

The Guardian

卫报

2022.09.19 - 2022.09.25

- [Headlines saturday 24 september 2022](#)
- [2022.09.24 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.09.24 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.09.24 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines](#)
- [2022.09.19 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.09.19 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.09.19 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines](#)
- [2022.09.23 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.09.23 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.09.23 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines](#)
- [2022.09.22 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.09.22 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.09.22 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines tuesday 20 september 2022](#)
- [2022.09.20 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.09.20 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.09.20 - Around the world](#)

Headlines saturday 24 september 2022

- [**'Class war' Kwarteng accused of reckless mini-budget for the rich as pound plummets**](#)
- [**Analysis Time against Truss as she bets big on economic plan**](#)
- [**'Toxic' Tory backbenchers despair at mini-budget**](#)
- [**Mini-budget 2022 What it means for you**](#)

Mini-budget 2022

Kwarteng accused of reckless mini-budget for the rich as pound plummets

Strategy of sweeping tax cuts gets hostile reception from markets and economic thinktanks, leaving some Tory MPs aghast

Kwasi Kwarteng delivers sweeping cuts in latest mini-budget – video highlights

[Larry Elliott](#) and [Rowena Mason](#)

Fri 23 Sep 2022 13.33 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 19.11 EDT

Kwasi Kwarteng has been accused of delivering a reckless mini-budget for the rich after his £45bn tax-cutting package sent the pound crashing to its lowest level against the dollar in 37 years.

In a high-risk strategy designed to revive Britain's stagnant economy, the new chancellor announced more than £400bn of extra borrowing over the coming years to fund the biggest giveaway since Tony Barber's ill-fated 1972 budget.

Kwarteng said tax cuts worth more than £55,000 annually to someone earning £1m a year were part of a new direction for the economy and were designed to help boost growth to 2.5% a year. Some Labour MPs described them as a "class war".

The Treasury admitted there were no forecasts for the impact of the measures on growth and the gamble received a hostile reception not just from the markets and opposition politicians, but from economic thinktanks and many Tory MPs, some of whom were aghast.

Paul Johnson, the director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, said: "Today, the chancellor announced the biggest package of tax cuts in 50 years without

even a semblance of an effort to make the public finance numbers add up. Instead, the plan seems to be to borrow large sums at increasingly expensive rates, put government debt on an unsustainable rising path and hope that we get better growth.

“Mr Kwarteng is not just gambling on a new strategy, he is betting the house.”

The shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, described it as “casino economics”.

FTSE graphic

Kwarteng scrapped the 45% rate of income tax paid by those earning more than £150,000 a year, abolished the cap on bankers’ bonuses, reversed the rise in national insurance contributions and brought forward by a year the reduction in the basic rate of income tax from 20% to 19% pencilled in by his predecessor Rishi Sunak for 2024. The income tax changes do not apply to Scotland, with Wales usually taking its lead from England and Northern Ireland.

The chancellor also announced a doubling of the £125,000 threshold for stamp duty on home purchases, a freezing of alcohol duties, and ditched the planned increase in corporation tax from 19% to 25% that was due to come into force in April. An estimated £60bn will be spent capping energy bills for households and businesses during the coming winter.

Stamp duty graphic

In the absence of independent scrutiny of the package from the Office for Budget Responsibility, it was left to thinktanks and the financial markets to pass judgment on the new government’s “plan for growth”.

The Resolution Foundation said the measures – including the energy support packages for households and businesses – would involve an extra £411bn of borrowing over five years. The thinktank said the tax cuts were heavily skewed in favour of the better off, pointing out that someone earning £1m a year would gain £55,220 a year while someone on £20,000 would gain just £157.

Tax graphic

Torsten Bell, the chief executive at the Resolution Foundation, said: “No chancellor has ever chosen to permanently increase borrowing by so much. Without significant cuts to public spending, debt will be on course to rise in each and every year. This is not what sustainable public finances look like. Every scrap of Treasury orthodoxy has been torn up.”

Reaction in the financial markets was swift and damning. The pound fell sharply across the world’s currency markets, dropping below the \$1.09 level against the dollar, while government borrowing costs hit their highest level in more than a decade. The crashing value of sterling will also drive up costs for households and businesses by making the imports more expensive.

Pound v dollar graphic

Larry Summers, a former US treasury secretary, said: “It makes me very sorry to say, but I think the UK is behaving a bit like an emerging market turning itself into a submerging market.”

He told Bloomberg: “Britain will be remembered for having pursued the worst macroeconomic policies of any major country in a long time.”

Despite Kwarteng’s pledge that the government would be financially responsible, investors were alarmed by the scale of the borrowing needed to cover his tax cuts and spending pledges – and by the prospect of much higher interest rates from the Bank of England. The financial markets are anticipating Threadneedle Street will more than double interest rates from their current level of 2.25% by next spring.

Kwarteng said his plan was designed to improve the supply side of the economy and to raise Britain’s underlying growth rate to 2.5% a year. In addition to tax cuts, the measures include cutting red tape to speed up big infrastructure projects, new investment zones and planning liberalisation.

“That is how we will compete successfully with dynamic economies around the world. That is how we will turn the vicious cycle of stagnation into a virtuous cycle of growth,” the chancellor said.

In her reply, Reeves said the government was “gambling the mortgages and finances of every family in the country to keep the Tory party happy”.

She added: “Twelve years of Tory government have left us with lower growth, lower investment, lower productivity, and today the lowest consumer confidence since records began. The only things that are going up are inflation, interest rates and bankers’ bonuses.”

In the Commons, only a few Conservative MPs gave the chancellor wholehearted support, while a number raised worries about aspects of the plans. John Glen, until recently economic secretary to the Treasury, praised the focus on growth but highlighted the “clear concern in the markets about the irreconcilable realities of having monetary tightening at the same time as fiscal loosening”.

Sir Bob Neill, another former minister, asked Kwarteng to bear in mind that as well as promoting growth, Conservatives “also believe in sound money and we must keep an eye on inflation”.

One senior Tory MP said it reminded them of the Barber budget, while one minister with a marginal seat described it as “a big gamble” that his constituents were not likely to appreciate at a time of economic instability.

Julian Smith, a former Tory chief whip, was one of the most vocal critics, saying: “The huge tax cut for the very rich at a time of national crisis and real fear and anxiety amongst low-income workers and citizens is wrong.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/23/kwarteng-accused-of-reckless-mini-budget-for-the-rich-as-pound-crashes>

Mini-budget 2022

Analysis

Time is against Liz Truss as she bets big on plan to turn economy around

[Pippa Crerar](#) Political editor

With an election two years away, any failure of her radical approach could shred the Tories' credibility



Liz Truss has said she is willing to be unpopular in order to push through her plans. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

Fri 23 Sep 2022 14.54 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 14.55 EDT

When [Liz Truss](#) flew to the US this week on her first foreign trip as prime minister, she was unequivocal about how she would achieve her mission in office: “Lower taxes lead to economic growth, there is no doubt in my mind about that.”

There was not a quiver of self-doubt in her voice as she gave a round of television interviews at the top of the Empire State Building expanding on her plans for the economy and saying she was “willing to be unpopular” to push them through.

The prime minister may not have anticipated just how quickly her own Tory MPs would start criticising her radical new approach, turning Treasury orthodoxy on its head. “I have never known the party so divided,” one sceptical MP said. “She’s clearly decided she goes big or goes home.”

Truss is acutely aware that time is not on her side. She has inherited the worst public finances in a generation, a country going through a cost of living crisis, and creaking public services. The next general election is two years away. It’s a mammoth task to even start to turn it around before then.

However, she also knows she will never be more powerful than her first few weeks in office. For now, most of her critics on the Tory backbenches are keeping their counsel – at least publicly – and government departments are primed for action.

She and her chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, have been working on plans for government for over a decade, ever since they wrote their book Britannia Unchained, the first draft of Trussonomics, a rip-roaring ride through free markets, deregulation and the small state. She is determined to make seismic changes.

One ally says: “It’s not going to be a comfortable two years. Liz isn’t afraid to break things. But if she can boost growth and people feel like they’ve got a bit more money in their pockets before the next election, it will be worth it.”

Not everybody on her own side agrees. The Commons benches behind Kwarteng were muted. Grim-faced MPs barely raised a cheer. Some of those with “red wall” seats are aghast that tax cuts so disproportionately benefit the rich. “It’s electoral suicide,” one despaired. Even some of her supporters admit her plans are “brilliant, or they are bonkers”.

If they go right, she wins big, turning round the economy and winning another term in office. If they go wrong – as many mainstream economists and politicians suspect they will – it could be an economic disaster that would shred the Tories’ economic credibility in a way not seen since Black Wednesday in 1992.

The success, or otherwise, of her experiment will take months to measure. There will be a swathe of new legislation, scrapping the rules on everything – from planning to finance to immigration – that she believes has held back growth. But its path through parliament will almost certainly be bumpy.

The eventual publication of the Office for Budget Responsibility’s forecasts will be another moment of acute danger for Truss. The Treasury has seen a draft, but is refusing to release details, prompting fears that the projections undermine her promise to boost growth by 2.5% “in the medium term” – generally assumed to be in the next two to five years.

[Sign up to First Edition](#)

[Free daily newsletter](#)

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

There is now a stark ideological divide with Labour, which is kicking off its party conference in Liverpool this weekend, with senior opposition figures deliberating how to take on a government it has criticised for raising taxes but is now slashing them, while their own plans for growth are not yet cutting through. With £72bn of extra borrowing between now and April, some are questioning whether there will be any money left for their own spending plans.

Kwarteng heralded a “new approach for a new era” – despite the fact he and Truss have both been in government for years – as he announced the biggest tax cuts since the then chancellor Anthony Barber’s “dash for growth” in 1972.

Barber’s radical plan to boost growth was seen as a bold experiment for a while. The economy did indeed pick up speed. Truss and Kwarteng could also see a brief economic “sugar rush” once the markets get used to the idea. But Barber’s proposals ended in economic disaster. With inflation at more than 10%, interest rates set to rise further and a recession on the cards, it is difficult to see Trussonomics ending any differently.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/23/time-is-against-liz-truss-as-she-bets-big-on-plan-to-turn-economy-around>

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

Mini-budget 2022

Tory backbenchers despair at ‘toxic’ mini-budget

Divisions of leadership contest return to the fore as some MPs criticise extra borrowing to pay for tax cuts

- [Politics live: reaction to the mini-budget](#)

Kwasi Kwarteng delivers sweeping cuts in latest mini-budget – video highlights

Aubrey Allegretti and Rowena Mason

Fri 23 Sep 2022 11.35 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 15.23 EDT

Kwasi Kwarteng’s mini-budget will prove “politically toxic and economically dubious”, Conservative MPs have said as they lambasted the extra £72bn of borrowing needed to pay for swingeing tax cuts that will disproportionately benefit the very wealthy.

The divisions of the Tory leadership campaign roared back to the fore after Kwarteng’s statement, with critics claiming the chancellor was trying to avoid scrutiny by refusing to publish economic forecasts from the independent budget regulator.

Kwarteng’s “plan for growth” was also compared by one senior party figure to the ill-fated “Barber budget” of 1972, which emulated a similar aim but ended in boom, soaring inflation and ultimately the demise of Ted Heath’s premiership.

“I’ve never known a government that has had so little support from its own backbenches, just four sitting days in,” observed one MP.

The normally ebullient benches that roar behind a chancellor as they make a fiscal statement to the Commons were more hushed on Friday. Several present said few order papers were waved and there was only a smattering of comments of “hear, hear”, allegedly orchestrated by party whips.

“I completely despair, because I’m a member of a party that stands up for the squeezed middle not the very rich. This will be politically toxic and economically dubious,” said another MP present for the statement.

In a sign of the level of discontent, several [Conservatives](#) rose in the Commons chamber to aim barbed and hostile interventions at Kwarteng. Mel Stride, the chair of the Treasury select committee and former campaign manager for Rishi Sunak’s leadership bid, said there was a “vast void” in the mini-budget.

Stride criticised the Treasury’s refusal to publish fresh economic forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility based on the measures unveiled this week, saying the markets were getting “twitchy” and “now is the time for transparency” to “provide a calmness”.

As the [pound fell further](#) against the dollar, the former attorney general Jeremy Wright said growth depended on confidence, and that would “evaporate” if the benefits of tax cuts were outweighed by mortgage repayments rising due to higher interest rates.

Others were gloomy about how the abolition of the highest tax rate and lifting the cap on bankers’ bonuses would play in poorer constituencies, particularly among the so-called red wall. “It’s the richest we’re helping while the poorest are suffering the most,” was one northern MP’s stark assessment.

Liz Truss’s ruthless reshuffle which ousted most Sunak supporters also hung like a dark cloud over the statement.

“Everybody is distraught at the reshuffle and the way it’s been handled,” said one person recently ousted from the government. “Looking ahead, you’re going to have a situation where, unless some goodwill is extended,

people will look for a cause to lay a marker down to make clear their unhappiness.”

Sunak’s supporters said they were more likely to boycott the Conservative party conference and ruminate over WhatsApp with other frustrated colleagues over the following few weeks of recess.

Roger Gale, a veteran thorn in the side of Boris Johnson’s administration, said: “Fortune favours the brave, but not the foolhardy,” and added that Kwarteng’s “not-so-mini-budget is certainly brave but also looks very high risk indeed”.

[Sign up to First Edition](#)

[Free daily newsletter](#)

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the [Google Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

However, some Tories were willing to give what they called Truss’s “gamble” a chance. “This is definitely driven by ideology, and politics is supposed to be – to some extent – about ideology,” said one. “She’s clearly taken the view she doesn’t win from the centre but a clear distinct position.”

Ardent Truss backers said it would force Labour into a difficult position of having to oppose the tax cuts and face uncomfortable questions about whether it would then reverse them. They also said it would shore up support on the right among voters who previously floated to support Ukip. Nigel Farage proclaimed it to have been “the best Conservative budget since 1986”.

David Jones, a former cabinet minister who supported Truss for the leadership, said: “Cutting taxes was very much called for because we were overtaxed previously. Kwarteng has obviously marked a clear break with the

Rishi regime and I personally think he had no option but to do it. If it had been steady as she goes then according to the OECD we would have had zero growth next year.”

Opposition parties sought to paint the mini-budget as a giveaway to the ultra-rich that would provide little support for those at the sharp end of the cost of living crisis.

Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, attacked Kwarteng’s “casino economics” that she said were “gambling the mortgages and finances of every family in the country”.

Ed Davey, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, called it a “billionaires’ budget” that had shown the Conservatives to be “completely out of touch with families struggling to pay the bills”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/23/tory-backbenchers-despair-at-toxic-mini-budget>

Mini-budget 2022: what it means for you

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/23/mini-budget-2022-what-it-means-for-you>

2022.09.24 - Spotlight

- [Alan Rickman's secret showbiz diaries The late actor on Harry Potter, politics and what he really thought of his co-stars](#)
- [Alan Rickman diaries Two decades of his withering film reviews](#)
- ['The inferno was racing towards me' Survivors of the Summerland fire on the day their holiday paradise burned down](#)
- [University Guide 2023 The full rankings](#)
- [Bee-keeping? Ghost-hunting? Why uni is all about extracurriculars](#)

Alan Rickman's secret showbiz diaries: the late actor on Harry Potter, politics and what he really thought of his co-stars

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/sep/24/alan-rickmans-secret-showbiz-diaries-harry-potter>

Advertisement

US edition

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

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Alan Rickman](#)

‘An unbelievable Die Hard rip-off’: two decades of Alan Rickman’s withering film reviews



Alan Rickman, the film critic. Composite: Allstar Picture Library

When the Harry Potter actor died in 2016, he left a trove of revealing diaries – which included some very frank critiques of movies of the time

Read an exclusive extract from [Rickman's deliciously indiscreet diaries](#)

Alan Rickman

Sat 24 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 24 Sep 2022 08.22 EDT

It's clear from Alan Rickman's diaries that he never lost his passion for the screen. The pages are littered with his verdicts on the movies he loved – and hated. Here's a small selection.

The Piano, 1993



Holly Hunter and Anna Paquin in *The Piano*. Photograph: Jan Chapman Productions/Allstar

For half of it, I thought it was a slightly coldly accurate rendition of the script. But somehow it kicked in. Holly Hunter was wonderful. They all were. An inspiration.

In the Line of Fire, 1993



Clint Eastwood, In the Line Of Fire. Photograph: Columbia/Tri-Star/Kobal/Shutterstock

Unbelievable Die Hard rip-off. Adversaries on the phone to each other, falling from a skyscraper etc, etc.

The Last Seduction, 1994



Linda Fiorentino in The Last Seduction. Photograph: Channel 4 Picture Publicity

Great reviews, Linda Fiorentino, etc, etc. Bodes well. But a deeply cynical, joyless, diminishing piece of work and we decide to leave. An espresso is more rewarding.

Secrets & Lies, 1996



Timothy Spall and Brenda Blethyn in Secrets & Lies. Photograph: Warner Bros/Allstar

Like watching your own life flash by. Things that aunts did or said and mums never forgot and never talked about leaving you perplexed as you open Xmas doors on sobbing relatives. Tim Spall quite wonderful.

Good Will Hunting, 1997



Robin Williams and Matt Damon in Good Will Hunting. Photograph: Cinetext Collection/ Sportsphoto/Allstar

Ultimately a bit of a let down. Matt Damon is a really fine actor, however. But the film feels as if it is looking for a sense of purpose, or that it has too many. And [Robin Williams](#) is too sweet from the word go.

Trees Lounge, 1996



Steve Buscemi in *Trees Lounge*. Photograph: Orion
Classics/Sportsphoto/Allstar

Steve Buscemi's beautiful film. Complete rethink on the being-in-it-and-directing question, although it has such a central quietness you forget anybody is acting or directing something. V inspiring.

Billy Elliot, 2000



Jamie Bell in *Billy Elliot*. Photograph: Un/Sportsphoto/Allstar

Jamie Bell is quite wonderful – not a sentimental second in his performance. The film is Stephen Daldry at his most calculating. It is almost as if he has fed the requirements into a computer. The film could have been beautiful but its cynical use of the miners' strike, added to a long list of untruths (the boy in the dress, the snowman, the brother's change of heart), make the newspaper headlines – "The Best British Film Ever" – an insult to [Joseph] Losey, [John] Schlesinger, [Lindsay] Anderson, Powell and Pressburger, [Mike] Newell, [Anthony] Minghella and the rest.

Gosford Park, 2001



Gosford Park. Photograph: Capitol Films/Allstar

There it is – the script perfectly realised on the screen. And I felt seriously detached. Maybe it's a problem when you don't really care about any of the characters. Because try as he might, [Robert Altman](#) can't make us see the story through the servants' eyes. The upper classes will always stop that. That's the point.

[Sign up to Inside Saturday](#)

Free weekly newsletter

The only way to get a look behind the scenes of our brand new magazine, Saturday. Sign up to get the inside story from our top writers as well as all the must-read articles and columns, delivered to your inbox every weekend.

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

[**About a Boy, 2002**](#)



Hugh Grant and Nicholas Hoult in About a Boy. Photograph: Universal Pictures/Allstar

The kind of depressing English film where single mothers and Amnesty workers are ugly people in oversized sweaters.

[Touching the Void, 2003](#)



Touching the Void. Photograph: Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy

They had to make a dramatisation because the two [mountaineers] are on a charisma bypass. But the shots are amazing and the ongoing dilemmas jaw-dropping.

Vicky Cristina Barcelona, 2008



Javier Bardem, Penélope Cruz and Scarlett Johansson in Vicky Cristina Barcelona. Photograph: The Weinstein Company/Allstar

Woman's Weekly tosh from Woody Allen.

Searching for Sugar Man, 2012



Searching for Sugar Man. Photograph:

Moving and simple documentary about the “lost” singer [Sixto] Rodriguez. Everything they say is right – he was ahead of his time, his music is wonderful, and his self-possession humbling.

12 Years a Slave, 2013



Michael Fassbender and Chiwetel Ejiofor in 12 Years a Slave. Photograph: New Regency Pictures/Allstar

A great film, I am told. Would I watch it twice? No. What does it say? Should Chiwetel [Ejiofor] get an Oscar? No. He's in it a lot, looking worried, and breathing heavily. Is that enough? [Michael] Fassbender, however, is very fine. Makes you ferret to understand him. Somehow, I was always watching actors, not a story.

Philomena, 2013



Judi Dench and Steve Coogan in Philomena. Photograph: Bbc Films/Allstar

Deeply frustrating. Seeming to ride on (correct) assumption of Judi [Dench]'s greatness, allowing quite a lot of script laziness. Watching it is to constantly want to put your hand up and yell: "Excuse me, what about/why didn't she/why hasn't he???? Etc, etc.

Quartet, 2012



Maggie Smith, Pauline Collins and Billy Connolly in Quartet. Photograph: Everett/REX/Shutterstock

Maggie [Smith] and Tom [Courtenay] full-up with class. And Billy Connolly doing some great work, but which OAP home is that? Let's all move in.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/sep/24/two-decades-of-alan-rickman-film-reviews>

Advertisement

US edition

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

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Isle of Man](#)

‘The inferno was racing towards me’: survivors of the Summerland fire on the day their holiday paradise burned down



Summerland leisure centre before the fire. Photograph: Manx National Heritage/Bridgeman Images

When it opened in 1971, the acrylic-clad complex promised balmy conditions year round. But then a blaze ripped through the building in minutes, killing 50. What happened – and why has the disaster been forgotten?

Sally Williams

Sat 24 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT

Heather Lea wasn't there when it happened; she was 19 and newly married. But her sister June was only 13 and had been looking forward to the family's annual fortnight on the [Isle of Man](#). Reg, Heather's husband, drove June and her parents to the ferry terminal in his car. Heather remembers her mother turning to wave goodbye.

The Cheetham family lived in a council house on the edge of Kirkby, Liverpool. Heather shared a bedroom with June and her older sister, Mavis. Their father, Richard, a typesetter in the printing business, was an ex-sergeant in the RAF who insisted shoes were polished on a Sunday night. Her mother, Elizabeth, was timid, with a mischievous side.

When Heather was small they went on day trips to Southport or Rhyl. But in 1964 they saved up to go to the Isle of Man. After that, they went back every year; they always stayed with Mr and Mrs Christian, who ran a guesthouse near the seafront, in Douglas.



Tan-seekers in the Sundome. Photograph: Manx National Heritage/Bridgeman Images

The summer Heather turned 16, in 1971, a new leisure centre opened on the island. Summerland looked like a big greenhouse, 250ft (76 metres) long. Inside, the temperature was subtropical, no matter how dismal the weather. You walked into the Solarium, a vast atrium with trees and deckchairs in which to eat ice-creams, drink beer and be entertained. There were birds at the start, but they were soon removed (they ate the leaves, even plastic ones). Above the Solarium were three open terraces; below, three lower floors. Summerland was an odd mix of styles: one half light, airy and modern; the other windowless and concrete. The lower floors were geared towards children and teenagers, with a disco, fairground rides and “moon walk” bouncy castle. The Solarium and upper terraces were themed. If you wanted cabaret, you went to the Marquee bar (level five). A tan? The Sundome (level six), to lie on a beanbag under UV lights. Ping-pong? The Cruise Deck (level seven).

Summerland was open from 9am to midnight (noon to 11pm on Sundays), so you could spend the whole day there, the kids running wild, everyone in the same building. Admission was 25p for adults (£3.33 today); 15p (£2) for children. Heather remembers playing crazy golf with June on the outside

terrace. Her parents liked the bingo and restaurants. After that first year, a visit to Summerland was one of the highlights of their holiday.

At around 9.30pm on Thursday 2 August 1973, Heather and Reg were watching TV at home when there was a newsflash: "Fire in Summerland, Isle of Man". There was a telephone number on the screen, but the newlyweds didn't have a phone. They rushed next door and Heather called the guesthouse. Mrs Christian answered, saying: "June, where are you?" "It's not June," Heather replied. She knew in that instant that her family were at the resort. Douglas police station received around 28,000 telephone calls that night and Reg finally got through at 9am the following morning. A voice confirmed that Richard, Elizabeth and June Cheetham were missing.



Heather Lea (with husband Reg) lost her parents and sister. Photograph: Shaw and Shaw/The Guardian

It emerged that a fire had broken out in a kiosk on the crazy golf course. Within half an hour, flames had engulfed Summerland, roaring 67ft (20 metres) in the air. The transparent acrylic walls and roof burned, as one eyewitness said, "as though they were paper". "It was a very rapid spread, very violent," says John Webb, then a young scientist and part of the team that would investigate the fire. Fifty people died, including 11 children and teenagers; 100 were injured.

The fire was one of the deadliest on land since the second world war, a safety scandal on the scale of [Grenfell Tower](#), 44 years later. It soon emerged that architects had used materials known to be a safety risk and rules had been “bent”, according to David McNeill QC, who represented relatives of the dead and injured at the public inquiry. Yet none of the named parties were charged with a crime. Almost 50 years on, Summerland is largely forgotten, its lessons not learned.

“Summerland is an outrage. Why don’t more people know about it?” asks Dr Ian Phillips, 48, a teaching fellow in geography at the University of Birmingham, who has spent two decades [researching the disaster](#). He draws a comparison with the [London Underground fire in 1987](#) in which 31 people died: “The King’s Cross fire is better remembered, despite fewer deaths.”

For survivors who still count the cost, it is a disaster with no end. “We just took it on the chin,” says Reg, 73 and still tearful at the memory. He and Heather, 68, live in a neat home in Great Sutton, near Chester. “The people at the top look after themselves and the people at the bottom get stuffed. And that’s exactly what happened.”

In the early evening of 2 August 1973, Jackie Norton, 13, her mother Lorna, 35, and Jackie’s best friend, Jane Tallon, 13, had dinner, then set off for Summerland. It was day four of their week on the Isle of Man, Jackie’s first proper holiday. She’d never stayed in a guesthouse before and lapped up everything the Isle of Man had to offer. They’d made a wish at the Old Fairy Bridge; seen the Laxey Wheel and Peel Castle.

Jackie lived with her mother and grandmother in a mid-terrace in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. The three were very close: Jackie and her grandmother shared a room; she never knew her father. She met Jane at Huddersfield high school and the pair were Osmonds mad, watching the cartoon series about the band every Saturday morning. When there was talk of a holiday, there was no question that Jane would come, too.



Jackie Norton (now Hallam) jumped off a balcony to escape; her mother and best friend died. Photograph: Shaw and Shaw/The Guardian

In Summerland, Jackie's mother jumped on the escalator and headed up to the Sundome. Jackie and Jane wandered around the amusement arcade.

At around 7.15pm, Chris Mannion, a musician and DJ, walked in from the drizzle and unbuttoned his coat to reveal a tuxedo and dress shirt. He had grown up in Cheshire, where he remembers telling a school careers officer he wanted to work as a disc jockey on a pirate radio station ("Come on, Mannion, be sensible!" was the response). He ended up in an office in a steelworks, but craved excitement. He had taken piano lessons as a child and soon found himself working as an entertainer, playing in pubs and clubs after work.

He'd heard through a friend of a vacancy for an organist on the Isle of Man. One evening, not long after, he was mid-set at the Slow & Easy, a pub in Northwich, Cheshire, when the head of entertainment at Trusthouse Forte, the UK hotel and leisure group, walked in. "I knew it was him because his arm was wrapped around a woman in glamorous 60s boots, and nobody wore those in Northwich," Mannion says. "I was lucky – it was a busy night. We'd got a coach in." The next thing he knew, Mannion was on a plane to

the Isle of Man to choose an organ. He signed a nine-week contract and handed in his notice at the steelworks.

At Summerland, his job was to play at the dance competitions, the talent contests, wherever he was needed. He had his own half-hour spot in the afternoons and evenings, playing Chirpy Chirpy Cheep Cheep, the Beatles, ballads. “Organists in those days were po-faced and had a high idea of themselves. But I introduced my songs in the style of a disc jockey. That made me very modern.” By 1973, he was in his third season and he’d been moved closer to the entrance, so people on the upper terraces could look down and see the stage.



The crazy golf course and the kiosk where the fire broke out. Photograph: Manx National Heritage / Bridgeman Images

By 7.30pm, holidaymakers were piling in. As Mannion made his way through the crowds, three boys were larking about in a broken-down kiosk on the crazy golf terrace outside. Two were 12; one 14; all were from the same area of Liverpool. The kiosk had been damaged by a storm a couple of months earlier: most of it had been dismantled and stored in the basement. One section was left on the terrace, close to the eastern wall. The boys were smoking and playing with matches. It’s not clear whether it was a discarded cigarette end or a lighted match, but at around 7.35pm, the kiosk caught fire.

Staff tried to put it out after being alerted by a sales assistant in the Solarium who spotted smoke drifting through an open window near the amusement arcade. They poured water on it from above, passed a firehose through the window and used fire extinguishers, even flagpoles, to try to move the kiosk away from the wall. What no one realised was that the fire had already broken through the wall. [Summerland was burning](#).

In the late 1960s, the Isle of Man was rapidly losing visitors to package holidays. In 1966, 17.9% of Britons went to Spain; by 1972 that figure would nearly double to 33.9%. The Manx government decided it needed something magnificent to attract visitors back. It had to be big and modern, rivalling the attractions of the Mediterranean. On average, the Isle of Man was overcast about 60% of the time during the summer holidays; it needed a place that was warm, 365 days a year.

The Douglas Corporation (now Douglas borough council) proposed the Derby Castle site at the northern end of the promenade. The corporation had bought Derby Castle, an antiquated entertainment centre that was formerly a retreat for the island's ruler, the Seventh Duke of Atholl, in 1964, with a view to demolishing and reviving the space. The site yielded three and a half acres with panoramic views over Douglas Bay.

James Lomas, a local architect, was awarded the contract for the entertainment centre, which would be called Summerland (the name was suggested at the last minute by Trusthouse Forte, which was contracted to run the building), as well as a nearby swimming baths, Aquadrome, in 1965. Douglas Corporation's Derby Castle subcommittee praised Lomas's "imaginative" idea to create a British seaside resort in an artificial Mediterranean climate. "The scheme envisages ... the maximum possible area enclosed by a structure designed to admit the maximum sunlight," stated a promotional booklet in 1972. Summerland and Aquadrome were expected to cost around £1.7m, funded by Isle of Man taxpayers and Douglas rate payers.

Lomas, then in his early 50s, had undertaken no work outside the island and his previous experience was limited to modest building designs. He proposed a collaboration with Leeds architects Gillinson Barnett & Partners,

a firm known for building innovative leisure centres. It was agreed: Lomas would be the principal architect, Gillinson Barnett the associate architects (12 people from the Leeds office worked on Summerland, including Basil Gillinson and Clifford Barnett, senior partners, and Alan Theaker, senior project architect).

From the outset, the hunt was on for a new and innovative means of enclosing Summerland. Barnett had become fascinated with a particular type of acrylic sheeting called Oroglas, made by Rohm and Haas, a US plastics company. Oroglas was around 20 times stronger than glass and could be moulded into different shapes to concentrate the sun. It had been used in the US for the walls of several entertainment centres, the roof of the Houston Astrodome, a multipurpose domed sports centre, and for the American Pavilion at Montreal's Expo 1967. Oroglas had also been used in the UK, for the Astrodome, which housed a rollercoaster at Blackpool Pleasure Beach, in 1970. But no building worldwide would incorporate as much Oroglas as Summerland. More than 1,900 panels would be used on the roof (tinted in bronze to "give a warmer feeling") and moulded into pyramid shapes on the south-facing wall.



The blaze rips through the building. Photograph: Noel Howarth / Manx National Heritage / Bridgeman Images

Work began in 1968. But first the architects had to get past bylaw 39, a building regulation on the Isle of Man that required external walls to be noncombustible and have a fire resistance of two hours. Oroglass melts at 90C; at 460C it ignites. In a test conducted by staff at Warwickshire county council, which was considering using Oroglass as a roofing material before the fire, it performed catastrophically. Staff watched as a panel was set alight with a cigarette lighter. “The sample burst into flames with a ferocity I had not seen since I, like all young boys do, had set light to a ping-pong ball,” Charles Alan, a quantity surveyor, recalled in an email to Phillips. “It spat and flared, and we got a bit panicked.”

Theaker (of Gillinson Barnett) was clearly concerned. “[Summerland] is so extraordinary [in] its conception that ... some relaxation of the Bye-laws will be necessary,” he wrote to Lomas in February 1967. “Unless we are granted [an Oroglass] waiver ... we shall be in the soup as I cannot suggest an alternative [material].”

On 3 November 1967, Lomas briefed borough engineer Leslie Powell on the fire properties of Oroglass: “The enveloping structure is, in effect, an acrylic glazed space frame, no part of which is combustible,” [Lomas wrote](#). Two weeks later, the local governing body agreed to relax bylaw 39 for Oroglass. Compensatory safety measures should have been taken, such as more exits and a sprinkler system (recommended by Rohm and Haas). In the event, no sprinklers were installed.

The shell of Summerland was finished by December 1970. But drawn-out negotiations with Trusthouse Forte meant the contract to furnish and operate the building was not signed for another fortnight, leading to a rush to construct the interior before the proposed opening in May. From then on, Gillinson Barnett became lead architects and Lomas’s involvement ceased.

In a prescient warning of the tragedy, Commercial Union, the site’s insurers, wrote to Trusthouse Forte on 25 May 1971 to say that having a public building with an open-plan design, “numerous timber mezzanine floors” and an upper half “almost entirely constructed of acrylic sheets, which of course are combustible” was “a most unattractive risk ... we would normally have no hesitation in declining”. Commercial Union proposed an annual insurance premium of £20,000 (£266,000 today). This was reduced by a

third, following a meeting with Trusthouse Forte in London on 13 December, five months after Summerland opened. The conditions included the appointment of a trained firefighting team (from members of Summerland staff), available all year, and a night watchman on duty from midnight to 8am. The watchman was hired and the firefighting team appointed. But the training they received was minimal.

Summerland opened in July 1971. There was a snobbish tone to press coverage. “The centre’s glossy brochure claims it has ‘Attractions for every taste’, but I must beg to be excused from that generalisation. I do not like motorway restaurants, either, but that is another variation on the theme,” wrote John Carter, the travel journalist and broadcaster, in the Times in May 1973.

Visitors, however, mostly considered Summerland a triumph. In its first year, it made a profit of £50,000 (£665,520 today), shared between Trusthouse Forte and the Douglas Corporation, despite not being open for a full season. The British Tourist Authority called Summerland an “outstanding tourist enterprise” – and awarded it a special certificate of commendation.

At about 7.45pm on 2 August, Lawrie Adam parked his car and made his way to his dressing room, a concrete box on one of the lower floors of Summerland. Adam was a comedian. If you’d done a summer season in Blackpool, you were on the up; Adam had done two. The year before, he’d just finished a set at the Central Pier when two men in smart mohair suits and tinted glasses came to his dressing room. “We’ve been watching you,” they said. “We’d like you to come to the Isle of Man.” Adam had never heard of Summerland. Nor did he know that Trusthouse Forte ran hotels, theatres and just about every pier in England. But his agent told him: “If you fall out with them, you could fall out with show business.” The work didn’t thrill him, but he found something that did: Trusthouse Forte offered to pay him around £400 a week – three times his normal salary.

In May 1973, he brought his entire family – his wife, Wendy, a professional dancer and his stage assistant, and their two young daughters – to Douglas for the summer season. They rented a chalet above the bay.

Adam's set was at 9pm, but he usually did a warmup act in the Solarium at around 8pm. As he walked on stage, he noticed concerned faces in the audience. One woman stood up and looked around. Another turned in her seat and started sniffing: there was a smell of smoke. Adam turned to a stagehand and said, "Just go and investigate and report back", before stepping up to the microphone. "It's nothing," he told the crowd. "The chef has set fire to the chip pan again." That got a faint laugh and the audience calmed down. Chris Mannion was about to finish his set, but Adam asked him to continue playing; he chose The Blue Danube.

At around this time, Maggie Leeche, 18, was standing at the entrance, waiting to be let in. The oldest of seven, from Glasgow, she'd spent the last three summers working as a chambermaid in a hotel on the seafront in Douglas. Along with Top of the Pops, Summerland was part of her Thursday evening routine. She had a weekly ticket and particularly liked the underground disco. "We're not letting any more people in at the moment," she was told. "We've got a small fire at the back."



Lawrie Adam had been entertaining the crowd. 'It's nothing,' he told them. 'The chef has set fire to the chip pan again.' Photograph: Shaw and Shaw/The Guardian

In press reports immediately after the fire, Oroglas was blamed for the disaster. In fact, although it burned with apocalyptic speed, the main culprit was Colour Galbestos, a plastic-coated steel sheeting used for the south-eastern wall of Summerland. The architects had proposed using concrete. But Lomas, after reflecting on the cost, wanted the cheapest material available.

There was another fatal error. An internal wall was needed for the amusement arcade on the Solarium floor. The architects suggested plasterboard, but Trusthouse Forte wanted something with more soundproofing. The interior designer suggested Decalin because a sales rep had given him a sample the day before. He didn't know Decalin had a propensity to burn rapidly; the combination of Galbestos and Decalin created a 12in cavity wall with a highly combustible surface on each side. When the burning kiosk collapsed against the building, flames either broke through the Galbestos steel sheeting into the void, or flammable vapours released by the heat were ignited. Either way, a fire burned undetected in the cavity, building in heat and intensity, for about 10 minutes.

There were fireballs coming down. It was like raining fire. There was no way to get away from it

Jackie Norton

Just after 8pm, a plume of flames and black smoke erupted into the amusement arcade, spilled over the ceiling and shot up over the front edges of the terraces. The noise was horrendous: "A roaring sound," Adam says. "The fire was an absolute inferno and it was racing towards me." He shouted to the audience to get out.

By then, Jackie and Jane were on the leisure floor, level six, from which they could see the whole Solarium. "Suddenly there was this huge thick black cloud of smoke moving towards us," Jackie says. "I couldn't breathe. There was no air." She describes what happened haltingly, through tears. "The whole corner of the building from top to bottom shot up in flames. Jane and I just looked at each other. There were screams and panicking. I turned and ran towards the sunbeds, shouting for my mum. Then I felt Jane pulling on

my arm, saying, ‘Jackie, we’ve got to get out of here.’ People were jumping over the balcony, pushing, shoving.”

In 1964, Rohm and Haas, the manufacturers of Oroglass, claimed that in a severe fire, the acrylic glazing would not melt or fall apart but “falls out in one piece”. In reality, the roof burned out in an astonishing 10 minutes. Jackie was below it, on level six. “There were fireballs coming down. It was like raining fire. There was no way to get away from it.” Jackie’s nylon stockings, which she had felt so grown up wearing for her night out, melted against her legs. Her polyester skirt burned and her hair was singed. “I was jumping from one foot to the other to try and relieve the pain. And there was nowhere to go.” She blacked out and fell to the floor.

Meanwhile, at the main entrance, there was mayhem. People were screaming to get out; others, who had got swept out, were screaming to get back in, to look for their children. One of the two glass doors was locked. Maggie Leeche remembers seeing a woman in a white flowery dress pushed through the glass door by the sheer force of people: “She was covered head to toe in blood.” In the rush for the exits, people were crushed, trampled on. Leeche got knocked to the floor; at the hotel later, she found footprints on the back of her coat.



Maggie Leeche (now Clarke) was trampled trying to get out. Photograph: Dave Kneale/The Guardian

In the rush to get away from the fire, Adam directed people downstairs to level two – street level – a route he knew, but most didn't, because his dressing room was below the Solarium. Mannion escaped through an opening someone had smashed near the entrance (the lower part of the front facade was made of glass).

Sign up to Inside Saturday

Free weekly newsletter

The only way to get a look behind the scenes of our brand new magazine, Saturday. Sign up to get the inside story from our top writers as well as all the must-read articles and columns, delivered to your inbox every weekend.

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

When Jackie came to, nobody was left on their feet: “Just people lying there, burning; bodies burning. I managed to get up. I had to step over all these poor people and I got to the balcony.” She threw off her shoes and dropped her bag down. “I climbed on top of the balcony. I looked at the fire around me, and I looked down at the black. And I let go.”

Summerland had a sophisticated alarm system that sounded in Douglas fire station, but the member of staff on duty that night didn't know how to use it. It wasn't until 8.05pm that the alarm was triggered. By this time, the fire station had already received a radio message from a ship anchored in the bay of Douglas. Alan Christian, the duty firefighter, climbed into the driver's seat of the fire engine and set off, siren blaring, to what he thought was a gorse fire. The embankment behind Manx Electric Railway and Summerland was thick with bracken and gorse. He was halfway along the promenade when it became obvious the fire was in the building. When Christian and his crew arrived, hundreds of people were streaming out, some of them on fire.

A total of 16 fire engines and 93 firefighters eventually made it to the scene. “To be frank, the fire was spreading so fast, there was no way we were ever going to extinguish it,” Christian says now.



Alan Christian was duty firefighter. Photograph: Dave Kneale/The Guardian

Something broke Jackie’s fall – it might have been the canopy of a shop on the Solarium floor. She got up and ran to a “speck of light”. Someone pulled her through an opening in the glass. “I just walked down the ramp. No shoes, no nothing. I got to the bottom and there was this woman wearing a red trouser suit. She just came up to me and shouted to her husband, ‘Ronnie, get the car!’ This man put me in the back of his car and I was sticking to the seat because I had no skin. They shouted out the window, ‘Where’s the hospital!?’”

Noble’s hospital in Douglas served the 56,000 residents of the Isle of Man, as well as the 500,000 people who visited each year. There were seven beds in the intensive care unit, and no separate burns unit. At around 8.15pm, casualties started to arrive, brought by taxis, private cars and ambulance. Blood donors appeared, in response to a radio appeal, and donated 44 pints of blood. Thirty-two patients were admitted; two would die from their injuries; 70, with minor burns, fractures and lacerations, were treated as outpatients.

The only people charged with a crime were the three boys, who were fined £3 each

“I was bandaged from head to foot,” Jackie recalls. “I remember opening my eyes and seeing my grandma smiling at me. I said, ‘Where’s my mum – and Jane?’ And she just shook her head.”

There was a five-year-old in Noble’s hospital, too. Ruth McQuillan and her family – her mother, father and younger sister, Lynda – had arrived from Belfast that morning. They spent only 15 minutes in Summerland: enough time to go to the top floor (“My dad loved a view,” Ruth says), spot a tendril of smoke and make their escape. Her father picked up her sister, leaving Ruth and her mother to follow. The flames were licking through the Flying Staircase, which was narrow, open and with wooden treads. Ruth was wearing an anorak, dungaree shorts, ankle socks and sandals. Her right hand and the backs of both legs were badly burned. She still has the toy monkey well-wishers gave her. “Why did you leave me behind?” she asked her father when he came to see her in hospital. “Why did you take Lynda?”

By 9.10pm, the fire was under control. Firefighters began to bring out the dead shortly before 11pm. Only 12 of the bodies were visually identifiable. Twenty-five people died on or near the Flying Staircase; 12 on the north-east service staircase. Jackie’s mother, Lorna, and her friend Jane were among them.

It would be a few days before a coroner from the Isle of Man got in touch with Heather and Reg asking for dental records for Richard Cheetham. Reg eventually tracked down a dental technician in Formby, Sefton. He said if the dentures were marked by an X and four initials, they would be Richard Cheetham’s teeth. On 10 August, Heather was officially informed of the death of her mother, father and sister. The cause of death: severe burning.

Two suitcases with the family’s belongings arrived at Heather and Reg’s home. Inside was a cow-shaped milk jug – a holiday present her parents had planned to give her. There was also a plastic bag with some charred banknotes, which were probably found in Richard’s pockets. “It was horrible. I was a with a friend in a pub right on the River Mersey about a

month or two later. He said, ‘Come with me’ and we walked down to the garden of the pub and threw it in the river. It helped.”

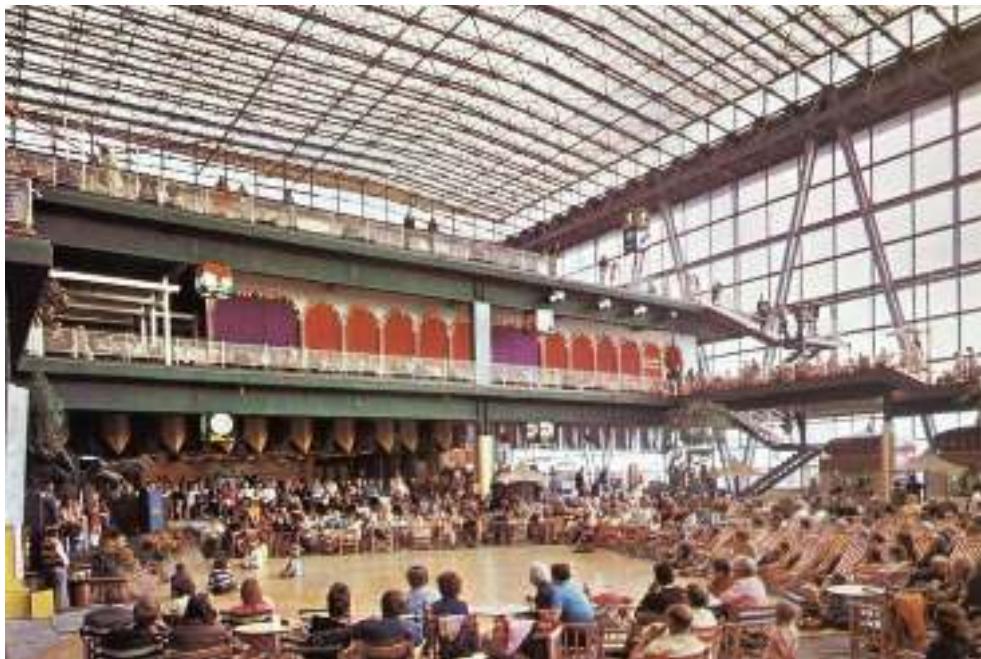
Heather was prescribed tranquillisers, and went back to work after two months; Reg thought it important to have a routine after such an awful loss.

On 3 September 1973, a three-man Summerland Fire Commission (SFC) was appointed to investigate the disaster. The chairman was Mr Justice Joseph Cantley, later castigated in the Daily Mail as the “snobbish judge” whose summing up “skewed the trial of the century” – that of Jeremy Thorpe, the former leader of the Liberal party, in 1979. The public inquiry began on 19 November. After 49 days of testimony from 91 witnesses, the commission’s report into the disaster was released on 24 May 1974. It criticised the open-plan design, lack of escape routes and fatal delay in calling the fire brigade.

The report confirmed that the waiver of bylaw 39 was evidence of extraordinary incompetence. The works committee of the Douglas Corporation said that had they known Oroglass was combustible, they would never have agreed to it. Lomas, meanwhile, clarified his assertion that “no part” of the enveloping structure was combustible: he meant the V-shaped steel frames, not the Oroglass panels (an explanation the inquiry found “unconvincing”). Worse, bylaw 39 had been inadvertently relaxed for both Oroglass and Galbestos. This meant the updated plans, with Galbestos in place of concrete, were never shown to the fire service.

David McNeill QC, representing relatives, told the inquiry: “The authorities at both [Douglas] Corporation and [Isle of Man] Local Government Board level were so committed to Summerland in terms of the political and financial decisions already made that the rules would have to be bent.”

The report criticised Trusthouse Forte, who “seem never to have been aware of how vulnerable Summerland was, or might become, yet its protection was their responsibility”; senior management, it continued, should have had a “proper system of fire precautions”, including the testing of alarms and a well understood procedure for evacuating the building in a fire emergency.



The Solarium, a vast entertainment area. Photograph: Bridgeman Images

And it criticised the architects. They made design mistakes, lacked “simple scientific knowledge about materials” and didn’t ask enough questions about the new materials they were using. They designed a public building without discussing “at any length” fire precautions and escape. Nor did they give much thought to the fire risk of using Galbestos rather than concrete. Memos from Theaker and Lomas saying things like “we might get away with it” and talking of “steering the mind of the chief fire staff officer along the lines of the lowest estimate” when it came to firefighting equipment were evidence of a cavalier mindset. At the inquiry, Clifford Barnett agreed it was necessary to watch Lomas “like a hawk”.

“The architects made a right dog’s dinner of the whole thing,” says Webb, the scientist on the investigating team. Yet the SFC concluded that, while there were “errors and failures” and “too much reliance upon an ‘old boy network’”, there were “no villains”. This, Phillips says, was “the line that stuck”.

The inquest returned a verdict of death by misadventure. The only people charged with a crime were the three boys, who were fined £3 each for causing unlawful and wilful damage to the door lock of the kiosk. In its

report the SFC stated: “There is no suggestion and no cause to suspect that the boys intended to cause a major fire.”

Lomas retired in 1971 and went to live on his yacht in the Mediterranean. He was in Corsica when he saw pictures of the fire in the French newspapers. He did not return to the Isle of Man until seven weeks later. “There has been far too much hysteria,” he said in an interview with the Daily Mail in October 1973. “Suggestions that I was hiding abroad refusing to return were codswallop.” In an interview with the Isle of Man Examiner in 2003, he was asked if he ever thought about the disaster. “You can’t carry something in your mind for ever,” he replied. Lomas died in December 2007, aged 93.

Basil Gillinson, associate architect, spoke at a press conference the day after the disaster. “We are horrified by what has happened ... I am appalled. I cannot understand how the fire spread so quickly ... The fire risk was given full consideration.” Gillinson died in 2001.

Clifford Barnett went on to set up leisure developers Techno Sunley; he worked with Will Alsop, the maverick architect, on a commission to build Splash, a swimming pool in Sheringham, Norfolk, in 1984. He died four years ago. Alan Theaker moved to the Lake District.

After the disaster, Oroglas was never again used to clad the side of a building or an entire roof in Britain. The material is now clearly labelled as heat resistant, emphasising its limited fire resistance.

It took 25 years for Douglas borough council to commemorate the disaster with a memorial stone, which was installed in Kaye Gardens, Douglas, in 1998. Survivors, families and campaigners found the small memorial insulting. “It was a stone from a garden centre just laid in a flowerbed,” Heather Lea says. The council erected a larger memorial, for the 40th anniversary, also in Kaye Gardens, in 2013. But Tina Brennen, 68, who lives on the Isle of Man and witnessed the fire, is campaigning to set up a memorial on the derelict site of Summerland, which has been for sale since 2008. “This is the place where 50 men, women and children perished in the most horrific way,” she says. “People say, ‘Let’s move on, draw a line under it all.’ But you can’t put a cap on somebody else’s grief.”



Tina Brennen witnessed the fire and is campaigning for a memorial on the site. Photograph: Dave Kneale/The Guardian

What Summerland did do was change building regulations in the UK. The new regulations, known as the Summerland Amendments, came into force from 1974-1975. They stipulated that external walls of public buildings must always be fire resistant. They also prevented flammable materials being used for the lower levels of a building, where they would be in contact with the floor. Forty-seven years later, in 2020, a public inquiry ruled that the [Grenfell Tower](#) refurbishment had [breached building regulations](#) in that the external walls did not adequately resist the spread of fire. The hearings went on to reveal how dangerous materials had come to be seen as widely compliant.

Heather went on to work as the manager of a care home; Reg as a printer. Now retired, they have two children and two grandchildren. Heather's sister June would be 61 now. "She never had a boyfriend, never got married, it was just emptiness for her. It was hard. We weren't close, but she was still my sister." Heather starts crying. She dealt with the tragedy by not talking about it. It was only when her girls were teenagers that they found out "Nanny Jackie and Grandad George" – a couple Heather and Reg knew from church – weren't their actual grandparents.

She says she never felt any anger towards the three boys who started the fire: “It was the fact that people weren’t honest,” she says. “I would have liked the architects and the chief fire officer to face trial,” Reg adds. “It’s too late now.”

Sometimes, even now, Heather has a recurring nightmare. “In this dream they come home, but they’re not as they were when they left.” Her eyes fill with tears. “They’re all ... burnt.”



Chris Mannion was on stage when fire broke out. Photograph: Peter Flude/The Guardian

Chris Mannion, 72, went on to work on cruise ships and had his own show on the pier in Eastbourne for 23 years. “I was very lucky. There’s a big difference between getting out of the fire before it got bad and being in the fire. The difference with Grenfell is people foresaw it and tried to tell the authorities about the danger. We were quite oblivious.” Lawrie Adam, 84, became a vicar after a Damascene conversion in a Christian B&B, where he happened to be staying after a performance on the Isle of Man in the late 70s (the sudden change was unrelated to Summerland). He now lives near Chester.

Maggie Leeche, 67, moved to the Isle of Man not long after the fire, got married and had six children. She is now divorced. “I survived and so many people didn’t,” she says.

“I am paranoid about going into public places. I’ve got to know where the fire exits are. If I don’t feel comfortable, I won’t go in.”

Ruth McQuillan-Wilson, 54, has five children and lives near Belfast in County Down with her second husband, Robert, a mechanic. “I am disfigured,” she says. “People say, ‘Forget it. Put it behind you.’ But how on earth can you do that?” Her parents never talked about the tragedy. “I grew up in the Troubles, too, which didn’t help. All the bomb scares just brought it back – just running away from something terrible.” After her father died in 2007, she suffered from panic attacks and flashbacks. “I hate to think he died thinking I blamed him.” She had a stroke in 2018: “I always had this need to be able to run away, in case something happened. Now I’m much slower. I just live on the edge, suffer from anxiety and stress.”

Lessons should have been learned. But they weren’t. And that makes me angry

Ruth McQuillan-Wilson

Ruth’s memoir, *Made in Summerland*, was published in 2017. She is working on a second. She is determined that the disaster should not be forgotten. “If people had talked about Summerland, then people might not have put combustible cladding on a building, and Grenfell might not have happened. Lessons should have been learned. But they weren’t. And that makes me angry.”



Ruth McQuillan (now McQuillan-Wilson) was badly burnt as a five-year-old. She still has the toy monkey well-wishers gave her. Photograph: Rob Durston/The Guardian

Jackie Norton, 63, spent long periods in hospital after the fire. She had many operations to release skin grafts that had fused her fingers and tightened the skin on her legs, making it hard to walk. She missed a year of school and at 18 was admitted to a psychiatric hospital. “I had a total breakdown, just sat in the corner, rocking all the time. I can’t begin to explain that sudden loss.”

As an adult, she married, had four children – “I had to make people” – trained as a nurse, then a midwife, separated from her husband and now works in maternal and neonatal safety for the NHS. She has never really talked about what happened, not even to her children. Summerland stayed in a sealed compartment: “I feel as though I’ve been in a world of one for all these years.” Because of her scars, she never swims in the sea or a public pool. She is fearful of even a candle on a table.

“My children have grown up without their grandma. I grew up without my mum,” she says, crying. “The life I was meant to live was annihilated that day and out of the shreds of me that were left, I had to build a new me. I think I cope with life well and make the best of things, but the trauma runs deep.”

“Summerland required a first class architect and manager continuously working on the project during its design, erection and completion,” the SFC report stated. In the event, “no one – clients, authorities nor architects – ever stood back and looked at the project as a whole. Each could have done so within the terms of their responsibilities.” The architects, it said, had the primary duty to take that decision, but “neither principal, Mr Lomas nor Mr Barnett, did so”.

