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[Names in the news](#)[Cyndi Lauper](#)

Cyndi Lauper: girls just wanna have fun – and be given their due

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)



A new wave of documentaries about female musicians highlights their accomplishments in an industry that too often failed them



Cyndi Lauper: getting the documentary treatment. Photograph: Steve Marcus/Reuters

Sat 7 May 2022 12.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 7 May 2022 14.17 EDT

Cyndi Lauper is about to get the feature-length documentary treatment, with news that a film about the singer's life is in production. It will be called [Let the Canary Sing](#) and is directed by Alison Ellwood.

Ellwood made the award-winning *The Go-Go's* in 2020, which told the story of the LA rock band's rise to the top and subsequent implosion. From the documentary about Janet Jackson earlier this year, to *Sheryl*, out in the US this weekend, about the long career of [Sheryl Crow](#), more and more films are focusing on women's careers in music and finally taking it seriously.

Many stories written upon the release of *Sheryl* have followed a similar vein, in that, despite her huge success, she was never given the credit she was due. In an interview with Crow, in the [New York Times](#), younger artists – from Soccer Mommy to Best Coast – said how much she meant to them. On YouTube, you can watch [Waxahatchee and Snail Mail](#) respectfully and beautifully covering *Strong Enough*, a Crow hit from 1993.

If the credit has always been there, the new film is putting it in its rightful place. Certainly, music history has always been askew about recognising its female contributors. In 2020, NPR [reported](#) that women made up only 8% of inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (bizarrely, Crow has never been nominated), though this year Pat Benatar, Carly Simon and Dolly Parton [joined the club](#), despite Parton's initial resistance.

These documentaries stand as correctives to stories that were often told badly at the time. [*Bad Reputation*](#), the 2018 film about Joan Jett, portrays a music press that hated the Runaways, which thought they were cute until they decided they were “sluts”. This might have been the 1970s, but when I started reading music mags in the 90s, “women in rock” special issues were standard and lists portioned off female musicians as something separate and alien. In 2003, *NME* put Avril Lavigne on a cover with the line “All hail the heroines of the no-cock revolution!” Different times.

There is a movement towards documentaries that explore pop culture from the past in the context of today's more considered attitudes. Many shine a light on tabloid culture and its treatment of celebrities, from Jade Goody to Paul Gascoigne. So music, too, is getting its revision. As the gatekeepers change, the record is being corrected, at last.

Eddie Scott: classic dishes with a twist won him MasterChef



Eddie Scott: king of the kitchen. Photograph: Shine TV/BBC/PA

This year's *MasterChef* came to an end with a final that summed up the eccentricities of what has been a brilliant competition, up there with the best.

Radha Kaushal-Bolland, who is 23, had only been cooking for a couple of years and made John Torode cry, served an entirely vegetarian meal. Pookie Tredell served cocktails from a flower and has dished up rice in every colour of the rainbow, as well as a meal in the colours of the Irish flag.

It felt like a playful year, in which the competition was hungry for difference, whether that was in celebrating rough-and-ready home cooks or wannabe Heston Blumenthals. But in the end, I am not sure the competition was even that close. Eddie Scott, the former Marine pilot who at one point wore a pink shirt and bow tie in homage to his hero, Keith Floyd, won with his combinations of classic French cuisine and Indian spices. His final menu reminded me of *MasterChef* in its early days, with a focus on technical skill as well as flavour. But that was a stuffier show then and Scott and the rest of the finalists, proved that these days *MasterChef* is very far from stuffy.

Women's sport: everyday TV matches are a massive win



Arsenal v Tottenham Hotspur: a prime-time treat. Photograph: MI News/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

One night last week, I was flicking through the channels and settled on the last 15 minutes or so of the Arsenal v Spurs match on BBC Two. At the weekend, I had ended up watching Arsenal trounce Aston Villa. They weren't matches I had planned to see, but had chanced upon and stuck with. Isn't this amazing, I said, as Caitlin Foord scored twice in 11 minutes. ([Spurs were obviously feeling emotional](#) that night.) Women's football is on TV and it is completely normal.

It's a far cry from even a couple years ago when, to watch a number of women's football matches without being there, you had to track them down online and then hope they had more than one camera trained on the pitch. But times have changed, quickly and definitively. According to [new research by the Women's Sport Trust](#), more people are watching women's sport than ever, and they are watching it for longer. "These encouraging figures support our longstanding view that if women's sport is made visible, then audiences will watch," said Tammy Parlour, co-founder and CEO of the trust.

People are watching women play football, cricket and rugby. The rise in audience figures is huge. During the first quarter of last year, 6.7 million watched women's sport; in the same period this year, that stood at [17.9](#)

million. The fact that it is now possible to accidentally catch a match one afternoon or evening feels momentous and I have already started to take it for granted that women's sport is on mainstream TV. If these figures are anything to go by, and the right people are listening, there should be plenty more where that came from.

Rebecca Nicholson is an Observer 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 observer.letters@observer.co.uk

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Opinion**Local elections 2022**

The Observer view on the meaning of the local election results

Observer editorial

The fragmenting of the vote has left the union more fragile than ever



Labour took the traditional Tory stronghold of Wandsworth in the 2022 local elections. Photograph: Xinhua/REX/Shutterstock

Sun 8 May 2022 01.00 EDT

The headlines describing the performance of the main parties in last week's local elections were undramatic, but they disguised a profound truth. The Conservatives suffered a [dismal set of losses](#) following the police fines for the prime minister and the chancellor for breaking the law during the pandemic. Labour achieved eye-catching success in London and made some progress elsewhere, but not enough for a party hoping to win an outright majority at the next general election. The Liberal Democrats went some way towards restoring their role as a repository of protest votes and as challenger

to the Tories in swathes of the south and west. Nationalist parties performed well.

The most important dimension of last Thursday's results is what they might mean for the country's constitutional settlement. Sinn Féin's success in the [Northern Ireland](#) assembly elections, coupled with the growing possibility of a Labour administration in Westminster contingent on SNP support, could have long-term and irreversible ramifications for the relationship between the UK's four constituent nations.

Boris Johnson is a deeply unpopular leader, and the Lib Dem resurgence is eating into the Conservative vote share

The Tories have tried to shrug off their losses as the usual mid-term slump. But there are signs that these are indicators of structural rather than cyclical malaise. Boris Johnson is a deeply [unpopular leader](#), and the Lib Dem resurgence is eating into the Conservative vote share. By the time of the next general election voters will be suffering even more as a result of unsustainably high energy, fuel and food costs. As [Brexit](#) has declined in salience as an issue for voters, the electoral coalition that Johnson so successfully forged off it in 2019 is looking more fragile.

But the flip side is not Labour surging ahead in all the areas where the [Conservatives](#) are retreating; the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and the SNP have benefited. There were bright spots for Labour: taking Westminster off the Tories to cement its dominance in London; good results in Wales; and the first tentative signs of a Scottish recovery. But these only translate into a moderate lead over the Conservatives and are not suggestive of a party on a trajectory to win an outright majority in the next general election. Expecting Labour to achieve this just five years after its worst election defeat since 1935 under Jeremy Corbyn would be a tall order. But Johnson has been beset by crisis after crisis, and Labour should be doing better given the state of the economy. Sir Keir Starmer has made important steps to distance himself from Corbyn on antisemitism within Labour and on foreign policy, but has struggled to articulate a positive vision. He seems much more comfortable defining himself by his opposition to Johnson and the left of his

party than communicating what he stands for. Labour has to do more to convince the country that it has a positive vision for the future, and the policies to realise it.

Labour's solid, but far from stellar, performance makes a hung parliament more likely, with a Labour government reliant on the SNP and the Lib Dems. Nicola Sturgeon is likely to demand another referendum on Scottish independence as the price of that support. She is out of step with the Scottish public on this – a survey for Scotland in Union out today suggests that fewer than a third of Scots back the SNP's policy for a referendum next year, and polling suggests that there is no pro-independence majority. But it is too close for comfort, and a second referendum would dominate UK politics for the years following the election, to the exclusion of other important issues.

It has huge implications for power-sharing in Stormont and the political stability of Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the collapse in the DUP's vote paved the way for Sinn Féin to claim first place in elections to the Stormont assembly. This is no reflection of growing public support for Irish reunification – Sinn Féin's vote share has increased only marginally since 2017 and support for a united Ireland has remained fairly consistent around the 30% mark in recent years. But it has huge implications for power-sharing in Stormont and the political stability of Northern Ireland. The DUP opposes the Northern Ireland protocol that introduced post-Brexit border checks between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK; Sinn Féin views it as an acceptable way out of the conundrum Brexit poses for the Good Friday agreement. The DUP will probably make Johnson breaking the protocol the condition of entering a power-sharing administration with Sinn Féin, which would lead to damaging retaliatory measures from the EU.

Six years after the Brexit vote, it remains unclear how taking the UK out of the single market and customs union, thus requiring customs checks either on the island of Ireland or in the Irish Sea, could ever be consistent with power-sharing and consensual politics in Northern Ireland. The issue will only become more existential in the run-up to the end of 2024, the deadline for the Stormont assembly to vote on consent for the protocol to continue.

Westminster politics is likely to continue to be dominated by allegations and counter-allegations about the breaking of Covid rules, and the announcement of and reaction to government policies with the sole purpose of distracting from bad economic news, such as its dreadful plans to forcibly deport asylum seekers to Rwanda and its destructive proposal to privatisate Channel 4. But last week's results sound a warning note for any politician who supports the union: a more fragmentary politics across the whole country could undermine stability in Northern Ireland, and end up changing the shape of the UK forever. They ignore this at their peril.

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OpinionAbortion

The Observer view on US abortion rights

[Observer editorial](#)

OVERTURNING the Roe v Wade ruling poses a real threat to women's lives



An anti-abortion activist outside the Jackson Women's Health Organization, Mississippi's last remaining abortion clinic. Photograph: Rogelio V Solis/AP

Sun 8 May 2022 01.30 EDT

Universal access to abortion has been a constitutional right guaranteed to all women in the US since the 1973 supreme court Roe v Wade ruling. But in some states, this has been chipped away through [stringent restrictions](#) on abortion clinics and the doctors who practise in them. There is only [one remaining abortion clinic](#) in the whole of Mississippi, for example, making access to abortion a theoretical rather than a practical right for most women in that state.

Now a conservative supreme court looks set to scrap this universal right, rolling back access to abortion for many more women across the US. A draft court ruling leaked last week, written by Justice Samuel Alito and reportedly supported by a majority of the court, would overturn Roe v Wade. It argues that it was “[egregiously wrong](#)” from the start in making this a constitutional issue and that laws on abortion should be determined by federal and state legislators rather than the supreme court.

Several Republican states have already passed highly restrictive abortion laws in anticipation of this ruling, meaning most abortions will be illegal in around 25 states in the likely event the court overturns Roe v Wade. This is estimated to mean 18 million women of child-bearing age will be more than [200 miles](#) from an abortion provider, effectively removing access for the many who cannot afford to travel.

Forcing women to give birth after becoming pregnant, even in the case of incest and rape, would represent an extraordinary rollback of their reproductive rights in one of the world’s richest democracies. History tells us there is no way to ban abortion – only safe access to abortion. Women will always resort to dangerous methods and backstreet clinics to terminate unwanted pregnancies if there is no other way and some will lose their lives as a result. Restricting access to abortion is associated with higher infant and maternal mortality – and the US already has the worst rates among [wealthier countries](#) – and higher [rates of poverty](#). Women who seek illegal abortions, and those who help them, could find themselves subject to the harshest of punishments; in Texas, anyone performing an abortion could be tried for murder and face a life sentence in prison.

If the US restricts abortion rights, it will go against the international trends towards liberalisation of abortion, joining a small club dominated by countries such as Poland, where a rightwing authoritarian government has introduced the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe. There are some uniquely American factors that have left women’s reproductive rights exposed. American women have long enjoyed fewer rights than their British and European counterparts, for example in relation to pregnancy and maternity discrimination. The American religious right has long made overturning abortion rights through a conservative majority on the supreme

court its key objective. And the fact that progressive presidents and legislators have never spent the political capital that would have been required to enshrine women's reproductive rights in legislation means that [Roe v Wade](#) was always going to be vulnerable to challenge once the court swung rightwards.

So much of women's oppression is based on their reproductive biology: on taking away their choices, forcing them to continue with unwanted pregnancies and punishing them economically for having children. In the UK, a woman is killed by a man every three days, rape convictions are at a [historic low](#) and most women in prison are survivors of [domestic abuse](#). What is happening in the US shows the danger of taking women's rights for granted: what is hard won can also be lost.

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Observer comment cartoon

Local elections 2022

Local elections: the wheels come off the Boris bus – cartoon

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NotebookLand ownership

Will mass trespasses make the Tories reconsider burying their land reform plan?

[Tim Adams](#)



As the government suppresses its own report, groups are gearing up to fight for better access to the English countryside



Right to Roam campaigners plan their first trespass in Totnes, Devon.
Photograph: Eduardo Fonseca Arraes/Getty Images

Sat 7 May 2022 10.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 7 May 2022 14.01 EDT

High on this government’s list of bad habits is its apparent compulsion to suppress its own reports. The latest was [Lord Agnew’s review](#) into the right to roam in England’s countryside. Currently, only 8% of English land and 3% of inland water is accessible to the public; in contrast, Scots are permitted to walk, camp, cycle, swim and kayak on most of their nation’s open spaces.

Agnew’s report was planned to create “a quantum shift in how our society supports people to access and engage with the outdoors”. The Treasury, however, in winding up the project, effectively re-emphasised its minister’s stated belief that “the English countryside is a place of business”.

Over the coming month, beginning [today at Totnes](#) in Devon, the Right to Roam group will be protesting against England’s fiercely protective land laws in a series of creative trespass events that argue for the extension of public access to forestry, downland and green belt. The protests take aim at the most visible of the host of statutes that continue to preserve the ancient,

high-walled ownership model that still governs the majority of England's green and pleasant acres.

A useful primer in those urgent issues of land reform might also be found in the polarities of two of last week's dramatic revivals: on the one hand, *Downton Abbey: A New Era*, the latest instalment of Julian Fellowes's rich-man-in-his-castle nostalgia franchise; on the other, Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem*, the most raucous of investigations into the ancient argument of who owns Britain. Mark Rylance's question, in the voice of *Jerusalem*'s untameable Johnny "Rooster" Byron, facing eviction from his patch of Wiltshire land, and declaring a day of freedom to all-comers, might have made a good starting point for Lord Agnew: "What the fuck do you think an English forest is for?"

Managing expectations



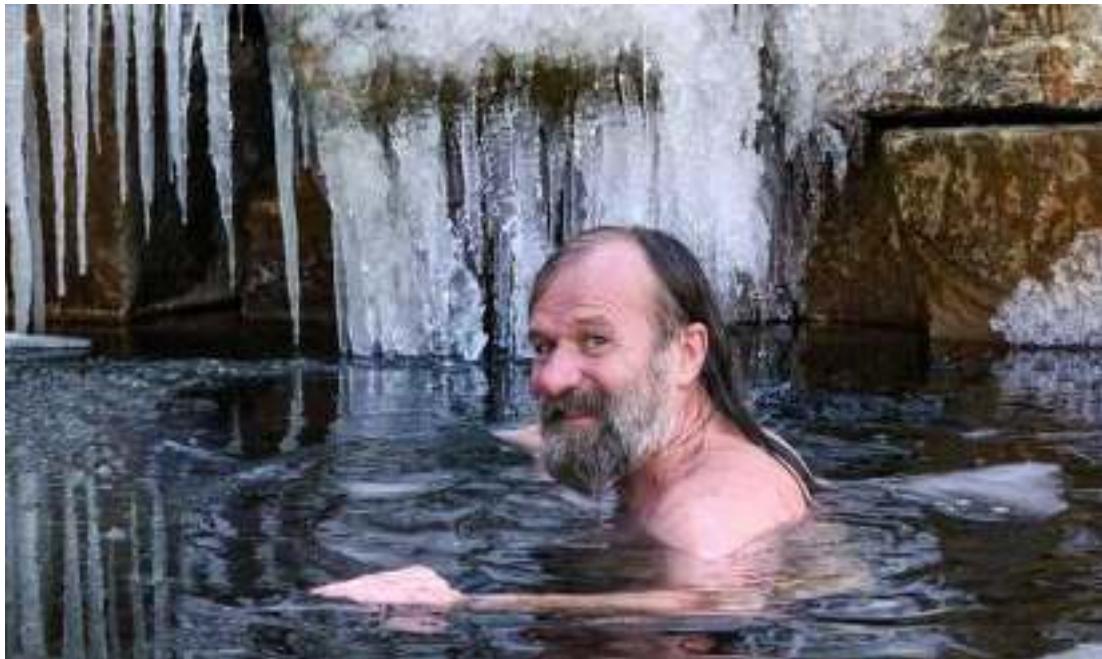
Pep Guardiola after Manchester City's defeat to Real Madrid on 4 May.
Photograph: Carl Recine/Action Images/Reuters

I once spent a very long 45 minutes interviewing the then England manager Fabio Capello in a hotel room in Lesotho, through the medium of a pony-tailed translator and two public relations officers. Every question I asked was filtered three ways to find the blandest possible form of words from the

taciturn England supremo. In the longueurs when those translations were being perfected, I had an idea for a reality show involving football managers shipwrecked together on a desert island: who, I wondered, would prevail?

In the years since, it would have been hard to bet against Manchester City's [Pep Guardiola](#) – with his unassailable mix of strategic purity and charismatic rigour – to emerge victorious from that particular jungle. The latest surreal last-gasp defeat of his team by Real Madrid in Wednesday's Champions' League semi-final suggested a different outcome, however. Having effortlessly mastered every *Lord of the Flies* survival strategy, a falling coconut would no doubt brain the Spaniard in the final act.

Snow business



Wim Hof takes an invigorating ice-bath in the Netherlands. Photograph: Frans Lemmens/Alamy

As we all collectively chip in to the [monster profits](#) of Shell and BP, and living rooms across the country get a little colder and darker, it seems no coincidence that the philosophy of [Wim Hof](#) is near the top of the bestseller lists. Hof peddles the idea that the secret to health and happiness lies in cold showers and frigid baths. Last week, I was flicking through Hof's book with one eye on the ever-alarming smart meter, while weighing up the cost (and

vascular) benefits of a 28-day cold shower regime. How long will it be before some minister steps forward to recommend “[snowga](#)” as an antidote to the cost-of-living crisis?

Tim Adams is an Observer columnist

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[**Opinion**](#)[**Met Gala 2022**](#)

What do you get when a lack of taste meets a shedload of cash? Anna Wintour's ball

[**Catherine Bennett**](#)



New York's annual Met Gala is tawdry at the best of times. This year its excess just seemed moronic



Kim Kardashian, ‘squashed into the very dress in which Marilyn Monroe once sang Happy Birthday, Mr President’, arrives with comedian Pete Davidson for the 2022 Met Gala at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photograph: Angela Weiss/AFP/Getty Images

Sun 8 May 2022 02.00 EDT

‘Gilded glamour’ was the theme of last week’s Met Gala, the annual fancy dress party that has long been run, to generally adulatory international effect, by Anna Wintour, the magazine eminence. This year’s guests included Lila Moss, Brooklyn Beckham, assorted actors and influencers and first among countless Kardashians, Kim, the underwear magnate, [squashed into the very dress](#) in which Marilyn Monroe once sang Happy Birthday, Mr President.

Wintour’s staff hailed Kardashian’s achievement in *Vogue*: “Orchestrating a style maneuver of this magnitude would require new levels of commitment and planning.”

Thanks to Amy Odell’s exhaustive new book chronicling Wintour’s ascent to fashion and celebrity dominion – though she hopes to be remembered as a great philanthropist – we know that planning for the “gilded glamour” spectacle would have started immediately after last year’s gala. Much is

made of Wintour's meticulous involvement, vetting everything from the celebrities' costumes to the appearance of the waiters and vegetables. So there's even less excuse for it, really.

Wintour could not have anticipated, of course, that her un-ironic emulation of the 19th-century gilded age, specifically of flashier profiteers whose (according to *Vogue*) "parties, balls, and soirées brought out the most extravagant style this country has ever seen", would coincide with attempted genocide in Ukraine and a revived nuclear threat. And also, as it turned out, with the leaking of a proposal to overturn Roe v Wade.

Not that there's anything new about ostentatious partying in the face of other people's adversity: in New York, as in Versailles, it's practically a tradition. In 1966, ecstatic reporting of Truman Capote's black-and-white ball easily eclipsed objections that Americans were dying in Vietnam while his friends were swanking around in bespoke rabbit masks. "The ball was a carryover from the 50s – the last time when people felt no guilt about expenditures and were not bothered by any serious social questions," one guest, the late Isabel Eberstadt, [recalled](#), long before Wintour's, and in London Evgeny Lebedev's, guests so enthusiastically proved her wrong.

One soldier, says Capote's biographer, Gerald Clarke, wrote to *Time* to complain about having to protect "this fat, lethargic, useless intelligentsia". An objection that could anyway have no bearing, today, on Wintour's guest list, one largely composed of well-exercised celebrities posing no intellectual threat to anyone. "God forbid if they're fat, if they are unsightly, they have to go. That was absolutely a thing," a *Vogue* staffer told Odell. It has been less easy for Wintour, running the gala since 1995, to edit parts of the museum she found ugly: when the 2,000-year-old Temple of Dendur could not be boarded up, she resorted to hiding it behind a stage on which Katy Perry performed. Donald Trump and Harvey Weinstein were, however, allowed – when in Wintour's favour – to be starkly visible.

Wintour's latest gala had a desperate, as well as tone-deaf quality

Assuming the 2022 planning was too advanced for either thematic adjustment or any other hint of restraint or awareness when Putin began

murdering Ukrainian civilians, the gilded glamour theme might already have looked tasteless, considering Covid and inflation, to a less formidably philanthropic host. On the other hand, Wintour could be confident that, with her blessing, crass excess would be indulged as per, even in an economic crisis and not only by her own publications. Nothing had deterred her after 2008. Each year, Odell says, “to make everything more impressive and more exclusive, the budget went up”. At the same time, previously spurned celebrities became cherished gala invitees and thus, thanks to Wintour’s influence, beneficiaries of heightened media respect for, say, their selfie or corset practice.

As for the party, [Tina Fey has recalled](#): “It’s just every jerk from every walk of life is there wearing, like, some stupid thing.”

The gala’s worthier purpose is, via costly tickets, to fund the Met’s costume institute, renamed in 2014 the [Anna Wintour](#) Costume Center. Its staff “excel”, the museum says, “in the practices and theories of costume and textile conservation”. Even without all the other reasons to recoil, Wintour’s decision to make Kardashian in Monroe’s dress into the 2022 gala’s central stunt would be astonishing for putting celebrity before preserving cultural heritage – the ostensible point of the event. “Naturally, the big reveal tonight was nothing short of jaw-dropping,” *Vogue* promptly confirmed. But maybe not in a good way? It’s as if, for instance, Tristram Hunt invited the entire panel of *Britain’s Got Talent*, with plus ones, to help V&A furniture conservation by buying a night in the Great Bed of Ware.

If Wintour’s choice of model, timing and event makes this an exceptionally striking lapse of judgment, Monroe’s fragile, beaded dress should not, the *LA Times* reported, have been worn again ever, for reasons both symbolic and physical. The dress speaks – spoke – of a historic moment, of a night four years before Capote’s black-and-white ball. It could be damaged by gravity along with perspiration, sunlight, temperature changes, humidity.

Sarah Scaturro, formerly a conservator at the Met’s Costume Institute, told the paper: “My worry is that colleagues in historic costume collections are now going to be pressured by important people to let them wear garments.”

Given Wintour's continuing hold on her "kingdom", as Odell calls it, with her proved power to make [naked dresses](#) a thing, such idiocy is not impossible. On the other hand, for a person whose influence remains (Odell again) "profound and unmatchable", Wintour's latest gala had a desperate, as well as tone-deaf quality. Is her primacy on the Met's stairs – welcoming a junior Beckham, fresh from one of the most vulgar weddings in living memory – what all the dawn blow-dries and interminable ruthlessness were for?

After Capote's party, taken to be Wintour's ideal, profiles of the famous often mentioned if they'd been there, his biographer says, "which was the irrefutable proof of their importance". The way her galas are going, it could yet be Wintour's achievement to offer her own guests the opposite.

Catherine Bennett is an Observer columnist.

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[Opinion](#)[Northern Irish politics](#)

With Sinn Féin's victory, tectonic plates have shifted in Northern Ireland

[Susan McKay](#)

In Yeats's words, 'all changed, changed utterly'



Alliance party leader Naomi Long: 'Confident and progressive leadership.'
Photograph: Liam McBurney/PA

Sun 8 May 2022 03.00 EDT

The Irish taoiseach, Micheál Martin, [put it politely](#). It would be “undemocratic” for the Democratic Unionist party to refuse to form an executive in Belfast after the elections, he said. But the DUP will refuse to enter an executive, now that Sinn Féin has [massively outpolled it](#), and a majority of Northern Ireland’s people has voted to have as first minister a republican whose party wants a united Ireland. Sinn Féin gained an astonishing 29% of [first preference votes](#) in Thursday’s assembly elections. The DUP got 21.3%, a drop of 6.7% on its last performance.

That refusal, ostensibly a protest over the Northern Ireland protocol, will be even further good news for an already jubilant Sinn Féin, because it proves definitively to its voters that Northern Ireland, set up 101 years ago to be an exclusively unionist state, is incapable of becoming a pluralist one and must therefore be brought to an end. No wonder Sinn Féin's president, Mary Lou McDonald, has already said that preparations for [a border poll](#) should begin immediately and that it could be held within five years.

Northern Ireland is one of the poorest regions in the UK and many of those who work with its most disadvantaged citizens are pointing out evidence that a growing number of people are living in what is defined as destitution. They cannot meet the basic needs of their families. This is not a good time to refuse to govern.

Under threat from the reality of change, unionism has hardened. During the election campaign, Jeffrey Donaldson, leader of the DUP, aligned himself with those extremists opposed not only to the protocol but to the Good Friday agreement and power-sharing. This was madness – the 1998 agreement protected unionist rights, whatever the constitutional future might hold. Donaldson's support has worked not for his own party but for the hard-right Traditional Unionist Voice party, which increased its vote, though as far as seats are concerned it remains [a one-man band](#). It will maintain its grip on the DUP. Its leader, Jim Allister, who is fiercely articulate in his aggressive nostalgia for the days of unionist dominance, has already begun to jibe at Donaldson about his post-election choices. He demanded to know if the DUP was now [willing to be bridesmaid](#) to Sinn Féin, with its MLAs as page boys and page girls.

Donaldson looks increasingly like Miss Havisham, sitting abandoned amid the mouldering ruins of the wedding feast. There is, we all know, no prospect that Boris Johnson will cease to be a cad. He casually let his suave best man Brandon Lewis reveal on Wednesday night that even his most recent [promise would be broken](#). There would be nothing in the Queen's speech about ditching the protocol, nothing to make it look like he even noticed the dilemma of the party that shafted Theresa May and got him into power. If it suits Johnson to use the DUP in its Brexit standoff with the EU,

he'll use it. Otherwise, his response to the DUP's neediness is Rhett Butler's to Scarlett O'Hara: "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

If it suits Johnson to use the DUP in its Brexit standoff with the EU, he'll use it

Donaldson would far rather stay at Westminster than return to Stormont. Another of Johnson's broken promises (allowing double jobbing) means he must choose. Paul Givan, the [first minister ousted](#) when Donaldson pulled down the executive earlier this year, said last night the party leader should be at Stormont, more evidence that the party is still bitterly divided. This election has simplified the political landscape, while also making it more interesting, not least because of the massive success of Alliance, which has emerged as the third largest party. It takes no position on the constitutional question and draws voters from unionist, nationalist and other backgrounds. Alliance used to be the party that "nice" unionists said they voted for when they didn't want to admit they voted for the Reverend Ian Paisley. Under the confident and progressive leadership of Naomi Long, it has attracted a broad range of people, including many young people from the Protestant community who have rejected the DUP's fundamentalism and intransigence.

At Stormont, under the power-sharing arrangements established under the Good Friday agreement, parties must designate as unionist, nationalist or other. Alliance is "other". It has surpassed even its own highest expectations, taking 13.5% of first preference votes and gaining numerous seats through transferred votes. The Social Democratic and Labour party and the Ulster Unionist party suffered devastating losses, even in their heartlands. The Green party lost its seat.

Long has been campaigning for a change in the power-sharing arrangements that recognises that the old binary no longer represents political reality and that her voters cannot be treated as lesser citizens whose representatives are not called upon when "cross-community support" is being measured. The success of Alliance will ensure that [Sinn Féin](#) and the DUP, should they form an executive office together, must represent the interests of a diverse society.

The [lines by Yeats](#) about the Easter Rising in 1916 and its aftermath are overused but in this case are apt. “All changed, changed utterly.” Northern Ireland has had a transformative election.

Susan McKay is the author of Northern Protestants – On Shifting Ground

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/08/with-sinn-feins-victory-tectonic-plates-have-shifted-in-northern-ireland>

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Observer lettersUniversities

Letters: not at university? The odds are stacked against you

Those who do not go into tertiary education face structural inequalities, yet the government will not level the playing field



People aged 18-22 in full-time employment must pay the full bus fare in Brighton. Photograph: Dan Istitene/Getty Images

Sun 8 May 2022 01.00 EDT

Sonia Sodha's article brilliantly highlights the unfair advantage that young people who happen to be able to go to university enjoy over their counterparts who happen not to – ie a government-subsidised and societally supported transition to adulthood and independent living ("[Is it fair that we spend so much helping middle-class children into adulthood?](#)", Comment).

There are other structural inequalities that see young people who enter the world of work (and for whom university may not be an option) further disadvantaged. The national living wage applies only to those over 23, yet

dental treatment, prescriptions, eye tests and bus travel (in Brighton, anyhow) cost 18- to 22-year-olds in full-time employment exactly the same as adults aged 23 and over. Meanwhile, those in full-time higher education can apply for low-income free prescriptions and access-free dental treatment up to the age of 19; receive income from a student loan that is exempted from their personal tax allowance; and can avail themselves of cheaper student travel and discounts on countless good and services (including eye tests and glasses). The government could do much to level things up for young people – it seems it simply chooses not to. In the meantime, pensioners (the biggest voting group) continue to enjoy free bus travel regardless of income.

Lauren Shukru

Brighton

Sonia Sodha's race-to-the-bottom logic is rife. Instead of abolishing tuition fees, investing in schools or ending the rent crisis, we should just defund universities even further? Already, the sector is funded through crippling loans rather than the government. [Universities](#) don't get to make up their own grading scales, they have external examiners to ensure parity; where this fails, it is because of corruption induced by fee and funding structures.

If there are more middle-class than working-class students, we need to address the shortcomings in education and prospects that make it so, not further stratify society by sending working-class students into internships. University education has nothing inherently to do with vocational training, and the sooner it is decoupled from the idea that society needs to somehow get “value for money” from this, the better.

If, as Sodha claims, “new research suggests that going to university is associated with a decline in racist and authoritarian attitudes”, this is all the more reason to encourage more people to study to this level, regardless of what work they end up doing.

Pil and Galia Kollectiv

London E2

Nursery crimes

Surprise, surprise, a childcare recruitment crisis (“[Staff shortages force nurseries to close – and it’s going to get worse](#)”, News). A friend with a social sciences degree, NVQ levels 3 and 5 and more than 30 years’ experience recently quit her nursery job to stack shelves in Aldi. Better working conditions, less stress and £1 an hour more in her pay packet. Says it all.

Alexandra Cosgrave
London SW11

Starmer's missed chance

Keir Starmer accurately, if incompletely, describes the political bankruptcy of this Tory government (“[The sound you can hear is the dying groans of a clapped-out government](#)”, Comment). It is disappointing, though, that the only reference he makes to the appalling error of Brexit, foisted on a misled populace by the same crew currently mismanaging the country, is to identify potential VAT cuts as a “genuine Brexit benefit”. This is, to be sure, one more than Jacob Rees-Mogg has identified, but, in failing to address the folly of this government’s version of Brexit, and its destructive impact on our policies, economy, security and reputation, Starmer is failing to lead, and failing to begin the dialogue towards repairing the damage wrought by it.

Tim Lambert
London SW1

The fog of war

It is remarkable that there are still those who want to defend the accuracy of Denis Avey’s account of his life as a British POW in Auschwitz (“[Hero or hoax? New doubts dog story of man who broke into Auschwitz](#)”, News).

Avey’s memoir is perhaps unique in that it is a false account based on two other such textual deceptions (Charles Coward’s *The Password is Courage* and *Stoker* by Donald Watt). No doubt Avey wanted recognition very late in his life and, rather than simply write about what was a horrific experience, constructed himself as a rescuer of Jews. That he should do so is perhaps understandable if unfortunate, but the lack of care taken to check the ludicrous elements of his story does no credit on the publishers and others

who helped him write the book and then promoted it and Avey. It is to be hoped that the forensic research of Alon Shapira and others will now lead to a major health warning if Avey's memoir remains on sale.

Professor Tony Kushner

Parkes Institute for the study of Jewish/non-Jewish relations
University of Southampton

Bertie is no Boris

William Keegan very wittily uses a scene from PG Wodehouse's *Much Obliged, Jeeves* to make a positive comment on the French presidential election, but incidentally calls Bertie Wooster a Boris Johnson-like figure ("[France has rejected the far right. So can Brexit Britain](#)", Business). This is a serious insult to Wooster, whose scrapes often arise from his trying to do a favour to a friend, with hilarious results from which Jeeves has to rescue him. Johnson's scrapes arise from his own dishonesty and incompetence, from which there is no Jeeves to rescue the country.

Vivienne Kynaston

Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire

The left's capital problem

To say that "Labour was too relaxed about rampant finance capitalism and too heedless of the downsides of globalisation", as Andrew Rawnsley argued, is the understatement of the decade ("[The lessons that Keir Starmer can learn from New Labour's famous landslide victory](#)", Comment). The "radical advances" he justly celebrates were largely undone, as the French economist Thomas Piketty has shown, by a massive transfer and concentration of wealth into the hands of the 1%, and a concomitant reduction in the living standards of the vast majority, creating an unprecedented challenge to the would-be regulators of capital.

The impoverishment that led millions to vote for Brexit in their despair is now intensified by Covid and war, which Labour describes as a cost-of-living crisis. That is certainly one symptom of a crisis at whose heart is a fundamental question for the left: is political regulation a feasible solution to capital's reluctance to coexist with humankind and the planet?

Martin Yarnit
Sheffield

Decline and fall

While skim-reading the *Observer*, I was initially struck by the magnanimous headline attached to Tim Adams's piece (“[Anyone with a heart is bound to feel sadness at Boris Becker's fall](#)”, Comment). Then I realised that, sadly, the fall of Boris referred to someone else entirely. I respectfully suggest that the *Observer* considers how its headline might be recycled in the near future.

Colin Mann
Barrhead, Glasgow

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[For the record](#)UK news

For the record

This week's corrections

Sun 8 May 2022 01.00 EDT

An article reporting concerns from the Scottish and Welsh governments that a book commemorating the Queen's 70-year reign was too Anglocentric ([Jubilee children's book hits a snag in Wales and Scotland](#), 1 May, p17), wrongly referred to those countries [constituent countries of the UK] as "regions".

The Kirklees council area does not include Wakefield as stated in an article previewing the local elections ([Porn shame adds to Tory woes in south-west as party fears poll blow](#), 1 May, p4).

[Speedy crossword No. 1,387](#) (1 May, p59) may have been speedier than usual for some readers to complete; an administrative error meant it was a duplicate of No. 1,379 that appeared on 6 March. We regret any disappointment caused. In addition, the clue for 21 across should have been "Multiplied by itself twice", not "Multiplied by itself three times".

Other recently amended articles include:

[Hero or hoax? The man who broke into Auschwitz – or maybe didn't](#)

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

OpinionCoronavirus

Sweden? Japan? UK? Debates over who had a ‘good’ Covid won’t end

Francois Balloux

The WHO has spoken but even its huge new report will not settle arguments about pandemic strategies



A cyclist passes a Covid awareness mural in New Delhi in July 2020.
Photograph: Sajjad Hussain/AFP/Getty Images

Sun 8 May 2022 02.30 EDT

National Covid death rates are, inevitably, political. How could they not be when they are viewed as evidence for good or bad government on matters of life or death? How did the UK fare compared with, say, Germany? Should both countries have been more like Sweden? However, when new data arrives, far from settling arguments over which pandemic mitigation strategies worked best, it tends to further inflame disagreements or harden pre-existing positions.

So it is with the [much-anticipated report](#) by the World Health Organization (WHO) on Covid-associated deaths, released last week. The WHO estimates that around 15 million additional people died because of the pandemic in 2020-2021, about 2.7 times higher than officially recorded deaths.

While staggering, the estimated excess deaths didn't really come as a surprise to those who have been closely following the situation. If anything, this estimate is lower than many may have anticipated. Indeed, two previous modelling efforts, by the [Economist](#) and the University of Washington, suggested around 18 million excess deaths.

That more people died in the pandemic than have been officially registered as Covid deaths should be largely uncontroversial. Many countries simply did not have the diagnostic infrastructure in place to identify every Covid death. The pandemic – and, to an extent, our response to it – has also been devastating to social and healthcare around the world.

Now the WHO report seems to provide ammunition for essentially any narrative and it is unlikely to check the politicisation of the Covid debate – in the UK or elsewhere.

For example, India's own official excess death estimate is about 10 times lower than the 4.7 million people reported by the WHO. Indian authorities have vehemently rejected the methodology used by the WHO and its estimate for their country. They even opposed publication of the report and released their own 2020 death figures [two to three months ahead of schedule](#) to offer a counter-narrative.

According to the WHO estimates, Germany significantly underestimated Covid deaths, France overestimated them and the UK got it about right

Here, many comparisons have been made with other countries to highlight the UK as either the epitome of failure or a roaring success. In fact, according to the WHO report, the UK has fared fairly unremarkably. An estimated 109 excess deaths per 100,000 people places it at 56th in the

global ranking of “best performing” countries, and middle of the table relative to the European Union, coming 15th out of the 27 EU member states. The UK’s estimated excess death toll is below Germany’s and Italy’s, but above France’s. According to the WHO estimates, Germany significantly underestimated Covid deaths, France overestimated them and the UK got it about right, suggesting that the much-criticised “death within 28 days of a positive test” approach was a reasonable proxy for Covid death before the Omicron wave.

Some countries became synonymous in the public imagination with particular pandemic mitigation strategies. Sweden has been criticised by some for the lack of stringency of its measures and hailed by others as a shining example of how to protect the rights of its citizens while navigating a health crisis.

To the possible disappointment of both its supporters and detractors, Sweden’s estimated excess death of 56/100,000 is about half the UK’s and, while it is above those of other Nordic nations, it still looks flattering relative to the majority of EU countries.

An additional reason why the WHO report won’t settle many arguments stems from Covid excess death figures being extremely difficult to measure precisely. Even in the absence of ideological disagreements, they do not offer simple, incontrovertible “follow the science” answers. Pandemic excess deaths represent the difference between the number of people who died, relative to a hypothetical number of people who *may have died*, had the pandemic not happened.

The worst performer by some margin is Peru, despite enforcing the harshest, longest lockdown

The number of actual deaths is accurately registered in high-income countries but this is not necessarily the case in many parts of the world, where estimates can be crude. Getting an accurate number for the hypothetical number of deaths that may have occurred had the pandemic *not happened* is even more challenging. (The WHO relied on a fairly complex

model and the extent to which some of its estimates may have been coloured by modelling assumptions will be scrutinised and criticised.)

The report paints a complex picture supporting no single straightforward narrative. Which shouldn't be too surprising. A single number for each country is unlikely to capture the full complexity of vastly different socioeconomic situations and two years of often inconsistent policies. Lower-middle income countries in eastern Europe and South America have been particularly badly affected, probably because of a relatively unfavourable age pyramid, low vaccination coverage and disruption to their economy and healthcare systems. Richer countries tended to do better overall, with the exception of the US, which fared quite poorly with 144/100,000 excess deaths.

A few countries kept excess deaths close to, or even below zero, including Australia, Iceland, Japan, Luxembourg, Mongolia and New Zealand. Being rich and geographically isolated helps.

The stringency of mitigation measures does not seem to be a particularly strong predictor of excess deaths. While countries that achieved low excess deaths tended to have fairly tight measures in place, the worst performer by some margin is [Peru](#), despite enforcing the harshest, longest lockdown. This proved ineffective at reducing viral transmission and probably contributed negatively to the excess death toll.

The results from the WHO report will undoubtedly be analysed extensively by pandemic planners, though they are unlikely to be of much help to inform actionable “one-fits-all-follow-the-science” strategies. The major message is that richer, more insular countries kept excess deaths low by limiting the spread of Sars-CoV-2 until the arrival of vaccines and then achieved high vaccination coverage in elderly people. Those relative success stories largely built on pre-existing geographic and socioeconomic advantages rather than unique, well-thought-out mitigation plans.

Read that way, the main thrust of the WHO report boils down to reducing inequality, improving health and providing a robust social and healthcare system offering the best pandemic preparedness. That would be money well spent, even if the next one takes a while to hit.

Francois Balloux is the director of the Genetics Institute at University College London

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[Opinion](#)[Rupert Murdoch](#)

Fox News deals in Kremlin propaganda. So why not freeze Rupert Murdoch's assets?

[Nick Cohen](#)



If NewsCorp's owner were Russian, there would be no hesitation in applying sanctions



Fox News's Tucker Carlson has suggested that the war in Ukraine is as a result of the Jo Biden administration's desire to avenge Donald Trump's 2016 election victory. Photograph: Richard Drew/AP

Sat 7 May 2022 14.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 7 May 2022 14.44 EDT

If the west could find the courage, it would order an immediate freeze of Rupert Murdoch's assets. His Fox News presenters and Russia's propagandists are so intermeshed that separating the two is as impossible as unbaking a cake.

On Russian state news, as on Fox, bawling ideologues scream threats then whine about their victimhood as they incite anger and self-pity in equal measures. Its arguments range from the appropriation of anti-fascism by Greater Russian imperialists – the 40 countries supporting Ukraine were “today's collective Hitler”, viewers were told last week – to the [apocalyptic delirium of the boss of RT](#) (Russia Today) Margarita Simonyan. Nuclear war is my “horror”, she shuddered, “but we will go to heaven, while they will simply croak”.

Russia would never give genuine western journalists airtime. But it can always find a slot for its [favourite quisling: Fox News's Tucker Carlson](#). He pushes out Russian propaganda lines or perhaps [creates his own lies for](#)

Russia to use. Ukraine, not Russia, is the real tyranny. Nato provoked poor Vladimir Putin. The west is plotting to use biological weapons. Last week, he floated the theory that the war was not the result of an unprovoked invasion by a colonialist dictatorship but of the Biden administration's desire to avenge Donald Trump's victory in 2016.

It was a big hit in Moscow, reported BuzzFeed's Julia Davis. "State TV propagandists loved it so much, Russia's *60 Minutes* included it not once, but twice in their evening broadcast – neatly bookended by the Kremlin's war propaganda."

Putin's appeal to both the far right and the Chomskyan wing of the far left in Europe and North America is worthy of a study in itself. He was a dream for ultra-reactionaries: a white, Christian strongman, who was anti-liberal and anti-EU. His victories heralded a world in which might was right and morality was for losers.

In Europe, Russia's atrocities have forced everyone from Arron Banks and Nigel Farage to Marine Le Pen and Matteo Salvini to find urgent reasons to change the subject. In the US, there remains a market for Putinism among a large minority of Republican voters. Their yearning for dictatorship, as evidenced by the support given to denying legitimate election results and to the fascistic forces that stormed Congress, is greater. The hatred of liberals in power is deeper.

Murdoch is boosting Russian morale and, conversely, undermining Ukrainian resolve by supplying a dictatorship with foreign validation. Do not underestimate its importance. Russians who suspect their TV anchors are state-sponsored bootlickers are more likely to believe foreign commentators who assure them that the lies they are hearing are true. Reporters risk their lives but Putin cannot fire or imprison Fox News presenters, steal their wealth or poison them with Novichok. Russian forces will not reduce their towns to rubble, rape them, torture them, burn them alive in theatres or shoot them in the head by the side of forest roads. Murdoch and his employees have nothing to fear from Putin. Their endorsement of Kremlin war propaganda carries conviction because it is freely given.

Murdoch boosts Russian morale and undermines Ukrainian resolve by supplying a dictatorship with foreign validation

As useful to Russia is the wider chilling effect. I have seen journalists start off making eloquent and plausible critiques of the left's hatred of free speech, for instance, or its tolerance of regressive religion, only to find that careers in the worst of the rightwing media come with a price tag. To succeed on [Fox](#) News in the US, they don't have to agree with banning abortion or denying climate change but they must never make their objections public.

The [UK's sanctions regulations](#) include among the reasons for freezing an oligarch's assets "obtaining a benefit from or supporting the Government of Russia". The [Biden White House promises to punish](#) those "responsible for providing the support necessary to underpin Putin's war on Ukraine". On both interpretations, there is a plausible prosecution case for freezing the assets of Murdoch's NewsCorp.

Because it is a media conglomerate, sanctions would be an attack on free speech. I say this plainly because so many writers and political actors pretend that they are not demanding censorship when that is precisely what they are doing. Nevertheless, in this case the threat to freedom is minimal. Murdoch would not be punished for revealing embarrassing truths about the west but for spreading demonstrable lies for a hostile foreign power.

If you still feel queasy, imagine if Murdoch's media organisation were exactly as it is today and producing the same arguments the Kremlin uses to justify its crimes. The one difference is that Murdoch is Russian rather than Australian. I don't believe there would be the slightest hesitation in removing him and his family from control of their businesses. Indeed, the UK, EU and US have already announced sanctions [against Russian broadcasters and individual journalists](#). I have not heard anyone claim that they are attacking press freedom, rather than trying to cripple the propaganda capacity of a warmongering state.

The Murdoch empire contains the *Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, whose Russian coverage has been admirable, and HarperCollins, which with a

bravery few other publishers would match, fought off a vicious legal assault by the Russian oligarchy and their pet London lawyers against a critical study of Putin's power.

But good deeds count for nothing in assessing the desirability of sanctions. The tycoon Oleg Tinkov spoke for many rich Russians when he denounced the “massacre” in Ukraine and called for an end to the “crazy war”. The oligarchs the west has sanctioned are losing their fortunes and what little influence they had. Of course they hate Putin's strategy. Western governments don't care because, as Tom Keatinge of the Royal United Services Institute explains it to me, they know that a large portion of oligarchical wealth is at Putin's disposal. Their private thoughts and, when they dare risk assassination attempts, public protests are irrelevant. The need to end war in Europe comes first.

Tender-hearted readers may object that Murdoch is now 90 and may well not be in full control of his organisation. But surely this is an argument for removing him? If in his dotage he is allowing himself to become a cross between Lord Haw Haw and Tokyo Rose, it would be a kindness for western governments to save him from himself.

Nick Cohen is an Observer 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 observer.letters@observer.co.uk

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Headlines

- 'I'm willing to risk it' Small boat asylum seekers undeterred by Rwanda plan, survey finds
- Firebombs and death threats Councillors need more protection, say UK bodies
- NHS 'Dental deserts' form in England as dentists quit, experts warn
- 'My teeth still hurt' Patients unable to get on to NHS lists

Immigration and asylum

Small boat asylum seekers undeterred by Rwanda plan, survey finds

Survey of asylum seekers in northern France finds three-quarters will try to reach UK despite government's offshoring plans



A group of people arrive in Dover, Kent, following a small boat incident in the Channel. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

[Diane Taylor](#)

Mon 2 May 2022 18.29 EDTFirst published on Mon 2 May 2022 04.52 EDT

Deporting asylum seekers to [Rwanda](#) is unlikely to deter those in northern France hoping to cross the Channel in small boats, according to a survey that found that three-quarters said they would still try to make the journey.

The snapshot survey of more than 60 asylum seekers in Calais and Dunkirk was carried out by the charity Care4Calais, which provides practical support to asylum seekers in both northern France and across the UK.

When the UK government [announced plans](#) to offshore some asylum seekers to Rwanda on 14 April, ministers emphasised that the controversial scheme would act as a deterrent to asylum seekers planning to cross the Channel in small boats.

Asylum seekers who talked to Care4Calais said they were still prepared to take their chances.

“I’m willing to risk it,” said one. “Everyone is scared in the camp but I don’t think it will affect them [the decision to cross the Channel].”

Many of those interviewed fled Sudan or South Sudan and were horrified at the prospect of being flown back to a country not far from the starting point for their journey, especially after enduring the difficulties of passing through Libya, where many had to deal with traffickers, and making the dangerous crossing across the Mediterranean to Italy.

“Rwanda is not good. It’s for animals, we take danger to get a safe life,” said another asylum seeker who participated in the survey.

On Sunday, more than 250 people crossed the Channel in small boats after an 11-day pause due to poor weather, although the government claimed the absence of these crossings was evidence that its Rwanda plan was already having a deterrent effect. The most recent crossings, prior to Sunday’s resumption of small-boat activity on the Channel, was on 19 April, when 263 people crossed in seven boats.

More people thought to be migrants were taken to Dover on Bank Holiday Monday, including children, with the BBC reporting that more than 100 migrants had been brought to shore by the afternoon.

The offshoring plans are the subject of [several legal challenges](#) including one from Care4Calais, PCS and Detention Action. They are challenging the failure to publish details of the policy and the government decision to penalise asylum seekers based on irregular entry to the UK.

Care4Calais has launched a [crowdfunder](#) for the legal action and has condemned the impact of the plans on asylum seekers on both sides of the

Channel. The charity is one of several to raise the alarm that since the government announced its plans to offshore people to Rwanda dozens of asylum seekers are reported to have gone missing from hotels across the UK where the Home Office is accommodating them, because they are fearful of being rounded up and put on a plane to Rwanda.

Sam Jonkers, a volunteer at Care4Calais, knows of some refugees who have vanished from hotels and says she has been deluged with text messages from asylum seekers fearful of being offshored.

“The Rwanda plans are devastating for people who have left such dangerous countries and had such difficult journeys to reach the UK,” she said. “I have received hundreds of text messages from terrified asylum seekers; they can’t sleep at night because they are so worried.”

One message states: “I couldn’t sleep. So frightened about what we expect to happen to us in the coming days with the Rwanda decision.”

Another said: “I now think there is no such thing as human rights anywhere in the world, Neither in Iran, UK or anywhere.”

While about a quarter of respondents to the Care4Calais survey in northern France said the Rwanda offshoring announcement would make them consider staying in France and seeking asylum there, many said they would continue with their plans to reach the UK.

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Enver Solomon, the chief executive of the Refugee Council, condemned the impact on asylum seekers in the UK of the Rwanda announcement, saying: “The government is failing in its duty of care to people in the asylum system by not recognising the devastating impact the threat of being expelled to Rwanda is having on them.”

He said the government was simply treating asylum seekers it hoped to offshore as “human cargo”.

Maddie Harris, of the Humans for Rights Network, is also aware that some asylum seekers have vanished from hotels since the offshoring announcement was made. She warned that many asylum seekers in the UK could go underground to avoid being offshored.

“This is a policy that trades human life for money,” she said. “It is forcing people out of the asylum system into destitution due to fear of removal, drastically increasing the risk of exploitation.”

A Home Office spokesperson said: “This world-leading migration and economic development partnership will overhaul our broken asylum system, which is currently costing the UK taxpayer £1.5bn a year – the highest amount in two decades. There is nothing in the UN refugee convention which prevents removal to a safe country. Under this agreement, Rwanda will process claims in accordance with national and international human rights laws.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/02/small-boat-asylum-seekers-rwanda-uk-france-survey>.

Local government

Firebombs and death threats: councillors need more protection, say UK bodies

Dozens of seats going uncontested as candidates step down due to ‘truly toxic’ environment



Arooj Shah, the Labour leader of Oldham council, has faced racist and misogynist abuse, harassment, death threats and physical intimidation. Photograph: Joel Goodman/LNP

[Libby Brooks](#), [Josh Halliday](#) and [Jessica Murray](#)

Mon 2 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 00.10 EDT

More must be done to protect councillors from abuse, according to local government bodies, as those on the frontline of local democracy describe a “truly toxic” political environment where online aggression spills over into real-life behaviour.

Candidates for council elections on Thursday across the UK have shared their experiences of escalating hostility as the chair of the Local Government Association (LGA), councillor James Jamieson, warned that “an increasing number … are being subjected to abuse, threats and intimidation both online and in-person, undermining the principles of free speech, democratic engagement and debate”.

In [Scotland](#), the local authority umbrella body Cosla is working with Police Scotland to develop personal safety briefings for the new cohort of councillors, a move welcomed by Pippa Hadley, who is standing for re-election as a Scottish Green councillor in the Highlands.

Hadley was assaulted on the street by a member of the public last year who told her she was “a cow who should be shot against a wall”. The man was later charged and received a custodial sentence.

“The whole point of being a local councillor is that people know who you are but that also makes you more vulnerable,” says Hadley, who brought a motion to Highland council this spring calling for a personal safety audit for all new members after 5 May.

“People do seem to be more aggressive, partly because of the effects of lockdown. It’s as if those online keyboard warriors have slipped into real life.”

Graeme Campbell is walking away from a position he has held for 15 years at South Lanarkshire council after a [sustained campaign of harassment](#), including three fire and acid attacks at his home. The former Conservative councillor is certain the attacks were carried out by criminals as a result of work he was doing in his elected role.

Last month, the candidate who hoped to succeed him withdrew after an onslaught of online abuse and intimidation.

“As a councillor, you need to be part of a community and by default people know where you live. As soon as you stand you are at the mercy of the public,” says Campbell. “This isn’t about one particular demographic but

coming from all kinds of people. People aren't standing for the council because of it."

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Across the UK, there are similar stories and the Guardian is aware of a number of in-person incidents on the campaign trail that are the subject of police inquiries. Last week, Welsh councillors [spoke out](#) about the abuse they faced online and from colleagues that had led them to step down at this election, resulting in dozens of uncontested seats.

Cosla and the LGA offer [resources to councillors for handling intimidation](#) and online abuse, and the LGA is calling for evidence of abuse across the country "to further understand the experience of councillors and to ensure robust measures can be taken to tackle this growing issue".

Arooj Shah, the Labour leader of Oldham council, had her car firebombed last year and is facing an [ongoing campaign](#) against her. She said: "The tone of political discourse has become truly toxic and this year's election campaign is no different. I've faced racist and misogynist abuse, harassment, death threats and physical intimidation.

"Of course, I welcome challenge on my politics – that goes with the job. But nobody should endure hatred and personal abuse in their work."

The situation is particularly stark for female council members. At the end of March, the last session of Glasgow city council closed with a motion setting out the barriers women face getting into politics, put forward by Scottish Labour's Maggie McTernan and supported by colleagues from the SNP and Greens. "With each woman who spoke, it was like ticking off a list: online abuse, harassment, being ignored in meetings, struggling to balance work and caring," she said.

"We've created a situation where people are more likely to be abusive because of this antagonistic, combative political culture. It's a problem throughout society but we should be modelling something better in politics."

The Wolverhampton Labour councillor Beverley Momenabadi says she is too scared to campaign alone and carries two alarms with her at all times – a rape alarm and a GPS alarm connected to a security centre.

“Carrying those around with me regularly when I’m just carrying out my council duties and campaigning isn’t something we should have to do. But because of my experiences, I feel that I have to for my own safety.” Momenabadi said she became particularly wary of her safety after an incident a few years ago when she was followed by a man while handing out leaflets who indecently exposed himself to her.

“People are obviously doing this stuff online and seeing no consequences, and I do think some of that transfers into real life. It does make me wonder how other young women must feel about wanting to take up a political position.”

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Dentists

‘Dental deserts’ form in England as dentists quit NHS, experts warn

Patients struggle to get treatment as report says health service has lowest number of dentists for a decade

- [‘My teeth still hurt’: patients unable to get on to NHS dentists’ lists](#)



Dentists generally each have a caseload of about 2,000 patients. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

[Denis Campbell](#) Health policy editor

Sun 1 May 2022 13.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 4 May 2022 06.29 EDT

“Dental deserts” are emerging across [England](#) after more than 2,000 dentists quit the NHS last year, leaving millions of people struggling to get checkups or have toothaches fixed, a new report reveals.

The exodus is exacerbating a crisis that has seen patients battle to get dental treatment because so few dental surgeries will see them as [NHS](#) patients.

The number of dentists providing NHS care in England fell from 23,733 at the end of 2020 to 21,544 at the end of January this year, according to the latest NHS figures, which have been obtained by the Association of Dental Groups (ADG) under freedom of information laws.

Given that dentists each have a caseload of about 2,000 patients, the depletion of the workforce has left an estimated 4 million people without access to NHS care. The NHS now has the smallest number of dentists it has had for a decade, according to the ADG, which represents major chains of surgeries.

Access to NHS dental care is so limited that people in some areas are forced to wait three years for an appointment. The difficulty obtaining treatment is one of the public's main sources of frustration with the health service, with just one in three people satisfied with dental services.

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Many are forced to go private, after seeking an NHS dentist in vain, in order to have problems resolved. Some have rung dozens of surgeries in their area in a vain quest to be accepted as an NHS patient, or had to travel outside their home area to get it. A growing number of dental surgeries do little or no NHS-funded work, citing problems with the dental contract.

Covid, Brexit and government underfunding of NHS dental services have combined to create a “critical” situation which is likely to get worse before it gets better, the ADG warned.

Patient groups voiced alarm at the “unacceptable” situation facing those needing dental care.

“People are struggling to get the dental treatment they need when they need it. This is a hugely worrying issue. Some dental practices have either shut down or have gone fully private, with some dentists having used up their

total NHS capacity and are asking people for private fees instead,” said Louise Ansari, the national director of NHS watchdog Healthwatch England. Children, disabled people and people living in care homes are the worst affected, she added.

The loss of 2,000 NHS dentists last year follows a decline the previous year of 951.

NHS dentistry has become “a rotten system” which lets down patients and deters practitioners of dental care, said the British Dental Association (BDA), which represents the UK’s 42,000 dentists. It blamed patients’ inability to get NHS care in England on ministers only providing enough money in the dental contract to cover the cost of treating just over half the population.

Successive governments since 2010 have pledged to reform the dental contract but not done so, although negotiations are ongoing. NHS England spends about £3bn a year on dental care, though that sum has remained flat for some time. [Dentists](#) dislike what they call a “broken” contract that involves targets for the amount of care given and, they say, can pay them the same amount for doing one filling as for doing 10 and discourages them from treating complex cases because they do not get paid for the time involved.

“Dentists are simply not seeing a future in the NHS, with a broken contract pushing out talent every day it remains in force,” said Shawn Charlwood, the chair of the BDA’s general dental practice committee.

