



# The Guardian

卫报

2021.05.17 - 2021.05.19

- [Headlines wednesday 19 may 2021](#)
- [2021.05.19 - Coronavirus](#)
- [2021.05.19 - Spotlight](#)
- [2021.05.19 - Opinion](#)
- [2021.05.19 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines tuesday 18 may 2021](#)
- [2021.05.18 - Coronavirus](#)
- [2021.05.18 - Spotlight](#)
- [2021.05.18 - Opinion](#)
- [2021.05.18 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines monday 17 may 2021](#)
- [2021.05.17 - Coronavirus](#)
- [2021.05.17 - Spotlight](#)
- [2021.05.17 - Opinion](#)
- [2021.05.17 - Around the world](#)

## Headlines wednesday 19 may 2021

- [Coronavirus Pandemic laid bare existing weaknesses in UK government, says NAO](#)
- ['Double whammy' Climate crisis to put millions of British homes at risk of subsiding](#)
- [Israel-Gaza conflict France adds to ceasefire pressure on US as violence rages](#)
- ['There is no safe place' Israel airstrikes hitting affluent heart of Gaza](#)
- [Day of anger Clashes in Jerusalem and West Bank amid protests and strikes](#)
- [Guardian morning briefing Dominic Cummings teases Covid document drop. Get up to speed quickly](#)
- [Hospitals UK NHS trusts accused of burying dozens of patient safety reports](#)
- [Trump Organization New York investigation is now criminal matter, says attorney general](#)
- [Daniel Morgan Anger as Priti Patel delays publication of report into private detective's murder](#)
- [Tobacco industry BAT and Imperial ask London court to strike out Malawi exploitation case](#)
- ['Moral authority' Nancy Pelosi calls for US diplomatic boycott of Beijing Winter Olympics](#)
- [Alcohol Any amount harmful to the brain, finds study](#)
- [Unexploded bombs 100 shells found in Solomon Islands yard by man digging hole for septic system](#)

## [Coronavirus](#)

# Covid laid bare existing weaknesses in UK government, says NAO

Report highlights data failings, workforce shortages and disconnect between health and social care

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Boris Johnson during a media briefing on Covid in January 2021. Johnson told reporters on Tuesday he saw no conclusive evidence to delay the full reopening of the economy on 21 June. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/AP

Boris Johnson during a media briefing on Covid in January 2021. Johnson told reporters on Tuesday he saw no conclusive evidence to delay the full reopening of the economy on 21 June. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/AP

[Peter Walker](#) and [Jessica Elgot](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 19.01 EDT

Coronavirus has exposed decades-long weaknesses in government and divisions in wider society, an official parliamentary watchdog has said, including neglect of social care and chronic underfunding in local government.

Amid renewed questions over the reopening timetable, the National Audit Office (NAO) warned that from the very start of the pandemic a lack of planning had left ministers without a “playbook” on how to respond.

In the report released on Wednesday that pulls together lessons from more than a dozen more sector-specific reports into the handling of Covid, the NAO said the virus “laid bare existing fault lines within society, such as the risk of widening inequalities, and within public service delivery and government itself”.

Coronavirus had “stress-tested the government’s ability to deal with unforeseen events”, said Gareth Davies, the head of the NAO, noting that it had shown the need for government to be “systematic” in planning for emergencies, and to learn lessons at speed.

Boris Johnson has told his cabinet that he [intends to proceed with the roadmap](#) for lifting England’s lockdown despite concerns over a new coronavirus variant, but said the government would monitor the data over the coming days.

Timeline

## **How England's Covid lockdown is being lifted**

Show

8 March 2021

Step 1, part 1

In effect from 8 March, all pupils and college students returned fully. Care home residents could receive one regular, named visitor.

29 March 2021

Step 1, part 2

In effect from 29 March, outdoor gatherings allowed of up to six people, or two households if this is larger, not just in parks but also gardens. Outdoor sport for children and adults allowed. The official stay at home order ended, but people encouraged to stay local. People still asked to work from home where possible, with no overseas travel allowed beyond the current small number of exceptions.

12 April 2021

Step 2

In effect from 12 April, non-essential retail, hair and nail salons, and some public buildings such as libraries and commercial art galleries reopened. Most outdoor venues can reopen, including pubs and restaurants, but only for outdoor tables and beer gardens. Customers will have to be seated but there will be no need to have a meal with alcohol.

Also reopen are settings such as zoos and theme parks. However, social contact rules still apply here, so no indoor mixing between households and limits on outdoor mixing. Indoor leisure facilities such as gyms and pools can also open, but again people can only go alone or with their own household. Reopening of holiday lets with no shared facilities is also allowed, but only for one household. Funerals can have up to 30 attendees, while weddings, receptions and wakes can have 15.

17 May 2021

Step 3

From 17 May people can be able to meet indoors in groups of up to six or as two households, or outdoors in groups of up to 30 people. People can also choose whether to socially distance with close family and friends, meaning that they can sit close together and hug. In care homes, residents can have up to five named visitors and be entitled to make low risk visits out of the home.

People can meet in private homes, or in pubs, bars and restaurants, which will all be able to reopen indoors. Weddings, receptions and other life events can take place with up to 30 people. The cap on numbers attending funerals will depend on the size of the venue.

Most forms of indoor entertainment where social distancing is possible will also be able to resume, including cinemas, museums and children's play areas. Theatres, concert halls, conference centres and sports stadia will have capacity limits in place.