Norton has been silent for 49 years. But no more, she says. “How dare they?”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/24/1973-summerland-leisure-centre-fire-isle-of-man-survivors>

The best UK universities 2023 – rankings

Find a course at the university of your choice. Our league tables rank institutions by subject, looking at student satisfaction, staff numbers, spending and career prospects

- [How to use the tables](#)
- [View the full guide](#)

Illustration: Yukai Du

- [facebook](#)
-
- [email](#)

Find a course

All fields optional

Course Institution

Subject area

Subject area Accounting and finance Aerospace engineering Anatomy and physiology Animal science and agriculture Animation and game design Anthropology and archaeology Architecture Biology Biomedical science Business and management Chemical engineering Chemistry Children's nursing Civil engineering Classics and ancient history Computer science and information systems Construction, surveying and planning Creative

writing Criminology Dentistry Drama and dance Earth and marine sciences Economics Education Electrical and electronic engineering English Fashion and textiles Film production and photography Fine art Forensic science General engineering General nursing Geography Graphic design Health professions History History of art Hospitality, event management and tourism Interior design International relations Journalism Languages and linguistics Law Marketing and public relations Mathematics Mechanical engineering Media and film studies Medicine Mental health nursing Midwifery Music Nutrition and food science Paramedic science Pharmacy and pharmacology Philosophy Physics Physiotherapy Politics Product design Psychology Social work Sociology and social policy Sports science Theology and religious studies Veterinary science Zoology

Region

Region	East Midlands	East of England	London	North East England	North West England
England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	South East England	South West England	Wales
				Yorkshire and the Humber	

Pick a subject area

Main table Accounting and finance Aerospace engineering Anatomy and physiology Animal science and agriculture Animation and game design Anthropology and archaeology Architecture Biology Biomedical science Business and management Chemical engineering Chemistry Children's nursing Civil engineering Classics and ancient history Computer science and information systems Construction, surveying and planning Creative writing Criminology Dentistry Drama and dance Earth and marine sciences Economics Education Electrical and electronic engineering English Fashion and textiles Film production and photography Fine art Forensic science General engineering General nursing Geography Graphic design Health professions History History of art Hospitality, event management and tourism Interior design International relations Journalism Languages and linguistics Law Marketing and public relations Mathematics Mechanical engineering Media and film studies Medicine Mental health nursing Midwifery Music Nutrition and food science Paramedic science Pharmacy and pharmacology Philosophy Physics Physiotherapy Politics Product

Student to staff ratio	14.2
Spend per student/10	4.2
Average entry tariff/13	4
Value added score/10	7
Career after 6 months/8	2
Continuation/9	6.5
29 23 <u>King's College London</u>	72.1 72.2 78.9 59.7 13.9 7.6 163 5.2 87 96.8
Satisfied with course	72.2
Satisfied with teaching	78.9
Satisfied with feedback	59.7
Student to staff ratio	13.9
Spend per student/10	7.6
Average entry tariff/16	3
Value added score/10	5.2
Career after 6 months/8	7
Continuation/9	6.8
30 27 <u>Sheffield</u>	72 79.1 82.9 65.6 14.9 5 150 4.7 82 96.8
Satisfied with course	79.1
Satisfied with teaching	82.9
Satisfied with feedback	65.6
Student to staff ratio	14.9
Spend per student/10	5
Average entry tariff/15	0
Value added score/10	4.7
Career after 6 months/8	2
Continuation/9	6.8
30 28 <u>Manchester</u>	72 71.3 77.2 57.8 14.3 8.1 163 5.1 84 97.7
Satisfied with course	71.3
Satisfied with teaching	77.2
Satisfied with feedback	57.8
Student to staff ratio	14.3
Spend per student/10	8.1
Average entry tariff/16	3
Value added score/10	5.1
Career after 6 months/8	4

Value added score/105.7	
Career after 6 months80	
Contin-uation93.6	
46 41 <u>Northumbria</u>	70 70.9 75.8 68.9 15.7 4.2 135 6.5 79 92.4
Satisfied with course70.9	
Satisfied with teaching75.8	
Satisfied with feedback68.9	
Student to staff ratio15.7	
Spend per student/104.2	
Average entry tariff135	
Value added score/106.5	
Career after 6 months79	
Contin-uation92.4	
46 33 <u>Queen's, Belfast</u>	70 77.2 81 62.3 15.9 4.9 149 4.9 86 96.5
Satisfied with course77.2	
Satisfied with teaching81	
Satisfied with feedback62.3	
Student to staff ratio15.9	
Spend per student/104.9	
Average entry tariff149	
Value added score/104.9	
Career after 6 months86	
Contin-uation96.5	
48 59 <u>Derby</u>	69.8 77.4 81.8 75.7 15.8 6.1 122 3.9 73 92.8
Satisfied with course77.4	
Satisfied with teaching81.8	
Satisfied with feedback75.7	
Student to staff ratio15.8	
Spend per student/106.1	
Average entry tariff122	
Value added score/103.9	
Career after 6 months73	
Contin-uation92.8	
49 32 <u>University for the Creative Arts</u>	69.7 66.9 76.7 74.5 13.8 7.2 133 7.8 59 90.2

Spend per student/102.8	
Average entry tariff/70	
Value added score/107	
Career after 6 months/80	
Continuation/93.9	
53 82 <u>South Wales</u>	69.2 71.6 78.6 71.1 15.3 5.4 126 5.3 71 90.7
Satisfied with course/71.6	
Satisfied with teaching/78.6	
Satisfied with feedback/71.1	
Student to staff ratio/15.3	
Spend per student/105.4	
Average entry tariff/126	
Value added score/105.3	
Career after 6 months/71	
Continuation/90.7	
54 51 <u>Queen Mary</u>	69.1 74.2 78.5 60.4 14.6 5.7 145 5.9 80 97.5
Satisfied with course/74.2	
Satisfied with teaching/78.5	
Satisfied with feedback/60.4	
Student to staff ratio/14.6	
Spend per student/105.7	
Average entry tariff/145	
Value added score/105.9	
Career after 6 months/80	
Continuation/97.5	
55 45 <u>Kingston</u>	69 73.6 78.5 71.1 17 5.4 121 5.5 72 92.5
Satisfied with course/73.6	
Satisfied with teaching/78.5	
Satisfied with feedback/71.1	
Student to staff ratio/17	
Spend per student/105.4	
Average entry tariff/121	
Value added score/105.5	
Career after 6 months/72	
Continuation/92.5	

Spend per student/104.5	
Average entry tariff126	
Value added score/105.8	
Career after 6 months78	
Continuation92.9	
59 49 <u>Stirling</u>	68.7 80.2 83.2 69.9 18.6 3.1 173 3.5 77 95.2
Satisfied with course80.2	
Satisfied with teaching83.2	
Satisfied with feedback69.9	
Student to staff ratio18.6	
Spend per student/103.1	
Average entry tariff173	
Value added score/103.5	
Career after 6 months77	
Continuation95.2	
61 61 <u>Reading</u>	68.6 76.9 78.6 63.6 16.6 4.9 127 5.8 80 96.1
Satisfied with course76.9	
Satisfied with teaching78.6	
Satisfied with feedback63.6	
Student to staff ratio16.6	
Spend per student/104.9	
Average entry tariff127	
Value added score/105.8	
Career after 6 months80	
Continuation96.1	
62 55 <u>Nottingham Trent</u>	68.4 77.5 79 71.8 15.3 4.3 123 3.5 72 94.6
Satisfied with course77.5	
Satisfied with teaching79	
Satisfied with feedback71.8	
Student to staff ratio15.3	
Spend per student/104.3	
Average entry tariff123	
Value added score/103.5	
Career after 6 months72	
Continuation94.6	

Value added score/106.7	
Career after 6 months76	
Contin-uation91	
89 85 Queen Margaret	64.2 77.4 82.7 69.6 21.9 1.9 162 4.7 73 92.3
Satisfied with course77.4	
Satisfied with teaching82.7	
Satisfied with feedback69.6	
Student to staff ratio21.9	
Spend per student/101.9	
Average entry tariff162	
Value added score/104.7	
Career after 6 months73	
Contin-uation92.3	
92 102 Brighton	63.9 64.5 74 62.9 18.1 5.3 116 6.2 77 91.4
Satisfied with course64.5	
Satisfied with teaching74	
Satisfied with feedback62.9	
Student to staff ratio18.1	
Spend per student/105.3	
Average entry tariff116	
Value added score/106.2	
Career after 6 months77	
Contin-uation91.4	
93 83 Robert Gordon	63.5 83.2 83.4 73.4 20.8 3.2 155 3.9 79 92.4
Satisfied with course83.2	
Satisfied with teaching83.4	
Satisfied with feedback73.4	
Student to staff ratio20.8	
Spend per student/103.2	
Average entry tariff155	
Value added score/103.9	
Career after 6 months79	
Contin-uation92.4	
94 66 Glyndwr	63.4 75.5 84.2 81.4 24.9 2.4 113 4.4 72 89.5

101 97	Solent	61.3 70.9 78.8 70.3 17.5 4 117 5.1 68 90
Satisfied with course	70.9	
Satisfied with teaching	78.8	
Satisfied with feedback	70.3	
Student to staff ratio	17.5	
Spend per student/104		
Average entry tariff	117	
Value added score/105.1		
Career after 6 months	68	
Contin-uation	90	
102 109	Leeds Beckett	61.2 74.6 78 70.1 21.7 3.9 113 6.6 72 91.1
Satisfied with course	74.6	
Satisfied with teaching	78	
Satisfied with feedback	70.1	
Student to staff ratio	21.7	
Spend per student/103.9		
Average entry tariff	113	
Value added score/106.6		
Career after 6 months	72	
Contin-uation	91.1	
102 92	Worcester	61.2 74.8 80.1 70.2 17.5 3.8 124 3.7 78 91.2
Satisfied with course	74.8	
Satisfied with teaching	80.1	
Satisfied with feedback	70.2	
Student to staff ratio	17.5	
Spend per student/103.8		
Average entry tariff	124	
Value added score/103.7		
Career after 6 months	78	
Contin-uation	91.2	
104 87	London Met	61.1 81.5 84.3 78.1 22.7 5.6 102 5.9 65 88.3
Satisfied with course	81.5	
Satisfied with teaching	84.3	
Satisfied with feedback	78.1	
Student to staff ratio	22.7	

Spend per student/105.6	
Average entry tariff102	
Value added score/105.9	
Career after 6 months65	
Contin-u-ation88.3	
104 97 <u>Central Lancashire</u>	61.1 68.6 76.1 70.2 16.2 5.5 126 5 76 90.6
Satisfied with course68.6	
Satisfied with teaching76.1	
Satisfied with feedback70.2	
Student to staff ratio16.2	
Spend per student/105.5	
Average entry tariff126	
Value added score/105	
Career after 6 months76	
Contin-u-ation90.6	
106 107 <u>Goldsmiths</u>	60.5 57.1 73.7 56.8 13.9 n/a 128 7.8 70 87.6
Satisfied with course57.1	
Satisfied with teaching73.7	
Satisfied with feedback56.8	
Student to staff ratio13.9	
Spend per student/10n/a	
Average entry tariff128	
Value added score/107.8	
Career after 6 months70	
Contin-u-ation87.6	
106 106 <u>Wolverhampton</u>	60.5 71.3 79 69.9 16.5 5.9 114 6.7 71 87.4
Satisfied with course71.3	
Satisfied with teaching79	
Satisfied with feedback69.9	
Student to staff ratio16.5	
Spend per student/105.9	
Average entry tariff114	
Value added score/106.7	
Career after 6 months71	
Contin-u-ation87.4	

Spend per student/105.9	
Average entry tariff112	
Value added score/105.7	
Career after 6 months72	
Continuation87.3	
111 96 <u>Roehampton</u>	58.9 72.8 76.4 68.8 18.3 5.7 106 5.6 68 90.3
Satisfied with course72.8	
Satisfied with teaching76.4	
Satisfied with feedback68.8	
Student to staff ratio18.3	
Spend per student/105.7	
Average entry tariff106	
Value added score/105.6	
Career after 6 months68	
Continuation90.3	
113 117 <u>Leeds Trinity</u>	58.7 72.1 77.2 70.9 21.5 4.7 115 7.4 68 91.8
Satisfied with course72.1	
Satisfied with teaching77.2	
Satisfied with feedback70.9	
Student to staff ratio21.5	
Spend per student/104.7	
Average entry tariff115	
Value added score/107.4	
Career after 6 months68	
Continuation91.8	
113 114 <u>East London</u>	58.7 72 77.8 70.2 26.2 2.9 111 6.3 69 90.9
Satisfied with course72	
Satisfied with teaching77.8	
Satisfied with feedback70.2	
Student to staff ratio26.2	
Spend per student/102.9	
Average entry tariff111	
Value added score/106.3	
Career after 6 months69	
Continuation90.9	

115 110 <u>Cumbria</u>	57.4 69.1 76.8 68.9 18.7 4.4 122 3.7 73 91.5
Satisfied with course	69.1
Satisfied with teaching	76.8
Satisfied with feedback	68.9
Student to staff ratio	18.7
Spend per student/10	4.4
Average entry tariff	122
Value added score/10	3.7
Career after 6 months	73
Continuation	91.5
116 116 <u>Brunel</u>	54.2 63.5 69.5 55.8 17.9 3.3 123 4.6 73 93.2
Satisfied with course	63.5
Satisfied with teaching	69.5
Satisfied with feedback	55.8
Student to staff ratio	17.9
Spend per student/10	3.3
Average entry tariff	123
Value added score/10	4.6
Career after 6 months	73
Continuation	93.2
116 119 <u>Canterbury Christ Church</u>	54.2 67.5 77.8 71.3 18.2 3.2 107 3.6 77 91.6
Satisfied with course	67.5
Satisfied with teaching	77.8
Satisfied with feedback	71.3
Student to staff ratio	18.2
Spend per student/10	3.2
Average entry tariff	107
Value added score/10	3.6
Career after 6 months	77
Continuation	91.6
116 110 <u>Westminster</u>	54.2 71.1 73.4 62.7 19.9 3.9 116 4.5 68 92.3
Satisfied with course	71.1
Satisfied with teaching	73.4
Satisfied with feedback	62.7

Continuation78.8

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/ng-interactive/2022/sep/24/the-guardian-university-guide-2023-the-rankings>

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

University Guide 2023Education

From bee-keeping to ghost-hunting: why uni is all about extracurriculars

There are hundreds of extracurricular activities to choose from, which could not only spark a new passion but also impress future employers

- [The 2023 league table](#)



Photograph: Morfon Media/Alamy



[Abby Young-Powell](#)

Sat 24 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT

When Harriet Owen arrived at university, she made the unusual decision to join the bee-keeping society, despite having no previous knowledge. “I looked through all the societies online, saw bee-keeping and thought, ‘Oh interesting, bees are cool,’” she says.

Owen, 21, who studies biomaterials science at the University of Sheffield, decided to get stuck in. She’s since learned to do hive checks and to spot the queen (she’s much bigger) and has made wax candles and honey cakes. “Bees are so good for the environment,” she says, adding: “I think they’re quite cute.”

Going away to university isn’t all about academic work, and many students value the activities they get involved with outside their course. This could be volunteering, sports, or joining student societies.

“Not only do you meet a wide variety of people, but you gain valuable skills in leadership and teamwork, and it builds your confidence,” says Iwan James, a wellbeing and sports officer at Sheffield’s student union.

Going along to events and meetings can also help you settle into your new environment. “Starting university is a transition,” says Paul Dodsley, student health development officer at Nottingham Trent University (NTU). “It’s a great time to try new things.”

Most universities will have hundreds of societies to choose from, covering academic specialisms, cultural and faith-based societies, media and creative groups, and those that are hobby-based or just for fun. From knitting to Harry Potter, there will most likely be a society for every interest, as well as some you’ve never heard of.

Most universities will run a society fair at the beginning of the year, where you can see what’s on offer and ask questions - as well as collect a few freebies.

Pick one activity you feel comfortable with and one you know nothing about but that you’re intrigued by

Dominique Thompson, GP and author

With so much choice, it can get overwhelming, Dominique Thompson, a GP and author of the Student Wellbeing series, says. Especially when many of us have had our social lives limited by pandemic restrictions. Thompson says not to worry if you feel overwhelmed with the options available. “I suggest people just pick two activities,” she says.

“Pick one you feel comfortable with, then, If you feel up to it, I strongly suggest you pick one you know nothing about but that you’re intrigued by,” she says. “It’s OK to just take little steps. You don’t have to spin many plates initially. But trying new things is so important and helps rebuild confidence.”

It’s also a good idea to keep costs in mind. The skiing society is likely to be more expensive than the cake-making club, for example.

While it’s probably not wise to choose your university entirely based on the extracurricular activities on offer, it is something to take into account when

weighing up your options, especially if there's something you're really passionate about, such as a thriving theatre scene or a topflight sports team.

"I got into both Nottingham and Nottingham Trent universities," says Benedict Wills, president of Nottingham Trent's student union. "I saw there was more social activity on offer at NTU [and chose to go there]. So it's important to take this into consideration as it's three whole years that you'll be there."

Getting involved in extracurricular activities can also impress future employers. "All the skills you gain can really help your CV," says Maisy Neale, 21, president of the LGBTQ+ society at Birmingham City University (BCU).

Regardless, it's always a good idea to give things a go. "It's something interesting you can say you were involved in," says Owen, who has found the bee-keeping society to be a highlight of her university experience. "It's something a bit unique you can talk about."

There's also no pressure to go to every social possible. As Owen explains: "For example, if you join the bee-keeping society you don't have to go in the hive if you don't want to. You can just come along and eat honey cake."

Five weird and wonderful student societies

Assassins' Guild, various universities. Not actually a professional association for real assassins. Members take part in mock assassinations across the city or university. Players are assigned targets to "assassinate" using pretend weapons such as water pistols or cardboard knives. Every player is also a target themselves. Long games can last for four weeks, by which time most of the society will have been eliminated.

Students of a Jane Austen Persuasion, University of Glasgow. It is a truth universally acknowledged that a student going to uni will be in want of a good society – and this one doesn't disappoint. It runs events throughout the year, from book groups to bonnet making, as well as trips to Regency houses and film sets. If you're a Mr Darcy fan, this might be the one for you.



Taylor Swift Photograph: Eduardo Muñoz/Reuters

Swift Soc, the University of Lincoln. A society that's all about a shared appreciation of Taylor Swift. Open to both hardcore and casual Swift fans – known as “Swifties” – they organise listening parties, singalongs and film nights.

Jailbreak Society, various universities. As part of a charity event, groups of players must get as far away from “jail” – the university campus – as possible within 36 hours. In previous years, some students even made it as far as New York.

Ghost Hunting Society, University of East Anglia (UEA). Described as “a society for students who need a little bit more of the strange and bizarre in their lives”, members go on excursions to haunted locations to look for evidence of the undead. If that sounds too scary, they also organise spooky film nights for the less adventurous in the group.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/sep/24/from-bee-keeping-to-ghost-hunting-why-uni-is-all-about-extracurriculars>

2022.09.24 - Opinion

- Britain is crying out for radical solutions, but Labour still thinks it's in the 1990s
- The UK's energy system is fattening state coffers – just not Britain's
- Giorgia Meloni is a danger to Italy and the rest of Europe
- The west's cruelty to migrants will only grow more inhuman. Don't let the nightmare peddlers win

[**OpinionPolitics**](#)

Britain is crying out for radical solutions, but Labour still thinks it's in the 1990s

[**Jeremy Gilbert**](#)



Support for strikes demonstrates a shifting public mood. Unless politicians listen, something more sinister may fill the vacuum



‘Labour is playing a dangerous game by distancing itself from dynamic social forces.’ Photograph: Guy Bell/Shutterstock

Sat 24 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 24 Sep 2022 07.16 EDT

The past few weeks of British politics have been very strange indeed. As one of the hottest summers on record drew to a close, a wave of militant strike action propelled union leaders on to the national stage for the first time in decades. A new mass movement to combat the cost of living crisis attracted [tens of thousands of supporters](#) within days. With Britain facing an imminent recession, Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng [announced tax cuts](#) for the rich in a “fiscal event” that felt like a surreal exercise in looting the country.

It’s clear that nobody in the political mainstream is offering solutions that are remotely up to the task of dealing with the climate crisis, the imminent recession or the spiralling costs of energy bills and other basic essentials. The new Conservative leadership has a policy agenda that would have seemed like [satire or science fiction in the 1980s](#), while Labour has become so preoccupied with its [factional war](#) against the left that it seems not to care that Jeremy Corbyn’s [core policy programme](#) always enjoyed broad [popular support](#).

Both frontbenches have put forward wholly inadequate [proposals](#) that come nowhere close to resolving Britain's fundamental problems. Corporations, developers, landlords, banks and their respective shareholders have been accumulating power and wealth at the expense of every other social constituency since the end of the 1970s. As a result, almost every institution, from the House of Commons to the local primary school, has been hollowed-out, starved of resources and lacks the authority to fulfil its social purpose. Younger generations have been left with a future far more grim than the past their parents enjoyed.

The sense of drift and perpetual crisis this has created is not a novel phenomenon. It has been developing at least since the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, when politicians, opinion-makers, thinktanks and lobbyists first began to lose their ability to secure support for the policy agenda that had defined the preceding two decades in the UK and US. Until the financial crisis, public complacency had been bought largely with the promise of private luxury. The public were only ever partially content with neoliberalism, and only content with it at all as long as cheap credit and cheap manufactured goods from China could guarantee them a relatively luxurious lifestyle.

From the 1980s to the mid-2000s, politicians and opinion-shapers became increasingly detached from the lived experience of most voters and workers and increasingly committed to pushing forward a deregulatory agenda, with only slight variations in attitudes to issues such as public spending and social liberalisation. The “professionalisation” of politics in the 1980s and 1990s, documented by political scientists such as [Peter Allen](#) and [Ron Formisano](#), saw PR consultants such as George Stephanopoulos and Peter Mandelson achieve unprecedented levels of influence over policy and strategy.

Of course there were significant differences between the policies of Tony Blair and David Cameron, but they shared many fundamental assumptions about what could be changed and what couldn't. The most consistent assumption was that voters should be treated primarily as consumers rather than as citizens or workers. They should get to choose their schools and hospitals, but [have little say](#) over how those services are funded or run. They should be incentivised by the tax, benefit and banking systems to behave

like aspirational entrepreneurs, rather than improving their lot through collective institutions such as unions.

After 2008, the number of people who could still be offered ever-expanding overdrafts and relatively affordable mortgages began to shrink. It has been contracting ever since. This hasn't stopped our politicians from clinging on to an outmoded worldview. The right wing of the Labour party spent most of the Corbyn years in a state of apoplectic panic at the thought of a social democratic government being elected. Now that they've effectively neutralised the left, at least in England, what other solutions do they have to offer? Labour has been doing well in the polls against a Tory government in meltdown, but Keir Starmer and his allies seem unable to follow the example of Joe Biden, who has at least tried to bring the progressive left on side and offer it some hope of meaningful social reform. In the UK, while the Tories are stuck in the 1980s, Labour seems stuck in an imaginary [1990s](#). This doesn't bode well for any prospective government.

The historical moment in which most of these politicians grew up is clearly over. One of the defining features of that period was the marginalisation of the organised left and the labour movement, and the general timidity of almost all union leaders. But the huge popularity of the Enough is Enough campaign, and union leaders like Dave Ward and [Mick Lynch](#), shows those days are gone. In Sharon Graham, the leader of Unite, a major British union has arguably the most militant leader since Arthur Scargill. The historical conditions for a significant shift towards a more progressive and redistributive politics have not been this favourable for decades.

Yet despite the upswell of public support for striking workers, the Labour leadership has chosen to pursue the votes of conservative, home-owning retirees who switched to the Tories in 2019. While it is true that their votes are particularly valuable in our absurdly unrepresentative electoral system, Labour is playing a dangerous game by distancing itself from these dynamic social forces. The party has explicitly turned its back on all forms of union militancy and on the movement that Corbyn's leadership inspired. That movement generated many innovative policy ideas, all of which could contribute to resolving our current crises, but none of which are taken seriously by Starmer or his team. The leadership's recent attempts to scrap a

motion in support of a “[Green New Deal](#)” from the annual Labour national conference is merely the latest example of this turn.

At a time when radical solutions have never been more in demand, when organised labour is on the march and more popular than it has been for a generation, there is every chance that more dangerous ideas will find an audience if none of these radical demands are met. The last time Britain experienced a comparable sense of dislocation and drift, it opened the door to the authoritarianism of Margaret Thatcher’s first parliamentary term. If demands for progressive change continue to be obstructed by a political class that can only react to such demands with panic, derision and hostility, then disillusioned voters are likely to turn to far more dangerous forms of populism.

- Jeremy Gilbert and Alex Williams are the authors of [Hegemony Now](#), published by Verso.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/24/britain-radical-solutions-labour-1990s-strikes>

[Opinion](#)[Renewable energy](#)

The UK's energy system is fattening state coffers – just not Britain's

[Frances O'Grady](#)

The British public should enjoy the full benefit of the energy that is generated here, and help plan its future

- Frances O'Grady is general secretary of the TUC



A turbine at the world's largest offshore wind farm, Orsted's Hornsea Two.
Photograph: David Sillitoe/The Guardian

Sat 24 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 24 Sep 2022 12.02 EDT

Despite yesterday's [mini-budget](#), nearly every family will face the winter with much higher bills than last year. The current government support to keep bills down is just a short-term sticking plaster. Liz Truss and her ministers have no long-term solution.

Clues to the answer we need lie in Munich, Germany, where a dad takes his daughter swimming in an Olympic-sized pool. And in Bergen, Norway, where a student receives her engineering degree without paying a penny in tuition fees. And on the windswept coast of Brittany, France, where a grandmother gets her energy bill, delighted to find it barely changed from last year – despite French companies facing surging wholesale prices for gas.

What do they have in common? And how does that relate to your rising energy bills? All of the above have been funded with the proceeds of energy companies – including profits made from offshore windfarms in Britain. While the UK sold off its energy industry to private companies, the governments of France, Denmark, Norway, and several German provinces and cities chose a different path. They developed publicly owned energy companies, alongside private sector competition.

Without shareholders extracting value, these companies generated billions to reinvest in services, infrastructure and lowering bills. The Norwegian people now own one of the world's largest investment funds – so big that it provides a fifth of the nation's budget year on year. This is in large part because it directed profits from its North Sea oil and gas fields into a sovereign wealth fund. The UK could have done the same. But we allowed private companies to take all the profit.

Oil and gas are not the only riches off our shores. Powerful winds course across the North Sea like rich seams of gold. But unlike gold – or fossil fuels – no matter how much you take, it never runs out. Over the past two decades, Britain has had the second largest expansion of offshore wind power in the world. This time, much of the profit flowed into the public purses of other countries: to Sweden, via the company Vattenfall; to the United Arab Emirates, via Masdar; to Canada, via a Quebec public pensions investment fund.

Meanwhile, fabrication yards and ports stood empty in Scotland and north-east England as wind turbine contracts went elsewhere in the world. And crews servicing turbine construction sites were found to be working for less than the national minimum wage.

Research [published today in a TUC report](#) shows that if the UK had a publicly owned energy champion like other countries, the Treasury could receive between £63bn and £122bn over the next two years due to the escalation of wholesale energy prices. That's at least £2,250 for every UK household – enough to cover the bulk of the government's energy price guarantee.

This should not just be a moment for looking back in regret. It's not too late to change our approach. In fact, we are still in the early stages of a major energy transition.

In the years ahead, the UK will need to build a tremendous amount of new clean energy infrastructure, to reduce our reliance on volatile fossil fuels and to keep the climate safe for future generations. The British public should get the full benefit of this UK-generated energy. Our report sets out proposals for the creation of a public energy champion to give the British people a major stake in our new energy infrastructure. And to make sure that the profits come back to the public purse – the UK's public purse.

The national wealth that will be generated is not the only benefit. [Energy](#) companies are tools for long-term transformation too. When their only aim is public benefit, they can help change the nation in positive ways for us all.

Public energy champions can think ahead to the energy mix needed for the future. They can pioneer technologies, as [Orsted did with offshore wind](#) and EDF with nuclear. On the scale of German or French companies, a new UK public energy champion could build 27-77 gigawatts of new, clean-electricity-generating infrastructure. This is at least a tenth, and up to a third, of the power needed for UK homes and industries by 2050.

They can set the gold standards on being a good employer, with best practice in workplace safety, pay, benefits and workforce relations. EDF, for example, practises this across many of its operations, from working to make construction a welcoming industry for female workers, to taking care of workers' re-employment when coal power plants are wound down.

For customers, public energy champions provide price stability even when global markets are volatile. And they enable support to households who need it, whether in an energy crisis or not.

If we get on the right track now – if we invest in a public energy champion – it will help ensure that our children and grandchildren live in warm homes, breathe clean air and work in good jobs.

- Frances O'Grady is general secretary of the TUC
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/24/uk-energy-system-state-coffers-britain-british-public>

This is EuropeItaly

Giorgia Meloni is a danger to Italy and the rest of Europe

[Roberto Saviano](#)



The Brothers of Italy leader denies she is a fascist but clings to the Mussolini-era slogan ‘God, homeland, family’



Giorgia Meloni at a Brothers of Italy convention in Bologna in December 2019. Photograph: Massimo Paolone/AP

Sat 24 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 24 Sep 2022 19.21 EDT

Giorgia Meloni presents a danger to the democratic balance in Europe. Her leadership looks to be the antithesis of what Italy needs – and not just at this difficult moment.

The danger arises for Europe because Italy has always been a laboratory: it has foreshadowed the crises of other countries. Italy had Mussolini before Hitler and the leftwing extremist Red Brigades before Action Directe appeared in France and the Red Army Faction followed suit in Germany. Italy had Berlusconi before the US got Trump. And after years of Berlusconi misrule, Italy produced the [Five Star Movement, the first populist party led by a comedian](#), before the rest of Europe caught up. Five Star's agenda was political disruption, often without any thought to the consequences.

Meloni's moral and economic inspiration is [Viktor Orbán](#), the man who in recent years has destroyed the opposition in Hungary and achieved legitimacy by weaponising popular consensus. He has provided an ephemeral sense of security but Hungarians have paid for it dearly in the form of economic instability and, above all, the loss of their rights.

The [European parliament declared](#) earlier this month that Hungary could no longer be considered a full democracy. Elections take place, but European norms and democratic standards are systematically ignored to the point that Hungary is now an “electoral autocracy”. MEPs from Italy’s populist League and the far-right Brothers of Italy voted against the resolution, and how could they do otherwise? Meloni has never made any secret of collaborating closely with Orbán and his allies in pursuing the [common goal](#) of strengthening the European hard right in the name of respect for national sovereignty, defence of the natural family, Christian identity and the social market economy.



Viktor Orbán and Giorgia Meloni in 2019. Photograph: Fabio Frustaci/EPA

The pair have [advertised their meetings](#) with [friendly selfies](#) on social media. After all, they sing from the same socially conservative hymn sheet on [abortion](#), [LGBT rights](#) and migration. They share a goal: societies based not on individual rights guaranteed by European law but on sovereign authoritarianism.

Not even a [recent report](#) from the Hungarian parliament’s economic watchdog, which warned that an increase in female graduates and female representation in the workforce disadvantages men, threatens population growth and the economy, caused Meloni to question her support for Orbán.

Moreover, the enthusiasm she shows about Hungary's economic policies, especially its flat tax, betrays her naivety and should raise alarm about a financial meltdown in [Italy](#) on her watch.

It is in her support for people like Orbán that we see what appears to be the real danger posed by Giorgia Meloni.

Meloni's party has succeeded in expanding its electoral base in Italy over the years by poaching militants from other parties ready to jump on what was supposed to be a winner's bandwagon. This high-risk strategy has worked although it has drawn the Brothers of Italy into controversy and several ongoing judicial investigations, into candidates' alleged involvement in [corruption](#), [extortion](#), [sleaze](#) and [illegal waste disposal](#). Yet Meloni has been able to reaffirm her credibility by [expelling troublemakers](#) and publicly distancing them. The only figures it seems she has difficulty disowning are politicians whose identity is built on far-right ideology.

Meloni [denies that she is a fascist](#). I don't think it is the most important point of her party's programme, but it is worth addressing. It is a simple game: parties whose lineage can be traced back to neo-fascist movements have gone to lengths to detoxify and soften their image, declaring their opposition to antisemitism, racism and the historical fascist experience.



The fascist leader Benito Mussolini, circa 1940. Photograph: Roger Viollet/Getty Images

Meloni dog-whistles to her neo-fascist political ancestors with the Mussolini-era slogan “God, homeland, family”. She did it in 2019, screaming from the stage at a rally in San Giovanni: “I am Giorgia, I am a woman, I am a mother, I am Italian, I am a Christian.” She reaffirmed it in the same year, at the World Congress of Families in Verona, where she was even more explicit, promising: “We will defend God, the homeland and the family”.

During an interview in the current election campaign, she said that “*Dio, patria, famiglia*” (God, homeland, family) was not a fascist slogan, but a beautiful declaration of love. To those who remember with a shudder that it was everywhere during the fascist regime, daubed on the walls of villages, at the entrances of offices and printed in school books, she countered that the original quote was from the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini.

God, for her, does not seem to represent faith, but rather a brand of Catholicism imposed as the only religion worthy of rights. The homeland’s borders must be defended, with violence if necessary, and the family is not the cradle of affection, but of imposition, obligation and prescription. The family is always heterosexual, its children born and recognised in the imposed form.



The tricolour logo of Brothers of Italy on a flag at a rally in Rome on Thursday. Photograph: Vincenzo Nuzzolese/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

Meloni's real beliefs and goals may not appear exactly the same, but her words can often carry echoes of Mussolini. Her speeches play on the need for identity, on the very human fear of being marginalised or going unrecognised. In her hands identity becomes a propaganda tool for dividing the world into Us and Them, where "they" are LGBTQ+ communities, migrants or those who don't see themselves represented in established structures or the labels imposed by others. The impression given is that they are the bad people, who jeopardise the identity of the entire nation. Totalitarianism has, since time began, leveraged such fears to convince people to voluntarily deprive themselves of their own rights, on the promise of being defended from an external enemy.

Although she denies any connection to fascism, Meloni appears to want to retain support from the wing of the radical right who consider her party too moderate, and only vote for it to make up the numbers against the left. Fully repudiating the party's fascist roots, it seems, would mean losing a lot of these votes.

On the other hand, continued association with neo-fascism would put Meloni in a very uncomfortable position internationally. She has opted

therefore for a rebrand, but it is partial. The [Brothers of Italy](#) keeps the same logo – an Italian tricolour in the form of a flame – used by the now-defunct neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI), founded in 1946 by such regime supporters as Pino Romualdi, a leading figure in the Fascist party and Giorgio Almirante, who was convicted of collaborating with Nazi troops.



From left, Matteo Salvini, Silvio Berlusconi and Giorgia Meloni at an election rally. Photograph: Alessandra Tarantino/AP

Meloni appears the most dangerous Italian political figure not because she explicitly evokes fascism or the practices of the black-shirted *squadristi* (militia), but because of her ambiguity. During the election campaign she promoted a democratic, liberal-conservative side. She condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and has been vocal in support of Nato and military aid for Kyiv. But she opposed EU sanctions on Russia after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. And in her 2021 book *I Am Giorgia* she wrote that Putin's Russia "defends European values and Christian identity".

Matteo Salvini, the leader of the League, gets the blame for his admiration of Putin, but the radical right in Italy more broadly has positioned itself close to Putinism. Meloni avoids [Salvini's mistakes](#). Yet they were both, together

with Berlusconi, part of the political alliance that most supported closer economic ties with Russia.

Meloni in her ambiguity, has directed her attacks on migrants. She has fuelled Italians' fears, created an enemy, a scapegoat on which to offload blame for public incompetence and mismanagement.

During the election campaign she has tried to pass for a moderate, muting her message and advancing what she claims are new ideas to solve the so-called migrant emergency and restore the Italian spirit.

The far right can succeed in Italy because the left has failed, exactly as in much of the world, to offer credible visions or strategies. The left asks people to vote against the right, but it lacks a political vision or an economic alternative. The left sounds elitist when it communicates, while the right has found a hypersimplified discourse: keywords, slogans, concepts reduced to the most basic, especially on migrants, from whose violence and terrorism Italians, it seems, must be saved. No wonder Meloni had no qualms, despite a public outcry, about [tweeting the video of a rape](#) allegedly perpetrated by an asylum seeker.

Meloni is, I believe, dangerous because she comes closest to the Berlusconi school of political lies and the [populist playbook](#) that says the more total a lie is, the more people will believe it.

Be careful, because where Italy goes, the rest of Europe will soon follow.

Roberto Saviano is an Italian author, essayist and screenwriter. His 2006 book Gomorrah, an exposé of organised crime in Naples, was adapted into a film and TV series

- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*

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

OpinionMigration

The west's cruelty to migrants will only grow more inhuman. Don't let the nightmare peddlers win

[Mohsin Hamid](#)

Sending people to Martha's Vineyard and Rwanda is a bid to paint them as marauders. But wealthy economies depend on their presence



Migrants at the US-Mexico border in Yuma, Arizona, in June. Photograph: Étienne Laurent/EPA

Sat 24 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 24 Sep 2022 19.20 EDT

In the United States, the Republican governors of Texas, Florida and Arizona are bussing and flying migrants from their states to states governed by Democrats. In the United Kingdom, the government plans to deport migrants to holding facilities in Rwanda, an authoritarian country 4,000

miles to the south, which only a generation ago experienced one of the worst genocides in recent human history.

In one wealthy country after another, migrants are being made into a spectacle, both for domestic political advantage and to deter other migrants from attempting to come.

These efforts at deterrence are unlikely to work. Thousands of migrants are already robbed, raped and murdered every year as they attempt to flee from countries where conditions have become intolerable. They are willing to sacrifice their physical safety and the entirety of their financial resources for the chance – not even for the likelihood, but just for the chance – of a better life.

The signalling is simple: we, the true people, are standing against these usurpers

As the climate crisis devastates communities, these movements of migrants are almost certain to increase substantially. In Pakistan, where I am writing these words, 30 million people are currently displaced by catastrophic floods that have inundated a third of the country.

Stopping migrants will require killing them, torturing them, starving them. Merely allowing them to drown as their boats and rafts capsize, or to die of thirst in the desert, will not be sufficient. If destination countries wish truly to stop arrivals, they will need to become monstrous. The rise of fascist politicians in the wealthy west is a sign of this choice beginning to make itself clear. Human rights, equality, democracy: these are not shared values but rather impediments to be overcome if the war on migrants is to be won.

It is, therefore, not in their deterrent effect but in their domestic political signalling that the current acts of migrant spectacle-making are most significant. And this signalling is simple: we, the true people, are standing against these usurpers, these outsiders; those who oppose us are not just hypocrites, they are the enemies within, and they must be overcome, whatever the price.

This is a powerful message. It transforms vulnerable migrants – people escaping hunger and violence, precariously arrived in a place where they have few rights and ask only for human decency – into wanton marauders, objects of fear and anger, capable of eliciting sympathy in no one but hypocrites and traitors. And it is a message resonating across the west, from Sweden to Italy, from Hungary to France, from Britain to America.



Human rights protesters demonstrate in London in June. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

In the era of climate change and reversed migration flows (reversed in that they are opposite in direction to the north-to-south flows of the age of colonization that preceded them), the economic and political models of the status quo cannot hold. And they are not holding. On the right, the new offer is one of nationalism, xenophobia and rampant inequality – but an inequality in which empowered in-groups will enjoy superiority over victimized out-groups.

This model has a powerful appeal that goes back centuries. It enjoyed the support of whites in the enslaving American south, and the support of Europeans in the colonized global south, and it continues to enjoy support today – and not just in the west. In its defensive form, it is the model of “inequality is fine, as long as it protects us from the bad people at the

bottom". Expressed as an aspiration, rather than as a warning, it is: "our greatness is worth the blood price."

On the left, there has been a struggle to come up with an equally potent response. "Fascism is bad" might seem to be enough, but it depends on voters believing that the alternative is in fact fascism (or that fascism is in fact bad), and a great many voters remain unconvinced. The left struggles for coherence because, deep down, it agrees with the right.

The left, too, fears that migrants harm native-born workers. And this leads the left into a trap. Western welfare states were built on the twin foundations of economic growth and large ratios of workers to retirees. In ageing western societies today, the ratio of workers to retirees is dwindling. Meanwhile, teetering mountains of debt preclude driving growth through additional leverage, and the bearing capacity of our planet constrains the ability to drive growth through the extraction of ever-greater amounts of natural resources. With insufficient workers, the agenda of the left threatens to collapse.

Just now, interest rates are rising in the west for the express purpose of increasing unemployment – and thereby reducing inflation. What does this mean? It means that too many workers is not the west's problem. A shortage of workers – and chronic underinvestment in workers – is. Western working-class wages have not been stagnant because factories have moved abroad, nor because workers from abroad have moved to the west.



Cousins, one from Venezuela and one from Houston, reunite in San Antonio, Texas, this month. Photograph: Jordan Vonderhaar/Getty Images

Western working-class wages have been stagnant because the vast profits made from moving factories and from employing migrant workers have been allowed to accumulate in the hands of a tiny wealthy minority instead of being reinvested in western workers, communities, public services, and infrastructure. Migrants are not an economic threat. No, migrants are the best opportunity the west presently has to create an economic surplus that might fund public goods. The economic threat has been – and remains – the rampant inequality flowing from the excessive accumulation of wealth by too few.

The policies of the right do not require migrants because they do not require growth. It is quite possible, for a while, to seize an ever-larger slice of a stagnant or shrinking pie. The policies of the left, on the other hand, require a growing pie so that it can be shared more equitably without making too many people less well off.

If migrants are associated with more opportunities for working-class people, rather than less – perhaps attitudes could change.

The policies of the left demand sustainable growth, and sustainable growth – given debt levels, environmental constraints, and demographics – demands migrants. The challenge for the left, therefore, is to reduce frictions between native-born and migrant workers, between majorities and minorities, and to think creatively about how to do so. This might seem a vote-losing task, given hardening attitudes.

But if the arrival of migrants coincides with investments in schools, openings of factories and shops and offices, and regenerating half-abandoned communities – in other words, if migrants are associated with more opportunities for working-class people, rather than less – perhaps attitudes could change. Reducing frictions will certainly not be easy, but it is vital to make the attempt.

Flying migrants to Martha's Vineyard, despicable and dehumanizing though it is, should remind us that there is indeed a connection between unprecedented concentrations of wealth and the rise of fascist politicians in the west. The plan to fly migrants to Rwanda, the site of recent genocide, should remind us that escalating violence towards migrants does indeed lie along the political path we currently seem intent on pursuing.

There is another way, though. We can recognize that the balance between labor and capital has shifted too far in capital's favor, that the time has come to re-emphasize the vital role of labor, and that migrants arrive in rapidly ageing and deeply indebted wealthy countries desperate to contribute and to work.

Migrants deserve our support not merely as fellow human beings in need, but as the last best hope of the west, before the nightmares peddled by the nightmare-peddlers succeed in becoming true.

*Mohsin Hamid is the author of five novels, including *The Last White Man**

- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2022/sep/23/migrant-flights-us-uk-immigration-west>

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

2022.09.24 - Around the world

- 'Something big is happening' The Iranians risking everything to protest
- Iran Marchers call for execution of anti-government protesters
- Rage against the regime How Iran erupted after the death of Mahsa Amini
- Analysis Mahsa Amini's death could be the spark that ignites Iran around women's rights

[Iran](#)

‘Something big is happening’: the Iranians risking everything to protest

Five people share their experiences of the protests sparked by Mahsa Amini’s death in custody, as hope of real change grows



People protest against Iran’s strict laws in The Hague, the Netherlands, after the death of Mahsa Amini, 22. Photograph: Lex van Lieshout/EPA

[Jedidajah Otte](#)

Sat 24 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 24 Sep 2022 02.02 EDT

The internet has been shut off in parts of Iran and [access to platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram blocked](#) after seven days of protest in cities across Iran.

The [uprisings](#) were sparked on 16 September by the death of a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, Mahsa Amini, who had been detained by the morality

police for wearing her hijab in an “improper” way. Iranian state television has said 17 people have died, though the number could be higher.

Here, five Iranians share their experiences of the past few days, and tell us what they make of this latest protest movement.

‘Men and women are protesting together this time’

“I don’t dare to go out and join the protests as they are killing people, but my friends are joining and tell me all about it. I don’t know whether this is the best way to achieve freedom and peace – although I think that they may improve safety for women. Previous protests consisted mainly of men but this one is very different. Women started it and men are by their side. When the police force women to wear their hijab, men fight against the police. Most protesters are young, but older people support them too.

“In Iran, women and girls have no rights, and this protest is about that. Here, two female witnesses in court count as much as one male. If a woman wants to visit her parents without her husband’s permission, he can sue her. I cannot take my son to another city without my ex-husband’s approval.

“At school, I was punished often for not hiding my hair completely or for laughing too loudly. These protests are the sound of all these years. I think the younger generations cannot tolerate these humiliations any more.”

Farah, 37, a mother from Shiraz, southern Iran

‘People attend protests with their mothers’

“I participated in protests at my university. Today, 100 *basijis* [a paramilitary volunteer militia] entered the university and arrested some students. My friend was arrested and he has to appear in court. He said he will protest again, even if this means he will be killed. This is how we are living. We don’t know whether we will see our friends again. I’m afraid of losing mine.

“As social media is blocked now, people just gather and see what happens. It is both us men and women in the streets, but I think the women are far more brave. They take their hijabs off and protest.

“My mother texted me and begged me to participate, but I joined the protests without telling my family. Since last night, many people are afraid of leaving the house, the streets are dangerous and unpredictable. It is many young people protesting, but it is older people too. Some go to protests with their mothers.

“I’m studying hard to obtain a scholarship and so I can afford to leave for another country. Everyone I know wants to do the same. Even some of the *basijis* want to go! People don’t want to stay here.”

Sobhan, 19, a student from Tehran

‘There are lots of people fighting in the streets’

“Yazd is a small religious city and the number of protesters over the past few days was outnumbered by security forces. The government is using force to break people up, they beat them and even shoot them.

“I haven’t joined the protests yet as I am afraid. But in the coming days I may go outside. There are lots of people fighting in the streets, especially brave women and girls. The Islamic regime oppressed them for decades, but they are out there and fighting for their rights. I know lots of women who want to throw away their hijabs, I have a sister and female friends who feel this way. This is a women’s revolution.

“My parents are also in favour of the protests, but they fear speaking up, like lots of other people.”

Amin, 29, from Yazd, central Iran

‘The older generations want change too’

“I’m very angry and disappointed. I’m a simple man and only want to provide for my family and keep them safe and happy. The government has made that impossible. They have ruined everything, the economy, export,

import, culture. I have a teenage boy and he wants to live freely, use social media, wear the clothes he wants to, but he can't.

"There is no mobile network and internet in the streets now. I have seen police brutality against peaceful rallies for days. They use teargas and electric shockers, and they have killed people, young and old, men and women. The people want freedom of information, freedom to choose their destiny.

"The leaders of the Islamic Republic believe in using any force necessary to preserve their authority, they use Islam as a weapon. I work in advertising, it is my job to know my people and my society, and I believe the Iranian people don't want [Iran's supreme leader] Khamenei, the mullahs' regime, or any sign of religious rules being forced upon their lives by government. Young people in Iran are trying every couple of years to send this message to government, peacefully, but they are jailed, tortured and killed.

"The older generations want change too, but they worry about their children and have seen previous uprisings fail. People of my country are tired. They are sick of the Islamic Republic, whether they are in Tehran, Kashan or Qom [Iran's most conservative city]."

Farbod, 44, works in advertising, from Tehran

'This uprising has united people across ethnic lines that used to divide us'

"I'm from Kurdistan, the same province Mahsa Amini was from. This uprising is definitely very different. The new generation is fearless, they fight back, bare-handedly, despite being at risk of losing their lives. Older generations are becoming empowered by the courage of the youngsters and this has brought some sort of unity between different ethnic groups.

"During the 2019 protests, there was no unity between Iranian Arabs, Turks, Kurds and so on. This time, people chant slogans such as 'From Tabriz to Sanandaj, from Tehran to Mashhad.'

“People in my home province are Sunni, a marginalised community under the regime, but religious and culturally nostalgic. The elderly people in my social circle are happy about these protests. On Monday, everyone in my home town closed their shops, out of respect for this girl.

“The number of young atheists has risen dramatically, but today’s conservatives in Iran are not the same as they were 10 years ago either. Previously, Iranians scarred by the losses of eight years of war against Iraq wanted to preserve internal stability at all costs. This sentiment has totally changed, even in holy cities like Mashhad [a place of religious pilgrimage], where prostitution is now rife because of the dire economic conditions.

“Celebrities are joining in now, who previously backed up the government but realised something big is happening, which is a huge deal. These protests are purposeful, and they are spreading to conservative areas. People have lost all trust in the government.”

Somi, 38, from Sanandaj in Kurdistan province, currently living in Australia

Some names have been changed.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/24/something-big-is-happening-the-iranians-risking-everything-to-protest>

[Iran](#)

Iran marchers call for execution of anti-government protesters

Army signals it is prepared to crush dissent after unrest over death of Mahsa Amini in police custody



People protesting over the death of Mahsa Amini, whose family say she sustained fatal injuries in a beating by police. Photograph: Wana/Reuters

[Patrick Wintour](#) and agencies

Fri 23 Sep 2022 13.28 EDTFirst published on Fri 23 Sep 2022 08.40 EDT

Pro-government rallies have taken place in several cities across [Iran](#) in an attempt to counter a week of mounting unrest triggered by the death of a woman in police custody.

Marchers called for anti-government protesters to be executed, while the army signalled that it was prepared to crush dissent by telling Iranians that it would confront “the enemies” behind the unrest.

Demonstrators condemned the anti-government protesters as “Israel’s soldiers”, live state television coverage showed. They also shouted “Death to America” and “Death to Israel”, common slogans the country’s clerical rulers use to try and stir up support for authorities, who claimed the demonstrations of support were spontaneous. “Offenders of the Qur’an must be executed,” the crowds chanted.

Anti-regime protests intensify after death of Mahsa Amini in Iran – video

A state TV anchor said the death toll in the protests that erupted last Saturday after the funeral of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini could be as high as 26, without elaborating on how that figure was reached. Anti-government protesters voicing pent-up anger over social and political repression have taken to the streets in several major cities in the most severe political unrest since 2019, when rights groups say hundreds were killed amid demonstrations against a hike in state-controlled petrol prices.

Videos on social media show protesters in Tehran torching a police car and confronting officers at close range. Elsewhere in the capital, videos show gunfire sounding out as protesters bolt from riot police, shouting: “They are shooting at people! Oh my God, they’re killing people!”

In the north-western city of Neyshabur, protesters cheered over an overturned police car. Footage from Tehran and Mashhad shows women waving their obligatory headscarves, known as hijab, in the air like flags while chanting: “Freedom!”

Amini was pronounced dead on 16 September, three days after being arrested by Tehran’s “morality police”. Her family and protesters say she died from injuries sustained in a beating by police. Iranian authorities say an initial coroner’s investigation showed she died from heart failure or a stroke.

“The death has tapped into broader anti-government sentiment in the Islamic republic and especially the frustration of women,” the political risk firm Eurasia Group wrote, noting that Iran’s hardliners had intensified their crackdown on women’s clothing over the past year since the former judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi became president.

“The prospect of the leadership offering concessions to Iranian women is minimal,” it said. “In the cold calculus of Iranian leaders, the protests have likely gone far enough and a more forceful response is required to quell the unrest.”



A pro-government rally in Tehran on Friday. Photograph: Abedin Taherkenareh/EPA

Raisi, who on Friday told Iranian TV that the pro-government marches showed the power of the Islamic republic, on Thursday told a [news conference](#) on the sidelines of the UN general assembly in New York that Amini’s death “must be steadfastly investigated”.

“Our utmost preoccupation is the safeguarding of the rights of every citizen,” Raisi said. “If her death was due to negligence, it will definitely be investigated, and I promise to follow up on the issue regardless of whether the international forums take a stand or not.”

Raisi said Iran would not tolerate “acts of chaos”, referring to the six nights of protests, and sought to turn the tables on the country he was visiting by asking about police shootings in the US. “Did all these deaths get investigated?” he said.

The Iranian judiciary has ordered the courts to take a tough line with protesters, claiming the demonstrators were being led by foreign agents and stirred by anti-Iranian social media – a familiar accusation levelled by the regime when dissent breaks out.

The US announced on Friday it was easing export restrictions to improve Iranians' access to the internet, which the Tehran government has severely hampered since Amini's death in what the US said was a bid "to prevent the world from watching its violent crackdown on peaceful protesters".

"In the face of these steps, we are going to help make sure the Iranian people are not kept isolated and in the dark," the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said. "This is a concrete step to provide meaningful support to Iranians demanding that their basic rights be respected."

Amini was detained for allegedly wearing a hijab in an "improper" way. As part of the protest action, Iranian women have taken to the streets and the internet, burning their headscarves and cutting their hair.

Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/23/iran-reportedly-arrests-journalist-activist-mahsa-amini-protests>

Rage against the regime: how Iran erupted after the death of Mahsa Amini

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/sep/23/how-iran-erupted-after-mahsa-amini-death-protests>

Rights and freedomIran

Analysis

Mahsa Amini's death could be the spark that ignites Iran around women's rights

[Weronika Strzyżyska](#)

The country faces a litany of problems, from inflation to a democratic deficit, and the women's movement is seen as an agent of change



An Iranian woman living in Turkey holds her cut hair at a protest against the death of Mahsa Amini outside Iran's consulate in Istanbul, 21 September 2022. Photograph: Murad Sezer/Reuters

Supported by



[About this content](#)

Fri 23 Sep 2022 11.56 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 12.19 EDT

On the day that news of Mahsa Amini's death spread throughout [Iran](#), a young woman with a shaved head joined protesters who had gathered outside Kasra hospital, where Amini had lain in a coma since her violent arrest by Iran's morality police days earlier.

In her hand she carried a plastic bag full of her long hair, shorn off in a gesture of solidarity with Amini and in defiance of the increasing crackdown on women by the regime.

A week later, and [protests](#) sparked by Amini's death are raging in the province of Kurdistan and Tehran as well as cities such as Rasht, Isfahan and Qom, one of Iran's most religiously conservative cities.

The rage across Iran at the brutal pointlessness of Amini's death has lit the fires of protest and the increasing desperation of the authorities to extinguish it are, some believe, a sign of the growing strength and momentum of Iran's women's rights movement.

“Women’s issues have long been a catalyst for broader political action in Iran,” said Annabelle Sreberny, professor emeritus at the Iranian Studies

Centre at Soas University of London. “This could be it. It could be the moment when people motivated by all the problems facing Iran today, like rising inflation, ecological crisis and lack of democratic participation, coalesce around these women’s issues to challenge the regime.”

During the past week women have been at the forefront of many of the demonstrations, shaving their heads and burning their headscarves in defiance of the strict hijab law and its brutal enforcement that led to 22-year-old Amini’s [arrest and allegedly her death](#).

“The women’s movement in Iran started in the first month of the Islamic Republic and has been simmering for at least the last 20 years,” said Sreberny. “It is seen as a carrier of socially progressive values … many Iranians see the women’s movement as having the potential to be the next social force to make waves.”

Control of the female body and oppression of women is existential to the Islamic Republic

Azadeh Akbari, academic

Women have always been key to challenging the regime. Since online blogging became a popular form of everyday dissent a decade ago, women and LGBTQ+ people have dominated the sphere. Today, some of the most significant anti-regime movements were created by women in cyberspace, including My Stealthy Freedom, a Facebook page launched in 2014 by an Iranian feminist journalist living in exile, [Masih Alinejad](#), which encouraged women to post hijab-less selfies.

The public removal of the state-mandated hijab has since become a universal sign of rejection of the regime, unifying Iranians from across the religious spectrum. For months before Amini’s arrest and death, women had been converging under anti-hijab protest hashtags on social media, posting videos of themselves walking with their heads uncovered or being harassed on the streets. In the weeks before Amini’s arrest for failing to correctly wear the hijab, the authorities had carried out a spate of arrests, beatings and forced public confessions of women.

Among them was [Sepideh Rashno, a 28-year-old woman](#) who was detained after a video showing her on a bus with her hair uncovered went viral. Rashno was reportedly beaten during her detention and forced to apologise on national television.

“Control of the female body and oppression of women is not just a matter of policy of the current government,” said Azadeh Akbari, a researcher at the University of Twente in the Netherlands, “It is existential to the Islamic Republic and fundamental to its founding ideology.

“These are protests against the compulsory hijab and controlling women. They have support even among women who believe in Islam and who choose to wear it, but they don’t agree with the compulsory hijab and they definitely don’t agree with the violence which is used to enforce it,” said Akbari.

The hijab, a headscarf worn by Muslim women, became mandatory in Iran after [the 1979 Islamic Revolution](#), which led to the overthrow of the shah and the instalment of Ayatollah Khomeini as the country’s supreme leader. Laws regulating women’s behaviour and restricting their participation in public life became a hallmark of the regime, as female liberation was presented as a force of western cultural imperialism.

Sign up for Her Stage to hear directly from incredible women in the developing world on the issues that matter to them, delivered to your inbox monthly:

Sign up for Her Stage – please check your spam folder for the confirmation email

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/sep/23/mahsa-amini-death-could-be-spark-broader-political-action-iran>

Headlines

- [Environment Burning world's fossil fuel reserves could emit 3.5tn tons of greenhouse gas](#)
- [Leicester Fifteen arrested to 'deter further disorder', say police](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: Ukrainian military says Russian attacks repelled in Kharkiv and Kherson](#)
- [Windrush scandal Home Office refuses to speed up visa case of woman with terminal cancer](#)
- [China West weighs calling for Uyghur abuses inquiry at UN](#)

Fossil fuels

Burning world's fossil fuel reserves could emit 3.5tn tons of greenhouse gas

The world will have released more planet-heating emissions than have occurred since the industrial revolution, analysis found



The Bruce Mansfield power station, a coal-fired power station on the Ohio River near Shippingport, Pennsylvania. Photograph: Clarence Holmes Photography/Alamy

[Oliver Milman](#)

[@olliemilman](#)

Mon 19 Sep 2022 00.45 EDTFirst published on Mon 19 Sep 2022 00.01 EDT

Burning the world's proven reserves of fossil fuels would emit more planet-heating emissions than have occurred since the industrial revolution, easily blowing the remaining carbon budget before societies are subjected to catastrophic global heating, a new analysis has found.

An enormous 3.5tn tons of greenhouse gas emissions will be emitted if governments allow identified reserves of coal, oil and gas to be extracted and used, according to what has been described as the first public database of fossil fuel production.

The database, which covers around three-quarters of global energy production, reveals that the US and [Russia](#) each have enough fossil fuel reserves to single-handedly eat up the world's remaining carbon budget before the planet is tipped into 1.5C (2.7F) or more of heating compared to the pre-industrial era.