“We need to halt an exodus that’s already in motion. Millions are going without the care they need, and quick fixes are no substitute for real reform and fair funding.”

The ADG’s report says that as a result of the decline in NHS dentists “we are now seeing ‘dental deserts’ emerge across the country where there is almost no chance of ever seeing an NHS dentist for routine care. Dental deserts present a serious risk to the dental health of millions of NHS patients in England.”

The trend is likely to worsen as dental practices increasingly rely on private work to stay open, it warns. The deserts are particularly concentrated in rural and coastal areas.

It names the area covered by the NHS clinical commissioning group (CCG) in North Lincolnshire as the part of England with the smallest number of NHS dentists per 100,000 people – just 32. North East Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire are joint second worst, with only 37 NHS dentists for every 100,000 people. Lincolnshire and Norfolk and Waveney are next, on 38.

The report also reveals that just 26.1% of adults in Thurrock in Essex have seen an NHS dentist in the previous two years – the lowest percentage in the country – followed by West Essex (27.3%) and then Kent and Medway (29.3%). Thurrock is also where the lowest proportion of children have seen an NHS dentist in the last year – just 30.7% – followed by north-east London (32.2%) and North Lincolnshire (35.3%).

“Dental deserts not only stretch across the whole of the east of England, from east Yorkshire, through Lincolnshire and down to Norfolk, but are now emerging in many other ‘red wall’ constituencies that the government wishes to level up,” said the ADG’s chair, Neil Carmichael, a former Conservative MP.

The ADG is also warning that the decline in access to dental checkups raises the prospect of “a looming health crisis” in which cases of mouth cancer and type 2 diabetes get missed rather than being picked up by a dentist.

It wants ministers to tackle the growing shortage of NHS dentists by taking action including increasing the number of training places for dentists in the UK and extending beyond the end of this year recognition of the qualifications of EU-trained dentists.

Urging reform of the dental contract Rachel Power, the chief executive of the Patients Association, said: “Our helpline regularly takes calls from patients who cannot find an NHS dentist. We know of patients joining three-year waiting lists, just to get on the books of an NHS dentist. This is an unacceptable situation.

“Dental deserts can not be allowed to develop. Dentists are often the health professional who spot serious health problems early.”

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: “We’ve given the NHS £50m to fund up to 350,000 extra dental appointments and we are growing the workforce so people can get the oral care they need – in December 2021, there were 264 more [private and NHS] dentists registered than the previous year.

“We are committed to levelling up health outcomes across the country – we have set up the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities to address the long-standing health disparities and will publish a white paper this year to ensure everyone has the chance to live longer and healthier lives, regardless of background.”

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Dentists

‘My teeth still hurt’: patients unable to get on to NHS dentists’ lists

Two people describe their problems accessing affordable treatment on the NHS in England



Maooz Awan in St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex. Photograph: Maooz Awan

[Alfie Packham](#)

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Sun 1 May 2022 13.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 2 May 2022 00.13 EDT

Maooz Awan, 29, PhD graduate, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex

At the beginning of the pandemic I moved from London to Hastings, where I grew up. My bottom teeth were hurting, so I went to the local dentist and

they said that because I hadn't had an appointment in three years they'd taken me off their list, and they didn't have any space for new [NHS](#) patients.

I checked the NHS website and looked up NHS-affiliated dental surgeries around me. I checked every one in Hastings, none of which were taking patients, and then farther and farther afield, up to Eastbourne, 20 miles away. There was nothing, so I just sort of gave up. I asked to be put on waiting lists and was told by several practices that they didn't have one. The only other option was to go private, but I didn't have the money to do that. I'm willing to travel but I just haven't found anywhere to register yet.

I haven't been to the dentist for six years now. I didn't bother changing my dentist in Hastings when I was living in London, and it was a pain trying to get an appointment. My bottom teeth still hurt. It's not debilitating, but I assume it's something I should get looked at. I look after my teeth as well as I can, but if you don't get them checked over for a few years, I assume problems will inevitably develop. It's very frustrating.

Linda, 68, retired, Surrey

I called my NHS dentist to ask for an emergency appointment for a broken tooth in January, but they said they would call me back. The receptionist told me they had to speak to the dentist because I hadn't been for two years – which was because of the pandemic. A week later I received a call, but within a couple of days of first reporting it, my tooth had flared up really badly and the whole of my face was swollen. It looked horrendous and I could barely speak or eat and drink anything. I couldn't really open my mouth, it was so bad.

I had to call 111 and get an emergency appointment with another, private dentist five miles away, who prescribed me strong antibiotics, which I took for about a week. They couldn't look at the tooth because the area had become so infected and swollen and I couldn't open my mouth. The medication made me feel quite rough and I was feeling bad as it was. What really frightened me was that the dentist said if the swelling gets any worse and you can't breathe, ring 999.

Once I heard back from my dentist and explained what had happened, they booked an appointment and said they would arrange for me to have the tooth out. About a month later, the tooth had finally been removed. I was just glad to get rid of it after the pain I'd suffered. But without the delay, I might have avoided the infection.

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Television

‘It feels like a mushroom trip’: this cult sci-fi comedy is a phenomenal TV treat

Funny, brave, breathtakingly beautiful: Undone’s second season is a mind-warping joy. Its creator explains how she wrote a time-travelling comedy about generational trauma



‘The visuals – rotoscoped and fluid – are even more breathtaking than before’ ... Undone season two Photograph: Courtesy of Amazon Prime Video



[Stuart Heritage](#)

[@stuheritage](#)

Mon 2 May 2022 04.46 EDT Last modified on Mon 2 May 2022 04.47 EDT

Kate Purdy sits upright, bespectacled and sensibly dressed, in a room containing an intimidatingly vast writing desk, completely unaware of how excited I am to see her. The second season of *Undone*, the mind-bending mental illness sci-fi comedy drama she co-created with BoJack Horseman's Raphael Bob-Waksberg, has just come out on Amazon Prime. A few weeks ago, I was emailed a preview screener and clicked on it out of idle curiosity. I devoured the first episode. Then the second. At some point during the third, I missed a work deadline. But I carried on gulping down the episodes, slackjawed with amazement.

Because, while I liked *Undone*'s first season, the second is phenomenal. Every element has been honed to the point of high art. The jokes are funnier. The dramatic lurches are braver. The visuals – rotoscoped and fluid – are even more breathtaking than before. It somehow manages to be several things at once. It's an exploration of mental health that plays out like a crime procedural. It's a meditation on the psychic wounds left by decades of generational trauma, but it's also a wisecracking, globetrotting romp. Almost as soon as our Zoom conversation begins, I start babbling about how quickly I gobbled the season up.

“It’s funny you say that,” Purdy says. “Raphael always says this is the longest meal prep of all time. You work for two and a half years, then people can watch the whole thing in six hours.”

Like many other shows returning of late, for obvious reasons, *Undone* has been off our screens for three years, which means a recap might be in order. In the first season, Alma, a young woman played by Rosa Salazar, realises that she can manipulate time and uses this skill to investigate the circumstances of her father’s death. However, it is never made clear whether Alma’s time manipulation is actually happening, or whether it is simply a manifestation of her mental illness.

Without spoiling the plot, the second season manages to embrace and abandon the premise, with Alma dragging her sister Becca (Angelique Cabral) and father ([Bob Odenkirk](#)) along for the ride, which means it feels noticeably lighter. “There are a lot more high jinks this time,” Purdy nods. “And you know, Rosa and Angelique are so fun together and play off each other so well. There’s a mystery with mom, so let’s poke around and get nosy. It almost feels like they’re two young detectives. And then it goes deeper and deeper.”



‘Noticeably lighter in tone’ ... Bob Odenkirk as Alma’s father. Photograph: Courtesy of Amazon Prime Video

Undone came into being after Purdy was tasked with writing Downer Ending, the standout episode of [BoJack Horseman](#)'s first season. In the episode, Horseman, a talking cartoon horse, enters a state of consciousness where he sees all the life paths he could have taken, along with all the opportunities he was denied due to his rampant egotism. "I brought a lot of myself to that episode," Purdy says. "And I brought in Carl Jung's The Red Book: Liber Novus and showed Raphael various images. After that he was like: 'There's more here. Figure out a show where we take some of this and explore it.'"

Again, this caused Purdy to dig deep into her own life. "My grandmother was schizophrenic," she says. "And there is depression and anxiety that runs through the family in addition to schizophrenia, and it's something that my father never wants to talk about. The one thing he has told me was that one time he was watching [Howdy Doody](#) with his brother and sister, and his mom shoved the broom handle through the television set. So that is woven into the show. We go back to that moment over and over again, because I want to unpack that. I want to know more. That's part of the exploration for me."

A day prior to our conversation, Netflix released the second season of Russian Doll. By total chance, it covers a lot of the same ground as Undone, in that it's about a woman bending reality in an attempt to heal generational trauma. Having seen them both, I'd say Undone nails the assignment with much more panache and commitment.

I wonder what happened to make everyone reflect on familial trauma, I say to Purdy. Perhaps the insular experience of lockdown gave people room to explore it. She smiles. "I mean, I think I'm a little more woowoo, to be honest."

Go on. "My perspective is that I really believe that we have an ancestry, and those ancestors are spirits who are guiding us and helping us," she says. "And part of that is a collective experience. Dreams and meditative states help us touch into this deep pool of information and wisdom that is helping to guide us."



‘I like genre-bending’ ... Undone’s creator Kate Purdy. Photograph: Michael Kovac/Getty Images for Amazon Studios

What’s fascinating about Purdy is the circuitous route she took to Undone. Her first job writing for TV was on the long-forgotten Jerry Bruckheimer procedural *Cold Case*, after which she jumped to the sketch show *MADtv* and Courteney Cox’s sitcom *Cougar Town*, which in turn led to *BoJack Horseman*. Happily, she says all of these stepping stones have helped to inform *Undone*.

“I was watching a documentary about Georgia O’Keeffe, who actually spent a lot of time learning to paint in other people’s styles until she discovered her own style and voice. And I felt like: ‘Oh, that’s been my process,’” she says. “But it was really good for me to have that experience. The practice of plotting a crime drama is something that is implemented on *Undone*. And sketch was really useful as a tool, because you have to come up with five ideas that are really strong every week, and then you have to write those within a week. That was its own training ground.”

Undone is something you have to see to properly understand. And that’s great for viewers seeing the finished product, but getting it commissioned must have been a nightmare. Was it hard to pitch a rotoscoped comedy about generational trauma that exists in the liminal space between reality and

dreams? Purdy laughs. “We wrote the first two episodes, and Amazon said: ‘We love it. It’s really fun. It feels like you’re on a mushroom trip. But what is this show?’ And so they ordered a third episode to get proof of concept. So we wrote it and they said: ‘OK, great. We love the third episode. But *what is this show?*’”

The second season of Undone is such an incredible achievement – and so intensely personal – that it feels destined to be the thing Purdy is remembered for. But fond memories of a cultish streaming show don’t exactly pay the bills, which might be why she already has one eye on the future. She recently signed a deal with Amazon to keep making new content.

“The things I’m excited to explore range from lighter teen comedy films with these important themes that are important to me woven through them,” she says when I ask what the future may hold. “But then other half-hour shows that are deeper, even into the sci-fi elements in terms of slipping reality,” she says. “I like genre-bending. I like feeling like we don’t have to stay in one tone if we make the shift elegantly. And I like always having a bit of humour that plays against the drama.”

Whether intentionally or not, she just perfectly described Undone. What a treat this show is.

Undone is on Amazon Prime now

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‘I can’t imagine getting married with those teeth’: how Britain fell for adult braces



‘I wanted this for so long’ ... Dabi Adesoye, before and after aligner treatment. Composite: Courtesy of Dabi Adesoye

Lockdowns and video calls have boosted demand for ‘invisible’ teeth aligners. But what do you get for your £1,500 to £4,000? And are some health experts right to be concerned?

[Simon Usborne](#)

Mon 2 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 2 May 2022 09.57 EDT

When Dabi Adesoye was growing up in Ibadan, a city of 6 million people in Nigeria, everyone called her “Eji”. In Yoruba, Adesoye’s first language, this translates roughly as “gap teeth”. It might have been a compliment – in Nigeria, a space between the top front incisors is seen as a mark of beauty, Adesoye says – but she hated hers.

“The idea that people were looking at my face and the first thing they would see is this massive gap just made me feel so uncomfortable,” she says from her home in south-east London.

Adesoye, who is 27 and moved to the UK five years ago, had metal braces in her teens, but they were painful and unsightly. She ended up having them removed early. The gap only grew wider. She would clamp her mouth shut for photos, until she did the opposite to make out that she didn’t care. “But, really, I’d absolutely hate the pictures,” she says.

In summer 2020, Adesoye, who works in sales for a finance software company, reached for her laptop to perform what is now an increasingly common search: “adult braces”. She had become aware that orthodontics had changed radically since her childhood. For so long an uncomfortable, food-flecked rite of passage for teens, the “train tracks” of yesterday have become hi-tech, aspirational – and barely visible.

Rather than submit to fixed metal or more camouflaged ceramic braces, adults are lining up to wear snug, clear plastic teeth aligners that achieve the same results. The correction process takes one or two years, requiring a new aligner with a marginally different shape every week or two. After treatment is complete, patients must wear a retainer at night for the rest of their lives to stop their teeth regressing.

To the consternation of many orthodontists, anyone can order aligners online, based on a 3D scan or a DIY mould of their teeth, without even having to look at a dentist's chair. The rise of these disruptive startups has created fissures in a traditionally slow-moving industry, as regulators try to keep up with innovation and consumer demand.



Clear results ... a course of treatment can start at £1,500. Photograph: Kadir Bolukçu/Getty Images

While aligner technology is continually improving, the devices, which should only be removed for teeth brushing and eating, are not new. Invisalign, the biggest manufacturer of aligners, started life in a Stanford University dorm room 25 years ago. But orthodontists report booming demand recently, particularly since the start of the pandemic, as social media and the ubiquity of video calls have thrown up new mirrors in our homes.

“We call it the Zoom boom,” says Anshu Sood, the co-owner of Helix House Orthodontics, a clinic in Nottingham. Sood is also the director of clinical practice at the British Orthodontic Society, where 84% of members last year reported a pandemic surge in adult patients, mostly aged 26 to 55 (Sood’s oldest patient was a 76-year-old who was sick of her grandchildren laughing at her “Nanny McPhee” smile).

Sood, whose aligner patients typically pay about £4,000, says younger people who were already open to the idea of making aesthetic changes suddenly had the time and cash to achieve them. Young men are increasingly signing up; men now make up almost half of Sood's patients, compared with about 20% only five years ago.

Jack Castle, 29, a lorry salesman from Nottingham, had never had cosmetic work done, but wanted a perfect smile for his wedding. "Looking back at old pictures, I just can't imagine getting married with those teeth," he says.



Marriage vow ... Jack Castle wanted his teeth straightened for his wedding day. Photograph: Courtesy of Jack Castle

Then there are the video-callers, says Sood. "They are people in their 30s and older who don't spend their days looking at their phones and taking selfies, and were not particularly self-conscious. But suddenly they were looking at themselves all day on screen."

Emma Burnell, 47, had aligner treatment in 2020. "My secret plan was to come out of lockdown with this amazing new smile," she says. Like Adesoye, Burnell, a political consultant and writer, has bad memories of ineffective teenage braces. (The NHS continues to fund metal braces for

under-18s who need them, but not adults, unless they have a medical reason. Teens are increasingly going private for clear aligners.)

“No photos of me smiling existed at all,” Burnell says. She was resigned to a life with crooked teeth, until lockdown – during which she conducted training courses and social gatherings online – turned a niggle into a glaring issue. “Suddenly, I was just seeing my teeth the whole time.”

Adesoye paid £4,000 for her treatment, which involved several appointments with an orthodontist and dozens of aligners over 13 months. “I took painkillers the first day, because there’s quite a lot of pressure, but you do get used to it,” she says. Then she waited, constantly checking mirrors in the hope the gap might begin to close.

Burnell took the more direct and controversial route. In the rapidly expanding direct-to-consumer market, patients can have their teeth scanned in a high-street store, or even make their own moulds using a mail-order kit. Design software then uses the scans or moulds to print the aligners.

The marketing for these services gives them the feel of a coffee subscription startup rather than a provider of serious dentistry. They have huge social media presences and paid partnerships with influencers and celebrities. But their biggest selling point is price. Direct-to-consumer aligners start at about £1,500, paid up front or in monthly instalments.

Burnell went with SmileDirectClub, the biggest player in the direct market. The American company, which was founded by two friends in 2014, arrived in the UK in 2019, when it also floated on the Nasdaq stock exchange with a valuation of more than \$8bn. It had revenues last year of \$638m and says it has served 1.5 million customers (it won’t say how many are in the UK).

There is a preconception that dentistry is still about old high-street buildings full of anxious patients and bad smells

Robbie Hughes

As well as offering a mail-order service with DIY moulds, SmileDirectClub opened “SmileShops” in cities including London, Manchester and Glasgow,

where “SmileGuides” scan teeth. “They run this wand over your jaw and mouth and show you these hi-tech pics of your teeth now, then a model of what your tooth journey will be,” says Burnell, who paid just under £1,600 after visiting a London SmileShop. SmileDirectClub says about half of its UK customers use its shops. The other half use the DIY moulds and never see anyone face to face.

Regulators and orthodontist bodies are worried. Crucially, direct-to-consumer providers do not X-ray patients before prescribing aligners. “Two-thirds of your teeth sit under the gums and when you’re moving a whole tooth you don’t know what you’re bumping into,” Sood says. Unseen problems can include buried or impacted teeth or cysts, adds the dentist, who says her colleagues are starting to see patients seeking a fix after bad experiences with direct-to-consumer aligners.

According to Sood, tooth decay and gum disease can also be missed – and this has been a growing problem while people have struggled to access NHS dentistry in the pandemic. (Sood says cosmetic dentistry does not affect NHS provision because NHS-funded clinics must still fulfil their contracts.) Without a full examination, including an X-ray, “the implications of moving teeth can be quite catastrophic”, says Sood, including cracked or loosened teeth.

In February, the British Orthodontic Society, which is responsible for maintaining standards, [published new guidance](#). It said aligner treatment should only follow a “face-to-face examination by an appropriate orthodontist or dentist” and that a patient must be given the name and contact details of the clinician managing their care. The General Dental Council (GDC), which regulates dentists, also says that “there is no effective substitute for [a physical, clinical examination](#)”.



‘I was trying to cut corners’... some of Emma Burnell’s aligners from SmileDirectClub did not fit. Photograph: Courtesy of Emma Burnell

David Cran, who leads SmileDirectClub in the UK, tells me that SmileShop staff include GDC-registered nurses and that named dentists or orthodontists, mostly based in the US, approve care plans remotely using moulds or images of customers’ teeth before aligners are made. [Dentists](#) remain on hand if problems arise, albeit indirectly via the company’s dental care team. Cran, whose previous job was managing the Aberdeen branch of Debenhams, says SmileDirectClub, which is registered with the Care Quality Commission (this is now an industry requirement), declines to treat complex cases – about 10% of inquiries – and that it has a rating of 4.4 out of five on the reviews site Trustpilot.

“There’s obviously a traditional approach to orthodontics,” says Cran when I put to him Sood’s worries about the potential problems that only a face-to-face check and X-rays can identify. “But the fact that we’re not doing those severe cases and that the imagery we take is so sophisticated means that we’re clearly able to identify underlying issues.”

Not all the concerns are clinical. The startups use social media to market themselves as slick lifestyle brands. But this also brings them into contact with negative posts. In 2020, the New York Times reported that

SmileDirectClub had a [confidentiality agreement for US customers seeking refunds](#). To receive any money, unhappy customers had first to delete any negative social media posts or reviews – and withdraw any complaints to regulators.

SmileDirectClub says this non-disclosure provision is “customary in both the industry and in general business practices” in the US and is not used in the UK. The company defended its strategy in the US, which has also involved suing regulators. “When we believe that there is an organised campaign to damage our reputation among consumers, dentists and/or investors, we will defend ourselves and our mission to democratise access to care every chance we get,” Susan Greenspon Rammelt, SmileDirectClub’s chief legal officer, told the New York Times. She said that fewer than 5% of customers had received a refund; Cran says the proportion is “much lower” in the UK.

Burnell noticed some movement during her first four sets of aligners, but then they no longer fit her teeth. She complained and a new set arrived after six weeks. She could not fit these either and eventually got a refund. She has paused her search for a new smile. “I should have gone to the dentist, but I was being cheap and trying to cut corners,” she says. (Cran tells me he would happily make contact with Burnell to discuss her experience.)

Without a full examination, the implications of moving teeth can be quite catastrophic

Anshu Sood

While some orthodontists have safety concerns about direct-to-consumer aligners, which, of course, are also a potential business threat, many welcome the industry shake-up. “It’s consumers who lead these trends,” says Robbie Hughes, a dentist and the founder of Dental Excellence UK, a clinic in Liverpool. “And it’s clear they want access to something fast with a minimal number of dental appointments at the right cost.”

Like an independent cinema battling Netflix, Hughes, 37, has set out to offer an experience. His clinic, where prices go from about £4,000 for aligners up to £20,000 for a full dental makeover, looks like a luxury hotel spa. His

patients have included celebrities such as the Liverpool manager, Jürgen Klopp. “There is this preconception that dentistry is still about old high-street buildings full of anxious patients and bad smells,” he says. “We want to change that.”

Hughes had to extend his opening hours last year to meet the post-pandemic rush. Extreme whitening is also in demand and can be achieved with wafer-thin porcelain veneers. “The trend here and in other cities is to have your teeth done and let other people know you’ve had them done – and that means making them stand out,” Hughes says.

Back in London, Adesoye had her teeth slightly whitened and got a small chip repaired before waiting for the aligners to do their thing. After two months, she began to notice the gap closing. “I’d be in the middle of meetings and I’d just steal moments in the bathroom and look in the mirror and be like: ‘Oh my God, I wanted this for so long and it’s happening,’” she says.

It took 13 months for her two front teeth to be united. “Eji” was no more. She posted a triumphant video to her YouTube channel, [Nigerian in London](#). Her Instagram following shot up from about 1,500 to more than 24,000. “And I don’t think it’s because of my teeth; I think it’s because of my confidence,” she says. “I’ve always tried to make funny videos and it’s only now that I’m comfortable enough to crack jokes.”

Adesoye’s friends and family were stunned. “For the first three months, my mum would video-call me from Nigeria just to see my perfect teeth,” she says. Adesoye is about to get married when we speak. She met Jon, a teacher, before getting aligners. “Now I’m able to say ‘cheeeese’ as hard as I want without feeling self-conscious,” she says, laughing.

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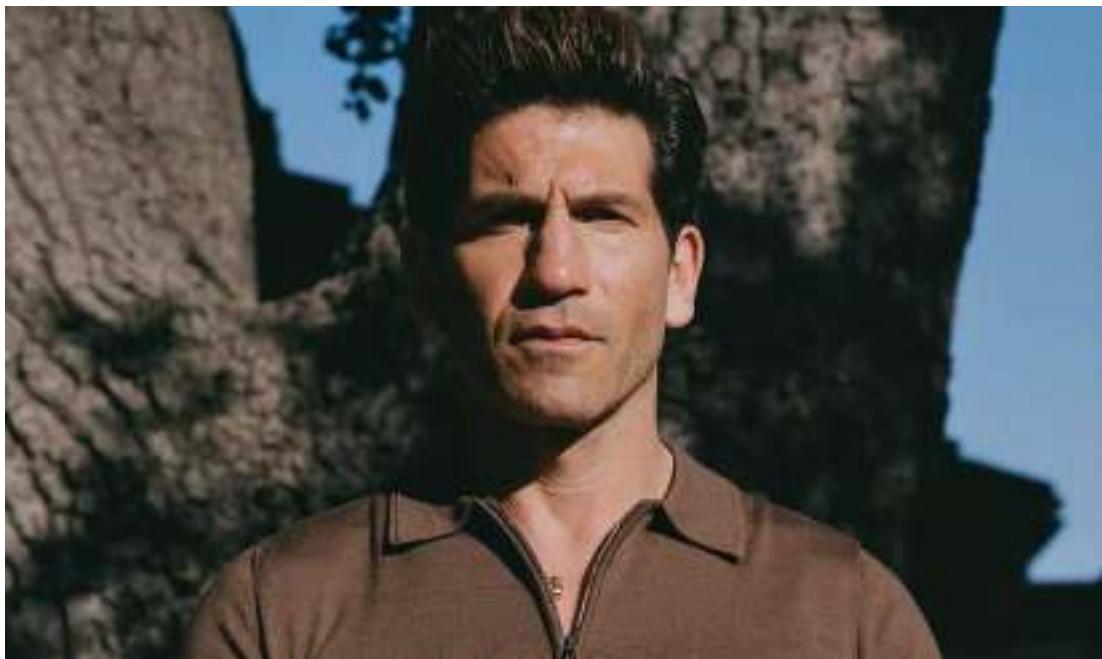
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Interview

‘I made a lot of mistakes’: Jon Bernthal on machismo, his violent past and playing a corrupt cop in We Own This City

[Chris Godfrey](#)



Jon Bernthal: ‘Masculinity has been completely corrupted by being loud and bombastic and unwavering.’ Photograph: Pat Martin/New York Times/Redux/eyevine

For his role in the hotly anticipated new drama from the creators of The Wire, Bernthal embedded himself in the Baltimore police force. He talks about his own brushes with the law, advice from Brad Pitt and how acting saved his life



Mon 2 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 4 May 2022 09.11 EDT

Jon Bernthal goes all in. On screen, he is known for playing emotionally damaged bruisers – big on machismo, short on temper – while off it he is notorious for a deep, some might say obsessive, commitment to his roles. Extensive weapons training and periods of isolation from his family for The Punisher, intensive tennis coaching for the sports drama King Richard, Navy Seal boot camp for Fury, socialising with maximum-security prisoners for Shot Caller – whatever the part calls for, he is game. It was no different for his latest role, the corrupt [Baltimore](#) cop Wayne Jenkins.

“Wayne is a good example where I’m all the way in, and I have no shame in that,” says Bernthal. He plays Jenkins in HBO’s forthcoming series We Own This City. It is another forensic analysis of police corruption by The Wire

creators, [David Simon](#) and George Pelecanos, this time portraying real events in a Baltimore still reeling from the death in custody of Freddie Gray in 2015.

Bernthal arrived in the city three months before production started and embedded himself in the Baltimore police department (BPD), learning everything he could about Jenkins from his ex-colleagues, as well as joining the BPD on patrol. When filming commenced, he didn't stop. "There were most nights where I worked full days on the set and then I'd go with Detective Severino – my buddy Dre – right from set to drug raids."

Today, the 45-year-old is in calmer surroundings, video-calling from his home in California, where he lives with his wife, Erin, three children (two sons and a daughter) and three rescue pitbulls. A navy vest exposes his tattooed biceps; a black beanie wraps his head, accentuating his boxer's nose. He speaks candidly and with fervour.

Bernthal has barely come up for air since he broke through in 2010 as *The Walking Dead*'s antagonistic police officer Shane Walsh. He racked up six credits last year alone, including opposite Sandra Bullock in *The Unforgivable* and as Johnny Soprano in *The Many Saints of Newark*. He excels at extracting a lot from a little in supporting roles where he comes in hot, steals a scene or two, then slips away. Although brawn and bluster are his hallmarks, he has shown range more recently with subtler character work.

For four years, Jenkins led the BPD's elite Gun Trace Task Force, achieving legendary status for his arrest statistics. The nine-man squad was supposed to be getting guns and violent criminals off the streets, but in fact spent years plundering Baltimore residents of cash, drugs and other valuables through baseless searches. They planted evidence and fraudulently clocked up overtime. After a federal investigation uncovered the extortion, the unit was disbanded and eight of the nine were convicted. Jenkins was sentenced to 25 years in prison, although that didn't stop Bernthal interviewing him.

We Own This City shies away from monstering the BPD. It is more concerned with scrutinising the culture of quota-based, reactionary policing that proved fertile ground for overreach and corruption to thrive. The priority was truth, rather than entertainment, says Bernthal: “It was done with sensitivity, with respect, with a journalistic integrity to really tell the truth in all of its complications and to not preach and not to have agendas.”



With Vera Farmiga in *The Many Saints of Newark*. Photograph: Warner Bros/Barry Wetcher/Allstar

“The police need to have culpability for their actions,” he adds. “What I hear from police officers is that the biggest problem with policing is there’s been this culture of refusing to admit you’re wrong, standing by each other, not pointing out flaws. I think that we have burst through that.”

His research for playing a dirty cop has not dented his respect for the police. “People who have no experience in the communities that absolutely rely on police to keep them safe were talking about abolishing the police or defunding the police, and anyone who’s ever really spent time in these neighbourhoods understood that that was completely ridiculous.”

He knows a lot of people will disagree, but he is constantly calling for dialogue across all cultural sore spots, not just policing. He hopes he can

lead by example with his weekly podcast, Real Ones With Jon Bernthal, which launched in February. The premise is to interview “authentic people living on the frontlines of the big issues” – police officers, civil rights attorneys, US veterans turned African game wardens. It is a sort of Joe Rogan affair, without the baggage and bullshit.

“I’m able to form really close relationships with folks,” he says. “Part of my job is to be able to sit down with anyone – like with Wayne – and reserve judgment. It is not about good or bad. It’s about how I can find a point of connection.”

Bernthal was raised in an affluent Washington DC suburb, the middle of three brothers, but his home was always brimming with more – his friends and the foster children his parents would take in. Some arrived angry or withdrawn, after difficult experiences. “No matter what a kid did when they came in the house, my mom was always able to see a light and stoke the flame of these young kids’ hearts.

“Everybody basically grew up in my house,” he says. “My dad had a no-locked-doors policy. We were burglarised seven times and he refused to lock the door. Any kid, anybody who was in trouble, you could come to my house. I am so grateful for this family. There’s no words to explain the depth of richness of the folks that I grew up with.”

Compared with his high-achieving brothers (one is now a CEO, the other an orthopaedic oncologist), Bernthal was the black sheep of the family, testing his parents in “every single possible way”. He risked expulsion at school, was caught trafficking copies of Playboy on a camping trip aged eight, would always get in fights (his nose has apparently been broken 13 times) and often brushed up against the law. “Anything you can imagine,” he says. “I made a lot of mistakes in my life and I was headed down quite a few roads that I probably shouldn’t have been able to come back from. That being said, my entire life, I grew up with an infrastructure and a family around me that loved me and supported me. There’s so many folks who don’t have that.”



As Frank Castle in *The Punisher*. Photograph: Nicole Rivelli/Netflix/Allstar

As an undergraduate at Skidmore College in New York, Bernthal was more interested in athletics than acting. But his acting teacher had seen something in him. When he dropped out, she insisted he head to Russia to train at the renowned Moscow Art Theatre. There, the 23-year-old found a use for his energy and love of risk. “Once I found acting, it was nothing short of spiritual for me. It saved my life. You start saying: ‘I was put on this Earth to do this.’”

After Bernthal returned to the US, for a long time he did “super-raw, avant garde theatre” where there would often be more people on stage than in the audience. He had no money and couchsurfed until he started dating Erin. A “literal angel on this planet”, she paid the bills with her job as an ICU trauma nurse.

Bernthal’s dream was to travel the country as a theatre actor, but when he tried to land stage roles in New York he found them going to actors who had already made their names on TV. “I had no idea that it was going to be about trying to get on a soap opera, and I really railed against it,” he says. He initially resisted doing TV and film. “It was naivety and just being a stupid pompous theatre guy ... I was being a real big idiot when I said: ‘I’ll never do that – that’s for sellouts.’ That was just some young man stupid shit.”

When he finally got into TV, he instantly fell in love with the medium. *The Walking Dead* was a turning point in many ways – he married Erin and had his first son while filming the series, and it opened enough doors for him to land the role of *The Punisher*, Marvel’s US marine turned mercenary Frank Castle. Acclaimed actors he had worked with – notably Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio – had warned him against superhero roles. But Bernthal was drawn to the character’s military background, his love for his family and his grounding. “I started seeing what it was and how unbelievably human this guy was – no capes, no invisibility and no shooting rays out of his eyes.”

Castle is a loner who turns to vigilantism after his family are shot dead. To find the character, Bernthal would isolate himself from the crew – and sometimes from his family. You could describe this immersion in a role as method acting – something that Bernthal studied in Moscow. There has been some [criticism of the method](#) in recent weeks – Mads Mikkelsen [called it “bullshit”](#) and Will Poulter suggested it has been used [as an excuse for inappropriate behaviour](#) – but Bernthal insists that is misplaced.

“The term has been so unbelievably bastardised,” he says. “Being a theatre snob who studied two years in the Moscow Art Theatre, I know that method acting – when we think of it as somebody who stays in character all the time – is not what [Konstantin] Stanislavski taught. That is not what it is. Period. There’s been something that took over movie actors for a long time, where it was like their process became louder than their performance.”



With Will Smith, Demi Singleton and Saniyya Sidney in King Richard.
Photograph: Warner Bros/Chiabella James/Allstar

For Bernthal, the issue is that he can't just "turn it on". The process is simply about isolating himself to get into the right frame of mind for the "precious, sacred seconds that exist between 'action' and 'cut'". He insists this can be done while maintaining kindness and professionalism. "You ain't gotta call me by any weird name!" he says, laughing. "And you'll never find someone that I've worked with that says I'm rude or that says I didn't take their feelings into account."

Although Bernthal's roles typically lean into his tough guy persona, he says he isn't worried about typecasting. Nor does he feel the need to think strategically about the roles he takes. "For better or for worse, I don't really think in those terms," he says. "I'm sure there are these genius agents or strategists who will say: 'Man, don't oversaturate yourself,' or: 'You need to do a comedy,' or: 'Hey, man, where's the romcom?' I don't know how to even begin to operate in that way."

When he took on the role of Lee Iacocca in *Ford v Ferrari*, people often asked him if this was a deliberate ploy to branch out from roles defined by their machismo. "My pushback on that is Lee Iacocca is every bit as tough or strong or masculine as Frank Castle," he says, before launching into one

of his favourite subjects. “I just think we have such a masculinity crisis going on now,” he says. “Masculinity has been completely corrupted by being loud and bombastic and unwavering and striding.”

Although he believes discipline and strength are a part of masculinity, equally it resides in “empathy and grace, and having the confidence to sit down with real temperance and respect for folks that think and feel differently than you,” he says. “I think kindness is masculinity just as much as these other components. Look at the components of the Samurai – yes, it was sword work, but it was also calligraphy.”

Bernthal is candid about his flaws, particularly his violent past. In 2009, he was walking along a beach in California when a drunk man called his dog over and grabbed it. Bernthal retrieved the dog, but the man began following him. Eventually, Bernthal snapped and punched the man in the face, knocking him unconscious. Bernthal landed three years’ probation and a \$2m civil lawsuit, which was eventually settled out of court. It was an epiphany for Bernthal, who recognised he needed therapy to control his rage.

“If you talk to folks who knew me as a young man, they would tell you: ‘It was not gonna work out for this guy,’” says Bernthal. “But I found this thing” – by which he means acting. “I’ve worked on it like crazy; I put everything I have into it. And it really is a dream – I’m living a dream.”

There is, he says, no chance of slipping back into old ways. “My life consists of my wife, my kids and my work. I’m able to take all of that energy, and all of that danger and throw it all into my work. And I’m so grateful for that, because I know how badly it could have gone. I can literally say, with my head held high: ‘I’m safe from that now.’ I know how to create danger, but I know how to do it in a totally healthy way.”

We Own This City is available in June on Sky Atlantic and Now TV

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Honest playlistPeaches

‘I can sing Wuthering Heights so perfectly, it makes people’s jaws drop’: Peaches’ honest playlist

The pop provocateur loves most pop from the early 70s to the mid 80s. But which all-American banger can she no longer tolerate?



Peaches ... ‘American Pie by Don McLean. It’s so annoying, it goes on for ever, I hate it.’ Photograph: Jennifer Endom



As told to [Rich Pelley](#)

Mon 2 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 09.57 EDT

The first song I remember hearing

Joy to the World by Three Dog Night on the radio in the family car. It came out in 1971, so we would have been driving from our house to our little cottage north of Toronto. That song seemed to come on the radio every two minutes, and we'd all sing along.

The first single I bought

I like to tell people that it was Bad Girls by Donna Summer that I used to listen to in the car with my dad. But really it was Love Will Keep Us Together by Captain & Tennille. I bought it from Sam the Record Man, this record store with a big flashing neon sign – so far more embarrassing!

The song I do at karaoke

I can sing Wuthering Heights by Kate Bush so perfectly, it makes people's jaws drop and go: "Wait! I don't understand!"

The song I inexplicably know every lyric to

Probably every pop song between 1973 and 1985, so I'll pick Total Eclipse of the Heart by Bonnie Tyler. I love a good cheesy power ballad. They make me feel whole.

The best song to play at a party

No one ever says that they don't like My Neck, My Back (Lick It) by Khia. It's not too fast, not too slow, makes everybody feel sexy and warms everybody up.

The song I streamed the most

Tears from My Pussy by Christene, because I performed it with her and had to learn the lyrics, so at the end of the year, it was the number one song I streamed.

The song I can no longer listen to

I'm really an oldie, soldie, doldie ... But I can't listen to American Pie by Don McLean. It's so annoying, it goes on for ever, I hate it. Shut up.

The song I can't help singing

Kill V Maim by Grimes because it's so ridiculous. I love it.

The song I wish I'd written

I Touch Myself by the Divinyls is *so* good. I like its swagger and its laziness, but also its candour at the same time.

The song I want played at my funeral

Fuck the Pain Away by [Peaches](#). It's my song, everybody loves it, I love it, they're gonna remember me fondly. Everybody's happy.

[The Teaches of Peaches Anniversary Tour](#) will be visiting the UK from 10 to 16 June.

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2022.05.02 - Opinion

- Removing benches, blocking cycle paths: why are police interfering in the UK's public spaces?
- The west can cut its energy dependency on Russia and be greener
- Heartstopper is dazzlingly brilliant TV – I wish my lonely younger self could have seen it
- I built a life on oversharing – until I saw its costs, and learned the quiet thrill of privacy

OpinionPolice

Removing benches, blocking cycle paths: why are police interfering in the UK's public spaces?

[Phineas Harper](#)

The Secured by Design initiative is damaging British cities, robbing them of greenery and public amenities while promoting fear



Twitter users are asking why this bench in Memorial Gardens, Ashford, has not been removed like the one in Stanhope. Photograph: Kent Police

Mon 2 May 2022 05.01 EDT Last modified on Mon 2 May 2022 14.02 EDT

Last month, police officers descended on public green spaces in Stanhope, a 1960s residential estate in Ashford, Kent, to fight crime. Rather than arresting any suspected criminals, officers [took away five benches](#) and uprooted low-lying shrubs from small parks. In a since deleted tweet,

Ashford Police explained that the benches had provided “places to gather” and their removal would help “design out crime”.

The chief inspector of Ashford [Police](#) explained that removing the benches and shrubbery were part of a temporary trial to “prevent antisocial behaviour in hotspot areas”. The idea that providing pleasant places to sit with friends causes crime sounds absurd, but it’s one of a number of controversial urban design principles that British police forces are promoting. Increasingly, these principles are dictating the design of our neighbourhoods: police aren’t just removing benches and bushes, they are demanding a wider raft of changes to architecture and public spaces, including blocking the construction of new cycle paths, dictating the height of garden gates and deciding the orientation of homes.

In Sussex, the Liberal Democrat district councillor Ruth Fletcher has complained about how footpaths and bike tracks were removed from a proposed housing development in Horsham after police objections. Pippa Goldfinger, of Bristol-based Design West, told me that officers in Frome, Somerset, insisted a passcode-operated gate be installed outside some sheltered housing. The elderly residents were unable to remember the passcode and found the gate too heavy to push, becoming locked out of their homes.

Meanwhile in Poole designs for a row of new houses that had been intended to overlook a park, in part so parents could keep an eye on their playing children, were rotated after the police claimed that homes overlooking a play area would encourage the “wrong kind of person” to move in. Officers in Eltham, in south-east London, insisted a school, which already had a 2.2 metre perimeter fence, spend thousands of pounds installing a new, higher fence. These counterproductive demands, such as Ashford’s bench and bush removals, all stem from a little-known police initiative called [Secured by Design](#).

Founded during the latter years of the Thatcher government, Secured by Design gives police significant influence over the architecture and design of public spaces. Under the programme, officers develop and publish neighbourhood design guides with recommendations such as advocating the

“use of single seats or stools set several metres apart” rather than park benches, and warning against “providing too many” footpaths. When planning applications are submitted to local authorities, officers in those areas may object if the proposals do not incorporate their recommendations.

None of the police design guides are part of government building regulations, meaning they are not legal requirements and are not subject to democratic consultation. However, many underfunded councils lack the resources or political will to challenge police objections. As a result, new neighbourhoods often incorporate many Secured by Design recommendations without thorough consideration.

“We end up implementing the recommendations to get planning permission but many are horrendous,” Russell Curtis, the cofounder of architecture firm RCKa, told me. “The problem with Secured by Design is that it’s diametrically opposed to good placemaking and promotes fear. Britain has a huge problem with loneliness and isolation. We should be taking steps to address this, but Secured by Design does the exact opposite, encouraging people to live in fear of their neighbours.”

One example Curtis gives is cul-de-sacs. Most contemporary urban designers avoid building cul-de-sacs because they chop communities into dead ends, inhibiting mobility and stopping neighbours from meeting each other. Secured by Design, however, praises “cul-de-sacs that are short in length and not linked by footpaths” claiming that permeability generates crime such as burglary.

Judging whether the benefits of an interconnected neighbourhood in which residents can meet one another, get around easily and build positive relationships outweigh the risk of a random burglary should be straightforward. Burglary can be traumatic, but it is uncommon, and numbers of [burglaries are falling](#). However, a bad design decision in a new housing estate will affect every resident on a daily basis for decades.

Inclusive street planning can help cultivate communities and promote wellbeing, while the fear of rare mishaps can compromise the experience of entire neighbourhoods. In many cases, police do not seem to balance their

recommendations against other town planning concerns, often demanding draconian design changes without fully considering their implications.

Recent instances highlighting institutional racism within police departments have called into question whether officers should have a role in shaping new community spaces at all. “So many groups don’t trust the police,” Shawn Adams, a young black architect who grew up in Mitcham before cofounding architecture firm POoR, told me. “A lot of the public have lost faith in them. To think that the police are making decisions about our public spaces makes us more anxious.” For Adams, Secured by Design is causing more harm than it prevents by treating people congregating in public parks, for example, as a threat. “If you’re not providing good spaces for people to hang out, where are they meant to go?” he asked. “Secured by Design is destructive – it is destroying places where people could socialise.”

Rather than removing park benches, authorities should focus on meaningful social investment that can alleviate inequality and social marginalisation. Secured by Design is damaging our cities, robbing them of greenery and public amenities while promoting fear and isolation. Just as teachers’ unions are now calling for [no police in schools](#), it is time to end police involvement in architecture and urban design too.

- Phineas Harper is director of the charity Open City
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Project Syndicate economistsBusiness

The west can cut its energy dependency on Russia and be greener

[Jeffrey Frankel](#)

The Ukraine war has focused minds on win-win policies from ending coal and oil subsidies to raising petrol taxes on petrol



A solar panel farm in what was once a field used for agriculture, in California's drought-stricken Central Valley near Huron. Photograph: Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images

Mon 2 May 2022 02.00 EDT

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has amplified the importance of national-security considerations in western countries' energy policies. At the same time, governments must continue to focus on reducing environmental damage – in particular, on cutting greenhouse-gas emissions. Both goals, geopolitical and environmental, are urgent and should be evaluated together.

These two objectives are not necessarily in conflict, as some believe. There are plenty of energy measures the west can adopt that would benefit the environment and further its geopolitical aims. The most obvious steps, especially for the [European Union](#), are [sanctions](#) that reduce demand for [imports of fossil fuels from Russia](#).

A review of different areas of energy policy reveals further options. Here, I emphasise the dos and don'ts that seem to be clear win-win choices, as opposed to policy decisions where tradeoffs are acute and reasonable observers may disagree.

The first policy choice is a blunt one: governments should not prolong the life of coal and should withdraw coal subsidies. The International Monetary Fund has estimated that global energy [subsidies](#) (including for oil and natural gas, as well as coal), at either the producer or consumer end, exceed [\\$5tn](#) a year. Direct US fossil-fuel subsidies alone have been conservatively [estimated at \\$20bn annually](#).

Next, policymakers should regulate natural gas. Continental Europe has made itself dependent on Russian gas, and US shipments of liquefied natural gas can help substitute for it. But if there is to be a renewal of the [fracking boom](#), which actually reduced total US carbon dioxide emissions from [2007 to 2012](#), careful regulation should drastically reduce the amount of methane released into the atmosphere as part of the process. Fortunately, this regulation need not be expensive.

Not [subsidising oil](#) also is key. Global petroleum subsidies amount to an estimated [\\$1.5tn](#) a year. If the US must open more federal lands to drilling, it should no longer offer [leases to drillers at below-market rates](#).

Western governments should also tap existing stockpiles, as Joe Biden did recently by [announcing](#) an unprecedented release of 180m barrels of oil from the country's [Strategic Petroleum Reserve](#). While presidents have in the past sometimes used the reserve for political purposes, Biden's decision has a genuine national-security justification, because the release can help to offset some of the current temporary supply shortfall.

Some argue that the oil reserve is not big enough to put a dent in global prices. But the US move has been accompanied by releases of similar emergency reserves by the UK, Germany, and many other countries, totaling 240m barrels over the next six months. Some economists also argue that the US does not need an oil reserve, now that the country is no longer a net importer of oil. Even if one agrees, this would not be an argument against releasing reserves now, but rather against restocking the reserve when the crisis has passed.

In addition, governments should raise, not lower, taxes on retail petroleum products. Several US states have recently declared “gas tax holidays” to cushion consumers from the effects of high global oil prices. Other countries also are trying to shield their citizens from energy-price increases. But these measures, while understandable politically, are terrible economics: They undermine drivers’ incentive to economise on their fuel consumption, thus benefiting Russia and hurting the environment.

As they stop promoting coal and oil, governments must keep up the momentum behind renewables. Continuing the recent trend toward wind and solar power is important for both geopolitical and environmental reasons. Government subsidies for renewables, including to support research into storage technology, can play a role. But the US and the EU should also take the less popular step of lowering, not raising, their tariffs and other protectionist barriers affecting imports of solar panels and wind turbines – imports that have helped bring down renewable-energy costs.

At the same time, governments need to steel themselves to extend the life of nuclear power plants. One of the most misguided current energy policies is Germany’s surprising choice to proceed with plans to close its three remaining nuclear plants later this year, rather than trying to reopen the three that it closed in December. The country’s decision in 2011, in response to the Fukushima disaster, to shut down all of its nuclear power over the course of the subsequent decade has led to increased dependence on coal and Russian fossil-fuel imports, and to higher CO₂ emissions.

Other countries assess the pros and cons of nuclear power differently. Fewer deaths resulted from the Japanese nuclear accident than occur every day

from [mining](#) or [burning](#) coal. The UK now plans to build [eight new nuclear reactors](#) this decade, partly to reduce its dependence on oil imports in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The best way to reduce demand for fossil fuels is through a [carbon tax](#) or [auctions](#) of tradeable permits (with the revenue used to reduce distortionary taxes, for example). For now, introducing such price mechanisms in the US is politically [impossible](#). But, 20 years ago, we said the same about the EU, and today it has the [Emissions Trading System](#).

Cutting demand for hydrocarbons hurts the earnings of all oil exporters, not just Russia. But while some of these producers are innocent bystanders, some are petrostates that are not entirely worthy of support from the US and its allies. It is not coincidental that so many oil-exporting countries are autocracies. Many [studies](#) of the [natural-resource](#) curse have concluded that societies built on the wealth of commodities in general, and oil in particular, are prone to [authoritarianism](#).

In the long run, it might be better all around if the fossil-fuel sector were to shrink worldwide. As western governments seek to devise energy policies that are both environmentally and geopolitically robust, that thought should help to concentrate minds.

Jeffrey Frankel is a professor at Harvard University's John F Kennedy School of Government. He served as a member of President Bill Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers

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[Opinion](#)[Sexuality](#)

Heartstopper is dazzlingly brilliant TV – I wish my lonely younger self could have seen it

[Owen Jones](#)



Growing up, I never saw any positive representation of my sexuality. I'm glad things are so different for a new generation



‘Young LGBTQ+ people now have a show with relatable and frankly adorable characters.’ Kit Connor and Joe Locke in *Heartstopper*.
Photograph: Netflix

Mon 2 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 2 May 2022 03.05 EDT

No one came out as LGBTQ+ at my comprehensive in the north of England in the late 1990s for a very straightforward reason: it would constitute social death. Homophobia was the background hum of school life, a crude instrument to sometimes violently discipline any boy who deviated from rigid male expectations. Homophobia is, after all, the savage border guard of masculinity.

A geography teacher once mentioned a young boy who was outed years back, and suffered relentless abuse and violence until they were driven permanently from the school. It was a salutary lesson imprinted on my young brain. Shamefully I, too, occasionally laughed along at anti-gay innuendoes or lowlife gags about George Michael. Why risk suspicion with all it entailed? Half-victim, half-accomplice, like everyone else, as Jean-Paul Sartre put it.

I found it impossible, then, not to be moved by Netflix’s [new school drama *Heartstopper*](#), which should be considered one of the most important

LGBTQ+ shows ever made. It's important to stress that it was not made for a geriatric millennial like me. It is squarely aimed at teenagers, which is one reason it is so pivotal. Written by the stunningly talented 27-year-old queer author Alice Oseman, it features a young geeky gay boy who falls for a rugby jock who, it transpires, is bisexual. Representation is at its core, with lesbians and queer people of colour – including a young trans woman who has transferred to the girls' school – as key protagonists.

Many queer older millennials have been dazzled by the show, but also felt a sense of grief and loss at what they never had: either acceptance from our straight peers, or affirming representation on our television screens. I grew up in the age of section 28, which prohibited the so-called “promotion” of homosexuality in schools and in practice stifled all discussion of LGBTQ+ issues. The one exception I recall was a teacher warning against anal sex. As someone who didn't come out until I was 20, what was so terrifying in adolescence was the sheer loneliness of the closet.

Heterosexuality offered a stable lifelong route map: find a life partner, marry, settle down, have children. With that seeming – however inaccurately – to be unattainable, what remained? The constant terror of rejection, of falling for straights who could never reciprocate, of suppressing your real identity for an easier life or to protect yourself from violence? Life is a tough enough gig, and brutally I did not want the hassle. I clung on to a passage from one of those “how to grow up” books which suggested that same-sex attraction was a temporary phase, that for many it would soon vanish.

LGBTQ+ cultural representation was weak at this point, and that compounded my loneliness. In popular culture, you could either find one-dimensional desexualised caricatures, or stories of tragedy – the shadow of the HIV/Aids pandemic was inescapable. Queer people living and loving, finding acceptance and yes, confronting challenges like anybody else and seeking to overcome them, was what was lacking.

This is why Heartstopper is so important. Some straight people may also look enviously at this show: regardless of sexual or gender identity, adolescence for many is defined by boredom, tedium, rejection and sometimes trauma. Most of us do not skip into the sunset with the rugby jock, after all. But at least straight people do not lack affirming

representation on their TV screens. Young LGBTQ+ people now have a show with relatable and frankly adorable characters who face hardship, but who also have the possibility of happiness. Because of that, this show will be a lifeline for many.

Here's a show, too, which reflects the transformed social values of generation Z – the zoomers who, I believe, will in time save us all, if there is a planet left to save. They are not free of problems, including homophobic bullying – as Heartstopper portrays – but they are the most progressive generation yet. Thanks in no small part to the struggle of LGBTQ+ people before, they feel more at ease with questions of sexuality and gender identity – something reflected in [polling](#) that shows only 54% of generation Z are attracted exclusively to the opposite gender, compared with 81% of boomers.

With Britain in the grip of a moral panic that depicts trans people as a potential threat to women and young people, positive cultural representation has never been more vital. The anti-gay rhetoric of the past damaged an entire generation. We don't need to repeat the same mistakes.

But those often terrified young trans folk have a show in which one of their own is loved and affirmed, helping to puncture that often cruel bubble of loneliness. I wonder if everyone involved in this show – from the writers to producers to actors – quite realise the impact of what they have created. They've offered comfort and affirmation to those who often need it the most. Not bad, not bad at all, for a show about adolescence, coming of age and love.

- Owen Jones is a Guardian columnist
-

[Opinion](#)[Social media](#)

I built a life on oversharing – until I saw its costs, and learned the quiet thrill of privacy

[Moya Lothian-McLean](#)

From social media to journalism, I shared in order to be heard. Now, I am beginning to listen to myself



‘Almost everything became fodder to be shared online.’ Photograph: Cavan Images/Alamy

Mon 2 May 2022 01.00 EDT

I’m part of a generation used to living their life in full view – our collective adolescence measured in a succession of messaging apps and social networks. Each of them encouraged increasing levels of openness and entrenched the message: sharing prompts caring or, better yet, attention.

For much of my life, almost everything became fodder to be shared online. Funny texts from friends, videos of strangers on the street, stray thoughts about sexual proclivities. Privacy, both mine and that of the people I came into contact with, was a mythical concept. If I had experienced something, surely that made it *my* anecdote, to do with as I pleased? This approach caused problems. A man I was dating texted me to ask if a particular rant about bad communicators was about him (yes). A colleague warned me about sharing pictures in my underwear, prompting a furious reaction. Family fractures resulted from drunk tweets. But why, I would think defiantly, should I censor myself?

Over the past two years, though, something has changed: I've started to properly pull back, prompted by the ongoing presence in my life of someone I love very deeply, whose attitude to privacy is the antithesis of mine. I had learned to see sharing as widely as possible as an act of pride. To me, posting a candid photograph to 10,000 followers was akin to loudly claiming my beloved for the world to see. He took a different view: attention from faceless avatars meant nothing to him. Why, he asked, did I feel compelled to perform my life for these people?

It was a good question and one I wasn't quite able to articulate an answer to, becoming defensive at first. Even now, I'm not sure there's a single way to understand the drive to broadcast every facet of my existence. Perhaps the simplest explanation is that oversharing was a behaviour I learned early – as a toddler, my mother tells me I would run around, pointing at people and announcing what genitalia I surmised they had, informed by the iconic 1973 kids' sex education book *Where Did I Come From?* – and engaging in it resulted in an incredible amount of positive reinforcement as I grew older. There are other reasons of course: realisations and breakthroughs I've had since beginning the process of redrawing my boundaries. But I'll keep those to myself.

Another factor was starting out as a lifestyle journalist in the twilight of the 2010s. A [first-person essay boom](#) was in full swing and leveraging your personal life was one of the few routes to get noticed if you lacked contacts or journalism qualifications. Young women desperate to stand out from the

crowd were coaxed into sharing intimate, and often traumatic, details about their lives for clicks. In this arena, to lay yourself bare was an act of ambition – one, we later discovered, that can be difficult to scrub from the internet. Meanwhile, a new crop of digital-first and reality TV celebrities had emerged, defined by their “authenticity” and willingness to present their entire existence for public consumption. Positive reinforcement for laying it all on the metaphorical table was high.

Reprogramming yourself is a fascinating exercise. The urge to share is most insistent when I’m alone, prompting the horrific realisation that somewhere along the way, my brain has been trained to process reality through an audience. Sharing became how I made my own life real; if a tree fell in a forest, and I didn’t tweet about it, did it even happen? At times, I feel like something terrible and irreversible has taken place; that I’ll never be able to walk down a street listening to a beautiful piece of music and not get the urge to convert the sheer joy of the experience into a social media post, or a text to a friend to make it real.

But every time I resist that grubby pull, there’s a small rush of triumph – and liberation. Now I’ve had a taste of what keeping things close feels like, I crave it. It’s a delicious secret, a reclamation of power I wasn’t aware I’d surrendered. Choosing what to share, with who and when, prompts necessary pauses – do I *really* need to mention this detail? Is this information I want out there long term? Do I even have the necessary consent to trumpet a certain story to all and sundry?

None of this means I’ve stopped sharing altogether. That would be a lonely life indeed. But I have become far more selective about exactly what information reaches an audience wider than my inner circle (and I’m not alone; there is a burgeoning backlash against oversharing, counting [Taylor Swift](#) and some [UK teens](#) among its converts). Last year, I read the playwright Joe Orton’s diaries, published after his 1967 murder. As detailed in John Lahr’s introduction to *The Orton Diaries*, Orton always intended for posthumous publication of the work and believed “the value of a diary was its frankness”. His entries are the last word in confessional writing. But they were penned safe in the knowledge that the public would only read them after Orton was long gone. As a result, the man who jumps off the page feels utterly free, for better or worse.

I'm now realising that complete openness was limiting. Privacy is a cloak, under which we are at liberty to explore the intricacies of the self, beholden to no audience other than ourselves. I have grown up in a generation that overshares in order to be heard. Only through the slow, gruelling process of learning to be private am I really beginning to listen to myself.

- Moya Lothian-McLean is a journalist who writes about politics and digital culture

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/02/life-oversharing-costs-thrill-privacy-social-media-journalism>

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[France](#)

May Day marches across France send pensions message to Macron

Eight police officers injured and 45 arrests made in Paris after protests on fringes turn violent



The traditional May Day labour union march in Paris on Sunday.
Photograph: Sarah Meyssonnier/Reuters

[Angelique Chrisafis](#) in Paris

[@achrisafis](#)

Sun 1 May 2022 14.08 EDTFirst published on Sun 1 May 2022 12.20 EDT

Tens of thousands of people have taken part in French street demonstrations as May Day marches sent a “message” to [Emmanuel Macron](#) that he must consult citizens more during his second term, and reverse plans to raise the retirement age or face protests.

“There will be a fight over pensions, that’s clear – battle has been declared,” said the leftwing CGT trade union in Toulouse. Trade unionists, environmentalists and parties on the left, as well as yellow-vest anti-government protesters, marched in cities across the country – on what is also known as *fête du Travail* (Labour Day) in [France](#) – demanding a rise in pensions and salaries and an end to Macron’s plan to gradually raise the pension age to 65.

The government said that 45 arrests were made on the edge of the peaceful march in Paris, after a small group of people dressed in black, described as “black bloc” anarchists, smashed the windows of businesses, including a McDonald’s, and attacked cash dispensers while setting bins alight. Police fired teargas and one woman was arrested for attacking a firefighter as he put out a fire. Eight police officers were injured.



French police detain a protester in Paris. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

The centrist Macron, who was [reelected](#) last weekend with 58.5% of the vote against the far-right [Marine Le Pen](#), is under pressure to govern differently in his second-term — with less top-down decision-making and a more

participative, decentralised approach, in which citizens would have more input.