Organised adult sport and exercise classes can resume indoors and saunas and steam rooms will reopen. Hotels, hostels and B&Bs in the UK will allow overnight stays in groups of up to six people or two households.

People will also be able to travel to a small number of [countries on the green list](#) and will not have to quarantine on return.

Pupils will no longer be expected to wear face coverings in classrooms or in communal areas in secondary schools and colleges as a result of decreasing infection rates. Twice weekly home testing will remain in place. School trips with overnight stays will also now be possible.

21 June 2021

Step 4

No earlier than 21 June, all legal limits will be removed on mixing, and the last sectors to remain closed, such as nightclubs, will reopen. Large events can take place. However, the prime minister has said that the rise of the B.1.617.2 variant of coronavirus first detected in India [may threaten this date](#).

**Peter Walker** *Political correspondent* and **Rachel Hall**

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

The prime minister told reporters on Tuesday he saw no conclusive evidence to delay the full reopening of the economy on 21 June, though sources have suggested it may not be as comprehensive a lifting of restrictions as [previously billed](#).

“I don't see anything conclusive at the moment to say that we need to deviate from the roadmap,” Johnson said, adding that more would be known



“in a few days’ time.”

A number of cabinet ministers are understood to be reluctant to allow the roadmap to slip unless there is compelling evidence that the spread of the variant could pose a threat to NHS capacity. A Whitehall source said ministers were keeping their counsel while a few more days of data is analysed.

One cabinet source said they expected government to throw “the kitchen sink” at hotspot areas to try to stem the spread of the new variant, expected to become the dominant variant within days. Another cabinet minister said the next few days would be “a race against the virus.”

The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, is understood to be keen to proceed with the roadmap as planned but is prepared to be convinced otherwise if the data is overwhelming.

[‘We are ecstatic!’: a taste of post-Covid freedom at Liverpool pilot gig](#)  
[Read more](#)

Other ministers with a particular vested interest in keeping to the 21 June plan if possible include Oliver Dowden, with his culture department in daily talks with sports organisations, theatre owners and others about whether a long-anticipated return of crowds can still happen.

Theatres have given the message that it is “bums on seats or bust” for their profession, a source said, adding: “We completely understand that plans might have to change, but it’s also important to know that we can’t keep the sort of emergency support we’ve offered to the sector going into the long term. Part of our job is to set out the case that more delay could mean the end for some venues.”

Johnson is charged with making the call on whether to proceed with the roadmap, with intense scrutiny over the early weeks of the pandemic, and the charge he allowed the B.1.617.2 variant to establish itself in the UK by delaying curbing arrivals from India, jeopardising a planned summer timetable for reopening the economy.



The NAO report highlighted the need for long-term solutions across areas including the disconnect between adult social care and the NHS, failings in data and IT systems, workforce shortages and ongoing monetary shortfalls, with a warning that already-struggling local government finances had been “scarred by the pandemic”.

The report also collated the total government extra spend on Covid-related measures, putting it at an estimated £372bn by the end of this March, taking in the full lifetime of all policies.

Johnson’s former senior adviser Dominic Cummings is also expected to lay out his view of the early weeks of the pandemic next Wednesday when he appears before a parliamentary committee which is also examining the lessons of the pandemic.

In [a Twitter thread](#), Cummings argued that the early process had been over-secretive, and promised to release what he described as “a crucial historical document from Covid decision-making”.

The NAO report laid out wider failures in planning for a pandemic, noting that Exercise Cygnus, a 2016 modelling of a flu-based outbreak, did not properly consider the issue of shielding clinically vulnerable people. “Government lacked a playbook for many aspects of its response,” the report concluded.

This led to gaps in data, it found, saying that when it was decided last spring that clinically vulnerable people should shield, it took three weeks to identify more than 400,000 of them because of the “challenge of extracting usable data from different NHS and GP IT systems”.

[A GP's verdict on the shielding list: 'It's been really complicated'](#)  
[Read more](#)

On social care, a lack of integration between care services and the NHS “has been challenging for decades”, the report said, citing 12 government consultations and five independent reviews in the past 20 years.

An impact of this was a better response to the pandemic for health services than for care. From March to July last year, NHS trusts received 80% of their estimated requirements for protective equipment, with the equivalent figure for care providers being just 10%, the NAO said.

It also set out the effects of underfunding, often due to a decade of austerity policies, in areas including councils, the NHS and social care.

The NAO also highlighted findings from its earlier reports about staffing shortages, with 11% vacancy rates in nursing just before the pandemic, and one-third of social care providers saying they needed extra staff.

Jonathan Ashworth, the shadow health secretary, said Covid had “exposed the NHS and social care to extreme pressure like never before”.

He said: “We entered the pandemic with a weakened NHS with growing waiting list, fewer beds and desperately short of staff. We cannot afford to repeat the same mistakes. We need both an NHS rescue plan to bring waiting lists down and a plan for social care reform. Our NHS and care system cannot be left exposed in the same way again.”

A government spokesperson said: “Throughout the pandemic, our approach has been guided by data and the advice of scientific and medical experts. As new evidence emerged, we acted quickly and decisively to protect lives and livelihoods.

“We have committed to a full public independent inquiry to look at what lessons we can learn from our response to this unprecedented global challenge.”