[Stacked bar chart of the cumulative of countries' emissions embedded in fossil fuel reserves](#)

Among all countries, there is enough fossil fuel to blow this remaining budget seven times over, propelling people and ecosystems into disastrous heatwaves, floods, drought and other impacts [never seen before in human history](#). Governments have agreed to restrain global heating to 1.5C but have largely declined to actively halt new fossil fuel leases or extraction.

“You’ve got governments issuing new licenses or permits for coal that are completely decoupled from their own climate commitments,” said Mark Campanale, founder of Carbon Tracker Initiative, which is launching the new [Global Registry of Fossil Fuels](#) with Global Energy Monitor on Monday.

“It’s like a country announcing that they’re going on a climate change diet and they’re going to eat salad for lunch and then sneaking back to their office and working their way through a box of donuts,” he said. “You’re not on a diet if you’re stuffing your face with donuts, but that’s what’s happening with countries and their developers of fossil fuels.”

For the world to have an even chance of avoiding 1.5C or more of global heating, scientists have estimated the world can only emit 400 to 500bn more tons of greenhouses gases. [This would involve](#) drastically cutting emissions by around half this decade before zeroing them out entirely by the mid point of the century.

However, the US alone has the potential to release 577bn tons of emissions, most of that from coal, through its known fossil fuel reserves. While Joe Biden has presided over America's [first ever climate change legislation](#) and vowed to tackle what he has called an "existential threat to humanity", his administration has continued to hand out leases for oil and gas drilling, including [in vast swathes of the Gulf of Mexico](#), site of the BP's Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster.

Of these reserves, 27bn tons of emissions are set to be released from approved American projects already under development, which include 33.2bn barrels of oil, according to the database.

[Bar chart of countries' fossil fuel reserves](#)

Russia, meanwhile, has enough identified fossil fuels to unleash 490bn tons of greenhouse gases and is currently developing projects that are set to emit 11bn tons. [China](#), India and Australia also all each have enough fossil fuel reserves to push the world to the brink of climate breakdown.

While countries agreed in the 2015 Paris climate accords to curb global heating, three decades of international talks did not yield any commitment to actually reduce the primary cause of the climate emergency – the burning of fossil fuels. At UN talks last year in Glasgow, wrangling by diplomats did yield [a promise to "phase down"](#), but not out, the use of coal.

"Countries like to talk about emissions, they don't want to talk about fossil fuels," said Campanale. "Emissions are from the use of fossil fuels and you can't do anything about emissions until you've actually come to a conclusion about what you're going to do about fossil fuels."

"When we're in a situation where you've got two, three, four times more fossil fuels in development for the remaining carbon budget, then that tells you that policy is more than slightly out of sync. It's fundamentally out of sync."

Many large companies are pushing ahead under the assumption of expanded fossil fuel use, despite government commitments. In May, [the Guardian revealed](#) there are nearly 200 'carbon bomb' projects in train around the

world, helmed by companies such as Exxon, BP and Shell, that would each result in at least a billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions over their lifetimes. Private equity firms, too, continue to [pour billions of dollars into the sector.](#)

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has exacerbated this situation by pushing up prices of oil and gas and causing European leaders to seek the expansion of gas imports from around the world. Campanale said new gas import facilities "risk becoming stranded" as they are superseded by cheap renewable energy, such as solar and wind, causing investors to heap pressure on companies to more quickly embrace a greener future to avoid financial wipeout.

That pressure is ramping up. More than 200 health organizations, including the World Health Organization, [last week called](#) for a global fossil fuel "non-proliferation" treaty and upcoming United Nations climate talks in Egypt will see activists urge countries to end their issuance of mining leases.

But António Guterres, secretary general of the UN, has warned that the pace of the energy transition is not fast enough, with global emissions [already returning to pre-pandemic levels](#). The recent heatwaves in Europe, the US and China, as well as the [cataclysmic floods in Pakistan](#) are the "price of humanity's fossil fuel addiction", Guterres said.

"The current fossil fuel free-for-all must end now," the UN secretary general added. "It is a recipe for permanent climate chaos and suffering."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/19/world-fossil-fuel-reserve-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

Leicester

Fifteen arrested to ‘deter further disorder’ in Leicester, say police

Police said groups of men were gathering in North Evington after incidents of violence and damage in the city’s east



Police hold back Muslim protesters on Sunday in order to try to prevent clashes with the Hindu community. Photograph: Andrew Fox/The Guardian

PA Media

Mon 19 Sep 2022 00.58 EDTFirst published on Sun 18 Sep 2022 23.17 EDT

Fifteen people have been arrested during a policing operation in east [Leicester](#) “to deter further disorder”.

It comes after two arrests were made when police said disturbances broke out at an unplanned protest on Saturday night and Sunday morning.

Additional officers have been on patrol in the area in recent weeks after disorder was sparked between Hindu and Muslim communities by an Asia Cup cricket match between India and Pakistan on 28 August.

In a statement on Sunday night, Leicestershire police said: “Officers became aware of groups of young men gathering on Sunday afternoon in the North Evington area of the city.

“Officers spoke to them and took steps, including putting in place a temporary police cordon, to minimise harm and disturbance to communities.”

The force said all fifteen remained in police custody just past midnight on Monday morning.

Temporary chief constable Rob Nixon called for calm on Saturday night. The force said large crowds formed when groups of young men gathered for an unplanned protest.

In a video filmed at 9pm on Saturday, Nixon said: “We have had numerous reports of an outbreak of disorder in parts of the east Leicester area of the city.

“We have got officers there, we are taking control of that situation.

“There are additional officers en route and dispersal powers and stop search powers have been authorised. Please do not get involved, we are calling for calm.”

A police spokesperson said: “Several incidents of violence and damage have been reported to the police and are being investigated.

“Two arrests were made – one man on suspicion of conspiracy to commit violent disorder and one man on suspicion of possession of a bladed article. They remain in police custody.

“We are continuing to call for dialogue and calm with support from local community leaders. We will not tolerate violence or disorder in our city.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/19/fifteen-arrested-to-deter-further-disorder-in-leicester-say-police>

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

Ukraine war liveUkraine

Russian strike at Pivdennoukrainsk nuclear power plant but reactors not damaged – as it happened

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2022/sep/19/russia-ukraine-war-live-updates-ukrainian-military-says-russian-attacks-repelled-in-kharkiv-and-kherson>

[Home Office](#)

Home Office refuses to speed up visa case of woman with terminal cancer

Windrush campaigner Eulalee Pennant has appealed that her application for further leave to remain be resolved before she dies



Eulalee Pennant made an application in January for further leave to remain, but is still waiting for it to be processed. Photograph: Teri Pengilley/The Guardian

[Diane Taylor](#)

Mon 19 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

A great-grandmother and Windrush campaigner who has terminal cancer has begged the Home Office to resolve her immigration status before she dies, but it has refused to expedite her case.

Eulalee Pennant, 64, of Jamaican heritage, arrived in the UK in 2001 and was granted a student visa. At one point, her immigration case was stuck in a Home Office backlog for a decade. She was granted discretionary leave to remain in 2019 on the basis of family life with her partner, Gilford Fraser, a British citizen and Windrush descendant, who arrived in the UK from Jamaica in 1968 at the age of 12.

Pennant's leave to remain ran out in January this year. She has made a new application for further leave to remain but is still waiting for the Home Office to process it.

She was working as a carer during the pandemic and was a music performer with the stage name [LadyP Lioness](#), but was diagnosed with stage 4 small round cell sarcoma in April and has been given just months to live by her doctors.

Pennant has no recourse to public funds, so she cannot access benefits that could make her final months more comfortable. So far she has not been charged for her NHS treatment, but she fears that Fraser may be saddled with a huge bill after her death. She has received emails from the hospital's overseas visitors department asking for proof of her leave to remain in the UK.

The couple live in a third-floor flat in Hackney with no lift. Pennant is housebound apart from when an ambulance crew carry her down the stairs for hospital appointments.

Her MP, Diane Abbott, wrote to the Home Office asking them to expedite her application for further leave to remain, but officials wrote in response that while they were sorry about Pennant's ill health, they would not expedite the application despite the limited time Pennant has left to live.

In the letter dated 6 August, officials said the type of application Pennant made does not have a target response time, and although these applications are considered as quickly as possible, "there may be circumstances which result in an extended delay in the application processing time".

The letter added that because she was receiving NHS care, officials concluded “it is not appropriate to expedite the application with the reasoning provided”.



Eulalee Pennant with her partner, Gilford Fraser. Photograph: Teri Pengilley/The Guardian

Family, friends and supporters have asked the Home Office to grant her access to public funds as well as asking the department to hurry up and process the application before Pennant dies.

Pennant has suffered many hardships and tragedies in her life, in Jamaica and the UK, including the murder of her son Michael Phillips in Jamaica in 2009. He died of multiple gunshot wounds in June 2009, months after being deported from the UK. In 2018, at the height of the Windrush scandal, the Home Office detained her and threatened to deport her to Jamaica. She has campaigned energetically for justice for Windrush victims.

Fraser said: “The things she has gone through are horrific. It is hard to even dream of the things she has experienced and the scars that she has been left with. When you see someone crying and you can’t do anything about it, it’s the worst thing.”

Pennant said: “If the Home Office would sort my case out, my life would be a million times better than it is now. They have messed with my life for so many years. Their treatment is cruel, it’s hostile, it’s racism. I have had a lot of struggle in my life. I don’t know what I’ve done to deserve this.”

Her supporters have set up a [fund](#) to pay for basics for her because she cannot access benefits.

Justice campaigner Karen Doyle, who is supporting Pennant, urged the Home Office to grant Pennant leave with recourse to public funds as a matter of urgency. “This simple act would take away the unbearable weight of worry about how she can financially survive, and lift the stress being caused by fears of being charged for medical care, how to pay bills, keep the home warm and survive the coming months.”

Home Office sources said they did not routinely comment on individual cases, that applications were considered on their own merits and that they endeavoured to consider them as quickly as possible.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/sep/19/home-office-immigration-visa-case-further-leave-to-remain>

[China](#)

West weighs calling for China Uyghur abuses inquiry at UN

Battle over influence at Human Rights Council, with Beijing warning of ‘politicisation of human rights’



China's president, Xi Jinping, addressing the UN last year. Photograph: Mary Altaffer/AP

[Patrick Wintour](#) *Diplomatic editor*

Mon 19 Sep 2022 02.53 EDT Last modified on Mon 19 Sep 2022 03.05 EDT

Western powers are weighing the risk of a potential defeat if they table a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council calling for an independent commission to investigate alleged human rights abuses by China in [Xinjiang](#).

The issue is a litmus case for Chinese influence at the UN, as well as the willingness of the UN to endorse a worldview that protects individual rights

from authoritarian states.

The outgoing UN human rights commissioner, Michelle Bachelet, [issued a report on her last day in office](#) – 31 August – claiming there was clear evidence of crimes against humanity committed by China during its suppression of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang province. It was the first time the UN made such a serious allegation against China.

The report found evidence of systemic discrimination, mass arbitrary detention, torture, and sexual and gender-based violence.

Western leaders, in uncharted waters, are hesitating whether to table a resolution setting up an investigatory mechanism into [China](#) at the Human Rights Council (HRC), which started meeting in Geneva last week and runs to 7 October.

Olaf Wientzek, from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation thinktank, said: “If such a resolution were passed it would be a watershed moment for the HRC and increase its credibility. Taking on China would be a first.”

However, China’s diplomats have already been mobilising, and on Tuesday the Chinese ambassador in Geneva issued a statement, backed by 30 countries, accusing the UN rights office of acting without a mandate and warning of the exaggeration of “an existing trend to western polarisation and politicisation of human rights”.

The number of signatories represents the hardcore that regularly supports China and was below the 40 that signed a statement in June urging Bachelet not to publish her report, but Wientzek said: “This may reflect the fact that the latest Chinese statement directly criticised the UN human rights office, and was not the usual discourse directed against a group of mainly western countries.”

The HRC has 47 member states, and only eight of the 30 signatories to the Chinese statement are current voting members, but observers estimate a vote to set up a well-resourced independent mechanism would be very close, with

roughly 14 backing the mechanism and between 15 and 18 supporting China's stance.

The Chinese ambassador to Geneva, Chen Xu, has said any resolution is condemned to defeat.

Sarah M Brooks, a programme director for the Geneva-based International Service for Human Rights warned: "A failure by the UN even to try to do something on this issue would be far worse than trying and failing. It would be letting down the Uyghur families, and it would be a signal that China is not accountable, and enjoys impunity at the UN, so setting a precedent."

"This is both a test case and a rare opportunity. At issue is the credibility of the UN as an institution committed to human rights."

[Sign up to First Edition](#)

[Free daily newsletter](#)

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

A range of options is being considered, including tabling a draft resolution to set up an independent inquiry, or instead calling for a special session of the HRC dedicated to the Chinese issue.

The eight signatories to the statement that sit on the HRC apart from China are Bolivia, Cameroon, Eritrea, Cuba, Venezuela, Nepal, United Arab Emirates and Russia. But there are at least seven African states, as well as Pakistan, that have previously backed China on human rights norms at the UN, that sit on the HRC, and may back China again. As many as 17 countries may abstain including India, Indonesia, Mexico and Malaysia.

China for its part has been taking African diplomats to the province, and writing scathing critiques of western human rights “hypocrisy” in influential newspapers in key Muslim countries such as Indonesia.

Privately some diplomats fear the west simultaneously taking on Russia over the invasion of Ukraine, and China over human rights could backfire. Others argue it is better to wait until Bachelet’s successor, an Austrian and veteran UN official Volker Türk is installed in mid-October so he can start his period in the office without a row with China.

Wientzek said: “The Bachelet report certainly more than justifies some form of monitoring mechanism or even demands it. But this is all new ground. Given the sizable number of opposed countries, there is a lot of hesitation whether it should be done and when.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/19/west-un-china-uyghur-abuses-inquiry-human-rights-council>

2022.09.19 - Spotlight

- 'Each guest experience will be different' VR and the future of theme parks
- 'Insane rightwing misogynist? I'm none of those things!' Steven Moffat on Doctor Who, his Baftas and his critics
- 'I lost everything' Italians count cost of deadly flood in Marche
- Laura Lexx 'I did 10 gigs for a master's in standup comedy – then never stopped'

Virtual reality

‘Each guest experience will be different’: VR and the future of theme parks

Expo in east London shows how important augmented and virtual reality will be, as attractions move with the times



Bumper cars with VR headsets, at the IAAPA expo in London. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian



[Alex Hern](#) Technology editor

[@alexhern](#)

Mon 19 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT

In the fight for theme park visitors the battle lines have been drawn – monster trucks, virtual reality zombie warfare and “smellscaping”, just thankfully not all at the same time.

And while there was a sombre atmosphere around parts of London as tens of thousands lined up to pay their respects to the Queen, there were 10,000 more gathered in a convention centre in East London experiencing the future of the theme park.

The convention centre’s hall was dominated by a monster truck on hydraulics rocking riders and a nine-foot-tall alien 3D-printed in a matter of hours.

Alongside that were several full-size bowling lanes and more soft play areas than you could fill with a whole primary school’s worth of birthday parties. Pinball manufacturers Stern did, however, delay the launch of its James Bond pinball machines as a mark of respect for the Queen.

Anyone taking a walk down the cavernous hall couldn't help but notice the vast quantity of virtual reality headsets. Through VR, riders on the monster truck experienced being thrown about as though they were being driven around a real arena, while rollercoaster manufacturer Mack Rides could demonstrate some of its own rides without needing to ship attendees out to the company's own Europa Park in Germany.



People visit the Ghostbusters VR Academy at the convention. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

The technology also helps provide interactivity, something that Mark Beumers, chief executive of Dutch "dark rides" vendor Lagotronics Projects, thinks is going to become increasingly crucial to the experience.

"Visitors expect more and more, since they grew up with technology, nowadays, and they want to experience technology in a theme park in a different and better way than they can do it at home. And since they already have a lot of technology at home that they experience in a good way, a theme park needs to be the extra step."

But, Beumers says, virtual reality has its limits. Simply getting headsets on and off riders can add unacceptable delays to loading up rides, and the

technology limits one of the best aspects of going to a theme park: sharing the experience with the friends and family you visit with.

And while the technology was just starting to be installed in parks towards the beginning of 2018, the impact of Covid in the last couple of years has given operators a chance to consider, and shift their approach.

“In 2019, people were thinking, this is the new thing, this is going to take off,” says Emily Popovich, of theme park design agency Outdoor Factory. “But then Covid hit, and everyone sort of forgot about that.

“And then, after Covid, everyone is calm and developing new awesome things, there’s so many geniuses in this industry. So we come out of Covid and everything is better than it was in 2019 and nobody cares about that any more.”

In its place, says Maximilian Roeser, Mack Rides’ head of marketing, is a new push for augmented reality that lets riders experience all the benefits of VR without being stuck in a bubble that shuts them off from the real world.

In the company’s latest creations, riders even put the headsets on long before they get on the rollercoaster itself, with the queue, boarding and alighting experience all having virtual additions.

[Sign up to TechScape](#)

Free weekly newsletter

Alex Hern's weekly dive in to how technology is shaping our lives

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

But Roeser says the biggest changes are likely to be those behind the scenes that such technology enables. “Theme parks will develop in a way that you’ll have more and more interactivity.

“More and more customisation to your customers as well: all the parks will know who is coming in, their name, their age, probably what they like and what they dislike, and therefore they can transform the park for each guest. And each guest experience will be different and probably fitted directly to that guest.



Maximilian Roeser of Mack Rides (and Alex Hern with VR headset).
Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

“We already worked with that, because we have some alpha options for our coaster ride so that you can choose your own experience: one person that is sitting on the lefthand side could see another movie than the person on the righthand side.”

The classic experiences aren’t going anywhere, though. For many, like Julie Rice-Witherell of conference organiser IAAPA, the global association for the attractions industry, there’s still nothing that matches the thrill of riding a new rollercoaster for the first time.

“Every time they build a new one anywhere near me, it’s like – it’s just something different. I wouldn’t say it’s better, but it is faster, or it has more turns or you know, hits higher G forces, whatever. It’s always something new that you’ve never experienced.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/sep/19/each-guest-experience-different-vr-future-theme-parks>

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

Advertisement

US edition

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

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[The G2 interview](#)[Television](#)

[Interview](#)

‘Insane rightwing misogynist? I’m none of those things!’ Steven Moffat on Doctor Who, his Baftas and his critics

[Stuart Jeffries](#)



‘A lot of people see what I do as merely clever’ ... Steven Moffat.
Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

The star TV writer has brought David Tennant and Stanley Tucci together for a new BBC drama about good people forced to do bad things. He talks about cliffhangers, ‘powerful, sexy women’ and what it would take for him to kill



Mon 19 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 21 Sep 2022 13.15 EDT

Steven Moffat is flouncing down Piccadilly. “I’ve got seven Baftas,” he snarls as we walk through the rain. We have just been refused admission to the sumptuous Bafta restaurant in the West End of London, where Moffat had a lunch date, before which we were planning to do the interview. Moffat didn’t shout: “Don’t you know who I am?” at the receptionist, but it was implied by the way he stood. His wife, the TV producer Sue Vertue, is a Bafta member, but he isn’t, so they won’t let us in even though I’m pretty sure someone made a reservation.

“More if you count the Welsh Bafta,” Moffat adds. “I’d have brought them as evidence, but I probably couldn’t carry them all.”

The former head writer of [Doctor Who](#) and Sherlock also has a couple of Primetime Emmys to his name, plus Royal Television Society awards and an OBE. “Hasn’t been much use so far,” he says of the OBE.

What I should realise is that the 60-year-old TV writer is giving a performance. Moffat is too self-aware to throw a hubristic hissy fit. Yet this outrage, one feels, would not have happened to the actors who have found fame from his words over the years: David Tennant, Stanley Tucci, Jenna Coleman, Benedict Cumberbatch, Martin Freeman, Matt Smith, Karen Gillan, Claes Bang, Dolly Wells, Pearl Mackie and many others. Writers, though, are never A-list.

Or are they? Moffat’s phone rings. We’re in! Minutes later we are being served and Moffat is telling me he dreams of being a murderer. “It bothers me at night. What would it take for a person like me to kill someone? I know I wouldn’t have the guts. And I’d think it was wrong.”

“You’re too nice a person,” I say.

“Thank you,” Moffat says. “I am, aren’t I?”

Moffat’s excellent new four-part BBC drama, Inside Man, is about what happens when nice people do something they know to be wrong. One of them – an American criminology professor called Jefferson Grieff, played by Stanley Tucci – is on death row after murdering his wife.



David Tennant is the vicar who goes astray in Moffat's new TV drama Inside Man. Photograph: Kevin Baker/BBC/Hartswood

Moffat recalls a line from his drama that explains why nice people kill. "David Tennant [who plays a vicar forced into some very illegal acts] is trying to explain his moral scruples to his wife in terms of his Christian religion, and she just says: 'Jesus didn't have kids.'" That line comes from Moffat's sensibility. What would prompt the writer to kill? If someone had harmed or sought to harm his kids. How intriguing it is, then, that in Inside Man, the vicar's son is played by one of Moffat's sons.

"The other thing about murder is that it is really hard. Doing nothing is so much easier." Moffat cites Hitchcock's 1966 film *Torn Curtain* to make his point. It takes a professor (played by Paul Newman) and a farmer's wife eight minutes and eight seconds to murder a Stasi agent. "I thought it was time to show that it was very difficult, very painful, and it takes a very long time to kill a man," said Hitchcock at the time. The lesson of this for Moffat is clear: solving murder is easy; committing it is harder.

When Moffat was writing [Sherlock](#) between 2008 and 2017, he wasn't concerned about such matters. "Sherlock turns up after the crime has been committed. He comes in time to see the body in the library, and solves the

crime by – ahem! – guessing accurately. But actually the real drama is before he arrives. I can see why that's a good formula.”



Benedict Cumberbatch and bloodhound on the set of *Sherlock*, 2016.
Photograph: BBC/Hartswood Films/PA

Does he think *Sherlock* was formulaic? “We don’t think of shows like *Sherlock* as dramas,” says Moffat. “We think of them as entertainment, as puzzle boxes. Nothing wrong with that, or at least I don’t think so. But a lot of people do. They see what I do as merely clever.” That clearly rankles, as did the reviews he got when the backlash began against *Sherlock*’s scripted cleverness. “My favourite review was one of *Sherlock* that went: ‘As ever, regrettably, it falls back on cleverness.’ Falls back on?” he snarls again. “That was just my default position. Being smarter than you. The other one was: ‘Why can’t *Sherlock* just be ordinary?’ Why? Maybe because ordinary wouldn’t have made *Sherlock* an international success.”

All that is true, but at least one of the *Sherlock* scripts by Moffat and co-writer Mark Gatiss was savaged for sexism. In Arthur Conan Doyle’s story *A Scandal in Bohemia*, Irene Adler is an adventurer who outwits Holmes; in the free adaptation of that story in *Sherlock*, as [Jane Clare Jones put it in the Guardian](#) 10 years ago: “[She is] remade by Moffat high-class dominatrix saved only from certain death by the dramatic intervention of our hero.

While Conan Doyle's original is hardly an exemplar of gender evolution, you've got to worry when a woman comes off worse in 2012 than in 1891."

At the time Moffat, unsurprisingly, didn't agree. "In the original, Irene Adler's victory over Sherlock Holmes was to move house and run away with her husband. That's not a feminist victory."

Moffat was also criticised for writing boring female characters during his stewardship of Doctor Who (he took over as head writer from Russell T Davies in 2008). Clare Jones accused him of plucking female characters "from a box marked 'tired old tropes' (drip/scold/temptress/earth mother to name but a few)", adding: "His consequent failure to sketch a compelling central dynamic between the lead and his companion has seriously affected the show's dramatic power."

The great thing now is I write for my own pleasure. I can write whatever I want

Moffat balks at this, naming two leading female characters he created for Doctor Who. "River Song? Amy Pond? Hardly weak women. It's the exact opposite. You could accuse me of having a fetish for powerful, sexy women who like cheating people. That would be fair."

When I remind him of these criticisms, Moffat says some coverage has him pegged as "an insane, rightwing misogynist. I'm really none of those things. And I'm certainly no proselytiser for docile women, this heavily subscribed-to myth. I don't know where it came from. I have never known a docile woman. I come through the front door and I fucking salute the dog."



‘Hardly a weak woman’: River Song (played by Alex Kingston) in a 2010 episode of Doctor Who. Photograph: BBC/James Stenson

The opening scene of Inside Man is striking in this context, a vignette about a misogynistic lout on a train undone by a far-from-docile woman. The manspreader gazes lasciviously at the passenger opposite, who will turn out to be a key character in the drama, journalist Beth Davenport (played by It’s a Sin’s Lydia West). He gets up to proposition her. Everyone in the carriage is uncomfortable, yet no one does anything. Moffat says he can relate to that mass inaction: “There’s always an argument which loads of cowards like me would make: that if we do nothing at all, it will just stop, so doing nothing is the right thing to do.”

But the scene escalates. A woman takes a photograph of the harassment. The lout demands she delete it. “That’s assault,” he tells her, snatching her phone. “You’ve invaded my personal space and I’m deleting your assault.” He may be ill-informed about the law, but physically he is a scary presence. Until, that is, a third woman stands up and tells him she is livestreaming *his* assault, and, with a bit of luck, the police will be at the next station to arrest him. Emboldened, other women stand up and start filming him.

The woman who claims to have alerted the police is the hero of the moment; and, in a nice piece of foreshadowing, she is the maths tutor called Janice

Fife (played by Dolly Wells) with whom Tennant's vicar will later clash. We know, then, what the vicar doesn't: he has picked on the wrong person. "She represents a kind of woman I know," says Moffat. "The kind of woman who is used to manipulating fools like us with the tilted head and humility. The kind of woman who, when you go one step too far, pushes right back. She's Ms Pushback. I know that kind of woman for sure."

[I last interviewed Moffat 10 years ago](#) when he had left 7.9 million BBC Sunday night viewers on tenterhooks. Sherlock (Cumberbatch) had plunged from a building, possibly pushed by Andrew Scott's Moriarty, seemingly to his death. We all knew the sleuth had to survive if there was to be a series three. But how? Perhaps the falling body was Moriarty in a Sherlock mask? Maybe pathologist Molly supplied a corpse to throw from the roof? No matter how many times I asked him, he wouldn't reveal the secret. "There's a clue that everybody's missed," he told me then, clearly taking pleasure from flummoxing not just me but millions of viewers around the world.

Moffat stopped writing Sherlock in 2017, but, for all that he claims he is not interested in writing more clever-clever crime storylines ("I've consciously tried not to write as aphoristically as I have in the past"), he can't help himself. In Inside Man, for instance, Tucci's Prof Grieff is essentially Sherlock solving crimes from his cell. Visitors bring him unsolved cases against which he pits his intelligence – aided by a terrifying serial killer in the next cell who has a photographic memory and who, for reasons I can scarcely account for, ate his mother's foot.

Moffat was born in Paisley, near Glasgow, in 1961. After an MA in English, he became a secondary school English teacher in Greenock. His TV break came in the late 80s, thanks to Harry Secombe. The former Goon visited Thorn primary school in Johnstone, Renfrewshire, to film his religious show, Highway. Moffat's father, Bill, the school's headteacher, allowed the show's producers to film there on condition that they read his son's script for a TV series about a school newspaper. This became ITV's Press Gang. During its six-year run, Moffat's first wife left him for another man. He plundered that break-up for his next project, the BBC sitcom Joking Apart, about a sitcom writer and the rise and fall of his relationship. In later sitcoms Chalk (set in a school) and Coupling (which satirised male commitment phobia), he again mined his own biography.



Moffat's break came with the TV comedy drama Press Gang, which ran from 1989 to 1993. Photograph: ITV/Rex Features

Ever since he fulfilled a childhood dream in 2004 when he was hired to write for Doctor Who, that stuff has been, he says, “action, mystery, suspense, adventure – all those things, opposed to a deep analysis of the failures of the human heart that I could never possibly write”. Why not? “Who wants to read the angst-ridden ravings of a middle-class successful writer who has had his two dream jobs: writing Doctor Who and Sherlock?”

Now, though, his days on those internationally successful franchises are over. His friend Russell T Davies has returned to be Doctor Who’s showrunner, but Moffat, as he told Radio Times in the spring, has no such ambitions. “Everyone can stop worrying. I did it for six seasons on the trot. And I cannot imagine going back into doing that.”

But he has been busy. In 2020, he and Gatiss disinterred Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel and wrote a well-received drama series called Dracula, starring Claes Bang and Dolly Wells. “The great thing now is I write for my own pleasure,” he says. “I can write whatever I want.” He is such a name he doesn’t have to write to commission. Maybe those Baftas and the OBE help after all.

Perhaps having a wife who is a big-time TV producer helps, too. Certainly, Vertue had a brilliant idea when it came to casting *Inside Man*. She told Moffat that Tucci was becalmed during lockdown in Barnes, only a few miles from the couple's home in Sheen, west London. "Lockdown did have one advantage. It means Stanley was unable to travel and so could play a murderer on death row." The supermax US prison in which Tucci's killer awaits execution is really a set in England. "It was right next to David Tennant's vicarage. You could see it from the window."

Moffat has also written his first play, *The Unfriend*, which is transferring to the West End from Chichester. It was inspired by a true story. Two friends had just been on a cruise and fell in with an American woman whom they invited to stay with them in London. "Then they Googled her and found out she was a murderer." In reality, the couple revoked the invitation; the conceit of Moffat's play is that the English couple are too polite, too passive to do the same, and invite Frances Barber's Elsa into their home.

As we finish our chat, Moffat poses for pictures in the nearby graveyard of Wren's St James church. In his M&S suit, he looks unusually soigne. "I hate this," he admits. "I've always hated being photographed from the days when we'd do cast shots for Doctor Who and all these gorgeous people – Jenna, Matt – would be standing next to this plum duff. In the end I just went with it, turning up in old clothes with food spilled down my T-shirt, safe in the knowledge nobody was really looking at me." And he heads off through the rain to his lunch date at Bafta. I hope they let him back in.

Inside Man begins on BBC One on Monday 26 September

This article was amended on 21 September 2022 to correct a mistranscribed quote from Steven Moffat.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/sep/19/insane-rightwing-misogynist-im-none-of-those-things-steven-moffat-on-doctor-who-his-baftas-and-his-critics>

Advertisement

US edition

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

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Italy](#)

‘I lost everything’: Italians count cost of deadly flood in Marche



Workers and volunteers at work in the flooded streets of Ostra, a small town in the province of Ancona in the central Italian region of Marche.
Photograph: Roberto Salomone/The Guardian

Eleven people so far confirmed dead in floods that have forced climate crisis onto agenda before next week's election

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Pianello di Ostra

Mon 19 Sep 2022 00.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 08.59 EDT

Her face and clothes splattered with mud, Isabella Puttilli, 74, fought back her grief as she sifted through the ruins of her home, among the dozens destroyed by catastrophic [flooding that struck Italy's central Marche region on Thursday night](#).

"I lost everything," she said. "Food, furniture, I need to throw it all away." But her emotions gave way as she entered the bedroom, where a photo hangs of her and her husband, who died seven years ago, on their wedding day. "He loved music, and had over 200 records," she said. "All have been destroyed, really precious items that I'll never get back."

Puttilli is from Pianello di Ostra, a town of fewer than 800 residents, where five of the 11 people so far confirmed to have died in the floods lost their lives.

Among them were Giuseppe Tisba, 65, and his son Andrea, 25. The pair had been trying to move their car from an underground garage when the banks of the Misa river, which flows just a few hundred metres behind their apartment building, burst, sending a deluge of water into the garage and trapping them inside. Their neighbour, Diego Chiappetti, 51, was killed in the same way.



Isabella Putilli in the flooded living room of her house in Ostra. Photograph: Roberto Salomone/The Guardian

The town's other victims were Ennaji Mohamed, 41, and Ferdinando Olivi, 80, whose grandson launched a desperate plea for help on Facebook as the lashing rain almost wiped Pianello di Ostra off the map within a couple of hours.

“Ferdinando used to have a driving school and he was my instructor,” said Pietro, who was standing outside his home as diggers cleared away mountains of debris and destroyed furniture. “The whole town is in mourning, everyone knows everyone here.”

It was the worst storm to affect Marche since 2014, with 420mm of rain falling within nine hours – a third of the region’s yearly average. The regional capital of Ancona and areas surrounding it were also badly affected, as was Senigallia, a town along the Adriatic coast.

The storms, widely described as a “tsunami” and “apocalypse”, turned streets into rivers, tipped cars upside down and felled trees. The two people still missing are eight-year-old Mattia Luconi, who got swept away from his mother’s arms as they tried to emerge from their car, and a 56-year-old woman.

But as Marche residents mourn the victims and come to terms with the consequences of the storms, anger is rising, most of it aimed at politicians as [Italy](#) heads towards general elections on 25 September.

“With all of this disaster, nobody will go and vote,” said Anna Rita Camerucci as she cleaned mud off important documents in her wrecked home. “I certainly won’t. People are very angry – there was no warning [of the intense storms] and no preparation.”

Italy is very vulnerable to climate change, with extreme weather events occurring more frequently. In August last year, temperatures in the country hit 48.8C, breaking the European record. A severe drought amid an intense, protracted heatwave this summer followed a mild winter with lower-than-average rain and snowfall. In early July, 11 people were killed when a huge mass of ice from a glacier on the north side of the Marmolada mountain in the Dolomites broke away, causing an avalanche. This summer, the seas surrounding Italy were five degrees warmer than average.



Andrea at work in the flooded garage of his house in Ostra. Photograph: Roberto Salomone/The Guardian

“It’s possible that the very warm sea fuelled this storm,” said Luca Mercalli, president of the Italian Meteorological Society.

However, until Friday, when Enrico Letta, the leader of the centre-left Democratic party (PD), asked why the fight against the climate crisis was not the first priority, the topic had been absent from the debate.

“They speak about it now as they just needed to share a couple of words in the middle of an emergency,” added Mercalli. “But they don’t think it’s an important problem. In fact, they see it as an obstacle for the economy.”

[Sign up to First Edition](#)

[Free daily newsletter](#)

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Mercalli was among the scientists who launched a petition, signed by over 120,000 people, in August urging political leaders to make the climate crisis a priority in their election programmes.

He said the only political force truly committed to the issue was, obviously, the tiny Greens party, which is part of a coalition with the PD. The PD, in turn, also has the environment high up on its government programme, while a coalition made up of the far-right [Brothers of Italy](#), League and Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, which is forecast to seize a landslide victory in the elections, gives the theme a token mention towards the end of its objectives.

Elly Schlein, the vice president of the Emilia Romagna region who is running as an independent candidate on the PD’s democratic and progressive list, argued that from her group’s side there was a “strong awareness” of the need to act immediately.

“What happened in Marche is terrible,” she said. “Again there are victims of the climate emergency and of extreme weather events that are more and more frequent and which have a hard impact on the population.”



Damage caused by flooding in Senigallia. Photograph: Roberto Salomone/The Guardian

Citing a report from Legambiente, Italy's most prominent environment group, she said that over the past decade Italy had spent six times more on repairing the damage after extreme weather emergencies than what it had spent on prevention and mitigating the damage, for example through maintaining rivers.

"We need to invest in prevention, in terms of limiting the impact these extreme weather events have," she said.

Her words, however, have little impact on Puttilli, who will now go to live with her daughter in a nearby town.

"Italy has had several disasters similar to this, and nothing ever gets done," she said. "Enough now. I don't believe politicians anymore and won't be voting."

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

Comedy Q&A Stage

Interview

Laura Lexx: ‘I did 10 gigs for a master’s in standup comedy – then never stopped’

Interview by [Liam Pape](#)

The comedian and author on studying laughter theory, industry frustrations and the perils of gigging at a racecourse



‘The industry likes to rocket people or ignore them’ ... Laura Lexx.
Photograph: Karla Gowlett

Mon 19 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 06.55 EDT

How did you get into comedy?

I studied the history of variety and vaudeville under [Oliver Double](#) at university and then did a master’s in standup comedy. I was really interested in laughter theory: what laughter is, why humans do it, how making people

laugh works theoretically. It had a certain amount of practical work where you had to do 10 gigs and document them. I did 40 and then never stopped.

Who did you look up to when you were starting out?

Eddie Izzard is the first comedian I became aware of – I remember finding the shows and the vibe so funny. My parents had a cassette of the show Glorious and my sister and I listened to it endlessly. For my 17th birthday my sister took me to see Sexie and that was my first live comedy show.

When I got started, Tiernan Douieb was beyond lovely and I had support from the producer John Fleming who seemed to see something in me and was very kind. I've always loved Zoe Lyons. I'm very drawn to the people who are funny, kind and bemused by the idea you would look up to them.

Do you have any pre-show rituals?

I used to not be able to wear shoes on stage. I was so distracted by my feet being in them. I got over that when I sliced my foot open on some broken glass on stage in Birmingham one night.

Can you remember a gig so bad, it's now funny?

It makes my blood run cold thinking about it. I'd been booked to do a gig at a racecourse, which is not unusual: I thought it'd be in a function room somewhere. Oh no, it was outside on a small podium in the thoroughfare where all the food stalls were. They wanted each comedian to do 15 minutes between the races. We were just talking to a crowd of people who had absolutely no idea why we were doing it or that it was meant to be standup comedy. It was, and I don't say this lightly, truly one of the most humiliating things I have ever done.



Laura Lexx. Photograph: Karla Gowlett

Any bugbears from the world of comedy?

When I have hosted a comedy night and someone who has enjoyed my bits comes up and says: “Oh you should have done a spot, have you ever thought of being a comedian?” I just want to scream.

With the instability caused by the pandemic, what can be done to keep standups on the circuit?

I’d like to see more nurturing of new talent and the amplification of voices who have been around a while. The industry likes to rocket people or ignore them. Rocketing people can, but doesn’t always, strip them of the time required to develop naturally. And on the flip side, brilliant voices are ignored because they matured in their own time. Comedians like Mark Nelson, Abigoliah Schamaun, Will Duggan and a hundred others I could name are doing really interesting things and are all the better for having been on the circuit for a few years. I’d love to see them have a few more TV breaks. I think social media is changing that, people like Troy Hawke are having phenomenal success bypassing the gatekeepers, but an industry that didn’t write people off if they’re not a regular TV panellist within a year would be better.

Your debut novel, Pivot, came out earlier this year. What interested you in fiction writing?

I didn't want to do the research required to write nonfiction really. I like stories, I like people and I like humour. Writing fiction allows me to write things that wouldn't work on stage because of the limitations of standup comedy. I have a voice and a persona my comedy needs to fit with, but a book lets you try on new perspectives.

Are there any similarities between writing standup and writing a novel?

I found them very different. Standup offers almost instant gratification for your ideas and jokes whereas a book is playing the long game. But writing a book was looser because I didn't have to write to a tight frame of: "This gig is 20 minutes, a joke every minute at least ... structure the sentence to best get the laugh." You can build more without needing to stick to the rhythm of live comedy.

Best piece of advice you've ever been given?

Put some shoes on, your foot is bleeding.

Worst piece of advice you've ever been given?

It's essential to do the Edinburgh fringe every year to build "momentum".

What are you most excited for right now?

My new podcast, Lexx Education. I've been working with my younger brother, who is a huge science nerd, on a podcast where he teaches me GCSE science. It's exactly the sort of project I love: giddy, silly, interesting and made purely for the love of it.

I'm also resurrecting a project I did through lockdown – writing a book based on audience votes. The audience votes and then I write a new chapter and read it live. I did it nightly through the lockdowns and the community we built was absolutely stunning. I'm restarting it from October, as a weekly project, for people who might need a bit of free comfort and company through the winter months. I'm excited about that because, again, it's forging works that are very me instead of chasing a vague idea of what I "should" be doing to "win" at having a career.

- Listen to [Lexx Education](#).
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/sep/19/laura-lexx-i-did-10-gigs-for-a-masters-in-standup-comedy-then-never-stopped>

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

2022.09.19 - Opinion

- [It was a very modern pilgrimage – a people's quest that led to this historic day](#)
- [What Charles can learn from the bond between the Queen and my grandfather](#)
- [I have seen the future and it stinks. Who wants to live in a world without deodorant?](#)
- [Italian politics has been in trouble for decades. Now it's heading for a new low](#)

OpinionQueen Elizabeth II

It was a very modern pilgrimage – a people's quest that led to this historic day

[Ian Jack](#)



This was a journey without self-flagellation or any major discomfort beyond sleeplessness, tired legs and sore backs



‘At Southwark Park on a warm Saturday afternoon, the pre-queue queue set off at a cracking pace.’ Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

Mon 19 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 19 Sep 2022 04.52 EDT

Great state occasions inspire an elevated kind of journalism, which does its best to match the mystical rituals of the ceremony and reflect or shape what it perceives as the national mood. “Two rivers run silently through London tonight and one is made of people,” the Daily Mail’s Vincent Mulchrone wrote – memorably, as it turned out – in January 1965 of the queues to see Winston Churchill’s lying in state. “Never safer, better guarded, lay a sleeping king than this, with a golden candlelight to warm his resting place, and the muffled footsteps of his devoted subjects to keep him company,” the BBC’s Richard Dimbleby told his radio audience in February 1952, when the coffin of George VI lay in the same ancient hall.

The Guardian has often taken a less Shakespearean approach. Its reports of George VI’s lying in state, witnessed by nearly 300,000 people over three days, are lively with detail. Some aspects of queue behaviour still apply: there are ways of jumping it. In 1952, the jumpers honourably included “nurses who had been on night duty” and, perhaps less forgivably, “the boys and masters of Westminster School”, who had been led in through a side door. Other things belong to history. Telephone boxes overflowed with pennies from husbands taking “a minute to explain that they would be home

late". A party from a girls' college in Berkshire had arrived through the snow by taking an early morning "workmen's train", evidence of their enterprise in an age when "workmen" travelled early and the middle class came late.

Other newspapers carried similar details. What marked out the *Guardian* was its wryness, its refusal to get carried away. It was a Manchester paper, after all. On the night before the king's funeral, the London correspondent toured the streets twice to gauge the kind of people who were prepared to wait for hours in the cold to have the best view. At 10pm, he noticed the groups that had set up camp in the Mall were mostly elderly women – "some were old women and some were very old women with memories of Queen Victoria's funeral". At 2am, he saw the last of the queuers emerge from Westminster Hall to ponder "whether to wait for the procession or go home to bed. Bed is winning." In the meantime, Whitehall had filled with one-night-only pavement dwellers using old blankets, mackintoshes and in-memoriam editions of that morning's papers to protect themselves against a bitter wind.

"Everybody was stoutly clad but everybody was cold," the London correspondent wrote, and the question naturally arose, as it has naturally arisen several times in the 70 years since, more pressingly since the whole affair can be watched at length without leaving home: *why?* Why freeze in the cold overnight for a fleeting sight of a gun carriage; why queue for 16 hours to walk past a catafalque in 60 seconds? The *Guardian*'s correspondent observed that when a reporter asked the question, he was "disconcerted to find that the kind of people who sit up all night ... answer in cliches or in headlines that were considered the latest thing in Northcliffe's day. 'It's cold but we shall see it through.' 'I've seen every royal procession since ...' or 'Been waiting three hours – feels like three days.'"

By "Northcliffe's day", he meant the first 20-odd years of the newspaper Lord Northcliffe founded, the *Daily Mail*, and when I visited the queue last week I have to admit that a part of me wanted to discover that the relationship between the *Mail* and the royal crowd persisted. In fact, so far as I could tell, it didn't. People spoke articulately and sincerely and freshly, in the sense that their words seemed unborrowed. They nearly always

mentioned the fellowship that had been created by the act of walking and stopping – walking and stopping again and again – on the four or five miles along the Thames to Westminster. “It’s like a kind of pilgrimage,” one woman said, and that was how it often looked: a pilgrimage with Essential Waitrose and Pret a Manger carrier bags, takeaway pizzas and coffees, and the occasional beer. A pilgrimage without self-flagellation or any major discomfort beyond sleeplessness, tired legs and sore backs. As the Guardian said in 1952, “mourning” wouldn’t be the right word for a crowd that was “cheerful but decently subdued”.

At Southwark Park on a warm Saturday afternoon, the pre-queue queue set off at a cracking pace, tramping along a chicane of rubber mats and temporary fencing that folded back and forth across the grass, a kind of treadmill in which we were the only moving parts, the distance between us and the bandstand hardly wider after 15 minutes’ brisk walking. The estimated time of the journey in prospect was 14 hours, but despite this a young woman kept shouting at us like a friendly sergeant major. “Move along now! Keep it up! Well done!” I think she was south Asian, or of south Asian heritage. There have been estimates of the multicultural nature of the crowd (mine is: a lot less multicultural than the average London bus), but none so far as I know of the police, stewards and marshals who directed and channelled the crowd from A to B.

The police were almost entirely white; the stewards and marshals with very few exceptions black or brown. Most were from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and their languages included Hindi, Punjabi, Telugu, Tamil, Gujarati and Bengali, as well as English. Private security firms pay them the standard living wage of £9.18 or £9.50 an hour, depending on their age. Many held the recently created post-study work visa that enables them to stay in the UK for two years after their graduate or (more usually) postgraduate studies have ended. In 2020-21, UK universities attracted more than 84,000 students from India alone.

In Southwark Park, I asked a few of them what they made of the crowd they were guiding towards the dead queen. They estimated that most were over 50, that 10% were African or African-Caribbean and another 10% south Asian or Chinese. They were all very friendly. There had been no trouble.

“Why is England so crazy about the Queen?” a student from Hyderabad asked. Her companion, from Ahmedabad, had an answer. The Queen was clearly popular; leaders became popular when they did good for their people; ergo, the Queen must have done good for her people. “She was a great woman, she deserves the respect.” It was tremendously logical, needed no poetry, and will do for the time being.

- Ian Jack is a Guardian columnist
 - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/19/queue-pilgrimage-peoples-quest-historic-day-queen>

OpinionQueen Elizabeth II

What Charles can learn from the bond between the Queen and my grandfather

[Ndileka Mandela](#)

Nelson Mandela understood that ‘Elizabeth’, as he called her, provided exactly what Britain needed during times of change



The Queen with Nelson Mandela during his state visit to Britain in 1996.
Photograph: Simon Kreitem/Reuters

Mon 19 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 21 Sep 2022 07.58 EDT

What makes a leader? To some, it’s simply a person with power – the more brutish and unrestrained, the better. That has been the philosophy of despots for centuries. But for my grandfather, [Nelson Mandela](#), power was something else. It was found in the willingness to commit your entire being to a set of values; to not only advocate for them but to embody them. Come what may.

In that respect, many leaders don't have power in the ordinary sense that we associate with the term. For people such as my grandfather, their moral courage and strength is what allowed them to exercise influence. What's more, people often cannot help but align themselves with the values and virtues of a noble person. That is why my grandfather went from a prison cell to helping overturn apartheid, winning over the most ardent critics in [South Africa](#).

And that is why he would have mourned the loss of the Queen along with the wider world. Some may find that strange, considering the painful legacy of [British colonialism](#) in Africa (and beyond). But I saw in Queen Elizabeth II a contrast with what the United Kingdom once was, as well as an opportunity to understand what leadership could be.

The Queen's relationship to my continent was a long one. She was in Africa when her father died. The connection endured, and during her reign she visited [more than 20 African nations](#). Once, she even joked to my grandfather that she'd been to more of Africa than "[almost anybody](#)". But for so many Africans, we mourn her because of the reason she developed a friendship with Nelson Mandela.

I know from personal recollection with my grandfather that he saw in the Queen a true friend. Someone who understood him and how he understood the world. Someone who was, for Britain, exactly what Britain needed during times of change: compassionate conscience.

The Queen refused to visit South Africa during apartheid, with some even believing the tension between her and Margaret Thatcher was partly due to Thatcher's blatant inaction. What the Queen did after apartheid underscored where she stood all along (and might explain why she and my grandfather were [on a first-name basis](#), an uncommon status with a British monarch). Her Majesty [declared her support](#) for South Africa's first Black president quickly, making her one of the first world leaders to do so. She also smoothed the way for South Africa to rejoin the Commonwealth, overturning yet another [consequence of apartheid](#).

For some in positions of great wealth, disconnected from politics, the temptation might be to withdraw from the world. To drown yourself in hedonism and diversion. But the Queen instead summoned her immense moral capital and the legacy of her throne to advocate in subtle but nevertheless profound ways. Even her determined, steely consistency, her refusal to debase her office, provided Britain with an anchor in stormy seas and difficult moments. That deserves praise.

It also deserves imitation— the sincerest form of flattery. Charles III now succeeds his late mother at a time that is difficult for Britain and the world. With a pandemic just behind us, and facing other major challenges such as the climate crisis, globally taxing conflicts, economic depression and increasingly fractured societies exasperated by a rise in bigotry and racism, the world looks on King Charles to follow the legacy of his mother – to be, in short, a moral leader.

One way Charles can do that is by drawing on the immense faith-based symbolic power and credibility he possesses – not only as head of the Church of England, but as a monarch who has spent years building bridges with faith leaders and communities across the globe. This is the same Charles who once said he wants to be a “defender of faith”, rather than simply “defender of the faith”, to reflect his commitment towards people of all religions.

The world needs such a leader now. Someone capable of using constructive non-political avenues to build bridges at a time when the nations and regions of the world feel as if they are drifting further apart. And there are ample new partners Charles can engage with. Like Pope Francis, who has been outspoken on the climate emergency. Or the Aga Khan, who has taken great pains to build interfaith bridges. Or Dr Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, who runs the world’s largest Islamic NGO, the Muslim World League, and who led the first Islamic religious delegation to Auschwitz.

Yes, such efforts by the new King would be devoid of any political power. But the Queen and my grandfather proved that real power lies in the hearts and minds of people. And that is why they, and now Charles, are capable of commanding such influence and respect. Because their character is their

means of communication, their principles are their politics, and their values and virtues hold strong.

- Ndileka Mandela is a writer, social activist and the head of the Thembekile Mandela Foundation
 - ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com***
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/19/charles-queen-nelson-mandela-britain>

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

[Opinion](#)[Life and style](#)

I have seen the future and it stinks. Who wants to live in a world without deodorant?

[Emma Beddington](#)



The shortages of baby milk and HRT were alarming. But nothing prepared me for the loss of my favourite under-arm freshener



‘We haven’t been able to get a stick deodorant for months.’ Photograph: PeopleImages/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Mon 19 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 12.25 EDT

‘Global supply chain management’ used to be a phrase I heard only in snippets of phone calls from another room: it is what my husband does for work. Now, though, we are all invested, tracking the gaps and delving into what has happened to semiconductors, [garage doors](#) and mustard. The food sector is even warning of a looming shortage of [carbon dioxide](#), one thing I thought we definitely had too much of.

Some shortages have been dramatic, such as the baby milk crisis in the US, where product recall compounded supply-chain wonkiness, or the scarcity of [hormone replacement therapy](#) in the UK. More often, they are an inconvenience that makes us question carelessly held certainties about how stuff reaches us, or perhaps even an exciting glimpse into a future when we will all be bartering homemade squirrel jerky for toothpaste with the man in the corner shop, elevated to the status of neighbourhood god.

Take deodorant. I haven’t been able to get a stick deodorant for months. My household uses Dove Original (the inoffensive plain crisp of deodorants) and things have been getting nasty as the last one wore down to nothing, rasping

my armpit skin. A swift Google revealed that [Mumsnet was all over it](#): apparently, most sticks are manufactured in Russia, hence the empty shelves. So it has been every man for himself, dabbling in sprays and roll-ons, rummaging through cupboards and testing the dregs. Things degenerated fast: a “96% natural” US-made alternative was aggressively scented and sticky, making my armpits smell and feel like a Bounty left in a hot car.

My deodorant complaints and internet searches brought the inevitable raft of targeted ads, scenting blood (well, sweat). Lured by the promises of “disruptive” deodorant manufacturers, I succumbed to a sleekly packaged refillable eco “system” just as the news on Mumsnet was that Dove is returning to the shops – now, apparently, made in Italy. It’s too late for me – it’s £6 refills for ever or become an eco-terrorist – but I’m passing it on for any pits in need.

- Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist
 - ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com***
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/19/i-have-seen-the-future-and-it-stinks-who-wants-to-live-in-a-world-without-deodorant>

OpinionItaly

Italian politics has been in trouble for decades. Now it's heading for a new low

Jamie Mackay

If Giorgia Meloni comes to power at the head of a far-right coalition, the economic and social outcomes could be terrible



Giorgia Meloni at an election campaign rally in Genoa, Italy, 14 September 2022. Photograph: Luca Zennaro/EPA

Mon 19 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 09.10 EDT

Earlier this month, Alessio Di Giulio, a Florentine councillor with rightwing populist party the League, [posted](#) a 17-second video that, to my mind, marks the nadir of what has been one of the most grotesque Italian election campaigns in recent memory. In the clip, Di Giulio strolls through the historic centre of the Tuscan capital when he comes across a woman who appears to be of Roma origin. Stopping in his tracks, the candidate leans into

the camera and implores his audience to “vote the League to never see her again”, a phrase he repeats three times for rhetorical effect.

Most Italians were appalled, and the video went viral. Which was, of course, Di Giulio’s hope all along. You can see it from the smile on his face. He was surely aware, when he uploaded his clip, that there was no chance of voters in his left-leaning constituency shifting their support. His gesture was purely performative, a tacit reminder to political sympathisers across the nation that if Giorgia Meloni’s Brothers of Italy wins this week’s election, as expected, people like him will soon have an opportunity to shape the policy agenda.

Meloni is adept at both courting and distancing herself from such extremists whenever it suits her. Earlier this summer, during a visit to Spain, she delivered a speech to supporters of the far-right Vox party in which she celebrated “patriots” and “the natural family” while attacking “the LGBT lobby” and “enemies of civilisation”. In Italy, by contrast, she has recently been posting cat videos and heavily airbrushed selfies to cultivate a bland, vacuous image designed to win over moderates. It’s striking, too, that unlike allies such as Matteo Salvini, who is synonymous with his draconian security bill, or Silvio Berlusconi, who has been pushing for a pro-wealth flat tax for years, Meloni has no flagship policy. Her party’s most dramatic intervention in the campaign so far has been a proposed boycott of the children’s cartoon Peppa Pig, on the basis that a new episode which features same-sex parents constitutes “gender indoctrination”.

But Peppa Pig doesn’t fill piazzas. Indeed, the most unsettling thing by far about this election is the near-total invisibility of Meloni’s supporters. A few days ago, I paid a visit to a Brothers of Italy rally in an anonymous concrete arena in the suburbs of Florence. A few volunteers were handing out leaflets, but none of them seemed to know what the party stood for beyond its conservative, family values. When I asked them to name a single policy, a young man thrust a “puzzle book” into my hands, a small pamphlet of crosswords and maze games challenging the reader to spell out the names of various pro-EU “Traitors of Italy”.

Depressingly, that puzzle book is the closest thing to participatory democracy I’ve seen this election. Thirty-five per cent of voters are expected

to abstain – and worse still, the parties, without exception, seem to have acquiesced. The liberals, the Action party and Matteo Renzi’s Italia Viva, have given up trying to reach non-voters and are instead leaching support from the flailing centre-left Democratic party. The Five Star Movement, which as recently as 2011 was capable of mobilising tens of thousands to the streets, is blighted by factionalism and has lost its appeal among the disfranchised. The left and Greens have failed to break out of their respective echo chambers to tap into the inclusive anti-fascist energy that [animated the Sardines movement](#) just two years ago. While Brothers of Italy has little grassroots presence, the party’s strategic manipulation of a broad range of conservative voters looks set to propel it to power.

The implications are worrying. Some commentators have interpreted Meloni’s new, softer image as evidence she will be a moderate prime minister. Her party’s record in local government suggests otherwise. In the Marche region, which Brothers of Italy has controlled since 2020, the administration has restricted termination of pregnancies to the [first seven weeks](#). While Meloni claims she has no plans to make the procedure illegal, she has close links to anti-abortion lobby groups such as [ProVita & Famiglia](#), and in a country where an estimated 64% of gynaecologists are already [conscientious objectors](#), she will face few obstacles to further squeezing women’s reproductive rights.

Then there is the threat to civil society. If Meloni’s coalition wins more than 44% of the vote, it could obtain two-thirds of the seats in both the chamber of deputies and the senate. Not only would this give the far right a supermajority for the first time in the history of the republic, it could, as a result, make changes to the constitution without the need for confirmation by public referendum. This is particularly concerning, given her party’s [close relationship](#) with the Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán; indeed, human rights groups have long been [warning](#) that she is hoping to impose a similar authoritarian regime in Italy.

Of course, none of this is going to happen overnight. Meloni, Salvini and Berlusconi disagree profoundly on pressing issues such as the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis and how to tackle inflation, and there’s a good chance their coalition would break down even sooner than the average 13-

month Italian government. Still, this is hardly comforting. However short-lived, the economic and social consequences of a Meloni administration would probably be terrible. And while centre and leftwing politicians may console themselves with the hope that spring 2023 may cleanse the political system of populist rabble-rousers, this is too little, too late. Yes, Italian democracy has been hollowing out for decades, but the imminent ascension of a far-right administration marks a new low.