“This is a very political [May Day](#), where workers intend to weigh heavily on all the big issues,” said Benoît Teste, head of the FSU teachers’ union. “It’s a crucial moment to feel the mood on the ground and set the tone.”

“I want to calm things,” Macron had told locals in a walkabout in south-west France on Friday, after vowing to take into account everyone who voted for him, including those on the left who chose him only to keep out Le Pen. But no details have filtered out on how Macron would consult with citizens or whether he will undertake a reform of France’s political system, including introducing an element of proportional representation in parliament.

With his second term beginning officially on 14 May, Macron is currently deliberating over who to appoint as the new prime minister who will have expanded powers on overseeing French environmental policy. Some have hoped it would be a woman with a background on the left.

Macron has spent recent days still in campaign mode, [wading into crowds](#) in town squares in order to listen to voters’ concerns, sometimes for hours at a time, to counter his image as haughty and aloof and to show he has understood the current cost-of-living crisis, which is voters’ number one concern.



Emmanuel Macron in Hautes-Pyrenees, Barbazan-Debat in south-west France on Friday. Photograph: Isa Harsin/Sipa/Rex/Shutterstock

This is seen as crucial if he is to secure a broad centrist majority in the parliamentary elections in June that would give him a free hand to implement his policies of overhauling the welfare state and pensions system. The parliament vote has been seized upon by both the far-right Le Pen and the radical-left's [Jean-Luc Mélenchon](#), who are seeking to greatly increase their seats in a France where voters are divided and disappointed with politics.

"What we have seen is an extremely strong break between the base of the social pyramid – those who don't have riches nor power nor influence – and the so-called summit," said François Bayrou, the head of the centrist party MoDem, and a key Macron ally, during the campaign. "There must be a new government approach, which must be constantly in consideration of the French people."

Sylvain Burquier was one of 150 people randomly selected to take part in a [citizens' assembly](#) to develop methods for cutting carbon emissions during Macron's first term. Environmentalists criticised the government for not going far enough to follow the citizens' recommendations. But Burquier said the method itself, of forming an assembly of everyday people to thrash out

difficult public policy issues, had proved that it worked and should be expanded.

“The 150 of us are convinced that new forms of participative or deliberative democracy can move issues forward,” Burquier said. “By being a middle path – neither activists nor businesses – we shook things up ... The population was behind us, we’re still active today, we upset a lot of people because we were totally transpartisan, and only linked by the common good, not at all by political posturing ... It’s a new transversal way of doing things that upsets the status quo and when that happens, things move forward.”

Macron has promised his second term would be devoted to tackling the climate emergency, after admitting environmental policy must be speeded up. But an Elabe poll after Macron’s presidential win on 24 April found 57% of people didn’t believe he would make the environment his top priority.

A key policy task in the short term is to address the cost of living crisis. Macron is expected to renew caps on energy costs and consider further anti-inflation payments to low-income households this summer.

Ultimately, Macron has promised to get France to full employment. The unemployment rate dropped to its lowest in 13 years during Macron’s first term, and its economy – the world’s seventh largest – outperformed other big European countries as well as the broader euro currency zone. But with inflation in France reaching a new high of 5.4% in April, while growth stalled in the first quarter, May Day marchers warned that people were angry at the struggle to make ends meet, calling for salaries to be increased and pensions to be raised.

Trade unions at the demonstrations said Macron’s new plans to raise the retirement age could lead to strike action.

During Macron’s first term, a different proposed pensions overhaul sparked protests that lasted longer than any strike since the wildcat workers’ stoppages of 1968, and the reform was shelved during the pandemic.

“If there’s a need to, we’ll strike,” the secretary general of the Force Ouvrière trade union told BFMTV at the Paris demonstration. “Let that be

heard. We have our reasons. It's not just pure obstruction, it's based on an economic and social argument.”

May Day protests were held in various countries across Europe:

- In **Turkey**, police detained 164 people for demonstrating without permits and resisting police at Taksim square, the Istanbul governor’s office said. On the Asian side of the city, a May Day union-organised gathering drew thousands who sang, chanted and waved banners.
- In **Italy**, after a two-year pandemic lull, an outdoor mega-concert was being held in Rome after rallies and protests in cities across the country. Besides improving conditions for workers, peace was an underlying theme, with many calls for an end to Russia’s war in Ukraine. Italy’s three main labor unions held their main rally in the hilltop town of Assisi, a frequent destination for peace protests.
“It’s a May Day of social and civil commitment for peace and labor,” said the head of Italy’s CISL union, Daniela Fumarola.
- Thousands of workers, unemployed people and retirees marched peacefully in **North Macedonia**’s capital of Skopje, demanding wage increases and respect for workers’ rights. Inflation, running at an annual clip of 8.8% in March, is at a 14-year-high.
- In **Germany**, Berlin mayor Franziska Giffey briefly interrupted her May Day speech at a trade union rally where someone threw an egg at her but missed. Giffey, of the centre-left Social Democrats, was met by loud protests during her speech. Giffey called the egg tossing “neither helpful nor politically valuable.”

Associated Press contributed to this report

This article was amended on 7 May 2022. An earlier version said President Macron had promised to get France to “full unemployment” when “full employment” was, of course, meant.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/01/may-day-marches-across-france-send-pensions-message-to-macron>

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[Iraq](#)

Iraq engulfed by dust storm, leaving dozens hospitalised and flights grounded

Thick sheet of orange shrouds country as experts say phenomenon to become more frequent due to drought and declining rainfall



Dust settled across streets and vehicles and seeped into homes in Iraq's capital Baghdad as the storm hit on Sunday. Photograph: Ahmad Al-Rubaye/AFP/Getty Images

Agence France-Presse

Sun 1 May 2022 20.27 EDT Last modified on Mon 2 May 2022 09.24 EDT

Iraq was yet again covered in a thick sheet of orange on Sunday as it suffered the latest in a series of dust storms that have become increasingly common.

Dozens were hospitalised with respiratory problems in the centre and the west of the country.

A thick layer of orange dust settled across streets and vehicles, seeping into people's homes in the capital Baghdad.

Flights were grounded because of poor visibility at airports serving Baghdad and the Shiite holy city of Najaf, with the phenomenon expected to continue into Monday, according to the weather service.

"Flights have been interrupted at the airports of Baghdad and Najaf due to the dust storm," the spokesperson for the civil aviation authority, Jihad al-Diwan, said.



Drivers switched on their headlights because of low visibility during the storm in Baghdad. Photograph: Ahmad Al-Rubaye/AFP/Getty Images

Visibility was cited at less than 500 metres, with flights expected to resume once weather improves.

Hospitals in Najaf received 63 people suffering from respiratory problems as a result of the storm, a health official said, adding that the majority had left

after receiving appropriate treatment.

Another 30 hospitalisations were reported in the mostly desert province of Anbar in the west of the country.

Iraq was hammered by a [series of such storms in April](#), grounding flights in Baghdad, Najaf and Arbil and leaving dozens hospitalised.



Iraqis walk past street stores in Karada district in central Baghdad on Sunday. Photograph: Ahmed Jalil/EPA

Amer al-Jabri, of Iraq's meteorological office, previously said the weather phenomenon is expected to become increasingly frequent "due to drought, desertification and declining rainfall".

Iraq is particularly vulnerable to climate change, having already witnessed record low rainfall and high temperatures in recent years.

Experts have said these factors threaten to bring social and economic disaster in the war-scarred country.



The sky was orange over the Al-Khilani square in central Baghdad.
Photograph: Ahmed Jalil/EPA

In November, the World Bank warned that Iraq could suffer a 20% drop in water resources by 2050 due to climate change.

In early April, Issa al-Fayad, an environment ministry official, had warned that Iraq could face “272 days of dust” a year in coming decades, according to the state news agency INA.

The ministry said the weather phenomenon could be addressed by “increasing vegetation cover and creating forests that act as windbreaks”.

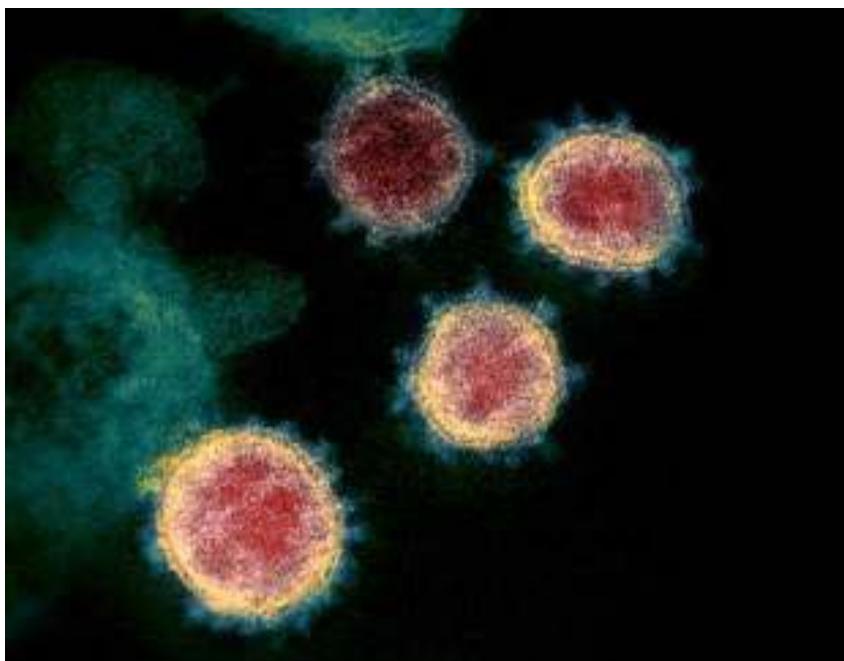
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Health

Australian researchers uncover clue to rare and severe response to Covid in children

Breakthrough could improve diagnosis and lead to development of treatment for condition that has baffled doctors for two years

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Children with Covid-19 who develop multisystem inflammatory syndrome often suffer from fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, skin rash, heart disease or conjunctivitis. Photograph: National Institutes of Health/AFP/Getty Images

Melissa Davey Medical editor

[@MelissaLDavey](#)

Mon 2 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 2 May 2022 05.02 EDT

In the first months after Covid emerged, [doctors were baffled by rare and severe responses to the virus in some children](#), whose symptoms included lung disease, blood clotting and heart damage.

Two years later and researchers led by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute [MCRI] in Melbourne have uncovered the proteins involved in these acute inflammatory responses in children.

MCRI haematology researcher Conor McCafferty said blood samples were taken from 33 children affected by either multi-system inflammatory syndrome or acute respiratory distress syndrome after they contracted Covid-19.

Children with Covid-19 who develop multisystem inflammatory syndrome often suffer from fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, skin rash, heart disease or conjunctivitis. Children who develop acute respiratory distress syndrome may suffer organ damage due to a lack of oxygen in the blood.

These blood samples were compared with samples from 20 healthy children.

“What we were doing was trying to look at all of the proteins in their blood,” McCafferty said. “So a lot of people hear about genomics, which is looking at all of the genes in the body. We were doing proteomics, which involved looking at all of the proteins in the blood so we could try and map out what was happening.”

They found the children affected by the syndromes contained specific proteins in their blood not seen in the healthy children.

“Our research was the first to uncover the specific blood clotting and immune protein pathways impacted in children with Covid-19 who developed these serious symptoms,” McCafferty said. The findings were [published in the journal, Nature Communications](#), on Monday, with researchers discovering 85 proteins specific to multisystem inflammatory syndrome and 52 linked to acute respiratory distress syndrome.

Knowing the specific proteins involved could improve diagnosis and lead to the development of targeted treatments for children suffering from severe Covid-19 cases. Currently, children affected are treated with intravenous immunoglobulin from donated blood, which reduces their chance of developing heart issues from one-in-four, to one-in-20. Children who do experience changes to their heart often see the issue resolve as they get older.

About 1.7% of children hospitalised with Covid-19 are admitted to intensive care. Most children who contract Covid-19 have mild or no symptoms.

The syndromes are so rare in Australia that researchers were sent blood samples taken from Covid-19 infected children with the syndromes receiving treatment at the Necker university hospital in France.

“France had the blood samples, while we had the proteomic testing capacity here in Melbourne,” McCafferty said. “This kind of collaboration is one of the silver linings to emerge from Covid-19.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/may/02/australian-researchers-uncover-clue-to-rare-and-severe-response-to-covid-in-children>

Boris Becker

‘He hasn’t killed anyone’: Germans react to Boris Becker’s imprisonment

Compatriots celebrate former tennis player’s thrilling performances that captured hearts the world over



Boris Becker wore a tie in the Wimbledon colours of purple and green when he was convicted. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/Zuma/Rex/Shutterstock

[Kate Connolly](#) in Berlin

Sun 1 May 2022 13.55 EDT Last modified on Mon 2 May 2022 12.39 EDT

The imprisonment in London of the tennis legend [Boris Becker](#) for bankruptcy offences has triggered an outpouring of shock and disappointment in his native Germany, where he was once hailed as a national hero.

One former fan spoke for many when he said: “He made mistakes for which he’s rightly being punished. But maybe he’ll get up again one day, just like

Becker, the tennis player, so often did.”

The writer Till Jecke, a sports reporter with the tabloid Bild, offered one of many recollections in Sunday’s newspapers of the day in July 1985 when the 17-year-old German became the youngest player to win the Wimbledon men’s singles title and “catapulted the somewhat stuffy ‘white sport’ into sheer galactic heights”.

“Boom Boom Becker,” as he was nicknamed at home for the way he pounded the court, captured hearts in Germany and across the world. His “Becker fist” and the “Becker pike”, when he’d hurl himself horizontally across the court in an effort to get every ball, were all part of the unforgettable magic mix of his play, Jecke said.



Boris Becker in action against Australia’s Wally Masur at Wimbledon, 1990.
Photograph: Dave Caulkin/AP

Such a contrast, then, was the scene in Southwark crown court on Friday when the 54-year-old was jailed for two and a half years for hiding millions of pounds’ worth of assets after being made bankrupt in June 2017.

“What now awaits him is brutal,” wrote Stefanie Bolzen, the London correspondent of Die Welt. She had watched as Becker, dressed in a tie in

the Wimbledon colours of purple and green, was “whisked from the dock and into the security wing – no last embrace, no chance to be comforted”.

The treatment of a convicted man in the UK is considerably harsher than in Germany, she and several German commentators have pointed out.

Becker was taken at speed in a white high-security van to Wandsworth prison – poignantly less than 3 miles from Centre Court at Wimbledon, the scene of his greatest performance, as German media reported live at the scene.

He had clutched his belongings in an olive sports bag that, according to Bild – which had a team of reporters on the story trailing him over the past weeks of the trial – he had bought in Harrods the previous day.

Newspapers showed superimposed images of him against the backdrop of the gloomy Victorian prison, showing a typical cell. They pored over the details, from the nickname of Wandsworth as a “screws’ jail” to previous inmates – Oscar Wilde, Julian Assange – and the visiting times; just one visitor allowed a week, with whom no physical contact is allowed. There are courses in yoga, embroidery and hairdressing, Bild said, and even a gym, but the food, according to a lawyer whose clients had been imprisoned there, “is like mush”.

There is very little sympathy in Germany for Becker, a man seen to have brought his problems on himself after he was found guilty of hiding millions of pounds worth of assets.

“He could have averted this tragedy,” Der Spiegel said, “but he was not prepared to show any real remorse, or humility towards his creditors … at the very least he should have shown that he had learned from his mistakes.”

Yet commiserations over the sportsman’s fall from grace were in plentiful supply. “For the human being Boris, I’m sorry,” the former football manager Reiner Calmund said. Günther Bosch, who trained him to Wimbledon victory, said he hoped his former protege would “use the strength with which he survived the hardest of matches, in order to master what he now

faces.” But the 85-year-old said he thought he “could not bear the idea” of visiting him in prison.

The German tennis federation, DTB, said it will “stand by” the three-times Wimbledon champion. “We respect and regret the judgment and wish him all the best for the coming time,” Dietloff von Arnim, its president, said. “We will stand by his side.”

His estranged wife, Lilly Becker, told the German channel RTL she was surprised by what she called the severity of the judgment – he had received just a suspended sentence in Germany in 2002 for tax evasion.

“After all, he didn’t kill anybody,” she said. She added that it was important for the world to know that she, his children and his first wife, Barbara, as well as his current girlfriend, Liliana, “all stand behind Boris”.

His mother, 86-year-old Elvira Pisch, said she was upset and surprised. “After all,” she said, “he is a decent boy.”

Anna Ermakova, his daughter from a brief but infamous sexual encounter with her waitress mother Angela in the cupboard of a London restaurant in 1999, said she was in a “state of shock”. She had written to the judge on behalf of her 12-year-old half-brother Amadeus, who she said would now be “without a father figure … during a difficult phase of his growing up”.

Roberto Blanco, the singer, and an erstwhile friend, said: “From a human point of view I’m incredibly sorry … not least because on the court he gave us all some really special moments.”

The fashion designer Harald Glööckler said: “Boris Becker was everyone’s idol. Regardless of whether you had anything to do with tennis or not, everyone was touched by him. He was once well and truly praised to the skies – and now he’s crashed from the heights.”

Oscar Otte, who reached the semi-finals of the ATP tournament in Munich on Friday, said he was saddened by Becker’s conviction “because he is the tennis legend in Germany and he made ‘tennis Germany’ what it is today thanks to his achievements”.

This article was amended on 1 May 2022. Boris Becker was the youngest player to win the Wimbledon men's singles title, but not "youngest person ever" to win Wimbledon as an earlier version said; Lottie Dod won the women's title at 15, and Martina Hingis did so at 16.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/01/he-hasnt-killed-anyone-germans-commiserate-boris-beckers-imprisonment>

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[Germany](#)

Feminist ‘witch’ protest kicks off May Day protests in Berlin

Women’s safety campaigners among thousands on Germany’s streets in annual labour day marches



The protests drew attention to issues ranging from the war in Ukraine, to women’s rights and rising living costs. Photograph: Christian Mang/Reuters

[Kate Connolly](#) in Berlin

Sun 1 May 2022 15.02 EDT Last modified on Mon 2 May 2022 10.12 EDT

A feminist march on the eve of [May Day](#), known as Walpurgisnacht, when witches traditionally meet, kicked off May Day demonstrations in Berlin, with a group of around 2,500 “Take back the night”.

The demonstration, described as lively and initially peaceful, was aimed at reconquering the night for women, lesbians, intersex and transgender people, according to the organisers. Accompanied by a large police presence, it

concentrated on the northern and central Prenzlauerberg and Mitte districts of Berlin. But police intervened to stop the march after some participants set fire to coloured flares and bottles were thrown.

Later in the evening, protesters apparently acting independently of organisers threw paint at shop windows and several panes of glass were broken, leading to three arrests. Charges were brought for breaching the peace, violent assault, bodily harm and criminal damage, police spokesperson Anja Dierschke told broadcaster rbb24.

Walpurgisnacht is an event in German folklore when witches meet to hold revels with the devil, traditionally in the region of north central [Germany](#) on the Brocken mountain.

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Tens of thousands of others took to the streets elsewhere across the country too, drawing attention to a wide range of issues dominated by the war in Ukraine, the rising cost of living, workers' rights, rental controls and plans to invest heavily in the German military.

A separate demonstration around an election campaign event in the northern state of Schleswig Holstein saw foreign minister Annalena Baerbock face accusations of warmongering for her support of providing arms to Ukraine.

A later event in the day in which she was due to participate had to be called off after protesters sprayed the stage with butyric acid.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz, speaking to a May Day rally in Düsseldorf, said he respected the values of pacifists but defended his decision to send arms to Ukraine, and said that equipment and aid would keep on coming to the country. He said with a looming food crisis expected to hit Africa in particular, because of wheat and other basic food supplies unable to be shipped from Ukraine, he pledged Germany's support to help countries in need.

“I respect all pacifism, I respect all values,” said Scholz. “But it would be cynical to tell a citizen of Ukraine he must defend himself against Putin’s aggression if he has no weapons.”

Frank Werneke, leader of Europe’s largest trade union, Verdi, speaking at a rally in Mainz, warned against a new arms race following Scholz’s recent announcement that he would provide €100bn (£84bn) to update Germany’s military. Werneke said the injection of such large amounts of money also from the United States and elsewhere, was in danger of disadvantaging poorer sections of society in particular.

“What we don’t want is a new arms race that comes at the expense of badly needed investments in social welfare, education and climate protection,” he said.

In Dortmund police intervened to break up protests involving leftwing demonstrators. But a spokesperson for the anti-fascist group Autonome Antifa 170 accused police of violence and said several of its members had been injured. The group had gathered to prevent a march of more than 200 rightwing extremists.

In Berlin the far-left Linke party called on the government to introduce a new law ensuring that if federal holidays, such as this year’s May Day, fall on a weekend, workers are given a weekday off to compensate.

This article was amended on 2 May 2022. Due to an error introduced during editing, €100bn was converted to £840m rather than to £84bn.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/01/feminist-witch-protest-kicks-off-may-day-protests-in-berlin>

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Roe v Wade

Supreme court voted to overturn Roe v Wade abortion law, leaked draft opinion reportedly shows

In an unprecedented revelation, a document written by Justice Samuel Alito says ‘Roe was egregiously wrong from the start’

Protesters gather over reports US supreme court to overturn Roe v Wade abortion law – video

[David Smith in Washington](#)

[@smithinamerica](#)

Mon 2 May 2022 22.18 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 11.18 EDT

The [US supreme court](#) has provisionally voted to overturn Roe v Wade, the landmark ruling that legalised abortion nationwide in America, according to a draft opinion reported on by Politico.

In what appeared to be a stunning and unprecedented leak, [Politico said](#) on Monday evening it had obtained an initial majority opinion written by Justice Samuel Alito and circulated in the court on 10 February.

The opinion strikes down [Roe v Wade](#), the court’s 1973 ruling that enshrined the constitutional right to abortion, and a subsequent 1992 decision – Planned Parenthood v Casey – that largely upheld that right.

Politico quoted Alito as saying: “Roe was egregiously wrong from the start. Its reasoning was exceptionally weak, and the decision has had damaging consequences. And far from bringing about a national settlement of the abortion issue, Roe and Casey have enflamed debate and deepened division.”

The justice adds: “We hold that Roe and Casey must be overruled. It is time to heed the constitution and return the issue of abortion to the people’s elected representatives.”

Four of the other Republican-appointed justices – Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett – voted with Alito in the conference held among the justices, the article added.

After an initial vote among the justices following the oral argument, one is assigned the majority opinion and writes a draft. It is then circulated among the justices. At times, in between the initial vote and the ruling being released, the vote alignment can change. A ruling is only final when it is published by the court.



A draft opinion written by Justice Samuel Alito claims that Roe and Casey have deepened division in the US. Photograph: Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images

But if, as expected, it is adopted, the decision would rule in favour of Mississippi in [a highly consequential case](#) about that state’s attempt to ban most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. That would sound the death knell for the half-century guarantee of nationwide protection of reproductive rights and allow each state to decide whether to restrict or ban abortion.

Several Republican-led states have already passed highly restrictive abortion laws in anticipation of such a ruling by the supreme court which, thanks to three appointments by Donald Trump, now has a 6-3 conservative majority.

Politico said it received a copy of the draft opinion from a person familiar with the court's proceedings in the Mississippi case. The draft opinion runs to 98 pages, including a 31-page appendix of historical state abortion laws, and includes 118 footnotes.

The supreme court declined to confirm what would be the worst security breach in its history – regarding one of its most consequential rulings in decades that is sure to enflame America's deep political divisions. After the Politico story broke, footage posted to social media showed [a crowd of protesters gathering](#) outside the supreme court late on Monday night, waving signs and chanting “my body, my choice.”

A massive protest is forming in front of the Supreme Court in support of protecting women's bodily autonomy. I'm proud our staff members are part. pic.twitter.com/I6MyzhoYex

— Bill Pascrell, Jr. □□□ (@BillPascrell) [May 3, 2022](#)

Neal Katyal, a former US acting solicitor general who has argued many cases before the supreme court, [tweeted](#): “I've quickly scanned the draft opinion and it appears legitimate. This means there was a preliminary vote to fully overrule Roe v Wade and that a majority of the court agreed.”

He added: “There are lots of signals the opinion is legit. The length and depth of analysis, would be very hard to fake. It says it is written by Alito and definitely sounds like him. It's 60+ pages long. If this is a deep fake, it would require a state actor or someone like that. I can't imagine that.

“It's possible the Court could pull back from this position, but this looks like they voted that way after the oral argument.”

Democrats condemned the leaked ruling. The House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, and Senate majority leader, Chuck Schumer, issued a statement saying

overturning Roe v Wade would be “an abomination, one of the worst and most damaging decisions in modern history”.

“If the report is accurate, the Supreme Court is poised to inflict the greatest restriction of rights in the past 50 years – not just on women but on all Americans,” they said.

“Every Republican senator who supported Senator McConnell and voted for Trump justices pretending that this day would never come will now have to explain themselves to the American people.”

Christie Roberts, Democratic senatorial campaign executive director, said: “If this report is true, this Republican attack on abortion access, birth control and women’s health care has dramatically escalated the stakes of the 2022 election.



Democrats condemned the leaked ruling, with Christie Roberts calling it a ‘Republican attack on ... women’s health care’. Photograph: Alex Edelman/AFP/Getty Images

“At this critical moment, we must protect and expand Democrats’ Senate majority with the power to confirm or reject supreme court justices.”

“I am horrified by the apparent draft supreme court opinion leaked this evening … this should not be the supreme court’s final opinion when it comes to abortion rights,” said New York’s Governor Kathy Hochul in a [statement](#). The governor [later added](#) on Twitter: “I refuse to let my new granddaughter have to fight for the rights that generations have fought for & won, rights that she should be guaranteed.”

“This decision is a direct assault on the dignity, rights, & lives of women, not to mention decades of settled law,” said the former secretary of state Hillary Clinton. “It will kill and subjugate women even as a vast majority of Americans think abortion should be legal. What an utter disgrace.”

Senator Bernie Sanders tweeted the news showed “Congress must pass legislation that codifies Roe v Wade as the law of the land in this country NOW”.

Reproductive rights and civil rights advocates also weighed in. NARAL Pro-Choice America’s president, Mini Timmaraju, called it “the most ominous and alarming sign yet that our nation’s highest court is poised to overturn Roe v Wade”.

“If the supreme court does indeed issue a majority opinion along the lines of the leaked draft authored by Justice Alito, the shift in the tectonic plates of abortion rights will be as significant as any opinion the court has ever issued,” the ACLU said in a statement.

Republicans, however, were exultant. Madison Cawthorn, a congressman from North Carolina, wrote on Twitter: “Because of Donald J Trump, Roe v Wade will be overturned.”

The Republican senator Tom Cotton condemned the apparent leak but applauded the vote, saying: “The Supreme Court & the DOJ must get to the bottom of this leak immediately using every investigative tool necessary. In the meantime, Roe was egregiously wrong from the beginning & I pray the Court follows the Constitution & allows the states to once again protect unborn life.”

Polling has shown that relatively few Americans want to see Roe overturned. In 2020, AP VoteCast found that 69% of voters in the presidential election said the supreme court should leave the Roe v Wade decision as is; just 29% said the court should overturn the decision.

Alito said the court can't predict how the public might react and shouldn't try. "We cannot allow our decisions to be affected by any extraneous influences such as concern about the public's reaction to our work," Alito wrote in the draft opinion, according to Politico.

Lauren Gambino and agencies contributed reporting

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Abortion

Supreme court abortion law leak: what happened and why does it matter?

Leak appears to shows court ready to overturn Roe v Wade ruling that guarantees federal constitutional protections of abortion rights



A crowd of people gather outside the US supreme court early on Tuesday.
Photograph: Alex Brandon/AP

[Archie Bland](#)

Tue 3 May 2022 05.30 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 17.41 EDT

What's happened?

A draft supreme court opinion, apparently by the conservative justice Samuel Alito, was leaked to Politico for [a story published late on Monday](#). It appears to show that the court is preparing to rule in favour of Mississippi in a case over whether the state can outlaw nearly all abortions at and after 15

weeks gestation – a direct challenge to the guarantee of abortion rights enshrined in Roe v Wade.

The 98-page document, which includes 118 footnotes and a 31-page appendix on historical state abortion laws, [was published in full](#). “Roe was egregiously wrong from the start,” it says. “Its reasoning was exceptionally weak, and the decision has had damaging consequences.”

It says Roe v Wade “must be overruled” and goes on: “It is time to heed the constitution and return the issue of abortion to the people’s elected representatives.”

Protesters gather over reports US supreme court to overturn Roe v Wade abortion law – video

What is Roe v Wade?

Roe v Wade is the court decision that protects the right to an abortion in the US up to the point a foetus can survive outside the womb, widely regarded as 24 weeks gestation. A full-term pregnancy is 39 weeks gestation. The 1973 ruling is among the most controversial in American history and has been subjected to many legal challenges over the year – but has survived until now.

For more details on the challenge to the law currently under consideration, take a look at [Jessica Glenza's explainer from December](#).

What does the leak tell us about the court's decision?

While the opinion is purportedly a draft, it would have been written after a vote on the question at hand by the court – and indicates that a majority of justices reached the same view as Alito. Politico reported that four other Republican-appointed justices supported the decision, meaning a total of at least five votes on the nine-member court.

After such a vote, a justice is assigned the majority opinion and then writes a draft, which is then circulated and subject to edits. It is possible for changes to be made to the opinion, or even for votes to change, before the court's final ruling, which is expected in the next couple of months.

How significant is a leak of a draft supreme court ruling?

The Guardian's Washington correspondent David Smith [called the leak](#) "stunning and unprecedented" and said it would be "the worst security breach" in the court's history. Theories abounded over the possible source of the leak, from a clerk for a liberal justice hoping to raise public pressure on the court before it publishes its decision to a conservative who wants to soften the impact of the decision when it comes – in other words, nobody knows.

A [tweet from Scotusblog](#), a respected news and analysis site, said it was "impossible to overstate the earthquake this will cause inside the court, in terms of the destruction of trust among the justices and staff. This leak is the gravest, most unforgivable sin."

How did reproductive-rights advocates react to the news?

With fury. A BuzzFeed reporter [posted a video](#) of about 200 protesters outside the court chanting slogans such as "abortion is healthcare" and "my body, my choice". Another video [showed somebody urging attenders](#): "If you feel like fucking screaming, then just scream."

What about politicians?

[Democrats said](#) overturning Roe v Wade would be a catastrophe. They were led by the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, and the Senate majority leader, Chuck Schumer, who issued a joint statement saying such a move would be

“an abomination, one of the worst and most damaging decisions in modern history”.

They also immediately sought to make Roe v Wade an issue for crucial upcoming midterm elections. Christie Roberts, the Democratic senatorial campaign executive director, said: “At this critical moment, we must protect and expand Democrats’ Senate majority with the power to confirm or reject supreme court justices.” Republicans by turns praised the apparent vote and condemned the leak itself.

Now what?

It is worth reiterating that it is still possible that votes could change and mean that the apparent draft opinion remains just that – a draft. But if the supreme court does rule along the lines suggested by the leaked document, the consequences will be rapid and hugely consequential.

Because the US Congress has never enshrined the right to terminate a pregnancy, the overturning of Roe v Wade would mean individual states could immediately make their own decisions over the way forward. Twenty-six of them would be expected to move quickly to do so, with many having “trigger” laws on the books, which would automatically come into effect in those circumstances. That means that women in those states would immediately face severe restrictions on their ability to have an abortion, and the US would become one of only four countries to curtail that right in nearly 30 years.

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Roe v Wade

What is Roe v Wade and how does it affect abortion rights in the US?

A woman's right to have an abortion through the first trimester of pregnancy was protected nationally in 1973 following the supreme court's landmark ruling

- [Supreme court voted to overturn Roe v Wade, leaked draft opinion reportedly shows](#)



A crowd gather outside the US supreme court in Washington DC on Monday night after a draft opinion indicated the court had provisionally voted to overturn the 1973 case Roe v Wade, the landmark ruling that legalised abortion nationwide in America. Photograph: Anna Johnson/AP

Reuters

Tue 3 May 2022 00.52 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 12.03 EDT

A leaked initial draft majority opinion suggests the US supreme court is [poised to vote to overturn the Roe v Wade decision](#) that legalized abortion nationwide, Politico reported on Monday.

The supreme court and the White House have declined to comment.

A woman's right to have an abortion through the first trimester of pregnancy was protected nationally in 1973, following the supreme court's landmark 7-2 ruling.

Plaintiff Jane Roe, later identified as Norma McCorvey, was an unmarried pregnant woman who was unable to get an abortion under [Texas](#) law, where it was illegal unless to save the life of the mother.

Roe's lawyers said she was unable to travel out of the state to obtain an abortion and argued the law was too vague and infringed on her constitutional rights.

[Abortion limits](#)

The ruling

"Pregnancy often comes more than once to the same woman, and in the general population, if man is to survive, it will always be with us," supreme court justice Harry Blackmun, a Republican nominated by the president Richard Nixon, wrote in the sweeping majority opinion that detailed attitudes about abortion from the time of the Persian empire.

The Texas law infringed on women's right to privacy, was overly broad and violated the due process clause in the US constitution's 14th amendment, the decision said.

"This right of privacy ... is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy. The detriment that the State would impose upon the pregnant woman by denying this choice altogether is apparent.

“Specific and direct harm medically diagnosable even in early pregnancy may be involved. Maternity, or additional offspring, may force upon the woman a distressful life and future. Psychological harm may be imminent. Mental and physical health may be taxed by child care. There is also the distress, for all concerned, associated with the unwanted child, and there is the problem of bringing a child into a family already unable, psychologically and otherwise, to care for it.

“In other cases, as in this one, the additional difficulties and continuing stigma of unwed motherhood may be involved. All these are factors the woman and her responsible physician necessarily will consider in consultation.”

[Abortion ban map](#)

Five Republican-nominated judges were among the majority. The court ruled the state could regulate the procedure during the second trimester and even ban it in most circumstances in the third.

“We do not agree that, by adopting one theory of life, Texas may override the rights of the pregnant woman that are at stake,” Blackmun wrote.

“We repeat, however, that the State does have an important and legitimate interest in preserving and protecting the health of the pregnant woman, whether she be a resident of the State or a nonresident who seeks medical consultation and treatment there, and that it has still another important and legitimate interest in protecting the potentiality of human life. These interests are separate and distinct.”

Justices Byron White, a Democratic appointee, and Republican-nominated William Rehnquist, later US chief justice, dissented.

The decision provoked a firestorm among social and judicial conservatives, who have long sought to undermine or overturn it.

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Roe v Wade

‘An abomination’: how campaigners reacted to report on US supreme court’s draft decision on Roe v Wade

Leaked initial draft majority opinion suggests court is poised to overturn ruling that legalised abortion across US

Protesters gather over reports US supreme court to overturn Roe v Wade abortion law – video

Reuters

Tue 3 May 2022 02.33 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 11.16 EDT

A [leaked initial draft majority opinion](#) suggests the US supreme court is poised to overturn the Roe v Wade decision that legalised abortion nationwide, Politico has reported.

The unprecedented leak stunned Washington. It holds the potential to reshape the political landscape ahead of US midterm elections in November. Here is some reaction to the report.

Alexis McGill Johnson, Planned Parenthood president

“This leaked opinion is horrifying and unprecedented, and it confirms our worst fears ... While we have seen the writing on the wall for decades, it is no less devastating, and comes just as anti-abortion rights groups unveil their ultimate plan to ban abortion nationwide... [W]e will continue to fight like hell to protect the right to access safe, legal abortion.”

National Women’s Law Center

“The language in the draft opinion leaked from the supreme court is outrageous, irresponsible and shocking. Any justice who signs on to this

opinion is fuelling the harm and violence that will happen to people who become pregnant in this country.”

American Civil Liberties Union

“If the supreme court does indeed issue a majority opinion along the lines of the leaked draft authored by Justice Alito, the shift in the tectonic plates of abortion rights will be as significant as any opinion the court has ever issued.”

Hillary Clinton, former US secretary of state

“This decision is a direct assault on the dignity, rights, and lives of women, not to mention decades of settled law. It will kill and subjugate women even as a vast majority of Americans think abortion should be legal. What an utter disgrace.”

Elizabeth Warren, Democratic senator

“An extremist supreme court is poised to overturn #RoeVWade and impose its far-right, unpopular views on the entire country. It’s time for the millions who support the constitution and abortion rights to stand up and make their voices heard. We’re not going back, not ever.”

Chuck Schumer, Senate majority leader, and Nancy Pelosi, House speaker

“If the report is accurate, the supreme court is poised to inflict the greatest restriction of rights in the past 50 years – not just on women but on all Americans. The Republican-appointed justices’ reported votes to overturn [Roe v Wade](#) would go down as an abomination, one of the worst and most damaging decisions in modern history.”

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Democratic representative

“As we’ve warned, Scotus [supreme court of the United States] isn’t just coming for abortion – they’re coming for the right to privacy Roe rests on, which includes gay marriage and civil rights. [Joe] Manchin is blocking Congress codifying Roe. House has seemingly forgotten about Clarence Thomas. These two points must change.”

Amy Klobuchar, Democratic senator

“If nothing can get done in Washington because of Republican obstructionism, then the American people and women are going to have to vote and people who believe in choice are going to have to vote like they never voted before, because that’s the only way we can change this.”

Kathy Hochul, Democratic New York governor

“This is an absolutely disgraceful attack on our fundamental right to choose, and we will fight it with everything we’ve got. Let me be loud and clear: New York will always guarantee your right to abortion. You have our word.”

Bernie Sanders, independent US senator

“Congress must pass legislation that codifies Roe v Wade as the law of the land in this country now. And if there aren’t 60 votes in the Senate to do it, and there are not, we must end the filibuster to pass it with 50 votes.”

Ken Paxton, Republican Texas attorney general

“I hope that Scutus returns the question of abortion where it belongs: the states. This is why I led a 24-state coalition in support of MS’s law banning them after 15 wks. I’ll [continue] to ensure that TX protects the unborn and pray for the end of abortion across our nation.”

Tom Cotton, Republican senator

“The supreme court and the DoJ must get to the bottom of this leak immediately using every investigative tool necessary. In the meantime, Roe was egregiously wrong from the beginning and I pray the court follows the constitution and allows the states to once again protect unborn life.”

Josh Hawley, Republican senator

“The left continues its assault on the supreme court with an unprecedented breach of confidentiality, clearly meant to intimidate. The justices mustn’t give in to this attempt to corrupt the process. Stay strong. I will say, if this is the court’s opinion, it’s a heck of an opinion. Voluminously researched, tightly argued, and morally powerful.”

Rick Scott, Republican senator

“The supreme court’s confidential deliberation process is sacred and protects it from political interference. This breach shows that radical Democrats are

working even harder to intimidate and undermine the court. It was always their plan. The justices cannot be swayed by this attack.“

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2022.05.03 - Spotlight

- The long read Why is it so hard to control our appetites? A doctor's struggles with giving up sugar
- 'There was an enormous amount of drugs being taken' Graham Nash on groupies, feuds, divorce and ego
- Met Gala 2022 Politics rises to the surface in fashion's biggest night
- Kim Kardashian Reality TV star wears Marilyn Monroe's JFK dress as Met Gala celebrates Gilded Age
- Sigrid 'I feel like I'm being discredited, for my talent and all the hours I've spent at the piano'

Why is it so hard to control our appetites? A doctor's struggles with giving up sugar

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Interview

‘There was an enormous amount of drugs being taken’: Graham Nash on groupies, feuds, divorce and ego

[Simon Hattenstone](#)



Graham Nash: ‘I’m trying to live the best life I can, and I want to do that until they close the coffin.’ Photograph: Gareth Cattermole/Getty Images

The Crosby, Stills and Nash singer on the wild early years, Joni Mitchell, his former bandmates and why his children no longer speak to him



Tue 3 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 4 May 2022 07.13 EDT

“I feel good,” a ludicrously youthful Graham Nash tells me. “Eighty years old and still rocking.” And some. Nash has rocked his way twice into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame – as a member of the pop group the Hollies and as part of the groundbreaking folk-rock super-group Crosby, Stills and Nash.

His recent activities include touring, publishing a book of his photography, recording a live version of his first two solo albums, and running his lucrative fine art printing studio, Nash Editions. And then there’s his 2019 marriage to artist Amy Grantham, 37 years his junior. “I’m singing excellently, the music is great, and I’m selling lots of merch. Everything is going really well.” But, as I discover later, it’s more complex than that.

He’s video-calling from New York, where he now lives after decades on the west coast and Hawaii. It’s a far cry from the Salford of his working-class childhood, living in a two-up, two-down terrace, outdoor toilets, no hot

water. At 14 he became the man of the family when his father was imprisoned for receiving a stolen camera (a present for Graham) and refusing to grass on the relative who had sold it to him. Music provided a way out for Nash. He formed the Hollies with his best friend from primary school, Allan Clarke. They had hit after hit in the 1960s, with catchy songs such as Carrie-Anne, On a Carousel and Bus Stop.

When did he realise he could make a career out of music? “The first time Allan and I with our two acoustic guitars attracted really pretty women. I was like: ‘Oh, I see!’ Once I could play three chords on the guitar, my attractiveness to the ladies went up sky-high.” Ladies and his attractiveness to them loom large in Nash’s life story.

In 2013, Nash published his memoir, Wild Tales (also the name of his second album). The book was full of them. Nash had been regarded as one of the quiet men of the music industry, a sensible, unifying figure who did his best to keep the excesses of Stephen Stills and David Crosby in check. But here it emerged that he indulged just as much as they did. The only difference was that he was lucky enough not to have an addictive personality.

Your memoir is pure sex, drugs and rock’n’roll, I say. He grins. “That’s what my life was. And is.” That’s amazing at 80, I say. “Absolutely. It’s *totally* amazing. Let me get my tea.” He reaches for his mug.

The early days of the Hollies, in particular, sound like one long shagathon. “We’d get laid a lot, of course, mainly girls that you picked up at the shows ... once you were found it usually led to sex,” he writes in his memoir. Not surprisingly, his marriage to Rose Eccles (whose surname inspired the hit Jennifer Eccles) was over by his mid-20s.



Nash (far left) and Allan Clarke (second left) with the Hollies in 1964.
Photograph: Val Wilmer/Redferns

Does he think today's pop stars could get away with what they did? "I don't think they can get away with it now because of social media. There is no privacy any more. And once it's on the net it will never leave the net. And that's terrifying because we've all done incredibly stupid things."

I'm looking at his teeth as he talks. They're so white and perfect. Are they natural? He smiles, giving me an even better view. "No, I'm English," he says.

By the late 60s Nash felt he had outgrown the Hollies and told them he was leaving. It caused a huge fallout with Clarke, though they made up long ago and Nash is currently helping him with a solo album. In his book he called the band "provincial". While they were still drinking eight pints a night of bitter, he'd had his mind expanded by cannabis. He was no longer satisfied writing bubble-gum pop about fancying girls; he had bigger issues to explore – war, justice, idealism and grownup relationships.

Even today, he says, much of his joy comes from the way dope enables him to focus on the world's beauty rather than its horror. "I'm glad that I got to know marijuana when I did. It changed my life completely," he says in that

unlikely Salford-Californian hybrid accent (imagine Mark E Smith as an LA lifestyle guru). “I get up every morning and I’m glad I’m alive.”



Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young at Wembley Stadium in 1974. Photograph: David Warner Ellis/Redferns

Did acid also have a positive impact? “It did. I took less than a dozen trips in my life but I realised with the first one that here we are, this ball of mud whizzing at 67,000 miles an hour through space, on one of trillions of planets. I understood when I took acid that everything is meaningless. And because of that everything is completely deeply meaningful.”

Drugs taught him to embrace his contradictions, and prepared him to work with Stills and Crosby. He first played music with them in 1968 at his then girlfriend Joni Mitchell’s home in Laurel Canyon, Los Angeles. He had gone out to stay with Mitchell, parked his car in the driveway, and heard two male voices in the house. “I wasn’t happy about that, but it was David and Stephen. They were having dinner with Joni. At one point David goes: ‘Hey, Stephen, play Willy [Nash’s nickname] that song we were just doing’, and they were doing a song called You Don’t Have to Cry. I say: ‘It’s a great song – play it again.’ They play it again. I say: ‘That’s *really* a great song – do me a favour and play it one more time’, and the third time I added my

high harmony and the world fucking changed from that moment. And that's what Joni was the only witness to."

Nash is not slow to proclaim the greatness of CSN, or the four-man version CSNY (with the added component of Neil Young). To be fair, they were truly great. All four contributed wonderful songs. Stills' Suite: Judy Blue Eyes, a seven-minute song in four parts, could be part of any classical repertoire ("When he played it to me for the first time I thought fucking Stills was from Mars"). Nash's Our House and Teach your Children are contemporary nursery rhymes about domestic bliss and parental duties, while Crosby's darker Long Time Gone and Almost Cut My Hair could rock with the best of them. Nash wrote the band's only Top 10 single, the gorgeous Just a Song Before I Go.

CSN last toured in 2015 and formally split up in 2016 after a lifetime of spats. What are his memories of their early days together? He smiles. "We used to go to our friends' houses in Laurel Canyon, me and David and Stephen with a couple of guitars, and we'd kill them. We were fucking *fantastic*. We had discovered a new way of singing, of creating a vocal blend, making our three voices into one. We would *kill* them. They could not believe what we were doing. Then we'd follow that with Guinnevere, then Lady of the Island, then Helplessly Hoping, and You Don't Have to Cry and they're all on the floor with their fucking brains melting. That's the image I see every time I think of those moments."

The early days were fabulous, he says. "We were in heaven." But it didn't last long. They were soon undone by rivalry, egos, excess and drugs. The band that harmonised so sublimely could not have been more discordant. "When we first started there were no egos. I think that came from all the cocaine we snorted. That's what brought egos into it. There were an enormous amount of drugs being taken." He runs through a typical day. "I'd get high in the morning and snort in the afternoon and I'd keep going till 3-4am." Without drugs would the music have been different? "I don't know, but we may have been able to make more music if we'd not been quite so stoned."

Nash remembers the date he last took cocaine. “10 December 1984. We had finished a tour and there is the tour-end party. I walk into this room and see all these people smiling, and the smiles never made it to their eyes. It was only a mouth. And I realised I must look like all these people because we were all snorting coke. I stopped instantly and never went back.”

Eventually they would fight over anything from music to women and drugs. After Nash asked the singer Rita Coolidge out on a date to a gig, Stills phoned her up, said Nash was sick and that he would take her. Stills and Coolidge moved in with each other for a few weeks before Nash “won” her back. Nash wrote such sensitive songs about women and relationships, but at times in the memoir he sounds like a priapic boor. I ask whether Michelle Phillips of the Mamas and Papas got in touch after the book was published. “No,” he says sheepishly. He mentions her once, saying that the only reason he went to meet the band was because he “wanted to fuck Michelle”. I wonder how she felt about that single reference, I say. “Well, I didn’t want to fuck John, I didn’t want to fuck Denny, and I didn’t want to fuck Cass. I wanted to fuck Michelle.” He pauses. “Now this was pure toxic masculinity. Completely.”

Was there a toxic masculinity to the whole band? “Absolutely. And it became more evident when Neil joined.” Often Stills and Young competed over guitar solos, I say. Nash corrects me. “Actually, it wasn’t quite that way. I’ve stood in the middle of Stephen and Neil countless times, with these two stags talking to each other through guitar riffs.” If Stills and Young were stags, what were he and Crosby? “We were the grass that kept the two stags alive.”

He then pays Young the ultimate backhanded compliment. “I’ve got utmost respect for him. You can put a European tour together with a crew of 25 people and then a week before he says: ‘Nah, I don’t feel like it’, so all those people are now out of a job. Things like that with Neil I don’t agree with, but I understand his strength and I applaud him for it.” (To be fair to Young, he cancelled tours in 1997 after he sliced the top off his finger while making a sandwich, and in 2013 after Crazy Horse guitarist Frank Sampedro broke his hand.) Does Young know he’s selfish? “Neil knows what is best for Neil.” As for Stills, he has nothing but warmth for him now. “I love Stephen.

Stephen Stills has got a big heart in that chest of his.” He says he prefers CSN to CSNY and regards Stills as the greatest of the four writers.

It is Crosby, once his closest friend, whom he appears to have had the terminal falling out with. At times, they were inseparable, making four studio albums together when CSN weren’t working. Nash always seemed to be there for Crosby to haul him out of the depths. But times have changed. Nash says he simply got tired of Crosby badmouthing him. What was the final straw? “My patience, my love for him, it all just stopped.” And you had loved him? “Of course, for 50-odd years. But when he goes on social media, says I wasn’t his friend, and all I was in it for was the money, that’s fucking heartbreaking for me.”

Could he see CSN/Y reforming? “No, absolutely not. Not a shot in hell.” Why did it break so badly last time? “I tried my best to keep it all together for the friendship, the music and the money. But I just ran out of patience.”

Nash returns to the subject of toxic masculinity. “Why do you think Russia invaded Ukraine? Pure fucking ego of one man. Thousands of people are dying because of one man.” He looks at me, severely. “If you could kill Putin, would you? I would. And I’m a total peacenik. But I realise that if somebody had killed Hitler, millions more people would have been alive.” So if somebody handed you a gun, would you be willing to serve time for killing Putin? “Yes, knowing what I know now, absolutely.”

We segue from toxic masculinity to his live version of the two tender albums he made after splitting up with Mitchell in 1970 – Songs for Beginners and Wild Tales. “Most of the sad songs on those albums are about my relationship with Joni.” Was she the love of your life? “Well, I’m married to this incredible woman right now, so I could say the very same thing about her, but, yes, in those days she was absolutely the love of my life. It’s *Joni Mitchell*, for fuck’s sake! Look at how she looks to start with! Then you put all those songs behind that smile. I didn’t stand a fucking chance.”



With Joni Mitchell in 1969. Photograph: Robert Altman/Getty Images

Before splitting up with him, she told him: “If you hold sand in your hand too tightly, it will slip through your fingers.” Did he hold on to her too tight? “We were each other’s lives then, and I just loved her so much, and she loved me – there’s no doubt about it in my mind. We would light up a fucking room when we walked into it. People would go, ‘Holy shit – what is the glow around these two people?’”

There is a story that you wanted to marry her and expected her to become a housewife? “No, no. *Nononono*. I think Joan thought if she married me I would ask her to stop writing and just cook pie. That is so insane to think that.” I tell him his face has turned bright pink. “I’m blushing. I can feel my face.” Because the idea that you could ask Mitchell to sacrifice her career for yours now seems so ridiculous? “Absolutely.”

At the end of their relationship, Mitchell told him that she thought he hated women. What did she mean? “I don’t know why she thought that.” Maybe she thought you objectified them? “Maybe. I don’t know. It’s hard to think about shit that happened 50 years ago.”

Do you see Joni now? “I do. I sent her a bunch of pictures I took of her. She loved them enough to want to use them as album covers, and of course I

gave them to her completely free. You know, you can't take a beautiful picture of Joni and then sell it to her." I'm amazed you're even talking about selling them to her, I say. "Right, no. I couldn't do that to Joan."



Nash with David Crosby, performing at Altamont in 1969. Photograph: Eamonn McCabe/The Guardian

The sunny idealism of the mid-60s gave way to a dystopian darkness – the US draft for Vietnam, the killing of Meredith Hunter at the 1969 Rolling Stones Altamont concert, the Manson murders. Nash experienced his own horror in 1975 when his 19-year-old girlfriend [Amy Gossage was murdered by her brother](#). There is no mention of her in his memoir. I ask if he found it too painful to write about. "Yeah, my relationship with Amy was incredibly painful." He looks upset, and starts to stutter. "Particularly ... she got murdered by her brother with a hammer. I couldn't ... couldn't ... I couldn't deal with it. I was writing and writing and writing, and when I came to that part, it made me feel so bad I just didn't want to deal with it."

So we deal with something he finds easier to talk about – his third wife, Amy Grantham, who resembles a young Joni Mitchell. Nash left Susan Sennett, his wife of 38 years and the mother of his three adult children, for Grantham in 2016. (In his memoir, he referred to Sennett as the love of his life, and wrote dotingly of his children and grandchildren.) Now he says he

feels as if he has been born again. In 2018, he told Event magazine: “My sex life is insane. It’s better than it’s ever been.” Today, he describes their relationship in different terms. “My life has changed because she won’t stand for any of my bullshit. You tell stories or you do something, and she says: ‘No, that’s not the way it is; this is the way I see it.’ And invariably she’s correct. So I’ve got someone in my life who will love me in spite of my weaknesses.”

What are those weaknesses? “Oh, I don’t know.” For younger women? “Not necessarily. I’m trying to live the best life I can, and I want to do that until they close the coffin.”



Nash with Amy Grantham at a march in 2016. Photograph: New York Daily News Archive/Getty Images

But even here the story is complex. I read that his children fell out with him after he separated from Sennett. What happened? “They didn’t realise that I had divorced their mother, not them. So they don’t want me in their lives, and …” He trails off.

All three of the children? “My daughter is a little friendlier than my boys.” That must be tough, to be cut off from them, I say. “It’s terrible. So I’m doing remarkably well considering everything.” Does he think they were so

angry with him because of the separation or the age difference? “I don’t know. People have to live their lives. People become who they are, and I realise my kids are not the people I thought they were, that my fatherly eyes glossed over their shortcomings.”

Does he hope there will be a reconciliation? “Actually I don’t. And that might seem awfully strange as a father, but it’s too painful. I can’t live my life in pain. If they don’t want me in their lives, that’s their choice. I don’t agree with it, but I will honour their choice.”

Suddenly the mood has changed. I stare at him, trying to work out what he is thinking. I seem to be looking at a man with the implacable resolve to follow his heart and live his rock’n’roll life to the last. But I also seem to be witnessing the desperate melancholy of an elderly man aware of all he has lost.

The album Graham Nash: Live is [out on 6 May on Proper Records](#).

This article was amended on 3 May 2022 to correct the placement of Hollies singer Allan Clarke in their 1964 photograph. It was further amended on 4 May 2022: CSN last toured in 2015, not 2013 and the song title is Teach your Children, not Teach the Children.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/may/03/graham-nash-on-families-joni-mitchell-and-toxic-masculinity-if-you-could-kill-putin-would-you-i-would>

Met Gala 2022

Met Gala 2022: politics rises to the surface on fashion's biggest night

Celebration of American design themed ‘gilded glamour’ prompts slogans, homage and big dose of history

- [Red carpet: from Marilyn Monroe’s gown to a fake moustache – in pictures](#)



Lizzo arrives at the Met Gala 2022. This year the Costume Institute benefit celebrated In America: An Anthology of Fashion. Photograph: Erik Pendzich/Rex/Shutterstock

[Edward Helmore](#)

Mon 2 May 2022 22.46 EDT Last modified on Wed 4 May 2022 10.12 EDT

Politics – personal, contemporary and historic – were close to the surface on New York’s Upper East Side on Monday night as 600 guests, invited to

celebrate America's Gilded Age at the Met Gala, offered their own interpretation of style and the multitude of meanings dress carries, then as now.

New York's mayor, Eric Adams, who had said he'd been "[dying to go](#)" to the fundraiser "for years", arrived on the red carpet wearing a jacket with decorative forearms and lapels that paid homage to the city's transit system. The back of his coat read "End Gun Violence" in red lettering.



The mayor of New York City, Eric Adams, with his partner Tracey Collins.
Photograph: Jeff Kravitz/FilmMagic

The former secretary of state Hillary Clinton came in a dress inspired by friendship quilts inscribed with the names, she explained, of "gutsy women" of the 19th and 20th century liberation movements.

But the celebration of women's progress toward equal rights came as news surfaced that the US supreme court had [provisionally voted to overturn Roe v Wade](#), the landmark ruling that legalised abortion nationwide in America, according to a draft opinion reported on by Politico.

Politics at the event returned again when Kim Kardashian appeared on the red carpet in the iconic dress Marilyn Monroe wore to coo Happy Birthday

to President Kennedy in 1962.

Hamish Bowles, the World of Interiors editor, sporting a raffish matinee idol moustache and gold tiara, said: “Tonight our hearts are with the people of Ukraine and the victims of war and displacement around the world.” The publisher, the major sponsor of the event, had made a donation to the Red Cross and encouraged “those who can to do so as well”.

Dame Anna Wintour’s “In America: An Anthology of Fashion”-themed ball kicked off at the Metropolitan Museum of Art with Priscilla Presley on hand to pitch Baz Luhrmann’s upcoming Elvis movie, Anderson .Paak in “Gucci from head to toe” and Ashton Sanders offering up “Blade, vampire tip”.

Riz Ahmed, in a T-shirt and worker’s shirt, said he was “trying elevate and celebrate working-class immigrants”. Amy Schumer said “when Gabriella Hearst offers to dress you put your Spanx on right over your c-section scar.” Janelle Monáe promoted her sc-fi book. Blake Lively came as the Statue of Liberty.



Amy Schumer. Photograph: Angela Weiss/AFP/Getty Images

The Met Gala is a commercial proposition, light years away from its creation, in 1946, by the publicist Eleanor Lambert, who is credited with bringing European fashion to America.

The influential trade publication the Business of Fashion said this year's event might be the "[most important Met Gala](#)" of Wintour's career. After two years of interruption – one cancelled by Covid-19; another under-attended due to international travel bans and vaccine requirements – Monday's gala was reported to have returned to full strength.

With tables costing \$200,000 to \$300,000, last year's event in September raised \$16.4m for the Costume Institute. But it's also a money-maker for Vogue. According to Amy Odell's newly published biography on Wintour, now Condé Nast's global chief content officer, it is the publisher's pitch to sell advertising. This year it is also a pitch to sell online subscriptions to Vogue.com and corral visitors to the Met museum.

"At the end of the day, this is an extremely important fundraiser," Anna-Lisa Yabsley, Condé Nast head of digital strategy, told BoF. "Everything we do content-wise is about raising awareness and getting people through the door."

Vogue charged \$1m for two, six-second spots on its Met Gala live stream over the course of two hours, according to BoF. Tracking data shows the stream pulled 16m views, along with 260m gala-related views across social media.

According to the tracking firm Launchmetrics, the night generates \$543m in media impact value, or the effect of placements and mentions – compared with the Super Bowl's \$520m. According to BoF, the more Vogue can market the Met Gala as the Super Bowl of fashion, the more it will be able to charge.



Kim Kardashian, pictured with Pete Davidson, in the iconic Marilyn Monroe dress. Photograph: Stephen Lovekin/BEI/Rex/Shutterstock

Earlier Monday, the first lady, Dr Jill Biden, kicked off a preview of the show, which features nine commissioned films by directors including Radha Blank, Janicza Bravo, Sofia Coppola, Julie Dash, Autumn de Wilde, and Chloé Zhao, last year's Oscar best picture winner.

The films celebrate overlooked figures in early American fashion, especially female designers, and especially those of color. The Costume Institute's head curator, Andrew Bolton, said when announcing the show, they "have been forgotten, overlooked, or relegated to a footnote in the annals of fashion history".