## [Climate change](#)

# Climate crisis to put millions of British homes at risk of subsiding

Drier summers mean the ground in vulnerable areas will be more prone to shrink and crack, scientists say



The key areas affected are London, Essex, Kent and a swathe of land from Oxford up to the Wash. Photograph: David Bagnall/Alamy Stock Photo

The key areas affected are London, Essex, Kent and a swathe of land from Oxford up to the Wash. Photograph: David Bagnall/Alamy Stock Photo

[Damian Carrington](#) *Environment editor*

[@dpcarrington](#)

Wed 19 May 2021 01.00 EDT

The climate crisis is very likely to put millions of homes at increased risk of subsidence, according to [new data](#) from the British Geological Survey

(BGS). The hotter and drier summers being driven by global heating mean the ground under houses will shrink and crack, scientists said.

The key areas affected are London, Essex, Kent, and a swathe of land from Oxford up to the Wash. This is because the clay formations underlying these areas are most vulnerable to losing moisture.

In a medium scenario for future emissions, the area of Great Britain that is highly or extremely likely to see increased risk of clay-related subsidence increases by a third from 2020 to 2030 and triples by 2050.

The projections are similar in a separate high emissions scenario, but this dataset allows the number of homes at risk of subsidence to be calculated. About a million homes were at risk in 1990 and this rises to 2.4m in 2030 and 4m in 2070. London is the most affected, with nearly half of the capital's homes at increased risk in 2030 and 57% in 2070, according to BGS.

“It is a very clear message that repeats in both projections,” said Anna Harrison, at BGS. “The south-east gets a double whammy, in that they’ve got susceptible geology and much drier, warmer summers are projected there.”

The subsidence risk projections could be used as a planning tool, she said, to highlight areas where the foundations of new houses may need to be deeper to avoid future problems. Subsidence is estimated to have cost £3bn in the last decade.

“Dry weather and high temperatures are going to be a major factor in the emergence of future shrink-swell subsidence,” said Lee Jones, a geological engineer at BGS. “The longer drought you get, and the higher the temperature is, the more moisture that’s going to be driven off.”

“In the south-east, many of the clay formations are too young to have been changed into stronger mud rocks, leaving them vulnerable to absorb and lose moisture,” he said.

BGS produced the projections by combining geotechnical information on potential ground movements with data on long-term rainfall and temperature scenarios.

['Our house fell apart – but our insurer won't pay the full amount'](#)  
[Read more](#)

“It’s advisable for those living in an area showing an increased susceptibility under future climate conditions to seek specialist advice before starting any major building work,” said Jones.

“Other steps property owners can take is to be [aware of the effects](#) of laying impermeable drives and paths, and of planting or removing trees close to properties, which can all have an impact on soil moisture profiles,” he said.

Subsidence can lead to increased insurance premiums, depressed house prices and in some cases, require engineering work to stabilise land or property and the replacement of utility pipeworks.

The London boroughs most likely to have increased subsidence risk according to the BGS are Camden, Islington, Brent, Barnet, Harrow, Haringey, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth, Lambeth and Lewisham.

In 2019, the UK’s official advisers, the Climate Change Committee, said it was shocked at the [lack of proper plans for protecting people](#) from heatwaves, flash flooding and other impacts of the climate crisis.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/may/19/climate-crisis-to-put-millions-of-british-homes-at-risk-of-subsiding>

## Israel

# Israel-Gaza conflict: France and Egypt add to ceasefire pressure on US

International calls for action grow as Netanyahu reportedly says fighting could end ‘within days’



Israeli air strikes and Hamas rocket fire continued early on Wednesday amid diplomatic efforts to find a solution. Photograph: Gili Yaari/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

Israeli air strikes and Hamas rocket fire continued early on Wednesday amid diplomatic efforts to find a solution. Photograph: Gili Yaari/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

*[Martin Chulov](#), Middle East correspondent, [Julian Borger](#) in Washington and agencies*

Wed 19 May 2021 02.10 EDT

Egypt has urged a brokered end to the fighting between Israel and militants in Gaza, and [France](#) has called for a UN security council resolution on the violence, as international pressure for a ceasefire intensifies.

The US has so far stopped short of demanding an end to the violence, confining its public efforts to urging that attacks are scaled back. Washington has repeatedly blocked efforts before the UN security council to draft joint statements calling for the fighting to end. The latest US rejection came at a security council meeting late on Tuesday that again ended without a statement, as airstrikes and rocket fire continued into the night.

However, signs are emerging that a ceasefire may be within sight, with the Egyptian effort gaining momentum among factions in Gaza, and prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu reported by Israeli media to have told officials in the south of the country that the fighting could end “within several days”.

Jordan too has lobbied intensively for a cessation of violence and has joined a French push at the UN to present a draft resolution that safeguards urgent humanitarian relief. The US would have to use its veto power to block the resolution, something the Biden administration will be reluctant to do.

[Clashes in Jerusalem and West Bank amid protests and strikes](#)  
[Read more](#)

During Tuesday’s closed-door meeting – the fourth since the conflict escalated over a week ago – US envoy Linda Thomas-Greenfield said: “We do not judge that a public pronouncement right now will help de-escalate”, AFP quoted a diplomatic source as saying.

Zhang Jun, Beijing’s ambassador to the UN, told reporters his team had heard the French ceasefire proposal and that China was “supportive”.

Meanwhile, sporadic bombardment of [Gaza](#) city continued overnight, with residents kept awake as Israeli jets flew low overhead, an AFP correspondent in the strip said.