- Jamie Mackay is a writer and translator based in Florence
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/19/italy-giorgia-meloni-politics-far-right>

2022.09.19 - Around the world

- [Environment Vulnerable countries demand global tax to pay for climate-led loss and damage](#)
- ['These kids can find anything' California teens identify two new scorpion species](#)
- [Taiwan Joe Biden again says US forces would defend island from Chinese attack](#)
- ['You just get on with it' Jacinda Ardern says Queen gave her 'best advice' on being a new mother and leader](#)
- [Italy Far-right favourite to be next PM softens on EU as election looms](#)

Climate crisis

Vulnerable countries demand global tax to pay for climate-led loss and damage

Poor nations exhort UN to consider ‘climate-related and justice-based’ tax on big fossil fuel users and air travel



The paper presented to the UN calls for taxes on air travel and the most polluting ships. Photograph: Nicolas Economou/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

[Fiona Harvey](#) Environment correspondent

Mon 19 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

The world’s most vulnerable countries are preparing to take on the richest economies with a demand for urgent finance – potentially including new taxes on fossil fuels or flying – for the irrecoverable losses they are suffering from the climate crisis, leaked documents show.

Extreme weather is already hitting many developing countries hard and [forecast to wreak further catastrophe](#). Loss and damage – the issue of how to help poor nations suffering from the most extreme impacts of climate breakdown, which countries [cannot be protected against](#) – is one of the most contentious problems in climate negotiations.

Some of the world's most vulnerable countries have prepared a paper, seen by the Guardian, for discussion this week at the [UN general assembly](#). It shows that poor countries are preparing to ask for a “climate-related and justice-based” global tax, as a way of funding payments for loss and damage suffered by the developing world.

The funds could be raised by a global carbon tax, a tax on [airline travel](#), a levy on the [heavily polluting](#) and carbon-intensive bunker fuels used by ships, adding taxes to fossil fuel extraction, or a tax on financial transactions.

The discussion paper notes advantages and drawbacks to each of these, and the alternatives of raising funding from rich countries through the world's development banks, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the private sector.

All options for funding loss and damage are likely to be difficult for rich nations to agree to at a time of [soaring fossil fuel costs](#), [rising food prices](#) and a [cost of living crisis](#) around the world. Although rich countries [agreed at the Cop26 UN climate summit](#) in Glasgow last year that there should be a framework for loss and damage, there is no agreement on how it could be funded or who should contribute.

Sign up to Down to Earth

Free weekly newsletter

The planet's most important stories. Get all the week's environment news - the good, the bad and the essential

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy](#).

[Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Nations will meet again for [fresh talks called Cop27](#) in Egypt this November, where loss and damage is again expected to be a major topic of discussion. At Cop26, negotiations were generally good-tempered and there was consensus on the need to limit global temperature rises to [1.5C above pre-industrial levels](#). However, amid the geopolitical upheavals since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, this year's talks are likely to be more fractious.

Damages to poor countries are expected to increase as the [world heats up further](#). A separate submission to the UN, by Antigua and Barbuda, warns that increasing sea and air temperatures in the Caribbean could create a superstorm within years that would wreak £7.9bn of damage in the island nation alone, six times its annual GDP.

Adelle Thomas, the director of the climate change adaptation centre at the University of the Bahamas and a lead author for the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), said: "The case of Antigua and Barbuda underscores the need for ambitious climate action addressing [greenhouse gas emissions reduction], adaptation and loss and damage. For countries in the Caribbean that have contributed the least to climate change but are already struggling with current impacts, it is critical that global warming is limited to 1.5C, that funding for adaptation is significantly increased and made more accessible, and that there is new and additional finance and support available to address loss and damage."

[The UN's new top official on climate, Simon Stiell](#), was previously environment minister for the Caribbean island of Grenada, and so is well versed in the needs and vulnerability of small island states. He is expected to lead robust discussions on the rapidly increasing threat of climate breakdown.

Walton Webson, Antigua and Barbuda's ambassador to the UN and chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, said: "[We] deserve to live without the looming fear of debt and destruction. Our islands are bearing the heaviest burden of a crisis we did not cause, and the urgent establishment of a dedicated loss and damage response fund is key to sustainable recovery. We

are experiencing climate impacts that become more and more extreme with each passing year.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/19/vulnerable-countries-demand-global-tax-to-pay-for-climate-led-loss-and-damage>

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

Advertisement

US edition

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

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[California](#)

‘These kids can find anything’: California teens identify two new scorpion species



Paruroctonus soda, one of two species identified by Prakrit Jain and Harper Forbes. Photograph: Prakrit Jain/California Academy of Sciences

The students traveled to salt lakes to collect specimens of unknown arachnids living in the harsh environment

[Matthew Cantor](#)

[@CantorMatthew](#)

Mon 19 Sep 2022 02.36 EDTFirst published on Mon 19 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

A pair of [California](#) scorpion species that may have crawled under the radar for tens of thousands of years have finally been exposed – thanks to the efforts of two Bay Area teenagers. And for one at-risk species, the students' work could prove life-saving.

Prakrit Jain of Los Altos and Harper Forbes of Sunnyvale, 17 and 18 at the time, identified two new species – *Paruroctonus soda* and *Paruroctonus conclusus* – after a tip from social media and excursions into the harsh terrain the arachnids inhabit, aided by a black light and [Jain's mother's car](#).

It began when Jain and Forbes – who met while working at a nature preserve – spotted the unidentified scorpions on [iNaturalist](#), a social network that allows people to share their observations of the natural world. Users all over the world can upload photos of organisms they've spotted and others with expertise in the area can identify them, Forbes explained.

With about 115m observations recorded on the platform, “the real benefit of this for people doing research is that it allows such an enormous amount of data to be present to anybody,” Jain says – data it would “take thousands of people many lifetimes to gather on their own”.



Harper Forbes, Prakrit Jain and Lauren Esposito. Photograph: Gayle Laird/California Academy of Sciences

Jain and Forbes have been interested in ecology and wildlife “pretty much our whole lives”, Jain says.

“These kids can find anything,” says Lauren Esposito, an arachnologist at the California Academy of Sciences who collaborated with Jain and Forbes. “You set them out in a landscape and they’re like: ‘Here’s every species of snake, here’s every scorpion, every butterfly,’ and it’s kind of incredible.”

The students check iNaturalist regularly, “seeing if there’s anything that catches our eye”. Unidentified species frequently appear on the platform, but these two examples caught their attention in part because of their small range. They were “geographically isolated”, Forbes says, living around what Esposito describes as salt lakes, or alkali flats – “a former lake from the glacial era, 10,000 years ago, that’s dried out over time”, leaving a brutal desert environment.

That means the scorpions – which look frightening but appear to pose little risk to humans – “have to be able to resist super salty, super hot, arid, dry [conditions], and the only way that they can do that is by adaptation through time. So these things have probably been living in these habitats for tens of

thousands of years, through the last major change of the ecosystem,” Esposito says. “They’ve just become isolated there and really can’t exist in the surrounding desert.”

The specificity of their locations made it easier to identify the species without “doing a ton of background work to make a coherent description”, Jain says. But that specificity also brings risks for the scorpions: any threat to their limited habitat, such as solar farms, could be disastrous.

Last year, the students headed to two of California’s dry lakes, Soda Lake and Koehn Lake, where they used a blacklight to try to collect enough of the scorpions to conduct a thorough study. “Looking for scorpions is fairly straightforward if they’re actually out on a given night. Almost all scorpions with the exception of certain families fluoresce under black light, or UV light,” Forbes says. “It could prove quite difficult to collect them in the numbers that we deem appropriate” – typically 10 – “if we didn’t have that tool with us.”

Then began the process of describing the species for a paper with Esposito [published last month](#) in the journal ZooKeys – a lengthy effort made pressing by the environmental threat to *P. conclusus*, whose small habitat is not protected (*P. soda* is lucky enough to live within the Carrizo national monument). It’s a tedious process that involves detailed, comparative descriptions of something people haven’t seen before, Esposito says. “That’s why it’s so amazing that these two went through the entire process, because I think for most people at their age, halfway through, they’d be like: ‘I’m done with this.’”

But the pair soldiered on, naming *P. soda* after the lake; *P. conclusus*, they write in their paper, “translates to restricted or confined, in reference to the high degree of habitat specialization and severely limited range” of the scorpion. The paper calls for threatened status for *P. conclusus*, but receiving that designation is another potentially years-long process, Esposito says.



Jain is a first-year student at the University of California, Berkeley; Forbes is at the University of Arizona. Photograph: Gayle Laird/California Academy of Sciences

She's not surprised at Jain and Forbes' youthful success. She met Jain when he was nine at a community science event. Hunting for scorpions, "he kind of shadowed me as we walked around. And, I mean, honestly, he knew more about the things that we were seeing than I did," she says. As for Forbes, "he's taught himself how to illustrate, by hand, anatomical features" – some of which appear in the paper – "which is something that many of my colleagues are still quite awful at after decades".

Jain, 18, is now a first-year student at the University of California, Berkeley; Forbes, 19, is at the University of Arizona. Both plan to continue studying ecology and evolutionary biology.

Jain says he will maintain a focus on scorpions, noting that the fate of a species like *P. conclusus* has much broader implications.

"The conservation efforts are not meant for just *P. conclusus* itself," he says. "Its presence in the unique habitat indicates that there's an entire ecosystem there with many probably relevant factors that we don't fully understand. So when we're aiming to preserve this landscape, the idea really is to preserve a

completely unique ecosystem and all of the other plants and animals that are living in it for as long as possible.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/sep/19/new-scorpion-species-discovered-california-students-inaturalist>

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

Taiwan

Joe Biden again says US forces would defend Taiwan from Chinese attack

White House confirms US policy has not changed after president's remarks on 60 Minutes show

- [China-Taiwan tensions – explained in 30 seconds](#)

This video has been removed. This could be because it launched early, our rights have expired, there was a legal issue, or for another reason.

Biden says US forces would defend Taiwan if China invaded – video

[Vincent Ni](#) and agencies

Mon 19 Sep 2022 04.26 EDTFirst published on Sun 18 Sep 2022 22.32 EDT

Joe Biden has again said US forces would defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion, in his most explicit statement so far on the issue.

Asked in a CBS [60 Minutes interview](#) broadcast on Sunday whether US forces would defend the self-ruled island claimed by China, he replied: “Yes, if in fact there was an unprecedented attack.”

Asked to clarify if he meant that unlike in Ukraine, US forces – American men and women – would defend [Taiwan](#) in the event of a Chinese invasion, Biden said: “Yes.”

A White House spokesperson said US policy towards Taiwan had not changed, after being asked about the president’s comment.

The Chinese foreign ministry said [China](#) had lodged “stern representations” with the US. “The US remarks ... severely violate the important

commitment the US made not to support Taiwan independence, and send a seriously erroneous signal to Taiwanese separatist independence forces,” foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a regular press briefing.

“We are willing to make the biggest sincere efforts to strive for the prospect of peaceful reunification,” Mao said. “At the same time, we will never tolerate any activities aimed at splitting the country, and reserve the choice to take all necessary measures.”

In a statement Taiwan’s foreign ministry expressed “sincere gratitude” to Biden for “affirming the US government’s rock-solid promise of security to Taiwan”. Taiwan would “resist authoritarian expansion and aggression” and “deepen the close security partnership” with Washington and other governments “with similar thinking” to protect regional stability, the statement said.

The US president’s remarks throw into question Washington’s longstanding position of “strategic ambiguity” on Taiwan.

The US is obliged by federal law to ensure that Taiwan has the means to defend itself but the law does not state whether American forces would be sent. The US has no formal relations with the democratically run island but maintains informal diplomatic ties.

A White House spokesperson said after the 60 Minutes interview: “The president has said this before, including in Tokyo earlier this year. He also made clear then that our Taiwan policy hasn’t changed. That remains true.”

The CBS interview with Biden was conducted last week. The president is in Britain for [Queen Elizabeth II's funeral](#) on Monday.

In May, Biden was asked if he was willing to get involved militarily to defend Taiwan and replied: “[Yes ... That's the commitment we made.](#)”

In the 60 Minutes interview, Biden reiterated the US did not support Taiwanese independence and remained committed to a “One China” policy in which Washington officially recognises Beijing, not Taipei.

Tensions over the Taiwan strait have been again increasing, after a controversial [visit to Taiwan by the US House speaker, Nancy Pelosi](#), in August. That visit prompted China to conduct its largest-ever military exercises around Taiwan.

Sign up to First Thing

Free daily newsletter

Start the day with the top stories from the US, plus the day's must-reads from across the Guardian

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

The Chinese president, Xi Jinping, has vowed to “reunite” the democratically governed Taiwan and, like his predecessors, he has not ruled out the use of force as a last resort.

In a phone call with Biden in July, Xi warned against “playing with fire” over Taiwan, saying “those who play with fire will perish by it”.

Asked in October last year if the US would come to the defence of Taiwan, Biden said: “Yes, we have a commitment to do that.” The US is required by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself.

At that time, a White House spokesperson said Biden was not announcing any change in US policy and some experts referred to the comment as a “gaffe”.

Bonnie Glaser, an Asia director at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, said if Biden made such pledges he needed to ensure he could back them up.

“If President Biden plans to defend Taiwan, then he should make sure the US military has the capability to do so,” she said. “Rhetorical support that isn’t backed up by real capabilities is unlikely to strengthen deterrence.”

Biden's Asia policy coordinator, Kurt Campbell, has previously rejected any move towards "strategic clarity" over Taiwan, saying there were significant downsides to that approach.

Reuters and Associated Press contributed to this report

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/19/joe-biden-repeats-claim-that-us-forces-would-defend-taiwan-if-china-attacked>

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

[New Zealand](#)

‘You just get on with it’: Jacinda Ardern says Queen gave her ‘best advice’ on being a new mum and leader

New Zealand PM said she sought the Queen’s advice as one of the few women to have combined leadership with motherhood



Queen Elizabeth II greets New Zealand’s prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, in 2018. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

[Tess McClure](#) in Auckland

[@tessairini](#)

Sun 18 Sep 2022 19.25 EDT Last modified on Sun 18 Sep 2022 20.53 EDT

Jacinda Ardern says the Queen gave her the best advice she got on combining the duties of leading a country and being a new mother: “Just get on with it.”

New Zealand's prime minister, who is in London to attend the Queen's funeral, said her first meeting with [Queen Elizabeth II](#) was in 2018, when she had recently been elected prime minister and was pregnant with her daughter, Neve.

Ardern is one of just a handful of world leaders who have been pregnant and [had a child while holding office](#), and said she had been mulling over how to manage having her first baby while leading a country.

"One of the things on my mind alongside being a new prime minister was being a prime minister and a mum – and when you think about leaders who have been in that position ... there were so few to look to," she told the BBC.

"So I said to [the Queen], 'How did you manage?' and I remember she just said, 'Well, you just get on with it'. And that was actually probably the best and most factual advice I could have," Ardern said.

"I see now what it takes to be a mum and a leader – and she did it more times over than I."

The late Queen gave birth to Prince Andrew and Prince Edward while she was monarch.

Ardern gave birth to her daughter, Neve Te Aroha, in June 2018, and returned to her position as prime minister just two months later. She is only the second elected leader to give birth while in office: the late Benazir Bhutto gave birth while serving as prime minister of Pakistan in 1990.

Ardern visited the Queen lying in state over the weekend – and as a visiting dignitary, was allowed to skip the eight-kilometre long queue of people turning out to pay respects and witness the historical moment.

She said if she was a private citizen, she would have joined the queue herself.

“In part as a way of acknowledging the moment in time as well as the person,” she said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/19/jacinda-ardern-queen-elizabeth-advice-on-being-a-new-mother-and-leader>

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

[Italy](#)

Far-right favourite to be Italy's next PM softens on EU as election looms

Giorgia Meloni once railed against Brussels, but experts suggest likely successor to Mario Draghi has no interest in rocking boat



Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia) leader Giorgia Meloni at an election campaign rally in Genoa last week. Photograph: Luca Zennaro/EPA

[Jennifer Rankin](#) in Brussels

Sun 18 Sep 2022 10.13 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 09.10 EDT

At a [gathering of Europe's far right in February 2020](#), the leader of the Brothers of Italy, Giorgia Meloni, railed against the “Brussels techno bureaucrats” who she said wanted to impose “the Soviet plan to destroy national and religious identities” – a typically bombastic claim of Eurosceptic nationalists.

Now, on the brink of becoming Italy's first far-right prime minister since Benito Mussolini, Meloni is sounding a rather different tune.

In an opinion article for *Il Messaggero* newspaper last month, Meloni said she wanted to work "in compliance with European regulations and in agreement with the [European] Commission" to use EU resources to promote Italy's growth and innovation – a line so conventional it could drop into the speech of any aspiring pro-EU technocrat.

Speaking in a video message broadcast in English, French and Spanish, she hit back at the "absurd narrative" her party would jeopardise Italy's access to €191.5bn (£166bn) in EU Covid recovery funds.

Meloni, who has sought to distance the [Brothers of Italy](#) from its fascist origins, said her party shared "values and experiences" with British Conservatives, US Republicans and Israel's Likud party.

While Brussels worried over [Italy's 2018 election](#) that brought the populist Five Star Movement and Matteo Salvini's hardline League to power, EU officials are less anxious about a Meloni-led rightwing coalition expected to unite her Brothers of Italy with Salvini's party and Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia.

Since that far-right gathering in 2020, Europe's political landscape has been upended by coronavirus that left Italy with the highest death toll of all EU nations. Under the outgoing prime minister, Mario Draghi, Italy secured the largest share of funds from the [EU's €750bn Covid recovery programme](#). Over a six-year period, Rome will get €191.5bn for policies such as bringing ultra-fast broadband to the whole country and funding 265,000 childcare places for children under six.

The anchor of the EU funding is even more important, with Italian growth set to slow sharply in 2023 as high energy prices weigh on the economy. Meanwhile investors are jittery about what Draghi's departure means for the stability of the eurozone's third largest economy.

“Some Italian commentators say that there is no stronger supporter of Draghi’s policies right now than Meloni,” said Lorenzo Codogno, a former director of the treasury department at Italy’s finance ministry. “She has no interest in blowing up the situation right now.”

While Meloni has pledged to modify Italy’s recovery programme, she is not expected to seek radical changes, which the European Commission has already ruled out. The EU executive is open to modest tinkering to national recovery plans to reflect [the new demand to phase out Russian fossil fuels](#), but has vetoed any root-and-branch renegotiation.

“She has to put her flag on the programme at the end of the day,” said Codogno, now a visiting professor at the London School of Economics. “But whether this will really change the substance of the programme, I doubt ... it’s in nobody’s interest to undermine the possibility of getting European money.”



Silvio Berlusconi, Giorgia Meloni and Matteo Salvini address a rally in Rome in October 2019. Photograph: Andrew Medichini/AP

Meloni is expected to appoint a technocrat as finance minister, such as the current incumbent, former central banker Daniele Franco. On foreign policy, she is advised by a veteran insider, the career diplomat and former foreign

minister, Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata. And she is said to be getting counsel from “Super” Mario – Draghi, the epitome of the EU establishment.

“It is fairly well known that there has been a direct line between the two so there is a lot of mentoring going on,” said Nathalie Tocci, director of the Institute for International Affairs in Rome. Tocci said Italy’s institutions, symbolised by Draghi himself, were “try[ing] to ensure that the Italian ship remains steady despite all of the political turmoil”.

With energy bills rocketing, Tocci does not think Meloni has room to express her Eurosceptic nationalism.

“We are basically in the midst of a crisis that she herself recognises does not have a national solution,” said Tocci, referring to Meloni’s support for EU-wide energy price caps. “Although she is a nationalist, although she is a Eurosceptic, she understands that this is a crisis that needs European solutions.”

Meloni, a pro-Nato Atlanticist, has been unequivocal in condemning Russia’s invasion and supporting the dispatch of weapons to Ukraine. Her coalition government is not expected to block EU sanctions, despite the presence of Salvini, who once posed in a T-shirt emblazoned with Vladimir Putin’s face and recently [claimed the restrictive measures against Russia are “bringing Europe and Italy to their knees”](#).

Sign up to First Edition

Free daily newsletter

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Luigi Scazzieri at the Centre for European Reform points out that the League-Five Star government never vetoed EU sanctions against Russia. He

does not think that will change under Italy's likely next government: "In terms of sabotaging western unity ... that's not going to happen.

Some EU supporters are less sanguine about a Meloni government.

"Meloni, just like other far-right populist leaders, has learned from the example of the UK and the chaos that leaving the EU has caused," said Petros Fassoulas, the secretary-general of European Movement International.

"Their intention isn't so much to attack the EU; their intention is to take over from within and transform it into something closer to their ideas – a nightmare for all of us here in Brussels."

He sees conflict between Meloni and the rest of the EU over migration. The Brothers of Italy want the navy to turn away migrant boats. In an EU increasingly pre-occupied by border security, Meloni's faction is far from alone in seeking to prevent asylum seekers reaching Europe's borders.

A government anxious to preserve EU cashflows, while keeping out migrants and asylum seekers is not exceptional in the EU. Meloni is allied to the governing nationalist right in Poland and the [far-right Sweden Democrats](#), who belong to the European Conservatives and Reformists group that she has led since 2020.

The success of the Sweden Democrats, who won [second place in last week's elections](#), making them potential kingmakers in shaping Sweden's government, is another fillip for Europe's nationalist union.

Fassoulas believes the rise of the nationalist Eurosceptic right will be destabilising. "It is easy to deal with one, but when you have two or three illiberal or far-right leaders within the European Council [of EU leaders] the process becomes much more cumbersome."

This article was amended on 20 September 2022. An earlier version stated that Meloni was "on the brink of becoming Italy's first far-right prime minister", without acknowledging Benito Mussolini, who led Italy from 1922-1943.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/18/far-right-contender-giorgia-meloni-italian-pm-eu-election>

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

Headlines

- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: Ukraine condemns ‘propaganda show’ as ‘voting’ begins in occupied areas](#)
- ['Total disgrace' Climate activists held in jail for up to six months before trial](#)
- [Fracking Rees-Mogg should make his constituency first to be drilled, says Tory MP](#)
- ['It's going to split opinion' Huge Weston-super-Mare installation opens](#)
- [Environment UK laws under threat in ‘deregulatory free-for-all’](#)

[Ukraine war liveUkraine](#)

Russia-Ukraine war: Russians flee to avoid draft as west says Putin faces ‘major challenges’ to recruit 300,000 – as it happened

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2022/sep/23/ukraine-war-latest-news-referendums-to-start-in-occupied-regions-zelenskiv-urges-russian-protests>

Environmental activism

UK climate activists held in jail for up to six months before trial

Campaigners say protesters arrested for blocking roads getting ‘lost in prison system’ while on remand



Police try to unglue a protester from the surface of the road during a blockade in November 2021. Photograph: Ian West/PA

[Terry Macalister](#)

[@TerryMac999](#)

Fri 23 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 03.40 EDT

Climate campaigners arrested on suspicion of blocking roads or other offences are waiting up to six months in prison before being tried.

Josh Smith, a 29-year-old stonemason from Manchester, has been held on remand in HMP Peterborough for more than two months.

His court date is not set until 1 February, meaning he will have been incarcerated for half a year before any sentence may be imposed.

Smith, who is one of at least seven people being held long-term in prison awaiting trial, says the one positive about his position is that people seem more receptive to his message about the climate crisis.

Speaking from inside the jail, he said: “The only good thing about my situation is that it seems to give an extra platform for my views. I spend most afternoons writing speeches and they have been read out all over the world – Italy, Sweden, Canada.”

Rebels in Prison Support, a group that helps incarcerated campaigners, says any sentences given to non-violent, direct action protesters are likely to be shorter than their time spent on remand.

“It’s a total disgrace what’s happening. Many of these protesters are young and have had no connection with the police, never mind the judicial system, before becoming environment activists,” said Alice Reid, a spokesperson for the group.

A further 50 protesters were arrested and jailed last Friday, but many have been going through court hearings in recent days and some have been released on bail.

Reid tells of protesters being “lost in the prison system” as they are moved from one facility to another, seemingly because of overcrowding.

Prisoners can find it difficult to make contact with the outside world for days on end and Reid says it can take a lot of time to try to find out where they have been taken.

Louise Lancaster, a 56-year-old former teacher from Grantchester in Cambridgeshire, was arrested on the M25 and taken to a police station in Grays, Essex. Her husband had to put out a missing person alert to find her.

She said: “I was held for two days in Essex and then moved to Peterborough prison. I am meant by law to be allowed one phone call [to alert friends or

family] and the police said they would do this, but they didn't." Essex police said this was down to human error.

Lancaster was quickly released on remand from Peterborough on the condition that she engage in no more "actions", but her court hearing is not scheduled until October 2023. "If I had been remanded in jail, I would be facing over a year before trial," she said.

The delays are partly due to the prison system struggling to cope with [high numbers](#) and a judicial system under [severe funding](#) and other constraints, as well as a [huge backlog](#) of cases resulting from the Covid lockdowns. There are 59,000 outstanding crown court cases and a continuing [barristers' strike](#) threatens to make this worse in the short term.

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice insisted environmental campaigners were being treated equally under the law. "Decisions on bail applications are made by independent judges who ensure the public are protected. They have been prioritising remand cases following the unprecedented impact of the pandemic," they said.

The detainees have mainly been arrested for road blockades organised by [Insulate Britain](#) or Just Stop Oil.

Sign up to Down to Earth

Free weekly newsletter

The planet's most important stories. Get all the week's environment news - the good, the bad and the essential

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

There is a high chance of more protesters joining their ranks soon. A coalition of groups including JSO, Jeremy Corbyn's Peace & Justice Project, Fuel Poverty Action and others is planning to hold a large protest in Westminster on 1 October.

Record UK summer temperatures and severe flooding in Pakistan have heightened the urgency in the eyes of climate activists.

Smith admits he is not an entirely innocent victim. He has been arrested 24 times at protests in less than a year and has refused to commit to giving up demonstrating.

But he is also resolute that he is doing the right thing. “In a decade from now, when droughts are out of control, crop harvests are failing and the UK is experiencing food shortages, will I regret trying to do everything possible – even if that meant spending time in prison and getting a criminal record? No,” he said.

“My dad is supportive and my mum understands. But she is like any other mum – she would rather it was someone else’s son doing this.”

Lancaster has also been arrested more than 20 times and is facing charges that she knows could lead to her losing her freedom.

“I have tried every other method of convincing my local MP and government to take [the] climate crisis seriously and I have failed, so I am left with direct action,” she said.

“I am lucky to be able to do this as I have a supportive partner who can look after my 17-year-old doing his A-levels next year. If going to prison is what I can do to get societal change to a tipping point then I must do it. This system is designed to frighten us and we won’t be frightened or stop.”

A spokesperson for JSO, confirmed large numbers of climate protesters were willing to break the law. “How many doctors, scientists, plumbers and grandparents are the government willing to put in jail before they face the truth that we must just stop oil and gas?” she said.

Fracking

Rees-Mogg should make his constituency first to be fracked, says Tory MP

Mark Menzies challenges business secretary to ‘lead by example’ and start drilling in North East Somerset



The Cuadrilla hydraulic fracking site on Preston New Road, Lancashire.
Photograph: Cuadrilla/PA

[Helena Horton](#) Environment reporter

Fri 23 Sep 2022 05.27 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 12.53 EDT

Jacob Rees-Mogg should “lead by example” and make his the first constituency to be fracked, a Conservative MP has said.

Mark Menzies, the MP for Fylde, challenged the business secretary to start drilling in North East Somerset before imposing fracking on other

constituencies.

Menzies' constituency is one of those that has faced the worst effects of shale gas drilling, with seismic events in Fylde, home to Cuadrilla's Preston New Road site, twice forcing national moratoriums.

"I believe the secretary of state has shale gas in his constituency," he said. "It would be great for him to lead by example on this, so why doesn't he ensure the first shale wells are fracked in his constituency and why not? There is no more noble cause than leading by example."

"There is nothing to stop him from demanding that North East Somerset is the flagship project. I am sure after listening to him in parliament, he is very confident people will welcome this with open arms, that communities will celebrate. Let us begin with North East Somerset. I think we would applaud him."

Rees-Mogg did not respond when asked by the Guardian whether he would take up Menzies' challenge. While British Geological Survey maps show there could be shale gas under his constituency, there have been no licences granted yet in North East Somerset. However, there are shale gas licences in the neighbouring constituency of Wells, so his constituents would still be affected if those areas were fracked.

Menzies, elected in 2010, has been seeking assurances that the prime minister, Liz Truss, will stick to her pledge to frack areas only after obtaining local consent. This week, the [Guardian revealed](#) the government is considering making fracking sites nationally significant infrastructure projects, thus bypassing local planning requirements.

In parliament on Thursday, Rees-Mogg refused to reassure Menzies that his constituents would be able to block drilling, saying instead that they would be compensated. "We obviously want to work with local communities, and it is really important that companies that seek to extract shale gas come up with packages that make what they are proposing to do welcome to local communities," he said.

Tory MPs confront Jacob Rees-Mogg over decision to lift ban on fracking – video

Menzies does not believe this to be good enough. He said: “A question put to the secretary of state was how do you define local consent – it was put to him eight times – and answer there was none. The government came to the dispatch box without an answer: it’s got some work to do to reassure members of parliament.

“This is a critical thing for me, the people of this country can understand the issues around energy prices, but above all they expect the prime minister to make sure her government follows through on crystal clear commitments and there is no backsliding or rephrasing.”

He hinted that Truss could face a rebellion from backbenchers should she go back on her word: “Every Conservative colleague who has fracking in their constituency is taking the prime minister at her word that it will only go ahead with local consent, and the strength of feeling will be across the parliamentary party, for all of us who will be affected by this.”

Sign up to First Edition

Free daily newsletter

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Menzies has been dealing with fracking and its effects on his constituency for 12 years, and did not always oppose it. However, after experiencing disruption, local anger and earthquakes, with no benefits to the constituency, he has become a vocal opponent of shale gas extraction locally.

“I’ve been doing this for 12 years. For a lot of the time I didn’t oppose it. I took the view that you had to consider whether it could be done safely, if

local people could come with you, if it has benefits locally or nationally. And now we have seen the result," he said.

"So anyone who says it hasn't been tried doesn't know what they are talking about it. If the industry wants to keep fracking the same piece of rock - I would highlight [the article in the Guardian](#) that highlights the fact the founder of Cuadrilla says it would not work.

"For those Conservative MPs who don't have shale gas and think it's all fabulous, I would say think if it was your constituency and the people you represent. You would need to take their concerns onboard, you wouldn't brush them aside."

This article was amended on 23 September 2022 to correctly refer to the British Geological Survey, rather than the British Geographical Survey.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/23/rees-mogg-constituency-fracked-tory-shale-gas-drilling>.

[Art](#)

‘It’s going to split opinion’: huge Weston-super-Mare installation opens

See Monster, on a decommissioned North Sea gas platform, is one of the UK’s biggest ever public art works



At 35 metres high, See Monster is 15 metres taller than the Angel of the North, and is built on a 450-tonne platform. Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA

[Steven Morris](#)

[@stevenmorris20](#)

Fri 23 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 08.19 EDT

It looms high above the Grand Pier and makes the big wheel on the seafront look tiny. As it has taken shape on the beach at Weston-super-Mare, [See Monster](#) – a decommissioned North Sea gas platform converted into one of the UK’s biggest public art installations – has provoked a heady mix of head-scratching, interest and ire.

Finally, after delays caused by the vagaries of this summer's extreme weather (too hot at times, too windy at others), visitors are being invited this weekend to clamber onboard.

[Patrick O'Mahony](#), the project's creative director, accepted the piece would not be to everyone's taste. "We knew that it's going to split opinion. I'd rather people love or hate it rather than being indifferent. There's nothing worse than doing something that people have no reaction to."

The installation is the ninth produced as part of the Unboxed: Creativity in the UK series – [aka the Festival of Brexit](#) – which has attracted widespread criticism and ridicule, not least because of the cost of the project: a whopping £120m to the taxpayers of the four UK nations.

O'Mahony said he was sad that Unboxed had been mocked. "We're close to the other nine commissions. [Art](#) and entertainment have had a very tough time and to get this level of investment in the sector has been amazing. Years of work have gone into these projects. People should be judged on the work."

People have been judging See Monster since the 450-tonne platform was hauled to the Somerset town in July, transported from the North Sea on a barge larger than a football pitch. The scale makes it hard to ignore – at 35 metres, it is 15 metres taller than the Angel of the North.

Artists, engineers and gardeners have created a 10 metre-high waterfall, representing the monster's roar, and 6,000 pieces of aluminium that shimmer in the wind like the scales of a mythical beast. The platform's 16-metre crane boom is the creature's neck and head.



The public will be welcomed onboard for the first time from Saturday.
Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA

Other features include a cloud machine, a garden of trees and grasses, sculptures, and contraptions that produce renewable energy to power at least some of the installation. BBC Radio's shipping forecast is piped on to the helipad at the top, which boasts wonderful views across to the hills of Somerset, Devon and south Wales.

The idea is to provoke conversations about subjects such as how industrial structures could be re-purposed, how the world must move from fossil fuels, sustainability and the British weather.

Ironies abound. Not least the fact that renewable energy is a key theme of this government-backed installation – but the UK business secretary, Jacob Rees-Mogg, has made it clear he wants to squeeze "[every last cubic inch of gas](#)" from the North Sea, using platforms just like this one.

[Ella Gilbert, a climate scientist at the British Antarctic Survey](#) and an adviser to See Monster, would not directly criticise the UK government but said: "The science is very clear. We need to move away from fossil fuels. We need to very dramatically upscale our ambition when it comes to climate change. This is a creative way of illustrating how we do that."

Another irony is that while sustainability is another theme, See Monster's sojourn in Weston will be very brief. There are concerns that its hulking presence could have a negative impact on the wading birds that overwinter here, so come the start of November it will be closed.

New homes for the plants and the artwork will be found but the platform itself will be cut up and the pieces trucked away to be recycled. The makers insist that while their monster will vanish, the lessons they have learned will be used by people across the world to turn disused platforms into art installations, hotels or diving platforms.

Until it disappears, it is hoped See Monster will provide the same lift for Weston that [Banksy's Dismaland](#) – a twisted version of Disneyland – did in 2015.

“That brought in a different type of tourist to Weston,” said Walter Byron, who is acting as a See Monster host. “I’d like it to stay and put a restaurant on the top.”

A second host, Sarah Windall, who also works as a supply teacher, said: “There’s been a lot of scepticism. Some people complain that the money for it is coming out of their taxes but I think it’s a clever way of looking to the future through art.”

Among those watching as the final touches were being made to the monster was Elaine Day, a Weston resident celebrating her 76th birthday with a trip to see how work was progressing.

“It’s something different,” she said. “I think it’s good for the town. People have been coming here on their holidays and saying: ‘What’s that thing up there?’ It’s putting Weston on the map.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/sep/23/its-going-to-split-opinion-huge-weston-super-mare-installation-opens>

[Environment](#)

UK environment laws under threat in ‘deregulatory free-for-all’

Campaigners say revoking of post-Brexit protections amounts to legislative vandalism



The environmental laws lined up for removal include those covering water quality and sewage, clean air, habitat protections and the use of pesticides.
Photograph: Leslie Garland Pictures/Alamy

[Sandra Laville](#) Environment correspondent

Fri 23 Sep 2022 04.22 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 05.12 EDT

Hundreds of Britain's environmental laws covering water quality, sewage pollution, clean air, habitat protections and the use of pesticides are lined up for removal from UK law under a government bill.

Environmentalists accused Liz Truss's government of reneging on a commitment made after Brexit to halt the decline of nature by 2030. They

say the revoking of 570 environmental laws that were rolled over from EU law after Brexit amounts to a deregulatory free-for-all leaving the environment unprotected.

The RSPB said it was deeply concerned that the government was about to start a full-on attack on the laws that protect nature.

The bill laid before parliament outlines how 570 environmental laws, and hundreds more covering every government department, including transport, health and social care, working hours and other areas, are being lined up to be removed from UK law or rewritten. These include the habitat regulations that have been vital in the protection of places for wildlife in the last 30 years and laws covering the release of nitrates and phosphates into rivers.

The laws were retained after Brexit when the then Conservative environment secretary, Michael Gove, promised the UK's environmental laws would not be watered down.

The retained EU law revocation and reform bill was laid before parliament on Thursday. Its purpose is to “revoke certain retained EU law; to make provision relating to the interpretation of retained EU law and to its relationship with other law; to make provision relating to powers to modify retained EU law to enable the restatement, replacement or updating of certain retained EU law; to enable the updating of restatements and replacement provision.”

Laying the bill before parliament, the business secretary, Jacob Rees-Mogg, said: “Retained EU law was never intended to sit on the statute book indefinitely. The time is now right to bring the special status of retained EU law in the UK statute book to an end on 31 December 2023, in order to fully realise the opportunities of Brexit and to support the unique culture of innovation in the UK.

“The bill will sunset the majority of retained EU law so that it expires on 31 December 2023. All retained EU law contained in domestic secondary legislation and retained direct EU legislation will expire on this date, unless otherwise preserved.”

Richard Benwell, the chief executive of Wildlife and Countryside Link, said scrapping the laws would be “legislative vandalism”. Rewriting them would pose an unacceptable delay to the protections the current law offered to the environment, he said.

The Conservative manifesto promised “the most ambitious environmental programme of any country on earth”.

Ruth Chambers, a senior fellow at Greener UK, said the planned derailing of hundreds of laws protecting air, rivers, wildlife and food standards would derail the government’s pledges and put public health at risk.

[Sign up to First Edition](#)

[Free daily newsletter](#)

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Chambers said the December 2023 timescale was far too tight, adding: “The new government is hurtling towards a deregulatory free-for-all where vital environmental protections are ripped up and public health is put at risk.”

“Ministers are pressing for the biggest ever law-scrapping exercise to be completed within just 15 months, at the same time as cutting civil service and departmental budgets.

“Not only is this undeliverable in the timeframe, it risks terrible consequences and renders the government’s promises to recover nature and rid our rivers of sewage obsolete.”

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

2022.09.23 - Spotlight

- 'I could see the trap in the ladette thing' Lush's Miki Berenyi on childhood abuse, hating Britpop, and her relief at dodging fame
- Extract 'The claim that Britpop celebrated sassy women in bands was a veneer'
- Darling, you were dreadful! The best (and worst) big-screen performances of all time
- 'Terrible music and absurdity' Introducing Trombone Champ, the internet's new favourite video game

Advertisement

US edition

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

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Music](#)

[Interview](#)

‘I could see the trap in the ladette thing’: Lush’s Miki Berenyi on childhood abuse, hating Britpop, and her relief at dodging fame

[Kate Mossman](#)



Miki Berenyi: ‘One of my pet hates is the idea of going through life feeling like a victim.’ Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

A neglected child, Miki found her family in 80s indie – then watched as Britpop turned it into a caricature. After losing her post-band job in lockdown, she decided to look back in a memoir

[Read an extract from Fingers Crossed: How Music Saved Me from Success](#)

Fri 23 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 24 Sep 2022 05.20 EDT

When Miki Berenyi thinks of [Britpop](#), certain memories stand out – such as the night at Soho House in London when Alex James from Blur sank his teeth into her bum. “I object to this idea that Britpop was fucking amazing,” says the lead singer of Lush, dragging on her vape at her kitchen table in Willesden, north London. “Don’t get me wrong. I’d been there, jumping up and down to Girls and Boys. Some of the music was great. But Britpop was a monoculture. Every scene has an underbelly, but there was no room for any other story. Of course, you can’t *say* that, because people will go: stop being such a killjoy, you’re only saying that just because Lush weren’t popular – which I have conceded!”

Berenyi, 55, has a disarming self-possession with a fizzing energy just below the surface. She fronted Lush with Emma Anderson – they had bonded at school over the Thompson Twins and a shared filthy sense of humour – and they wrote their own songs, contrary to the assumptions of many journalists at the time. They emerged from the shoegaze scene in the late 80s and were signed to 4AD. Their lyrics were smart: Ladykillers was a kiss-off to Red Hot Chili Peppers’ Anthony Kiedis, who Berenyi says tried to take her to a strip club (“He didn’t do anything terrible – he was just a bit of a twat”). But then they were swept up in ladette culture. One day in 1996, Berenyi found herself being photographed bent over a toilet, legs splayed, being told to look seductively back at the camera.

“I don’t think Cocteau Twins or Throwing Muses were asked to get their kit off and pose in a swimming costume,” she says. “I’m pretty sure Liz Fraser was never asked to get down to her undies. I could see the trap in the ladette thing. It was saying: it’s all about liberation, it’s all about girls doing what

they want – if they want to get their tits out, or watch football or drink beer, that's great. The problem is for anyone who doesn't feel confident enough to go out in a fucking negligee. And the girl that does, I can guarantee that she's going to get a shitload of crap."

Chaotic promo tours and a manager no one liked added to the sense of something unravelling, and Lush quit in early 1997, devastated by the suicide of their drummer, Chris Acland. Berenyi enrolled on a proofreading course and was offered a job subbing TV listings on the ninth floor of King's Reach Tower in Southwark, south London, the same building that housed NME. She would meet rock journalists in the lift: "I could sense their discomfort when they recognised me." But she loved the sociability of office life – the same reason she liked being in a band. She remained in similar jobs, raising two children with her partner, the musician "Moose" McKillop, until she was made redundant after the pandemic and decided to have a crack at writing a book.

"The thing is, I didn't know if anyone would really give a shit about Lush," she says. "And I don't really read a lot of rock bios, and the ones I like aren't that much about rock ..." Many of the most interesting music narratives of the last few years have been written by women who never thought they had it in them. Their stories are more valuable than the traditional rock'n'roll yarns, and Berenyi's story is odder than most.



Berenyi onstage with Lush in New York in 1993. Photograph: Steve Eichner/Getty Images

These suburban Willesden streets are the kind that gave rise to countless pop dreams for musicians of Berenyi's generation, forged mainly from a desire to escape. Yet hers was a wild childhood and a lifelong search for normality has kept her rooted here: she lives just a bus ride from her old family home. Her Japanese mother was an actor (she is one of the geisha girls lathering James Bond in a whirlpool bath in *You Only Live Twice*) who moved in with Cary Grant's stunt double and parented remotely from the other side of the Atlantic. Her late father was an adored but destructive Hungarian dissident: on thousand-mile drives back to the motherland, he would cover petrol costs by making his nine-year-old daughter sell cassette tapes on the streets of eastern bloc countries; in London, he would occasionally take her clubbing, and use her as bait to attract girls on the dancefloor. By the time she was 14, she was sleeping on a camp bed in the eaves of her school.

And then there was Grandma Nora, fallen from a good life under the Nazis when the Russians invaded Hungary, shipped over to Willesden when Berenyi's mother moved out. Nora, sipping on Advocaat, making her granddaughter walk on the outside of the pavement to take the potential impact of any passing car, sharing her bed – and subjecting her to years of sexual abuse, which Berenyi later assumed was her own fault. "Sometimes I

stare at the toothless cavity of her mouth, fallen open as she snores,” she writes, “and I want to shove my fist inside until she chokes.”

Berenyi’s book recreates the mental landscape of a neglected child with astonishing detail and uncovers new truths about the kind of impulses that drive a teenager to carve out a life in bands. She developed an array of childhood tics, such as pushing her eyeballs in with her fingers: an early introduction, she explains, to self-harm and being in control of her own pain. Today, she wears a sleeveless top and many old, self-inflicted scars are visible on her forearm.



Berenyi, centre, with Emma Anderson and Steve Rippon, playing at the National, Kilburn, London, in 1991. Photograph: Mick Hutson/Redferns

She was a people-pleaser, tough but clingy and terrified of being alone. “I’ve always defined myself as quite wishy washy,” she offers. “Charlie Brown is my ideal childhood character. Whereas Emma would be Lucy van Pelt ...” (Berenyi and Anderson – who is frequently characterised in the book as “moany” – no longer talk, since a 2016 Lush reunion proved their lifelong differences irreconcilable.) But a cool reasonableness hangs over Berenyi: her obsession with weighing up both sides of any story was useful for an indie band being put in compromised positions. It was a coping trick that began in childhood – she considers kicking her grandmother down the stairs

but thinks better of it because she doesn't want the juvenile detention sentence.

"One of my pet hates is the idea of going through life feeling like a victim, waiting to be bruised by everything, and on the lookout for harm," she says. "I've had people react to my childhood and say: 'God, I can't believe that that social worker came around and saw the state of the place, and didn't recommend you to be put into care.' What, and that would have been better, to grow up in care?"

There was no love lost when granny died. Much of Berenyi's shame and confusion came from the fact that she would reciprocate her grandmother's advances to please her, acting out love scenes she had seen in films (detail in the book is kept to a minimum). "When I did talk to friends, I would up the outrage," she says. "I never would have admitted that there were times when I actually *instigated* it. Because people would think I was the bad seed, and Nora wasn't the abuser at all."

As an adult, Berenyi struggled with fidelity and had a reputation for sleeping around. She had many famous boyfriends, including Billy Childish, who was still with Tracey Emin at the time. "Even in Britpop there was moral judgment," she says. "We're expected to be having it large or whatever, but we're still getting called slags behind our backs."

That said, much of it was tremendous fun. In bands, she found the constant company she craved; with her image, she made a feature of her innate difference: "If I was stared at, I could tell myself they were reacting to the clothes, the hair, the makeup. The stuff I'd put on deliberately," she writes. "Not the girl I couldn't help being inside the disguise." She passes gruelling US tours in a state of wonder, sitting upfront with the driver all night on the bus. She is endlessly thrilled by the famous people she meets, even when she's quite famous herself. But Britpop felt mean, like the playground of one of her many primary schools. And it homogenised what was interesting about British music in the years leading up to it, she now thinks.



Berenyi with Lush, performing in London in April 2016, in their first performance in almost 20 years. Photograph: Lorne Thomson/Redferns

“When shoegaze happened, you also had Manchester, and baggy, all these different things,” she says. “People could be tribal but they coexisted. Britpop knocked the interesting corners off bands – even with Pulp, who I really did love. Jarvis had a self-deprecating manner, the songs were romantic, they reminded me of the Kinks, touching and awkward. But all the stuff that I found charming about Pulp got swept away. I could see it happening in the attitude and the sneer. Everyone thought Common People was great. The song that is having a rant at some girl is the one everyone loves most.”

Lush folded after their most successful album, *Lovelylife*, following wrongheaded attempts to break America and a steady drop in morale. In 1997, journalists connected Acland’s death with the band’s changing fortunes – another thing that sets their story in more primitive times. “What those obituaries taught me was, unless you’re a mental health professional, keep your asinine assumptions to yourself,” says Berenyi. “Because all the people who were close to him, and his family, none of us has come up with an answer, and we knew him better than anybody.”

Had Acland not died, Berenyi says: “I wonder what state I would have ended up in before I thought: I really need to get out of this.” The book she didn’t think she had it in her to write is subtitled: “How music saved me from success.” As a subeditor she led a less glamorous life but believes she lucked out: “6pm, job done.” It paid twice as much as Lush ever did, too.

Fingers Crossed: How Music Saved Me from Success by Miki Berenyi is published on 29 September by Nine Eight Books. To help the Guardian and Observer, [order your copy from guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/sep/23/lush-miki-berenyi-britpop-childhood-abuse-fame>

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

[Britpop](#)

Miki Berenyi: ‘The claim that Britpop celebrated sassy women in bands was a veneer’

In this extract from the former Lush singer’s memoir, she recalls how Britpop sanded the edges off a thriving UK music scene and enshrined a culture of nasty, relentless sexualisation

[Read an interview with Miki Berenyi](#)



‘Music has been hijacked by elitist dickheads’ ... Lush in 1991. Photograph: Martyn Goodacre/Getty Images

Miki Berenyi

Fri 23 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 03.30 EDT

There are entitled arseholes everywhere. At a Headcoats gig, Graham Coxon and his new squeeze Jo, from riot grrrl band Huggy Bear confront me, petulantly demanding: “Why are YOU here?” Never mind that I’ve known

the band's singer, Billy Childish, for over a decade and if anyone's the fucking interloper, it's them. Their attitude is everywhere, erasing any history before their patronage, claiming bands, venues, entire genres of music have only existed in any "happening" sense since the [Britpop](#) royalty "discovered" them. And there's a cruel schadenfreude in the air, as bands failing to achieve the required Top 5 hit are dumped from their major-label deals and mocked for their failure.

Bands have always been competitive and often bitchy, but it's now de rigueur to trample everyone else into the dust to ensure your own supremacy. Everyone is picking sides in the Blur v Oasis battle for No 1, ignoring the fact that both Country House and Roll With It are the two worst songs either band has produced. The music is irrelevant, it's the conflict that everyone is enjoying. I get that in past times, there was a snobbery about "selling out" and commercial success was treated with suspicion. But that was mostly the preserve of irritating contrarians. Now, the only barometer for taste is success and a record only has value if half a million other people like it, too.

I'm bitter, of course, because none of this works in Lush's favour. Our chart positions are viewed as feeble by bands hyped to the rafters with major-label money. I feel like I'm surrounded by trust-fund millionaires: "My dear, you're just not *trying* hard enough."

The drugs don't help, either. We play Féile festival, in Ireland, where our drummer Chris Acland is overjoyed to be meeting up with a band he's close mates with. Their guitarist merely barks at him: "Have you got any drugs?" and when he offers her some coke, she sneers: "No, I mean REAL drugs." Backstage, Terence Trent D'Arby is in the trailer opposite and his assistant pops into our Portakabin with the news that Mr D'Arby is requesting my presence. He's literally sitting not 10 yards away. I tell her that if he wants to speak to me, he can get off his arse and come over himself.



Miki Berenyi of Lush in a bar in Los Angeles in 1991. Photograph: Martyn Goodacre/Getty Images

Back in the pre-shoegaze days, Melody Maker had labelled Lush part of the Scene That Celebrates Itself (STCI), because rather than clawing each other's eyes out, the bands – Moose, Chapterhouse, Ride, My Bloody Valentine, Stereolab, Silverfish and others – played in each other's line-ups, enjoyed each other's gigs, lent gear, offered supports, hung out as friends and seemed part of a community. This new environment is completely baffling to me: where friends you haven't seen in months act like you're a random stranger to ponce drugs from and musicians treat other musicians like handmaid groupies; where someone whose only claim to fame is designing a T-shirt swans around oozing celebrity entitlement and every no-mark hanger-on acts like they're Johnny Fucking Rotten. I mean WHAT THE FUCK is going on? I've been subsumed in music since my teens and found my tribe, my family. Now it's been hijacked by elitist dickheads.

Lovelife comes out in March and we do the rounds: Davina McCall interviews us for some show I can't even remember the name of; Julian Clary does his catty act on his latest BBC vehicle, taking the piss out of my un-dyed roots. My fellow singer Emma Anderson and I chat with Zig and Zag on The Big Breakfast and are friendly and girly with presenter Katie Puckrik on Pyjama Party, where two drag queens plaster us with a

homemade face pack. It's all dumb fun and it's great to finally be getting some TV attention. I just hope that all this nonsense pays off.

The album charts at No 8. We're happy to have bounced back after Split, but in this climate, anything outside the Top 3 is considered a bit meh. The press coverage is mixed – some dismiss us as desperate has-beens trying to hitch our wagon to Britpop and even the positive takes are all backhanded compliments trumpeting that we've *finally* released something worth listening to. Everything we did before this moment is garbage; any previous failure to reach the Top 10 recast as “the wilderness years”. Whatever. The press are championing so much utter drivel right now that their opinion has become largely irrelevant. We play along, for the sake of the coverage.



‘Constant, relentless sexualisation’ ... Lush in 1994. Photograph: Gie Knaeps/Getty Images

I'm going to be 30 next year and though half these bands are as old as I am, they make me feel past it. Chris uses the term “mutton dressed as mod” to refer to the entire youth-obsessed trend of passing off bands knocking 30 as teenagers. He is seeing a 21-year-old. She seems terribly young but my sex life is a car crash so I'm hardly in a position to criticise his, and they seem to be a good match. In any case, I first met the girl as a teenager sporting a T-shirt bearing the legend “Fucked by Fabulous” so I assume she's no

vulnerable flower. Fabulous were a contrived cash-in band consisting of NME staff and masterminded by James Brown. The groupie merch was just one element of their bad-boy image and hyped-up exploits that their media friends splashed over the press. For James, it paved a path to Loaded, a men's magazine positioned directly in opposition to political correctness that is now fanning the flames of lad culture.

This kind of sexist bullshit is becoming commonplace and reframed as ‘edgy’

I can't take it seriously and I realise I'm not meant to, but I mean: not in the way I'm not meant to. The under-clad girls, the praising of machismo – it's all meant to be *fun*. Yet the joke for me is that the James I knew back in the fanzine days was a skinny-arsed brat and lauding him as the Hugh Hefner of Britpop seems ludicrous. I wouldn't mind if these boys just wanted their fun and admitted they didn't have a clue, but it strikes me that the women are being reduced and boxed in, made lesser, to make the boys look more. “Fucked by Fabulous” – not even “I fucked Fabulous”.

James does in fact offer Lush the chance to plug Lovelife in Loaded, but only if Emma and I strip down to bikinis. It takes me a moment to realise he's serious. And why shouldn't he be? Plenty of others have no issue with baring the flesh, so why shouldn't he assume that I'm up for it, too?

Emma and I do a photo shoot for Dazed and Confused and are presented with a rack of clothes selected by a stylist. The photographer picks me out a black top and a leather mini. It's only when I put them on that it becomes apparent that the skirt is the width of a football scarf and barely covers my arse. As we walk through the magazine's busy offices, I tie my jumper around my waist to cover my rear and make sure I walk bolt upright, lest the skirt ride up any further.

This kind of sexist bullshit is becoming commonplace and reframed as “edgy”. I'm recommended a hot new photographer who is hailed as a visionary genius for shooting underage models in white underwear having a pillow fight on a bed. The snapper's brilliant creative idea is to have Emma and me pose in a toilet cubicle. We position ourselves in our usual stance,

but now he's telling me to stick one leg against the door or push my hip out and stretch an arm up the wall. Any shift in my posture has the microskirt riding up, so I cautiously comply only as far as dignity will allow. When he indicates that he wants me to bend over the toilet, legs splayed and look back at him over my shoulder, I realise that this whole set-up is an elaborate ploy. The magazine isn't interested in Lush, they just want some wank fodder for their readers. I firmly tell him no and we finish the shoot. The piece ends up relegated to an eighth of a page with about 40 words of text.



Miki Berenyi performing with Lush at Beach Rock festival, Zeebrugge, Belgium in 1996. Photograph: Gie Knaeps/Getty Images

At one of the Soho House soirees, while I order drinks, a drunk comedian slurs at me to either suck his cock or fuck off. As I stand chatting to friends, Alex from Blur is sprawled on the floor making "phwoarr" noises and sinks his teeth into my arse. The Carry-On Sid James impersonations are a common theme. I fall into conversation with Keith Allen and try to ignore him sweeping his eyes around my body, twitching with overheating gestures and tugging at his collar to show he's letting off steam. Another comedian sharing a cab ride suggests he come in for a bunk-up, despite having spent the entire night excitedly chatting about his imminent fatherhood. Liam Gallagher shuffles around me, wondering aloud when I'll be ready to fuck him in the toilets.

This isn't flirting, it's constant, relentless sexualisation. And there's a nasty edge to it, implying that it's me, not them, who is asking for it.

I recall Suzanne Vega once pointing out that Madonna may be breaking boundaries, but every teenage girl who dresses like her is still treated like a slut. I'm experiencing a similar uncomfortable side effect with the supposed androgyny of Britpop. While Justine from Elastica and Sonia from Echobelly and Louise from Sleeper, wearing suits or jeans and T-shirts, get treated as one of the boys, my long hair and short dresses are now a signal that I'm gagging for it. I've been doing what I do for years and now I'm being reframed as happy to be objectified.

I've been reading feminist texts since college, however unfashionable that might be right now – and to be fair, Chris always found it a bit tiresome. My education, both at North London Poly and from the politicised bands I've followed, has taught me to see through the "harmless fun" to the misogyny that drives it. I'm not militant about it. I don't crucify people for crossing a line, I just recognise there is one. And I need to know someone well enough to accept that they're "just joking"; I'm not going to swallow it as an excuse from a bloke I've just met.

I tag along to the NME Brats awards and the only women to take the stage all night are some semi-clad dancing girls and Candida Doyle, keyboard player in Pulp. Of the 17 categories, with 10 entries each, there are just seven women included and four of those are in the solo artist category: Madonna, Björk, PJ Harvey and Alanis Morissette (Paul Weller wins). The claim that Britpop celebrates sassy women in bands is a veneer. I saw it before with riot grrrl, where (in the UK, at least) the press consisted mainly of pitting women against each other. It spawned a host of "women in rock" debates that to my shame, I got dragged into, badmouthing Kylie Minogue when it was the men comparing every other female musician disparagingly to her sexy pop-puppet image that I should have attacked. I'm not going to be fooled again.

