused to say exactly what action, if any, they might take. That's sensible, for now. We must hope that Putin is being told in no uncertain terms, through diplomatic back channels and perhaps by France's president, Emmanuel Macron, who still talks to him, that he goes down this path at his [utmost peril](#).

It's plain that war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are being committed daily by Russia. All those responsible should understand they will be held to account, however long it takes. There will be justice for Ukraine.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/13/observer-view-russian-war-crimes-against-humanity-ukraine>

NotebookLaw

The UK government's hypocrisy is keeping Jack Letts and his mother in purgatory

[Tim Adams](#)



Sally Lane's son was stripped of his citizenship for allegedly joining Islamic State, yet others have been quietly returned



Sally Lane and John Letts, the parents of Jack Letts. Photograph: Antonio Olmos/The Observer

Sat 12 Mar 2022 12.00 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Mar 2022 13.59 EST

I received a note the other day from Sally Lane, the mother of Jack Letts, the British teenager who went to Syria in his gap year and who remains uncontactable in a Kurdish prison camp, along with tens of thousands of others, suspected of involvement with [Islamic State](#). Sally has written a book, *Reasonable Cause to Suspect*, about Jack's five years of incarceration and the family's efforts to have him freed to face justice at home.

I met her a few years ago, with her husband, John Letts, and wrote about the trial in which the British government thought it worthwhile to prosecute them for "funding terrorism" (they had sent £223 to Jack, to buy a new pair of glasses and to try to find a way of getting back to the UK). She knows that there are plenty of people with little sympathy for her son, who was 18 when he went to Syria without their knowledge in 2014.

Jack remains a symbol, however, of this government's shameful unwillingness to confront the hardest of its responsibilities. Jack and [Shamima Begum](#), the two highest profile prisoners, had their UK citizenship revoked in response to media outrage.

Meanwhile, at least 300 other former IS volunteers were anonymously allowed back into Britain without sanction. Sally Lane is campaigning in vain for her son to be repatriated to Canada, the country of his father's birth, where she now lives. Meanwhile, she remains in purgatory with him.

Follow the money



The One Hyde Park, residential and retail complex in Knightsbridge, London. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

The list of likely buyers for Chelsea FC includes property developer Nick Candy. If that sale goes ahead, all proceeds should go to London's world-leading fund in black irony. Candy and his brother cornered the market in oligarch-chic as far back as 2001, when they sold a £5m apartment in Belgrave Square to [Boris Berezovsky](#), a former business partner of Roman Abramovich. The apartment, it was reported, came complete with "bullet-proof CCTV cameras, fingerprint entry systems and laser beam alarms that activated smoke bombs".

The last word in oligarch style was perfected by the Candys with their development at One Hyde Park, where Kazakh politicians and Nigerian oil billionaires competed to throw money at the most expensive real estate on the planet. In 2014, Ukrainians chose the building to protest outside because

of resident Rinat Akhmetov's links to the disgraced Yanukovych government. Plus ça change...

Last words



Observer journalist Euan Ferguson pictured at his home in 2013.
Photograph: Alex Lake

On Wednesday, I went up to Edinburgh for the funeral of my old friend and *Observer* colleague Euan Ferguson. Euan's life was all story and everyone had a dozen single malt anecdotes, but one that rang true for me came from his younger brother, Donald. He recalled how as boys he and Euan had been going together to visit their grandfather, who was in poor health after a stroke. "Let's try to make him 100% happier!" Euan announced on the way. Donald did not know what a percentage was at the time, but the ambition was memorable enough to have stuck with him 50 years on.

Euan had suffered grim health himself in the past decade after a stroke of his own, but as anyone who was lucky enough to share a bar-room table with him – or read one of his peerless opening paragraphs – knew, that generous determination to make the world around him not just a little bit jollier never left him. It remained true at the funeral; it was a horribly sad

day but, even so, no one could think of Euan for 10 seconds without giving in to a smile.

Tim Adams is an Observer columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/12/uk-government-hypocrisy-keeping-jack-letts-and-mother-in-purgatory>.

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

Observer comment cartoon

Vladimir Putin

The grim reaper confronts Vladimir Putin – cartoon

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/picture/2022/mar/12/the-grim-reaper-confronts-vladimir-putin-cartoon>

Opinion[John Bercow](#)

John Bercow is rightly damned as a bully and liar. But he was not alone in the Commons

[Catherine Bennett](#)



Even as a report excoriates the former Speaker, Priti Patel is still in office. Why?



John Bercow: ‘intergalactic hero’ or ‘serial bully’? Photograph: Ken McKay/ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

Sun 13 Mar 2022 03.00 EDT

One of John Bercow’s unfortunate subordinates, recalling how “spectacularly” the former [Commons Speaker](#) lost his temper, compared the transformation to “Jekyll and Hyde”.

Although Bercow has objected to her account (“the suggestion that I waved my arms... with spittle coming from my mouth is disgusting, offensive and untrue”) and called the investigation “amateurish” and based on “tittle-tattle”, the comparison is probably one of the more forgiving lines in the [report](#) that the Commons’ independent expert panel has entitled, rather beautifully, *The Conduct of Mr John Bercow*.

For, if Bercow could behave despicably, the idea that he had a wholly delightful alter ego called Mr Speaker might suggest that his many Commons admirers weren’t simply duped by his rewarding transformation from [Enoch Powell fan](#) into a champion of diversity and inclusion. Maybe, like the inhuman Mr Hyde and decent Dr Jekyll (“one of your fellows who do what they call good”), Bercow really could be both things at the same

time? Perhaps it was possible for the man David Lammy called an “intergalactic hero” to double as the “[serial bully](#)” of the new report? Not that Bercow limited himself to that: “The respondent has lied extensively to try and avoid the damning reality of the truth,” the panel found.

To toggle between the panel’s conclusions and the [Commons effusions](#) when Bercow finally left in 2019 can certainly feel like reading about two separate people. “Your humanity and personal touch will never be forgotten” was typical, along with “you are an extraordinary man”; “thank you for being such a good human being”. The person who we know to have been “offensive, malicious and insulting” to one Commons staffer, “leaving the complainant feeling undermined, humiliated and denigrated”, would himself leave Westminster, according to Thangam Debbonaire, “billowed up on a cloud of love and admiration from us all”.

Staff described Bercow mimicking them ‘by way of mocking caricature’. For admirers, such turns made him all the more adorable

Elsewhere though, it’s clearly the same person, different audience. Staff described Bercow mimicking them “by way of mocking caricature”. For admirers, such turns made him all the more adorable. “You have your talent – that of mimicry, your voices and all that stuff,” said the Labour MP Barry Sheerman.

Like most workplace bullies, Bercow appears to have monstered selectively, picking moments and people, never inadvertently slipping like Jekyll into Hyde mode (“I was seized again with those indescribable sensations that heralded the change”). “My own personal experience is different to the things I read in the report,” [said non-victim Emily Thornberry](#), in 2018, as if this were a reason not to act on other people’s allegations.

If such unquestioning commitment now seems hard to credit, it could be worth considering that the trait of Machiavellianism has been [strongly associated](#) with perpetrators of workplace bullying, with dishonest Machiavellians “the biggest bullies of all”.

“It is for historians to judge,” says the newest report on Bercow’s behaviour, “whether the respondent was a successful reforming Speaker of the [House of Commons](#). However, there was no need to act as a bully to achieve that aim.”

The Labour party, which finally suspended Bercow last week, has been slow to reach agreement. In 2018, Margaret Beckett had wanted him to stay as Speaker because Brexit “trumps bad behaviour”. Thornberry, not that she’d witnessed bullying, could nonetheless see things from the bully’s perspective: “I appreciate that there must be times when it is extremely frustrating trying to get, trying to drag the House of Commons into the 21st century.”

To be fair to Thornberry, her implied distinction between bog-standard bullying and a justifiable, virtuous kind is one widely in use. In fact, for some of our most active social justice advocates, the message of the Bercow report, that all workplace bullying is bad, regardless of the visionary claims of the perpetrators, must be distinctly unwelcome. Must progressives deny themselves even occasional name-calling and intimidation?

As for the Conservatives, a renewed enthusiasm for bullying has prevented them glorying in Labour’s Bercow difficulties

Sheerman, a former chair of the all-party parliamentary group on bullying, remains defiant. Bercow, he [tweeted](#), was “a great reforming Speaker of the House of Commons who deserves our thanks & respect”.

As for the Conservatives, a renewed enthusiasm for bullying has, alas, prevented them glorying as fully as they might have wished in Labour’s Bercow difficulties. It’s tricky, after all, to ridicule Labour hypocrisy on workplace respect when the current home secretary is, as confirmed by an official report, the most powerful bully in the land.

Lest Priti Patel’s survival be explained as a regrettable necessity, dictated purely by the shortage of comparably affectless candidates, the party has further illustrated its commitment to dignity at work by bullying Kathryn Stone, the standards commissioner tasked with investigating bullying.

Kwasi Kwarteng said she should “decide [on] her position”. Mark Spencer, the former whip accused of bullying lowlier MPs, is now leader of the house. On the backbenches, Daniel Kawczynski stands up for brutes by, having apologised for bullying, saying he didn’t mean it.

Actually, if Andrea Leadsom (who was once insulted by the Speaker) was right to demand Bercow’s exclusion from Labour membership, and others justifiably question his professorship at Royal Holloway University of London, what is Patel doing in her – in any – job?

At his public resignation from the Home Office, her permanent secretary, Sir Philip Rutnam, mentioned allegations of belittling, shouting and swearing, an “atmosphere of fear”. Boris Johnson then ignored the conclusion of Sir Alex Allan, his adviser on ministerial standards, that Patel’s conduct amounted to bullying. Allan resigned. Rutnam later received a settlement of £340,000, with £30,000 in costs.

If it has always been obvious that normalising bullying and trashing codes of conduct extract a social cost, we are still learning how much suffering and shame comes of government by bullies in a humanitarian crisis. Patel’s failures of empathy and twisted notions of acceptable behaviour now shape the national response to freezing, bombed-out Ukrainian families, as well as to refugees in dinghies. When investigated for in-person bullying, Patel said (inaccurately) that nobody told her it was wrong. What’s her excuse this time?

Catherine Bennett is an Observer columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/13/john-bercow-rightly-damned-bully-liar-but-not-alone-in-commons>

Names in the newsGlass Animals

Heat Waves proves patience is a virtue, especially when it comes to megahits

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)



The Glass Animals hit took the slowest journey to the top spot ever recorded



Edmund Irwin-Singer, Joe Seaward, Dave Bayley and Drew MacFarlane of Glass Animals attend the Brit awards 2022. Photograph: Dave J Hogan/Getty Images for BRIT Awards Limited

Sat 12 Mar 2022 10.00 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Mar 2022 18.14 EST

You might have heard the song Heat Waves, by [Glass Animals](#), or maybe you haven't. It was a UK hit, but not ubiquitous, not the kind of song you would necessarily expect to break international records. It was first released in June 2020. Last October, it peaked at number five. Glass Animals were on their way to becoming an indie-pop staple. In 2017, they were nominated for the Mercury prize, for their second album. But in the US, they have become a pop staple and there is no more indie about it.

It took 59 weeks for Heat Waves to make the journey from its arrival at number 100 in the Billboard charts to its spot at the very top and now, after more than a year, Glass Animals have a number one hit in America.

It is the slowest ascent to the top of all time and a sign of how unpredictable a hit can be right now. Star-making songs come from all sides and they come from all eras; it is increasingly difficult to work out where, when or why it will happen. Take [Pavement](#) and their album *Terror Twilight*, which came out in 1999. I bought it on CD at the time. The band's biggest song on

Spotify, with 68m plays, is a B-side from that era called Harness Your Hopes, which would have been one for the mega-fans, even then.

A report on [Stereogum](#), in 2020, dug into the algorithms to suggest reasons why that particular song floated to the top, but more than 20 years later, it's so popular that the band last week released a brand new video for it, starring one of the actors from the hit series *Yellowjackets*. It is thrilling, in a way, almost lawless. It's as if a toddler has been left in charge of the music industry and is pressing the buttons at random: why not let TikTok turn Fleetwood Mac's Dreams into one of the biggest hits of the 2020s, even though it was first released six decades ago?

At the same time, any world-conquering hit is usually a surprise. It's unpredictable by nature. What labels think will work is rarely in line with what listeners decide has worked. That's why artists are always asked if they saw a megahit coming and they always say they did not. Mark Ronson always says that, for a long time, he didn't think Uptown Funk was working at all. Camila Cabello said she had to persuade her label to release the mega-hit Havana. It makes sense that few could have seen Heat Waves coming. That's part of the story of a smash.

Pete Davidson: starring role in a story more crazy than any fiction



Pete Davidson: this is his life. Photograph: Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images

Sitting at the centre of a gaudy Venn diagram where celebrity gossip and sketch comedy meet is Pete Davidson, the *Saturday Night Live* regular who is also known for being a boyfriend to very famous women. Davidson, who was once engaged to Ariana Grande and who now goes out with the freshly divorced Kim Kardashian, has been a staple of the gossip circuit in recent weeks, after Kanye West, Kardashian's ex-husband, depicted an avatar of Davidson being buried alive and then slapped by a skinned monkey, in two music videos for the same song.

So last week's report in [Deadline](#) that Davidson is to star in a new comedy inspired by his own life, certainly sounds as if it has potential. The show, provisionally entitled *Bupkis*, is in development but has been compared to *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, which is a bit like me standing in front of the mirror in my pyjamas thinking about getting dressed and then comparing myself to a catwalk model in full couture.

The report says it is a "fictionalised" version of his life, but, considering the twists and turns of just the past fortnight, surely the issue isn't what to make up, but what on earth he's going to leave out.

Katy Hessel: flummoxed by female artists? Help is at hand



Katy Hessel: help is at hand. Photograph: Stephane Cardinale - Corbis/Corbis/Getty Images

A new YouGov [survey](#), published on International Women's Day, has revealed that, when it comes to naming female artists, British people are not necessarily at their best. Turn them upside down and shake them like a piggy bank and 30% can name three, with Tracey Emin, Barbara Hepworth and Frida Kahlo the most common artists to know. More than half of respondents said they had never been taught about female artists at school. Usually, hope lies in young people when it comes to addressing historically sexist imbalances, but not according to this survey: 84% of 18- to 24-year-olds were not up to the task.

The survey was commissioned by the art historian Katy Hessel to promote her forthcoming book, *The Story of Art Without Men*. As an avid watcher of quiz shows on television, these results did not surprise me. From quizzes I have learned many things, namely that *Tipping Point* reliably gives the best wrong answers in the game (see the contestant who answered a question about which MP had written a weight-loss memoir with “Agatha Christie”).

But what is true across the board, from *University Challenge* to *Pointless* to *The Chase*, is that questions about female artists strike fear into the hearts of every contestant. Either they answer a question that doesn't specify the gender of the artist with a man's name or their faces drop as they realise they should have used that extra hour they spent revising the periodic table to read up on Sarah Lucas or Vanessa Bell. Hessel is custodian of the excellent Great Women Artists Instagram page, which is the perfect place to start, for anyone who would like to brush up.

Rebecca Nicholson is an Observer columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/12/heat-waves-proves-patience-virtue-especially-when-it-comes-to-megahits>

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

Observer lettersUkraine

Letters: vulnerable Ukrainians need non-Nato support

The UN could authorise non-Nato forces to protect pregnant women, babies, elderly and disabled people under attack



An injured pregnant woman is carried from the maternity hospital in Mariupol, Ukraine. Photograph: Evgeniy Maloletka/AP

Sun 13 Mar 2022 01.00 EST

To avoid dangerous opposition on the ground from Russian forces, it is essential for protected humanitarian support to [Ukraine](#) to come from non-Nato countries, thereby reducing the risk of escalation of military action, including possible nuclear warfare.

If the UN general assembly provides support for humanitarian forces entering Ukraine and if President Zelenskiy's government invites such support, secure humanitarian aid, including medical assistance for pregnant

women, babies, severely ill children, injured, elderly and disabled people might be achieved. Such support could include protected humanitarian corridors, protection of hospitals and other health facilities and safe medical evacuation when needed. We are not aware of any legal reason against this approach and it avoids the UN security council issue of a Russian veto.

In 2019, the World Bank reported that 138 non-Nato countries/territories have a total of 21,748,000 military personnel (minus Russia and Ukraine). These countries combined have the economic strength, expertise in humanitarian missions and the military capacity to provide secure humanitarian protection for Ukraine.

The question is whether, if requested by Ukraine, the UN would be willing to lead and, also, whether countries would be willing to work together to provide international forces to secure protected humanitarian assistance in Ukraine as a matter of urgency.

Professor David Southall, honorary medical director, Maternal and Childhealth Advocacy International; **Dr Olena Kostiuk**, associate professor, neonatology department, Shupyk National Healthcare University of Ukraine, Kyiv; **Volodymyr Shcherbakov**, physician gynaecologist, Maternity Hospital No 1, Dnipro, Ukraine; **Dr Rhona MacDonald**, honorary executive director, MCAI; **Dr Aniko Deierl**, MSc consultant, Department of Neonatology, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust; **Dr Zoryana Ivanyuk**, MSc consultant, Department of Neonatology, imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, London; **Dr Victor Bobyk**, neonatologist, Lviv City Children's Clinical Hospital, Ukraine; **Dr Sarah Band**, deputy medical director, MCAI; **Professor Marina Mamenko**, dean of the Pediatric Faculty of Shupyk National Healthcare University of Ukraine

Clearly, Ukrainian students in the UK deserve the greatest support, as Vladimir Putin lays waste to their homes and homeland (["Lonely and guilty, Russians at UK universities fear for the future"](#), News). However, in that ancient war epic the *Iliad*, enemies Achilles and Priam are united by a shared experience of grief. Some students born in Russia, and in Ukraine, will be bereaved by the senseless fighting. It is important that support is openly available and accessible – and without “blame” for the young people

who feel so far from home.

Woody Caan

Duxford, Cambridge

Grammar blights learning

I enjoyed Cathy Rentzenbrink's piece and am equally dismayed by the preposterous teaching of complex (and unnecessary) grammar to primary school students ("[Fronted adverbials be damned. Let's teach the young what really matters](#)", Comment). I adore grammar – my interest developed when I learned Latin (a great way to be introduced to its beauty) – and I like nothing better than spotting a jussive subjunctive. But that's just me. Educators should treat grammar as they teach (I hope) history, biology, literature or PE: give a child an engaging taste and hope that she grabs what suits her and runs with it.

Alison Carter

Lindfield, West Sussex

Digital art theft is everywhere

Your account of the dismay felt by Vanessa Bowman on finding her art was being stolen online was welcome, but described only a fraction of the digital theft of creative work ("[They took my world': fashion giant Shein accused of art theft](#)", News). The same goes for musicians and writers. My wife and I are both full-time writers. Our earnings are meagre and have shrunk over the past decade. It is extraordinarily galling to find our work repeatedly billed as "free download" on the internet. It is no better than shoplifting.

David McDowall

Richmond, London

Gender is so last century

I take issue with Charlie Porter's use of the term "gender critical" ("[Clothes maketh the gender-fluid man](#)", Focus). It should be obvious that the term describes those of us who deride the whole concept of gender, based as it is in regressive stereotypes of what is "masculine" or "feminine". Those of us

who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s have spent decades fighting those assumptions, including entering then male-dominated professions. Many of us were “gender non-conforming” as children and still are.

Billy Porter is no less a man for wearing a dress to the Oscars, just as Greta Garbo was still a woman when wearing a tuxedo. That is the gender-critical position – that while our sexes are fixed, our expression as people is infinite and should not be restricted. We also do not ignore the barriers to full equality – the assumptions that women should always be “kind” being especially pernicious in the current climate. To paraphrase Rebecca West, I am a feminist because I am not a doormat.

Dr Annette Neary

Menlough, Co Galway, Ireland

Share the riches, Tristram

Tristram Hunt would like Stoke to create a national pottery museum, (“[Pottery challenge thrown down to Stoke: celebrate your heritage](#)”, News). I’m sure it would love to. However, with Londoners getting far more per head spent on them for the arts and culture than on those elsewhere, I’d make a bet it’s not going to happen.

Stoke is on a list of areas outside London that has been promised a share of a lump sum of money, according to Nadine Dorries, to help level up the arts. But this will be just a one-off payment. Outside London, councils spend on arts or bin collections, arts or children’s services, arts or any other number of essentials. If Hunt wants a national pottery museum in Stoke, let him share a chunk of the V&A’s funding with it on a yearly basis.

Sharon Maher

Wigston, Leicestershire

Pay rises all round

If “the main impact of higher gas and oil prices will be to cause a severe hit to household finances” (“[Bank of England’s war footing won’t be a crowd pleaser](#)”, Business), won’t workers have to secure the “inflation-busting wage rises over the coming months” that Bank governor Andrew Bailey

feared and economist Andrew Goodwin thought unlikely to materialise, just in order to stay afloat?

David Murray

Wallington, Surrey

O'Shaughnessy the fearless

I was saddened to read about the death of foreign correspondent Hugh O'Shaughnessy ([Comment](#)), who was a friend and inspiration to me. He was a thorn in the side of Latin American dictatorships and those who supported them. I came across numerous references to Hugh in Foreign Office papers while I was researching Britain's relations with the Pinochet dictatorship and the Argentine military regime (1976-83) in the British National Archives. The Foreign Office described him as one of "the triumvirate of Latin American correspondents who influence British opinion" (along with The Guardian's Richard Gott and Christopher Roper).

Hugh would never be silenced. On one occasion in 1981, the *Financial Times* asked him to write an article to accompany an *FT*-sponsored conference on the benefits of investing in Argentina (then a military regime). Rather than write a puff piece, his report highlighted human rights abuses. The British ambassador, Anthony Williams, who spoke at the conference, was furious and demanded that the Foreign Office complain to the editor. But Hugh, as always, stuck to his guns.

Dr Grace Livingstone

London N6

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2022/mar/13/vulnerable-ukrainians-need-non-nato-support>

For the recordUK news

For the record

This week's corrections

Sun 13 Mar 2022 01.00 EST

We misquoted Ed Humpherson, the director general of the UK Statistics Authority, as saying: "... we're on the side of the statistics. We are a referee in the debate." What he said was: "We are not a referee in the debate ([Downing St warned repeatedly about job figures before rebuke](#), 6 March, p31).

An article said: "I remember my gran being sent tapes by the RNLI when her sight started failing." This should, of course, have referred to the RNIB ([Let me tell you a story](#), 6 March, the New Review, p31).

The French officer at the centre of the Dreyfus affair was Alfred Dreyfus, not Albert, as an opinion article named him ([Far right and far left alike admired Putin. Now we've all turned against strongmen](#), 6 March, p58).

A restaurant review omitted the final "d" in the place name Pontypridd ([Dining in Cardiff has been reformed – as an exceptional lunch at the Heathcock demonstrates](#), 6 March, *Observer* magazine, p24).

Other recently amended articles include:

[Nine Quarters of Jerusalem by Matthew Teller review – a new map of a contested city](#)

[Toney hits hat-trick and Eriksen shines as Brentford pile pain on Norwich](#)

[Saracens show their Premiership title mettle in revenge victory over Leicester](#)

How satellites may hold the key to the methane crisis

*Write to the Readers' Editor, the Observer, York Way, London N1 9GU,
email observer.readers@observer.co.uk, tel 020 3353 4736*

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/mar/13/for-the-record>

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

OpinionRefugees

The Tories claim we are worse than we are – and it's the Ukrainians who suffer

[Nick Cohen](#)



The Home Office and hostile ministers ensure a cold welcome for those fleeing war



Members of a Ukrainian family wait for paperwork to be completed at the ferry terminal in Calais. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

Sat 12 Mar 2022 14.00 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Mar 2022 14.26 EST

Two groups of politicians have looked at the burning hospitals and ravaged cities and thought: “This is the ideal opportunity to advance my career by lying about a merciless imperial war.” The first consists of [Vladimir Putin](#) and his organised crime gang. The second consists of Boris Johnson and his ministers.

If – and I hope when – Putin’s gangsters face trial, they will plead that the boss gave them no choice. If Sergei Lavrov does not [pretend the war is not a war](#) and “we have not even attacked Ukraine”, he will lose his job and maybe more than his job as Putinism turns into Stalinism. Russia is now behaving as if 1989 never happened. The few Russians with the courage to speak out risk 15 years in jail for publishing “fake news” (or “telling the truth”, as the rest of us would say).

No one threatened to lock up Priti Patel if she refused to mislead parliament. She was not saving herself from the sack when [she told MPs she had set up a visa application centre](#) for Ukrainian refugees in Calais, when no such centre existed. No secret policemen will interrogate Patel on

the origins of the sick rumour that streams of Ukrainians running for their lives [“may” be riddled with Russian agents](#). (Pause for a moment to admire the cynical cleverness of the smear. No one can conclusively disprove it.)

Patel could tell her honourable counterparts in Dublin that she worried that [Ireland’s decision to welcome refugees](#) could allow them to reach the UK by the back door, and then toddle off to her safe home and warm bed, and enjoy a sleep undisturbed by nightmares.

Come to that, no one bullied Grant Shapps into allowing a sly smirk to suffuse his puffy face as he announced that the Conservatives were [following the express wishes of Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#) when they denied sanctuary to Ukrainian women and children.

For who would punish them? They were simply riffing on a [cracked tune sung by Boris Johnson](#) when he told a straight lie (again) and asserted: “The UK is way out in front in our willingness to help refugees.” The trouble with liars is they force you to waste everyone’s time by stating the obvious. So for the record, and as I’m sure you know, the EU gave freedom of movement to all Ukrainians, while Johnson and Patel insisted on visa restrictions. Nowhere in Europe is as small as Global Britain.

Policy towards refugees is driven by the same crabbed and punitive moralism that led the Victorians to build workhouses

Two forces have driven the abandonment of our allies and the denial of common humanity: the bureaucratic ineptitude of the [Home Office](#) and the calculations of the Conservative leadership.

The Home Office is an institutionalised absurdity. You can only make sense of it if you’re drunk. In theory, it believes in a “hostile environment” that makes life so miserable for migrants they would think twice before coming here. In practice, the hostile environment does not work even on its own mean-spirited terms.

The untutored might think a hostile environment meant deporting migrants whose asylum claims failed. But the [rate of enforced deportation](#) has

collapsed under Patel to the lowest level since records began in 2004.

All that is left is her determination to use every Kafkaesque ploy to stop asylum seekers reaching the UK unless they have been through an authorised government scheme and force them into a [100,000-strong queue of applicants](#) if they make it through. The determination to control means the Home Office must pay for accommodation, while its processes grind on full stop. The Treasury is sick of meeting the bill and is insisting on economies. Given the cost controls, the Home Office under its current policies may not be able to afford a Ukrainian refugee influx.

Financially, morally and practically, the hostile environment is a farce. But here is the point you may find hard to grasp – the Home Office doesn't care. In 2016, the chief inspector of borders reported that senior Home Office managers had told him they were unlikely to change policy even if there was no reduction in the number of asylum seekers entering the UK. Inflicting pain was “the right thing to do”, they said ... The public would not accept asylum seekers receiving “the same range of benefits and services” British citizens enjoyed. They must suffer.

If puritanism is the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy, conservatism is the haunting fear that some claimants, somewhere, may be comfortable. Conservative policy towards refugees is driven by the same crabbed and punitive moralism that led the Victorians to build workhouses. To add to their absurdist atmosphere, Patel is presenting a nationality and borders bill to parliament that will criminalise Ukrainian refugees who cross the Channel without her permission. The spectacle of Tory MPs, who have denounced [Russia](#) and praised the resistance, voting to treat Putin's victims as villains will test all but the strongest stomachs.

A home secretary and prime minister with empathy and political will could have cleared the obstacles and forced the bureaucracy to relent. The government was generous to Hongkongers fleeing the Chinese communist takeover, after all. But that was because the Foreign Office drove the policy. [Ukraine](#) has been left to Johnson and Patel and they believe their supporters are racist. The decision of the 1997-2010 Labour government to allow the largest mass migration in UK history destroyed it, they reason. The failure of the Cameron government to contain migration led to the Brexit vote and

Ukip threatening to supplant the Conservative party. They think that if they forget their base's xenophobia for a moment, they will suffer the same fate.

Downing Street and the Home Office can beat the most elitist Remainer in their contempt for working-class [Conservatives](#). They assume they are thick and prejudiced, even when those same supporters say they are nothing of the sort.

Opinion polls may show [76% of the public](#) want Ukrainian refugees to be allowed into the country. Conservative politicians and journalists may berate the government's heartlessness and mendacity as forcefully as any leftist. Johnson and Patel don't believe they mean it. George Bernard Shaw said: "The liar's punishment is not in the least that he is not believed, but that he cannot believe anyone else."

The liars at the top of government cannot believe the electorate. They are certain that their power depends on thinking the worst of the British.

Nick Cohen is an Observer columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/12/tories-claim-we-are-worse-than-we-are-and-its-ukrainians-who-suffer>

Headlines

- Gender equality Women face 30-year wait for parity at top of finance industry
- Women in business Companies with female leaders outperform those dominated by men, data shows
- TUC Workers can fight and beat the wage squeezes, says Frances O'Grady
- Climate crisis Six key lifestyle changes can help avert disaster, study finds

Financial sector

How long for UK gender pay gap to be bridged at top of finance? About 30 years

Aviva boss Amanda Blanc warns of ‘frustratingly slow’ pace of changes in pay at senior levels



Amanda Blanc, chief executive of the insurer Aviva. Photograph: Aviva

[Julia Kollewe](#)

Mon 7 Mar 2022 01.01 EST

It will take 30 years to reach gender parity at senior levels of the financial services industry if nothing is done to improve the “frustratingly slow” current rate, the Treasury’s champion on the issue has warned.

Amanda Blanc, who is also chief executive of the insurer [Aviva](#), said women and business could not afford to wait that long to achieve equality.

The government's women in finance charter was [launched in 2016](#) as a voluntary agreement committing firms to gender diversity targets. More than 400 City institutions have signed up to it, including Aviva, the Bank of England, London Stock Exchange, the fund manager BlackRock, the banks Morgan Stanley, Santander and Monzo, and the building society Nationwide.

Research by the women in finance taskforce found the proportion of senior management among the 400 signatories who were female increased by just one percentage point between 2018 and 2020, from 31% to 32%. It calculated that at this rate, it would take the financial services industry another 30 years to achieve gender parity at senior levels.

Blanc, who has run Aviva since July 2020 and was appointed by the Treasury as the women in finance charter champion a year ago, said: "Progress towards gender equality in the financial sector remains frustratingly slow. Women, companies and society cannot afford to wait 30 years when we can achieve this in 10.

"We've got to work quicker and harder, for the sake of women, for the sake of society and because a more diverse business is a more productive and innovative one."

She unveiled a series of proposals to tackle the problem: mandating shortlists for senior positions with 50% female representation, greater use of psychometric testing in recruitment, removing male-biased recruitment advertising, creating diverse interview panels and mid-career returner programmes to help women move back into work.

Her other recommendations included: advertising all jobs as flexible, publishing bonus payments of all senior managers, formal sponsorship programmes for women at all levels, full-pay equal parental leave and

benefits packages that support women at key life stages including menopause.

Blanc said senior female role models and zero-tolerance policies for harassment were crucial for improving culture and behaviour. She also recommended setting detailed annual gender representation targets for all parts of the organisation, a real-time dashboard to showcase progress against gender targets that is publicly available, and embedding gender parity targets into scorecards for all senior management linked to executives achieving gender parity targets.

Sign up to the daily Business Today email or follow Guardian Business on Twitter at @BusinessDesk

This means that bonus payments should be linked to executives achieving gender parity targets.

The proposals, drawn up by the taskforce in partnership with the consultancy Bain & Company and published a day before International Women's Day, are based on interviews with bosses of financial firms, academic research, and more than 100 responses to a survey of the charter's signatories.

Nearly six out of 10 women (58%) say caring responsibilities have stopped them applying for promotion or a new job, and one in five (19%) have left a job because it was too hard to balance work and care, according to separate new research by market researcher Ipsos UK and Business in the Community.

While just over a third of all adults, and 44% of working adults, have caring responsibilities, the research found that they are not spread equally. Women account for 85% of sole carers for children and 65% of sole carers for older adults. More people from ethnic minority backgrounds (42%) have caring responsibilities than from white backgrounds.

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

Women in the boardroom

Companies with female leaders outperform those dominated by men, data shows

Labour's Anneliese Dodds says women should play a central role in the UK's post-pandemic economic recovery



Labour's shadow secretary for women and equalities, Anneliese Dodds.
Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

[Alexandra Topping](#)

Sun 6 Mar 2022 09.45 EST Last modified on Sun 6 Mar 2022 17.21 EST

Women should play a central role in the UK's post-pandemic economic recovery, with evidence revealing companies with more female leaders outperform those dominated by men, according to House of Commons research.

Accusing the government of ignoring women's needs during the coronavirus pandemic and side-lining them in plans for recovery, the shadow secretary for women and equalities, Anneliese Dodds, said the data showed women held the key to a stronger economy, but they were being held back by a lack of investment and the risk of "childcare deserts" in parts of the country.

"When you've got more engagement from women, when women are in the driving seat to the extent they should be, it makes for far more successful businesses," she said. "Our commitment is to consider women's concerns and other equality issues from the start. The problem with the current government is they're not even tacking women's concerns on at the end, they're not considering them at all."

She warned that the UK was facing a "childcare emergency" with early years settings struggling to recruit staff and the Early Years Alliance reporting that some areas of England have seen a 25% decline in the number of places in the past six years.

"The childcare sector is facing a short-term emergency, seeing childcare deserts in different parts of the country, with providers going bust and not being able to continue operating – that has an awful impact on working women," said Dodds. "Childcare providers are part of our economic infrastructure, we have to find a more sustainable way forward."

To mark International Women's Day, which is on Tuesday, Labour have collated data from the House of Commons library. It cited McKinsey research that shows companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the bottom, while companies with more than 30% female executives were more likely to outperform companies that don't, according to research from academics from the Universities of Glasgow and Leicester.

But only eight women, and no women of colour, are currently employed as CEOs in the FSTE 100, while women hold only 14% of executive directorships and 38% of all directorships, according to the Fawcett Society's Sex and Power report 2022.

The data shows that women-led SMEs contribute about [£85bn to economic output](#), but Beis research shows that only [16% of small business employers](#) and [one in three of entrepreneurs](#) are women. There is further evidence that fewer women get access to financing and business loans, with only 15% of bank financing applications and 22% of new primary business bank accounts openings coming from women.

Dodds said [Labour](#) would create 100,000 government-backed start-ups with a “equal recovery pledge” ensuring female representation, strengthen the pay gap reporting system and give a “new deal” for working women.

“Unless we actually back women in business, then we’re going to be losing out on a huge amount of potential extra economic activity and prosperity, that all of our communities really need,” she said.

New global data from gender equity researcher Equileap, released for IWD, shows that in the UK, women make up only a fifth (20%) of executive team members, 13 companies (6%) have a female CEO, and 27 companies (13%) have a female CFO.

NatWest is the only company with both a female CEO and CFO. The analysis also found that the UK is one of the worst performing countries on flexible work options, with only 29% of companies publishing a flexible hours policy, and just 18% publishing a flexible locations policy.

This article was downloaded by [calibre](#) from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/06/companies-with-female-leaders-outperform-those-dominated-by-men-data-shows>

Frances O'Grady

Workers can fight and beat the wage squeezes, says Frances O'Grady

TUC general secretary hails B&Q strike victory, saying more workers can organise and win pay rises



Frances O'Grady meets workers in Worksop to discuss workers' rights, low pay and the cost of living. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian



[Larry Elliott](#) *Economics editor*

Mon 7 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Mar 2022 14.44 EST

Outside a giant B&Q warehouse in Worksop [Frances O'Grady](#) is braving the icy rain to talk chat to members of the Unite union fresh from an 11-week long dispute.

This is classic red wall territory. Worksop forms part of Bassetlaw, the Nottinghamshire constituency won by the Conservatives at the 2019 election by more than 14,000 votes. The distribution centre is on the site of what was once the Manton colliery and – in a move redolent with symbolism – a Unite picket line was set up where miners had gathered during the year-long pit strike of 1984-5.

There is one crucial difference. Whereas the miners eventually lost their industrial battle, O'Grady, the TUC's general secretary, is greeted by workers celebrating victory. Having balloted to reject a 4% pay offer, Unite members at B&Q's main UK distribution centre stood firm. Eventually, the 450 warehouse workers secured a 6.7% pay deal backdated to July. With recognition and bonus payments on top they will receive the equivalent of a 10.75% rise.

“The workers from B&Q are a great example of what is possible, affordable and just,” says O’Grady. “They should never have had to go on strike to get a fair share but they were determined. They were in it for the long haul.”

O’Grady is visiting Nottinghamshire to see for herself how workers are coping with [Britain’s cost of living crisis](#) and dismisses the idea that excessive pay rises are making the problem worse.

“It is plain to see that it is not pay rises that are driving inflation. According to the Bank of England’s own estimates real [inflation-adjusted] wages are going to fall again this year. Working families are victims of inflation, not the cause of it,” she says.



Frances O’Grady with workers outside B&Q’s Wincanton site. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

“I don’t see wages taking off. I don’t know how anybody can make that case. I don’t find the comparisons with the 1970s convincing. If we don’t get wages rising again we will hold back economic growth. There is plenty of evidence that working families are really struggling, and not just low-paid workers. Middle-income people are feeling it too.”

Comparisons with the 1970s are certainly inappropriate when it comes to the strength of organised labour. Trade union membership is less than half of its 13.2 million peak in 1979, and down to 13% in the private sector, according to the latest government figures.

But although strikes have been made more difficult by measures passed by Conservative administrations, it is still possible for workers to take action if they go through the necessary legal hoops. In recent months, two factors have emboldened workers to stand up to their employers: shortages of labour and making ends meet.

At a Worksop hotel, O'Grady listens to workers from the Riverside bakery in Nottingham explain why they are balloting for industrial action. Current rates of pay for operatives who make quiches for big supermarket chains including Tesco, Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer are £9.02 an hour – 11p above the minimum wage.

From April, the bakery workers have been offered £9.61 an hour – again 11p above the minimum wage – but the employers have sought to claw back some of the increase by pegging premium rates at the weekend at the old £9.02 an hour rate. A spokesperson for The Compleat Food Group said increases of between 6.5% and 9.5% to basic rates represented “a very favourable offer”.



Riverside Bakery workers (from left) Avi Singh, Andy Green and Mahari Abraham. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

Results of the ballot will be known on Tuesday, but the union is expecting a big majority in support of action. Cheryl Pidgeon, Unite's regional officer for the East Midlands, said: "I'm really proud of them. I'm really proud they are fighting back. The company says nobody else is getting this, but nobody else stood and fought.

"The workers at this site have been key workers throughout the pandemic, feeding the nation whilst risking their lives at work. The company refuse to open the books, but we know they made profits last year as the volumes went up and workers were being run ragged re: production requirements."

O'Grady says the bakery dispute is an example of a company looking to fund a wage increase by redistributing the pay bill so that workers are worse off. She says the big-name supermarket chains need to stop turning a blind eye to what is going on.

"I don't know how whoever thought of it sleeps at night. All those who are supplied by the bakery need to take a share of the responsibility," she says.

Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine [sent energy prices soaring even higher](#), the Bank of England was forecasting a record 2% drop in living standards this year. Andrew Bailey, the Bank's governor, was slapped down by 10 Downing Street for saying workers needed to show [pay restraint](#) to help tackle inflation.



Unite regional office Cheryl Pidgeon meeting workers in Worksop.
Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

O'Grady is on the Bank's [court of directors](#) and will not talk directly about Bailey's comments, but says in general terms there is a danger of people in power being out of touch with people's lives. The list of out-of-touch people, in the TUC general secretary's view, includes Bassetlaw's Conservative MP, Brendan Clarke-Smith, who told a Unite member questioning why he had not backed a VAT cut on energy bills to save £15 a month by cancelling their union membership.

"There is nothing left to squeeze", she says. "With strong unions, working people at least have a chance of a fair shot. If you set out to weaken unions then you are deliberately weakening the bargaining power of working people. When I go out on the road I get angry but I also get encouraged. People have to believe we can win but we have to organise."

One of those organising low-paid workers is Vicky Wass, a care worker and GMB union rep for Bassetlaw. “I have got members going to food banks or doing two jobs, and even then, finding they can’t make ends meet.”

Wass’s message is a simple one. For many workers it is a question of eat or heat, which may explain the rumblings of discontent in red wall seats.

This article was amended on 7 March 2022. An earlier version was incorrect when it referred to Bassetlaw’s Conservative MP, Brendan Clarke-Smith, and said he “told the B&Q workers they would be better off accepting the 4% and cancelling their union membership”. In fact Clarke-Smith told a Unite member questioning why he had not backed a VAT cut on energy bills to save £15 a month by cancelling their union membership.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/mar/07/workers-can-fight-and-beat-the-wage-squeezes-says-frances-ogrady>.

Climate crisis

Six key lifestyle changes can help avert the climate crisis, study finds

Research shows that governments and individuals making small changes can have a huge impact in reducing emissions

- [Six promises you can make to help reduce carbon emissions](#)



Jump, a new climate movement persuading people to make six relatively simple lifestyle changes to cut global emissions. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

[Matthew Taylor](#)

Mon 7 Mar 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 8 Mar 2022 03.46 EST

People in well-off countries can help avert climate breakdown by making six relatively straightforward lifestyle changes, according to research from three leading institutions.

The study found that sticking to six specific commitments – from flying no more than once every three years to only buying three new items of clothing a year – could rein in the runaway consumption that is partially driving the climate crisis.

The research carried out by academics at Leeds University and analysed by experts at the global engineering firm Arup and the C40 group of world cities, found that making the six commitments could account for a quarter of the emissions reductions required to keep the global heating down to 1.5C.

The study was published on Monday alongside the launch of a new climate movement to persuade and support relatively well off people [to make “The Jump” and sign up to the six pledges](#).

Tom Bailey, co-founder of the campaign said: “This ends once and for all the debate about whether citizens can have a role in protecting our earth. We don’t have time to wait for one group to act, we need ‘all action from all actors now’.”

Last week the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC) issued its “bleakest warning yet”, saying the climate crisis was accelerating rapidly with only a narrow chance left of avoiding its worst ravages.



Founder Tom Bailey speaks at the Jump event in Guilford. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

Timeline

Half a century of dither and denial – a climate crisis timeline

Show

Fossil fuel companies have been aware of their impact on the planet since at least the 1950s

1959

The physicist Edward Teller [tells](#) the American Petroleum Institute (API) a 10% increase in CO₂ will be sufficient to melt the icecap and submerge New York. “I think that this chemical contamination is more serious than most people tend to believe.”

1965

Lyndon Johnson’s President’s Science Advisory Committee states that “pollutants have altered on a global scale the carbon dioxide content of the air”, with effects that “could be deleterious from the point of view of human

beings”. Summarising the findings, the head of the API [warned](#) the industry: “Time is running out.”

1970

Shell and BP begin funding scientific research in Britain this decade to examine climate impacts from greenhouse gases.

1977

A recently filed lawsuit claims Exxon scientists told management in 1977 there was an “overwhelming” consensus that fossil fuels were responsible for atmospheric carbon dioxide increases.

1981

An internal Exxon memo warns “it is distinctly possible” that CO2 emissions from the company’s 50-year plan “will later produce effects which will indeed be catastrophic (at least for a substantial fraction of the Earth’s population)”.

1988

The Nasa scientist [James Hansen testifies to the US Senate](#) that “the greenhouse effect has been detected, and it is changing our climate now”. In the US presidential campaign, George Bush Sr says: “Those who think we are powerless to do anything about the greenhouse effect forget about the White House effect … As president, I intend to do something about it.”

2 January 1988

A [confidential report](#) prepared for Shell’s environmental conservation committee finds CO2 could raise temperatures by 1C to 2C over the next 40 years with changes that may be “the greatest in recorded history”. It urges rapid action by the energy industry. “By the time the global warming becomes detectable it could be too late to take effective countermeasures to reduce the effects or even stabilise the situation,” it states.

1989

Exxon, Shell, BP and other fossil fuel companies [establish](#) the Global Climate Coalition (GCC), a lobbying group that challenges the science on global warming and delays action to reduce emissions.

1990

Exxon funds two researchers, Dr Fred Seitz and Dr Fred Singer, who dispute the mainstream consensus on climate science. Seitz and Singer were previously paid by the tobacco industry and questioned the hazards of smoking. Singer, who has denied being on the payroll of the tobacco or energy industry, has said his financial relationships do not influence his research.

1991

Shell's public information film Climate of Concern acknowledges there is a "possibility of change faster than at any time since the end of the ice age, change too fast, perhaps, for life to adapt without severe dislocation".

1992

At the Rio Earth summit, countries sign up to the world's first international agreement to stabilise greenhouse gases and prevent dangerous manmade interference with the climate system. This establishes the UN framework convention on climate change. Bush Sr says: "The US fully intends to be the pre-eminent world leader in protecting the global environment."

1997

Two month's before the Kyoto climate conference, Mobil (later merged with Exxon) takes out [an ad in The New York Times](#) titled Reset the Alarm, which says: "Let's face it: the science of climate change is too uncertain to mandate a plan of action that could plunge economies into turmoil."

1998

The US refuses to ratify the Kyoto protocol after intense opposition from oil companies and the GCC.

2009

The US senator Jim Inhofe, whose [main donors](#) are in the oil and gas industry, [leads](#) the “Climategate” misinformation attack on scientists on the opening day of the crucial UN climate conference in Copenhagen, which [ends in disarray](#).

1 January 2013

A study by Richard Heede, published in the journal Climatic Change, reveals [90 companies](#) are responsible for producing two-thirds of the carbon that has entered the atmosphere since the start of the industrial age in the mid-18th century.

1 January 2016

The API removes a claim on its website that the human contribution to climate change is “uncertain”, after an outcry.

1 January 2017

Exxon, Chevron and BP each [donate at least \\$500,000](#) for the inauguration of Donald Trump as president.

2019

Mohammed Barkindo, secretary general of Opec, which represents Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria, Iran and several other oil states, says climate campaigners are the [biggest threat](#) to the industry and claims they are misleading the public with unscientific warnings about global warming.

Jonathan Watts

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Bailey said as the world reaches the edge of ecological [collapse](#), it needed a workable alternative to this ‘universal consumer society’ in the next decade.

“The research is clear that governments and the private sector have the largest role to play but it is also equally clear from our analysis that individuals and communities can make a huge difference.”

The Jump campaign asks people to sign up to take the following six “shifts” for one, three or six months:

Eat a largely plant-based diet, with healthy portions and no waste

Buy no more than three new items of clothing per year

Keep electrical products for at least seven years

Take no more than one short haul flight every three years and one long haul flight every eight years

Get rid of personal motor vehicles if you can – and if not keep hold of your existing vehicle for longer

Make at least one life shift to nudge the system, like moving to a green energy, insulating your home or changing pension supplier

The campaign was officially kicked off on Saturday and Bailey said there was already a growing movement emerging in response to the evidence with Jump groups up and running around the country.

05:33

Indigenous activists on tackling the climate crisis: 'We have done more than any government' – video

“This is not just new information, or a normal behaviour change ‘campaign’, but a fun movement that is working to go way beyond the usual ‘greenie’ suspects,” said Bailey. “A movement that is able to engage all types of people … engaging and being led by communities of colour and the economically excluded.”

Bailey said there has been a widespread belief in climate circles in recent years that individual action was relatively ineffective and the only option

was to get out on the streets and demand system change from governments and corporations.

“Obviously this is still hugely important but what this research shows is that there is a role for a new joyful climate movement which can help lead the way to less stuff and more joy.”

Some of the shifts the campaign calls for are, at least partially, dependent on systemic change – the prohibitive cost of train fares might leave individuals with little choice but to use short haul flights for essential journeys; public transport maybe expensive or nonexistent in areas of the country, leaving people with no choice but to use their car.

Bailey was the lead author of Labour’s plan to decarbonise the UK’s energy sector at the last election. He has worked in the green energy sector in the UK, US and China for the past 15 years, and said individual actions could have a cascade effect, leading to community level action and ultimately contributing to systemic change.

Although not everyone would be able to commit to all the pledges, just “making a start” could have a big impact, he said.



Jump co-organiser Marvina Newton and participants form discussion groups. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

“This isn’t going back to the stone age, it’s just finding a balance. Less consuming in relatively rich western countries can mean more creativity, comedy, connection … Live for joy, not for stuff.”

The research is based on a study by academics at Leeds University, Arup and the C40 group of leading cities which assesses the impact of consumption by people in the world’s leading cities.

Analysis of that data has found that six steps set out above could cut global emissions by between 25% and 27%.

Ben Smith, director of climate change at Arup, who led the analysis said that as scientific evidence mounts, it was clear that all sections of society had to act.

“Our research shows that all of us, from politicians, city and business leaders to individual citizens, have important roles to play. And it is clear there’s lots that we can do as individuals, and that this is one of the easiest and quickest places to start”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mar/07/six-key-lifestyle-changes-can-help-avert-the-climate-crisis-study-finds>

2022.03.07 - Spotlight

- ['Good times? I was out of it' Naveen Andrews on booze, drugs and baffling the world in Lost](#)
- ['I don't have penis envy. I have 12 in a drawer at home'](#)
[The fearless female standups of the 60s](#)
- [Samsung Galaxy S22+ review A good phone playing it safe](#)
- ['I just wanted to play Duck Hunt with my kids' The man on a mission to bring back the light gun](#)



‘I don’t know if there was any logic to Lost at all’ ... Naveen Andrews in Santa Monica. Photograph: Daniel Gonçalves/The Guardian

[The G2 interview](#)

‘Good times? I was out of it’: The Dropout’s Naveen Andrews on booze, drugs and baffling the world in Lost

‘I don’t know if there was any logic to Lost at all’ ... Naveen Andrews in Santa Monica. Photograph: Daniel Gonçalves/The Guardian

He found fame in *The English Patient* before becoming a huge TV star. Now he is tackling the Theranos fraud scandal. But addiction in the 90s nearly cost him everything

by [Steve Rose](#)

Mon 7 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Mar 2022 10.27 EST

If your abiding image of Naveen Andrews is as Sayid from Lost – the soulful Iraqi officer whose sad eyes, powerful biceps and luxuriant hair set many mid-00s hearts a-flutter – you might be in for a shock seeing him in [The Dropout](#). Paunchy, bespectacled, greying, with shockingly normal-length hair, he is less a strapping man of action and more a middle-aged man of business – and not a very good one at that. Andrews portrays Sunny Balwani, the partner and alleged co-conspirator of [Elizabeth Holmes](#), who was once the world's youngest female billionaire and is now [a convicted corporate fraudster](#).

On a video call from his home in Santa Monica, California, Andrews, 53, looks more Sayid than Sunny. His black gym vest exposes reassuringly well-toned biceps; the hair is returning to its trademark resplendence. He gained 9kg (1st 6lb) for The Dropout, he explains, to make his face fuller and his belly paunchier. He also modified his movements to seem slower and older. “Well, I did at least want to *resemble* the character I was playing,” he says, a little sting of sarcasm in his inflection.

Andrews has lived in the US for 22 years, but there is nothing American, or even mid-Atlantic, about him. He speaks with a middle-class London accent that he has seldom had the chance to deploy on screen. In person, he is playfully arch, refreshingly honest and liberally swear-y. You could easily imagine him holding forth in a pub in Soho, as he often did during what he freely admits was a youth misspent on drugs and alcohol.

Bad blood ... watch the trailer for The Dropout.

He has few regrets about leaving Britain. “I miss old buildings – the sense of history, maybe; some aspects of the English countryside; Richmond Park; Hampton Court Palace. But I don’t miss anything else about it,” he says. It wasn’t just disillusionment with his home country. “There’s a certain kind of lifestyle that I didn’t feel I could escape by living there, rightly or wrongly. I don’t know what would have happened if I’d stayed. A lot of the people I knew from that time are not alive any more.”

Andrews still follows British politics, however. “I can’t help it; it’s like looking at an accident from afar,” he says. “I find it ironic that the country

is being undone by its ruling classes.” When we discuss how willing people were to believe the hype around Holmes and Balwani, he turns the conversation to Boris Johnson. “You just have to look at parliament. You see [him] at prime minister’s questions refusing to answer any questions, lying through his teeth every time he opens his fucking mouth, and everyone goes along with it. So why shouldn’t that happen at a corporate level?”

The Dropout is very much a parable for our post-truth, late-capitalist times. For the uninitiated, Holmes dropped out of Stanford in 2004 after founding Theranos, a next-generation health company that claimed its machines could analyse one drop of a patient’s blood and make a diagnosis in seconds, thus bypassing the testing industry and the painful ritual of needles in arms. Holmes was compared to Steve Jobs. Powerful politicians and CEOs joined Theranos’s board. Major corporations invested billions. Except Theranos’s technology never worked – a fact that was successfully concealed for more than a decade.



Riding a wave of British-Asian storytelling ... Andrews with Roshan Seth and Susan Fleetwood in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

Holmes met Ramesh “Sunny” Balwani, a wealthy Pakistani-American software developer, when she was 18 and he was 37. Balwani invested in Theranos and became its chief operating officer. He was also secretly Holmes’ romantic partner for 12 years, it later emerged. According to *The Dropout*, Balwani moulded Holmes (played by Amanda Seyfried) into CEO material (black sweaters, green juice drinks) and established the corporation’s bullying, deceitful culture. These craven characters would not be out of place in a Shakespeare saga, Andrews suggests, although, as love stories go, it is probably more Macbeth than Romeo and Juliet. “He was besotted with her,” says Andrews of Balwani. “And probably still is, in some way. There was a romantic aspect to it which colours everything. How far are you prepared to go? When you love somebody that deeply, what will you do?”

I miss old buildings, but I don’t miss anything else about Britain

Balwani is still awaiting trial; Holmes’s trial was in court as *The Dropout* was shooting. “It was like a play within a play,” says Andrews. “We would be on set doing the scene and then we’d have breaks and be looking to see what had happened in the trial.” The scripts were being revised as new information emerged, including some excruciating text messages. (Balwani: “Missing u in every breath and in every cell.” Holmes: “Ditto.”) “It worked to our advantage in a very strange way, because, very early on, Amanda and I made a decision about what kind of relationship it was; the level of intimacy. When you do these kinds of things, it’s a gamble; you don’t know if it’s on the money or not. And then all these texts came into the public domain which made us feel that we may be close, thank goodness.”

Beneath the physical transformation, Balwani’s identity as a south Asian man in the US was all too familiar to Andrews. “The idea of displacement, or the idea of a fundamental, deep insecurity that perhaps he’s not even aware of – I felt that was behind nearly everything,” he says. “I was able to relate to this emotionally: if you grew up in a place where you’re not welcome, and you deal with that on a day-to-day basis, it does something to you.”



Breakthrough role ... with Juliette Binoche in *The English Patient*.
Photograph: Miramax/Allstar

Andrews' parents emigrated from Kerala to Wandsworth in south London in the mid-60s. Racism was an everyday childhood experience. "One of my earliest memories is my mum pushing me in a pushchair along our road and the nextdoor neighbour's girl – later on, she fancied me – who was maybe 10 or 11, running alongside going: 'Golliwog! Wog!'" he says. "My mum says I was waving back at her, because I didn't know what she was saying. And then, obviously, later on, it's more violent." He goes no further. "I don't mean to sound like a victim, because I know people who've *really* been through it, you know? I'm still here."

His parents scraped together enough money to send him to private school, which set him on a path towards drama, but also a path away from his conservative-minded family and towards alcohol and, later, heroin. He left home at 16 and moved in with his married maths teacher, who was 15 years his senior. They began an affair and later had a son, by which time Andrews was at the Guildhall School of Music and [Drama](#). Such a relationship would have been illegal under "abuse of position of trust" legislation passed in the 00s, but it was not then against the law.

Andrews' early career coincided with a new wave of British-Asian storytelling in the early 90s. He had parts in *London Kills Me*, written and directed by Hanif Kureishi, and in the comedy *Wild West*, about a British-Pakistani country and western band. Then, at 23, he was the lead in the BBC's [The Buddha of Suburbia](#), adapted from Kureishi's semi-autobiographical novel (the author also grew up in south London, a decade earlier than Andrews) and boosted by a David Bowie soundtrack.

That led to Andrews' breakthrough role in Anthony Minghella's [The English Patient](#). He played Kip, a bomb-disposal expert whom Juliette Binoche catches bathing. His acting career was on the up, as was his reputation as a sex symbol. Those must have been good times, I suggest. "Oh, I was too out of it to even register, to be honest," he replies. "Because when you're in that kind of condition, I can say now, you're not really aware of what's happening at all. You're not present. It's very odd."



'I thought: what would really shock middle America?' With Maggie Grace, whose character had a relationship with Andrews' in *Lost*. Photograph: Alamy

He was just about keeping it together enough to function, replacing heroin with alcohol while he was on a job. Then, in 1997, he collapsed on set and required medical treatment. He checked into rehab and has been clean ever

since. “I don’t want to dwell on it, but it’s a daily struggle,” he says. “But one that I want to keep struggling along.”

Andrews moved to the US after shooting the 1999 road-trip romance *Drowning on Dry Land*, in which he played an Indian taxi driver driving Barbara Hershey from Manhattan to the Arizona desert. The on-screen love affair continued into real life – Andrews and Hershey were together for 10 years – although during a brief separation he had a son with a different woman in 2005. It is not difficult to imagine what tempted Andrews away from London. “I was like: ‘Where the fuck have I been all my life?’” he says. “Because I was [in California] and, you know, the weather! And at least on the surface, the apparent openness of America compared with England was quite attractive. And also I was trying to stop drinking and I was very lucky to meet someone here that I admired a great deal and helped me get sober.”

Then, in 2004, [came *Lost*](#). It is easy to forget just what a big deal the show was in the early 00s. The combination of post-9/11 disaster scenario, the maddeningly mystifying plot and the hot young cast made it a must-see show – and the perfect material for the relatively new forum of online discussion.

If you grew up in a place where you’re not welcome, it does something to you

Andrews played one of the show’s most intriguing and beloved characters, although he had no more idea of what was going on than most viewers, he confesses: “We really knew bugger-all. I mean, I don’t know if it would have *helped*. It was a strange feeling not knowing what direction this thing was going in, and yet you were committed to it.” Did he ever ask the showrunners what was going on? “There was no point in ever being that direct, ’cause you weren’t going to get a straight answer, were you?”

If he had to, could he explain Sayid’s arc through six seasons? “No. I don’t know if there was any kind of logic to it at all,” he says. “I could be completely wrong. There are people who love it and see something in it, and I’m glad if they can. But I can’t.”

Andrews was attracted to the idea of portraying a broadly sympathetic Iraqi character at the height of the war on terror. Sayid stands in stark contrast to Islamophobic stereotypes being trotted out in so many American shows and movies of the time. His decision to take the role was also influenced by his experiences as a brown-skinned man travelling regularly through US airports. Countless times he was taken to a side room and searched by customs officials. “It’s even happened where I’ve been recognised by the people who’ve taken me out of the line,” he says with a laugh. “They’re going: ‘We know who you are. We’re really sorry, but we have to do this.’”



‘I did at least want to resemble the character I was playing’ ... with Amanda Seyfried in *The Dropout*. He cut his hair and put on 9kg for the role. Photograph: Beth Dubber/Hulu

Sayid was even allowed some romantic agency. His relationship with Shannon, played by Maggie Grace, was Andrews’ idea. In an interview at the time, he said: “I thought: what would really shock middle America? What if Sayid was to have a relationship with a woman that looked like Miss America?”

On the other hand, Sayid was also *Lost*’s resident torturer, thanks to his Special Republican Guard training. There are numerous, protracted episodes in which he extracts information from his fellow castaways using

brutal methods, while reciting lines such as: “Perhaps losing an eye will loosen your tongue.” Meanwhile, in the real world, it was the US military that was torturing Iraqis, as the Abu Ghraib prison scandal revealed. Wasn’t there something a bit hypocritical about that?

“You’re absolutely right,” he says. “But you also can’t deny that in Syria, Iraq, Egypt – India, too – torture is something that’s applied on a daily basis, even in the smallest police stations, for absolutely nothing. It’s part of our culture.” He sees me grimacing to hear him say this. “I hate to say that, but it’s true, man! And you can’t deny it.” To gloss over these aspects of his and other cultures is no better than one-sided negative stereotyping, he argues. Had Sayid simply been a torturer, he would never have accepted the role, but that wasn’t the case: “He was presented as somebody with a soul.”

To be forced to care about my child, being responsible, learning to cook, has definitely given me self-esteem

You could say Andrews provided him with that soul, as he has done with countless other characters, even Balwani. Andrews is good at his job, yet seems to have a healthy perspective on it. He is not desperately seeking the next role. When promotion for The Dropout is over, he says, “I’ll just go back to my regular job, which is being a dad”. He fought for and won sole custody of his younger son when the boy was three. He is now 16, the age at which Andrews started to go off the rails. “He’s not into that at all. He lives next to the beach. He surfs, he fishes. It’s the lifestyle,” he says.

“Life is very weird. It’s so unpredictable and it throws up these things that end up working for you in a way you never thought possible. I always thought I only gave a shit about myself, and then to be forced to care about this child, being responsible, learning to cook … It has definitely given me self-esteem that I never had.”

I mention a clip I found online of a 23-year-old Andrews doing an interview for The Buddha of Suburbia, sandwiched on a park bench between Kureishi and Bowie. He remembers this one, he says. “The interviewer asked [Bowie]: ‘So, how did you feel about doing this?’ And, of course, he’s Bowie. He’s incredibly charming, erudite and he answered the question

beautifully. And then it went to Hanif and he said his bit. And Bowie is saying: ‘I’d love to work with these two again.’ And I was thinking: ‘Yeah, right. You’re going to get into the limo and I’m getting the bus home.’

“And then it came to me and they said: ‘So, how do *you* feel?’ And I kind of looked up at the sky and said: ‘It’s just a job.’ Bowie stopped the interview: ‘Cut! Cut! Cut!’ He grabbed me and took me off and told me: ‘You can’t talk to the press like that.’ So, we came and sat back down and I gave the right answer. But, looking back, I have to say – and if he was here now I’d say it to him – you know what? I was right. It is a job.”

The first three episodes of The Dropout are on Disney+ now. The remaining four will be released weekly on Thursday

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/mar/07/naveen-andrews-the-dropout-booze-drugs-and-lost>

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[Comedy](#)

‘I don’t have penis envy. I have 12 in a drawer at home’ – the fearless female standups of the 60s



‘You can’t go up there and be a woman. You’ve got to be a “thing”’... The Marvelous Mrs Maisel. Photograph: Nicole Rivelli/Amazon Prime Video

They were pigeonholed, derided – and even shot at. With *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel* back on TV screens, we find out what life was really like for women who dared to be funny in the postwar years



[Emine Saner](#)
[@eminesaner](#)

Mon 7 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Wed 9 Mar 2022 08.06 EST

Back in the days when they were still called *comediennes*, an older comedienne turns to a younger one and says: “What is your persona?” The younger woman is confused. Bob Hope and Lenny Bruce don’t have personas, she says. They are just allowed to be funny as themselves, so why isn’t she? “They have dicks,” snaps back Sophie Lennon, one of the most memorable characters in *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel*.

In the hit Amazon show – set in 50s and 60s New York – Midge Maisel discovers her talent as a standup. She’s an accidental comic, getting up on stage at a Greenwich Village club one night, drunk and angry and confessional, after her husband leaves her for his secretary. At the time, there is really only one mainstream female standup: Lennon, whose persona is that of a Queens housewife, complete with feather duster, fat suit and grating catchphrase. Maisel, with her shocking, electrifying set – it ends

with her getting arrested – represents a new style of comedy, particularly for women.