The attacks came after an AFP photographer saw streaks of light in the sky as Israel’s air defence system intercepted rockets launched from Gaza. The



Israel Defence Forces said sirens warning of rocket fire sounded in the south on Wednesday morning.

Randa Abu Sultan, 45, said her family no longer knew what sleep was. “We’re all terrified by the sound of explosions, missiles and fighter jets,” said the mother of seven. “We all sit together in a single room. My four-year-old son tells me he’s scared that if he falls asleep he’ll wake up to find us dead.”

[Biden tours Ford facility in Michigan as protests erupt over Gaza-Israeli conflict](#)

[Read more](#)

During a visit to an airbase in Israel’s south on Tuesday, prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Hamas and Islamic Jihad had “received blows they did not expect” that had set them back “many years” and that the operation would continue as long as necessary to restore calm.

Tuesday saw fresh unrest throughout the region, with serious clashes in Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank as Palestinians took part in a day of protests and strikes over Israel’s bombardment of Gaza.

A Palestinian man was killed and more than 70 wounded, including 16 by live fire, in clashes with Israeli troops on the outskirts of Ramallah, according to the Palestinian Authority health ministry. Two Israeli soldiers were injured.

Hundreds of Palestinians burned tyres and hurled stones at an Israeli military checkpoint. Troops fired teargas canisters at the crowd. Large crowds also gathered in Nablus, Bethlehem, Hebron and other towns in the West Bank.

In Jerusalem, police deployed water cannon in the neighbourhood Sheikh Jarrah, where Palestinian families are facing eviction from homes they have lived in since the 1950s. [The threat of eviction has been a key factor in rising tensions](#) in the city over recent weeks. There were also clashes at the nearby Damascus Gate entrance to the Old City.

Many Palestinian-owned businesses in the Old City were shut as part of a “day of anger” over the eight-day conflict. Support for the general strike was high in towns inside Israel.

Israeli airstrikes have killed 217 Palestinians, including 63 children, and wounded more than 1,400 people in just over a week in the Hamas-run enclave, according to Gaza’s health ministry.

The death toll on the Israeli side has risen to 12 after rockets Hamas fired at the southern Eshkol region killed two Thai nationals working in a factory, police said.

The humanitarian crisis has deepened in the impoverished strip, with the UN saying 72,000 Palestinians have been displaced.

But a convoy of international aid trucks that started rolling into Gaza through a border crossing from Israel, Kerem Shalom, was halted when Israel quickly shuttered it again, citing a mortar attack on the area.

Before the latest UN meeting, Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser to the US president, Joe Biden, said Washington was engaged in “quiet, intensive diplomacy”.

His comments came after Biden issued a statement expressing for the first time [support for a ceasefire](#) between Israel and Hamas, after a phone conversation with Netanyahu.

However, he stopped short of calling for an immediate halt to Israeli airstrikes and Hamas rocket barrages. “The president reiterated his firm support for Israel’s right to defend itself against indiscriminate rocket attacks,” the White House statement said.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/19/israel-gaza-conflict-frances-adds-to-ceasefire-pressure-on-us-as-violence-rages>

## Gaza

# ‘Every day there is bombing’: Israel airstrikes hitting affluent heart of Gaza

Areas that have escaped worst of bombing in previous conflicts are bearing brunt this time around



Search and rescue work continues amid the debris of a building after airstrikes by Israeli army hit buildings in al-Wehda street in Gaza City. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Search and rescue work continues amid the debris of a building after airstrikes by Israeli army hit buildings in al-Wehda street in Gaza City. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[\*Hazem Balousha\*](#) in Gaza City and [\*Peter Beaumont\*](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 11.43 EDT

For the residents of the central neighbourhoods of Gaza City the last nine days [have been unusually brutal](#).

The affluent heart of Gaza's Palestinian society, in past conflicts areas like Tal al-Hawa and al-Rimal have been less heavily hit by the periodic wars between [Israel](#) and Hamas that have shaken the coastal strip since 2008.

All that, however, has changed in the latest round of conflict.

In the apartment blocks and houses from where Gaza's professionals and businesspeople watched the worst of the bombing in past wars from their windows, the conflict has been brought home in recent days.

Over the weekend, Israeli strikes hit at the heart of al-Rimal, killing 42 people alone in Wehda Street, the thoroughfare that runs from close to the Shifa hospital and cuts through the heart of the district.

Another controversial strike, brought down the Jalaa Tower, home to the [offices of Associated Press and Al Jazeera](#).

On Tuesday morning an Israeli military spokesperson Hidai Zilberman said al-Rimal district would be the focus of strikes again and would continue to be attacked throughout the day.

Most of the professionals who live in the more affluent areas have not had to flee to a UN-run shelter. Instead, in the past, they have received relatives from locations further out.

"Al-Rimal is the backbone of Gaza City," said Taghreed Al-Omari, 38, who lives in a three-story building with her husband's siblings and their children.

"It's the most beautiful place in Gaza City. At this time of year it's usually full of people for the Eid holidays and beyond. But now it is empty, full of rubble and sadness.



A collapsed building in al-Rimal after Israeli airstrikes. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

“Now every day there is bombing in our area and there is a building that collapses. Most of the windows of the house are smashed, we replaced it with plastic temporarily and there are cracks in the walls of the house.

“I used to check on my friends in other areas of the Gaza Strip. This war I am receiving calls to check on us. In similar periods of conflict in the past my husband’s relatives would come to our house to escape from their homes in different areas of the Gaza Strip. This time no one came to our house because the bombing is bombing closer to us than them.