The female-led Britpop bands sold a fraction of what the successful bloke bands did. Sure, the girls got a fair bit of attention, but it's the blokes who ruled the roost. I'm now a "ladette", trying to fit in with and be fancied by

the boys. My drinking pints and swearing and interest in football are no longer things I do purely for my own enjoyment, they've been fetishised as attributes for ideal girlfriend material. I'm supposed to be flattered that my normal behaviour is now framed as a male fantasy, as if that's the peak of any woman's dreams and achievement.

I told a fair few people to fuck off during that time, which only made them laugh all the more. ("Ooh! Feisty!") And though most of the men were nothing like as bad as this, few objected to the behaviour. There wasn't much solidarity between the women, either. Feminism was just an empty "girl power" slogan that seemed to be more about celebrating your girly BFFs and being "allowed" to get your tits out than treating women as equals. So: sorry for being a party pooper, I know a ton of you had a blast, but I fucking hate Britpop and I'm glad the whole sorry shit-fest ended up imploding. I just wish it hadn't done so much damage while it lasted.

Fingers Crossed: How Music Saved Me from Success by Miki Berenyi is published on 29 September by Nine Eight Books. To help the Guardian and Observer, [order your copy from guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/sep/23/miki-berenyi-the-claim-that-britpop-celebrated-sassy-women-in-bands-was-a-veneer>

Advertisement

US edition

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

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Movies](#)

Darling, you were dreadful! The best (and worst) big-screen performances of all time



Composite: Guardian Design; Rex Features; Allstar; Columbia

What makes cinema acting great – or awful? As Harry Styles raises eyebrows in two new films, our film critics name the portrayals that really

blew them away

Guardian film critics

Fri 23 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 07.46 EDT

How terrible is Harry Styles in [Don't Worry Darling](#)? Not very, sadly. Despite the lip-smacking about his reportedly awful performance, he turns out to be borderline competent – even quite cleverly cast – in Olivia Wilde's drama, which is out this week.

Still, fans of the formidably awkward can take comfort in his turn in [My Policeman](#), a love triangle weepie out next month. Here, he is catastrophic. Lines thud. School-play stiffness hobbles his every move. He's blank, shallow and embarrassing.

And his co-stars – including Emma Corrin and Rupert Everett – are somehow sucked into this black hole of charisma and ability; no mean feat given he doesn't even share scenes with the latter.

In *Don't Worry Darling*, by contrast, Florence Pugh, who plays Styles's wife, continues to be brilliant, despite this anxious amateur gaping at her. She carries him along, and the film too; a powerhouse firefighter scooping puppies in a burning kennel.

So what is it about Pugh in *Don't Worry Darling* that's so commanding and Styles in *My Policeman* that makes you want to call the cops? We asked Guardian film writers to dissect exactly what makes a great movie performance – and a terrible one. *Catherine Shoard*

Hadley Freeman

Great: Ralph Fiennes in Schindler's List

My therapist would have some thoughts on why I, a Jew, am obsessed with Fiennes' performance as SS officer Amon Göth. But no one has better captured the inhumane [psychopathy and very human stupidity of the Nazis](#),

and Fiennes – always sniffling in this vanity-free performance – is enthralling. When he's not on screen, you miss him and you dread him.

Terrible: Andie MacDowell in Four Weddings and a Funeral

Yes, “Is it still raining, I hadn’t noticed” is bad. But MacDowell’s entire performance is devoid of charisma whereas the rest of the film is bursting with charm. The tedious monotone, the vacant expression – she’s a character with no character, so why is Hugh Grant in love with her? And *how* could he choose her over Kristin Scott Thomas? It makes even less sense than Grant’s hair.

Andrew Pulver

Great: Pete Postlethwaite in Distant Voices, Still Lives

Terence Davies’ 1988 masterpiece may be the most perfect British film ever made. It combines relentlessly beautiful stylisation with angry kick-in-the-throat protest to amazing effect. Most of its charge is buried in Davies’ resentment of his real-life father, conceived for the film as a terrifying figure alternating between sadism, petty torture and moments of unexpected gentleness. Postlethwaite, then really a bit-part guy in TV shows, puts together an absolutely electrifying performance amid Davies’ radical camera angles and sublime long-takes. Career-transforming in the best way.

Terrible: John Malkovich in Rounders

A terrible accent can stink out any movie, holding the entire thing hostage even when the actor concerned is keeping entirely stumm. Most bad-accent attention is devoted to the likes of Marlon Brando in The Missouri Breaks, or Don Cheadle in Ocean’s Eleven, but connoisseurs of radioactive terribleness should really check out Malkovich’s turn as a Russian mobster in this 1998 poker-school thriller. Sounding as if he has a mouthful of tar and marbles, Malkovich wrecks an otherwise stellar film with a vintage late-

90s cast (Matt Damon, Edward Norton, Famke Janssen, Gretchen Mol); you've really got to hand it to him.

Cath Clarke

Great: David Bowie in Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence

It's a straighter, less quintessentially Bowie part than his alien in Nic Roeg's *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. And yet in Nagisa Ōshima's 1983 second world war movie, Bowie is all snaggle-toothed strangeness and subversion playing an army major of the "tofficer" class in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. I don't know if the film holds up today, but the scene where Bowie is buried up to his neck in sand haunted my childhood.

Terrible: Robert De Niro in Little Fockers

To be fair, it was a funny joke in *Meet the Parents* back in 2000: Robert De Niro channelling all that thermonuclear intensity into the role of a paranoid ex-CIA agent who toilet-trains his cat and keeps a lie-detector test at home to grill prospective son-in-laws ("Have you ever purchased pornographic material?"). By film number three, however, for Focks sake.

Peter Bradshaw

Great: Celia Johnson in Brief Encounter

David Lean's *Brief Encounter* is occasionally mocked by unbelievers for its stiff upper lip, but it is a great film and Celia Johnson is wonderful as Laura, the middle-class postwar housewife who has an unhappy platonic affair. She is subtle, restrained, refined, tragically dignified and genuinely passionate. Her performance is especially compelling in her silent soliloquy of wretchedness: "This misery can't last ... not even life lasts very long ..."

Terrible: Henrietta Vincent in Brief Encounter

Celia Johnson's niece, Henrietta Vincent, played her nine-year-old daughter, Margaret, in this film and her one line is outrageously wooden and stilted. Supposedly, Margaret has been quarrelling with her brother Bobbie about whether to go to the circus or the pantomime for Bobbie's birthday, and Vincent speaks in a nasal drone: "My birthday's in June and there aren't any pantomimes in June ..." Afterwards, just before the cut, you can see her glance flick away from Johnson to Lean behind the camera as if to ask: was that all right? The answer – much as I love this film and everyone involved – is no.

Ryan Gilbey

Great: John Boyega in Detroit

Initial signs suggest that John Boyega, as the security guard Melvin Dismukes, will be the hero of Kathryn Bigelow's film about the 1967 Detroit riots. In fact, he is merely a helpless witness to the savagery of racist cops. Boyega's performance amounts to an ongoing reaction shot with tremors of stifled panic. It's no small thing for a young actor to play an impotent role with such conviction, which makes him brave as well as brilliant.

Terrible: George Clooney in The American

Playing against type as a taciturn assassin, George Clooney fails in his bid to become the new Steve McQueen. The Sunday-supplement gloss that has won him lucrative advertising contracts is fatal here. When he broods, he simply looks sulky. With no plausible interior life, he has all the presence and charisma of a Nespresso pod.

Anne Billson

Great: Cameron Diaz in The Counsellor

I initially recoiled in horror from Diaz's harsh performance in Ridley Scott's jet-black cautionary tale, but subsequent viewings convinced me that this is one of the most implacable femmes fatales in cinema. Her affectless delivery of Cormac McCarthy's line "The slaughter to come is probably beyond our imagining" is as chilling a coda as you're ever likely to hear.

Terrible: Kenneth Branagh in Hamlet

The worst thing about Kenneth Branagh's plodding film of Shakespeare's longest play is his own performance. Repeatedly ignoring his own advice to the Players to dial it down, he splits the ears of the groundlings, tears passion to tatters, and generally comes across as a whiny Kevin the Teenager playing to the back row of the gods.

Mike McCahill

Great: Alia Bhatt in Gangubai Kathiawadi

One of 2022's greatest performances. As the real-life figure of Ganga Harjivandas, the self-improving sex slave who became queen of Mumbai's 1960s red-light district, Bhatt makes complete emotional sense of a rollercoaster character arc. Her extraordinarily expressive dancing in drum number Dholida tells its own story: veering from communal celebration to personal desolation, it's a walloping three-minute tabulation of everything this woman has gained and lost.

Terrible: Gordon Ramsay in Love's Kitchen

He was an established screen personality, so Ramsay's apparent discomfort before the camera in this culinary-themed Dougray Scott romcom proves doubly puzzling: he barely seems up to playing himself, let alone mouthing banalities about trifle. Director James Hacking quarantines this minor existential crisis in clean single shots, hoping it won't spoil his other ingredients, but it was no-stars all round.

Steve Rose

Great: Lupita Nyong'o in Us

Few actors are called on to play the victim *and* the antagonist in a horror movie. Nyong'o does such a fantastic job here that it is easy to forget it's the same actor playing both Adelaide, the terrified but plucky mom, and her doppelganger Red – a horrifically unnerving creation with a crooked smile and a voice from the depths of the uncanny valley. She should have won *two* Oscars!

Terrible: Jared Leto in House of Gucci

People talk about actors “disappearing into the role” – this was the exact opposite. The net result of Leto’s layers of prosthetics, bad hair, loud clothing, scenery-chewing hamminess and a “shaddap-a-you-face” Italian accent was to throw you out of the fiction and remind you that he was just a guy pretending to be another guy, and doing a really terrible job of it.

Adrian Horton

Great: Jennifer Lawrence in The Hunger Games

Anchoring a franchise, especially one as subversive as The Hunger Games, is a tall order, one Jennifer Lawrence more than met. Indomitable yet vulnerable, unflappable under pressure yet vibrating with panic, Lawrence is convincing both as a fighter and as an unwitting celebrity grappling with stardom. Never has she proved her ability to hold the centre better.

Terrible: Tom Hanks in Elvis

Tom Hanks commendably went against type as Colonel Tom Parker in [Elvis](#) – one of America’s most likable actors as an infamous show-business vampire, a straightforward villain. And he made some terrible choices. The

cartoonish accent? The leering? It's a mess, all the more so compared to Austin Butler's uncanny Elvis. For an actor who specialises in Everyman portrayals, Hanks's performance here is a bizarre caricature.

Xan Brooks

Great: Jack Lemmon in *The Apartment*

Lemmon's note-perfect turn as an ignoble office drone is the great screen performance that first springs to mind, which is strange because twitchy, garrulous CC Baxter isn't the obvious natural candidate for anything. Cinema typically mistreats or misrepresents the world's beta-men. Lemmon, though, paints a grand Shakespearean tragedy off a palette of browns and greys.

Terrible: Daniel Radcliffe in the Harry Potter films

The joke's on us: he's laughing all the way to the bank. Nonetheless, Radcliffe was mesmerisingly dreadful in the billion-dollar film series: a clenched, perky emptiness, borne around the set by the greats of British acting as if he were the central prop in some fiendish drama-school exercise. Your co-star is a house brick; now convince us that it's Jesus.

Leslie Felperin

Great: Barbara Stanwyck in *The Lady Eve*

Barbara Stanwyck is like the Terminator of golden age Hollywood acting: a perfect mimic, killer comic instincts, capable of ripping your heart out if necessary. She gets to do it all in *The Lady Eve* playing Jean, a grifter in a sparkly bolero top (costumes by Edith Head), who plays a con on Henry Fonda's brewing heir but then falls for him. It all goes wrong, but she comes back a year later pretending to be an English noblewoman named Lady Eve, and the ruse works precisely because while she makes no attempt to physically disguise herself, her entire manner, voice and carriage are

different. Stanwyck plays all the layers, roles within roles, with unmatched machine precision.

Terrible: Edith Massey in John Waters' films

In this YouTube package, Edith Massey endearingly says she “never went to no acting school”, but at least she always tried to do her best when playing such immortal roles as Edie the Egg Lady in *Pink Flamingos*, Queen Carlotta in *Desperate Living*, the deliciously named Cuddles Kovinsky in *Polyester*, and herself as a bartender in *Multiple Maniacs*. Bless her, she wasn’t even good at that last role. She bleats all her lines like a dyspeptic goat, dresses age-inappropriately with gusto, and is a kind goddess of acting ineptitude – precisely the qualities that make her so iconic in Waters’ deliberately trashy shock cinema. Sometimes bad acting has a place.

Guy Lodge

Great: Marilyn Monroe in *Some Like It Hot*

For years, the legend stuck about how “difficult” Monroe was on the set of Billy Wilder’s pitch-perfect farce, creating the impression that her droll, vulnerable turn as luckless lounge singer Sugar Kane was a director-crafted accident. Well, enough of that: there is as much wily genius in her timing, her body language and her shorthand character detailing as there is in Jack Lemmon’s and Tony Curtis’s more generously lauded turns.

Terrible: Meryl Streep in *The Iron Lady*

Sometimes the very worst acting comes from the very best actors; on occasion, that paradox can even confuse people into throwing awards at it. Take Meryl Streep, who won her third Oscar for her absurd mechanical waxwork of Margaret Thatcher, a gorgon-esque prosthetics showcase that careers wildly between two irreconcilable approaches: high-camp caricature and a hollow attempt at humanisation.

Phuong Le

Great: Edana Romney in Corridor of Mirrors

With her jet-black mane and brooding eyes, the now-forgotten Edana Romney exudes a frightening magnetism in this sumptuous yet eerie cautionary tale, which she also co-wrote. In projecting the slow abandonment of one's identity, her third and final performance on the big screen evokes the pleasure – and the terror – of romantic submission.

Terrible: Richard Burton in Bluebeard

In this delightfully garish, exploitation-tinged 1972 reimagination of the classic wife-killing tale, the formerly robust Richard Burton is a block of granite drained of any campy instincts. Unlike Vincent Price, who effortlessly integrates his stage-training into this more lowbrow fare, Burton's homicidal maniac is as lifeless as his unfortunate victims.

Phil Hoad

Great: Caleb Landry Jones in Nitram

The recent performance that has blown me away the most. The idiosyncratic Jones can't fail to be interesting on camera, but here he takes it to a new level. He could have slipped into grotesquerie playing Martin Bryant, the Tasmanian waster who murdered 35 people in Port Arthur, but every tic and outburst feels psychologically grounded. Jones shows the man's dysfunctions alive and crawling underneath the skin.

Terrible: Jared Leto in Suicide Squad

How is it possible to jump the shark playing the Joker? Kudos to Jared Leto, today's king of try-hard thesping. Where Heath Ledger's scuffed-up twitchiness fitted the realpolitik of the Christopher Nolan films, and Joaquin

Phoenix impeccably fleshed out the character's emotional compulsions, Leto's expressionism – which amounts to lots of head-rolling and heavy breathing – is completely hollow and related to nothing more than his own ego.

Stuart Heritage

Great: Tom Hanks in Cast Away

Many other actors, if handed *Cast Away*'s impossible list of requirements (hold the audience's attention alone; lose a tremendous amount of weight; somehow make us all sob uncontrollably over a lost volleyball) would make uncomfortably heavy work of the task. Not Tom Hanks, though, whose performance couldn't have been more effortless. This is true star power.

Terrible: Tom Hanks in Pinocchio

Again, any actor would have to summon the depths of their training to be any good in Disney's new *Pinocchio* movie – you try expressing a convincing emotion against an invisible wooden puppet! But many of them would at least be able to hold a consistent accent during it. Hanks's Geppetto is not only syrupy and off-putting, but also only intermittently Italian. It's a bizarre turn, especially from an actor as reliable as Hanks.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/sep/23/the-best-and-worst-big-screen-performances-of-all-time>

Games

‘Terrible music and absurdity’: introducing Trombone Champ, the internet’s new favourite video game

This endearingly ludicrous viral music game is more than a one-note comedy



‘The noises you come out with bear only the vaguest relationship to music’
... Trombone Champ

Photograph: Holy Wow



Keza MacDonald

Fri 23 Sep 2022 04.51 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 05.26 EDT

On Wednesday morning, I saw a tweet from games magazine PC Gamer that made me leak from the eyes with laughter. It contained a video, in which a wide-eyed, pained-looking cartoon trombonist struggled to hit the notes of Beethoven's Fifth while the composer himself stared sombrely out of the screen in evident disapproval. It is a golden comedic combination of terrible music, fart noises, earnestness and absurdity. This is the video game [Trombone Champ](#), and it has since gone wildly viral.

Of course I immediately downloaded it. I've been playing rhythm games for more than 20 years, from Beatmania to Guitar Hero to Amplitude via fun musical contraptions in Japanese arcades, and I take them embarrassingly seriously. Trombone Champ is *not* serious; it is a wonderful blend of accidental musical comedy, trading-card collection, made-up facts about trombones and hotdogs ("The first trombone was made in 200,000,000BC"), and true facts about baboons. (Don't ask about the baboons. This game has unexpected secrets and the baboons are one of them.)

The world's first trombone rhythm game is instantly a GOTY contender. And no, I'm not kidding. Turn up the volume and hear

Beethoven like you've never heard it before. <https://t.co/Qu7Cmkhjzc>
<pic.twitter.com/jTXNdWx3Zm>

— PC Gamer (@pcgamer) [September 20, 2022](#)

Playing it is, remarkably, as funny as watching it on video, at least for the first few songs. You move the trombone's slider with your mouse and click or press a key to toot it. The noises you come out with bear only the vaguest relationship to music. The visuals are eerily comical: Rosamunde is accompanied by bierkrugs and pretzels leaping and twirling majestically on-screen. During a truly appalling rendition of God Save Our King, photos of London Bridge and the union jack fades reverently in and out of view in the background, followed by a giant jpeg of a cooked breakfast.

Trombone Champ is made by a [two-person developer](#) called Holy Wow, consisting of Dan Vecchitto and Jackie Lalli, who also made a series of competitive typing games called Icarus Proudbottom's Typing Party. It's fair to say that this game wasn't on my radar. I asked PC Gamer's Chris Livingstone how he found it; he said: "I was browsing Steam on Monday night and thought: 'This looks cute', which by Tuesday morning became: 'This is a work of pure joy and I must tell the world.'"

Ben Jacobs – AKA [Max Tundra](#), electronic musician and multi-instrumentalist – composed a song specifically for this game. (He also features on one of its trading cards.) When I asked how he got involved with an extremely niche indie tromboning game, he told me that it all started because he asked for a favour [on Twitter in 2018](#). He needed someone to recreate an image for a poster, and one of the respondents said that he'd do it if Ben wrote a song for his game. He accepted, and four years later, you can toot along to Max Tundra's Long-Tail Limbo.

The developers have been overwhelmed by the sudden attention that Trombone Champ is attracting. "We should clarify that at the moment, Holy Wow is mostly a one person operation. And it's not even our primary gig! We work full-time jobs (!!!) and built this whole game on nights, weekends,

and holidays,” tweeted Vecchitto. “So, it’s going to take us a few weeks to get our lives in order and deal with the huge demand this game generated.”

Trombone Champ is a little gift from the internet, something that can be thoroughly enjoyed – unexpected baboons and all – over a few lunch breaks or evenings, and then evangelised about for ever. I kept noticing new little details about it, such as the graph that scores each song on Spunk, Doots, Slides, Fury and Tears, or the scrolling lyrics to the warmup tune, which conclude “I have warmed up my trombone! My nightmare is over, woo”. I defy you not to grin while playing it.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/games/2022/sep/23/trombone-champ-the-internets-new-favourite-video-game>

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

2022.09.23 - Opinion

- [Has Liz Truss handed power over to the extreme neoliberal thinktanks?](#)
- [Why I'll be fighting for a rent freeze across England and Wales this winter](#)
- [Who wants Liz Truss's bonfire of net-zero red tape? Not big business, for a start](#)
- [Putin's nuclear threat shows a desperate man out of options](#)

[**Opinion**](#)[**Thinktanks**](#)

Has Liz Truss handed power over to the extreme neoliberal thinktanks?

[**George Monbiot**](#)



The prime minister is in hock to a group of rightwing lobbyists who are themselves indebted to oligarchs and corporations



‘To a greater extent than any previous leader, Liz Truss’s politics have been shaped by organisations that call themselves thinktanks, but would be better described as lobbyists who refuse to reveal who funds them.’ Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Fri 23 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 12.11 EDT

Who chose Liz Truss? Conservative party members, of course. Who are they? Disproportionately rich, white, older men living in the south of England. But there are some members whose profile we have no means of knowing. They don’t live in the UK, have never been residents or citizens here and have [no right to vote in our elections](#). Astonishingly, since 2018 [these foreign members](#) have been permitted to determine who the UK prime minister should be.

The Conservative party’s rules of association are an open invitation to anyone who wants to mess with our politics. There seems to be nothing to stop agents of another government from [registering as members with Conservatives Abroad](#). Nor, it seems, is there anything to stop one person (or one botswarm) applying for multiple memberships. So much for the party of patriotism, sovereignty and national security.

This open invitation, to judge from the [little information](#) we can glean, has yet to be fully exploited. Perhaps foreign governments haven't yet realised what a golden opportunity they've been given. Perhaps they simply can't believe how irresponsible the Tories are.

But we don't need to suggest a campaign by another state to see Truss as a kind of [Manchurian Candidate](#), subverting what remains of our democracy on behalf of undemocratic interests. As a rule, the more loudly a politician proclaims their patriotism, the more likely they are to act on behalf of foreign money. Every recent Conservative prime minister has placed the interests of transnational capital above the [interests of the nation](#). But, to a greater extent than any previous leader, Truss's politics have been shaped by organisations that call themselves thinktanks, but would be better described as lobbyists who refuse to reveal who funds them. Now she has brought them into the heart of government.

Her senior special adviser, Ruth Porter, was communications director at the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), an extreme neoliberal lobby group. An [investigation](#) by the democracy campaign Transparify listed the IEA as "highly opaque" about its funding sources. We know from a combination of leaks and US filings that it has a history of [taking money from tobacco companies](#) and since 1967 from the [oil company BP](#), and has also received large [disbursements from foundations](#) funded by US billionaires, some of which have been among the major sponsors of [climate science denial](#). When she worked at the IEA, [Porter called](#) for reducing housing benefit and child benefit, charging patients to use the NHS, cutting overseas aid and scrapping green funds.

She then became head of economic and social policy at Policy Exchange, which was also listed by Transparify as "highly opaque". Policy Exchange is the group that (after Porter left) called for [a new law against Extinction Rebellion](#), which became, in former home secretary Priti Patel's hands, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act. We later discovered it had received [\\$30,000 from the US oil company Exxon](#).

Liz Truss, according to [the head of the IEA](#), has spoken at more of its events than "any other politician over the past 12 years". Two of Truss's meetings

with the organisation were deleted from the official record, then [reinstated](#) after the deletions caused a scandal.

More importantly, Truss was the [ostensible founder](#), in 2011, of the free enterprise group of Conservative MPs. The group's webpage was registered by [Ruth Porter](#), who at the time worked for the IEA. The IEA organised events for the group and supplied it with [media briefings](#). Twelve members of the current cabinet, including several of its most senior figures, belonged to the group. Today, if you try to open its webpage, you are redirected to the [Free Market Forum](#), which calls itself "a project of the Institute of Economic Affairs".

Truss's chief economic adviser is Matthew Sinclair, formerly chief executive of a similar lobbying group, the Taxpayers' Alliance. It is also [funded obscurely](#) by foreign donors. Sinclair wrote a book called Let Them Eat Carbon, arguing against action to prevent climate breakdown. [It claimed](#) that: "Equatorial regions might suffer, but it is entirely possible that this will be balanced out by areas like Greenland." In other words, we can trade the lives of billions of people against the prospects of some of the least inhabited places on Earth. It's among the most callous and ignorant statements I've ever seen.

Truss's interim press secretary, Alex Wild, was research director at the same organisation. Her health adviser, Caroline Elsom, was senior researcher at the Centre for Policy Studies, which was [listed by Transparency International](#) as – you guessed it – "highly opaque". Her political secretary, Sophie Jarvis, was head of government affairs at the Adam Smith Institute (also "highly opaque"), and funded, among others, by [tobacco companies](#) and [US foundations](#).

These groups represent the extreme fringe of [neoliberalism](#). This maintains that human relationships are entirely transactional: we're motivated above all by the pursuit of money, which shapes our behaviour. Yet, hilariously, when you challenge them about their funding, they deny that the money they receive influences the positions they take.

For decades, policy development on the right was shaped as follows. Oligarchs and corporations funded the thinktanks. The thinktanks proposed

policies that, by sheer coincidence, suited the interests of oligarchs and corporations. The billionaire press – also owned by oligarchs – reported these policy proposals as brilliant insights by independent organisations. Conservative frontbenchers then cited the press coverage as evidence of public demand: the voice of the oligarchs was treated as the voice of the people.

In his autobiography [Think Tank](#), Madsen Pirie, founder of the Adam Smith Institute, explained how it worked. Every Saturday, in a wine bar in Leicester Square, staff from the Adam Smith Institute and the Institute of Economic Affairs would sit down with Conservative researchers and leader writers and columnists from the Times and Telegraph to plan “strategy for the week ahead” and “co-ordinate our activities to make us more effective collectively”. The Daily Mail weighed in to help the lobbyists refine their arguments and ensure there was a supportive article on its leader page every time they published a report.

But now the thinktanks don’t need a roundabout route. They are no longer lobbying government. They are the government. [Liz Truss](#) is their candidate. To defend the interests of global capital, she will wage war against any common endeavour to improve our lives or protect the living planet. If Labour is looking for a three-word slogan with which to fight the next election, it could do worse than “Mend This Country”.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*

OpinionRenting property

Why I'll be fighting for a rent freeze across England and Wales this winter

[Jazmyn Sadri](#)

Extending Scotland's rent freeze would help millions of renters like me who are struggling to pay their bills

- Jazmyn Sadri is a member of the London Renters Union



'I have now lost my home twice in two years because of unfair rent increases and I'm not alone.' Photograph: Alex Segre/Alamy

Fri 23 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 05.04 EDT

At the height of the pandemic, I received a letter from the letting agent that managed the flat I was renting. I opened it, thinking it would be about the broken heating system I'd been complaining about since winter. Instead, the

letter stated that my rent would be going up by £50, with no mention of the repairs.

I could have just about covered the [rent increase](#), but after the agent continued to ignore my requests for repairs, I decided to cut my losses and find somewhere else to live. I was fed up with having to shower at friends' houses and couldn't face another winter living in a flat so cold that frost formed on the inside of the windows.

Eventually, I found a "studio" to move into. It was the former kitchen of a house converted into a box room with space for a bed and not much else. It cost almost £1,000 a month and I started to encounter problems as soon as I moved in. When I told the letting agent that the shower leaked every time I used it, they said, "Try having shorter showers." Other requests for repairs were ignored.

Then, in June this year, just as the cost of living crisis was starting to bite, the agent told me the rent would be going up by at least £200 a month. My heart sank – there was no way I could pay 20% more. Before I was even given a formal [section 21 eviction notice](#), a legal requirement in England and Wales, I spotted my home advertised online at a higher rent. After I said I couldn't afford a big increase, I was told I would have to leave in two weeks, on the day my contract was due to end, even though I had paid until August.

When I contacted my union, the [London Renters Union](#) (LRU), for support, they explained that the agent was acting illegally by trying to evict me without serving the proper paperwork and giving me two months' notice. They helped me write a letter spelling out that I knew my rights and I wouldn't leave until they legally acquired a possession order. The agent replied with an aggressive, personal reply calling me "rude".

The support from other renters gave me the confidence I needed to stand my ground and remain in my home for the period I had paid rent for and long enough to find somewhere else to stay, but ultimately there was no law to protect me from the rent hike and I was forced to leave.

It's the job of local councils in England to enforce upholding tenants rights, but mine told me that even though the eviction was illegal they didn't have the resources to intervene. What use are tenants' rights if a landlord can't be held to account? I have now lost my home twice in two years because of unfair rent increases and I'm not alone. Rents in London have [gone up 16%](#) on average in the past year. Through my union, I've learned about renters facing rises of 30%, 40% and even 50%. Agents have put up signs in their windows and [sent out emails](#) encouraging landlords to put up rents. Landlords and estate agents are using the inflation crisis to squeeze renters and boost profits.

Housing costs are most people's biggest outgoing, and renters in the UK already spend about [four or five times as much](#) as homeowners on housing each month. When average monthly [rent in London is £1,450](#), a 20% increase, like I was given, is essentially the same as an eviction notice. Rent rises force impossible choices on people, such as having to skip meals or leave the heating off. This is the human cost of bumper profits for energy companies, landlords and estate agents.

In the short term, the solution is clear – and it's already happening in Scotland. At the beginning of September, the Scottish government announced a [freeze on private rents](#) to help renters cope with the cost of living crisis. It's a huge victory for Living Rent, Scotland's tenants union. Until at least March 2023, landlords in Scotland will not be allowed to increase rents.

All of us deserve a decent home where we can have some security. We want to live close to our families, feel connected to our communities and, after the rent is paid, have enough money to live a dignified life. But for renters, this often isn't possible. Rent controls in England and Wales were scrapped in 1988 and the balance of power has been further tipped in favour of landlords by successive governments ever since. The Conservatives haven't even [implemented the ban](#) in England on "no fault" evictions that they promised in 2019.

If a rent freeze like the one in Scotland had been in place in England and Wales a few months ago, I would have been able to stay in my home. The

London mayor Sadiq Khan has recognised that this policy is urgently needed in the capital to avoid an eviction crisis, but so far neither the government nor the Labour party has backed any protections for renters from rent hikes.

By implementing a rent freeze throughout Britain, the government could relieve the pressure on millions of people struggling to pay their bills and put food on the table this winter. It would also start to repair some of the damage done by decades of government decisions that have prioritised profits for landlords and investors above the safety and security of tenants. This is why I'll be fighting for a rent freeze this winter alongside renters across England and Wales.

- Jazmyn Sadri is a charity sector worker and a member of the London Renters Union
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/23/rent-freeze-scotland-britain-help-millions>

[Opinion](#)[Conservatives](#)

Who wants Liz Truss's bonfire of net-zero red tape? Not big business, for a start

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



The Tories were once the party of business. Now all they know how to do is drag Britain back to the 1980s



‘Cheap, secure, renewable energy looks increasingly key to big business’s ability to keep turning a profit.’ Photograph: Owen Humphreys/PA

Fri 23 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 09.35 EDT

If Liz Truss believes wholeheartedly in one thing, it’s that nobody likes being told what to do. People don’t want to be nagged about their weight, or nudged to eat less and move more. They don’t want to be told what they can say on social media. And above all, businesses want to be free to make piles and piles of money, unhindered by regulation and red tape and what David Cameron famously called “[green crap](#)”. But when she said she didn’t mind making herself unpopular in the process of unleashing all that growth, she didn’t mean with the people doing the growing.

What to make, then, of the fact that this week more than 100 big corporate names from Ikea to Amazon, Coco-Cola and Sky signed an open letter urging the government not to [backtrack on net zero](#), following hints that Truss might be considering doing exactly that? This wasn’t in the script, either for the deregulatory right or arguably that part of the left convinced that capitalism loves nothing more than warming its rapacious hands over a bonfire of crackling red tape, while watching the planet burn. What, exactly, is going on?

CEOs aren't monsters, obviously. They see the same fires and floods and droughts on the news as everyone else, and presumably have the same teenage children berating them at breakfast. They know that being seen to go green matters both to younger customers and employees, with generation Z increasingly squeamish about working for brands their friends consider toxic.

For some, like a [water industry](#) enduring its driest summer in 30 years, the climate crisis already represents a direct threat to their operations; others, like renewable energy providers, have built their businesses around decarbonisation. But what has really changed, following the conflict in Ukraine, is that big business is now significantly more worried about rocketing fossil fuel prices. Cheap, secure, renewable energy looks increasingly key to their ability to keep turning a profit.

That said, it would be naive to imagine that big polluters aren't already lobbying this new government to water down some net zero policies, or that plenty of companies didn't have tweaks they'd like to make. But there is a surprisingly big swathe of business that would be rattled by a sudden change of direction now.

The letter was organised by the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL), whose recent [poll of 700 senior business leaders](#) found nearly 70% already had their own company net zero plans (some doubtless more convincing than others, but that's another column) and 80% had earmarked funding. Telling them at this late stage that actually they needn't have bothered spending the money seems more exasperating than liberating.

The same is true of [scrapping the sugar tax](#) now, after companies have already been through the pain barrier of reformulating snacks and fizzy drinks to avoid the tax. Sometimes red tape isn't just about protecting the public but creating stable and predictable conditions in which to make money, plus a level playing field of obligations where well-run companies aren't undercut by bad ones or made to feel like suckers. Almost three-quarters of respondents to the CISL poll, tellingly, said that far from being a drag, regulation mattered to their company's business model.

True, it often shifts costs from the state on to business, which business naturally resents. But the logical, if unpopular, corollary is that scrapping it just shunts those costs back on to taxpayers, something the government seems rather less keen to discuss. As Polly Mackenzie, the former chief executive of the thinktank Demos, tweeted recently, you can scrap the rules that stop businesses fuelling things such as obesity or workplace stress or air pollution but “your health costs are going to be massive”, quite apart from the human suffering caused. Someone still has to pay: it’s just a question of who.

Mackenzie knows this territory well, having been a Liberal Democrat special adviser in the 2010 coalition government, whose own much-hyped bonfire of red tape fizzled out when it emerged that most rules actually exist for a reason, and the reason is often that people like them. One early candidate for scrapping was apparently rules governing the flammability of children’s nightwear, on the grounds that most families now have radiators not riskier open fires. But still, is anyone crying out for kids’ pyjamas that go up in flames more readily? Is that really what progress means?

Even rules that were fiercely resented at first tend to settle in over time, becoming part of the wallpaper. The working time directive, which protects employees from being forced to work more than 48 hours a week, was controversial back in 1998 when it was first introduced. But binning it – as Jacob Rees-Mogg is [reportedly considering](#) – feels curiously last century now, in a world where companies anxious to boost productivity are instead experimenting with four-day weeks.

The idea of freedom, or getting the government the hell out of your life, remains a heady one and for many leavers was part of the itch to Brexit. But if it still thrills a certain kind of Tory voter, it feels increasingly retro. We’ve come a long way from the days when greed was good, lunch for wimps and caring about the planet strictly for hippies. If you want to drag Britain back to the 1980s, don’t expect us to come quietly.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
-

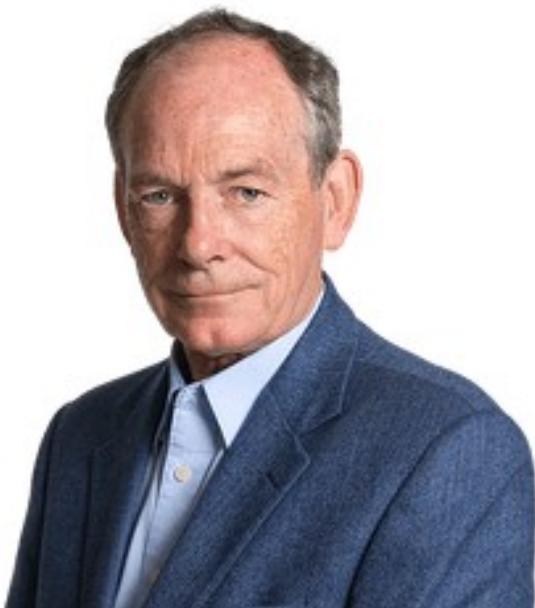
This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/23/liz-truss-bonfire-net-zero-red-tape-big-business>

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

OpinionUkraine

Putin's nuclear threat shows a desperate man out of options

[Simon Jenkins](#)



Using such weapons has no tactical purpose – it would only lose the Russian president support at home and abroad



‘Polls show a quarter to a half of Russians oppose the war.’ Poster in Moscow. Photograph: Anton Karliner/SIPA/Rex/Shutterstock

Fri 23 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 08.09 EDT

Vladimir Putin is ready to use a nuclear weapon in his ongoing attempt to conquer Ukraine. Or so says [Vladimir Putin](#). The reason is that his conquest has been justly defeated so far and he sees no other way forward. The prospect of such an escalation is appalling. A line would be crossed. Nuclear-armed powers round the world would regard it as a licence. It might not be the end of the world, but it might just be the beginning of the end.

For all the cheerleading of western politicians over Putin’s humiliation, it is crucial to emphasise how disciplined has been the west’s support for Kyiv. Yes, Nato took a gamble in advancing its borders eastwards after 1991, George Kennan’s [“most fateful error of the post-cold war era”](#). It taunted Russia’s paranoia and risked the emergence of a belligerent patriot, which is what happened in the case of Putin. But at no point has the west taken up arms against Russia, even when Russia successively attacked and “repatriated” areas of neighbouring Georgia, Chechnya and even Ukraine.

Moscow’s spring invasion of [Ukraine](#) was on a wholly different scale from the 2014 intrusion into Donbas. It was so blatant and brutal that outside

military support for Kyiv was as much humanitarian as strategic. But from the start, Nato did nothing to substantiate Moscow's lie that the west had taken up arms against Russian territory. There were to be no long-range missiles, no bombers or western troops fighting on the ground. Only with economic sanctions did the west lend plausibility to Putin's claim that it was attacking Russia itself.

Putin has done his nation much harm. He has revealed his army as a Potemkin farce, his generals as incompetent sycophants. Many of his people, proud Russians long supportive of his bombast, are now openly hostile to his mobilisation. [Polls show](#) that a quarter to a half of Russians oppose the war. Only the spectacular discomfort caused to the west by Moscow's retaliatory gas sanctions has afforded the Kremlin some respite. Otherwise Putin is bereft of options. Like many a commander forced into retreat, he is tormented by the choice of escalation or abject defeat.

During the cold war, Europe's civilians were taught how to respond to a potential thermonuclear exchange. The horror of "mutual assured destruction" was so ingrained it fed through into great-power diplomacy and created an infrastructure of back channels and accident aversion. The merest hint of danger, as during the Cuban crisis in 1962 and a radar malfunction in 1983, brought a swift return to sanity.

There is no reason – or should be no reason – to see the present crisis as a return to the cold war and nuclear confrontation. Great powers are not in existential contention. Even Putin is threatening only tactical nuclear weapons. Given the weakness of his forces on the ground, it is hard to see what gain such weapons would bring him in what is a conventional infantry war over territory. They would be a gesture, and one that would surely lose him support both at home and abroad among his putative admirers in China and India. As for a nuclear "response" from the west, it would serve no tactical purpose and merely open the gates to escalation.

We are told that if Putin was to fall, even "harder-line" figures within his circle would replace him. [Russia](#) is like all regimes under sanctions. Besieged elites drive opponents and moderates underground or into exile. They become entrenched and ever less vulnerable to diplomacy and

economic pressure. Yet all wars must end. Russia's in Ukraine has been going on for eight years and has increasingly taken on the colours of a proxy conflict of west against east. Therein lies the danger of Putin's escalation.

Western aid has enabled Ukraine to drive Russia's troops back towards the 2014 frontiers. Ukraine and the west have been united in defying a brutal and authoritarian regime, and have been largely successful. The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, now risks that unity by stating that he wants ever more western aid to drive Russia out of all of Ukraine, including Crimea.

While his cause remains just, there must come a point when a war to conquer all of Ukraine becomes one of where to draw a line of armistice, as with Russia's infringements of its neighbours' sovereignty in Chechnya, Georgia, Crimea and Donbas. At some point, perhaps after one more forceful Ukrainian drive eastwards, there must come a different effort, to encourage the parties to agree a peace. Recent deals on wheat exports and prisoner exchanges show there are channels in place.

That will mean a new challenge. The world of compromises, plebiscites, borders and guarantees may be less dramatic than that of guns, bombs, tanks and drums. But it has to be the world of the future. It has to presage the rebuilding of Ukraine. There is no conceivable interest in reviving the horrors of nuclear conflict between east and west just because one Russian ruler took leave of his senses.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist
-

2022.09.23 - Around the world

- [Iran Mahsa Amini death must be investigated, says president, as protests grow](#)
- [Tehran Iran blocks capital's internet access as Amini protests grow](#)
- [CNN Iran leader shuns interview over refusal to wear headscarf](#)

[Iran](#)

Iran president says death in custody of Mahsa Amini must be investigated

Ebrahim Raisi says he has contacted Kurdish woman's family but laments western double standards on human rights



A barricade is set up in Tehran, Iran, on Wednesday, in protest at the death of Mahsa Amini last week. Photograph: EPA

[Patrick Wintour](#) in New York and agencies

Fri 23 Sep 2022 05.58 EDTFirst published on Thu 22 Sep 2022 21.50 EDT

The death in custody in [Iran](#) of a Kurdish woman that led to widespread protests must be "steadfastly" investigated, Iran's president has said, as he lamented what he claimed were western "double standards" on human rights.

Ebrahim Raisi told a news conference on the sidelines of the UN general assembly in New York that the death of Mahsa Amini while in the custody

of Iran's morality police "must certainly be investigated".

"I contacted her family at the very first opportunity and I assured them we would continue steadfastly to investigate that incident ... Our utmost preoccupation is the safeguarding of the rights of every citizen."

Of Amini's death, he said authorities were doing what they needed to do and that responsibility now lay in the hands of the judiciary. He claimed the initial coroner's investigations into the death of Amini showed she died from heart failure or a brain stroke, and not a physical beating by the morality police.

But he said: "If her death was due to negligence, it will definitely be investigated, and I promise to follow up on the issue regardless of whether the international forums take a stand or not."

Protesters reject the state's conclusions, pointing to reports that officers beat Amini's head with a baton and banged her head against one of their vehicles.

At least 36 people are feared by rights groups to have died in six days of protests, sparked by the death on 16 September of the 22-year-old Kurdish woman.

On Thursday, protesters torched police stations and vehicles in several cities, and Iran [shut off the internet](#) in parts of Tehran and Kurdistan, and blocked access to platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp, in an attempt to curb a growing protest movement. Iranian women have taken to the streets and the internet to burn their headscarves and cut their hair.

Amini was [detained](#) for allegedly wearing a hijab headscarf in an "improper" way. Activists said the woman, whose Kurdish first name is Jhina, had suffered a fatal blow to the head, a claim denied by officials, who have announced an investigation. Police continue to maintain she died of natural causes, but her family suspect she was subjected to beating and torture.



The president of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, speaks at a press conference in New York on Thursday. Photograph: Bebeto Matthews/AP

Raisi, a former hardline head of the judiciary accused of sending hundreds to their death in the past, said Iran would not tolerate “acts of chaos”, referring to the six nights of protests over her killing, but said his country accepted lawful protest.

The judiciary has ordered the courts to take a tough line with protesters, claiming the protests are now being led by foreign agents and stirred by anti-Iranian social media, a familiar regime accusation when dissent breaks out.

He sought to turn the tables on the country he was visiting by asking about police shootings in the US. “Did all these deaths get investigated?” he asked.

“Every day, in different countries, including the United States, we see men and women dying in police encounters, but there is no sensitivity about the cause and dealing with this violence,” he added.

The scope of Iran’s ongoing unrest, the worst in several years, still remains unclear as protesters in more than 12 cities – venting anger over social repression and the country’s mounting crises – continue to encounter security and paramilitary forces. The Iranian army said on Friday it would

“confront the enemies” to ensure security, the toughest warning yet to the protesters.

Raisi, who addressed the general assembly formally on Wednesday, said bad things happened to people at the hands of authorities everywhere, making vague references to the US and the UK. He called for the “same standard” around the world in dealing with such deaths at the hands of authorities.

Raisi’s comparison reflects a common approach by Iranian leaders, who when confronted with accusations of rights violations often point to western society and its “hegemony” and demand that those nations similarly be held accountable.

The protests have grown into an open challenge to the government, with some Iranians calling for the downfall of the Islamic Republic itself. They are the most serious demonstrations since 2019, when protests erupted over a government hike in the price of gasoline.

While not outright condemning the protests, Raisi said: “What is occurring, having demonstrations ... of course these are normal and fully accepted ... We must differentiate between demonstrators and vandalism. Demonstrations are good for expressing specific issues.”

The US imposed sanctions on the morality police and leaders of other Iranian security agencies on Thursday, saying they “routinely employ violence to suppress peaceful protesters”. US officials promised to take further measures in the coming days.

Erfan Mortezaei, Amini’s cousin, told the IranWire website that the dead woman’s family were still under pressure to publicly back the regime’s version of events: namely that she did not die because of head injuries sustained in custody, but from complications from a historic brain surgery.

At the weekend Mahsa’s nephew Arkan, 17, was taken into custody. He was released on Thursday morning on a 500m toman (US\$16,000) bail. The judiciary told the family it was because he had gone to the offices of a news

agency based in the city, presumably intending to speak to them about his aunt.

“The goal of this pressure,” Erfan said, “is to obtain a forced statement from Mahsa’s family in view of stopping the nationwide protests.”

Nasser Kanani, the spokesperson of the Islamic Republic’s ministry of foreign affairs, wrote in a tweet without referring to the nationwide protests in Iran: “The real violators of human rights do not have the necessary moral competence to comment on human rights.”

In an index of the scale of the riots the mayor of Tehran, Alireza Zakani, claimed damage had been inflicted on 43 buses, 54 bus stations and 23 fire engines.

The protests have no organised leadership and although the focus initially has been on the right of women not to wear the hijab in public or be harassed by the morality police, there have been broader calls for freedom, or overthrow of the regime.

Iranian officials have been trying to drive a wedge into popular support for the protests by emphasising its anti-Iranian violence.

US-based human rights groups had been trying to serve a writ on Raisi on behalf of former political prisoners including [Kylie Moore-Gilbert](#), the British-Australian dual national kept in jail for two years.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/23/iran-protests-2022-mahsa-amini-president-ebrahim-raisi-says-kurdish-woman-death-in-custody-must-be-investigated>

[Rights and freedomIran](#)

Iran blocks capital's internet access as Amini protests grow

Social media platforms have also been cut off in areas of Tehran and Kurdistan as videos of dissent go viral

Anti-regime protests intensify after death of Mahsa Amini in Iran – video

Supported by



[About this content](#)

[Weronika Strzyńska and agencies](#)

Thu 22 Sep 2022 08.08 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 00.27 EDT

Iran has shut off the internet in parts of Tehran and Kurdistan, and blocked access to platforms such as Instagram and [WhatsApp](#), in an attempt to curb a growing protest movement that has relied on social media to document dissent.

The protests, which were sparked on 16 September after the death of a 22-year-old Kurdish woman in police custody, show no sign of subsiding. On Thursday, protesters torched police stations and vehicles in several cities.

This comes as anti-regime demonstrations spilled into cyberspace, with videos of women burning their hijabs going viral. Other women have been posting emotional videos in which they [cut their hair in protest](#) under the hashtag #Mahsa_Amini.

Mahsa Amini was [detained on 16 September](#) for allegedly wearing a hijab headscarf in an “improper” way. Activists said the woman, whose Kurdish first name is Jhina, had suffered a fatal blow to the head, a claim denied by officials, who have announced an investigation. Police continue to maintain that she died of natural causes, but her family suspect that she was subjected to beating and torture.

In response to her death, the US placed Iran’s morality police on its sanctions blacklist on Thursday.

The US Treasury said the morality police were “responsible” for Amini’s death as it announced the sanctions “for abuse and violence against Iranian women and the violation of the rights of peaceful Iranian protesters”.

Iranian state media reported that by Wednesday street rallies had spread to 15 cities, with police using teargas and making arrests to disperse crowds of up to 1,000 people.

In southern Iran, video footage purportedly from Wednesday showed demonstrators setting fire to a gigantic picture on the side of a building of general Qassem Soleimani, the revered Revolutionary Guards commander, who was killed in a 2020 US strike in Iraq.

Demonstrators hurled stones at security forces, set fire to police vehicles and bins and chanted anti-government slogans, the official Irna news agency said.

On Thursday, Iranian media said three militiamen “mobilised to deal with rioters” were stabbed or shot dead in the north-western city of Tabriz, the

central city of Qazvin and Mashhad in the north-east of the country.

A fourth member of the security forces died in the southern city of Shiraz, Iranian news agencies reported, adding that a protester was stabbed to death in Qazvin, adding to six protester deaths already announced by officials.

The Iranian authorities have denied any involvement in the deaths of protesters.



Protesters flooding a street in Tehran. Photograph: EPA

Amnesty International said it had recorded the deaths of eight people – six men, one woman and a child – with four shot by security forces at close range with metal pellets.

The protests are among the most serious in Iran since November 2019 unrest over fuel price rises.

“The internet shutdowns must be understood as an extension of the violence and repression that is happening in physical space,” said Azadeh Akbari, a researcher of cybersurveillance at the University of Twente, in the Netherlands. “Social media is existential to the mobilisation of protesters, not only to coordinate gatherings but also to amplify acts of resistance.

“You see a woman standing without her hijab in front of the anti-insurgency police, which is very courageous. If a video of this comes out, it’s suddenly not just one person doing this, women in all the different cities are doing the same.”

“Women, life, freedom”, the words which could be heard at Amini’s funeral, have been repeated by protesters across the country, including in a [video which shows young women burning their hijabs](#) while male protesters fight off security forces. The video has received over 30,000 views on Twitter.



A woman cuts off her ponytail in front of Iran's embassy in Istanbul, Turkey. Fuelled by social media, anger has spread to cities across the world.
Photograph: Erdem Şahin/EPA

In a different video, [an Iranian woman sings a hymn to fallen youth as she cuts her hair with household scissors](#), which has amassed more than 60,000 views.

“[The videos] are a hundred percent valuable,” one young Twitter user from Iran told the Guardian, adding that while the protests had not reached her home town, she had been able to participate in opposition activity online. “I am sad that my compatriots in other parts of Iran have come to the streets

and are fighting against this regime for all our rights. And I can't do anything except share information online."

She added that videos showing police brutality towards protesters were motivating people in different cities to take action.

"It is very difficult for the regime to control the videos coming out. Many people don't post them on social media, but circulate them within WhatsApp groups, etc. The demonstrations are happening simultaneously in cyberspace and in the physical space."

Social media has long been one of the key tools for anti-regime activity, as public spaces are closely policed by security forces. "Platforms like Instagram became the virtual street, where we can gather to protest, because it was not possible to do that in real life," said Shaghayegh Norouzi, an Iranian campaigner against gender-based violence who has been living in exile in Spain.

Norouzi said that while she had been able to keep in touch with activists in Tehran, she was afraid of future internet blackouts and what they could mean for the safety of activists.

"During the last protests [2017-2019], the government cut off internet for days at a time. During that time, protesters were killed and arrested," she said. "Protesters are also using the internet to organise themselves. They can call each other and say when they are in danger or warn each other."

Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard Corps called on the judiciary to prosecute "those who spread false news and rumours" in a statement published on Thursday.

Amini's death came amid a governmental crackdown on women's rights. On 15 August, Iran's hardline president, [Ebrahim Raisi](#), signed a decree which, among other measures, increased the punishment for women posting anti-hijab content online.

Speaking at a briefing with some western reporters on the sidelines of the UN general assembly, Raisi said the circumstances of Amini's death were

under investigation.

The early signs from the investigation showed there had been no beatings or violence that led to her death, he said. “All signs point to a heart attack or brain stroke,” he said, but he stressed “that is not the final determination”.

He said deaths by police violence had occurred hundreds of times in the US, and also in the UK.

Akbari said that at the same time as targeting women’s rights, the Iranian government was tightening its cyber-regime. She fears that continued internet blackouts could be used to facilitate an expansion of the Iranian national internet, which is cut off from the rest of the world.

“This is a very dangerous plan, which would see the regime completely cut off Iran from the global internet in the near future,” she said. “This would allow the regime to control cyberspace along with policing the physical space, and develop an all-pervasive machinery of control.”

Additional reporting by Patrick Wintour in New York

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/22/iran-blocks-capitals-internet-access-as-amini-protests-grow>

Ebrahim Raisi

Iran leader shuns Christiane Amanpour interview over refusal to wear headscarf

President Ebrahim Raisi had been scheduled to talk in New York to veteran CNN correspondent, who was widely praised for her stance



President Ebrahim Raisi of Iran addresses the United Nations general assembly in New York this week. Photograph: Lev Radin/Pacific Press/Rex/Shutterstock

[Maya Yang](#) and [Patrick Wintour](#) in New York

Thu 22 Sep 2022 13.07 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 00.29 EDT

Iran's president, [Ebrahim Raisi](#), has cancelled an interview in New York with the veteran CNN correspondent Christiane Amanpour after she refused to wear a headscarf at his request.

In a series of tweets, the chief international anchor of CNN said that she had been scheduled to meet Raisi on the sidelines of the United Nations general assembly, and had planned to ask him about various topics, including the outbreak of protests in [Iran](#) following the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, 22, who was arrested and beaten by “morality police” for violating headscarf laws.

“This was going to be President Raisi’s first ever interview on US soil, during his visit to NY for UNGA. After weeks of planning and eight hours of setting up translation equipment, lights and cameras, we were ready. But no sign of President Raisi,” Amanpour [tweeted](#) on Thursday.

Forty minutes after the interview was scheduled to begin, an aide approached Amanpour and told her that Raisi was “suggesting [she] wear a headscarf, because it’s the holy months of Muharram and Safar”, she wrote.

Amanpour said she declined the request, explaining that “we are in New York, where there is no law or tradition regarding headscarves”. She added that no other Iranian president has required that she wear a headscarf when she interviewed them outside Iran.



Christiane Amanpour: ‘We are in New York, where there is no law or tradition regarding headscarves.’ Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The

Guardian

“The aide made it clear that the interview would not happen if I did not wear a headscarf. He said it was ‘a matter of respect’, and referred to ‘the situation in Iran’ – alluding to the protests sweeping the country,” Amanpour said.

“Again, I said that I couldn’t agree to this unprecedeted and unexpected condition.”

As a result, Amanpour and her team walked away and the interview did not take place. A picture Amanpour posted at the end of her tweets showed her wearing a white suit while sitting across from an empty chair as she awaited the Iranian president, her hair uncovered.

And so we walked away. The interview didn’t happen. As protests continue in Iran and people are being killed, it would have been an important moment to speak with President Raisi. 7/7
pic.twitter.com/kMFyQY99Zh

— Christiane Amanpour (@amanpour) [September 22, 2022](#)

The British-Iranian journalist’s refusal to wear a headscarf was met with widespread praise online.

“Good for @amanpour. The days in which Iranian officials require female reporters and officials to wear the hejab in order to get interviews and meetings should be over. Forced hejab reflects an antiquated and intolerant ideology not a culture,” [tweeted](#) Karim Sadjadpour, an Iranian-American policy analyst at the Carnegie Endowment, a DC-based thinktank.

The NPR radio host Esther Ciammachilli retweeted Amanpour’s photo, [writing](#), “What they mean when they say, ‘A picture is worth a thousand words.’ Christiane Amanpour’s integrity is fully intact.”

Bahman Kalbasi, the New York and UN correspondent for BBC’s Persian Service, echoed similar sentiments, [tweeting](#): “Raisi doesn’t show up to interview with CNN after Christiane Amanpour refuses to put on regime’s

hijab. Iran regime's president seems to think he can impose the hijab in NYC too. [#MahsaAmini](#)."



A protester in New York City holds a picture of Mahsa Amini, who died in police custody in Iran. Photograph: Caitlin Ochs/Reuters

Raisi was repeatedly asked about Amini's death during a briefing with reporters on Thursday morning which Iranian officials initially tried to confine to the subject of negotiations over Iran's nuclear deal with the west.

Raisi repeated official claims that Amini had died from a heart attack or stroke while in custody and said similar deaths in custody had occurred in the US and UK.

At least three women who attended the briefing were not wearing headscarves. One New York Times reporter was barred from the briefing for reporting that Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was seriously ill.

In a statement released Thursday, a New York Times spokesperson said: "Iranian state media has reported comments made by an official that a New York Times correspondent must 'admit a mistake' in her coverage of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in order to attend a press conference with President Raisi."

“We stand by our reporting by Farnaz Fassihi on the health of Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, which was corroborated by senior sources. Iranian officials were given the opportunity to comment on our story and chose not to respond,” the spokesperson added.

At least 31 people have died in six days of protests since Amini’s death. Iranian women have been taking to the streets and the internet to burn their headscarves and cut their hair.

“A law that tramples on human dignity isn’t a normal law,” said one female protester.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/22/christiane-amanpour-ebrahim-riasi-headscarf-interview-iran>

Headlines

- [Live GP leaders say Thérèse Coffey's NHS plan will make 'no tangible difference'](#)
- [GPs No sanctions if doctors miss two-week target, health secretary suggests](#)
- [Jobs Kwasi Kwarteng to shrink part-time work benefits to grow labour supply](#)
- [Liz Truss Striking union members should 'get back to work', says PM](#)

[**Politics live with Andrew Sparrow**](#)[**Politics**](#)

National insurance increase will be reversed from 6 November, says Kwasi Kwarteng – as it happened

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2022/sep/22/liz-truss-therese-coffey-gps-nhs-health-uk-politics-live>

GPs

No sanctions if GPs miss two-week target, health secretary suggests

Thérèse Coffey describes new goal for offering patient an appointment as ‘expectation’ not guarantee

- [Politics live – latest updates](#)



The health secretary, Thérèse Coffey, said ministers were still working on an NHS workforce plan. Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

*Aubrey Allegretti Political correspondent
@breeallegretti*

Thu 22 Sep 2022 04.45 EDT Last modified on Thu 22 Sep 2022 13.40 EDT

GPs who fail to offer an appointment to patients within two weeks will not face any sanctions, the health secretary has suggested.