Not allowed to be beautiful ... Phyllis Diller, the first female comic superstar, wore a sack dress to hide her 'great figure'. Photograph: AF archive/Alamy

Lennon and Maisel have been likened to real-life comics Phyllis Diller and Joan Rivers (the show's creator, Amy Sherman-Palladino, has said Maisel is more of an amalgam of lots of people, including her father who was a standup). When Jane Lynch, who plays Lennon, read the script, she thought of Diller, whose act was a caricature of a 50s housewife. There had been others, such as Belle Barth, Rusty Warren and Moms Mabley. In 1939 Mabley, who had come from the black vaudeville circuit, became the first female comic to perform at the Harlem Apollo (the third season of Maisel features Mabley, played by Wanda Sykes, performing there). Mabley had a grandmotherly housewife persona but was more edgy than Diller, her act confronting gender and racial prejudice. It was Diller, though, who became the first female comic superstar.

"In order to break through," says Lynch, "you had to have material that spoke to men, because the club owners, the TV producers and the late-night hosts were men. You would cater your material to what they would think is

funny – and something that men love is when it refers to them. You go, ‘I can’t get a boyfriend cos I’m ugly’ and right there you’re not threatening. You’re almost one of the guys, because the guys don’t want to go to bed with you.” Lynch’s character explains this problem to Maisel, referring to her beauty. “Men don’t want to laugh at you,” she says. “They want to fuck you. You can’t go up there and be a woman. You’ve got to be a ‘thing’.”

Modern viewers can immediately tune into Maisel’s material about sex and the challenges of motherhood, as well as her swear-y rants, all delivered in up-to-date dialogue. It’s not meant as a historical record, points out Yael Kohen, author of *We Killed: The Rise of Women in American Comedy*. “I think there is an aspect of the comedy and her point of view that is very modern,” she says, “and it’s being imposed on someone in that time period.” Whereas at the time, the comics who became successful, such as Diller and Rivers, were not “necessarily defying female stereotypes. Joan Rivers was joking about getting a husband.”

In reality, it would be some years after Maisel’s debut that more subversive, intellectual comics such as Lily Tomlin would take off. There had been other women whose acts didn’t rely on a comic lack of self-esteem, such as Elaine May, but she was in improv, not standup. Diller told Kohen she wore a sack dress partly because looking funny was part of the act, but also “because I had such a great figure”. Kohen says: “There’s long been a tension between women’s looks and their sense of humour – this idea that a funny woman couldn’t be beautiful.”



‘She should be at home making an omelette’ ... Joan Rivers. Photograph: ABC Photo Archives/Disney General Entertainment Content/Getty Images

Rivers, with her black cocktail dress and pearls, challenged this to some extent. In her book, Kohen quotes a 1963 review of Rivers’ early act: “Female comics are usually horrors who de-sex themselves for a laugh. But Miss R remains visibly – and unalterably – a girl.” But, points out Kohen, Rivers was not a conventional beauty in the way Maisel is. “She cared about how she looked and she used that in her comedy, but it doesn’t mean the tension [between being beautiful and funny] wasn’t there.”

We said: ‘We’re lesbians.’ The TV executive said: ‘That’s OK. Just don’t tell anybody’

It is also, adds Kohen, “not irrelevant” that Mrs Maisel is Jewish. “Many of the most famous women in comedy from the 1960s on were Jewish. It’s important to note that these women weren’t considered emblems of Wasp femininity. They were considered part of an ethnic minority and not conventionally beautiful. Jewish women were often considered an exception to the rule that women aren’t funny – Christopher Hitchens, for example, singled them out in his infamous essay Why Women Aren’t Funny. And it wasn’t always a compliment.”

In the 60s, Treva Silverman – who would go on to write for *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* but was rejected for Johnny Carson because she was a woman – was writing sketches for *Upstairs at the Downstairs*, the New York nightclub where many comics and musicians started their careers. “With topical revues,” she says, “nobody cared if it was a man or a woman. It was more of a cabaret atmosphere. There was not the kind of sexism there was with standup. My doing sketches was not that unusual for a woman.”

Silverman and Rivers became friends. “Joan was so ambitious from the very beginning,” says Silverman. “She was in touch with absolutely every agent and they were not used to booking a female comedian. People would say ‘Well ...’ and her agent would say, ‘Try her for one night’ because they knew that would mean booking her for a week.” What were Rivers’ early audiences like? “They would think, ‘What is she doing up there? She should be home stirring the omelette or whatever.’ But she was so likable. Men liked her immediately, because she was very pretty, even though she kept complaining she wasn’t.”



Edgier than Phyllis Diller ... Moms Mabley in 1970. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

Her act, says Silverman, “was absolutely from a female perspective. She talked about what it was like to be a woman, an unmarried woman when

everybody else was doing the ‘right thing’. She was talking about feeling inferior, somewhat unattractive, being the odd person in not only a male-dominated world, but also not up to par with the rest of the women. But everything she complained that she didn’t have, of course she had.” In putting herself down, says Silverman, “she kind of knew that she would be more likable”.

Robin Tyler was part of a double act in the 60s with her partner Patty Harrison. “Humour is the most aggressive medium there is,” she says. “The only way women were allowed to be aggressive is when they turned it on themselves. So you have Phyllis Diller and Joan Rivers with, ‘I’m not pretty enough.’” Tyler says she understands it, “because that’s what they had to do to make a living”. Diller told Kohen: “Women’s libbers hated what I was doing. They didn’t like my self-deprecation.”

Harrison and Tyler had started joking about things like bra sizes, but then second-wave feminism took off. They read Betty Friedan’s 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* and it felt like a wake-up call. “We said, ‘Why are we making jokes on ourselves?’” Women, continues Tyler, were questioning “what we thought was funny. Patty and I turned it around and did ‘Take my husband’ and ‘I don’t have penis envy – I have 12 at home in a drawer.’” This was towards the end of the 60s and reviews of their work called them threatening to men. “All we did was take the same material [male comics were doing about women] and turn it on men.”

Tyler enjoys *The Marvelous Mrs Maisel*, which has just started its fourth series, not least because it echoes some of her own career, in particular when Maisel and her family go on holiday to the Catskill Mountains, where popular resorts attracted affluent Jewish families. “I used to perform as a singer in ‘the Borscht Belt’. The comics there, I loved them, all the Jewish comics, but it was still sexist.”



'Humour is the most aggressive medium there is' ... Robin Tyler and Patty Harrison. Photograph: Walt Disney Television Photo Archives/ABC

Like Maisel, Harrison and Tyler performed for US troops but, unsurprisingly, their feminist act did not go down as well as Maisel's funny – but extremely feminine – material. On a comedy tour in New Zealand, Tyler says the man who booked them for one gig was so angry that they were encouraging the women in their audience to organise liberation movements, he shot at them. "We aggravated a lot of people because not only were we funny on stage, we were activists off stage. And they had never seen women use comedy as a weapon."

They mostly played colleges, rather than clubs. "Why would we want to play clubs where we played to sexist audiences? We were never going to end up in Vegas." In the 70s, they made an attempt to go more mainstream when they were approached to make TV, but they didn't fit. Tyler remembers getting a call from Fred Silverman, the influential TV executive. "We said, 'We're lesbians.' He said, 'That's OK. Just don't tell anybody.' They were trying to make us do stupid sketches of stupid women and we hated it. They made four pilots with us, and it didn't work out. Not only were we women-aggressive, we were lesbians-aggressive, so that was really too much."

TV, she says, was like an extension of the comedy circuit. “It wasn’t just sexist. They had to neutralise us.”

This article was amended on 7 March 2022. An earlier version referred to Treva Silverman writing for “the Mandy Moore Show”, rather than The Mary Tyler Moore Show.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/mar/07/penis-envy-fearless-female-standups-60s-marvelous-mrs-maisel>

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

Samsung

Samsung Galaxy S22+ review: a good phone playing it safe

Premium Android has good screen and camera, longer updates and recycled materials – but lacks wow factor



The Galaxy S22+ is a good, solid-feeling standard premium Android with a big screen and long support life. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

[Samuel Gibbs](#) Consumer technology editor

Mon 7 Mar 2022 02.00 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Mar 2022 02.01 EST

The Galaxy S22+ is Samsung's big-screen premium phone for 2022, offering top specs and good quality hardware, but little in the way of novel or exciting features. It's a safe, solid device.

With an RRP of £949 (\$999/A\$1,549) that doesn't mean low cost, but it is £200 cheaper than the all-singing, all-dancing £1,149 S22 Ultra superphone

with its [Galaxy Note-like design](#). Shop around, though, and you should soon be able to find it for less.



The back of the phone is smooth, frosted glass with colour-matched aluminium sides and camera housing, here shown in ‘pink gold’ colour.
Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The S22+ is similar to [last year’s S21+](#) with a flat glass front and back and solid-feeling aluminium sides. It looks and feels refined rather than flashy, and while it has a big 6.6in screen it is fairly easy to hold with sharper edges to grip with your fingers and a relatively light 195g weight.

The 120Hz AMOLED display looks fantastic with vibrant colours, good viewing angles and an extremely high peak brightness of 1,750nits ([a standard measure of screen brightness](#)), which is enabled when in direct sunlight making it easier to see outdoors than its rivals.

Specifications

- **Main screen:** 6.6in FHD+ Dynamic Amoled 2X (393ppi) 120Hz

- **Processor:** Samsung Exynos 2200 (EU) or Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Gen 1 (US)
- **RAM:** 8GB of RAM
- **Storage:** 128 or 256GB
- **Operating system:** One UI 4.1 based on [Android](#) 12
- **Camera:** Triple rear camera: 50MP wide, 12MP ultra-wide, 10MP 3x telephoto; 10MP front-facing
- **Connectivity:** 5G, dual nano sim, USB-C, wifi 6E, NFC, Bluetooth 5.2, UWB and GNSS
- **Water resistance:** IP68 (1.5m for 30 mins)
- **Dimensions:** 157.4 x 75.8 x 7.6mm
- **Weight:** 195g

Top chips and solid battery life



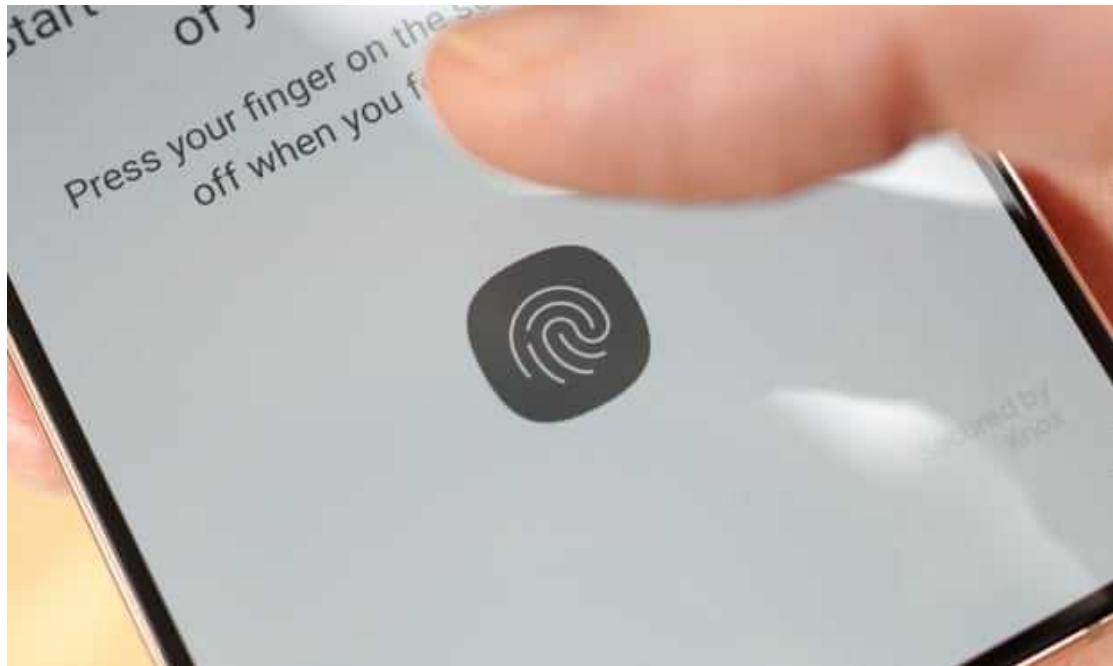
The phone fully charges in 60 minutes, hitting 50% in 21 minutes using a 45W USB-C PPS charger (power adaptor not included). Fast (15W) wireless charging and reverse wireless charging are available. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

In the US the S22+ has the standard top Android chip for 2022 from Qualcomm, the [Snapdragon 8 Gen 1](#). But in the EU it has a [Samsung Exynos 2200](#) with the first mobile graphics processor designed by AMD, the company behind the chips used in the [Xbox Series X](#) and [PS5](#) games consoles.

Testing the EU version, general performance was excellent, although not perceptibly faster than the already snappy models of last year. Gaming performance of the AMD graphics was more variable than Qualcomm-using competitors, likely requiring optimisation for games.

The battery lasts for about 35 hours between charges, on 5G for two hours and wifi for the rest, using the screen for about five hours in various chat apps, the camera, Spotify, Chrome and a light spot of gaming. That's enough for a good day of use, but slightly [shorter than last year's model](#) and miles behind the market-leading 48-hour-plus [Apple iPhone 13 Pro Max](#).

Sustainability



The under-display fingerprint sensor is fast and responsive, making unlocking the device or authenticating payments easy. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

Samsung does not provide an expected lifespan for the battery. Those in similar devices typically maintain at least 80% of their original capacity for at least 500 full charge cycles.

The phone is [generally repairable](#). Screen repairs cost £179, while the battery is replaceable by authorised service centres. But the phone only scores a three out of 10 on [iFixit's repairability ranking](#).

Several [internal components](#) are made from [20% recycled nylon or plastic](#). Samsung offers [trade-in](#) and [recycling schemes](#) for old devices. The company publishes [annual sustainability reports](#) but not impact assessments for individual products.

OneUI 4.1

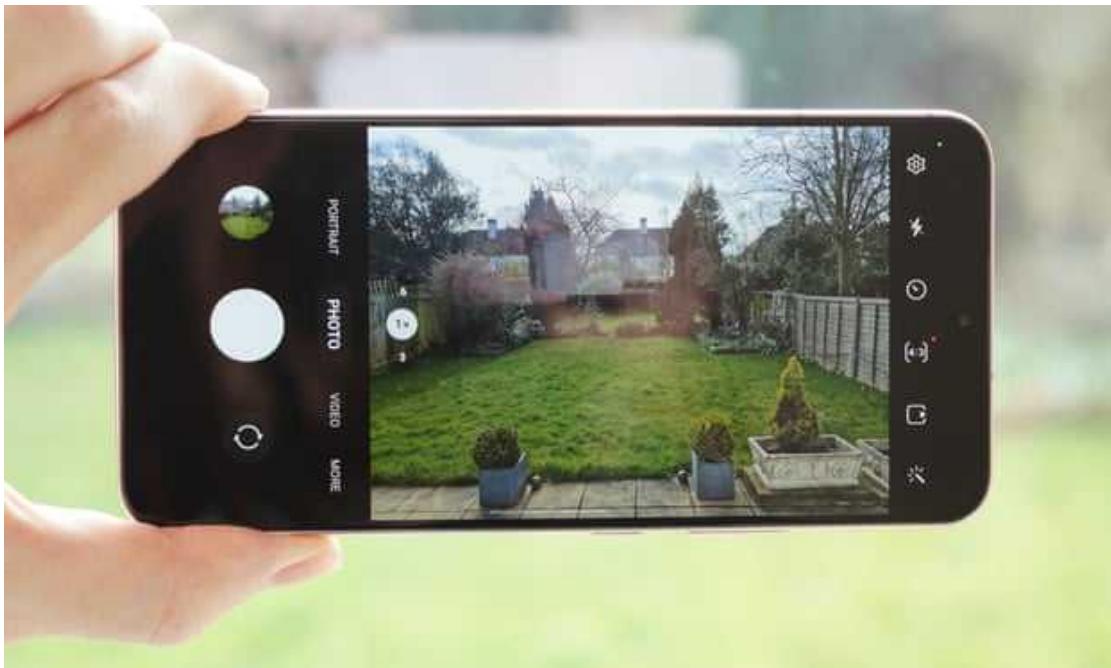


One of the useful additions to standard Android is a small shelf with app icons that can be pulled out from the side to open two programs side by side in a split-screen view. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The S22+ ships with OneUI 4.1, which is based on the [latest version of Android 12](#) and receives prompt updates unlike some competitors. It is a refined version of Android that offers plenty of customisation options and useful tools.

The S22+ will receive at least [five years of software updates](#) from release, including four major Android version updates and [monthly security patches](#), making it one of the longest-lasting Android devices available and just behind Apple's six-year-plus support for its iPhones.

Camera



The camera app offers point-and-shoot simplicity but also has a full ‘pro’ mode for manual control and the ability to save RAW files as well as JPEGs. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The S22+ has a triple camera system on the back: a 50MP main, 12MP ultra-wide and a 10MP 3x telephoto camera.

The main camera is excellent, capturing really good images in a variety of lighting conditions. Its low-light performance is significantly improved over previous models, dramatically brightening scenes. It does, however, sometimes lose contrast in the process with a tendency to make people look like you’ve shone a flash in their face.

The telephoto camera has a 3x optical zoom and produces sharper images in good light than last year’s model, but it still struggles in low light settings producing bright but heavily processed images.

The ultra-wide camera produces slightly crisper images in good light and handles lower light levels better than before. The 10MP selfie camera did an excellent job of balancing detail and grain in fairly challenging light, producing pleasing, detailed shots the majority of the time.

Samsung's video capture remains ahead of most of the Android pack shooting up to 8K at 24 frames a second and with plenty of features, including a new auto-framing system that tries to keep up to 10 people in focus and in shot at any one time.

Overall the S22+'s camera is very good, but falls slightly short of the very best on the market.



The camera housing is moulded into the side of the phone for a more streamlined look while protecting the three lenses. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

Price

The Samsung Galaxy S22+ costs from [£949 \(\\$999/A\\$1,549\)](#) with 128GB of storage.

For comparison, the Galaxy S22 costs [£769](#), the S22 Ultra costs [£1,149](#), the [Z Flip 3](#) costs [£949](#), the [Google Pixel 6 Pro](#) costs [£849](#) and the [Apple iPhone 13 Pro Max](#) costs [£1,049](#).

Verdict

Everything about the Galaxy S22+ feels premium but it lacks a certain wow factor, particularly next to [Samsung's other £949 folding flip phone](#).

The screen is great, the camera is good, performance is snappy and the battery life is reasonable. These are all big upgrades on old models, but no more than expected in a top phone in 2022.

The S22+ feels nicer and is easier to hold than many rivals. In theory it is more durable, made from stronger aluminium and the hardest smartphone glass available.

It will receive at least five years of software updates from release, making it the longest-lasting Android phone available and only slightly behind Apple's iPhone. It is the first Samsung phone to be partially made from recycled materials, too.

Buy it at lower than RRP, around the £750-£800 that previous models have been readily been available, and it offers a lot of phone for the money. Keep it for the five years you can safely use it thanks to security updates and it offers better value than many cheaper rivals.

Pros: 120Hz screen, good camera, One UI 4.1/Android 12, good performance, decent battery life, fast fingerprint scanner, five years of software support, contains recycled materials, premium feel.

Cons: big, expensive, no headphone socket, battery life and camera bettered by others, no flashy features.



The phone is attractive, extremely well made with excellent build quality and nice little design touches. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

Other reviews

- [Galaxy Z Flip 3 review: Samsung's cheaper, better hi-tech flip phone](#)
 - [Galaxy Z Fold 3 review: Samsung's cutting-edge water resistant phone-tablet hybrid](#)
 - [Pixel 6 review: the cut-price Google flagship phone](#)
 - [Pixel 6 Pro review: the very best Google phone](#)
 - [iPhone 13 Pro review: Apple's very best](#)
-

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

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[Games](#)

‘I just wanted to play Duck Hunt with my kids’: the man on a mission to bring back the light gun



‘I was so sure it was going to work’ ... the Sinden Lightgun in action.
Photograph: Courtesy of Andrew Sinden

No one believed he could make a light gun that worked on modern TVs. But Andrew Sinden persevered with his dream to revive a dying game genre

Lewis Packwood

Mon 7 Mar 2022 04.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 7 Mar 2022 04.03 EST

Almost every console and computer, from the Sega Dreamcast to the humble Amstrad CPC, once had its very own light gun. Whether you were shooting ducks with the NES Zapper or downing baddies in Time Crisis on the PlayStation, they were ubiquitous – yet now they are all but extinct. Andrew Sinden aims to change that: he's on a crusade to make light-gun games mainstream again. "I'd consider the project has failed if I don't manage to do that," he says.

It all began around four years ago, when Sinden's parents were cleaning out their loft. They came across his old NES, and asked him whether he still wanted it. "Of course, the answer was yes," recalls Sinden. "And what I really wanted to do was play Duck Hunt with my kids." But after hooking up the console to his television, he was dismayed to find that nothing happened when he pulled the Zapper's trigger. "I completely forgot that light guns didn't work on modern TVs," he admits. "It was a real disappointment, because I thought Duck Hunt on a 50-inch TV would be amazing. I used to play it on a 14-inch TV!"



Long-held dream ... Andrew Sinden aged eight playing Duck Hunt with the NES Zapper. Photograph: Courtesy of Andrew Sinden

The way light guns such as the Zapper work is intimately tied how to old-fashioned cathode-ray tube (CRT) TVs “paint” images on to the screen. A beam sweeps across from left to right and top to bottom, only ever projecting one pixel at a time. But the beam sweeps across so quickly, multiple times per second, that we perceive it as a continuous image.

My dad was like, ‘Look, if you’re going to do it, you might as well go big’

Typically, a light-gun game will make the screen flash white when you pull the trigger. The console will then check the light sensor in the gun to read when it goes from perceiving black to sensing white as the beam reaches the part of the screen the gun is pointing at. The console can then work out how long it took from the start of the screen flash to the moment when the gun sensed white, and that timing reveals where the gun was pointing.

But none of this works with modern TVs, which use thousands of tiny, constantly lit LEDs. Since the demise of CRTs, the few light-gun games that have made it into the home have mostly done so via the Nintendo Wii. That

console used an infrared sensor to detect where the Wii Remote was pointing, but this isn't as accurate or fast as the CRT light guns of old. "It's a different game mechanism," says Sinden. "It's a bit like using a mouse."

After his Duck Hunt disappointment, Sinden was suddenly struck by a different idea for how to make a light gun work with modern TVs – by adding a white border to the screen. He reasoned that if a camera in a light gun could pick up the border, it could use it to calculate exactly where the gun was pointing. And a bit of complex maths could even compensate for when the gun was aimed at an oblique angle to the screen. "Before I even made it, I was so sure it was going to work," says Sinden.

He used an old light gun to mock up a prototype, and his background as a software developer meant he was confident in creating the code to make it function. But the hardware was more of a challenge – he had to teach himself some rudimentary electrical engineering via the internet to work out how to put it all together. "The information's there," he says, "it just takes a while to actually understand it."



'I thought Duck Hunt on a 50-inch TV would be amazing' ... a screenshot from the NES Duck Hunt game. Photograph: ArcadeImages/Alamy

His thoughts turned to how it could be made into an actual product. He launched a Kickstarter campaign in 2018: “And it was a big, big failure really,” he remembers. “People didn’t believe it would work.” He estimated he would need £250,000 to put the gun into production, but only ended up raising around £2,000.

At this point, Sinden thought about giving up. But his dad eventually talked him into pursuing his dream. “He was like, ‘Look, if you’re going to do it, you might as well go big’,” recalls Sinden, who decided to go back to Kickstarter in 2019. “This time I only asked for £25,000, because I’d already decided to go ahead anyway,” he says. “If the sales were low, then I was going to fund everything myself.”

Second time around, he paid a 3D designer to come up with a more professional-looking prototype ahead of the Kickstarter campaign. On YouTube, he demonstrated the [Sinden Lightgun](#) to a waiting list of prospective buyers. When the Kickstarter launched, he smashed through his £25,000 target within a couple of days, eventually raising more than £238,000.

But actually making the light gun wasn’t as easy as he thought. “I didn’t necessarily appreciate some of the intricacies of manufacturing,” Sinden admits. “Everything just took ages. And this was pre-pandemic as well.” The shell design had to be tweaked multiple times to make it suitable for injection moulding, and the electronics board needed numerous modifications, too.

Sinden eventually began shipping light guns to backers in September 2020, and started [taking orders on Indiegogo](#) for people who had missed out on the original Kickstarter campaign. By the end of 2021 he had shipped around 10,000 Sinden Lightguns. He estimates he will finally clear the order backlog by February, at which point he’ll be able to ship direct from stock.



A Sinden Lightgun. The basic version costs £80, while a model with recoil costs £135. Photograph: Courtesy of Andrew Sinden

The guns don't come cheap. A basic model costs £80, while a version with recoil will set you back £135. Sinden envisaged being able to get the price down as production increased, but the turmoil of the past couple of years has scuppered that plan. "All that's happened is that any savings I've managed to make have been cancelled out by the pandemic," he says, noting that component costs have continued to creep up.

The current version of the Sinden Lightgun is compatible with PC and Raspberry Pi, but setting it up can be a little daunting. A [wiki](#) guides you through the process, and there's a large [Discord community](#) to provide help if you get stuck. More problematic is the relative lack of light-gun games available on PC; most users turn to emulating older console games.

It's possible to connect a Sinden Lightgun to older consoles, but it's a laborious process that necessitates [building your own adapter](#). However, Sinden is already working on a plug-and-play version of the light gun for the original PlayStation, with adapters for other consoles to follow.

Sinden's ultimate aim is to make light-gun games mainstream again – and that means getting the big console manufacturers and publishers on board.

“I’m working on it, that’s kind of all I can say,” he says. He still has a long way to go before his dream is realised. “When I get in touch with you to play Time Crisis 6 on the new Xbox or PlayStation,” he says, “that’s when I’ll have nailed it.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/games/2022/mar/07/duck-hunt-light-gun>

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

2022.03.07 - Coronavirus

- [US Experts urge cities and states to prep for future outbreaks as Omicron slows](#)
- [Why have some people never caught Covid? The answers could help protect us all](#)

US news

Experts urge US cities and states to prep for future outbreaks as Omicron slows

As cases and hospitalizations decline, public health experts worry it might lull people into thinking the pandemic is over



People wait at a pop-up Covid testing site in New York City. Photograph: Brendan McDermid/Reuters

[Melody Schreiber](#)

Mon 7 Mar 2022 02.00 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Mar 2022 02.01 EST

Omicron is receding in the US and states and cities are lifting remaining restrictions. Public health experts, however, are urging leaders to use the lull to prepare for future outbreaks.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently announced new guidelines for judging community risk, shifting focus from cases to hospitalizations.

More than 90% of the US is now at low risk of overwhelming health systems, which means requirements for masks and other precautions can be loosened, the CDC [said](#).

Most states and cities had [already](#) dropped mask mandates and vaccination requirements or announced plans to end them. Others did so after the change in guidance.

With only 65% of the population fully vaccinated, the US was buffeted by Omicron. It is now seeing an average of 54,000 cases and 1,300 deaths each day.

But cases and hospitalizations are declining very rapidly, which is “reassuring”, said Abraar Karan, an infectious disease physician at Stanford University.

Large swaths of the population have some form of protection from Covid, through vaccination or prior infection or both.

“Even if you pull back on mitigation measures, you may not have a big rise in cases,” Karan said.

But he was also worried that might lull the public and leaders into thinking the pandemic is over.

Officials should use this time to prepare for the next surge and the next variant, which could be more severe or more transmissible, Karan said.

“Once we have another variant, whenever that may be, the amount of spread from that variant will depend on what kind of preparedness we do now. What are we doing to make schools, workplaces and public spaces more safe?”

The US should continue investing in masks, tests, ventilation, vaccination campaigns, wastewater monitoring and other measures to prevent and respond to the next surge, experts said. And when the next wave begins rising, communities should pay careful attention to changing levels of risk.

“We need to expect the unexpected with Covid-19,” said Jason Salemi, an associate professor of epidemiology at the University of South Florida College of Public Health.

The US had limited national precautions throughout the pandemic, with mask mandates for federal buildings and transportation corridors and some restrictions on international travel. Pandemic response has largely fallen instead to states, cities and counties, producing a patchwork set of rules.

Cities like New York, Chicago and Washington are lifting indoor mask mandates and proof of vaccination requirements. Los Angeles, the most populous county in the US, lifted its indoor mask mandate at the end of February, for those who can show proof of vaccination or a negative test. Atlanta and New Orleans also lifted indoor mask mandates.

California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon and Rhode Island recently lifted or announced plans to lift indoor or school mask mandates. On 26 March, Hawaii will end requirements for travelers to show proof of vaccination or negative tests, or to quarantine.

Businesses may still require masks and proof of vaccination and individuals should mask if they are high-risk or in hospitals or nursing homes, the CDC said. Those who test positive should continue masking regardless of community levels. The CDC is still reviewing federal mask mandates, including on transportation.

The guidelines are intended to show when masks are necessary again, offering a data-driven approach to preventing health systems from being overwhelmed.

“We want to give people a break from things like mask wearing when our levels are low, and then have the ability to reach for them again if things get

worse in the future,” the CDC director, Rochelle Walensky, [said](#) on a call with reporters.

But there was [political pressure](#) to lift pandemic rules, particularly among Democrats looking to the next election, and some public health experts have worried the new guidance doesn’t focus enough on preventing new infections.

“I’ve seen a lot of people’s very, very legitimate concerns about if you’re focusing on hospitalizations … it is more of a lagged indicator,” Salemi said. “If there is a new variant that emerges and we start to see infection rates rise, by just focusing on hospitalizations and hospital burden, are we missing an opportunity to act sooner?”

The new guidance is more reactive instead of proactive, he said, adding that it also puts the onus on the most vulnerable, including immunocompromised people, to protect themselves from potentially devastating infections.

Without more preparation, another surge could be devastating in the US, Karan said.

“I’m actually pretty scared that it’s going to be the same thing that happened previously. We’re going to be scrambling to get updated vaccines out, we’re going to be scrambling to get people masks and rapid tests, we’ll be completely overwhelmed because of exponential spread.”

That’s why prevention and preparation now are so important, he said.

“You don’t prepare for the best-case scenario,” Karan said. “I’m not sitting here with wishful thinking – that’s not a strategy.”

OpinionCoronavirus

Why have some people never caught Covid? The answers could help protect us all

[Zania Stamataki](#)

I'm a Covid researcher, but I've never tested positive. Studying variations in immune systems could lead to better vaccines



'There is also a possibility that different immune systems respond differently to the virus.' A doctor injecting a patient with the Covid-19 vaccine. Photograph: Westend61 GmbH/Alamy

Mon 7 Mar 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Mar 2022 13.46 EST

I'm one of the fortunate people who is yet to test positive for Covid. This is despite the fact that I work with live replicating Sars-CoV-2 (the virus that

causes Covid) for my research, teach face-to-face at university, and have school-age children.

My fully vaccinated healthy friends of the same age were not so lucky, and some have suffered from more than one case of Covid in the past couple of years. What does this reveal about my immune system?

First, we have to consider a number of scenarios. There is a very small chance that I have never come into contact with the virus. But given the duration of the pandemic, and the number of highly transmissible variants, this is unlikely. Then there is the chance that I have come into contact with Sars-CoV-2, but it was cleared from my body quickly before it developed into the disease Covid (abortive infection). At the start of the pandemic, and before I was vaccinated, I could have caught the virus but I could have been one of the small number of people who did not display symptoms and therefore did not test for it.

Some people may clear the virus quickly because they have pre-existing antibodies and memory immune cells that recognise the virus. These could be cross-reactive memory T-cells generated previously to fight similar coronaviruses that cause the common cold. There is evidence of higher prevalence of endemic (non-Covid) coronavirus infections in the young and reduced cross-reactive T-cell presence in older people.

When vaccines became available, I received my first and second doses, along with a booster shot. Vaccines work by introducing our immune system to the virus spike protein, and setting off an early arsenal of specific antibodies and T-cells. These leave memory cells behind, which can persist for years and spring into action to prevent reinfection.

Although Covid vaccines still protect from severe disease, each time there is a new variant we scientists frantically search for any evidence of vaccine escape in real-life data. We can't predict vaccine escape because we are not observing stepwise virus evolution, where emerging strains add new mutations to their predecessors; the now-prevalent Omicron variant has few similarities with Delta, which was spread widely last year. Natural infection

does not offer long-term protection, and the more potent vaccine-induced immunity needs a booster to protect against variants.

As a result, if I had previously caught but coped well with one variant, I am not convinced that I would be immune to the next one. Indeed, people report different symptoms after different rounds of infection, some doing better, some worse in later infections.

There is also a possibility that different immune systems respond differently to the virus. For Sars-CoV-2 to infect, the spike protein on the surface of the virus needs to stick to specific proteins on the target cells, like the ACE2 protein. Is it possible that those resistant to infection have different levels of ACE2 than others? Age-related ACE2 expression in the lungs of children compared with adults may [partly explain](#) why children often show milder infection.

It is also possible that some of us may have rare types of ACE2 that the coronavirus spike cannot stick to. Differences in protein expression between people are known as polymorphisms, and they are valuable to discover. People that have a rare genetic polymorphism for CCR5 protein have been immune to HIV infection. To support this theory, recent [genetic analyses](#) have revealed that rare types of ACE2 may influence susceptibility to Covid.

Additionally, [studies](#) in healthcare workers who consistently remained negative for Covid showed the presence of pre-existing T-cells that recognise peptides – the chain of molecules that make up a protein – from less variable parts of the virus than the spike protein (which, under pressure from our immune response, mutates frequently to evade our antibodies). This work suggests that it would be wise to not rely on spike-targeting vaccines if we want to induce immunity to new variants, and we should think about incorporating more parts of the virus that don't change over time ("evolutionarily conserved proteins") into our vaccine design.

While we are still learning about what may be causing Covid resistance, we can't be sure why someone like me hasn't yet tested positive. But what I do know is that because of the likelihood of emerging variants, there is no

guarantee that I won't develop Covid still. Even if you've been lucky so far, don't take your chances.

- Dr Zania Stamatakis is a senior lecturer and researcher in viral immunology at the University of Birmingham
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/07/never-caught-covid-immune-systems-vaccines>

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

2022.03.07 - Opinion

- [It took decades to achieve progress for women – why has it stalled?](#)
- [Keir Starmer's clarity on foreign policy will restore trust in Labour](#)
- [Sexual abuse in football: what needs to be done now](#)
- [Men's clothes have always been a way to unpick the locks of gender](#)

OpinionLabour

It took decades to achieve progress for women – why has it stalled?

[Rachel Reeves](#)

This International Women's Day we promise to carry on the transformative work of our predecessors in the Labour party



'Labour women who stood up and changed our country for the better': Barbara Castle, Edith Summerskill and Alice Bacon in 1954. Photograph: Reg Burkett/Getty Images

Sun 6 Mar 2022 09.00 EST Last modified on Sun 6 Mar 2022 13.41 EST

This Tuesday is International Women's Day, when we celebrate women's achievements and the victories women have won in the fight for equality. From the Equal Pay Act to the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equality Act through to the minimum wage and [Sure Start](#), the Labour party has always

stood up for women and driven the change they needed, while the Conservatives defended the status quo.

As Labour's shadow chancellor of the exchequer, I know I stand on the shoulders of giants from our party's past: the [Labour](#) women who stood up and changed our country for the better. Women like Barbara Castle, who introduced the Equal Pay Act; Jennie Lee, who created the Open University; Alice Bacon, who reformed the law to make abortions legal; Ellen Wilkinson, who raised the school-leaving age; Jo Richardson's campaigning against domestic violence, and the work done on Sure Start and tax credits by Tessa Jowell and Harriet Harman, have all shaped our movement and our country.

Thanks to the radical improvements those Labour governments brought in to support women in their work and family lives, there are more women in work today than ever before, and more are balancing a career and a family, too.

This week we celebrate that progress, while acknowledging that there is still much to do before women and men are equal. In that context, there can be no shying away from the fact that women were disproportionately affected by the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Even before the pandemic hit, women were more likely to be [stuck in low-paid work](#) and hampered by a parenthood pay gap. At its height, they were more [likely to be furloughed](#), more likely to lose income, and more likely to work in the sectors that were hardest hit. Black, Asian and minority ethnic women – who are [more likely to be in lower paid](#), insecure work in the first place – were hit particularly hard. Working from home also [increased family duties](#) for women, with mothers more likely to be interrupted and finding themselves with less time than fathers for their paid job. And of course, women are still paid less than men – a [gender pay gap](#) that has actually widened over the last year.

The burden that women carried during the Covid crisis should be a wake-up call for the Conservative government. For too long, ministers have been complacent about the vital role that women can play in the economy.

Labour wants to do things differently, with an approach based on bringing people together in a national endeavour, and on understanding that Britain's real wealth is found in the effort and talent of tens of millions of working women.

Labour believes that women hold the key to a strong economy – and the evidence backs that up. Women-led small- and medium-sized enterprises contribute about [£85bn](#) to the economy. And when women are involved in businesses – whether starting up, rising up or sitting on boards – they make them more profitable. Companies with the most gender-diverse executive teams [are 25% more likely](#) to have above-average profitability than those with the least diverse teams, and companies where more than three in 10 of their executives are women are more likely to outperform companies than those with fewer female executives. The government's own [study of UK FTSE 100 firms](#) found a positive relationship between gender diversity and firm performance, which became more significant when three or more women were appointed to the board.

This is all very encouraging, but it's not clear if ministers have got the message. The government must recognise the role women will play in our economic recovery and understand the need to back them to succeed. Yet its own Small Business Survey shows that only [16% of small business employers](#) and [one in three of entrepreneurs are women](#), and women also struggle to access the financing and new business loans needed to get their companies off the ground. In bank financing, 15% of applications were led by women and 56% by men, and just 22% of new primary business bank accounts were opened by women, compared with 66% by men. Though success rates for both were roughly the same, the average loan amount approved for female-led businesses was around £25,000; for male-led businesses it was about £33,000.

Labour wants to put women at the heart of our economic recovery – to lift women up, not hold them back. We will do that by backing female entrepreneurs and great British enterprise. Under the Conservatives, the rate of business creation has plummeted across every English region since 2016. Labour would reverse that trend by [creating 100,000 new startups](#) in the first term of a Labour government across all English regions – doubling the

number of businesses the government's Start Up Loans scheme is delivering through a five-year funding guarantee that will fund 20,000 new businesses a year over the next five years.

Our Equal Recovery Pledge will also ensure that the inequality supercharged by the Covid pandemic does not become even deeper and more embedded during our recovery. The next Labour government will introduce a new deal for working people that will bring in stronger family-friendly rights.

On International Women's Day, it's right that we celebrate women and the progress they have made in building a more equal society. But we cannot be complacent about the challenges they still face today. Labour understands that women are crucial to the future of Britain's economy – and, as the first woman chancellor under a Labour government, I am determined to make sure their effort and talent is recognised.

- Rachel Reeves is a Labour MP and shadow chancellor of the exchequer
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/06/progress-women-international-womens-day-labour-party>.

Opinion[Keir Starmer](#)

Keir Starmer's clarity on foreign policy will restore trust in Labour

[Ben Nunn](#)

After the Skripal poisoning, Starmer took a principled stand against Russia. He has shown the same decisiveness on Ukraine

Ben Nunn is a former communications director for Keir Starmer



'If Labour was to be a patriotic party again, then it had to be proud to stand with our nation's flag.' Keir Starmer holds a shadow cabinet meeting following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Sun 6 Mar 2022 11.00 EST Last modified on Sun 6 Mar 2022 14.03 EST

Four years ago this month, I was travelling down to Dover with my then boss [Keir Starmer](#) to film Question Time. The process for prepping

politicians for one of Britain's longstanding political programmes is well rehearsed in Westminster. Party headquarters will send over a hundred-page document with all the “lines to take” about ourselves, our opponents and a tranche of obscure policies. Ministers and shadow ministers will then hunker down with their advisers for a few hours in the preceding days to hone the arguments (and decide how best to react if someone in the audience starts booing).

Dover’s Question Time was meant to be a Brexit special, which, for the shadow Brexit secretary, should have been relatively straightforward. However, 10 days earlier, everything changed. [Sergei and Yulia Skripal](#) were poisoned in Salisbury. The pages of notes written up about the advantages of Labour’s post-Brexit customs union versus the Conservative’s customs partnership became redundant. Everything was now about where Labour stood on an act of foreign aggression.

As a former director of public prosecutions, Keir was well versed in matters of national security and, as a human rights lawyer, he had represented Alexander Litvinenko’s wife, Marina, in her case against the Russian state. Having listened to the various statements by the prime minister, Keir was firm on where he wanted to stand. [Russia](#) should be condemned for its involvement and we should fully back the action being taken by the government. No ifs, no buts.

And yet, on the train journey down – with barely any warning – an [article by the then leader Jeremy Corbyn dropped](#). It was a painful read. Eight-hundred words, but no condemnation of Russia for the attack.

I remember my stomach sinking. How on earth can we defend this? I handed Keir my phone, told him to read the article and then asked for “a few minutes of silence and reflection” before deciding what to do. When we got off the train, his view hadn’t changed. He turned up, contradicted Corbyn, condemned Russia “without reservation”, backed the government and [demanded strong action](#). It’s worth noting that Keir was not alone in taking this position. The then shadow foreign and defence secretaries, Emily Thornberry and Nia Griffith, took the same stance, as did many other Labour MPs.

It's often underestimated how damaging that moment was for [Labour](#). At best the response was confused, at worst it appeared ambivalent about terrorism on British soil. It fed into a narrative with voters that, when it came to our nation's security, Labour was soft, and an even deeper sense that we were no longer a party that would stand up for Britain.

Changing that perception has been a fundamental part of Keir's mission since he became leader two years ago. When he spoke of "[a new leadership](#)" in the summer of 2020, it was a message of change backed up with action.

If Labour was to be a patriotic party again, then it had to be proud to stand with our nation's flag. Despite how flippantly some people treated this at the time, I never needed a focus group to tell me that the candidate for the UK's next prime minister should deliver speeches with the union jack behind him. To voters, the flag represents the country that political parties should aspire to serve – and protect. Google any political leader around the world – Joe Biden in the US, Jacinda Ardern in New Zealand, Olaf Scholz in Germany – and they stand with the flag of their respective nation. The Labour party should be no different.

If Labour was to be trusted with our nation's security again, then it had to bring clarity where previously there had been ambiguity. That included [reaffirming our commitment to Nato](#) – an institution that we helped to create in the aftermath of the second world war. And if Labour was to be seen as credible, it had to be decisive – and that is exactly what it has done these past few weeks in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

However, this isn't simply about politics for Starmer; it comes from a deeper set of principles. I was his director of communications for four years. I lost count of the number of times he spoke publicly and privately of his admiration for our security services, and how he had seen first-hand the work they did to keep our country safe. When he says the government should change approach, he means it. And when he says Labour needs to change, he means it too.

Foreign policy did not ultimately decide the 2019 election result, nor do I think it will ultimately decide 2024. I still believe the charge that the Conservatives are a low-growth, high-tax party will be a potent attack line – especially if Labour can demonstrate that it is the party to get Britain's economy growing again. However, by restoring his party's stance on security and patriotism, Starmer can go a long way towards showing Labour is once again a government-in-waiting.

- Ben Nunn was Keir Starmer's director of communications from 2017 to 2021 and is senior counsel at Lexington
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/06/keir-starmer-foreign-policy-labour-russia-ukraine>

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

Soccer

Sexual abuse in football: what needs to be done now

[Kat Craig](#)

If Fifa's proposed multi-sport entity to deal with the crisis is to succeed it must be independent, transparent and well-funded



Sun 6 Mar 2022 15.00 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Mar 2022 07.07 EST

As a lawyer specialising in sport and human rights I receive more than 200 messages a week about abuse in football alone. Some messages are from players, some are from whistleblowers. Almost all express fear, frustration and anger about how the system is failing. It's not just that the abuse was allowed to happen. It's that when they alerted the powers that be, they were ignored, gaslighted or silenced.

Since 2016 I've worked with victims of abuse in sport across five continents. From England to Afghanistan, Argentina to Haiti, Canada to Gabon, football is being used intentionally by sexual predators as a vehicle to access, groom and abuse children and young adults. In all cases, someone knew that the abuse was taking place – often someone senior in football's governing structures.

Fifa, as football's global governing body, is ultimately responsible for investigating allegations of abuse where national federations lack competence or alleged perpetrators are directly appointed by Fifa. This happens often and, in those cases, Fifa also decides on whether to fine and ban the perpetrators. By all accounts, Fifa has struggled on this front. It is a field in which Fifa has little experience, and its systems and procedures are better suited to tackling match-fixing and doping than abuse and discrimination.

To its credit, Fifa has managed to ban two major perpetrators to date, albeit relying heavily on evidence submitted by international players' union Fifpro who supported survivors and whistleblowers to collate accounts of the abuse that had been going on for years. Fifa has also been brave enough to acknowledge the challenge of investigating these cases, while many other federations bury their heads in the sand. It is now proposing to launch a multi-sport entity that would help sports bodies manage cases of abuse. That new entity has the potential to impact not only youngsters in the elite game but also set a precedent for professional and grassroots athletes across sports.

However, Fifpro and the international NGO Human Rights Watch have already raised concerns about whether Fifa's plans present a realistic alternative and meaningful improvement on the current system. So how can we feel confident that this proposed new entity is on the right track?

1) Independence and transparency

Why it matters

It is incredibly difficult to speak about being abused. It is even harder if speaking out might end a lifelong dream to become a top athlete. But if victims and survivors don't report, sport rarely learns about the predators in its midst.

That means we must do all we can to encourage and facilitate safe reporting. And that requires people to trust the entity. This will be not be an easy task: there are countless examples of abuse being covered up by federations, reports and concerns being ignored, perpetrators being tipped off or investigations being bungled – often because of personal connections or vested interests.

In the existing system, you have to report into the same infrastructure that accredited, appointed and often promoted your abuser. For the new system to work, it must be completely transparent and indisputably independent.

What to look out for

The key here is the governance structure, and how that structure will guarantee rigorous investigation of *everyone* who participated in, facilitated or ignored abuse, regardless of their standing in the sporting community. We need to see clear and concrete examples of how the entity will be free to determine, without any actual or perceived interference from Fifa itself, when it does and does not investigate a complaint; how far it casts its investigatory net; and when it does and does not publish its findings.

The new entity must also welcome external scrutiny to help it stay the course. This means engagement of civil society, and victim and survivor representatives, in the organisation's key governance structures and decision-making functions. It also means ensuring that victims and survivors have appropriate legal support. Perpetrators and sports bodies will all be lawyered up. It is only fair that the victims and survivors, often children or young people and almost always lay people, should have the requisite professional representation. Only with these changes will victims and survivors believe that the entity is able and willing to make the pain of reliving their worst experience worthwhile.

2) A person-centred approach

Why it matters

Although sport is increasingly employing buzzwords such as “trauma-informed” or “survivor-centred” in its rhetoric, this rarely translates into action. Overwhelmingly, victims and survivors say that their reports of abuse were met not with a desire to offer protection, unearth the truth and root out the problem, but instead with a defensiveness that prioritises protecting sport’s reputation above all else.

Many victims, survivors and whistleblowers also experience significant harm after engaging with the investigatory process. I have arranged multiple emergency evacuations (for example after armed gunmen shot at a whistleblower’s house) or secured urgent psychotherapeutic support for athletes who were suicidal after engaging with unsafe and unsympathetic sport bodies.

What to look out for

The key here is a demonstrable and detailed understanding of what this process entails for victims, survivors and whistleblowers. At every step of the way, we are looking for a recognition of the challenges that they may face and how these can become barriers to reporting or engaging in the process.

This is a complex task but we should be seeing a number of commitments from the entity, including: to conduct risk assessments into the potential ramifications for victims, survivors and whistleblowers; to train staff, agents and partners in trauma-informed practices and on how to avoid prejudiced investigations; to obtain informed consent for participating in investigations from victims and survivors by clearly outlining what this entity realistically can and cannot achieve and offer; and to listen to concerns and avoid actions that can be perceived as favouring the person of concern or protecting the institutional reputation. For example, in the USA Gymnastics cases the prolific rapist Larry Nassar continued to be recommended as a doctor to athletes long after allegations had been made.



Supporters of victims of sexual abuse by Larry Nassar, hold up signs during a Michigan State Board of Trustees meeting, in December 2017.
Photograph: Dale G Young/AP

The new entity must also honestly acknowledge and robustly tackle flaws in the current system. It will probably only be able to make *recommendations* to sport bodies. Those sport bodies, in turn, continue to operate under the very same flawed system that was not designed to handle abuse cases. The new entity must therefore either seek to create an overarching and bespoke framework for abuse cases, or demand change of individual federation rules.

3) Expertise and adequate resources

Why it matters

This is a problem that will require extensive resources to tackle its causes and effects. If the new entity is under-resourced it will fail: victims and survivors will be encouraged to report into a structure that cannot respond promptly and effectively. It will become a black hole into which concerns disappear. Meanwhile, the sport bodies charged with keeping children safe will have successfully outsourced responsibility for any failings.

What to look out for

The key here is an unequivocal and transparent commitment to sustainable funding. If sport is serious about tackling this major problem, and it is serious about mitigating the significant risks to victims and survivors who report the problem, it must also acknowledge that this carries a serious price tag.

The new entity must hire expert staff and build partnerships. As well as those already involved in these cases (such as player representatives and human rights NGOs) the entity needs to engage and pay survivor organisations and experts with lived experience. Many survivors work tirelessly to improve these systems on a shoestring or for free. This is deeply unfair: if sport is to benefit from their expertise it needs to ensure there is capacity to do the job well.

So, what would all this cost? Wada, the independent anti-doping agency, costs \$46m a year, to give you a ballpark figure. Sport can easily afford this. In 2018, Fifa generated more than \$4.6bn in revenue, with 2019 reserves soaring to \$2.7bn. In its own words, it is in a “healthy and sustainable financial position”. But if this new entity has the potential to benefit athletes across sport, then Fifa should not pick up the tab alone.

If, and only if, the above criteria are met and the new entity gains full buy-in from victims and survivors, as well as those involved in holding sport to account for decades, then others must get on board. Fifa has been candid about its desire to work with the International Olympic Committee and governments to help foot the bill. This will make the entity more viable: the global sports industry is estimated to be worth approximately \$620bn, with growth that is faster than global GDP. Just 0.01% of that global value would see the new entity well-resourced to fulfil this crucial task.

As someone who has seen the devastation that abuse causes to children around the world, I can think of no better way to spend that money.

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

[The ObserverFashion](#)

Men's clothes have always been a way to unpick the locks of gender

[Charlie Porter](#)

The V&A's first major exhibition dedicated to menswear shows how it has always pushed beyond binaries



Billy Porter's embroidered suit and cape worn at the 2019 Golden Globes will feature in the V&A's new exhibition, *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear*. Photograph: Valérie Macon/AFP/Getty Images

Sun 6 Mar 2022 02.45 EST

Have you worn a tailored jacket this week? If so, you have also been wearing a skirt. Technically, jackets are skirted garments – the lower part, from the waist down, is known as “the skirt”. The tailored jackets worn by Vladimir Putin, Boris Johnson, Joe Biden: they’re pretty much long-sleeve

button-front minidresses. The suit is a globally understood signifier of patriarchal power. But, like all other clothes, it's just drag.

This month, the Victoria and Albert Museum ([V&A](#)) in London opens *Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear*, the museum's first major exhibition dedicated to men's clothing. The show will gather 100 contemporary and historical outfits, alongside 100 artworks, to reveal how menswear has always pushed beyond binaries, even in garments considered traditional.

Included in the exhibition are pieces worn by those who have broken gender norms in the public eye, such as David Bowie, [Harry Styles](#) and Sam Smith. There are also pieces that explore the gender complexity of the seemingly sober, such as a row of 19th century frock coats, the predecessor to the modern-day suit. Those frock coats, then the garment worn by those of power, flare out in their skirt.

I have donated two outfits to the exhibition. One is from a Comme des Garçons Homme Plus collection inspired by Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando*, which uses clothing to soar beyond gender. The other is a sleeveless romper by designer Rick Owens, in simple black cotton jersey. From the front it is plain, but at the back there is a zippered hatch over the butt, should one ever need easy access.

My pieces err towards the flamboyant. I am 48, a midlife point that gives me perspective on what I maybe didn't realise before. I have always used clothing to poke at the assumptions of gender. As a kid, I had safe parameters from my whiteness and middle-class upbringing within an accepting family. Where I sit on the gender spectrum is like a comedy version of "male", which has allowed me to pass lightly in this patriarchal society.

Others have a different experience. The V&A exhibition will feature the gloriously embroidered cape and suit worn by actor Billy Porter at the 2019 Golden Globes. Porter grew up in a conservative religious family, sexually abused by his stepfather from the age of seven. The actor, who found fame through his role in the TV show *Pose*, uses expressive clothing to demand

visibility for black queer humans. His fashion choices are both a fabulous celebration and an act of defiance.

For a new generation, gender-fluid experimentation with clothing is their way of living. Harris Reed, a 25-year-old designer, splices masculine and feminine tropes for his showpieces. One such, a tailored suit cut with a hoop skirt and layers of tulle, was worn by Harry Styles in the December 2020 issue of US *Vogue*. Reed had only just graduated from fashion college, an immediate sensation with his beyond-binary outlook.

I co-run [a queer rave](#) in London called Chapter 10, which from the beginning has been actively non-gendered. At our rave the other month, it seemed like everyone young in the crowd, no matter their gender, was wearing a camisole. Using their clothing, this new generation is unravelling gender for themselves.

Perhaps it's safer to do so through what they wear. According to gender-critical feminists, men who voice their trans-inclusive beliefs on gender identity are bullies and misogynists. It is common among such men to desire the dismantling of patriarchy. I am one of them. Yet I believe the result of the gender-critical argument is that gendered stereotypes are maintained, and patriarchy is consolidated.

Clothing often expresses what is subconscious, or what words cannot say. It has always been this way, across centuries. The V&A exhibition is an opportunity to champion and encourage those who use what they wear to unpick gender. By using extravagance and the theatre of clothes, they can encourage the loosening of oppressive societal norms.

It is the first major exhibition of menswear at the V&A, and hopefully it can be the last. A new generation wants us to transcend gender and just see humans, and their clothes.

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

2022.03.07 - Around the world

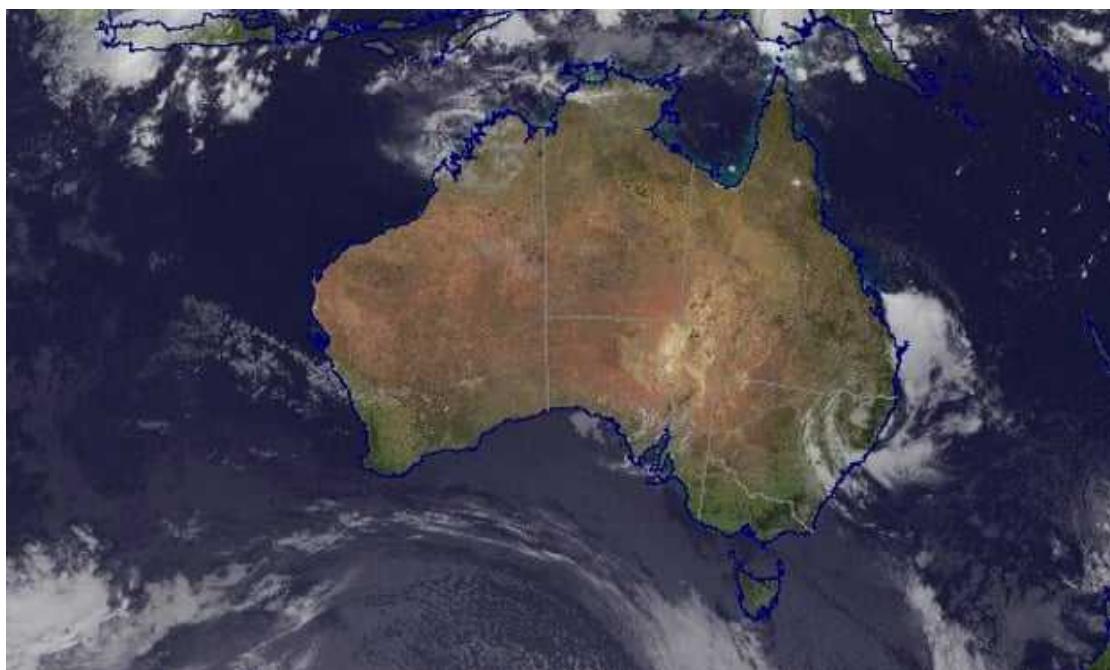
- [Australia Severe weather warning issued for Sydney and parts of NSW](#)
- [PM flags ‘enormous’ flood recovery effort](#)
- [Shane Warne death Woman questioned after climbing into ambulance transporting body](#)
- [Ghislaine Maxwell trial Juror’s grilling by judge could cast verdict into disarray](#)

NSW and Queensland floods 2022

Severe weather warning extended to cover much of eastern NSW, with heavy rain and flash flooding forecast

A second east coast low is expected to form overnight, bringing heavy rain and damaging winds

- [Follow our live blog for the latest updates](#)
- [‘It’s not a footnote. It’s the story’: Climate Council says too many Australian leaders silent on cause of floods](#)
- [‘Beyond dire’: how the Queensland and NSW floods are worsening the rental crisis](#)
- [Get our free news app; get our morning email briefing](#)



A weather map of Australia showing a second east coast low forming off the NSW coast. More heavy rain and possible flash flooding is forecast. Photograph: Bureau of Meteorology/Japan Meteorological Agency/Nasa

Peter Hannam and Caitlin Cassidy

Mon 7 Mar 2022 04.52 ESTFirst published on Sun 6 Mar 2022 17.08 EST

A massive stretch of the [New South Wales](#) coast is forecast to be hit by dangerous weather with a second east coast low set to deliver heavy rains and strong winds.

The Bureau of Meteorology has [expanded its warning zone](#) for towns and communities stretching almost 1,000km from Coffs Harbour south towards the Victorian border.

The NSW State Emergency Service on Monday evening warned dangerous conditions were expected to increase for large parts of the coastline, including [Sydney](#). Renewed flooding and landslides were possible, along with severe thunderstorms, hazardous surf, damaging wind and hail.

Heavy rain and strong winds forecast tonight for large part of coastal NSW. It could bring new flooding, and see already flooded rivers rise more. The rain and wind also brings a risk of trees falling. Stay safe and stay up to date with warnings from [@BOM_NSW](#) and [@NSWSES #NSWRFS](#) pic.twitter.com/JCnN7ktSHu

— NSW RFS (@NSWRFS) [March 7, 2022](#)

A severe weather warning was in place between Taree and Bega, while conditions were expected to worsen on the mid-north coast and the Hunter, Sydney, Illawarra and South Coast regions.

“Heavy rain may cause flash flooding, and river heights could rise rapidly over and above what has been experienced in the past few days,” the SES said.

“This could happen during the night. Strong winds are expected which could cause trees and powerlines to fall. Landslides are also possible, which could block roads.”

Six-hourly rainfall totals between 70mm to 120 mm were possible, the bureau said, with a peak expected in Sydney and the Illawarra on Monday evening into Tuesday.

Damaging wind gusts with peaks in excess of 90 km/h were possible on Tuesday across Sydney, the South Coast, Illawarra and the Southern Tablelands, continuing into Wednesday.

Doon Doon in NSW copped 1040 mm in 48 hours. That's more than one metre of rain in two days! This rain rate, in this part of NSW, has an annual exceedance probability of between 0.1 and 0.05% (1-in-1000 to 1-in-2000 year event). pic.twitter.com/sMADkb2JLy

— Ben Domensino (@Ben_Domensino) [March 7, 2022](#)

Updated forecasts for Tuesday said [Sydney's falls](#) could range from 50mm to 80mm, and as much as 150mm at Penrith. [Wollongong](#), not far to the south, may get 90mm to 300mm, indicating the difficulties for meteorologists in picking the low's impact.

“This one is going to come with more wind [than last week’s east coast low] but rainfall totals may be fairly similar,” bureau meteorologist Hugh McDowell said.

“There’s more likely to be trees coming down with this one than the last one. Sodden ground doesn’t help things at all.”

The NSW SES said the state had 16 evacuation warnings in place for its central coastal region, including parts of Sydney, with forecasts of more heavy rain and the potential for flash flooding as a second east coast low looms in as many weeks. Across the state, 43 evacuation orders remain in place.

Fire and Rescue NSW crews were dispatched on Monday to the scene of a major landslide, caused by intense rainfall, at Katoomba in the Blue Mountains.

FRNSW said the rail line was also in danger as greater Sydney braces for more rain.

Some large rain totals had already been recorded in the 24 hours to 9am Monday, including one gauge near Shoalhaven that collected 253mm, and Wottamolla, south of Sydney, with 191mm, McDowell said. Some 118.5mm of rain fell in six hours at Mittagong.

#Sydney's Hawkesbury River region has many roads closed like this one: pic.twitter.com/r6AcIPqThP

— Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [March 6, 2022](#)

Sydney and surrounds are in for two more days of potentially heavy rain from an east coast low. [@BOM_au pic.twitter.com/ktAIXn5oTQ](#)

— Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [March 6, 2022](#)

The NSW SES has issued evacuation warnings for parts of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River, which continues to flow at major flood levels at North Richmond. Levels were steady on Monday morning.

A road weather alert has been issued for metro Sydney through to the Central Coast and Illawarra, with a warning heavy rain and strong winds could down trees and powerlines, cut roads and cause land slips.

[Dams around Sydney](#) were 100% full and most were spilling as of Monday. The largest of them, Warragamba Dam, has been spilling since Wednesday morning.

The latest figures from WaterNSW show Warragamba Dam, Sydney's main reservoir, was spilling at the daily rate of 160 gigalitres as of Monday morning.

Warragamba Dam update: it's spilling at a steady rate of 160 gigalitres per day, and inflows are running at 113GL/day and falling slightly, WaterNSW says. Rainfall today is expected to increase both the

inflows and spill rate over the next 24 hours.
pic.twitter.com/RwKFkZMHEv

— Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [March 7, 2022](#)

Inflows into the dam are at 113 GL/day, but rainfall today is expected to boost both the inflows and spill rate over the next 24 hours.

“Based on the current forecast from the Bureau of Meteorology the upper range of that peak spill forecast remains 240-400GL/day tomorrow,” WaterNSW said.

Last week’s spill rate reached 315 gigalitres a day – it reached 450GL a day during the March 2021 floods.

Warragamba collected 46mm of rain in the 24 hours to 9am Monday, McDowell said. It may get another 100-200mm “broadly across that area” before the east coast low weakens and moves away from the coast, probably on Tuesday going into Wednesday.

Sydney and surrounds were forecast to have two more days of heavy rain, with falls approaching or exceeding 100mm possible.

Flood evacuation warnings were in place for Wisemans Ferry, Picton’s central business district and parts of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River.

Wollongong to the south of Sydney may collect even more rainfall. Lake Illawarra was another of the areas under an evacuation warning.

It will still be breezy on Wednesday before clear skies return, potentially breaking a run of rainy days for Sydney that began on 21 February.