The Met Ball itself, fashion activists have said, has long been an opportunity for greater inclusivity than the structure of the publisher, or its pages, had embraced until racial protests in 2020.

In her remarks, Biden said: "Style helps us express things that can't be put in words.

"The way we carry ourselves, how we put our shoulders back when times are hard, or offer a friendly smile even when we don't agree. How we choose to show up for our communities – the small acts of kindness that are

remembered long after they are offered.”

She continued: “And that includes what we wear.”

This article was amended on 4 May 2022 to remove an incorrect reference to Alicia Keys wearing a cape that celebrated New York union history; this was based on an altered image of her outfit being shared online.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2022/may/03/met-gala-2022-politics-rises-to-the-surface-in-fashions-biggest-night>

Met Gala 2022

Kim Kardashian wears Marilyn Monroe's JFK dress as Met Gala celebrates gilded age

Reality TV star wore a sauna suit and lost 16 pounds to fit into gown worn by actor when she sang Happy Birthday to John F Kennedy

- [Met Gala 2022: politics rises to the surface on fashion's biggest night](#)
- [Red carpet: from Marilyn Monroe's gown to a fake moustache – in pictures](#)



Kim Kardashian arrives at the 2022 Met Gala in New York on Monday wearing the dress worn by Marilyn Monroe to serenade US President John F Kennedy on his birthday in 1962. Photograph: Evan Agostini/AP

[Rafqa Touma](#) and Reuters

Tue 3 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 02.47 EDT

Kim Kardashian has appeared on the 2022 Met Gala red carpet wearing a crystal-embellished gown last worn by Marilyn Monroe six decades ago when she serenaded the US president [John F Kennedy](#) for his birthday.

The Met Gala, known for its high-profile guest list and extravagant ensembles, marks the opening of the annual fashion exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute.



Marilyn Monroe in the gown, serenading JFK at Madison Square Garden.
Photograph: Bettmann Archive

This year's exhibition, In America: An Anthology of Fashion, inspired the [gala theme](#) of "gilded glamor".

Kardashian's interpretation of the theme came from "the most American thing you can think of".

"And that's Marilyn Monroe," [she told Vogue](#). "For me, the most Marilyn Monroe moment is when she sang Happy Birthday to JFK, it was *that* look."

Kardashian's transformation into Monroe for the Met Gala carpet took more than sporting the Bob Mackie dress. "I did want a physical change too," she told Vogue.

As well as bleaching her hair platinum blond, Kardashian said she lost 16 pounds (7kg) in less than a month to fit into the dress.

“It was such a challenge,” she said. “It was like a role. I was determined to fit this. I would wear a sauna suit twice a day, run on the treadmill, completely cut out all sugar and all carbs, and just eat the cleanest veggies and protein.”

Acquiring the dress was a challenge, too. The piece sold in 2016 for \$US4.8m and holds the record for the most expensive dress sold at auction, as reported by Vogue.

Now usually stored in a temperature-controlled vault at Ripley’s Believe It Or Not Museum in Orlando, Florida, the gown was transported to Kardashian’s home in Calabasas, California by private plane and accompanied by guards.



Kim Kardashian and Pete Davidson together on the red carpet. Photograph: Gotham/GC Images

She stepped on to the red carpet in the multimillion dollar-gown topped by a white fur shawl. With her newly bleached hair slicked into a bun, she posed beside her partner, Pete Davidson. The comedian wore a black suit and sunglasses.

When worn by Monroe in 1962, the dress – designed by Jean Louis based on a sketch by Bob Mackie – caused a stir.

“Nowadays everyone wears sheer dresses, but back then that was not the case,” Kardashian told Vogue. “In a sense, it’s the original naked dress. That’s why it was so shocking.”

The Monroe look joins Kardashian’s lineup of Met Gala ensembles that have captured attention – including her [2019 “wet” Thierry Mugler dress](#) dripping in crystals and last year’s [head-to-toe black Balenciaga bodysuit](#).

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2022/may/03/kim-kardashian-wears-marilyn-monroes-jfk-dress-as-met-gala-celebrates-gilded-age>

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Interview

Sigrid: ‘I feel like I’m being discredited, for my talent and all the hours I’ve spent at the piano’

[Alim Kheraj](#)



Raising the roof ... Sigrid. Photograph: James Perrols

The Scandipop singer talks about how lockdown sparked her thrilling new disco direction – and why she's sick of questions about her authenticity

Tue 3 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 4 May 2022 11.28 EDT

In 2020, Sigrid had a crisis of confidence. Forced back to her parent's house in Norway by the pandemic, she found her old teenage insecurities creeping in. As a kid, she had never considered herself cool, often choosing to play piano at home rather than socialise with friends. Then her life changed: she became a successful pop star, one with hit singles, 1.3bn streams and counting, and fans all over the world. "With the success, I had that feeling that maybe I was cool," she says. "Then ... boom! Isolation. Back home with my parents, in my childhood bedroom, remembering cringe moments of being 14."

"I got a bit scared of how quickly I adapted to this completely alternative life, where I was waking up in the morning, having breakfast with my parents, going for a hike and skiing," she admits. "Like, the whole day was about getting to the peak of a mountain, skiing down and then coming home to talk about how the snow was while having dinner. There were no emails. There was no stress. I had this serene, alternative life, but there was this really scary thing going on at the same time. I think that's how many people felt."

Speaking from her apartment in Oslo, bright-eyed and eager to chat, she doesn't seem like someone filled with self-doubt. Since she released her debut single aged 20 – 2017's triumphant rejection of music industry sexism *Don't Kill My Vibe* – Sigrid found herself on an unstoppable roll: she scooped the top prize on the BBC Sound of 2018 poll, scored a platinum-selling single with the mammoth pop banger *Strangers*, became a fixture on festival lineups, and headed out on her own extensive tour.

When the campaign for her debut album Sucker Punch finished in 2019, she actually felt relieved. "It was a crazy few years," she recalls, her perfect English coloured by a Norwegian accent. "But I also remember feeling bittersweet at the end, too. My band, crew and I were all Norwegian and

experiencing everything for the first time. It was so exciting. The energy was unstoppable, and you're just running on adrenaline.”

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Before the pandemic hit, she had been in Los Angeles for the early, anxiety-inducing process of making her new album, *How to Let Go*: “Everyone talks about the difficult second record, and I hadn’t quite figured out what I wanted to do. It stressed me for, like, a month.”

It wasn’t until Sigrid wrote *It Gets Dark* with Norwegian songwriter Caroline Ailin and Danish producer Sly that things fell into place. The song touches on themes of isolation and overcoming adversity. “In my life, I can appreciate the good stuff because of things that have been difficult and where I’ve come from,” she says. “Being far from home can be sad, difficult and lonely, but the highs that come with that are just so worth it.”



Northern powerhouse ... Sigrid at Leeds festival in 2021. Photograph: Andrew Benge/Redferns

I suggest that *Sucker Punch* was an album that helped her become a touring artist, whereas this new record was about shaping her into a recording artist.

“Shaping is an interesting word,” she says, bristling slightly. “That’s something that people have commented on when it comes to my authenticity. They’ve said, ‘Is she authentic? Is it real?’ At first, I laughed, but then I got sad about it. You feel questioned, like none of what I’ve done was actually me and that someone else handles everything. That feels like I’m being discredited, both for my talent but also for all the fucking hours I’ve spent at the piano working.”

Such hard work appears to be in opposition with her casual aesthetic, even if it’s seen by some as a carefully crafted marketing plot. “If you take a picture of someone and slam it on a billboard, that picture is a lie,” she says in reference to the ubiquitous image of her wearing a white T-shirt and jeans. “It’s not natural to be at a photoshoot and then have that photo replicated over and over on different things, even if it comes from an authentic place.”

It’s OK as a woman to have a plan for your career. That’s not calculated, it’s just smart

Although she gives short shrift to accusations that she’s an “industry plant”, she is atypically deliberate with her career choices, treating being a pop star like the business it is. Citing Taylor Swift as an inspiration in this regard, she says: “I’ve seen interviews with her where she explains that it’s OK as a woman to have a plan for your career. That’s not calculated, it’s just smart. It’s smart to have a plan.” In fact, it was such plotting that allowed Sigrid to land on the overarching theme of *How to Let Go*, an album about moving on from past relationships and relinquishing who you once were. “But it’s also about letting go of the doubts and fears I have,” she adds. “I’m scared of things, and this means a lot to me because I am ambitious, as I think a lot of artists are. I’m afraid of losing it because it means so much to me.”

There’s an existential thread, too, and album-closer *High Note* sees Sigrid pondering her own mortality as she sings, “I got so much more to do / When I run out of time / I wanna know I’ve seen it through.” Like any young person who has lived through political and economic upheaval, a global pandemic, and is witnessing the climate crisis play out in real time, thinking about death is understandable. “The world just feels smaller and smaller

every day. It's a scary time," she says. "I think sometimes you can almost become paralysed by that fear."

These worries are why she also leaned into disco on *How to Let Go*, most notably on the self-love anthem *Mirror* and glitterball oddity *A Driver Saved My Life*, an ode to blasting tunes in the back of an Uber: "With the world feeling scarier, I think people just want some kind of escapism."

Morbid thoughts aside, Sigrid has moved on from the identity crisis she suffered at the beginning of the pandemic. "This is going to sound so cheesy, but I've learned that I'm stronger and more fun than I think," she says. "Sometimes I entertain thoughts about what life would be like if I wasn't doing this and lived in Norway, but then I think, 'No!' This album has really taught me that nothing moves me how music does. I'm back, and I'm hungry to get out there."

How to Let Go is released on 6 May on Island Records. This summer, Sigrid plays Isle of Wight, Glastonbury, TRSNMT and more.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/may/03/sigrid-music-interview-how-to-let-go-it-gets-dark>

2022.05.03 - Opinion

- As the US supreme court moves to end abortion, is America still a free country?
- Around the world, journalists are resisting the regimes that would jail and kill them
- Vulnerable, British and black? Now that's enough to have you face deportation
- The Tories would have you believe we are all as terrible as they are. Don't believe a word of it

Opinion**Abortion**

As the US supreme court moves to end abortion, is America still a free country?

[Moira Donegan](#)



There is no condition more essential to democratic citizenship than a person's control over her own body. We can't call ourselves a free country without it



‘This will make women prisoners to their own bodies, and to men’s ideas of what those bodies must mean. It will make our country weaker, crueler, stupider and less vibrant.’ Photograph: Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images

Tue 3 May 2022 00.32 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 20.54 EDT

It’s the worst possible outcome: according to [a draft majority opinion published by Politico](#), the US supreme court has voted to overturn Roe v Wade, along with its sister decision Planned Parenthood v Casey. This momentous ruling will result in abortion becoming immediately illegal in [an estimated 26 states](#) when it is officially issued, probably sometime next month.

The draft opinion, authored by Samuel Alito, the most rabidly hateful member of the court’s arch-conservative wing, will upend 50 years of precedent and undo a landmark ruling that has profoundly shaped legal doctrine, popular conceptions of the law, and millions of American lives. It will make women prisoners to their own bodies, and to men’s ideas of what those bodies must mean. It will make our country weaker, crueler, stupider and less vibrant.

Before the court heard oral arguments in the case [Dobbs v Jackson](#), a challenge to a Mississippi law that bans abortion after 15 weeks’ gestational

age, some court watchers – mostly male – predicted that this outcome was unlikely. They chin-strokingly declared that judicial nominees like Amy Coney Barrett or Neil Gorsuch were really moderates (both have signed on to the draft opinion) or that chief justice John Roberts' incrementalist impulses would temper the passions of his more misogynist colleagues.

[Feminists, meanwhile, were more consistent](#) in measuring the depth of the right's commitment to sexism and more perceptive in understanding the implications for other areas of the law in a world without Roe.

But [after oral arguments on 1 December](#), even those pundits who were most committed to their performance of sophisticated calm had to admit that there was little doubt that this would be the outcome. The hearing, whose audio was live-streamed to the public, turned into a carnival of delusional hypotheticals and nodding insistence on the triviality of precedent.

Amy Coney Barrett asked why women needed abortion, now that “safe haven” laws allowed for new mothers to surrender newborns without being arrested. Kavanaugh rattled off long lists all the decisions that the court had overturned in the past. It was a joke, a festival of misogyny, an unserious legal formality providing a gossamer of legitimacy for a preordained outcome. Roe would be overturned.

In a way, the leaked opinion didn't tell us anything we did not already know: [these are the last days of reproductive freedom in America](#), and most states will soon ban abortion outright, or restrict it so onerously that it is inaccessible within their borders. But Alito's draft opinion nevertheless represents about as odiously maximalist an approach as the court could have taken.

The opinion does not just overturn Roe and Casey; it expresses outright contempt for the notion that the constitution protects bodily autonomy for women. It articulates a rigid and unchanging vision of individual rights, one in which only those freedoms with robust historical precedent and explicit enumeration in the text of the constitution will be recognized by the court.



Pro-choice activists gather at the US supreme court in Washington DC after a leaked draft of a majority opinion that would shred nearly 50 years of constitutional protections on abortion. Photograph: Stefani Reynolds/AFP/Getty Images

This interpretation that, if carried to its logical conclusion, would eradicate many of Americans' other rights that the court has recognized based on so-called substantive due process concerns, among them the right to contraception, the right to gay marriage, and the decriminalization of gay sex. The end of legal abortion will not be where the court's reactionaries stop. They aim to hurt, punish and narrow the lives of Americans in many more cruel and inventive ways.

The sudden illegality of abortion in most states come June will also create new legal landmines that will rapidly erode other individual rights. As women cross state borders for care, red states will try to limit interstate travel. As activists send abortion pills through the mail, aggressive searches and seizures of packages and personal belongings will become more frequent.

As women find ways to end their pregnancies, many of them will be arrested on criminal charges and some of them will be convicted. As doctors face patients with life-threatening pregnancy complications, many of them will

not know what they are legally permitted to do, and in fear, they will let their patients die. Some of those who make the other choice, and help their patients live, will be arrested.

All of this will create legal precedents that erode American freedom, making life more burdensome, more brutish and less safe.

There are ways to fight. Of course, legal rulings aside, American women do not derive their moral right to control their own bodies from the US supreme court; they derive it from their human dignity. And many of them will seek and provide abortions, whether the court likes it or not, in accordance with this higher, more noble law. Others will donate to the [abortion funds](#) that will be in dire need of support as costs and demand soar. Still others will spread the word about organizations like [Aid Access](#), which mails abortion pills to women in the US from abroad.

Some will call their senators, and demand that the US Senate seize upon this moment of popular outrage to abolish the filibuster and pass the [Women's Health Protection Act](#) before the moment fades and it's too late. And some will call their state representatives and urge them to adopt the most aggressive pro-choice laws possible, in advance of what is coming.

But none of this changes the fact that the reversal of Roe will come at an intolerable human cost. [Abortion](#) has so frequently been spoken of as a “high stakes” or “hot button” political issue that it is easy to lose sight of the foundational dignity that the right provides to women and others. The state compelling a person to be pregnant is not like compelling her to pay taxes. The event doesn’t occur in a courtroom or on a balance sheet; it occurs inside her body.

The question at hand is whether half of the country will have control over their own insides, or whether the government can be so intimately evil that it can enforce its vision of gender conformity even within its citizens’ own organs. It is a question of whether an individual American can have the dignity and the freedom to choose her own family, to maintain her own health, and to shape the course of her own life – or whether that freedom is withheld based on her sex.

Some have raised doubts about whether America can call itself a democracy, now that policymaking power has been largely taken over by the unelected courts – whose decisions, like this one, are so radically out of step with, and indifferent to, public opinion. But it is also worth wondering whether any country can call itself a democracy that does not protect abortion rights.

In making abortion illegal, the court is imposing a legal status that is so cruel, so personal and so life-altering on half its population, that those subject to this imposition cannot be called free. Is there any condition more essential to democratic citizenship than a person's control over her own body? Can we call ourselves a free country without it?

- Moira Donegan is a Guardian US columnist
- This article was amended on 3 May 2022 to clarify that Aid Access, not Plan C, mails abortion pills. Plan C is an informational resource only

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/03/as-the-us-supreme-court-moves-to-end-abortion-is-america-still-a-free-country>

[Opinion](#)[Journalist safety](#)

Around the world, journalists are resisting the regimes that would jail and kill them

[Mary Fitzgerald](#)

From Russia to India, it has never been more dangerous to pursue the truth. But unity and new tactics bring hope



‘We should fete the bravery of journalists such as Rana Ayyub, who stand tall in the face of relentless attacks from Narendra Modi’s ruling BJP.’
Photograph: Chandan Khanna/AFP/Getty Images

Tue 3 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 02.19 EDT

Should we be celebrating press freedom at all today? Last year a record number of journalists [were jailed](#) worldwide. Five out of every six of us live in a country where [press freedom has declined](#) over the past five years; some 400 journalists [have been killed](#) in the same time frame. Vladimir Putin has

crushed the last vestiges of independent journalism inside Russia. And from India to the Philippines to the UK, there's been a sharp rise in [coordinated, misogynist attacks](#) against female journalists.

There seem few causes for celebration, then. And yet this year, I'm daring to believe there'll be some cautious reasons for hope.

For a start, there's the bravery of our many colleagues who keep reporting, even in the most hostile circumstances. In Peru in recent weeks, the legendary Gustavo Gorriti and IDL-Reporteros, an online newspaper based in Lima, have endured [break-ins, physical assaults and smear campaigns](#), but they keep going. Mexico is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist, but that doesn't stop the investigative journalism organisation Quinto Elemento and their partners from [exposing mass graves, money laundering](#) and much more. When the offices of Canal de Moçambique and Canal Moz in Mozambique were ransacked and set ablaze, the editor-in-chief, Matías Guente, and his team [refused to be cowed](#). "We will not bow to fire," ran the paper's headline that week.

There's plenty of courage and determination to celebrate, then – but, also, increasing ingenuity. In the Philippines, Nobel prizewinner Maria Ressa faces [up to 100 years](#) in jail on trumped-up charges, yet she and her Rappler colleagues aren't just continuing to report the news and embarrass corrupt politicians. They're building [new technology for newsrooms](#), and have assembled a [powerful coalition](#), ranging from the Catholic church to rural newspapers, to call out lies and hold presidential candidates accountable ahead of next week's [crucial election](#). Their mantra? "In crisis, we innovate."

Meanwhile, Paris-based Forbidden Stories is unveiling [the Safe Box Network](#): a secure digital system where journalists in danger can keep their stories safe. If something happens to the reporter, their work will be published nonetheless – both a handy insurance scheme, and a big disincentive for those tempted to harm journalists in the first place. "Now, killing the journalist won't kill the story," as Forbidden Stories' founder, Laurent Richard, told me recently.

Indeed, as the violence, intimidation and censorship have got worse, many journalists and their allies in law, tech, activism, advertising and elsewhere have just got more creative. Networks have sprung up to deploy targeted ads, mirror sites, free VPNs and much more to deliver accurate news [about the war inside Russia](#), despite draconian Kremlin censorship. Journalists forced to flee are teaming up with other news outlets and [building new operations](#) across Europe.

The war has also, finally, forced politicians to try to curb the abuse of our courts to silence and intimidate journalists. In March, Dominic Raab [announced plans](#) aimed at deterring strategic lawsuits against public participation (Slapps), a tool often used by oligarchs against journalists. Britain's days as the capital of "libel tourism" may also be numbered thanks to similar European Union plans, [announced weeks later](#), which would also refuse to recognise judgments from outside the EU – including London. The US also announced a [global defamation defence fund](#) late last year.

While not perfect, Europe's landmark [new deals on tech regulation](#) could be a big step forward in curbing the harassment and abuse of journalists online, too, by forcing big tech companies to clean up the disinformation and hate speech that pollute our news environment. We may also see meaningful action on spyware used to target and surveil journalists, after the [Pegasus scandal](#) earlier this year. Critically, big tech firms such as Apple have [committed action and money](#) to the cause, as have governments on both sides of the Atlantic. The devil will be in the detail, but it is at least movement in the right direction.

It shouldn't have taken Ukraine's epic human tragedy or scandals such as Pegasus to force action from our leaders. And there have been other, far less desirable consequences of Putin's war. Facing constricting energy supplies, Boris Johnson duly [trotted off to Riyadh](#) to court Saudi crown prince Mohamed bin Salman, ignoring the gruesome murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. A month later [Johnson was in Delhi](#), cosying up to the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, without so much as a mention of Rana Ayyub, Fahad Shah, Sajad Gul or the [countless other journalists](#) in Kashmir alone who have been arrested and jailed. "Global Britain" should be so much better than this.

The situation remains dire. We can fete the bravery of journalists such as Ayyub, who stand tall in the face of relentless attacks from Modi's ruling BJP. "I am proud of the fact that the government is scared of me and my words because somewhere it is impacting them, my truth is impacting them. I'm glad," she told the [Perugia journalism festival](#) last month. But the ongoing persecution has taken a huge toll on her health and her ability to work. Meanwhile, Novaya Gazeta in Moscow was finally [forced to suspend operations](#) in recent weeks and its editor, Nobel prizewinner Dmitry Muratov, [was brutally attacked](#) by Putin's thugs.

Yet from journalists devising their own insurance schemes to keep colleagues alive, to lawmakers who are finally feeling pressure to act, there is much to fight for – and win – in the coming weeks and months. As Muratov said of journalism in [his Nobel speech](#) just weeks before Russian tanks swept into Ukraine: "Yes, we growl and bite. Yes, we have sharp teeth and strong grip. But we are the prerequisite for progress. We are the antidote against tyranny."

- Mary Fitzgerald is director of expression at the Open Society Foundations, and former editor-in-chief of openDemocracy
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OpinionRace

Vulnerable, British and black? Now that's enough to have you face deportation

[Afua Hirsch](#)



When a lost non-verbal teenager ends up in an immigration centre, it's clear citizenship has become a privilege, not a right



‘One Mumsnet user wrote: ‘If I should be knocked on the head or suffer a seizure while outside and not carrying anything identifying, I might find myself in an immigration detention centre.’ Brook House Immigration Removal Centre. Photograph: PA Images/Alamy

Tue 3 May 2022 03.00 EDT

Have you checked your ID privilege lately? Because in recent days I’ve observed with unprecedented clarity that it’s becoming a phenomenon in Britain. There are two types of citizen in this country: those who feel compelled to carry proof that their presence is legal. And those secure enough, entitled even, to barely give it a thought.

Until recently, I have always been in the second category. It’s cultural. ID cards are totally un-British – as I discovered when I first started writing about civil liberties for the *Guardian* 15 years ago. Government proposals to introduce them back then stirred a deep well of Magna Carta-philia and a libertarian distrust of positive law. British people don’t expect to have to prove their identity unless collecting a parcel or checking in for a flight.

Unless you are a visible minority, that is. For us, that entitlement is gradually being eroded. Being asked where we are from, “[Go home](#)” vans, the

Windrush scandal. The escalation from rhetorical othering, to the actual, violent deportation of people perfectly entitled to be here, shook Britain's black community to our core.

Last week, [a new level of escalation](#). A 17-year-old boy from Kent ran away from a hospital. He is British, black and non-verbal, and was being treated for his mental health. Reportedly in a state of distress, having attempted to travel to Manchester and back with no money, phone, or – by the time he returned – even any shoes, he was arrested by British Transport Police for not having a train ticket.

So far this is a story about the carceral state, straight from the abolitionist textbooks. The Black Lives Matter movement familiarised everyone with what happens when a vulnerable black person is met not with support, solutions, or even basic compassion, but with the brutality of law enforcement and criminalisation. Tragically, we are familiar with their names in many cases because it ended in their death – Sean Rigg, [Mzee Mohammed](#), Leon Briggs, Kingsley Burrell.

What British Transport Police did in this case, however, offers a sinister new twist. Claiming to have “interviewed” this non-verbal young person, its officers concluded that he was a Nigerian who had come to the country illegally. Since he allegedly failed to give satisfactory or reliable answers (did I mention that he was non-verbal?) the authorities began steps – according to paperwork he was later found carrying – for his “imminent” [deportation](#).

The implications are alarming. “I now have to factor in the possibility,” wrote one [Mumsnet user](#), “that if I should be knocked on the head or suffer a seizure, anything rendering me incapable of speech while outside and not carrying anything identifying, I might soon find myself locked up in an immigration detention centre.”

In a private group of which I’m a member, friends berated each other for not carrying ID already. “Ever since Windrush, I carry my British passport with me at all times,” said one black woman. “My white husband never carries anything. That’s the world we live in now.”

If this sounds like an overreaction, consider the context. This was also the week that the Nationality and Borders Act was passed by the House of Commons. Its Rwanda plans – shipping asylum seekers randomly to the central African country, which incidentally is already the most densely populated on the African continent – are probably illegal and almost certainly unworkable. As we already know with this government, all of this is immaterial because the prime minister and his government are comfortable with breaking the law and more interested in optics than outcomes.

The Rwanda story has also distracted the public from the reality that the new act will also affect British people. Especially those who either have, or are entitled to, dual nationality, affecting about 6 million black, Asian and Jewish Britons. Its clause 9 has to be read to be believed. The government can now strip us of our citizenship, and if it deems it “not reasonably practicable”, or “not in the public interest”, does not even need to give us notice that it’s doing so.

Nationality is a birthright, not a privilege. But now those of us designated less entitled to it by this legislation will all have to check ourselves on that too.

The experience of this non-verbal teenager in Kent strikes a chord because it confirms two things that many of us already suspected. The first is that new laws are being enacted in a climate of racial profiling. As the sister of this young man said: “If [the police] had met a white teenage minor who was barefoot and distressed, would their first instinct be to deport him? Of course not. But when they saw my brother they didn’t see a boy in pain, they saw his race.”

Similar observations were made by supporters of Child Q, a 15-year-old girl who was left traumatised after being strip searched by police officers in school while on her period. Widespread protests followed her mistreatment, and the children’s commissioner has recently reported that black children are overpoliced and adultified in settings where they should be being nurtured.

The second is that protections the government claims will prevent injustice will be undermined by incompetence. When it came to the Kent teenager,

the [Home Office](#) got so much wrong: his name, his date of birth, his nationality, the state of his mental health (an assessment raised no mental health issues when in fact he was under a Mental Health Act section order) and his ability to be interviewed.

This is a toxic combination that creates two tiers of British citizens. The first tier – those who retain ID privilege. People who think, as British citizens, laws on immigration and asylum do not apply to them, people who do not think about having to prove their identity or immigration status, people who feel their presence in their own country is a right, not a privilege at all. Every single British person should be in this category.

But we are not. Now, any of us whose visible minority appearance could be interpreted by the above incompetent and racially profile-leaning authorities as not really British, belong in a different category. Our tendency to be racially or religiously othered is well – established. Now we know that this othering can be converted into actual attempts to deport us and strip us of our citizenship, and even do so without notice.

In the run-up to the new Rwanda asylum plans, the civil servants involved in implementing it wrestled with their personal consciences. In a reference to the Nuremberg Nazi trials, one [wrote](#): “The words ‘I was only obeying orders’ are echoing down through history to me and making me queasy.”

And so they should. Because we have plenty of historic precedents for what happens when a country starts dividing its citizens into tiers based on their heritage. And none of them end well.

- Afua Hirsch is a writer, broadcaster, and former barrister

[Opinion](#)[Local elections](#)

The Tories would have you believe we are all as terrible as they are. Don't believe a word of it

[Zoe Williams](#)



As elections loom, Downing Street is trying to pretend that nobody's behaviour matters because everybody's is the same



‘The 2019 election had the saddest subliminal electioneering I’d ever heard, but that was before this year.’ Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Tue 3 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 07.21 EDT

When people talk about dog whistles in politics, they mean ugly messages – usually racist – that only some voters can hear. It’s metaphorically inexact: we can all *hear* them, but only some of us come when we’re called. All elections emit a different kind of noise, equally audible, even less likely to be put into words. A “what’s this really all about?” noise. In [2019](#), it was “all politics is futile, circular, boring, childish, and this is your chance to walk away”. Back then, it was the saddest subliminal electioneering I’d ever heard, but of course that was before the [2022 local elections](#), in which the take-home is: “We’re terrible. They’re terrible. Everybody’s essentially terrible. You’re probably also terrible.”

So, sure, Downing Street had [parties](#) while people in hospitals died alone; but have you heard about the opposition? They had [beer](#). Pointless to dive in any deeper; try playing that argument out, and saying, “By [April 2021](#), the rules were completely different ...” Before you even get to the end of the sentence, you feel besmirched by your own pedantry, lost in a new, faceless terrain, where nobody’s behaviour matters because everybody’s is the same. And, besides, nobody obeyed the rules all the time, because the rules were

stupid. This is an unappealing new consensus, that sensible people saw civic duty all along for what it was: a mug’s game.

I’ve heard callers on BBC Radio 4’s Any Answers? argue that everyone watches porn at work, and maybe we should all grow up a little bit; commentators insisting that, hey, politics is bad, but wait until you hear about sexual harassment in the world of finance. Which is worse between a Tory MP who’s a convicted sex offender, [deferring his resignation](#) until the last possible minute, and a Labour MP about whom someone once made [a sexual and sexist insinuation](#)? Trick question! Neither is worse or better, in the world of mad equivalence where everyone is corrupt because, who knows, original sin, maybe?

I hold out a hope, though, that this won’t fly in local elections; there’s something about words such as “transport links” and “recycling” that splashes cold water on the face of fevered notions, and makes you think, “Wait a second … I’m not sure I am that bad.”

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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2022.05.03 - Around the world

- [Elon Musk Tech mogul seeks to use less of his fortune with bid for more Twitter funding](#)
- [Spain Catalonia plans law to protect historic shops as rents soar](#)
- [New Zealand Setback for billionaire Peter Thiel's plan to build luxury lodge in remote area](#)
- [China Outcry in Shanghai as person declared dead and put in body bag found to be alive](#)
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Elon Musk

Musk seeks to use less of his fortune with bid for more Twitter funding

The tech mogul is looking at various options such as pledging his shares of Tesla to secure bank loans



Musk has also pledged some of his Tesla shares to banks to arrange a \$12.5bn margin loan to help fund the deal. Photograph: Dado Ruvic/Reuters

Kari Paul

Mon 2 May 2022 20.32 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 13.12 EDT

A week after [Elon Musk](#) finalized a \$44bn deal to purchase Twitter, the billionaire is working to secure outside funding for the acquisition that would tie up less of his personal fortune.

The world's richest person is in talks with large investment firms and high net-worth individuals to take on more financing, Reuters reported Monday.

Though Musk has an estimated net worth of about \$245bn, much of his fortune is tied up in stocks.

The Tesla CEO disclosed last week he had sold \$8.5bn worth of stock following his agreement to buy [Twitter](#). Additional financing, which could come in the form of preferred or common equity, could reduce the \$21bn cash contribution that Musk has committed to the deal as well as a margin loan he secured against his Tesla shares, sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The banks that agreed last month to provide \$13bn in loans based on Twitter's business balked at offering more debt for Musk's acquisition given the San Francisco-based company's limited cashflow, Reuters reported last month.

Musk has also pledged some of his Tesla shares to banks to arrange a \$12.5bn margin loan to help fund the deal. He may seek to trim the size of the margin loan based on the new investor interest in the deal financing, one of the sources said.

Major investors such as private equity firms, hedge funds and high net-worth individuals are in talks with Musk about providing preferred equity financing for the acquisition, the sources said. Preferred equity would pay a fixed dividend from Twitter, in the same way that a bond or a loan pays regular interest but would appreciate in line with the equity value of the company.

Apollo Global Management Inc and Ares Management Corp are among the private equity firms that have been in talks about providing the financing, the sources added.

Musk is still deciding whether he will have partners team up with him in writing the equity check needed for the deal, the sources said. Musk is not seeking to take on more debt for the Twitter deal currently, the sources added.

Musk has also been in talks with some of Twitter's major shareholders about the possibility of them rolling their stake into the deal rather than cashing out, one of the sources said. Rolling stake involves selling the majority of shares in a company while retaining a minority ownership interest. The former Twitter chief executive and current board member Jack Dorsey is examining whether he will roll his take, one source added.

Large institutional investors, such as Fidelity, are also in talks about rolling over their stake, according to the source. Musk has tweeted that he would try to keep as many investors in Twitter as possible as he takes the company private.

The sources requested anonymity because the matter is confidential. Musk, Dorsey, Fidelity, Apollo and Ares did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Investors have been fretting over whether Musk will complete the Twitter deal given that he has backtracked in the past. In April, he decided at the last minute not to take up a seat on Twitter's board. In 2018, Musk tweeted that there was "funding secured" for a \$72bn deal to take Tesla private but did not move ahead with an offer.

Musk would have to pay a \$1bn termination fee to Twitter if he walked away, and the social media company could also sue him to complete the deal.

Twitter shares rose 1.2% to \$49.63 in afternoon trading in New York on Monday, closer to the \$54.20 a share acquisition price, as investors interpreted the news on the new financing as more certainty for the deal closing.

On Monday, the social media company said in a filing that false or spam accounts represented fewer than 5% of its monetizable daily active users during the first quarter.

The company had 229 million users who were served advertising in the first quarter.

The disclosure came days after Musk tweeted that one of his priorities would be to remove “spam bots” from the platform.

Twitter said in the filing it faced several risks until the deal with Musk is closed, such as whether advertisers would continue to spend on Twitter and “potential uncertainty regarding our future plans and strategy”.

Musk, who calls himself a free speech absolutist, has criticized Twitter’s moderation policies. He wants Twitter’s algorithm for prioritizing tweets to be public and objects to giving too much power on the service to corporations that advertise.

Reuters contributed to this report

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Catalonia

Catalonia plans law to protect historic shops as rents soar

Facades are already protected but government aims to go further to preserve a site's commercial activity



The glove and fan shop Guantería Alonso on Carrer de Santa Anna in Barcelona. Photograph: Stephen Burgen/Guardian

[Stephen Burgen](#) in Barcelona

Tue 3 May 2022 05.49 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 17.41 EDT

The Catalan government is to introduce a law to protect historic businesses as soaring rents and the pandemic have forced many of the region's landmark shops and bars to close.

Shopfronts and other details that are more than 100 years old are already protected but the pioneering legislation goes further, with shop owners in listed premises having to ask permission if they want to change its

commercial activity. In short, if a patisserie closes it will ideally reopen as a patisserie.

“What we need to do is to protect the non-material heritage,” said Sònia Hernández, the Catalan government’s director general of cultural heritage. “The existing law doesn’t protect things that people now believe we need to protect. The facade and the interior of some buildings are protected already; now we want to protect the activity as well.”

The aim is partly to prevent a repeat of what happened to Colmado Quílez, a much-loved grocery store that had stood on La Rambla de Catalunya since 1908 and was forced to close in 2014 when faced with a 700% rent increase. The signage has been preserved but the window display of wine and conserves has been replaced with expensive suits, obliterating the shop’s essential character.



The Musical Emporium, now a bureau de change. Photograph: Stephen Burgen/Guardian

Some historic businesses struggle on, such as Casa Beethoven on La Rambla, which has sold music scores since 1883 and is now an outlier among the bars and souvenir shops that dominate the city’s most famous street. It only survives because it has a low fixed rent.

Further up La Rambla, the Musical Emporium, which sold sheet music and instruments for 114 years, is now a bureau de change, and Camiseria Xancó, a purveyor of shirts and underwear for 203 years, succumbed to the pandemic.

Rent rises forced the closure of Herboristeria del Rei, which had been selling herbal remedies since 1818 and was appointed herbalist to the Spanish royal family in 1857. Others at risk in Barcelona city centre are Xarcuteria La Pineda and the glove and fan shop Guantería Alonso, relics of the city's history in a sea of chain stores.

Hernández accepts that as things stand the government cannot stop landlords raising the rent, but believes a growing awareness that there is more to conservation than a handpainted sign may help to conserve what remains of Catalonia's commercial heritage.

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New Zealand

Setback for billionaire Peter Thiel's plan to build luxury lodge in remote New Zealand

Council planners recommend sprawling development proposed for Wanaka, near Queenstown, be rejected



Billionaire Peter Thiel wants to build a luxury lodge in Wanaka, near Queenstown, but council planners say it would have an ‘unacceptable’ effect on the environment. Photograph: (Rendered by QLDC.EcmCMIS)

*Tess McClure
@tessairini*

Tue 3 May 2022 03.57 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 17.41 EDT

Billionaire Peter Thiel's proposal for an elaborate lodge in a remote region of [New Zealand](#) may be scuttled, after council planners recommended the plans be rejected for “unacceptable” adverse effects on the environment.

The [development Thiel had proposed](#) is in Wanaka, near Queenstown – a remote, alpine area in the South Island, renowned for its isolation and pristine natural beauty.

Second Star Ltd, a company owned by Thiel, lodged a consent application for a sprawling lodge on his property, which would include a “pod” for Thiel himself, water features and meditation zones.

The application described “a series of stand-alone buildings, including a lodge for visitor accommodation for up to 24 guests, accommodation pod for the owner, with associated lodge management buildings, infrastructure, landscape treatment, water features and meditation space”. The earthworks required to build it would cover more than 73,700m² of land.

Senior planner Sarah Gathercole was charged with assessing the environmental and cultural impact of the proposal for the council and in a report running to nearly 1,000 pages, she recommends that the council reject it.

The “adverse effects of the activity on landscape quality and character, visual amenity, design and density of development, cumulative effects and earthworks will be unacceptable,” Gathercole’s report said.

She said the proposed lodge “is of a scale well in excess of what could be reasonably anticipated”.

“Whilst some positive effects will result from the proposal, I consider it does not constitute a positive [enough] effect on the environment to entirely offset or compensate for the adverse effects.”

Thiel, the billionaire co-founder of PayPal and a Trump supporter, has generated controversy for his activities in New Zealand.

In 2017, it was revealed that he had been given [New Zealand](#) citizenship despite spending just 12 days in the country.

The usual route to citizenship requires applicants to be in New Zealand as a permanent resident for at least 1,350 days in five years before an application, but the government waived the requirement for Thiel on the basis of his entrepreneurial and philanthropic activities.

At the time, [Thiel was seen as part of a broader cohort of super-rich investors](#) who hoped to buy up remote New Zealand properties as hideaways for potential societal or environmental collapse.

He [began facing opposition](#) from New Zealand environmental groups and residents over his plans to build the lodge when the designs were released for submissions in late 2021.

Local resident John Sutton said in a submission to council that the lodge would “destroy our beautiful lake environment”.

The Upper Clutha Environmental Society said the site was “wholly within and surrounded by outstanding natural landscape … landscape of national importance” and opposed it, saying “the development is likely to cause significant adverse physical changes to the appearance of the natural landscape when viewed from public places in the vicinity”.

In its proposal, Second Star argues that the architects “have designed the proposal to blend the buildings in to the undulating landscape that surrounds them” and that “the proposed lodge will create high-end accommodation in the region, whereby the economic benefits reach across the district and beyond”.

The Guardian approached representatives of Second Star for comment.

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[China](#)

Outcry in Shanghai as person declared dead and put in body bag found to be alive

Incident prompts concerns over city's overwhelmed medical system during weeks-long Omicron lockdowns

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Shanghai is in the middle of a weeks-long Covid lockdown. Photograph: Aly Song/Reuters

*Helen Davidson in Taipei
@heldavidson*

Tue 3 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 17.41 EDT

Six people are under investigation in Shanghai after an elderly nursing home resident was mistakenly declared dead, put in a body bag and taken by coroners to a waiting van before mortuary workers noticed they were still alive.

The incident, which took place on Sunday afternoon, was filmed by onlookers and footage quickly spread online, sparking a furious backlash in the city which has been under a [gruelling lockdown for five weeks](#). It also prompted concerns over the city's overwhelmed medical system.

In the footage, workers wearing protective clothing are seen pulling a bodybag out of the mortuary van on to a trolley. They look inside the bag before realising the person inside is alive.

“Alive! Did you see that? Alive!” says one. “Do not cover him again!” says another.

One worker goes to speak with people wearing protective suits outside the building, and the elderly patient is wheeled back inside.

上海新长征福利院把还活着的老人装进尸袋，要送去殡仪馆火化，被运尸体的殡仪馆工作人员发现：“活的！”看来这是嫌上海老人死得还不够多，烧死活人不算死于新冠就行。
pic.twitter.com/O6Zn5qV76L

— 方舟子 (@fangshimin) [May 1, 2022](#)

The incident was confirmed by the Putuo district government, which said that investigations had begun. The Shanghai Supervisory Commission and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection said five officials, including the director of the care home and a doctor, had been stood down and put under investigation. Another local Party official was reprimanded.

Shanghai Xinchangzheng Nursing Home has apologised, while the funeral home reportedly praised its employees for noticing the person was still alive,

and rewarded them with 5,000 yuan (£600) each.

State media said the elderly patient had been transferred to hospital and was receiving treatment. The incident shocked people in [China](#), where a wave of Omicron is challenging the government's commitment to zero-Covid measures including strict lockdowns and mass testing. It is also testing the resolve and trust of residents.

“What if this incident was not captured by the citizens of Shanghai?” said one commenter on a state media report.

“Care homes and nursing homes will be the last places for many elderly people, especially some lonely elderly people who have no choice,” said another. “Who would dare send their parents to a care home now? And who would dare to live in a nursing home with peace of mind?”

Shanghai authorities had sought to avoid a lockdown but in early April backflipped on their assurances, sending about 25 million people inside. The lockdown has been [plagued with issues](#) including food shortages and delivery problems, and prompted protests both online and in people's homes and streets.

Video has also circulated of a man who said he was a worker in Shanghai, walking on to a road to stop a truck and beg for food. “Shanghai people, not one person cares about us. Take care of us! Expose this! Help me expose this! I am a worker. I'm going to starve to death!” he says, according to a translation by the Chuang blog.

Heart-wrenching video of a worker in Shanghai, who stops a truck to expose his desperation and hunger. Man breaks down crying when given bananas and crackers pic.twitter.com/trNTM9vHzi

— Chuang (@chuangcn) [May 3, 2022](#)

On Saturday authorities said more than 15 million residents were now able to leave their communities, with the spread of the virus mostly contained to people in quarantine facilities. However on Monday 58 new cases were detected among the free cohort of residents. Officials did not comment on

the new cases, which prompted fear among some residents of more lockdowns or delays in the city reopening. On Sunday residents in Ningbo, south of Shanghai, were told they must obtain a negative test every 48 hours if they want to use public transport or enter public venues.

In Beijing, authorities have also avoided implementing mass lockdowns, instead focusing on frequent testing of millions of people in at least a dozen districts and other strict measures. Restaurant dining, entertainment venues, and schools were closed, and travel restrictions imposed to and from the city ahead of the five-day May Day long weekend. Authorities reported 62 new cases on Monday.

Overall, China reported 368 confirmed symptomatic cases and 5,647 asymptomatic cases. The vast majority – 274 and 5,395 respectively – were found in Shanghai. There are growing numbers of asymptomatic cases being detected across the country, including dozens in Liaoning, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Xinjiang.

Additional reporting by Chi Hui Lin

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/03/outcry-in-shanghai-as-person-declared-dead-and-put-in-body-bag-found-to-be-alive>

[New Zealand](#)

NZ's former deputy PM banned from parliament for visiting anti-vaccine-mandate protest

Winston Peters condemned two-year ban as ‘dictatorial behaviour’ that ‘should be reserved for third world banana republics’



New Zealand First leader Winston Peters has been banned from parliament for two years after talking to anti-vaccine-mandate protesters. Photograph: Fiona Goodall/Getty Images

[Tess McClure](#) in Auckland

[@tessairini](#)

Tue 3 May 2022 02.05 EDT Last modified on Tue 3 May 2022 02.30 EDT

New Zealand's former deputy prime minister, [Winston Peters](#), has been banned from parliament grounds for two years for visiting anti-vaccine-mandate protesters who occupied the grounds.

The [weeks-long February protests](#), modelled on the Canadian truckers’ “freedom convoy”, took over parliament grounds and blocked off a number of surrounding streets. In the first days of the occupation, the speaker issued a trespass notice to all attendees. But efforts by police to disperse the gathering were repeatedly repelled, until it [descended into a violent riot](#), with at least 40 injured, while tents, piles of rubble and a playground were set aflame.

Peters, who was deputy prime minister in Jacinda Ardern’s first coalition government, had visited the occupation in its earlier days, saying, “I hope to encourage the protesters to demand that they be heard.”

Peters on Tuesday said he had received a two-year trespass notice for that visit, blaming House speaker Trevor Mallard for the decision. “This dictatorial behaviour ... should be reserved for third world banana republics,” he said in a statement [quoted by Newshub](#).

“What’s more astounding is that the speaker of the House of Representatives in our country could possibly attempt to trespass former members of parliament – of whom some are leaders of political parties planning to run against the sitting government in around eighteen months’ time.”

There was a difference between those who visited the precinct and those who took an “active part in the protest”, he added.

Peters lost his parliamentary spot after his party failed to win 5% of the vote, but says he intends to run in the next election. He was not the only one to receive a trespass notice. Ex-National party MP Matt King, who also plans to run in the next [New Zealand](#) election with the newly formed Democracy NZ party, received a notice in late April. Violation of the notices could result in a fine of up to a \$1,000 or up to three months’ imprisonment.

In New Zealand, the speaker has responsibility for parliament’s grounds and buildings. Mallard generated headlines for his unusual tactics in trying to evict the protesters from the lawn – including turning on the sprinklers, and

blasting Barry Manilow from parliament's loudspeakers. Often, those tactics appeared to backfire, galvanising rather than discouraging the crowds.

Ardern told Stuff the decision rested with Mallard, but she had asked that he discuss the decision with all parties to try to reach consensus.

“Ultimately, this does sit with the Speaker, but I think it is useful for parties to be able to hear him out about how he came to the decision and to make a joint decision, as much as they’re able to, about whether or not MPs should ultimately be treated differently than everyone else.”

Mallard did not respond to a request for comment.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/03/nzs-former-deputy-pm-banned-from-parliament-for-visiting-anti-vaccine-mandate-protest>

Headlines

- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: conflict taking 'heavy toll' on Russian units, says UK; US defends passing intelligence to Ukraine](#)
- ['Everything is possible' How hospital wedding dance restored bomb victim's will to live](#)
- [At a glance What we know on day 73 of the invasion](#)
- [Full report US announces \\$150m military aid package as dozens evacuated from Mariupol](#)

[Skip to key events](#)
[Ukraine crisis live](#)[Ukraine](#)

All women and children evacuated from Azovstal; Ukraine claims it has destroyed another Russian ship – as it happened

The UK Ministry of Defence says Russia's [most advanced units have suffered heavy losses](#); Pentagon [defends intelligence sharing with Ukraine as 'lawful'](#)

- [US intelligence told to keep quiet over role in Ukraine triumphs](#)
- [Odesa hit by missiles as Ukraine claims it has sunk second Russian ship](#)
- [How hospital wedding dance restored bomb victim's will to live](#)
- [Ukrainians take DNA tests to identify Bucha's dead](#)
- [Russia-Ukraine war: what we know on day 73 of the invasion](#)

Updated 8h ago

[*Miranda Bryant*](#) (now); [*Léonie Chao-Fong*](#) and [*Samantha Lock*](#) (earlier)
Sat 7 May 2022 19.01 EDTFirst published on Sat 7 May 2022 00.55 EDT



A Russian soldier near the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol. Photograph: Alexander Ermochenko/Reuters

Miranda Bryant (now); Léonie Chao-Fong and Samantha Lock (earlier)
Sat 7 May 2022 19.01 EDTFirst published on Sat 7 May 2022 00.55 EDT

Key events

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- [16h ago](#)[Russia continues assault on Mariupol steelworks, says Ukraine](#)

Show key events only

Live feed

Show key events only

From 15h ago

[12.39](#)

All women, children and elderly evacuated from besieged steel plant in Mariupol

All women, children and elderly people have been evacuated from Mariupol's besieged steel plant, Ukraine's deputy prime minister has said.

Iryna Vereshchuk said the current state of the humanitarian operation in Azovstal has been completed.

“This part of the Mariupol humanitarian operation is over,” she wrote on Telegram on Saturday.

It comes after Ukraine announced an evacuation plan for the plant and other parts of the city on Friday.

Earlier, Russian-backed separatists in the Donetsk region said that 50 civilians had been evacuated.



Buses carrying evacuees from Mariupol arrive in buses in Bezimenne in the Donetsk region on Saturday. Photograph: Alexander Ermochenko/Reuters

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Updated at 12.40 EDT

[8h ago](#) [19.34](#)

This blog is now closed. Thanks for reading. Our live coverage of the war in Ukraine will resume in a few hours. In the meantime you can read all our Ukraine news and analysis [here](#), and this is our latest news story taking in all the main developments:

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[8h ago](#) [19.01](#)

Today so far ...

The time in Kyiv is now 2am. Here are the latest developments from today:

- All women, children and elderly people have been evacuated from Mariupol's besieged steel plant, Ukraine's deputy prime minister has said. Iryna Vereshchuk said [the current state of the humanitarian operation in Azovstal has been completed](#).
- Several missiles hit the southern Ukrainian port city of Odesa, the regional administration's spokesperson, Serhiy Bratchuk, said. The strikes hit the city after [targets in the surrounding Odesa region had been hit by four missiles earlier in the day](#), Bratchuk said in televised remarks, without giving further detail about the new strikes.

- Two Russian missiles hit locations near the Russian border in Ukraine's northern Sumy region today, local governor Dmytro Zhyvytskyi said. A border guard was wounded by [the strikes on the Myropilske and Khotin municipalities](#), Zhyvytskyi wrote on Telegram.
- The Ukrainian government has said that it has destroyed another Russian ship. The ministry of defence [claimed that Ukrainian Bayraktar TB2 had hit the landing craft of the Serna project](#), tweeting: "The traditional parade of the Russian Black Sea fleet on May 9 this year will be held near Snake Island – at the bottom of the sea." Associated Press [said it had analysed satellite photos showing the aftermath of the strike](#).
- The conflict in Ukraine is taking a "heavy toll" on some of Russia's most capable units, the UK's ministry of defence said in its latest intelligence report. [At least one T-90M, Russia's most advanced tank, has been destroyed in fighting](#), the ministry added. "It will take considerable time and expense for Russia to reconstitute its armed forces following this conflict," the report said.
- The UN security council has issued its first statement on the war in Ukraine, but withheld from using the words "war", "conflict" or "invasion". [The statement instead "expresses deep concern regarding the maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine"](#) and voiced "strong support" for the secretary general, António Guterres, in seeking a peaceful solution to the "dispute".
- The World Health Organization indicated it is gathering evidence for potential war crimes committed by Russia. The WHO emergencies director, Mike Ryan, said the agency has already documented 200 attacks on hospitals and clinics in Ukraine, which could violate international law.
- Nearly four million Russians left the country in the first three months of 2022, official statistics published by Russia's federal security service (FSB) show. [Arrivals to former Soviet countries saw a significant spike after Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February](#). It is unclear how many have since returned to their home country.
- Former US intelligence officers are advising their successors currently in office to shut up and stop boasting about their role in Ukraine's military successes. [Two stories surfaced in as many days in the American press this week](#), citing unnamed officials as saying that

US intelligence was instrumental in the targeting of Russian generals on the battlefield and in [the sinking of the Moskva flagship cruiser](#) on the Black Sea.

- **Britain has pledged to provide another 1.3bn pounds (\$1.60bn) in military support and aid to Ukraine.** The new funds will almost double Britain's previous spending commitments to Ukraine. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in a statement, "Putin's brutal attack is not only causing untold devastation in Ukraine – it is also threatening peace and security across Europe."
- **The latest US military aid package to Ukraine, announced by president Joe Biden on Friday, is worth \$150m,** the secretary of state, Antony Blinken, confirmed. The latest tranche of assistance includes 25,000 155mm artillery rounds, as well as counter-artillery radars, jamming equipment, field equipment and spare parts. [It brings Washington's military assistance to Kyiv since the Russian invasion began to around \\$3.8bn](#), Blinken said.
- **The Group of Seven (G7) leaders will hold a video call on Sunday with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy in a show of unity the day before Russia marks its Victory Day holiday, the White House said.** Talks will focus on the latest developments in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, efforts to bolster the country and ways to demonstrate "continued G7 unity in our collective response, including by imposing severe costs for Putin's war", [a spokesperson for the White House said](#).

That's it from me for today. Handing over now to my colleagues in Australia. Thanks for reading.

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[9h ago](#)[18.41](#)

The director of the Central Intelligence Agency, William Burns, said Russia's setbacks in [Ukraine](#) may be impacting China's calculus about trying to gain control over Taiwan.

Speaking today at a Washington event hosted by the Financial Times, Burns said China was alarmed by “the fact that what Putin has done is driving Europeans and Americans closer together” and was looking “carefully at what lessons they should draw” for Taiwan.

Burns added:

It strikes us . . . that Xi Jinping is a little bit unsettled by the reputational damage that can come to China by the association with the brutishness of Russia’s aggression against Ukrainians [and] unsettled certainly by the economic uncertainty that’s been produced by the war.

But while the international outcry over the invasion of Ukraine may be impacting China’s thinking about Taiwan, Burns said he did not believe the war had “eroded Xi’s determination over time to gain control over Taiwan”.

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[9h ago](#)[18.20](#)



Emma Graham-Harrison

Emma Graham-Harrison and Vera Mironova report from Kyiv on the paramilitary unit assisting the city's strained police force:

The call came around midnight. There was a suspicious man poking around a rundown complex of garages and workshops, police had heard a gunshot and so they wanted backup.

The men of the Maidan group rolled out of the bodyshop that served as their headquarters, into a couple of vans with personalised Maidan numberplates and their own ambulance, and set off into the eerie quiet of curfew-hours Kyiv.

Far from the frontlines, the war is straining society. There has been extraordinary solidarity across [Ukraine](#), with ordinary people risking, and often giving, their lives to help others simply make it through the day, taking food and fuel to vulnerable and elderly people, or driving evacuation vehicles to pick up those stranded at the frontline.

But a minority have taken advantage of the chaos of fighting, the flight of many neighbours into exile, and authorities distracted by an existential threat.

In over two months since the first missiles hit Kyiv, Maidan patrols have picked up opportunists on looting raids, desperate residents driven to steal as the economy collapsed, and Russian spies trying to scope potential targets, gather information or just prepare for orders to come.

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[10h ago](#) [17.59](#)

UK to provide another 1.3bn pounds of aid to Ukraine

Britain has pledged to provide another £1.3bn (\$1.6bn) in military support and aid to Ukraine, [Reuters reports](#).

The news comes one day before G7 leaders are scheduled to participate in a video call with the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, as [Russia](#) prepares to hold its **9 May Victory Day** celebrations.

The new funds will almost double Britain's previous spending commitments to [Ukraine](#), as the country tries to push back against the Russian military's attacks.

Boris Johnson's government has already sent anti-tank missiles, air defence systems and other weapons to Ukraine since Russia launched its invasion in February.

Johnson's office said he also plans to meet with executives from leading defence companies later this month to discuss increasing production in response to the war in Ukraine.

Johnson, who visited Ukraine last week and became the first western leader to address its parliament since the start of the invasion, said in a statement:

Putin's brutal attack is not only causing untold devastation in Ukraine – it is also threatening peace and security across Europe.

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Updated at 18.52 EDT

[10h ago](#) [17.38](#)

Berlin authorities said investigators are studying a device found and destroyed at a residential building housing Russian news agency staff in the city, [Reuters reports](#).

A Berlin police spokesman said the device was found on Friday, and an investigation is now underway to determine how dangerous the device was and who it may have been targeting.

Russia's foreign ministry has called on European countries to take steps to protect Russian journalists and their families abroad during the war in [Ukraine](#).

In a statement released on Saturday, the ministry said of the incident in Berlin:

We see this as a direct consequence of the harassment of Russia media and their employees unleashed in the West. The politicised decision to disconnect Russian media from the airwaves in the European Union was the precursor to their physical intimidation, right up to their elimination.

The EU has already banned the state-controlled Russian outlets RT and Sputnik, accusing them of spreading misinformation and Kremlin propaganda about the war.

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Updated at 17.55 EDT

[10h ago](#) [17.15](#)



Daniel Boffey

“Holding up”, wrote Denys Prokopenko, commander of Ukraine’s Azov regiment, in his latest WhatsApp message to his wife Kateryna from the besieged Azovstal steelworks in the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol.

Speaking via Zoom from Krakow, in eastern Poland, alongside three fellow wives and partners of soldiers living under the remorseless Russian shelling and infiltrating raids, Kateryna, 27, says she is doing everything she can think of to ensure the message at 10pm on Friday evening is not one of her husband’s last.

It is now two weeks since the last Ukrainian defenders of the flattened city of Mariupol, in south-east Ukraine, withdrew to the sprawling complex of hot and fetid tunnels, along with thousands of terrified civilians, including children.

Ukrainian deputy prime minister Iryna Vereshchuk said on Saturday that all women, children and older adults had been evacuated.

For the 2,000 soldiers, 700 of whom are said to be injured, hope, however, is quickly dwindling, as has become cruelly clear from the irregular messages coming out of the works. “The last message was yesterday,” Kateryna says of the text from her 30-year-old husband. I said ‘Hold up, we will do everything in our power to save you.’”

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Updated at 17.56 EDT

11h ago **16.55**

Jill Biden expressed gratitude to the first lady of Romania, Carmen Johannis, for hosting her today at a public school that Ukrainian refugee children have started attending after fleeing their country.

“To my fellow teacher and First Lady, thank you for an afternoon in Romania full of compassion and hope,” Biden said on Twitter. “Not only do we share a love for our students, but we stand united in our support for the Ukrainian people.”

To my fellow teacher and First Lady, thank you for an afternoon in Romania full of compassion and hope.

Not only do we share a love for our students, but we stand united in our support for the Ukrainian people. pic.twitter.com/EHMJGylKYW

— Jill Biden (@FLOTUS) [May 7, 2022](#)

The American first lady is currently on a four-day trip to Romania and Slovakia, which is meant to show US support for Ukrainian refugees.

On Sunday, which is Mother’s Day in the US, Biden will travel to the Slovakia-Ukraine border to meet with Ukrainian mothers and children who were forced to leave their country after the Russian invasion.

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[11h ago](#) [16.35](#)



Julian Borger

The director of the Central Intelligence Agency, William Burns, was asked about the fears of Vladimir Putin using a nuclear weapon in frustration, as the Russian military has suffered setbacks in [Ukraine](#).

Burns said today at a Washington event organised by the Financial Times:

We stay very sharply focused as an intelligence service, as I know our counterparts and allied countries do on those possibilities, at a moment when the stakes are very high for Putin's Russia.

And those risks in the second phase of the conflict are serious and shouldn't be underestimated. But we don't see practical evidence of preparations for that at this stage.