Thérèse Coffey said the new target, announced as part of an effort to [tackle the growing crisis](#) within the NHS, was an “expectation” rather than a guarantee.

She said the [number of GPs](#) remained “pretty stable” despite a parliamentary report warning [about 700 had quit](#) since the 2019 general election, and admitted the government was “still working” on a long-awaited workforce plan for tackling staff shortages across the health service.

Coffey defended the “our plan for patients” strategy, which she is [due to announce formally](#) to MPs on Thursday.

Pressed repeatedly on what patients could do if their GP did not offer them an appointment within a fortnight, Coffey told LBC radio that they could switch practice and said more phone lines would be “opened up to help people get through”.

It was up to the GP and patient whether appointments should be in person or via a phone or video call, Coffey said.

“I know that, throughout the pandemic, there’s been a variety of ways that people have interacted with seeing their GP,” she said. “I’m not going to be overly prescriptive.”

“I know that some people enjoy just having a phone call but may need to go in and see the doctor. I know that other patients are very keen in that regard.”

She said more than half of practices were meeting the expectations she had set but added that she was not “intending to take a league table approach”.

After the Guardian revealed the government’s obesity strategy [could be axed](#) as part of a wider crackdown on “red tape”, Coffey said she was not intending to make an announcement about the policy.

However, she said she was looking at the effectiveness of health policies pursued by Boris Johnson’s government and “doing an internal summary” of

them, declining to comment when pressed on whether she [supported the sugar tax](#).

Coffey signalled that the prime minister, Liz Truss, wanted to take a new approach to the economy by “unlocking regulation” and making growth the main focus.

Asked why cabinet ministers who served in previous governments – including Truss, Coffey and the chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng – had not pursued tax cuts more ardently given they were now pressing ahead with them, the health secretary said all Conservative administrations had been focused on “fiscal discipline”.

[Sign up to First Edition](#)

[Free daily newsletter](#)

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

She told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: “We are a sound Conservative government and we will be delivering in a Conservative way. But also recognising we are not prepared to just have managed decline but to focus on growth.”

Labour said the [Conservatives](#) could not be trusted to solve the crisis in the NHS.

Wes Streeting, the shadow health secretary, said: “Maybe after 12 years, expecting the Conservatives to fix the crisis in the [NHS](#) is a bit like expecting the arsonist to put out the fire they created.

“It’s not going to happen. The longer we give them in power, the longer patients will wait.”

He added: “I can’t believe after 12 years in government, the health secretary is presenting a two-week wait to see a GP as some great news for patients. When we were in government, we guaranteed GP appointments within two days.”

Streeting said “unless we recruit significant numbers” of [new doctors and nurses](#), “we’re not going to be able to bring those waiting times down”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/sep/22/therese-coffey-two-week-gp-appointment-target-no-sanctions>

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

Benefits

Kwasi Kwarteng to shrink part-time work benefits to grow labour supply

New UK chancellor aims to reverse inactivity in labour market, especially among over-50s



Under Kwasi Kwarteng's plans, benefit claimants working up to 15 hours a week will have to take steps to raise their earnings or lose benefits.
Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

*[Jessica Elgot](#) Chief political correspondent
[@jessicaelgot](#)*

Wed 21 Sep 2022 18.50 EDT Last modified on Thu 22 Sep 2022 13.10 EDT

Kwasi Kwarteng will tighten benefit rules for part-time workers, requiring them to work longer hours or take steps to increase their earnings.

The new rule will require benefit claimants working up to 15 hours a week to take new steps to increase their earnings or face having their benefits

reduced. The current threshold is nine hours, though it was increased this summer to 12 hours, which will come into force next week.

The further increase, expected to be implemented from January 2023, will affect only a small additional number of those on universal credit, about 120,000 people out of about 5.5 million claiming the benefit.

But the move is intended to signal a new offensive by the Treasury to fill job vacancies, with many industries facing chronic shortages.

Kwarteng will also announce new support to get over-50s into work, after a sharp increase in economic inactivity in that age group since the Covid-19 pandemic, with a significant number citing stress or mental health reasons.

The Treasury has found that economic inactivity in the over-50s is contributing significantly to shortages in the jobs market, one of the key issues driving up inflation.

“Our jobs market is remarkably resilient, but it is not perfect,” Kwarteng said in advance of the announcement. “While unemployment is at its lowest rate for nearly 50 years, the high number of vacancies that still exist and inactivity in the labour market is limiting economic growth.

“These gradual changes focus on getting people back into work and maximising the hours people take on to help grow the economy and raise living standards for all. It boosts incomes for families and helps businesses get the domestic workers they need, all while supporting economic growth.”

The changes will be announced at Kwarteng’s mini-budget on Friday, along with a slew of other measures including significant tax cuts and further details of the energy package to support households and businesses with bills.

Benefit claimants working up to 15 hours a week on the national living wage must now meet regularly with their work coach and take active steps to increase their earnings or face having their benefits reduced.

Sign up to First Edition

Free daily newsletter

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Work coaches will require the claimants to make commitments such as applying for jobs, attending interviews or increasing their hours.

Chloe Smith, the work and pensions secretary, said the aim was to address labour market shortages and helping people on lower incomes to increase their pay.

The changes will be UK-wide and certain groups will remain exempt from sanctions, including people who are unable to work due to long-term sickness or a disability.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/sep/21/kwasi-kwarteng-to-shrink-part-time-work-benefits-to-grow-labour-supply>.

Liz Truss

Striking union members should ‘get back to work’, says Liz Truss

PM maintains pledge to bring in measures limiting industrial action but denies planning to rip up EU rules on workers’ rights



Union members at 14 train operating companies, including Avanti West Coast, are due to go on strike at the beginning of October. Photograph: Andy Gibson/Alamy

[Pippa Crerar](#) in New York

[@PippaCrerar](#)

Wed 21 Sep 2022 17.30 EDT

Liz Truss has told striking workers to “get back to work” as she doubled down on her pledge to bring in measures to limit industrial action within weeks of coming to power.

The prime minister suggested that a planned wave of strikes by workers ranging from train drivers to barristers, risked holding the country back during the toughest economic climate in a generation.

The belligerent approach to the issue amid the cost of living crisis, which has led to increased pay demands, will further antagonise trade unions that have already launched legal proceedings against new strike-breaking regulations.

Tensions rose further on Tuesday [when rail workers announced plans to strike](#) on the eve of the Conservative party conference in Birmingham next month, with Britain facing a wave of coordinated industrial action from other sectors this autumn.

Truss, in the US on her first foreign trip as prime minister, was asked whether she was still committed to bringing in measures to limit industrial action within 30 days of coming to power, after the plan was derailed by the mourning period for the Queen.

“We are committed to bringing in legislation for minimum service levels on rail as soon as possible,” she said, before admitting that the deadline may have to be pushed back to as late as the end of November.

The prime minister added: “My message is: I want this country to be successful. And that means people being able to get to work. People being able to get on with their business, people being able to move projects forward.

“So I would encourage rail workers to get back to work. There’s no doubt we’re facing tough times as a country; I want to take a constructive approach with the unions, but I would tell them to get back to work.”

The chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, and the business secretary, Jacob Rees-Mogg, have also repeatedly promised action to weaken unions’ power.

Eleven trade unions, led by the Trades Union Congress (TUC), have sought permission for a judicial review of new laws allowing companies to use

agency workers to break strikes – legislation they argue is a “broad daylight” attack on the right to take industrial action.

[Sign up to First Edition](#)

[Free daily newsletter](#)

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Truss denied she was planning to rip up EU regulations that protect workers’ rights, such as the limit on hours in the working week and the minimum number of holiday days, as her government tries to make the UK more competitive and boost growth.

“What we’re talking about is having the right regulations for Britain,” she told reporters. “That isn’t about removing workers’ rights and holiday days. But there are a number of the EU regulations that are not working for Britain and that we need to do things differently.”

She added: “In 2016, people voted to leave the EU. It’s now 2022. What I have pledged is that by the end of 2023, all those EU rules will be off the statute books and we will have our own rules.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/sep/21/unions-workers-strikes-industrial-action-liz-truss>

2022.09.22 - Spotlight

- [Divine comedy The standup double act who turned to the priesthood](#)
- [Short menus, local produce, no tablecloth How to choose a restaurant and help save the planet](#)
- [World Cup 2022 Migrant workers in Qatar left in debt after being ordered home before tournament starts](#)
- [Welcome to the First Blokes club! What can Hugh O'Leary expect as the prime minister's husband?](#)

Divine comedy: the standup double act who turned to the priesthood

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/22/divine-comedy-standup-double-act-who-turned-to-priesthood-christianity>.

Advertisement

US edition

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

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Food](#)

Short menus, local produce, no tablecloth: how to choose a restaurant and help save the planet



Nell's Pizza in Manchester – doggie bags are encouraged. Photograph: PR

Restaurants can be horribly wasteful places or they can be impressively green – here is how to tell the difference

[Tony Naylor](#)

Thu 22 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 22 Sep 2022 15.43 EDT

The doors of good restaurants frequently display stickers from guidebooks such as Michelin or the Good [Food](#) Guide. It is far less common to spot anything that proclaims their green credentials. Even venues making positive moves on sustainability can be coy about flagging it, for fear of boring people.

Consequently, diners who are keen to make better choices for the planet in where and how they eat lack direction. You need to know how to decode a restaurant and its menu, spotting the tell-tale signs of a progressive operation. What marks out a greener restaurant and what should we order when we get there? How, as customers, can we embrace that change?



A chef adds the finishing touch to a dish at Maray, Liverpool, which is powered by green energy. Photograph: PR

Do a little digging

It will seem archaic to those swiping through dishes on TikTok and Instagram, but a restaurant website will, in a few clicks, yield useful intel easily missed on social media. You might find out, for example, that a

restaurant uses green energy ([Maray](#) in Liverpool), or upholsters its chairs in the pineapple-skin leather alternative, Pinatex ([Pizza Pilgrim's](#) eco test-site at Selfridges, London).

Some schemes do exist to ethically audit restaurants. It may only currently cover [3,000](#) of the UK's near [90,000](#) restaurants, cafes and takeaways, but the Sustainable Restaurant Association's Food Made Good star ratings are available at [foodmadegood.org](#). [Living Wage Foundation](#)-accredited hospitality venues (sustainability includes people, too, right?), can also be browsed by region at [livingwage.org.uk](#). One such restaurant, Manchester's Open Kitchen, is, says its founder, Corin Bell, proof that "you can run a business without killing the planet or treating people badly".

Menu (and portion) size matters

Think about the style of the restaurant. Broadly, the larger the menu the more food waste it will likely generate. According to the campaigning charity WRAP, 21% of the £3.2bn of food wasted annually in UK hospitality comes from ingredient spoilage. "A la carte restaurants walk a tightrope between selling out [of dishes] and having excess thrown away. It is rare they know how many people are going to turn up, what they will order and when," says chef [Alex Rushmer](#).

Choose a restaurant with a shorter menu and you curb that tendency. Choose one with a set menu, like Rushmer's plant-based [Vanderlyle](#) in Cambridge, and the kitchen should produce minimal waste.

Some [research](#) suggests larger menus encourage over-ordering, with food going uneaten ([plate-waste](#) constitutes 34% of binned restaurant food). Carbs such as chips, bread and rice, baked beans on full breakfasts and frou-frou salad garnishes on sandwiches, are often left. Simply serving smaller portions, says WRAP, can lead to significant waste reduction.

"Be mindful of servers who push you towards more food than you can eat," warns Sustainable Restaurant Association managing director, Juliane Caillouette Noble. If you do over-order, don't be shy about asking to take leftovers home.

Manchester's Common bar switched from a brunchy menu ("Loads of burgers. Avocado-use was insane," says the owner, Jonny Heyes), to serving its meat-minimal Nell's Pizza. One reason was because pizza – and these run to a whopping 22in - is a dish that: "If people don't finish it, give them a box and they'll take it home. There's not many products people would do that with."

No-shows are not on

Kitchens order according to predicted numbers of (booked) diners and every no-show, as well as being financially damaging, is likely to result in more fresh ingredients thrown away.



Douglas McMaster, chef-owner of Silo in London, where the menu is projected on to a wall to save paper – part of its zero-waste mission.
Photograph: Nick Howe

Save paper, embrace technology

Years ago, when restaurants started putting menus and wine lists on tablet computers, it seemed gimmicky. Mid-2020, clunky online ordering systems had people crying into their (empty, socially-distanced) pints. But the pandemic urgency to improve that technology means it is now frequently

seamless to access a menu via QR code and order on your phone – rather than, particularly in food halls, multiple venues printing endless paper menus.

Even ordering face-to-face, do you need a paper menu? In country pubs, chalkboard menus pre-date the climate crisis. At [Silo](#), a “zero-waste” London restaurant, the menu is projected on to the wall. “It works like a dream and uses less energy than a few lightbulbs,” says chef-owner Douglas McMaster.

At [Apricity](#), in London, owner Chantelle Nicholson has encountered “some pushback” after asking guests to look at the menu on their phones (a larger tablet is available for customers who find that easier). But having moved the menu online to save paper, Nicholson has been struck by how it allows the kitchen to quickly update the menu, minimising waste. Rather than being held to a menu printed for that service, she says: “If we have three pork belly portions left, we can sell these, then switch to another dish.”

At the other end of the meal, Maray has dispensed with paper bills and receipts because the thermal paper used to print them is not ordinarily recyclable. Diners view the bill on a handheld terminal and are emailed a receipt.



Carrot tartare, slow-cooked egg yolk, Thai aromatics, fried shallot and coriander at Alex Rushmer's restaurant Vanderlyle, Cambridge. Photograph: PR

Rethinking creature comforts

The absence of tablecloths is not just a question of style. It removes, says Rushmer, an “overlooked” contributor to a restaurant’s carbon footprint. “It’s common for laundry to be collected by a dedicated company, washed, starched, pressed, potentially wrapped in single-use plastic and delivered back.”

Going further, Cardiff’s Kindle restaurant has nixed napkins which, says co-owner Deb Lewis, are “invariably” left untouched, but “must be laundered regardless”. Like throwing away disposable paper napkins, that felt wasteful. A stash is held for messy dishes, emergencies or guests who really need one, but, says Lewis, after some initial “shock and horror”, most diners accept the no-napkin policy.

Despite being an entirely alfresco venue, Kindle does not use outdoor heaters, either. Many restaurants will follow suit this winter due to rising energy prices. “Heating the outdoors is a losing, unsustainable battle,” says Lewis. Diners are offered blankets and hot water bottles. If need be, regulars wear big coats: “We’ve had people turn up in ski suits. It’s all part of the experience.”

Upcycled, reusable spaces

From refurbished furniture and bars built from scaffolding planks (Café Spice Namasté, London) to [lampshades](#) created from the fungus mycelium (Silo), a growing minority of restaurants are building green principles into their interior design. Apricity and [Kindle](#) are so-called restorative or regenerative builds, meaning everything, from Kindle’s motion-sensor LED lights to the wool insulation in the kitchen (built into a former park warden’s cottage), can be removed and re-used.

Learning to decode a menu

Pickling and fermenting is not just a hipster fad. When playing “amateur sleuth” online, chef Matthew Pennington, co-owner of the Ethicurean, near Bristol, sees references to preserving techniques on menus as a sign of good habits. The kitchen that pickles excess produce in summer is, in winter, says Pennington, “less likely to order out-of-season kit from leagues away. It shows they take care in minimising waste.”



Restorative design at Apricity in Mayfair, London, Chantelle Nicholson's zero-waste restaurant. Photograph: Karen Robinson/The Guardian

Does the menu set vegetables in the foreground? Kindle aims for 70% veggie dishes. Are low-impact wild meats used? For example, [Forestry England](#) is urging people to eat [wild venison](#). It must cull exploding deer numbers for environmental reasons and otherwise, what it describes as, “arguably the UK’s most sustainable meat”, will go to waste, a spokesperson says.

It is pretty rare on menus, but you could make a similar case for British, RSPCA Assured [rose veal](#), which is produced to higher welfare standards than its EU equivalent. The RSPCA says: “Sadly, the vast majority of unwanted dairy bull calves are shot at birth as there isn’t currently enough of a market for all of them to be reared as veal.”

A good menu should also be transparent and verifiable. Where fish and seafood are offered, does the menu include the Marine Stewardship Council [MSC] [blue eco-label](#)? Are suppliers named? Are claims to nose-to-tail, root-to-shoot, fin-to-gill cooking backed up by visible instances of such cooking? Does the menu include, for example, no-waste pesto made from carrot tops, potato and Jerusalem artichoke peel crisps, or seasonings of salted spring onion ash?

Sourcing and what it says about a restaurant

Given how little transport contributes to food's carbon footprint, particularly that of the most emission-generating foods such as red meat or dairy, the "eat local" mantra is [outdated](#). What you eat and how it was produced matters more than where it came from (caveat: sustainability is complex, there are always exceptions).

However, restaurants that grow their own or rely on a few small, regional suppliers are usually set up that way because the chef wants to use heritage ingredients cultivated using regenerative, low-impact or organic farming methods. It is a sign of good intentions, even if the head chef is primarily concerned with flavour and ingredient quality, rather than the planet.

What should you eat?

Vegetables, as [repeated studies](#) have shown. But non-vegans can change how they order in meaningful ways. To take pressure off stocks, George Clark, the MSC programme director, urges diners to eat seafood other than the popular big five: cod, haddock, salmon, tuna, prawns.

He recommends (in summer) Cornish sardines and herring as replacements for salmon and tuna in sushi, or hake and coley as "versatile" alternatives to cod and haddock. Look for restaurants embracing that advice. UK and Irish [mussels](#), adds Clark, are "low-impact, carbon sequesterers" that, particularly when rope-grown, "positively impact the environment and marine ecosystem".

Rather than awkwardly quizzing your waiter, consulting the [Marine Conservation Society's \[MCS\]](#) Good Fish Guide app is a useful way to stay up to date with which seafood to avoid. Its red list includes European eel which, says Jack Clarke, the MCS sustainable seafood advocate, “is often found on fine dining menus but is more endangered than a panda”.

Eating prime cuts of chicken, pork, lamb and beef (listed in ascending order of their [greenhouse gas emissions](#), according to Our World In Data analysis), leaves a lot of squidgy offal potentially uneaten. One [German study](#) suggested that eating more heart, liver and kidney could reduce livestock emissions by 14%, as fewer animals would need to be reared overall.

Such eco-conscious dining may require a gastronomic leap of faith. Kindle’s barbecued lamb heart with smoked breast meat, fermented red cabbage, triple-cooked lamb-fat fries, chilli, garlic and mint sauce, is, admits Lewis, “pushing boundaries”. Offal always is. Equally, it contains “all the flavours people know from a great kebab”.



Making Rum Punch at the Alchemist, where discarded citrus peel is made into marmalade to flavour cocktails. Photograph: PR

Booze without a planet-sized hangover?

If you cannot stick to tap water, drink local pints. [Packaging](#) beer in glass bottles or cans and moving that heavy liquid long distances is a relatively significant contributor to its overall carbon footprint (even before you start recycling that packaging), and one that it is fairly easy to address if you drink draught beer. The metal kegs and casks used for draught beer last decades and, if you are drinking locally brewed beer, may travel only a few miles.

Cellar-cooled rather than refrigerated, cask real ales produce less CO2 than lager, according to one [Imperial College London](#) study, while traditional [cider](#) (heat-free fermentation, [British ingredients](#) from [bio-diverse orchards](#)), is often touted as the greenest booze.

Those weighty issues around glass and transport have led to a rise in tap wine, served from recyclable kegs. Simultaneously, so-called low-intervention or natural wines, made from biodynamic or organically farmed grapes (no pesticides, no monoculture soil degradation) have surged in popularity. As Steve Nuttall, founder of the Leeds bar-shop Wayward Wines, puts it, this is “wine made with respect for the land”.

There is now a number of British low-intervention winemakers, such as [Ancre Hill](#), [Tillingham](#) and [Davenport](#). Like the organic, biomass-boiler-powered whisky distillery, [Nc'nean](#), the Scottish carbon-positive pea gin, [Nàdar](#), or [58 and Co](#), which makes a pink gin using renewable energy and “wonky” apples, these brands are pioneering a greener future for booze. Toast Ale, made from surplus bread, regularly appears on menus nationally, and several other breweries are creating beers from potential waste products. [Seven Brothers'](#) Throw Away IPA, brewed in Salford, uses breakfast cereal offcuts from the nearby Kellogg's.

The age of cocktails extravagantly decorated with fruit that often goes uneaten is passing. In December, the [Revolution chain](#) dropped the passion fruit garnish that used to float in its pornstar martini. Now the talk is of closed-loop cocktails which, in cordials, syrups and infused spirits, use every part of the fruit, not just the juice. The bar-restaurant chain, the Alchemist, creates “marmalade” from discarded citrus peel to use in a spritzer and a martini on the brunch menu.

Look out for homemade ingredients, seasonal foraged or preserved garnishes and batched cocktails which – chilled rather than shaken over ice – can decrease the amount of water wasted by bars. We can all drink to that.

Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2022/sep/22/short-menus-local-produce-no-tablecloth-how-to-choose-a-restaurant-and-help-save-the-planet>

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

Rights and freedomQatar

Migrant workers in Qatar left in debt after being ordered home before World Cup starts

Early end to migrants' contracts leaves many owing large sums to recruiters and unable to support their families

[World Cup hotel shields England team from fans – and Qatar's labour abuses](#)



Labourers work on a project to upgrade Doha's Corniche before the World Cup. Thousands are being sent home years before their contract ends.
Photograph: Pete Patisson/The Guardian

Supported by



[About this content](#)

[Pete Pattisson](#) in Doha

Thu 22 Sep 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 23 Sep 2022 00.27 EDT

Thousands of poorly paid migrant workers in Qatar are being forced to return home before the [World Cup](#), leaving many fearing they will be left jobless, unable to support their families and deep in debt.

In some cases, workers say they have been sent back before the end of their contracts or without receiving their full salary or allowances.

The moves to send migrant workers back to their home countries before the beginning of the [Fifa](#) tournament appears to be linked to a government circular, published last year and seen by the Guardian, which ordered some contractors to complete all works by mid-September and prepare a plan for workers' leave that "maximises the reduction in the number of workers in the country" in the run-up to the World Cup.

On the sweeping promenade that skirts the bay in Doha, a red clock in the shape of Qatar's World Cup logo counts down the days until the tournament begins.

When the Guardian visited in the summer, hundreds of migrant workers dressed in blue overalls were working in the stifling humidity to complete a revamp of a popular walkway and the road alongside it, known as the Corniche, which is expected to be a destination for thousands of tourists and football fans once the tournament begins.

The Guardian interviewed 25 labourers employed on the Corniche. Most said they had expected to be in Qatar for two years but were being sent home far sooner – in some cases after just 10 months. Many of those interviewed have now returned to their own countries.

Some workers who spoke to the Guardian said they had not been working long enough to repay the huge sums – equivalent to four or five months' basic salary in Qatar – that they borrowed to pay recruitment agents in their home countries to secure their jobs in Qatar.



A clock on Doha's Corniche counts down the days until the start of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Photograph: Pete Patisson/The Guardian

“We don’t want to go back. We’re poor so we need to work,” said a Nepali worker, who said he had been forced to pay the equivalent of almost £1,000 in illegal recruitment fees to secure the job. “I have not yet paid back the fees. I will be in loss if I’m sent back.”

Others were in a state of confusion, saying they were being sent home but had been told they may be recalled after the World Cup. They are now facing up to six months with no salary while they wait to see if they will be able to return.

All the workers interviewed said they had no choice but to leave. “Many have already been sent and others are on the list. If your name is on the list, you have to go,” said one.

Many blamed the World Cup for the sudden end to their work. “Everyone will be sent back because of the World Cup. It doesn’t matter how long you have been here,” said one. “What can I do? I’m helpless.”

Ansar Ali* said he paid an agent in India 100,000 rupees (£1,050) to secure his job. To afford the fee, he borrowed money at a steep 10% interest rate, but calculated that over two years he could repay the debt and still earn enough to support his wife and two sons.

But only 10 months after arriving in Qatar, he was now expecting to be sent home at any moment. “I don’t know when I’ll be sent, but I know I’ll have to go. Two or three of my friends have already been notified,” he said.

“How will I survive when I go back? How will I pay back my debt?” he asked as he walked to a currency exchange to swap Qatari riyals for Indian rupees.

The workers interviewed by the Guardian are employed by UrbaCon Trading & Contracting Company (UCC) and InfraRoad, both subsidiaries of UCC Holding, on a project to upgrade the Corniche.

Most of the affected workers appear to have been hired on short-term “project visas”, but say they were told they would be employed for at least two years. Letters from InfraRoad offering workers jobs in August 2021 – after the government circular was published – appear to back this up.

The letters promise annual leave and a return air ticket after two years, and require a two-month notice period after two or more years of service.

Some workers blamed recruitment agents in their home countries for falsely promising them a two-year contract. Others said the responsibility lay with the contractor. “It’s the company’s fault because they made the agreement with the agent,” says one.

Research by migrant-rights.org, an organisation that advocates for the rights of migrant workers in the Gulf, uncovered similar cases among workers recently sent back to Nepal by a number of Qatar’s biggest construction companies.

Some workers told migrant-rights.org that they had not received their full salaries, overtime pay or end-of-service benefits. Others said they had been sent home before the end of their contracts.

One, who had worked in Qatar for 12 years, including on a number of World Cup stadiums, said: “How nice it would be for the workers like me to watch the games at the stadiums we ourselves made. But who cares about us? There’s no value for labourers in that country. I feel like the World Cup is an event of and for only rich people.”

May Romanos, Gulf researcher at Amnesty International, said: “It is crucial for the Qatari government to put workers’ rights at the forefront of any decisions and ensure that the very people who made Qatar’s dream to host this World Cup possible do not face further abuses and violations as a result.”

In a statement, a Qatari official said there was no government requirement for companies to repatriate employees or reduce their workforce before the World Cup.

“Any independent measures by companies to reduce their workforce must be taken in accordance with the law and must not adversely impact the wellbeing of employees,” it said.

The statement also said employment law allowed employers and employees to terminate a contract before the end of its term as long as they adhered to the legal notice period. Foreign workers have the right to change jobs if their

contract is terminated and legal procedures are in place if an employee does not receive their wages or allowances at the end of their contract, it said.

The Qatari government also said a fund to support workers, including by reimbursing unpaid wages or benefits, had paid out £152.5m by last month.

“Qatar is committed to a fair and effective labour system, and we value the indispensable role of foreign workers in our economy and wider society,” the official added.

UCC Holding did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

** Name has been changed to protect his identity*

[Sign up for a different view with our Global Dispatch newsletter](#) – a roundup of our top stories from around the world, recommended reads, and thoughts from our team on key development and human rights issues, delivered to your inbox every two weeks:

Sign up for Global Dispatch – please check your spam folder for the confirmation email

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/sep/22/migrant-workers-in-qatar-left-in-debt-after-being-ordered-home-before-world-cup-starts>

Advertisement

US edition

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

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Liz Truss](#)

Welcome to the First Blokes club! What can Hugh O'Leary expect as the prime minister's husband?



Keeping in the background ... Liz Truss gives her first speech at Downing Street as PM, watched by her husband, Hugh O'Leary. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Denis Thatcher seemed happy to do nothing but booze and play golf. Jacinda Ardern's fiance throws himself into fishing. How will Liz Truss's spouse cope with being in the spotlight?



[Zoe Williams](#)

[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Thu 22 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 22 Sep 2022 09.38 EDT

Hugh O'Leary recently joined a club – and I'm not sure many of us would envy him. No, it wasn't the "husbands of Liz Truss" club, but the First Guys club or – the New Zealand variant, which I prefer – the First Blokes club: that select but growing band of male partners of heads of government. In many ways, it is less onerous than being a female consort, since certain ancient social prejudices remain: a male partner is not expected to go everywhere with his spouse, at least not until he retires. If O'Leary is still married to a prime minister when he reaches retirement age (he is currently 48), I will eat my hat, your hat and all the hats.

The pair are said to live fairly separate lives – few in the party would even recognise O'Leary, outside the "Greenwich mafia", their local Conservative scene. An unnamed source from Truss's office said they had to give him access to her work diary, otherwise he would never know where she is or when she's coming back.

Nor is a first bloke expected to look any particular way. He can be scruffy or smart, thin or fat, he can cut any which way, which suits most first blokes, except in the case of Markus Räikkönen, the husband of Finland's prime minister, Sanna Marin, whose Instagram feed is like a cry for help: "World! I know it is not fashionable to notice my appearance, but seriously, will you just *look* at me, I'm too handsome for venture capital, I'm too handsome for eco startups."

First ladies, for all the unwanted scrutiny, judgment and idiot requests they get for biscuit recipes, are not just accepted but seen as necessary to the political landscape. But first men tend to slip into an uncomfortable space where all the bigotry that can't be said out loud about the female leader (it mainly boils down to: 'What's she doing there, really? Surely this is unnatural') is mediated instead through the subtle emasculation of her husband. If he isn't a complete man, it follows that she isn't a complete woman, and therefore the universe is at least partially back on its axis.



Vice-president Kamala Harris and second gentleman Douglas Emhoff.
Photograph: Alex G Perez/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

Douglas Emhoff, the husband of Kamala Harris, lawyer and visiting professor at Georgetown Law Center, is known as the first second gentleman, which in three words distills the novelty and aberrance of the

role, and the archaic standards used to judge it. He's the "first", because the vice-president has never been a woman – it's like he's been awarded first prize in a race that should never have been run; he's the "second" because she's the second (to the president), but also he's second to her, so he's like second squared; and he's her "gentleman" because she would have been his lady, had she not decided to be ambitious instead. History doesn't relate whether or not this bugs him, partly because it's much worse on Reddit threads – there, he's the "biggest cuck in America right now". Either way, he's quite a serious character, who keeps his focus on more important things, such as social justice. This is one very useful route for a first guy, first modelled by quantum chemist and professor [Joachim Sauer](#), the second husband of Angela Merkel. Dagmar Seeland, UK correspondent of the German magazine Stern, recalls: "Sauer managed this incredible feat of remaining in the background for 25 years, which was interesting given that he was such an eminent, famous scientist in his own right. It's partly because people like that abhor publicity. They have complicated minds. They see the world in a much more complex way."

O'Leary, who is a finance director at Affinity Global Real Estate, doesn't have the "serious-minded, above the fray" option available to him – say what you like about global real estate, it's definitely not above politics. But there are other ways for first guys to stay behind the scenes without losing their identity, including but not limited to: being rich (Philip May, Denis Thatcher, Sindre Finnes, husband of Norway's erstwhile prime minister Erna Solberg) or being a lovable loafer (Denis again and Clarke Gayford, the fiance of New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern).



New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Ardern and partner Clarke Gayford.
Photograph: David Rowland/EPA

You also need an origin story for the relationship. This is just bald-faced sexism, I'm afraid. A male leader doesn't need a politically relevant meet-cute because it's understood that he would have been reflexively scouting for action wherever he went. Male leaders actually often *do* meet their wives in a political context (Gordon Brown met Sarah on the way to a Scottish Labour conference; Norma met John Major in the 1970 GLC election campaign), but nobody goes on about it. Female leaders, by contrast, are tacitly expected to have met their spouse in a precinct that is both germane (how can she be a serious politician if she's not always at the politics?) and makes her sound fun (how can she be trusted if she doesn't have a human side?). In consequence, it always seems to come together somewhere like a Conservative party disco (the Mays) or a party-conference cocktail party (Truss and O'Leary), even though if you've ever been near such an event, you'll know this to be impossible. They're hell. They smell of hell.

Yet if you met through politics, it follows that you, the man, are also passionate, politically. The problem of relative ambition and success surfaces: the first guy has to slip effortlessly into the background, even if the fact that he wanted to become a politician in his own right is a matter of public record. O'Leary regularly stands for the local council in Greenwich,

always loses horribly, keeps on canvassing. I think he's just owning his own political failure, here, in a kind of crash-and-burn display: "I'm going to keep going for these very low-stakes roles in which I am more or less guaranteed failure, to indicate that I am not competing with my wife, since we all know who would win." And that's one way of doing it. It's easier for Tory first guys to slip into the background because they just slide into finance and forge their fortunes there. It's basically the same career with more money, per the old saying: Conservatives are always in power, they're just only sometimes in office.

Katie Perrior, May's director of communications, remembers Philip very warmly – "amazing temperament, lovely man" – and says that part of what sustained their relationship is that he never lost his passion for the party, despite having parked his own ambitions within it. "He'd be on the phone banks all night, out delivering leaflets. He didn't invite cameras – it wasn't for show. At one point, as a couple, it was decided that he'd fall behind Theresa, but he's just as political and just as engaged in the Conservative party succeeding."

Famously, Labour stalwart Margaret Beckett's late husband, Leo, only pushed her to stand in Lincoln in the first place (in 1974) because he foresaw defeat in the constituency for Labour, and he wanted someone to keep the seat warm for when the party had better prospects, and he would become the candidate himself. It is pretty impressive how he came back from seeing his own ambitions completely thwarted to become a lifelong helpmeet to her [sterling political career](#).

It shouldn't be problematic for one member of a couple to be more successful than the other in a field that both find appealing. Yet society still abhors a more powerful woman, and enforces this through mass media. If it sounds archaic, it's actually slightly worse. Prof Susan Doran, author of *Monarchy and Matrimony: the Courtships of Elizabeth I*, says: "I think the British are more gender sensitive now, so when we look at the past, we tend to interpret it through gender. In Elizabeth's era, they had a theory of the king's two bodies, which separated the body of the monarch from the political institution. The doublethink was that [had Elizabeth taken a spouse] as the monarch's husband, he would be a subject, and therefore show deference, but in domestic affairs, she would be his wife and normal

relations would be expected.” We’ve maybe lost a bit of that subtlety of mind.



Margaret Thatcher and husband Denis on holiday in Cornwall. Photograph: PA/PA Archive/PA Photos

Perhaps more difficult, as a first bloke, is that female leaders, as well as being picked over for their appearance, are remorselessly sexualised, their character traits expressed through physical objectification, their weaknesses foregrounded as visible in the body. God help them if they actually are attractive, because then all their social behaviours turn into sexual provocations. François Mitterrand famously said of Thatcher that she had “the eyes of Caligula and the mouth of Marilyn Monroe”, which is batshit on its own terms – her mouth resembles Monroe’s only in so far as it is also a mouth – but it stuck because it put her in her place: she was no longer a tough negotiator but a cruel seductress. President Sarkozy went a different way with Chancellor Merkel – “She says she is on a diet and then helps herself to a second helping of cheese” – but the underlying impact is the same: strength recast as weakness via the diffuse but elemental shortcomings of the female form.

Unarguably, the Finnish PM, Marin, has it worse, with coordinated far-right leaks and witch-hunts, abetted by the mainstream tabloid media, to turn

everything she does into a quasi-sexual transgression. She's never photographed dancing, she's always "grinding" or "dancing intimately with glamorous models". There's an expectation that the first guy will be unreactive, characterless, almost invisible – or failing that, slightly delinquent, in the Prince Philip mode: a child of – rather than a man in – the relationship. On the plus side, if a first bloke gets cheated on, it's done and nobody ever mentions it again: Truss's 2006 affair with the MP Mark Field was a huge problem for her with the Norfolk Tory Taliban, but never attached itself as a slight to O'Leary. This is a baffling double standard: if a first lady gets cheated on, it's her fault for ever, either for failing to keep him or failing to dump him, or very often both.

Same-sex couples ... well, Matthew Barrett isn't technically a first bloke, since he hasn't married Leo Varadkar, although the former taoiseach's championing of the campaign for the right of gay couples to marry in Ireland makes the pair the patron saints of wedlock. In Luxembourg, the prime minister, Xavier Bettel, and his husband, Gauthier Destenay, never had this hyper-sexual yet prurient interest taken in them. "Nobody cared," says one Luxemburger journalist, who did not wish to be named. "For a country so conservative, it was somehow surprising. My theory: for Benelux standards we were late to the party. Belgium and the Netherlands had had high-profile gay politicians before. Plus, Bettel conformed to traditional marriage values. And in a small country, people tend to let the private be private."

Gayford, despite some ruthless but quite random takedowns in the New Zealand press (one journalist doesn't like the "flourish of the 'e' in Clarke"), is the role model I'd choose, were I O'Leary. A bit of a himbo, maybe, who initially made his name on a reality TV show, he met Ardern through a constituency issue (the Government Communications Security Bureau Amendment bill – political meet-cute!). She got pregnant days before assuming office as PM in 2018, announcing the news: "I'll be PM & a mum while Clarke will be 'first man of fishing' & stay at home dad." They got engaged in 2019 but aren't yet married, because of Covid. Even though he makes a perfectly legitimate living presenting a fishing programme, the fishing is always presented, including by him, as the ultimate hobby, which is a common way to neutralise any perceived threat from the first bloke.



Theresa May and husband Philip on the day she resigned in 2019.
Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

Possibly the most aggravating trope in this whole clam-bake is that, while any female consort is routinely presented as manipulating and conniving in petty ways, male partners are assumed to be much more influential svengali figures, their deciding influence over their spouse constantly intuited, all her decisions traced back to his personal interests. An example: May must have launched airstrikes against Syria to further Philip's investment interests in BAE Systems. Would I prefer that no one had arms dealer interests anywhere near the mother of parliaments? Sure. But it seems improbable that she would be that bent. Margaret Thatcher, product of an earlier time, was so keenly aware of this risk that the popular caricature of Denis – lit up like the Commonwealth half the time, playing golf the other half – as popularised in Private Eye's Dear Bill column, was deliberately devised by the Thatchers and Bill Deedes, one-time editor of the Telegraph, in order to defang him. And there is something about these pursuits – golf, fishing – that is deeply evocative of the slow-paced, solitary man, highly unlikely to be plotting anything.

O'Leary can take comfort from the fact that this prime ministership is in for a such a wild ride from external factors that, one, nobody will be combing over the first guy, and two, even if they do, it won't be for very long. For as

long as his term in not-office lasts, there is a medium-length line of role models who went before him –background, shadowy creatures who were probably nothing like as interested in golf as they made out to be.

This article was amended on 22 September 2022 to clarify that Liz Truss and other political leaders mentioned are heads of “government”, not of “state”. It was also amended on the same date to state that Leo Varadkar is the former taoiseach, not president of Ireland, and that he wasn’t in office in 2015 when the referendum to legalise gay marriage was passed.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/sep/22/welcome-to-the-first-blokes-club-what-can-hugh-oleary-expect-as-the-prime-ministers-husband>

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

2022.09.22 - Opinion

- True crime makes us believe we are certain about people like Adnan Syed. We should be ashamed
- Say goodbye to the ‘tiger mom’. Welcome to the school of jellyfish parenting
- ‘Everything is broken because of 12 years of Tory government’ – why can’t Starmer just say it?
- I spent an afternoon writing my own name. It was lovely until I started overthinking it

OpinionSerial

True crime makes us believe we are certain about people like Adnan Syed. We should be ashamed

[Amelia Tait](#)



His release from prison has not proved his innocence or guilt – but it has highlighted how we are all guilty of pretending we know more than we do



‘True crime invites us to speculate, score points and take sides.’ Adnan Syed after a judge overturned his conviction and ordered a new trial. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Thu 22 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 22 Sep 2022 03.03 EDT

I know for certain whether [Adnan Syed was guilty](#). Syed, who has just had his conviction overturned after serving almost 23 years for the 1999 murder of his ex-girlfriend Hae Min Lee, once said that only he and her murderer could be 100% certain whether Syed was innocent – but nope, sorry, I know. I’ve listened to [Serial](#) – the 2014 podcast that popularised Syed’s case – twice. I’ve spent countless hours on Reddit forums dedicated to everything the podcast missed. I’ve spotted telling remarks made in telling tones. I have read the doodled diary extracts of a strangled teenage girl. I know whether Syed is a murderer. Get rid of judges, juries and executioners: replace them with me.

I’m being facetious, obviously – there’s a reason I haven’t told you whether I’m so sure of Syed’s innocence or of his guilt. This is because I know, logically, that the certainty that surges in my chest is no such thing at all. *Obviously* I don’t know whether Syed committed murder more than two decades ago; *obviously* I don’t know whether he was framed by corrupt detectives at the Baltimore Police Department. I am just one of 340 million listeners, and about as geographically and temporally removed from the case

as it's possible to be. But still, I am certain – and I'm troubled by that, and troubled by other people's certainty too.

True crime invites us to speculate, score points and take sides. I have watched the internet divide itself into “guilters” and “innocenters” who gleefully call each other deluded and celebrate like sports fans when a new piece of evidence benefits their “team”. Huge swaths of people spend their days cosplaying as detectives, digging into strangers’ lives, reading their diaries, even driving past their houses. And so many of them – like me – are so, *so* certain that they’ve got it right. So many of them are unwilling to admit that they actually know very little at all.

Syed’s conviction was vacated on 19 September because the state failed to share exculpatory evidence about two potential suspects that could have helped his defence at trial (this is known as a Brady violation). Syed has been placed on home detention. The 41-year-old was not released from prison because he has been found innocent – rather, investigators are awaiting the results of DNA analysis before deciding whether to seek a new trial. What has been proved, however, is that Syed’s conviction was wrongful and his rights were violated – the state was “morally compelled to take affirmative action”, as it had “lost confidence in the integrity of the conviction”.

Whether or not there is another trial, it is possible that there will never be a smoking (or smokeless) gun in this case. The identity of the killer may be one of those things that the wider world can never know for certain – Serial host Sarah Koenig recently told the New York Times that, “there was no way” for the show’s producers “to say definitively what happened”. Instead, Koenig said: “What we were pointing out in our story was that the timeline of the case and the evidence in the case had serious problems …

“This kid goes to prison for life at 18, based on a story that wasn’t accurate. That’s what we wanted people to think about: even setting aside the question of Adnan’s guilt or innocence, are we OK with a system that operates like that?”

Of course, no one wants to “set aside the question of Adnan’s guilt or innocence” – no one ever has. When Serial first aired, some listeners were [disappointed](#) that the final episode didn’t feature a shocking, spine-tingling revelation that could put the case to bed. Instead, it was a story about the failures and flaws of the US justice system – booo-ring! For many, it was far more fun to don a deerstalker and spend the next eight years becoming so, so certain about whether Syed did or didn’t do it.

Frankly, we should all be ashamed. This isn’t a game – the people we are talking about aren’t characters on TV. Addressing the court before Syed’s conviction was overturned, Hae Min Lee’s brother, Young Lee, said: “This is not a podcast for me. It’s real life that will never end. It’s been 20-plus years. It’s a nightmare.”

Serial paved the way for countless true crime podcasts and documentaries, and while Koenig stopped short of declaring whodunnit, other producers have been less scrupulous. I remember a sickening feeling creeping over me when I listened to a podcast on a friend’s recommendation shortly after finishing Serial. The host authoritatively declared in the final episode that the person at the heart of the case had indeed committed the crime – they made a big, grand show about a moment they sensed they were speaking to a murderer. But we can’t sense anything. Our hunches are just hunches. As ProPublica reporter Pamela Colloff [has pointed out](#): these are the same biases that lead to wrongful convictions in the first place.

Can true crime thrive without inviting viewers to speculate? Probably not. The genre invites us to be entitled – it welcomes us with warm arms to the worst moments of other people’s lives. But as viewers and listeners, we must resist certainty – we must resist black and white thinking and confident declarations of innocence and guilt. We should accept that we are just spectators; that we know very little at all. If we don’t – if we continue to belittle each other, stalk strangers and leave arrogant comments about our instincts – then we must accept that the only guilt that we can be certain of is our own.

- Amelia Tait is a freelance features writer

- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/22>true-crime-adnan-syed-serial-prison>

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

OpinionParents and parenting

Say goodbye to the ‘tiger mom’. Welcome to the school of jellyfish parenting

[Emma Brockes](#)



We talk about identifying our children’s ‘passions’, yet it’s really all about early investments in human capital. Time to change tack



In New York, if you want your child to swim, read music, or have exposure to a second language before high school, you have to pay for it yourself.'

Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Thu 22 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 22 Sep 2022 12.43 EDT

It was the violin practice, in the end, that broke me. I hung on, last year, through clashing after-school activities entailing frantic cab rides between venues so we were never there on time. I sucked up complaints from my children who would have rather been at home. I put down amazing amounts of money to furnish them with useful skills (official rationalisation) and (actual case) avoid having to watch them in the playground. "This is a hostile environment," I muttered after the first day of term, as 500 kids converged on the park near the school. The mum standing next to me looked around in alarm. "Oh, sorry. I just meant I guess I didn't miss it." And then, two weeks ago, I quit everything cold.

A lot has been written about parental overinvestment in extracurricular activities, and the anxiety that underpins it. Happiness isn't strictly the goal. We can talk about enabling our children by helping them identify their passions – such a wily phrase – but under the age of about 10, what we're really referring to is competitive advantage. "Passions" in children at this age are largely transient, cultivated and massaged by parents. Left to themselves, my children's passions are playing Roblox, watching Henry

Danger and writing each other spiteful little notes. How is any of that going to help them when all the jobs become AI?

None of this would matter, perhaps, if the cost was less acute. Americans invented the term “tiger mom” – dads get off free in this scenario – to describe the overbearing parent who burnishes their five-year-old’s CV, a dynamic you can drift into without ever fully meaning to. In New York, where I live, if you want your child to swim, read music, or have exposure to a second language before high school, you have to pay for it yourself, and the sticker price can run into thousands. Demand for services is so high that even getting them into a programme requires Darwinian skills. You need an alert on your calendar for the second a good swimming class opens, at which point you’ll refresh the page until you lock down your place. My children are seven-year-olds. You would think they were trying out for the Olympics.

A result of this feverishness is to change the colour of the experience, both for parents and children. It raises the unhappy spectre of investment return. If I am simultaneously bankrupting and killing myself to make karate happen for one child, uptown, at 4pm, and French, downtown, for the other, I want to see results. Fun is an inadequate metric. I want to see badges, certificates, league tables. I want some kind of externalised measure of success.

The business model for child activity centres in the city understands and exploits this intuitively. Martial arts, swimming and, notoriously, gymnastics programmes are tailored to fan the flames of parental vanity. If your child shows even a hint of ability, they are earmarked as “talented” – be still your parental heart – and invited for “squad training” and the privilege of paying many extra hundreds of dollars a month. It’s a more expensive version of why we slogged through Duke of Edinburgh all those years ago, weeks of our life we’ll never get back.

The cost of living crisis on both sides of the Atlantic may force a rethink on all this, where stressed-out children has not. For us, it has been a combination of both. My daughter didn’t want to practise violin. I wheedled and pressured. I told her it was supposed to be hard, and she might take a while to improve. To my shame, I reminded her it was costing \$75 an hour.

On the brink of uttering the immortal line, “You’ll thank me when you’re older,” I had a sudden, seditious thought. What if we didn’t do this? The child who likes piano can keep up with that, but why force the other one to learn violin? What was this compulsion to furnish them with a suite of accomplishments like tiny Regency ladies in a Jane Austen novel? Why not needlepoint?

We quit violin. (Take the feeling you get when someone cancels a dinner and quadruple it.) We opted out of taekwondo (initial enthusiasm, followed by endless weekly foot-dragging). We’re about to exit dance (loved it, then didn’t love it). I put it into Google: “What’s the opposite of a tiger?” Google suggests jellyfish. Jellyfish parenting – boneless, diaphanous, endlessly flexible. I’m almost there. There’s a climbing wall near our house and a few weeks ago, one of my children shot up it like a pro. Obviously, I put her in for team try-outs – there’s only so much I can do with my personality – but if she gets in and doesn’t like it, we’ll do the wildest thing. We’ll quit.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/22/tiger-mom-jellyfish-parenting-children>

[**Opinion**](#)[**Politics**](#)

‘Everything is broken because of 12 years of Tory government’ – why can’t Starmer just say it?

[Zoe Williams](#)



Ahead of party conference, the talk is of singing the national anthem. But that’s Labour, always fighting yesterday’s battles



'For Keir Starmer, who styles himself as a practical politician, choosing an enemy and hammering that home seems both too binary and too rhetorical.'

Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK Parliament/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 22 Sep 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 22 Sep 2022 08.30 EDT

There's no through line to this era of Conservatism. It unfolds randomly like prog rock, ear-bleeding thrash straight after a flute solo. First, their only agenda was to reduce the deficit, then they were all about levelling up, now they want to increase the deficit and stop levelling up, and what they say doesn't really matter, because it doesn't happen anyway. Very often they deliver the exact opposite, and you have to conclude that the real agenda was to sever the links between language and meaning, cause and effect, promise and outcome.

What they cannot escape, however, is the passage of time. Twelve years have now gone by, and it would be time-consuming and complicatedly disrespectful to recap how much hardship, how much lasting damage they have caused. They can and will start culture wars to plug the rhetorical gaps, but on the material realities facing most Britons, they have only one option: a narrative of impotence. The UK is poorer because the good times couldn't last for ever; energy is more expensive because of unavoidable exogenous shocks; inflation is high because of energy; interest rates are high because of inflation; look over there, Germany is having a right time of it too. We're in

decline because so is the world. Any line other than this would require them to take some responsibility, which would interrupt their messaging that they “got the big calls right”.

Labour needs to focus on how not to get pulled into the vortex. It is fabulously bad at avoiding other people’s narratives. The internal conversations ahead of its conference next week are about whether to launch with the national anthem – the reasoning being that royalism is at an all time high and now is the perfect time to draw in those elusive socially conservative, economically socialist voters without whom all hope is lost. It is a damn fool idea, playing God Save the King, an open invitation to hecklers which will then become the story. If no one heckles, that too will be a story. (“Call yourselves the party of equality? You can’t even muster the energy to object to your aristocratic overlords.”)

The bigger problem, though, is that they’re always putting out yesterday’s fires, dealing with the concerns of last year’s focus groups. This drags them irresistibly into the Tory narrative, that we’re mired in a broken system. To make matters worse, this decline narrative is the left’s comfort zone, and the obvious alternative – vague, high-minded visions of a brighter, better future – won’t cut it, having been tainted by the boosterish drivel of the departing Boris Johnson.

To escape the mire of decline, they first have to make the coherent case linking Conservative decisions, past and present, to current conditions. Ambulances take hours to arrive because of policy; schools are facing bankruptcy, parents are going hungry to feed their children, social care is on its knees, maternity services are unsafe – all the decay you can see is a direct consequence of governmental choices. This is uncomfortable for Keir Starmer, who styles himself as a problem solver, a practical politician; choosing an enemy and hammering that home seems both too binary and too rhetorical to someone who’d rather concentrate on outcomes than theories. But it’s fundamental, if we want to regain any sense of agency and control, to insist on this. What we’re facing this autumn is not a “perfect storm”, because it’s not an act of God; it’s much more workmanlike, an act of Conservative governments, and only by constantly reinforcing that can you

hope to persuade anyone that life under a different government would be better.

They also have to reject the prevailing idea that external factors will simply resolve over time, and there's nothing to do about the short-term pain except grin and bear it. The idea that Vladimir Putin, at some indeterminate point in the sunlit future, will halt his war and reopen his gas pipelines, bringing energy prices back down and a return to normality, has a Johnson-esque optimism (vague, a bit shaky), but more importantly, misses an opportunity. There has never been a better time to move decisively away from fossil fuels and towards renewables; there has never been a better time for green investment than when carbon has priced itself out of the market; there has never been a riper time to make the argument that climate must take priority; there has never been a more stagnant time, waiting for a second Industrial Revolution.

Finally, they need to drop the hand-wringing: “How could all these individual privations happen, in the sixth largest economy in the world?” This is a constant mantra in Labour circles, they've been saying it since the UK was the world's fourth largest economy, and it's meaningless. There is no point measuring your GDP relative to other nations' if you're not asking who's got the money and what they're spending it on. The wider case is that the putative “normal” UK that the new prime minister hopes to get us back to was itself unequal to the point of widespread hardship and economic self-sabotage. A Labour government should not strive to take us back to 2015, when the [Conservatives](#) had only done half their damage and there were only half as many food banks. It should not be chasing growth just for a seat at the world's big-economy table. It needs new metaphors, new hymns; God might save the King, but only we can save ourselves.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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

OpinionBooks

I spent an afternoon writing my own name. It was lovely until I started overthinking it

[Adrian Chiles](#)



Who'd have thought that signing 2,000 books could be so relaxing?



'I started worrying my signature was losing definition.' Photograph: miguelangelortega/Getty Images

Thu 22 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT

I wrote my own name 2,000 times on Tuesday afternoon. An odd experience, to be sure. I got through two and a half brand new Sharpies. This was at a book distribution centre in an enormous warehouse near Didcot in Oxfordshire. I can't bear writers who use columns to plug their books but mine's called [The Good Drinker](#) and it'll be available in all good bookshops, blah, blah, very soon.

So here I was facing a massive stack of them, all of which needed signing. "That's half of them," said a genial bloke called Steve, who was looking after us. We got stuck in. On my left, a nice woman from my publisher opened the book at the appropriate page and slid it in front of me to sign and pass it on to a younger woman from the publisher to my right, who passed it to another chap to put in a box. We were soon getting through them at a pace that earned us the praise of Steve, who also commended me on the legibility of my signature, which was nice.

The young woman to my right, doing the passing to the packer, was a highly qualified university graduate. I asked her if this was what she had had in mind when she went into publishing. She told me it wasn't. The colleague to my left showed her experience by presenting the books to me at a pleasing angle, convenient for signing.

It all became, for me anyway, a deeply meditative process. Anyone with ADHD will tell you what relief there is to be found in the paradise of complete absorption. I'd only experienced anything comparable to this in motorcycling, language learning and stacking logs. Problems only arose when I started worrying my signature was losing definition. Overthinking the matter, I got what cricketers call the yips, when the bowler suddenly can't release the ball. The ability to write my own name temporarily deserted me. But I soon got back in the zone for the zen-like calm to return. When I was done, I motorbiked the hour and a half home. What a beautiful day.

Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/22/i-spent-an-afternoon-writing-my-own-name-it-was-lovely-until-i-started-overthinking-it>

2022.09.22 - Around the world

- [Agriculture Small number of huge companies dominate global food chain, study finds](#)
- [China Influencer Lipstick King reappears, months after Tiananmen ‘tank cake’ row](#)
- [Horn of Africa Drought puts 3.6m children at risk of dropping out of school](#)
- [Colombia Leader’s promise of ‘total peace’ may prove too ambitious](#)
- [Denmark Scandals dent trust in leadership contender Søren Pape Poulsen](#)

Food & drink industry

Small number of huge companies dominate global food chain, study finds

Two firms control 40% of global commercial seed market, compared with 10 companies 25 years ago, ETC Group says



Syngenta is majority owned by the Chinese government through Sinochem and ChemChina. Photograph: Arnd Wiegmann/Reuters

[Fiona Harvey](#) Environment correspondent

Thu 22 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 22 Sep 2022 01.11 EDT

The dominance of a small number of big companies over the global food chain is increasing, aided by the rising use of “big data” and artificial intelligence, new research has found.

Only two companies control 40% of the global commercial seed market, compared with 10 companies controlling the same proportion of the market 25 years ago, according to the ETC Group, an eco-justice organisation.

Agricultural commodity trading is similarly concentrated, with 10 commodity traders in 2020 dominating a market worth half a trillion dollars.

Food prices have risen sharply in recent months, after the disruptions caused by the Ukraine war, and the continuing impacts of the Covid pandemic, sending the profits of key commodity traders and grain producers soaring.

Chinese companies are also coming to the fore, [according to the ETC Group's latest 141-page report](#) published on Thursday. The Chinese state-owned company Cofco is now the world's second-biggest agricultural commodity trader, behind only Cargill of the US, with sales in 2020 of just over \$100bn (£89bn), compared with \$134bn for Cargill.

The next biggest trader, Archer-Daniels-Midland, had sales of \$64bn in 2020, according to the latest data on which the report is based.

Syngenta, the seed, pesticides and biotech company, is now majority owned by the Chinese government through Sinochem and ChemChina. The group controlled about a quarter of the global market in agricultural chemicals in 2020, with \$15bn in sales, far greater than its nearest rivals Bayer and BASF.

Two of the other Top 10 agrochemicals companies are also Chinese, as is the seventh big synthetic fertiliser company, Sinofert.

ETC also pointed to increasing interest from the Middle East. The report found: "In 2020, the sale of 45% of one of the world's largest commodity firms, Louis Dreyfus, to a state-owned holding company in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates signals that cash-rich countries are positioning to climate-proof food security via offshore food production with little consideration for sustainability or the notion of regional food self-reliance."

Jim Thomas, of ETC Group, said the increasing market dominance of a small number of companies was concerning, particularly at a time of high and rising food prices, a gathering climate crisis and biodiversity crisis. "Power over the global food system is being concentrated in a very small number of hands, and we should be concerned about that," he said.