The view from Pitt Down on Sunday ... not usually so close to the Hawkesbury River. [#nswfloods pic.twitter.com/3YI4zkZw5u](#)

— Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [March 6, 2022](#)

The SES had conducted 38 flood rescues in the past 24 hours, including 14 in the Sydney metro area.

According to an update from emergency services on Monday morning, there were about 280 ADF troops helping with flood assistance in hard-hit areas of NSW and Queensland. A basecamp for 100 troops is being built.

The NSW Rural Fire Service, meanwhile, has set up a basecamp at Wollongbar TAFE near Ballina. It will house 450 personnel to scale up to 550 as more shelters are added.

“Numerous communities across the Northern Rivers are currently isolated,” the report said.

Service NSW has set up a new phone number for community members in need of rapid relief and resupply requests.

The NSW government is also setting up a third incident control centre at Taree on the mid-North Coast to take control of coordination by Tuesday morning.

“Telco agencies are responding to multiple isolated outages and are progressively restoring services as access and conditions allow,” the emergency authorities report said.

Metro Sydney continues to face flood threats, and not just in the Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain. Authorities, for instance, are planning for “potential operational activity” from the east coast low that forecasters are expecting to form.

Priority areas facing potential flooding include Sussex Inlet “around Tuesday”, the report said.

Floods have claimed six lives in NSW including four people in Lismore.

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

[Australia news live](#)

[Australia weather](#)

PM says further assistance coming as ‘rain bomb’ set to cost Queensland billions – as it happened

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/live/2022/mar/07/australia-news-updates-live-scott-morrison-floods-weather-nsw-victoria-queensland-covid-coronavirus-shane-warne>

Shane Warne

Shane Warne death: Thai police say autopsy shows cricket great died of natural causes

German woman separately questioned by police after climbing into ambulance carrying remains of 52-year-old

- [Get our free news app; get our morning email briefing](#)

01:07

Thai police say autopsy shows Shane Warne died of natural causes – video

Navaon Siradapuvadol in Koh Samui and [Caitlin Cassidy](#)

Mon 7 Mar 2022 02.53 ESTFirst published on Mon 7 Mar 2022 02.19 EST

Shane Warne's autopsy shows the cricket great died of natural causes, Thai police say, as his family issued a statement saying they would accept the offer of a state memorial in Melbourne.

Thai police spokesperson Kritsana Pattanacharoen said on Monday afternoon the autopsy report had been received and it concluded Warne had a “natural death”.

Police informed his family and the Australian embassy and will provide the report to the prosecutor to close the case.

The Australian ambassador thanked the Thai police and the related department for the investigation into the 52-year-old's death on Friday.

Warne's parents on Monday evening said the past few days had been a “never-ending nightmare”.

“To find words to adequately express our sadness is an impossible task for us and looking to a future without Shane is inconceivable,” Keith and Brigitte Warne said.

“Hopefully the mountain of happy memories we all have will help us cope with our ongoing grief.”

They added: “Over the past few days Shane has been honoured, with the family being offered a state memorial for Shane by premier Daniel Andrews, which the family have gratefully accepted.”

02:47

Shane Warne, 'the King of Spin', dead at 52 – video obituary

Children pay tribute

Warne's son, Jackson, said he didn't think anything would fill the void his father had left behind.

“I love you so much,” he said. “Sitting at the poker table, walking around the golf course, watching the Saints and eating pizza is never going to be the same.”



Jackson Warne and his father, Shane Warne, in St Kilda, in Melbourne.
Photograph: Sam Tabone/WireImage

His daughter Brooke said she would forever cherish her final memories with her father “laughing and joking around”.

“We were happy. We were so similar in so many ways and I always used to joke that I got your genes and about how much that annoyed me,” she said.

“Well, now I

couldn’t be happier and prouder that I have your genes.”

Warne’s younger daughter Summer said: “Our time was robbed. I want more holidays with you, more laughs where your smile lights up the whole room.”

‘No suspicious circumstances’

Lt Gen Surachate Hakparn, an adviser of the Royal Thai Police, said on Monday afternoon Warne had visited Koh Samui three times since 2017 before his fourth trip last week.

From the official investigation, there were no signs of fighting or of assets being stolen, Hakparn said. There were “no suspicious circumstances.”

He said Warne’s body would be taken to Bangkok on Monday night by road and then flown to Australia on Tuesday.

‘Just a cricket fan’

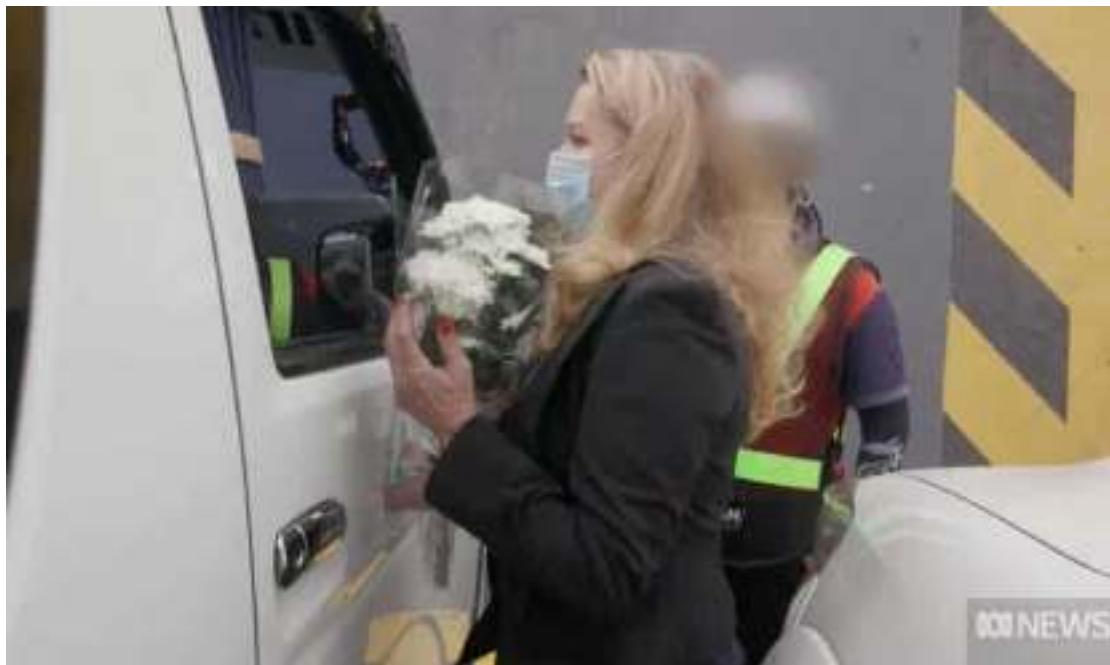
Earlier on Monday, a German woman had been questioned by Thai police after she had entered the back of the ambulance transporting Warne’s body off Koh Samui island.

Warne’s body was on Sunday taken from Koh Samui by ferry to Surat Thani on the mainland and to a local hospital where the [official autopsy](#) was conducted.

Warne's body was accompanied by his friends, as well as the Australian ambassador to [Thailand](#), Allan McKinnon, and Dfat officials, but they were not with the van when it was parked on the car ferry, [the ABC reported](#).

ABC video footage showed a blond woman accompanied by a Thai woman talking to local immigration officials by the car ferry.

The pair was then escorted to the ambulance parked on the ferry where the blond woman approached the driver's window holding flowers. They had a brief exchange before he escorted her to the other side of the van and allowed her to enter for less than a minute.



Screenshot of an unidentified woman who climbed into the ambulance carrying Shane Warne's body after his death on Koh Samui. Photograph: ABC News

The woman attended the local police station on Monday morning.

Hakparn said after an investigation, police determined the woman was "just a cricket fan". "She was sad that he died here," he said. "She just wanted to put down the flowers and honour him."

The woman, who lives in Koh Samui, was not charged because she was not deemed to be a threat, Hakparn said, adding the incident was a security breach. She didn't know Warne personally.

McKinnon, the Australian ambassador, on Monday afternoon thanked Thai police for conducting their investigation into Warne's death "smoothly and professionally".

Warne was found unresponsive in his villa about 5.15pm on Friday after he did not arrive for dinner with friends as scheduled.

One of the paramedics called to the scene on Friday described how Warne's friends desperately tried to revive him by applying CPR.

The Australian cricket great was later pronounced dead at the local hospital, with Bo Phut police confirming his death shortly afterwards.

Bo Phut police station superintendent Yuttana Sirisombat has said Warne had been suffering chest pains before arriving in [Thailand](#). He also had asthma and had seen a doctor about his heart.

Warne visited a local tailor before his death. Parsuram Panday said on Monday that the ex-cricketer was "happy and playful" when he saw him for the first time in two years due to the Covid pandemic.

"His body looked the same, he's a sportsman, he looked fresh," Panday told Guardian Australia.

"He was funny. He played belly punching with me. He was a nice man. He smoked. He didn't smoke before but this time I saw him smoking. I don't know what happened to him. I don't know. He looked strong. I heard it was a heart attack."

The tailor said he was due to have a fitting with Warne at his villa on Saturday but would now "drop his suit to the hotel".

Last meal was Vegemite on toast

The Sporting News chief executive, Tom Hall, has revealed [Warne's last meal](#) was a plate of Vegemite toast shared with a friend at the Thailand resort where he died hours later.

“I have dined with Shane in many fine establishments, but rather than sample some of the local Thai fare, we tuck into a plate of Vegemite on toast,” Hall wrote in [an article on the outlet’s website](#).

“Shane chomping away: ‘Geez, you can’t beat Vegemite with some butter, always great wherever you are in the world’. An Australian through and through – this was to turn out to be his last meal.”

Warne’s death is believed to have been caused by a heart attack.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2022/mar/07/shane-warne-death-woman-questioned-after-climbing-into-ambulance-transporting-body>.

Ghislaine Maxwell

Ghislaine Maxwell juror's grilling by judge could cast verdict into disarray

Scott David faces questioning under oath on Tuesday about his answers to a jury selection question about sexual abuse



Judge Alison Nathan is likely to ask the juror about his negative response to a question about whether he had ever been the victim of sexual abuse.
Photograph: Jane Rosenberg/Reuters

[Victoria Bekiempis](#) in New York

Mon 7 Mar 2022 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 8 Mar 2022 00.10 EST

When [Ghislaine Maxwell](#) was [convicted](#) last December of procuring minor teenagers for the disgraced financier [Jeffrey Epstein](#) to sexually abuse, their victims [expressed](#) joy and relief that long-delayed justice had finally been served.

Less than one week later, however, a juror's comments revealed that he apparently did not disclose childhood sexual abuse during jury selection – sparking a chain of events that could now potentially undermine the trial's outcome.

Following prosecution and defense requests to investigate [the juror](#) Scotty David's comments – and Maxwell's calls for a retrial – Judge Alison Nathan said that she will question him under oath on Tuesday.

While David said he would invoke his fifth amendment right against self-incrimination, prosecutors are seeking immunity for him which, if obtained, would compel him to testify.

"To be clear, the potential impropriety is not that someone with a history of sexual abuse may have served on the jury," Judge Nathan said in a 24 February order. "Rather, it is the potential failure to respond truthfully to questions during the jury selection process that asked for that material information so that any potential bias could be explored."

Veteran attorneys told the Guardian that there is a high bar for overturning a jury verdict. While unlikely, it is possible that Maxwell could get a new trial: a prospect that will be stunning for many involved in the long hunt for the former British socialite and those who have followed the Epstein saga for years.

With Epstein having killed himself in a [New York](#) jail cell, Maxwell's trial and guilty verdict was seen as a form of justice for the victims of the sex trafficking ring, especially given the elite and powerful status of so many in Epstein's social circle.

But the spat over David has thrown a spanner in the works and seemingly thrown Maxwell an unlikely potential lifeline.

David's explanation for why he marked the no box on a screening questionnaire that asked: "Have you or a friend ever been the victim of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual assault?" will be key to the outcome of the hearing.

“Depending upon how this hearing goes, it could absolutely throw the verdict into disarray,” said David S Weinstein, a partner at Jones Walker who previously worked as a federal prosecutor. “It doesn’t mean it absolutely will, but there is a greater likelihood than before, when we didn’t know as many facts.”

A key question is whether David’s seeming omission deprived Maxwell of an opportunity to select jurors in her case. Prosecutors and defense attorneys are able to challenge potential panelists during jury selection, with possible bias being a key factor.

Maxwell’s attorneys have contended they would have challenged David had they known his history – and that he would have been excused. “If it turns out that he knowingly and intentionally misled the lawyers on both sides with his answers, then [Nathan] can decide if that, in and of itself, deprived the defendant of a fair trial by denying [Maxwell] the opportunity to select jurors,” Weinstein said.

Ron Kuby, a criminal defense attorney of nearly four decades, said: “This claim of juror misconduct is a substantial claim – given even more substance based on reporting that the juror will invoke his fifth amendment right against self-incrimination.”

“I’ve never seen a juror take the fifth,” Kuby said.



Ghislaine Maxwell, pictured with Jeffrey Epstein, is seeking a retrial.
Photograph: SDNY/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Kuby said that claims of juror misconduct – such as claims that they were bullied into rendering a certain verdict, or allegations that they read coverage of the case – are not uncommon after trials. But, “those claims don’t tend to change the outcome because that conduct is immaterial.”

However, David claimed to have been sexually abused as a child, which is important, given that Maxwell’s trial was about sexual abuse of teenage girls. “This goes, in many ways, to the heart of the case,” Kuby said of the controversy surrounding these developments.

Moira Penza, a partner at Wilkinson Stekloff who, while working as an assistant US attorney in Brooklyn, successfully prosecuted the Nxivm sex cult case, said judges rarely overturn verdicts.

Penza said this was an “unusual situation”, but didn’t want to make predictions about what might unfold, especially given the complexity of the events. “We’ve already had Judge Nathan decide that an evidentiary hearing was warranted so really, at this point, we wait and see what happens at Tuesday’s hearing,” Penza said.

“If juror No 50 is granted immunity, and is therefore compelled to testify and is unable to assert the fifth amendment, what we’ll see is an inquiry from Judge Nathan as to how this juror questionnaire was filled out with a negative response to the sexual abuse question,” she said.

“I think it’s really important that Judge Nathan has already stated that just an affirmative answer to the sexual abuse question would not, in and of itself, disqualify juror No 50 from sitting on the jury.

“The question really becomes: was there an intentional misrepresentation that would have allowed for a cause challenge by the defense to keep him off the jury?”

David’s attorney did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Maxwell was [found guilty](#) on sex trafficking and other related charges for facilitating Epstein’s sexual abuse of minor teens, some just 14 years old. Maxwell has maintained her innocence.

Epstein, a convicted sex offender who once counted Prince Andrew among his rich and powerful associates, was arrested in July 2019 for sex trafficking minor teens. He killed himself about one month later in a Manhattan federal jail, while awaiting his trial.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/07/ghislaine-maxwell-juror-judge-questioning-sexual-abuse>

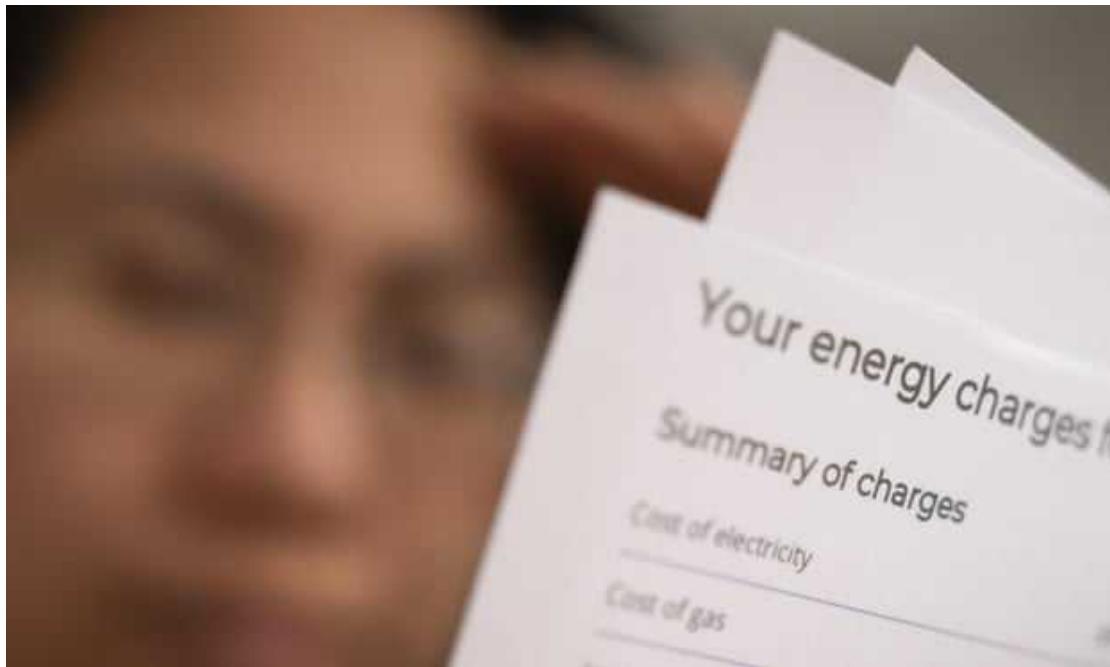
Headlines

- ['Starve or freeze' Huge energy bills could push some into extreme poverty, Martin Lewis says](#)
- [Petrol prices How to save money on running a car](#)
- ['We expect a huge hit' UK firms struggle as fuel costs soar](#)
- [Ask an expert What's my personal inflation rate?](#)

Energy bills

Huge UK energy bills would cause some to ‘starve or freeze’, Martin Lewis warns

MoneySavingExpert founder calls on Sunak to act, saying extreme poverty produces civil unrest



The annual cost of energy in the UK could hit £3,000 in October.
Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

[Heather Stewart](#) Political editor

Sat 12 Mar 2022 04.14 ESTFirst published on Sat 12 Mar 2022 03.30 EST

Some of the poorest people in the UK will “simply starve or freeze”, as a result of rocketing energy prices, consumer expert Martin Lewis has warned, as he urged [Rishi Sunak](#) to take action in his spring statement.

Lewis said energy bills for an average household, already set to rise [to £1,971 in April](#), could hit £3,000 in October, when the regulator Ofgem next sets the price cap. “That’s my conservative guess: not the worst case,” he said.

“I think people are going to feel worse than they have for a long time this year. When your energy bill comes in and it’s £3,000 for a year instead of £800, nobody feels good.”

In an interview with the Guardian, the founder of the MoneySavingExpert website gave a stark assessment of the potential effects of such a rapid increase, when many families are already struggling, and inflation is running at a 30-year high.



Martin Lewis says the chancellor must act in his spring statement.
Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

“When you start to have absolute poverty, which is what we’re going to be talking about with this, when you start to have panic, and a nihilistic feeling of the future, when our charity services start to be swamped … then I think you have to get to the point where you have to question what the impact on

wider society is, because you know that extreme poverty causes civil unrest,” he said.

“I hope we are not there yet, and I hope we won’t get there,” he added, but called on Sunak to offer “something that gives people peace of mind that they will survive – and I use that language deliberately”.

The chancellor announced a package of measures last month to soften the blow of surging energy costs, including a £150 council tax rebate for homes in bands A to D, and a [£200 discount on bills in October](#), which will be repaid with higher bills in future years.

Sunak is holding the line against making that scheme more generous when he gives his spring statement on 23 March. Lewis – who has been critical of the £200 rebate, which he calls a “loan-not-loan” – urged him to go further, given the renewed increase in prices since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which will feed into the October energy price cap.

The Treasury argues that it is unclear how much more the energy price cap will rise in October, allowing Sunak time to take further action later in the year if needed – but given the scale of concern among consumers now, Lewis called for “forward guidance” from the chancellor.

“We do not need wholesale plans and costings – we need the commitment that something will be done, and the scale of help for the individual.”

He argued that the chancellor’s first priority must be “those people who will simply starve or freeze because of this. And that is not exaggeration”.

Lewis said a recent phone-in on his Radio 5 live show, in which members of the public discussed what they were doing to cope with the rising cost of living, had reduced him to tears.

“I had so many people cutting back on food, and saying, ‘I’m prioritising kids’ food rather than my own’,” he said.

He said the government would also come under pressure from middle-earners, who will still be able to put food on the table – but for whom the

squeeze will be a “massive lifestyle hit”.

Lewis, who has interviewed Sunak several times, said he had been “genuinely quite impressed” on meeting him, and rejected the idea that he doesn’t understand the concerns of low-income households – but urged the chancellor to ditch his ideological attachment to balancing the books.

“My call to him would be, I’m afraid you’re asking people to suck it up, and I think they do need to suck some of it up, but I think maybe, chancellor, if you could suck up some of your ideology and get it sorted.”

He added: “If I were a Tory MP, especially if I were a ‘red wall’ MP, I would be saying ‘you have to nip this in the bud, chancellor’, because this is going to be catastrophic for those people. We told them that life will get better. And manifestly they’re seeing it getting worse.”

Setting out the government’s plans earlier this week to [phase out Russian energy imports](#), the business secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, suggested the British public were prepared to “endure hardships in solidarity with the heroic efforts that the people of Ukraine are making”.

But Lewis argues it is important to be clear that much of the cost of living crisis originated before the invasion – though it has been exacerbated by it. “I am worried about an over-simplistic narrative that uses this as a convenient, catchy reason for what is happening,” he said.

Separately, the TUC warned that energy bills were set to rise at least 14 times faster than wages this year. The union organisation said its analysis showed that gas and electricity bills were on course to increase by 54% when the price cap set by Ofgem changes in April, but average weekly wages will go up by 3.75%.

It estimated that record high energy prices could wipe out the entire value of pay rises this year.

The TUC says those on low incomes will be hit hardest by sky-rocketing bills, as years of weak wage growth and benefit cuts leave working families

“badly exposed” to the cost of living crisis.

The TUC estimated that since 2010 energy bills have risen at twice the speed of average wages.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2022/mar/12/uk-energy-bills-martin-lewis-warns-extreme-poverty>.

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

Motoring

Petrol prices are soaring – here's how you can save money on running a car

From using a cashback card to emptying your boot, there are ways to reduce running costs



Many UK households reliant on their vehicle are under pressure because of the cost of living crisis. Photograph: Matthew Horwood/Getty Images



Rupert Jones

Sat 12 Mar 2022 04.00 EST

The cost of living crisis is hitting the UK's motorists hard, with each day seeming to bring news of a record high for fuel prices.

Many motorists are already shelling out well over £1,000 a year to fill their tanks, and most commentators believe prices will continue to push upwards in the coming days, and that petrol may even hit £2 a litre.

It is a worrying time for those reliant on their vehicle but there are things you can do to save money, ranging from small changes in the way you drive to being savvy about where you fill up and how you pay.

Official data [published on Tuesday](#) revealed that UK motorists were hit by the steepest weekly rise in fuel prices in more than 18 years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The cost of filling up a typical 55-litre family car had gone up by more than £2 in only a week

The UK's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said the average price of a litre of unleaded petrol went up by 3.7p between 28 February and 7 March, to just under 153p. Over the same period, diesel prices increased by 5.2p to an average of 158.6p a litre.

That means the cost of filling up a typical 55-litre family car had gone up by more than £2 in only a week.

The rises have continued as the week has gone on. The RAC said that by Wednesday, after the UK's announcement that it will [phase out Russian oil imports](#), petrol and diesel had risen to 159.6p and 167.4p. It is all a far cry from May 2020, when the average price of a litre of unleaded dipped below 105p.

The AA reckons pump prices will continue to go up in the next few days, and some experts expect diesel prices to rise at a faster rate, as the UK reportedly gets [15-20% of its supplies from Russia](#). A few filling stations have already breached the £2 a litre of diesel barrier.

However, there is a sliver of good news that will counter some of that extra cost. "We are moving from winter to spring, which means engines don't have to work so hard, and more daylight driving means the burden of headlights, wipers and heaters is reduced," the AA says.

That, plus employing some simple eco-driving techniques, should improve fuel efficiency by about three extra miles a gallon. Roughly that is the equivalent of a 9p-a-litre saving at the pump, it adds.



The AA says: ‘We are moving from winter to spring, which means engines don’t have to work so hard.’ Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA

The research website NimbleFins recently put [the average annual running cost for a car](#) in the UK, excluding purchase and depreciation, at £1,977. It said almost half of that – £961 a year – was the bill for petrol or diesel. In second place, at £484 a year, was car insurance, while repairs and servicing came in third at £273.

There are changes people can make that will have a huge impact on their spending, such as switching to an electric vehicle or one that is cheaper to run, but these will almost certainly involve hefty upfront costs. Instead, we have focused on quick fixes that do not involve a big outlay.

Drive more efficiently

This includes things such as driving smoothly (as a rough rule, keep the revs between 1,500 and 2,500rpm if it’s a petrol engine, and 1,200 and 2,000rpm if it’s diesel, says the consumer body Which?), avoiding excessive braking and acceleration, changing up a gear early, and sticking to the speed limit: the AA and others say that driving on the motorway at 80mph can use up to 25% more fuel than driving at 70mph.

The AA has [a useful webpage](#) on driving more efficiently, and there are a number of videos on YouTube that have been put up by [organisations](#) such as [driving schools](#).

Fill up at the supermarket

A litre of petrol at supermarkets typically costs a few pence less than fuel at other forecourts, [according to Which?](#)

“The best prices are often found at supermarket forecourts and, when filling up, remember that most cars get little benefit from expensive premium unleaded petrol,” says Adam French from Which?

The money-saving website [Wethrift](#) says that while supermarket fuel usually comes from the same refineries as the big brands such as Shell or Esso, these brands will usually add special additives to their own fuels in order to improve efficiency and performance, which is why they tend to cost more.

However, Which? says petrol from a supermarket filling station “is of the same quality” as that from other locations.



Which? says a litre of petrol at supermarkets typically costs a few pence less than fuel at other forecourts. Photograph: Nick Ansell/PA

From time to time, supermarkets incentivise shoppers by offering money off fuel when they spend a certain amount on groceries. Last month, Morrisons was running an offer where customers spending £40 or more in-store got a voucher worth 7p off a litre of fuel. Tesco and Sainsbury's run similar time-limited offers, so keep an eye out for these.

Don't forget about the supermarket loyalty schemes. For example, with a Tesco Clubcard you can earn one point for every £2 spent when you fill up at the supermarket's petrol stations. You can spend Clubcard vouchers on fuel at all Tesco petrol stations at face value.

Sign up to a petrol station loyalty scheme

BP's rewards programme is called BPme, and you earn one point for every litre of regular fuel, two points for every litre of Ultimate fuel, and one point for each £1 spent in-store. You can redeem points on fuel and shop products (200 points equals £1 off).

Shell's scheme is called Shell Go+. Points are called visits and when you spend £10 or more on fuel or £2 or more in-store you will earn one. Reach 10 and you get a money-off "fuel reward".

Texaco has Star Rewards: when you buy one litre of fuel, you get one point worth 1p. When you hit 500 points, they can be redeemed for a £5 voucher, making this one of the more generous schemes.

Meanwhile, Esso Nectar allows you to collect Nectar points on fuel purchases at participating Esso petrol stations. You earn one point for every litre bought (you can also collect points on items you buy in the shop), and 300 points gets you 5p off a litre of fuel.

Use a cashback debit or credit card

The US bank [Chase's newish UK current account](#) comes with a debit card that lets you earn 1% cashback on everyday purchases for a year, including petrol.

American Express offers some of the best-paying cashback credit cards. Its Platinum Cashback Everyday card gives new customers 5% cashback on purchases (up to £100) for the first three months. After that, it's up to 1% cashback, depending on how much you spend. But not everywhere takes Amex, and be wary about racking up debt.

Shop around

The [PetrolPrices](#) website and app let you see where the best price for fuel is in your local area. You have to create an account (it's free), then it shows you the cheapest or nearest petrol stations. This week it was claiming it could help some drivers of petrol cars save £225 a year.



Keep tyres appropriately pumped up to reduce fuel consumption.
Photograph: David Burton/Alamy

Many local news websites also provide updates on the cheapest places to fill up.

Think about your journeys

If you have got a trip coming up – you are driving to visit family for a few days, say – it's probably a no-brainer in the current climate to fill up when you arrive at your destination rather than waiting until you set off home. With prices rising by the day, it could be more expensive when it is time to leave.

Check your tyres

“Incorrect tyre pressure is not only unsafe, it could be costing a small fortune in fuel,” says Richard Bruce, the motoring director at Halfords. The lower the tyre pressure, the more fuel a car will use to push them around, so keep them pumped up appropriately to reduce consumption.

Use a satnav

As well as showing you the quickest route to your destination, they can also work in real time and help you avoid getting stuck in jams. Some will even select the most economical route to help you avoid fuel-gobbling obstacles such as large hills, says Nick Drewe at Wethrift.

Google Maps [has been rolling out](#) eco-friendly routeing where, in addition to showing the fastest route, it will also display the one that is the most fuel efficient (if it doesn't happen to also be the fastest).

Empty the boot

Are you carrying around loads of unnecessary stuff? Maybe find another home for it because the heavier your car, the more fuel you will need to move it around. Similarly, remove roof boxes and bike racks if they are not being used much (or at all).



Do you carry unnecessary items in the boot of your car? Photograph: Graham Oliver/Alamy

Drive less

For many this will be tricky because of where they live or work or their family situation but some are already cutting back on shopping and recreational trips by car. One leading campaigner this week said he expects mileage [to fall by as much as 30%](#) in 2022.

Some may want to investigate carsharing – AKA lift-sharing – for getting to work. [Liftshare](#) calls itself the UK's biggest carsharing community, so it's a good place to start if you work somewhere where there are lots of other companies. If you work for a big employer, its intranet might be good place to find a sharer.

Cut the cost of insurance

As well as reducing your petrol consumption, you should check you are getting the best deal on insurance when it is time to renew your policy. The good news is that, [according to the industry body the Association of British Insurers](#), the average cost of motor cover in 2021 was at a six-year low, but

make sure you shop around rather than assuming the policy you are being offered is the best deal.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2022/mar/12/petrol-prices-are-soaring-heres-how-you-can-save-money-on-running-a-car>

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

Cost of living crisis

‘We expect a huge hit’: UK companies struggle as fuel costs soar

Transport firms urge government to act as rising petrol and diesel prices threaten profitability



Safeguard Coaches says rising petrol and diesel prices have put it back in the same position it was before the bus recovery grant. Photograph: Andrew Halliday

[Georgina Quach](#)

Sat 12 Mar 2022 04.30 EST

UK businesses reliant on fuel are braced for plummeting profits, as prices at the pump hit yet another record this week, with the cost of petrol topping £1.60 a litre for the first time.

Unleaded petrol hit £1.61 a litre on Thursday, having risen by 8p in a week, while diesel reached £1.70 a litre, as wholesale prices for oil remained close to all-time highs after western countries [announced bans on Russian energy exports.](#)

The RAC has urged the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, to cut VAT on fuel, as its figures show the cost of filling an average tank of petrol is at almost £88 while diesel has gone over £92. Meanwhile, companies are struggling with how to remain profitable as one of their biggest expenses grows ever larger.

JP Transport, York

Jonny Pattenden, the managing director of York-based courier [JP Transport](#), says he is struggling to pay his staff as fuel prices surge. Since 2019, Pattenden's fleet of nine vans moves everything from car parts to commercial waste, and runs an express courier service.

"In less than a year, fuel prices have jumped from £1.16 to £1.61. Because I cannot pass these costs on to our customers, I am having to swallow about 37% of my profit margin. It's becoming really hard to keep my drivers on," he says.



The boss of JP Transport is asking the government to cut VAT and fuel duty by 40% for two years. Photograph: Jonny Pattenden

On top of high vehicle maintenance costs, the price of keeping the engines running may be enough to put him out of business. “The cost of living has gone through the roof. We are also being squeezed more on clean air zones in major northern cities – this is adding £40 to the average cost of a typical delivery journey.

“The government have the chance to release the stress on us, by cutting VAT and fuel duty by 40% for two years,” says Pattenden, who has started a petition for the cause that has amassed 50,000 signatures.

Safeguard Coaches

Andrew Halliday, the managing director of Safeguard Coaches, a family-owned regional bus and coach company serving Surrey and Hampshire, says the price rise has reversed the small gains the firm had made after a dismal couple of years as the pandemic hit business.

Last year Safeguard received government support through the bus recovery grant, but this wound down in September – before the oil price surge began to bite. “Our revenues plummeted as rider numbers fell during the pandemic, so the grant helped us survive,” Halliday says. “Passenger numbers are returning, though are still not at pre-pandemic levels.

“But now, with the rise in fuel costs, we are back in the same position that we were in before the grant.



Jimmy Peeke, one of Safeguard's drivers. Photograph: Andrew Halliday

"We are expecting a huge hit to our bottom line. Typically we would buy 30,000 litres at about £1.50 a litre. But with petrol prices climbing, we are braced for our normal spend to increase by up to £10,000."

He says raising fares is not an option, because the firm is trying to win back the customers that fell away during the pandemic, but hopes the increased costs of running a car will encourage people to "give the bus a go".

Nationwide bus operators use hedged fuel to cope with the risks of a volatile market. But Halliday says this is harder for his small operation and together with Album, a group of small bus company managers he vice-chairs, he is working to pile pressure on the government to act.



Hats Group says there are no protections against fuel cost increases in its public sector contracts. Photograph: Hats Group

Hats Group

The high energy costs, which are forecast to continue, are also raising fears for driver firms serving patients and vulnerable people. Hats Group relies on fuel for its essential services: taking children with special educational needs to school, transporting patients to hospitals and mental health facilities and relocating refugees.

Richard Hancock, the chief executive of Hats Group, says because there are no protections against fuel cost increases in its public sector contracts, the burden can be on it to absorb the loss. “We are not transporting people for fun – they need us and we cannot let them down. We are calling for state help with the petrol hike, which is adding up to 25% to our fuel costs, in the same way as furlough.”

To soften the blow and reduce unnecessary fuel usage, the company is carrying out daily checks on car maintenance and making sure the right size vehicle is assigned for each journey. It has also brought in driving assessors to improve driving style. “I’m hopeful that we will adjust, but these measures go only so far,” Hancock says. “We can’t change the

aerodynamics of a 16-seater vehicle. We would like to expand our services but these rising fuel costs are limiting our dreams.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/12/uk-companies-fuel-prices-petrol-diesel-prices>

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

[Conversations with experts](#)[Life and style](#)

What's my personal inflation rate? We ask an expert

Edward Smith, co-chief investment officer at Rathbones, explains what it is and why it matters



'We're back to a rate of inflation we haven't seen since the 90s.'

Illustration: Lalalimola/The Guardian



[Coco Khan](#)
[@cocobyname](#)

Fri 11 Mar 2022 10.00 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Mar 2022 00.38 EST

Last month, anti-poverty campaigner Jack Monroe sparked change by [highlighting huge price increases on food](#) that far exceeded the Office for National Statistics' inflation figure of 5.4%; the cost of living crisis, it seems, is hitting low-income Britons the hardest. The [ONS responded](#) by saying it accepted that everyone has their own "personal inflation" rate. But what affects our rate, and why does it matter? I asked Edward Smith, co-chief investment officer at Rathbones, a wealth management firm which offers a free-to-use personal inflation calculator.

I'd never heard of a personal inflation rate before. Why are we talking about it now?

For the last 25 years, inflation has been stable. But now we're back to a rate we haven't seen since the 90s. It's probably going to get up to 7.5%, possibly 8%, come April.

Oof! All this because of energy prices?

Not entirely. Energy prices accounted for about six-tenths of the overall increase last year, but there's also Covid. We're spending more on goods

than services, and that demand butted up against supply-chain disruptions. The good news is we think spending habits are likely to normalise, and we expect it to be back at 2% by next year.

Sign up to our Inside Saturday newsletter for an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the making of the magazine's biggest features, as well as a curated list of our weekly highlights.

Hmm, I'm not sure. It sounds like inflation spikes when disaster strikes, and with the climate crisis there are plenty of those coming.

Yes. Some of the areas most affected by climate disasters are in our supply chains, such as Asia. Though there are some people who say the rising energy costs are due to Europe going down the green route too quickly and failing to consider the impact of a relatively windless summer, like last year's.

So how long have the ONS averages on inflation been problematic?

I wouldn't say they have been. The ONS has always been clear that the number it produces is an average for the whole country, and over the past 20 years the rates haven't been all that different between groups. We're talking about a few tenths of a per cent between lower earners – who tend to be younger, without property wealth – versus higher earners. One of the reasons we have the personal inflation calculator is because you may have a few years when you're spending more on something: medical care for a loved one, say. And inflation is an important part of planning. Say you save £100 a month for 20 years; if the rate of inflation was 2%, then your £24k savings would be worth about £16k in inflation-adjusted terms. But if 2% wasn't representative for you and your rate was more like 3%, then your savings would be worth only about £13k. That's massive.

The ONS says it's working on capturing the rates across different groups – how?

By using a big-data approach, where it takes all the transaction data from supermarkets instead of using a sample of prices through surveys.

That sounds like a data-protection nightmare.

It's all anonymised!

Hope so – I prefer to keep my prosecco-purchasing habits out of any official roster. We talked about 2% being a “good” amount of inflation; why not 0%?

Because if inflation is too low, people may be put off spending, thinking prices are going to get even lower. That means companies making fewer sales, and job losses. Ultimately, the cost to society of 1-2% of deflation is much greater than the cost of 1-2% inflation. Though I'd like the price of my prosecco to stay the same.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/mar/11/whats-my-personal-inflation-rate-we-ask-an-expert>

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

2022.03.12 - Spotlight

- Kae Tempest ‘I was living with this boiling hot secret in my heart’
- Hello £200k beach huts, goodbye primary school The Welsh village hollowed out by second homes
- ‘There’s a desire to see women who’ve been invisible’ Camille Cottin on becoming a sex symbol in her 40s
- Blind date ‘I couldn’t hear him chewing – that’s always a good sign’

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[Kae Tempest](#)

Interview

Kae Tempest: ‘I was living with this boiling hot secret in my heart’

[Michael Segalov](#)



Kae Tempest ... ‘I don’t want to say the wrong thing for my people’
Photograph: Wolfgang Tillmans

Speaking for the first time about coming out as non-binary, the hip-hop poet and playwright recalls the pain of adolescence, and how lyricism, rapping and music provided a lifeline



Sat 12 Mar 2022 04.30 EST

Kae Tempest is perched at a table outside a station-side cafe, playing with a cigarette. Murphy, Tempest's alaskan malamute, stirs as I approach, and on clocking me, Tempest returns the cigarette – still unlit – to their chest pocket. For years, Tempest's long curly barnet was a trademark look. Today, though, wearing white trainers, upturned jeans and a turquoise jacket, their hair is short, a neat fade that, Tempest says, they still occasionally catch themselves admiring.

We are meeting to take a walk in Catford, south-east London, at Tempest's request; a corner of the capital they've called home since childhood. A prolific poet, author and recording artist, Tempest has spent the best part of a decade touring the globe, but something has always pulled them back here. "People ask why I've stuck around," they say. "It's because I feel so close to this place, and the people I've known my whole life here." Tempest, now 36, has never felt a need to escape.

We walk for a while, before settling on a quiet riverside bench. It is late January – utterly freezing. Tempest talks about how in their early years, language and lyrics helped them navigate the world – how something clicked when they started rapping among friends as a teenager. They traversed various scenes, taking to the mic wherever opportunities arose. There were squat parties and hippy festivals; east London raves.

“I used to work at a record store, and would even pop out and stand on the high street to rap at bemused kids at the bus stop.” In their early 20s, Tempest found the spoken-word poetry scene. Soon, bookings started to come in, as did an offer to write for theatre. “That’s when I felt these pathways in my brain open up,” Tempest says. “It wasn’t only a 16-bar rap, but narrative: plot, structure, themes. I could feel my mind changing.”



Hide and seek ... Tempest has taken nearly two years to talk about their decision to come out as non-binary. Photograph: Wolfgang Tillmans

Tempest has an excited energy when recounting each passion project and career high. But when it comes to discussing more personal topics during our interview, they cut themselves off – lots of pensive staring.

In August 2020, in an Instagram post, Tempest came out [as non-binary](#). They announced their name is now Kae (pronounced like the letter K), and

explained that, going forward, they would be using they/them pronouns. “I have tried,” they wrote at the time, “to be what I thought others wanted me to be so as not to risk rejection. This hiding from myself has led to all kinds of difficulties in my life. And this is a first step towards knowing and respecting myself better.” Beyond this statement, however, today is one of the first times they have publicly spoken about their experiences.

“Coming out has been huge,” Tempest says, tentatively. “A beautiful but difficult thing to do publicly.” The process has been fraught with pain and uncertainty. “It’s hard enough to say: ‘Hey look, I’m trans or non-binary,’ to loved ones. And I have this twin life beyond my friends and family.”

I don’t understand how our bodies became territory for war

“Trans people are so loving, so fucking beautiful,” they say. “I think of my community, and how much strength I’ve got from people telling me I don’t have to go through this alone.” Tempest feels the power of visibility. “If I hide, and I’m ashamed of myself, it’s [as if] I’m ashamed of them.”

Tempest is on more solid ground expressing themselves through their work, and their latest offering is no exception. Next month sees the release of their fourth solo album, *The Line Is a Curve*. Their first two albums received Mercury prize nominations. Tempest has already written three plays, a novel and six poetry books and last year published *On Connection*, their debut work of nonfiction. “But it’s starting to hit me how different this album is from everything else,” they say, “how far it could potentially go. It’s reaching for something beyond what the others have been.”

Musically, *The Line Is a Curve* is certainly a more introspective and personal affair than what has come before; Tempest’s lyrical and performance prowess, however, remains consistent. Each track goes in deep: “I can feel myself opening up … I’ve stopped hoping, I’m learning to trust; let me give love, receive love, and be nothing but love.”

For the first time in eight years, Tempest’s face is emblazoned on the artwork, too. It’s a sign, they say, of wanting to invite listeners in, in a way

that previously felt difficult. Tempest spent years simultaneously desperate for the spotlight, and hugely uncomfortable inside it.



Shorn again ... Tempest's new-look hair. Photograph: Wolfgang Tillmans

"For the last couple of records," they say, "I wanted to disappear completely from the front-facing aspects of the industry." There was a genuine desire to let the work speak for itself; constantly grappling with the fact that as a writer their output was enough, yet putting out music meant being public-facing. "But this time, I want to be different."

That doesn't mean the adjustment is straightforward. "It's difficult talking to you," Tempest admits. "Because I know how this goes. What'll happen next. Trans people are used in these weird ways to express people's deep fears about other things; obsessed over by people void of humanity ..." Eyes damp, their pain is palpable. "I don't understand how my body, our bodies, became a territory for war. These bodies we've spent lifetimes living in.

"I've quit," Tempest says, "but do you mind if I smoke?" They take out and light that cigarette.

Two weeks later, I am sitting across from Tempest and Murphy once more, this time in a booth at a south London recording studio. A few days earlier, they'd texted to suggest another meeting. "I shied away from talking about myself last time we met," they say, slowly. There's a vulnerability to their voice. "I feel like I have to be careful. I'm a storyteller: I know the power of stories." Through their work, of course, Tempest shares snapshots of their life. But poetry and prose allow details to be blurred; art can exist in the abstract.

"This whole album, and this process, and me coming out, is me squaring myself with the idea of what being a musician is," they say, "and how that differs from being a playwright or an author, where you can be less visible." Part of Tempest longs for that invisibility. "At the same time, what am I scared of? It's my life." Maybe, they say, openness might be healing. "The pain of what it used to be – to be interviewed or on telly, that pain is also about [gender] dysphoria," they say. "And because I'm doing something to treat that, maybe it's not going to hurt this time."

"I don't want to say the wrong thing for my people," they add. Tempest feels an overbearing sense of responsibility. "When trans issues are spoken about in the press, it's often not trans people doing the speaking. So in this rare moment there's a trans person talking about trans things, I don't want to fuck up or waste the opportunity."

I was so different it freaked people out: who are you? What are you?
Performing, I didn't need to pass as either gender

They take a minute. Sharing stories from their past, Tempest explains, isn't easy. "Until hitting puberty, I lived as a boy," they say. "People around me would say: 'You're a tomboy, you'll grow out of it.' I internalised that, and hoped I would." That never happened. "Puberty was disorientating. It brought a lot of pain to me."

What they put on to the page was never shared, but even then Tempest found comfort in words and language. And among their peers, predominately straight, cis-gendered boys, Tempest was accepted lovingly and without question. Nothing needed saying. "I was just one of the guys,"

they say: that sense of being known, one of the reasons they've never wanted to leave this community. "But when I met someone new, I had to start all over again. A lot of trans kids go through that. And I didn't have a queer community, or the words to explain, so I was constantly hiding pieces of me."

Back in the late 80s and early 90s, there was even less understanding and support available for trans and non-binary children. Tempest struggled. "I had ADHD, depression, a panic disorder, and also dysphoria. I was having a tough time existing with my brain in this body." They stopped going to school, taking GCSEs from a pupil referral unit instead. "I was drinking lots, taking too many drugs. I was away from home for a while." Tempest expands on this in *On Connection*: nights spent sleeping in churchyards with a best friend who was addicted to heroin; being touched up by an older man in exchange for beer and cigarettes. The shame they felt about their gender, Tempest says, was all-consuming.

"All this is to say that when I did fixate on lyricism, rapping and music," they continue, finding a flow, "it was a real lifeline. A balm for the pain when I was confused and unwell." Day to day, dysphoria was a source of great distress. "Because I was so different to other people, it would freak them out: who are you? What are you? People didn't understand me. When performing, that was my pass. I didn't need to pass as either gender."



Tempest at National Theatre rehearsals for Paradise. Photograph: Helen Murray

Music wasn't just an escape for Tempest, it also shifted people's attention away from their body. "When I had rapping and lyricism," says Tempest, "*that's* what I was. Everything else disappeared. I almost left my body behind, and became an artist."

They were determined to succeed as a performer. But being so visible came with its own set of challenges. Suddenly they were "she" and "her" in the press; nominated in the best female category. Interviews could feel treacherous. It's not that dysphoria ever went away, but with all eyes on them, Tempest didn't know how to engage with it.

"I was so desperate to make it," they say, "I really wanted success. So I just ignored it, and carried on. For a long time, my dysphoria was also hidden from me. For the last 10 years, it has been gnawing away at me. The increasing discomfort of: when are you going to do something?"

Tempest dreamed of cutting their hair. "I wanted to, so much," they say, "that every time I saw somebody with short hair or a fresh haircut, it would physically hurt me." For years, Tempest felt trapped in their longer locks: *everyone* said cutting those long curls would be a travesty. It became

symbolic: a shield Tempest hid behind, yes, but also representing their ever-present discomfort with expectations of femininity. “I convinced myself I could never risk cutting it,” they say. “I’d think: ‘If I do, will I still be able to go on stage? People will stop listening.’ It’s wild what dysphoria does to you.

“I was resigned to living the life I was in,” they say, “and then maybe at 50 when I stopped having this career I thought I might be able to finally transition. But increasingly I couldn’t bear it.” In January 2020, they chopped their hair short. Their eyes light up when recalling the sense of liberation. And then, the pandemic hit. For the first time in what felt like for ever, Tempest was forced to take a beat. A few months later, they came out publicly.

“All that fear was about shame,” Tempest says. “I was afraid, because of internalised homophobia and transphobia. I was afraid to be who I was, because I’d learned that it was ugly. I was resigned to being wrong all my life. Coming out and saying I’m trans, non-binary, is me saying I’m on a journey.” They’re still not certain where it’ll take them. “But I realised the ramifications of what might happen didn’t seem as scary as living with this boiling hot secret in my heart for eternity.”

I am aware my brain is intense. It's like this weird mate always hanging out with me

Coming out was never intended to be a radical act. Tempest doesn’t see themselves as an activist. “The poet’s role is different; it’s why I’ll always be hesitant to talk too much about one element of my experience, however huge. Because poetry is vast. It’s rare and profound, bigger than my experience or yours.”

And so it continues. This month, Tempest heads to the US on tour. The European leg starts in April. There is another novel in the works; a book of poetry, too. There’s more, of course. So much of it. “I can feel myself at an important moment creatively,” they say. “Things spinning around in my head; coming out of my hands.” Frankly, I say, it sounds exhausting.

“I am aware my brain is fucking intense,” they reply, cracking a smile. The room feels lighter. “It’s like this weird mate always hanging out with me.” In the past, they’ve crashed hard. “Back in the day, I’d come back from a tour and I’d fall over. I couldn’t even make it to bed. It would take me days to fill the reservoir again.” Now, they hope things might be different.

“I was always me on stage,” they say, “but I was hiding who I was, including from myself ... When I perform I go to the depths; beyond gender, beyond body. I leave everything behind. That’s why it was addictive.”

This time, though, it will be *Kae Tempest* transcending. “I’ve not had a tour where I’ve known this iteration of myself,” Tempest says, eyes closed. “It’s going to be joyful, although I’ve got no fucking clue where it’ll take me.”

The Line Is a Curve is released on 8 April.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/mar/12/kae-tempest-i-was-living-with-this-boiling-hot-secret-in-my-heart>



Charlotte Williams and Tom Evans in their caravan, where they are bringing up their baby, Twm. They can't afford a property anywhere in the area. Photograph: Craig Easton/The Guardian

Hello £200k beach huts, goodbye primary school - the Welsh village hollowed out by second homes

Charlotte Williams and Tom Evans in their caravan, where they are bringing up their baby, Twm. They can't afford a property anywhere in the area. Photograph: Craig Easton/The Guardian

Abersoch was once an ordinary fishing hamlet. Now, holiday flats sell for £1.5m. We talk to locals whose community is disappearing under a flood of outsiders' cash

by [Sam Wollaston](#). Photographs: Craig Easton

Sat 12 Mar 2022 01.00 EST

On a Monday night before Christmas in a chapel in Abersoch, a concert is taking place. Abersoch is a seaside village on the Llŷn peninsula, the arm that sticks out from north [Wales](#) into the Irish Sea; and this is the end of term Christmas concert of Ysgol Abersoch, the local primary school, a wooden building across the road from the chapel.

On the pews, spaced out in an attempt to keep Omicron at bay, sit parents, villagers, governors, former pupils; some are all of the above, about 50 in total. At the front of the chapel, facing the audience on the other side of a wooden altar rail, are the performers: children aged between four and seven, and dressed colourfully, as an elf, a doll, an angel, a reindeer, a grandmother with orange hair ... and that's it. There are just five of them. Ysgol Abersoch is a very small school; that's the problem, though not everyone sees it that way.

Actually, there are seven children in the school. But it's a miracle even five made it tonight. There's a lot of Covid around; on Friday there were only two pupils in school. But Linda Jones – Mrs Jones, the headteacher, the only full-time teacher, also a former pupil – wasn't going to let anything stop the concert. Even if none of the children had made it, she would have gone ahead, using puppets instead.

Mrs Jones sits in the front row, prompting, nudging, sometimes playing the clarinet during a song. The children sing, and sway in time, and wave at their families. Vera, the eldest, narrates the story, which is called The Colours of Christmas. It's all in Welsh. At the end, the audience joins in with Dawel Nos (Silent Night). And Father Christmas (who is actually – look away now, any children reading – Dewi Roberts, a local councillor) turns up with a bin bag full of goodies. It's a lovely evening.



- Ysgol Abersoch pupils performing their Christmas concert last year.

It's also a really sad evening. The school, which opened in 1924, is being closed down. Not at the end of the school year, but now, at Christmas. Gwynedd council says it's not practical or financially viable to keep such a small school open. It costs £17,404 per pupil, compared with the county average of £4,198. Closing it will save an estimated £96,000 a year.

But the people of Abersoch, not least the people here in Graig chapel tonight, say it will be the death blow to a community slowly being suffocated by wealthy second-home owners. They point out that the village is empty for much of the year but unaffordable to local families. It's a story that will resonate in pretty coastal villages across Devon and Cornwall – [Kingston](#), [South Huish](#), [Dalwood](#), [St Minver](#), [Padstow](#) and [St Merryn](#), and many more. Also elsewhere in Wales: there were the news reports about the village of Cym-Yr-Eglwys in Pembrokeshire having only one permanent resident left, but these stories were contested, not least by the 10 or so year-round residents who say the situation is more complicated and deeper-rooted than simply millionaire English second-homers buying up all the properties.



- Ysgol Abersoch teacher Natalie Williams (left) and headteacher Linda Jones with twins Maisie and Charlotte, six, Vera, seven, Melissa, five, and Mansar, four.



- The school in 1924.

In Abersoch, though, the issue is plain. In 2020, [46% of the housing stock was second homes](#), when commercial holiday lets are included in the definition; there is a luxury development going up where flats will sell for £1.5m; and it is home to Wales's most expensive street, where the houses are worth much more, while local families live in caravans in the surrounding countryside. And now the school going – the final blow.

At the end of the concert, Eifiona Wood – governor, former parent, former pupil of Ysgol Abersoch – stands up and speaks, in Welsh and English. “We can only thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for making us what we are today,” she says to everyone who has been involved in the school past and present. She chokes up a bit, and she’s not the only one.

That’s not quite the end; there are still a few school days left. Next morning, four children make it to class: Vera, who’s seven; twins Maisie and Charlotte, six; and Melissa, five. At the school gate, the twins’ mother, Annette Weston, says she’s devastated. “Some people say there are only a few children here – they can’t be getting a good experience. But it’s totally the opposite. It’s like dropping them off at a family house: it’s a fabulous way to learn, and they love it.”

She says there are 23 children in the village who could be coming to Ysgol Abersoch, which goes up only to year 3, after which pupils go to the school at Sarn Bach, a mile and a half away. The reason more haven’t been coming is that it’s had the threat of closure hanging over it for years. “If you took away the closing order, it wouldn’t be an issue; the school would have plenty of children. I think they took the decision years ago and they’ve been waiting like vultures for numbers to drop to a point where they say, ‘That’s it, we’re going to close.’”

Second homes in Gwynedd are charged [200% council tax](#). Vera’s mother, Eva Palanova, thinks that this, as well as the stamp duty generated by Abersoch’s thriving property market, could be used to finance the school. “I’m from the Czech Republic. We went through a similar process during communism – built these massive school hubs for 4,000 kids. But now they are reopening all these little schools because parents realise that that’s not what they want; they want a local connection.”

Inside, it doesn't feel like the end of anything, just the beginning of another day. The classroom is bright and friendly. The walls are covered in school work and art – pictures of a deer, a salmon, a raven, all done in leaves; a project about Diwali; a map of the peninsula. The morning begins with a song about the days of the week, in Welsh. Abersoch, like all the primary schools in this part of Wales, is Welsh language. Mrs Jones sits on the floor, facing the four girls, again prompting when required. The school's only other teacher, Natalie Williams – Miss Williams – is also in today; you don't get that kind of teacher-student ratio at many schools.

Mrs Jones remembers being a little girl in this room; she never thought she'd end up as head. She's desperately sad about her school being closed down, but doesn't want to go into it too much; she's going to have to find another job. She doesn't know what or where yet, and may consider supply teaching.

What about Miss Williams – what will she do? "Cry," she says. Then she'll probably go back to supply teaching, too. There aren't a lot of permanent teaching jobs in the area.



- Headteacher Linda Jones with pupils in the classroom.

How do the kids feel about the school closing? “Sad!” they say, in unison. What do they like about Ysgol Abersoch? “Everything!” Incidentally, there is one boy who attends the school, named Bobby, but he’s off, too.

Another student has come in: Mansar, who is four. She hasn’t been well, but she wanted to be in the photo. The Guardian’s photographer is going to recreate the first photograph of the school taken in the 1920s – pupils and staff, outside, standing against a corner of the building. It will serve as pictorial punctuation to end a chapter just shy of a hundred years long.

Mansar’s dad, Sarwar Jamil, the only Iraqi Kurd on the peninsula, is also sad. “The school has been lovely and welcoming. Education is the main thing in the world. If I had any power, I wouldn’t let it happen.” He left Iraq about 17 years ago, ending up cleaning cars on Anglesey. His Welsh is now so-so, he says; Mansar’s is much better.

A few minutes’ walk away, in Eifiona Wood’s kitchen, I meet three of the school’s governors. With Eifiona are Margot Jones and Louise Overfield. Louise didn’t go to Ysgol Abersoch – she’s an outsider, from England. But her partner, Dylan, did, and their children. Margot, chair of the governors, went there, as did her children; her son Tom recently graduated from Cambridge University, and yes, she does hold Ysgol Abersoch responsible. “I think the attention he received in his formative years, the confidence he was given through being in a small school where everyone’s voice is heard, plays where everyone has a part, everyone is seen, everyone is valid – I can’t imagine a better start in life.”

Margot has joined by Zoom, even though she’s just round the corner – she’s recovering from Covid. She and the others are actually ex-governors: they resigned when they learned that the council expected them to dismiss the school’s staff, Mrs Jones and Miss Williams. “We will not do their dirty work for them,” they said.

They are devastated – and furious. Angry that the closure went ahead during a pandemic, and that it’s happening in the middle of the school year. Angry that none of the initiatives they’ve started – a nursery, parent and toddler group, beach school, a petition with 3,000 signatures (including that

of Bear Grylls, who owns a nearby island) – has succeeded in saving the school. “It just feels like we were walk-on parts in a panto: we had custard pie thrown at us throughout but it’s not really very funny,” says Margot, who has a lovely way with words, even coming out of a laptop.

And they are anxious about what it will mean for their village and their community. “We’ve already lost our bank, our post office, our surgery,” Eifiona says. “There are a lot of second homes, but there is a really strong local community, a strong-willed community, as well.”

It’s been branded Cheshire-by-the-Sea. There are footballers, TV personalities, soap stars, adventurers

Margot worries about the survival of that community, that by taking away the school you lose the mortar that holds it together. “Our parents have been there, we’ve been there, our children have been there, we want our children’s children to go there, and all this has just been lost – that continuity is going to be smashed. It will leave a gaping hole. This community is really in danger of becoming nothing more than a holiday camp.”

She knows that tourism brings jobs and income. “I’ll put my hand up now and say I actually have a holiday let which could have been a home for someone. It’s a struggle to balance that. I justify it by saying that I live here. Any money I earn from it is spent locally ... but is that a bit thin? I don’t know.”

Eifiona points out the irony that a large majority of the councillors are Plaid Cymru, the party aiming for a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Closing a place of learning in Welsh in the centre of one of the most anglicised villages in Wales will have a negative impact on the language there, the ex-governors say.

Cymdeithas yr Iaith, the Welsh language pressure group, is similarly unimpressed. “Gwynedd has the highest percentage of holiday homes in Wales, and as a result, house prices are out of proportion with local wages,” Jeff Smith, chair of Cymdeithas’s sustainable communities group, says over

email. Abersoch, he argues, now faces an additional challenge. By closing the school, the council is “undermining their housing and language policies and abandoning the community”.

Abersoch is lovely. It was once a fishing hamlet; the little harbour where the River Soch reaches the sea opens out on to a golden sandy beach, with an even better one just round the headland. On a clear day, the views stretch from the verdant farmland of the interior of the Llŷn peninsula to the mountains of Snowdonia and across Cardigan Bay all the way to Pembrokeshire. No surprise it’s become such a popular tourist destination.



- A building plot overlooking the main beach in Abersoch.



- Beach huts.

In the media it's been branded Cheshire-by-the-Sea, because of the number of wealthy visitors who come here from there, as well as everywhere else: footballers, football managers, television personalities, soap stars, adventurers, a lord chief justice, captains of industry, and plenty of ordinary folks on holiday.

Walking through the village, there might not be a doctors' surgery, a bank or a post office (there are post office facilities in the Londis), but there are plenty of boutiques, surf shops, ice-cream parlours, cafes and restaurants, including a Mexican one. On a winter day like this, many are empty, and some are closed; there are few people around at all, famous or otherwise. It's a very different story in the summer.

There are two estate agents. One of them doesn't want to talk to the Guardian; perhaps they're a tiny bit embarrassed about having just [sold a beach hut for £191,000](#) (£16,000 over the asking price) when local people can only dream of getting a toe on the property ladder. The other, Rhys

Elvins, is happy to chat. He's just sold a 1960s bungalow overlooking the golf course. It was on for £975,000 and went in two weeks, for £1.01m.

He's got a three-bedroom chalet in The Warren holiday park for just £250k, which sounds like a bargain for around here until you hear it's only a 19-year lease. I'd call that more of an expensive let, and it's a way back from the beach. Even so, everything is going super quick. Perhaps because people haven't been able to go abroad in the pandemic, their outlooks have changed, or they're retiring earlier. The record is £2.95m, for a three-bedroom house, though that one was on the seafront.

Our guide for the unofficial Abersoch real estate tour is Einir Williams. She is Abersoch born and bred – the family farm is on the edge of the village. Einir, a former pupil of Ysgol Abersoch, is the school clerk; she is also secretary to the parish council. She gets to see the planning applications for extensions, demolitions and new buildings.

An empty plot on the way out of the village is where the Whitehouse hotel used to be and where work is due to start this year on a new £30m development. It will be called The Abersoch, a luxury hotel with 42 rooms and suites, a destination restaurant, pool, gym and spa, as well as 18 apartments. Dewi Roberts (Santa Claus from last night, a big supporter of the school and opponent of its closure) says it will provide 40 much-needed jobs for the area, though the people who get these jobs may not be snapping up the flats. They're already being marketed from £675,000 for a two-bedroom flat that won't have a view of the sea, up to £1.65m for a three-bedroom one that will.

Einir takes us round the Benar headland, recently identified as Wales's most expensive street (even though it isn't really a street), where houses cost, on average, £2,152,000. There's a definite look to most of the Benar properties: a lot of glass, a lot of grey, a lot of decking – think Sandbanks meets Big Little Lies. They're probably lovely inside. Einir is not a fan. "It's become a play area for people who come in their flash cars," she says. Not today, though. Again, there's not a soul to be seen.



- The beach hut that sold for £191,000.

Past the yacht club and down on to Abersoch beach, where the beach huts are, with a sold sign on the blue and white one that's just gone for £191,000. It's not even the biggest. It doesn't have water or electricity; it is essentially a very expensive shed.

Einir takes us to another house, in the centre of the village, with a banner hanging from the window: "Nid yw Cymru ar Werth" ("Wales is not for sale"), which, given what we've just been seeing, seems like wishful thinking). This is the house of Anna Jones – again, Abersoch to the core, both a past pupil and past headteacher of the school. She recently had eggs thrown at her home, though she's not sure if it was because of the banner or because it was Halloween. Also present is Wyn Williams, another former pupil, and the previous chair of the governors, as well as a former local councillor.

If the empty grey and glass houses of the headland are what Abersoch will become, sitting around the table in this cosy kitchen, with Anna, Wyn, Einir, and a plate of buttered bara brith, feels like what Abersoch is in

danger of losing. They share memories of the school. Wyn, who was there during the war, remembers the coal-burning stove in the middle of the classroom, and the headteacher, Miss Thomas, who was very strict and had a black book into which went the names of children who misbehaved. “I was in the black book quite often,” he says, not unprudently. Anna, who went as a pupil in 1948, digs out old school photos, including one of her with a severely and unfortunately angled fringe; she’d cut it herself, she remembers.

When Anna went back as headteacher, in 1996, there were 11 children. At the end of her reign, in 2003, it was up to 30. “It has always been like that – a coming and going school,” Einir says. And now it’s going completely.



- From left: former headteacher Anna Jones with former pupils Einir Williams and Wyn Williams.