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[11h ago](#)[16.15](#)

Celebrity chef José Andrés said his organization, **World Central Kitchen**, has opened a new warehouse in Dnipro to help feed families affected by the

war in [Ukraine](#).

Andrés' team is compiling 15 kilo food bundles for families to cook with and distributing the packages across the region, particularly to areas near the frontlines where it is more difficult to access food.

Since the start of the Russian invasion in February, Dnipro has become “a logistical hub for humanitarian aid and a reception point for people fleeing the war in the Donbas and other parts of the country”, NPR [wrote in March](#).

Our new [@WCKitchen](#) warehouse is up and running in Dnipro in Ukraine! The team is creating 30 pound food bundles for families to cook with...They are distributed across the region—especially to villages near the front lines that don't have reliable access to food!
[#ChefsForUkraine](#) pic.twitter.com/qzRe2oLDGD

— José Andrés (@chefjoseandres) [May 7, 2022](#)

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Updated at 16.45 EDT

[12h ago](#) [15.55](#)

Michael McFaul, the former US ambassador to [Russia](#) under Barack Obama, has called on diplomats in Moscow to avoid the country's **9 May Victory Day** celebrations.

McFaul said any ambassador who opposes “annexation, imperialism, and Putin's horrific, unjustified invasion of Ukraine” should not attend the parade on Red Square planned for Monday.

I assume all ambassadors from countries that are against annexation, imperialism, and Putin's horrific, unjustified invasion of Ukraine will not attend the May 9th parade on Red Square.

— Michael McFaul (@McFaul) [May 7, 2022](#)

McFaul's message comes as Russia tries to take the last stronghold in Mariupol, the besieged steel plant, in time for the 9 May celebrations.

The Guardian's Moscow correspondent, Andrew Roth, wrote about how Putin faces an array of dangerous options in Ukraine as Victory Day approaches:

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Updated at 16.06 EDT

[12h ago 15.36](#)

Now that all women and children have been evacuated from **Mariupol**'s besieged steel plant, attention has turned to the Ukrainian fighters still trying to defend the site.

Hundreds of soldiers remain at the plant, and the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said on Friday that his government was working on a diplomatic effort to save those still there.

The fighters have insisted they will not surrender, but officials fear they will come under increased attack in the coming days as Russia tries to take the last remaining Mariupol stronghold in time for the country's [9 May Victory Day celebrations](#).

The wives of at least two Ukrainian fighters still at the plant have been in Rome, begging for the international community to rescue the trapped soldiers.

One of the wives, Kateryna Prokopenko, [told the Associated Press](#) on Thursday:

Assault continues. Many dead and new injured ... They are waiting for the evacuation operation from Europe, or they will all die.

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Updated at 16.57 EDT

12h ago**15.16**



Nick Cohen

Observer columnist Nick Cohen argues that Rupert Murdoch should face sanctions over Fox News' promotion of Russian propaganda:

If the west could find the courage, it would order an immediate freeze of Rupert Murdoch's assets. His Fox News presenters and Russia's propagandists are so intermeshed that separating the two is as impossible as unbaking a cake.

On Russian state news, as on Fox, bawling ideologues scream threats then whine about their victimhood as they incite anger and self-pity in equal measures. Its arguments range from the appropriation of anti-fascism by Greater Russian imperialists – the 40 countries supporting [Ukraine](#) were “today’s collective Hitler”, viewers were told last week – to the apocalyptic delirium of the boss of RT (Russia Today) Margarita Simonyan. Nuclear war is my “horror”, she shuddered, “but we will go to heaven, while they will simply croak”.

Russia would never give genuine western journalists airtime. But it can always find a slot for its favourite quisling: Fox News's Tucker Carlson. He pushes out Russian propaganda lines or perhaps creates his own lies for Russia to use. Ukraine, not Russia, is the real tyranny. Nato provoked poor Vladimir Putin. The west is plotting to use biological weapons.

Murdoch is boosting Russian morale and, conversely, undermining Ukrainian resolve by supplying a dictatorship with foreign validation. Do not underestimate its importance.

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[13h ago](#)[14.56](#)

WHO gathers evidence for Russia's possible war crimes

During the [World Health Organization press conference](#) in Kyiv today, officials indicated they are gathering evidence for potential war crimes committed by Russia, [Reuters reports](#).

The WHO emergencies director, Mike Ryan, said the agency has already documented 200 attacks on hospitals and clinics in [Ukraine](#), which could violate international law.

Ryan said:

Intentional attacks on healthcare facilities are a breach of international humanitarian law and as such – based on investigation and attribution of the attack – represent war crimes in any situation. ...

We continue to document and bear witness to these attacks ... and we trust that the U.N. system and the International Criminal Court and

others will take the necessary investigations in order to assess the criminal intent behind these attacks.

Russia has denied past accusations of committing war crimes or targeting civilians in Ukraine, but those denials have been met with increasing scepticism from western officials.

The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said Thursday that Russian troops have already destroyed or damaged nearly 400 healthcare institutions in the country.

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Updated at 15.03 EDT

13h ago **14.33**

The speaker of the US House, Nancy Pelosi, was asked about the request from Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, for the [Biden administration](#) to designate Russia as a state sponsor of terror.

Appearing on the network MSNBC yesterday, Pelosi said:

I've been advocating that for a while. If Russia is not listed as a state sponsor of terrorism, tear up the list. ... You have a president of a country who has turned his own soldiers into such acts of violence.

Pelosi, a Democrat, also discussed her recent trip to [Ukraine](#), where she met Zelenskiy:

We brought our admiration and commendation to the people of Ukraine for their courage and fighting for democracy because that's what this fight is about.

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Updated at 15.23 EDT

13h ago**14.16**

Putin's choices filled with peril on eve of Victory Day parade



Andrew Roth

On the brink of its May 9 Victory Day celebrations, Russia looks very far from triumph in its war in [Ukraine](#). And all of its options going forward are fraught with danger.

After a disastrous assault on Kyiv, [Russia](#) is engaged in an attempt to take territory in Ukraine's east, as its military nears exhaustion and sanctions continue to escalate.

“With the current force that they have, the push that they’re attempting now is all that they have left,” said Jeffrey Edmonds, former director for Russia on the US national security council and senior analyst at the CNA thinktank.

“Militaries just don’t recover that quickly from such a devastating loss. And given how effective the Ukrainians have been with our support, I just don’t think they’re going to be able to achieve their objectives within the coming

weeks. And the coming weeks are going to be the telltale of where this is going.”

Facing setbacks, officials have suggested that [Vladimir Putin](#) may use the May 9 holiday to repackage the war in Ukraine. Dramatic options include escalation through a formal declaration of war or general mobilisation – or de-escalating by proclaiming victory.

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Updated at 14.16 EDT

[14h ago](#)[13.56](#)

The director general of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, sent a message of solidarity with the Ukrainian people as they confront Russia’s attacks.

Speaking from the government media center in Kyiv today, Tedros said:

My message to all the people of Ukraine is this: WHO stands by you.

The WHO emergencies director, Mike Ryan, said that the organisation has documented 200 attacks on healthcare facilities in [Ukraine](#) and would share its findings with those investigating potential crimes committed in the war.

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Updated at 13.58 EDT

[14h ago](#)[13.38](#)

The Ukrainian foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, said he spoke to his counterpart in Angola about how the war against [Russia](#) is affecting global food security.

Kuleba said on Twitter that he and Tete Antonio discussed “steps to develop trade” and “the need to fully unblock Ukraine’s food exports”.

Spoke with Angola's Foreign Minister Tete Antonio [@amb_tete](#) on our further cooperation within international organizations and steps to develop trade. We focused on ways to mitigate the impact of war on global food security and the need to fully unblock Ukraine's food exports.

— Dmytro Kuleba (@DmytroKuleba) [May 7, 2022](#)

The Global Network Against Food Crises, an agency set up by the United Nations and the EU, [issued a report on Tuesday](#) warning that the war in Ukraine could exacerbate food insecurity around the world.

Countries that already face high levels of food insecurity – such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen – could be put in even more danger if the war drags on, considering many countries import wheat from Russia and Ukraine.

The report said:

Countries already coping with high levels of acute hunger are particularly vulnerable to (the war) due to their high dependency on imports of food and (their) vulnerability to global food price shocks.

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Updated at 13.59 EDT

[14h ago](#) [13.21](#)

The director of the Central Intelligence Agency, William Burns, has warned that Vladimir Putin is “doubling down” on the war in [Ukraine](#), despite the global condemnation he has faced.

Speaking at a Financial Times event in Washington, Burns said:

He's in a frame of mind in which he doesn't believe he can afford to lose. I think he's convinced right now that doubling down still will enable him to make progress.

Burns also [expressed concern](#) that the recent reports about the intelligence that the US has shared with Ukraine are "irresponsible" and "very risky," as they could further enflame tensions with Russia.

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[Ukraine](#)

How hospital wedding dance restored Ukraine bombing victim's will to live

Video of Oksana Balandina, 23, dancing with Viktor Vasyliv in a hospital has been seen around the world

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

Ukrainian nurse who lost both legs in war shares first dance with husband in hospital – video



[Daniel Boffey](#) in Lviv

Sat 7 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 7 May 2022 03.07 EDT

“They were tears of happiness at first,” says 23-year-old Oksana Balandina of her first dance with her new husband, [captured on video by a nurse](#) and now shared across the world.

Six weeks ago, Oksana stood on a mine as she was returning home with her then partner, Viktor Vasyliv, also 23, after venturing out to collect some supplies for elderly neighbours on their street in Lysychansk, an east Ukrainian town on the frontline of the war with Russia.

Oksana, a paediatric nurse, and mother of Diana, 5, and Illia, 7, was, according to medics, fortunate to survive the blast, but she lost both her legs and four fingers on her left hand. Since then she has had moments of utter despair, screaming out that she wants to die, says Viktor, a carpenter, as he crouches by her wheelchair.

Today, however, drinking a takeaway coffee and taking in the sun outside Lviv's municipal hospital, Oksana – quick to smile – says she feels stronger and grateful, as she dusts some tree blossom off her husband's cheek.



Oksana Balandina with her husband, Viktor Vasyliv. She is a nurse and a mother of two. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

In part, she says, that is due to an outpouring of support from strangers around the world touched by that moment two weeks ago in the hospital ward when her husband gently lifted his bride, dressed in white, and held her tight as she buried her face in his shoulder and they swayed to tinny music playing on a laptop.

Oksana posted the video on the social media site TikTok and she has since put up other short pieces of film of her trying to keep fit to music since the incident. They have been viewed many thousands of times, provoking the vital comments of support that Viktor says his wife has so treasured during these hard weeks.

“The dance was a complete surprise,” she says. “We had come back to the hospital from the registry office and Natalia and Olesia [hospital volunteers] had brought a dress and a laptop for music. Natalia said, ‘What kind of wedding is that without a dance?’”

“It was pure joy and happiness,” she adds of her response to Viktor picking her up. “But then the realisation came. It’s not how I wanted my first dance to be.”

There have, of course, been innumerable other difficult moments, not least explaining the injuries to her children, who are staying with their grandfather in the Poltava region to the east.

Oksana and Viktor, who are waiting to be taken for rehabilitation at a specialist hospital somewhere in the European Union, have not been able to see the children for weeks. But the memory of that day, and the precariousness of life in Ukraine today, is itself hard to get over, the couple say. The retelling only emphasises Oksana’s extraordinary strength.

“We were coming back home and there’s a stream at the back of our garden, so we wanted to make a shortcut and took a dirt road,” says Oksana. “We knew this way very well. I was in front and my husband and friend behind, and I saw there was a missile not far from us, I turned towards Viktor, I yelled, ‘Honey, look.’ He looked at me and I just suddenly flew into the air, I heard a loud noise in my ears. I looked at my feet and they weren’t there. Just bones.”

Viktor ran to her. He was breathless, caught in a panic, he says. “In my head I thought it was over for a moment,” he recalls. “Then she started to move; she yelled to me to call the ambulance. But they refused to come close because they were afraid of the mines. They said it needed to be cleared.”

The couple's friend called Oksana's stepfather on the phone. "So we carried her with her stepdad and our friend, we carried her to the ambulance. Oksana, despite all the shock she was in, was in charge of everything. She pushed me and I went out of shock, she was the one who told me to call the ambulance. I don't know when would I have come to my senses if she didn't tell me. Then she helped the paramedic."

Oksana explains: "The paramedic was a young inexperienced girl – apparently she had never seen anything like this. So I helped her. I knew my veins better. I asked for oxygen but they didn't have any. When we came to the hospital, I saw my mom. I saw her and cried 'Mummy', and I lost consciousness."

Oksana does recall brief snippets of the conversations of the medics working to save her life. "When we were on the way to the hospital, the paramedics were saying, 'If only she was able to make it to the hospital.' When we came to the hospital, the doctors were saying, 'If only she was able to make it through the surgery.' But when the anaesthesia wore off and I came back to my senses, I realised – that's it. I have nothing. I was panicking, I didn't want to live, I didn't want my children to see me like this."

Oksana was transferred from Lysychansk to the city of Dnipro, 200 miles farther west. "The doctors did an amazing job. They helped me a lot," Oksana says. "I realised my life was not over. I need to move on and I need to move on for the sake of my children."

Viktor adds: "She was very depressed – she yelled she didn't want to live. But in Dnipro there were amazing rehabilitation doctors. They inspired Oksana. And then there was TikTok. She started to post some videos, got a lot of positive comments, and it helped to boost her morale."

Viktor proposed on the 27 April and they were married the next day.

"I just posted these videos just for myself," Oksana says, "I didn't think about becoming popular – I just wanted to document the process of recovery. How the rehabilitation goes ... and later, when I will hopefully have prosthetics, I will learn how to use them."

Viktor adds: “It helps her. Whenever she has a minute, she is trying to read comments to her videos. She smiles, she is happier.”

Oksana says she is determined to rebuild her life and continue her career in medicine – in the field of rehabilitation. “And to show to the others with my own example that you can’t give up, that everything is possible and you should keep living no matter what.”

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Russia-Ukraine war: what we know on day 73 of the invasion

Zelenskiy says Mariupol being ‘tortured to death’, as UN security council omits words ‘war’ and ‘invasion’ from its first statement

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



Smoke rises from the Azovstal steelworks in Mariupol. Photograph: AP

[Samantha Lock](#) and [Gabrielle Canon](#)

Fri 6 May 2022 22.05 EDT Last modified on Sat 7 May 2022 03.10 EDT

- **The UN Security Council issued its first statement on the war in Ukraine, but withheld from using the words “war”, “conflict” or “invasion”.** The statement instead “expresses deep concern regarding the maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine” and voiced “strong

support” for Secretary General Antonio Guterres in seeking a peaceful solution to the “dispute”.

- The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said the besieged southern port city of Mariupol is “an example of torture and starvation used as a weapon of war”. He also confirmed in his latest national [address](#), [evacuation operations are continuing](#) in Mariupol with 40 civilians rescued.
- Three evacuation buses left the besieged Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol , according to Russian media reports. Buses carrying 25 civilians including children were brought out from the plant [to a camp in the Russian-controlled town of Bezimenne](#). An estimated 200 civilians, along with Ukrainian resistance fighters, remained trapped in underground refuges at the huge industrial complex.
- On peace talks, Zelenskiy said [he was “elected as president of Ukraine and not a mini-Ukraine”](#), and that Russia must first fall back to the territory it held before its invasion on 23 February if talks are to succeed. He also accused Russia of “outright nuclear blackmail” during the speech at Chatham, the international affairs think tank, saying “Russia is blackmailing Europe through threats”.
- The latest US military aid package to Ukraine, announced by president Joe Biden, is worth \$150m, secretary of state Antony Blinken confirmed. It includes 25,000 155mm artillery rounds, as well as counter-artillery radars, jamming equipment, field equipment and spare parts. It brings Washington’s military assistance to Kyiv since the Russian invasion began to around \$3.8bn, Blinken said.
- US defense department spokesperson John Kirby deflected questions about whether the Pentagon provided information to Ukraine that helped military leaders target Russian generals. Kirby would not corroborate the [reports](#), instead saying Ukraine “makes the decisions” when it comes to how they use US intel and stressed that Ukraine combines intelligence from many countries and the US is “not the sole source of intelligence and information to the Ukrainians”.

- Germany will also send seven self-propelled howitzers to Ukraine, on top of five artillery systems the Dutch government has already pledged, the German defence minister, Christine Lambrecht, said. [The PzH 2000 is one of the most powerful artillery weapons in the Bundeswehr inventories](#) and can hit targets at a distance of 40km (25 miles).
- Vladimir Putin will send a “doomsday” warning to the west when he leads Russia’s Victory Day celebrations on Monday. A [fly-past over St Basil’s Cathedral will include the Il-80 “doomsday” command plane](#), which would carry Russia’s top brass in the event of a nuclear war, Russia’s defence ministry said.
- A yacht reportedly belonging to Putin was seized by Italian officials. Reporters say the yacht, which had been moored in a Tuscany marina, [belongs](#) to Putin. The ministry of economy and finance said in a statement the boat was seized under regulations relating to “actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine”.
- Russia’s foreign ministry said it had summoned Britain’s ambassador to Russia, Deborah Bronnert, adding that it strongly protested in relation to new UK sanctions on Russian media. Russia would continue to react “harshly and decisively” to all sanctions imposed by the UK, [the ministry said in a statement](#).
- Amnesty International said there was compelling evidence that Russian troops had committed war crimes in the Kyiv area in February and March. Civilians also suffered [abuses such as “reckless shootings and torture” at the hands of Russian forces](#) when they occupied an area outside Ukraine’s capital, including the town of Bucha, in the early stages of the invasion, the rights group said in a report.
- Russian troops are attempting to encircle and storm Severodonetsk, the easternmost city in Ukraine held by Kyiv, a local official said. [Severodonetsk’s capture would be a major gain for](#)

[the Russian army](#) which has refocused its efforts on taking the whole of the eastern Donbas region.

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Ukraine

Ukraine: US announces \$150m military aid package as dozens evacuated from Mariupol

The latest security assistance brings the total US military aid to \$3.8bn as UN security council's first statement on crisis omits words 'war' and 'invasion'

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



A girl looks through the bus window as civilians evacuated from Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol arrive at temporary accommodation in the village of Bezimenne. Photograph: Alexander Ermochenko/Reuters

Agence France-Presse

Sat 7 May 2022 02.46 EDT Last modified on Sat 7 May 2022 03.10 EDT

US president Joe Biden has announced another package of military assistance for [Ukraine](#) as dozens of civilians were evacuated from Mariupol's besieged steelworks, the last pocket of resistance against Russian troops in the pulverized port city.

Worth \$150m, the latest US security assistance for the “brave people of Ukraine” would include artillery munitions and radars, Biden said. A senior US official said it included counter-artillery radars used for detecting the source of enemy fire, and electronic jamming equipment.

Friday’s new batch brings the total value of US weaponry sent to Ukraine since the invasion began to \$3.8bn – and the president urged Congress to further approve a huge \$33bn package including \$20bn in military aid, “to strengthen Ukraine on the battlefield and at the negotiating table”.

Biden and leaders of other G7 nations will hold a virtual summit with Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, on Sunday. They are expected to discuss western support for Kyiv in its struggle against Russian president Vladimir Putin’s invasion.

It comes as the UN security council issued its first statement on the war in Ukraine, but withheld from using the words “war”, “conflict” or “invasion”.

The [statement](#) instead “expresses deep concern regarding the maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine” and voiced “strong support” for secretary general António Guterres in seeking a peaceful solution to the “dispute”.

“The security council expresses deep concern regarding the maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine,” read the statement released on Friday night. Russia, which has a veto in the council, has stymied all prior bids to adopt a statement on Ukraine.

In his latest national address, Zelenskiy said more than 40 women and children had been evacuated on Friday from the Mariupol steelworks after spending two months in underground shelters and that “diplomatic options” were underway to “rescue our soldiers”.

The Russian defense ministry gave a figure of 50 civilians evacuated, including 11 children, saying they were handed over to the UN and Red Cross, which are assisting in the operation.

It said the “humanitarian operation” would continue on Saturday.

About 200 civilians, including children, were estimated to still be trapped in the Soviet-era tunnels and bunkers beneath the sprawling Azovstal factory, along with a group of Ukrainian soldiers making their last stand.

Russia announced a daytime ceasefire at the plant for three days starting on Thursday but the Ukrainian army said Russian “assault operations” had continued by ground and by air.

Ukraine’s Azov battalion, leading the defence at Azovstal, said one Ukrainian fighter had been killed and six wounded when Russian forces opened fire during an attempt to evacuate people by car.

Azov battalion leader Andriy Biletsky wrote on Telegram on Friday that the situation at the plant was critical.

“The shelling does not stop. Every minute of waiting is costing the lives of civilians, soldiers, and the wounded.

Ten weeks into a war that has killed thousands, destroyed cities and uprooted more than 13 million people, defeating the resistance at Azovstal and taking full control of strategically located Mariupol would be a major win for Moscow.

It would also be a symbolic success as 9 May approaches, the day Russia celebrates the Soviet victory over the Nazis in the second world war. Ukrainian officials believe Moscow is planning a parade in Mariupol but the Kremlin denied any such plans.

White House press secretary, Jen Psaki, noted that the G7 meeting will come a day before “Victory Day” and the leaders will demonstrate “unity in our collective response” to “Putin’s war”.

“While (Putin) expected to be marching through the streets of Kyiv, that’s obviously not what’s going to happen,” Psaki said.

Since failing to take Kyiv early on in the war, which began on 24 February, Russia has refocused its offensive on the south and east of Ukraine.

Taking full control of Mariupol would allow Moscow to create a land bridge between separatist, pro-Russian regions in the east and the Crimean peninsula, which it annexed in 2014.

Other key developments include:

- A Ukrainian official said Russian forces had almost encircled Severodonetsk, the easternmost city still held by Kyiv, and are trying to storm it. Kherson in the south remains the only significant city Russia has managed to capture since the war began.
- The Pentagon [denied reports it helped Ukrainian forces](#) sink the Russian warship Moskva in the Black Sea last month. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said the US had “no prior knowledge” of the plan to strike the ship, which sank April 13, leaving a still-unclear number of Russian sailors dead or missing.
- The European Commission has proposed that all 27 EU members gradually ban Russian oil imports but Hungary rejects the ban.

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Tongue-scrappers, mouthwash and flossing: the dentists' guide to cleaning your teeth properly



With a disciplined approach to looking after your teeth, visits to the dentist can become fewer and further between. Illustration: Jack Hudson/The Guardian

How long should you spend brushing? Will whitening damage your teeth? And what toothpaste should I use? As [patients struggle to get checkups](#), here's everything you need to know about oral hygiene



[Elle Hunt](#)

Sat 7 May 2022 02.00 EDT

Should I use an electric or manual toothbrush?

No ambiguity here: even an entry-level electric beats a manual. “Power toothbrushes can remove up to twice the plaque and really help to improve your gum health in the longer term,” says Dr Nigel Carter, chief executive of the [Oral Health Foundation](#).

The two main types are the oscillating-rotating brush (Oral-B has a wide range) and the sonic brush (Philips Sonicare is the leading brand). The latter has the benefit of a faster brushing motion, but it doesn’t really matter which you choose, says Dr Nyree Whitley, group clinical director of the dental-care provider, the key point is minimising the need for manual dexterity: “It can be quite challenging to put the toothbrush at 45 degrees, get circulation motions and the right amount of pressure on the tooth.”

How long should I brush for?

Two minutes – though most of us do not come close to that. The average time spent brushing is 43 seconds, says Carter. He suggests parents should get kids used to brushing for two minutes, even if their smaller mouths can be done in less time, as “that’s the habit they’re going to keep for life.” [The Oral Health Foundation’s advice](#) is to start as soon as the first teeth appear, with a children’s brush, and supervise until the age of seven.

Another advantage an electric toothbrush has over a manual is that many now come with timers or apps that connect to your brush via Bluetooth to monitor and tell you how long you spend brushing. That means having your phone to hand every time you brush, but let’s be real: it’s never far away anyway.

Coverage also matters. The more hi-tech electric toothbrushes, such as the Oral-B iO series, use artificial intelligence (or “3D teeth tracking”) to ensure that all areas of your mouth get equal attention. The latest model retails for a mind-boggling £500, although they can usually be found discounted to half that price, advises Carter. I try to imagine circumstances where I would spend £250 on a toothbrush, and can’t. Just make sure you pay equal attention to the inner, outer and biting surfaces of every tooth.

Is it hygienic to brush my teeth in the shower?

This issue was raised on [Reddit’s No Stupid Questions forum](#). A man’s girlfriend called him weird for brushing his teeth in the shower, out of some vaguely articulated sanitary concern. He said it was a “normal thing most people do”.

The response from Reddit was mostly along the lines of: why would it be weird? “I mean, I’m still going to stand there for a while blankly staring into the void, may as well brush my teeth,” was the top-voted comment.

My dental professionals respond with similar bemusement. “Certainly don’t utilise the toothbrush as a loofah at the same time – but, it’s fine,” says Whitley. Carter agrees: “I don’t think it matters where you brush.”

I say, if you're hung up on your boyfriend brushing his teeth in the shower, you're looking for problems.

Are those fancy water picks worth the money?

All that matters is that you clean between your teeth every day. Carter says [water picks](#), which use a pressurised, often pulsating stream of water to clean between your teeth, can be a savvy investment for people with bridge work or orthodontic braces, who might find it harder to clean in between their teeth (though, he adds, "It takes a bit of mastering so that you don't shower yourself with water as well"). They can cost hundreds, but you can get a basic model for about £50.

Interdental brushes are more effective at plaque removal than string floss, and many people find them much easier to use

If your oral care needs are more straightforward, you can probably save your money. Interdental brushes have been shown to be more effective at plaque removal than string floss, and many people find them much easier to use (though you should ask your dentist which size is best).

But, says Whitley, if you choose waxed floss tape rather than string, "it really isn't that difficult". The trick is to tie it in a loop, then put fingers either side of the knot, "like a little lasso", rather than messing about with a long bit of string. ([This video](#) gives you the idea, with some jaunty music.) If your gums bleed, persevere – they will get healthier with consistency.

Does it matter which toothpaste I use?

Fluoride is the key ingredient, so make sure your toothpaste contains at least 1,350-1,500ppm (parts per million) and no sweeteners – duh! "Don't assume toothpastes are all the same, because they're not," says Whitley. "Some tooth-cleaning tablets and herbal toothpastes don't have fluoride in them. As a dentist it's really difficult not to go up and tell people in the supermarket, 'Don't buy that one.'"

Once you've checked the fluoride content, you might look for one that meets your needs, such as for sensitive teeth, or a preference for whitening.



The days of ultra hard toothbrushes are long gone: now we're being encouraged to address every aspect of oral health. Illustration: Jack Hudson/The Guardian

What about mouthwash?

If you are brushing twice a day, for two minutes each time, you can probably do without mouthwash, says Carter – but if you're not, it's a “very useful adjunct to your cleaning routine.” While brushing removes more plaque than mouthwash, throwing it in can improve plaque control by up to 20%. Make sure it has fluoride in it, for an additional advantage.

In terms of when to use mouthwash, a dental therapist on TikTok [went viral](#) for saying that it should always be used *before* brushing your teeth. But as soon as I mention TikTok videos, the professionals visibly shudder. “I saw an awful one where people were using things other than toothbrushes to brush their teeth,” says Whitley. “Just, like ... sticks.”

It goes without saying: do not brush your teeth with sticks. This tip about mouthwash, however, turns out to be quite sound

As a dentist, it's difficult not to go up and tell people in the supermarket, 'Don't buy that toothpaste'

as not all mouthwashes contain fluoride. By rinsing with those that have a lower concentration than toothpaste (or, even more so, with water), "you're effectively washing your mouth out," says Whitley.

The advice differs depending on the mouthwash's active ingredients: those that contain antimicrobial chlorhexidine, for example, should be used after brushing. But in general, dentists suggest using mouthwash at a separate time to brushing, such as between meals.

Should I wet my toothbrush before putting toothpaste on?

"You're immediately putting it into a mouth full of saliva," says Carter. "It's probably not going to make any difference."

Sticking the toothbrush under the tap harks back to the time when bristles were harder. These days even "hard" brushes are made from a manageable nylon. "What was hard in the 1970s you'd probably scrub the floor with now," says Carter. Most people are advised to use medium-to-soft brushes.

Do I need a tongue scraper?

Like water picks, tongue scrapers haven't taken off in the UK the way they have in the US. "It's not something we'd routinely recommend as clinicians, but if people want to use them, fine," says Whitley. They might help with bad breath or tongue discolouration by removing the bacteria that builds up – but if either of these is a problem, see your dentist.

If you've not had a filling for a few years, have good routines and are free of gum disease, you may only need a yearly check-up

Will whitening my teeth damage them?

Whitening toothpaste is a bit of a marketing gimmick, says Whitley. “It can stop stains building up – simple things like tea, coffee, red wine – but it won’t make teeth whiter than they originally were.” And some at-home whitening kits risk damaging more than your teeth. Many sold online far exceed the [UK legal limit of 0.1% hydrogen peroxide](#), with potentially dangerous results. Of 36 products bought from AliExpress, Amazon, eBay and Wish last year, consumer advocates [Which? found that 20](#) contained more than 10 times the legal hydrogen peroxide level, and six contained more than 100 times.

Even if a kit seems well reviewed, “you wouldn’t know quite where it’s coming from, or even if it’s legitimate”, says Carter. He tells me about a case where someone used a product containing 350 times the legal level of hydrogen peroxide. I shall spare you the gory details.

Still, as a regular tea drinker, Whitley uses one herself, sometimes for sensitive teeth: “It’s about getting a balance between the two.”

How often do I need to see the dentist?

Good news: it may be less often than you think. The traditional six-monthly check-up was established “without huge science behind it”, says Carter. And tooth decay has been less of a problem since fluoride toothpaste was introduced in the 1970s.

If you’ve not had a filling for three to four years, have good daily routines and are free of gum disease, you may only need a yearly check-up, or even every two years, says Carter (which will also free up appointments for more needy patients). [A 2020 study](#) found no difference in oral health between patients who saw the dentist once every six months and those who observed “risk-based recall intervals”.

A change in lifestyle, and therefore diet, can be a risk factor, and Whitley points out that “it’s obviously more difficult to eat healthily on a low income. And if people are stressed, some turn to sugar as a crutch.” Similarly, children who have “never needed a single filling” can see a sudden reversal in fortunes after they leave home, she adds.

But, in general, if your dentist tells you not to come back for a year, you can believe them.

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I saw someone on TikTok using human hair to floss. Is this advisable?

If people have difficulty wrangling actual string floss, Carter points out, “I don’t think human hair is going to work any better. And what about bacteria from the hair you’re transferring into your mouth?”

I also try to ask Whitley about [#teethtok](#) trends – that use lemon juice and rubber bands – but she has heard enough and does not indulge me: “Just no!”

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‘I yearned for a deeper, slower, more useful existence’: dispatches from the Great Resignation



Escape artists ... Illustration: Frances Coccicolella/The Guardian

From the ad executive turned charcoal burner to the woman who built a new life in the woods, a new genre of books about radical reinventions is proving

a runaway success



[Laura Barton](#)

Sat 7 May 2022 04.00 EDT

Not long after I had left my job, and my marriage, and my home, in quick succession, I ran into an old acquaintance outside a local coffee shop. She had heard, of course, about the dismantling of my life, and now she looked at me, bewildered. “You had it all,” she said, as she gripped her cup. “And now you have … nothing?”

For many years I had tried to live a life that made sense to others. I had swanned from a prestigious university straight into a job at a prestigious newspaper. I had got married young, to the man I began dating at 23, we had bought a beautiful home, got ourselves a cat, and begun to talk about starting a family. I had tried, very hard, all my life, not to put a foot wrong. And yet something inside me felt perpetually crushed.

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With hindsight, the confusion my old acquaintance experienced outside the coffee shop seems understandable. To reject, so resoundingly, all the signifiers of happiness and success can be unsettling to observers. But still, my decision to walk away from the life I had built remains something of which I am proud. It was turbulent, and it was terrible, and I regret the hurt that was caused, but it was also the making of me.

In recent years, books written by authors who chose to do something similar – taking a sharp left in their lives, where most might turn right – have become something of a genre. Loosely, these memoirs tend to fall into two categories. The first presents the writer with little left to lose – Cheryl Strayed's 2012 bestseller, *Wild*, for instance, in which the US author hiked the 1,100-mile Pacific Crest Trail solo, following divorce, drug addiction and the death of her mother. Similarly, in Raynor Winn's *The Salt Path*, Winn and her husband walk the South West Coast Path in the UK, shortly after he is diagnosed with a terminal illness and the pair find themselves homeless following a bad investment. Or there's Amy Liptrot's *The Outrun*, in which the author's alcoholism leads her to abandon life in London and return to her native Orkney to begin again in the landscape she once fled.



Life journeys ... Julia Roberts in the film adaptation of *Eat Pray Love*.
Photograph: Allstar Picture Library Ltd./Alamy

In a similar vein, this spring we've seen the publication of Doreen Cunningham's [Soundings](#), in which the author and her young son follow the grey whale migration path up to northern Alaska. For Cunningham, like Winn and Liptrot, life has hit an all-time low: single parenthood has left her isolated, financially challenged and at a loss as to how her life ended up this way. The trip north is a nature study, and a way to understand parenthood, but it is also an attempt by Cunningham to reconnect with her younger self.

This isn't an entirely new phenomenon – it is close to 170 years since Henry David Thoreau "went to the woods" because he "wanted to live deliberately" and [wrote about it](#) in *Walden*. At the heart of such stories is the question of what happens when life is stripped back to its bare bones. How much do we need to survive, how do we rise to the challenge, and who are we at heart, without all of life's paraphernalia?

A second strand of today's "life change" genre follows authors who were roused from steady lives – who abandoned careers, took up new pursuits and rooted themselves in unexpected places hoping to find Thoreau's more "deliberate" way of living. Elizabeth Gilbert's post-divorce travel memoir, *Eat Pray Love*, might be the blousiest example. Frances Mayes's *Under the Tuscan Sun*, Helen Russell's *The Year of Living Danishly*, Shonda Rhimes's *Year of Yes* and Glennon Doyle's *Untamed* all plough a similar furrow. Among this year's crop are [Deer Man](#), the story of photographer and lecturer Geoffroy Delorme, who moves to a forest in Normandy to live among roe deer, and *The Cure for Sleep* by Tanya Shadrick, whose near-death experience at 33 prompts her to begin life afresh.

These recent books have taken on new resonance. The pandemic has encouraged many to perform an emotional audit of their lives; with a break from entrenched routine has come a recalibration of work and home, a recognition that life is perhaps too short to spend doing something you do not love. Last year Anthony Klotz, a professor at Mays Business School in Texas, coined the phrase "the Great Resignation" when predicting the huge number of workers likely to quit their jobs. In the UK, that was one in 20 of us, but the phenomenon has been global – last November, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that "quits", as they are termed, had hit a record high, as 4.5 million American workers voluntarily left their jobs.

There are of course many reasons for this grand walkout, ranging from health concerns to childcare needs. But it appears a striking number of people left their jobs with no plan to seek employment in the same sector, instead choosing wholly new lifestyles and careers. It makes sense that these memoirs should flourish in this context; those contemplating a radical life-change perhaps seeking inspiration – or the steady hand of a cautionary tale.



‘I have been told it was a brave move, but it had nothing to do with courage. It was a matter of survival’ ... Ben Short in Dorset. Photograph: Joya Berrow

There is both to be found in Ben Short’s April memoir, *Burn*. Short walked away from his role as a creative director for a London advertising company, along with all its desirable trappings (the flat, the fancy motorbike, the glamorous business trips), to work on the land – living, coppicing, hedge-laying and charcoal-burning in Dorset. “I came to the woods over a decade ago,” he writes. “I came to the woods because there was a fire in my head.”

“I was deeply unhappy,” he says today. “Beset by anxiety and stifled and frustrated by a career which was supposed to be creative but often felt anything but.” Raised in rural Hampshire, he found that after 16 years in

London the pace of the city had begun to pall. “I yearned for a deeper, slower and more ‘useful’ existence.”

Short’s decision to rip it up and start again was not only rooted in frustration, it was also a way to address his crippling obsessive compulsive disorder. “The illness was not a lot of fun,” he says. “It basically took [away] a decade of my life. That said, it did give me a rocket-fuelled impetus to leave my career. I have been told many times that it was a brave move, but it had nothing to do with courage. It was a matter of survival. Had I done nothing, my existence would have been incredibly small and miserable and I was not prepared to live like that.”

In one memorable scene, Short recalls the point where it became apparent that he must change his life. He is on a cruise ship in the Mediterranean, pitching for a new advertising account, when he suffers an acute anxiety attack. “I felt like a boxer who had been knocked down a million times,” he writes, “yet staggered back to his feet and was floored again in a bout lasting years. Inside I was pulp.”

In this form of memoir, immersion in nature is often presented as a salve – see also Caroline Van Hemert’s account of a trek across Alaska in *The Sun Is a Compass*, Jon Krakauer’s biography of Chris McCandless, *Into the Wild*, or Elizabeth Gilbert’s *The Last American Man*, about Eustace Conway, who in 1977 moved from suburbia to the Appalachian mountains.

The idea of abandoning modern life in favour of something more traditional has long appealed to the disillusioned wage slave; there was the back-to-the-land movement of the 1960s and 70s, for instance. But the reality of manual labour after decades of deskbound life can be challenging, and rural life a rude awakening after the ready comforts of urban living. “I’m very much a romantic by nature, so yes, there was an element of that,” Short concedes.

When I found that manual labour could be so fulfilling, that was life-changing

Siri Helle

“Living in the woods did, initially, feel quite extreme. But I got used to the new rhythms and demands of living off-grid and grew to love them. I learned that when one’s life is reduced to the basics – boiling water over a wood stove, hauling one’s water from a well, washing in a tin bath – those tasks become rewarding in themselves.”

It was a similar experience for Siri Helle, author of *Handmade: Learning the Art of Chainsaw Mindfulness in a Norwegian Wood*, published in March. Some years ago, Helle inherited a plot of land and a red-and-white-painted log cabin, without water or electricity. When she set herself the task of building a privy, she found a new sense of purpose.

Since her late teens, Helle had led an unsettled life – she had moved 30 times in 20 years, made a few attempts at university, lived overseas, but found herself too restless to stick at anything. She was at agricultural college, studying to be an agronomist (a course she did in fact see through), when she first encountered the chainsaw. “Someone just put it in my hands. And then when I came back to my cabin and I saw all the spruce trees my grandfather had planted, I realised it was the perfect tool for me. It sort of became clear to me that I could do it, or that I should at least try.”

It was not easy. “All the challenges in the construction, I had to handle them somehow,” she remembers. “And sometimes I handled them by just throwing the tools aside and going for a long walk, and then I came back the next day and found a solution. But I think that can be a good mantra: it’s just starting and trying. And the first hour is always going to be the most difficult one.”

Like Short, Helle admits to harbouring some romanticism about the idea of working outside in a traditional job. “But of course it’s really difficult, and there are so many things to learn,” she says.

Still, the rewards can be vast. “When I discovered that the manual labour and the creative challenges could be so fulfilling – that was life-changing. It gave me a feeling of accomplishment. I get it from writing as well, but it’s different to getting it from something that’s completely physical – and that’s needed.” Today, Helle divides her time between work as a carpenter and as a writer, and says they make excellent bedfellows. “The division between

working with your hands and working with your head is really one of the most stupid divisions we make in society,” she says. “Because it’s not possible to work with your hands without also using your head.” Throughout a lifetime of work, she feels we should be able to choose any number of careers that meet our different needs, talents and interests, and sometimes to pursue them in tandem. “I think it’s very hard to demand we should choose just one path,” Helle says.

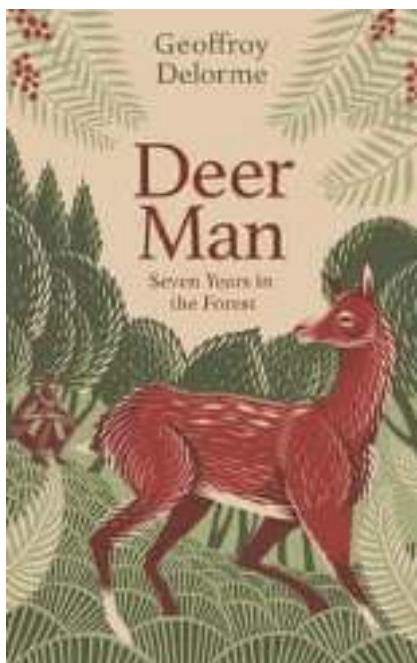


Siri Helle inherited a plot of land and a cabin in Norway. Photograph: Frode Grimelid

“If you want to be a blacksmith or a carpenter, go try it!” says Bill Burnett, co-author (with Dave Evans) of *Designing Your New Work Life*. “Maybe you will love it.” Burnett is executive director of the design programme at Stanford University in California and his approach to making a big life change is, accordingly, design-led. Most quitters leave a job because they hate it, rather than because they have the promise of something better – Burnett refers to this as “running away from a bad thing”, as opposed to “running toward a good thing”. This rarely works out well, he says. “What we tell people is: it’s very dangerous to just throw everything up in the air, quit your job, and try to figure it out. Because there are bills to pay.”

A former Apple employee, Burnett encourages considering your career the same way one might design a new piece of tech. “What do you do when you want to build a new product? You build a lot of prototypes,” he says. “And you try a lot of experiments to see what’s going to work. I knew some guys on the iPhone team, and they brought three different prototypes to Steve [Jobs], and three times Steve said: ‘Nah, that’s not good enough, do it again, do it again.’” If you follow the prototype approach, you’ll road-test your new career before you quit your job in the bank; it might be an idea to spend some of your free time at the circus, maybe take a few classes. Perhaps you’ll even acknowledge that sometimes it’s OK to keep trapeze artistry as a hobby. Burnett often holds workshops for mid-career executives. “Who’s miserable?” he will ask the group. “And you know who raises their hands? Lawyers, bankers, private equity people, folks making lots and lots of money.” It’s the same story every time, he says: a partner in a law firm, making a tonne of money, a house in Manhattan, a house on Long Island, two Teslas, kids in private school. “And they say: ‘I hate my job and I hate my life.’” So Burnett will ask them: how did you get here? And reliably they will answer him: “I never asked myself the question: is this what I wanted?”

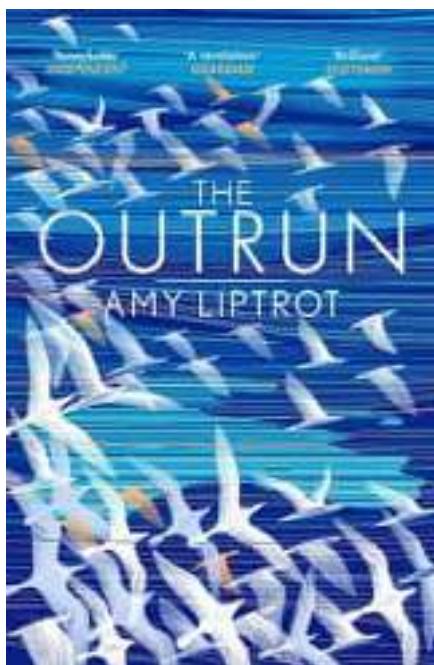
“We don’t have this conversation in our culture,” he says, “and it’s a shame. So part of the ‘life design’ idea is getting clear on what you want. And recognising that that changes all the time. It’s ok to keep wanting things.”



Lucy Leonelli was some way into a career in recruitment and in her late 20s when she had the nagging feeling that “it was never really what I wanted to do,” she says. The first person from her family to attend university, after graduation, like all her peers, she had moved to London and embarked on a white collar career.

“I was having a good time, and doing well, and succeeding, but I wasn’t living the truest version of myself.” She began to think about the person she’d been before corporate life. “I had quite a wide array of hobbies, and different kinds of people that I spent time with,” she says. “There was more colour in my life. I acted in pantomimes, I was a goth, I hung out with skaters and I rode horses. I was part of all these different worlds.”

Rather than walk out entirely on her career, she negotiated taking a gap year from her job, using the time to explore a range of other lifestyles and write a book about her experiences. *A Year in the Life: Adventures in British Subcultures*, which came out in January, is a nimble A-Z of different avenues – there are Essex girls, fetishists, LARPists (people who take part in live-action role-playing games) and vampires; there is a rollercoaster ride with a group of naturists.



“I needed to have a way of it being productive in some way,” Leonelli says, of setting herself this rather exaggerated version of Burnett’s prototype task. “Writing a book meant having something to show for the year, and having a focus was really important,” she says. It also helped her to explain what she was doing to those who thought taking time off from an ascendent career would be a mistake.

“The question, ‘What’s this going to do to your career?’ came up a lot,” she says. “But I think the idea of a career is shifting. The idea of the episodic career is becoming increasingly relevant. I work in recruiting, and I see people having sabbaticals a lot more now than at the beginning of my career.”

Leonelli did return to her previous field, but she believes her year of exploration helped her enormously – she has fewer prejudices now, an openness to new situations and a ready confidence that meant that six years ago she had no qualms about relocating to California. “If I hate it,” she reasoned, “I can always go back. Though I know that’s a privilege.”

Sometimes, though, the knowledge that you can’t really go back is an important part of changing your life. I did not go back to my office job. I did not return to my marriage or my home. For a long time I lived in the state of nothing, trying to work out who I was, and how I wanted to live. I think, if we are lucky, all of us are given a moment to question the narrative of our lives. To wonder whether where we find ourselves is the result of our own choices, or of convention and others’ expectations.

When this moment arrived for me, I’m glad that I took it. There have been many such moments since; new expansions in my career, time spent overseas, a period when I left London and later returned – decisions that might have seemed bewildering to others. But each time these moments come, I tell myself to take them. I tell myself to go into the woods. I tell myself to live more deliberately.

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The secret world beneath our feet is mind-blowing – and the key to our planet's future

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Mystery of phone in North Sea could hold key to ‘Wagatha Christie’ case



Coleen Rooney and Rebekah Vardy (right) during an England Group B Euro 2016 match in Lens. Photograph: John Walton/PA Archive/PA Images

Coleen Rooney enters libel trial brought by Rebekah Vardy without disclosure of lost evidence

[Jim Waterson](#) *Media editor*

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Sat 7 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 7 May 2022 03.33 EDT

Somewhere at the bottom of the North Sea is a mobile phone which may hold the evidence [Coleen Rooney](#) needs to win next week's "Wagatha Christie" libel trial at the high court in London. Unfortunately for the footballer's wife, her only hope of retrieving the device – and any relevant WhatsApp messages it could still hold – is if a fishing trawler happens to dredge up the phone before her case starts on Monday.

The celebrity libel trial of year is finally due to get under way after more than £1m in legal fees, the publication of excruciating private conversations, and revelations about the interactions between footballer's wives and tabloid journalists.

On one side is Coleen Rooney, who has spent most of her life in the public eye as the wife of former England player Wayne Rooney. Stories about her private life have always been catnip to the tabloid press, with paparazzi once receiving many thousands of pounds for exclusive photographs of her. Almost three years ago Rooney ran [an elaborate sting operation](#) to try to catch the person who was leaking stories about her family from her private Instagram account to journalists at the Sun.

On the other side is Rebekah Vardy, the wife of Leicester City's Jamie Vardy, a late arrival on the footballers' wives scene who – court disclosures suggest – had [conversations](#) with her agent about selling stories about a drink-driving incident involving her husband's ex-teammate Danny Drinkwater to journalists at the Sun. In one exchange she appeared to suggest that her agent passed a story to the tabloid newspaper and added: "I want paying for this x".



Vardy on ITV's Loose Women during her first TV interview since her social media account was publicly outed, February 2020. Photograph: Ken McKay/ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

After Rooney's extensive sleuthing as to who was leaking from her Instagram – earning her the nickname "Wagatha Christie" – in October 2019 she made the public accusation that launched the lengthy proceedings: "Now I know for certain which account / individual it's come from. I have saved and screenshotted all the original stories which clearly show just one person has viewed them. It's..... Rebekah Vardy's account."

The issue is that Vardy has always denied being the leaker and starting legal proceedings, claiming Rooney defamed her with a false allegation. Under English libel law, it is up to Rooney to justify her original accusation. And, amid the accidental loss of potentially key evidence by Vardy and her team, Rooney has yet to locate a smoking gun.

Take the phone at the bottom of the North Sea, which belonged to Vardy's agent Caroline Watt. Last summer, with legal proceedings in full swing, Rooney's lawyers asked to search the device for WhatsApp messages that could help their case. The high court heard that shortly afterwards – and before the phone could be searched – Watt was on a boat trip off the British coast when it hit a large wave and she accidentally dropped her mobile

[phone into the sea](#), losing its contents. The incident was described as “most unfortunate” by Rooney’s lawyers.

A separate set of potentially relevant WhatsApp messages held by Vardy was backed up by her IT expert but the court heard that they had [unfortunately “forgotten the password”](#). The laptop Vardy used during the relevant period is no longer working. Watt’s Twitter account has also been deleted. Jamie Vardy himself lost access to his WhatsApp messages, with the court informed they had been hacked.

And the Sun is resisting attempts to disclose any messages from Watt and Vardy potentially held by its reporter Andy Halls, citing the rights of a free press and journalists to protect their sources. In response, Rooney’s lawyers claim they are being denied a fair trial due to a lack of evidence.



Victoria Beckham (left) with then unknown girlfriend of Wayne Rooney, Coleen McLoughlin (centre), Louise Owen (wife of Michael Owen, second right) and Elen Rivas (fiancee of Frank Lampard, right). Photograph: Mark Large/ANL/Rex/Shutterstock

Mark Stephens QC, a leading media lawyer at Howard Kennedy, [told the Guardian’s Today in Focus podcast](#) that the case was “almost unique in libel history, because it’s untrammelled by evidence”.

He added: “Destroying evidence deliberately is a very serious matter. But there’s no suggestion that that happened. It does seem there was an unfortunate series of events which has meant this case can’t be properly proved.”

The defining moment in the case may have come with a court ruling in late 2020. While Rooney had originally written that “Rebekah Vardy’s account” was responsible for leaking the Instagram stories to the Sun, [Mr Justice Warby ruled](#) that the true meaning of those words – on which the libel trial will be fought – was that Vardy was personally responsible for the leaking. As a result Rooney either has to prove it was Vardy herself – rather than someone else with access to Vardy’s Instagram account – who leaked stories to the Sun, or convince a judge that the publication of the allegation was in the public interest.

In the absence of conclusive evidence, Rooney and her legal team have instead had to build a case based on inference. They argue that since Vardy had dealings with the Sun and talked about selling stories to the newspaper it is reasonable to conclude she was the leaker on this occasion. The court also heard that Vardy, for her part, has [suggested at the last minute](#) that Watt, her agent, may have “betrayed” her and leaked the relevant stories without her knowledge.



Court artist sketch by Elizabeth Cook of (left to right) Hugh Tomlinson QC, representing Rebekah Vardy, judge Mr Justice Warby and David Sherborne, representing Coleen Rooney, at the Royal Courts of Justice during the first hearing in Vardy's high court libel claim. Photograph: Elizabeth Cook/PA

On Monday a six-day trial will get under way. Watt now says she is too unwell to give evidence but Wayne Rooney could be called as a witness. There is a waiting list for tickets to attend the small wood-panelled Victorian courtroom in central London, with officials already arranging an overspill room given the level of media interest in the case.

Vardy's reputation has taken a further battering as a result of her decision to bring the libel case, after messages showed her saying she would “love” to leak stories about Rooney and may have called her supposed friend a “bitch”. However, Vardy could decide it was a gamble worth winning if she is vindicated by a libel win – with the loser facing a million-pound legal bill.

Stephens said Rooney's team face an uphill challenge under English libel law: “I think that Vardy wins this on a technicality because there's no evidence that Coleen has that can prove it.”

Listen to the Guardian's Today in Focus podcast on the case:

- [Part One](#)
 - [Part Two](#)
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2022.05.07 - Opinion

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Here's what we have learned: Starmer can't dazzle like Blair, but might still rid us of Johnson

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



After these elections, prospects of a 1997-style landslide look remote, but just removing this government would be enough



Keir Starmer congratulates winning Labour candidates in the Cumberland council election in Carlisle, 6 May 2022. Photograph: Anthony Devlin/Getty Images

Fri 6 May 2022 09.37 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 13.45 EDT

Good, but not quite good enough. Keir Starmer might just swallow that as a description of Labour's performance in [Thursday's local elections](#). The task he faces now is ensuring those words do not become his political epitaph.

Make no mistake, there is much for [Labour](#) to celebrate in these results. The party has turned the capital city into a Labour heartland, so that London councils that were once bywords for Thatcherism – Wandsworth and Westminster – have moved from blue to red. (A notable win was Labour's capture of Barnet, home to the largest Jewish community in the country, and evidence that Starmer's efforts at brand decontamination on that score have not been in vain.) But this is not merely a London phenomenon, but rather an urban England one: Labour is in charge in Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle and Norwich, too.

There were gains in the south to shout about, thanks to a win in Southampton, and in the north, with an unexpected victory in Cumberland. Labour's overall share of the vote looks healthier. And yet no one would hail

this as the kind of nationwide shift that is a clear prelude to general election victory. For that to be true, there would have had to be Labour advances everywhere, including in the red wall areas that delivered Boris Johnson his 80-seat majority in 2019. But the picture was patchier than that.

Of course, it can be a mistake to read too much into local elections. Worse than a mistake, it's an insult to regard them as a glorified opinion poll for the Westminster parliament when they are democratic contests in their own right, ones that have a direct impact on people's daily lives. But they can be revealing. And one thing these results show is the limits of Labour's, and Starmer's, current approach.

Consider just how bad things are – or should be – for the Conservative government. A cost of living crisis is pressing in on Britons, and it is set to get much worse. Energy bills are already through the roof, and now mortgage payments are going up after this week's hike in interest rates. Inflation is the highest it's been for years, at 7%, and forecast to reach 10% by the autumn, with the Bank of England warning of a "sharp economic slowdown" this year. If the most important question in electoral politics is usually "Are you better off now than you were before?", most voters would answer with a loud and angry "No."

And that's before you get to the state of this administration. In power for 12 years, almost to the day, with a prime minister who broke a life-and-death law that he had imposed and who is thought by [78% of the country](#) to have lied about it; a government whose state of moral decay is embodied by the MP who watched [porn in the House of Commons](#) and expected us to believe he only wanted to look at ... tractors. The glum reality is that a governing party behaving like this, against this economic backdrop, should have been crushed at the polls on Thursday. It did badly, but not badly enough.

Put that together with the story told from the doorstep – that while there is plenty of disillusion with Johnson and the Tories, there is no wave of enthusiasm for Starmer and Labour. The fact that much of the current discontent found its outlet in support for the Liberal Democrats and Greens rather than Labour, even in traditionally Labour areas, adds to the same picture: voters breaking from this government but not yet embracing the alternative.

That points to a clear conclusion for Starmer to draw: that even when the prevailing conditions for an incumbent government are dire, mere opposition by the opposition is not sufficient. In Labour's case, two things are holding it back. One is easy enough to remedy; the other much harder.

The first is that Labour is approaching the next general election much as the Conservatives approached the contest that brought them into office in 2010. David Cameron and George Osborne devoted more energy to attacking Gordon Brown and Labour than to sketching out their own plan for the country. It worked well enough to wipe out Brown's majority without delivering an outright Tory win. The contrast is with 1995 to 1997, when Brown and Tony Blair spent more time promising a "new Britain" than they did pointing out the failings of John Major, culminating in the landslide Labour victory whose 25th anniversary passed this week.

To be sure, the circumstances were very different: Blair and Brown had the luxury of talking about Labour's offer in the mid-1990s because by then the Tories were so obviously a busted flush. The polling was unmistakable: Labour was on course to victory. But the lesson remains, all the same. Oppositions flourish when they don't just enrage voters about the present but encourage them about the future. (It doesn't help that channelling public fury about Partygate just got more complicated, with reports that Durham police are to [investigate Starmer](#) over a beer he had during lockdown.)

The second is more awkward, because it's more personal. The BBC's political editor described Labour's performance as far from "dazzling". Starmer does not dazzle, and that's not going to change. He does not have that kind of charisma. But that need not be fatal. As the *i* paper reports, some southern Tory MPs privately fear that Starmer's "[boring, unthreatening reputation](#)" might even be his secret weapon, not least because it frees remainierish Tory voters to shift to the Lib Dems in a way they did not dare in 2019 for fear of letting Jeremy Corbyn into Downing Street.

There might even be a constituency of voters who have grown sceptical of charismatic men and the trouble they bring. Watch [WeCrashed](#), the story of WeWork founder Adam Neumann and his "supernova" charisma, noting how it all ended in disaster, and you can't help but think of Johnson or

Donald Trump, or the Iraq war messianism of Blair. After Johnson the steady, unflashy competence of a Keir Starmer could appeal.

Still, in the absence of charisma, you need something else. There is a moment in [The 47th](#), the new play at London's Old Vic that imagines Trump seeking re-election in 2024, in which the former president recalls his win in 2016. Even if you hated him, he says, you knew what he was going to do, whether it was a ban on Muslims or building a wall. What concrete thing, Trump asks, was Hillary Clinton going to do? Anyone?

Here, then, is how Labour might raise the current ceiling on its performance, demonstrated by these latest results. Talk a bit less about what the Tories are doing; talk a bit more about what Labour will do – and do it not with a rock-star personality at the top but a few sharp, memorable promises that lodge in the consciousness. It won't be enough to win a 1997-style landslide: one of those is not coming anytime soon. But it might be enough to repeat 2010, depriving the incumbent PM of his majority and allowing for a change of government. And right now, I think we'd take that.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist
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[**OpinionLabour**](#)

We hoped for a Starmer surge; this is middling Miliband territory. Still, there's hope

[**Gaby Hinsliff**](#)



Labour is celebrating today but the party must be realistic: there's been no huge shift. There is still a mountain to climb



Keir Starmer speaking to supporters after a Labour victory in Barnet, London, 6 May 2022.

Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

Fri 6 May 2022 07.36 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 15.07 EDT

A new dawn has broken, has it not. But the difference between 1997, when [Tony Blair famously greeted victory](#) with these words, and the rather more anticlimactic muddle of this year's [local elections](#), is that this isn't quite the dawn Labour was after. The good news for Keir Starmer is that there is a profound if very unpredictable realignment under way in British politics, with the ground starting to crack beneath the Tories' feet in their southern strongholds much as it once did for Labour in their northern ones. If the next general election were 10 or even five years away, things would be looking very sunny indeed. As it is, Britain may well go to the polls while Labour is still in an awkward transitional stage, trying to make sense of a past seemingly dead and a future yet unborn. Not so much [glad confident morning](#) as one greeted half-dressed and hopping about, with one foot caught in your trousers.