He added that increasing digitisation was also working to consolidate that power further, by making it possible for companies to avoid transparency, automate transactions and influence consumer demand. He also warned that agricultural workers were in danger of being thrown off the land as robotic technology began to be used in an increasing number of countries.

Sign up to First Edition

Free daily newsletter

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

“We uncovered a vast digital restructuring of the commercial food system, including AI, robots, drones, blockchains,” he said. “Concerns include manipulating customers, taking decision-making away from farmers, replacing and algorithmically controlling food chain workers, and the climate costs of the data use.”

Food companies argue that their use of such technology makes for far greater efficiency, enabling them to use less of valuable resources such as water, fertiliser and pesticides, and streamlining operations to reduce costs for consumers.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/sep/22/small-number-of-huge-companies-dominate-global-food-chain-study-finds>

[China](#)

China's Lipstick King reappears, months after Tiananmen 'tank cake' row

Celebrity livestreamer Li Jiaqi returns to screen after nearly four months of silence following a broadcast showcasing a tank-shaped dessert



Li Jiaqi at an import expo in Shanghai, China, in 2020. The celebrity shopping livestreamer has appeared briefly online after his feed was abruptly cut in early June. Photograph: Top Photo Corporation/Rex/Shutterstock

*Helen Davidson in Taipei
@heldavidson*

Thu 22 Sep 2022 00.08 EDT Last modified on Thu 22 Sep 2022 00.32 EDT

China's leading shopping livestreamer, Li Jiaqi, has returned to online commerce platforms almost four months after his feed was suddenly cut,

which viewers suspected was linked to the errant appearance of [a tank-shaped cake](#).

Li, [also known as the Lipstick King](#) for his ability to move huge amounts of product on his sales channels, briefly appeared on Alibaba Group's Taobao marketplace on Tuesday evening.

The two-hour appearance was unannounced but word quickly spread online about his return. From 7pm to 9pm the audience reportedly grew from about 100,000 to more than 50 million. Sitting alongside co-anchor Wang Wang, Li appeared more subdued than usual as he promoted a range of basic items including mobile phone holders, sneakers and cleaning products.

He began by welcoming viewers and thanking them for their support, urging them to spend “rationally”, before quickly moving on to the sales portion of the broadcast.

“I feel like he is not opened up,” one commenter remarked. “They looked very cautious,” said another. “It’s so sad!”

Few comments discussed his disappearance but some made references suggesting a general air of caution. After one person asked: “What happened to Li Jiaqi?” Another replied: “It’s not his fault, but it’s better not to know. Who knows the inside story of his disappearance, and why did he return? Please give me more details, please!”

Li hasn't been seen online since 3 June this year, [when his feed was abruptly cut](#). He blamed technical issues but there was rampant speculation among viewers that the stream was deliberately ended by operators after a cake was presented on screen which resembled a military tank. Images of tanks are often used in reference to the Tiananmen Square massacre on 4 June 1989, and the date is highly sensitive in China.



Li Jiaqi, who is known as China's Lipstick King', discusses what looks to be a tank-shaped cake in June.

Photograph: Taobao Live

Discussion of the incident, in which Chinese authorities killed unknown numbers of student protesters in Beijing, is banned, and censorship is so strict that many in [China](#) have little to no knowledge of the event. Ironically, the cutting of Li's stream prompted many viewers to begin searching for the significance of the tank reference at the time. His return appeared to spark similar quests for clarity.

"What happened? I can't find anything on Baidu," one person noted on Tuesday. "Something can't be said, Baidu can't find it."

Li was one of China's top three shopping livestreamers, who have become national celebrities for their abilities to move mountains of products by anchoring broadcasts that resemble higher-tech versions of 1980s and 90s TV shopping channels.

On platforms such as Taobao and Douyin – China's TikTok – billions of dollars are spent on the anchors' interactive livestreams. Livestreaming accounts for 10% of Chinese e-commerce revenue, according to

management consultancy firm McKinsey, and underpins major shopping and sales events.

Li's management agency, Mieone, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Additional reporting by Chi Hui Lin

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/22/chinas-lipstick-king-reappears-months-after-tiananmen-tank-cake-row>

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

Global education

Horn of Africa drought puts 3.6m children at risk of dropping out of school

Experts warn that girls' education will be worst hit, as many families are forced to move away from schools



Girls at school in Toghdeer, Somaliland. Many will be forced into marriage due to the drought. Photograph: Armstrong Kiprotich/Plan International

Global development is supported by



[About this content](#)

[Lizzy Davies](#)

Thu 22 Sep 2022 05.38 EDT Last modified on Thu 22 Sep 2022 06.12 EDT

More than 3.5 million children are at risk of dropping out of school due to the drought in the Horn of [Africa](#), the United Nations has said, amid warnings the crisis could lead to “a lost generation” that misses out on education.

According to new figures shared with the Guardian, Unicef now estimates that 3.6 million children in Kenya, [Somalia](#) and [Ethiopia](#) are in danger of leaving school as a result of the cumulative pressure on households caused by the unrelenting drought.

In a sign of how acute the situation is becoming in many areas, that number has more than tripled – from 1.1 million – in the past six months.

Four consecutive failed rainy seasons [have pushed millions of families to the brink](#), increasing the number of deaths of children from malnutrition and forcing people to flee their homes in search of more resources.

But the drought also threatens to cause another, quieter ripple effect in the three worst-hit countries, said Abhiyan Jung Rana, Unicef’s education

adviser for eastern and southern Africa.

“In the Horn of Africa, there are about 15 million children out of school, including these countries. But the fear is that because of the drought an additional 3.6 million more children will drop out as they’re moving with their parents to different areas away from their school.”

Teachers and activists in [Somaliland](#), an autonomous region of Somalia, say they are already seeing this effect in their classrooms – and it is mainly girls who are leaving.

“When the chips are down, it is always the girls who bear the brunt of the situation,” said Sadia Allin, country director for [Plan International](#), which is working with communities in Somaliland to help them withstand the drought.

“It is very worrying. Education provides immediate physical, psychological, and cognitive protection. For girls, being out of school is disappointing. It is impacting their dreams,” she said.

“When girls feel they are losing that [education], it seems also that they are losing their rights.”

Kiin Farah Hasan, the headteacher of a village school in the Toghdeer region of Somaliland, is praying that this year will be better for the girls at her school. By the end of the last academic year, after two rainy seasons failed, only 31 of the original 56 girls remained.

“Some of the girls got married, some of them moved to other places because their parents migrated from here due to the drought,” she said. “And some of them, their families are poor and have nothing, even getting their livelihoods is hard for them.”

Kiin said she had become used to teaching hungry children. “When we wonder about them being hungry, sometimes we give them a 30-minute break and order food from the market for them to eat, and for some I even cook food in my house and give [it to] them,” she said.



Kiin Farah Hasan, a teacher in Toghdeer, Somaliland, says she is used to teaching hungry pupils and often prepares food for them herself. Photograph: Armstrong Kiprotich/Plan International

A proper school feeding programme, along with a school bus to cover the 3-6 mile (5-10km) journey to school, would enable many of those at risk to stay in education, she said. But the absence of these, combined with the added pressure on household incomes, has stacked the odds against children getting to school.

Kiin said she believed “three or four” of the girls who dropped out had married since leaving school. “Maybe some of them got married by their own will, but that problem really affected me.”

Child marriages [often increase in times of drought](#) or disaster as parents seek to raise extra funds through dowries.

Unicef said it did not expect to see a discernible difference between the sexes in terms of the numbers of children at risk of dropping out, because the displacement of entire families, including boys and girls, was a major factor in their vulnerability.

But Jung Rana said he did expect girls to be less likely to return to school, just as in the aftermath of Covid lockdowns, which in some places coincided

with higher rates of early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and gender-based violence.

"I would foresee something similar happening because, in a sense, schools are closed for them and they're there with their parents or with their families, and these kinds of things would likely be happening more," he said.

He added: "Girls especially are looked on in households to be able to provide the caregiving aspects ... more than boys would be, in terms of taking care of their smaller siblings and taking care of chores around the home or wherever they are. I think, with those conditions, they are more likely not to go back."



Women collect water in Xidhinta in Somaliland. An estimated 13 million people are facing severe hunger in the Horn of Africa as a result of drought, the UN says. Photograph: Daniel Jukes/AP

Speaking from Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, Allin said it was vital that donor countries such as the UK recognised that droughts and other crises could have severe repercussions on girls' education, and provide funding accordingly. Liz Truss, Britain's new prime minister, has in the past declared women and girls to be a priority.

“My message to her and to the world is that education is just such a powerful thing ... and if we don’t provide these girls with the resources that they need to stay in education, it will [mean the] loss of a generation and [be] very costly in the future,” she added.

Unicef estimates that 1.57 million children – roughly equal numbers of girls and boys – are at risk of dropping out of school in Kenya, 1.14 million in [Ethiopia](#) and 900,000 in Somalia, including Somaliland.

It says factors that increase the chances of a child dropping out include the displacement of the family to other villages with limited educational capacity, a lack of school feeding programmes, and parents’ inability to afford essentials such as books and uniforms.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/sep/22/horn-of-africa-drought-puts-36m-children-at-risk-of-dropping-out-of-school>

[Colombia](#)

Colombian leader's promise of 'total peace' may prove too ambitious

Little-known militia groups have surfaced to declare their willingness to strike peace deals – and reap ceasefire rewards



Violence in Colombia has spiked as armed groups scramble to gain strategic advantage ahead of a promised ceasefire. Photograph: Joaquín Sarmiento/AFP/Getty Images

[Megan Janetsky](#) in Bogotá

Thu 22 Sep 2022 05.50 EDT Last modified on Thu 22 Sep 2022 15.06 EDT

The announcement came in a grainy video from the dense jungles of northern [Colombia](#).

A dozen masked men with camouflage uniforms and automatic weapons stand in a cluster, a roaring stream washing over their black combat boots.

“We’re declaring to the government and the Colombian people our will to negotiate,” one man says in a lofty voice. “The Self-Defense Conquistadors of the Sierra Nevada are ready.”

In a tone implying that this is news to be exalted, the militiaman declares that they want to work toward a “stable and long-lasting peace”.

But most Colombians who saw the clip were probably asking themselves a simple question: who are these people?



The Self-Defense Conquistadors of the Sierra Nevada from northern Colombia declared they were ready to negotiate with Gustavo Petro. Photograph: <https://twitter.com/tobymuse/status/1567990708404985856?s=20&t=Z0KhKa9TlPRIRi2rJGheaQ>

The message was a response to a bold promise made by Colombia’s first leftist president, Gustavo Petro, when he took office last month. He declared he would achieve “total peace” in a nation that has been plagued by armed conflict for most of its history.

Perhaps even more ambitious was the way he would go about it. Petro – himself a former member of the now defunct M-19 urban guerrillas – called upon the country’s ever-expanding list of armed groups to join him in a “multilateral ceasefire” and strike peace deals.

But just a month into his administration, his efforts to untangle an elaborate web of armed groups have already had an adverse effect, and observers worry the new leader may have bitten off more than he can chew.

Militias in every nook of the country from long-feared guerrilla armies to little-known factions such as the Self-Defense Conquistadors of the Sierra Nevada have stepped forward to get in on peace talks, hopeful to reap the rewards from a ceasefire.

Chief among those are guerrillas from the National Liberation Army (ELN), which is now set to [restart negotiations](#) in Havana after years of failed talks.

But at the same time, violence has only increased as each armed group scrambles to expand its territory and gain a strategic advantage in the lead-up to potential dialogues. Rates of mass killings, assassinations of human rights activists and attacks on police have all shot up since Petro took office.



Gustavo Petro, president of Colombia, called upon the country's armed groups to join him in a 'multilateral ceasefire'. Photograph: Joaquín Sarmiento/AFP/Getty Images

"This plan for total peace actually caused a major shuffle in the configuration of the conflict," said Beth Dickinson, Colombia analyst with International Crisis Group. "It's really remarkable how significant the

increase in violence has been ... The mere idea of potential negotiations has completely changed the game.”

Observers like Dickinson say it underscores that the road to true peace will be a long one and filled with many hurdles.

Colombia has long struggled to consolidate peace after previous deals with armed groups including rightwing paramilitaries in the 2000's and with its biggest guerrilla force, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc), in 2016.

But failures by previous governments to implement the most recent deal and assume control of large stretches of jungle left by the Farc brought with it a resurgence of violence.

While other big narco gangs and guerrillas moved in on that land, many former Farc combatants grew disillusioned with the peace pact, rearming against the government and joining emerging mafia groups focused on narcotrafficking. More recently, Mexican cartels and Venezuelan gangs have pushed into Colombia, only exacerbating the violence.

Now, if one group demobilizes, there will probably be a slew of smaller gangs waiting in the wings to take what they controlled. For Petro, it creates an ever-expanding puzzle.

In the Pacific port and trafficking hub of Buenaventura, human rights activist Miyela Riascos said her city now had so many warring armed groups that few knew which was in power at any given moment.

“They never stop killing, and right now we’re seeing another peak in the violence,” Riascos said.



Violence has spiked in the Pacific port city of Buenaventura, Colombia, since Petro took office. Photograph: Joaquín Sarmiento/AFP/Getty Images

Violence in her city has shot up in the months since Petro took office, and Riascos was skeptical that the armed groups would actually follow through on their promises.

Yet, for her, the new government still inspires hope.

“It’s really complex, but not impossible because we human beings have the capacity to do harm but also to create,” she said. “It’s worth it to try it without expecting much change, but to try it with the deep desire of wanting total peace.”

Camilo Posso, president of the Bogotá-based thinktank Indepaz, which tracks war and peace in Colombia, said he doubted that such a bold ambition can be realistically achieved in four years.

Yet he also said it could mark an important change in strategy for a country that has historically addressed the armed conflict with militarization as opposed to addressing root causes of conflict such as poverty and lack of opportunity.

And while Colombia is far from total peace, he said, striking deals with bigger militias like ELN guerrillas could create an important “domino effect” in pushing other, smaller groups to demobilize and lower levels of violence.

“The people don’t want war, they don’t want arms, or politics as we know it,” he said. “They want change that will give this society a future. That’s what we want with this project of ‘total peace’: a future.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/22/colombia-gustavo-petro-total-peace>

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

Denmark

Scandals dent trust in Danish leadership contender Søren Pape Poulsen

Conservative People's Party leader takes poll hit after undisclosed meetings and accusations about husband



Søren Pape Poulsen had ranked higher for trustworthiness than prime minister Mette Frederiksen, but now they are neck and neck. Photograph: Martin Sylvest/Ritzau Scanpix/AFP/Getty Images

[Jennifer Rankin](#)

Wed 21 Sep 2022 13.38 EDT Last modified on Wed 21 Sep 2022 15.40 EDT

One of the leading contenders to become Denmark's next prime minister has stumbled in the polls after revelations of undisclosed meetings and accusations that his husband had made up family links to a former president of the Dominican Republic.

Søren Pape Poulsen, the leader of Denmark's Conservative People's Party, announced last week that his marriage was over after it emerged that his husband, Josue Medina Vásquez Poulsen, had no biological relationship to a former president of the Dominican Republic whom he had claimed as an uncle.

Poulsen is also under fire from the governing Social Democrats for undeclared meetings he held as justice minister during a family holiday to the [Dominican Republic](#).

The Conservative leader, who could yet become Denmark's first gay prime minister, has admitted he was wrong to have held meetings in 2018 with government politicians in the Caribbean country without informing or consulting the Danish foreign ministry.

Pape Poulsen also conceded his husband, a national of the Dominican Republic, "has said things that are wrong" and there were "misunderstandings", which he had passed on in "good faith" to others. The statement, published on Facebook earlier this month, came after Danish newspaper Ekstra Bladet reported that his husband was not Jewish but came from a family of strongly committed members of the Christian denomination Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Pape Poulsen had told the Danish parliament and Jewish community leaders that his husband was Jewish, seemingly to burnish his credentials on Jewish affairs. The same paper also reported that Vásquez Poulsen's claim to be a nephew of a former president of the Dominican Republic, Danilo Medina, was incorrect.

The three controversies are a political setback for Pape Poulsen amid growing expectations of snap elections in Denmark.

Social Democrat prime minister [Mette Frederiksen](#) is expected to announce in early October the date for parliamentary elections after pressure from her coalition partners to end the government before its term expires in June 2023.

Casper Dall, political editor at Avisen Denmark, a group of 14 regional newspapers, suggested Pape Poulsen had been found wanting under the political spotlight. “It’s both the lack of transparency and the lack of will to tell the truth and to handle this kind of crisis,” he said.

“Søren Pape Poulsen has been in front of the Conservative party for eight years now and this is actually the first time he has been tested and he has not handled it very well.”

Elisabet Svane, a political analyst at the newspaper Politiken, said the undisclosed meetings were the most serious of the scandals that had damaged him in the polls. “For almost a year, he has been the most popular among Danish politicians … The worst thing for Pape Poulsen is that he came to power because he was (seen as) trustworthy. People liked him, they believed him.

“The minute Søren Pape Poulsen said he wanted to be prime minister, he was in a totally different ball game.”

Since the revelations, Pape Poulsen’s rankings have fallen sharply: only 31% of people rate him as one of Denmark’s most trustworthy political leaders, down from 49% in June, according to a poll published last week for Politiken and Denmark’s TV2. The slide in his score puts him almost neck-and-neck with Frederiksen, who was judged as among the most trustworthy by 32% of respondents.

Sign up to First Edition

Free daily newsletter

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

The incumbent prime minister has gained in recent polls after a disastrous summer, when her government was [excoriated by an official inquiry](#) for making “grossly misleading” statements about the decision to cull its entire farmed population of 15 million mink during a peak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The latest scandals are not the first time Pape Poulsen’s husband has caused him political trouble. In 2018 as justice minister, the Conservative leader made a public apology after his partner was caught drink-driving after a late-night visit to Burger King.

Pape Poulsen met his husband in 2013 in Brussels after a conference where the two clicked over a beer on a sunny June evening, talking about “politics, social models and much more”, according to an account that remains on Pape Poulsen’s official website. Last week he announced their separation: “Josue and I are breaking up … We both agree that our marriage is over and wish each other the best on life’s journey.”

The Social Democrats, which have been piling pressure on Pape Poulsen over the undeclared meetings, are also attacking his tax-cutting economic plan. Poulsen wants to cut personal and corporation taxes, and abolish inheritance tax as part of his pledge to give Danes “greater financial freedom”. The Social Democrats have said the cuts would lead to 40,000 public-sector workers losing their jobs.

“The Social Democrats have made a huge negative campaign against the Conservatives’ economic plans,” Dall said. “Those two things – the scandals and the negative campaign, in my point of view – are the reasons for the decline in the polls.”

“The general impression is that Søren Pape Poulsen is under pressure and he has been tested because he is now in this new league where he is aiming for the prime minister’s office.”

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

Headlines tuesday 20 september 2022

- Live Truss's admission talks on trade deal with US have been shelved is 'terrible news for UK economy', Labour says
- Liz Truss No US trade deal on the horizon, admits PM as she flies in for Biden meeting
- Liz Truss PM lands in US to reset 'special relationship' on first foreign trip as leader
- United Nations Ukraine war to take centre stage at general assembly as west and Russia vie for support

[**Politics live with Andrew Sparrow**](#)[**Politics**](#)

Liz Truss says she is prepared to be unpopular as she sets out policies aimed at delivering growth – as it happened

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2022/sep/20/liz-truss-us-trade-deal-shelved-joe-biden-un-labour-economy-uk-politics-latest>

Liz Truss

No US trade deal on the horizon, admits Truss as she flies in for Biden meeting

PM admits talks are not even taking place and plays down hopes from Brexiters that they could start ‘in the short to medium term’



Liz Truss has said that the main focus of her talks with Joe Biden will be global security amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Composite: AP

[Pippa Crerar](#) Political editor

[@PippaCrerar](#)

Tue 20 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 06.38 EDT

Britain may not strike a free trade deal with the US for years, Liz Truss has admitted ahead of her first bilateral meeting with [Joe Biden](#).

The new prime minister conceded that talks were unlikely to start in the “medium term” as she travelled to New York on her first foreign trip since entering Downing Street.

In a move likely to disappoint Brexiters, she downplayed expectations that any trade agreement was imminent amid concerns that overpromising but then failing to get talks off the ground would damage her nascent administration.

On the plane to the US, Truss admitted to reporters: “There aren’t currently any negotiations taking place with the US and I don’t have any expectation that those are going to start in the short to medium term.”

It is the first time the government has conceded there is virtually no chance of getting agreement on an early bilateral trade deal with the US, Britain’s biggest trading partner, despite it being coveted by Brexit supporters as one of the major potential benefits of leaving the EU.

Instead, the new prime minister said her priorities would be joining the trans-Pacific trading partnership of 11 countries, including Australia, Canada and Singapore, as well as striking deals with the Gulf States and India.

She added that her “number one” focus in talks with Biden at the UN on Wednesday would be global security, especially working with the US and European partners to deal with Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Truss’s relations with the US president have already been strained by her [threats as foreign secretary to rip up the post-Brexit trading arrangements in Northern Ireland.](#)

Biden has warned that peace in the region should not be undermined by the row and has been reluctant to strike a trade deal with the UK as a result.

UK officials have tried to decouple the two issues and highlighted mini trade deals signed with individual states, including Indiana and North Carolina, to boost transatlantic trade.

At the White House last year, Boris Johnson’s hopes of an early post-Brexit trade deal were dashed after Biden made clear publicly that it was not on the cards.

The former prime minister was left talking up “solid incremental steps” achieved on trade after the US started allowing imports of UK lamb for the

first time in decades.

In contrast, former president Donald Trump had promised a “massive” trade deal to support Brexit, although Washington insiders had warned he would expect concessions in return.

[Sign up to First Edition](#)

[Free daily newsletter](#)

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

During Truss’s two-day trip to New York, she will hold a series of bilateral meetings with other key leaders including the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, and the French president, Emmanuel Macron.

It will be the first official meeting between the pair since Truss’s comments during the Tory leadership race that the [“jury’s out” over whether Macron was “friend or foe”](#).

In what appeared to be a softening of her stance, Truss told reporters she wanted to have a “constructive” relationship with France, working with Macron on migration, Brexit, energy security and Ukraine.

However, it is understood that the prime minister’s tone simply reflected her wish to be diplomatic on the day of the Queen’s funeral.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/sep/20/no-us-trade-deal-on-the-horizon-admits-truss-as-she-flies-in-for-biden-meeting>.

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

Liz Truss

Liz Truss lands in US to reset ‘special relationship’ on first foreign trip as PM

New PM must win over Joe Biden after threats to rip up Northern Ireland protocol, but will find common ground on Ukraine



Liz Truss will also visit the UN general assembly where she will underline Britain’s long-term commitment to Ukraine. Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

[Pippa Crerar](#) in New York

[@PippaCrerar](#)

Mon 19 Sep 2022 22.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 00.12 EDT

Liz Truss has arrived in the US where she will hold talks with [Joe Biden](#), the US president, on her first foreign trip as UK prime minister.

Relations between the two leaders are already strained by her threats as foreign secretary to [rip up the post-Brexit trading arrangements](#) in Northern Ireland.

Biden has expressed concerns that peace in the province should not be undermined by the Brexit row, and has been reluctant to strike a free trade deal with the UK as a result.

However, the pair are likely to find common ground on pursuing a tough line on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, as well as sharing a hawkish approach to China.

Truss will use her visit to the UN general assembly in New York to underline Britain's long-term commitment to Ukraine and its people with a pledge of at least £2.3bn in military aide next year.

In recent days, Ukraine has made major military gains against Russia, with territory in the east of the country liberated by its armed forces.

The UK is expected to provide more equipment to the country such as the multiple launch rocket system which has helped Ukraine regain more than 3,000 sq km (1,200 sq miles) in recent days.

It is already the second largest military donor to Ukraine after the US, committing £2.3bn in 2022 and providing hundreds of rockets and five air defence systems, as well as training troops.

Ahead of the trip, Truss said: "Ukraine's victories in recent weeks have been inspirational. Time and time again these brave people have defied the doubters and showed what they can do when given the military, economic and political support they need."

"My message to the people of Ukraine is this: the UK will continue to be right behind you every step of the way. Your security is our security."

She will also tell fellow leaders that they must put an end to Putin's economic blackmail by removing all energy dependence on Russia. Earlier this month Russia again closed off the Nord Stream pipeline, with restrictions on supply leading to further spikes in energy prices.

Truss said: "By turning off the taps of Nord Stream gas pipeline, Putin has consigned millions of people in Europe to a colder and more difficult winter.

“Too many lives – in Ukraine, in Europe and around the world – are being manipulated by a dependence on Russian energy. We need to work together to end this once and for all.”

The prime minister wants to use the diplomatic visit to encourage global efforts to stop Russia from profiting off its energy exports while ending energy dependence on authoritarian regimes.

Her most significant bilateral talks, which will define the next two years of the ‘special relationship’, will be with Biden after a planned meeting in Downing Street was rescheduled for Wednesday at the UN.

While there are pre-existing tensions over Brexit between the two leaders, inherited from Boris Johnson’s government, both sides are said to be hoping to improve the relationship amid signs that talks between the UK and the EU will resume over the protracted dispute.

[Sign up to First Edition](#)

[Free daily newsletter](#)

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Labour meanwhile said Truss had been “snubbed” by Biden after their planned meeting prior to the Queen’s funeral did not go ahead.

David Lammy, the shadow foreign secretary who is also flying to New York for bilateral meetings, said she should “bring the UK back in from the cold and begin rebuilding our country’s diplomatic influence”.

He claimed that “12 years of Conservative governments making diplomatic gaffes, announcing plans to break international law, failing to live up to

promises on climate action and cutting international aid” had “damaged relations with the US and left Britain isolated on the global stage”.

Lammy added Truss “urgently needs to wake up to the damage her reckless approach to foreign policy is doing to the UK’s national interest” and said a Labour government would scrap the “lawless” protocol bill and “get back round the table with EU”, as well as restoring the UK’s 0.7% aid target.

After [a meeting between Truss and the Irish prime minister](#), Micheál Martin, on Sunday, both sides were understood to have agreed that there was an opportunity to reset relations between the UK and Ireland, giving hope that talks with Brussels will restart in coming weeks.

During Truss’s two-day trip to New York she will hold a series of bilateral meetings with other leaders including the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen and the French president, Emmanuel Macron.

It will be the first official meeting between the pair since Truss’s comments during the Tory leadership race that the “jury’s out” over whether Macron was “friend or foe”.

She will also address the UN directly in a speech on Wednesday with British officials privately believing that, despite her sometimes stilted delivery, she will get a better reception than Boris Johnson, who last year left diplomats bemused with his ramblings about Kermit the frog.

When she lands back on British soil on Thursday, Truss will be putting the finishing touches to her mini-budget, which is expected to confirm national insurance cuts. Analysis by the IFS on Monday found that the lowest-paid workers stand to gain just 63p a month from the move, while the richest could get back £150 a month.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/sep/20/liz-truss-lands-in-us-to-reset-special-relationship-on-first-foreign-trip-as-pm>

United Nations

Ukraine war to take centre stage at UN as west and Russia vie for support

General assembly is expected to see fresh tussles over future of Ukraine, as well as famine and climate crisis threats in global south



The United Nations general assembly during a special session to pay tribute to Queen Elizabeth II. Photograph: Mike Segar/Reuters

[Julian Borger](#) and [Patrick Wintour](#) in New York

Tue 20 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 10.36 EDT

The UN general assembly summit this week will be dominated by a struggle – between the US and its allies on one side and Russia on the other – for global support over the fate of [Ukraine](#), as the global south fights to stop the conflict from overshadowing the existential threats of famine and the climate crisis.

With a return to fully in-person general debate, presidents and prime ministers will be converging on [New York](#), many of them direct from London, where the diplomacy got under way on the sidelines of the Queen's funeral.

Russia is currently in retreat on the battlefield and in the contest for global hearts and minds over Ukraine's fate. The general assembly voted 101-7 with 19 abstentions to allow the Ukrainian president, [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#), to deliver a prerecorded video address, granting him an exemption from the requirement that speakers should appear in person.

India, a longstanding Moscow ally which has tended to abstain in votes on Ukraine, voted in Zelenskiy's favour. The vote was on the same day that India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, [publicly scolded Vladimir Putin](#), telling him "today's time is not a time for war" when they made a joint appearance at a regional Asia summit in Uzbekistan. Putin said he was aware of Indian "concerns", echoing what he had said the day before [about China](#).

The weeklong session of United Nations general assembly meetings and leaders' speeches begins as mass graves are being discovered after the Russian retreat from the [Ukrainian town of Izium](#).

War crimes are likely to be central in speeches on Wednesday delivered by Zelenskiy and [Joe Biden](#), and the UN security council will convene a ministerial meeting on Thursday morning, chaired by the French foreign minister, Catherine Colonna, focused on accountability for war crimes in Ukraine.

The Russians "should expect that it will not be business as usual when they arrive in New York tomorrow", the US envoy to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said.

"They will be isolated. They will be condemned in the security council, as well as more broadly in the general assembly," [she told CNN](#).

There will be no traditional lunch with ministers from the permanent five members of the security council this year. The Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, is only due to speak on Saturday when most other ministers will have left, so if there is a walkout when Lavrov approaches the lectern, it will have less impact.

Despite broad sympathy at the [United Nations](#) general assembly for Ukraine's plight in the face of the Russian invasion, there has been irritation among developing countries that the focus on the conflict has crowded out discussion and action on parallel food and climate crises that threaten mass displacement and starvation in the global south.

Ukraine has pressed for more resolutions condemning Russia in the security council and general assembly, but Kyiv's western backers have warned of the risk that the diminishing numbers supporting such resolutions might become the story.

"There has been an ebb and flow of interest and engagement from countries not directly affected by Ukraine and so we've had to work hard to make it clear that we're talking about those issues that do affect them in their own right," a European diplomat at the UN said.

On Tuesday, the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, will chair a summit on food security, and US officials have also signalled that Washington is ready to talk about the reform of UN institutions, including the security council.

Western member states will seek to use the food security summit to point out the linkages between the Russian invasion and global food shortages.

"Linking the two where appropriate is useful because it stops Ukraine being seen as a European problem that doesn't really matter," the European diplomat said.

Russia and the west have been locked in a propaganda battle across [Africa](#) over responsibility for the grain shortages caused by the interruption of exports from Ukrainian Black Sea ports.

Lavrov has been touring Africa, portraying Russia as a victim of a western imperialist war while highlighting Russia's role in backing decolonization movements.

In a parallel move to bolster its support at the general assembly, the US has abandoned its noncommittal position on the reform of UN institutions like the security council to make them more representative.

Speaking about reforming the council, the US assistant secretary for international organization affairs, [Michele Sison](#), said on Friday: "We do not believe the United States should defend an outdated status quo."

"While we're clear-eyed about the obstacles to security council reform, we will make a serious call for countries to forge consensus around credible, realistic proposals for the way forward," Sison said. "To remain credible into the 21st century, the council needs to better reflect global realities and incorporate regional perspectives."

As there are competing plans for changing the membership of the security council, all of which will be vetoed by Russia and [China](#), the change in US position is unlikely to lead to any concrete reforms. It is aimed primarily at further isolating Moscow and Beijing as guardians of the status quo.

This article was downloaded by [calibre](#) from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/20/united-nations-ukraine-russia-war-climate-crisis-famine-global-south>

2022.09.20 - Spotlight

- [Whitney Houston and nuclear secrets Trump's DJ role exposes security flaws](#)
- [Mar-a-Lago The lax security of Trump's alternative 'White House' – visualized](#)
- ['It's a midlife crisis on steroids!' Jackass's Steve-O on ageing, addiction and planning a face tattoo](#)
- [Were you a 'parentified child'? What happens when children have to behave like adults](#)

[**Donald Trump**](#)

80s hits and nuclear secrets: security concerns plague Trump's Mar-a-Lago

Thousands of sensitive documents lay nearby as Trump was spinning the Village People in Mar-a-Lago's not so private club



Donald Trump played Elton John and the Village People's YMCA for patrons of Mar-a-Lago. Photograph: Lynne Sladky/AP



[Julian Borger](#)

Tue 20 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 21 Sep 2022 00.08 EDT

At a certain point in an average evening at [Mar-a-Lago](#), the lights go down and the volume goes up, as the proprietor and former president of the United States turns DJ for the night.

A member of the Mar-a-Lago private club said that following a period of withdrawal after his election defeat, [Donald Trump](#) has in recent months assumed the role of social ringmaster, deciding to bring a disco vibe to the Palm Beach resort after dark.

“At about 9.30pm every night, he’s sitting at his table, whether on the patio or inside, and they bring a laptop over and he starts picking songs, and he starts being a DJ for the night, but it’s sort of funny because he picks like the same 10 songs every night,” the club member said.

The Trump playlist is of a certain era, when he was a regular clubber in New York. The signature tune is the Village People’s YMCA, alongside The Greatest Love of All by Whitney Houston, and a few Elton John numbers.



A bar area and room inside the Mar-a-Lago estate. Photograph: Zuma Press Inc/Alamy

“Sometimes he dances to it,” the club member said. “He will be at his table and he’ll dance while sitting.”

Towards the end of the evening, Trump will play a hymn, How Great Thou Art, which topped the charts when Elvis Presley sang it. It was a favorite of Trump’s father, Fred, a sentimental way of drawing a Mar-a-Lago soiree to a close.

What might have otherwise seemed no more than a characteristically bizarre twist for a post-presidential career, looks more significant now that it is known that all the while the lights were low, the music was playing, guests were tipsy and the host was otherwise engaged, there were [thousands of government documents](#), many of them highly sensitive, and at least one of them containing nuclear secrets, being kept illicitly in rooms and closets nearby. And all of this was unfolding in a venue described by former intelligence officials as [a priority target](#) for foreign spies.

“Without any question the former president, and those in his circle will be very important targets for any foreign intelligence service. They will be looking at: how do we get into that circle?” said Douglas London, a 34-year

veteran of the CIA's clandestine service, and author of *The Recruiter: Spying and the Lost Art of American Intelligence*.

London added: "He's brought in really questionable people with various skeletons in their closets, financial or personal or political, who have vulnerabilities a foreign intelligence service could exploit."

It is a scenario which in other circumstances, might make for an uproarious comedy series, featuring spies from around the world tripping over each other in the dark as they race each other to grab hold of the motherlode of state secrets, as YMCA echoes around the darkened corridors.

The setting is suitably flamboyant. When it was built in the 1920s for a cereal heiress, [Marjorie Merriweather Post](#), the style of the 58-bedroom palace was described as Spanish-Moorish-Portuguese-Venetian. There are gargoyles that look like they were borrowed from medieval Britain. The original decor was chosen by a Viennese theatrical designer.



Mar-a-Lago's Grand Ballroom. Photograph: Zuma Press, Inc./Alamy

When Trump bought it for \$10m (£8.75m) in 1985, it had 58 bedrooms, an adjoining golf course and three bomb shelters. He said at the time he thought of the purchase as a "statement" rather than somewhere he could imagine

living, but the high-end Floridian lifestyle grew on him and the place became his favourite home.

In the 1990s, after a string of bankruptcies, he tried to squeeze desperately needed cash out of the property by trying to split it into plots, hold on to the main house, and sell the rest, but he was blocked by the local planning board.

The board also tried to veto his plan B, turning the estate into a private club, but he was able to outmanoeuvre his opponents on the panel by assiduously cultivating individual members and pointing out publicly and embarrassingly that almost all the other clubs in Palm Beach did not admit Jews or Black people.

There were few if any African Americans in the area who could afford the \$100,000 (£87,454) initiation fee, which was doubled in 2017, but plenty of wealthy Jews, who had made their money in real estate and clothing. They became the bulk of the membership, the majority of them Democrats.

When Trump succeeded Obama as president, and Mar-a-Lago became the “winter White House”, the ambience began to change. Trump had no time for the official presidential retreat at Camp David, which he saw as too rustic. Also the Trump Organization made no money from him staying there. Mar-a-Lago was another matter.

The president saw no distinction between his personal life, his business and the public office, and Trump’s presidency became one of the club’s leading attractions. It was another label under the Trump brand. Paying guests were able to witness real-life scenes like Trump huddling with the then Japanese prime minister, Shinzo Abe, and his aides to hammer out a joint response to a North Korean missile test.

In April 2017, Trump told the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, about the missile strikes he had authorized in Syria while the leaders sat in the Mar-a-Lago dining room eating what the former president described as “the most beautiful piece of chocolate cake that you have ever seen”.

After Trump was defeated in 2020, he decamped to his Florida retreat, taking with him boxes full of secret documents and a new clientele. The crowd that hung around Trump International hotel in Washington followed him to Mar-a-Lago.



The style of the property has been described as Spanish-Moorish-Portuguese-Venetian. Photograph: ZUMA Press, Inc./Alamy

“The club used to be serious money, serious players in business. Some really big players through the years have been members,” a longtime member reflected somewhat ruefully.

“The new members of the club are a little bit Maga,” the veteran member said. “It’s very eclectic, a lot of foreigners, people that have made money in cryptocurrency, Oklahoma, fracking money. It looks more like the menagerie at the Trump Hotel in Washington.”

Asked specifically about the foreigners, this member said: “A lot of different people there that they didn’t really have before. You’ll have Chinese people. You’ll have maybe some additional Arab people.”

Even during the Trump presidency, there were significant holes in Mar-a-Lago’s security. Over the 2018 Thanksgiving holiday, a teenager, Mark

Lindblom, slipped past guards and entered the club through a tunnel from the beach.

Two Chinese women were caught trespassing. One of them, Yujing Zhang, had no fewer than four mobile phones, an external hard drive, as well as five sim cards and a “signal detector” gadget for locating hidden microphones or cameras. She was deported without any clarity on what she was doing there and why she was in possession of such an array of electronics.

In the post-presidency, there are far fewer controls.

“Typically once a president becomes former president, there’s a scale-back in resources at the Secret Service, but that really is something that doesn’t lend itself to the Mar-a-Lago environment because of the obvious threats there,” said Frank Figliuzzi, a former FBI assistant director for counterintelligence.

Each year the club hires 80 to 90 foreign workers. They at least get vetted, but that is no guarantee against an insider threat, Figliuzzi said

“The fact that four years ago, the Secret Service vetted the guy who serves Trump Diet Coke 12 times a day, doesn’t mean that that guy is invulnerable to a \$200,000 [£174,936] payment from a foreign intelligence agency,” he said.

The problem of the club members and their guests is far greater.

“Who are these members? Who’s vetting them?” Figliuzzi asked. “If you have the requisite money and you plunk it down, it appears you’re a member. And now here come your family members and guests and their cousins and their in-laws. And is it really possible for the Secret Service to even begin to think that they could vet the guest side of the house?”

All this helps explain why a Russian-speaking Ukrainian-born woman called Inna Yashchyshyn was able to mingle with club members and Trump himself in the spring and summer of 2021, posing as Anna de Rothschild, a Monaco-bred scion of the banking family.

Whether Yashchyshyn, and the two Chinese interlopers, were just opportunists or connected to something more sinister, remains unknown. But then the same could be said of much of the Mar-a-Lago crowd, especially the new arrivals. But perhaps the biggest question mark is hanging over the resort's wounded and vengeful owner and DJ. No one knows what plans he had for his stolen trove of state secrets.

“Whatever he selected was because he had some intent to do something with it,” London said. “The question mark is: what were his intentions? But none of it is going to be a happy story. None of it is going to end well, in terms of the impact on national security.”

This article was amended on 20 September 2022. The teenager who entered Mar-a-Lago through a tunnel was Mark Lindblom, not “Mike Lindbloom”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/sep/20/donald-trump-maralago-nuclear-secrets-whitney-houston-security-flaws>

Mar-a-Lago: the lax security of Trump's alternative 'White House' – visualized

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/sep/20/mar-a-lago-map-security-visualized>

Advertisement

US edition

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

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Television](#)

[Interview](#)

‘It’s a midlife crisis on steroids!’ Jackass’s Steve-O on ageing, addiction and planning a face tattoo

[Tim Jonze](#)



Steve-O, star of MTV's Jackass series, at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Toronto. Photograph: Philip Cheung/The Guardian

He has survived being shark bait, snorted wasabi and had dog poo fired into his face. Now 48, he has written a self-help book – and is preparing for even stranger and more outlandish stunts



[@timjonze](#)

Tue 20 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 08.22 EDT

Steve-O from Jackass has written a self-help book, so let's start with the most obvious question: who on earth is going to take life advice from a man who has repeatedly stapled his scrotum to his thigh?

“Oh, for sure,” he replies in his unmistakably gravelly voice. “The idea of a book of wisdom from me is a patently absurd concept.” Steve-O is speaking over Zoom from his tour bus in Canada, where he’s on the road with his Bucket List comedy show. He weighs up my question again. “The way I describe the book is that it’s 90% insane stories about my fucked-up life and maybe 10% nuggets of wisdom gleaned from having made so many terrible decisions. That 10% might not help you at all, but you’re gonna have an entertaining journey.”

A Hard Kick in the Nuts is not Steve-O's first book. The 48-year-old's 2011 memoir, Professional Idiot, documented his rise from desperate attention-seeking kid to, um, desperate attention-seeking adult who became the breakout star of Jackass, the infamous early 00s [MTV](#) show in which a bunch of dudes would perform outlandish DIY stunts. Steve-O snorted wasabi, lit fireworks from his bottom and nearly got eaten alive by dunking himself into the ocean as shark bait (complete with a hook pierced through his chin). He was puppyish and lovable, but back then he was also a complete mess, an unreliable alcoholic who was so strung out on cocaine that he was once able to scoop a lump of congealed snot and coke from his nostril and smoke it in a homemade pipe ("I called it 'crack boogers,'" he notes).

In the decade since that book, Steve-O has gone through a *lot*: he has kicked drugs and drink with the 12-step programme and overcome the many addictions that have sprung up in its place – sugar, sex, spending (he calls it "addiction whack-a-mole"). He has also built an impressive career that incorporates the hit Wild Ride! podcast, a YouTube channel with more than 6m subscribers and a standup comedy career built around retelling his craziest real-life stories. (Sample line: "If your *cover-up* tattoo is a man fucking an ostrich, that's when you know you started off with something pretty rotten.")

During all of this, Steve-O has found love, settled down in LA and become incredibly serious and boring – as proved by the recent [Jackass Forever movie](#), in which he smeared his penis and testicles in honey and released a hive of bees on to them. Or the [YouTube clip](#) where his friend fired a cannon of dog poo into his face at such close range that it perforated his eardrum. Or his plans to ... OK, so maybe he's not got *that* boring.

"I used to be a drunk attention whore," he says, "and now I'm a sober attention whore. That's kind of my deal."



Steve-O (in cart with hands up) in a scene from Jackass: The Movie (2002).
Photograph: Reuters

Indeed, while A Hard Kick in the Nuts might sound like a ridiculous premise, it actually contains a startling amount of soul-searching – and jaw-dropping honesty: Steve-O recounts the numerous women he love-bombed and then ghosted; he examines the endless grief he has given his former friends and neighbours with reckless and selfish behaviour; he even admits to campaigning behind the scenes to get his late Jackass co-star, Ryan Dunn, kicked off a show they were co-presenting because he thought he was a big enough star to do it alone. Steve-O's need to confess seems to be as compulsive as any of his addictions.

“I remember recording the audiobook,” he says, “and as I started reading out loud what I’d put down on the page, I had this strong feeling, like, ‘Oh my God, why am I putting this out there?’ At times I couldn’t believe what I was reading. But the stories are 100% true. And there’s something really powerful about including ugly truths, which are just so deeply unflattering. It becomes quite clear early on that I’m not writing the book to make myself look good.”

And yet ... it’s hard not to come out of the book liking Steve-O, even though you’ve just read 200-plus pages of him doing largely terrible things. The

book is full of what his friend, Jackass co-creator Johnny Knoxville, described as “so much growth”. The self-help angle might seem flimsy, but the overall message of examining your mistakes, understanding your faults and trying to become a better person is admirable.



Steve-O in Jackass Number Two. Photograph: Paramount/Allstar

That doesn't mean it's not also entertainingly weird. A case in point: when Steve-O sought help for his sex addiction, a therapist suggested he try a month or two of celibacy to rewire his brain. Steve-O's insistence on taking everything too far meant he ended up going 431 days without sex or even ejaculating. He was so determined to abstain that, he says, he would somehow wake himself from sexual dreams.

“It was a crazy thing, and I don't think it was particularly helpful or healthy,” he says. How did it affect his daily behaviour?

“Oh God. I was on a standup comedy tour for the majority of that time and as part of my routine I would announce, each night, how many days it had been since Elvis had left the building. And that tour was – well, a fucking disaster is what it was. If people were chatting in the audience or anyone was recording the show on their phone, I just flew off the handle. My capacity for losing my temper was impressive. *Really* impressive.”

Steve-O is a seasoned standup these days and always gets a laugh for his opening line: “I’m in a terrible situation … I’m Steve-O in my 40s.” This fear of ageing has been a constant as long as he can remember. Born Stephen Gilchrist Glover in Wimbledon, south London, Steve-O’s childhood was spent on the move thanks to his father’s work as a corporate executive. He lived in Brazil, Connecticut, Florida and Toronto among other places. He always assumed he’d die young so spent his time filming himself doing crazy stunts – the best way to leave a legacy, he reasoned. An early school report famously said: “Socially, Steve’s attempt to impress his peers frequently has had the opposite effect.” Yet he found his calling when he was accepted onto Jackass, the brainchild of Knoxville, film-maker Spike Jonze and then-skateboard magazine editor Jeff Tremaine.

If, like me, you have this overdeveloped need for attention, then the idea of people no longer looking at you is scary

Steve-O

More recently, though, Steve-O has found himself facing what he calls “a midlife crisis on steroids”. The man who built a career on firing hard objects into his balls now invokes eastern spirituality and Buddhist philosophy in order to wrestle with western society’s approach to ageing and why it disturbs him so much. “We shove old people in nursing homes because we don’t want to think about our own mortality,” he says. “When you get old, people don’t want to see you. So if, like me, you have this overdeveloped need for attention – and that’s putting it mildly – then the idea of people no longer looking at you is scary.” The cliche of the washed-up clown performing old tricks to a dwindling audience gives him nightmares. But film-maker and comedian Kevin Smith, a recent guest on his podcast, told him he could envisage Steve-O as a modern-day George Carlin, the countercultural comedian who remained popular, edgy and cool into old age. “And God, I’ve been hanging on to that ever since!” he laughs.

One plan for longevity rests on what he refers to as his Gone Too Far tour, a future standup show that he hopes will continue his unique combination of comedy and filmed stunts, only this time “raising the bar for crazy”. This will involve having breast augmentation surgery and inking a tattoo of a penis on his forehead, although one plan he mentions in the book – shooting

a bullet through both of his cheeks – is no longer happening. “I’ve taken that off the table,” he says, a little embarrassed. “I’m not known for saying I will do something and then backing out … but I’ve lost my sense of humour for guns. I no longer find it fun or funny to seek to shoot myself.” Fair enough. But what about the breasts? I mean, why that specifically?

“The theme that ties together all of these ridiculous acts is an examination of my body and how, on the cusp of turning 50, the instrument I rely on for attention is breaking down,” he says. “As we barrel towards our inevitable demise, we wilt, and our bodies deteriorate, and it’s this really sad dark thing. And that process is well under way for me.”

And so he’s fighting this existential dread with a boob-job?

“That came from me being legitimately horrified to look in the mirror and discover that not only am I developing man tits but I literally have underboob too. And so I’m childishly lashing out at the God that enabled me to develop man titties. Like, if I’m going to be forced to have titties then goddamn it they’re going to be DDs!” He laughs his dirtbag laugh and then says, referring to the 19th-century American showman: “I think the PT Barnum in me just thinks that makes sense. It will be the tour that promotes itself.”

The penis tattoo follows a similar line of thinking: “I feel compelled to draw attention away from the increasing wrinkling going on around my eyes. Clearly, a big dick on my forehead is all anybody’s going to be able to see, so it’ll keep me young.” What could be more rational?



Steve-O in Jackass Number Two. Photograph: Paramount/Allstar

Since 2017, Steve-O has been in perhaps his first functional relationship, with Lux Wright, a 35-year-old production designer. They plan to marry and open an animal sanctuary (kids are off the agenda ever since Steve-O filmed himself having a vasectomy and then inviting local teenagers to beat his balls like a piñata immediately afterwards). I wonder what Wright makes of his *Gone Too Far* plans?

“She really hates the boobs thing,” he says. “But she’s come around a little bit. I consulted with arguably the world’s most famous plastic surgeon and he said that he thinks after a period of three months it will be easy to put back together. The penis on my forehead will ultimately be lasered off, too. So I will be restored to usual.”

Steve-O describes Wright as “exceedingly normal”, which is an interesting choice of words for someone who was happy to film their partner taking a dump in their living room on top of a whirring fan and get sprayed with faeces as a result. (The resulting footage is shown as part of Steve-O’s Bucket List tour.) That’s how he knew she was the woman for him?

“Yeah,” he laughs. “There’s certain things she’s perfectly fine with which you would think she wouldn’t be. Then there’s the life-threatening stuff that,

understandably, she really hates.”

Steve-O might be in no mood to settle down. But there is plenty in his book to suggest that Knoxville is right: there has been so much growth. For instance, Steve-O now looks back at Jackass and accurately pinpoints its true charm: “It was devoid of any mean spirit. There was nothing bigoted or misogynistic. I consider it rather wholesome.” He also risks alienating some of his fanbase by discussing his vote for Joe Biden: “I would sooner have less in my bank account and live in a world that is safer and more dignified for all of its inhabitants.”

There’s an unexpectedly sweet ending to the interview when I wish him well with his book. “Thank you, man,” he says. “It’s a big deal to ask someone to read a book. It’s a *humongous* thing, especially in this day and age. It’s a tall order. So for you to have done that? I just want you to know what a tremendous gift that is to me, for you to have devoted that much attention to my book. I can’t thank you enough, I’m over the moon and I just want you to know how grateful I am.”

I think he really means it, too. Which, coming from someone who once tightrope-walked over an alligator pit with raw meat stuffed into his underwear, means a lot.

A Hard Kick in the Nuts: What I’ve Learned from a Lifetime of Terrible Decisions will be published on 27 September.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/sep/20/jackass-steve-o-on-ageing-addiction-and-planning-a-face-tattoo>

Advertisement

US edition

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

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Life and style](#)

Were you a ‘parentified child’? What happens when children have to behave like adults



“You might recognise the once-parentified child in the over-responsible coworker, the always-available friend.” Photograph: Getty Images/iStockphoto

When parents cast a child into the role of mediator, friend and carer, the wounds are profound. But recovery is possible

Nivida Chandra

Tue 20 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 21 Sep 2022 23.32 EDT

I came to research the emotional neglect of children by accident. More than a decade ago, I wrote my master's thesis on the relationship between the personal and professional lives of psychotherapists. How did they manage to keep the distress they heard in their clinics from affecting their own emotional balance? And how did they stop their personal challenges from affecting their clinical work?

In our conversations, I asked what brought them to be clinicians. The consistency of their answers surprised me. Virtually all said that being there for others, emotionally, came naturally; they were good at it because they were practised in tending others' needs since childhood, starting with their own parents. With deeper conversations, I learned of the difficult family circumstances they each came from.

Their childhood stories were dominated by watching one parent beat the other, or a parent with undiagnosed depression, or other shades of pervasive discord between their parents. Their "job" was to protect and support their parents however possible. It made sense then that, as adults, they channelled this exceptional skill towards helping even more people.

One participant, Sadhika (45 at the time of our interviews), had parents who fought every day about everything. Her mother was like a wildfire who burned anything in her path. She was loud, persistent in her demands from everyone around her, and "decimated" anyone who disagreed with her. Her father became a "piece of furniture" in the house, unable to protect the children. Sadhika told me it was inconceivable for her to ask him to protect her and her siblings, because he seemed to "be in the same boat" as the children.

So it fell to her to manage her mother, protect her younger siblings, do the household chores and hold the centre. Missteps were not an option – from

managing interpersonal relationships to fixing a dripping tap.

Sadhika had endured “parentification”, which can occur in any home, anywhere in the world, when parents rely on their child to take care of them indefinitely without sufficient reciprocity. The parentified child who supports the parent often incurs a cost to her own psychic stability and development. The phenomenon has little to do with parental love, and much more to do with the personal and structural circumstances that stop parents from attending to the immense anxiety and burden that a child may be experiencing on their behalf. The parent is often unable to see that their child is taking responsibility for maintaining the peace in the family, for protecting one parent from the other, for being their friend and therapist, for mediating between the parents and the outside world, for parenting the siblings, and sometimes for the medical, social and economic stability of the household.

The idea of the “parental child” first appears in the literature in the late 1960s, when a group of psychologists in the US studied family structure in the inner city. Given the high rates of single motherhood, incarceration, poverty and drugs, they found, it often fell to a child to act as the family’s glue.

The term “parentification” was introduced in 1967 by the family systems theorist Salvador Minuchin, who said the phenomenon occurred when parents de facto delegated parenting roles to children. The concept was expanded and honed by the psychologist Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, who offered that deep problems could emerge in the child when a family had an imbalanced ledger of give-and-take between parents and children. Since then, psychologists have charted parentification across cultures and taken an inventory of the fallout.

If you think about it, your adult circle of acquaintances, colleagues and friends probably include some who fit the bill. You may recognise the once-parentified child in the over-responsible co-worker, the always-available friend – the one who always seems to be weighed down by something, yet manages to take care of everything without ever asking for help in return. Despite her conscientiousness, this person’s inner world may be

impoverished and, if you asked her, she might say she is running on fumes, or that she wished she had a friend like her.

How can parentified adults make sense of their childhood when there is no obvious excuse for the sense of burden?

Having resolved familial interpersonal conflict my entire childhood, was I, too, parentified?

These narratives of parentification, revealed during my interviews, opened a window to my own psyche too. I also came from a good home, a loving family, with no apparent reason for the unhappiness that I felt nor the unhealthy relationships I found myself in. Having resolved familial interpersonal conflict my entire childhood, was I, too, parentified?

After I decided to pursue my doctoral studies in this field, I remember my doctoral committee questioning the applicability of this “western” concept to Indian family systems; they cautioned me to remain wary of imposing pathological concepts on the “normal” systems found here. I felt – due to my accidental discovery and personal experiences – that perhaps normal family systems were being confused with acceptable parental practices. I decided to stay my course, and chose to study these “normal” urban Indian families with two available parents, sufficient financial stability, no obvious or diagnosed parental illness, or any other condition that would cause the child to play the adult sooner than her friends.

The reason was that, when parentification is found in families that have suffered parental death, divorce, poverty or even war, the children have an available narrative of struggle that helps them make sense of their challenges. They understand why more was demanded of them as children, and this is also obvious to others. But how can parentified adults make sense of their childhood when there is no obvious excuse for the sense of burden? I found myself questioning why families believed they provided the best, safest environments for their children to grow up in, no matter what?

I had no trouble finding several people willing to share their stories. They identified themselves as having taken on excessive and age-inappropriate

responsibilities as children. I spoke at length with each, averaging 8-10 hours of back-and-forth interviews in which I tried to understand every aspect of their lives thus far, what they thought had gone awry, what should have happened instead and how all this was affecting them today.

Her parents would continue as if nothing had happened, and the cycle would repeat

Priya (26 at the time of the interviews) came from a large city in south India. Her parents had married for love. Her mother had been promised an education her family of origin could not afford. Yet, after their marriage, her husband – Priya's father – insisted that she be a stay-at-home mother.

The spouses were also from different castes and married against their families' wishes. Inter-caste marriages are still considered sacrilegious in many parts of India. For this, both families exiled them, causing a lot of stress to the couple and their children, which led to fights, unhappiness and isolation from a system of loved ones. Over time, Priya's father started drinking, and would hit her mother. Priya would come home from school to see her mother with bruised, puffy eyes and scratches. She would be angry at her father but, in a few days, she would be the only one holding on to that fear and anger. Her parents would continue as if nothing had happened, and the cycle would repeat. Priya alone seemed intent on stopping it from happening again.

Like Sadhika and Priya, the other participants – Anahata and Mira – remembered their mothers as perpetually dissatisfied, unhappy, angry or depressed. In-laws bullied them, or husbands abandoned them to the sense that a fulfilling life, personally and professionally, was unachievable. They remembered their fathers as either quiet or angry, constrained by their own pressures of being men in a heavily patriarchal society. It's very likely they, too, were deeply unhappy with their lives, but they seldom spoke about what they were going through, leaving the mothers free to induct the children into their camp, as it were.

I uncovered that, despite the seeming normalcy, there was substance use, undiagnosed mental illness, and discord created by extended family members.

For instance, the mothers were often taunted by their in-laws or rebuked for belonging to this caste or that section of society, or for bringing up their children poorly. Whatever the reasons for discord or the nature of violence (verbal or physical), it seemed to have been deemed acceptable, thus closing avenues for intervention or reparation. Most importantly, it blocked an understanding of the effect on the child. In the child's mind, however, normal or not, she learned that it was on her to apply bandages and soothing balms everywhere she could. She took on whatever role was needed of her to support, protect or nourish her parents.