“Usually people in the border areas, most of them go to UNRWA [United Nations relief and works agency for Palestine refugees] schools as shelter. We have never gone through that experience. And if our house is targeted, we will go to the house of our relatives or friends.

Far removed from the narrow lanes of the crowded refugee camps like neighbouring al-Shati, where Hamas was born, those who live in these areas are the minority able to afford to socialise and dine at the Gaza Strip’s restaurants and hotels, buy solar panels when electricity is in short supply, and survive most easily its economic, security and social vicissitudes.

01:20

Israel unleashes wave of airstrikes on Gaza as Biden issues statement supporting ceasefire – video

Made up of Gaza's university professors, doctors, civil servants and businesspeople, they are a class, sometimes apart and often more secular, that historically has tended towards being more critical of Hamas.

All of which raises the question why areas like al-Rimal have been hit so hard.

While the Israel Defence Forces have talked about Gaza City as a whole being Hamas's "nerve centre", and say they are targeting Hamas assets and senior leaders hidden among the civilian population, including claims of a massive buried tunnel network, some Palestinians in Gaza believe the areas are being attacked precisely because they are more wealthy.

Mkhaimar Abusada, professor of political science at Al-Azhar University in Gaza and a well-known analyst, has also noticed the middle class being hit far harder than in previous conflicts.

"It's clear that there is pressure being exerted on Gaza's middle class by bombing the al-Rimal area more heavily. Forty-two people were killed on Wehda Street, which constitutes about a quarter of those killed during the war."

A former Knesset member, Chaim Yelin, had suggested in 2018 that destroying al-Rimal, the main centre of the Gazan economy, would mean "the elites will not have a place to return".

But if it is a tactic to push an influential section of Palestinian society by bringing the war home to them and push Hamas to stop firing rockets, Abusada is not convinced it will necessarily be effective.

"It seems that there is an understanding being suggested in recent days: stop firing rockets towards Tel Aviv in exchange we'll stop the bombing the towers in Gaza.



“But I don’t think that pressure on Gaza’s middle class will push people to demand Hamas to stop firing rockets.

“Because there is no real economy in Gaza in the actual sense. Gaza is not Beirut, it is not Cairo, and it is not Amman. The Arab countries have something to lose, while Gaza has nothing to lose.”

For Muhammad Al-Mashlakhoun, 42, a father of four works who for a non-governmental organisation and lives in an apartment on the fifth floor of a 10 storey residential building in the middle of al-Rimal, the last week and a half have been harrowing.

“This war seems more cruel here than other previous wars,” he told the Guardian, describing his experience of the current fighting.

“I’ve lived in Gaza all my life. Previous wars [in 2008, 2012 and 2014] were fought much more in the border areas, but this time I don’t know why, there have been deliberate strikes in the centre of Gaza City.

“There is bombing in many areas in the Gaza Strip, but these areas haven’t seen what has happened in al-Rimal and the centre of Gaza City this time.

“Many buildings neighbouring ours were hit. Government headquarters and towers were bombed, including Shorooq Tower, which is 100 metres away from my home, as well as the Jalaa Tower, where AJ [Al Jazeera] and the Associated Press are located.

“And there was the Al-Jawhara tower, which is less than 500 metres from my house.

“What should I do? I don’t know. Should I go to areas farther from the Gaza City centre? There is no safe place in the entire Gaza Strip.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/18/israel-airstrikes-hitting-affluent-heart-of-gaza>



## [Israel](#)

# Clashes in Jerusalem and West Bank amid protests and strikes

Palestinian man killed and more than 70 wounded as hundreds hurl stones at Israeli checkpoint

01:49

Israeli police use cannon and teargas during clashes in Jerusalem and West Bank – video

[\*Harriet Sherwood\*](#) and agencies

[@harrietsherwood](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 19.18 EDT

Serious clashes erupted in Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank on Tuesday as Palestinians took part in a day of protests and strikes over Israel's bombardment of Gaza.

A Palestinian man was killed and more than 70 wounded, including 16 by live fire, in clashes with Israeli troops on the outskirts of Ramallah, according to the Palestinian Authority health ministry. Two Israeli soldiers were injured.

Hundreds of Palestinians burned tyres and hurled stones at an Israeli military checkpoint. Troops fired teargas canisters at the crowd.

Large crowds also gathered in Nablus, Bethlehem, Hebron and other towns in the West Bank.

In Jerusalem, police deployed water cannon in the neighbourhood Sheikh Jarrah, where Palestinian families are facing eviction from homes they have lived in since the 1950s. [The threat of eviction has been a key factor in rising](#)

[tensions](#) in the city over recent weeks. There were also clashes at the nearby Damascus Gate entrance to the Old City.

Many Palestinian-owned businesses in the Old City were shut as part of a “day of anger” over the eight-day conflict. Support for the general strike was high in towns inside Israel.

Muhammad Barakeh, one of the strike organisers, said Palestinians were expressing a “collective position” against Israel’s “aggression” in [Gaza](#) and Jerusalem, as well as the “brutal repression” by police across Israel.

“This is the first time we’re seeing almost everyone participate in the strike,” Castro Othman, a resident of Tamra in northern Israel, [told the Times of Israel](#). “We feel like we’re in an existential struggle.”