True, toast will have been dropped over Tory breakfast tables at news of [Wandsworth and Westminster falling to Labour](#). There were breakthroughs, too, in places such as [Cumberland](#) – home to [Workington Man](#), archetype for the 2019 red wall voter, and split between three Labour target seats – or

Chingford on the border between London and Essex, part of Iain Duncan Smith's seat. Labour canvassers in some parts of the south particularly are gleefully reporting the return of the "I've always been a Conservative, but ..." voter, Tories who simply can't condone the behaviour of their own party. (Even those who swallowed their doubts about illicit partying aren't happy: 53% of those voting Conservative on Thursday thought their government hadn't done enough to help with the cost of living, according to a [TUC/Opinium poll](#) that suggests something in the Treasury must surely now give.) Liberal remain-voting Tories, who have felt like a persecuted minority in their party ever since Brexit, are meanwhile starting to snap.

The divide first noted in 2016, when older and less well-educated voters voted leave while younger ones and graduates voted remain, looks to be consolidating and cutting across tribal loyalties. In Chingford, [Labour](#) campaigners found City workers worried about their jobs now that Brexit is pushing banking business out to rival European cities, plus the kind of priced-out young urbanites now turning suburbs and shire towns into more favourable Labour territory. Like the three marginals overlapping in Barnet, where Labour recaptured the council, this is exactly the kind of seat that should fall under a "don't frighten the horses" Starmer leadership. And if unhappy Tories aren't always swinging directly to Labour – in rural west Oxfordshire, and most likely in parts of Surrey still counting at the time of writing, it's the Liberal Democrats who have benefited from irritation with Johnson plus longer-term anger about new housebuilding – that's not necessarily a problem for Starmer. Demolishing such a huge Tory majority requires a pincer movement by progressive parties, each attacking parts the other can't reach. But while the Lib Dems seem to be delivering on their side of what isn't quite yet a deal, Labour is lagging on its.

With much of [England, Scotland and Wales still yet to finish counting](#) at the time of writing, there are glimmerings of recovery in so-called [red wall](#) seats but signs in some parts of 2019 Tory voters doubling down. Any spike in support for the Greens, small independent or local candidates – classic plague-on-all-your-houses votes – would suggest that disillusioned 2019 Tory voters won't just meekly return to Labour overnight, but will try other options first. All of this adds up to a new and fiendishly complicated

electoral picture, demanding new leaps of political imagination yet to emerge from Labour.

Perhaps the most worrying aspect of Labour progress, meanwhile, remains its fragility. If Starmer is never going to set the heather alight, the great advantage of his decent-but-dull public persona is that mud doesn't easily stick. Despite the news this week that Durham police will investigate him for having [a takeaway curry and a beer](#) at the end of a day's campaigning, nobody looks at Starmer and sees a party animal. But as a test of Labour's performance under pressure, Beergate was more worrying. A week of harrying saw Starmer looking sometimes reluctant to answer questions – probably because he doesn't think they're fair, but in an election they won't be – and his office occasionally muddling details.

An election campaign in which Tories genuinely feared for their survival would be this magnified a hundredfold, with every half-true rumour that could conceivably be dug up on any Labour candidate simultaneously upended over his head. To win under such a barrage, Labour will have to be slick, confident and miles out ahead from the off. So far what we're looking at is a party that, even under conditions in which Boris Johnson was practically daring voters to kick him, has recovered from the near-fatal collapse it suffered at Jeremy Corbyn's lowest ebb and perhaps progressed a little further than Corbyn at his highest ebb, but remains basically stuck in Ed Miliband territory: nearly there, but not quite nearly enough. A new dawn has broken, but something about the day doesn't half look familiar.

- Gaby Hinsliff 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

[Opinion](#)[Local elections](#)

What the 2022 local election results tell us so far – the panel's verdict

[Polly Toynbee](#), [James Johnson](#), [Amna Ahmad](#) and Owen Jones

The Tories have taken significant hits in London, but how will the rest of the country play out?



Wimbledon, 5 May. Photograph: Amer Ghazzal/Rex/Shutterstock

Fri 6 May 2022 07.40 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 12.46 EDT

Polly Toynbee: Does Boris Johnson survive this? Labour must certainly hope so



Symbols matter, so Labour's victories in Westminster (wow!), Wandsworth (ha!) and Barnet (speaks to progress on antisemitism) give a fine fillip to the party's fortunes. Wins in Cumberland and Southampton augur well. It's too early in the day to know how close Labour is to becoming the biggest party at the next election, but the Liberal Democrat revival gnawing at Tory votes helps.

Conservative councillors went over the top defenceless, lambs to the slaughter. But they deserve every loss, after tolerating intolerable 50% cuts to their council budgets without rebelling against their Westminster party. They blame their leader's collapsed ratings and the cost of living crisis, but don't pity Tories reaping their own whirlwind: their MPs and local parties cynically chose a rogue prime minister, knowing his egregious unfitness for office. Now he's their loser, Tory ex-council leaders line up to call for his head.

If final results suggest Brexit divides still lurk, especially in the north, the Tories may keep Johnson hoping he can rekindle old passions. Labour should hope they do, as his negatives far outweigh the dying embers of Brexit passions. However, fire in the belly is what the official opposition lacks right now: time to let the frontbench off their tight leash of disciplined messaging for more forthright speaking from the heart.

Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

James Johnson: The Tories are in denial about the scale of the problem they face



Faced with the results today, some [Conservatives](#) are saying all is well. This is wrong. Of course, these results are not a sign of a seismic Labour recovery, or a Blair-like storming to power for Keir Starmer. Though Labour made gains, they were not enough to win back areas like those it lost back in 2005 and 2010, like Nuneaton and Peterborough.

But Labour does not need a Blair-sized victory to deprive the Conservatives of power: it can do so while being behind on votes, come a general election.

The Conservative vote is in trouble on two fronts. Most stark is the serious attrition in London and the south, especially in areas with more educated and middle-class voters: to go backwards by so much in these areas spells serious trouble for southern marginals at the next election. To simply write off a Labour advance with the middle classes as Starmer being a “metropolitan elite” – as one Tory source has – is to misunderstand the Conservative victory in 2019, where the party was able to carry southern

seats as well as northern ones. And there are plenty of middle-class voters in the “red wall” too.

Nor were the results good for the Conservatives [in the red wall](#). Again, key here are the 2018 council elections, not the 2019 general election. Labour standing still (as it did in Hartlepool), making gains (Dudley), or even going slightly backwards (Sandwell) is a good result for the party. Why? Because in 2018 it held the northern and Midlands seats that Boris Johnson went on to win a year later. In other words Labour is currently doing as well as it did before it “lost” the red wall in 2019.

Today, some Conservatives – whether wilfully or not – are in denial about the scale of that problem, especially those most loyal to No 10.

But since January, the interests of Boris Johnson and the Conservative party have become disconnected. If Conservatives want to win again at the next general election, they will need to come to that realisation – or risk sleepwalking into national defeat.

James Johnson is a former Downing Street pollster who worked under Theresa May and now runs JL Partners

Amna Ahmad: It's clear the Lib Dems offer the alternative that many voters are looking for



At the time of writing, [Liberal Democrats](#) across the country are jubilant. Gains have been made in traditionally Conservative and Labour areas in the capital, such as Merton and Brent, with astonishing wins in places such as Richmond and Kingston-upon-Hull. This follows on the heels of “blue wall” by-election wins in Chesham and Amersham and North Shropshire in 2021. More local election results are still to be announced, but we are delighted with the wins.

It is usually foolhardy to directly equate local and national politics, but this time it felt different. Voters told me that they were worried about rising inflation, spiralling energy costs and, in the wake of Partygate, couldn’t help but feel that the Conservative cabinet was only looking out for itself. Councillors – current, new and former – have told me that cash is desperately needed from central government to do more for those most in need – but that local government is seen as a low national priority. I’ve noticed ethnic minority communities feeling let down by promises of a Brexit “dividend” that never transpired, and anecdotal evidence of particularly low voter turnout among these groups. It’s clear that the Lib Dems provided an alternative for many thousands across the country.

Neither Boris Johnson nor Keir Starmer can claim an outright win today, despite reasonable results in parts of the country. This makes the next 12

months, in the runup to the next local elections and a rumoured general election, a critical time. Today's results show us that people are looking for a new political home. Expect more upsets.

Amna Ahmad is vice-president of the Liberal Democrat party

Owen Jones: Labour bet the farm on Starmer – and despite the ‘long Corbyn’ excuse, he is not enough



The political conditions for Labour could hardly be more fortuitous. We have a Tory government enveloped in a scandal over systematically breaking its own laws during a national emergency, riddled with sleaze, led by a man whose own admirers acknowledge is a stranger to honesty, and overseeing the worst squeeze in living standards in modern history. In midterm, too, voters are well-disposed to give the incumbents a kicking.

First, Labour's good news: the Tories have collapsed in London. Wandsworth, the laboratory of Thatcherism; Westminster, whose former leader Shirley Porter from the 1980s was best known for [gerrymandering](#); and Barnet are now all red. A long-term trend must be acknowledged in a

city with an increasingly young, diverse, working-class population defined by a housing crisis.

But piling up votes in the capital is no compensation for going backwards in England. “Long Corbyn” is given as the reason by Labour politicians and commentators, a bizarre excuse for doing worse in English boroughs than Keir Starmer’s predecessor did in 2018. The Labour leader’s brazen discarding of his leadership pitch – radical policies fused with party unity – in favour of a vision-free offer and relentless punching left has not delivered the electoral goods.

The rise of the Greens is just one sign that marginalised progressive voters were already looking elsewhere. Perhaps a cost-of-living crisis set to rob the pockets of millions is Starmer’s lifeboat, allowing him to win by default without offering any inspiring plan for the country he seeks to lead. Maybe, but Labour have bet the farm on a leader as devoid of principle as he is of charisma, mopping up purely because of Tory failure. It is clearly not enough.

Owen Jones is a Guardian columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/06/what-the-2022-local-election-results-tell-us-so-far-the-pANELS-verdict>

2022.05.07 - Around the world

- [Wheat Ukraine's harvest may fall by 35%, raising fears of global shortage](#)
- [Donald Trump San Francisco judge rejects lawsuit challenging Twitter suspension](#)
- [Switzerland Politicians vote against loosening notorious banking secrecy law](#)
- [US Trump ally Marjorie Taylor Greene can run for re-election, Georgia judge says](#)
- [Sri Lanka President calls second state of emergency in five weeks](#)

Ukraine

Ukraine's wheat harvest may fall by 35%, raising fears of global shortage

Satellite imagery ‘illustrates spectre of rising food prices and hunger’ due to invasion of world’s sixth-largest wheat exporter

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



An unexploded missile in a wheat field in Mykolaiv, southern Ukraine.
Photograph: Vincenzo Circosta/ZUMA Press Wire/REX/Shutterstock

[Fiona Harvey](#) and [Sarah Butler](#)

Fri 6 May 2022 12.40 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 14.39 EDT

Wheat production in [Ukraine](#) is likely to be at least a third lower than in normal years, according to analysis of satellite images of the country.

Ukraine is one of the world's biggest exporters of wheat, but the war is taking a toll on the country's agriculture and food supplies, sparking fears of shortages or higher prices around the world.

Last year, Ukraine produced about 33m tonnes of wheat, of which it exported about 20m tonnes, making it the sixth-largest exporter globally. This year, with the situation as it stands, the country only has the potential to produce about 21m tonnes of wheat, down about 23% on the average of the previous five years, according to analysis published on Friday by the satellite analysis company Kayrros.

But with more disruption from the war extremely likely, and fighting concentrated in the east where the main wheat-growing regions are found, Kayrros estimates that the wheat harvest is likely to be down by at least 35% this year compared with 2021.

Ukraine has already moved to ban exports of grain and many other food products, in an effort to preserve its own food supplies. Transport is also difficult, with Russia blockading the country's Black Sea coast.

Global wheat prices [leapt by 20% in March](#), owing to the direct impact of the war on wheat production, as well as higher energy and fertiliser prices around the world. These costs were already rising before Russia's invasion, but have been sent soaring further as countries have moved to cut imports of oil and gas from Russia.

While wheat prices have since slipped back slightly from record highs, analysts at Rabobank predict they could rise again due to the war in Ukraine, where it is predicting production could fall by slightly more than 20%, as well as sanctions on Russia and dry and hot conditions in other wheat-producing nations including the US and India.

Carlos Mera, an analyst at Rabobank, said prices would remain high as it was unlikely leading global producers would be able to increase production significantly, because of high fertiliser prices and pressure to grow other crops where prices were also rising.

Russia and Ukraine are also big producers of fertiliser, which has further raised input prices for farmers.

He added: “It is not just a question of how much wheat Ukraine will harvest but how much it will manage to export. Normally 90% of grain exports flow through ports into the Black Sea but we are not going to see that [because of Russian military action].” He said exports via train had also been affected by attacks on railway lines.

Food price rises are now a serious cause of concern around the world. People on low incomes in developing countries were already facing problems because the pandemic had depleted their resources, while conflict has led to countries such as Yemen and Afghanistan teetering on the brink of famine.

The climate crisis is also taking a toll. In recent weeks, a heatwave in south Asia has left millions of people facing heat stress. The heat is likely to reduce crop yields, and could affect India’s wheat harvest.

Last year, heatwaves in Canada disrupted its wheat-growing and led to higher prices for pasta. Australia, another major wheat producer, has had heavy flooding this year.

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In the UK, Brexit has added about 6% to food prices, according to the London School of Economics.

Much of Ukraine’s wheat went to the Middle East, forcing countries there to be even more dependent on Russia for grain supplies. Egypt, for instance, which will host the next UN climate summit, Cop27, this November, is reliant on Ukraine and Russia for about 80% of its wheat.

Kayrros uses artificial intelligence combined with data from satellites to monitor commodities, biomass and other environmental concerns such as methane. Antoine Halff, its co-founder, said: “Monitoring geopolitical events in near real-time is critical to understanding them and mitigating their

impacts. The impacts of the terrible war in Ukraine can sadly be seen from space, and this data illustrates the spectre of rising food prices and hunger the world faces as a consequence of this conflict.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/06/ukraine-wheat-harvest-may-fall-by-35-percent-satellite-images-suggest>

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Donald Trump

San Francisco judge rejects Trump lawsuit challenging Twitter suspension

The former president was banned from from the social media platform after the deadly US Capitol attack



A US judge has dismissed Donald Trump's lawsuit against Twitter.
Photograph: Adrien Fillion/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Reuters

Fri 6 May 2022 19.38 EDT Last modified on Sat 7 May 2022 09.01 EDT

A US judge on Friday dismissed Donald Trump's lawsuit against Twitter that challenged his suspension from the platform.

In a written ruling, US district judge James Donato in San Francisco rejected Trump's argument that [Twitter](#) violated his right to freedom of speech guaranteed by the first amendment of the US constitution.

Twitter and other social media platforms banned Trump from their services after a mob of his supporters attacked the US Capitol in a deadly riot on 6 January 2021.

That assault came after a speech by Trump in which he reiterated false claims that his election loss in November was because of widespread fraud, an assertion rejected by multiple courts and state election officials.

Trump's lawyers alleged in a court filing last year that Twitter "exercises a degree of power and control over political discourse in this country that is immeasurable, historically unprecedented, and profoundly dangerous to open democratic debate".

At the time of removing Trump's account permanently, Twitter said his tweets had violated the platform's policy barring "glorification of violence". The company said then that Trump's tweets that led to his removal were "highly likely" to encourage people to replicate what happened in the Capitol riots.

Before he was blocked, Trump had more than 88 million followers on Twitter and used it as his social media megaphone.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/06/donald-trump-twitter-lawsuit-dismissed>

Suisse secretsPress freedom

Swiss politicians vote against loosening notorious banking secrecy law

Failure to amend law in reaction to Credit Suisse investigation dashes hopes for fast-track route to greater press freedom



A Swiss law known as article 47 makes it a criminal offence to disclose information about a bank's clients, even if it is in the public interest.
Photograph: Fabrice Coffrini/AFP/Getty

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

Fri 6 May 2022 16.36 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 16.57 EDT

Swiss politicians have voted against [loosening the country's banking secrecy laws](#), drawing criticism from the UN and campaign groups who said the laws will continue to harm press freedom.

A notorious law known as article 47 makes it a criminal offence to disclose information about a bank's clients, even if it is in the public interest. It means whistleblowers and journalists who report on potential wrongdoing can be prosecuted.

Switzerland's parliamentary subcommittee on the economy and taxes voted against amending the law on Friday, saying Swiss banks had strengthened their controls on money laundering and white collar crime, and were meeting international standards.

"An amendment to the [Banking](#) Act would run the risk of encouraging public pre-judgements against private individuals," the subcommittee said in a statement, adding that no media has been convicted under the law.

The subcommittee was reviewing the law in reaction to the [Suisse secrets](#) investigation into Switzerland's second largest bank, Credit Suisse. [The leak, which included data for 30,000 clients](#), revealed that the bank held accounts for individuals involved in torture, drug trafficking, money laundering, corruption, and other serious crimes, over decades.

Switzerland's extreme banking secrecy laws meant that journalists who took part in the investigation [risked potential fines or even imprisonment](#). Swiss media could not take part as a result.

While the Swiss parliament still intends to discuss the matter at a later date, the subcommittee's refusal to back the changes dashed hopes that the amendments could be fast-tracked.

The subcommittee's failure to amend the law drew criticism from the UN special rapporteur for freedom of expression and opinion, Irene Khan. She told Der Spiegel and Tages-Anzeiger that she was disappointed and "will continue to press the government of Switzerland to repeal the banking law".

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Khan plans to escalate the issue to the UN human rights council on 24 June.

Denis Masmejan, the secretary general of Reporters Without Borders Switzerland, said: “We deplore this decision, but we do not lose hope that other parliamentary interventions will eventually change the lines.

“The application of article 47 to the media is absurd and incompatible with the freedom of the press ... It will have to be corrected in one way or another,” he added, saying the issue could eventually be addressed by the European court of human rights.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/may/06/swiss-politicians-vote-against-loosening-notorious-banking-secrecy-law>

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US Capitol attack

Marjorie Taylor Greene is qualified to run for re-election, Georgia official says

Secretary of state Brad Raffensperger accepts judge's findings and says far-right congresswoman, a Trump ally, is eligible to run



Marjorie Taylor Greene speaks after a primary debate in Atlanta.
Photograph: Brian Cahn/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Associated Press in Atlanta

Fri 6 May 2022 17.46 EDTFirst published on Fri 6 May 2022 15.40 EDT

The [Georgia](#) secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger, has accepted a judge's findings and said the far-right Republican congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene is qualified to run for re-election.

A group of voters filed a [challenge](#) saying Greene should be barred under a seldom-invoked provision of the 14th amendment concerning insurrection,

over her links to the January 6 attack on the US Capitol by supporters of Donald Trump.

A state administrative law judge, Charles Beaudrot, last month held a hearing on the matter and found that Greene was eligible. He sent his findings to Raffensperger, who was responsible for the final decision.

It was an awkward position to be in for the secretary of state who drew the ire of Trump after he resisted pressure to overturn Joe Biden's victory in Georgia.

Greene has been a staunch Trump ally and has won his endorsement for her re-election bid while continuing to spread unproven claims about the 2020 election being "stolen".

Raffensperger has defended the integrity of the election in Georgia but is facing a tough primary challenge from a Trump-backed US congressman, Jody Hice.

Beaudrot held a day-long hearing last month that included arguments from lawyers for the voters and for Greene and questioning of Greene herself.

During the hearing, Ron Fein, a lawyer for the voters, noted that in a TV interview the day before the attack at the Capitol, Greene said the next day would be "our 1776 moment".

"In fact, it turned out to be an 1861 moment," Fein said, alluding to the start of the civil war.

Greene has become one of the GOP's biggest fundraisers by stirring controversy and pushing baseless conspiracy theories. During the hearing, she was defiant and combative under oath.

She repeated the unfounded claim that fraud led to Trump's loss, said she didn't recall incendiary statements and social media posts and denied supporting violence.

While she acknowledged encouraging a rally to support Trump, she said she was not aware of plans to storm the Capitol or to disrupt the electoral count

using violence.

Greene said she feared for her safety during the riot and used social media to encourage people to remain calm.

The challenge is based on a section of the 14th amendment that says no one can serve in Congress “who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress … to support the constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same”.

Ratified after the civil war, it was meant in part to keep out representatives who had fought for the Confederacy.

James Bopp, a lawyer for Greene, argued that his client engaged in protected political speech and was herself a victim of the Capitol attack. He also argued the administrative law proceeding was not the appropriate forum to address such weighty allegations.

The challenge amounted to an attempt “to deny the right to vote to the thousands of people living in the 14th district of Georgia by removing Greene from the ballot”, Bopp said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/06/trump-marjorie-taylor-greene-reselection-georgia-judge-raffensperger>

[Sri Lanka](#)

Sri Lankan president calls second state of emergency in five weeks

Police disperse students with teargas and water cannon as national strike over economic crisis takes place



Police use water cannons to disperse students demanding the resignation of Sri Lanka's president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Photograph: Ishara S Kodikara/AFP/Getty

AFP in Colombo

Fri 6 May 2022 13.49 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 14.26 EDT

[Sri Lanka](#)'s president has declared a state of emergency for [the second time in five weeks](#), giving security forces sweeping powers as a nationwide strike demanding his resignation brought the country to standstill.

A spokesperson for Gotabaya Rajapaksa said he invoked the tough laws to “ensure public order” after shops closed and public transport was halted on

Friday by unions blaming him for the unprecedented economic crisis, which has ignited weeks of unrest.

Earlier on Friday, police used teargas and water cannon to disperse students attempting to storm the national parliament demanding Rajapaksa resign.

The state of emergency gives powers to security forces to arrest and detain suspects for long periods without judicial supervision. It also allows the deployment of troops to maintain law and order in addition to police.

“The president used his executive powers to invoke emergency regulations to ensure the maintenance of essential services and public order,” the spokesperson said. He said the laws will go into effect from midnight on Friday.

Rajapaksa had declared an earlier state of emergency on 1 April, a day after thousands of protesters attempted to storm his private home in the capital. That emergency was allowed to lapse on 14 April.

But protests have escalated since then. The new emergency declaration came as thousands of demonstrators remained outside Rajapaksa’s seafront office, where they have been protesting since 9 April, and smaller groups tried to storm homes of other key government politicians.

The 85,000-strong police force had stepped up security for all ruling party legislators.

But they were stretched to the limit and had asked the security forces to reinforce them.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/06/sri-lankan-president-calls-second-state-of-emergency-in-five-weeks>

Headlines

- [Live Tories face test on cost of living and Partygate as voting opens across UK](#)
- [Local elections Parties manage expectations as voting begins](#)
- [Explainer Key councils to watch and when the results will come in](#)
- ['Local Conservatives' Leaflets distance candidates from Boris Johnson](#)

[Skip to key events](#)

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)[Politics](#)

Tories face test on cost of living and Partygate as people vote across the UK – as it happened

Latest updates: elections take place in many areas across the UK with polling stations open from 7am to 10pm BST

- [Follow all the results from the local elections here](#)

Updated 2d ago

[Christy Cooney \(now\)](#); [Andrew Sparrow](#) and [Rachel Hall \(earlier\)](#)

Thu 5 May 2022 17.00 EDTFirst published on Thu 5 May 2022 04.24 EDT



People outside a polling station in Westminster, London. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

[Christy Cooney](#) (now); [Andrew Sparrow](#) and [Rachel Hall](#) (earlier)

Thu 5 May 2022 17.00 EDTFirst published on Thu 5 May 2022 04.24 EDT

Key events

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- [3d agoWhich of the key races will be first to announce a result?](#)
- [3d agoLaw Society says Johnson's attack on 'liberal lawyers' over Rwanda plan undermines rule of law](#)
- [3d agoRaab says Parole Board needs 'fundamental overhaul' after it approves release of Baby P's mother](#)
- [3d agoGains and losses at the local elections – what the experts are forecasting](#)
- [3d agoBill to overhaul Northern Ireland protocol not likely to be in Queen's speech, minister hints](#)
- [3d agoShell profits soar to \\$9.1bn amid calls for windfall tax](#)

Show key events only

Live feed

Show key events only

[2d ago16.51](#)

Closing summary

That's it for us today, with the polls now almost closed. For all the latest results as they happen, please head over to our new dedicated [UK politics liveblog](#) from 10pm, which will take you through all the action as it happens into tomorrow.

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Updated at 17.00 EDT

2d ago16.32

If you're in Greater Manchester or Lancashire, here's a good rundown of the times your nearest councils are expected to declare a result from polling company Opros.

Estimated Council Declaration Times:

01:00 Tameside
01:30 Wigan
02:00 Bolton
02:15 Oldham
04:00 Salford
06:00 Stockport
15:00 Manchester, Trafford
15:30 Rochdale
20:30 Bury

— Election GM (@ElectionGM) [May 5, 2022](#)

And for Lancashire Councils:

02:00 Chorley
02:30 Preston
14:00 Rossendale
14:30 Burnley
15:00 Hyndburn
15:30 West Lancashire
16:00 Blackburn with Darwen
16:30 Pendle

— Election GM (@ElectionGM) [May 5, 2022](#)

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2d ago [16.03](#)

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has condemned a terror attack that left three people dead in the Israeli city of Elad.

Eyewitnesses told police that two men attacked passersby with axes or sharp knives on Thursday night.

Three men in their 40s are known to have died and several other people were wounded. A search for the perpetrators is underway.

Writing on Twitter, Truss said she was “appalled by another terror attack in Israel”. The attack is one of a number to have occurred recently in Israel and the West Bank.

Appalled by another terror attack in Israel, targeting innocent people as they celebrate their Independence Day. My thoughts are with the victims and their families.

The UK stands with the Israeli people against terrorism.

— Liz Truss (@trussliz) [May 5, 2022](#)

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3d ago [15.12](#)

We've had this #dogsatpollingstations picture in of rescue dog Loki at a station in Ramsbottom, Bury this afternoon.

Owner Alex tells us Loki will be watching with anticipation as results come in tonight.



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Updated at 15.13 EDT

[3d ago](#)[14.43](#)

The Mirror's Rachel Wearmouth reports that Labour is asking its activists in [London](#) to head to Wandsworth and Croydon to campaign before polls close at 10pm.

Wandsworth is among the councils mentioned in the last post as being ones to watch. The [Conservatives](#) currently hold 33 of its 60 seats, but Labour has been hoping to make gains in the borough.

In Croydon, [Labour](#) currently control the council, holding 40 of its 70 seats.

Labour pushing its London activists to head to Croydon (a council the party currently holds) & Wandsworth this eve

— Rachel Wearmouth (@REWearmouth) [May 5, 2022](#)

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Updated at 14.51 EDT

[3d ago](#)[14.08](#)

Which of the key races will be first to announce a result?

Polls in Thursday's local election will close at 10pm, with the first results expected to come in about or after midnight. Here are some of the key places we're expecting to hear results from early in the night.

Bolton, where a result is expected sometime after 2am, has been run by a minority Conservative administration since 2019, but is now likely to tip into no overall control. The borough should give a good early indicator as to whether [Labour](#) is making any comeback in the north of England.

Also expected to announce after 2am is **Wirral**, where there is currently no overall control. The race is expected to be very close, with Labour hoping to make strides towards a majority but the Greens and Tories potentially making gains.

Early on Friday will be key results from **Wandsworth, Derby, Southampton and Barnet**.

Read Jessica Elgot's full rundown of [all the results to look out for here](#).

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Updated at 14.22 EDT

[3d ago](#)[13.27](#)

Durham's former police chief has condemned attempts to get the force to investigate **Keir Starmer** over allegations of Covid rule-breaking as "hypocritical" and "dangerous".

Michael Barton, chief constable of Durham until 2019, said there was no evidence the Labour leader flouted the law and that the pressure on police to investigate was politically motivated.

Labour has said a takeaway delivered to a constituency office in Durham last year during the Hartlepool by-election was necessary for campaign staff, but reports have questioned the volume of food and alcohol supplied as well as Labour's claim there were no alternative options for dinner.

The Guardian's Vikram Dodd and Jessica Elgot have [the full story](#).

This is now Christy Cooney taking over the blog from Andrew. Do send any pics, tips, or thoughts to christy.cooney.casual@theguardian.com.

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Updated at 13.56 EDT

[3d ago](#) [12.50](#)



Andrew Sparrow

This is from the former Guardian editor, **Alan Rusbridger**, who has another example of a polling station being located near a food bank. Perhaps some Camden official has discreetly been trying to make a point.

Telling sign at Camden polling station which doubles up as the [@QCCA_ltd](#) community centre. [If you're interested in what the food bank does see Michael Palin talking about it here <https://t.co/FV0h7kvZq8>] pic.twitter.com/awt76FPUmI

— alan rusbridger (@arusbridger) [May 5, 2022](#)

That's all from me for today. My colleague **Christy Cooney** is taking over now.

This blog will carry on until polling closes at 10pm.

At that point we will immediately launch a new results blog, which will be full of great reporting even though it won't have any results in it until about midnight or later, when the first ones are declared. My colleague **Helen Livingstone** will be in charge overnight, and I will be in from 6am to pick it up.

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Updated at 13.55 EDT

[3d ago](#) [12.27](#)

Dominic Cummings, Boris Johnson's former chief adviser, has added an update to his earlier diatribe about the failings of the government. (See [3.27pm](#).)

5/ (Shd have added) Vote Tory = more...

Letting out the worst child killers on parole because all your talk of 'tough on crime' is bullshit for media idiots

(Im one of the few who read the full secret unredacted Baby P report & it's even more horrific than what was published)

— Dominic Cummings (@Dominic2306) [May 5, 2022](#)

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[3d ago](#) [12.23](#)

Here is a #dogsatpollingstations update on behalf of a loyal reader.

[@AndrewSparrow](#)

Hi Andrew! Here's BTL'er GreaseMeUpWoman's pup Edgar performing his civic duty. Edgar is a huge fan and never missed a Politics Live blog! [#dogsatpollingstations](#)
pic.twitter.com/WDKvM7NAaP

— Circus Intern (@circus_intern) [May 5, 2022](#)

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[3d ago](#) [12.16](#)

Boris Johnson spoke to the Ukrainian president, **Volodymyr Zelenskiy**, in another of his regular calls this afternoon. Here is a readout of the conversation from No 10:

[Johnson] welcomed the opportunity to address the Ukrainian parliament earlier this week, noting how important Ukraine's democratic values are as a counterweight to Russia's failing autocracy.

President Zelenskiy said the parliament's welcome had been heartfelt, demonstrating the importance of the UK's support for Ukraine.

The leaders discussed developments on the battlefield and the Ukrainian armed forces' requirements, including the provision of longer-range weaponry to prevent the bombardment of civilians.

The prime minister also set out the importance of a robust and independent international judicial process to ensure those responsible for atrocities in Ukraine are held to account, and offered the UK's continued support on war crimes evidence-gathering.

They agreed to speak again in the next few days.

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Updated at 12.26 EDT

[3d ago](#)[12.01](#)

Last week my colleagues **Rowena Mason** and **Heather Stewart** published a story saying rebel Tory MPs fear [Boris Johnson](#) could call a general election within months on the grounds that this might give him his best chance of staying in office.

Catherine Neilan, from Insider, has heard the same speculation, and she has published [a good story](#) with new insight into why some Conservative MPs privately think this could happen. She says one factor is that Johnson “has been warned by his political strategist Lynton Crosby that the British economy ‘won’t get any better’ before the current term runs out in 2024”.

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Updated at 12.07 EDT

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Local elections 2022

Parties manage expectations as voting in local elections begins

Results will be seen as test of Boris Johnson and Keir Starmer at likely mid-point of current UK government



A woman arrives at a polling station in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Polling stations are open across the country from 7am until 10pm. Photograph: Jason Cairnduff/Reuters

*[Aubrey Allegretti](#) Political correspondent
[@breeallegretti](#)*

Thu 5 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 04.20 EDT

Polls have opened in the local elections, with both major parties frenetically managing expectations as a Tory mayor warns Boris Johnson he will have to go further in helping people struggling with the cost of living.

The results will be seen as a major test for Johnson and Keir Starmer, coming at the ostensible mid-way point of the UK government's term. A total of 146 English councils, and all those in [Scotland](#) and Wales, are up for grabs – as well as seven mayoralties.

In [Northern Ireland](#), voters will also elect 90 members to the devolved assembly in a contest from which Sinn Féin could emerge as the largest party.

Coming after the prime minister and chancellor were fined for breaking Covid laws, the pressure is on the [Conservatives](#) to make some gains on councils across the country.

The last time these seats in [England](#) were contested was 2018 and in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales it was 2017 – one of the lowest periods of the Conservative' party's popularity given deep divisions over the handling of Brexit by Theresa May.

Tory MPs have indicated mixed responses on the doorstep, with those in the party's traditional southern heartlands concerned that voters will stay at home.

Some are even plotting for a poor result to be the excuse to launch a fresh leadership challenge against Johnson.

The Liberal Democrats' deputy leader, Daisy Cooper, accused Johnson of failing to visit many of the towns, villages and cities in the south of England that have become known as the “blue wall”. She said: “Your no-show in this election is an insult to millions of people.”

Meanwhile, Tory peer and elections expert Robert Hayward said postal vote returns were down “quite markedly” compared with 2018. He added: “My expectation is therefore that turnout will be hard pushed to reach 30% in 2022.

“I don't think this will benefit any one party but more that the electorate is saying ‘a plague on all your houses’.”

Hayward told the Guardian he was staggered by the “the range of expectation management by the two major parties”, given Tory insiders fear the party could be on course to lose up to half the seats they are defending and some [Labour](#) figures have downplayed the chances of many gains.

“It’s a bigger range than I’ve ever experienced before,” Hayward said.

Andy Street, the Conservative mayor of the West Midlands, said that people would predominantly vote on “local issues” – such as bin collections, schools and transport.

He acknowledged the cost of living crisis was a “genuine issue” and said Sunak had made “some good first moves”, but said the government would have to go further to mitigate the effects of spiralling energy bills, before the price cap is raised again in the autumn.

Street told the Guardian: “I’m expecting movement before the autumn and it looks sadly now as though that will be necessary, because we do seem to be heading into another price hike. So I’m expecting further moves.”

Despite some candidates badging themselves as “Local Conservatives” and urging voters not to punish them for “mistakes made in Westminster”, Street said there was “an incredible goodwill” among people towards Johnson, and that he remained an electoral asset.

In his closing pitch, Starmer tried to move attention on from questions about him drinking a beer with colleagues in April 2021 and stressed that voters would be motivated predominantly by the cost of living.

Asked if Durham constabulary had contacted him in recent days, the Labour leader said: “I have not had contact from Durham constabulary and I think people are just about fed up with the mudslinging that’s going on.”

“This relentless focus on mudslinging instead of the issue in hand by the Conservatives means that they’ve got no answer to the real question that so many people want answered, which is: ‘What are you going to do to help me with my bills?’

“We’ve got a clear answer to that, which is a windfall tax on oil and gas companies, and use that to help people pay their bills, up to £600 off their bills.”

Johnson also sought to downplay concerns about the Partygate scandal, and insisted he would still be leader of the Conservatives at the next general election.

The prime minister said he was “absolutely confident that we have the right agenda for the country”, and added: “I have a big mandate to deliver.”

However, Ed Davey, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, said Johnson’s leadership was a factor in encouraging some people to switch to his party because the prime minister was not a “decent man”.

He said: “That’s a group of lifelong Tories who are telling us they’ll never vote Tory again while Boris Johnson’s prime minister, and many of them are switching to us.”

Polling stations are open across the country from 7am until 10pm. Some results will be announced overnight, but others may not come until much later the following day.

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Local elections

Key councils to watch in UK local elections and when results will come in

An estimated timetable for Thursday night and Friday, and how the numbers stack up in close races

- [Local elections: live coverage](#)
- [Full election results as they come in](#)



Polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on Thursday. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

Jessica Elgot Chief political correspondent. Graphics by [Antonio Voce](#)
Fri 6 May 2022 02.12 EDTFirst published on Thu 5 May 2022 02.00 EDT

Early hours of Friday

From 2am we should start seeing some interesting results trickle through, including in **Bolton**, which should give a good early indicator as to whether Labour is making any comeback in the north of England. The borough has been run by a minority Conservative administration since 2019, and this time it is likely to tip into no overall control. Tory sources are cautiously optimistic that Labour is not yet making enough impact.

Wirral is also on a knife-edge, with Labour hoping to make strides towards a majority but the Greens and Tories potentially making gains.

Friday morning

Four huge results for Labour could come in between 5am and 7am on Friday. The most significant would be taking the London borough of **Wandsworth**, which has remained solidly blue through many political storms.

We expect **Derby** council to declare by about 5am, where Labour hopes to make gains. And **Southampton** at 5am is one that Labour desperately hopes to snatch from the Tories, who took control a year ago. This would compound Tory fears about losing voters in the south.

At 7am Labour hopes to take **Barnet** council in north London for the first time. The party underperformed in 2018 amid concerns about antisemitism, and gaining the council would show Keir Starmer has assuaged some fears on that front.

Friday afternoon

At 2pm, **Worthing** will be an interesting result to see if the Conservatives lose the south-coast council for the first time.

Newcastle-under-Lyme in the Midlands should declare at about 3pm and give some indication if Labour is making gains in areas it would need to win back to prevail in a general election.

The Liberal Democrats are hoping to take **Somerset** council at about 4pm, which would indicate that the party has a decent chance in the upcoming Tiverton and Honiton byelection.

Glasgow council at 5pm will be the bellwether for Labour's fortunes in Scotland, though ultimately the main goal will be to overtake the Tories as the largest unionist party and show gains against the SNP.

Friday evening

Kirklees is one of Labour's most closely watched councils. The party hopes to win the two seats it needs for a majority, and to indicate it is on course to win the neighbouring Wakefield byelection. It should declare at about 6pm.

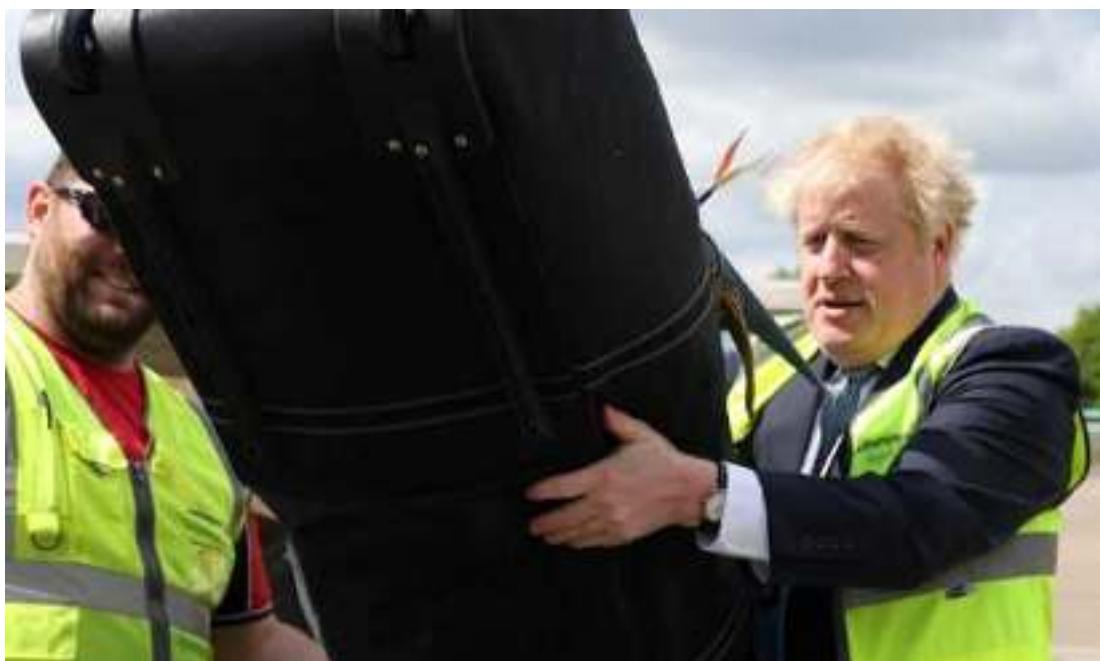
Monmouthshire is the most interesting council to watch in Wales, as the only council where the Conservatives could lose a majority, at about 7pm.

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[Local elections 2022](#)

Election leaflets distance ‘Local Conservatives’ from Boris Johnson

Tory candidates ask voters not to punish them for ‘mistakes’ in Westminster in wake of Partygate



Boris Johnson loads bags on a conveyor belt at Southampton airport as part of his visit to the Eastleigh constituency before the local elections.
Photograph: WPA/Getty

[Heather Stewart](#) Political editor, [Jessica Elgot](#) and [Vikram Dodd](#)

Wed 4 May 2022 14.32 EDTFirst published on Wed 4 May 2022 08.22 EDT

Hundreds of Tories are distancing themselves from [Boris Johnson](#) by standing as “Local Conservatives” in Thursday’s council elections, with rebel MPs saying they will gauge support over the weekend for a move against the prime minister.

Election leaflets seen by the Guardian show local candidates across England playing down their Tory affiliations, eschewing pictures of Johnson and styling themselves as “Local Conservative” on voting ballot papers.

Conservative central office registered “Local Conservative” as an alternative title in early 2019, when Theresa May’s unpopularity was at its height. It is being widely used in this week’s polls as [Conservatives](#) weigh up the electoral costs of the Partygate scandal.

The Metropolitan police are expected to make an announcement on the inquiry into lockdown law-breaking in Downing Street after the elections, with further fines expected.

More than 5,000 seats are being contested in Thursday’s elections. In Hartlepool, candidates are urging voters: “Please don’t punish local Conservatives for the mistakes made in Westminster. We are local and proud of where we live.”

The deputy Labour leader, Angela Rayner, said: “It speaks volumes that Boris Johnson’s own Conservative candidates are ashamed to be associated with him and trying to pull the wool over voters’ eyes.”

A senior Tory source said: “CCHQ [Conservative campaign headquarters] does not direct local associations’ campaigns. There are a range of options available to local campaigners and some choose to use the Local Conservatives brand.”

Tory MPs who have been organising against the prime minister say they will renew efforts after Thursday’s vote, having previously been unwilling to jeopardise their local councillors.

“The phones will be humming over the weekend,” said one former cabinet minister, who suggested a poor set of results could be the “tinder” for a leadership challenge – especially if Johnson faced more Partygate fines for lockdown gatherings.

**This Thursday, please don't punish local
Conservatives for the mistakes made in
Westminster, we are local and proud of where
we live, and like you, we want the best
for Hartlepool.**

Best wishes,

Jane Reeve

Published & promoted by Ray Martin-Wells, Hamilton House, 4 Duke of Wellington Gardens, TS22 5PY
Printed by Atkinson Print, 10/11 Lower Church Street, Hartlepool TS24 7DJ

Leaflets in Hartlepool say: ‘Please don’t punish local Conservatives for the mistakes made in Westminster.’ Photograph: undefined/Twitter

Another MP said they had been heartened by rumours that the former health secretary Jeremy Hunt has reportedly told friends he was considering running for party leader again. “I think, more than anything else, what he is trying to do is tell colleagues: as soon as we are on the other side of the locals, I’m now ready for the race.”

They added: “There are many able colleagues who have criticised the prime minister who will now never get any ministerial job again. Which means they have to move now – for personal ambition if not for any other reason.”

Some MPs believe Johnson may carry out a lightning reshuffle in the aftermath of the polls and before next week’s Queen’s speech, to show that his government has not run out of ideas.

Conservative MPs who have been out canvassing are warning of a tough night, especially in London and other parts of southern England. One said colleagues in the capital were “very downhearted” and finding it “tough going”.

Tory special advisers have been told Wandsworth in south London is the priority area for activists to flood. Labour campaigners in the borough are

cautious and say the vote is on a knife-edge and will depend on turnout of activists to get voters to the polls. But there is some optimism that Labour can at the very least move the council to no overall control, and campaigners say they are seeing some indications that Lib Dem voters are prepared to vote tactically.

Areas where candidates are listed as “Local Conservatives” for Thursday’s vote include Oxford, Birmingham, the London borough of Sutton, Elmbridge, and in the justice secretary, Dominic Raab’s, constituency of Esher and Walton.

Raab, who held his seat by a narrow margin of 2,743 in 2019, has been sending local updates to Esher and Walton voters on glossy green paper, with no mention of the Conservative party on the cover.

A leaflet for Keith Rowe, in Birmingham Northfield, carries a picture of the label “Local Conservative” as it will appear on the ballot paper, and the claim: “This is a straight fight between Keith and an unknown Labour candidate.”

In Newcastle-under-Lyme, Conservative leaflets emphasise: “This election is about local issues, not national issues.”

Johnson’s picture rarely appears on the scores of local election leaflets seen by the Guardian. Some MPs, particularly in the south of England, have said Partygate is coming up frequently in doorstep conversations, as well as the cost-of-living crisis.

The Liberal Democrats have accused the prime minister of failing to campaign in “blue wall” areas such as Surrey, where they believe recent revelations about the prime minister’s lockdown breaches are particularly damaging.

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The Lib Dem deputy leader, Daisy Cooper, said: “Conservative candidates up and down the country are desperately trying to distance themselves from

Boris Johnson to avoid a backlash at the polls. But those standing for the Conservatives are still backing a law-breaking prime minister and a tax-raising chancellor, even if they are too ashamed to admit it.”

Rayner said: “With no answers to the cost-of-living crisis, Tory candidates are trying to hide from their own government’s record. A vote for Labour on Thursday is a vote to send the Conservatives a message they can’t ignore. Britain deserves better.”

The Met is continuing its investigation into Partygate. Johnson has received one fixed-penalty notice for breaching lockdown rules by attending a birthday party.

The prime minister has told allies he does not expect to receive further fines, but it is widely believed at Westminster that more may come. The Met has said it will not update the public further until after the local elections.

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2022.05.05 - Spotlight

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Anonymous, anti-capitalist and awe-inspiring: were crop circles actually great art?



Time for a reappraisal? ... a crop circle in Wiltshire. Photograph: Krzysztof Dac/Alamy

Dismissed as the work of pranksters, these mysterious flattenings should now be seen as stunning examples of non-profit art for all, says this bestselling author, who recalls the wonder they injected into the 1980s

[Benjamin Myers](#)

Thu 5 May 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 15.37 EDT

As the sun rose over Wiltshire, Hampshire and Gloucestershire in the summer of 1989, farmers discovered that their swaying fields of barley, wheat and oats had been used to host a new phenomenon: crop circles. They reached their apotheosis during those balmy months, thanks to a sudden proliferation and blanket mainstream media coverage, but the narrative was dominated by discussions of possible alien visitation or just the wilful vandalism of it all. At the time, few people thought to judge crop circles on their artistic merit but, three decades on, the time may have come for such a reappraisal.

Britain in the 1980s was a country lacking in mystery, magic and enchantment. Then, as now, it was a time of conflict, division and ideological battles – free market v unionised labour; police state v workers – all overseen by the cold pragmatism of the prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, as she ruthlessly pursued war on distant soil and the “managed decline” of industries such as coalmining and shipbuilding.

From [Auf Wiedersehen, Pet](#) to [Boys from the Blackstuff](#) and [Brideshead Revisited](#), much of enduring TV drama reflected a politicised country controlled by class, or increasingly obsessed by the financial accumulation of the individual. The seminal [Freeze exhibition](#) of 1988 set Damien Hirst on the path to becoming the world’s wealthiest artist, someone defined by price rather than content, and even the decade’s salient moment in pop, Live Aid, was concerned with addressing a byproduct of capitalism: poverty in the developing world. The times they had a-changed.

The potency of crop circles lay less in the who and how and more in the why. And the answer seemed to be: just because. These strange flattenings of crops were made simply for spectacle, their anonymous creators’ sole ambition to evoke a sense of awe lacking in British daily life.



‘Stunning distractions designed to raise questions rather than offer answers’ ... a crop circle near the Avebury stones in Wiltshire. Photograph: Paul Brown/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Their scale was certainly staggering: at their largest, some designs measured 900ft across, almost as long as the Eiffel Tower is tall. If these were intended as art, or regarded as such, no price tag could be attached. Instead, they were a gift to the nation, a series of stunning distractions designed to raise questions rather than offer answers.

Aside from a few enterprising farmers and aerial photographers, there was no real profit to be had from crop circles. This, by their very nature, made them anticapitalist, completely at odds with the messages being relayed from the twin powers of Westminster and the City: profit at all costs. It was precisely because their creators were unknown, and their work had no intrinsic economic value, that made their moment in the spotlight an important chapter in the evolution of indigenous British folk art.

It is this idea of art for the people – rather than the more mundane practicalities of the endeavour (spoiler: crop circles were made by pranksters using ropes and planks) – that I explore in my new novel, [The Perfect Golden Circle](#), a fictionalised attempt to celebrate the scale of these landscape artworks, and the type of individuals who might visualise them in

the first place. The esoteric designs represented freedom, trespass and never asking permission, which is why their makers were highly criticised – even though their respectfully executed nocturnal missions left a farmer's yield undamaged as the stalks slowly sprang back to their former height.

The real winners were the news media, who had a story that could run and run, filling large pages during the fallow summer months. A photograph and a few sentences could make a spread. Nevertheless, the message sent by their makers remained an entirely subversive one. These works asked the crucial question: who really owns the land?



Artists on a different plane ... crop circle pioneer Dave Chorley, who teamed up with Doug Bower. Photograph: Shutterstock

My novel frames crop circles within a longstanding tradition of pranksters, peasant revolutionaries and landscape dissidents, such as the 17th-century activist [Gerrard Winstanley](#), who published searing treatises about the question of class and led the dissident Diggers in occupying common land during the time of the enclosures.

Winstanley was fighting a reformatory system that led to the carved up country of today in which, according to author Guy Shrubsole in his 2019 book [Who Owns England? half is owned by less than 1%](#) of its population,

and 67% is owned by a mixture of aristocrats, corporations, the crown, the church and oligarchs – the last particularly prescient given the role of Russia's wealthy elite in the rise of Vladimir Putin (and Britain's complicity in their overseas investments).

But we don't even need to look far into the past to appreciate the importance of crop circles in the summer of 1989, which saw the culmination of several summers of rural unrest. In 1985, Wiltshire police had prevented several hundred people travelling in convoy to Stonehenge; there were beatings and 537 arrests (21 travellers were later awarded compensation for false imprisonment and wrongful arrest). It was one more example of the same heavy-handed police tactics that had defined the miners' strike and the Wapping disputes of 1986, as well as the part that police ineptitude played during the Hillsborough disaster that April in 1989.

The Public Order Act of 1986 had given police greater control over public gatherings, but also resulted in new age travellers squatting at several sites close to Wiltshire's A303 over subsequent summers. Further police clashes culminated, on 22 June 1989, in 260 arrests of those attempting to celebrate the solstice at Stonehenge (the next spring would also see the poll tax riots, undertaken in the same spirit of revolt against power).



Unrest at Stonehenge ... police stop a coach. Photograph: PA

It was also the second summer of love, at a time when acid house raves were held, much to the chagrin of the authorities and the outrage of the tabloid press. The parties were merely the modern iteration of various ritualised pagan practices that had been enjoyed for millennia: dancing, revelling, communing.

In among the convoys, camper vans and sound systems, the crop circlers covertly went about their business, part of this new age traveller culture, yet unseen and unnamed, always maintaining a code of silence that was mafia-like in its resolve: an omertà of the grassy downs and chalk plains. Theirs was a symbolic act of rebellion against a backdrop of state repression.

But the circles themselves also reached a level of artistic purity that was impossible to achieve by artists who enter the commercial marketplace of exhibitions, dealers and collectors. Crop circles could never be commodified but should rightfully be recognised as works of equal value and importance to those created by such British landscape artists as [Andy Goldsworthy](#) and [Richard Long](#), whose work utilises natural resources on miniature and epic scale.

American sculptor Robert Smithson's 1,500ft-long earthwork [Spiral Jetty](#), or [Agnes Denes' Wheatfield: A Confrontation](#), in which two acres of a vacant New York lot were filled with wheat, could also be seen as forerunners to crop circles. Even Banksy, for all his attempts at anonymity, has accumulated great wealth from his public art, whereas crop circlers operated at a deeper level of subterfuge. They bypassed all commercial concerns by making work impossible to either move or monetise. Like a portrait rendered in disappearing ink, their works soon vanished.



Great land art ... Robert Smithson's earthwork Spiral Jetty on Utah's Great Salt Lake.

Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

I have chosen to depict a series of fictionalised crop circles and the two characters who make them: a taciturn Falklands veteran recovering from injury and trauma, and a semi-feral punk with an innate ability to design increasingly intricate patterns. “Patterns” is a preferable term here, as “circles” does a disservice to the more ambitious creations that incorporated such design features as locks, clock parts, ribbons, dolphins, whirlpools, mandalas and much more.

The novel is written in the spirit of crop circle pioneers such as Doug Bower and Dave Chorley, who came forward in 1991 to dispel the many conspiracy theories when they casually confessed that they had been responsible for making more than 200 circles since 1978 (with another 1,000 or so created by unknown others).

The unassuming Englishness of Bower and Chorley, and the modesty of their revelation, made them even more heroic to many. They didn’t need to point out that the many crackpots theorists, cereologists (experts on the paranormal explanation for crop circles), frothing journalists and random tinfoil hat-wearing oddballs attracted to the fields of Wiltshire were just

wrong. They were simply artists, operating on a different literal plane. Today we should salute them and their valuable work, and say their names alongside those of English greats such as Blake and Bacon, Constable and Turner, Moore and Hepworth.

The Perfect Golden Circle by Benjamin Myers is published by Bloomsbury on 12 May.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/may/05/anonymous-anti-capitalist-awe-inspiring-crop-circles-benjamin-myers-great-art>

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[**Italy**](#)

‘We are already at zero’: Italian resort counts cost as Russian visits dry up

Covid pandemic and invasion of Ukraine have brought sudden halt to years of flourishing business in Calabrian town of Scalea



Property-building boomed in Scalea in the 1980s, driven by demand for holiday homes from Italian buyers, mostly from Naples. Photograph: Angela Giuffrida/The Guardian

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Scalea

Thu 5 May 2022 00.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 00.51 EDT

The services listed on the billboard outside Rotondaro Costruzioni, an estate agency and builder, are written in Italian and Russian, as are the details of the properties advertised for sale in the window display.

Inside, about a dozen thick red folders, filled with plastic envelopes containing details of customers dating back to 2010, spill out of a cabinet.

The majority of those property buyers were Russian. A short distance away is a stretch of Italy's southern Calabrian coastline lapped by clear-blue sea. This is not the glitzy Costa Smeralda in Sardinia or Tuscany's Forte dei Marmi, where lavish villas and yachts belonging to Russian oligarchs have been seized over the last two months, but Scalea, a low-profile holiday resort with a medieval hilltop village whose economy has flourished over the past decade, partly thanks to the ordinary Russians who flocked here for the cheap property and sunshine.

Nicola Rotondaro, the company's owner, is finalising the sale of another property, a one-bedroom apartment worth €22,000 (£19,000), to a young Russian-Ukrainian man living near Naples. He is not in good spirits, however. The presence of Russian buyers and holidaymakers in Scalea had already all but evaporated as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the unauthorised status of the Russian Sputnik vaccine in the EU. Now the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and subsequent economic sanctions, especially a ban on flights, means the Russians are unlikely to return for the foreseeable future.

"We are already at zero," said Rotondaro. "The Russians don't come any more; they've been cut off."

Rotondaro is not the only one feeling the pinch. Scalea, a town of just under 11,000 residents, has about 30 property agencies, many catering to the Russian market. Restaurants, bars and shops had come to depend on their Russian guests, who tend to spend more than their Italian counterparts while elongating the holiday season by visiting outside the hot summer months. La Playa, a spacious bar and restaurant, has menus in Russian and Russian-speaking staff, but when the *Guardian* visited at lunchtime on a recent national holiday, there were few diners. "In normal situations, there are lots of Russians here. Now there is not even one," said Salvatore, a waiter. "And they spend a lot. If the war ends soon, maybe they'll return in time for the summer."



The estate agency Rotondaro Costruzioni in Scalea. Photograph: Angela Giuffrida/The Guardian

Property-building boomed in Scalea, and other towns along Calabria's coastline, in the 1980s, driven by demand for holiday homes from Italian buyers, mostly from Naples. "You could count the number of foreigners on one hand," said Tony Hackett, a British-Italian property agent. "But then people who bought during that period stopped coming, and so a lot of property has been recycled."

Interest from Russians started to gather pace from about 2010. They were schoolteachers, professors and doctors, snapping up humble properties that even today can be bought for as little as €14,000. The most famous Russian property owner in Scalea was Boris Klyuyev, an actor who died in 2020.

Some of the property owners have settled in the town, including Maria Stepura, the president of the Calabria-Russia association, which helps to promote Calabria in Russia and assists property buyers with Italian bureaucracy. Stepura bought a home close to the beach in 2010. "The value of the rouble at the time meant it cost much less than buying land near Moscow," she said.

Buyers with enough savings would purchase a property outright; others would obtain loans from Russian banks. “Life here is simple: you have a beautiful beach, the cost of living is cheap, you can eat out cheaply and have breakfast at the bar, which is always a pleasure, and the locals are welcoming,” Stepura said.

Scalea has been described by the local press as “a little Moscow in Calabria”, but Giacomo Perrotta, the mayor since August 2020, begs to differ. “Yes, there has been significant investment from Russia – obviously Scalea is different from Moscow for those who like the sun,” he said. “But we also have other communities – Polish, Romanian, and Ukrainian. Recently we held a march for peace, and everyone participated, Russians and Ukrainians. As a population, we are well integrated.”

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The property boom in areas of Calabria was partly fuelled by illegal building by mafia groups, with a crackdown since 2013 leading to the seizure of hundreds of tourist resorts and holiday homes. Some foreign investors became unwittingly entangled in the mafia’s real-estate crimes.

Scalea has not been left unscathed, and now the local administration is hoping to put properties confiscated from the mafia on to the market. “We’re participating in a competition for funding, so that is the first step – to have the funds to tidy them up,” said Perrotta.

It remains to be seen if Russians will return to buy the additional property stock, but Perrotta is confident that Scalea is in for a busy summer. “We will wait for the Russians to come back … but after two years of the pandemic, we anticipate a boom in tourist presence – we don’t only live off Russians; we have plenty of Italian visitors too.”

How Putin's invasion returned Nato to the centre stage

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'Do something, Democrats': party struggles to rise to abortion challenge



The Senate majority leader, Chuck Schumer, alongside the Senate Democratic Caucus, denounces the draft decision leaked from the US supreme court that would over turn Roe v Wade at the US Capitol this week.
Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Despite controlling the White House and Congress, Democrats seem powerless to fight the assault on Roe v Wade but hope it will energise midterm voters

[Lauren Gambino](#) and [Lauren Burke](#) in Washington

Thu 5 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 11.52 EDT

Visibly shaking with fury and brandishing megaphones and posters, thousands of women defending reproductive rights in America thronged below the marbled columns of the US supreme court to protest against what appears to be the imminent demise of the 1973 Roe v Wade ruling recognizing abortion as a constitutional right.