Not caring for their parents was not an option

From a young age, the child learns her place as the one entrusted to "do the psychological work" of the others in her family. Mira would bear her mother's emotional outbursts, soothe her tears, entreat her to open locked doors and eat her meals, not walk out of the house, hear how her father and grandparents were awful, and how Mira needed to be better for the sake of her mother's happiness. Sadhika's task was to bear her mother's despair and "smooth ruffled feathers" with everyone from the vegetable vendor to her aunts and uncles. Anahata and Priya would encourage their mothers to create change in the house, get a job, even get a divorce.

Much like your favourite therapist does for you, these children developed a way of intuiting how to support their parents and others. This was necessary for their own psychological survival. Not caring for their parents was not an option. The consequences could range from the parents withholding love from the children to outright violence between the parents themselves, and the child would then blame herself. These children do not have the opportunity to understand the problems they are trying to solve are not their own, or why the problems continue despite their best efforts. They learn only that they need to pay more attention, intuit better.

Priya said she felt she had developed a finely tuned emotional radar that was always scanning for who needed what and when. Sadhika had an especially cogent analogy to describe what was going on: “Imagine a really cranky, brilliant, irritable surgeon and he has this really efficient nurse. When he puts his hand out, the correct surgical instrument magically appears. That was my role.”

What does it do to the internal world of the child to constantly be on alert for the next potential problem? What does it mean for a child to handle emotional and interpersonal problems mature adults cannot seem to solve? No child is equipped. Sadhika, Priya, Anahata, Mira and I all spent hours in our early adolescence crying to ourselves. No one knew, and sometimes I wonder if anyone ever knew to ask.

These children need help, yet their families claim the status of normal. The child is perhaps the only one who imagines a different kind of normalcy. She develops a picture of normal – based on whatever she sees on TV or in the homes of others – and tries to mould her family by intervening, offering solutions, resolving conflicts. If anyone paid attention to her or took her advice, there would be no cause for so much hurt, or for parentification.

They wonder – how much can I ask for? Will I be considered needy or dramatic?

As a consequence of always looking after others, little space is left for the child to know or express her own needs. The only legitimate needs seem to be those of others. Expressing her needs is met with frustration, anger or other parental emotions that link her needs with fear and shame. This leads to the development of what paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott in 1960 called a “false self”. In its unhealthiest form, this self-denying persona allows the parentified child to stop expressing and fulfilling her own needs, and gain value from foregrounding the needs of others. It makes sense that parentified adults struggle with setting healthy, balanced boundaries and find themselves in abusive or exploitative relationships, whether with friends, co-workers or romantic partners.

Deeply unsure of their own worth, parentified adults form relationships based on how valuable they can be to others. This allows them familiar feelings of being good and worthy, from which they can operate in the world around them. This can look like people-pleasing, or being the agony aunt or overextending their own resources to help others. On the other hand, they struggle to receive support in return. They wonder – how much can I ask for? Will I be considered needy or dramatic? They struggle to claim space in the lives of others, uncertain if the person will stay should they have an ask of their own.

The worst fallout comes in romantic relationships. Studies [show](#) that parentified adults are vulnerable to unhealthy, addictive or destructive intimate relationships. Psychologists have [found](#) they suffer from various psychopathologies, [including](#) masochistic and borderline personality disorders in adults.

Her husband asked: ‘Why you?’, and she answered with what felt like clarity: ‘There is no one else’

Many of those I spoke with found themselves in abusive relationships with narcissists because, as Sadhika said, “it’s such a perfect fit.” She is married to someone she feels can be clinically diagnosed with narcissistic personality disorder. Priya also found herself in a relationship with someone who belittled her constantly and [gaslit](#) her, always choosing others over her.

What surprises me is how long it can take parentified adults to recognise their own abuse. To them, subconsciously, relationships that were unhealthy – even violent and abusive – were not meant to be broken away from but repaired. This is what they had learned their entire lives and, without intending to, they repeated these patterns. Parentified adults are compliant. They are happy to give the other person all their space. In doing so, they are often manipulated and shamed, adding to their childhood neglect and emotional impoverishment. These patterns are so familiar to the adult that, instead of raising alarms, the familiarity sustains them.

On the other hand, these caregiving experiences can be channelled into fulfilling professions. Parentified adults are dependable, sensitive, solution-

focused and caring. Sadhika is now a parenting coach. Priya is a therapist. Anahata litigates for people on death row. Mira specialises in early childhood education in India's low-resource neighbourhoods. The list of impressive career decisions continues. Almost everyone works to uplift or support others.

Yet, even at work, parentified adults can be exploited. Some of them shared how they felt singularly responsible on the job. Mira was taking on more work than the others, struggled with delegating, and strived for perfection. Her husband asked: "Why you?" And she answered with what felt like clarity at that time: "There is no one else." In a way, this one sentence summarises parentification better than an entire textbook.

Perfectionism can be [characteristic](#) of many kinds of people and pasts, but [research](#) has found that parentified adults show a particular proclivity here. The anxiety to always be there for others generates a harsh inner voice, keeping them bathed in anxiety and guilt. Others can take advantage of this dedication. One participant's co-workers would tell her of their emotional troubles, and use these troubles as a reason to pass on their work to her. Unable to say no – as many parentified adults are – she would take on all their work, no matter how busy or tired she was.

Between their self-denying persona, unhealthy relationships, caring unendingly for others and an overall sense of pervasive burden, it is unsurprising that parentified adults can face inner exhaustion and fierce anger. This often expresses itself in bursts of rage or tears, and a quickness to frustration that seem surprising to everyone, including the parentified adult, who is otherwise always so calm and collected. Unless interrogated, these clues to understanding the impact of childhood can be lost, and the [patterns](#) will simply continue.

Undoing parentification amounts to reparenting yourself

One of the biggest risks for parentified adults is the [possibility](#) of parentifying their own children and [furthering](#) the cycle of neglect. This can [occur](#) across several generations, with each accruing unresolved burdens for

the next. Insightful parentified adults seek therapy in an attempt to break this cycle of intergenerational trauma when they find themselves turning to their own children for excessive emotional support.

Whichever circumstances bring parentified adults to therapy, they begin to draw lines between the immense fear, helplessness and loneliness they lived with as a child, their need and ability to care for others, and their exhaustion, continued sense of burden and anxiety as adults. This emotional exhaustion is a bit perverse: it is part of their identity as the perfect caregiver and has the power to keep them clinging to unhealthy patterns.

To undo parentification, you need to understand what happened, how it's affecting you, and allow yourself to experience the validity of your narrative. When done with kindness and support, this amounts to reparenting yourself. This can help rebalance equations of give and take in important relationships. You can begin to care from a space of choice and love, not obligation and fear of abandonment. With effort, you may start to feel as though you are entering yourself for the first time.

Since parentification does not necessarily imply a bad childhood, nor is it an all-or-nothing phenomenon, a helpful first step is to identify and circumscribe your parentification. If you, in childhood, cared for your parent over extended periods of time and are still suffering the consequences, I encourage you to seek therapeutic, restorative support.

Like other issues in psychology, parentification unfolds on a spectrum. In my research, I found 12 variables at play: age of onset (the earlier, the more damaging), reasons for onset (clearer reasons can offer a sense of purpose), clarity of expectations from the child (were you told what exactly was needed of you?), nature of expectations from the child, guidance and support provided to the child, duration of expected care; acknowledgment of care, age-appropriateness and child development norms your family subscribes to, lived experience (how you experienced all of this around you), genetics and personality propensities, gender, birth order and family structure, and, finally, the life you are living now (how we view our past is influenced by our present circumstances). As you work through your pain, you can use these variables to know what worked in your childhood, and leverage it – and what didn't work, and minimise it.

A strong voice emerges from within that was silent all this time, longing to protect the child they once were

I have noticed that, as parentified adults wade through years of painful memories and realise why they still hurt, feelings of anger and injustice become dominant, at least at first. A strong voice emerges from within that was silent all this time, longing to protect the child they once were.

Mira told me: “There was this feeling of, how could she do this to me?” Similarly, in one particularly forceful moment, the otherwise calm Priya said: “When I look back, I’m like, why, why, why did that have to happen? Why couldn’t you have found some other way of dealing with your shit?” It was not that she minded caring for her parents: it was that something was taken from her without her knowledge, beyond her childhood capacity to understand. By expressing these feelings of anger and injustice, space for other emotions emerges.

Above all, healing needs repeated validation for your narrative, one that supports your personal growth without “villainising” your parents. This can come in many forms: a therapist, a few friends, fulfilling work (even if born of parentification).

She would tell her younger self: ‘I’m sorry you had to go through this’

One significant factor is a healthy romantic relationship. I’ve noticed that a partner who can “bear” you, withstand your anger and provide a gentle reminder they will still be there once that fight is over, or who gives the parentified adult consistent support, can begin to replace the fear of abandonment with an anchored feeling of being held and heard.

A validating therapist who understands parentification can help along this journey of reparation. They can help contain the anger while also creating the possibility of a new, progressive narrative. I’d like to caution that, despite what social media may suggest, it is near-impossible for all this validation to come from within. Difficult as it can seem, it is necessary to slowly build relationships with those who allow you to depend on them.

Parentified adults carry around years of hurt, and they need to locate and unearth an “inner, younger self” who willingly receives adult love and care. For Sadhika, her younger self was “outside the door, standing in a corner. It’s like you have a little puppy who’s been severely abused. *Abused*. And now you’ve brought the puppy into the house and the puppy knows it’s kind of safe, and the cowering in the corner has stopped.” This is her task of re-parenting herself. She and others would tell their younger selves: “I’m sorry you had to go through this.”

Healing may not come from the source of the hurt: changing the parents’ perspective is not the goal here

You will ultimately find yourself resetting your boundaries with your parents. Many put differing degrees of distance between themselves and their parents. Some cut ties completely but this is rare, at least in India. Parentified adults are more likely to choose when they engage with their parents. Some even try to share with their parents how they feel they were hurt by them. Some parents are open to listening to this, but most do not take it well.

Priya’s parents, for instance, have been unusually receptive, though her mother’s guilt at receiving her daughter’s narrative called for Priya to attend to her once again. Priya was able to tell her mother how her continued reliance on her drained her energy. Her mother was surprised (isn’t that parentification itself!) but receptive to her daughter’s perspective.

On the other hand, when Anahata tried to talk to her parents about her experiences, they did not take it quite as well. She told me: “We were having one of our confrontations. And [my father] was like: ‘Don’t you dare blame us. We have given you everything. Anything that money can buy, you’ve received, always. What’s your problem in life?’” It’s important to recognise that healing may not come from the source of the hurt: changing the parents’ perspective is not the goal here. The aim instead is to believe in your own narrative, validate your hurt and heal through other avenues of support.

As you set boundaries, you may feel guilty or selfish about “abandoning” others. They may want to pull you back into that caregiving role. I

encourage you to stay your course and show yourself some kindness should you fall back into old patterns. I hope you come to realise that they will be OK without you, and you will be too. Health is the ability to let others take responsibility for themselves. It is the ability to say no when your energy reserves feel empty. It's also the ability to say yes to someone when you feel like giving care.

As I write, my body shakes and I cry, but it does not overwhelm me any more

I have found health and reparation in my ability to write about this and to offer my thoughts to others. As I write, my body shakes and I cry, but it does not overwhelm me any more. I can talk to my parents about it, and I have been lucky enough to have them listen to me. I had to impose months of distance on them. I found clarity and confidence in my own story, read a lot, spoke to others, did my research. I slowly opened communication.

It has taken me 10 years to stop parenting my parents and find a space that is somewhere between their daughter and manager. To their credit, they have started asking me to step away from making decisions for them. We even have place for humour now. It is a running joke in our family that every time I write about my fear-filled childhood, my parents will write a simultaneous article defending their actions. The fact that we can, as a family, accept all of this to be true, is health for me.

Author's note: my research and therapeutic practice have so far been only with women. This is why I have used the pronoun "her". Similarly, "mother" here is used because the daughters were exposed mostly to their mothers' narratives, since they were the primary caregivers. The fathers' narratives were largely absent due to their own reticence (a cultural imperative) and sometimes because they were the perpetrators of abuse in the child's eyes. I want to be clear, however, that no one parent is solely responsible for parentification. This view would deny us a true understanding of the complex factors that come together to engender parentification. It would also limit the possibilities of healing as well as expanding the discourse.

This piece was originally published by [Aeon](#)

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/sep/20/parentified-child-behave-like-adult>

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

2022.09.20 - Opinion

- From Brexit to the cost of living, Tory governments exploit crises to evade scrutiny
- I have never felt more lonely in my republicanism, or more wedded to it
- The radio was the soundtrack to my life. But I turned it off a week ago – and may never turn it back on
- I'm a parent of two children with a brain cancer diagnosis. We're in the middle of a long and tiring journey

[**OpinionPolitics**](#)

From Brexit to the cost of living, Tory governments exploit crises to evade scrutiny

[Andy Beckett](#)



Big dramas can make politics look small, and in an age of constant upheaval voters can miss how badly the country is being run



‘Thanks to the suspension of parliament after the Queen’s death, Liz Truss may not start facing regular Commons examinations until mid-October – six weeks after taking over Downing Street.’ Photograph: Reuters

Tue 20 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 13.54 EDT

Politics in Britain is again marching to strange rhythms. Officially, nothing much has been happening this month, because of an all-important period of national mourning. But in reality Whitehall has been busy, even frantic. The Treasury has been purged of its [most senior civil servant](#) and given a new, pro-growth mission. The latest [emergency budget](#) is being drawn up, thinly disguised as a “fiscal event”. And a new, potentially very risky government has been settling in. Yet another Conservative experiment on the country is being prepared, largely unscrutinised.

Much of our politics has had this simultaneously stuck and manic quality since at least the EU referendum. [Brexit](#) deadlocks and “cliff edges”, the pandemic, Tory leadership contests, the cost of living crisis, the invasion of Ukraine and now the Queen’s death – each has accelerated or paralysed politics, making a mockery of the once common idea that British democracy is about steady progress.

These seemingly never-ending shocks and disruptions have in some ways been very challenging for a Tory government that increasingly lacks capable people. As well as the administrative headaches, orthodoxies about the size of the state, levels of taxation and the party's relationship with business have had to be reexamined, argued over and, at least temporarily, abandoned. Once promising Tory politicians such as Rishi Sunak have become casualties.

But in other less noticed ways, the chaotic rhythm of the past six years has helped the Tories. "Never allow a good crisis to go to waste," President Barack Obama's chief of staff Rahm Emanuel famously told the New York Times in 2008. "It's an opportunity to do the things you once thought were impossible." For the Conservatives, applying this principle used to mean using periods of turmoil to rethink their policies and how the party presented itself to the public, such as during the turbulent 1970s before Margaret Thatcher took power. In unstable times, the self-styled party of order would offer new ways to make the crisis stop.

Yet, since Brexit, the Tories' approach has changed. Often, they hide behind crises, and use them to play for time. For months, Conservative ministers and MPs argued that the situation in Ukraine meant the world was too dangerous for the party to change its leader, however unsuited to that position Boris Johnson became.

At other times, the Tories tried to use Ukraine and the pandemic in a different way: to give the government qualities it lacked. In broadcasts and press conferences, Johnson sought to affect a Churchillian steadfastness and gravitas, and an almost apolitical, father of the nation persona – opposite to the feckless, divisive person he is in reality. Crises also suit a modern Conservatism more comfortable with fiction than facts. When voters are frightened and looking for reassurance, big promises, fantasies and storytelling can resonate more, at least at first, than what a government is actually achieving.

And while a national crisis makes prime ministers more visible, especially to those crucial voters who don't usually follow politics, it can also make them less accountable. Like Johnson, Liz Truss avoids scrutiny where possible. During her long leadership campaign she did not give a single in-depth

broadcast interview until the voting had finished. As prime minister, thanks to the suspension of parliament after the Queen's death, she may not start facing regular Commons examinations until mid-October – six weeks after taking over Downing Street.

For an unpolished new premier, who has so far given only short, rudimentary speeches while constantly looking down at her notes, this breathing space could be valuable. Meanwhile, the opposition parties will have fewer chances than usual to define and damage the government while it is still young and at its most vulnerable – or at its most threatening, if voters grant it a honeymoon.

For Keir Starmer, who likes to build a case in the Commons, the frequent absence from there of Tory prime ministers has been a problem ever since he became [Labour](#) leader. Britain's almost permanent state of crisis has reduced interest in the opposition and its room for manoeuvre, forcing it to appear less "party political" and more "constructive". When voters are worried about dying from Covid or not being able to heat their houses in the immediate future, a change of government at an election, which may be years away, can be mistaken for a luxury.

Big crises have a drama that can make politics look small. By contrast, when Tony Blair was such a successful opposition leader from 1994 to 1997, Britain was much calmer: voters and journalists could consider his offering without many distractions. They could also see with growing clarity that a long period of Tory rule had in many ways failed the country. The party's record in office since 2010 is worse, but it has often been hard for voters to focus on that. The [ongoing failure of Brexit](#), for example, rarely makes the news.

With the official period of mourning over, it's possible political life will return to more normal patterns. But given that politics hasn't been "normal" for at least six years, and given that so many of Britain's most pressing issues remain unresolved, further turmoil feels more likely. I grew up politically during the 1990s, when our politics seemed to move in slow cycles and the country seemed much the same from one year to the next. That world feels so distant now, and the nervous systems of many

journalists, politicians and voters have adjusted: they expect – perhaps even want – regular shocks.

If Labour does win the next election and somehow provides a stabilising government, expect some people to call it boring. But if we continue to lurch from one emergency to the next under Prime Minister Starmer, different rules will apply to those now. When the Tories are in power, times of crisis are often seen by the press and parliament as a reason to get behind the government. But when Labour is in power, crises are usually seen as a reason to get rid of it, as premiers from Jim Callaghan to Gordon Brown have discovered. Until Labour governments are able to – or allowed to – duck and weave through chaotic times as Tory ones do, Labour will remain stuck as the second party.

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/20/brexit-cost-of-living-tory-government-crises-avoid-scrutiny>.

OpinionRepublicanism

I have never felt more lonely in my republicanism, or more wedded to it

[Moya Lothian-McLean](#)

If you approve of the current system, you're committed to preserving inequality, whether your royalism is 'soft' or not



'While the Queen's death has entrenched my republicanism, it seems to have done the opposite to much of the country.' Photograph: Reuters

Tue 20 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 03.03 EDT

I have always harboured a secret fear that I could be a "soft royalist". The ingredients were all there: I'm a history buff who is fascinated by the machinations – and sordid gossip – surrounding Britain's monarchs of yore; I have a weakness for nostalgia; I own the updated version of Tina Brown's 2007 biographical opus of Diana, Princess of Wales. I have no particular personal dislike of the royals as individuals and I have found myself feeling

truly sympathetic, such as when [Queen Elizabeth II](#) lost her husband of 73 years during lockdown.

But the past 12 days have revealed just how staunch my republican principles really are; they [fortified them](#), in fact. It seems obvious: rather than passing the sceptre, we should be taking this opportunity to throw it on to the scrapheap of history. Never has the fiction of a divine right to rule seemed so threadbare.

Sandwiched between wall-to-wall coverage paying tribute to the deceased monarch, or the live blogs dissecting the [meaning of the pearl choker](#) sported by the Princess of Wales in Westminster Abbey, multiple stories testify to the suspension of common sense required to maintain the existence of the royals, justifying cancelling medical appointments in the middle of a deadly NHS backlog, or arguing for the right of the new king [not to pay inheritance tax](#) on the hundreds of millions he has inherited from his mother.

Yet while reaction to the Queen's death has entrenched my republicanism, it seems to have done the opposite to much of the country. The overwhelming might of tradition has worked its hegemonic magic and rallied support for the royals, even among my peers, the much touted "young Brits" [who had supposedly](#) "turned their backs on the monarchy".

YouGov polling from 11 September found that while 18- to 25-year-olds were [more unsure about the monarchy](#) than older cohorts, 40% still supported its existence; this figure hits 53% among 25- to 49-year-olds. King Charles has enjoyed a significant boost in popularity since suffixing his name with III – the same survey found the percentage of people willing to agree with the statement that he would "make a good king" had increased from 32% in May to 63% last week. Younger respondents are less effusive in their support for him, but it is still there.

Data also suggests that republican sentiments held while younger are likely to be eroded by age. Only [14% of under-35s](#) were willing to say the monarchy was "very important" to Britain in 2021, in contrast with 44% of those aged 55 and over. According to the poll maven John Curtice, this is a historical pattern – that gap is much the same as it was in 1994. Those who

have cautioned republicans essentially to wait out a short-term boost of support for the royals after the Queen's death may find themselves disappointed.

Even armed with that realism, it is still jarring to watch so many fall into line, on cue. There are different subsections, of course: from the diehard, committed Royalists-with-a-capital-R, to those who claim republican tendencies but have found themselves capitulating in the face of the state machine, seeing it as a mark of "respect" to Elizabeth not to actively oppose the continuation of the monarchy via her son.

Mini culture wars are playing out via public mourning. As a friend theorised earlier this week, for some (mostly centrist and rightwing media pundits, it has to be said) monarchism has become a means of "left bashing" – see the likes of [Dan Wootton of GB News](#), who has long paired his tiresome "war on woke" with royal coverage [so sycophantic](#) you suspect even the Windsors may find it distasteful. One interesting exercise in tracking political fragmentation is looking at the [supporters of the pressure group Republic](#) from 2012 – it's hard to imagine those names uniting for any common cause today.

Then there's the "royalist or not, it's hard not to be moved by this celebration of the Queen" approach, which seems to include younger people wanting to partake of some – partly manufactured – collective feeling. It's a surreal feeling to be suddenly so out on a limb for thinking: "Well, actually, it's very easy not to be moved." If I'm moved to any particular emotion, it is anger that enforced mourning will [bring further suffering](#) to the already struggling, that [dissenting voices](#) are being repressed, that the concept of "respect" is being invoked by so many and yet afforded to so few.

On Saturday, I pushed my way through throngs of royal mourners in central London on my way to a smaller gathering, just yards away, outside New Scotland Yard. The demo was to protest at the police shooting of an unarmed 24-year-old Black man, [Chris Kaba](#). As we stood there, listening to the heartache of Kaba's bereaved family and friends, along with relatives of [some of the 1,833 people](#) who have died after contact with the police in

England and Wales in the past 32 years, a woman stalked past and shouted, “Someone’s mother has died.”

It was a moment so surreal, the violence – and I don’t use that word lightly – of it so shocking, it was hard to fully comprehend. The sentiment, so often silent had been uttered, loud and clear. One life is not equal to another. To live in a country governed by royalty means fealty not just in deed but in thought. It means a commitment – often unconscious – to preserving inequity, whether the royalism is “soft” or not. Perhaps some day soon, republicanism will regain its non-partisan footing. But until then, I know where I stand, and I have never been more sure of being wedded to such an unpopular belief.

- Moya Lothian-McLean is a contributing editor at Novara Media
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/20/queen-anger-monarchy-preserving-inequality>

OpinionRadio 4

The radio was the soundtrack to my life. But I turned it off a week ago – and may never turn it back on

Zoe Williams



I could handle the monarchism after the Queen died, but not the repetition.
I'm getting my news from Twitter now



‘The second half of my life may sound completely different from the first’: Zoe Williams Photograph: Luca Luca/Alamy

Tue 20 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 08.44 EDT

Up until now, I’ve never deliberately turned the radio off. OK, caveats: I’ll turn it right down if people are trying to talk to me, or if I don’t want to answer a young person’s questions about North Korean missile testing first thing in the morning. I’ll make a mad leap if the Archers comes on, to a different station, but I won’t turn it off. [Radio 4](#) has been a lifelong susurration, sometimes so ambient I don’t even get annoyed by it, sometimes so annoying it’s like the permanent low-level siren in a nuclear power plant. And still I don’t turn it off.

Then, maybe eight days ago, I unplugged the radio and have lived in this cave of silence since. There was no final straw or particular anti-royal sentiment. I have nothing against fervent monarchism, sincerely expressed: it was merely the sound of people aping royalism, the performative respect, above all the repetitiveness. It’s such a fundamental principle of broadcasting, that whatever you say, you can’t say it twice. Even the roughest DJ on hospital radio knows this, which is how they find themselves accidentally disclosing details of their personal life, just to avoid repeating the sandwich offers.

Six days ago, I gave it one more chance, only to find Today programme presenters trying to amp up the nation's solemnity by talking more slowly. Honestly, the insult: we have to hear the same thing an apparently infinite number of times, but now it's going to take much longer.

Here are the downsides: without Thought for the Day, there's no longer a cue to have a shower, so my personal hygiene has taken a hit; I have no clue what has happened in the sports; I don't even know if sports are still occurring; I don't know what the weather is like elsewhere in the country. I've been going to Twitter for the news, so US politics has undue prominence but at least the climate crisis is at the centre of everything.

It's possible that I will never turn Radio 4 back on, and the second half of life sounds completely different from the first. Or, more likely, I get sucked back in by Soul Music, and normality resumes midweek.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/20/the-radio-was-the-soundtrack-to-my-life-but-i-turned-it-off-a-week-ago-and-may-never-turn-it-back-on>

OpinionCancer

I'm a parent of two children with a brain cancer diagnosis. We're in the middle of a long and tiring journey

Dominic Santangelo

There are many story angles surrounding childhood cancer, but rarely mentioned is the burden of illness on everyday life



‘As parents we can only do so much, and when something goes wrong it’s often a survival instinct to simply move on.’ Photograph: FatCamera/Getty Images

Tue 20 Sep 2022 02.02 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 20.13 EDT

As a parent of two young children with a high-risk brain cancer diagnosis, it’s wonderful to see donation drives soar and yellow ribbons promote empathy for my family’s situation during childhood cancer awareness month.

However, I'm also acutely attuned to important story angles that seem conspicuously absent.

Childhood cancer is often depicted as purely biological. A problem for medical science to solve. But sometimes it is Voldemort. An almost unspeakable evil addressed in hushed tones through abstraction and metaphor.

Somewhere in between these two extremes lie the true experiences of patients and their families.

Our story

On Christmas Eve 2020, after experiencing some worrying headaches, our seven-year-old daughter underwent an emergency craniotomy to remove a lesion detected on the right-hand side of her brain.

It was revealed to be a grade four glioblastoma, a cancer extremely rare in children, very difficult to treat, and with a high chance of recurrence. Median survival in adults is about 12 months.

Additionally, it was found that a rare genetic condition had caused the cancer, and in the months to come we would discover that our son, at age five, also carried the condition.

Earlier this year we were told that our son had developed a brain tumour with the same pathology as his sister's.

[Constitutional Mismatch Repair Deficiency \(CMMRD\)](#) is a recessive genetic condition related to Lynch syndrome that causes aggressive cancers in children with an alarmingly high rate of probability and is often misdiagnosed or undetected.

There was no practical way we could have detected CMMRD before cancer, with no relevant history on either side of the family and available prenatal testing options unable to pick it up.

Selective statistics

Statistics usually form the basis of awareness campaigns.

Rates of incidence, survival and mortality are humanised through personal stories, such as a child's formative years given over to harsh and extended treatment cycles, or of a family grieving the loss of a child gone too soon.

What is rarely mentioned however are the incompatibilities of childhood cancer with the everyday expectations of social, cultural and economic life.

How many parents or guardians lose the ability to work? What percentage of the family income is lost? How much travel time is spent accessing treatments? How many relationships dissolve? How many careers are ended? What are the impacts on mental health?

Kids are told that they are engaged in a battle, whereas in reality they are shadowboxing

The maximum Centrelink payment for a carer of a child with cancer is far from a living wage – unless their house is a tent.

My family is probably one of the lucky ones. We are flexibly employed, and live in relatively secure accommodation.

Yet we still require regular financial help from charities, extended family, friends and kind strangers. In the case that both our kids may need to receive hospital-based treatment at the same time, we simply don't have a plan beyond GoFundMe.

Where people in any category of disadvantage fall through the gaps of adequate social support is a sure sign that some aspect of our society is fit for improvement.

The things we say

Some of the abstract ways we choose to talk about childhood cancer are absurdly different to how we are forced to live with it, and this can make life harder for everyone involved.

Famously in the 1970s, the writer and activist Susan Sontag challenged ways in which myths and metaphors about cancer contribute to the suffering of patients. Yet defining childhood cancer through metaphor persists as part of a “you can beat this” attitude that I suspect is mistakenly associated as promoting resilience.

Kids are told that they are engaged in a battle, whereas in reality they are shadowboxing. They’re simply not in control of the weapons that can harm their opponent.

A doctor once encouraged our daughter to name her tumour, as if to personify the enemy within. To me that seems a whole lot scarier than the reality of an indifferent biological mass requiring surgery and treatment.

The body as a battleground is perhaps a more truthful metaphor for cancer and its treatment, but generally I see depictions of warfare as unhelpful for kids, especially when we simultaneously encourage them to understand and accept the reality of their illness.

Well-meaning fictions are also offered to parents. Going thorough this journey, I am often told that what has happened to us is “unfair” and that we as a family “deserve more” than what the hand of fate has delivered.

Our views on life and death are deeply cultural and, in many ways, inadequate

While I appreciate the underlying sentiment, there is an obfuscation of agency going on when cancer itself is viewed through a moral lens. I see the same thing as happening when I hear about cancer being a “cruel disease”. It expresses our frustration at how difficult cancer is to control, but it also makes a fictitious and terrifying claim about what cancer is.

Instead of constructing a malicious villain out of childhood cancer, I believe we should focus on the agency of human beings in the story and what is

within our power to change.

People power

Unlike the disease itself, plenty of people have genuine moral agency in addressing the health and social problems arising from childhood cancer.

Be they medical scientists, clinicians, health administrators or policymakers, real people wield extremely important powers to help or hinder the lives of cancer patients, and often these powers are executed unfairly.

While I'm extremely grateful for the high standard of paediatric cancer care in Australia, there are still many things that could be improved.

Funding constraints and the need for more infrastructure are obvious but not the complete picture. Poor communication, hospital-wide inefficiencies, a lack of genuine approaches to consumer engagement and inflexible workplace cultures all prevent services from improving.

As parents we can only do so much, and when something goes wrong it's often a survival instinct to simply move on. We're in the middle of a long and tiring journey.

The kind and passionate health workers who attend to my children's care clearly value the experiential knowledge of their patients and their families, but there simply aren't enough practical systems in place to extract this knowledge and put it to good use.

Facing our fears, shifting our norms

Families caught in the natural disaster of childhood disease can easily be swept from the safe but narrow precipice of society's constructed norms, and some of these norms are less obvious than others.

Our views on life and death are deeply cultural and, in many ways, inadequate.

I am forever hopeful for my kids to get the all-clear on their scans, for their treatments to work, for gentler ones to emerge, and for a cure to set us all free.

However, I am also a realist and can easily see other situations unfolding.

We tend to view childhood as an inevitable pathway to adulthood and death before old age as an aberration to the natural order of things, but rationally neither of these things are true.

Childhood need not be defined in relation to some uncertain future, and illness or death at any age is both natural and normal, even if it is extremely sad and relatively uncommon.

Some childhood cancer charities target anxieties about death as a way of attracting much needed donations, and while this is helpful in one important respect, it also contributes to a wide-eyed fear of childhood cancer as some abomination or spectre of evil.

When I think about childhood cancer awareness, I equate it with much more than horrifying statistics feeding donations to medical research.

I try to imagine everything that can be gained from the lived experiences of those who face it.

I am still quite new to this journey and these thoughts are my own. Others facing childhood cancer will have their own differing and valuable perspectives to offer. Now is a great time to listen.

Dominic Santangelo is an Australian communications specialist and parent to two young people living with cancer and rare disease

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/20/im-a-parent-of-two-children-with-a-brain-cancer-diagnosis-were-in-the-middle-of-a-long-and-tiring-journey>.

2022.09.20 - Around the world

- [Nigeria Country battling floods ‘beyond control,’ warns of dams overflowing](#)
- [Hong Kong Journalist charged days before leaving for Oxford fellowship](#)
- [Israel Risk of crossing Hezbollah ‘red line’ as it prepares to connect to disputed gas field](#)
- [Japan Warnings over floods and landslides in wake of Typhoon Nanmadol](#)
- [Adnan Syed Judge overturns murder conviction featured in Serial podcast](#)

[Nigeria](#)

Nigeria battling floods ‘beyond control’ as warning given of dams overflowing

Floods have affected half a million people, including 100,000 displaced, Nigeria’s National Emergency Management Agency says



People walk through floodwaters after heavy rainfall in Hadeja, Nigeria.
Photograph: AP Photo/AP

AP in Abuja

Mon 19 Sep 2022 17.50 EDT Last modified on Mon 19 Sep 2022 18.24 EDT

Nigeria is battling its worst floods in a decade with more than 300 people killed in 2022 including at least 20 this week, as authorities said the situation is “beyond our control.”

The floods in 27 of [Nigeria](#)’s 36 states and capital city have affected half a million people, including 100,000 displaced and more than 500 injured, Nigeria’s National Emergency Management Agency said.

The disaster has also destroyed thousands of hectares of farmland, worsening fears of a disruption of food supply in Africa's most populous country.

Since 2012, “this [the flood-related deaths] is the highest we ever had,” said Manzo Ezekiel, a spokesperson for the disaster management agency.

Nigeria sees flooding every year, often as a result of non-implementation of environmental guidelines and inadequate infrastructure. Authorities are blaming the floods this year on water overflowing from local rivers, unusual rainfalls and the release of excess water from Lagdo dam in neighbouring Cameroon’s northern region.

The Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency predicted more floods in 2022 than last year due to “excessive rainfalls and contributions from external flows” such as the dam in Cameroon.

On Monday, Nigeria’s disaster management agency alerted more than a dozen states of “serious consequences” in the coming weeks as two of the country’s dams started to overflow.

“I want to advise all the governments of the frontline states to move away communities at risk of inundation, identify safe higher grounds for evacuation of persons and prepare adequate stockpiles of food and non-food items,” said the head of Nigeria’s National Emergency Management Agency, Mustapha Habib Ahmed.

In the north-west Jigawa state, floods killed more than 20 people in the last week, Yusuf Sani Babura, head of the Jigawa State Emergency Management Agency, told the AP. The state has recorded 91 deaths from flooding this year – more than any state in the country.

“We are facing devastating floods beyond our control,” said Babura. “We have tried our best and we couldn’t stop it.”

The floods have also destroyed crops, mostly in Nigeria’s northern region, which produces much of what the country eats, raising concerns that they

could further affect food supplies already disrupted by armed conflict in the country's north-west and central regions.

[Sign up to First Edition](#)

[Free daily newsletter](#)

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

In the Benue state, Aondongu Kwagh-bee said he visited his rice farm recently and discovered that a heavy downpour had “wiped away everything.”

“Right now, there is nothing there. Just sand filled up and the rice has been washed away,” the 30-year-old said.

Akintunde Babatunde, an Abuja-based climate analyst, said the main cause of Nigeria’s annual flooding problem was the poor infrastructure of roads, drainage and waste disposal.

“Unusual rainfall is evidence of the changing climate,” he said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/19/nigeria-battling-worst-floods-in-a-decade-with-more-than-300-people-killed-in-2022>

[Hong Kong](#)

Hong Kong journalist charged days before leaving for Oxford fellowship

Ronson Chan was due to travel to the UK when he was arrested for ‘obstructing police’



Ronson Chan, chairman of the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA), talks to the media outside the Mongkok police station in Hong Kong before he was charged with obstructing police. Photograph: Peter Parks/AFP/Getty Images

Guardian staff and agencies

Tue 20 Sep 2022 09.40 EDTFirst published on Tue 20 Sep 2022 00.50 EDT

The head of Hong Kong’s journalist union was charged with obstructing police on Monday, 10 days before he was set to leave the city and begin an overseas fellowship at Oxford University.

Ronson Chan, chairman of the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA), was [arrested on 7 September](#) over a dispute with two officers who asked to see his identification while he was covering a residents' meeting at a public housing estate.

The police say Chan refused to provide his ID card and behaved in an “uncooperative” way despite multiple warnings.

He was charged Monday for obstructing a police officer, an offence that carries up to two years in jail, and will appear in court on Thursday.

Speaking to reporters after he was formally charged, Chan maintained he had acted within his rights by asking to see the officers' warrant cards.

“Not an easy environment,” he said, when asked whether media freedoms were deteriorating in Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong Journalists Association is one of the last major professional groups in Hong Kong advocating fundamental rights and media freedoms, following the enactment in June 2020 of the controversial national security law by Chinese authorities.

Authorities have used a [national security law](#) and colonial-era sedition charges to crack down on dissent in Hong Kong after pro-democracy protests three years ago.

“I told them I do not understand the charge ... I did not obstruct any police officers,” Chan said outside the police station.

Chan has disputed the police's account, saying he was asking the officers to explain why they had subjected him to a search and was cuffed before he could get his card out.

He also accused the officers of threatening him on the way to the police station, saying they made comments such as “let's see when you will die”.

Some western governments have criticised the national security law as a tool of repression in Hong Kong, which was handed back to Chinese rule by Britain in 1997. Beijing and Hong Kong authorities say the law has brought stability after the demonstrations in 2019.

The HKJA has been under pressure to disband from pro-Beijing media outlets who accuse it of being an anti-China organisation with ties to overseas groups such as the National Endowment for Democracy – claims the HKJA has denied.

In April, Hong Kong's Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) suspended its annual Human Rights Press Awards so as not to “unintentionally” violate any laws, in what was seen as another sign of eroding media freedoms in the Asian financial hub.

Chan had been planning to leave Hong Kong at the end of September for the six-month Reuters Institute fellowship programme at Oxford University.

Rasmus Nielsen, director of the Reuters Institute, said: “We will welcome Ronson Chan to Oxford as part of the Reuters Institute’s journalism fellowship as soon as possible. He is a distinguished and experienced journalist with much to share, and everyone here is looking forward to hosting him.”

Local media deemed critical of the government have faced a surge of police investigations and the city has plummeted down global press freedom rankings.

Hong Kong dropped 68 places to 148th in the annual press freedom index released by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) this year.

Local tabloid Apple Daily and online news platform StandNews – which Chan used to work for – were forced to close last year after executives were charged with national security violations, leaving hundreds of journalists out of work.

With Reuters and Agence France-Presse

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/20/hong-kong-journalist-charged-days-before-leaving-for-oxford-fellowship>.

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

[Israel](#)

Israel risks crossing Hezbollah ‘red line’ as it prepares to connect to disputed gas field

The Karish maritime reservoir, part of which is claimed by Lebanon, is estimated to hold 2-3tn cubic feet of natural gas



Energean's drill ship drilling at the Karish natural gas field offshore Israel in the east Mediterranean in May. Photograph: Ari Rabinovitch/Reuters

[Bethan McKernan](#) in Jerusalem

Tue 20 Sep 2022 00.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 21 Sep 2022 01.10 EDT

Israel is preparing to connect a disputed Mediterranean gas field to its national gas network, a development helping the country cement its new role as a supplier to Europe at the risk of inflaming tensions with Lebanon's [Hezbollah](#).

The Israeli energy ministry said last week that it would conduct tests on the rig and natural transmission system in the Karish maritime reservoir, part of which is claimed by neighbouring [Lebanon](#). The work is expected to begin on Tuesday, and London-listed company Energean, which has licensed the field, has said that it is “on track to deliver [the] first gas from the Karish development project within weeks.”

Discovered in 2013, the relatively small Karish field, together with the nearby Tarin field, is estimated to hold as much as 2-3tn cubic feet of natural gas and 44m barrels of liquids. While what can be immediately exported is a fraction of what is needed to ease the [global energy crisis](#) sparked by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the operation is nonetheless viewed as welcome by Israel’s western allies as prices soar and Europe searches for alternatives to Russian gas sources.

But Lebanon, which is still technically at war with [Israel](#), claims part of the Karish field as its own. Events took a dramatic turn over the summer, after Energean brought a production vessel into the field in June. Beirut protested that the reservoir should not be developed until US-mediated maritime border negotiations, which began in 2020, are completed. While Israel media has reported that the talks are close to a deal, sources close to the process say there is still substantial work to do.

Hezbollah, the powerful Lebanese Shia movement allied with Iran, responded to the Energean move by launching unarmed drones towards Karish on 2 July, which were shot down by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF).

The group has repeatedly threatened attacks if Israel proceeds in the disputed area. On Saturday, Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, said in a televised speech that Israeli extraction of gas from Karish was a “red line”, but that he wanted the US-brokered maritime border talks to succeed.

“We are following up on the negotiations … our eyes and missiles are locked on Karish,” the cleric said. “As long as extraction has not started, there is a chance for solutions.”

Energean has previously said it has received security assurances from the Israeli government, which has dealt with threats against its offshore gas installations before from Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Israeli media has reported the Greek-founded hydrocarbon exploration company is contractually obliged to begin supplying gas to customers, and has accrued significant debt by developing the project.

“If Nasrallah wants to try and harm and to complicate this process, he is welcome to do so: the price is Lebanon,” Israel’s defence minister, Benny Gantz, said last week. “I hope for his sake that he won’t do this. We are prepared to defend our interests.”

“Israel doesn’t regard anything in its economic exclusive zone as a matter that needs to be negotiated with the Lebanese, but it can be argued that they are being provocative by going ahead with this. The Israeli side of things is verging on the undisciplined, because there’s only a caretaker government in place at the moment,” said Simon Henderson, the director of the Washington Institute’s Gulf and energy policy programme.

[Sign up to First Edition](#)

[Free daily newsletter](#)

Archie Bland and Nimo Omer take you through the top stories and what they mean, free every weekday morning

Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our [Privacy Policy](#). We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

“It’s a geopolitical game of bluff. Hezbollah doesn’t actually want to confront Israel. Israel wants to assert what it sees as its right. And the US, right before the midterm elections, doesn’t want a Middle East war.”

Karish is marginal in terms of global supply, but represents an important economic boon for Israel and Lebanon. Beirut licensed a group of international companies to carry out the country’s first offshore energy

exploration in two other blocs in 2018, but stymied by the maritime border dispute, unstable government and financial collapse, has been unable to make significant progress.

Israeli gas production, meanwhile, is up by 22% so far this year as a result of [Europe severely reducing its dependence on Russian energy](#).

In June, Israel signed a trilateral memorandum of understanding in which gas will be shipped to Egypt, and then on to the EU, for the first time.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/20/israel-risks-crossing-hezbollah-red-line-as-it-prepares-to-connect-to-disputed-gas-field>

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

[Japan](#)

Warnings over floods and landslides in Japan in wake of Typhoon Nanmadol

Two dead and thousands without power as storm dumps heavy rain and authorities warn six million to evacuate



High waves triggered by Typhoon Nanmadol are seen at a fishing port in Aki, Kochi prefecture, western Japan. Photograph: KYODO/Reuters

[Justin McCurry](#) in Osaka and agencies

Tue 20 Sep 2022 01.42 EDT Last modified on Tue 20 Sep 2022 08.21 EDT

Two people have died and more than 100 were injured after Typhoon Nanmadol slammed into [Japan](#) on Monday, dumping heavy rain, paralysing traffic and leaving tens of thousands of homes without power.

The worst of the rainfall was seen in the southernmost island of Kyushu, where two people died, according to the fire and disaster management

agency, before the typhoon was downgraded to a tropical storm as it made its way to the Pacific Ocean.

One of the victims was found inside his submerged car on farmland in Miyakonojo town, and another was recovered from beneath a landslide in Mimata.

One person was missing in Hiroshima prefecture, and 115 others were injured across western [Japan](#), the agency said. Most of injuries were minor, with people falling in the rainstorm, hit by shards of broken windows or flying objects.

Nearly six million people were still under evacuation warnings and authorities cautioned against complacency, warning that in some areas even a small amount of additional rainfall could trigger flooding and landslides.

About 130,000 homes, most of them in the Kyushu region, were still without electricity on Tuesday morning. Many convenience stores were closed at one point and there was disruption to some supply lines.



Typhoon Nanmadol from space Photograph: Bob Hines/NASA/AFP/Getty Images

Most transportation had returned to normal on Tuesday, for many people the first day back at work after a three-day weekend. Bullet train and most ground transportation services resumed, but dozens of flights were grounded in northeastern Japan.

The tropical storm has headed out to the Pacific Ocean off northern Japanese coast, the Japan meteorological agency said Tuesday.

While the meteorological agency had warned of a potentially devastating typhoon, which came ashore unleashing gusts of up to 234 kilometres (145 miles) an hour, the damage appeared relatively limited.

“The typhoon has all but disappeared today and the rain and wind are also subsiding now,” a crisis management official in the south-western town of Saito said.

But residents in the region said they had left their homes as the storm approached, fearing the worst.

“I came to the hotel to shelter because it was windy and I thought it was dangerous,” said Yasuta Yamaguchi, a resident of Izumi in Kagoshima prefecture. “I didn’t feel safe at home.”

Meteorological agency officials said the storm appeared to have lost much of its intensity.

“The thick cloud and eye area around the typhoon’s centre have already disappeared and it is weakening rapidly,” Ryuta Kurora, the head of the JMA’s forecast unit, told reporters.

Japan is struck by about 20 typhoons a year, mainly in the autumn, and routinely experiences heavy rainfall that causes landslides and flash floods.

Experts have warned that typhoons are traveling much slower and causing more damage across Japan in September, a trend that has been attributed to [global heating](#).

In 2019, Typhoon Hagibis [smashed into the country](#) while it was hosting the Rugby World Cup, killing more than 100 people and forcing the cancellation

of several pool matches. A year earlier, Typhoon Jebi shut down Kansai Airport in Osaka, leaving 14 dead.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/20/warnings-over-floods-and-landslides-in-japan-in-wake-of-typhoon-nanmadol>

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

[US news](#)

Adnan Syed: judge overturns murder conviction featured in Serial podcast

Syed was sentenced to life in prison for the murder of his girlfriend Hae Min Lee in 1999



Adnan Syed departs after a judge overturned his 2000 murder conviction and ordered a new trial during a hearing in Baltimore, Maryland.
Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Guardian staff and agencies

Mon 19 Sep 2022 18.05 EDTFirst published on Mon 19 Sep 2022 16.26 EDT

A [Baltimore](#) judge on Monday ordered the release of Adnan Syed after overturning his conviction for the 1999 murder of his ex-girlfriend Hae Min Lee – a case chronicled in the hit podcast *Serial*.

Ruling that the state violated its legal obligation to share exculpatory evidence with Syed's defense, the circuit court judge, Melissa Phinn, ordered Syed placed on home detention with GPS monitoring. Phinn also gave the state 30 days to decide whether to seek a new trial or dismiss the case.

As the hearing ended, Phinn said: "All right Mr Syed, you're free to join your family."

Outside, Syed smiled as he was shepherded to an SUV, through a sea of cameras and cheering supporters.

Adnan Syed, subject of the Serial podcast, exits court to cheers – video

Lee was 18 when she was strangled and killed. Her body was found buried in Leakin Park, Baltimore, in February 1999.

Syed's first trial, in December 1999, ended in mistrial. At his second trial, in February 2000, he was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. Now 41, he has spent more than 20 years behind bars. He has always maintained his innocence.

On Monday, he was led into the crowded courtroom in handcuffs. Wearing a white shirt with a tie, he sat next to his attorney. His mother and other family representatives were in the room, as was the state attorney, Marilyn Mosby.

The case first received widespread attention in 2014, when the debut season of Serial raised doubts about some evidence used.

The 12-part true-crime series was created by Sarah Koenig, a radio producer and former Baltimore Sun reporter who spent more than a year researching the case and reporting her findings in hour-long segments. The podcast won a Peabody Award and did much to popularize the format.

In 2016, a Maryland judge cited doubts over cellphone evidence used to convict Syed and said he should receive a new trial.

Rabia Chaudry, a lawyer and activist, [wrote then](#): “Adnan is my younger brother’s best friend and like a brother to me as well. From the day he was taken from his bed in the pre-dawn hours of 26 February 1999 until today, he has maintained his innocence and I, and my family, have believed him.”

Chaudry also said: “Every piece of forensic evidence collected pointed to Adnan’s innocence. From the hairs found on Lee’s body, which did not match Adnan, to the dozens of soil samples taken from his clothing, shoes, car and room, which returned negative results for matching soil from Leakin Park.”



Shamim Syed, Adnan Syed’s mother, left, celebrates her son’s release after he spent more than 20 years in jail. Photograph: Brian Witte/AP

Lee’s family said then: “It remains hard to see so many run to defend someone who committed a horrible crime, who destroyed our family, who refuses to accept responsibility, when so few are willing to speak up for Hae.”

The family also said: “Unlike those who learn about this case on the internet, we sat and watched every day of both trials – so many witnesses, so much evidence.”

The state appealed the retrial order. Ultimately, the Maryland supreme court denied Syed a retrial. The US supreme court declined to review the case.

Last week, prosecutors filed a motion saying a lengthy investigation conducted with the defense uncovered new evidence that could undermine Syed's conviction.

Mosby's office said an investigation had "revealed undisclosed and newly developed information regarding two alternative suspects, as well as unreliable cellphone tower data".

The suspects were known persons at the time of the original investigation but were not properly ruled out or disclosed to the defense, said prosecutors, who declined to release information about the suspects due to the ongoing investigation.

An assistant state attorney, Becky Feldman, described details that undermined the conviction including unreliable witness testimony and a potentially biased detective.

Feldman said: "I understand how difficult this is, but we need to make sure we hold the correct person accountable."

On Monday, Lee's family did not immediately comment.

Mosby said investigators were waiting for the results of "DNA analysis" before determining whether to seek a new trial or throw out the case and "certify [Syed's] innocence".

She also said: "Justice is always worth the price paid for its pursuit."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/sep/19/adnan-syed-judge-orders-release-serial-conviction-vacated>

Table of Contents

[The Guardian 2022.09.25 \[Sun, 25 Sep 2022\]](#)

[Headlines saturday 24 september 2022](#)

['Class war' Kwarteng accused of reckless mini-budget for the rich as pound plummets](#)

[Analysis Time against Truss as she bets big on economic plan](#)

['Toxic' Tory backbenchers despair at mini-budget](#)

[Mini-budget 2022 What it means for you](#)

[2022.09.24 - Spotlight](#)

[Alan Rickman's secret showbiz diaries The late actor on Harry Potter, politics and what he really thought of his co-stars](#)

[Alan Rickman diaries Two decades of his withering film reviews](#)

[‘The inferno was racing towards me’ Survivors of the Summerland fire on the day their holiday paradise burned down](#)

[University Guide 2023 The full rankings](#)

[Bee-keeping? Ghost-hunting? Why uni is all about extracurriculars](#)

[2022.09.24 - Opinion](#)

[Britain is crying out for radical solutions, but Labour still thinks it’s in the 1990s](#)

[The UK’s energy system is fattening state coffers – just not Britain’s](#)

[Giorgia Meloni is a danger to Italy and the rest of Europe](#)

[The west’s cruelty to migrants will only grow more inhuman.](#)

[Don’t let the nightmare peddlers win](#)

[2022.09.24 - Around the world](#)

[‘Something big is happening’ The Iranians risking everything to protest](#)

[Iran Marchers call for execution of anti-government protesters](#)

[Rage against the regime How Iran erupted after the death of Mahsa Amini](#)

[Analysis Mahsa Amini's death could be the spark that ignites Iran around women's rights](#)

Headlines

[Environment Burning world's fossil fuel reserves could emit 3.5tn tons of greenhouse gas](#)

[Leicester Fifteen arrested to 'deter further disorder', say police](#)

[Live Russia-Ukraine war: Ukrainian military says Russian attacks repelled in Kharkiv and Kherson](#)

[Windrush scandal Home Office refuses to speed up visa case of woman with terminal cancer](#)

[China West weighs calling for Uyghur abuses inquiry at UN](#)

2022.09.19 - Spotlight

['Each guest experience will be different' VR and the future of theme parks](#)

['Insane rightwing misogynist? I'm none of those things!' Steven Moffat on Doctor Who, his Baftas and his critics](#)

['I lost everything' Italians count cost of deadly flood in Marche](#)

[Laura Lexx 'I did 10 gigs for a master's in standup comedy – then never stopped'](#)

2022.09.19 - Opinion

[It was a very modern pilgrimage – a people's quest that led to this historic day](#)

[What Charles can learn from the bond between the Queen and my grandfather](#)

[I have seen the future and it stinks. Who wants to live in a world without deodorant?](#)

[Italian politics has been in trouble for decades. Now it's heading for a new low](#)

2022.09.19 - Around the world

[Environment Vulnerable countries demand global tax to pay for climate-led loss and damage](#)

['These kids can find anything' California teens identify two new scorpion species](#)

[Taiwan Joe Biden again says US forces would defend island from Chinese attack](#)

['You just get on with it' Jacinda Ardern says Queen gave her 'best advice' on being a new mother and leader](#)

[Italy Far-right favourite to be next PM softens on EU as election looms](#)

Headlines

[Live Russia-Ukraine war: Ukraine condemns 'propaganda show' as 'voting' begins in occupied areas](#)

['Total disgrace' Climate activists held in jail for up to six months before trial](#)

[Fracking Rees-Mogg should make his constituency first to be drilled, says Tory MP](#)

['It's going to split opinion' Huge Weston-super-Mare installation opens](#)

[Environment UK laws under threat in 'deregulatory free-for-all'](#)

2022.09.23 - Spotlight

['I could see the trap in the ladette thing' Lush's Miki Berenyi on childhood abuse, hating Britpop, and her relief at dodging fame](#)

[Extract 'The claim that Britpop celebrated sassy women in bands was a veneer'](#)

[Darling, you were dreadful! The best \(and worst\) big-screen performances of all time](#)

['Terrible music and absurdity' Introducing Trombone Champ, the internet's new favourite video game](#)

2022.09.23 - Opinion

[Has Liz Truss handed power over to the extreme neoliberal thinktanks?](#)

[Why I'll be fighting for a rent freeze across England and Wales this winter](#)

[Who wants Liz Truss's bonfire of net-zero red tape? Not big business, for a start](#)

[Putin's nuclear threat shows a desperate man out of options](#)

2022.09.23 - Around the world

[Iran Mahsa Amini death must be investigated, says president, as protests grow](#)

[Tehran Iran blocks capital's internet access as Amini protests grow](#)

[CNN Iran leader shuns interview over refusal to wear headscarf](#)

Headlines

[Live GP leaders say Thérèse Coffey's NHS plan will make 'no tangible difference'](#)

[GPs No sanctions if doctors miss two-week target, health secretary suggests](#)

[Jobs Kwasi Kwarteng to shrink part-time work benefits to grow labour supply](#)

[Liz Truss Striking union members should 'get back to work', says PM](#)

2022.09.22 - Spotlight

[Divine comedy The standup double act who turned to the priesthood](#)

[Short menus, local produce, no tablecloth How to choose a restaurant and help save the planet](#)

[World Cup 2022 Migrant workers in Qatar left in debt after being ordered home before tournament starts](#)

[Welcome to the First Blokes club! What can Hugh O'Leary expect as the prime minister's husband?](#)

2022.09.22 - Opinion

[True crime makes us believe we are certain about people like Adnan Syed. We should be ashamed](#)

[Say goodbye to the 'tiger mom'. Welcome to the school of jellyfish parenting](#)

['Everything is broken because of 12 years of Tory government' – why can't Starmer just say it?](#)

[I spent an afternoon writing my own name. It was lovely until I started overthinking it](#)

2022.09.22 - Around the world

[Agriculture Small number of huge companies dominate global food chain, study finds](#)

[China Influencer Lipstick King reappears, months after Tiananmen 'tank cake' row](#)

Horn of Africa Drought puts 3.6m children at risk of dropping out of school

Colombia Leader's promise of 'total peace' may prove too ambitious

Denmark Scandals dent trust in leadership contender Søren Pape Poulsen

Headlines tuesday 20 september 2022

Live Truss's admission talks on trade deal with US have been shelved is 'terrible news for UK economy', Labour says

Liz Truss No US trade deal on the horizon, admits PM as she flies in for Biden meeting

Liz Truss PM lands in US to reset 'special relationship' on first foreign trip as leader

United Nations Ukraine war to take centre stage at general assembly as west and Russia vie for support

2022.09.20 - Spotlight

Whitney Houston and nuclear secrets Trump's DJ role exposes security flaws

Mar-a-Lago The lax security of Trump's alternative 'White House' – visualized

'It's a midlife crisis on steroids!' Jackass's Steve-O on ageing, addiction and planning a face tattoo

Were you a 'parentified child'? What happens when children have to behave like adults

2022.09.20 - Opinion

From Brexit to the cost of living, Tory governments exploit crises to evade scrutiny

I have never felt more lonely in my republicanism, or more wedded to it

The radio was the soundtrack to my life. But I turned it off a week ago – and may never turn it back on

I'm a parent of two children with a brain cancer diagnosis. We're in the middle of a long and tiring journey

2022.09.20 - Around the world

Nigeria Country battling floods 'beyond control,' warns of dams overflowing

[Hong Kong Journalist charged days before leaving for Oxford fellowship](#)

[Israel Risk of crossing Hezbollah ‘red line’ as it prepares to connect to disputed gas field](#)

[Japan Warnings over floods and landslides in wake of Typhoon Nanmadol](#)

[Adnan Syed Judge overturns murder conviction featured in Serial podcast](#)