Yaakov Shabtai, the Israeli police commissioner, said his forces had restored calm after “riots in the Arab sector”. The strikes and protests followed communal violence between Jewish and Palestinian residents of mixed towns in Israel last week, leading political leaders to warn of the risks of civil war.

In Gaza, at least 217 Palestinians have been killed, including 63 children, and about 1,400 wounded since fighting began last week. Twelve people in Israel have been killed, including two Thai workers who died when a packaging plant in southern Israel was hit by a rocket fired from Gaza on Tuesday.

The Israeli military said militants had also fired rockets at the Kerem Shalom crossing, where humanitarian aid was being brought into Gaza, forcing it to close.

The UN said more than 40,000 people in Gaza had been displaced as a result of the bombardment, and 2,500 people had lost their homes. Authorities in Gaza warned that the territory’s fuel supplies would last only another two or three days. Medical supplies are also running low.

Among the buildings hit by Israeli forces on Tuesday was a six-storey block containing educational facilities of the Islamic University, which was

destroyed in an airstrike.

During a visit to an airbase, Netanyahu said Hamas had “received blows they did not expect” that had set them back “many years” and that the operation would continue as long as necessary to restore calm.

The World Health Organization said the bombing of key roads, including those leading to the main Shifa hospital, has hindered the movement of ambulances.

Egypt’s president, Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, said the country would contribute \$500m (£350m) for reconstruction in Gaza. Egypt has also sent humanitarian aid and medical supplies, and some of the wounded have been transferred to Egyptian hospitals.

There was no sign of movement towards a ceasefire, although Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser to the US president, Joe Biden, said Washington was engaged in “quiet, intensive diplomacy”.

His comments came after Biden issued a statement expressing for the first time [support for a ceasefire](#) between Israel and Hamas, after a phone conversation with the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

However, he stopped short of calling for an immediate halt to Israeli airstrikes and Hamas rocket barrages. “The president reiterated his firm support for Israel’s right to defend itself against indiscriminate rocket attacks,” the White House statement said.

In Brussels, the EU failed to unite behind a call for a ceasefire after the Hungarian government said such a statement would undermine Israel’s right to self-defence.

Following a special meeting of EU ministers, the bloc’s high representative for foreign affairs, Josep Borrell, read out a short statement that he said had the backing of 26 of the 27 member states.

While condemning the rocket attacks by Hamas, Borrell said the Israeli response should be “proportionate” and that it was time for an immediate

end to hostilities. “The priority is the immediate cessation of all violence,” he said.

The UN security council was also expected to meet for a fourth emergency session on the crisis, although each time the US has blocked a call for an immediate ceasefire.

01:20

Israel unleashes wave of airstrikes on Gaza as Biden issues statement supporting ceasefire – video

Some analysts believe Netanyahu may be inclined to keep the military action going for another two weeks, until the deadline given to the opposition leader, Yair Lapid, to form an alternative coalition government has expired on 2 June.

If the deadline passes without a government being formed, Israel will face its fifth election since April 2019.

There were also clashes along Israel’s border with Lebanon on Tuesday. Israeli forces fired teargas at Palestinians and Lebanese protesters who threw rockets.

The Lebanese national news agency said five people had been injured and others suffered from smoke inhalation. A number of protesters in the Lebanese border village of Adaisseh had climbed the border wall to plant Lebanese flags and the yellow flags of the militant Hezbollah group.

It was the fifth day of protests along the border. Hundreds of protesters also marched in Beirut on Tuesday in support of Gaza.

The Israeli military said there had been six failed attempts to fire rockets over the border into Israel on Monday.



# Wednesday briefing: France pushes US to back Gaza ceasefire

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/19/wednesday-briefing-france-ceasefire>

## Hospitals

# UK hospitals accused of burying dozens of patient safety reports

BBC's Panorama reveals majority of 'invited reviews' have not been published or shared with regulators



A review at Royal Liverpool University hospital covered 400 patients, but 18 months later only a quarter of them had been checked. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

A review at Royal Liverpool University hospital covered 400 patients, but 18 months later only a quarter of them had been checked. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

*[Denis Campbell](#) Health policy editor*

Wed 19 May 2021 03.14 EDT

Hospitals have been accused of burying the results of dozens of secret reports written by expert groups of doctors asked to investigate patient



safety problems.

NHS trusts have been criticised for “disgraceful secrecy” for not publishing the reports, and often not even sharing them with regulators charged with overseeing standards of care.

While trusts have asked medical royal colleges to undertake 111 “invited reviews” over the last five years, they have put only 16 in the public domain, BBC One’s Panorama will reveal on Wednesday.

In addition, just 26 of the reports were shared in full with NHS regulators, such as the Care Quality Commission, which monitors care standards in the health service in England. Such widespread non-disclosure appears to be a breach of their duty, introduced in 2015 after the [Morecambe Bay maternity care scandal](#), to give a copy of such reports to regulatory bodies.

Prof Helen Stokes-Lampard, the chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, told Panorama she was “dismayed” that summaries of invited review reports were not being made public.

“If things are not being shared, and if that has implications for patient safety, that must be put right. The fact that a review is done should never be secret and indeed a summary of the findings should always be published,” she said.

Panorama sent freedom of information (FoI) requests to every NHS trust and health board in the UK. It found out that they had commissioned one of Britain’s medical royal colleges to undertake an investigation into worrying lapses in cases, some of which involved patients dying. They obtained a copy of 80 of the 111 reports. Of those, 65 were into potential or actual concerns around patient safety.