“Do something, Democrats,” the crowd [chanted](#) at one point.

In the hours that followed, [Democrats](#), who control the House, the Senate and the White House, echoed their outrage and vowed a response.

The urgency follows a leak late on Monday evening of a draft opinion from the court that a majority of the nine judges on the bench – all conservative-leaning appointees of Republican presidents – support not just more restrictions on abortion services but the overturning of the landmark Roe ruling that guarantees the right to abortion when final opinions are issued in June.

“I am furious – furious that Republicans could be this cruel, that the supreme court could be this heartless, that in legislatures across the country, extreme Republicans are ready for their trigger bans to go into effect,” Senator Patty Murray, a Democrat of Washington and a longtime advocate of women’s reproductive rights, said.

Speaking from the steps of the US Capitol, she was referring to states that have legislative bans on abortion prepared and waiting to be “triggered” into effect as soon as Roe is overturned.

“It is craven and we won’t stand for it,” she said. “I’m not going to sit quietly and neither should any of you.”

Yet, infuriatingly for the pro-choice voters who helped elect [Joe Biden](#) and a Democratic Congress, the party finds itself largely powerless at present, without a legislative path forward to protect abortion rights in the likely event the court reverses its decision in Roe.

Biden said it would be a “radical decision” by the court and called on Congress to act to enshrine the rights afforded by Roe into federal law via legislation.

And Vice-President Kamala Harris, speaking to attendees at a gala hosted by Emily’s List, which works to elect Democrats who support abortion rights, railed that a ruling overturning Roe would be a “direct assault on freedom” in America.

Barring swift legislative action, nearly half of US states are likely to ban abortion or severely restrict access to the procedure.

But the reality of Democrats’ thin congressional majorities is that they don’t have enough support in the evenly divided [US Senate](#) to codify abortion protections, nor do they have the votes to eliminate the so-called filibuster rule, thus allowing legislation to pass with a simple majority.

Biden has resisted pressure from progressives to use his bully pulpit to call for eliminating the filibuster, following recent demands to do so to pass voting rights legislation. And on Tuesday, he said he was “not prepared” to do so to protect reproductive rights.

Nevertheless, the Senate majority leader, Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, vowed to forge ahead with a vote on legislation that is stalled in Congress but if passed would establish a woman’s right to end her pregnancy.



Abortion-rights advocates demonstrate in front of the US supreme court on Wednesday. Photograph: Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images

But the measure, a version of which passed the Democratic-controlled House last year, was already rejected once this year, when it fell far short of the 60 votes needed to break a filibuster. It didn't even win the support of all 50 Democrats, so even if the filibuster were scrapped the bill, called the Women's Health Protection Act, would not have passed in the Senate.

Senator Joe Manchin, an anti-abortion Democrat from West Virginia, voted with Republicans to block consideration of the bill. The bill also failed to attract the support of two pro-choice Senate Republicans, Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who have introduced separate legislation that they say would codify Roe.

Yet Schumer argued that it was important to put every senator on the record.

"A vote on this legislation is no longer an abstract exercise. This is as urgent and real as it gets," he said.

The leaked draft decision, written by the conservative justice Samuel Alito, would shift the question of whether abortion should be legal to the individual states.

The effect would dramatically alter the US landscape almost overnight, with restrictions and bans going into effect across much of the south and midwest while abortion would remain legal in many north-eastern and western states.

Emboldened by the supreme court's conservative super-majority, Republican legislatures have enacted a flurry of new abortion laws as conservative activists begin to lay the groundwork for a nationwide ban.

On Tuesday, as the country reeled from the revelation that the supreme court was likely to dismantle Roe, Oklahoma's Republican governor [signed into law](#) a bill that would ban abortions after six weeks of pregnancy, a copycat version of a Texas law enacted last year.

Meanwhile, liberal states have moved to safeguard abortion protections. Last week, [Connecticut](#) lawmakers approved a bill that would protect abortion providers in the state. And states like California and New York have vowed to be a "sanctuary" for people seeking reproductive care from places where the procedure is banned.



Senator Dick Durbin: 'The answer is in November.' Photograph: Michael Brochstein/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

With few options, Democrats have implored Americans shocked and angered by the seemingly impending loss of abortion rights to vote in the

midterm elections. Majorities of Americans say they want abortion to remain legal in some or most cases. Few say they want the court to overturn Roe.

But Democrats face steep headwinds in November, weighed down by Biden's low approval ratings, rising inflation and a sour national mood.

The Republican reaction to the news that the nation's highest court was prepared to strike down Roe was relatively subdued. In the Senate, lawmakers were far more focused on the source of the leaked document than the decision, which is the culmination of a decades-long drive by the conservative movement to overturn Roe.

The response suggested that there may be some concern that Republicans are worried about provoking a political backlash among more moderate and independent voters who broadly support a constitutional right to abortion.

"There's an answer," the Illinois senator Dick Durbin, the majority whip, said at a press conference. "The answer is in November."

But many Democrats and activists believe November is too late for millions of women in states where abortion will be banned almost immediately. They want the party – from the president on down – to throw every ounce of their political capital at finding a legislative solution.

"People elected Democrats precisely so we could lead in perilous moments like these – to codify Roe, hold corruption accountable, & have a President who uses his legal authority to break through Congressional gridlock on items from student debt to climate," Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a progressive Democrat from New York, wrote on Twitter. "It's high time we do it."

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Abortion deserts: America's new geography of access to care – mapped

If, as a leaked draft decision suggests, the supreme court ends the federal right to abortion, women will face much longer journeys for treatment

by [Alvin Chang](#), [Andrew Witherspoon](#) and [Jessica Glenza](#)

Thu 5 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 02.35 EDT

A [leaked draft of a supreme court opinion](#) shows that the country's highest court is on the verge of overturning the 1973 landmark decision Roe v Wade, which guarantees a federal right to abortion.

In its absence, states hostile to abortion would be free to ban or severely restrict the procedure. That would leave entire regions of the country without an abortion clinic within a day's drive, reshaping the geography of abortion access in America in a single seismic shift.

Abortion won't be accessible for huge swaths of the country

More than half of US states would be certain or likely to ban abortion if the supreme court overturns Roe v Wade. Several states already have abortion bans on the books that would no longer be blocked by Roe v Wade, while others have "trigger laws", [which would be put in motion](#) should the federal government no longer protect reproductive rights.

When those states ban abortion, about a quarter of the country's abortion clinics would close – overwhelmingly in states where clinics are already sparse.

[Map showing how far people will have to travel to the nearest abortion clinic if Roe v Wade is overturned](#)

In Cameron county, at the southern tip of Texas, a woman would need to travel to a clinic more than 680 miles away in New Mexico. On the meandering roads of rural America, that's more than 800 miles: a 12-hour drive.

Women in some states will have to travel more than 500 miles to the nearest abortion clinic

A [2017 study](#) found that half of US women live within 11 miles (17km) of an abortion clinic, but about 20% of them have to travel 43 miles (68km). Abortion bans in half of US states would drastically increase those travel times, particularly in the south, where a large swath of contiguous states are likely to ban abortion.

Map

But traveling to another state for an abortion may not even be an option. People who seek abortions are disproportionately likely to have low incomes, and most already have children. Experts also warn that [states may pass laws](#) to restrict women from traveling out of state to seek abortion services.

Abortion is legally protected in some states, but that won't stop further restrictions or bans

A handful of states do have legal protections for abortion, either in their constitution or as statutes. While existing abortion laws may not immediately kick in after Roe v Wade is overturned, Republicans in some of those states are expected to make a push to ban abortion.

Map of state laws that would kick in if Roe v Wade is overturned

In Kansas, for example, the constitution protects a woman's right to access abortion, but a [referendum in August](#) will determine whether that protection will be eliminated. A [poll](#) earlier this year found that more than 60% of Kansans oppose making abortion completely illegal. But the referendum is

part of the primary elections, and [primary voters tend to be more conservative](#).

Meanwhile, the Washington Post reports that Republican senators have discussed federal legislation to [ban abortion after six weeks](#), called “heartbeat” bills by proponents. Many women don’t know they are pregnant until after six weeks, and a [2018 study](#) found that younger women, women of color and women without college degrees are more likely to find out after the seven-week mark.

Together, these new restrictions could further endanger legal protections in states that support abortion rights.

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Ask yourself this before you vote: can anyone truly say the Tories have made Britain better?

[George Monbiot](#)



Weighed against the slim policy pickings of 12 years in government is an astounding litany of harm to the country



Illustration: Sébastien Thibault

Thu 5 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 05.26 EDT

There is one question that counts when you cast your vote: have they made life better? This month, the [Conservatives](#) will have been in office for 12 years. Today, in the local elections, we have a chance to pass judgment on their record. What does it look like?

It's an astonishing thing, but it is genuinely hard to think of government policies that, in this period, have improved life for people other than the richest and most privileged. There are a handful. There's the same-sex marriage legislation passed during David Cameron's first term, though it was developed by the Liberal Democrats and [opposed](#) by a majority of Conservative MPs. There's a higher threshold for paying income tax, a higher minimum wage (though it falls short of a [genuine living wage](#)), shared parental leave and automatic pensions enrolment. There's the Modern Slavery Act 2015, no-fault divorces, the [law against coercive behaviour](#), an improved highway code, the [carbon floor price](#), the soft drinks levy and payments for plastic bags. Cameron oversaw a successful Olympics, and Boris Johnson's government executed an effective vaccination programme.

To this brief list, we could add a few policies that might be positive in principle, and have managed to deliver some improvements, but have been disastrously designed and implemented. These include universal credit, increased hours for free childcare, furlough payments and net zero. But that's about it: remarkably slim pickings across 12 years of government.

Weighed against these benefits is an astounding litany of harm. As the elections on 5 May are for council seats, let's take a look at what has happened to local authorities. Since 2010, they have suffered cuts in central government funding of almost 60%. This has caused devastating losses to local services, including Sure Start children's centres, youth and community services, respite care, libraries, local buses, recycling, arts and culture. And it's not over: further massive cuts are expected next year. Several councils are now close to bankruptcy and must sell the last of their assets. The poorest boroughs have been hardest hit – so much for levelling up. The social fabric of the nation has been torn apart.

Why? Obviously, they'll tell you, to save money. If so, why have they been lavishing cash on pet projects and favoured interests? As Cameron and George Osborne ripped into public budgets, they somehow found £2bn for a pointless and chaotic reorganisation of the NHS. They spent £4.5 bn a year on the Afghan war, for reasons they could never clearly define; with this money they could have cancelled either their entire public-sector pay freeze or the cut to the universal credit budget – and still have a billion in change.

For the price of one or two contracts issued to ministers' friends through the dodgy Covid "VIP channel", the current government could have reversed all the losses to the Arts Council's budget, or brought national spending on libraries back to its 2010 level. Of the £12.1bn of protective equipment the government bought in 2020-21, it wrote off £8.7bn, thanks to the disastrous cronyism of procurement policies. That's roughly six times the national budget for rebuilding schools in England.

Abandoning due diligence during the pandemic, against the advice of civil servants and other experts, the Conservative government managed to lose an estimated £3.5bn in bounceback loans to fraud while £5.2bn of furlough payments also ended up in the hands of fraudsters or was paid in error. It appears to have made little effort to recover these stolen funds.

The budget for the test-and-trace scheme – £37bn – which, according to the public accounts committee, has achieved none of its aims and failed to make “a measurable difference to the progress of the pandemic”, equates to more than twice the entire cut across 10 years in the central government grant to local authorities. For the same money, we could have avoided all that suffering, all the losses in services and the damage to civic and community life, and still had £22bn in change. The Conservatives’ austerity programmes have little to do with saving money. They’re inspired by an ideology called neoliberalism, which seeks to destroy the very notion of effective government.

This social vivisection, carving up a living society to see if its parts can survive in isolation, has been devastating to the people whom governments have the greatest duty to protect – the poor and vulnerable. Despite the pandemic, during which accommodation for rough sleepers magically materialised as soon as they were deemed a “health risk”, the number of people living on the streets is estimated to be 38% higher today than it was in 2010.

A tiny fraction of the social housing we need is being built. The cruel benefits cap and bedroom tax have made piddling savings while inflicting enormous pain. The Malthusian two-child benefits limit imposed in 2017 delivers child poverty and nothing else. The number of food parcels supplied by the Trussell Trust has risen from 41,000 a year before the Conservatives took office to more than 2m today. Almost one in 10 parents expects to have to use a food bank this summer.

Disgracefully but unsurprisingly, life expectancy in the most deprived areas has been falling since 2011. If you want a single indicator of government performance, this is it.

The crisis in the NHS, caused by 12 years of dire underfunding, coupled with the pandemic backlog and, to be fair, the legacy of New Labour’s disastrous private finance schemes, is likely to accelerate this trend. Six million people in England – more than a 10th of the population – are now waiting for treatment, the highest number since records began. Patients are frequently stuck for 24 or even 48 hours in accident and emergency departments. Some wait hours for an ambulance after dialling 999.

I could go on, discussing the [truncation](#) of civil liberties; the deliberate stoking of division through culture wars; the gross mishandling of the pandemic, causing tens of thousands of unnecessary deaths; Partygate and the destruction of public trust; the assault on public protections, leading, among other horrors, to the [Grenfell Tower disaster](#); the administrative collapse across dozens of public services, exemplified by the current Passport Office [fiasco](#) and the transformation of our [rivers](#) into open sewers; a [14% increase](#) in crime this year caused largely by fraud, against which there is now almost [no recourse](#); the [stalling](#) of carbon cuts; oh, and the small matter of Brexit.

This is the record on which we should be voting, in today's elections and those that follow. The past 12 years of Conservative government have made the life of this nation worse. A lot worse. What else do you need to know?

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
 - [**George Monbiot: Regenesis | The Guardian Members**](#) Join George Monbiot on 30 May, live in London or by livestream, as he discusses his new book, Regenesis
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[Republic of Parenthood](#)[Transgender](#)

The language of maternity is alive and well – so why not expand it to include trans parents?

[Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett](#)



We could all do with a little more solidarity between those entering into parenthood, regardless of their gender



In a still from the documentary *Seahorse*, Freddy McConnell shows a scan of the baby he is carrying. Photograph: Danny Burrows/The Guardian

Thu 5 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 13.51 EDT

“Hey, Mama!” This is how I was greeted by a friendly member of staff every morning during my week-long stay in hospital after my baby’s birth. Theoretically, I had had my whole pregnancy to get used to the idea of being a mother in the eyes of the world, because almost immediately you become, to the professionals you interact with, “Mum”. As in: “could Mum pop herself up on the bed, please?” (Mums seem to do a lot of “popping”). But nonetheless, it was still surreal to feel my identity shift.

Meanwhile, the baby’s father wore a name tag that proclaimed: “I am [name]. I am husband.” It made me laugh, recalling as it did “I am woman, hear me roar”, or at least a labour ward version of that: “I am husband, hear me … ask politely once again for pethidine.”

So these were our roles: mother and father, husband and wife. On all the discharge documents, too. Yet if certain media reports are to be believed, one of those terms was under threat: the word “mother”, as a result, apparently, of the push for trans-inclusive language. When, last year, Brighton and Sussex maternity services announced they would be [adopting](#)

gender inclusive language, including terms such as “birthing parent” and “chestfeeding”, they were accused of misogyny and of “erasing” womanhood. Though the announcement made clear that the language of women and motherhood would be retained, some reports failed, cynically, to mention this fact, and there was still a social media uproar. (The widespread use of the inclusive term “birth partner”, however, doesn’t seem to ever cause such an outcry.)

Fear over the erasure of the language of female biology, especially in maternity services, has become central to the gender-critical discussion of trans versus women’s sex-based rights, and yet, as someone who has been pregnant recently, it doesn’t seem to bear out. The language of maternity remains heavily gendered: I was almost always mama, Mum, mother, a pregnant woman, a lady, a female patient, a breastfeeding mother.

It is true that at times I was a “pregnant person”, though I was never referred to this way by health professionals – it was usually applied by other resources and services, including charities. And in any case, it really didn’t bother me. Some aspects of pregnancy can feel dehumanising: I quite liked the fact that I was being given personhood when so often womanhood seems to preclude that.

Yet the notion that trans people want to wipe out the language of maternity persists to the point that it has become, in my view, something of a moral panic.

In her nine years as a midwife, the author Leah Hazard has, to her knowledge, only treated patients that identify as women. However, she feels that inclusive language is an important part of her practice.

“Inclusive language and behaviour aren’t about erasing one group. It’s about including all groups,” she says. “It allows all people to feel included and seen and cared for and honoured. And that really is the essence of midwifery.” Instead of seeing inclusive language as a dangerous affront to women, Hazard sees it as part of her duty towards patients. Medical professionals, of course, adapt their language around different patients all the time: they might be working with a mother who has had a double mastectomy after cancer, rendering the language of breastfeeding

inappropriate, or whose emergency caesarean means the language of vaginal birth makes her feel terrible.

“If you’re in bed one and you want to talk about breastfeeding, I will talk to you about breastfeeding,” says Hazard. “And if Charlie is in bed two and is a trans man and wants to talk about chestfeeding or body feeding, what skin off my nose, really, is it to talk to Charlie about chestfeeding? None whatsoever ... But it just means that I continue to provide that individualised person-centred care that I’m actually duty bound by the regulator to provide.”

The importance of personalised care is even more apparent when I talk to a former colleague and fellow writer Freddy McConnell, a trans man who has just given birth to his second child. “Throughout both my pregnancies I felt respected and understood by every midwife and doctor I encountered,” he says.

“After my second arrived by emergency C-section, it was incredibly touching and affirming to hear multiple people in the operating theatre spontaneously say, “congratulations, Dad” and “well done, Dad”. I didn’t have to ask or explain myself. I didn’t want special treatment – I just wanted us to be safe and to have a positive birthing experience.” (McConnell notes that the paperwork he was given could have been more inclusive – a point other LGBTQ+ couples have also highlighted.)

I fail to see how anyone could reasonably take umbrage with his words. It seems to be that some of the uproar from the shift towards more inclusive language comes, not as a result of demands from trans people that the word “mother” be erased, but from organisations and services overcorrecting themselves while seeking to be inclusive.

“I really don’t feel comfortable being called a birthing person. I am a mother, I have a baby,” said one NHS source, who complained during a meeting in which replacing “mother” with “birthing person” was touted by a colleague. She described the reaction to dealing with this issue as an “organisational phobia”, saying that the focus on this question was overshadowing the more important issue of improving services for everyone. “I’m not transphobic and I want people to feel comfortable ... there needs to

be some middle ground.” In the end, her workplace decided on “women and pregnant people”.

Away from the fury and clamour of social media, professionals are making these decisions every day. They are not always getting it right, but at the heart of their efforts is the desire to create a more inclusive environment for everyone having a baby.

On the day I unexpectedly went into labour, I was rewatching [Seahorse](#), a documentary, directed by Jeanie Finlay, about McConnell’s journey towards pregnancy and parenthood. All I saw when I watched was another parent, embarking on a new life while negotiating their own specific challenges, as we all do. In this, I felt only solidarity, something we could all do with more of, no matter how we identify.

What's working: I want to sing the praises of the inventors of the Elvie breast pump, who have enabled me to feed my preterm baby – one of the biggest challenges that I have faced as a mother so far. It sits silently inside your bra, and unlike other pumps it allows you to move around while wearing it, so you feel less like a cow being milked. It’s expensive but worth it, especially in a situation such as ours. A truly liberating invention.

What isn't: My father reports that hand-knitted baby clothes have disappeared from Welsh charity shops, due to a visit from trading standards demanding that they need a fire safety label. Though he has discovered a way to, shall we say, *circumnavigate* this, it's still a shame.

- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett 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*

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[**Opinion**](#)[**Electoral reform**](#)

Today's elections are the last before the Tories vandalise our democratic rights

[**Polly Toynbee**](#)



The elections bill will deter non-Tory supporters from voting and scrap any oversight. Reform is needed more than ever before



A protest against the elections bill in Parliament Square, London, in February. Photograph: Hollie Adams/Getty Images

Thu 5 May 2022 04.06 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 12.23 EDT

Today is the last time you will go to the polls before the government's shameful and shameless new [elections bill](#) becomes law. It was squeezed through parliament late at night last week in the final "wash-up" of bad bills before the end of the session.

The bill's Trumpish voter suppression is designed to deter poor and young people from voting. Its passing also makes these the last elections to be monitored and scrutinised by a genuinely independent Electoral Commission. This habitually timid outfit tried to stand up for itself: "The independence of the Electoral Commission is vital to the functioning of a healthy democracy," it said. But, as of now, Boris Johnson and his allies [will set their own terms](#) for the commission, including its scrutiny of finance.

Every voter will need a photo ID from now on, so 7.5% of voters, or [3.5 million people](#), without a driving licence or a passport will have to be determined enough to trek to their local council office, have their photo taken and [fill out an application](#) with a counter-signature. It's worth noting that the DVLA and the [Passport Office](#) are in crisis: just try booking an

urgent passport slot. Anyone looking at our voting patterns would worry about too few people turning out, not people voting twice. The risk of “personation” – cheating on identity – is minuscule: in 2017 there was [one conviction](#), in 2018 none at all. In a grossly unfair and undemocratic electoral system, the probity and honesty of its operation is the one aspect to be proud of.

The Tory-led [public administration and constitutional affairs committee](#) produced a devastating condemnation of the bill. They estimated 2.3% of voters would be deterred from voting, or 1.1 million people, who would probably be those on low incomes, from ethnic minorities and with disabilities. They warned that too much arbitrary discretion would be left to polling station staff to accept or reject ID, causing queues and rows.

If you doubt this is a conspiracy to stop non-Tories voting, look at the only ID that is acceptable beyond passports and driving licences: pensioners will be allowed to use the [older person's bus pass](#), Oyster 60+ or Senior 60+ SmartPass – while young people will be barred from using their railcards. The government rejected [Lord Willetts' amendment 86](#) trying to include a wide range of documents for all ages. Older people are the main users of postal votes – which won't require ID. All this is surely not unconnected with the Tories' 47-point lead among the over-65s, and Labour's 43-point lead among under 25s [as of 2019](#).

The Spectator has kindly assembled no fewer than 11 writings and sayings by Johnson excoriating ID cards, [starting with](#), “I loathe the idea on principle. I never want to be commanded, by any emanation of the British state, to produce evidence of my identity ... I will take that card out of my wallet and physically eat it.” But now ID cards serve his only remaining political purpose: to get re-elected.

The bill's other abomination concerns the relatively new mayoral and police and crime commissioner elections: it sweeps away the present second-preference system in favour of the unfairest of all, the antique first past the post (FPTP). Why? Because Tories are more likely to win under FPTP. There are more anti-Tory progressive voters, who transfer their second preferences to another progressive party, but rarely to a Tory.

As [Neal Lawson](#), who advocates a progressive alliance, wrote eloquently this week, a majority-progressive vote is usually disastrously divided. Today, in 82% of elections there will be at least two progressive candidates splitting their vote, standing against just one Conservative, according to [Jon Narcross](#) of the Electoral Reform Society. Proportional representation (PR) would, to borrow a phrase, “level up” votes, so they don’t pile up wasted. PR now gets strong public support, according to [YouGov](#), with 44% in favour, and only 27% for first past the post.

The last week, with seven front pages of the Mail and others piling in, trying to make Keir Starmer’s beer and curry on the campaign trail as bad as Downing Street’s [12 parties](#) is just another grim reminder of the monstrous heft of the rightwing press, used unscrupulously to save its [multimillionaire owners](#) from the perils of Labour in power.

Labour, if it becomes the biggest party at the next general election, must lead the way to electoral reform. Labour is highly unlikely to win alone, so this time the Liberal Democrats and all the other parties must demand PR immediately, as its first act or refuse any cooperation on anything else. There is no need for a referendum, just do it. Referendums are toxic politics – and the Tories can hardly complain when they have gerrymandered, prorogued and suppressed opposing votes, their mendacious press claque distorting any fair voice, with total disregard for what is now a broken constitution. Johnson has killed off Peter Hennessy’s theory of a “[good chaps](#)” constitution, one in which practitioners hold dear not just the rules themselves but also their spirit.

So what should progressive “good chaps”, be they male or female, do at the close of a Johnson era? That much is clear. They should feel free to introduce a voting system that will stop any corrupt party with a minority of votes ever governing alone again with dictatorial powers.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist
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OpinionUkraine

Ukraine is already winning: victory can be achieved without risking nuclear war

[Anatol Lieven](#)

A mooted US proxy conflict over existing Russian-occupied territories would be unnecessary and dangerous



President Biden delivers a speech during his visit at a Lockheed Martin facility in Troy, Alabama, in the US. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Thu 5 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 11.15 EDT

Ukraine, with some western help, has won a great victory, and the original aim of Russia's invasion – to capture Kyiv and replace the Ukrainian government – has been utterly defeated. The Russian army has now regrouped in the east for a much more limited objective: that of capturing the whole of the Russian-populated [Donbas region](#), which Moscow has already recognised as independent.

If the Russian army can achieve this in the coming weeks then we cannot say for sure what Moscow's next move would be. However, Russia has suffered huge casualties among its elite troops, and even taking the relatively small city of [Mariupol](#) has taken two months and required reducing the city to ruins. In view of this, a further Russian campaign to capture much bigger cities such as [Odesa](#) looks implausible, and it seems possible Russia could go on the defensive, and offer a ceasefire and peace talks.

Putin will pretend to the Russian people that taking a bit of extra territory in the Donbas has been a victory for Russia, but there is no need for the west to agree with him. The truth is that this war has proved a military, political and moral [catastrophe](#) for Russia. The reputation of the Russian army has been shredded; Russia's economy is badly damaged; and the European Union is moving with surprising speed and resolution to end its dependence on Russian oil and, more slowly, gas. This would suggest that in future, Russia will be dependent on China as a market for its gas – meaning both political subordination to China and its ability to set the price for it.

What are the wider implications of Russia's defeat? The first is that on the most important issue by far – that of Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and western alignment – [Ukraine](#) (and the west) have already won. That should allow a degree of flexibility when it comes to compromises over territorial issues, especially since most of the territories concerned have been held by Russia since 2014. Second, if there ever was a Russian plan to use Ukraine as a springboard for further aggression, that too is now over. If the Russian army cannot capture cities less than 20 miles from Russia, it is hardly likely to invade Nato.

Russia will no doubt defend the positions it already holds, in defence of breakaway territories in [Moldova](#), [Georgia](#) and [Nagorno-Karabakh](#). If the war in Ukraine continues, there will be an increasing danger that Georgia and Azerbaijan will again seek to recover their lost territory by force. The result would be a much wider and even more dangerous conflict.

Such an extension of the war will be greatly encouraged if Ukraine becomes a US proxy war against Russia, as the Biden administration apparently now intends. The defence secretary Lloyd Austin has said the US should use the

war in Ukraine to “[weaken](#)” Russia in order to prevent it invading more countries. Important voices in the US and Britain have said we should help Ukraine to win a complete victory, by which they seem to mean drive Russia from all the territories it has taken since 2014, and impose such a humiliating defeat that the Putin regime is overthrown. Incredibly, it has been suggested that [US support for the Mujahideen in Afghanistan](#) in the 1980s – with all its appalling consequences for Afghanistan, the US and the Middle East – is some sort of positive model for this.

Western public acceptance for the economic suffering created by sanctions has been mobilised through the argument that this is necessary to defend Ukraine and stop Russian aggression. Permanently weakening or even destroying [Russia](#) is a very different matter. Support for Ukraine is legitimate and necessary, but it has also already achieved its most important goal: that of preserving Ukrainian independence and sovereignty over the great majority of Ukrainian territory, and deterring further Russian aggression.

It is also horribly dangerous. In the first place, for the Ukrainians to attack entrenched Russian positions across open country would be a very different matter from defending Ukrainian cities. The tactical advantage would inevitably shift to Russia. Ukraine could thereby suffer immense losses and turn victory into defeat.

If, on the other hand, Ukraine – with western backing – did seem on the verge of complete victory, the threat to Putin’s regime and to Russian vital interests would be such that it really would seem possible Russia might escalate to missile strikes against Nato supply lines in Poland, in an effort to terrify France and Germany into making a separate peace.

Once a Nato member is attacked, there will be tremendous pressure in the US to declare a [no-fly zone in Ukraine](#) – in other words, to send the US air force into action to support the Ukrainian forces on the ground. Some of these planes will then be shot down by missile batteries based in Russia itself. How long would the US accept these casualties before launching attacks on Russian territory?

We would then be faced with a prospect that, during the cold war, eight US presidents took great care to avoid: Russia and Nato firing missiles into each other's territory, and a direct conflict in [Europe](#) between two nuclear superpowers, with the ability between them to destroy humanity. US presidents did not exercise this restraint out of sympathy for the Soviet Union, but from a cold calculation of the terrible risks involved. And running these risks is unnecessary, given the strategic defeat we have already helped to inflict on Russia.

- Anatol Lieven is a senior fellow of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft and author of Ukraine and Russia: A Fraternal Rivalry
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Amber Heard accuses ‘monster’ Johnny Depp of sexual assault

Actor tells US court he hit her repeatedly in drug-induced rages and once carried out ‘cavity search’

Amber Heard accuses Johnny Depp of sexual assault in court – video

[Edward Helmore](#)

Thu 5 May 2022 04.59 EDTFirst published on Wed 4 May 2022 14.50 EDT

Amber Heard has accused [Johnny Depp](#) of being a self-described “monster”, hitting her repeatedly during jealous drug-induced rages, breaking furniture, and at one point sexually assaulting her in what she described as a “cavity search” for cocaine he believed she had hidden from him.

Heard took the witness stand in a [Virginia](#) court on Wednesday afternoon during Depp’s defamation lawsuit against her – a make-or-break moment for the actors in a four-week trial that had so far largely focused on Depp’s version of events during their turbulent 15-month marriage.

She described how during a weekend away with friends in May 2013, Depp tore her dress, ripped off her underwear and stuck his fingers “inside” her. “He proceeds to do a cavity search,” she said. “He’s looking for his drugs, his cocaine.”

Earlier in the hearing, the psychologist Dawn Hughes testified that Heard told her Depp had put his fingers up her vagina to search for cocaine.

At one point in their relationship, Heard also alleged during her witness statement that Depp held her by the neck and warned he could “kill me”.

Speaking at the hearing, she said: “I struggle to find the words to describe how painful this is … this is horrible for me to sit here for weeks and relive everything, to hear people that I knew, some well, some not, my ex-husband with whom I shared a life, speak about our lives in the way they have.”

She added: “This has been one of the most painful and difficult things I’ve ever gone through, for sure.”

Heard described typical activities from her upbringing in Texas, ranging from breaking in horses to working at her father’s construction company, where she answered phones, then working at a modelling agency, where she earned enough to have professional photographs taken, and her move to Hollywood.

“I went from slightly bigger role to slightly bigger role, and worked my butt off,” Heard said.

She had met Depp when she auditioned for Bruce Robinson’s *The Rum Diary*. “I was the dream kid, that’s what he told me,” Heard testified.

During filming in Puerto Rico in 2011, the actors were scripted to kiss. “It didn’t feel like a normal scene in the job, the lines were blurred. He grabbed my face and pulled me in and really kissed me.”

Heard was asked if he used his tongue. “Yes,” she said.

In her trailer, she said, “he kind of picked up the back of my robe with his boot and I kind of turned around and giggled … He kind of playfully pushed me down on this bed, sofa. Playful and flirtatious.

“And he said, ‘Yum.’ And kind of lifted his eyebrows up like that.”

Depp’s seduction continued, she said, with Heard “batting him away”. After the filming was complete, she said, they parted. “We were both in relationships. It was intimidating, and we went our separate ways.”

Months later, she said, Depp called her out of the blue and invited Heard to his house in Beverly Hills, ostensibly to have a drink with him and

Robinson. “It was clearly not about the movie, if you know what I mean,” she said.

Depp, she said sent her a dress he described as wrapping paper – “happy wrapping”, he wrote. He sent guitars and other gifts. Finally, on the Rum Diary press tour in London, they slept together, she said.

“He kissed me and I kissed him back. It was a beautiful and strange time. We were falling in love. For the rest of the press tour it was on, let’s put it that way.” Depp invited her to his house in the Bahamas, she said. “It felt like a dream, like absolute magic.

“I fell head over heels in love with this man,” she told the court. “When I was with him, I felt electricity in my body. I had butterflies. I couldn’t see straight. I felt like this man knew me, saw me, in a way so one else had.”

But, Heard testified, Depp began to “just disappear, and you couldn’t get hold of him. He’d disappear and come back. He’d be different.”

Heard testified about the first time Depp allegedly hit her, telling the jury: “I’ll never forget it. It changed my life.”

The two were sitting on a couch, drinking, she said. A “jar of cocaine” sat nearby, the court heard, and Heard asked Depp about the “Wino Forever” tattoo on his arm.

“You think it’s funny, bitch?” he said after hitting her, she testified. “I laughed because I didn’t know what else to do. I thought this must be a joke,” she said.

“I didn’t move, freak out, because I didn’t know what else to do,” she told the court. “Then he slapped me again one more time. Hard. I lose my balance on edge of couch and I wished so much he’d say he was joking.” Heard said Depp slapped her again.

Depp then got down on his knees and sobbed, she said. “I will never do that again, I’m so sorry, baby … I thought I put the monster away,” Depp said, she testified. Heard said she knew she had to leave, but didn’t want to.

“I wish I could say I stood up and walked out of the house but I didn’t,” she said. “I was heartbroken.” Depp, she said, called a few days later to say “he would rather cut [his] hand off” than lay it on her.

Depp, Heard said, criticised her choice of clothes – about “pouring herself out” in a low-cut dress at a charity event.

Then “there’d be a blow-up. He’d smash things,” Heard told the court. “He loves to break furniture,” she said, and would often “smash up a place”. Heard said she noticed a pattern of escalation.

Heard testified that Depp was deeply jealous and that his jealousy turned their relationship into “a never-ending fight”.

“It was a revolving door of accusations,” Heard told the jury. “I was an acquaintance with someone. And he was accusing me of having an affair with them.”

At times, Heard said, Depp would disappear to get clean and sober. “When he was done, he’d go back to being this unbelievable, warm, generous, kind man that I loved.” But Depp’s negative behavior returned, she said, and she began to predict his moods and behaviour.

“What kept me in it was waiting for the other shoe to drop, the sobriety shoe,” Heard said, adding that she held on to the hope he would eventually be “ready to get clean and sober again”.

“Johnny on speed is very different from Johnny on opiates. And Johnny on opiates is very different from Johnny on Adderall, and Cocaine Johnny, which is very different from Quaaludes Johnny,” Heard testified.

On one occasion, she came down to breakfast to find the kitchen table littered with alcohol and cocaine, and Depp agitated. “I realised I wasn’t going to talk our situation down. He was intent on me admitting an affair I wasn’t having,” Heard said.

Heard said she convinced Depp to leave the house with her to get him to work. On the car-ride, she said, Depp held one of the couple’s teacup Yorkies out of the car window while howling.

Heard said: “Everyone in the car just froze. Nobody did anything. He’s howling and holding this dog out of the window. No one reacted, no one did anything.”

Heard went on to testify that Depp, who she said was drinking, threatened to kill her while the two were in the Bahamas to sail on his yacht before it was sold to the author JK Rowling.

“He slams me up by my neck and holds me there for a second and tells me that he could fucking kill me and that I was an embarrassment,” she said.

His daughter, Lily-Rose Depp, was upset by her father’s behaviour, Heard said, and Depp attacked her because he thought she had told his children about his addictions. Heard then left the island taking Lily-Rose with her.

In court, Depp shook his head and said, “Wow.”

Heard also testified that her former husband would pass out and lose control of his bodily functions.

“This man lost control of his bowels and I cleaned up after him,” she said. “He passed out in his own sick ... and then he’d walk around saying he didn’t have a problem,” Heard testified. “No one told him. No one was honest with him,” she said of the people around Depp.

Depp, 58, testified that he never struck Heard, and that, in fact, he was the victim of abuse, and was punched and struck by his wife on many occasions. Depp described Heard to the jury as having a “need for conflict”.

- *In the UK, call the [national domestic abuse helpline](#) on 0808 2000 247, or visit [Women's Aid](#). In Australia, the [national family violence counselling service](#) is on 1800 737 732. In the US, the [domestic violence hotline](#) is 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). Other international helplines may be found via www.befrienders.org*

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Global development

Latin American feminists vow to protect abortion rights at home after shock US ruling

Women's movements have fought hard to reverse anti-abortion laws in their countries and say it's not the end for the US



People take part in a rally in support of legal and safe abortion in Bogotá, Colombia, in 2021. The placard reads: For the right to decide. Photograph: Nathalia Angarita/Reuters

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[Natalie Alcoba](#) in Buenos Aires

Thu 5 May 2022 06.01 EDTFirst published on Thu 5 May 2022 05.30 EDT

Reproductive rights activists across Latin America have vowed to protect hard-fought gains in their own territories as they brace for potential ripple effects if [the US supreme court overturns Roe vs Wade](#) – the 1973 ruling which guarantees the right to abortion.

Latin America has some of the most draconian anti-abortion laws in the world. But feminist movements have fought for decades to chip away at the prohibitions, and in recent years a younger, diverse generation of activists has mobilized in massive numbers to help clinch a string of victories in traditionally conservative countries.

Now, the possibility that the US could be moving in the opposite direction has prompted bewilderment, fear and indignation among campaigners from Mexico to Argentina.

“The segment of society that wants to return us to the dark ages is real,” said Ana Cristina González Vélez, a Colombian doctor and co-founder of Mesa por la Vida, an organization that was part of [the successful campaign for](#)

decriminalization of abortion in Colombia. “This has to be a wake-up call, that a legal victory is not a cultural one.”

A February ruling by Colombia’s constitutional court – which decriminalized abortion until the 24th week of pregnancy – was the latest in a series of gains by reproductive rights activists.

In 2020, Argentina’s *marea verde* – green wave – protests pushed the country’s congress to legalize elective abortion until the 14th week of pregnancy. Less than a year later, Mexico’s highest court declared a complete abortion ban was unconstitutional – although statutes outlawing abortion are still on the books in most of Mexico’s 32 states.

Brazil – where terminations are only allowed in cases of rape, risk to the woman’s life and certain congenital conditions – and Chile are also facing pivotal moments in the fight for legalization.

But the importance of Roe vs Wade across the region cannot be overstated, said Debora Diniz, a Brazilian law professor and human rights activist.

“In a country that is a political, financial, military empire, a supreme court decision has a contagious effect. Because everything moves together,” said Diniz, who co-founded Anis – Institute of Bioethics, Human Rights and Gender, an NGO pushing for the court in Brazil to decriminalize elective abortion.

Argentina was able to secure change through legislation, but the effort took years and has been difficult to replicate in other democracies ravaged by past military dictatorships or still governed by a patriarchal ruling class, she said.

“For Latin American countries, like Brazil, like Mexico, like Colombia, the US supreme court was a very important precedent behind the simple idea that courts are a legitimate space in which to decide abortion [rights],” said Diniz.



Demonstrators protest against the rejection of the law to decriminalize abortion in Veracruz, Mexico. Photograph: Carlos Tischler/Rex/Shutterstock

The Mexican lawyer and abortion rights campaigner Melissa Ayala said that the courts in Mexico were strongly on the side of women's reproductive rights now. But she warned that anti-abortion groups that have been gathering forces in the region will now take a page out of the US playbook. Mariela Belski, executive director of Amnesty International Argentina, agreed.

"The threat has been there since the legalization [allowing abortion] was passed," she said. "We are very worried about the strong anti-rights groups that we are seeing."

Such concerns are all the more pressing because while abortion may be legal in Argentina, access still varies dramatically between regions.

Women in Argentina are not prepared to cede any ground, Belski said, adding that they would flood the streets at the first sign of any fresh threat to their legal rights.

Her advice to US counterparts was exactly that. "Take to the streets. Mobilize in massive numbers," she said, and work in a bipartisan way. "I

think that the secret in Argentina was the cross-section of legislators who were fighting for the same cause. There wasn't political division."

Added Diniz: "We have to believe in the green wave. The situation in Latin America was so desperate, and we managed to bring about change."

In several Latin American countries the situation remains desperate: Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador maintain absolute prohibitions in all circumstances, and women have been given long prison sentences even in cases where they suffered miscarriages.

In Honduras, the government responded to the growing strength of legalization campaigns by enshrining its total abortion ban in its constitution. "Things couldn't be worse," said Neesa Medina, a member of feminist collective Somos Muchas.

It was not lost on Medina that the people most affected by an abortion ban in the United States will be the most vulnerable: minorities, migrants, the undocumented.

"Latinas," she added. "There are so many stories that link us as societies. It's our neighbors, our families, our cousins, aunts, who are going to feel the repercussions directly."

But activists across the region said that their own recent histories offer proof that progress can be fought for. "We're so used to looking to the United States, but this is a very good moment to look to the south," said Ayala.

- This article was amended on 5 May 2022 to correct the spelling of Roe v Wade.
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Global development

UK aid cuts have forced 40,000 Syrian children out of school, charity says

Funding for 133 schools run by Syria Relief ended on 30 April, leaving pupils at risk of child labour and early marriage



A school destroyed by shellfire at Abrar refugee camp in the Taoum district of Idlib, Syria. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

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[Kaamil Ahmed](#)

Thu 5 May 2022 01.30 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 01.51 EDT

More than 40,000 Syrian children are out of school as a direct result of British aid cuts and more schools could soon close, a leading charity has said.

British funding for 133 schools run by [Syria Relief ended](#) on 30 April, as the government cut its total foreign aid spending from its commitment of 0.7% of gross national income to 0.5%.

“If funds are not found to plug the gaps left by the UK government and other donors, a generation of children in northern Syria will be out of school and this will lead to a close-to-immediate rise in child labour, child marriage, early pregnancies, child conscription to military and armed groups, child exploitation and child trafficking,” said Jessica Adams, head of communications for Syria Relief and its parent charity, Action For Humanity.

“This was a political choice that we, and the children, parents and teachers of Syria, hope desperately will be reversed.”

The details of the UK's "["rushed" £4.2bn spending cuts](#)" in 2021 were revealed in March, and it was Syria that received the harshest cuts, despite millions of people still living in refugee and displacement camps more than 10 years after the conflict began.

Spending on Syria was slashed by 69%, including cuts to programmes on education, health, maternal health and Palestinian refugees.

Syria Relief said it had been the largest non-government provider of schools in Syria, with 306 schools. But with other donors also reducing spending or redirecting aid to Ukraine, it currently supports 3,600 children in 24 remaining schools, which face closure by August, leaving a total of 100,000 children left without an education since 2021.

The charity said the closures would defeat the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's stated goal of helping more girls into school and would push more girls into early marriages.

"If this school closes we will have to send them to schools that ask for money, but we don't have money, not even for rent, so we need the school to stay open," said Abu Halid, whose children are at school in Mahmoodli camp for internally displaced people in northern Syria.

According to Syria Relief, camp schools are overcrowded without electricity or heating. The charity said there are already high rates of child labour and early marriages among the war's displaced people, which are likely to quickly increase if more schools are shut.

"There are more than 2.4 million children out of school in Syria, and unless we significantly scale up our support, even more are at risk of dropping out. Rapid and substantial investments are now required to help us break the vicious cycle of suffering, violence and despair," Joyce Msuya, assistant secretary general for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told the UN security council last week.

The UN estimates [14.6 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian aid](#). The EU is hosting a conference next week aimed at encouraging donations and

pushing for a resolution to the conflict.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/05/uk-aid-cuts-have-forced-40000-syrian-children-out-of-school-charity-says>

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Egon Schiele

Egon Schiele painting of his uncle rediscovered after over 90 years

Portrait last seen in 1930 will go on display in Vienna and also be part of a non-fungible tokens collection



Leopold Czihaczek at the Piano (1907) was painted shortly before Schiele's 17th birthday. Photograph: Leopold Museum

[Nadia Khomami](#) Arts and culture correspondent

[@nadiakhomami](#)

Thu 5 May 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 05.11 EDT

A painting by [Egon Schiele](#) depicting the artist's uncle and legal guardian has been rediscovered after being missing for more than 90 years, a museum has said.

Leopold Czihaczek at the Piano (1907) was found within a Viennese private collection and will go on public display for the first time at the Leopold

Museum in [Austria](#), which houses the largest and most eminent collection of works by the great expressionist.

The piece will be a part of the museum's non-fungible tokens (NFT) collection of 24 paintings and drawings by Schiele, produced in partnership with LaCollection – a new NFT platform [dedicated to museum collections](#). Funds from the NFT collection will go towards the painting's restoration and expansion of the museum's Schiele collection.

Recognised as one of the most formative and colourful figures of Viennese modernism, Schiele managed to create a groundbreaking body of work before his death from flu at the age of 28 during the 1918 pandemic.

The Leopold Museum's founder, Rudolf Leopold, was one of the most important patrons of Schiele's work and is credited with being largely responsible for his fame.

Leopold Czihaczek at the Piano was painted shortly before Schiele's 17th birthday. It is impressionist in style, with a muted palette characteristic of his early work.

Czihaczek became Schiele's legal guardian after the death of Schiele's father when the artist was 15. He is depicted in the painting as a bourgeois figure and man of culture – an ode to the role he was to play in the young artist's life.

Verena Gamper from the Leopold Museum Research Center said: "The painting shows Egon Schiele's uncle and legal guardian, Leopold Czihaczek (1842-1929), playing the piano in his apartment in Vienna's Leopoldstadt district.

"Following the untimely death of Egon's father, Adolf Schiele, Czihaczek had assumed Schiele's guardianship."

The last record of Leopold Czihaczek at the Piano can be traced to Rudolf Leopold's 1972 catalogue raisonné of the artist. According to Gamper, it was previously only known from preliminary studies and a black and white photograph from 1930 showing a room in which it hung.

“Since then, there was no evidence if the painting still existed or if it had been permanently lost,” she said. “It was such a thrilling moment seeing this poorly documented and presumably untraceable work materialise, when the owners of the painting contacted us and I realised what kind of treasure they were talking about.”

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The NFT collection will reflect subjects at the heart of Schiele’s work that continue to resonate today, including gender and androgyny, self-identity and psychological struggle. “As one of the most revered but controversial modern painters for the disturbing intensity and raw sexuality of his painting, the NFTs provide an opportunity to collect works that elicited a strong visceral reaction in viewers when first shown in 1906,” the museum said.

NFTs – unique digital assets stored on a blockchain – have gripped the arts sector since the digital artist Mike Winkelmann, better known as Beeple, made history last year by [selling an NFT for \\$69.4m](#).

Hans-Peter Wipplinger, the director of the Leopold Museum, said: “Leopold Czihaczek at the Piano is a masterpiece of Schiele’s early work ... The current owners have agreed to place the painting at the disposal of the Leopold Museum as a permanent loan.

“Following its cleaning and restoration, we will have the chance to make it accessible to the public as part of our permanent presentation on Vienna 1900 and within the museum’s unique collection of paintings and drawings by Schiele.”

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LGBT rights

Biden warns LGBTQ+ children could be next target of Republican ‘Maga crowd’

President warns of new attacks by Trump-dominated political party after supreme court ruling draft leak on abortion



Joe Biden delivered remarks on economic growth, jobs, and deficit reduction at the Roosevelt Room on Wednesday. Photograph: Alex Wong/Getty Images

*[Martin Pengelly](#)
[@MartinPengelly](#)*

Wed 4 May 2022 17.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 4 May 2022 17.48 EDT

Joe Biden has warned of new attacks on civil rights as the supreme court prepares to strike down the right to abortion, telling reporters at the White House that LGBTQ+ children could be the next targets of a Trump-

dominated Republican party he called “this Maga crowd” and “the most extreme political organisation … in recent American history”.

“What happens,” the president asked, if “a state changes the law saying that children who are LGBTQ can’t be in classrooms with other children? Is that legit under the way the decision is written?”

Biden’s remarks, at the end of a brief session on deficit reduction, referred to a leaked draft of a ruling by Justice Samuel Alito. One of six conservatives on the supreme court, Alito was writing on a Mississippi case which aims to overturn both Roe v Wade, the 1973 ruling which guaranteed the right to abortion, and Casey v Planned Parenthood from 1992, which buttressed it.

The Mississippi case is expected to be resolved in June. The leak of the draft ruling [to Politico](#), which reported that four other conservatives on the nine-justice court supported it, caused a storm of controversy and anger.

In a statement and remarks on Tuesday, Biden condemned Alito’s reasoning and intentions and called for legislation to codify Roe into law.

But the president has faced criticism within his own party for seeming reluctant to contemplate reform such legislation would require, namely abolishing the Senate filibuster, the rule that requires 60 votes for most bills to pass.

A lifelong Catholic who nonetheless supports a woman’s right to choose, Biden has been eclipsed as a strong voice against the attack on abortion rights by high-profile Democratic women including the Massachusetts senator Elizabeth Warren, who spoke angrily outside the court on Tuesday, and the vice-president, Kamala Harris.

Harris’s struggles as vice-president have been widely reported but on Tuesday night, speaking to the Emily’s List advocacy group in Washington, [she seemed to hit her stride.](#)

The former prosecutor and California senator [said](#): “Those Republican leaders who are trying to weaponise the use of the law against women. Well, we say, ‘How dare they?’

“How dare they tell a woman what she can do and cannot do with her own body? How dare they? How dare they try to stop her from determining her own future? How dare they try to deny women their rights and their freedoms?””

She asked: “Which party wants to expand our rights? And which party wants to restrict them? It has never been more clear. Which party wants to lead us forward? And which party wants to push us back? You know, some Republican leaders, they want to take us back to a time before Roe v Wade.”

At the White House on Wednesday, Biden took brief questions. He was asked about sanctions on Russia over the invasion of Ukraine and about “the next step on abortion once this case gets settled”.

“As I said when this hit, as I was getting on the plane to go down to Alabama, this is about a lot more than abortion,” he said. “I hadn’t read the whole opinion at that time.”

The 79-year-old president then gave a lengthy, somewhat rambling answer about “the debate with Robert Bork”. Bork was nominated to the supreme court by Ronald Reagan in 1987. Biden was then chair of the Senate judiciary committee. The nomination failed.

At the White House, Biden said Bork “believed the only reason you had any inherent rights was because the government gave them to you”, a stance with which Biden said he disagreed.

Biden also said Bork had opposed [Griswold v Connecticut](#), the 1965 case which established the right to contraception – a right many on the left fear may be left [open to rightwing attack](#) once Roe, another case concerning privacy, has been overturned.

In her speech the previous night, Harris said: “At its core, Roe recognises the fundamental right to privacy. Think about that for a minute. When the right to privacy is attacked, anyone in our country may face a future where the government can interfere in their personal decisions. Not just women. Anyone.”

The vice-president also said: “Let us fight for our country and for the principles upon which it was founded, and let us fight with everything we have got.”

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[Exams](#)

Pupils in England showing high anxiety in run-up to GCSEs and A-levels, teachers say

Reports of panic attacks, anger, self-harm and disengagement before first exams in three years since Covid

- [Exam stress: how to help children cope with GCSEs and A-levels](#)



A teacher lays out exams. This summer's cohort of A-level students have not yet experienced public exams because of the Covid pandemic. Photograph: Kevin Coombs/Reuters

[Sally Weale](#) Education correspondent

Fri 6 May 2022 04.29 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 08.58 EDT

Teachers in England have observed high levels of anxiety among pupils in the run-up to GCSEs and [A-levels](#), with reports of panic attacks, angry

outbursts, self-harm and disengagement among students who will be the first to sit examinations in three years due to the pandemic.

With the main summer exam period due to begin next week, headteachers say they have seen a rise in requests from GPs and mental health teams, asking for individual pupils to be allowed to sit their exams in a separate or smaller room, away from the main exam hall, because of stress and anxiety. Numbers have more than doubled in one school, creating space and invigilation challenges.

A-level candidates have also reported fewer university offers from the most sought-after institutions – fuelling their anxiety – partly as a result of a rise in the number of students who deferred places last year following [record A-level results](#), but also because there are more 18-year-olds in the population competing for places.

GCSEs and A-levels in England have been cancelled for the past two years because of Covid and replaced with [teacher-assessed grades](#), meaning this summer's cohort of A-level students have not yet experienced public exams. They have also been told there will be fewer top grades as the government begins to rein in grade inflation.

“We’ve got more young people who are anxious than we would normally have,” said Glyn Potts, the headteacher of Newman Roman Catholic college in Oldham, Greater Manchester. “We have got some students who are desperate to do very, very well. They fear they are not going to get the grades they should be getting because of the disruption, and because the government needs to sort out the [grade] inflation over the last two years.

“We’ve also seen a huge number of doctor or CAMHS [child mental health services]-related feedback to parents … requesting children should have a room of their own for the exams.” Requests have more than doubled to 23 GCSE candidates this summer, he said.

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A Place2Be mental health practitioner working in a secondary school in the north of England, who asked to remain anonymous, said some pupils were suffering panic attacks. One girl was unable to make it into the hall to do her mocks. “Even thinking about exams would bring on panic. It’s affected sleeping and eating – particularly for females. There’s a lot of self-harm. Lots of low mood and anxiety.

“The boys tend to get more angry. One particular boy got very angry at the thought or mention of exams and was punching walls. He didn’t want to hear anything about exams, because it felt too painful, too stressful to think about.”

One London teacher, who did not want to be named, said: “In one class I’ve had one male year 13 student crying and shouting at me. Some other kids’ response is to just shrug their shoulders and downplay the significance of the exams.”

Robin Bevan, the headteacher of Southend high school for boys in Essex, said – as with many schools – he had seen a noticeable increase in pupils seeking additional mental health support or counselling.

“Until a few years ago we would have made the occasional referral to external services, we now have a fully booked full-time on-site counselling service and the benefits of an NHS-funded mental health support team. It is hard to tell whether this is a real increase or suppressed demand now coming in to the open.”

Sean Maher, the headteacher of Richard Challoner School in New Malden, Surrey, said: “We have certainly seen an increase in anxiety and less resilience in our young people but my feeling is that they aren’t any more stressed about the upcoming examinations than they have been in previous years.”

Ben Davis, the head of St Ambrose Barlow RC high school in Swinton, Manchester, said: “There’s an awful lot of anxiety, fear, and worry, and disengagement among some of them. Overall, I’ve been really impressed at how the year 11s have coped. But there’s a group of them for whom it’s

suddenly got very real very quickly. They don't quite know how to handle it.”

Elena Blair, 18, who is about to sit her A-levels at Harrogate grammar school, a comprehensive in North Yorkshire, said: “Not having GCSEs has thrown us all a bit, particularly when it comes to revision. It's been quite difficult. It does probably add a layer of stress. It does not really feel real.”

“It's quite scary,” said one 16-year-old student from Manchester who will sit 26 exams in 10 different GCSE subjects over the next few weeks. “You do see a lot more people getting upset during school. It's hitting everyone, now that the exams are coming. Sometimes people are in tears. Everyone feeds off everyone else's anxieties.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/may/06/pupils-showing-high-anxiety-run-up-gcses-a-levels-teachers-say>.

Exams

Exam stress: how to help children cope with GCSEs and A-levels

Tips for parents and carers include talking openly, helping them relax, and creating revision routines

- [Pupils showing high anxiety in run-up to GCSEs and A-levels, teachers say](#)



‘Remind them that there is more to life than their grades, and their results don’t define who they are.’ Photograph: parkerphotography/Alamy

[Sally Weale](#) Education correspondent

Fri 6 May 2022 04.29 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 08.58 EDT

Look out for signs of stress

“I think the first thing is about being aware,” says Dr Dan O’Hare, the vice-chair of the British Psychological Society’s division of education and child psychology. “Are they more irritable than usual? If they play Fortnite, have they suddenly lost interest in it or are they playing way more than they should be? Have they gone off their food, are they complaining of physical symptoms, like headaches and stomach aches more regularly than they might do?”

Talk about anxiety

“Remind your child that it’s perfectly normal to feel worried or stressed about their exams,” says Cecilia Corbetta, the parenting lead at the Place2Be mental health charity. “Talk openly about how you cope with your own stressful situations, so your child has a positive role model for managing their emotions and time.”

Create routines

O’Hare stresses the importance of the basics – food, exercise, friends and downtime. Then help them create a plan to prepare for their exams. “When are those exams? How do we create a sustainable revision timetable? I think sometimes young people get generic advice – ‘do some revision’. Does that mean six hours at the same textbook, or does it actually mean 30 minutes, a five-minute break, then we go out for a walk? Helping them plan and create that structure for those small wins, I think is really key.”

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Don’t make them feel worse

O’Hare says a lot of motivation around exams is fear-based – warnings that if you don’t do well, you won’t be able to go to university. “That sort of narrative is really stressful for children,” he says, and should be avoided. “Be reassuring, positive, and help put things into perspective,” says

Corbetta. “Remind them that there is more to life than their grades, and their results don’t define who they are.”

Be available to listen and flexible to their needs

“Sometimes your child may not want to talk, and it’s important we don’t force them to have a conversation they don’t want to have. Make yourself available but don’t pressure them to talk,” says Corbetta. Listen to their needs, says O’Hare. “Parents and carers might want to get the young person out of the house for all the best reasons. But if it becomes so rigid that it starts contributing to the stress, rather than alleviating it, as adults we need to be flexible.”

Unwinding after exams

Help them to relax so they don’t dwell on things they could have done better. Place2Be suggests watching a film or enjoying a favourite meal together, before starting revision for the next test.

Extra support

If you are concerned about your child or they won’t talk to you, encourage them to talk to someone at school or a charity such as ChildLine, says Place2Be. O’Hare says worried parents can also approach their child’s school via their form tutor, head of year or pastoral lead. “These are people in the school system who are really aware of how to support children who are going through these things.” If you’re worried about a child who may be having panic attacks, for example, contact your GP.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/may/06/exam-stress-how-help-children-cope-gcses-a-levels>

Conservatives

Two donors who gave Tories £1m between them handed public health jobs

Exclusive: Labour raises questions about probity of recent appointments to NHS England and UKHSA



Simon Blagden, who has been made a member of the UKHSA advisory board, pictured in 2013. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

[Aubrey Allegretti](#) Political correspondent

[@breeallegretti](#)

Fri 6 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 10.26 EDT

Two businessmen who together donated more than £1m to the Conservative party have been handed prominent public health jobs, igniting a new “cronyism” row.