Wyn doesn’t blame the council, even though he says the process hasn’t been ideal. “Our dear friend Mr [George] Osborne cut local authority budgets by 40%. If you go to any local authority in Wales or England, you’ll find they’re suffering.” And staying with Tory policy but going back further, he

lays plenty of blame on the Thatcher government, in particular [Kenneth Baker's 1988 Education Reform Act](#), which meant parents no longer simply sent their kids to the local school but were allowed to choose, with schools competing for customers like businesses.

They all agree that the closing of the school is linked to second homes, house prices, young families not being able to afford to live here; again Wyn points another finger at Thatcher. “The other thing Mrs Thatcher did was she allowed council houses to be sold, didn’t she?” Last year a former council house [sold for £385,000](#).

Abersoch has always been wealthier than the surrounding area, and that’s all because of the tourists. They first came in the early 1900s, but it was after the war that it really took off as a holiday destination. Anna remembers her mother renting out rooms in the family farmhouse, and cooking for the guests. “That’s the only time I can remember having toast for breakfast. My mother used to cut the crusts off for them and we were allowed to eat the crusts. I enjoyed having them. I learned to speak English – I used to go for rides with some of them.”

Anna wants a clause in her will saying her home will only be sold to locals. And if not? ‘I’ll haunt it’

She changed her mind when her parents started to rent out the whole house over the summer, and Anna and her family moved into a room above the barn. She remembers the mayor of Liverpool coming to stay. “I was very active with the Welsh Language Society. He used to say, ‘I’m only coming for a holiday,’ and I said, ‘Don’t speak to me!’”

Is she still militant, I wonder? “Oh, it’s in here,” she says, holding a hand to her heart. It’s not like the 1980s though, when [Meibion Glyndŵr](#), the Welsh nationalist group, were burning down holiday homes, is it? “It’s surprising how many people I have heard saying it’s about time Meibion Glyndŵr came back,” she says. She tried unsuccessfully to put a clause in her will saying that her house could only be sold to local people. And if it ends up as holiday rental, on Airbnb? “Then I will come back and haunt them.”

Wyn says it's not about hatred: "Everyone relies on the tourist industry." And it's not only the locals who do well out of it. "In the past year, the Senedd in Cardiff has had £6m from Abersoch in stamp duty," he says.



- Top: houses out of season are dark and quiet. Above: an architect-designed house overlooking Abersoch beach and harbour.

There were more than 900 people on the electoral register in Abersoch when Wyn became a councillor in 1995. Now it's down to 568. Of the 30 houses in the street he lives on, only about three are occupied in winter.

"It's dark at night," Einir says. "There's no one living here – it's all second homes."

It's the same story in other parts of Wales, Pembrokeshire, Devon, Cornwall, Ireland, other places in Europe, Wyn says: "They call them the black villages in Finland." But perhaps in Wales, where it's about more than pricing locals out of their homes, and a national language and culture is at stake, it hits a particular nerve.

Jeff Smith of [Cymdeithas](#) points to a rally in Newport in October, when a young woman training to be a teacher told the crowd that she could not afford a house in the village she grew up in or the surrounding area because prices had increased so much.

"The Welsh government has begun discussing emergency measures to tackle the problem of second and holiday homes," he says. "But there is more that the government can do now, such as closing loopholes in the law that allow people to avoid taxes on second homes by registering them as a business." He calls for a property act that – through measures such as changing the definition of affordable housing and controlling rent prices – will "secure a home for everyone".

To Rhyd-y-clafdy, a small village a few miles inland but a world away from Abersoch. Actually, to outside Rhyd-y-clafdy, along a muddy farm track, to one more kitchen, though there's no room for a table here. In the static caravan where Tom Evans and Charlotte Williams live with their five-month-old son Twm and a labrador, also five months, the kitchen doubles as living room, nursery and everything else. Tom, 26, is a plumber, doing his gas apprenticeship (it means at least the caravan has heating); Charlotte, 21, drives a taxi, taking kids who have special needs to school, though she's on maternity leave at the moment.

They'd like to live in Abersoch, but can't afford it. They can't afford to buy, or rent, anywhere around here. "I was brought up here, we've got a kid, we can't live where we want to," Tom says. "And all the holiday homes, people in them a few weekends of the year and six weeks in summer – the rest of the time they're empty, and there are people like us struggling in a caravan."



- Tom Evans and Charlotte Williams inside their caravan.

They have been on a list for a council house for more than a year, but have heard nothing, even since the baby. That's when life got really hard. "There's not enough room for all the baby things," Charlotte says. "I have to sell things as soon as he grows out of them because we haven't got anywhere to keep them. If we have another, we'll have to buy everything again."

Sign up to our Inside Saturday newsletter for an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the making of the magazine's biggest features, as well as a curated list of our weekly highlights.

Tom was working in Manchester before, and had thought of asking Charlotte to move there. “If it was just the two of us, I would’ve considered it,” she says. “But with the baby, I want family around me. I’d like to bring Twm up here.”

Tom thinks the only solution is to build more affordable homes and council houses; otherwise, the situation is going to get worse. “It’s just going to turn people against each other in the end.” They have heard about the £191,000 beach hut. “Sickening,” Tom says. I don’t think they’ll be putting their names down for an apartment at The Abersoch, even one without a sea view.

Back in Abersoch that evening, walking around with the photographer, it looks like Wyn Williams’s black village. There’s a light in one window, then nothing for a couple of houses, then a light in Anna’s house, then more houses in darkness. A housing estate called Cae Du is in near darkness. Is there a power cut? No, because one house’s security light comes on as we pass. Then it goes out again – there’s no one here.

This was once a field on Einir’s farm. Her father sold it, not knowing it would end up as holiday rentals and second homes, empty for much of the year. There may have been a forewarning in the name: *cae du*, she says, means black field.

The following morning, leaving Abersoch, I pass the little wooden school. It must be break time, because in the playground, with its bright pictures of an octopus, a seal and a crab, there are children.

I can see, and hear, the twins, Maisie and Charlotte; and Melissa, Vera and a boy who must be Bobby. They are playing, happily, loudly, in Welsh. It’s lovely, and also very sad. Because by the time you read this, there won’t be children playing there, or learning there, in Abersoch, any more.

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[Television](#)

Interview

Call My Agent!'s Camille Cottin on becoming a sex symbol in her 40s: 'There's a desire to see women who've been invisible'

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)



Camille Cottin: ‘There’s a certain fragility that can emerge from success.’
Photograph: Jean-François Robert/The Guardian. Clothes: [Celine by Hedi Slimane](#)

She stole the show as a ‘female Don Juan’ in the French hit series – then flirted with Villanelle in *Killing Eve*. She talks about breaking out in middle age, and whether it’s OK for a straight actor to keep playing lesbians



Sat 12 Mar 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Mar 2022 15.31 EST

It is a gorgeous late winter's day in Paris, and in a hotel lobby off the Place des Vosges, the picturesque historic square that counts Victor Hugo among its former residents, a sharply dressed concierge asks if I am here to meet Madame Cottin. She guides me to a corner seat by a cosy open fire to wait. It feels very formal, very elegant, very classy.

When Camille Cottin arrives, a few minutes later, she is elegant, too, casual in jeans and a navy blouse, a little nervous, warning me that as we are doing the interview in English, she might ask me to help her find the words. "I feel like I'm expressing myself like an eight-year-old," she says, apologetically, though I should be the one apologising: it quickly becomes apparent that her English is immaculate and utterly precise.

Cottin, 43, has been famous in [France](#) for a number of years now, but during the pandemic she went global. The French comedy-drama *Call My Agent!* (known as *Dix Pour Cent* in France, after the 10% cut that agents take from their clients) found an international audience via Netflix, despite the fact that it was all but over in its home country – though more on that later. Cottin played the agent Andréa Martel, a swaggering, blazer-wearing character whom she describes as a "female Don Juan". The clients Andréa represents are French acting royalty, with stars such as Juliette Binoche, Isabelle Huppert and Sigourney Weaver appearing as heightened versions of themselves. She was the heart of the show, almost as dedicated to seducing women as she was to her job, and much of the series dealt with her failed attempts to find a life/work balance while looking striking in an impossibly chic wardrobe. *Call My Agent!* fans would be hard pressed to describe the tough-but-br brittle Andréa as a massive laugh, but once she warms up, Cottin, goofier and sillier than her most well-known role, definitely is.

Sign up to our Inside Saturday newsletter for an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the making of the magazine's biggest features, as well as a curated list of our weekly highlights.

Why did people love Andréa so much? “Andréa,” she says, “is *super sexy*.” As she says this, she swings her arms out wide with such enthusiasm that she sends her teacup and its contents flying across the table. It is the second time during the interview that she has to ask the waiter for a cloth. She apologises to the expensive-looking couple dining at the table next to us, then collapses on to the sofa, mortified. “I’m sorry! I’m, like, banging things! I was just saying that Andréa is strong, but she’s very clumsy, too.”



With Jodie Comer in *Killing Eve*. Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

It has been a huge few years for Cottin. She has entered what I try calling her Hollywood era. “My Hollywood pop-up?” she suggests instead, drily. She had a small part in the 2016 spy film *Allied*, which starred her friend Marion Cotillard and Brad Pitt. She co-starred with Matt Damon in last year’s thoughtful drama *Stillwater*, and drove a wedge between Adam Driver and Lady Gaga in the epic *House of Gucci*. Is she working her way through a list of Hollywood hunks? “Brad Pitt, done. Matt Damon, done. Adam Driver …” Who’s next? “Do you think I could ask?” she says, with a throaty laugh. “I feel like I’m just entering the room, saying: ‘Hey’ and then it’s done,” she demurs, but the parts are clearly getting bigger.

She is here, officially, to talk about her return to [Killing Eve](#). Cottin first appeared in series three, in 2020, playing the assassin trainer Hélène, who

both taunts and flirts with Jodie Comer's Villanelle. But there is strict secrecy around the show, and she is worried about what she can and can't say. "It's quite funny," she says. "It's very complicated to talk about something you're not allowed to talk about. How can we do this?"

We try vagueness. Cottin has never played an assassin trainer before. "Absolutely not. That is a first." The opening episodes of series four might as well be called Finding Hélène, as they are mostly concerned with tracking her character down. She is full of praise for her co-stars and was thrilled to have the chance of working with Fiona Shaw, whom she calls "the most exquisite person" – though, wary of spoilers, she is careful to say that their two characters in *Killing Eve* merely have a possibility of meeting each other.



'Was I a shy child? Wild would be more precise.' Photograph: Jean-François Robert/The Guardian. Suit: [Acne Studios](#). Jewellery: [Dior](#)

Cottin starred in the short-lived French remake of *Fleabag*, called [Mouche](#), and Shaw tried to introduce her to Phoebe Waller-Bridge, who was in charge of *Killing Eve*'s first season. But it was not to be. "She tried, we missed each other," Cottin says. It may happen yet. "That's still something great, to be lived," as she puts it. She speaks softly and poetically. She hits

on an idea, then talks it through, working out its creases until she is finally satisfied.

Cottin is a native Parisian, born in the Faubourg-Montmartre, and she lives in the city with her husband and two children. In Paris, she explains, the traditional style is navy blue, simple, classic. “But I’m a very big fan of the British fashion, the excess and the eccentricity, how you mix Liberty and leopard print. I really love it.” When she was 12, her family moved to London, where she went to a French school, returning to Paris when she was 17. She soaked up British culture, particularly its music (“Freddie Mercury is my icon”), though admits that, as is the expat way, she mostly hung out with other French people. “That’s one of the things I would change if I could do it again.” She had always wanted to act, but as a teenager was too shy to go to drama classes in London, afraid her English would not be good enough.

Was she a shy child in general? “Wild, would be maybe more precise?” She laughs, then takes a long pause. “I’m trying to figure out the difference between being shy and being wild. I mean, wild, like a wild animal, like not being domesticated. So you can’t really approach the animal. But at the same time, I think I was shy, too, and at the same time, eccentric and over the top.” She found the rules and restrictions of school to be stifling. “In my education, they were like, whoa, whoa, we have to calm this one down.”

Acting allows you to be yourself, by exploring someone else. So which part of me is that woman? That’s the mystery

Cottin’s mother set up a drama club at her daughter’s school in London, where they put on a French play about the Trojan war. Cottin was to play Helen of Troy and she was thrilled about the casting of Paris, the Trojan prince with whom Helen elopes. “I was really happy, because there was this very cute guy one grade above us, who came to the theatre club, and he was going to act Paris.” Two weeks before they were due to perform, the cute guy dropped out. “So guess who acted Paris?” she says. I hold my breath. “*My mum.* I was on stage with my mum, disguised as a sailor. And she was talking in a low voice and holding my hands like my beautiful lover. I wanted to die. Freud would have loved this.”

Amazingly, Cottin was not put off acting. She did the equivalent of a master's degree at the Sorbonne, studying English and American literature and history, and spent much of her 20s doing theatre in Paris. "From my 20s to 35, really," she says. In *Stillwater*, which came out in 2021, she is a woman immersed in fringe theatre in Marseille; it's a role, she says, that is the closest she has played to herself. "Honestly, I did everything. I did a lot of comedies, in rooms with 30 seats, where you enter the theatre and you're there on stage." She did bigger plays, smaller plays, some film and TV in France. Did she think that would be her life? "I was doing some castings, but it never really worked. So after a certain time I thought: 'OK, well, this will never happen. But there are some exciting territories to explore still, even if I never work in cinema and television.' And then it happened."

Cottin's first big breakthrough in France came when she starred in a hidden camera prank show called *Connasse*, in which she sends up the stereotype of a rude Parisian woman by being awful in public. She smokes on a petrol station forecourt; parks in the middle of the road; talks loudly on her phone on the Métro, slating the people around her. As career trajectories go, it's a peculiar beginning, as if Dom Joly went on to co-star with Cate Blanchett. The title is hard to translate. On *The Graham Norton Show*, Cottin opted for "Parisian bitch". "But it's not the same. I think a bitch is somebody taking advantage of people, whereas this girl, she just behaves like she doesn't care about anyone. 'Connasse' is like this street word. It's like the insult that you give to somebody you don't know, who mistreats you, but in an impersonal way." She lowers her voice, for the sake of the diners nearby. "Really, the word comes from 'cunt,'" she says, cheerfully. "So I think it's 'cunt-esse'."



In Call My Agent!. Photograph: Netflix

In 2015, they made a film of Connasse in London called Princess of Hearts, in which Cottin's character tries to track down and marry Prince Harry. She was arrested twice during filming: for climbing the gates of Kensington Palace and walking between the horses during the changing of the guard. She was jailed for two nights and banned from attending the latter for life. "I don't think I'd do it now." Another long pause. "At the same time, I'm telling you this, and *I don't know*. I don't know. Maybe I would. Maybe I would, yeah." Is that your wild streak? "It comes back," she says, with a smile.

After Connasse came Call My Agent!. The raucous story of a talent agency and its roster of stars, it was a slow-burn success. At the beginning, some feared that it would be of interest only to people in the industry, and in the first series recruiting famous guest stars was hard work. But by the second series, celebrities began to understand the joke, and storylines were written to mock stars' public personas: the famously beautiful Monica Bellucci can't find a boyfriend; Charlotte Gainsbourg is stuck doing a terribly arty sci-fi project; Isabelle Huppert sends up her workaholic tendencies.

The Call My Agent! film? I don't think anyone would leave the ship. That would be like not turning up at Christmas

Cottin is often asked if any of the guests made her starstruck and usually she declines to answer. “I always say, look, they were all amazing.” Perhaps it’s because she has chucked her tea all over me, but she decides to name names today. “When I started acting, Isabelle Adjani was it for me. What she did in Camille Claudel, Bonne Nuit, La Reine Margot and Subway … I wasn’t particularly a cinephile, and I have some gaps in my culture. But for me she was a goddess of acting. I remember that I was shaking hands with her, I remember holding her hand, and she has this very tiny voice. And I was like, oh my God. I was moved. A very strong emotion,” she says.

As a lesbian lead character, Andréa was unusual for French television. “And the fact that her sexuality was not an issue was also something very modern,” Cottin says. “The drama was around: can she have a relationship, can she be faithful, can she be domestic, but not: why is she a lesbian? So I think that was something very positive about the show, and very welcomed.” She based Andréa on a real-life agent who, she says, is also “super-sexy”. “And I was a bit influenced, too, by Ally McBeal, this blond girl who is also a lesbian.” Portia de Rossi? “Yes. I remember her long hair and I thought, I like this dichotomy, of having this super feminine hair, and walking in a very grounded and straightforward way, and this blazer, which had a very strict and sharp fit.”



‘I would have loved to go full method in Killing Eve.’ Photograph: Jean-François Robert/The Guardian. Clothes: [Dior](#)

In 2021, the show’s producers announced there would be [a feature-length film and a fifth series](#), which came as a surprise to many fans, who felt the ending had been emphatic. I don’t know what is happening with it, I say. “Me, neither,” Cottin says. “They’re moving step by step. I know they’re working on the film.” Is she involved? “In the writing? No.” In its return? “In principle, yes. I don’t think anyone would leave the ship. You know, that would be like not turning up at Christmas.” Andréa’s ending was a relatively dark one, so she sees it as a chance of redemption. “She was eating the dust. So it could be quite cool if she comes back. Some friends said to me, ‘Andréa is Daenerys. She’s the mother of dragons. What’s happening? She can’t be like this!’ So in a way, it could be interesting that it’s not her last word.”

Such was Call My Agent!‘s success that, inevitably, it is now being remade around the world. She says that in the Turkish version, Andréa will be straight, which saddens her. “I mean, I am more than sad,” she says.

W1A’s John Morton has [adapted the programme for the UK](#), where it will feature cameos from Helena Bonham Carter, Emma Corrin, Kelly Macdonald and Dominic West. Rebecca, loosely modelled on Andréa, will be played by Lydia Leonard. “I have a great trust and faith in the British remake,” Cottin says. “I’m not saying this because you’re British, but I’m a huge fan of British fiction, and TV, and I think you’re doing amazing things.”

Cottin is now a fixture of the Hollywood world that Call My Agent! satirised. She shares a big-time agent with Sigourney Weaver, who guest-starred in the fourth series. In Ridley Scott’s House of Gucci, she plays Paola Franchi, for whom Adam Driver’s Maurizio Gucci leaves Lady Gaga’s Patrizia. Her character arrives on a ski slope, in a fabulous blond wig, and faces off with Gaga over apple strudel. Never has pastry been so dramatic.

The film was famously stuffed with method actors, with [Gaga not breaking character at all](#); she told Cottin that because their characters were enemies, she couldn't talk to her outside their scenes. "She did it in a very lovely way. I didn't know her, but I'd seen the documentary about her. And you can see how she wouldn't be where she is if she wasn't such a hard worker. Very focused. I have a lot of admiration and respect."

Was she ever tempted to go full method herself? "To be honest, I would have loved to do this," she chuckles. "But as a mum, if I come and pick up my children as an assassin trainer? Handing them a croissant and saying: 'Be careful, we're being watched,' pushing them into a black car." She laughs. "I'm kidding. But honestly, I would have loved to do this, because the result is brilliant." She hopes that she and Gaga will meet again, under different circumstances. "I really regret that she's not nominated at the Oscars, because I think she's fantastic."



Photograph: Jean-François Robert/The Guardian. Styling: Chloé Dugast, assisted by Léna Kalfleche. Hair: Perrine Rougemont at Caren Agency. Makeup: Christophe Danchaud at The Wall Group. Suit: [Isabel Marant](#). T-shirt: [Dior](#)

I wonder if finding success in her 30s, then more in her 40s, suits Cottin's personality more than if it had happened in her early 20s. She nods.

“Definitely, because I’m grounded.” She chooses this word deliberately, because her husband is an architect and she likes the metaphor. “I understand how one can lose balance. There’s a certain fragility that can emerge from success, so having built a strong family, and I’m talking about friends also, the people around you, I think it helps.”

Do her children understand her fame? “I think they do. Sometimes they question it. They’re like: ‘Are you more or less famous than [the footballer Kylian] Mbappé?’” She laughs. “I’m like, less, less, less. And I love Marion Cotillard, she’s a good friend of mine. And my son is like: ‘You’re much less famous, aren’t you?’ And I’m like: ‘Much less, yeah.’”

There have been moments when she has worried being older might mean she has less time left in her career. “But I think that’s not true. Being a woman over 40 now in the industry *is* interesting. I think that’s something to keep in mind, rather than thinking, oh, this is a tricky moment.” She mentions the Oscar nominations; apart from Kristen Stewart, the best actress candidates are all over 40. “I think there’s a big demand for creating content and seeing those women of a certain age that have been invisible. There’s a desire for that.”

After *Killing Eve*, Cottin will appear in the biopic *Golda*, as Lou Kaddar, secretary and assistant to the Israeli prime minister Golda Meir, played by Helen Mirren. There has been debate over Mirren’s casting, which some critics have labelled “Jewface”. “I know, I’ve read that,” Cottin nods. “I think [Helen answered](#) in a very, very brilliant and intelligent way, and also respecting the point of view, because that’s definitely an issue of representation.”

There has been a similar discussion about whether gay roles should be played by gay actors. “Well, having played a gay character,” she says, “I had this conversation this morning with a friend, a gay friend, an actor, and we laughed about it. And I said: ‘Maybe they thought, she’s gay, she’s definitely from the community, the only thing is she doesn’t know it.’” She laughs. In *Killing Eve*, Hélène is a lesbian, too. “Yeah. But we were talking about how acting allows you to be yourself, by exploring someone else. So which part of me is that woman? That’s the mystery, and I don’t know until

I explore it and discover it.” She adds that if she had not been able to play Andréa, she would have been “devastated”.

After Golda, Cottin is working on another project, though she can’t say what, for now. She is in the early stages of setting up a production company with a friend, a feminist documentary film-maker, and is reading novels to see which they might adapt. As the table is wiped clean of tea, she gives me a recommendation for a book she is considering working on. Cottin is such a good talker that we have chatted for far longer than we should have.

What would she like to do next, career-wise, I ask? “There are so many things I haven’t done,” she says. Maybe theatre; perhaps perform on stage in London, at long last. She doesn’t skip a beat: “But this time, without my mum!”

Series four of *Killing Eve* is on now on BBC One and iPlayer.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/mar/12/call-my-agents-camille-cottin-on-becoming-a-sex-symbol-in-her-40s-theres-a-desire-to-see-women-who've-been-invisible>

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[Blind date](#)[Life and style](#)

Blind date: ‘I couldn’t hear him chewing – that’s always a good sign’



Photograph: Alicia Canter/the Guardian

David, 42, civil engineer adviser, meets Joanna, 48, education officer

Sat 12 Mar 2022 01.00 EST

Joanna on David



What were you hoping for?

To meet someone who was good company and easy to talk to (and some chemistry would be a bonus). At worst, make a new friend.

First impressions?

Really warm, a tad nervous, but friendly.

What did you talk about?

Travel. Food. Drink. [Dating](#) apps. Work. And what the hell made us sign up for this.

Any awkward moments?

More funny than awkward: he wasn't sure what to order so asked the waitress for her recommendation for nearly every dish.

Good table manners?

I couldn't hear him chewing, that's always a good sign. No complaints.

Best thing about David?

He was really easy to talk to, and his birthday is the day before mine. He also had no problem sharing food.

Would you introduce him to your friends?

Not sure he'd fit in, but yes, I would.

Describe David in three words?

Friendly, chatty, smiley.

What do you think he made of you?

She likes her grub.

Did you go on somewhere?

Only to the train station.

And ... did you kiss?

No.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

Nothing, really. I'd never been on a blind date before, and for a first experience it was pretty painless. David is a genuinely nice guy. I'd maybe have ordered the flatbread just for myself – it was so tasty!

Marks out of 10?

7

Would you meet again?

As friends, for a drink maybe.



David and Joanna on their date

David on Joanna



What were you hoping for?

I was so nervous – I felt like I was going to a job interview. I had no expectations.

First impressions?

Joanna was nice and friendly (thank God).

What did you talk about?

Travelling. Food. Board games. And the restaurant – which was especially nice. I loved the way they presented the food.

Any awkward moments?

I don't think so. If there were any, it was probably because of me.

Good table manners?

No complaints.

Best thing about Joanna?

She was so relaxed, kind and friendly.

Would you introduce her to your friends?

Yes.

Describe Joanna in three words?

Kind, friendly, approachable.

What do you think she made of you?

I have no idea. I hope she enjoyed my company.

Did you go on somewhere?

Unfortunately not. I had to work the next day.

And ... did you kiss?

I gave her a sneaky kiss on the cheek when we left.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

Nothing. Joanna was nice. The food and service at the restaurant were brilliant. The photoshoot was fun.

Marks out of 10?

8

Would you meet again?

As friends, yes.

Q&A

Want to be in Blind date?

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at theguardian.com every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

What questions will I be asked?

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

Can I choose who I match with?

No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

Can I pick the photograph?

No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

What personal details will appear?

Your first name, job and age.

How should I answer?

Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

Will I see the other person's answers?

No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length,

and we may ask you for more details.

Will you find me The One?

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

Can I do it in my home town?

Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

How to apply

Email blind.date@theguardian.com

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

*David and Joanna ate at [26 Grains](#), London SE1. Fancy a blind date?
Email blind.date@theguardian.com*

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/mar/12/blind-date-joanna-david>

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

2022.03.12 - Opinion

- While the Tories dawdle over Russian gas, we have a £28bn plan to make energy cheap – and green
- Cartoon Martin Rowson: the Putinful game
- I've faced a lot of hate. But I didn't realise how much until I saw myself on stage
- Note to Sajid Javid: the idea that my family could have weaned me off cocaine is ridiculous

OpinionEnvironment

While the Tories dawdle over Russian gas, we have a £28bn plan to make energy cheap – and green

[Ed Miliband](#)

Insulating homes and investing in wind and solar are the only solutions to the energy crisis. But Johnson is busy pandering to climate deniers

- [No 10 must not cave in to Tory climate sceptics on fracking, says Ed Miliband](#)



‘The lowest cost fuels available are now wind and solar.’ A wind turbine at Whitelee onshore windfarm in Scotland. Photograph: Andy Buchanan/AFP/Getty Images

Sat 12 Mar 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Mar 2022 10.44 EST

At this perilous moment, we are faced with three interlocking energy crises. An energy security crisis, with the invasion of Ukraine demonstrating to Europe that it must wean itself off Russian gas and oil, and quickly. A price crisis of soaring, sky-high bills. And the climate crisis, which the UN warned just last month is even more advanced and dangerous than we thought.

Some will say we cannot confront all three together. There are voices on the right of politics already growing louder, saying it's necessary to sacrifice or slow down our climate ambitions so we can lock in energy security.

But they are profoundly wrong. Doubling down on fossil fuels, for example, through a fracking-style dash for gas which some on the Conservative benches are proposing, would be a disastrous response to each of these crises.

For starters, what is the quickest way to get us off Russian gas and allow us control over our own energy supply? By pressing ahead with building the 649 onshore wind and solar projects that already have planning permission in the UK. They could come on stream within two years and would fully replace Russian gas imports, but are being held back by the de-facto moratorium imposed by the government in 2015, when it introduced draconian planning restrictions for new windfarms and cut onshore windfarms off from investment in renewables. Fracking would take at least a decade to arrive, as the prime minister was warned this week by his own business secretary, and the average time between new exploration and production in the North Sea is 28 years.

It's the same story on price. The lowest-cost fuels available are now wind and solar. Even before Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent gas prices spiralling further, generating energy from gas was four times more expensive than new solar or wind. And because we operate in an integrated gas market, we pay the same price for gas from domestic sources as we do for imports. Of course, the North Sea will continue to play a role as we transition to net zero, but whatever the level of our domestic supply, it cannot be immune from international price shocks.

Fracking was halted because it was considered too dangerous by Conservative ministers. And on climate, the case the UK made at Cop26 was that the world needed to get off fossil fuels. That is indeed the central challenge of net zero. The idea that reverting to business as usual is somehow consistent with tackling the climate crisis is therefore nonsense.

There is only one way to meet all three crises of security, price and climate together: to not slow down on the drive towards zero carbon, but to turn the current saunter into a sprint.

It is time to finally take seriously the Cinderella of this government's energy policy, which is home insulation and energy efficiency – because the best way of reducing our demand for fossil fuels is to reduce energy demand overall.

Upgrading the 19m cold, draughty British homes would cut energy bills by an average of £400 every year and our gas imports by 15%. But home insulation rates have plummeted over the past decade, and emissions from buildings are as high now as they were in 2015.

We need to push further and faster on every form of renewables. Get rid of the moratorium on onshore wind. Reignite the push towards solar power that I started when I was the energy secretary, but which was stamped out by government policy in 2015. Embrace tidal power and hydrogen.

Finally, nuclear power needs to play a supporting role in the energy mix. The independent [Climate Change Committee](#) says that new nuclear stations are needed to achieve our net zero targets. During my time as the energy secretary, I identified the potential sites for new nuclear plants, but 12 years on the government has not completed any new nuclear stations. We should set a clear deadline on financial close for [Sizewell C](#).

There is no mystery as to why the government has so comprehensively [failed](#) on energy efficiency: it is the product of piecemeal, outsourced and underfunded schemes. We simply cannot achieve energy efficiency and the rapid [switch to heat pumps](#), for example, without substantial public investment.

That investment – as everyone from the OBR to the IMF will tell you – is the responsible economic choice. It is why Labour has committed £6bn a year to energy efficiency over the next decade as part of our groundbreaking £28bn a year climate investment pledge. We don't have time for more of the government's ideologically driven failure, nor their failure to take on the deniers on their backbenches. They play the climate hokey-cokey and we end up with climate delay.

Remember the onshore wind ban was put in by David Cameron in response to unhappy backbenchers. They were no doubt inspired by a guy called Boris Johnson, who said in 2013 that wind turbines wouldn't "pull the skin off a rice pudding" and that fracking was a better answer. The same double-speak cannot be allowed to happen again on the false premise that a new dash for gas through fracking might answer today's challenges.

Fossil fuels are not the answer to a fossil fuel crisis. We need a clean energy sprint to tackle the climate crisis, the cost of living crisis, and our energy security crisis together. This is the route to national energy independence and sovereignty. Business as usual just won't do. The safest route is to go big, go green, go bold and go fast.

- Ed Miliband is the Labour MP for Doncaster North and is the shadow secretary for climate change and net zero
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/12/tories-russian-energy-cheap-green-insulating-homes-wind-solar-boris-johnson>

Guardian Opinion cartoon
Chelsea

Martin Rowson: the Putinful game – cartoon

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/picture/2022/mar/11/martin-rowson-putin-abramovich-chelsea-cartoon>

OpinionPolitics

I've faced a lot of hate. But I didn't realise how much until I saw myself on stage

[Gina Miller](#)



A new play centres on my court case against Theresa May, and my treatment by the Daily Mail. Watching it was painful

- Gina Miller is a transparency campaigner who has won two supreme court cases against the government



Gina Miller and Amara Karan after the premier of Tim Walker's play Bloody Difficult Women, at Riverside Studios, west London, 1 March. Photograph: David M Benett/Dave Benett/Getty Images

Fri 11 Mar 2022 08.33 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 08.36 EST

How would you feel about having the most intimate and dramatic moments of your life put on stage? Would audiences think that this partly fictionalised account was all true? With that weighing heavy on my head and heart, I went to see the opening night of the play [Bloody Difficult Women](#), whose title referred to Theresa May and myself. It was the oddest mix of emotions. The apprehension I felt was almost akin to awaiting a [supreme court verdict](#).

The play was not what I was expecting, and makes the point that May and I have certain things in common. We are both details people, we work hard, our lives have been shaped by difficult experiences, and we have had to make our way in male-dominated worlds: for me, the City and activism; for her, politics.

It also highlighted another similarity: we both recognise that while sticks and stones can break our bones, words and abuse meant to destroy us rarely does. May, when informed about the play that focuses on my [successful](#)

court case against her government – an action aimed at upholding the sovereignty of the UK parliament – was sanguine. She felt no need to demand to see playwright Tim Walker’s script, or to make any attempt to check it for factual accuracy or how she was portrayed.

My attitude was precisely the same, and I think maybe that’s because women have a greater sense of themselves – we have grown accustomed to certain levels of criticism or abuse if we ever put our heads above the parapet. And we both understand the importance of freedom of expression.

It struck me as profoundly ironic therefore that the only real-life character featured in the play to make a fuss about it should be Paul Dacre – who, as editor of the Daily Mail when I began my case in 2016, had his media group’s legal department fire off innumerable letters to its producers demanding to see the script. These were, quite rightly, declined. When I think of some of the appalling things Dacre published about me – even suggesting at one point that, like Joan of Arc, I should be burned at the stake – and the abuse they engendered, I realise this is a man who can dish it out but clearly can’t take it.

Still, on the night I saw the play, I admit it was often very painful seeing my own life enacted on stage. Tim has been a friend of mine for many years – and still is – but I know that as a writer his need to create a dramatically compelling piece would, to some degree, outweigh concerns about my feelings.

His play gets into intensely personal issues about my own life – as it does May’s – which I found very difficult to watch. Somehow seeing your life played out on a stage made the things that happened to me feel more real – especially as I am someone who has survived by refusing to stay down when others have knocked me down. The dramatisation also brought home to me how abhorrent the Daily Mail had been to dig into my family’s past to see if there were any skeletons.



Jessica Turner as Theresa May, and Amara Karan in Bloody Difficult Women at the Riverside Studios. Photograph: Mark Senior

I appreciate a lot of my own backstory – as well as May’s – had to be condensed in a play that runs to only an hour and a half, but I regretted, for instance, that no mention was made of why my parents sent me to Great Britain from British Guyana when I was still a child. My father, the attorney general, had been fighting a dictator and corrupt government, which had made him powerful enemies and put my and my eldest brother’s lives in danger. On a lot of the smaller details, however – my love of cricket and crisps, for instance, and my husband Alan’s penchant for appalling jokes – the play is spot on.

The real eye-opener for me about the play, however, was seeing the portrayal of Dacre in the Daily Mail office as my case got under way, and how I became, so far as he was concerned, an “[enemy of the people](#)”. In this regard, I know the playwright was writing from a position of knowledge – Tim worked for Dacre for 10 years, and present employees of the paper tell me he has captured the essence of the man. The play makes it clear that making my life a misery was all part of a game to him.

After I saw the play, it took a while to process what I had just seen. Several people came up to me and said they had no idea quite what had been going

on behind the scenes during my cases against May's and later [Boris Johnson's governments](#). I had been for them simply this strong woman who had successfully taken two governments to court.

I had a surreal encounter with Amara Karan – the very gifted and generous actor who portrays me in the play – and I was struck by how diligently she had done her research, and how we also had a lot in common. She had worked in the City – as I still do – before she switched careers and went into acting owing to the misogyny she too had encountered. She asked me if I was OK. I gave her a hug.

Ultimately, I would never have wanted a play to be put on about me. I am not sure I would wish the ordeal on anyone. But I accept its heart is in the right place.

For it is important in this week of International Women's Day for society and its institutions to accept that women must not be bullied or intimidated. We have a rightful place in all walks of life, including in positions of power.

Gina Miller is a transparency campaigner and leader of the True and Fair party

[Bloody Difficult Women](#) is running at the Riverside Studios in west London until 26 March

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/11/gina-miller-stage-play-theresa-may-daily-mail>

OpinionDrugs

Note to Sajid Javid: the idea that my family could have weaned me off cocaine is ridiculous

[The Secret Drug Addict](#)

In my experience, close relatives are often the source of the problem. Addicts need the help of NHS professionals to get off drugs



Sajid Javid delivering a speech about healthcare reform at the Royal College of Physicians, London, 8 March. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

Fri 11 Mar 2022 08.22 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 16.57 EST

I recently had a conversation with a mother on Twitter. She was supporting her son by buying him heroin. She loves him and can't stand to see the physical pain he was in as the result of an accident. He was prescribed codeine, a highly addictive opioid that he found himself unable to get off.

When the GP ended his prescription, he was offered methadone by a friend, which then led to him using heroin. A Serco nurse declared him fit to work but he hasn't gone back. He can't stop using heroin. He knows the dangers, he knows it might kill him and no matter how hard his mum tries to wean him off, he can't stop.

Earlier this week, health secretary Sajid Javid [said](#) family members, and not the state, should be responsible for helping people out of drug addiction because of the “unsustainable finances” of the NHS. “Whether it’s stopping drug addiction or dealing with depression, there’s no more powerful motivating force than family,” he said. The fundamental flaw in his statement is that not only that many addicts have no immediate family surrounding them, it is that it is sometimes impossible to reason with a person in active addiction, no matter how detrimental their drug or alcohol misuse is.

I have had issues with most drugs at various points in my life, but especially cocaine, alcohol, benzos and opiates. I spent most of my mid-to-late teens struggling with addiction and, after engaging with different therapies and community drug services, finally became abstinent in June 2007. I managed to stick with recovery because I finally reached a place where a) help was available and b) using drugs as a coping mechanism wasn't working any more. I could no longer delude myself that drugs weren't negatively impacting every area of my life. No family member could have motivated me out of drug addiction: I had to come to accept the problem and then look for a solution. I was also lucky that when I did reach out for help, mental health services were much better funded and I received help promptly. I have since set up the Twitter account, [Secret Drug Addict](#), where I help support and signpost people (including family members of people) struggling with drug addiction to resources that might help them.

Javid is a banker, so presumably he knows about statistics. He seems to have missed the ones that show that between 2013-14 and 2018-19, community drug treatment funding was reduced by £160m. Or the figures that show half of local authorities in England had cut their drug and alcohol treatment budgets in 2019, [despite hospital admissions rising](#). Or the ones

showing that drug deaths are at [an all-time high](#) and that alcohol-related deaths [have risen by more than 20%](#) during the pandemic. There are [fewer under-18s getting help](#) for addiction in England than ever – with youth services being cut by 41% since 2013/14.

Javid said his father stopped smoking simply because his mother told him, “If you die, your boys won’t have a dad.” That is not only unhelpful for many people with a physical dependency on their drug of choice, it’s dangerous.

Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous recorded a surge in the number of people reaching out for support since the pandemic. What these addicts found online was unity and support from a fully functioning, self-supporting structured mutual aid group of recovering alcoholics and addicts. At no point would AA or NA members have advised them to stop using if they were physically dependent on a drug. For some people, it’s not a case of being told “no Special Brew for you, it’s harmful”, as though that were a magic wand. What is helpful is to say, “please contact your GP and reduce safely but keep coming to meetings for support”.

Lots of parents or partners or siblings simply don’t really understand addiction or how to support the person struggling. Sometimes they are the problem. Other times, they will do things that aren’t helpful but are done with the best intentions, usually in a bid to save the person from the consequences that come with active addiction. This is how the mother I spoke to online ended up buying heroin for her son: to stop him being arrested, either by buying the drugs himself or stealing the money or engaging in sex-work to buy them. She thought she was helping him.

I have a close family member currently in long-term psychiatric care for the effects of drug use. He’s younger than me, and even when I was in active addiction, I wanted to save him from himself. When I got into recovery, there was still no getting through to him. Addiction isn’t a career choice, it is an illness. I can’t advise him better, nobody can. He has since been diagnosed with drug-induced personality disorder; he will most likely require psychiatric care for the rest of his life.

If this government is serious about addressing the health crisis surrounding addiction and mental health, it would fund services adequately and address the issues such as poverty, education and insecure social housing that we know make people at higher risk of harm from addiction.

Or maybe ... Javid's mum could tell him to stop slashing drug support services, because it's killing people. It worked for his family, after all.

- The Secret Drug Addict is a recovering drug addict who offers support to anyone affected by addiction issues
 - In the UK, [Action on Addiction](#) is available on 0300 330 0659. In the US, [SAMHSA](#)'s National Helpline is at 800-662-4357. In Australia, the [National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline](#) is at 1800 250 015; families and friends can seek help at [Family Drug Support Australia](#) at 1300 368 186
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/11/sajid-javid-addicts-treatment-family-nhs-drugs>

2022.03.12 - Around the world

- [US Judge blocks Texas from investigating parents of transgender children](#)
- [US Outcry as Georgia lawmakers aim to pass Florida-style ‘don’t say gay’ bill](#)
- [El Salvador Court orders arrest of former president over 1989 priest massacre](#)
- [US The Covid cloud is starting to lift – but two years on, its legacy of grief lingers](#)

[Texas](#)

Judge blocks Texas from investigating parents of transgender children

The halt follows an ACLU lawsuit that accused Greg Abbott of trampling ‘on the constitutional rights of transgender children’



A judge has blocked Texas from investigating parents who provide their transgender children with gender-affirming care. Photograph: Bob Daemmrich/ZUMA Press Wire/REX/Shutterstock

Guardian staff and agencies

Fri 11 Mar 2022 19.38 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 20.54 EST

A [Texas](#) judge has temporarily blocked the state from investigating parents who provide their transgender children with gender-affirming medical treatments, following a hearing in which one state inspector said they were told to pursue parents even when they did not think abuse had occurred.

The temporary halt, issued by a district court judge on Friday, [follows a lawsuit](#) brought by the American Civil Liberties Union against the state's Republican governor, Greg Abbott, who the organization accused of trampling "on the constitutional rights of transgender children, their parents, and professionals who provide vital care to transgender children".

Judge Amy Clark Meachum held a hearing on Friday as she considered a request to temporarily block Abbot's order. Randa Mulanax, an employee of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), was the first witness to testify.

Mulanax said that she has resigned from the department because of concerns about the directive, and said cases involving gender confirming care were being treated differently than others. Mulanax said her agency did not give workers the option to determine a reported case of child abuse involving a transgender child was "priority none" status, meaning it did not merit investigation.

"We had to be investigating these cases," Mulanax testified, adding that she has handed in her resignation notice because she believes the directive is "unethical".

Such investigations could remove trans children from families and jail parents who provide them with procedures.

The hearing is part of pushback by LGBTQ+ groups against conservative politicians' proposals in dozens of US states to criminalize gender-affirming procedures for trans youth in the run up to midterm elections.

Abbott ordered doctors, nurses and teachers to report such care or face criminal penalties.

The ACLU asked Meachum to impose a statewide injunction on investigations by the DFPS into what the civil rights group said was "medically necessary gender-affirming care".

Meachum last week [temporarily blocked](#) an investigation into the parents of a 16-year-old transgender girl, saying it would make them the subject of “an unfounded child abuse investigation”.

Opponents of gender-transitioning procedures say minors are too young to make life-altering decisions about their bodies. Advocates argue that it is crucial care that has been politically weaponized, impacting the mental health of trans youth who suffer a disproportionately high rate of suicide.

More than 60 major US businesses, including Apple and Johnson & Johnson, signed their names to an advertisement that ran in Texas on Friday opposing Abbott’s directive, saying “discrimination is bad for business”.

The DFPS has opened nine child welfare inquiries subject to Abbott’s directive, a spokesman said.

Megan Mooney, a clinical psychologist, said the governor’s directive has caused “outright panic” among mental health professionals and families of transgender youth.

“Parents are terrified that [child protective services] is going to come and question their children, or take them away,” Mooney testified. “Mental health professionals are scared that we’re either violating our standards and professional codes of conduct, or in violation of the law.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/11/texas-judge-blocks-investigations-transgender-rights>

Georgia

Outcry as Georgia lawmakers aim to pass Florida-style ‘don’t say gay’ bill

Legislators introduce bill that would ban discussions of gender identity and sexual orientation in private schools



Demonstrators gather in front of the Florida state capitol on Monday to protest against the so-called ‘don’t say gay’ bill. Photograph: Wilfredo Lee/AP

Gloria Oladipo in New York

@gaoladipo

Fri 11 Mar 2022 10.47 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 11.58 EST

Georgia lawmakers are trying to pass a bill that would ban discussions of gender identity and sexual orientation in private schools, introducing the measure the same day the Florida [senate passed](#) its so-called “don’t say gay” bill.

[Under Georgia's new bill](#), the Common Humanity in Private Education Act, no private school classroom would be able to “promote, compel, or encourage classroom discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity in primary grade levels or in a manner that is not appropriate for the age and developmental stage of the student,” [reported NBC](#).

Proponents of the measure say that it promotes parental rights and inclusion in their children’s education, but LGBTQ+ advocates argue that the bill is another example of attacks on LGBTQ+ youth happening nationwide.

“We know it’s not about parental rights,” said Jeff Graham, the executive director of the LGBTQ advocacy group Georgia Equality, [to NBC](#). “It really is about restricting the activities, participation and learning of children in school.”

Compared to Florida’s bill, Georgia’s measure focuses exclusively on private schools, though critics of the measure have argued that the bill’s wording could also include all publicly funded programs.

While the bill has little chance of passing soon, given how late it was introduced into Georgia’s legislative session, opponents of the bill worry that its introduction now [could energize Republicans](#) ahead of elections in the fall.

Current discussions of the bill could also set the stage for more serious consideration next year.

In addition to Florida and [Georgia](#), several other states have introduced or passed bills in recent months marginalizing LGBTQ+ people.

The Iowa governor, Kim Reynolds, [signed a bill last Thursday](#) that banned trans girls and women from participating in high school and college athletics, despite arguments that the bill was discriminatory and targeted a non-existent problem.

In Tennessee, Republicans advanced legislation on Tuesday that would [ban public schools from using textbooks](#) that “promote, normalize, support or

address LGBT issues or lifestyles” in K-12 classrooms, reported the Associated Press.

Kansas Republicans introduced a bill last month that would make it a class B misdemeanor to teach classroom materials on “homosexuality”, changing the state’s current obscenity laws, [reports NBC](#).

Outside of anti-LGBTQ+ laws targeting school activity, several states have introduced marginalizing laws or directives that prosecute outside of the classroom.

In Texas, the Republican governor, Greg Abbott, instructed the state’s child protection services to [investigate any parents providing their children](#) with gender-affirming care, accusing them of “abuse”.

Tennessee, Iowa and Oklahoma are some of the states currently considering the most pieces of anti-LGBTQ legislation, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, [reported CNN](#).

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/11/georgia-florida-dont-say-gill-bill-legislation>

El Salvador

El Salvador court orders arrest of former president over 1989 priest massacre

Alfredo Cristiani, who left the country in 2021, is accused of knowing of military plans to massacre six Jesuit priests



Former El Salvador president Alfredo Cristiani, pictured at a congressional inquiry in 2021, is facing arrest in relation to the 1989 massacre of six Jesuit priests. Photograph: Rodrigo Sura/EPA

Associated Press

Fri 11 Mar 2022 23.20 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 23.21 EST

A court in [El Salvador](#) has ordered the arrest of former president Alfredo Cristiani in relation to the 1989 massacre of six Jesuit priests and two others by soldiers.

Prosecutors allege that Cristiani knew of the military's plan to eliminate the priests and did nothing to stop them.

On 25 February [charges were filed against Cristiani](#), who was president from 1989 to 1994, and a group of soldiers for alleged involvement in the murders. Cristiani and a former lawmaker, Rodolfo Parker, had been summoned to court on Tuesday, but did not appear.

"There is nothing left but to decree the detention against those persons because they did not appear in court and did not send lawyers," the court's resolution said.

Cristiani left El Salvador in 2021 after appearing before a special congressional panel investigating overpayments to former government officials.

When prosecutors reopened the priests' case, his daughter, Claudia Cristiani, published some photos of her father and said they were in the land of the grandfather, meaning Italy, but it was unknown if he is still there.

In a statement released by his daughter, the former leader denied the allegations.

"The truth is I never knew of the plans they had to commit those killings," Cristiani said. "They never informed me nor asked for my authorization because they knew that I would never have authorized that that Father [Ignacio] Ellacuría or his brothers were harmed."

El Salvador's attorney general's office has accused Cristiani, Parker and a number of former high-ranking military officers of being behind the murders. A general amnesty passed in 1993 during Cristiani's administration had prevented pursuit of those involved in war crimes until it was repealed in 2016.

On 16 November 1989 [an elite commando unit killed the six priests](#) – five Spaniards and one Salvadoran – along with their housekeeper and the

housekeeper's daughter in the priests' residence. The killers tried to make the massacre appear as though it had been carried out by leftist guerrillas.

Nine members of the military were initially put on trial, but a court absolved seven of them. Two officers served short sentences but were released in 1993 under the amnesty.

After the supreme court found the amnesty unconstitutional, a judge ordered one of those officers, Col Guillermo Benavides, back to prison where he remains.

While the case stalled at home, a Spanish court in 2020 [sentenced former Salvadoran Col Inocente Orlando Montano](#) to 133 years for the priests' killings.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/12/el-salvador-court-orders-arrest-of-former-president-over-1989-priest-massacre>

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[US news](#)

The Covid cloud is starting to lift – but two years on, its legacy of grief lingers



Pamela Swan Addison, her husband Martin Addison, and two children Elsie and Graeme. Martin died of Covid early in the pandemic. Composite: Danielle Riley photography, Getty Images

US could be turning the corner on the pandemic, but not if you are one of the many people who has lost loved ones or is suffering post-coronavirus symptoms known as long Covid



[Ed Pilkington](#)
[@edpilkington](#)

Sat 12 Mar 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Mar 2022 03.02 EST

Pamela Swan Addison keeps hearing the same phrases over and over. People are tired. They are tired of wearing masks, tired of getting vaccinations, tired of their lives being disrupted. Addison is tired too. But she's tired of different things. She's tired of listening to people complain about masks and vaccinations and disrupted lives when she knows her life will never be the same again.

She's tired of the inevitable question people ask her whenever they discover her husband Martin died of Covid early in the pandemic aged 44: did he have an underlying health condition? He didn't, as it happens, but why do they have to be so insensitive?

She's tired of the conspiracy theories and fabrications. "One person commented my husband didn't die of Covid, the hospital was paid to lie to

me to inflate the numbers. How could someone say that to a widow who was grieving?"

She's tired of the thought that her husband, a frontline health worker who died in April 2020, has been all but forgotten. He gave his life serving his patients in a New Jersey hospital like a soldier who falls in battle, leaving her to care alone for their two-year-old son Graeme and three-year-old daughter Elsie, but where is the recognition?



Martin Addison and Pamela Swan Addison. Photograph: Pamela Swan Addison

All of this negativity frustrates and saddens her. She set up [a group](#) for young widows and widowers of Covid-19 so that others could share their experiences, and they all say the same things.

"We talk about how ignored we feel, how our kids are the forgotten grievers. People keep saying this disease is not so serious. But it is. It has killed almost a million people."

Two years ago Sars-Cov-2 penetrated the United States, [tentatively at first](#) and then with a terrifying roar. On 11 March 2020 the World Health Organization [declared](#) Covid a pandemic, and two days later Donald Trump

announced a national emergency, adding the memorable disclaimer: “I don’t take responsibility at all.”

Now two years into the global pandemic, hope is in the air that the US might finally be turning the corner. The Omicron surge is abating, mask mandates are being scrapped and vaccination requirements lifted even in Democratic states where public safety stances have been most stringent. Music festivals are being planned this summer with no Covid restrictions.

But the more the Covid cloud appears to be clearing, the more it becomes apparent that the consequences of the virus are likely to stick around. As Addison said, it’s hard to put behind you a disease that has killed almost 1 million people in America alone.

Ashton Verdery, a sociologist at Pennsylvania state university, created with colleagues a bereavement multiplier that estimates how many people in the US have lost a close relative to Covid. Given the paucity of historical demographic data for Hispanic and Asian Americans, they based their calculations on population statistics for white and Black Americans though they are confident their conclusions apply broadly to all US residents.

Verdery was taken aback by the findings. The number affected by Covid bereavement was much larger than he had expected.

Verdery and the team concluded that for every person who dies of Covid in the US there are almost nine people in their immediate kinship group left bereaved. For every grandparent who dies there are on average four grandchildren mourning them, every parent two children, every sibling two brothers or sisters left behind.

Diagram showing for every American who died of Covid, left behind were on average two siblings, two children, four grandchildren, a spouse in every two deaths and a parent in every five deaths.

That amounts to a total pool of Covid bereaved people in the US of about 8.5 million, including almost 4 million Americans who have lost a grandparent and more than 2 million who are grieving the loss of a parent.

Verdery told the Guardian that he had been particularly struck by the large numbers of people who lost a grandparent. “Many children will remember for the rest of their lives that they lost a grandparent in the pandemic.”

The implications are especially acute when children lose a parent – a position that now applies to [more than 200,000](#) under-18s.

“That’s going to have big consequences,” Verdery said. “Children who lose a parent have a greater likelihood of dropping out of school, not attending college, criminal justice involvement, lower earnings and higher mortality in later life.”

[About 8.5m Americans have lost a close family member to Covid.](#)

The US could conceivably be turning the corner on the pandemic, but not if you are one of the many people suffering post-coronavirus symptoms known as long Covid.

There is so much we don’t know about long Covid, not least how many of the almost [80 million people](#) in the US who have been infected with the virus are suffering the most common symptoms of prolonged disease – tiredness, breathing problems, joint or muscle pain, and difficulties with concentrating.

Eric Topol, professor of molecular medicine at Scripps Research in San Diego, said that the number of US residents suffering enduring problems is likely to be more than 10 million. Some of his medical colleagues who contracted the virus in the early days of the pandemic are still very debilitated, he said.

“This is going to be one of the lingering profound results. We are in the dark, we have no idea where this will end. We have no treatment that is effective, and there’s been not nearly enough given the millions of people adversely affected.”

For Topol, the story of the past two years has been that of the extremes of American capability. On the one hand, there is the story of the lightning-fast

development of vaccines, which he calls “historic, momentous, the greatest biomedical triumph yet”.

A [timeline](#) he put together on his Twitter feed makes the point. The Sars-Cov-2 virus was genetically sequenced on 10 January 2020 – two months before Trump announced his “no-responsibility” national emergency.

Five days later the first mRNA vaccine was designed by the US National Institutes of Health in partnership with Moderna. Two months after that a trial began of a vaccine that has proven to be remarkably resilient at withstanding the mutational dexterity of this virulent disease.

Compared with this unparalleled example of scientific speed and ingenuity, Topol despairs at how the vaccines and boosters have been put to use. Or not put to use. “We botched the whole booster program in the US,” he said.



Martin Swan Addison with his two children Elsie and Graeme. Photograph: Pamela Swan Addison

Americans have taken up booster shots at a dramatically lower level than other wealthier countries despite the relative ease with which they can be obtained. The [latest estimate](#) from the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) is that booster coverage is as low as 42%.

Expressed as [a league table of countries](#), the US now ranks 67th for the proportion of its population that is fully vaccinated and 54th for boosters. “We should see those rankings and have a sense of blatant failure,” Topol said. “We had reasons to be the leader in vaccine use and yet we slumped into being a world laggard.”

The consequences of that failure continue to be felt in the US despite the leavening mood. Thousands of Americans are still dying each week, deaths which Topol believes are almost entirely preventable given the efficacy of boosters at mitigating the deadliness of the virus.

He sees the continuing costs of failure too in the [burnout](#) within his profession. “Colleagues are going for early retirement because they can’t take it any more, people are changing careers, we’re losing nurses. It’s palpable, the disenchantment. It’s not just burnout – it’s burnout squared.”

As Topol suggested, the problem is especially acute among nurses. The American Nurses Association [has said it expects](#) more than half a million experienced registered nurses to retire this year, adding to a shortage projected to exceed 1 million.

That leaves a healthcare system whose flaws have been [amply displayed](#) during the pandemic even more vulnerable should the virus mutate again into a new aggressive variant.

Danielle Allen, a Harvard professor and national policy leader on the Covid response, told the Guardian that the pandemic has exposed other fundamental fault-lines that have been festering in American society for the past 50 years. In her new book, [Democracy in the Time of Coronavirus](#), she explores how the country’s flailing approach was in significant part rooted in its gaping wealth inequality.

She notes how at the start of the pandemic affluent Americans retreated to their vacation homes and Zoom bubbles, “much as ancient Romans and early modern British aristocrats used to retreat to villas and country estates in the face of plague”. Meanwhile, low-income workers in essential frontline jobs – large proportions of whom were African American and

Hispanic – were forced to turn up for work in person, prompting Covid case and death rates to match.

That core disparity is reflected in the latest statistics. [KFF reports](#) that two years on the racial gulf in Covid experiences remains huge: when data is age-adjusted it shows that Hispanic, Black, and Native American and Alaska Native people are twice as likely to die from Covid as their white counterparts.

“The pandemic has been an X-ray on who holds power and the vast separation between those elites and everybody else,” Allen said.

Allen recalls vividly the initial shock of the pandemic as it swooped down on her community. “It felt like falling off a cliff with no bungee cord. There was a plunge into hunger, and we had one of the highest mortality rates in the country among older people even though we have one of the crown jewels of biotech right here in Massachusetts.”

That dichotomy spoke volumes to her. “We were one of the richest states in the richest country in the world – and people felt abandoned.”

Abandoned. That’s the word that Allen kept hearing from people describing their plight.

It leads her to draw a highly sobering conclusion in her book, that Covid taught the US a very dark truth about itself: “We don’t know, in conditions of emergency, that we will be OK together.”

Too many people, she argues, “were willing to abandon our elders” to the virus. Too many people were willing to abandon essential workers, young people, people of colour, rural Americans.

For Allen, hard questions hang in the air even as the pall of the pandemic dissipates. The hardest question of all is stated bluntly in her book.

“If, in conditions of emergency, we cannot count on support from one another, then how do the institutions we share together have any legitimacy?”

The waves of Covid grief in America

That's another potential long-term legacy of the virus in the US – its impact on democratic institutions. Around the first anniversary of the pandemic Ashley Quarcoo, a non-resident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment, assessed the situation and came up with some reasons to be cheerful.

In an [article](#) for the Council on Foreign Relations she pointed to new methods of voting, particularly voting by mail, that contributed to a [historic turnout](#) in the 2020 presidential election. She also highlighted the eruption of new forms of civic activism that reached a peak in the summer of protests following the police murder of George Floyd.

“There may be a silver lining that could strengthen US democracy in the longer-term,” she wrote then.

What a difference a year can make. The Guardian went to Quarcoo and asked her whether, on the second anniversary of the pandemic, she was still optimistic.

“There’s been a backlash to the huge election turnout in 2020, with many states passing laws to restrict voting by mail,” she said. “There’s also been a decline in confidence about our election integrity provoked by Donald Trump’s claims of election fraud.”

She still sees residues of the collective activism that the pandemic helped unleash, but there’s less consensus around the search for solutions. “That sense of social solidarity and coming together in the summer of 2020 has given way to mistrust, both about how things work and between citizen and citizen.”

As America scrambles to get back to a “normal” that perhaps never existed, Quarcoo warns that the wounds of these brutal two years run deep. “The social fabric of the US is more brittle, fissures are more deeply exposed and starkly clarified.”

That poses a challenge, she said. She gave it a name: the long Covid of our democracy.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/12/covid-pandemic-two-years-later>

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

Headlines

- Cost of living UK household incomes 'face biggest decline since mid-70s'
- National insurance rise Labour to test Tories with snap debate
- Customs UK faces large EU bill over Chinese imports fraud
- Live International Women's Day marked with events around the world

Cost of living crisis

UK household incomes facing biggest decline since mid-70s, says thinktank

Resolution Foundation warns record-high energy prices amid Ukraine war could lead to hit worth £1,000 per household



Protesters march through Manchester city centre against rising energy prices and an increase in the cost of living last month. Photograph: Jake Lindley/Sopa/Rex/Shutterstock

*[Richard Partington](#) Economics correspondent
[@RJPartington](#)*

Mon 7 Mar 2022 19.01 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Mar 2022 19.03 EST

UK household incomes are on course to collapse by the most since the mid-1970s after Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent energy prices soaring to new highs, a thinktank has said.

The Resolution Foundation said the dramatic increase in global oil and gas prices was forecast to push UK inflation above 8% this spring, causing average incomes across Britain to fall by 4% in the coming financial year – a hit worth £1,000 per household, the biggest annual decline since 1975.

Warning the chancellor, [Rishi Sunak](#), that urgent steps were required to help the poorest families in Britain with soaring living costs, the thinktank said weak wage growth and high inflation were expected to drive more children into poverty.

Inflation in the UK [was already at 5.5%](#) – the highest rate for 30 years – before Vladimir Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine. Now economists are warning that the conflict's [impact on global oil and gas prices](#) will add to inflationary pressures around the world.

Although the UK sources relatively little of its gas supply from Russia – about 5% of its total imports – fears over supply restrictions amid the escalating conflict have driven up global wholesale prices.

Oil prices surged to \$139 a barrel on Monday before falling back to about \$125. UK gas prices rose to 800p a therm before falling to about 600p – still almost triple the price at the start of February.

The Resolution Foundation said UK inflation could therefore peak at 8.3% this spring, or even exceed the 8.4% rate of April 1991, which was the highest level for the measure of the increasing cost of living since 1982.

It said the damage for household incomes would have been bigger without the £350 boost provided by the government's energy support package announced last month. Without taking this into account, analysts at the Bank of America last week had [forecast the biggest drop in living standards since at least 1956](#).

The warning comes as the government prepares to increase the value of working-age benefits and the state pension by 3.1% from April. Over the course of this year, the Resolution Foundation estimated this would mean a real-terms cut in the value of benefits of more than £10bn.

Sign up to the daily Business Today email or follow Guardian Business on Twitter at @BusinessDesk

The thinktank said Sunak needed to take evasive action to protect households from the squeeze. Adam Corlett, the principal economist at the Resolution Foundation, said: “The immediate priority should be for the chancellor to revisit benefits uprating in his upcoming spring statement.”

The chancellor has come under increasing pressure in recent days to use his mini-budget to address the economic impact of the conflict at home and abroad, including from [backbench Conservatives urging a rise in defence spending](#) and trade unions [calling for more humanitarian aid for Ukraine and support for UK workers.](#)

Tom Keatinge, the director of the Centre for Financial Crime and Security Studies at the Royal United Services Institute, told MPs on the Treasury committee on Monday that Sunak needed to provide an urgent update.

“I would like to hear from the chancellor about how he is thinking about the impact of sanctions on the UK economy. It’s clearly a massive issue for the UK. So it would be good to hear how the thoughts around dealing with cost of living crisis. How is that being thought through? I think communicating that soon would be important,” he said.

Retail industry bosses are warning that the squeeze on living standards would hit consumer spending this year, weighing down the UK’s economic recovery from Covid-19.

The British Retail Consortium said on Tuesday total sales rose in February by 6.7% compared with the same month a year earlier, and by 4.9% compared with the same month in 2020 before the pandemic struck, as shoppers returned to the high street after the government relaxed Covid restrictions introduced during the Omicron wave.

However, Helen Dickinson, the chief executive of the consortium, said sales would soon come under pressure. “The future is looking increasingly uncertain, with current demand unlikely to be sustained,” she said. “The cost of living will continue to spiral due to global inflation, increasing

energy bills and the rise in national insurance this spring. With households facing lower disposable income, discretionary spend will be one of the first things to feel the squeeze.”

A Government spokesperson said: “We recognise the pressures people are facing with the cost of living, which is why we’re providing support worth around £20 billion this financial year and next to help.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/08/uk-household-incomes-decline-resolution-foundation-ukraine-conflict-energy-prices>

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

Labour

Labour to test Tories with snap debate on national insurance rise

Opposition move is intended to expose growing unease among Conservatives over cost of living



The shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, said the Tories were ‘hitting workers with a double whammy’. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

*[Jessica Elgot](#)
[@jessicaelgot](#)*

Mon 7 Mar 2022 17.30 EST Last modified on Tue 8 Mar 2022 02.20 EST

Labour will spring a snap debate on cancelling the increase in national insurance contributions (NICs) on Tuesday, warning it will cost the average private sector worker £410 a year, as the opposition tries to exploit Tory divisions.

In new analysis of sluggish wages and the national insurance rise, planned for April, Labour said private sector employees would face a “double whammy”, with employers also passing on the cost of their increased NICs.