However, only 16 of the 111 reports had been published and just 26 shared with regulators.

“These findings are both shocking and worrying,” said Peter Walsh, the chief executive of the patient safety charity Action Against Medical Accidents.

“Reports from royal colleges of this nature are commissioned to identify and find solutions to patient safety problems. It is disgraceful that there is such widespread secrecy over such important reports and, worse still, failure to act upon them.” There should be a new legal duty put on trusts to publish these reports, Walsh added.

Panorama, presented by Faye Kirkland, will disclose that in 2015 the Royal College of Physicians, which represents hospital doctors, reviewed Royal [Liverpool](#) University hospital’s care of patients with vasculitis, which is inflammation of blood vessels. It ordered a review of all patients treated in the previous two years.

However further FoI requests showed that, while the review covered 400 patients, 18 months later only a quarter had been checked. Among a group of 26 patients who were on powerful medications, two had been given them “inappropriately”, four received “possibly excessive” doses and three had died due to side-effects of the drugs.

Prof Ted Baker, the CQC’s chief inspector of hospitals, said NHS trusts and professional bodies undertaking reviews should ensure they pass a copy to the CQC. “It is extremely disappointing that despite this very clear expectation, we continue to see examples of a lack of transparency.”

Prof Stephen Powis, NHS England’s medical director, said: “Patient safety is of great importance and there are robust and transparent systems to ensure hospitals and other care providers learn and improve their services.

“All independent reviews should be made available to relevant health commissioners and regulators, including the CQC, and NHS England and Improvement expects trusts to take prompt action to address appropriate recommendations made.”

- Panorama: Hospital Secrets Uncovered is on BBC One at 7.30pm on Wednesday

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

## US news

# New York investigation into Trump Organization now criminal, says attorney general

State joins Manhattan attorney general in launching ‘active’ probe into allegations the former president falsified property values to boost income



The Trump Organization is being investigated in a ‘criminal capacity’, New York state attorney general said on Tuesday. Photograph: Kena Betancur/AFP/Getty Images

The Trump Organization is being investigated in a ‘criminal capacity’, New York state attorney general said on Tuesday. Photograph: Kena Betancur/AFP/Getty Images

*Reuters*

Tue 18 May 2021 23.48 EDT

The New York attorney general's office has opened a criminal investigation into Donald Trump's company, increasing the legal risk for the former president and his family.

Attorney general Letitia James has been investigating whether the Trump Organization falsely reported property values to secure loans and obtain economic and tax benefits.

The announcement on Tuesday night marked another escalation of the legal jeopardy Trump faces four months after leaving office, taking to three the number of known criminal investigations into the former Republican president.

[Liz Cheney defiant over Trump as Republican civil war heats up](#)  
[Read more](#)

"We have informed the Trump Organization that our investigation into the organization is no longer purely civil in nature," Fabien Levy, a spokesman for the attorney general's office, said in a statement.

"We are now actively investigating the Trump Organization in a criminal capacity, along with the Manhattan DA," he said.

The Trump Organization, the former president's family-owned business, could not immediately be reached for comment. Trump has said that the investigation overseen by James, a Democrat, is politically motivated.

Separately, Manhattan district attorney Cyrus Vance, also a Democrat, has been investigating Trump's pre-presidency business dealings for [more than two years](#).

Vance's office has said in court filings it was investigating "possibly extensive and protracted criminal conduct" at the Trump Organization, including tax and insurance fraud and falsification of business records.

In February, prosecutors in Fulton County, Georgia, opened a criminal investigation into Trump's attempts to influence the state's 2020 election

results, after he was [recorded](#) pressuring Georgia's secretary of state to overturn the outcome of voting based on unfounded claims of tampering.

Vance's probe began after Trump's former lawyer and fixer [Michael Cohen](#) [paid hush money](#) to silence two women before the 2016 election about extramarital sexual encounters they claimed to have had with Trump.

James has said she opened her inquiry after Cohen testified before Congress that Trump's financial statements were manipulated to save money on loans or reduce his real estate taxes.

Cohen, who once said he would take a bullet for Trump, pleaded guilty in 2018 to campaign finance violations and other crimes and is currently serving his three-year sentence under home confinement.

"As more documents are reviewed by the NYAG and NYDA, it appears that the troubles for Donald Trump just keep on coming! Soon enough, Donald and Associates will be held responsible for their actions," Cohen said in a text message to Reuters on Tuesday night.

Two people familiar with Vance's probe have told Reuters that Cohen has been interviewed by the district attorney's investigators.

Court records show that the [New York](#) attorney general and Manhattan district attorney investigations, while separate from one another, do overlap.

Both are examining how the Trump Organization and its agents assessed the value of Seven Springs, a 212-acre estate north of Manhattan that Trump purchased in 1995.

Trump's company has said the century-old, 50,000-square-foot mansion on the grounds was used as a Trump family retreat.

Trump's ambitions to build a championship golf course there were derailed by local opposition, and he shelved another plan to build luxury homes.

But the property did become a vehicle for a tax break, according to property records and court filings. In 2015, he signed a conservation easement – an agreement not to develop the property – covering 158 acres.