After the government [came under criticism](#) for its awarding of Covid contracts, including a “VIP lane” for suppliers, Labour raised fresh questions

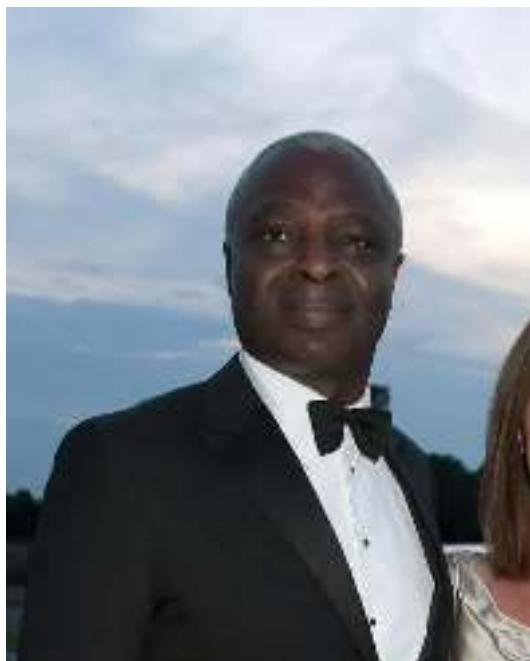
about recent appointments to NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

One of those given a senior public health advisory role was chair of a firm that reportedly sued the NHS for hundreds of millions of pounds over a failed IT project.

There is no suggestion that improper recruitment processes were followed. But the health secretary, Sajid Javid, was urged to ensure there would be no conflicts of interest.

In March, Oluwole Kolade was made a non-executive director and deputy chair of NHS England for three years. In just over a decade, Kolade has donated £859,342 to Conservative party headquarters; the party's London mayoral candidate in 2021, Shaun Bailey; and the party's branch in Hitchin and Harpenden. About a third of the donations – £300,000 – have been made since Boris Johnson became prime minister.

The government's public appointments website said the appointing department was Javid's and added: "Kolade has made a donation to the Conservative party."



Oluwole Kolade in 2019. Kolade has been made a non-executive director and deputy chair of NHS England for three years. Photograph: David M Bennett/Dave Benett/Getty Images for Rolls-Royce

Kolade is a managing partner of Livingbridge, a private equity firm with extensive investments in private healthcare. On its website the company said it “has made a private equity investment in the healthcare and education sector in almost every single year for the past two decades”. Livingbridge’s portfolio includes multiple NHS suppliers, and private dental companies, care providers and fertility firms.

Andrew Gwynne, the shadow health minister, said the appointment looked like “naked Conservative cronyism” and urged against the NHS being “placed in the hands of the highest bidder”. He called on Javid to “come clean about what guarantees he secured that this position won’t be used to benefit private interests over public health”.

Another prolific donor, Simon Blagden, was made a member of the UKHSA advisory board in April. Since 2005, Blagden and companies he is associated with have donated £376,000 to the [Conservatives](#). These include Pietas Ltd, a firm he was director of from 2000 to 2020, and Avre Partnership Limited, which he has been director of since 2014.

He was also a chairman of Fujitsu UK, which sued the NHS over a failed IT project. A parliamentary committee’s [inquiry](#) into the debacle in 2013 cited [reports](#) that a sum of £700m was sought from the Department of Health.

Blagden already holds a role in government – as chair of its telecoms supply chain diversification advisory council at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – and in 2016 was awarded a CBE for services to the economy.

Labour said that “yet again, the Tories have appointed one of their own to a crucial public role”.

A spokesperson for the Department of Health and Social Care said: “Political activity is not a bar to holding a public appointment. In line with the requirements of the code of governance for public appointments, if

someone has been politically active and has made donations, the government declares this when the appointment is announced.

“Wol Kolade was appointed by ministers in 2018 as a non-executive director on the board of NHS Improvement – he declared he had made donations to the Conservative party and the department declared this when he was first appointed and again when he was reappointed this year.”

A UKHSA spokesperson said: “All members of our advisory board have been appointed in line with government protocols and will provide vital impartial oversight and advice to help UKHSA deliver its strategic objectives.”

Kolade and his company Livingbridge were contacted for comment. Blagden was contacted for comment through Larkspur International, where he is a director.

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Obesity

Vegan diet can help overweight people shed pounds, study shows

Eating vegan for 12 weeks also led to lower blood sugar levels in overweight people or with type 2 diabetes



People can get most of the nutrients they need from eating a varied and balanced vegan diet. Photograph: Alamy

[Andrew Gregory](#) Health editor

Thu 5 May 2022 18.01 EDT

Vegan diets can help people who are overweight or have type 2 diabetes lose weight and lower their blood sugar levels, research suggests.

A meta analysis showed that adhering to a vegan diet over three months reduced body weight by about 4.1kg (9lb) on average compared with control

diets, and cut blood sugar levels. There was little or no effect on blood pressure or levels of cholesterol or triglycerides, a type of fat.

The data was drawn from 11 randomised trials including 796 people who were overweight with a body mass index (BMI) of at least 25 or who had type 2 diabetes. The results were presented at the European Congress on Obesity.

Anne-Ditte Termannsen, of the Steno Diabetes Centre in Copenhagen, who led the research, said: “This rigorous assessment of the best available evidence to date indicates with reasonable certainty that adhering to a vegan diet for at least 12 weeks may result in clinically meaningful weight loss and improve blood sugar levels, and therefore can be used in the management of overweight and type 2 diabetes.

“Vegan diets likely lead to weight loss because they are associated with a reduced calorie intake due to a lower content of fat and higher content of dietary fibre.”

A second piece of research presented at the conference in Maastricht found women were more likely than men to gain weight during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic. In both sexes, people under the age of 45 were more likely to pile on extra pounds than older age groups.

The research covering almost 1 million adults in the UK used data from the Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD) of more than 200,000 UK GP practices, which includes information on BMI just before lockdown in March 2020, and in the year or so afterwards.

Prof Thomas Yates, of the University of Leicester, said: “The implications of even modest weight gain at a population level in younger adults and women could translate into more diabetes, heart disease, cancers and other serious obesity-related health problems over the coming decades in these populations unless action is taken to reverse the effects of lockdown.”

A third study found that toddlers eat more vegetables if they are rewarded for trying them. A three-month research programme on children aged one

to four at nurseries in Limburg, in the Netherlands, found that giving children rewards such as stickers or small toy crowns may help them develop a taste for healthy food.

Britt van Belkom, of Maastricht University, who carried out the study, said the type of reward was very important. “It should be fun but not food,” she said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/05/vegan-diet-can-help-overweight-people-shed-pounds-study-shows>

2022.05.06 - Spotlight

- ['It's shocking' Senior nurse tells of acute pressure on NHS 111](#)
- [Experience I punctured my lung by eating cereal](#)
- [Victory Day How it became central to Putin's idea of Russian identity](#)
- [Abortion No-exception laws, once too harsh even for anti-abortion Republicans, gain traction across US](#)
- ['Severe chilling effect' Abortion bans will inhibit doctors' advice to patients, experts fear](#)

Nursing

‘It’s shocking’: senior nurse tells of acute pressure on NHS 111

Telephone service desperate for clinicians as call numbers surge to unworkable levels, says insider



NHS 111 call centres are staffed by a combination of call handlers and clinicians. Photograph: James Drew Turner/The Guardian

Anonymous

Fri 6 May 2022 05.00 EDT

The [NHS](#) cannot cope with the growing need for care, long delays for treatment are now routine and the staffing crisis is so acute that retired doctors are now being asked to come back and work in hospitals.

Here, a senior nurse describes how the NHS 111 telephone advice service – an important source of urgent medical advice and way of taking the pressure

off A&E – is increasingly unable to help those who ring seeking help and voices her fears that patients with serious conditions may be suffering avoidable harm as a result.

I've worked in NHS 111 for more than 10 years. But in all that time, I've never seen it in the state it's in now. It's shocking. In my experience, everybody in 111 is on their knees at the moment. We just can't deal with the sheer number of calls and requests for help that we are getting.

111 is a very important service, so it needs to be working properly. It's basically where people can ring to get advice about a whole range of medical problems when GP surgeries are shut. They ring, tell us what the problem is and then they get a call back, depending on how urgent their symptoms are, and then they get help – or at least that's how it's supposed to work anyway. We can advise someone to go to see their GP, or send an electronic prescription to their local pharmacy or in some cases request an ambulance to take them to A&E.

Callers ring with all sorts of problems. It might be someone with a respiratory infection or urinary infection, or a child who is vomiting and has diarrhoea, or someone with mental health issues or abdominal pain. So it includes things that may be signs of a serious illness.

People think they can ring 111 and get advice quickly. However, increasingly that doesn't happen as we are in a state of constant, massive overload. We just can't cope with the number of people who ring us seeking our help. The end result is that people can wait a long time before anyone calls them back or some people end up getting no care or help at all, which really worries me.

I work nightshifts, usually at the weekend, as my main job is as a nurse in a hospital. When I'm at work I'm the sole clinician with responsibility for the care of an area with a population of 350,000. The clinician is the health professional – usually a doctor or nurse, but sometimes a paramedic – who uses their expertise to decide how urgent cases are and what we should recommend the patient does next. Every caller undergoes triage; I do what's called "advanced triage".

Before Covid, when I started my shift there would be 20-30 people waiting on the list to be called back. Now it's always about 60, so it's gone up a lot in a short space of time. Bank holiday weekends are the worst; that's when 111 falls over. When I arrived for my shift on Good Friday last month there were 290 people waiting for a call back. I'd never seen so many before.

Since Christmas things have got worse and worse in terms of demand for our help. Every shift is worse than the previous shift. I don't know if the public realise it or not but many of the doctors, nurses and other clinicians working for 111 have other jobs and only work part-time. 111 is very understaffed. We get text messages every day saying "please come and work in 111". They're basically begging us to spare a few hours to help triage people. I sometimes get five or six messages like that a day. When that happens, it's because it's desperate. But it's not just desperate in my county. It's the same all over England.

The crisis in NHS ambulance services has made things worse recently in 111. In most places these days if you've had a heart attack or stroke or been involved in a car crash you might be waiting two hours plus for an ambulance to arrive. If someone has had a stroke – where you have a "golden hour" to get them to hospital and start treatment – delay can make the difference between them recovering or ending up disabled or even dead. So NHS overload and delays do put patients at risk. Sometimes you ring someone whose symptoms are very worrying and find that they've already been waiting for 100 minutes. That's very frustrating. It could be that a delay in assessing someone means that a skin infection gets missed and escalates into sepsis or that their stroke has gone untreated. It's impossible to know how much avoidable harm this all leads to, but it does happen.

The pressure on ambulance services doesn't just mean that patients can't get an ambulance quickly enough. It can also mean that myself and colleagues have to stay with that person in their own home, trying to keep them alive while waiting for the ambulance. But the long waits for ambulances also mean that the 999 service are offloading patients on to us to look after who they know they're not going to be able to get to for six to eight hours. That hasn't happened because the patient doesn't need 999 help – they do – there just isn't an ambulance available to go to them.

Ambulance services offload patients on to us because they – as with 111, GP surgeries, community services, A&E units and every other part of the NHS – are so overloaded. Everything is under completely unsustainable pressure. Staff working in all these services carry such an emotional burden because they're having to make decisions that you wouldn't want to have to make – about who gets treatment soon and who has to wait, when they all need to be seen – because there isn't enough resource to respond properly to the huge need for care.

When people are triaged, they're prioritised as needing a call back within two, six, 12 or 24 hours. But the days are gone when we could get through everyone on the waiting list. Often we only manage to get to all those given a two-hour callback time – the most worrying cases. The others have to just visit their GP when the surgery is next open or see a pharmacist. It's emotionally distressing, and also professionally distressing, that some people who are sick end up not getting any help at all from 111. But that's what happens.

I understand why people who were told they were going to get a call back, or who have gone to bed before it comes, get annoyed. People who have called 111, or their relatives, get anxious when no one calls them back.

111 is a great system. For the NHS to work, it needs to work. But I'm at my wits' end worrying about it because it cannot deal with the pressure it's under just now.

As told to Denis Campbell

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/06/its-shocking-senior-nurse-tells-of-acute-pressure-on-nhs-111>

Experience**Life and style**

Experience: I punctured my lung by eating cereal

I'd got through about a third when I felt an excruciating pain under my shoulder



Harry Long: 'I didn't see a doctor because Mum told me our family had a history of adult-onset asthma.' Photograph: Charlie Kinross/The Guardian

Harry Long

Fri 6 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 16.57 EDT

Accidents happen to me all the time – I play a lot of sports in Melbourne, where I am finishing a master's degree and potentially storming towards a mixed [netball](#) grand final. I have broken my back, dislocated my kneecap, torn my groin and had appendicitis. But it was a piece of cereal that gave me my biggest scare.

I was 16, on a family holiday to [Malaysia](#) in 2015. My parents and I were staying at a resort in Kuantan on the east coast. It was just me and Dad at the buffet that morning; we were keen to wolf down a quick breakfast so we could reserve a spot by the pool before it got too busy. Dad grew up in Malaysia, so we used to visit quite often, and whenever I was there I would look forward to a nice bowl of Honey Stars. It was a tradition of mine.

They're honey-flavoured, star-shaped pellets of sugary goodness – a treat for the growing teenager I was. I had them every morning of the trip the same way I eat any cereal: without milk. I never got on board the milk-and-cereal bandwagon because it makes everything too soggy, though soggy wouldn't have been the end of the world, considering what happened next.

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I was about a third of the way into an admittedly enormous bowl when suddenly, mid-mouthful, I felt an excruciating pain under my shoulder blade; it was as if someone had come up from behind and stabbed me. Within seconds, my moaning and groaning caused heads to turn. Dad kept telling me to pull myself together because half the resort was staring at us, but the pain wouldn't let up, so I decided to head back to my room to try to sort myself out.

Walking back, I must have looked as if I had drunk 15 beers. I was trying to walk in a straight line but keeling over every few metres. Once I was in my room, I spent the next 20 minutes writhing about on the floor, until the pain stopped as abruptly as it had begun. Over the next week, I experienced shortness of breath going up and down stairs, and when I tried to hold my breath underwater, I would feel a little bit of pain in my shoulder.

My surgeon did his medical degree in Melbourne. He started telling me about how Australians are all 'bred tough'

I didn't see a doctor because Mum told me our family had a history of adult-onset asthma, and my description of the pain sounded consistent with what had happened to a couple of my aunts when they first had asthma attacks. So we decided to sort out my asthma once we got home.

Seven days later, while we were in Singapore, Dad went to hospital for an ear infection. I was still having spells of shortness of breath, so I tagged along. After an X-ray, the doctor discovered a piece of dry cereal had made its way into my lung and, to everyone's amazement, caused a puncture. I experienced what is called a [pulmonary aspiration](#), which is when you inhale something into your windpipe and lungs. The excruciating pain I had initially felt was the subsequent collapse of my lung. The pain subsided only after it had totally collapsed. Since that breakfast, I'd been breathing with one lung.

I was rushed into emergency surgery. My surgeon did his medical degree in Melbourne; he started telling me about how Australians are all "bred tough". Before I knew it, he jabbed me with a long, corkscrew-shaped instrument. I immediately passed out. I woke up half an hour later hooked up to what looked like a tiny vacuum, which was slowly removing the excess air from my lung and reinflating it. I was stuck like that for five days.

After leaving hospital, I was required to wait a few extra days before flying home. Then the seriousness of what had happened hit me. I had flown from Malaysia to Singapore with a collapsed lung; the doctor said I was extremely lucky we didn't hit a certain altitude, or they would have had to make an emergency landing to keep me alive.

Within a few weeks of arriving home, everything felt back to normal. Unfortunately, I punctured the same lung last month during a netball game. But this time, I got it sorted out straight away.

If there's one thing I've learned, it's that if you feel something isn't right, get it checked out. The experience hasn't scared me too much, though: I still eat cereal without milk.

As told to Joseph Arthur

Do you have an experience to share? Email experience@theguardian.com

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How Victory Day became central to Putin's idea of Russian identity

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/06/how-victory-day-became-central-to-putin-idea-of-russian-identity>.

[Abortion](#)

No-exception laws, once too harsh even for anti-abortion Republicans, gain traction across US

Extreme anti-abortion groups are now emboldened to fight for laws that ban ending pregnancies conceived in rape or incest



Demonstrator at a January 2022 rally holding a Students for Life sign.
Photograph: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

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

Fri 6 May 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 6 May 2022 02.01 EDT

Republicans were largely dismissive when, in 2019, [a small group of extreme anti-abortion activists](#) called on the party to reconsider its “decades-old” view that laws restricting abortion in the US ought to exempt victims of rape and incest.

It simply went too far, the party's House minority leader, Kevin McCarthy, argued at the time, to support absolute abortion bans that did not offer protection to women and girls who had been raped or were the victims of incest.

But there has been a sea change in Republican thinking since then.

At least 11 US states – including Alabama, Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas and Texas – have passed legislation that bans abortion without any such exceptions. Where Republicans once believed that absolute bans were unpalatable and “toxic” with voters, the party’s legislators have now adopted the language once promoted by the most extreme anti-abortion activists in the country who say any such exceptions are “prejudice against children conceived in rape and incest”.

“It is our view that the value of human life is not determined by the circumstances of one’s conceptions at birth,” said one letter by proponents of absolute bans. “A child conceived in rape is still a child.”

While most of the laws have been blocked by US courts for now, the expected reversal of Roe v Wade, the landmark 1973 decision that made abortion legal in the US, would almost immediately, or as soon as practical, put the bans into effect.

It means that in many states, restrictions on reproductive rights will be more extreme than they were before Roe was passed nearly 50 years ago.

“Something has changed, at least in Arkansas, and I perceive nationwide,” said Jim Hendren, a retiring state senator from Arkansas who left the Republican party after the January 6 insurrection and is now an Independent. While Hendren said he was proud of his long history as a “pro-life” legislator, he said Arkansas had – until now – also always passed legislation with rape and incest exceptions.

“The fact is, it’s a different ethical dilemma when you’re talking about a 10-year-old girl who is a rape victim being responsible for the actions of a

criminal, versus someone who is responsible for their own actions,” Hendren said.

After years of “closing every other loophole”, Hendren added, “suddenly the discussion changed”.

“You get to a place where there is nothing else to do. And there is no other mechanism for these [anti-abortion] organizations that have survived and thrived by working on this issue than to continue to push into this new area,” he said.

Hendren, who noted that Arkansas had one of the [worst infant mortality rates](#) in the US, ultimately voted “present” on the bill. While he drafted an amendment that would have included a rape and incest exception in the legislation, he did not put the amendment forward for a vote. It would not have had enough support, Hendren said, because even Republican legislators who quietly supported him and “agonised” over their vote were fearful that supporting the amendment would mean they would be labeled “pro-choice” by Republican primary challengers.

[Mary Ziegler](#), a professor at Florida State University College of Law who specialises in the history of reproductive rights, said it was difficult to judge what the exact impact of absolute abortion bans would be because so many sexual assaults and cases of incest are unreported. It was possible, she said, that the US could begin to see minors being forced to carry pregnancies to term, as has been the case in Ecuador and Argentina.

Republican “indifference” to rape and incest exceptions was “something new”, Ziegler said, and could reflect how groups that support such absolute bans no longer feel they need to “tread carefully”.

At the centre of the new movement is an advocacy group called Students for Life of America (SFLA), which has called itself one of the world’s leading grassroots “pro-life advocacy groups”. Among other legislative victories, SFLA has recently taken credit for [thwarting “backdoor efforts”](#) to weaken the Arkansas legislation.

On its website, the group emphasises its work across college campuses and includes pictures of dozens of young-looking staff members who lead the group's outreach efforts. But tax records show SFLA is far from grassroots: it has become a financial powerhouse in the anti-abortion movement thanks to the support of wealthy donors.

Records show that the group transformed from an organisation with a budget of about \$20,000 in 2004 to \$12m in 2019.

It is co-chaired by Leonard Leo, the conservative lawyer who served for years at the helm of the Federalist Society and was the legal adviser to President Donald Trump, where he had [extraordinary influence](#) selecting the conservative judges – including Amy Coney Barrett and Brett Kavanaugh – who now serve as justices on the supreme court.

Leo is described in some tax records as SFLA's principal officer, which legally means he has the “ultimate responsibility for implementing the decisions of the organisation's governing body, or for supervising the management, administration, or operation of the organisation”.

Richard Crum, who is listed as a “financial services executive” on the group's website and – according to LinkedIn – appears to be a top executive at CapitalOne bank, is another co-chair.

Crum did not respond to a request for comment. Other board members include the former Wisconsin governor Scott Walker and Greg Mueller, a conservative strategist and president of Creative Response Concepts, whose clients have included Leo's Federalist Society.

While SFLA does not list its donors in its own tax records, tax filings by other groups who have donated to the organisation show that donors include: the Apollos Charitable Foundation, a Texas-based group run by the Hetland family, who previously owned a Houston-based insurer called American Financial & Automotive Services; the Prince Foundation, the Christian charity in Michigan headed by Elsa Prince, the mother of the Blackwater founder Erik Prince and his sister, former education secretary Betsy DeVos; and Gerard Health Foundation, which was founded by Raymond Ruddy, a

millionaire businessman and donor to conservative causes like abstinence-only education policies. Ruddy also serves on SFLA's board.

On its website, the group said it relied on an unnamed "angel investor" for helping it to "grow rapidly" and become the voice of the "pro-life generation".

The group's longtime executive director, Kristan Hawkins, did not respond to the Guardian's questions about Leo or other board members' role in the organisation.

Hawkins, who has said that in her "ideal world" the pill and IUDs would be "illegal", recently [praised the Oklahoma](#) governor, Kevin Stitt, for signing a "life at conception" bill which she said was "sponsored" by SFLA and would make all abortion illegal, except in cases where a mother's life was in immediate danger. If it survives legal challenges – which it could if Roe is completely overturned – the absolute ban would take effect on 1 August and would make performing an abortion a felony, punishable by 10 years in prison.

A separate bill signed by Stitt this week makes all abortions illegal after six weeks and takes effect immediately. Oklahoma had become a destination for women in Texas seeking abortions who were prohibited from receiving the procedure following that state's near ban on abortion.

Additional reporting by Jessica Glenza

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/06/no-exception-rape-incest-anti-abortion-laws-republicans-us>

Abortion

‘A severe chilling effect’: abortion bans will inhibit doctors’ advice to patients, experts fear

Extreme restrictions combined with tough-on-crime laws could put medical professionals in severe legal jeopardy



Supporters of abortion rights and anti-abortion protesters gather at the Indiana federal courthouse in Indianapolis on Tuesday. Photograph: Michelle Pemberton/AP



[Jessica Glenza](#)

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Fri 6 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 12.02 EDT

The end of a federal right to abortion in the US would have profound and detrimental impacts on medical education, the freedom to practice medicine and patients' ability to seek medical advice without fear of prosecution, doctors and legal experts said.

The warnings come as a [leaked supreme court draft opinion](#) and accompanying reporting from [Politico](#) show a majority of justices voted to overturn Roe v Wade, a landmark decision that has protected the federal right to an abortion for nearly 50 years.

If the court's opinion does not change substantially from the leaked draft, [at least 26 states would be certain or likely to ban abortion](#). Until the court issues a final decision, expected in June, Roe prevents states hostile to abortion from banning the procedure before a fetus can survive outside the womb.

"If this decision ends up being similar to what [was leaked], this is going to substantially affect abortion care, obstetrics care and healthcare more

generally,” said Dr Nisha Verma, a Darney-Landy fellow with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Such a decision would represent a seismic shift in the American healthcare landscape, with devastating consequences for medical care, education and the doctor-patient relationship.

“It really starts with doctors, because overturning Roe will have a severe chilling effect,” said Lindsay Lewis, co-author of a report by the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers that studied the potential criminal effects of ending Roe, and a board member of the same organization.

Abortion restrictions are now more likely to contain extremely narrow exemptions to save the lives of pregnant people, severe criminal penalties for providers and to lack exemptions for rape and incest.

That puts doctors in the position of trying to interpret legislation that is often extremely narrow. In one recent example, an [Oklahoma abortion ban](#) makes performing an abortion a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison. In addition, medical exemptions for the procedure are exceedingly narrow.

An abortion can be legally performed only in the event the medical emergency “cannot be remedied by the delivery of the child”. “Medical emergency” is strictly defined as when a threat to a person’s life “by a physical disorder, physical illness or physical injury including a life-endangering physical condition caused by or arising from the pregnancy itself”.

Functionally, these restrictions on medical exemptions have made new abortion bans much stricter than even some that existed before Roe was decided, when some states allowed women to seek clearance for an abortion from hospitals boards on the basis of psychological crises.

“For basically the past decade, or a little over the past decade, these exceptions have simply become so narrow as to be functionally unusable,” said Elizabeth Nash, an expert on state abortion restrictions at the Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive rights research organization. “There are very few people who meet these definitions.”

In another example, should Roe fall, doctors who perform an abortion against [state law in Alabama](#) could be face up to 99 years in prison.

“This has the potential to turn the doctor-patient relationship on its head,” said Lewis. Doctors may not feel comfortable advising women they could go to another state to seek abortions, while women may be uncomfortable being open about speaking about her considerations.

What’s more, tough-on-crime laws passed in the nearly 50 years since Roe was decided mean some zealous prosecutors could charge doctors, and a host of other people, with [aiding and abetting, conspiracy or accomplice crimes](#) related to the end of a pregnancy.

Abortion bans would also have a dramatic impact on medical education, in particular on residents in obstetrics and gynecology who are required to learn routine abortion care as part of training.

“Largely because of the politicization of obstetric and abortion care, the public sees these as two very different and separate things,” when in fact, “pregnancy management and pregnancy termination are very interconnected,” said Dr Kavita Vinekar, assistant professor at the University of California Los Angeles school of medicine and a fellow with Physicians for Reproductive [Health](#). “A lot of the skills we use in obstetrics are directly related to the training we receive in abortion care.”

A [study co-authored by Vinekar](#) found that nearly half (44%) of obstetrics and gynecology residents, or about 2,600 residents, will attend programs in states that could outlaw abortion training.

Already, some programs have pioneered efforts to help residents from Texas, which banned abortion at six weeks in 2021 September, to travel to states where it is legal. But it is not simple or easy.

“I’m trying to think of ways to help, so there are not huge training and education deficits in our workforce, but I am also very nervous about it,” said Dr Jody Steinauer, a co-author of the study and director of the Ryan residency and training program at the Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health at the University of California, San Francisco.

Additionally, Steinauer said she worries that workforce shortages will threaten pregnant people in states where abortion is banned, because few doctors will want to practice under the threat of prosecution, unable to provide safe, evidence-based care.

“Just the emotional distress factor would be enough to make people not want to practice in these states,” Steinauer said.

Existing abortion restrictions, even as Roe stands, means pregnant people may seek abortion care far from where they live. Verma has seen patients come to Georgia from Alabama and Tennessee, which have more restrictions. However, the threat of prosecution may pose a threat.

“In too many of these cases,” a person who was prosecuted “has come to the attention of law enforcement by someone from whom they’ve sought medical care,” said Jill Adams, executive director of If/When/How, a reproductive rights legal group.

Although anti-abortion lawmakers often argue they exempt women from punitive statutes, laws that confer rights on fetuses have already resulted in prosecutions. Those criminal sanctions are likely to expand should Roe fall.

That was probably the case for Lizelle Herrera, a Texas woman who was charged with murder for a “self-induced abortion”. Charges were later dropped – abortion is legal because Roe remains the law of the land – but historians warn the case is a forewarning of things to come. There is no requirement for healthcare providers to report pregnant people to law enforcement for self-managed abortions, which are legal.

“In a time when we’re trying to end mass incarceration, we will see far more women, far more people of color, far more poor people – these are the people we see getting abortions – being charged with crimes and going to jail simply for exercising what once was their right to determine what to do with their own bodies when it comes to pregnancy,” said Lewis.

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2022.05.06 - Opinion

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OpinionConservatives

Boris Johnson rose on promises of a glorious future. Now all he has left is a painful present

[Andy Beckett](#)

From Brexit to ‘Boris Island’, he made a career out of vague, eye-popping plans that have all turned to dust



Illustration: Thomas Pullin/The Guardian

Thu 5 May 2022 10.44 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 23.25 EDT

The future used to be Boris Johnson’s great friend. During his many years manoeuvring for the Tory leadership, he used fantastical building proposals such as the “[Boris Island](#)” airport to keep his national fame alive. During the dominant first phase of his premiership, he won over voters with huge promises about Brexit. And he persuaded a party that had been in power for

a decade – usually too long – that its best days in government were still to come.

In a country that often feels weighed down by the past and gloomy about its prospects, [Johnson's relentless optimism](#) was unusual and powerful. After believing for years that politicians could achieve little, many Britons persuaded themselves that he would be different, despite his terrible record as a minister and lack of significant achievements as mayor of London. Any democracy needs periodic infusions of belief from voters if it is not to collapse into total cynicism and apathy, and the personality cult of “Boris” provided one. To millions of voters, he was a superhero who would somehow transform the country.

For quite a while, focusing on the future fitted Johnson’s abilities and personality. He is a bad administrator yet eager to please everyone; an attention-seeker yet averse to accountability; an advertiser of his own authenticity yet also a constant liar. His flaws and contradictions are so many and obvious that dealing with the present or the recent past – timeframes where his performance can be scrutinised – rarely suits him. On the occasions when he does try to be serious in public, he only sounds truly comfortable sketching out glorious futures.

Increasingly, his party prefers that timeframe, too. With the Conservatives’ miracle cures for Britain’s ills, such as shrinking the state and leaving the EU, achieving so little and doing so much damage since 2010, the moment to judge their effectiveness, according to the Tories, is further and further in the future. In 2018, the future minister for Brexit opportunities [Jacob Rees-Mogg argued](#): “The overwhelming opportunity for [gains from] Brexit is over the next 50 years.” Had the often elderly Britons who voted for Brexit been told this during the referendum, the leave campaign might not have gone so well.

For the first year and a bit of Johnson’s premiership, this sort of Tory futurism – which is sometimes no more than procrastination – was given a degree of intellectual energy and credibility by his adviser [Dominic Cummings](#). He aggressively promoted his schemes for reshaping the civil service and the economy as a dose of realism, as a way for Britain to

belatedly adjust to the modern world. But their sheer ambitiousness and scale, the fact that they would take many years to carry out, meant that they were also a way of avoiding the government's difficulties in the present. And even after Cummings' disillusioned [departure from Downing Street](#) in 2020, the government's tendency to take refuge in the future lived on. Last autumn, Johnson [tried to present](#) the shortage of truck drivers and resulting supply-chain chaos as just bumps in the road on our journey to becoming a "high-wage economy".

Yet since then the future has become a much less reassuring place for him and the Tories. With the [police investigation into Partygate](#) continuing, the Sue Gray report coming, the cost of living crisis [worsening](#), the Conservatives behind in the polls, and his authority over the party loosening, the next few months at least look very perilous for Johnson – assuming he stays in Downing Street that long. And as his position weakens, so does the allure of his promises. There will probably still be plenty of big ones in the [Queen's speech next week](#) – a government that regularly calls its policies "world-beating" is unlikely ever to turn modest – but an air of unreality hangs over the programme of any premier whose days seem numbered.

As his future has darkened, Johnson has retreated into his other comfort zone: the distant past. In his [2014 book on Winston Churchill](#) – published when the premiership of his rival David Cameron seemed in trouble – Johnson's intellectually old-fashioned, unashamedly self-serving central argument was that "one man can make all the difference" in a crisis. Predictably, his response to the invasion of Ukraine has become ever more self-consciously Churchillian. This week he even deployed one of Churchill's most mythologised phrases from 1940, [telling the Ukrainian parliament](#) that their country's resistance to Russia was its "finest hour".

But unlike in 1940, Britain is not at war. While the government's handling of the Ukraine situation is one of the few parts of its performance that voters [broadly approve of](#), Johnson's Churchill impression has not lifted the government's overall poll position. Despite the efforts of Johnson and the tabloids, the second world war may simply be too long ago now for most voters to feel stirred when its British legends are invoked.

Unable to reference the past to any great effect, and no longer able to talk mainly about the future, Johnson has finally been forced to conduct his politics in the present. He is not finding it easy. With his upper-class airs and old-fashioned language – “humbug”, “piffle” – he has always been a retro politician, in some ways, but the widespread assumption has been that it’s all a skilful act. Yet it may be that much of contemporary Britain simply baffles him. This week, he appeared not to have heard of the famous [TV presenter Lorraine Kelly](#) or to know the difference between [Tyneside and Teesside](#) – not great when campaigning for local elections in a region that is supposed to be one of your government’s priorities.

Johnson seems trapped in the present in another sense as well: too damaged to dominate politics again, yet too lacking in obvious successors to be quickly ousted. Instead, surviving from one week to the next, playing for time, relying on elaborate parliamentary procedures, his political existence is beginning to resemble – with delicious irony – that of the beleaguered Commons remainers during the early months of his premiership, before the 2019 election. Then, Johnson treated their delaying tactics with contempt, as an obstruction of the will of the people; yet now he may be beginning to realise how they felt.

Prime ministers often age fast. But these days Johnson sometimes looks strikingly lined and pale – almost haunted. It could be the after-effects of Covid, or it could be a belated realisation, that in politics making lots of promises is ultimately not enough, however much your party and many journalists and voters want to believe them. As Cameron once said to Tony Blair, when the end of Blair’s premiership was in sight: “You were the future once.”

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist

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Opinion[Roe v Wade](#)

There's rage at this Roe v Wade mess – and those on the left who didn't see it coming

[Emma Brockes](#)



From anti-Hillary Democrats to Ruth Bader Ginsberg, who clung on at Supreme Court, unlikely targets are being identified for blame



Elizabeth Warren: ‘I am angry... The Republicans have been working towards this day for decades.’ Photograph: Alex Brandon/AP

Fri 6 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 10.43 EDT

After the initial shock, the blame. On Monday, when [news broke](#) of the leaked US supreme court draft opinion overturning Roe v Wade, millions of horrified Americans sought emotional release. “[I am angry](#),” said Elizabeth Warren, voice shaking, leading a pack of reporters straight over a flowerbed outside the supreme court. Her face ignited with rage as she reminded them that [69% of Americans](#) are against overturning the abortion legislation. “The Republicans have been working towards this day for decades,” she said. In the background, a man shouted, “You want to dismember children in the womb!”

For many of us, that man – the you-want-to-kill-babies guy – and his ilk were not the first target for righteous abuse. It’s hard, in moments of duress, to get much satisfaction from reiterating an existing and long-held revulsion, particularly when its subject is beyond reasonable reach. When considering the rightwing architects of this moment, there was no “what if” in attendance; all the what ifs belonged to the left. Political purists who in 2016 urged Democrats to avoid voting for Hillary Clinton (hi, [Susan Sarandon](#)) were the first in line, and social media echoed to the sound of, “We told you this would happen.”

Sacrificing the good in pursuit of the better and winding up with the absolute worst – a dynamic as familiar to British as to American leftwing politics – was, in this moment of horror, a more enraging consideration than flat hatred of the right. From revived outrage at the Bernie bros, it was a quick descent into rage against various champions of the left. “You know who I blame for this?” said a friend. “Ruth Bader Ginsburg.” The late supreme court justice’s vanity in hanging on to her seat, her overconfidence that Clinton would win, her refusal to listen to warnings from the Obama White House that, should the unthinkable happen and the Republicans regain the presidency, the first casualty would be [Roe v Wade](#) – her fundamental enjoyment, one assumed, of being RBG when she could have ceded her seat to an Obama appointee – twisted us up into pretzels. I love Ginsburg, so all this had about it the extra and extremely female zing of self-harm.

Oh, and Clinton wasn’t off the hook either. “If she’d bothered to campaign in Michigan,” said another friend sourly, “none of this would’ve happened.” All the terrible, bad-tempered fights of that election flew back up into the air, like a water column after a bomb. The only Republican who came in for similar ire was that idiot Susan Collins, senator from Maine, a supporter of abortion rights who had nonetheless voted in line with her party to confirm both Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh to the supreme court. Both had assured her, she said at the time, that they wouldn’t go after Roe v Wade. Shocked! [Shocked, she was](#), this week to discover these were not men of their word.

Of course, all this fury was mere displacement for the fundamental truth that rightwing forces were smarter, more organised, disciplined and talented in prosecuting a digestible narrative – “don’t kill babies” – than the fractured and dissembling left. Progressives tried to rally towards concrete solutions. There were things to be done – in the first instance, register to vote. (After less than a year of citizenship, I hadn’t. This weekend, I will). There was the call for fundraising. Celebrities started [throwing around \\$10,000](#) matching donations to anyone giving to local abortion funds.

And both Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders, as well as senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer, hyped the necessity of [codifying Roe v Wade](#) in Congress, a move backed by President Biden that would enshrine the right to abortion in federal law irrespective of actions taken by

the supreme court. It sounds good, and has the advantage of generating political action. But it is also a long shot, a case of last-resort measures, and too little too late. Earlier this year, Democrats tried to codify Roe, and while it passed the House it [failed in the Senate](#), overcome by a filibuster. (Then “we must end the filibuster”, tweeted Sanders. None of this can happen quickly, if at all.)

The fact is that if, as Warren said, the Republicans had been planning this moment for decades, rigging composition of the supreme court with precisely this endgame in mind, there was, irrespective of the scale of public outrage, no immediate way to turn back. In this first week of shock, before anger might become effectively organised, there was only the tiny compensation of the blame spiral.

- Emma Brockes 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

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[SportblogSoccer](#)

Football must do more to tackle climate change: this is how clubs and fans can help

Barney Weston

We are in ‘Fergie time’ when it comes to reducing our carbon footprint but it is not too late to chart a path to sustainability



Carlisle’s Brunton Park flooded in 2015 due to a storm likely caused by climate change. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

Fri 6 May 2022 03.00 EDT

Climate change is a defining global issue, and football is not exempt. Roughly a quarter of England’s 92 league clubs [could be regularly flooded within the next three decades](#), and the average grassroots pitch in England already loses five weeks a season to bad weather. Sport is also a significant

contributor to climate change, with an estimated global carbon footprint the equivalent size of Tunisia's – and that is at the low end of estimates.

It's tempting to ask fans to reduce our carbon bootprint – but how can we use public transport on matchdays, when it's often too expensive and sometimes unavailable? There were no trains running from the [north-west to Wembley](#) when Liverpool and Manchester City competed in the FA Cup semi-final. The FA provided 100 buses, enough for 5,000 fans.

There is merit to meat-free food options, but it's a half-baked solution when the energy used to heat pies and light stadiums isn't even from a renewable source. It's unhelpful to expect perfection – but we must push for better.

When the government announced a fan-led review of English football governance, "securing the game's future", colleagues and I expected environmental sustainability to be acknowledged. While awareness of the link between football and climate change is low, a recent YouGov survey found concern for the environment [is at an all-time high among the British public.](#)

The fan-led review references financial sustainability as "clearly the single most important factor" in the context of the challenges facing English football – but does not make a single reference to environmental sustainability or climate change.

Climate change poses a serious financial risk to English football. Just ask Carlisle, who were forced out of their stadium by Storm Desmond for seven weeks at a cost of almost £3m. The club's chief executive, Nigel Clibbens, has [since become an active advocate for action](#), recently quoting scientific studies that Desmond was 59% more likely to occur because of climate change.

However, environmental sustainability in English football presents a great opportunity. Clubs can make financial savings by eliminating energy inefficiencies and upgrading to environmentally sustainable infrastructure. They can also attract unique sponsors – another attractive form of income. For evidence, look no further than Forest Green Rovers, [verified by the UN](#)

as “the world’s most sustainable club” and recently promoted to League One.



Forest Green have combined being the world's most sustainable football club with success on the pitch. Photograph: Shane Healey/ProSports/Shutterstock

The government has now committed to publishing a white paper in the summer – this will be their plan for how to implement the 10 recommendations set out in the fan-led review. The white paper must address the link between financial and environmental sustainability. As the review states, EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) “should form a strong pillar of good corporate governance”.

Why can't we take the same attitude with environmental sustainability? Let's ask clubs to develop environmental sustainability action plans – and ask an independent football regulator to supervise and educate clubs on how to become more environmentally sustainable.

It would be in line with another of the fan-led review's recommendations, “improving supporter engagement in the running of their clubs”. A recent survey of 1,400 football fans revealed over 90% agreed on the importance of protecting the environment and fighting climate change.

The Football Supporters Association (FSA) – a key contributor to the fan-led review – have acted with this in mind. They are partnered with Pledgeball, which rallies football fans to tackle climate change. At their recent AGM the FSA set an aim for all clubs to develop and publish sustainability policies, and for all clubs to invite external assessors to measure their environmental performance by the start of next season. Could the government help make club sustainability policies and detailed carbon bootprints publicly available? Fans cannot hold their clubs accountable without public records.

The Fiver: sign up and get our daily football email.

Owners and directors can also help tackle climate change. A new owners' and directors' test not only has the chance to identify unsuitable individuals, but also to identify more-than-suitable individuals with experience embedding environmental sustainability in organisational culture. A top-down approach could combat the risk climate change poses to English football, and meet the bottom-up efforts of club staff who are already concerned about climate change and attempting to tackle it in their day-to-day work.

Combined, these efforts could unlock the potential of English football tackling climate change: our national game trailblazing an environmentally sustainable transition to global net zero, supporting other sports and industries to follow suit. Let's apply the fan-led review's recommendations to climate change and build them into the white paper. When it comes to taking the necessary steps we're in "Fergie time", but it's not too late.

Barney Weston is co-director of [Football For Future](#), a new non-profit organisation with a mission to build a more environmentally sustainable culture in football

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2022/may/06/football-must-do-more-to-tackle-climate-change-this-is-how-clubs-and-fans-can-help>

[Opinion](#)[Cost of living crisis](#)

‘Don’t tax energy giants – they invest in Britain’s future.’ Let’s drill down into that

[Tessa Khan](#)

North Sea developments aren’t about lowering bills or securing energy supplies – they’re just business as usual



‘BP wants to invest in extending its Clair field – by seeking approval for its Clair South project – but the oil it contains is unlikely end up in Britain.’
Photograph: Stuart Conway/PA

Fri 6 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 16.44 EDT

The image of Elsie, the 77-year-old pensioner whom Good Morning Britain’s Susanna Reid used as an example when [interviewing Boris Johnson](#) about the cost of living crisis on Tuesday, was shocking. Having to eat just one meal a day and riding on buses to avoid putting on the heating on at

home: it's morally – and politically – indefensible. Just imagine the extreme measures people will be taking come autumn, when temperatures drop and energy bills rise yet again.

According to Reid, Elsie's energy bills have risen from £17 a month to £85 a month. Meanwhile, the energy company BP just announced underlying quarterly profits of nearly £5bn; Shell's profits are likely to be similarly huge. Asked whether he would countenance taking some of the profits from oil giants like BP and Shell to help people such as Elsie, Johnson said: "If you put a windfall tax on the energy companies, what that means is that you discourage them from making the investments that we want to see."

The energy lobby claims that the industry will invest £20bn on UK projects to extract oil and gas between now and 2026 to generate UK energy security. Leaving aside for one moment the irrefutable climate imperative to keep new oil and gas in the ground, will the British public really get a secure supply of affordable energy from this "investment", as Johnson seems to believe?

In short: no. According to research by Uplift, the campaign organisation I direct, three-quarters of this planned "investment" – 72% – is in North Sea oil (as opposed to gas) fields, and the majority of this oil – 80% – will probably be shipped abroad. Investing in these oilfields will reap huge profits for the energy companies that hold the licences to these areas, but will do little to secure energy supplies for UK households.

Just look at BP's huge Clair oilfield, off the coast of Shetland (near the site of Shell's Cambo field). BP wants to invest in extending this field – by seeking approval for its Clair South project – but the oil it contains is unlikely to end up in Britain: as noted, the UK exports most of its oil.

Last week, the business secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, was full of praise for BP's plans to extend another, smaller field, Murlach, tweeting: "I'd much rather we source more of our gas domestically." But we have calculated that the majority – 80% – of Murlach's small reserves are, again, oil, most probably for export, with a relatively small amount of gas. Most of what's

left in the North Sea is oil. These developments aren't about providing UK energy security, they're simply business for oil and gas companies.

But what of the investment these companies are making in the UK's renewable energy supply, which – unlike oil and gas supplies – actually would lead to lower energy bills? Harbour Energy, the biggest operator in the North Sea, has explicitly ruled out investment in renewables in the near future, citing instead its net-zero strategy and involvement in UK carbon capture and storage projects, a technology that has so far failed to work at scale in other parts of the world.

Of the 49 current oil and gas producers in the North Sea, only 11 companies also generate renewable energy in the UK. Even this doesn't mean that the power they produce reaches UK households, though: some produce electricity solely for powering oil and gas infrastructure. The UK public gain nothing from this.

Is this the kind of investment the prime minister wants to see more of? Precious little or no renewable energy production, and lots of drilling for oil for export by companies that have paid the UK zero corporation tax in their North Sea operation in recent years? Last year, the government produced a plan – the North Sea Transition Deal – that failed to include any binding targets on the industry to either reduce its emissions or invest in renewable energy.

Last month's energy security strategy was another gift to the industry. It doubled down on new oil and gas drilling, announcing a new round of oil and gas licences and a process to speed up the approval of new projects, such as Cambo, Clair South and Shell's Jackdaw gas field. According to Friends of the Earth Scotland, if approved, Jackdaw would provide only about 1% to 2% of UK gas demand over its lifetime but the same amount of pollution as half of Scotland's annual emissions. The government's energy strategy came just three days after the IPCC issued its starkest warning yet that existing and planned fossil fuel infrastructure will push us past the limits for a livable climate.

New domestic oil and gas production will have, at best, a marginal effect on UK energy bills. It won't provide a secure and, crucially, affordable supply of energy. What it will do is ensure that the fossil fuel industry can keep cashing in on oil and gas from the North Sea, while millions of households struggle to pay spiralling bills. If ever there was a moment for the government to side with the public over a handful of wealthy oil and gas companies, it's now.

- Tessa Khan is a climate lawyer and director of Uplift UK
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US Capitol attack

Rudy Giuliani backs out of interview with Capitol attack committee

Former Trump lawyer was expected to appear at the interview on Friday, but canceled when the panel denied his request to record it



Giuliani's no-show could mean the committee will not secure documents and testimony from a central figure. Photograph: Jacquelyn Martin/AP

[Hugo Lowell](#) in Washington DC

Thu 5 May 2022 20.53 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 21.54 EDT

Donald Trump's former attorney [Rudy Giuliani](#) is not expected to appear at an interview scheduled for Friday with the House select committee investigating the January 6 Capitol attack, throwing into jeopardy the prospect of his cooperation, say sources familiar with the matter.

The move by Giuliani to cancel his appearance after the panel declined his request to record the interview means it may not secure documents and testimony from a central figure in [Trump's](#) efforts to overturn the 2020 election in time for public hearings in June.

Giuliani was expected to have revealed his contacts with Republican members of Congress and other matters not covered by executive privilege or attorney-client privilege as part of a cooperation deal that his lawyer had been negotiating for months, the sources said.

The former attorney to the president had also indicated to the select committee that he was prepared to turn over materials about Trump's schemes to return himself to office on January 6 that House investigators had outlined in [a subpoena issued earlier this year](#).

But, as the Guardian first reported in February, [Giuliani told the panel](#) he would only appear for an interview if it was not pursuant to that subpoena – in part because he considered the investigation illegal – and does not have to violate any claims of privilege.

The select committee has conceded that Giuliani cannot violate privilege, the sources said, making a deal attractive to Giuliani, who can avoid being held in contempt of Congress by providing information the panel could not otherwise get – while also not giving up Trump.

But that delicate arrangement appeared to fall apart on Thursday, after Giuliani also asked to record the interview to ensure he might not be caught in a perjury trap in a potential subsequent investigation, according to another source close to Giuliani.

The no-show by Giuliani could also presage the breakdown of the entire cooperation deal, the source said, and Giuliani is expected to wait for the panel's response to decide next steps. Giuliani may reschedule the interview if the impasse is resolved.

“Giuliani is an important witness to the conspiracy to overthrow the government and he remains under subpoena,” a spokesperson for the select

committee said. “If he refuses to comply, the committee will consider all enforcement options.”

House investigators have been particularly determined to get the cooperation from Giuliani, one of Trump’s closest advisers involved in efforts to overturn the 2020 election from the very start – and could provide unique insights into the events of January 6.

Giuliani could speak to events such as a 18 December 2020 meeting in the Oval Office where [Trump reviewed a draft executive order](#) to seize voting machines and verbally agreed to install conspiracy theorist Sidney Powell as special counsel to investigate election fraud.

The Guardian has reported that Giuliani then led the [Trump “war room” at the Willard hotel](#) in Washington DC when Trump called from the White House and discussed ways to stop Biden’s certification – and could speak to non-privileged elements of the plan.

The cooperation deal would also technically involve Giuliani turning over documents in addition to appearing before the select committee, the sources said, but the logistics were unclear given the FBI last year seized his devices that he used on January 6.

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Australian election 2022

Australia election: climate and cost of living in focus as leaders stumble

Labor hope to end a decade in opposition by ousting Scott Morrison's government on 21 May, but independents have grabbed most attention



Australia's Labor opposition leader Anthony Albanese (left) and the prime minister, Scott Morrison. Composite: Lukas Coch | AAP & Mick Tsikas | AAP



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Fri 6 May 2022 04.49 EDT Last modified on Fri 6 May 2022 11.33 EDT

Two weeks out from Australia's 21 May election, cost of living pressures and the rising prominence of independent pro-climate action candidates have made the future of the country's prime minister, [Scott Morrison](#), increasingly uncertain.

Just past the halfway stage of the election campaign, multiple newspapers have released polls pointing to a slight advantage for Anthony Albanese's Labor opposition over the conservative Coalition comprising the Liberal party under Morrison and the rural-based National party.

However, the polls failed to predict Morrison's [narrow win in 2019](#), and support for both major parties is in decline, leaving several outcomes open, including the prospect of a hung parliament.

Morrison's task is to [retain the 76 seats the Coalition currently holds](#) – the minimum required to form government in a parliament of 151 – which would extend Labor's run of losing elections to four, stretching back to 2013. He has hopes of picking up some Labor marginals, particularly in

New South Wales, but also faces threats from a well organised group of independents in generally wealthy inner-city seats who are demanding more urgent action on climate.

So far, the campaign has been rocky for both leaders.

The campaign began shortly after revelations that members of Morrison's government, including the deputy prime minister and National party leader, Barnaby Joyce, [had called him a liar](#), both publicly and privately.

Morrison has since endured sustained criticism from Labor over Australia's disintegrating relationship with the Solomon Islands after the Pacific nation [signed a security pact with Beijing](#) that blindsided the Australian government.

On Tuesday, the Reserve Bank of Australia raised its cash rate for the first time since 2010, prompting the country's four largest banks to [immediately raise their interest rates](#), after alarming figures released the previous week showed inflation rising at double the pace of wages.

Having campaigned for weeks on cost-of-living issues, hoping to reinforce the traditional strength of the [Coalition](#) on economic management, Morrison was quick to dissociate the bank's decision from his policies, blaming overseas events beyond his control.

Labor seized on the rate rise, as it unveiled a policy to help lower income Australians break into the investor-driven housing market, whereby the government would take a 40% stake in a house to ease mortgage sizes.



Anthony Albanese, centre, campaigns with two local candidates on the NSW Central Coast. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

Albanese, coming out of a week of Covid isolation at his home in Sydney, travelled to Western Australia to officially launch his party's campaign, and later to Queensland, in a week where he was joined by the premiers of Labor-led states whose popularity surged as a result of tight domestic border controls during the pandemic.

Albanese, who has made much of his upbringing as the child of a single mother in Sydney public housing, is a party stalwart from Labor's left faction, although far from a radical firebrand. A near-fatal car crash near his home last year made him refocus his life, he says, and he has since made a point of his healthier diet and lifestyle, while acceding to superficial image changes. But he has struggled to inject inspiration into Labor's campaign, which has kept its policy offering to a minimum after the [ambitious program of his predecessor](#), Bill Shorten, was [effectively torn down by Morrison](#) at the 2019 election.

But the Coalition is fighting on more than one front, thanks to the [so-called “teal independents”](#) – candidates running in traditionally safe Liberal party seats on a strong climate action platform, some backed by substantial funds from the Climate 200 organisation. Many have adopted the colours pioneered

by former winter Olympian Zali Steggall, [who ousted the former prime minister Tony Abbott](#) from his Sydney seat of Warringah at the last election, the teal nodding both to the traditional Liberal blue and their green credentials.

Several seats in affluent areas of Sydney, Melbourne and Perth appear vulnerable to independents, according to polling, threatening the political career of prominent moderate Liberal MPs, including the Treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, [in the traditionally rock-solid Liberal seat of Kooyong](#), in Melbourne.

Rather than shift policy to appeal to moderate Liberals concerned about climate, Morrison has focused on voters in outer metropolitan, regional and mining seats, [some former Labor strongholds](#), others held by the Nationals.

Morrison went on the attack this week, criticising the other pillar of the teal independent platform – calls for a robust federal anti-corruption watchdog – [as potentially leading to a “public autocracy”](#).

Morrison has also resisted calls to disendorse Katherine Deves, the candidate he hand-picked to challenge the independent Steggall. Deves has been revealed to have [made controversial comments about transgender women playing sport](#), using Holocaust comparisons to make her point. Morrison’s stance again seems likely to further alienate voters in some of the seats being challenged by independents.

Morrison has warned voters that electing these candidates could result in a hung parliament, and that a future minority government would be hampered in its ability to pass legislation without ceding to the independents’ demands.

On Friday, the former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull, who was ousted as Liberal leader in 2018 and ultimately replaced by Morrison, said voting for the teal independents could thwart [the “capture” of the Liberal party](#) by its conservative wing.

Elsewhere, leaders have stumbled over seemingly more straightforward blocks.

Albanese was unable to name the unemployment and interest rates on the first day of the campaign, and then struggled to explain Labor's disability policy when pressed by journalists.

The leader of the Greens, Adam Bandt, won some kudos for telling a journalist who asked what the obscure wage price index was, to “Google it, mate”.

Most bizarre of all was Morrison, who posted an image to his Facebook page on Sunday night of curries he had prepared for his family – a well-worn tactic he has used to promote his brand as a regular suburban dad spending time with his family.

“Strong curry. Strong economy. Stronger future,” the caption read.

The image showed an extremely pale looking chicken korma, with an alarmingly pinkish chunk of meat, triggering an onslaught of negative comments.

Morrison defending his cooking skills, telling one radio station the photograph was misleading: “People went back for seconds. It was just the way the light bounced off the skin of the chicken.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/may/06/australia-election-climate-and-cost-of-living-scott-morrison-anthony-albanese>

[Louisiana](#)

Louisiana Republicans advance bill to make abortion a crime of murder

Since supreme court draft ruling was published, Democrats have warned of a likely torrent of challenges to established rights



The Republican House minority whip, Steve Scalise, speaks to anti-abortion activists outside the US supreme court in Washington DC on 1 December 2021. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York

[@MartinPengelly](#)

Thu 5 May 2022 13.50 EDT Last modified on Thu 5 May 2022 17.22 EDT

Republicans in Louisiana have [advanced](#) a bill to make abortion a crime of murder, as a draft decision that would end abortion rights continues to spark nationwide protests and police in Washington raised “[non-scalable](#)” fences around the supreme court.

Supporters admitted the bill, under which a woman terminating a pregnancy or anyone assisting her could be charged, was unconstitutional – as long as Roe v Wade was law.

The supreme court is expected to formally overturn [Roe v Wade](#), the 1973 case which established the right to abortion, in June.

Danny McCormick, the state representative behind the [Louisiana](#) bill, said: “We can’t wait on the supreme court.”

Since the draft ruling that seems set to overturn [Roe](#) was published by [Politico](#) on Monday night, Democrats have warned of a likely torrent of challenges to established rights.

Joe Biden has sounded the alarm about threats to privacy-based rights including the rights to contraception ([Griswold v Connecticut, 1965](#)) and to same-sex marriage ([Obergefell v Hodges, 2015](#)). The president also raised the prospect of attacks on the [teaching](#) of LGBTQ+ children.

On Wednesday, Biden said [Republicans](#) pushing such cases constituted “the most extreme political organisation … in recent American history”.

The same day in Texas, the Republican governor [raised](#) the possibility of challenging a 1982 ruling which said states must provide free education to all children, including those of undocumented migrants.

“I think we will resurrect that case and challenge this issue again,” Greg Abbott said.

Abbott is a prominent figure on the hard right of that Republican party, with rumoured presidential ambitions.

Undocumented migration is a key issue in his re-election fight against Beto O’Rourke, a former congressman, and a central part of the national Republican party’s [approach to midterm elections](#) in which they are favoured to take back Congress.

Abbott was speaking to the [conservative radio host Joe Pagliarulo](#).

Pagliarulo said: “We’re talking about public tax dollars, public property tax dollars going to fund these schools to teach children who are five, six, seven, 10 years old, who don’t even have remedial English skills. This is a real burden on communities. What can you do about that?”

Abbott said: “The challenges put on our public systems is extraordinary. Texas already long ago sued the federal government about having to incur the costs of the education program, in a case called [Plyler v Doe](#).

“And the supreme court ruled against us on the issue about denying, or let’s say Texas having to bear that burden. I think we will resurrect that case and challenge this issue again, because the expenses are extraordinary and the times are different than when *Plyler v Doe* was issued many decades ago.”

Most progressive concern has focused on rulings which protect privacy rights, among them [Lawrence v Texas \(2003\)](#), which said it was unconstitutional to make gay sex a crime.

Charles Kaiser, a leading historian of gay life in the US, said the draft Roe opinion “so blithely disregards past precedents, it could suggest a willingness to overturn previous court decisions enshrining certain fundamental rights for LGBTQ+ people.

“One passage in particular set off alarm bells for activists who think its reasoning could jeopardise the court’s decisions legalising sodomy and the right of members of the same sex to marry.”

The conservative justice Samuel Alito, Kaiser said, “cited those decisions and denigrated them by saying they used criteria ‘which at a higher level of generality could license fundamental rights to rights to illicit drug use, prostitution, and the like’”.

Speaking [to Bloomberg Law](#), Cynthia Soohoo, co-director of the Human Rights and Gender Justice Clinic at the City University of New York, said: “The same arguments that Justice Alito makes against recognising constitutional protection for abortion can be made about … the right to access contraception.”

Katherine Franke, director of the Center for Gender and Sexuality Law at Columbia University, told the same site: “Once you kick out the stilts underneath Roe there’s nothing to rest those other decisions on.

“There’s no constitutional foundation for the Lawrence decision saying that criminalising same-sex sex is unconstitutional, or the Obergefell decision that says same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry.”

On the far right, Peter Brimelow, the founder of the VDare nativist website whom the New York Times has [linked](#) to the Fox News host Tucker Carlson, was [reported](#) to have greeted news of the draft Roe ruling by writing: “Next stop Brown vs Board!”

That was a reference to [Brown v Board of Education](#), the 1954 case which ended racial segregation in public schools.

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