The rise, billed as a [health and social care levy](#), was designed to raise £12bn to tackle the post-Covid NHS backlog, as well as funding a longer-term overhaul of social care.

Critics including the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Resolution Foundation have said the rise, set in legislation in the autumn, is disproportionately loaded on to younger and lower-paid workers compared with a rise in income tax.

The vote at Labour’s opposition day debate on Tuesday is intended to expose growing Tory unease over the cost of living crisis, exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Among those who have called for the NICs rise to be delayed are the Cabinet Office minister Jacob Rees-Mogg, the Tory chair of the Treasury select committee, Mel Stride, the foreign affairs select committee chair, Tom Tugendhat, and the former Europe minister David Frost.

The shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, said the UK had been “left exposed to soaring costs and spiralling inflation because of choices the Conservatives have made, and now they’re going to make the cost of living crisis worse, hitting workers with a double whammy from an unfair, terribly timed tax rise”.

She added: “The Conservatives are trapping us in a high-tax, low-growth cycle. They must get behind Labour’s motion tomorrow and halt this tax rise before it’s too late. And they must look again at Labour’s proposal for a one-off windfall tax on oil and gas producers to cut household energy bills by up to £600.”

The draft motion from Labour calls on the government to cancel the planned rise of 1.25 percentage points.

Labour's analysis is based on the conclusions of the Office for Budget Responsibility which found that, in addition to the NICs rise directly levied on employees, 80% of the equivalent increase in employers' contributions would be "passed through to workers via lower nominal wages".

Tory MPs have been privately making the case to the Treasury that the economic circumstances that shaped the NICs rise announced last summer have fundamentally changed, including a bigger than expected increase in energy prices and significant inflation.

In January, Rishi Sunak and Boris Johnson [wrote a joint article](#) vowing to press ahead with the rise, a sign in part that the chancellor feared the prime minister could bend to the demands of Tory MPs while his premiership was under threat over Downing Street lockdown breaches. No 10 has said there are "no plans" to delay the rise. The Treasury has been contacted for comment.

A HM Treasury spokesperson said: "The chancellor has been clear he believes in lower taxes. But we took the tough but responsible decision to introduce the levy that will provide a necessary, permanent source of funding to support the NHS and fix the social care system."

"The levy is fair, with those earning more paying more – and it's right that employers, who benefit from a healthy workforce, contribute so the costs are more widely shared.

"We're providing around £21bn this financial year to help families with the cost of living, including a rise in the National Living Wage, meaning that people working full-time will see a £1,000 increase in annual earnings."

European Union

UK faces large EU bill over Chinese imports fraud

Court rules government failed to fulfil obligation to collect correct amount of customs duties and VAT



The UK remains subject to the jurisdiction of the European court of justice for any breaches of EU law during its time as a member state. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

[Jennifer Rankin](#) and [Daniel Boffey](#) in Brussels

Tue 8 Mar 2022 04.57 ESTFirst published on Tue 8 Mar 2022 03.46 EST

The British government faces paying a hefty charge to the EU after the European court of justice ruled it had been negligent in allowing criminal gangs to flood European markets with cheap Chinese-made clothes and shoes.

Publishing its final ruling on Tuesday, the court concluded that the UK as member state had “failed to fulfil its obligations” under EU law to combat fraud and collect the correct amount of customs duties and VAT on imported Chinese goods. The failures by [HMRC](#) date from 2011 to 2017.

Under the withdrawal agreement signed by Boris Johnson, the UK remains subject to ECJ jurisdiction for any breaches of EU law during its time as a member state. The [European Commission](#) has been seeking since 2018 to force the UK to pay more than €2bn (£1.7bn) in compensation to the EU budget.

The complaint emerged in 2017, when the EU’s anti-fraud office said [British authorities had allowed criminals to evade customs duties by making false claims about clothes and shoes imported from China](#). It found that more than half of all textiles and footwear imported into the UK from China were below “the lowest acceptable prices”.

In a blow to the government, the EU’s highest court upheld the complaint, finding “that the United Kingdom has failed to fulfil its obligations under EU law by failing to apply effective customs control measures or to enter in the accounts the correct amounts of customs duties”.

It also said the British government had failed to provide EU officials with all the necessary information to calculate the amount of money owed.

But it was not a complete victory for the commission, which had claimed a €2.7bn payment from the UK government to cover the EU’s losses. The court said the commission’s calculations had not met the “requisite legal standard” and instructed EU officials to recalculate the losses based on recommendations in the judgment.

The UK cannot appeal against this final verdict but has the right to challenge the commission over how much money it should pay into the EU budget, once a revised bill is published. The British government has also been ordered to pay four-fifths of the commission’s legal costs.

The case emerged after a 2005 decision [championed by the then EU trade commissioner, Peter Mandelson](#), to abolish quotas on textiles and clothing from all World Trade Organization countries, including China. In subsequent years, EU fraud officials became concerned that shell companies were using fake invoices that undervalued Chinese-made clothes and shoes. In 2014, the EU's anti-fraud office launched Operation Snake to check import declarations, which included a method to calculate undervalued goods.

British customs officials declined to use the EU method, arguing it was counterproductive and disproportionate. In court, the UK defence team said its customs officers had done everything required to combat fraud, contending that EU law did not mandate any method to calculate undervalued goods. The government was supported by six member states: Belgium, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Portugal and Slovakia.

The court, however, sided with EU officials, suggesting the UK should have used EU-wide method set out by the bloc's anti-fraud office, Olaf.

In a statement, the court said: "According to Olaf, fraudulent imports were increasing significantly in the United Kingdom on account of the inadequate nature of the checks carried out by the United Kingdom customs authorities, encouraging the shift of fraudulent operations from other member states to the United Kingdom."

A UK government spokesperson said they would consider the judgment and respond in full in due course, adding: "Throughout, we've made the case that we took reasonable and proportionate steps to tackle fraud in question and that the Commission vastly overstated the size and severity of the alleged fraud.

The UK has always and continues to take customs fraud very seriously and evolves its response as new threats emerge."

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

International Women's Day

International Women's Day marked with events around the world – as it happened

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2022/mar/08/international-womens-day-events-around-world-iwd-2022-live>

2022.03.08 - Spotlight

- ['From basic to flamboyant overnight!' The people who transformed their style – in their 50s, 60s and 70s](#)
- [Shamans, Hitler and mutual hatred South Koreans go to polls in rancorous election](#)
- [Picture essay Black Women Photographers on what International Women's Day means to them](#)
- [Going places 10 inspirational female adventurers](#)

Fashion

‘I went from basic to flamboyant overnight!’ The people who transformed their style – in their 50s, 60s and 70s

Growing older can mean getting bolder – so why shouldn’t this be reflected in our clothes? Meet four people who refuse to blend into the background



Arlinda McIntosh. Photograph: Robert Bomgardner; Tewelde Medhin



[Ammar Kalia](#)

Tue 8 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 08.08 EST

Our style evolves as we move through life; trends come and go. When we get older, the phrase “age-appropriate” is suddenly everywhere. But not everyone is content to blend into the bland smart-casual background. Some choose to tear up their old wardrobes for something entirely different.

What is it that prompts people to revolutionise their styles later in life, to swap streetwear for flouncy skirts or trousers for kilts? And how does it feel to disregard the fashion rulebook?

‘Life is a celebration’

Arlinda McIntosh, 64, New Jersey

Throughout my 20s and early 30s in the 80s, I used to wear mainly oversized clothing to hide myself. I would put on leggings and a big T-shirt – things I thought I was supposed to wear, so that onlookers wouldn’t notice anything different about me. I was a married mother working as a receptionist for a cable TV company.



Arlinda before her transformation. Photograph: Courtesy of Arlinda McIntosh

But when my husband and I separated in my early 30s, I started altering and making clothes for friends to supplement my income.

One day, I was walking down the street in New York and I caught myself in a reflection. I noticed what I was wearing and realised that, rather than dressing to avoid being noticed or judged, I needed to dress so that I could enjoy what I saw. If I'm going to style someone else, I have to be proud of what I'm wearing.

I thought: who doesn't love a wedding and the bride walking down the aisle in her big dress? I wanted to wear something that encapsulated that feeling – and nothing would stop me from wearing it every day, since life itself is a celebration.

The clothes I wanted to wear didn't exist, so I started making these big celebratory skirts, some with trains, so I could bring joy to my appearance. I went from basic to flamboyant almost overnight and wore this huge skirt that looks like a wedding skirt to the mall. I loved how I felt as I caught my reflection.

Making and wearing these clothes gave me greater confidence. Eventually, I left my job to become a full-time designer. What's the point of growing older if you're not going to be bold about your decision-making? There's no such thing as young people's clothing or old people's clothing – it is all fabric.

Being a woman of colour aged over 60, you might feel like you have to dress down – to become almost invisible. Not me; I'm very visible. But I do it so I can be visible to me. You have to come into your own boldness and understand that you can do what you want.

'I choose clothes that look nice – I don't worry about gender'

Phil Grosset, 51, York



Phil Grosset.

I used to dress very much in the “off-duty dad” style with ill-fitting jeans, grey T-shirts, plaid shirts and Dr Martens. I was used to blending in – it’s the same sort of look I’d had since I was 18.

In 2020, an internal shift took place. I decided to identify as non-binary. After that, there was no connection between how I felt on the inside and how I presented on the outside.

I began by making small changes publicly – buying tighter-fitting jeans marketed for women and small accessories like bags – then it transformed to wearing sweater dresses, denim jackets, skirts, tights and colourful blouses. Over a few months, my dress changed completely. My wife and friends were so supportive.



Phil before his makeover.

I don't see gender in clothing any more. I choose things that I think look nice and make me feel good without worrying about what gender they're marketed at. Clothes that are marketed to women have so much more choice in their patterns, colours and fabrics – it's made me addicted to colour. I tend to throw on all the clothes I want to wear; eventually, something will match if you try enough combinations.

Gender confusion can be upsetting for a lot of trans and non-binary people, but, if you get to a happier place, there's also some fun in it and something to be celebrated. I expected a bit of hostility when I started dressing like this, but, for the most part, people either don't say anything or they are

friendly and chatty. It's been affirming to realise a lot of people are very tolerant and thoughtful.

Clothing changes the way others view you, but, more importantly, it changes how you feel about yourself. Now that I feel peaceful and comfortable with myself, I absolutely won't go back.

'Be proud of who you are!'

Najate Leklye, 69, Rotterdam



Najate Leklye. Photograph: Courtesy of Meryem Slimani

Growing up in the 60s and 70s in Morocco, I dressed in a hippy style. I was attracted to bright colours and wore bootcut trousers and platform heels, or fitted flowery dresses with uncovered hair. My dress sense was very free.

Around 1980, when I was 27, I moved to Holland to be with my husband. Three years later, I had my daughter and my style remained largely the same. I was teaching Arabic at an elementary school full of migrant children. Most of the women who came to Holland from Morocco at the same time as me came from the villages and they were a lot more traditional, so I stood out because I wasn't wearing a hijab.

A decade later, at 37, my husband and I divorced and I found a connection with religion. Studying the Qur'an became comforting, like finding an anchor. That was when I decided I would wear a hijab. It changed my dress sense entirely.

My clothing had to become more modest – longer and not as tight-fitting. I felt empowered by my choice and my newfound love for my religion. After a few years of dressing for school in my hijab, pantsuits and heels, I began experimenting more with my original love for colour and fabrics. I found a way to have fun with it. I didn't want to feel awkward about it, or like I was hiding. By the time I was 44 or 45, I had found a new way to express myself through fashion.



Najate and her daughter Meryem in 1988. Photograph: Courtesy of Meryem Slimani

My style since has been colourful and comfortable. I wear bright hues and match my hijab with my clothes. Once I retired, I wore more streetwear, too – jeans and sweatpants and sneakers bought by my daughter. It's like I've got back my old sense of style from my 20s. I can be extravagant and outgoing, while still expressing my religion – something that feels rare in fashion, especially for women of colour.

My confidence has always come from within, so my style has evolved as I have evolved as a human being. I never lost my eye for beautiful things and I never worried about what other people thought of me. I wear my clothes; they don't wear me. My mantra is: have fun with what you're wearing, since it's OK to just be proud of who you are.

'I got rid of all my trousers'

Bob, 70, Oban



Bob.

Five years ago, my knee was hit by a car door, causing permanent nerve damage. It made my knee so sensitive to touch that I can no longer wear trousers.

Before the accident, I would have described myself as someone with an ordinary dress sense – jeans, chinos or smart trousers, depending on the occasion, along with shirts and polo shirts. I have never liked standing out in a crowd.

After the accident, I thought about wearing shorts all the time, but when I went out in them in the winter I got rude or flippant comments from people

telling me they didn't realise it was so hot. It made me uncomfortable and anxious.

A friend suggested I wear a kilt. I had one for weddings, but I had never worn it on an ordinary day. I took it with me on a trip I was making with my wife to Edinburgh. I imagined that everybody was staring at me, because people tend not to wear the kilt casually. Yet I noticed that it was a conversation starter, too: strangers would come up to me and mention that I was looking very smart, or that it was good to see someone in a kilt.

It was so comfortable and avoided the awkward problem of dress codes when it comes to dining at nice restaurants or going to smart places abroad. I decided on that trip to buy another kilt. I now have 10, in a mix of tartans.

Even though I felt anxious when I started wearing the kilt, now I wear one almost all the time, since it usually creates so many pleasant interactions with strangers. I'm not always smart on top, either. Not too long ago, I got rid of all my trousers, because there was no point keeping them. In a strange way, being forced to wear the kilt has made me more confident in myself.

'I won't fade into the background'

Faye McNiven, 60, Totnes

My mother had an amazing, fearless sense of style – she wore a kilt with a red baseball jacket and blue trainers when she was in her 70s.

She encouraged me to express myself through clothing, but I was a bit of a tomboy and always found myself wearing jeans and T-shirts in muted blues and blacks. As I got older, I felt as if I was losing myself more and more, receding into the background and blending in.

Like most of us, I found the lockdowns difficult and experienced a lot of anxiety. I was working from home and wearing loungewear until, after six months, I grew fed up and started to re-evaluate how I was dressing and how I wanted to live my life.



‘You don’t have to be invisible’ ... Faye McNiven. Composite: Courtesy of Faye McNiven

I realised that I needed to dress for myself, to embrace colour and be visible to me, just like my mother had shown me before she passed away in 1998. My niece mentioned that I should look into a Yorkshire-based company called [Lucy & Yak](#), which makes bright dungarees and boiler suits, and I immediately fell in love with it. I started building a collection of its clothes – yellow and pink boiler suits, white boots, rainbow T-shirts – and began wearing them every day, since it’s silly to save your best clothes for when you go out.

The effect was almost instantaneous – it really cheered me up. I was in a much more positive frame of mind and felt as if I was being myself. People started talking to me much more, asking where I got my clothes and saying how they were brightening their days. It made coming out of lockdown far less daunting. The whole experience has brought me much closer to a sense of community with the people who live near me.

It’s been liberating not to feel that I need to dress in body-conscious clothes, or in what other people would expect me to wear as a woman. I stopped dyeing my hair as well and have gone grey – it’s all about feeling more comfortable in my own skin.

It's important as a woman who is getting older to get out there and be happy in yourself. You don't have to be invisible. I'm no longer worried about expressing myself through clothing and colour. I am keeping it bright and won't fade into the background as I hit my 60s.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2022/mar/08/i-went-from-basic-to-flamboyant-overnight-the-people-who-transformed-their-style-in-their-50s-60s-and-70s>

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

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[South Korea](#)

Shamans, Hitler and mutual hatred: South Koreans go to polls in rancorous election



Yoon Suk-yeol, the presidential candidate of the main opposition People Power party, waves toward his supporters during a campaign stop in Busan, South Korea. Photograph: Yonhap/EPA

Presidential hopefuls trade insults and fend off allegations of impropriety in race some liken to Squid Game series



[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Tue 8 Mar 2022 04.51 EST Last modified on Wed 9 Mar 2022 00.08 EST

Hitler insults, shamanistic intrigue and some colourful language for good measure. It was always going to be difficult for [South Korea](#) to match the vitriol surrounding Park Geun-hye's dramatic [removal from office](#) five years ago over corruption charges for which she would spend more than three years in prison.

But the campaign leading up to Wednesday's election for the country's next president has given even Park's chaotic exit a run for its money.

The world's 10th-biggest economy is likely to require a period of national reconciliation after weeks of rancour that some have likened to the hit South Korean Netflix series [Squid Game](#), although no one is suggesting the price of failure will come via the barrel of a submachine gun.

Unlike the election's 2017 iteration, when the left-leaning [Moon Jae-in](#) was swept into the presidential Blue House by an electorate enraged by Park's

abuse of power, this week's vote is still too close to call.



A man wears a mask depicting Younghee, a doll from the Netflix series Squid Game, during a rally in Seoul. Photograph: Ahn Young-joon/AP

After two years of the Covid-19 pandemic and rising disquiet over the cost of living – against a backdrop of a [ferocious gender war](#) – Moon's Democratic party heir apparent, Lee Jae-myung, is behind in the polls.

The most recent survey, taken a week before Wednesday's vote, put Yoon Suk-yeol, the conservative challenger from the People Power party, marginally ahead.

The ghosts of Park, the daughter of a former South Korean dictator who in 2012 was elected the country's [first female president](#), appeared early in the current campaign, when Yoon and his wife were accused of having ties to a shamanistic healer who, in return for advice, had been given a decision-making role.

The claims were particularly damaging for Yoon, who, ironically, had been part of the legal team that pursued Park after her impeachment: her downfall began with revelations that she had allowed a longtime friend,

whose late father was the leader of an obscure religious cult, to influence policy.

For a while, some wondered if spiritualism was again going to help determine South Korea's political future.



Lee Jae-myung of the ruling Democratic party gestures to supporters in Seoul. Photograph: Jung Yeon-je/AFP/Getty

Park aside, Kim Dae-jung, who was elected in 1998, reportedly won after moving the location of his father's grave on the advice of a shaman. Media reports claimed that if Yoon was elected, his wife would change the location of the Blue House's guest accommodation, having been told to do so by a shaman.

They are not alone: Yoon Yeo-joon, a former environment minister, suggested it would be easier to count the number of South Korean politicians and business leaders who did not pick up the phone to a trusted shaman before making an important decision.

But by last month, the shamanism row dimmed, amid claims that senior figures in the Democratic party may also have been present at a ritual where Yoon and his wife were reportedly [named as guests](#).

That did not give way to a more civilised campaign, however. Instead, it has been described as a revenge mission by conservatives still loyal to Park, who was [pardoned](#) late last year.



Officials set up a polling station in Gwangju on the eve of the presidential election. Photograph: Yonhap/EPA

“This year’s presidential election has been more overwhelmed by negative campaigning than any other previous election, and the mutual hatred won’t easily die down after the election,” said Choi Jin, the director of the Institute of Presidential Leadership in Seoul.

While voters demand action on skyrocketing house prices in Seoul, stagnant growth and youth unemployment, the two frontrunners have continued to trade insults and fend off allegations of impropriety.

Yoon [accused](#) Lee’s party of using the tactics of Hitler and Mussolini, while Lee’s allies described Yoon as a “dictator” and “an empty can”.

Lee, who is being scrutinised over a suspect land development deal, opened his campaign with an apology for a profanity-laden family phone call and has been dogged by rumours of links to organised crime.

Yoon, meanwhile, has made several gaffes, most recently a “tone deaf” – and now-deleted – tweet about Ukraine that included a tangerine with an angry face drawn on it in an apparent reference to the country’s 2004 Orange revolution.

The Dong-A Ilbo newspaper spoke for many South Korean when it questioned the candidates’ priorities. “Isn’t our national future too bleak with an unpleasant and bitter presidential election that calls for choosing the lesser of two evils?” it asked in a recent editorial.



Voters gather to listen to a speech by Lee Jae-myung during his campaign stop in the south-eastern port city of Busan. Photograph: Yonhap/EPA

Faced with an angry electorate, the worst coronavirus wave of the pandemic and a [North Korea](#) that has rediscovered its penchant for ballistic missile tests, it may be that political reality quickly supersedes campaign acrimony as the winner prepares to take office in early May.

Yet despite promises from Yoon and Lee during a recent TV debate not to launch politically motivated investigations against the defeated candidate, many fear the mud-slinging will continue long after the election.

“We now have an election race like Squid Game, but it will be the new president’s responsibility to pull us out of it,” said Cho Jinman, a professor at Duksung Women’s University in Seoul.

Agencies contributed reporting.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/08/south-korea-presidential-election>

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



Identity: the Nigerian Woman. Photograph: Maryam Turaki

[The Guardian picture essay](#)

Black Women Photographers on what International Women's Day means to them

Identity: the Nigerian Woman. Photograph: Maryam Turaki

We hear from a some of the members of the [Black Women Photographers](#) collective, a group facilitating greater diversity in editorial photography

- [Black Women Photographers #BWPSummit](#), 11-13 March 2022

by [Matt Fidler](#)

Tue 8 Mar 2022 03.19 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 10.03 EST

The [Black Women Photographers](#) collective, established via a Covid-19 relief fund, is approaching its second year of promoting and empowering Black female photographers, as well as increasing the visibility of their work.

In March, [a virtual summit](#) supported by Adobe will feature [Raven B Varona](#), Kimberly Douglas, aka [@kihmberlie](#), [Audrey Woulard](#), [Lola Flash](#), [Lola Akinmade Åkerström](#), [Amanda J Cain](#), NHL's first Black woman team photographer, [Whitney Matewe](#), [DeLovie Kwagala](#), [Cheriss May](#), [Sade Ndyia](#), [Chaya Howell](#) and [Idara Ekpoh](#).



Immaculata Abba

- 2017: My friends Dara and Isioma, who I have known since 2008 in boarding school. This photo was taken at one of our many mini alumni meetups. After spending six years of the most formative parts of our adolescence in a remote school campus – loving, hating and knowing each other – we can say that we come from each other.

Above all else, International Women's Day (IWD) is like all other days: every day I am a woman and every day is my day. But what I appreciate about IWD is that it is usually a call to think more about our identity as women and the boundaries we make or contest around that identity.



- One of my younger sisters, Naya, is a brave and resourceful girl. My father calls her his Amazon. © [Immaculata Abba](#)

Yes, it becomes a marketing gimmick for brands, and I am already dreading the amount of Each for Equal/Choose to Challenge/Break the Bias campaign emails I am about to receive. Notwithstanding, for me, the day becomes a plea and a reminder for us to think more about what it means to be a woman in our various societies. While I understand and appreciate the need to celebrate women's achievements in our misogynistic world, events that reify gender, like IWD, have become opportunities for me to think more about the role of gender. And when I am not in the mood for hard thoughts, IWD is a day to text my mum, aunties, sisters and friends that *clink-clink* emoji because, *chale*, it's not easy being a woman.



- 2021: At a friend's birthday party. © [Immaculata Abba](#)

I am here and alive today because of redemptions I find when I am in community with other women. The way we have learned to stand tall for ourselves, to hold each other when we can't stand, and to tell ourselves the truth about what keeps us from standing ... these are the things that have brought me here.



Taiwo Aina

- Portrait of a woman in her kitchen. This was inspired by the challenges every girl faces when transitioning into a woman.

International Women's Day is an iconic day in which women are celebrated all over the world ... I strongly believe women should be celebrated every day. My mum is a superhero to me, so I dedicate every women's day to her and to other amazing women out there.



- Iyawo Ile Oba (king household wives) in one of their societal forms, whose duty it is to sweep the palace every year. The importance of this is to make the property neat for the festival and also thank God for another celebration year. September 2021. Ile-Ife, Nigeria. © [Taiwo Aina](#)

This photo series is titled Women and Culture and it aims to celebrate women and their connection to our culture. African women contribute greatly to the formation of culture and Yoruba fashion. The value of women in our society cannot be underestimated: they add colours and meaning to our society, homes, and offices.



Tobi Sobowale

- This photo of Christina captures her smile.

To be photographed is a vulnerable act. There is a relationship that is created between myself as the photographer and the women I capture in front of the lens. I am given the opportunity to show their smile, their grace, their strength and their resilience. Today, on International Women's Day, I celebrate every woman who has sat in front of my lens. I say thank you. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to capture part of you.



- This photo of Sindy, snapped in 2021, captures her bright personality.
© [Tobi Sobowale](#)

International Women's Day to me is about recognising the impact of the women you know, know of, and aspire to be like. As I consider this, I am using this day to reflect on the impact that the women I photograph have had on me and my work.



Maryam Turaki

- Hadizah Atta from the series Identity – the Nigerian Woman.

For me, it's a day of recognising women and camaraderie with each other and support. It means unity, it means that women from all over the world can see women do something for their own countries. It means another day for women to be celebrated. I honestly welcome any excuse to celebrate women, especially in this part of the world.



- Hadizah Atta: Identity – The Nigerian Woman. © [Maryam Turaki](#)

Hadizah Atta, a public health specialist: “The word that would best describe my identity is ‘duty’. Duty as first daughter, sister and friend. No one had told me that power could come from sex, that having sex and not feeling bad about yourself is a really strong type of feminism, especially in Nigeria.”



Jacarrea Garraway

- Abuela Hipolita stands proudly in front of her kitchen.

International Women's Day is not just a celebration of the women in our lives but of the women who will come before and after that. Many families and communities are stronger when they have more empowered women within them.



- Hipolita's granddaughter, Annette, holds her child in the family home.
© [Jacarrea Garraway](#)

There are generations of girls and women who deserve this day to acknowledge how vital they are to this society and to each other.



Elizabeth Okoh

- Legacy from my African Diasporan project exploring the bond between mothers and daughters.

International Women's Day to me is a time to celebrate present women, while also honouring the women that have come before me that made an impact to improve the quality of life women experience.



- Yasmin Jamaal posing as Lilian Bader, one of the first Black women to join the British airforce. © [Elizabeth Okoh](#)

It is also a time to reflect on what is yet to be done to achieve equity and an introspection of how I can contribute to the movement in my own unique way.



Esther Sweeney

- A portrait of Ngina, a Kenyan self-love and health advocate.

Every day is women's day to me, however International Women's Day is the day that the whole world gets to acknowledge and celebrate women worldwide. This is the day that we celebrate being women, our impact and contribution to each and every society that we are in and or attached to. International Women's Day also means taking stock on how far we have come with regards to women's rights and assessing the next steps we can take to do better for women across the world.



- Wanjiku Kaniaru, an endometriosis warrior, laughs in between a photography session to celebrate her recovery from surgery. Wanjiku has decided to live her life out loud and encourage other women living with the condition to live their lives to the best of their ability. © [Esther Sweeney](#)
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/mar/08/black-women-photographers-international-womens-day>.

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[United Kingdom holidays](#)

Going places: 10 inspirational female adventurers



Aiming high ... Rhiane Fatinikun (centre) of Black Girls Hike. Photograph: Sebastian Barros

To mark International Women's Day on Tuesday, these great women offer inspiration on how to power up your own adventures

Gemma Bowes

Tue 8 Mar 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 8 Mar 2022 09.51 EST

Rhiane Fatinikun, founder of Black Girls Hike UK

Rhiane launched the non-profit organisation [Black Girls Hike](#) in Bolton in 2019 to create a safe space for Black women to explore the outdoors and connect with nature. It's now a nationwide organisation hosting hikes, training events and activity weekends, and she won a positive role model award for gender at the National Diversity Awards in 2021.

“My most memorable moment so far was our first London event in Epping Forest. We had over 100 women attend, whereas I was used to having just 10 to 15. I genuinely could not believe it. It was so powerful and affirming. Last year we had a column in Stylist magazine, worked with Bear Grylls and did a TEDx talk,” says Rhiane, “and this year we’re launching international trips.”

[@bgh_uk](#), [@rhianesworld](#)

Allie Bailey, ultrarunner, endurance coach and blogger



‘Ultrarunning is for everyone’ ... Allie Bailey

Allie is an [ultrarunner](#) who has crossed Namibia three times, run from coast to coast in Panama, Malta, Scotland and Santorini, and run the entire length of the Outer Hebrides chain. She was a route tester for [Rat Race](#)’s long-distance running trips, but decided to go it alone as a coach after what she describes as “a seismic mental breakdown in 2021”.

Recognising her “extremely dysfunctional and addictive relationship with alcohol” as an extremely fit and functioning alcoholic is something she writes about beautifully with humorous raw honesty. “My mission in life,” says Allie, “is to try to help people, especially women, understand that ultrarunning is for everyone and can be a gateway to a fuller life – it’s not about being the best, it’s about being *your* best.”

“No matter how dark things might seem, there’s light at the end of it – and you get there faster if you put your trainers on.”

alliebailey.co.uk, [@ab_runs](https://twitter.com/@ab_runs)

Rebecca Lowe, human rights journalist and adventure cyclist



Rebecca Lowe en route to Tehran

In July 2015, Rebecca set off on an 11,000km (6,835-mile), year-long solo cycle ride from London to Tehran, through Europe and, among other places, Turkey, Lebanon and Iran, a revelatory journey documented in her new book. “I went to find the Middle East that lay beyond the bombs and burqas of the headlines,” she says, “to explore the historic, political and cultural connections between the region and the west.

“I learned the Middle East is predominantly a warm, sympathetic place, with a generous spirit and pockets of fierce beauty. And the area outside your comfort zone is never as frightening or risky as it appears.”

Rebecca’s book about cycling across the Middle East, [The Slow Road To Tehran](#), is out this month, [@reo_lowe](#)

Sally McGee, surf instructor and brand founder



Surfing the wave ... Sally McGee

Sally is well respected in the surfing world for her inclusive approach. Based in Tynemouth, north-east England, she runs Yonder, a surf school, coaching company and surf brand that is helping to empower a community of surfing women in a region where the scene was slow to develop. A background working with the Red Cross and asylum seekers has perhaps informed her nurturing sensibility. Kicking back against the stereotypical portrayal of female surfers to “change the narrative of female surfing in the UK” is another aim.

Listen to her interview on the excellent [Looking Sideways](#) action sports podcast; [@sallymcgeesurf](https://www.sallymcgeesurf.com), surfyonder.com

Ali Phillips, an outdoors enthusiast who blogs about the Lake District and runs wild swimming trips



‘I just really love where I live’ ... Ali Phillips

Ali’s blogs and Instagram posts about her outdoorsy life in the Lakes are pure joy – all silly leaps into frozen lakes in her bobble hat, big grins on mountaintops and pints in cosy Cumbrian pubs. There are also useful local tips, and hats off to her for making her wild swimming groups pick up litter after their dips.

Ali prides herself on being honest and real, and her unpolished images of a normal woman having fun in the countryside are a refreshing change from the touched-up, bikini-clad perfection often found in the online travel sphere.

“I’ve had women contact me saying they’d never dared to be seen in public in a swimming costume before, but I’d encouraged them. I try not to polish too much; I’m a size 14 and ordinary. I just really love where I live and sharing that, along with a bit of sunshine and positivity.”

girlabout.co.uk, [@alwaysswimmingwild](https://www.instagram.com/alwaysswimmingwild)

Omie Dale, swimming instructor, outdoor swim coach and director of Swimunity



Cold-water fan ... Omie Dale

“What really drives the work I do is spreading the joy of swimming and the joy of being outdoors with others,” says Omie, who was named Swim England’s Swimming Teacher of the Year 2021.

Omie is a host for [Mental Health Swims](#) in London, a free monthly swim meet focused on cold-water immersion, and director of [Swimunity](#), a community interest group that teaches swimming to children and women for free in London. Her work involves getting women and children out of London and into nature, and increasing diversity in the water, enabling people to swim who might not otherwise have taken it up.

“It’s about so much more than just swimming up and down in a pool for hours. Getting outdoors and combining swimming with hikes, beautiful scenery and aquatic activities such as paddle boarding helps get this message across.”

[@swimunity](#). [@omiedale](#)

Rosie Swale Pope, adventurer, runner and author, who at the age of 75 is running from the UK to Kathmandu



Rosie Swale Pope crossing the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul, in 2019.
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Rosie has numerous impressive journeys under her belt, from sailing solo across the Atlantic to running 20,000 miles across the globe, unsupported and carrying her belongings in a cart she towed behind her, after the death of her husband in 2002. She detailed this in her 2009 book Just a Little Run Around the World.

Her current mission, to run from the UK to Kathmandu to raise money for [Phase Worldwide's](#) community charity work in Nepal, has been hindered somewhat not by her age, but by recent events. Setting out in 2018, she reached northern Turkey before the pandemic forced her to return home. Not one to be thwarted, she set off again via a 1,000-mile training run in the UK to Norway, planning to reach Kathmandu via Finland, Russia and China. Illness and the current situation with Russia have just brought her home again. But she won't be here for long, and her next attempt will be live-blogged on her website.

rosieswalepope.co.uk

Sophie Nicholson, skier and ski writer



Sophie Nicholson Photograph: Rachel Keenan/©Rachel Keenan

Yes, there are countless professional female skiers posting about their unbelievable tricks and extreme lines on the world's gnarliest mountains. But what we like about Sophie Nicholson, a skier, runner and sports therapist, is her get up and go attitude and humorous social media posts about her solo adventuring into the backcountry of Scotland's Cairngorms, where she lives.

Running along remote ridges and Highland hikes as well as carrying her skis on her bike to reach untouched Scottish powder feature heavily, along with some painful injury shots.

“When I was younger I really wanted to be a boy as I loved doing things like skateboarding, playing football, and building forts. Back then, gender lines were very traditional and defined.

“As I’ve grown up I’ve continued to make choices that sit slightly out of the mainstream but these days I’m so so happy that I am a woman! The ladies who I am lucky enough to call my friends make my heart swell with pride – whether they have families or are blazing the single trail, all of these women are so inspiring to me – they are capable, resilient, adventurous,

kind, brave and loyal.”

[@snicholson76](#)

Tracy Edwards, sailor and founder of charitable foundation The Maiden Factor, which works to empower girls through education



Tracy Edwards and crewmate Mikaela Von Koskull in the Whitbread Round the World Race in 1989. Photograph: Entertainment Pictures/Alamy

Although her most famous achievement was quite a while back – as a 27-year-old [Tracy Edwards](#) skippered the first all-female crew to sail in the 1989 around-the-world Whitbread race – it has been brought to the attention of a new generation thanks to the incredibly moving film about the feat, [Maiden](#), being added to Netflix’s library in January. Tracy’s determination and skill in the face of sexism in the male-dominated yacht-racing world, and the power of the crew’s female friendships, will have you sobbing by the end, even if you’re a landlubber who gets seasick on canal boats.

Anna Fleming, rock climber, mountaineer, blogger and author



Anna Fleming climbing Shawbost Pillar on the Isle of Lewis. Photograph: Robert Durran

Anna is a young but serious mountain woman, whose adventures climbing in the Scottish mountains – from the Cuillin of Skye and the Cairngorms to the wild seacliffs of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides are inspirational. Her progression over a decade of learning to climb on different rock across the UK is poetically described in her just-released debut book.

Anna says she was hugely inspired by Gwen Moffat, the first ever female mountain guide in the UK, and her book *Space Below My Feet*. “It gave me a real buzz to get out! Now aged 97 and still going strong, Gwen Moffat is an inspiring example.” Anna might just do the same for you.

Anna’s book, *Time on Rock: A Climber’s Route into the Mountains*, is out now; thegranitesea.wordpress.com

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2022/mar/08/10-inspirational-female-adventurers-international-womens-day>.

2022.03.08 - Opinion

- Want to help women on International Women's Day? Let's start by giving all migrants the vote
- Stop moaning about sensitivity readers – if there was diversity in publishing we wouldn't need them
- Boris Johnson's six-point plan for Ukraine turns out to be six vague principles

OpinionPolitics

I know one way to improve women's lives. It involves giving more men the vote

[Zoe Williams](#)



Yes, it sounds like an odd idea for International Women's Day. But bear with me ...



'If your destination is equality and justice, your route is democracy'... the Million Women Rise protest In London last week. Photograph: WIktor Szymonowicz/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

Tue 8 Mar 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 8 Mar 2022 06.33 EST

It's International Women's Day, so of course I find myself reflecting not on the plight of women, but on what I was up to on all previous IWDs. In the 90s, we celebrated it in pubs, because whether or not real women drank pints was one of feminism's critical questions back then. I'm not kidding. It's not even a stupid question – but we can talk about why not some other time.

Most of the 00s was lost to arguing on social media about why there wasn't an International Men's Day (ignoring the boring reality that it's on [19 November](#)), or whether that was every other day of the year.

Then, on what has lodged in my memory as aeons before the pandemic, but was actually the blink of an eye ahead of the first lockdown, I went to Berlin for a panel discussion about what a feminist [Europe](#) would look like. The question made me miserable. We had been wading through the toxic sludge of Brexit for nearly four years, and we had just elected a government of rightwing shysters. Even if we did come up with a blueprint for an

international feminist utopia, Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage would between them probably find a way to yank the UK out of it.

Plus, you almost never see a new idea spawned during a panel discussion in real time. You would be more likely to see a scientific breakthrough on Ready Steady Cook. That was my prejudice; turned out that was just because most panels don't contain enough feminists.

So anyway, I can't remember whose idea this was, between Saboura Naqshband, an academic and co-founder of the Berlin Muslim Feminists Collective, Daphne Bülesbach, vice-president of European Alternatives Berlin, or Prune Antoine, editor-in-chief of Sisters of Europe. All I can say for certain is that it wasn't my idea. I'd arrived with nothing in my head besides goodwill and the aforesaid misery.

It sounds pretty simple in retrospect. There were four basic questions. What were the origins of the women's movement? Universal suffrage. What was its international evolution? As women's voting rights were established, it became a Peace, Land and Bread movement, and still has the campaign against poverty and conflict at its core. What are the pressing issues now? Still poverty and conflict, the displacements they both cause, plus the democratic deficits that land us with the authoritarian governments that create them. How could we loop all that together? With a new suffrage movement for the 21st century, except not for women – many of us, I can't help but notice, already have voting rights – but for migrants.

Everyone had an example of the transformative impact it would have in various elections, if migrants were granted the vote. The Munich mayoral elections were just around the corner, there was something afoot in Barcelona ... I wasn't really listening because, yet again, I'd disappeared down the rabbit hole of our own referendum. What would have happened if the three million EU migrants living in the UK had been able to vote in 2016? We wouldn't be in this mess. What would happen to immigration policy – indeed, the very language around migration – if immigrants were recast as people whose votes you wanted? It might be humane. What would have happened in the 2019 general election if the long-term UK residents whose lives were about to be upended by some blowhard promising to "get Brexit done" had had a say in the matter? He wouldn't now be prime minister.

But these sad counterfactuals weren't really the point. It's just morals, innit? There isn't really a defensible civic agenda in which some people's voices are, in perpetuity, more important than others'. Feminism was mobilised in the crucible of this understanding; if your destination is equality and justice, your route is democracy, as much of it as you can lay your hands on.

You'll notice something counterintuitive about the plan, I'm sure. The idea wasn't "votes for migrant women" but "votes for all migrants". The logical endpoint for International Women's Day would be a unisex campaign, which I do realise will bug the hell out of some people. Happy International Women's Day!

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/08/want-to-help-women-on-international-womens-day-start-by-giving-all-migrants-the-vote>

OpinionPublishing

Stop moaning about sensitivity readers – if there was diversity in publishing we wouldn’t need them

[Juno Dawson](#)



Since 2011, all my book editors have been white. Why wouldn't I want another perspective on the characters I invent?



A woman browsing crime fiction books in Waterstones, Cambridge.
Photograph: Kumar Sriskandan/Alamy

Tue 8 Mar 2022 04.00 EST Last modified on Wed 9 Mar 2022 13.15 EST

Until a few years ago, only publishing industry insiders would have understood the role of the sensitivity reader. Then came [American Dirt](#). The Jeanine Cummins novel sold to a US publisher for a seven-figure advance, was chosen for Oprah's Book Club, and [was touted as](#) "the new Grapes of Wrath". On the book's release in 2020, early readers noted that the white author's depiction of Mexican people was, at best, flawed, inaccurate, and riddled with stereotypes and, at worst, simply racist.

A sensitivity reader is an additional editor who works alongside the publishing house staffer who acquired the rights to your book. This individual will conduct a very specific read of the manuscript, and offer notes on characters from marginalised groups, or elements which may cause offence. The argument goes that if *American Dirt* had been sufficiently scrutinised by a reader of Mexican heritage, some of the furore could have been avoided.

The publishing industry is split over the increased usage of sensitivity readers. [Lionel Shriver said](#) she would rather quit writing than have her

work scrutinised. John Boyne [tweeted](#): “No serious writer would ever allow their work to be so sanitised.” Kate Clanchy claimed sensitivity readers “[sullied my memoir to suit their agenda](#)”, and parted ways with the publisher who employed such professionals.

My background as an author is in young adult fiction, an area in which sensitivity readers are common, especially in the US, so I’m less fazed. I have also been a sensitivity reader, informally. An author friend asked if I’d read his manuscript to check if I felt he’d accurately depicted a transgender character. He mostly had; there were some quirks he’d got wrong, things that only someone who had gone through the grind of gender transition – like me – would be aware of.

I see my job as a giddy, creative game of make-believe in which I spend my office hours imagining what it’s like to be someone who isn’t me. I am a trans, 40-year-old woman from Bradford navigating life on the south coast of England, but I don’t want to exclusively write characters in my own demographic. Through my fiction, I’ve been a Time Lord; a Scot; a fashion model; an oligarch’s daughter and Bloody Mary. It’s all part of the job. However, when I’m writing a character who has experienced oppression, I need to take extra care. When writing my forthcoming adult debut, *Her Majesty’s Royal Coven*, I created a character called Leonie, a mixed-race woman from Leeds. The book is about magic and witchcraft, but it is also a story about women and feminism – and I felt it was odd to pretend race wasn’t an issue in the fictional coven. There were elements of Leonie that were very familiar to me. Like her, I’m from Yorkshire, I’m queer, and I’m an ambitious gobshite. Unlike Leonie, I am white.

So, to the surprise of my UK publisher, I petitioned to get a sensitivity reader. If I was to include Leonie in my book, I wanted to know I had done her, and myself, justice. My publishers agreed so I sent my manuscript to a sensitivity reader, herself a mixed-race woman, and I waited to hear her thoughts. My editor checked in with me to ensure I was ready to hear some things I might not want to hear. Of course, no one wants to think of themselves as bigoted, but if I’d inadvertently written something inaccurate or insulting, I’d much rather know while the book was a Word document and not on the shelves of bookstores. To me it was a no-brainer.

The reader's notes came back and, I stress, I was under no obligation to make changes to the novel, but I did. It was the same sort of feedback I'd given my friend – I'd got a few tiny details wrong and, in one sequence, had actually been a bit snobby about a council estate, which is ironic because I was born on one. Unconscious bias strikes!

There is a bigger issue under the surface of all this. We wouldn't need external editors if the in-house teams at UK publishers were more diverse. I have loved working with every single one of them, but the six UK editors I've had since 2011 have all been cisgender white women from (I'm guessing) quite comfortable backgrounds. Their big bosses, almost exclusively, have been cisgender white men.

I am starting to see a change, and that's a good thing, but for now, I think sensitivity readers are here to stay, and I'd urge authors to welcome them into their process. After all, don't we all want to release our book into the world safe in the knowledge it's as rigorously edited as it can be?

The final word goes to Society of Authors chair, and author, Joanne Harris: "It takes courage for an author to admit they may not have all the answers. (Note: Dickens changed his depiction of Jews after corresponding with one of his Jewish critics, who pointed out antisemitism in Oliver Twist.) In later years, he also went through the text and revised it quite heavily, removing more than 200 of the more extreme antisemitic references, to the disappointment of some of his more antisemitic readers. He showed the capacity to grow. Perhaps that's what makes a great writer."

Juno Dawson is an author and screenwriter

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/08/stop-moaning-sensitivity-readers-diversity-publishing>

The politics sketch**Politics**

Boris Johnson's six-point plan for Ukraine turns out to be six vague principles

[John Crace](#)



PM's plan – already all but forgotten – resembled something a toddler might come up with for a school assembly



Trudeau, Johnson and Rutte: the three amigos stuck to the script – and didn't say much at all. Photograph: Tayfun Salcı/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Mon 7 Mar 2022 14.59 ESTLast modified on Tue 8 Mar 2022 00.14 EST

Over the weekend, we were told that [Boris Johnson](#) had a six-point plan with which he would lead the west to victory over Russia in Ukraine. However, on closer inspection – and on contact with reality – that plan didn't seem to amount to much more than you would expect from a toddler who had been asked to come up with something for a primary school assembly to help other children understand the war. Or something that Gavin Williamson – make that *Sir* Gavin – might have dreamed up.

1: Get humanitarian aid to [Ukraine](#) and be nice to refugees. 2: Support Ukraine's efforts to do whatever Ukraine wants to do. 3: Increase sanctions on Moscow – though not on anyone we quite like, even if they owe their billions to Vlad the Invader. 4: Tell Russia to shut up and go away. 5: Tell Russia to shut up and go away a bit louder if Russia hasn't already shut up and gone away. 6: Try to ensure it never happens again.

And that was it. Just six vague principles, on which anyone could more or less agree, and no metrics by which to measure their success. Certainly

nothing by which The Suspect could claim to be leading the world's response to the Russian invasion. Then again, no one outside the UK is claiming that anyway. And even then, it's only a small number of people inside No 10 and the Boris-friendly media who see Ukraine as a chance to reboot his premiership. To make him look impressive on the world stage and to make the country forget he is unfit for office.

Certainly, the six-point plan appeared to be all but forgotten as Johnson gave a joint press conference with Justin Trudeau, the prime minister of Canada, and Mark Rutte, the prime minister of the Netherlands. As was any sense of the UK leading a western coalition against Russia. If Trudeau and Rutte were in any sense taking their cue from Johnson, it was news to them. Rather, this was, as far as they were concerned, a meeting of equals. Of three leaders fumbling in the dark as they tried to impose rational solutions on an increasingly irrational Russia.

Nor did The Suspect choose to bring up the six-point plan that he had briefed so heavily over the past couple of days in his opening remarks. Probably for the best. In hindsight, even he must see that it's all a bit feeble. Instead Johnson stuck to garbled generalities and platitudes. The international community was almost unanimous in its condemnation and must move together. Putin had underestimated the west and must surely fail. And in the meantime, the UK would be giving Ukraine an extra £175m in humanitarian aid.

Trudeau and Rutte said much the same, though in fewer words. Mercifully. Though Trudeau did twice mention something about the importance of middle-class jobs in the ongoing crisis, before going on to say that Canada would be imposing sanctions on 10 new individuals. This clearly startled Johnson. He sincerely hoped that the new people being targeted were not personal friends of his or philanthropists who had [donated money to the Tory party](#).

Most of the questions focused on the dependence of the west on Russian oil and gas. The three amigos more or less stuck to the same script. Reducing dependence was a good idea, but not every country could move at the same speed. Obviously, no one was going to start an energy crisis in their own country just to help Ukraine. I mean, come on, everyone, get real. Johnson

merely added that he was open to abandoning his commitment to net zero and that [increasing North Sea oil production](#) and starting fracking were not off the cards. Though he didn't seem to be aware that this might not solve the UK's problems as the oil and gas were likely to be sold abroad.

Things got trickier for The Suspect when he was asked about refugee visas and sanctions. On visas, he merely said that the UK wanted to be as generous as possible. Unfortunately, that turned out to be not very generous at all. After all, we had taken loads of Afghan refugees and now the UK was technically full. It was just Ukraine's bad luck. But hopefully the Poles could help out.

On sanctions, the UK was again going the extra mile. It was completely normal for the son of a KGB agent who had done bugger all for the UK [to be granted a peerage](#) after the personal intervention of the prime minister. In any case, it wasn't as if Evgeny Lebedev ever went to the Lords. Or spoke. Or voted. He was a complete waste of space. He just liked to swan around while flunkies called him "Lordski". So, no harm done. He was hardly involved in UK politics at all.

And as for the really bad oligarchs – as opposed to the pretend baddie oligarchs – The Suspect had them in his sights. Any that hadn't been of use to the [Conservatives](#) would now find that they had to declare their beneficial interests in assets within six months rather than 18 months. However awfully inconvenient for them this might be. Somehow Trudeau and Rutte managed to keep a straight face.

It was all rather low-key, as if it had only just dawned on everyone there were no quick fixes on offer. Two weeks ago, Johnson had seen Ukraine's tragedy as an easy shot at personal redemption. Now he was beginning to realise there were strings attached. Tricky choices that would leave him further compromised. Decisions that would cost lives. And personal responsibility isn't The Suspect's strongest suit.

Nor that of his colleagues. In front of the foreign affairs select committee, the foreign secretary, Liz Truss, was putting all the blame for the failure to take more than a handful of refugees on the Home Office. Nothing to do with her, guv. While in the Commons, Priti Patel was insisting that the

Home Office figures of [just 50 refugees allowed in](#) were nothing to do with the Home Office. And that visa staff were in Calais when they weren't. Apart from those on holiday. Then Priti Vacant at least has an excuse. She's not just vicious, she's stupid.

Meanwhile, Ukraine burns and its citizens fight on alone. Just imagine their despair if they ever get wind of Johnson's six-point plan.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/mar/07/boris-johnsons-six-point-plan-for-ukraine-turns-out-to-be-six-vague-principles>

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

2022.03.08 - Around the world

- [Nuclear weapons Satellite images suggest building work at North Korea site for first time since 2018](#)
- [Ageing Scientists rejuvenate tissues in middle-aged mice](#)
- [Australia Sydney floods: two found dead, roads inundated, homes and suburbs across the city swamped](#)
- [Guantánamo Bay Detainee allowed to return to Saudi Arabia after 20 years](#)
- ['Such a good deal' Turkey's trade in counterfeit goods booms, fuelled by falling lira](#)

North Korea

North Korea: satellite images suggest building work at nuclear test site for first time since 2018

Images captured by satellite showed very early signs of activity at the Punggye-ri site



Parts of North Korea's nuclear test site were blown up in Punggye-ri in 2018
Photograph: AP

Reuters

Tue 8 Mar 2022 01.26 EST Last modified on Wed 9 Mar 2022 00.09 EST

Commercial satellite imagery shows construction at North Korea's nuclear testing site for the first time since it was closed in 2018, US-based analysts said on Tuesday, adding to concerns the country could resume testing major weapons.

Images captured by satellite on Friday showed very early signs of activity at the Punggye-ri site, including construction of a new building, repair of another building, and what is possibly some lumber and sawdust, specialists at the California-based James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) said in a report.

“The construction and repair work indicate that North Korea has made some decision about the status of the test site,” the report said.

North Korea tested a record number of missiles in January, including its largest weapon since 2017, and appears to be preparing to launch a spy satellite.



Satellite imagery by Maxar showed three locations in Punggye-ri nuclear testing site where fresh activity had emerged. Photograph: MAXAR

International monitors have also reported the North's main nuclear reactor facility at Yongbyon appears to be in full swing, potentially creating fuel for nuclear weapons.

Punggye-ri has been shuttered since North Korea declared a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear weapons tests in 2018. Leader Kim Jong-un,

however, has said he no longer feels bound by that moratorium with denuclearisation talks stalled since 2019.

At the time, North Korea said it was closing the site's tunnels with explosions, blocking its entrances, and removing all observation facilities, research buildings and security posts. It invited a handful of foreign media to observe the demolition, but refused to allow international inspectors, leading to speculation the facilities could be restored.

In South Korea, where voters will elect a new president on Wednesday, the national security council said on Sunday it was paying particularly close attention to Yongbyon and Punggye-ri, without elaborating.

The CNS analysts said the changes at Punggye-ri occurred only in the past few days, and it is still difficult to conclude what precisely is being built or why.

“One possibility is that North Korea plans to bring the test site back to a state of readiness to resume nuclear explosive testing,” the report said.

The CNS analysts cautioned the test site is many months, if not years, from being ready for new nuclear explosions.

“How long it would take North Korea to resume explosive testing at the site depends on the extent of the damage to the tunnels themselves, something we do not know with confidence,” they wrote in the report. “It is also possible that North Korea will resume nuclear testing at another location.”

Punggye-ri is North Korea’s only known nuclear test site. It conducted six nuclear weapons tests in tunnels at the site from 2006 to 2017. North Korea’s last and largest nuclear test appeared to trigger geological instability that has since caused multiple small earthquakes, but analysts and US intelligence officials have said the site could probably be used again.

A Pentagon spokesperson, Lt Col Marty Meiners declined to comment on matters of intelligence or commercial imagery analysis.

“However, we have been very clear on the threat posed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) missile programs, and our commitment to the defence of the ROK, Japan, and the US homeland, and our commitment to uphold regional peace and stability,” he said, using the initials of the official names of North and South Korea.

The United States says it is open to talks without preconditions, but North Korea says Washington and its allies must first stop their “hostile policies.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/08/north-korea-satellite-images-suggest-building-work-at-nuclear-test-site-for-first-time-since-2018>

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

Science

Ageing reversal: scientists rejuvenate tissues in middle-aged mice

Prospect of medical therapies that rewind clock for humans edges a little closer



A cell biologist at work. The study shows that partial reprogramming may be able to safely rejuvenate tissues. Photograph: Andrew Brookes/Getty Images/Image Source

[Ian Sample](#) Science editor

[@iansample](#)

Mon 7 Mar 2022 18.57 EST Last modified on Tue 8 Mar 2022 00.11 EST

The prospect of medical therapies that rewind the clock on the ageing process has edged a little closer after scientists safely rejuvenated tissues in middle-aged mice.

Researchers in the US treated healthy animals with a form of gene therapy that refreshed older cells, making the animals more youthful according to biological markers that are used to measure the effects of ageing.

Repeating the trick in humans is far from straightforward, but the findings will fuel interest in radical new therapies that aim to slow or reverse the ageing process as a means of tackling age-related diseases such as cancer, brittle bones and Alzheimer's.

"A host of age-related diseases might benefit from this approach," said Heinrich Jasper, a principal fellow and director at the US biotech firm Genentech.



A group of cells seen through a microscope. Photograph: Henrik5000/Getty Images

If the approach can be shown to combat certain health problems, "it would constitute a new therapeutic approach with a significant impact on unmet medical needs at all stages of our life", he added.

The scientists drew on previous work by the Japanese Nobel laureate Prof Shinya Yamanaka, who showed that a mixture of four molecules – known

as Yamanaka factors – can rewind adult cells into youthful stem cells that are capable of forming almost any tissue in the body.

Writing in the journal [Nature Aging](#), the US team led by Jasper and Prof Juan Carlos Izpisua Belmonte at the Salk Institute in California and the San Diego Altos Institute, found that mice who received Yamanaka factors for several months resembled younger animals in many ways, with their skin and kidneys in particular showing signs of rejuvenation.

The experiments showed that rejuvenation was more effective when the therapy was given for a long time – seven to 10 months – starting when the animals were 12 to 15 months old, equivalent to age 35 to 50 in humans. When older animals, equivalent to 80 years old in human terms, were treated for one month, the scientists saw little impact.



Prof Juan Carlos Izpisua Belmonte.

Researchers are cautious about using Yamanaka factors in humans because previous work has shown that fully reprogrammed cells can turn into clumps of cancerous tissue called teratomas.

The latest study shows that partial reprogramming may be able to rejuvenate tissues without such risks, but further hurdles remain. Rather

than using Yamanaka factors to rejuvenate aged humans, many scientists suspect that new drugs will be needed to partially reprogram cells safely and effectively.

“Will this ever find application in humans?” said Dr Tamir Chandra, an expert in the biology of ageing at the University of Edinburgh, who was not involved in the study.

“In theory, biological age reversal or reduction could be possible. However, we are at very early stages where we need to understand the basic science behind it much better.

“Using Yamanaka factors bears the risk of inducing cancer, and unlike mice, humans – due to their lifespan – carry many more mutations at older age, which might already be predisposed to developing into a cancer.

“Research groups are working on timing, dosage and combinations of Yamanaka factors to minimise this risk.

“Now that we know that loss of cell identity and age reversal can be distinct in their trajectories, other groups are trying to find new factors that uncouple the loss of cell identity from the rejuvenation effects.

“The first applications will likely be in tissue that is easily accessible and can be modified outside the body, like blood stem cells.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/mar/07/ageing-reversal-scientists-rejuvenate-tissues-in-middle-aged-mice>

NSW and Queensland floods 2022

Sydney floods: two found dead, roads inundated, homes and suburbs across the city swamped

Streets become rivers amid shocking deluge as Manly Dam spills and Roseville bridge flooded, with evacuation orders covering more than a dozen suburbs

- [Follow our live blog for the latest floods updates](#)
- [Get our free news app; get our morning email briefing](#)

02:22

NSW floods: Sydney inundated by torrential rain with parts of northern beaches evacuated – video

[Caitlin Cassidy](#), [Cait Kelly](#), [Mostafa Rachwani](#) and [Peter Hannam](#)

Tue 8 Mar 2022 03.18 ESTFirst published on Mon 7 Mar 2022 23.28 EST

Tens of thousands of [Sydney](#) residents have been forced from their homes as floods unleashed carnage across Australia's largest city and claimed the lives of a mother and son.

Australia's death toll from the east coast floods rose to 21 on Tuesday as a massive stretch of the New South Wales coast endured dangerous winds and heavy rains, causing landslides and wild surf conditions as the second east coast low in a week moved in.

About 50,000 people were told to leave their homes across NSW including 40,000 residents in more than a dozen Sydney suburbs including the northern beaches.

EROWAL BAY flooding from St Georges Basin this morning. Stay clear of low lying rivers, streams, storm drains and stay safe out there.
□ pic.twitter.com/kwSkXFTxIp

— NSW SES (@NSWSES) [March 8, 2022](#)

Two bodies were discovered in western Sydney on Tuesday morning – a 67-year-old woman and her 34-year-old son from Wentworthville. Their abandoned car was found earlier and their deaths took the NSW toll to eight. Thirteen people have died in Queensland's floods.

The worst of the NSW flooding on Tuesday affected Sydney's northern suburbs and northern beaches. Roseville Bridge, which crosses Middle harbour, was inundated, trapping cars and causing major delays.

From a friend.

Roseville Bridge now. [#SydneyStorm](#) pic.twitter.com/qN2pNykKB1

— Tanya Selak (@GongGasGirl) [March 8, 2022](#)

Residents in low-lying areas below Manly Dam were urged to evacuate as the NSW premier, Dominic Perrottet, warned the dam had begun spilling, potentially affecting about 2,000 people in 800 homes.

The State Emergency Services later amended the order to an evacuation warning as water levels at the dam dropped slightly.

In nearby Dee Why, water up to a metre deep surged down a main thoroughfare.

Pittwater Road becomes Pittwater river with flooding in Dee Why
[#sydneyfloods](#) [#deewhy](#) [#northernbeaches](#)
pic.twitter.com/9E9hFQu91N

— Road Less Travelled (@rdlesstravelled) [March 8, 2022](#)

At Mackellar girls campus in Manly Vale, students watched cars float past the windows in deep water. One parent at the school said her daughter had to wade through water to get out of the school.

“An email was sent about 1pm advising us to pick up kids from Quirk Road,” the parent said. “They were calling kids’ names as we arrived over the loudspeaker to leave.

“Water was over the top of cars and spilling into the bottom levels of the lower blocks. My daughter had to walk through knee-deep water to get out as she was in the hall.”

00:52

Sydney high school students watch car float past classroom in NSW floods – video

There were 64 evacuation orders in place on Tuesday evening from the Kempsey CBD in northern NSW down to the Illawarra region south of Sydney, with a further 17 evacuation warnings affecting another 18,000 people.

Among the latest orders was one for Narrabeen on Sydney’s northern beaches which were being hammered by [hazardous surf that will last into Thursday](#) for a lot of the NSW coast.

The Bureau of Meteorology [updated its warning for damaging winds and heavy rain](#) for an area ranging from near Newcastle southwards towards Bega.

“Damaging winds averaging 60 to 80 km/h with peak gusts of about 110 km/h are possible over the coastal fringes of the Illawarra and [Sydney](#) metropolitan districts this evening,” the BoM said.

Heavy rainfall threatened to cause flash flooding in the southern parts of the Hunter, Sydney metro region, Illawarra and northern parts of the south coast districts, the BoM said. Rainfall totals in the next six hours could be between 70mm and 100 mm.

Sydney itself has had its wettest start to any year, with 821.6mm as of Tuesday morning, well ahead of the nearest rival period in 1956, a Weatherzone meteorologist said. By Tuesday evening, the tally had risen by another 41mm.

Some of Tuesday's heaviest falls were centred on the northern parts of Sydney, with 102mm recorded at Monavale Golf Club in the three hours to 3.30pm. Other big totals included 124mm at Forestville over a six-hour period and 128.5mm at Mosman in a similar timeframe.

Authorities closed many of the main roads surrounding the Georges River in the south-west of the city, including Henry Lawson Drive and Milperra Road, with entire sections of streets completely underwater.

The three major routes into the northern beaches were closed to all traffic, shutting thousands of residents out of the CBD.

Many residents could only watch on as the water swallowed up their homes and cars. Thousands of residents in the south-west were ordered to evacuate on Monday night as heavy rain caused rivers to swell.

The usually bustling Newbridge Road in Sydney's south-west was closed by authorities, with the river having risen up to 3.65 metres earlier on Tuesday, and with the water reaching up to 1.5 metres in homes.

This is the Spit pic.twitter.com/Z2OCeQvHtJ

— Spiney (@spiney21) [March 8, 2022](#)

Angelo Testa and Oliver Bucha were steering their dinghy along their street in Chipping Norton, helping neighbours and transporting supplies.

Testa, a boat broker, said the first level of his parent's home was completely underwater, and that it was the second time in three days their home had flooded.

“We got about a metre and a half of water, it’s the second time in three days, it’s been absolutely crazy,” Testa said. “But it is what it is. Water comes up, then goes down.

“We had a guy walking through last night, with water up to his neck. We picked him up and took him to the end of the street, we’ve had people stuck in their houses, who had initially decided to wait out the flood but found they couldn’t.”

Can’t say I’ve ever taken a boat down Newbridge Road, but here we are. Parts of w/syd completely underwater.
pic.twitter.com/lFHfGNYHoo

— Mostafa Rachwani (@Rachwani91) [March 8, 2022](#)

Anthony Lippis, who lives just off Newbridge Road, said the water came into his home “in a flash”.

“I lost my car, and we didn’t have enough time to save it,” Lippis said. “It’s heartbreaking.

“Every time this happens we need to move everything up a level, and it is exhausting, it’s devastating for everybody.”

The Blue Mountains was declared a natural disaster area as landslips and collapsed roads caused havoc for commuters.

Emu Heights on the Nepean river right now as Blue Mountains is declared a disaster zone. #floods pic.twitter.com/2jcUoDinUL

— Suzanne (Suzie) Smith □□□ (@suzipeep) [March 8, 2022](#)

A BoM spokesperson said the thunderstorms were slow-moving.

“Intense rainfall that may lead to dangerous and life-threatening flash flooding is likely,” they said.

Dean Narramore from the BoM said it had been a “devastating week” for the state, with the conditions not expected to ease until Thursday.

“Both the Hawkesbury River and the Nepean River are in danger of major flooding with many locations experiencing levels equal to or greater than what we saw in March of 2021,” Narramore said.

[#SevereThunderstormWarning](#) updated for [#Intense](#) rainfall that will lead to life threatening flash flooding and possible landslides for parts of northeast [Sydney](#). Full warning here: <https://t.co/YirEXV8NvBpic.twitter.com/588mpfXIsy>

— Bureau of Meteorology, New South Wales (@BOM_NSW) [March 8, 2022](#)

There were 25 flood warnings in place across NSW from the mid-north coast to the south coast, while all but two of the state’s major dams were at 100% capacity.

At Kempsey, the Macleay River was expected to peak at 6.3 metres on Tuesday evening near the major flood level of 6.6 metres.

The last time flood waters reached that level was in the 2013 floods when the river reached 7.1 metres. Other rivers, including the Hawkesbury-Nepean, were flooding at levels exceeding last week and surpassing March 2021.

The Hawkesbury River is now higher at North Richmond and Windsor than it was last week. This is the same swing set. [@abcnews](#) <https://t.co/061Dy7qFcg pic.twitter.com/gR9QQXhMJH>

— Mollie Gorman (@_MollieGorman) [March 8, 2022](#)

At North Richmond, the Hawkesbury River was expected to reach about 14.2 metres on Tuesday evening, with higher rises possible.

The SES had conducted 147 flood rescues in the 24 hours to 4pm on Tuesday with almost 3,000 calls for assistance. Nearly 900 people were in temporary accommodation.

Perrottet said there needed to be “frank assessments” of the state’s disaster mitigation strategies once the severe weather event had subsided.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/mar/08/sydney-floods-nsw-evacuation-orders-flood-manly-dam-spills-roseville-bridge-inundated-road-closures-flooding>.

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

Guantánamo Bay

Guantanamo Bay detainee allowed to return to Saudi Arabia after 20 years

Mohammad Ahmad al-Qahtani was accused of attempting to enter the US to hijack planes in the September 11 attack



The Department of Defense says al-Qahtani was flown back to Saudi Arabia after a review board concluded he could be safely released after 20 years in custody. Photograph: Alex Brandon/AP

Guardian staff and agencies

Mon 7 Mar 2022 20.52 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Mar 2022 20.59 EST

A man accused of attempting to join hijackers in carrying out the September 11 attacks has been repatriated to his home country of Saudi Arabia for mental health treatment after two decades detained at [Guantánamo Bay](#), the US Department of Defense said on Monday.

Mohammad Ahmad al-Qahtani was flown back to [Saudi Arabia](#), to a treatment facility, from the US base in Cuba after a review board including military and intelligence officials concluded he no longer represented a significant threat to US national security, and could be safely released after 20 years in custody.

“The United States appreciates the willingness of Saudi Arabia and other partners to support ongoing US efforts toward a deliberate and thorough process focused on responsibly reducing the detainee population and ultimately closing of the Guantánamo Bay facility,” the statement said.

The 46-year-old prisoner has suffered from mental illness, including schizophrenia, since childhood, according to medical examinations and records obtained by his lawyers. The US dropped plans to try him after a Bush administration legal official concluded he had been tortured at Guantánamo.

According to a Guantánamo detainee profile maintained by the Defense Department, al-Qahtani was trained by al-Qaida and sought unsuccessfully to enter the United States on 4 August 2001 to take part in the 9/11 attacks.

US forces later captured him in Afghanistan and sent him to Guantánamo, where he was subjected to brutal interrogations that the Pentagon legal official in charge of war crimes commissions said amounted to torture.

That treatment included beatings, exposure to extreme temperatures and noise, sleep deprivation and extended solitary confinement. An FBI official in 2002 observed al-Qahtani speaking to nonexistent people, hearing voices and crouching in a corner of his cell while covering himself with a sheet for hours at a time.

“After two decades without trial in US custody, Mohammed will now receive the psychiatric care he has long needed in Saudi Arabia, with the support of his family,” said Ramzi Kassem, a law professor at the City University of New York who represented al-Qahtani with help from students for over a decade. “Keeping him at Guantánamo, where he was tortured, and then repeatedly attempted suicide, would have been a likely death sentence.”

His release leaves 38 prisoners left at the detention center. He is the second released under Joe Biden, who has said he intends to close the facility.

The defense department notified Congress of its intention to transfer al-Qahtani in February, prompting outrage from some Republicans.

Lawyers for al-Qahtani obtained a federal court order in 2020 requiring a medical examination of the prisoner by an independent medical panel, which could have ordered his repatriation under Army regulations if the diagnosis of his doctors was confirmed. The Trump administration contested the order, a legal fight that was dropped under Biden.

The 38 remaining prisoners at Guantánamo include 19 who have been approved for repatriation or resettlement by the review board. There are another 7 who are eligible for review. Ten prisoners face trial by military commission, including five charged with involvement in the September 11 attacks. Their death penalty case has been stalled for years in the pretrial phase.

The remaining two prisoners at the base have been convicted, one of whom, former Maryland resident Majid Khan, is nearing the completion of his sentence under a plea deal.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/07/accused-911-hijacker-repatriated-saudi-arabia>

Turkey

Turkey's trade in counterfeit goods booms, fuelled by falling lira

Value of country's fakes tripled from 2019 to 2020 as it became main source of counterfeit designer clothes stopped at EU borders



Clothes stalls in Istanbul. Photograph: Andia/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

Elif Ince in Istanbul

Tue 8 Mar 2022 00.00 EST

Photos of fake Gucci bags, Louis Vuitton sweatpants and Nike sneakers are flaunted on the social media accounts of a Turkish store with more than 155,000 followers on TikTok. There are thousands of comments under the posts in English, Italian, Bulgarian, Polish, German, Spanish and French.

Turkey is the third biggest exporter of counterfeit products to the EU after China and Hong Kong, according to data on the value of goods seized. Falls in the value of the Turkish lira and the deterioration of the Turkish economy are further fuelling demand as such items become cheaper to traders buying in euros.



Counterfeit shoes for sale in Istanbul. Photograph: Bülent Kılıç/AFP/Getty Images

“Our sales doubled in 2021. It’s such a good deal if you earn in dollars or euros,” the Turkish store owner said. “Foreigners can buy a high-quality replica Nike tracksuit for €30 and resell it for €90 back home.”

A December 2021 [report](#) published by the EU’s intellectual property office (EUIPO) also points to the trend. The value of counterfeits from Turkey more than tripled from 2019 to 2020, reaching nearly €134m (£111m), and Turkey became the main source of fake designer clothing and medicine stopped at EU borders, surpassing China in these categories.

“We see fakes booming when the economy does badly,” said Zeynep Seda Alhas, who specialises in intellectual property rights at Gün + Partners, a law firm in Istanbul representing some of the world’s most famous brands. “The cheap lira has made exporting counterfeits even more profitable.”

She said the number of court-approved raids by the firm on counterfeit producers doubled in 2021 and the number of items it seized almost tripled. In January, it conducted what Alhas called “the biggest raid in Turkey’s history”, confiscating more than 350,000 pairs of fake designer trainers in three Istanbul workshops, some half-finished and all destined to be eventually sent abroad.

“Profits are much higher in counterfeit goods,” Alhas said, explaining that even factories that produce legally for big brands could “turn bad” during times of economic trouble, working extra shifts to produce fakes.

Turkey’s legal exports have also surged during the currency crisis, increasing 33% over the year and reaching \$225bn (£171bn), according to the government-run Turkish Statistical Institute. “There’s no reason why counterfeit goods’ exports would increase any less than legal exports,” said Ümit İzmen, a former chief economist of TÜSİAD, Turkey’s leading business association.

Lost sales cost the EU €83bn a year, according to EUIPO and İzmen says working conditions at underground production facilities are less likely to comply with laws on wages, child labour and health and safety.

“Counterfeiting is generally perceived as a minor offence and not a serious crime,” İzmen said. “But there’s an organised criminal network behind all this. At the very least, you need to bribe someone at every customs point.”

Law firms such as Alhas’s usually hear about big shipments caught by customs officers – mostly in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands – and then try to find the production site in Turkey.

The website of neighbouring Bulgaria’s customs authority is packed with reports of vehicles from Turkey caught with counterfeit goods. In February 2021, hundreds of bottles of counterfeit perfume were found tucked under a passenger seat in a bus, apparently hidden by the driver.

But much gets through. A producer of fake Dsquared2 jeans said there were freight companies in Istanbul that focused on counterfeit exports, filling trucks with fakes surrounded by originals. “They charge extra to transport

fakes, they know people at customs,” he said. “They have built a spider web of networks all over the border.” A 2020 [report](#) by Europol said a criminal group regularly transported large quantities of fake designer clothes from Istanbul to Greece with the help of three customs officers recruited to “facilitate” their activity for years before getting caught.

Alhas said her firm’s investigations team – which includes former law enforcement officers – would spend months looking for the factories that made knockoffs, pretending to be buyers and collecting evidence to present to the courts in order to get permission for a raid. “They work like private detectives,” she said.

But catching fakes was almost impossible when orders were placed online and sent in small parcels by mail, explained Alhas.

“I haven’t had any trouble with the law,” said the owner of the store with the 155,000 TikTok followers, who claimed to send about 300 packages abroad monthly . “I could sell a ton more, but I don’t want to attract attention.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/08/turkey-trade-in-counterfeit-goods-booms-fuelled-by-falling-lira>

Headlines

- [Mental health Teachers ‘buckling under strain’ of pupils’ anxiety and depression](#)
- [School funding Senior teachers will endure long pay freeze under DfE plans, study finds](#)
- [Education National tutoring scheme failing disadvantaged pupils, say MPs](#)

Teaching

Teachers ‘buckling under strain’ of pupils’ mental health crisis

Experts say educators are under-equipped to help children with rising mental health needs



Rates of mental illness in under-18s have risen by half in the last three years. Photograph: Hannah Beier/Reuters

[Denis Campbell](#) Health policy editor

Fri 11 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 01.02 EST

Schools and teachers are “buckling under the strain” of supporting the fast-growing number of schoolchildren developing mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, experts say.

Despite being the people pupils turn to most often when in distress, teachers are hampered in their desire to help by the profession’s widespread lack of training in tackling mental ill-health.

The huge barriers many families in England face getting help for their son or daughter from NHS child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) put pressure on schools, according to a group of education and health experts writing in the journal of the Royal Society of Medicine.

“Children’s burgeoning health needs are not currently being met by the health sector. Schools and teachers provide vital support but they are buckling under the strain of the demands placed on them,” they say.

“The mental health of children and young people in England, and the services designed to support them, are in a dire state,” they add. While rates of mental illness in under-18s have risen by half in the last three years, “provision is nowhere near sufficient to meet need.”

Only one in four of the 500,000 children and young people referred to CAMHS every year receive help as services are stretched, and many are refused care because they are deemed not ill enough.

The authors include Chloe Lowry of the UCL Institute of Education in London, Lisa-Maria Müller and Alison Peacock from the Chartered College of [Teaching](#) and Anant Jani of Heidelberg university’s Institute of Global Health in Germany. Schools should receive funding from the NHS to help them train teachers to cope with rising need, they argue.

Teachers’ detailed knowledge of and regular interaction with their pupils means they are “not only the first port of call when concerns arise, but for many the only port of call”. Children and young people seek help from them more often than from their own family, surveys show. Teachers are regarded, alongside GPs and social workers, as part of the first tier of support in CAMHS.

“It is therefore both astonishing and alarming that teachers in England are not adequately trained for these roles,” the authors write. Only one teacher a school in England receives mental health awareness training.

Despite being tier 1 CAMHS professionals, just 40% of classroom teachers feel equipped to teach children in their class with mental health needs and

only 32% knew which organisations outside the school could help pupils, according to a report for the government in 2016.

“While schools and colleges do all they can for pupils, it remains the case that the lack of support and provision of mental health services for children and young people has been an ongoing problem for many years,” said Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the NEU, the main teaching union. Covid has made the situation worse, she added.

“Workload, lack of external support, inadequate numbers of staff to work on pastoral issues and training are all huge barriers to pupils getting the support they need and should expect.”

Dr Nihara Krause, a consultant clinical psychologist, said teachers need to have specialist mental health services they can refer pupils on to because pupils are displaying ever more complex problems.

“Schools should offer basic mental health training to all staff, have specialist trained teachers, have support for staff to share the challenges they may be facing in their students and themselves, [and] have clear school policies and procedures on steps to take with students presenting with different mental health conditions,” added Krause.

A government spokesperson said: “We are supporting teachers to help children and young people to recover from the emotional impact of the pandemic, including by offering training to senior mental health leads in every state school and college by 2025.

“To support pupils with more complex needs, we have also invested an additional £79m to expand children’s mental health services and accelerate the rollout of mental health support teams, which will give nearly three million children in England access to health experts through school or college by April 2024.”

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

School funding

Senior teachers will endure long pay freeze under DfE plans, study finds

Pay rise for new teachers will come at expense of much lower increases for those with experience



The Institute for Fiscal Studies said an increase in school funding meant there was room for higher pay awards across the board. Photograph: John Birdsall/Alamy

[Richard Adams](#) Education editor

Thu 10 Mar 2022 19.01 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 19.03 EST

Experienced teachers and school leaders in England will continue to endure a decade-long pay freeze if the government's plans for teacher salaries are adopted, according to the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#).

The IFS said long-serving teachers and heads will experience a 14% real-terms cut in their pay going back to 2010, following the below-inflation

increases proposed by the [Department for Education](#) in its submission to the teachers' pay review board.

The analysis comes as [Nadhim Zahawi](#), the education secretary, is to give a keynote speech to the Association of School and College Leaders annual conference on Friday, in which he is to say that support for teachers will be "at the heart" of the forthcoming schools white paper.

The DfE has asked the School Teachers Review Body (STRB) to recommend substantial increases in pay for newly qualified teachers in state schools, allowing starting salaries to rise from about £25,000 to £30,000 in 2024, meeting a commitment in the Conservative party's 2019 election manifesto.

But the IFS found the rise will come at the expense of much lower increases for teachers with more than five years in the classroom or in senior roles. Those teachers instead face a real-terms pay cut of 5% over the next two years.

Luke Sibieta, a research fellow at the IFS, said: "Smaller pay rises of 2%-3% per year for most other teachers are likely to represent real-terms cuts and would follow on from more than a decade of real-terms pay cuts. There is also a risk that the highly unstable geopolitical and economic situation pushes inflation higher still."

The government's proposals work out to a 4% pay rise if applied across the board. But the IFS said that a higher average pay award of 5% for teachers was affordable this year thanks to the rise in school funding from September.

"An increase in school funding of close to £4bn in 2022 means there is room for a higher pay award within planned school budgets. A higher award than that proposed by the government may carry fewer risks than a lower one," Sibieta said.

Zahawi will also announce that he is establishing a new arm's-length body to help teachers and schools design the curriculum and deliver lessons. The new body will repurpose the Oak National Academy, created by a group of teachers and academies to deliver online lessons during the 2020 school closures.

"Instead of each teacher reinventing the wheel, they will be able to access content, for free, that continuously evolves and gets better and better on the back of feedback from teachers across the country – saving time and improving lessons immeasurably," Zahawi will say.

However, the education secretary will be accused of allowing schools and colleges to be "thrown to the wolves" by his decision to restart league tables based on this year's exam results.

Pepe Di'Iasio, president of the Association of School and College Leaders and head teacher of a secondary school in Rotherham, will tell members: "How can it be right to compare the performance of one school or college with another when they have been so differently affected by the pandemic over the last two years?"

A survey of ASCL members found that 80% were opposed to league tables being resumed.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/mar/11/senior-teachers-will-endure-long-pay-freeze-under-dfe-plans-study-finds>

Tutoring

National tutoring scheme failing disadvantaged pupils, say MPs

Consultancy firm Randstad's contract 'must end' unless it delivers learning missed during Covid



MPs criticised the 'spaghetti junction of funding' that makes it difficult for schools to support tutoring programmes. Photograph: John Birdsall/Alamy

[Richard Adams](#) Education editor

Thu 10 Mar 2022 17.00 EST

A national tutoring programme is failing to help the children who need it most, according to MPs, who say ministers should terminate their contract with the consultancy firm running the scheme unless it "shapes up".

A report by the education select committee gives a scathing account of the government's £5bn national tutoring programme (NTP), which aims to help

children in [England](#) catch up on learning missed during the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021.

The MPs criticised the “spaghetti junction of funding” that makes it difficult for schools to support tutoring programmes. But they reserved their sternest criticism for Randstad, the Dutch multinational service provider [given a contract to administer the scheme](#) by the Department for Education (DfE) last year.

The committee says it has “huge concerns” over Randstad’s ability to meet the targets it was set. The NTP is said to have reached just 15% of its overall target so far.

“The NTP is missing its overall target to deliver tuition to 2 million children. When Randstad appeared before us, they were unable to provide us with figures setting out who was accessing the NTP,” the committee said. “If the NTP is not meeting its targets, the [DfE] should terminate its contract with Randstad.”

MPs said the £5bn funding was not being spent wisely. “By not providing support for those most in need, the government risks baking in deepening inequalities between disadvantaged children and their better-off peers.”

Earlier this month, Schools Week [reported](#) that Randstad had removed a requirement to reach 65% of disadvantaged children from its contracts with tutoring providers.

Robert Halfon, the Conservative MP who chairs the education committee, said: “The government must ensure Randstad shapes up, or boot them out. The catch-up programme must be shown to be reaching disadvantaged pupils and this data must be published.”

The DfE said new statistics about the NTP’s operation would be published on Friday.

Bridget Phillipson, the shadow education secretary, said the poor design of the NTP meant ministers were “pouring taxpayers’ money down the drain”.

“Our children have been an afterthought for the Tories throughout the pandemic and are now being neglected in our recovery,” Phillipson said.

Anne Longfield, the former children’s commissioner, said the report showed the government’s response had been “haphazard, unambitious and mired in bureaucracy”, with deprived and vulnerable children at risk of being left further behind.

“It is time to deliver what was promised after schools reopened post-lockdown and make children’s recovery the priority it should be. That should include being prepared to dismiss those who are being paid millions to run a catch-up plan, if that plan is not doing its job,” Longfield said.

Natalie Perera, the chief executive of the Education Policy Institute, said: “The scope and ambition of the government’s wider £5bn catch-up programme continues to fall short of what the evidence tells us is needed. Our research has shown that an education recovery package of £13.5bn is required to support pupils in England.”

A DfE spokesperson said: “We continue to work with Randstad to ensure as many children from all backgrounds – in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds – across the country can benefit from high-quality tutoring and catch up on lost learning.”

Karen Guthrie, Ranstad’s senior programme director for the NTP, said she was “encouraged to see an increase in the number of packages delivered”.

“We are working closely with schools across the country who are best placed to select pupils that need tuition the most. We have been working in partnership with the DfE, schools and tuition partners to look at how we can improve the programme moving forward to best serve the needs of schools,” Guthrie said.

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

2022.03.11 - Spotlight

- ['Running naked with a fake penis' How Simon Rex found redemption playing a washed-up porn star](#)
- [Thailand Backpackers' return brings glimmer of hope for tourism revival](#)
- ['I was a bit of a brat about marriage' Jenny Hval on domesticity, dangerous art and dogs](#)
- [Ukraine Stop Tanks With Books – in pictures](#)

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[Movies](#)

Interview

‘I was running naked with a fake penis’: how Simon Rex found redemption playing a washed-up porn star

[Ryan Gilbey](#)



You sexy thing ... Simon Rex. Photograph: Paul Grandsard/Contour by Getty Images

From comedy rap with Charlie Sheen to a sitcom with Meghan Markle, Rex has had a rollercoaster life. Now, Sean Baker's film Red Rocket has bestowed one quality that eluded him – respect for his acting

Fri 11 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 04.09 EST

What must it be like to have a penis the size of a draught excluder? “I wouldn’t know, dude!” says Simon Rex. The one the actor models in the new comedy Red Rocket, in which he plays a disreputable middle-aged former porn star named Mikey Saber, is in fact a prosthetic. Rex’s actual penis is there for all to see in several porn videos he made as a callow, cocky 18-year-old back in the early 90s. Until this week, though, he was being coy about whether that was really him in Red Rocket’s nude scenes. Now, as he puts it, “the dick is out of the bag”.

Having established that the recording of our video call won’t be uploaded anywhere – “Cos I look like I just got thrown off a balcony,” he says, running a hand through scruffy hair – he relaxes into a chatty, chipper mood. He is speaking from his Los Angeles hotel room on the morning

after he was named best male lead actor at the Independent Spirit awards. Kristen Stewart presented his prize, then looked on admiringly as the 47-year-old reflected on a career that was “in the toilet” before he got the call from Sean Baker, director of [The Florida Project](#), inviting him to come to Texas to make Red Rocket.

That was September 2020, and the film was to be shot guerrilla-style: shoestring budget, Covid restrictions, a skeleton crew of 10, no permits. That seat-of-the-pants scrappiness suits the material. In the opening scene, Mikey arrives in his old Gulf Coast suburb after many years in LA. Battered, bruised and on his uppers, he begs a spot on his ex’s sofa, starts dealing weed, and proceeds to groom a 17-year-old for possible porn stardom.

“When I read the script, I thought: ‘Why is anyone going to care what happens to this guy?’” says Rex, popping a grape in his mouth. “I knew my only job was to get the audience to like him. I had to make him boyish and charming.” This he does in abundance, leavening the character’s toxicity with an indefatigable vim and optimism. It helps that Mikey is often a hapless figure. In one scene, he flees naked down the street in the middle of the night, draught excluder flapping comically. “We were in a very bad neighbourhood in Texas, the cops driving by. I’m sitting in a van at two in the morning, naked except for a robe and a fake dick, going: ‘Is the coast clear?’ It was crazy, man. But it all helped. When you see me running down the street scared, I really was running down the street scared. That wasn’t acting.”



Beaten to the punch ... Rex with Anna Farris in *Scary Movie 4*.
Photograph: Dimension/Allstar

Mikey is a kind of Peter Porn: the stud who never grew up. “Usually in a movie you’re watching a character arc,” says Rex. “They begin somewhere, they change, and that’s what is interesting. But Mikey is going in circles. Not too many movies have a despicable lead character who you root for, but who doesn’t change. We all know this person: we’ve dated them, worked with them. Maybe we *are* them.”

Some even voted for one: Red Rocket is set during the 2016 presidential campaign, with Mikey something of a minor Donald Trump. “They’re both delusional American narcissists. Trump is a byproduct of the problem, which is America and capitalism and greed. It’s not like he came out of a vacuum. Mikey is the same, he just doesn’t have Trump’s success.”

Rex’s performance would be audacious by any measure. Even more remarkably, though, he has done nothing in his decades-long career to suggest he had it in him. A former model, rapper and MTV VJ, he is the missing link between Paris Hilton (he swears they never dated), Meghan Markle (ditto), Adrien Brody (who encouraged him to rap), Mark Ronson (who DJ’d while Rex strutted up and down the catwalks of Paris and Milan) and Charlie Sheen (who took Rex under his wing).

Once you leave your seat at the Hollywood table, it's hard to get it back. It's a small table

He went on to be an agreeable clown in US sitcoms and web series, although quality control has not been his strongest suit. "I wasn't killing it," he says. He was paid handsomely for three instalments of the execrable [Scary Movie](#) franchise, where slapstick was his stock in trade: he gets kicked in the balls by an alien, throws a small child into a ceiling fan, and tries to rouse a corpse in an open casket, having misunderstood the word "wake". In [The Karate Dog](#), from 2005, he teams up with a computer-animated mutt; they pee side-by-side at a urinal. In one of his last gigs prior to Red Rocket, he is the green-haired villain Dark Jokester in the Marvel parody [Avengers of Justice: Farce Wars](#); other characters include "Tony Starch" and "Beaverine".

Did he ever suspect he was capable of something as good as Red Rocket? "Yes," he shoots back. "I always believed in myself, but I don't think anyone else saw it in me. You're so lucky in this town to get a shitty bad job. The phone just wasn't ringing." That has changed now. "I'm getting, like, Steven Spielberg auditions. It's very rare that this sort of thing happens. I don't want to put myself with John Travolta or Mickey Rourke, because they were A-list movie stars and I wasn't ever that. But they had comebacks too. I think we Americans like a comeback story." Ask him how he got here and he will respond with a shopping-list of happy accidents. "Everything has always fallen into my lap. My philosophy is: no plan is the best plan."

The only son of Bay Area hippies who divorced when he was two, Rex weathered a turbulent childhood with an alcoholic stepfather, then went straight from high school into a forklift job at a potato sack factory. He met a Penthouse model and moved in to a one-bedroom apartment with her and her two-year-old child. To pay his half of the rent, Rex agreed to appear in a handful of solo porn videos. "At the time, I was so young and dumb that I thought it was cool," he says. "At 18, you don't make good decisions."

He is accustomed to people mentioning those videos, and concedes it has all fed helpfully into the marketing of Red Rocket. “Sean told me, ‘I cast you because of your talent but there’s definitely a meta thing happening with your backstory.’ I’m OK with that.” Though he is sanguine about the whole affair, he hopes it will “dissolve” the more he keeps working. He looks surprised, however, to learn that the continuity announcer at the Independent Spirit awards made a reference to it (“Rex got his start in pornographic films . . .”) while he was walking up to collect his award. “Oh, they said that?” he asks, not quite concealing his disappointment. “I didn’t know that.”

Accompanying that same girlfriend to a modelling audition, Rex got a rather luckier break: the agency snapped him up instead. “I would never be dumb enough to *try* to be a model, but they sent me to Milan, then to New York and Paris.” MTV executives invited him to be a VJ. “I told them I had no journalistic experience, had never been on TV. They said, ‘You’re hired.’” Tupac Shakur complimented him in the middle of an interview – “I’ve been watching you, you’re good,” the late rapper told him – and the director Gus Van Sant invited him to audition for a part in Good Will Hunting. “I go in and sit down with him and Matt Damon. We’re doing a reading and then Gus stops me in the middle and says: ‘Simon, this is really bad, you’re not ready.’ Matt Damon is laughing and I’m embarrassed. Gus says: ‘But don’t worry, you have something. Trust me. Go to acting school.’”

Even once the money was rolling in from sitcoms and Scary Movies – “I made tons in the early 2000s, bought a house in the Hills, bought a Porsche” – the quality jobs were not. Disenchanted with the business, he started a rap project with two friends as a joke, and christened himself Dirt Nasty. The conceit was that the group would “turn everything on its head. So instead of rapping about selling drugs, we rapped about *buying* drugs. That was the joke. We were the customers.”

Their fans were “white, mostly female. When we started, we were like: ‘Everyone’s always rapping to other dudes about being tough and cool. What about if we were rapping to girls?’” They supported Red Hot Chili Peppers on tour, and had a platinum-selling hit (“A million fucking units!”)

with the song [My Dick](#). The lyrics were comprised of one boast after another: “My dick cost a late-night fee / Your dick got the HIV … My dick, size of a pumpkin / Your dick look like Macaulay Culkin.” Mikey Saber would have approved.

When people used to ask what I did and I said actor, I’d feel like I was bullshitting. Now I can say it and feel proud

There were two downsides to this tomfoolery. First, everyone kept confusing Rex with his onstage character. Second, it capsized his acting prospects. “My agents would phone about an audition and I’d say: ‘I’m in Poland with the Chili Peppers.’ Once you leave your seat at the Hollywood table, it’s hard to get it back. It’s a small table.” With few acting roles on the horizon, he found it hard to decline the offers he was getting for gigs, even once he felt too old to be a rapper. My Dick had become a pain in the butt.

There were other distractions along the way. Several UK tabloids offered him \$70,000 to claim he had slept with Markle, with whom he appeared in a 2005 episode of the sitcom Cuts; their off-screen interactions never got further than one platonic lunch. “I was broke as fuck! I really needed the money. But I’ll be on food stamps before I do that.” Markle wrote him a thank you letter. “She said: ‘It’s nice to know there are still good people.’” He has it framed in his home out in Joshua Tree.



Simon Rex and Suzanna Son in Red Rocket. Photograph: AP

Perhaps few events in his life have been as bizarre as the time he accompanied Charlie Sheen on his 20-date live tour (*My Violent Torpedo of Truth*) in 2011. “That was a weird one, man. That was a fucking circus.” Sheen, with whom he became friends on *Scary Movie 3*, “was up on stage every night talking shit. Then a pro baseball player would come on and play catch with him, then I’d do a *Dirt Nasty* song. It was a shitshow.” When did he first realise it wasn’t going well? “When the crowd starting chanting: ‘Refund! Refund!’”

Despite that, he marvels now at the memory of flying from gig to gig on private jets, staying at Ritz-Carltons and the like. “Charlie would tell me: ‘Order everything on the menu. Lobster, steak, whatever. Use the spa every day, get a facial, get a massage.’ I said: ‘I don’t wanna waste your money.’ He said: ‘Simon, I make more in one day of *Two and a Half Men* reruns than you could possibly imagine. Spend all of it.’”

He talks admiringly of Sheen being “the last of the Hollywood bad boys” and seems torn between lamenting the end of that public wildness and profligacy, and recognising that “society has moved on, and it’s a good thing that it has. Even though I don’t approve of cancel culture and virtue signalling and all of that.”

Rex has moved on, too. It would be poignant to hear him talking about missing his “young, athletic” physique if he didn’t look so trim and taut, and if he wasn’t now in receipt of something which had eluded him for so long: respect. “When people used to ask me what I did, and I told them I was an actor, I always felt like I was bullshitting,” he says. “For the first time now, I can say it and feel proud because I think I did a good job.” The old Simon Rex may be dead but the new one is killing it.

Red Rocket is in cinemas from 11 March

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/mar/11/i-was-running-naked-with-a-fake-penis-how-simon-rex-found-redemption-playing-a-washed-up-porn-star>

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

Thailand

Backpackers' return brings glimmer of hope for Thailand tourism revival

Chiang Mai tourism slowly picks up after two years of despair, though some call for more relaxed Covid entry rules to entice visitors

- [Read all our coronavirus coverage](#)



The coronavirus pandemic effectively stopped the flow of visitors to Chiang Mai, Thailand, forcing many businesses to close. Photograph: Pongmanat Tasiri/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Andrew Nachemson in Chiang Mai

Thu 10 Mar 2022 22.00 EST Last modified on Sun 13 Mar 2022 00.59 EST

After months of absence, Chiang Mai's waterfalls, night markets and hostels are once again filling up with a familiar sight: backpackers.

While [Thailand](#) was once a haven for budget travellers, Covid-19 devastated the tourism industry, which is only now starting to take tentative steps towards reopening.

People familiar with Chiang Mai at its tourism peak will still find the city relatively quiet, but those in the travel industry are seeing glimmers of hope after two years of despair.

“We can see the number slowly increase,” said Palakorn Viriya, owner of Deejai Backpackers hostel. Speaking to the Guardian from the hostel lobby, he described the previous two years as a “struggle”.

Palakorn said before Covid, he usually had 40-60 guests every night, but now he gets about 10 each night. Still, this is a marked improvement from 2020 and 2021.

“The last customer left the hostel in July 2020 and then there was nothing until November 2021,” when Thailand eased entry restrictions for vaccinated visitors, he said.



Chiang Mai in Thailand is still relatively quiet, but tourists are returning.
Photograph: John Angerson/Alamy

Palakorn says he was lucky because he owns the property outright but estimates as many as 80% of his [competitors were forced to close down](#), mostly because they couldn't afford rent with no customers.

"Now the customer is more than last year but still not really that much if compared before Covid," said a Thai tour guide and driver who goes by the English name Vincent.

Vincent said before Covid hit, he had customers every single day, but now he only has customers two or three times a week, and many are still domestic travellers. During peak Covid waves, he had no customers at all and was forced to go back to working at his family's rice mill.



Tuk tuk drivers wait for customers outside an unusually-empty night market in Chiang Mai in 2020, as Covid caused visitor numbers to plunge.
Photograph: Lillian Suwanrumpha/AFP/Getty Images

According to data from the country's tourism ministry, nearly 204,000 tourists arrived in Thailand in the month of February. January arrivals

slumped to 134,000 due to an Omicron wave, while December saw about 230,000. The previous 11 months combined saw less than 200,000.

But the recent uptick still pales in comparison to the 39.8 million international tourists that graced Thailand's beaches, mountains and cities in 2019 before the pandemic, contributing 21.9% of Thailand's total GDP.

Still, Palakorn and Vincent both believe the industry has rounded the corner. "I can see the town is getting busier," Palakorn said.

"I think the tourist situation will absolutely improve in next year," said Vincent.

Deejai hosted a pool party on 6 March, its first event in two years, and Palakorn says there will be more to come, although there are still complications. He estimates that about 250 people attended, a "successful" turnout. All attendees were given rapid tests before being admitted, with two people testing positive and getting sent home.

Israeli tourist Or walked down the street in Chiang Mai's old city, wearing a tell-tale backpack half his size. He politely declined persistent offers for a ride from tuk-tuk drivers, incredulous that he would walk in the blazing heat. The 22-year-old was taking time off to travel after compulsory military service, a common tradition in Israel.

He arrived in Thailand in mid-February, after a few months in India.

"In Thailand I was shocked because in comparison to India there was a large amount of tourists," he said. He said the highlight of his trip so far was a motorbike ride to a monk's village in the Chiang Mai mountains.

He also planned to go to a traditional Thai cooking class, a very popular tourist attraction in Chiang Mai.

"I find in Chiang Mai they love cuisine and food and I want to experience more of this," he said.



A visit to elephant sanctuaries had been a big draw for travellers to Chiang Mai. Photograph: Lauren DeCicca/Getty Images

But constantly changing regulations and onerous requirements may be keeping some tourists at bay. In Thailand, fully vaccinated travellers must apply online for a Thai Pass before entering, which requires vaccination, health insurance, flight bookings, and a pre-booked hotel and PCR test for the first night. This costs hundreds of dollars, which must be spent before the traveler has even been approved to enter.

Some tourism experts have urged Thailand to scrap the Thai Pass and the first-night quarantine.

“Thailand is at a crossroads now. There’s no choice but to open up and get rid of Test & Go,” said Thailand Hotels Association president Marisa Sukosol earlier this month.

In neighbouring Cambodia, fully vaccinated tourists simply need to take a rapid test on arrival and are free to go if it comes back negative. Or is planning to visit Cambodia next, and said the process was “way easier”.

Palakorn would like to see Thailand's policies change as well, or risk losing budget travellers to countries like Cambodia.

"I want to see, when you arrive at the airport you just show your vaccine and that's it," he said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/backpackers-return-brings-glimmer-of-hope-for-thailand-tourism-revival>

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

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[Music](#)

Interview

‘I was a bit of a brat about marriage’: Jenny Hval on domesticity, dangerous art and dogs

[Rachel Aroesti](#)



‘The older you get, the more complicated your life is’ ... Jenny Hval.
Photograph: Jenny Berger Myhre

Having made her name with songs about pornography and patriarchy, the avant garde Norwegian felt like a hypocrite for tying the knot. Now, she has turned that conflict into a thrilling album about growing up



Fri 11 Mar 2022 03.00 EST

In the autumn of 2019, [Jenny Hval](#)’s Paris show was interrupted by a rival spectacle – an impressive achievement, considering that a Hval gig already constitutes quite the extravaganza. Over the years, the experimental Norwegian singer-songwriter has been joined on stage by a huge inflatable clam, a projected image of a pregnant Angelina Jolie, a flower-throwing, banana-eating man and all manner of other leftfield antics. Yet it was something rather run of the mill that stole the audience’s attention on that evening: an in-crowd marriage proposal.

Years later, [Hval](#) is still reeling from witnessing that “very normcore display of romantic love” at one of her characteristically envelope-pushing shows. In fact, the ordeal had such a profound impact on the 41-year-old that she begins her eighth album, *Classic Objects*, by reliving it. “It was so

programmed, so calm and so very performative – choreographed, getting down on one knee and all that,” she says from her home office in Oslo, looking Nordically stylish in a blue polo neck and blue jumper. Hval felt it was especially jarring – even ironic – because at the time she was performing her album *The Practice of Love*, a record expressly concerned with love that exists outside the bounds of romance and marriage: “Love that isn’t given language or ritual in mainstream society,” she explains.

There was another reason Hval couldn’t stop thinking about the proposal. Its conventionality perturbed her, which felt slightly hypocritical, considering she had recently got married. That she did something as traditional as tying the knot may surprise those familiar with her provocative, radical oeuvre: a collection of eerily intimate records that combine ominous synthscapes with high-pitched, sometimes skin-crawlingly delicate, vocals. Her lyrics about bodily fluids, pornography and masturbation can be eyebrow-raising (“I grab my cunt with my hand that isn’t clean,” she sings angelically on 2015’s *Apocalypse, Girl*), but Hval isn’t so much interested in shock value as in undertaking an often surreal interrogation of women’s place in society (on the same album, she refers to cupcakes as “the huge capitalist clit”).

Dreamy ... watch the video for Year of Love.

Hval was certainly against marriage as a younger woman. “I was a bit of a brat with that earlier on in my life. I was arguing with people who enjoyed marriage, being quite political and structural about it.” As she explains in *Year of Love*, a dreamy number with a stilted groove that opens her new album, she agreed to what she calls a “patriarchal cornerstone” only for contractual reasons – specifically, the advantages married couples have in Norwegian law. “So my partner would be able to inherit my huge fortune,” she says. “Of almost nothing.”

Afterwards, she admits, she didn’t feel particularly conflicted. During our conversation, she repeatedly refers to marriage as “sweet”. I get the sense that letting go of preconceptions – and even closely held beliefs – has turned out to been an unexpected boon of the ageing process for Hval.

I've worked with challenging what a concert is for so long that I forgot the strengths of being in a band

"The older you get, the more you're going to challenge those black-and-white ideas that you had as a younger person, simply because you experience more things, you meet more people, you need to respect more people," she says. "The older you get, the more complicated your life is, because you've done this and you've done that, anything could be [unearthed] to invalidate everything you say, and there's something great about that, I think. You don't make sense any more."

"It's like before you've signed your first record contract; nobody can say you decided to let down your subculture and go to the industry, so it's easy to criticise others. But I like that life and time make us less coherent."

Classic Objects isn't wholly preoccupied with marriage. Hval's pandemic experience looms large over much of the record, with the legal restrictions placed on artistic performance providing plenty of food for thought. The fact that live music events were halted gave her the impression that her work was generally considered "dangerous yet unimportant" – the perfect perspective, she says, for "any authoritarian government" wanting to make changes to society.

Even as things open up again, Hval is concerned that the music industry is continuing its slide into a "more conservative" mindset, with the economic toll of multiple lockdowns cementing the shift. In order to guarantee ticket sales, venues that "started out as subcultural hubs" are now "hosting bands that are already signed and touring the world", she says. The datafication of music also rewards existing success. "I wonder if that trend will just keep going now that we try to measure everything," says Hval. "There are so many numbers – they can distort good creative decisions."



‘Some parts of me only exist in that stage moment’ ... performing in London in 2018. Photograph: Prog Magazine/Future Publishing/Getty Images

Yet lockdown had its perks. Hval felt the physical benefits of pausing her itinerant lifestyle; she has coeliac disease and felt liberated from the constant challenge of finding suitable food while on tour. She also entered a period of cosy domesticity, spending time with her husband, who got very into fermenting food and looking after their puppy – a task that led to the semi-passive consumption of endless trashy movies, the only art form undemanding enough to accommodate the pair’s newly dog-centric attention spans.

Hval came to the conclusion that she “would be quite happy to be a hermit artist”, but a recent return to live performance reminded her that touring’s sacrifices are accompanied by a unique joy. “There’s some kind of magic about being on stage that I only remember [when I’m there],” she says. “There are some parts of me that only exist in that stage moment.”

Instead of turning her into a permanent recluse, the pandemic, and the change of pace it required, fed into a new approach to songwriting: “simple stories” to echo her experience of a simpler life. The lyrics in *Classic*

Objects are more immediately intelligible than on her previous offerings, but pared-back Hval is still rich and complex. The gorgeously searching, organ-backed American Coffee references everything from Guy Debord and her mother's fear of driving to watching French cinema while suffering from a brutal UTI. She admits her songs "did get more adventurous than I anticipated", which, in retrospect, she is relieved about. "Otherwise I think I would have written something that I didn't actually agree with."

This month, Hval is heading out on tour – and taking this more straightforward approach with her. It doesn't sound like there will be much room for sealife-themed inflatables this time around; instead, she has decided to embrace the idea of humans playing music together in a room. "I feel like I've worked with challenging what a concert is for so long that I forgot the strengths of being in a band and doing a music performance," she says with a smile. "So I'm really excited about that, although it sounds like it's going to be a boring show."

This seems unlikely. Hval might have toned down the outrageousness – and perhaps even mellowed with age – but you get the sense this boundary-pushing musician couldn't do boring if she tried.

[Classic Objects](#) is out now on 4AD

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/mar/11/i-was-a-bit-of-a-brat-about-marriage-jenny-hval-on-domesticity-dangerous-art-and-dogs>

Ukraine: Stop Tanks With Books – in pictures

Members of the choir at Kyiv Lavra Orthodox church. Photograph: Mark Neville

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2022/mar/11/ukraine-stop-tanks-with-books-in-pictures>

2022.03.11 - Opinion

- [Putin's brutal war is the moment for Britain to reset its attitude to all refugees](#)
- [What's driving the Great Resignation? Hope – with a side order of self-doubt](#)
- [Is Priti Patel vicious or stupid? It's a fine line for Ukrainian refugees](#)
- [Why did we endlessly forgive Shane Warne? He was boorish and cringey... but we loved him](#)

OpinionRefugees

Putin's brutal war is the moment for Britain to reset its attitude to all refugees

[Owen Jones](#)



The public's compassion for violently displaced Ukrainians is dramatically out of step with our politicians' cruel indifference



Refugees from Ukraine arrive in Sweden, having taken a ferry from Poland.
Photograph: Tt News Agency/Reuters

Fri 11 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 01.01 EST

British political culture is nearly as hostile to self-reflection as it is to refugees. When the Spectator splashes on Britain “failing Ukraine’s refugees”, it might consider how its previous headlines, such as “It’s time for Boris to turn back the Channel migrant boats”, helped forge a hostile environment for those fleeing war in [Ukraine](#). Our political discourse apparently sees no problem with the former home secretary Amber Rudd, who resigned over the Windrush scandal, now grandstanding on national radio over Britain’s lack of generosity to refugees. When she declares the need for a “wholly different” approach to Ukraine’s refugees because “we’ve got war in Europe”, her sympathy for those who have been violently displaced sounds suspiciously like the British general who told the BBC that public opinion wouldn’t tolerate “people who look and live like us being slaughtered”.

Rich countries in general fail in their duty of care to the people they have helped to make refugees. Britain is a particularly egregious example of this. Around 85% of refugees are [sheltered by poor countries](#) with few resources and weak infrastructure; and of those hosted by rich nations, a third are in

Germany. As things stand, Britain has [accepted only 300 Ukrainian refugees](#) – compared with 1.2 million in Poland, more than 50,000 in Germany, 17,000 in Italy and 6,000 in Spain. This is all too consistent with our recent history. Boris Johnson’s dishonesty is cruder and less finessed than his predecessors, but his policy is consistent with theirs: he boasts of resettling more vulnerable people than other European countries, when [just over 9,000 people](#) were granted refuge here in 2020, five and half times fewer than in Spain alone.

Demonising foreign “others” has long been a convenient means of diverting working-class anger at economic insecurity away from powerful interests. This is what drove a Conservative government to pass the Aliens Act of 1905 to keep out Jewish refugees and migrants from eastern Europe – “the native folk cannot assimilate this element”, as one Tory MP put it at the time – and for Margaret Thatcher to suggest “people are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people with a different culture”. Remember when David Cameron snarled that Jeremy Corbyn and his shadow chancellor “[met with a bunch of migrants in Calais](#)” and “said they could all come to Britain”? What could have possibly flashed through his mind other than the cynical idea that public fear of Afghans, Eritreans and Darfuris living in that squalid, dirty camp would drive Corbyn’s Labour into electoral oblivion”?

It’s hardly a secret that much of Britain’s press is an open sewer for noxious anti-migrant views; headlines such as “[Halt the asylum tide now](#)” and “[Calais: send in the army](#)” make the public defence of refugees an act of political courage in normal times. But it can be done. When that devastating picture of Alan Kurdi, a Kurdish toddler washed up dead on a Turkish beach, [reached public attention in 2015](#), the number of people who believed Britain should accept more refugees [surged](#). Why? Because the dehumanisation of refugees encouraged by our politicians and media outlets was momentarily confronted: parents kissing the foreheads of their little ones at night could visualise Alan as one of their own.

A large majority of Britons are now in favour of taking in thousands of Ukrainian refugees. This has put government cruelty and public opinion [on a collision course](#). As a tide of human misery sweeps westwards, that old

refugee-baiting trope – “Why can’t they just claim asylum in the first safe country?” – dissolves as rational human beings understand that a few countries alone should not shoulder this burden. The Tories now find themselves on autopilot, too ideologically inflexible to respond to the shift in public opinion and therefore indulging only the basest, most inhumane prejudices of a swath of their electorate.

The opposition is not immune from these criticisms either. Labour’s shadow home secretary, Yvette Cooper, has refused to support visa waivers for refugees; when Cooper held the same role before 2015, she indulged xenophobic sentiments with calls to [strip migrants of benefits](#). New Labour – now the principal ideological inspiration for Keir Starmer – suggested schools had been “[swamped](#)” by non-English-speaking foreigners, and [tried to ban](#) asylum seekers’ children from schools. But Labour has another history it could draw on: when Hugh Gaitskell – himself no leftist – was the party’s leader in the early 1960s, he declared: “The Labour party is opposed to the restriction of immigration as every Commonwealth citizen has the right as a British subject to enter the country at will.”

As Vladimir Putin’s criminal invasion descends into barbarism with the recent bombing of a children’s hospital, sympathy for Ukrainians will only grow. Some commentators and politicians say the quiet part out loud: that their sympathy is particularly great because these are white Europeans rather than fellow human beings in desperate need. But now is a moment to argue for a new permanent settlement – for a Britain that abandons its particularly inhumane indifference to the world’s most vulnerable and desperate people, whether they come from Ukraine, Yemen or Afghanistan. Mainstream parties have vacated the pitch, driven by electoral calculation, cynicism and cowardice, and so others must step up to offer the moral leadership that this country so desperately needs.

- Owen Jones is a Guardian columnist
-

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

[**Opinion**](#)[**Work & careers**](#)

What's driving the Great Resignation? Hope – with a side order of self-doubt

[Emma Brockes](#)



My friend is one of many planning a radical post-pandemic life change – but rehearsing leaving her job showed it's not easy



Commuters at a subway station in Brooklyn, New York, December 2021.
Photograph: Ed Jones/AFP/Getty Images

Fri 11 Mar 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 03.17 EST

All week, we'd been rehearsing how my friend should leave her job. Specifically, where to land her resignation speech on the spectrum between a cathartic, spite-filled rant and something more businesslike. She was quitting because the money was terrible, the hours were terrible, it was incredibly stressful and she felt constantly gaslit and undermined by a boss who while giving her a dumb assignment would assure her it was consolidating her "brand". We could rake over her motivation until the cows came home, but her reasons for quitting basically boiled down to one thing: "I've had a gutful," she said (she's Australian).

In the last year, the urge to quit has jumped from a staple background whinge to a startling mass action. In November last year in the US, the number of people leaving their jobs reached a record high of [4.53 million](#). These were not people working in finance. For the most part, [according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics](#), the highest concentration of workers walking out of their jobs fell in the leisure and hospitality industry, shortly followed by retail workers – that is, in the middle to lower wage brackets. Surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center [found the reasons](#) people

cited for leaving were low pay, feeling stuck and “disrespect”. In other words, nothing out of the ordinary. But where in previous years these kinds of discomforts might have been weathered indefinitely, or until a better option came along, now people were snapping and walking out.

My friend who was quitting had plenty of plans but no solid job offer to go to. She was quitting cold, unable to stand it for a second longer, which seemed to be the pattern elsewhere. Another friend quit her job a few weeks ago, somewhat to her own surprise. When I asked what had prompted it, she said, “the pandemic distilled things to the core attributes”, and mentioned the effect of all those months at home giving her more time to think. An exhausted labour force is, generally, a more compliant one than workers who have a little time and space to take stock. Furthermore, said my friend, any employer who had not “displayed full empathy” during the pandemic appeared guilty of something much worse than bad management.

If we have all been through the equivalent of a collective near-death experience, the urge to embrace a radical life change makes sense. In the US, pandemic relief payments from the federal government gave people a small amount of “fuck you” money. And the thrill of being on the other side of something as large as an entire world that shut down is a head-rush it’s hard to ignore. Quitting hasn’t been the only expression of this feeling. Relative to the sheer scale of the psychic ground covered over the past two years, other types of movement seem trivial. In my children’s school, there has been more intake churn, and more evidence of people selling up and moving across the country, than anything seen prior to 2020.

Still, for many of us social conformity and conditioning run deep. “Am I being a brat?” said my friend. We’d been round this cul-de-sac before. Most people hate their jobs; having a job was a privilege; where did boldness stop and recklessness begin? At root, what made her think she deserved better? We talked about the endless books and podcasts that foreground the success of people who quit – like [Jeff Bezos quitting finance](#) to start Amazon – and how the thousands of people for whom this risk presumably didn’t pay off never get much of a look-in. We discussed whether there was some middle ground, where she might scale down to part time. Every one of these

discussions ended in despair. We have one life. What is there to gamble on if it isn't yourself?

I think you should take the moral high ground, I said: tell them you could string them along while you look for something else, but that it's better all round if you quit. We did a few role plays, all of which ended in hysteria when one or other of us addressed the boss character as "madam". We tried to anticipate what horrible things would be said to her in the course of resigning. "It's abusive", we said of her workplace, which is true. As a single contributor to the Great Resignation, my friend is part of a movement that at a distance looks seamless, even easy, but behind the scenes is riven with anxiety and self-doubt. Late yesterday, her boss cancelled the meeting at the last minute. My friend felt a combination of relief, disappointment and shame at not being able to execute her plan. She'll do it next week.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/11/great-resignation-hope-pandemic-life-change-job>

The politics sketch[Priti Patel](#)

Is Priti Patel vicious or stupid? It's a fine line for Ukrainian refugees

[John Crace](#)



The home secretary's mix of incompetence and cruelty has come to the fore in this war



Priti Patel ‘couldn’t quite get her head around the fact that nearly every Tory backbencher had gone soft on refugees’. Photograph: Michael Mayhew/Allstar

Thu 10 Mar 2022 13.25 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 04.04 EST

You can only imagine the kompromat that Priti Patel must have on the prime minister. As international development secretary in Theresa May’s government, she had been sacked for going rogue with her own foreign policy. [Her flight back to the UK from Kenya](#) had been tracked every bit as closely as those made by Russian oligarchs today. That would have been the end of their career for most politicians. But not Priti Vacant. When Boris Johnson became prime minister, he promoted her to home secretary.

Then came the inquiry that [found Patel guilty of breaking the ministerial code for bullying](#) staff. That again should have been enough for instant dismissal. Instead The Suspect ordered colleagues to [protect “The Prittster” at all costs](#). And so she survived; to bumble on with her characteristic mix of incompetence and viciousness. No more so than during the current war in Ukraine.

While most other government departments have upped their game over the past weeks, the [Home Office has been a national embarrassment](#). While

other European countries have opened their borders to welcome refugees, the UK went out of its way to make it almost impossible for any Ukrainians to reach this country: from not disclosing where most of the visa application centres were situated to making sure those that were advertised were closed. Cue hundreds of refugees being sent on pointless journeys from Calais to Lille to Paris. And back.

None of this has gone down well with MPs on either side of the house. On Monday, [Vacant had managed to give the Commons the wrong information](#) about which visa application centres were open and where they were – one hesitates to say she lied, as she's genuinely stupid enough not to be across the finer details of what her department is up to.

The following day, she had gone awol during an urgent question about the Home Office's mishandling of the refugee crisis and let a junior immigration minister take the hit instead. Not that Kevin Foster seemed to mind. He went on Twitter to say that refugees could always take advantage of the seasonal agricultural workers scheme. Because picking fruit would help take their mind off the war.

On Thursday, Patel did bother to come to the Commons in person to answer yet another urgent question on refugees. Partly because she needed to reassure Tory MPs that she had at least some idea what was going on; partly because this time she actually had [something new to say](#).

Though she did look initially a bit bewildered. She was under the impression – as most of us had been – that her sole role was to win favour with the Tory right by being beastly to foreigners; something at which she excels. Vacant couldn't quite get her head around the fact that all of a sudden every Tory backbencher – with the exception of Edward Leigh and Daniel Kawczynski – had gone soft on refugees.

But Patel gathered herself and ploughed on with the script. To make things easier, refugees with Ukrainian passports and family in the UK would now be allowed to apply for their visas online. Quite how this would work for refugees whose passports were lost or missing in the chaos of war, she didn't say. Nor how people without data roaming on their phones would

manage to upload their visa applications. Even assuming they could still manage to charge their phones.

In any case, none of this could start until next Tuesday as the Home Office needed to ensure all necessary security measures were in place. Though, given that the Russians had been planning the invasion for months, you'd have thought they had all the spies they wanted in place in the UK without trying to pass a few off as Ukrainian refugees.

This was a start, said Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary. But why had it taken yet another urgent question to shame Patel into action at the dispatch box? And why was there still no clear humanitarian pathway for refugees without immediate family in the UK? For reasons best known to herself, Cooper went along with the security rhetoric. Almost as if Labour was terrified of being seen to be weak on immigration. Even though every other country in Europe was taking unlimited numbers of refugees without visas. And even though the majority of people in the UK are in favour of this country doing the same. Labour's response is to be a bit nicer than the Tories, but not too much.

Vacant, however, was a model of indignation. Contrary to appearances, she hadn't been dragged to the Commons. She had been gagging to be asked. It's just that she was a little shy and didn't want to appear too pushy. Patel: the model of modesty. And the Tories had a "world-beating" record on refugees. This one again. No matter how often she and Boris repeat it, it doesn't make it true. The UK may score well in the narrow band of "resettled refugees", but on refugees in general, we're hopeless. In proportion to population size, we barely make the top 20 of the most welcoming European countries.

Then came the moment that – temporarily at least – silenced the entire chamber. The visas and the bureaucracy were actually doing the refugees a favour, Patel continued. Because if we had an open border policy and let in as many as wanted to come, then we'd have a Windrush situation where people couldn't prove they had leave to remain.

This was Vacant at either her most vicious or her most stupid. Because it wasn't the lack of paperwork that was the problem for the Windrush

generation; it was the hostile environment that sought to deport people who were legally entitled to be here – the lack of full paperwork was just a means to that end. A hostile environment policy dreamed up by Theresa May in 2012 and slavishly pursued by Patel a decade later.

Most MPs were in a forgiving mood, though. Ready to congratulate Patel on her baby steps towards humanity, rather than to castigate her for the all too obvious shortcomings in her plans. There again, there was every chance that the home secretary would be back in the Commons to explain another policy disaster in the coming weeks. Time was on their side. If not on the side of those fleeing the war.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/mar/10/is-priti-patel-vicious-or-stupid-its-a-fine-line-for-ukrainian-refugees>

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

OpinionShane Warne

Why did we endlessly forgive Shane Warne? He was boorish and cringey ... but we loved him

[Alex McClintock](#)

Maybe we should note how good it feels to give the benefit of the doubt



‘Just one of the dozens of times Shane Warne embarrassed himself in the national spotlight could have caused any of us to spontaneously combust.’
Photograph: Matt Jelonek/Getty Images

Thu 10 Mar 2022 11.30 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 16.20 EST

Until Saturday morning I thought that waking up sitting bolt upright was something that only happened in the movies. Then my clock radio told me [Shane Warne](#) was dead.

The shock didn't last too long. A heart attack in a Thai villa was an incredibly Shane Warne way to go, after all.

When the news ended, I sat there in the dark thinking about his kids and Simone, the Gatting ball, every summer of my childhood, hair loss products, Hawaiian pizza, the relentless march of time, Liz Hurley, the phrase "bowling Shane" and my own fruitless attempts to bowl a single leggy that actually turned for the Drummoyne public school B team.

Finally I was left with a sense of dread that if I went on social media, the sadness would be compounded by someone dragging up every unsavoury thing he ever did to make a point.

(I'm aware that getting pre-emptively mad about an opinion you haven't even seen is probably a symptom of some sort of pathology. It's definitely a sign of spending too much time online. But we all do that, so we may as well talk about it.)

In any case, I stayed away until the next day, at which point I logged on and saw exactly what I feared/desired: a bunch of people saying we should remember Warne as a sexual predator, among other things.

These takes were couched in the language of nuance, the idea that they were bringing balance to an otherwise uncritical outpouring of adoration. The fact that every obituary of the man covered his missteps mattered not at all.

It wasn't the arguments themselves that annoyed me – though I think it's a huge leap to conflate "bad husband" with "misogynist". Nor, as a rule, do I think there's anything wrong with speaking ill of the dead, though waiting until the body is cold is usually tasteful.

What got to me was the all-too-familiar tone. The rush to label. The total lack of forgiveness. The terrifying idea that a person's whole life should be defined by the worst things they ever said or did: a standard none of us

would want applied to ourselves. A standard that, if broadly applied, would make for a miserable, unworkable society.

It's reassuring that this position was only held by a small minority. On Facebook and Instagram it seemed most of Australia had a story about meeting Warnie, how glad he had been to make their day, and how sad they were that he was gone.

That wasn't because they ignored his flaws. It was because they made the calculation that, on balance, he brought them joy. That his sins, whatever they were, were forgivable. And that felt good. We forgave him because we loved him, but we also loved him because we forgave him.

Just one of the dozens of times Warne embarrassed himself in the national spotlight could have caused any of us to either spontaneously combust or not sleep for the rest of our lives. If he could survive telling the press that his mum gave him diuretics or the world reading his horny DMs, surely we could survive our memories of hurting others or singing No Woman No Cry in a Jamaican accent in year 7 music (just one example, many such cases). That he was allowed to keep doing his thing was oddly comforting.

Yes, the reason Warne got away with being boorish and cringey was that he was the greatest dude ever to throw a spinning red leather ball. And it didn't hurt that he was white and rich and male.

But instead of using him as an example of how we should hold everyone to ever-higher standards, maybe we should note how good it felt to give him the benefit of the doubt and widen the circle of people we think are worthy of being seen as "complex".

That doesn't mean automatically letting people off the hook or giving them a licence for bad behaviour. It means acknowledging that though some of us can bowl better leg breaks than others, we're all just apes with smartphones, making mistakes and trying to be happy.

Alex McClinton wrote a book called [On the Chin](#) about his short and painful boxing career. He lives in Sydney

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/11/we-loved-shane-warne-flaws-and-all-pious-social-media-posts-pointing-them-out-serve-no-one>

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

2022.03.11 - Around the world

- Ukraine Western Europe leaders rebuff fast-track EU membership appeal
- Islamic State New leader is named, confirming US raid killed predecessor
- Coronavirus One-third of all US child Covid deaths occurred during Omicron surge
- 'Devastated' Gender equality hopes on hold as 'anti-feminist' voted South Korea's president
- Che Guevara Bolivian soldier who killed revolutionary dies at age 80

Ukraine

Western Europe leaders rebuff Ukraine fast-track EU membership appeal

Emmanuel Macron says ‘we must be vigilant’ despite eastern member states wanting to show Ukraine ‘path is open to them’

- [Ukraine-Russia war – latest updates](#)
- [The oligarchs and business figures on western sanction lists](#)



EU leaders pose for a photo at the summit at the Palace of Versailles, outside Paris, to acknowledge the ‘tectonic shift in European history’. Photograph: Ludovic Marin/AFP/Getty

[Daniel Boffey in Versailles](#)

Thu 10 Mar 2022 13.51 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 00.28 EST

Emmanuel Macron has led western European leaders in rebuffing appeals from [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#) for fast-track EU membership for Ukraine

despite the backing of eastern member states.

At a summit in Versailles, the 27 EU countries acknowledged as one the “tectonic shift in European history” caused by Russia’s invasion of its neighbour and vowed to bolster their military might and “strengthen our bonds and deepen our partnership” with Kyiv.

But calls from Ukraine’s president, supported by Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, for a special membership process failed to convince France, Germany, Spain or the Netherlands.

France’s president said he wanted to “send a strong signal in this period to Ukraine and to the Ukrainians” of solidarity but “at the same time, we must be vigilant”, adding that he did not believe it possible to “open an accession procedure with a country at war”.

“Should we close the door and say never, it would be unfair,” he said.



Emmanuel Macron shakes hands with the prime minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Mark Rutte, the Dutch prime minister, told reporters there was no prospect of the EU membership for Ukraine in the short term. He said: “All countries in the western part of Europe that I speak to say that you shouldn’t try to have a fast-track procedure or accelerated accession process ...

“What’s important is that Ukraine has asked to be member of the EU ... There is no fast-track procedure to become a member of the EU.”

Western European governments opposed to rushing to EU candidacy status are concerned by the widespread corruption in Ukraine, the lack of stability in its institutions, and its parlous economic state. The experience in being unable to act in relation to the democratic deficit in Hungary and [Poland](#) has put off a number of capitals from any enlargement before big reforms of the bloc’s decision-making mechanisms.

Germany’s chancellor, Olaf Scholz, suggested that the EU was not ready for enlargement as its decision-making was still rooted in unanimity.

There was no immediate response from Kyiv. The EU member states have asked the European Commission to give an assessment of Ukraine’s membership application, which could take up to 18 months to complete.



Emmanuel Macron (right) welcomes the Latvian prime minister, Krisjanis Karins. Photograph: Ian Langsdon/EPA

The Latvian prime minister, Krisjanis Karins, whose country shares a border with Russia, said Ukraine should join the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey in being granted candidate status, although that would be the start of a “long road” to membership.

“It is important to show a clear, open door for EU membership for Ukraine, that the path is open for them to take,” he said.

The leaders were meeting in France just hours after talks between Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, in Turkey ended in stalemate.

Macron, who has staged a number of lengthy calls with Putin before and after Russia’s president launched his invasion, told reporters he would continue to talk with Moscow but that he was not hopeful of a breakthrough.

He said: “I do not see a diplomatic solution in the next few hours or the next few days, but we will speak again with President Putin in the next few days, try to see if things move on either side, and so we will continue to remain engaged with a lot of strength ...

01:26

Zelenskiy accuses Russia of genocide in hospital bombing – video

“I have to confess that the conditions that he puts on the table aren’t acceptable to anybody, to be honest.

“The question is whether Mr Putin is ready to engage himself and we will work genuinely collectively ... When I look at the facts, the facts are the following: Russia decided to launch war; Russia has bombed Ukraine; Russia is bombing civilians; and in parallel you have negotiations, but the negotiations are not ready to be completed.”

He described the Russian airstrike on a Mariupol maternity hospital as a “a shameful and amoral act of war”.

Josep Borrell, the EU’s foreign policy chief, said Putin was engaged in a “crazy war” and was “indiscriminately” shelling civilians and “bombing and destroying a country” as it had done in Syria.



Emmanuel Macron with the prime minister of Finland, Sanna Marin.
Photograph: Ian Langsdon/EPA

The EU’s leaders discussed a variety of ways in which economic and political ties could be strengthened with Ukraine, ranging from a seat for the Ukrainian leadership at some EU meetings to membership of the Erasmus student exchange programme.

They also focused on how to reduce the bloc’s dependency on Russian gas and oil. In 2021, the EU imported 155bn cubic metres of natural gas from Russia, accounting for about 45% of its gas imports and close to 40% of the bloc’s total gas consumption.

The EU has already imposed unprecedented punitive measures on key parts of the Russian economy and hundreds of politicians, officials and oligarchs.

According to a draft summit communique seen by the Guardian, the leaders are expected to warn Moscow that they “are ready to move quickly with further sanctions if needed”.

In Moscow, Putin warned that their sanctions against Russia would rebound by raising the price of food and energy. He said: “These sanctions would have been imposed in any case. There are some questions, problems and difficulties, but in the past we have overcome them and we will overcome them now.

“In the end, this will all lead to an increase in our independence, self-sufficiency and our sovereignty.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/10/western-europe-leaders-rebuff-ukraine-fast-track-eu-membership-appeal>

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

[Islamic State](#)

Islamic State names new leader, confirming US raid killed predecessor

Audio message names Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi as new leader in first admission of former head's death



The ruins of Islamic State leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi's hideout in Syria's Idlib province after he blew himself up during a US raid in February. Photograph: Aaref Watad/AFP/Getty Images

Staff and agencies

Thu 10 Mar 2022 20.33 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 23.03 EST

Islamic State has named a new leader after confirming that its previous head was killed by the US in north-western Syria over a month ago.

In an audio message released on Thursday, an IS spokesman, Abu Omar al-Muhajer, confirmed the death of the group's leader, Abu Ibrahim al-

Hashimi al-Qurayshi, as well as that of its former spokesman, Abu Hamza al-Qurayshi, in [the US raid](#).

Muhajer said IS had named a successor, identifying him as Abu Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi and saying the late IS chief had chosen him.

“He has accepted the leadership,” Muhajer said of the new chief, without providing his real name.

There was no immediate information about the new leader and it wasn’t known whether he was Iraqi like his two predecessors, both killed in rebel-held parts of [Syria](#).

None of the Qurayshis are believed to be related. “Al-Qurayshi” comes from Quraish, the name of the tribe that Islam’s Prophet Muhammad belonged to, and which serves as part of an IS leader’s nom de guerre.

Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi was killed during an overnight raid by US special forces on 3 February.

US officials said he blew himself up along with members of his family as American forces raided his hideout in the north-western Syrian town of Atme, near the Turkish border.

About 50 US special operations forces landed in helicopters and attacked the house in the rebel-held corner of Syria, clashing for two hours with gunmen. In all, 13 people were killed, including six children and four women.



Former IS leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi. Photograph: US Department of State/AFP/Getty Images

In a televised address, the US president, Joe Biden, said “this horrible terrorist leader” was accused of the genocide of the Yazidis in northern Iraq and [last month’s spectacular assault on a prison holding IS inmates](#) in the east of Syria.

Qurayshi, an Iraqi born in the northern town of Tel Afar, was a veteran of the post-Saddam Hussein Sunni-led insurgency.

He is the fourth senior Isis leader to have been tracked down, captured or killed in Idlib province in the past two years. Qurayshi’s predecessor [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in October 2019](#) in a village nine miles (14.5km) south of Atme.

The prevalence of the IS leadership in the area raises the likelihood that the heartland of the group – western Iraq – is no longer the centre of its operations, and that a new generation of leaders is opting for sanctuary on the battlefields of Syria.

With Associated Press

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/islamic-state-names-new-leader-confirmed-us-raid-killed-predecessor>

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

Omicron variant

One-third of all US child Covid deaths occurred during Omicron surge

Children seem to be facing increasing risks as mask mandates are abandoned and vaccination rates stall



Parents with their children wait in line for Covid-19 tests at Ohlone elementary school in Hercules, California, in January, during the Omicron surge. Photograph: John G Mabanglo/EPA

Melody Schreiber

Fri 11 Mar 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 09.22 EST

As many as a third of all child deaths from Covid in the US have occurred during the Omicron surge of the pandemic.

Children seem to be facing increasing risks from Covid-19 even as mask mandates drop across the country, and vaccination rates among children stall out at alarmingly low rates.

“We saw a massive surge of hospitalized young children during Omicron that we didn’t see in the earlier months of the pandemic,” said Jason Kane, a pediatric intensivist and associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Chicago Comer children’s hospital.

Since the beginning of the year, 550 children have died from Covid-19 in the US, compared with 1,017 children in the preceding 22 months, [according](#) to data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Omicron was first identified in November, and within weeks became the dominant variant in the US.

Although Omicron is less severe than Delta, it is three to five times worse than previous variants, recent CDC [research](#) shows.

The variant may also affect younger children in different ways than previous versions of the virus. Omicron tends to infect the upper airways, which in children are narrower and can be more easily irritated.

“Omicron really did something different than Delta, and I don’t think it was just because more kids were infected,” Kane said. He saw younger patients with illnesses similar to croup and bronchiolitis, which can be dangerous in young children with “a pediatric airway the diameter of a pencil”, he said.

“It’s no longer fair even to insinuate that Covid doesn’t affect children, that Covid deaths are only in unhealthy children or kids with risk factors. That’s just not true, by the data.”

The under-five age group saw [record-high hospitalizations](#) over the past few months. Omicron hospitalization rates for kids under the age of five soared five times higher at Omicron’s peak than during the Delta wave, according to recent CDC [research](#).

Among all ages of children, those under one may face the highest risk of severe disease, yet they are not able to take many of the precautions available to older people. Children under two cannot wear face masks, and children under five are not yet eligible for Covid vaccination.

Nearly 5 million children have been infected with Covid in 2022, and cases are now sharply declining. The majority of children who become infected with Covid have mild cases, but that may change as variants evolve and emerge – Kane called it the “million-dollar question”.

“Omicron has been very bad for kids. We don’t know what future variants will do,” said Julia Raifman, assistant professor at the Boston University School of Public Health, who flagged the sharp uptick in Omicron deaths. “We don’t have a good enough understanding of what protection there is from prior infection, how long it lasts, how robust it is.”

In coming months, she said, “we’ll see a lot more infection, and more cases will always mean more hospitalizations and deaths,” especially with low vaccination rates.



Florida’s surgeon general, Dr Joseph Ladapo, has recommended that ‘health’ children not be vaccinated against Covid-19. Photograph: Chris O’Meara/AP

Florida’s surgeon general recently recommended against vaccinating “healthy” kids given the possibility of side-effects, which remain extremely rare and are outweighed by the vaccines’ protection.

Vaccines are highly effective against severe illness, hospitalization and death for eligible children. But less than 30% of children between the ages of five and 11 are vaccinated in the US, and a little more than half of children 12 to 17 are vaccinated.

Preventive measures like masks should stay in place at schools and daycares, as well as parents' workplaces and public transportation, in order to protect children as long as the virus is circulating, Raifman said.

"The kids who are too young to wear masks really need other people to reduce transmission around them," she said.

Requiring face masks in schools during the Delta wave last fall helped reduce Covid cases by 23%, according to CDC [research](#) published on Tuesday.

A nationwide child vaccination campaign is very important as well, Raifman said – especially one in multiple languages that focuses on low-income communities where not enough families have gotten vaccinated.

Covid has hit marginalized communities harder – and vaccination rates and access to medical care tend to be lower in the same communities, creating a double whammy, Kane said.

Vaccines provide some protection against infection, which helps keep the virus from spreading, and they also offer excellent protection against hospitalization and death.

Vaccinating and boosting those who are eligible would help protect children too young to be eligible themselves, as well as providing other important benefits, Raifman said.

"We've never achieved high-enough vaccinations in the United States – we lag far behind other countries – and it makes us really vulnerable to continued high rates of death, hospitalization, societal disruption, economic disruption."

And deaths are only one measure of Covid's effects, she said. "Long Covid is also a concern for kids; the record-high hospitalizations are concerning for kids."

Amid the fear and exhaustion of the Omicron surge, Kane's overwhelming feeling was frustration, because proven measures are available to keep many children from becoming severely ill or dying.

"Kids shouldn't die," he said. "Kids shouldn't die."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/us-child-covid-deaths-omicron-surge>

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

South Korea

‘Devastated’: gender equality hopes on hold as ‘anti-feminist’ voted South Korea’s president

Election of Yoon Suk-yeol, who has blamed feminism for low birthrates, seen as a ‘pivotal moment’ for public discussion of women’s issues



South Korean president-elect Yoon Suk-yeol celebrates his victory this week. Some see his win as a setback for gender equality in the country.
Photograph: Chung Sung-Jun/Getty Images

Raphael Rashid in Seoul

Fri 11 Mar 2022 00.17 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 14.00 EST

The election of an avowed “anti-feminist” as the next president of [South Korea](#) has been greeted with dismay amid accusations Yoon Suk-yeol fuelled the county’s gender divide to garner support from young male voters.

Former top prosecutor [Yoon defeated the liberal ruling party candidate Lee Jae-myung](#) by a margin of 263,000 votes in one of the most closely contested presidential elections in recent memory.

Yoon has blamed the country's low birthrate on feminism. He has called for the abolition of the gender equality ministry, which he says focuses too much on women's rights and is no longer necessary. He has promised to enhance punishments for false accusations of sexual violence, a step campaigners say will deter even more women from coming forward.

An exit poll showed only 34% of women in their 20s marked Yoon on their ballot paper, compared with 59% of men in their 20s, and 53% of those in their 30s.

Kim Hye-yoon, a 34-year-old woman from Gwangju, said she felt "bitter" at the result. "Everyone knows that misogyny in Korea is a serious problem, and while it's comforting to see change is occurring, when I saw the election of a candidate who pledged misogyny, I knew we still have a long way to go," she says.

Kim said the result was expected, given so much criticism of the current administration, including a sluggish economy and soaring house prices.

South Korea suffers from poisonous gender politics. Many young men regard women's advancement as a threat to their financial security, amid a bleak job market and rising living costs, especially when they have to serve mandatory military service in addition. Surveys have shown that young men believe that it is they who are victims of gender discrimination, fuelling a gender divide that has been exploited by politicians.

Jieun Choi is a South Korean journalist and survivor of [spycam crime](#) – the use of secret cameras to film women, often in public toilets. She said the election was a "pivotal moment" in terms of how women's issues are talked about in public discourse.

“The major parties, especially the conservative party, didn’t shy away from using misogyny as a political tactic,” she says, adding that the solidarity young women felt in 2022 was reminiscent of the way massive street protests were organised by women online against the use of spycams in 2018.

“A lot of my friends were devastated by the result,” she says.

Yoon accused of ‘gender conflict’

After Yoon’s election, the Korea Women’s Associations United issued a statement accusing him of “disappointing many people by actively using the regressive and fictional frame of hate incitement and gender conflict” and urging the incoming government to fulfil its responsibility to realise gender equality.

During a press conference, he denied promoting a gender divide. Some controversial comments made in the run-up to the election suggest otherwise.

On international women’s day, which fell the day before the election, he retracted a description of himself as a feminist in a Washington Post interview. His camp described the wording as an “administrative error”.

He has stated that South Korea has “no structural gender discrimination,” describing it instead as a “personal matter”, despite ample evidence suggesting otherwise in indices measuring women’s rights and gender equality. Women continue to face everyday sexism, including pervasive digital sex crimes. Some 80% of survivors of spycam crime are women, 98% of perpetrators are men.

Yanglee Hyun-kyung, co-representative of Korea Women’s Associations United, said she was “worried” about gender equality policies being ignored under Yoon.

“Korean society will continue to be very unequal and polarised, and I am very concerned about how this discrimination will be resolved,” she said at

an event in Seoul denouncing the politics of hate and discrimination on Friday.

“Yoon’s call to abolish the gender equality ministry was an election strategy based on distorted misinformation. I hope he will realise the importance of it when he becomes president.”

No official statement has been released regarding the possible dismantling of the gender equality ministry. An official who spoke to the Guardian on condition of anonymity said the mood in the ministry was “quiet” but that staff would continue to work hard as normal until further notice.

If Yoon follows through on his pledge, it is unclear whether it will be accepted by the country’s parliament, where the now opposition Democratic party has a majority. Some observers predict that his policy of abolition may become more of a reorganisation.

Kim Hye-yoon is looking towards the future – presidents in South Korea are limited to a single five-year term. “I think we will be able to write a new history of women’s politicisation if we work hard for the next five years.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/south-korea-gender-equality-anti-feminist-president-yoon-suk-yeol>

Che Guevara

Bolivian soldier who killed Che Guevara dies at age 80

Mario Terán pulled the trigger to execute famed revolutionary guerrilla: ‘It was the worst moment of my life’



Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara in Havana, Cuba, in 1962. Photograph: Tony Ortega/AP

AP in La Paz

Thu 10 Mar 2022 14.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 14.26 EST

The Bolivian soldier who pulled the trigger to execute the famed revolutionary guerrilla Ernesto “Che” Guevara has died at the age of 80.

Mario Terán “simply complied with his duty as a sergeant of the army,” said retired general Gary Prado, who led the group that captured Guevara in 1967 after a months-long pursuit.

Speaking to Radio Compañera, he said Terán had died after a long illness. He is survived by his wife and two children.

Guevara, an Argentinian physician, achieved mythic status as a leading figure in the Cuban revolution that won power in 1959 under Fidel Castro by toppling the dictator Fulgencio Batista.

After serving as a senior official in Cuba's government for several years, he set off to try to lead other insurrections – with far less success – in Africa and then in South America.

His small band was finally tracked down by Bolivian soldiers in 1967.

Terán was chosen to kill him after orders to execute the already wounded Guevara, then 39, arrived from the capital.

“It was the worst moment of my life,” he told reporters later. “I saw Che large, very large. His eyes shone intensely. I felt him coming over me and when he fixed his gaze on me, it made me dizzy ...

“‘Calm yourself,’ he told me, ‘and aim well! You are going to kill a man!’ Then I took a step back toward the door, close my eyes and fired.”

Guevara’s biographers said his first shots missed Guevara’s chest, but eventually hit.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/10/bolivian-soldier-killed-ernesto-che-guevara-dies>

Headlines

- [React study UK Covid cases rising among those aged 55 and over](#)
- [Thursday briefing Get up to speed quickly on the big stories](#)
- [Stonehaven Wrongly built drainage system led to train crash – inquiry](#)
- [Spring budget statement Sunak under pressure to react to cost of living crisis in spring statement](#)
- [Analysis What can Sunak do to relieve cost of living crisis?](#)

Coronavirus

UK Covid cases rising among those aged 55 and over

Imperial College study finds R value higher for older people, raising concerns about waning immunity



A mobile NHS Covid-19 vaccination service run by Solutions4Health was in Dedworth, Berkshire, in February. A further push on vaccinations is due in early April for over-75s and the clinically vulnerable. Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

Ian Sample Science editor

[@iansample](#)

Thu 10 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 08.00 EST

Covid cases appear to be rising in older people as increased socialising, waning immunity and a [more transmissible version of the Omicron variant](#) threaten to fuel a resurgence of the virus.

Tests on nearly 100,000 swabs from homes across [England](#) reveal that, while infections have fallen overall since the January peak, one in 35 people tested positive between 8 February and 1 March, with cases either level or rising in those aged 55 and over.

Scientists on Imperial College's React-1 study said the R value – the average number of people an infected person passes the virus to – remained below 1 for those aged 54 and under, meaning cases were in decline. But for those aged 55 and over, R stood at 1.04.

The suspected uptick has raised concerns as older people are more prone to severe Covid and have had more time for their immunity to wane, as many had their booster vaccines several months ago.

The findings come as the [latest government figures](#) showed a sharp 46% rise in new recorded UK cases week on week – to 346,059 over the past week – and a 12% rise in hospitalisations to 8,950.

[Chart showing 'UK Covid-19 patients in hospital' from December 2021 to 8 March 2022](#)

Prof Paul Elliott, director of the React study, said the rise was probably driven by factors including the lifting of all Covid legal restrictions in England on 24 February, more mixing between age groups and waning protection from booster shots.

One idea experts are investigating is whether hospitalisation rates are being driven by “unshielding”, where people who have been extremely careful for two years have emerged into a world where infections are still rife.

Another driver is thought to be the [BA.2 form of Omicron](#), a relative of the original BA.1. While BA.2 does not seem to evade immunity any more than BA.1 or cause more severe disease, it spreads faster and increases R by 0.4 compared with BA.1, the Imperial researchers found. “From what we see, BA.2 is more transmissible and may prolong the Omicron wave of the pandemic,” Elliott said. “It’s taking over, so that could explain higher infection rates.”

Since the first BA.2 cases were discovered in December, it has steadily gained ground and now accounts for about half of all Omicron cases in England, with levels currently highest in London. It is unclear how large a wave of infections and hospitalisations BA.2 could drive given widespread immunity from vaccines and past Covid infections.

A further push on vaccinations is due in early April when over-75s and the clinically vulnerable will be offered a fourth shot, or a fifth in the case of people with severely weakened immune systems. “Additional doses of vaccine are almost certainly going to be necessary,” said Prof Peter Openshaw, a member of the government’s New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (Nervtag).

Mark Woolhouse, professor of infectious disease epidemiology at the University of Edinburgh, said it was “impossible to make a sensible prediction” about the size of any BA.2 wave but the situation needed close monitoring. “The worry is that it’s hard to see anything happening in the next few weeks that will reverse the growth of BA.2 unless, that is, people decide on their own account to step up precautions.”

Danny Altmann, professor of immunology at Imperial College, who is not on the React-1 study, said the recent rise was foreseeable. “We’ll see a great deal more of this, along the lines of recent resurgent [spikes in Scotland](#) and Hong Kong,” he said. “Caseloads were by no means low or under control as we came out of all mitigations and, when you add in waning immunity and the enhanced transmissibility of BA.2, it looks like we are in for a difficult period, especially for the elderly.”

He said a lack of measures such as mask-wearing and testing potentially left only the option of “a wider push for fourth shots, beyond the over-75s” but cautioned that very regular boosters may not be sustainable long-term.

Openshaw said the rise in cases and hospitalisations should remind people the pandemic is not over. “I think it’s a shame that the message that seems to have got out to the population is that it’s all over and we don’t need to be cautious any more,” he said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/10/uk-covid-cases-rising-among-those-aged-55-and-over>

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



Aftermath of Russian bombardment of the Mariupol maternity hospital.
Photograph: EyePress News/Rex/Shutterstock

[Guardian morning briefing](#)

Thursday briefing: Fears Russia may use chemical weapons

Aftermath of Russian bombardment of the Mariupol maternity hospital.
Photograph: EyePress News/Rex/Shutterstock

Alarm as Moscow makes ‘preposterous’ claim of US-Ukraine bioweapons ... Sunak under fresh pressure over cost of living ... hack your happy hormones

by [Warren Murray](#)

Thu 10 Mar 2022 01.31 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 01.35 EST

Top story: Moscow ‘setting stage for false flag’

Hello, Warren Murray with enough to get you started.

Western officials have warned of “serious concern” that Vladimir Putin could use chemical weapons on Kyiv as Russian propagandists spread [what the US has called “false claims](#) about alleged US biological weapons labs and chemical weapons development in Ukraine”. “We should all be on the lookout for Russia to possibly use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine, or to create a false flag operation using them,” wrote the White House press secretary, Jen Psaki. Experts have pointed to the [use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict, where Russia is involved](#). The Kremlin has produced no evidence to support its weapons lab claims, which were called “preposterous” by Psaki and have been dismissed by Ukraine’s government.

01:26

Zelenskiy accuses Russia of genocide in hospital bombing – video

Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has called a [Russian strike on a maternity hospital in Mariupol “the ultimate evidence of genocide”](#). Zelenskiy said children were buried under rubble and the regional governor said 17 people were wounded when the hospital was destroyed by a Russian airstrike on Wednesday afternoon. We have made a [series of slider images from satellite photos](#) to show how Mariupol has been hit. The UK is gearing up to send [state-of-the-art Starstreak anti-aircraft weapons](#) to Ukraine, as well as Javelin anti-tank missiles, and will continue to supply NLAW anti-tank weapons, the defence secretary, Ben Wallace, has said.

In the last few hours, the US has moved to drastically [bolster support to war-ravaged Ukraine with a \\$13.6bn aid package](#). The House of Representatives voted to rush through the package that would increase military and humanitarian support. Senate approval is expected within days. It includes \$6.5bn for the US costs of sending troops and weapons to eastern Europe and equipping allied forces there, and \$6.8bn to care for refugees and provide economic support to allies. The House also passed a [bill banning Russian oil imports](#). Make sure to [keep up with further developments at our live blog](#).

Chancellor's spring dilemma – Rishi Sunak is facing intense pressure from Conservatives to take action in this month's spring statement to [alleviate the cost of living crisis](#), which has been exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Sunak's February package of a £200 energy bill cut, to be paid back over five years, and a £150 council tax rebate have been criticised as too meagre to cushion the blow significantly for many households. Anti-poverty campaigners and thinktanks are calling on the chancellor to uprate benefits by more than the planned 3.1%, and many backbench Tories would love him to [ditch the 1.25 percentage point increase in national insurance contributions](#), proceeds of which are earmarked to fix health and social care. Robert Halfon, the chair of the education select committee, has called on ministers to follow [Ireland's approach of cutting fuel duty](#).

Bad drainage doomed train – A drainage system wrongly built by Carillion and unchecked by Network Rail [led to the Stonehaven train crash](#). Three people died on 12 August 2020 in the worst fatal event on the UK railways in 18 years, when a Scotrail passenger train from Aberdeen to Glasgow derailed at Carmont, near Stonehaven, after hitting debris washed by heavy rain on to the track. The Rail Accident Investigation Branch also noted the outdated “crashworthiness” of the 1970s-built HST model involved. The train drivers’ union Aslef called for moves to immediately start to take the HST train type out of service. A separate report on the crash is due in coming months from the rail regulator, ORR, in conjunction with Scottish police and British Transport police.

Covid rise in over-55s – Covid cases appear to be [rising in older people](#) as increased socialising, waning immunity and the more transmissible BA.2 Omicron variant threaten to fuel a resurgence of the virus. One in 35 people tested positive between 8 February and 1 March, with cases either level or rising in those aged 55 and over. Scientists on Imperial College’s React-1 study said the R value – the average number of people an infected person passes the virus to – remained below 1 for those aged 54 and under, meaning cases were in decline. But for those aged 55 and over, R stood at 1.04. Latest government figures show that as of this Tuesday there were 11,639 confirmed UK Covid-19 patients in hospital.

Shrewsbury report delayed again – Families have voiced frustration after publication of the final report into the [Shrewsbury and Telford maternity scandal](#) was delayed for a second time. The Ockenden review investigated 1,862 maternity cases at the NHS trust in which mothers and babies may have been harmed over almost 20 years. It was delayed from December 2021 until this month, but this week families were told publication had been delayed again due to “parliamentary processes” that need to take place. Rhiannon Davies, whose daughter Kate Stanton-Davies died under the care of the trust shortly after she was born in 2009, said: “We’ve had this date ahead of us, everyone’s lives are on hold and we’re holding our breath to finally get this report.” A new date for the report’s delivery has yet to be confirmed.

‘Anti-feminist’ wins – South Korea has a new president: the [conservative candidate Yoon Suk-yeol](#), who narrowly defeated the ruling party’s Lee Jae-myung with 48.6% of the vote to 47.8%. As an avowed “anti-feminist” he has pledged to abolish the ministry for gender equality, claiming South Korean women do not suffer systemic discrimination – despite voluminous evidence to the contrary.



Yoon Suk-yeol, South Korea’s incoming president. Photograph: Getty Images

Yoon will be sworn in as president on 10 May, taking over from Moon Jae-in. South Korean presidents get a single five-year term.

Today in Focus podcast: Could Nato be doing more?

Nato has refused to intervene militarily in the Ukraine war. Dan Sabbagh explains [what more the world's most powerful military alliance could do](#) – and why full intervention is off the table for now.

Today in Focus

Could Nato be doing more?

00:00:00

00:32:50

Lunchtime read: Hack your happy hormones

Can we really harness our brain chemicals to give ourselves a blast of positivity? Researchers share their [shortcuts to boosting oxytocin, serotonin and more](#).



Illustration: Adam Higton/The Guardian

Sport

Karim Benzema scored a 17-minute hat-trick in [an epic comeback](#) as Real Madrid overturned a 2-0 aggregate deficit to [dump PSG out of the Champions League](#), while Manchester City made it through to the quarter-finals after a 0-0 second-leg draw with Sporting gave them a 5-0 aggregate win. England began life on the road [without Jimmy Anderson and Stuart Broad](#) on [a stop-start second day of the first Test](#) against West Indies.

Novak Djokovic cannot enter the US while he remains unvaccinated from Covid-19 and will [not be allowed to compete](#) at the Indian Wells and Miami ATP Masters 1000 tournaments this month. The sacked Formula One driver Nikita Mazepin has been [included on a list of people who face sanctions](#) from the European Union over Russia's invasion of Ukraine. England's netball captain, Serena Guthrie, has [announced her retirement from the sport](#) after revealing she is pregnant with her first child. And Eddie Jones will hold a crucial training session on Thursday morning [before finalising his England team](#) to face Ireland with Kyle Sinckler understood to be among the players hampered by injury or illness this week.

Business

Asian markets have surged after oil prices dropped, easing fears of accelerating inflation. Wall Street's S&P 500 index rose 2.6% for its biggest daily gain in 12 years as prices swung wildly amid uncertainty about the impact of Russia's war on Ukraine. This morning the FTSE is pegged to open higher, going by futures trading. The pound is worth \$1.317 and €1.190 at time of writing.

The papers

The **Guardian** print edition's splash today is “‘An atrocity’: Russia bombs Ukraine children’s hospital” about which there is opprobrium everywhere. “Barbaric” says the **Mirror** which uses the same picture as the **Guardian** of a pregnant woman being stretchered out of the ruins. The **Metro** has “A new low for Putin – Russians hit baby hospital”.



The **Times** underpins the same picture with “Aiming at mothers and babies” while the **Daily Mail** accompanies it with “Depraved” while the **Express** deplores “The ultimate in depravity”. The **Financial Times** says

“Zelenskiy accuses Russians of hospital ‘atrocity’ in plea for world’s assistance”.

“Evil upon evil” – the **Sun** shows a bloody-faced woman leaving the scene wrapped in a quilt. The same patient is shown on the front of the **i** picking her way down a mangled stairwell – that paper says “Putin bombs children’s hospital”. The **Telegraph** uses pictures of both the aforementioned victims while headlining its front-page lead “Russia ‘plotting chemical attack’”.

Sign up

The Guardian Morning Briefing is delivered to thousands of inboxes bright and early every weekday. If you are not already receiving it by email, you can [sign up here](#).

For more news: www.theguardian.com

Get in Touch

If you have any questions or comments about any of our newsletters please email newsletters@theguardian.com

Sign up to Inside Saturday to get an exclusive behind the scenes look at the top features from our new magazine delivered to your inbox every weekend

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/10/thursday-briefing-fears-russia-may-use-chemical-weapons>

Network Rail

Wrongly built drainage system led to Stonehaven train crash, investigators find

Network Rail failed to notice that works by Carillion on Aberdeen to Glasgow line did not match the design



Three people were killed at Stonehaven in Aberdeenshire on 12 August 2020 when a drain washed debris on to the track. Photograph: RAIB/PA

*[Gwyn Topham](#) Transport correspondent
[@GwynTopham](#)*

Wed 9 Mar 2022 19.01 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 00.13 EST

A drainage system wrongly built by Carillion and unchecked by Network Rail led to the [Stonehaven train crash](#), investigators have found, when a Scotrail train hit debris washed by rain on to the railway track.

Three people died on 12 August 2020 in the worst fatal event on the UK railways in 18 years, when the passenger train from Aberdeen to Glasgow derailed at Carmont, near Stonehaven, after heavy rainfall.

Inspectors said the drainage system and earthworks, installed in 2011-12 by the contractor Carillion to stabilise the slope above the track, “had not been constructed in accordance with the original design and so were not able to safely accommodate the water flows” when almost a month’s rainfall, 51.5mm, fell in three hours.

The changes made by Carillion, which [went bust in 2018](#), were not noted by Network Rail, which did not inspect the upper parts of the drainage system after a handover in 2013.

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch’s final report on the disaster also found that route controllers had “not been given the information, procedures or training needed” to effectively manage the situation, and that [Network Rail](#) had not fully implemented risk measures developed after previous events involving extreme weather.

Despite a nearby landslip the same morning, and floods from the extreme rainfall, no speed restrictions were imposed and the train was travelling at 73mph when it hit the gravel washed from the drainage trench and came off the tracks, striking a bridge parapet. One of the four carriages overturned and another fell down a steep embankment and caught fire.

The RAIB said the outcome would probably have been less severe for a more modern train with better “crashworthiness” than the 1970s-built HST model involved.

The train drivers’ union Aslef called for moves to start immediately to take the HST train type out of service.

The three people who died included two train staff: the driver, Brett McCullough, and the conductor, Donald Dinnie. One passenger, Christopher Stuchbury, died, and the other six people on the train were

injured. The report said many more casualties could have arisen but for the low numbers travelling during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The RAIB's chief inspector, Simon French, said the tragedy highlighted "the risk of uncontrolled changes to railway infrastructure during construction" and was "a reminder how potentially dangerous Britain's volatile weather can be".

French said the railway should "get even smarter about the way it counters this threat" and "urgent[ly] provide real-time decision-makers with the information, procedures and training they need".

He said shutting down the railway during bad weather would force potential passengers on to roads, which were "undoubtedly much more dangerous". But the accident should not be dismissed as a one-off event, he added, and the industry "needs to think through the implications of severe weather on its infrastructure".

Andrew Haines, Network Rail's chief executive, said the report showed there were "fundamental lessons to be learned by Network Rail and the wider industry".

"As well as expressing our deep sorrow and regret ... we acknowledge it should not have taken this tragic accident to highlight those lessons," Haines said. "We must do better."

He said they had invested tens of millions of pounds in improving rail's resilience to weather, including inspecting similar locations and drainage systems across the country.

Mick Whelan, the general secretary of Aslef, the train drivers' union, said: "The failures identified in this report are so bad that we believe this must be a watershed moment in the way we ensure the safety of passengers and staff on our railway network."

ScotRail's chief operating officer, Ian McConnell, said the report made for "very sober reading", adding that while most of the RAIB's recommendations related to other parties, "ScotRail will play its part fully

in ensuring that safety lessons are learned ... to do everything possible to reduce the risk of something like this ever happening again.”

Solicitors acting for relatives of a victim and for injured passengers said the report showed “a catalogue of failures within Network Rail”. Neil Davidson, a partner at law firm Digby Brown, said: “The RAIB investigation clearly shows rail management had prior knowledge of several known risks – they were told to improve, yet still failed to act. This is the very definition of negligence.”

The rail regulator, ORR, is conducting a separate investigation into the crash, with Police Scotland and the British [Transport](#) Police. It expects to hand over a final report to Scotland’s public prosecutor, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, in the coming months.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/10/wrongly-built-drainage-system-led-to-stonehaven-train-crash-investigators-find>

Cost of living crisis

Sunak under pressure to react to cost of living crisis in spring statement

Chancellor urged to take action on cost of living crisis that has been exacerbated by war

- [Russia-Ukraine war – latest news](#)



Treasury sources did not rule out Sunak taking further action on living standards. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

[Heather Stewart](#) and [Peter Walker](#)

Thu 10 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 02.34 EST

Rishi Sunak is facing intense pressure from Conservative colleagues to take action in this month's [spring statement](#) to alleviate the cost of living crisis, which has been dramatically exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Asked about the impact of sanctions on Russia for consumers at home, the business secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, told MPs on Wednesday he believed the public was “willing to endure hardships” in solidarity with the people of [Ukraine](#).

But many Conservative MPs are privately and publicly urging the chancellor to do more to soften the blow, and one source suggested Treasury officials were already drawing up possible policy options.

Sunak’s February package of a £200 energy bill cut, to be paid back over five years, and a £150 council tax rebate had been criticised already as too meagre to cushion the blow significantly for many households.

New analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) suggests the impact of the war on energy prices means those measures may now protect consumers from just a fifth of the coming increase. “Living standards will suffer across the board,” they warn.

The IFS calculates that providing the same level of protection as Sunak had planned would now cost an additional £12bn. Its director, Paul Johnson, said the chancellor must make a “huge judgment call”.

“Will he do more to protect households from the effects of energy prices which have risen even further in the last two weeks? If he doesn’t then many on moderate incomes will face the biggest hit to their living standards since at least the financial crisis. If he does, then there will be another big hit to the public finances,” he said.

Treasury sources rejected the idea of ditching the national insurance increase due to come into force in April and said the spring statement would be “policy-light”, but did not rule out Sunak taking further action on living standards.

The Labour leader, Keir Starmer, used prime minister’s questions to repeatedly link the cost of living crisis to the impact of the invasion of Ukraine. He called for more direct help to cut energy bills, including a

windfall tax on oil companies, but also demanded urgent action to reduce reliance on hydrocarbons, including an end to a de facto ban on new [onshore wind projects](#).

Johnson dismissed the idea of a windfall tax, saying: “The net result of that would be to see the oil companies put their prices up yet higher, and make it more difficult for them to do what we need them to do … and that is divesting from dependence on Russian oil and gas. That is the way forward for this country – it is to take a sober, responsible approach.”

Starmer responded with derision, saying: “I don’t think the prime minister understands the mess he’s in.”

During a later statement by Kwarteng about phasing out Russian oil, Conservative MPs underlined the scale of the challenge, with the former housing secretary Robert Jenrick warning: “I think we have to brace ourselves for the greatest impact on living standards that any of us have known in our lifetimes.”

Robert Halfon, the chair of the education select committee, pressed ministers to echo [Ireland’s approach of cutting fuel duty](#). “We must, must do the same,” he said. “Prices at the pumps are reaching £1.60 per litre for hard-pressed motorists. They’re paying around £16 more than a year ago. Hauliers are paying more than £120 every time they fill up at the pumps, and this is literally unaffordable for many people.”

The North East Bedfordshire MP, Richard Fuller, called on the government to do more to insulate homes in an effort to reduce energy demand.

The former business secretary Andrea Leadsom told the Guardian no option should be ruled out – including a tax on the energy companies, which have been making record profits.

“The chancellor will no doubt be looking carefully at further steps in addition to the energy support he has already put in place,” she said. “In such unprecedented times, every solution should be on the table – from an urgent focus on home insulation to rapid deployment of batteries to store

wind and solar power and even to short-term ramping up of production in the North Sea basin and further taxes on big oil companies.”

Sunak has been holding roundtables with backbench Conservative MPs to discuss ways to alleviate the impact of rising energy bills, though one attender said the chancellor had stressed the parlous state of the public finances.

Speaking this month after giving a lecture at the London School of Economics, Sunak appeared to acknowledge that more might need to be done.

He pointed out that part of the cost of living support package will continue to help consumers into the autumn, but added: “As ever part of my job is always to be listening to people and making sure the policies that we’ve got in place are the right ones to help the economy, to help families and people can judge me on my track record about how we do that.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/10/rishi-sunak-under-growing-pressure-react-ukraine-crisis-spring-statement>

Energy bills

What can Rishi Sunak do to relieve the cost of living crisis?

The chancellor was under pressure to help struggling households even before the Ukraine invasion sent fuel prices soaring



Energy bills are rising and homeowners on floating rate mortgages will also be affected by higher costs. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

[Heather Stewart](#)

Thu 10 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 01.02 EST

Russia's invasion of [Ukraine](#) and the resulting economic sanctions have exacerbated a cost of living crisis that was already well under way, and the chancellor is under pressure to do more to help at his spring statement on 23 March.

What steps has Rishi Sunak already taken?

Last month, before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with energy prices already surging, the chancellor announced a package of measures to help to cushion the blow to households of rising domestic fuel bills.

They included a £200 discount on consumers' bills in October, which will have to be repaid through their bills over the following five years; and a £150 council tax rebate for homes in bands A to D.

The bill payback scheme has been controversial, with financial expert Martin Lewis calling it a "worrying gamble" which risked unravelling if gas prices did not fall back as expected.

What are the other pressures on consumers' finances?

Economy-wide inflation was already running at 5.5%, the highest rate in almost 30 years, and is expected to surge higher in the coming months.

With state benefits due to be uprated in April by a much more modest 3.1%, many lower-income households were already likely to see their living standards fall.

At the same time, the 1.25 percentage point increase in national insurance contributions earmarked for health and social care comes into effect in April.

Homeowners on floating-rate mortgages will also have been affected by the Bank of England's decision to increase interest rates in February, with further rises expected in the coming months.

Thinktank the Resolution Foundation has called it the biggest hit to living standards since the 1970s.

How will the cost of living be affected by the war in Ukraine?

Swingeing sanctions on the Russian economy, including a ban on oil imports from next year, have sent oil and gas prices through the roof.

Gas has traded above £5 per therm, compared with less than £2 a month ago, before partly falling back. It is unclear how much of that increase will persist, and the price cap on domestic energy bills has already been set for the next six months – but at best it suggests prices may remain high for longer than the Treasury feared.

Cutting Russia out of the global economy is likely to push up the prices of other commodities, too.

What more could Sunak do?

Anti-poverty campaigners and thinktanks such as the Resolution Foundation are calling on the chancellor to uprate benefits by more than the planned 3.1%, which given the rate of inflation will mean a substantial decline in living standards for many low-income households.

Sunak cut the taper rate for universal credit in his autumn budget, allowing claimants to keep more of their benefits as their pay increases – he could reduce it further.

Many backbench Tories would love him to ditch the increase in national insurance contributions. That appears unlikely – Sunak and Johnson penned a joint op-ed committing themselves to it at the end of January.

One radical option could be to cut the basic rate of income tax – or to promise to do so in future, something the chancellor is already believed to favour in the run-up to the next general election.

2022.03.10 - Spotlight

- [Strictly, sauerkraut and Monopoly Expert tips for hacking your happy hormones](#)
- [Buffy at 25 'If the apocalypse comes, beep me!'](#)
- ['It was a Lazarus story' How BBC 6 Music rose from the dead to become the home of new music](#)
- ['Infertility stung me' Black motherhood and me](#)

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[Health & wellbeing](#)

Watch Strictly, eat sauerkraut, win at Monopoly: expert tips for hacking your happy hormones



Can we use biology to make ourselves happier? Illustrations: Adam Higton/The Guardian

Can we really harness our brain chemicals to give ourselves a blast of positivity? Researchers share their shortcuts to boosting oxytocin, serotonin and more



[Amy Fleming](#)

Thu 10 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 05.27 EST

Loretta Breuning grew up around a lot of unhappiness, but couldn't figure out why. To try to find out, she avidly read up on psychology, alongside raising two children and working as a professor in management at California State University. "I thought that, if I followed the research, it would make everybody happy all the time," she says. "And then I saw that my students were not that motivated, my kids were not that motivated, and the kids of social science professors were not that motivated. So I started looking for the deeper roots of our motivation and our emotions." She went on to write a book, *Habits of a Happy Brain: Retrain Your Brain to Boost Your Serotonin, Dopamine, Oxytocin and Endorphin Levels*.

Today, when the news seems endlessly bleak, we all need an extra blast of positivity. Can harnessing our understanding of brain chemicals – from dopamine and endorphin to oxytocin and serotonin – help? Breuning, along with a number of scientists working in the field, believe so.

Most of what we know about the biological basis of our emotions comes from research on animals. Think of the lab rats who learned to press certain levers to get more sugar or cocaine and who demonstrated the two-pronged pleasure circuit of wanting and liking. Wanting is associated with the neurotransmitter dopamine, and liking with the heavenly feelings of cannabinoids and opiates that our bodies produce when we get our desires. Oxytocin's reputation as the love hormone stems largely from experiments with prairie voles nurturing their young, which showed oxytocin is what makes social bonding so delightful. In other words, these types of studies may not qualify us to make detailed pronouncements on the cause and effect of any activity on any individual human's brain chemicals, but they do offer useful dots we can join.

Dopamine

We often refer to pleasures as rewards, because they evolved to encourage behaviours that promote survival. But they definitely are not, says Breuning, “just to make you happy about sitting around contemplating the universe”.



Dopamine is often mentioned in terms of addictions, consumerism and social media, but it is there to alert us to seek basic necessities such as food

and a mate. “Think about a monkey looking for food,” says Breuning. “When they see food in the distance, dopamine is released, and that gets their attention, releases their reserve tank of energy, and motivates them to step forward. Each step toward the reward triggers more dopamine.”

Dopamine is part of pleasure, but it’s the anticipatory, excited, searching aspect. So apart from staring at junk food ads, what are the healthy ways to get the buzz? “Have a long-term goal, a short-term goal, and a middle-term goal,” Breuning says. “So that you’re always stepping toward a reward, and you’re always stimulating it a little bit.” This will help, because “dopamine doesn’t last, it’s not designed to last. If you’re dying of thirst, as soon as you get water, then water doesn’t make you happy any more.” She suggests building a skill “that helps you reach a distant dream. Maybe you only spend 10 minutes a day on that skill, but it continually sparks that feeling that you’re getting closer to the reward. Another one would be planning an event like a party, anything that gives you something to look forward to, that you have control over, that you can regularly invest effort in.”

There are zillions of unhealthy options for short-term goals, of course – sweets, mindless internet shopping, drugs and booze – but Breuning advises just taking time to plan your entertainment. “You can enjoy yourself by researching a list of things that you actually like, to be ready when you have a tired moment.”

It was the professor Kent Berridge who first identified the pleasure system of wanting and liking. The bliss of the liking part of pleasure has, he says, “a much smaller and more fragile brain basis” than wanting – the dopamine bit. “That’s part of why the intense pleasures in life are less frequent and less sustained than intense desires.”

But even short-lived pleasure can put us on a more positive footing, so thank goodness there are many sources: [seeing a cute baby laughing](#), eating tasty food, and sex are all excellent ways to light up the pleasure centres. Sadly, most of these come with built-in satiety – once we’ve eaten a certain amount of cheese, it becomes less and less pleasing and we become “full”, at least until we see the dessert menu and a new wave of dopamine is triggered.



But there is an easy way to sustain the thrilling push-pull cycle of pleasure: “Music, and also dance,” says Olivia Foster Vander Elst, a musician turned neuroscientist, who is doing a PhD in salsa dancing at Aarhus University in Denmark. “With both, you get this constant renewal of the liking phase. So you get these really long pleasure cycles. And the satiation phase is also quite weak.” It doesn’t matter if you listen to Let It Go repeatedly, or a playlist of your favourite arias – the pleasure keeps coming. A recent paper Foster Vander Elst co-authored states that the positive effect of music is partly down to a constant anticipation of what’s coming next: “The ‘sweet anticipation’ stage of this pleasure cycle is both highly motivating and pleasurable.”

Foster Vander Elst is devising ways to measure brain activity during dancing. How is it, she asks, that even when we’re exhausted, we can dance for hours? “It’s an amazing thing that the exhaustion drops away as a result of moving to the music.” Salsa has the added advantage of being a partner dance. “That links in with some very cool research that’s been done on dance and synchrony generally, that it fosters feelings of empathy and closeness to other people,” she says.

You can get the same emotions from merely watching aesthetically pleasing movements (hello, Strictly). We may not yet know precisely what’s going

on in the brain in dance, but, says Foster Vander Elst, “we know that moving in synchrony raises pain thresholds”.



Oxytocin

This bring us back to the so-called love hormone, oxytocin. Breuning is worried we have unhelpful idealised expectations of it. “Animals seek a group when they feel threatened. So you can let down your guard because you’re protected by others – an inherently selfish feeling. A zebra can’t eat if it’s constantly looking for a lion. When it’s surrounded by others then it can relax and eat.”

While bonding makes you feel safe, Breuning says, “when you have idealised notions about social groups, then frankly your social relations can end up disappointing”. Instead she advises us to think about trust rather than social lives. “That trust is reciprocal, so you have to offer support in order to get support.” If you’re feeling oxytocin-starved, Breuning’s solution “is to build your side of a bridge with a lot of people. You can’t control when they cross it, but you’ll be nicely surprised.” Getting oxytocin this way, she says, “is much better than feeling like you have to follow the herd every minute, which is what your inner mammal thinks – it feels threatened when you’re isolated.”



Serotonin

This is the neurotransmitter that we often hear about in relation to antidepressant drugs and the high of MDMA. But its role in mood is not well understood. We make it from a substance called tryptophan, which is found in plenty of healthy foods, but there's no evidence that eating them will boost serotonin levels or happiness. We do know that the mysterious universe of microbes that live in our guts has been positively [linked to](#) serotonin production (90% of our serotonin is made in the gut), so eating a microbiome-supportive diet can help. Avoid high-sugar and processed foods, and go for a diverse, high-fibre, mostly plant-based diet incorporating fermented products such as miso and sauerkraut. There is plenty of [evidence](#) that eating like this results in less depression and anxiety.

Breuning links serotonin's glow to feeling like a winner. "Mammals are very competitive and hierarchical," she says. "They're always looking for the one-up position, because that helps them spread their genes. Everyone has this impulse, and your mammal brain rewards you with serotonin when you gain the one-up position." But it doesn't last, she says, so you can end up in a never-ending needy cycle.

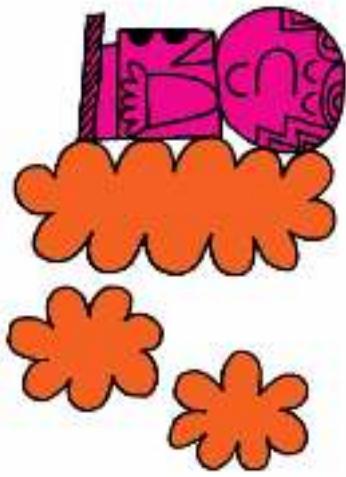
Her advice is to find ways to put yourself up, without putting others down, by focusing on your strengths. “But also,” she says, “be philosophical and know that we’re not designed to have serotonin every minute.”



Ciara McCabe, professor of neuroscience, psychopharmacology and mental health at the University of Reading, says it’s likely that serotonin levels are relatively fixed. “What we do know is that if you engage in what you consider subjectively rewarding, pleasurable experiences, you will probably release some of those chemicals involved in enjoyment, calmness or contentment.” And if you make a habit of doing those things – whether it’s playing with your cat, winning at Monopoly or canoeing – even the anticipation and cues associated with them will become pleasurable.

Endorphins

These are endogenous (meaning we make them in our bodies) opioids that flutter through us in fleeting moments of intense pleasure, but can also dull the pain of injury. They are always trotted out as the reason exercise makes us feel good, but in fact exercise produces a veritable cocktail of drugs along with other physical and psychological benefits – from a sense of achievement to better cardiovascular health.



David Raichlen is an evolutionary biologist at University of Southern California whose current goal is to discover why exercise is rewarding to humans when most animals evolved to preserve physical exertion for when necessary (running from a lion, say). His hypothesis is that it evolved 2m years ago, when we swapped a life of foraging for higher-octane hunter-gathering.

His research has shown that when we exercise moderately – perhaps a brisk walk in which we get out of breath – we make endocannabinoids. These are, says Raichlen, “the body’s form of the active ingredient in marijuana. The main endocannabinoid that seems to be associated with exercise is called anandamide, which is named after the Sanskrit word *ananda*, meaning bliss.” When you get this kind of endocannabinoid activation, he says, a couple of things can happen. “One, you get that analgesic effect, a kind of pain-relief effect. And there’s also a mild, rewarding sensation – not like the high that you would get from smoking marijuana, because you’re not bathing your brain in this chemical – being produced on demand, likely in areas associated with reward.” Rather than euphoria, the result is a gentler glow of wellbeing.

These chemicals are broken down fairly quickly, but not before they cheer us up. “We’re such a weird species, because we have this ability to think

about how we're feeling," says Raichlan. "You get this shift in your mood from physical activity, and then that alters your mindset for the rest of the day, even when that chemical is gone."



If an injury or health condition means you can't exercise as much as you would like, PET scanning has recently revealed another route to endorphin heaven: social laughter. So maybe it is the time to get to a comedy club or ring your funny friend. A 2017 study by Finnish and British researchers found that [social laughter "significantly increased" endorphins](#).

Raichlen thinks we can all benefit from understanding these lifestyle connections to mood, "because it means that we're not totally helpless. If there are actions that people can take that are tried and true and scientifically tested, they can improve the way you feel. I think it's really important for people to know that."

This article was amended on 11 March 2022. An earlier version described tofu as a "fermented product", when many varieties are not fermented; miso has been added to the text instead.

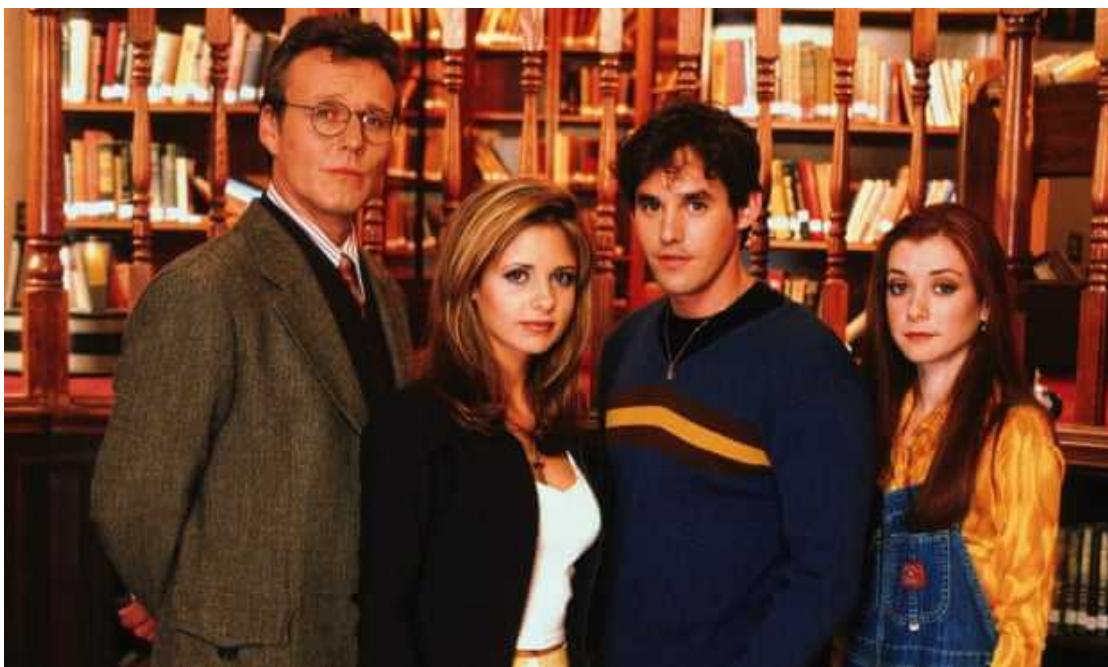
| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

‘If the apocalypse comes, beep me!’: Buffy the Vampire Slayer at 25

A teenage girl kicking vampire butt was regarded as an oddity when Buffy first aired – but these days it is a cult favourite, with a nuanced message about resilience

- [Demons, death and dynamite dialogue: the 20 best episodes of Buffy the Vampire Slayer](#)



Buffy The Vampire Slayer, season one: Anthony Head as Giles, Sarah Michelle Gellar as Buffy, Nicholas Brendon as Xander and Alyson Hannigan as Willow. Photograph: The WB

[Patrick Lenton](#)

[@patricklenton](#)

Thu 10 Mar 2022 00.00 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 16.25 EST

“Nobody is likely to take this oddball camp exercise seriously . . .” the New York Times wrote of Buffy the Vampire Slayer’s first season back in 1997, 25 long years ago. This attitude to the horror-comedy-romance-drama, about a teenage girl who is destined to save the world from the forces of darkness, was not uncommon 25 years ago. Most early critics tended to treat Buffy like either an oddity or a joke; Variety deemed it “an uneasy cross between The X-Files and Clueless”. But the show’s poppy, slangy, valley-girl dialogue soon became indicative of everything from low-brow trash to moral bankruptcy; US conservatives used Buffy as moral panic fodder, for apparently depicting witchcraft, occultism and satanism.

These days, Buffy is widely regarded as iconic, a cult favourite that has become a darling of streaming services. Its legacy is now confirmed, having spawned egregious “paranormal high school” type shows, inspired a snappier kind of teen speech (“If the apocalypse comes, beep me!”) and slang terms still used today. (“Wigging out” or “What’s the sitch?”) There’s even [a much-anticipated reboot coming](#), rumoured for release this year.

But in retrospect, it shouldn’t be surprising that Buffy has lasted the distance for 25 years – it’s a show all about resilience.

The first episode opens with a classic horror scene: a tremulous schoolgirl exploring a high school with a boy at night. The nineties was the peak era of slasher horror, packed with gory teen deaths. Instead, in a typical Buffy inversion, the girl’s face ripples (badly – the early graphics are one thing which didn’t stand the test of time) and we discover that she’s the lurking monster. She’s the danger, but more importantly, she’s the one with the power.

Buffy is a show about strength: who has it, and who doesn’t. Buffy herself is a regular teen girl, concerned with boys and clothes and friends – who also has the superhuman strength to fight vampires. Her high school is literally hell – for the first three seasons, the school squats over a “hellmouth”, or portal to hell, with the majority of supernatural occurrences, vampire attacks, and other calamities happening on campus. It’s a metaphor that obviously appeals to anyone at school, or who can remember the torture of it.



'I may be dead, but I'm still pretty. Which is more than I can say for you' ... from season one episode Prophecy Girl. Photograph: United Archives GmbH/Alamy

But Buffy's strength is not just physical, or reserved for defeating vampires – she's resilient and plucky, useful qualities for getting through something as horrific as high school. Or surviving the literal apocalypse – and not just once. "When I saw you stop the world from, you know, ending, I just assumed that was a big week for you. It turns out I suddenly find myself needing to know the plural of apocalypse," says Riley, the dopiest of Buffy's boyfriends.

None of Buffy's characters stay the same over the show's seven seasons. The innocence of the early episodes is stripped away as they are put through multiple world-ending calamities, often brutally. One of Buffy's closest friends, Willow, goes from gawky school girl to a powerful and vengeful witch who literally flays a men's rights activist, and almost ends the world herself. (She also comes out as a lesbian, which is neither here nor there.) Xander, a rare character with no superpowers, is initially resentful when Buffy rejects his advances, but grows up and remains a loyal friend. (And then has his eye gouged out by an evil priest.) But even when Buffy has to murder her own boyfriend, or dies twice herself, the show still makes sure to entertain us. There is silliness in Buffy, and a commitment to humour,

manifested in the dialogue, that makes it so infinitely re-watchable and comforting, 25 years later.

The comedy is often broad: from ridiculous episodes such as Beer Bad, where a magical beer turns Buffy into a Neanderthal, to more subtle moments of wit interspersed with the horror, drama and action. The infamous musical episode, Once More With Feeling, is not filler or a sign of a tired writers room; every song and dance number, even the hilarious ones, help develop the plot of the narrative arcs of that season. Every witty quip is an expression of a character's fortitude, every weird scene played for laughs is a moment of release. "If the world doesn't end," Buffy's frenemy Cordelia says, "I'm going to need a note."

Anyone who grew up watching Buffy must also feel as if they have also gone through multiple apocalypses: since the show began, millennials have lived through all sorts of disasters. But Buffy also showed that apocalypses can be personal; along with calamities of the supernatural flavour, there's also the horror of simply being alive, of surviving. One of the show's most devastating episodes, The Body, sees Buffy's mum, Joyce, suddenly die of natural causes.

And perhaps it is the show's depiction of female strength that can explain why so many fans are still sticking with Buffy after the show's own doomsday, after [allegations of bullying and abusive behaviour by the show's creator Joss Whedon](#) towards some of the female actors on set. (Whedon has denied the allegations.) The news was a twist worthy of Buffy itself: the nice guy who could be a monster. For some fans, Whedon's alleged conduct has soured the show irrevocably, which is understandable. For others, it's a disappointment they'll try to live with, maybe just the latest of many. As Buffy says in the final season: "This is how many apocalypses for us now?" "Oh, uh, six at least. Feels like a hundred," answers Giles.

- *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is available to stream on Disney+
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/mar/10/if-the-apocalypse-comes-beep-me-buffy-the-vampire-slayer-at-25>

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

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)

[Music](#)

‘It was a Lazarus story’: how BBC 6 Music rose from the dead to become the home of new music



6 appeal ... (from left) Sherelle; Little Simz; Lizzo; Dry Cleaning; Wet Leg. Composite: Nick Dale; Steve Gullick; Matthew Baker/Getty; Richard Young/Rex/Shutterstock

As the indie station celebrates its 20th anniversary, key players explain its humble roots, how it survived the threat of cancellation, and how they see its future



[Laura Snakes](#)

Thu 10 Mar 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Mar 2022 14.07 EST

In 2002, the BBC launched a scrappy new radio station, aimed at highlighting its massive archive of live music sessions, “on a thing called DAB, which no one had really heard of”, says early morning presenter Chris Hawkins. Twenty years on, 6 Music is the biggest digital station in the UK, with 2.6 million listeners. It survived a serious threat of closure in 2010. Its audience has grown up with it (breakfast show host [Lauren Laverne](#) even DJed at the wedding of a couple who met discussing the station). The presence of independent acts that it championed such as Dry Cleaning and Yard Act in the UK album chart – and Little Simz winning a Brit award – reflects its impact.

Sign up to our Inside Saturday newsletter for an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the making of the magazine’s biggest features, as well as a curated list of our weekly highlights.

But a lot has changed in 20 years. [6 Music](#) positions itself as “beyond the mainstream” – but indie and alternative music have become central to British culture: while 1.5 million people applied to attend Wimbledon this year, 2.5 million tried for Glastonbury tickets. The independent music scene has become markedly more diverse, and music fandom is no longer the sole preserve of the young. Taylor Swift collaborates with the National now. Is 6 Music too cosy to reflect these shifts? And how does it handle change when – as they discovered when DJ Shaun Keaveny left last September – many of its listeners would quite like things to remain exactly the same?

That tension speaks to its place in its loyal listeners’ lives. 6 Music became a lifeline for many during the pandemic, and its role will surely continue, licence fee cuts notwithstanding. I spoke to Laverne on the morning Russia invaded Ukraine. “Days like today are a challenge because people wake up feeling anxious, sad, overwhelmed,” she said. “They need us to be a soft place to land.”

In the beginning ...

Chris Hawkins, presenter I was part of planning the station. It was about filling a gap somewhere between [Radio 1](#) and Radio 2 – there was a market for music lovers who weren’t being catered for by those stations.



Steve Lamacq. Photograph: BBC/Leigh Keily

Steve Lamacq, presenter The Radio 1 Evening Session was ending in 2003 and I wasn't sure what I was going to do. Then 6 Music got in touch. I was excited that somebody wanted to put us on air because my morale was quite low. Here was somebody saying: "Do you want to do three hours of radio, old records, new records, and basically get on with it?" It was incredibly liberating.

Hawkins At first it didn't really feel like a proper radio station. We had one on-air studio, one production studio and a kitchenette. In the early days, you could hear the photocopier whirring. I always remember John Peel wandering around the same corridors and that had a certain magic about it.

Lamacq John Sugar, who ran the station, would always say: "Dig deeper." That was the catchphrase. Don't just play Love Will Tear Us Apart.

Gilles Peterson, presenter At first I thought 6 was like old-school Radio 1 at night, very indie – with massive admiration for all those broadcasters, I'm just from another space. I thought the audience would think of me as a bit dancey – "Oof, jazz, not sure about that". But it was a natural platform for me to be able to do what I do best.

Lamacq On Sunday we had a weekly phone call with Richard Hawley called “Hawley’s hangover cures”, then he would choose some completely obscure rockabilly record.

Shaun Keaveny, former presenter There was a period when it was very comedy-focused – Russell Howard, Jon Richardson, Russell Brand and Adam and Joe – and I think they drifted too far towards that for a little while.

Lamacq When Lauren Laverne joined about 18 months before the threat of closure, that’s when we really worked out what we were doing. We were far more accessible. The danger was that in the early days, it was like you weren’t allowed in unless you knew the catalogue numbers of the first 10 releases on Stiff Records.

Hawkins And then, of course, came that sort of D-day.

The threat of closure in 2010

Matt Everitt, presenter It’s not a big station in terms of headcount. Why close us when we do something really distinct?

Lamacq It was lucky we’d worked out what it was before someone tried to close us down, because when people listened in to see what it was, they found it quite enjoyable.

Tom Ravenscroft, presenter Weirdly it was the best it had ever sounded. Maybe there was an element of: let’s not give a fuck. There’s more of a punk attitude than perhaps there is when you get really popular. I felt like, if the ship was sinking, I wanted to be on it. I thought even if I could get a show on there for six months, I’d be happy.

Everitt [David Bowie](#) was making statements, but there were also tens of thousands of people telling the powers that be: no, this is a mistake. [And it survived.](#)

Keaveny It was a Lazarus story. And it was beautiful and the start of a huge love-in over many years.

Ravenscroft: As things get more popular, they get less risky – “now this thing’s really popular, we don’t want to break that”. So I think naturally, things became a little less punk rock.

Alternative to what?

Everitt At the start, the public perception was: it’s kind of indie. That wasn’t really true at the start, but over time that inclusivity has become more apparent.



Gilles Peterson. Photograph: BBC

Samantha Moy, 6 Music head I want this station to be as representative of all music lovers as possible. We still play indie and alternative, that is part of our USP, but so is Sherelle and Little Simz.

Lauren Laverne, presenter The breakfast show is traditionally described as the shop window of the station. When I started doing it I was keen that

all the genres that have a place on 6 were represented in the show. I wanted to open the doors.

Peterson I approach my show quite differently to all the other shows, in that I don't have a script. I won't even pick the first songs until seconds before the show starts sometimes. It's a very volatile show, a bit like free jazz.

Lamacq: I still get tons of actual post – vinyl and CDs, which I really delight in. If somebody has sent you a 7-inch single, you know how committed they are to their project.

Lauren Brennan, music team editor Deciding what goes on the playlist is an enormous balancing act. We're looking at the strength of the track, what we think will interest the audience, but also the playlist as a whole to make sure there's a diversity of voices – that we're representing as many genres as we can.

Matthew Maxey, radio plunger 6 feels like a genuine meritocracy in that metrics like social media following, music video views have little to no influence on what gets played. An artist with a relatively small profile on a DIY label will be heavily supported and even playlisted if the song's good enough.

Simon Hallyday, 4AD 6 is a really important factor in how we set up a release in the UK. We speak to them early on and roughly tell them our plan and see if the timing works with their playlist. We will juggle [release] times so it's convenient for the band and the station. They're that important.

Brennan A lot of it is gut instinct. When Wet Leg's Chaise Longue was sent to us, we put that on the playlist straight away – it had barely any time on air to build but everybody in the team knew we had to play this now.

Lamacq: If your record doesn't go on and somebody else's record does go on, it all boils down to: my band's better than your band. It's not malicious and it's not overly competitive. But you feel the need to wave the flag. and if they take notice of somebody else's flag this week, then next week, you're going to come back with an even bigger flag.

Jeff Bell, Partisan Records The success of Idles and Fontaines DC – and the fact that every other week now there is an artist in that [post-punk] vein appearing at the top end of the [album] charts – just goes to show how the work that someone like Steve has done has permeated wider music culture in the UK.

James Smith, Yard Act 6 has managed to revive interest in new indie guitar music again by rebranding it as post-punk. Although us and our contemporaries may be bound by certain traits – semi-spoken lyrics and angular sounds – for the most part the bands coming through do sound completely different from each other.

Scott Devendorf, the National 6 Music has been incredibly important for us – we grew up together over the past 20 years.

Martin Mills, Beggars Group Does it affect what we sign? Exposure on 6 is a factor in what we can achieve – but the majors shape records to get on the radio. We make the records the artists want to make.

Lamacq On average, just by email, I get 200 singles a week. And there are a lot of very generic records. You could get annoyed by it. But you can't stop because something amazing will eventually come along. I listened to that Wet Leg single 19 times the day I got it. That's what a teenager does.

Laverne I think I was the first person to have Lizzo in session in this country, then you see her at Glastonbury or Little Simz at the Brit awards. It's not like I would overstate it – they're the artists, it's all their own work – but to be able to share their music is so exciting.

Peterson I'm discovering music from around the world but fitting that into the context of clubbing and electronic music. That taste has become more normalised now, so in a way my job is done.

Moy John Peel's spirit goes the whole way through 6. John played the cornerstones of 6 Music – Bowie, Nick Cave, PJ Harvey. But he was progressive, always looking out for the next thing. In his later years, it was White Stripes, DJ Scotch Egg, grime. I think you see that coming through with our presenters, and it felt like it showed how future-facing he was and

how that spirit is still alive in pop culture. That's one of my proudest commissions.

Ravenscroft Everyone always makes this comparison between 6 Music and my dad, which I don't personally see.

Camilla Pia, assistant commissioner We did a Bowie season five years after his passing. I thought, how can we tell a story about Bowie that hasn't been told a million times? We had a real range of voices on there, Charli XCX and Christine and the Queens.

Simon Hallyday: 6 Music is so broad now that it's harder for the artists who made the station to get back in there. That competition is a good thing. It's part of how sustainable and flexible you can be.

Lamacq When I started going to gigs in London at the end of the 80s, if you saw someone even over the age of 30, it was: "What are you doing here, Grandad!?" It's not like that now. We've gone through a 20-year period where more and more people over 30, 40, 50 haven't given up on music. That's been part of our success story – it shows that we understand our audience, we've grown up together.

Laverne I'm the daughter of a sociologist, so I find these social shifts fascinating. The generation gap between my dad and his parents was massive. Between me and my dad, it was much smaller. My 14-year-old has just cleared out my record collection of J Dilla, MF Doom and Wu-Tang, so it's very small between us. Music's not about age, it's about attitude.

Keaveny How much more growth is sustainable? Originally it was providing something that the big stations weren't. How much bigger can you get before you're just another one of the big ones?

Jeff Smith, head of music When I joined in 2007, we had 500,000 listeners. We've got 2.6 million now. A lot of them have grown up with us – I don't think we've lost an awful lot and I don't think we've compromised.

6 Music's changing faces

Lamacq I've been in the same spot since 2005. A member of management once said I was the Ken Bruce of 6 Music: solid, reliable, gets good figures, gets on with it; without Popmaster, but with new bands.



Afrobeats. Photograph: BBC/Sarah Louise Bennett

Ravenscroft I was given the opportunity to learn on the job through nepotism, ultimately. I joined [in 2010] and then no one else joined for like, eight years. I was also the youngest DJ. It was kind of ridiculous.

Laverne There was a time when I was the only woman on weekdays. It didn't feel right. If you're a public service broadcaster, it's our job to reflect our audience. I was really pleased to see that change.

Moy I wanted to get more music into the daytime. When I'm looking at any 6 presenter, I want to make sure that they have real authenticity. Shaun might not have been at the super sharp end of it but he put together a brilliant radio show that was absolute companionship. I wanted to try something different with him.

Keaveny It was a small offering. Perhaps a weekend show, a couple of hours a week or something.

Moy Ultimately it was his decision to leave.

Keaveny They tried to persuade me to stay. I considered it for a while but I thought the brave thing to do was to step away.

Keaveny: I would say this on air – I always felt like the dickhead at 6: the clown, the generalist rather than the specialist. I was the friendly guy giving out leaflets at the door. I was trying to entice people in and then they get hit over the head with serious music. I always thought it was possible to have both. It was possible because we did for a long time.

Everitt I worked with Shaun for a long time. I love him dearly and I loved working on that show. The way we covered Bowie's death [which Keaveny and Everitt announced live on air] has been talked about a fair amount – it's one of the things I'm most proud of.

Keaveny I had a little chat with Johnny Marr, because I know that he'd been through a lot – you leave a band like the Smiths then join about 75 other bands. He sent me a massive message that said: "Change is good. Don't worry about it, don't fear it." What did I do after my last link? We went to [legendary Camden venue] the Dublin Castle and got unbelievably pissed, which is the only right way for a 6 Music presenter to leave the stage, really.

Moy What was really important to me was having an authentic club culture show. 6 Music has been on air for a very long time and if you're 45-plus, there's a big chance you went clubbing. Having a show that can talk about Frankie Knuckles and go right through to Sophie's legacy, helmed by the Blessed Madonna – that should absolutely be on 6 Music. And it was a question of *when* with Jamz Supernova.

Afrodeutsche, presenter I was approached with the concept of the show and within a month Sam was welcoming me to the [BBC](#). If I'd taken a breath I probably would have said no, because I didn't know what I was embarking on. All I knew was I love music, and here's an opportunity to share all the different types of music that I love: yes.

Peterson There was an imbalance in terms of the background of a lot of the broadcasters and I think that they've certainly addressed that.

Laverne It's important for 6 to develop new talent and I'm such a big fan of the new people coming through. I want people who are going to give me a run for my money. This morning I was driving into work and Deb Grant on early breakfast was playing Virginia Astley, and I was like, wow, OK, here we go!

Lamacq I don't think I'll still be there in my 70s. I have to go and see bands live, and I might be a bit knackered by then. Maybe there'll be a day where I wake up and want to wear slippers and listen to trad jazz and that'll be the end. But at the moment, particularly having had 18 months where we haven't been able to do the job properly, trying to make sense of what we've got now is a challenge I'm enjoying. While I feel excited like that, I'll carry on until they tell me to stop.

Ravenscroft Where do 6 DJs go next? The gap between stations is really weird. For some presenters, the longer you're at 6, the harder it is to go anywhere else.

Afrodeutsche I didn't realise until I started this show that my music knowledge is pretty deep. I thought I just loved music. It turns out I'm a massive nerd for detail, dates, how sonics change because of technology. I'd never claimed that before 6 made me see it.

How to broadcast in a pandemic

Laverne The pandemic was a big lesson in responding to how our audience was feeling and a huge illustration of things we instinctively knew about the importance of radio for mental health and wellbeing, the community aspect of what we do.

This morning I had a lady on her way to a shift at Alder Hey children's hospital saying thanks for cheering her up

Lauren Laverne

Lamacq My wife's a psychologist. She said: "Don't keep referencing it, don't say things like 'We're all in it together'. Be positive and don't keep coming back to how terrible it is."

Afrodeutsche Listening to radio was really important for me because I live alone. It was like I had someone with me.

Peterson I think I was the only show on the weekends that was going out live. I felt like I was needed, so I wanted to make sure I was on top form. I got into the habit of getting up and going for a big run, and that gave me the energy to get to the end of the show.

Lamacq This time last year was the worst – cold, dark and wet. Just me and the producer on the other side of the glass. No one else on the floor at all. You had to go in early to do a temperature check but you couldn't go into your studio until 15 minutes before you were on air, so there were 45 minutes where you were wandering the streets. That wasn't the greatest, sitting outside Domino's with a can of Coke and a packet of crisps. I'd occasionally treat myself to a cider.

James Smith What's happened with Yard Act over the last few years wouldn't have happened without Steve Lamacq and 6 Music. It was people's only access to us, because the live show didn't exist, and we didn't exist before lockdown.

Laverne I fell into my job through having fun and doing TV jobs for shoe money back in the day. In my early 20s I thought, I want to do something meaningful with my life. And I find that side of what I do incredibly meaningful – this morning I had a lady on her way to a shift at Alder Hey children's hospital saying thanks for cheering her up. That's the other thing you've got to remember when there's a big global event happening – people still have the challenges of their everyday lives, which can be really significant. I don't want to overstate it because it's also about having fun and just enjoying what you do. But it means a lot that we can make her morning a little bit nicer.

Here's to the next 20 years

Keaveny The BBC sometimes doesn't understand how great it is at certain things. If you're making live radio fit a non-live platform, you're fucking up the live show. There aren't enough people vocally championing the virtues of live radio without the bells and whistles.

It's taken four months to not feel sick with nerves before doing the show, but I get it now. It's just so much joy

Afrodeutsche

Lamacq There have been so many threats to linear radio over the last 20 years, like how people have been saying guitar music is dead since the days of the Haçienda. We will see as new generations come through whether they want radio in the same way. As long as radio never forgets how brilliant it is at being immediate and spontaneous, I think it will still exist.

Moy It would be premature for me to speculate on the implications of any licence fee settlement.

Lamacq The BBC, sometimes to its detriment, can move quite slowly. But in this case, I think the period of thought and reflection and consideration is probably the right thing. No one's pushing alarm buttons.

Moy What does the move to Manchester mean for 6? [By 2027, 60% of 6 Music production will come from Salford, a rise of 20% from current figures.] You want to represent all parts of the nation, because we're paid for by the licence fee. What I've talked about in terms of [music] representation – it's the same for the UK. It's gonna be a real opportunity. Will there be big lineup changes? It'll be a brilliant opportunity to think about what 6 will sound like, what voices it'll have on it. When you think about what 6 sounds like now, Afrodeutsche's based in Salford, Marc Riley, Craig Charles – they sound fantastic. So I'm not concerned.

Peterson I really hope that the government get – and I think they do – the cultural imprint that music has. You wonder what Britain is about sometimes. Music is still really relevant and resonant.

Laverne Every morning we wake up and there's three hours of silence that we get to fill with whatever we like.

Peterson I walk in there with my records on my back and I have this excited joy that I had when I was 16 going to my first pirate radio shows.

Afrodeutsche We're in Salford. We're going live in 27 minutes. I'm shaking, taking deep breaths, wide eyes, looking at my producers and going: "It's OK!" but not really knowing if it is – and then just going for it. Every Friday, as soon as we go live, we take the feed from London and there's no going back. It's like doing live gigs. It's taken four months to not feel sick with nerves before doing the show, but I get it now. It's just so much joy.

The BBC Radio 6 music festival will take place in Cardiff from 1 to 3 April with highlights broadcast on 6 Music and BBC Sounds. Shaun Keaveny presents the podcast Creative Cul-de-Sac and the online radio show [Community Garden Radio](#).

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/mar/10/it-was-a-lazarus-story-how-bbc-6-music-rose-from-the-dead-to-become-the-home-of-new-music>



Illustration: Diana Ejaita/The Guardian

[The long read](#)

‘Infertility stung me’: Black motherhood and me

Illustration: Diana Ejaita/The Guardian

I assumed I would be part of the first generation to have full agency over my reproduction – but I was wrong

by [Edna Bonhomme](#)

Thu 10 Mar 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 05.42 EST

I detest clinics. Sometimes, it’s the forms I have to fill out, other times it’s the harsh lighting – but the thing I hate most is the television, which is often harnessed in a corner near the ceiling. It is meant to be a distraction, but it never manages to take my mind off why I’m in the clinic in the first place.

Early one morning in May 2021, I was sitting in a health facility in central Berlin. It was different from the aseptic ones I had visited when I lived in New York City: this was higher-end, with mild luminescent lighting and a floral smell wafting throughout. In the far corner of the waiting room, a TV was showing a family of penguins in Antarctica waddling along an icy shore. I was unconvinced by its message of optimism, of nature triumphing against the odds.

On the walls of the waiting room, there were posters of young couples in bloom, tethered to each other, smiling intently, some of the women with protruding bellies. Most of these expressions read like success. I tried to internalise these positive messages, playing [Eye of the Tiger](#) in my mind to summon victory. But it was hard to manifest the strength of Rocky ascending the stairs in triumph while I was hungry, thirsty and clad in a burgundy hospital gown, Crocs and a green hairnet.

For two weeks, I had injected hormones into my abdomen daily and sprayed more into my nostrils. These were meant to increase the size of my eggs and offset ovulation. All I could tell was that they induced a state of listlessness broken only by extreme hot flushes. While my body was being optimised for egg extraction, my partner waited with me in the clinic. I looked like a patient ready to go under the knife. He was primed to jerk off in another room to a selection of adult entertainment that included Girls Gone Wild and Latinx Holiday.

Afterwards, I sat with my partner, tense and despondent, waiting to hear what had happened. The doctor came in and said: “We were only able to extract two eggs.”

Two eggs. Two. This was the lowest number yet.

“We will try to fertilise the two eggs with your partner’s sperm, and I am hopeful that it will be effective,” she continued.

In previous extractions, I produced four or five eggs per cycle. This was our fifth attempt at [IVF](#), and the fertilisation rate had so far been 50%. Two days later, the physician telephoned with painful news – none of the eggs

had been fertilised. Anguish rushed into my soul, bringing the dismal conviction that I would remain childless.

We had gone through this process five times, and five times it had failed. Each time, our misfortune went unexplained. We had both been tested for genetic preconditions. A haematologist processed my blood; I had surgery to remove a uterine fibroid. My partner had varicocele surgery – to remedy enlarged veins in the scrotum – in October 2020 in the hope that it would improve his sperm quality. It did not.

The process of in vitro fertilisation is brutal, not only because of the mood swings brought on by hormone injections, but also because of the weight gain. One of the many things I have absorbed from everyday sexism is to hate my body, and I was acutely self-conscious about my belly – I had a baby bump without a baby.

In a way, I felt anti-feminist for wanting to be pregnant at a moment when more radical forms of kinship are being imagined. For several years, one friend of mine has been co-parenting a child with two of her romantic partners, moving beyond the cultural norm of one mother to three.

For many Black women I have come to know – ambitious, progressive, and independent – motherhood is a matter of choice. Some of my Black female friends have embraced their role as auntie, stepping into the position of jaunty elder who inspires their nieces and nephews to be adventurous. This nurturing role is fulfilled on their own terms, allowing them the freedom to pursue their life's work – professional ambitions, financial security or travel. “I don’t want to make somebody else,” states the rebellious seductress Sula in [Toni Morrison](#)’s novel. “I want to make myself.”

Before I tried to get pregnant, I never thought it would be a challenge, or that it would raise questions about my body and identity. I had previously felt ambivalent about parenting. Like Sula, I activated my power to be whole, Black, and free. With a community of Black women, I travelled to Paris for the [Afropunk festival](#), organised late-night dance parties in Berlin, and swam in coral reefs off the coast of Tanzania. Being Black and free has been at the core of my existence, given that my mother and her mother were

often restricted from living their lives on their own terms. It is not just about flight – it is about pursuing my desire to be a historian and writer, and anchoring myself in affirming friendships and a relationship with a loving partner. But like many people, I was pulled in by my parents' desire for grandchildren. After I turned 30, my Haitian mother would call and spontaneously declare: "I am ready for grandchildren." Like the steadfast millennial I was, I would change the subject and hang up.

As a Black American living in Germany in 2021, I was already finding this period of my life difficult. I was exploring my identity in a new place while a global reckoning for Black lives raged. I was surrounded and assailed by images of Black Americans in distress. Reading about the death of [Breonna Taylor](#) in Louisville or [the eviction of a Black and indigenous family in Portland](#), I found myself wondering whether I should bring a Black life into this world. As my partner and I underwent each IVF cycle, I believed my answer was yes – mostly because he was the only person I could imagine being a parent with.

As cliched as it sounds, we met in a Marxist reading group in Berlin. On the surface, we could not be more different. I am petite and curvy, while he is tall and lean. Beyond the separate, inherited identities of class and nationality, we found common ground in politics and psychoanalysis. Amid uncertainty and grief during the pandemic, we took the leap to live together – something neither of us had done with any previous partner. His wit and ability to charm me with his British humour has been a relief to my radical-left feminist cynicism. Together, we supported each other during our transition from somewhat secure postdoctoral fellows to the more precarious venture of becoming writers. Even translating our different versions of English – he says coriander, I say cilantro – brings a smile to my face.



A woman at a protest in Sydney in June 2020 after the killing of George Floyd in the US. Photograph: Rick Rycroft/AP

In the US, where anti-Black violence was a trademark of society, the decision to have a Black child forced me to reflect on the reality that a child of mine might come with foretold grief. In Germany, it felt safer to contemplate bringing up a child, far from armed civilians or trigger-happy police. But more importantly, because of my partner's compassion and sincerity, I could finally imagine being a parent.

We discussed having children with lightness, imagining what parenting would be like together. I thought we could raise a rabble-rousing socialist family. He would joke that we should call our child Toussaint, after [the Haitian revolutionary](#). I offered that we could choose from an array of Black radicals, including [Harriet Tubman](#) or [Assata Shakur](#). We teased each other about the surname. I suggested X – after Malcolm – in order to not pass on the name that enslavers had given my ancestors. At the same time, I felt reluctant to conceive in a world, and a country, where I felt so out of place.

While this was going on, I often thought about the Black women in my family who had little control over their reproductive lives. I had always imagined that once I decided to bear children, it would be easy. My

maternal grandmother had 13 children and my mother had three. I assumed I would be part of the first generation – to my knowledge – to have full agency over my reproduction. But what I didn’t realise was that assisted reproductive technology does not guarantee conception. It was an invasive, emotional experience that caused me 15 months of despair.

I was raised by working-class Haitians who migrated to Miami. For my entire childhood, I lived in a majority-Black working-class neighbourhood where the bungalows and apartment blocks were painted fervent pink and bright amber, and whose accessories could pummel your eyes – Catholic figurines carved into lawns, Christmas lights hanging from ramshackle porches all year round. Palm trees soared up between derelict building, providing some relief from Miami’s oppressive heat.

We found a way to breathe life into the community through street parties that stretched out well past midnight, even amid the stench of abandoned waste. The neighbourhood characters – from adolescent to senescent – were full of voracious spirit and wry humour, while the children would rebel against any adults who tried to curtail our freedom to play.

Nothing says “love” the way Black women do the tender work of child-rearing. At one time, we had nine people living in our two-bedroom duplex. In addition to our immediate family of five, we had a rotation of relatives – the recently divorced aunt, the uncle (literally) fresh off the boat, a cousin who became a surrogate older sister. My mother raised her niece in our home for several years during my childhood, and did everything to treat her like a daughter, to the point of regularly dressing us in matching outfits.



Edna Bonhomme as a child (centre, on her mother's lap), with her extended family in Miami, Florida. Photograph: Courtesy of Edna Bonhomme

At times I felt overwhelmed by this changing cast of people, the lack of privacy and the shouting matches. Our house, a miniature Haitian Ellis Island, was home for whoever my parents could help. When the state fails them, Black people try to provide one another the care they need. Another cousin became a de facto guardian to her nephew, after her brother was incarcerated during the early months of his child's life. We have never adhered strictly to being a nuclear family. Instead, we carved out a robust and tender support system for one another. Whenever I had a dispute with my parents, or "ran away", my aunt would console me, feed me, provide relief for my adolescent rage.

At 18, I was accepted into a private liberal arts college on the US west coast. Suddenly finding myself among a mostly white middle-class student body, I was made aware of the contradictions of enlightenment. This was a place that espoused "atheism, communism, and free love" – the college's unofficial motto – while mainly welcoming in a privileged few, along with some low-income students, like myself, who were admitted with scholarships and student loans.

For a time I thought about becoming a doctor, and volunteered at a clinic. It was a progressive organisation in Portland, Oregon, that provided free medical care to intravenous drug users, sex workers and the unhoused. During my weekly night shifts, people trickled in, hammered by their latest fix or seeking shelter from the perpetual rain. One forthright patient, thinking I was a doctor, pulled down his pants to show me the abscess on his buttocks. One young woman, a heroin user, was several months pregnant and living under a bridge with her boyfriend. These people were barely hanging on. Theirs was a different face of poverty from the one I grew up seeing: they were all white. At the same time, their life stories were similar to those I saw in Miami, except that what existed in the crevices of the Pacific Northwest was an even colder, lonelier version of destitution.

There, I saw how resolving medical problems was not just a matter of physical checkups or taking vitamins. We had to think bigger. The patients needed safe housing and non-judgmental medical care, and not to be criminalised for drug use or sex work. The clinic showed me how the [essential work of healing](#) was tied to the [project of mutual aid](#). We need to challenge the systems that make us sick. I came to see medicine as being not just about healing, but also about imagining different possibilities of living in the world, of stepping outside the pathologies that have been imposed on working-class people like myself, and making us whole, through reparations, restitution and redistribution of resources.

Some people think of children in binary terms: to have them or not to have them. When lockdown began in March 2020, my partner and I decided to take our chances and started trying to conceive. Being in our 30s and healthy, we assumed we would be parents in no time. After several months, I realised it wasn't going to be so easy. Like clockwork, I bled every month – each menstruation greeted with mounting disappointment. A problem that had emerged long before I moved to Germany, but did not really sink in until I was engulfed with pain and failure, seemed to be making my body an unhealthy place for an embryo.

In 2015, while I was a doctoral student at Princeton, tests revealed that my uterus was damaged. The official diagnoses were endometriosis and uterine fibroids. The endometriosis, I was told, was a mass of lesions that,

untreated, might contribute to infertility, while the fibroids – non-cancerous tumours whose causes are unknown, and which are three times more prevalent among Black Americans than white – could also cause infertility. The tumours were steadily growing inside me, flourishing and creating a home where they shouldn't have been. If they hadn't caused pain, I probably would have kept them – mostly because the surgery would have interrupted my research, and I didn't then have anyone to take care of me afterwards. I had one round of surgery in 2015 and another in April 2021.

Whenever my emotions are anaemic, I pry open a book, hoping to find refuge in someone else's prose. Whether it was my academic undertaking to trace the fragility of life during a plague, or my journalistic assignment to track instances of racism in medicine, I was gnawed by the details, hoping that I exist outside the statistical categories of being Black in the US. I had hoped that relocating to Germany offered a new possibility for what a healthier life could be like.

My surgical experiences in the US and Germany were wildly different. In general, the care I received in the US was compassionate, but came at a high cost, financially and personally. My 2015 fibroid surgery in the US cost \$90,000, while the 2021 one in Germany cost €0. In Germany, the public medical system felt fairer and more humane, even if German doctors had a more hard-nosed style. Thinking she was doing me a “favour” by not raising my hopes, one German physician told me that, being in my mid-30s, I was too old to have children. The health workers I encountered were at best methodical, and at worst brusque, but there were no barriers to getting healthcare.

Many predicted the Covid-19 pandemic would herald a baby boom, given all the spare time people suddenly had. What could one do but shag? However compelling the idea, it didn't work out like that – at least not in the US. For about six years, the birthrate there has been decreasing, and [in 2020 it declined by 4%](#). This is likely due to the expense of raising children, the lack of state support or paid parental leave. In contrast, [Germany saw a 10% increase](#) in its birthrate in 2020, the highest since 1998, most likely related to longstanding government support for reproductive assistance and paid leave.

Having my IVF partially funded by the German medical system felt revolutionary. Even as a foreigner, I benefited from a welfare programme that is not available to most working-class women, including many of my relatives, in the US or Haiti. For the first time I felt as if I had the power to break through the constraints that had shaped my life in the US.

Race is not the only lens through which we can see how people are treated, but it does often determine whether someone has access to healthcare, if their pain is considered “legitimate” and, in the context of Covid, whether they are more likely to die. Today, maternal mortality is soaring in African-American communities. Medical racism takes different forms in different places, with subtle vocabularies, at times echoing violent histories. While these histories can seem abstract, the trauma is embedded within us, and expresses itself in the people we become.

Black motherhood has historically been precarious in the US. Under slavery, women had no control over whether they had babies, or were allowed to raise them. As historian [Leah Wright Rigueur has written](#), Black mothers were vilified, generating “the American mythology surrounding the so-called menace of the pathological Black matriarch of the 1960s, the treacherous welfare queen of the 1970s, and the drug-addled crack mother (and her babies) of the 1980s”.

This unexamined trope has become part of the accepted canon of racism in the US. There is little public support or sympathy for Black families, but that does not prevent Black mothers from seeing themselves in another light.

There are people who have had families that give them support and comfort and a model for what love might be. At present, that is not my reality. We are often told that, in order to get a sense of ourselves, our humanity and our worth, we must become parents. And for those of us carrying intergenerational trauma – enslavement, genocide, forced migration – the pressure to “carry on the family line” complicates what family obligation means. For women from Black, working-class families like mine, to have children – countering the forces that tried to destroy us – can be a powerful political act.

I say all this not to be fatalistic, or even to reduce the cherished and beautiful moments of Black kinship, but to highlight that the historical discrimination against Black women has combined with these discriminatory narratives about them to strip away our humanity. My aunts speak about parenting in vague terms, about how they value it, not for some intrinsic reason, but as something that their parents and grandparents did. Never do they say what I think about motherhood: they do not speak about the material difficulties and psychological struggles. Instead, their dreams are deferred to my generation, who they hope might avoid the hardships they endured. Being a parent is one of the most underappreciated jobs in our society. Of course, we should demand wages for housework and provide more space and support for people who do this. As I struggled to get pregnant, I was aware that so many of my life circumstances have been shaped by who deems me worthy of care.

As it became clear that my fertility journey was going to be rugged, I started reading heavily on the subject, taking refuge in research papers, books and leaflets about reproductive hormones. Writing became part of how I dealt with my pain, but it barely deflected my shame or anxiety. I regretted waiting “too long” to think about starting a family, and I was ashamed of my jealousy at seeing others successfully do so. From June 2020 until August 2021, I suffered from a depression that affected my work and my ability to connect with others. It turns out that my post-IVF depression was not uncommon. Infertility damages mental health in many ways, and the clinical depression and anxiety disorders [that occur](#) after failed IVF attempts can have long term negative consequences.

With my friends, and the feminists I organised with in Berlin, I looked for ways to bring up my experience. I needed compassion, but sometimes I received only unwelcome advice: drink tea, try acupuncture, just relax. Some people offered unwanted counsel: “Why don’t you adopt?” or “You can’t get pregnant because you’re too stressed.” Such comments made me petulant. Everyone seemed to have a friend who had tried for two months and magically got pregnant. It felt like some people I knew could simply cough and conceive. Meanwhile, I had to accept that some people will never get pregnant, no matter how hard they try.

During one low point, after my final IVF attempt had failed, I read an article about a white British woman in her 30s with early-onset menopause who managed to conceive. I began to see a pattern in the way that fertility struggles get told. There is a growing body of literature that focuses on the infertility struggles of highly educated white women who succeed in getting pregnant. These are celebrated because the majority of readers can relate to them. These stories seem to imply that, with determination, a person can conceive, that childlessness can be conquered with tenacity. People want to read happy stories, and accounts of difficult pregnancies that end in birth are, of course, uplifting. It is more challenging to tell a story about fertility treatment that ends in childlessness.

With few exceptions, I felt invisible in these narratives. But then I came across Emily Bernard's book [Black is the Body](#), in which she describes her own reproductive struggles, and how she felt like a failure for not being able to conceive. Her account stuck with me and festered like an open sore, as I considered how conception stood for so much more than bodily failure. Like me, Bernard was an ambitious Black American scholar and writer, and like me, no matter how much she tried, she could not conceive (she ended up adopting). Emotionally exhausted by the ebb and flow of artificial hormones, and the isolation I felt in the midst of the storm, I was further marooned by my inability to develop a precise language, or a method of coping.

Infertility stung me. I sought insights from family and friends. I revived a group chat with my cousins and asked how many of them had fibroids. I connected with Black parents I knew in Germany, and heard their stories of conception, pregnancy and birth, each different from the next. One friend and confidante, who struggled for nearly 10 years to conceive, told me how she had been ready to adopt right before she became pregnant. These conversations were healing, but they have not been enough.

My inability to have a baby opened new vistas of disappointment and grief. It has forced me to meditate about my soul's purpose, to accept and move on, to imagine new possibilities for myself, and forge new bonds. At the same time, I have to rationalise that my body, like all bodies, is complex, and there is no simple answer for why I cannot get pregnant.

My fertility struggle has shown me that I need new ways to envision parenting outside giving birth. Wright Rigueur shows that Black parenting can be full of laughter and pride, not just the fruit of suffering, but an experience shared by people with common political aims, desires and agency. Her account of Black mothers' joys reminded me of what I was missing. The stories she recounted, of new life coming to this Earth, revealed Black love, visceral and beautiful, and in a way, validated my pain and how I felt embattled and charred. I want to feel that joy of Black motherhood, the hope that runs through a lineage of survivors.

It's hard to say that I will never be pregnant. I do not know if I will ever feel comfortable with my body with the exactitude that Black joy demands. Black joy is grounded in the active commitment to love myself and accept that I am complete. But there are days where I don't feel that way. I want to hold dear to the words of the poet Robin Coste Lewis, who affirmed without apology in an [interview](#) that "black joy is my primary aesthetic, often: the world was so muted in what it offered us, but because of love and family and connection, our lives were gorgeous."

Knowing that I cannot get pregnant is forcing me to look inwards, to find ways to mourn, and to recognise that joy has to come from elsewhere. My partner and I have walked in the forests of Brandenburg, done Sunday yoga and watched trashy TV. And though these rituals have been healing, they have not been enough. In [Revolutionary Mothering](#), the poet Alexis Pauline Gumbs suggests an alternative: "Queer, utopian, and hopeful and critical articulations of mothering" centred on collective kinship.

I find that Black joy enshrined in my friendships with queer Black people, the people who create havens of safety where we can debate the big questions and share the trivial – whether watching HBO's [Insecure](#) or passionately debating which west-African country makes the best [jollof rice](#). But there is also comfort in our listless moments, those periods of walking aimlessly in the summer heat and finding a shoulder to lean on. This is the family I have chosen to create.

In our confessional culture, it is not uncommon to reveal intimate aspects of being human, our identity, our sense of self. But we mostly tell the stories

that appear digestible – our brilliant accomplishments, only occasionally sharing the less uplifting subjects. In the closing lines of a story such as this, one might assume the denouement brings a child: it doesn't. Unfortunately, it ends here.

Follow the Long Read on Twitter at [@gdnlongread](#), listen to our podcasts [here](#) and sign up to the long read weekly email [here](#).

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/mar/10/infertility-stung-me-black-motherhood-and-me>

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

2022.03.10 - Opinion

- [Europe has rediscovered compassion for refugees – but only if they're white](#)
- [The magic of a 5am run makes me feel alive – and I'm determined to feel safe](#)
- [A 10-week wait for a coil? British women are facing a quiet crisis in contraceptive care](#)
- [Cartoon Ben Jennings on Vladimir Putin's extraplanetary view](#)

This is EuropeRefugees

Europe has rediscovered compassion for refugees – but only if they’re white

Daniel Howden

Separating those fleeing conflict into ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ is immoral and a betrayal of European values



Migrants arriving at a temporary centre in the Spanish enclave of Melilla, 2 March 2022. Photograph: El Faro TV/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 10 Mar 2022 01.00 EST

How should we regard the two faces of Europe’s refugee response? In the week when the [European Union](#) welcomed nearly two million refugees from Ukraine, do we also need to watch graphic footage of a young African being battered for climbing a European border fence? Yes, we do.

As Europe rediscovers compassion for refugees, we should watch [this video](#) on loop. It shows a defenceless young man in tattered clothes gingerly descending a six-metre fence. Waiting for him at the bottom are half a dozen Spanish border police, in helmets and body armour and wielding batons. The first blow is struck before he reaches the ground. The images that follow, of a crowd of uniformed white men viciously beating a black man, are all the more disturbing because they are so familiar.

Spain's Melilla, one of two small exclaves of EU land on the African continent, has long been the strongest distillation of [fortress Europe](#). Melilla's [ring-fenced](#) honey pot of golf courses, casinos and [corruption](#) have provided these images before. But now it is especially important to look at them and think hard.

A generation of people across Europe have spent the last several days wondering where they would go, what they would take with them if a larger war erupted. The distance and sense of otherness that helped us ignore the war in Syria or the collapse of Afghanistan have not been on offer in [Ukraine](#).

There are compelling reasons why the war in Ukraine has prompted Europe's [rediscovery of compassion](#). As a British army veteran and volunteer in Ukraine said, "it's a black-and-white war", or, as others point out, Ukraine is a country next door. There are questions of culture and then, of course, there is race.

The war in Ukraine creates asylum seekers who fit the simplest definition of a refugee. Thus far, they are mainly women and children, and they are seen on TV to be crossing a single border. Coming after a dark and divisive period in which asylum in Europe has been under real threat, with lives lost and [border walls built](#), the outpouring of compassion is moving and welcome. But the simplification and segregation are not. The Ukraine refugees are crossing into Poland, a country still busy constructing a wall along the Belarus stretch of its border to prevent the entry of Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis.

There have been [disturbing levels of discrimination](#) faced by non-European-heritage refugees fleeing the Russian onslaught in Ukraine itself. The reporting of this needs to be presented with nuance, context and balance. Not everything presented as racism should be so simply described. But there have been [verified incidents](#) of people of colour being barred from evacuation trains, being segregated and made to wait for days at border crossings.

There will be those who imagine that open arms for Ukrainians and fortress Europe for black and brown refugees can and should co-exist. They are wrong, and not only on an obvious moral level. Too many commentators in Europe have already fallen into the trap of separating deserving and undeserving refugees. Their rightful praise for Ukrainians has been laced with references to supposed exceptional qualities such as pluck and fighting spirit. These are [insults that are heard](#) and understood by Syrians, Afghans and others, who have been recently received with brutality at some of the same borders and, in the case of Syria, after fighting the same aggressor.

The [segregation of black refugees](#) at some of Ukraine's exit points and the double standards on [who gets to remain](#) in the EU offer Putin and other malign actors a playbook for destabilising the EU. The plaintive panic with which Poland and Brussels received the prospect of a few thousands [Iraqis, Afghans and Syrians](#) arriving via Belarus offers a glaring weakness to exploit.

The neighbourhood authoritarians from Moscow and Minsk to Ankara know that Europe would rather be blackmailed than reach a consensus on resettlement of asylum seekers across the EU. The [deals with Turkey](#) and Libya to warehouse refugees and migrants have made vulnerable people into a commodity, and turned our borderlands into desperate and lawless places.

These are political choices defended by recourse to lies: that [Europe](#) is unfairly burdened with refugees it can ill afford to support. These are arguments that Jordan or Turkey can maintain, but they make no sense when deployed by an ageing Europe.

Meanwhile, the response to Ukrainians' suffering is demolishing specious old arguments about cost and space. This refugee relief effort will cost [€30bn in its first year](#), according to the Centre for Global Development. The UNHCR foresees at least 4 million refugees being forcibly displaced, and happily the voices quibbling over these costs are few to none.

Some will be tempted to harden the fortress, to argue that Europe is full now that it shelters Ukrainians. The arrival of a refugee crisis that we are right to embrace and support is also the time to reconsider the mistakes made since 2015. The commodification of refugees and the fragility we advertise with military responses in the Aegean in 2020 and the [Belarus standoff](#) in 2021 guarantee more of what EU governments call "hybrid wars".

Today's actual war explodes the excuses that a rich and shrinking Europe has offered to defend its fortress. What is left is racism. It is what was waiting for the young man in tattered clothes at the foot of a giant fence. And an openly racist Europe defeats most of what we claim is at stake in terms of values in the war in Ukraine.

- Daniel Howden is managing director of Lighthouse Reports, an investigative non-profit newsroom covering migration, corruption and conflict that works with leading European media

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2022/mar/10/europe-compassion-refugees-white-european>

OpinionRunning

The magic of a 5am run makes me feel alive – and I'm determined to feel safe

[Nell Frizzell](#)



With just the foxes and bats for company, running in the early morning allows me to assert my place in the city



‘Other runners say bright and breezy good mornings or hellos as we pass each other’ Photograph: Artem Varnitsin/Getty Images/EyeEm/Posed by model

Thu 10 Mar 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 07.13 EST

There is no better time to go for a run than 5am. Especially in March.

Two or three mornings a week at the moment, I edge out of bed, creep down the stairs and stand fully naked in the kitchen. The curtains are closed and there’s nobody awake to see me anyway. Then I change into my running things – out of earshot of my partner and sleeping son – and, turning the front door as quietly as I can, slip out.

Stepping into the inky blue dark, I am hit by a cold that is almost more of a taste than a temperature. Still warm from my bed, I meet the soft, earthy tang of dew and mist and soil. A few stars hang in the night sky above. My neighbours’ windows are drawn closed; like eyelids. I am entirely alone. Well, nearly. The magic of an early morning run is also that, even in a city, you can flush out unsuspecting wildlife. Muntjac deer, rabbits, foxes and cats scatter as I turn out of our little estate, run through a nature reserve or across the park. Along the river I hear the hooting of barn owls. Bats swivel through the sky above my head.

As a woman running through the city in the dark before dawn, I feel safe. No, I feel determined to feel safe. Other runners say bright and breezy good mornings or hellos as we pass each other on the towpath or in the gaps between streetlights. I pass men and women, in headscarves and puffa jackets, walking into town to start their shifts. Occasionally, sweaty and wearing a bumbag, I pass groups of students, listing down the centre of the road like ships buffeted by high winds, sliding down from the summit of a night out. At five in the morning, there are few cars on the road, making the air sweet, the world quiet, the hills and asphalt mine to explore. You don't get that at 11am or 3pm or, God forbid, in a gym.

If there is a danger in this situation, it is not me. I have the right to be outside, in the dark, moving my body, breathing steam. Nobody has the right to hurt, bother, hassle, intimidate or harm me. So I take up space. I get out there. I wave to other women running as a show of solidarity and mutual reassurance. The dark and the outdoors is ours.

- *Nell Frizzell* is the author of [*The Panic Years*](#)
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/10/the-magic-of-a-5am-run-makes-me-feel-alive-and-im-determined-to-feel-safe>

OpinionWomen

A 10-week wait for a coil? British women are facing a quiet crisis in contraceptive care

[Nell Frizzell](#)



Delays in being able to get contraception and abortions can wreck women's lives. It's time women ignored the stigma and started complaining more loudly



‘Ten weeks is a hell of a long time to wait for adequate, hormone-free, affordable contraception’ ... an IUD coil. Photograph: flocu/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Wed 9 Mar 2022 09.55 EST Last modified on Wed 9 Mar 2022 20.42 EST

When a friend recently told me that there was a 10-week waiting list to have a copper coil fitted, my shock turned quickly into anger. Ten weeks is a hell of a long time to wait for adequate, hormone-free, affordable contraception. To put it into context, that means anyone who had asked for a coil fitting on 29 December – surrounded by Quality Street and the Christmas Radio Times – would be coming up to their appointment just about now. Someone requesting one today might hopefully get an appointment by 18 May. What, precisely, are you meant to do in the meantime? As is so often the case with women’s health, that’s your problem.

We are experiencing [a quiet crisis in contraceptive care](#) in this country. Lives are being jack-knifed off course by the kind of policies that are often only discussed in corners, with close friends. Perhaps this was always going to be the result, not just of living through a pandemic, but of living under a government that has continually cut funding to sexual health services. According to a report [by the Advisory Group on Contraception](#): “Going into

lockdown, services had faced years of budget cuts by the government, leading to an 18% decrease in real-terms contraception spend since 2015.”

The same report points out that there has also been a huge reduction in sites commissioned to deliver contraception (26% of local authorities cut sites in 2018-2019), meaning people are having to travel further to get the medical help they need, simply not to have an unplanned, unwanted, unaffordable or unsafe pregnancy. I have heard of one woman who was told she would have to travel 93 miles for an abortion, only to turn up and find the doctor wasn’t in, so she had to wait a further two weeks for an appointment in a different city. In the end, the whole process took so long that she went from needing a medical abortion – two pills, taken a few days apart – to a surgical abortion.

Talking of pregnancy, you would be excused for missing the significant changes in abortion services over the past few years. For example, you may not have noticed that a large number of abortions are now handled by a charity, rather than the NHS. The British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) helps, in its own words, “100,000 women a year access reproductive healthcare services including pregnancy counselling, abortion care, miscarriage management and contraception at clinics across Great Britain”. I am in favour of anything that makes access to early abortion easier, faster and friendlier. But I can’t help but wonder why such an essential medical service is being handled by a charity. I may be talking rubbish here, but it’s not as if your council tax is processed by Shelter or your warfarin is prescribed by the British Heart Foundation.

During lockdown, BPAS was – after some rather confusing government messaging – allowed to provide “telemedicine” as a temporary measure. Essentially, it was able to send out the pills necessary to terminate a pregnancy following a phone consultation. No need to go to the doctor, no need for an ultrasound. But sadly, as Vicky Spratt [has reported for the website Refinery29](#), on 24 February the government announced that it would be [scrapping at-home early medical abortions](#) after 29 August. Why this change? Especially when access to in-person services has become harder, thanks to BPAS closing some of its physical clinics after the move to telemedicine. Well, it’s because, as Spratt puts it, “anti-abortion

campaigners are more vocal than people who are in favour of abortion". When it comes to courting public approval – and this government seems to do little else – restraining access to abortion will always play out well with a very vocal minority. As a parent, I would genuinely like to know what the anti-abortion lobby would like us to do with our unplanned and unwanted pregnancies; I would like to know who is going to look after those children and parents.

Here is a list of just some of the people who are likely to have needed an abortion in the last year: a nurse; the woman bringing you a plate of beans on toast on Sunday morning; the person who delivers your shopping; the woman who looks after your kids on Tuesdays and Thursdays; the mum at the school gates with navy boots; that woman at the gym who wears a T-shirt advertising an investment bank; your daughter. According to [the Office for National Statistics, 25.2% of conceptions in England and Wales in 2019 ended in abortion](#). That's just over one in four.

Unfortunately, the stigma still attached to contraception and reproductive health means people are less willing to complain publicly about the huge waiting times, the travel costs and the difficulty they face in accessing contraception and abortion. Subtly and overtly, we are told that this is our lot and we must bear it. After all, there are plenty of people out there ready to whip our reproductive rights out from under us. Which makes it easier for government to keep cutting funding. Continually making small slices, from every side, scraping bits off with a fingernail, breaking off whole corners, then putting it back in the fridge, hoping nobody notices that it is now half the size it should be.

- Nell Frizzell is the author of [The Panic Years](#)
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/09/a-10-week-wait-for-a-coil-british-women-are-facing-a-quiet-crisis-in-contraceptive-care>

[Guardian Opinion cartoon](#)

[Ukraine](#)

Ben Jennings on Vladimir Putin's extraplanetary view – cartoon

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/picture/2022/mar/09/ben-jennings-on-vladimir-putins-extraplanetary-view-cartoon>

2022.03.10 - Around the world

- ['Heartless' Denmark PM says sorry to Greenland Inuits snatched from families 70 years ago](#)
- [Operation Pandora VI Thousands of priceless artefacts seized as police act across 28 countries](#)
- [Coronavirus Treatment sotrovimab can cause drug-resistant mutation, study finds](#)
- [IMF Global lender approves \\$1.4bn emergency support for Ukraine](#)
- [Business Rio Tinto to sever ties with Russian businesses over Ukraine war](#)

Denmark

Denmark PM says sorry to Greenland Inuit taken for ‘heartless’ social experiment

Mette Frederiksen apologises in person to six surviving Greenlandic Inuit who were snatched from families as children more than 70 years ago



Danish prime minister Mette Frederiksen apologises personally to six Greenlandic Inuit who were separated from their families more than 70 years ago. Photograph: Liselotte Sabroe/EPA

Agence France-Presse

Wed 9 Mar 2022 20.52 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 15.51 EST

Denmark’s prime minister has apologised in person to a group of Greenlandic Inuit who were removed from their families and taken to Copenhagen more than 70 years ago as part of an experiment to create a Danish-speaking elite.

“What you were subjected to was terrible. It was inhumane. It was unfair. And it was heartless,” Mette Frederiksen told the six surviving members of that group at an emotional ceremony in the capital. “We can take responsibility and do the only thing that is fair, in my eyes: to say sorry to you for what happened.”

In 1951, 22 Inuit children between the ages of five and eight were sent to [Denmark](#), which was Greenland’s colonial power at the time but has since gained autonomy.

The parents had been promised their children would have a better life, learn Danish and return to Greenland one day as the future elite, in a deal between authorities in Copenhagen and Nuuk, the Greenland capital.

In Denmark, the children were not allowed to have any contact with their own families. After two years, 16 of the group were sent home to Greenland, but placed in an orphanage. The others were adopted by Danish families. Several of the children never saw their real families again.

An inquiry into their fate concluded more than half were very negatively affected by the experiment. Only six of the 22 are alive today.



Six Greenlandic Inuit who were separated from their families more than 70 years ago listen as Danish prime minister Mette Frederiksen apologises personally to them on Wednesday. Photograph: Liselotte Sabroe/EPA

“It was a big surprise for me when I realised that there were only six of them left, because they were not that old,” their lawyer Mads Pramming said. “They told me that the others had died of sorrow.”

The prime minister’s apology is “a big success for them”, Pramming said, two weeks after they each received financial compensation of 250,000 kroner (\$37,200). “First they got an apology in writing, and then the compensation for the violation of their human rights, and now they will have a face-to-face,” with the prime minister, Pramming said.

One of the six, Eva Illum, was grateful, saying: “Nothing had happened until now and it’s you, Mette [Frederiksen], who took the initiative to set up a commission two years ago.”

In December 2020, the prime minister offered the six an official apology.

The headline and text of this article were amended on 10 March 2022. The group of people are Inuit (singular Inuk), not Inuits as we had in an earlier version.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/10/denmark-pm-says-sorry-to-greenland-inuits-taken-for-heartless-social-experiment>

[Interpol](#)

Thousands of priceless artefacts seized in police operation across 28 countries

Roman gold coins, ancient Mexican artefacts and 13th-century processional cross recovered



Operation Pandora VI, led by Spain, involved seizures at airports and border crossing points. Photograph: Interpol

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

Wed 9 Mar 2022 14.07 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 00.13 EST

Priceless artefacts, including ancient coins, paintings, furniture, musical instruments and statuettes, have been seized in a four-month police operation across 28 countries.

More than 9,400 items were recovered and 52 people arrested in an operation targeting illicit trafficking in cultural goods, carried out between

June and September last year, [Interpol](#) said on Wednesday.

More than 170 investigations are ongoing, with more seizures and arrests expected as investigators “continue their pursuit of those spoiling and destroying cultural heritage”, the international criminal police operation said.

Operation Pandora VI, led by Spain, involved actions in airports and at border crossing points, as well as in auction houses, museums and private homes. Online markets were monitored for suspicious sales.



Fifty-two people were arrested in an operation targeting illicit trafficking in cultural goods. Photograph: Interpol

French customs officials seized 4,231 archaeological objects, including about 3,000 coins, as well as bells, buckles, rings and pieces of pottery that had been looted from archaeological sites by an individual using a metal detector.

Separately, they recovered three ancient statuettes dating back to La Tolita-Tumaco culture, whose people inhabited the area along the present-day border between Colombia and Ecuador in the first millennium AD.

Spanish police seized 91 Roman gold coins, looted from an archaeological site and worth an estimated half a million euros on the black market. Their investigation began when the coins were spotted at an auction house in Madrid.

US customs and border protection officials recovered a shipment containing 13 Mexican artefacts from the post-classic to the Aztec era, including a skull and 12 adzes, a cutting tool.

A 13th century processional cross was returned to the Evangelical Church Museum of Cisnădie, Romania.



Operation Pandora VI ran from 1 June to 30 September 2021 in 28 countries. Photograph: Interpol

Meanwhile, police in the Netherlands recovered two Kees Verweij paintings that had been reported as stolen, after investigating an online sales catalogue from an Amsterdam auction house.

A marble column dating from the Roman period, and 13 ancient coins and three pottery vessels dating from the Hellenistic period, were seized by Greek police.

Seven European law enforcement authorities recovered 90 metal detectors destined for illicit use at archaeological sites.

Operation Pandora, coordinated by Europol, Interpol and the World Customs Organisation, has resulted in the recovery of 147,050 cultural artefacts and the arrest of 407 people since it was launched in 2016.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/09/thousands-of-priceless-artefacts-seized-in-police-operation-across-28-countries>

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

Coronavirus

Covid treatment sotrovimab can cause drug-resistant mutation, study finds

Australian researchers raise concerns mutated virus could spread in the community if patients given the drug are not monitored

- [Get our free news app; get our morning email briefing](#)



Some Covid patients develop resistance to sotrovimab six to 13 days after treatment, making 'the drug effectively inactive', an Australian study has found. Photograph: GlaxoSmithKline/PA

*Melissa Davey Medical editor
@MelissaLDavey*

Thu 10 Mar 2022 17.35 ESTFirst published on Thu 10 Mar 2022 02.22 EST

Australian virologists have uncovered a drug-resistant mutation in the Covid-19 virus associated with the drug sotrovimab and say without the monitoring of patients given the treatment the mutated virus could spread in the community.

The world-first findings, [published in the New England Journal of Medicine on Thursday](#), are the result of an analysis of the first 100 patients in western Sydney during the Delta outbreak in 2021 to be given sotrovimab.

Sotrovimab is a monoclonal antibody that is available in many countries to treat vulnerable patients who are at risk of severe disease and death due to Covid-19 infection. Sotrovimab must be administered via infusion within the first five days of Covid-19 infection, and prevents Covid-19 symptoms from becoming severe. It is one of the few human-engineered monoclonal antibodies that can target Omicron.

The lead author of the study, Dr Rebecca Rockett, said four of the patients developed resistance to sotrovimab six to 13 days after treatment. The whole genome sequence of the virus analysed from the patients before and after sotrovimab treatment uncovered mutations in a few patients that “made the drug effectively inactive,” Rockett, from the University of Sydney’s Institute for Infectious Diseases, said.

“We’re not sure if sotrovimab helps neutralise the virus early on in the infection before it develops resistance. But often drugs are given to treat Covid-19 patients and there’s not really any follow-up done. We realise that you can’t follow every patient with PCR testing or genomic surveillance, but we are trying to advocate for patients that progress to severe disease despite the treatment that we investigate using genomics to see whether they’ve acquired any resistance mutations.”

It was important to monitor them because once the patients acquired the mutations, Rockett and her team could still take samples from them and grow the virus in the laboratory, which meant they were still infectious. It meant the patients were at risk of passing the mutated virus on to others.

“What we don’t want to see is resistant virus disseminating in the community, because that will mean that a lot of other people can’t use this drug as well.”

Rockett said it would be prudent for those who developed resistance to isolate for longer until the virus had cleared, and make extra efforts to remain separate from those in the same household. The virus persisted in the affected patients for up to 24 days after sotrovimab treatment.

- [Sign up to receive an email with the top stories from Guardian Australia every morning](#)

Sign up to receive the top stories from Guardian Australia every morning

It marks the first report of resistance to sotrovimab in patients.

An infectious diseases physician and drug resistance expert with the Australian National University, Prof Peter Collignon, said potential spread of resistant viruses in the community presented “a real problem”.

“Thankfully, this mutation appears to be a relatively rare event, but the only way you ever know that is to keep an eye on it.”

GSK, the manufacturer of the drug, said the study results were consistent with its large clinical trials, which found a small proportion of patients develop on-treatment resistance.

“Resistance is also seen in studies for other Covid-19 monoclonal antibodies and oral treatments, and relates to how the immune system interacts with the virus,” it said in a statement.

“This report does not change the positive benefit-risk of sotrovimab for use in the treatment of mild to moderate Covid-19 in patients at high risk of progression.”

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

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

IMF approves \$1.4bn emergency support for Ukraine

Global lender says funds will help country meet urgent spending needs caused by Russian invasion

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



The IMF managing director, Kristalina Georgieva, said the invasion ‘has been responsible for a massive humanitarian and economic crisis’. Photograph: Daniel Leal/AFP/Getty

Reuters in Washington

Thu 10 Mar 2022 03.15 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 03.21 EST

The International Monetary Fund has approved \$1.4bn in emergency financing for [Ukraine](#) to help meet urgent spending needs and mitigate the economic impact of Russia’s military invasion.

The global lender said Ukrainian authorities had cancelled an existing standby lending arrangement with the IMF but they would work together to design an appropriate economic programme focused on rehabilitation and growth when conditions permitted.

“The Russian military invasion of Ukraine has been responsible for a massive humanitarian and economic crisis,” the IMF managing director, [Kristalina Georgieva](#), said after the meeting, predicting a deep recession in Ukraine this year.

“Financing needs are large, urgent, and could rise significantly as the war continues,” she said. Once the war was over, Ukraine was likely to need additional “large support”.

Vladyslav Rashkovan, Ukraine’s alternate executive director at the IMF, gave an emotional and deeply personal speech at the board meeting about the devastation caused by the war and its impact on its people, a source familiar with the meeting said.

His remarks were met with spontaneous applause, a rare event at such meetings. In its statement on the new funding, the Russian executive director, Aleksei Mozhin, who is the board’s most senior member and serves as its honorary dean, spoke only briefly, telling members: “I pray for peace,” the source said.

The IMF said the war had resulted in very serious consequences, citing the departure of more than 2 million people from the country in 13 days and destruction of key infrastructure. Russia calls the assault a “special military operation”.

The disbursement under the IMF’s rapid financing instrument (RFI), equivalent to 50% of Ukraine’s quota in the IMF, would help fund urgent spending needs in the short term, while helping to catalyse financing from other partners, the IMF said.

The RFI provides rapid funding to IMF member countries without the need for a fully fledged programme. Members can tap the RFI repeatedly within

any three-year period if the balance of payments need is caused by an exogenous shock, according to the IMF website.

It comes on top of \$700m disbursed to Ukraine by the IMF in December, and \$2.7bn in IMF special drawing rights, or emergency reserves, that Ukraine received as part of an IMF allocation in August.

The World Bank's executive board on Monday approved a \$723m package of loans and grants for Ukraine.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/10/imf-approves-emergency-support-ukraine-russia-invasion>

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

Rio Tinto

Rio Tinto to sever ties with Russian businesses over Ukraine war

Mining giant's decision follows other big names exiting Russia and casts doubt over Queensland Alumina Ltd joint venture

- [Follow our Australia news live blog for the latest updates](#)
- [Get our free news app; get our morning email briefing](#)



As it severs ties with Russia, Rio Tinto says it is reviewing its joint venture with Rusal in Queensland Alumina Ltd, which runs an alumina refinery in Gladstone. Photograph: Richard Wainwright/AAP

[Ben Butler](#)

Thu 10 Mar 2022 00.16 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Mar 2022 01.10 EST

Global mining company [Rio Tinto](#) says it is severing its ties with Russia, throwing into doubt an aluminium joint venture between it and Rusal,

which was founded by oligarch Oleg Deripaska.

In a one-line statement, Rio Tinto said it was “in the process of terminating all commercial relationships it has with any Russian business”.

Rio is reviewing its joint venture with Rusal in Queensland Alumina Ltd (QAL) which runs an alumina refinery in Gladstone.

Thursday’s decision creates a fuel supply problem for Rio’s Oyu Tolgoi project in Mongolia, which relies on Russian diesel.

It comes as more western businesses turn their backs on Russia after the invasion of Ukraine, with Coca-Cola, Pepsi and other big brands joining the rush for the exit in the past 24 hours, amid sanctions that have laid waste to large sections of the Russian economy.

QAL is 80% owned by Rio and 20% by Rusal, where Deripaska [continues](#) to hold a stake through their London-listed parent company, EN+ Group.

Deripaska and EN+ were among the oligarchs and companies sanctioned in 2018 by the US government over issues including the invasion of Crimea in 2014.

Activist investors, the Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility (ACCR), welcomed the decision by Rio and another Australian company, engineering group Worley, to pull out of Russia.

- [Sign up to receive an email with the top stories from Guardian Australia every morning](#)

Sign up to receive the top stories from Guardian Australia every morning

“We look forward to seeing more detail about the implications for Rio Tinto’s Queensland Alumina joint venture,” ACCR’s director of climate and environment, Dan Gocher, said.

“Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, all Australian companies should sever relationships with companies owned or part-owned by oligarchs aligned with Russian president Vladimir Putin.

“Rio Tinto and Worley should be commended for taking appropriate action.”

In a statement to the Australian stock exchange, Worley said it had “begun the safe withdrawal of its services provided in and into Russia and will not enter into new contracts”.

The decision will not have a material impact on Worley’s global business, the company said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/10/rio-tinto-to-sever-ties-with-russian-businesses-over-ukraine-war>

Table of Contents

[The Guardian.2022.03.13 \[Sun, 13 Mar 2022\]](#)

[2022.03.13 - Opinion](#)

- [The Observer view on Rishi Sunak and rising energy bills](#)
- [The Observer view on Russia's crimes against humanity in Ukraine](#)
- [The UK government's hypocrisy is keeping Jack Letts and his mother in purgatory](#)
- [The grim reaper confronts Vladimir Putin – cartoon](#)
- [John Bercow is rightly damned as a bully and liar. But he was not alone in the Commons](#)
- [Heat Waves proves patience is a virtue, especially when it comes to megahits](#)
- [Letters: vulnerable Ukrainians need non-Nato support](#)
- [For the record](#)
- [The Tories claim we are worse than we are – and it's the Ukrainians who suffer](#)

[Headlines](#)

- [Gender equality Women face 30-year wait for parity at top of finance industry](#)
- [Women in business Companies with female leaders outperform those dominated by men, data shows](#)
- [TUC Workers can fight and beat the wage squeezes, says Frances O'Grady](#)
- [Climate crisis Six key lifestyle changes can help avert disaster, study finds](#)

[2022.03.07 - Spotlight](#)

- [‘Good times? I was out of it’ Naveen Andrews on booze, drugs and baffling the world in Lost](#)
- [‘I don’t have penis envy. I have 12 in a drawer at home’ The fearless female standups of the 60s](#)
- [Samsung Galaxy S22+ review A good phone playing it safe](#)
- [‘I just wanted to play Duck Hunt with my kids’ The man on a mission to bring back the light gun](#)

2022.03.07 - Coronavirus

[US Experts urge cities and states to prep for future outbreaks as Omicron slows](#)

[Why have some people never caught Covid? The answers could help protect us all](#)

2022.03.07 - Opinion

[It took decades to achieve progress for women – why has it stalled?](#)

[Keir Starmer's clarity on foreign policy will restore trust in Labour](#)

[Sexual abuse in football: what needs to be done now](#)

[Men's clothes have always been a way to unpick the locks of gender](#)

2022.03.07 - Around the world

[Australia Severe weather warning issued for Sydney and parts of NSW](#)

[PM flags 'enormous' flood recovery effort](#)

[Shane Warne death Woman questioned after climbing into ambulance transporting body](#)

[Ghislaine Maxwell trial Juror's grilling by judge could cast verdict into disarray](#)

Headlines

['Starve or freeze' Huge energy bills could push some into extreme poverty, Martin Lewis says](#)

[Petrol prices How to save money on running a car](#)

[‘We expect a huge hit’ UK firms struggle as fuel costs soar](#)

[Ask an expert What’s my personal inflation rate?](#)

2022.03.12 - Spotlight

[Kae Tempest ‘I was living with this boiling hot secret in my heart’](#)

[Hello £200k beach huts, goodbye primary school The Welsh village hollowed out by second homes](#)

[‘There’s a desire to see women who’ve been invisible’ Camille Cottin on becoming a sex symbol in her 40s](#)

[Blind date ‘I couldn’t hear him chewing – that’s always a good sign’](#)

2022.03.12 - Opinion

[While the Tories dawdle over Russian gas, we have a £28bn plan to make energy cheap – and green](#)
[Cartoon Martin Rowson: the Putiful game](#)

[I've faced a lot of hate. But I didn't realise how much until I saw myself on stage](#)

[Note to Sajid Javid: the idea that my family could have weaned me off cocaine is ridiculous](#)

[2022.03.12 - Around the world](#)

[US Judge blocks Texas from investigating parents of transgender children](#)

[US Outcry as Georgia lawmakers aim to pass Florida-style ‘don’t say gay’ bill](#)

[El Salvador Court orders arrest of former president over 1989 priest massacre](#)

[US The Covid cloud is starting to lift – but two years on, its legacy of grief lingers](#)

[Headlines](#)

[Cost of living UK household incomes 'face biggest decline since mid-70s'](#)

[National insurance rise Labour to test Tories with snap debate](#)

[Customs UK faces large EU bill over Chinese imports fraud](#)

[Live International Women's Day marked with events around the world](#)

[2022.03.08 - Spotlight](#)

[‘From basic to flamboyant overnight!’ The people who transformed their style – in their 50s, 60s and 70s](#)

[Shamans, Hitler and mutual hatred South Koreans go to polls in rancorous election](#)

[Picture essay Black Women Photographers on what International Women's Day means to them](#)

[Going places 10 inspirational female adventurers](#)

[2022.03.08 - Opinion](#)

[Want to help women on International Women's Day? Let's start by giving all migrants the vote](#)

[Stop moaning about sensitivity readers – if there was diversity in publishing we wouldn't need them](#)

[Boris Johnson's six-point plan for Ukraine turns out to be six vague principles](#)

[2022.03.08 - Around the world](#)

[Nuclear weapons Satellite images suggest building work at North Korea site for first time since 2018](#)

[Ageing Scientists rejuvenate tissues in middle-aged mice](#)
[Australia Sydney floods: two found dead, roads inundated, homes and suburbs across the city swamped](#)

[Guantánamo Bay Detainee allowed to return to Saudi Arabia after 20 years](#)

['Such a good deal' Turkey's trade in counterfeit goods booms, fuelled by falling lira](#)

[Headlines](#)

[Mental health Teachers 'buckling under strain' of pupils' anxiety and depression](#)

[School funding Senior teachers will endure long pay freeze under DfE plans, study finds](#)

[Education National tutoring scheme failing disadvantaged pupils, say MPs](#)

[2022.03.11 - Spotlight](#)

['Running naked with a fake penis' How Simon Rex found redemption playing a washed-up porn star](#)

[Thailand Backpackers' return brings glimmer of hope for tourism revival](#)

['I was a bit of a brat about marriage' Jenny Hval on domesticity, dangerous art and dogs](#)

[Ukraine Stop Tanks With Books – in pictures](#)

[2022.03.11 - Opinion](#)

[Putin's brutal war is the moment for Britain to reset its attitude to all refugees](#)

[What's driving the Great Resignation? Hope – with a side order of self-doubt](#)

[Is Priti Patel vicious or stupid? It's a fine line for Ukrainian refugees](#)

[Why did we endlessly forgive Shane Warne? He was boorish and cringey... but we loved him](#)

[2022.03.11 - Around the world](#)

[Ukraine Western Europe leaders rebuff fast-track EU membership appeal](#)

[Islamic State New leader is named, confirming US raid killed predecessor](#)

[Coronavirus One-third of all US child Covid deaths occurred during Omicron surge](#)

[‘Devastated’ Gender equality hopes on hold as ‘anti-feminist’ voted South Korea’s president](#)

[Che Guevara Bolivian soldier who killed revolutionary dies at age 80](#)

[Headlines](#)

[React study UK Covid cases rising among those aged 55 and over](#)

[Thursday briefing Get up to speed quickly on the big stories Stonehaven Wrongly built drainage system led to train crash – inquiry](#)

[Spring budget statement Sunak under pressure to react to cost of living crisis in spring statement](#)

[Analysis What can Sunak do to relieve cost of living crisis?](#)

[2022.03.10 - Spotlight](#)

[Strictly, sauerkraut and Monopoly Expert tips for hacking your happy hormones](#)

[Buffy at 25 ‘If the apocalypse comes, beep me!’](#)

[‘It was a Lazarus story’ How BBC 6 Music rose from the dead to become the home of new music](#)

[‘Infertility stung me’ Black motherhood and me](#)

[2022.03.10 - Opinion](#)

[Europe has rediscovered compassion for refugees – but only if they’re white](#)

[The magic of a 5am run makes me feel alive – and I’m determined to feel safe](#)

[A 10-week wait for a coil? British women are facing a quiet crisis in contraceptive care](#)

[Cartoon Ben Jennings on Vladimir Putin’s extraplanetary view](#)

[2022.03.10 - Around the world](#)

['Heartless' Denmark PM says sorry to Greenland Inuits snatched from families 70 years ago](#)

[Operation Pandora VI Thousands of priceless artefacts seized as police act across 28 countries](#)

[Coronavirus Treatment sotrovimab can cause drug-resistant mutation, study finds](#)

[IMF Global lender approves \\$1.4bn emergency support for Ukraine](#)

[Business Rio Tinto to sever ties with Russian businesses over Ukraine war](#)