The attorney general's office said in a court filing that an appraiser hired by Trump before the conservation agreement set the property's value at \$56.5m and the easement's value at \$21.1m – an amount Trump claimed as an income tax deduction.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/19/new-york-investigation-into-trump-organization-now-criminal-says-attorney-general>

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



## Police

# Anger as Patel delays publication of report into private detective's murder

Independent panel set up to investigate killing of Daniel Morgan 'furious' at home secretary's move



Daniel Morgan was found dead in a south London car park in 1987, with an axe embedded in his head. Photograph: Metropolitan Police/PA

Daniel Morgan was found dead in a south London car park in 1987, with an axe embedded in his head. Photograph: Metropolitan Police/PA

[Vikram Dodd](#) *Police and crime correspondent*

Tue 18 May 2021 15.49 EDT

The home secretary has ordered that an independent report on claims murderers were shielded by police corruption and claims of corruption in Rupert Murdoch's media empire must be vetted by her department before its publication.

The move triggered fury and follows eight years of work by a special panel to investigate the murder of private detective Daniel Morgan in 1987, who was found dead in a south London car park with an axe embedded in his head.

No one has been convicted of his murder with key suspects alleged to have close ties to News International, and claims police investigations were botched.

The report was due to finally be published next Monday and the panel has kept its silence since being set up by former home secretary Theresa May.

Priti Patel's direct intervention was made in private on Monday, and on Tuesday the Morgan panel issued a blistering statement attacking the intervention warning it would compromise their independence.

The panel, chaired by Lady Nuala O'Loan, is understood to be furious about the demands which it insists had never been mentioned previously in the eight years since it was established.

The Morgan panel said it had been told the report would not be made public until it agreed to the pre-publication review by government, which it says breaches the understanding it has about its independence.

The panel also claimed the [Home Office](#) wanted the right to black out any part of the report it considered may breach "national security" or human rights obligations.

Morgan's brother Alastair, [who has waged a 34-year](#) long justice campaign, attacked the home secretary's intervention as "shameful" and told the Guardian the panel should consider court action to protect the independence of its report.

Morgan told the Guardian: "They have known the terms of reference for the best part of a decade. I think it is shameful, but typical.

"The panel should consider going to the high court."

In its statement the Daniel Morgan inquiry panel said that no mention was made by the Home Office of any need to review the report prior to its publication until this Monday: “The Panel was informed yesterday (Monday 17 May) that a publication date will not be agreed until the home secretary and Home Office officials and lawyers have reviewed the contents of the Panel’s Report.

“A review of this nature has not been raised previously in the eight years since the panel was established in 2013.”

It added: “The panel believes that this last-minute requirement is unnecessary and is not consistent with the panel’s independence.”

It said a senior team from the Metropolitan police had already checked to ensure there was nothing in the final report that jeopardised security.

The panel said it had an agreement with the Home Office dating back to 2013 limiting the government’s role: “In relation to report publication the home secretary’s role is limited to reporting to parliament on the Panel’s work, receiving the panel’s report and laying it before parliament, and thereafter responding to the panel’s findings.”

The panel added: “The panel is disappointed with this position and hopes the matter can be resolved in adequate time for its report to still be published in May while parliament is sitting.”

The panel’s [terms of reference](#) included “police involvement in the murder; the role played by police corruption in protecting those responsible for the murder ... and the failure to confront that corruption.

But also the panel was investigating “the incidence of connections between private investigators, police officers and journalists at the former News of the World and other parts of the media, and alleged corruption involved in the linkages between them.”

Those facing criticism in the report have already been sent letters warning them of the criticism, and inviting them to respond.

The motive for the murder has not been established. Some believe it resulted from a business dispute but following a fresh investigation the Met announced in 2007 that the motive for the murder was probably that Morgan “was about to expose a south London drugs network possibly involving corrupt police officers”.

At least one witness has said that Morgan was in discussions with the News of the World to sell a story about police corruption shortly before his death.

The prime suspects for involvement in the murder [sued the Met at the high court](#) and were named as Morgan’s business partner, Jonathan Rees, his brothers-in-law, Glenn and Garry Vian. The Met told the high court that Rees paid Glenn Vian to carry out the killing, and that Vian struck two blows with the axe.

[In 2011 a murder trial collapsed](#) with the suspects walking free.

Rees ran a corrupt private agency called Southern Investigations which was paid tens of thousands of pounds by the News of the World. One time Met detective Sid Fillery replaced Morgan as Rees’s business partner at the agency and while in the Met, worked on the first inquiry into the Morgan murder.

The former Sunday tabloid was closed by Murdoch at the height of the [phone hacking scandal](#).

So close were ties between Southern Investigations and the Murdoch empire, that two executives set up a business which records show was registered at the same address as Southern.

Alastair’s campaign languished for years with few noticing. Recently it gained fresh attention after the case was seen as inspiring the police corruption in TV drama Line of Duty.

A Home Office spokesperson denied Patel wanted to block or censor parts of the report. They said: “Under the terms it was commissioned in 2013, it is for the home secretary to publish the report which she hopes to do as soon as possible.

“The home secretary also has an obligation to make sure the report complies with human rights and national security considerations.

“This has nothing to do with the independence of the report and the Home Office is not seeking to make edits to it.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/may/18/anger-as-patel-delays-publication-of-report-into-private-detectives>

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

## [Tobacco industry](#)

# Tobacco firms in move to strike out Malawi exploitation case

BAT and Imperial will on Wednesday ask the high court in London to dismiss watershed proceedings



Tobacco fields in Malawi. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Tobacco fields in Malawi. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

[Sarah Boseley](#) *Health editor*

Wed 19 May 2021 01.00 EDT

Two of the world's biggest tobacco companies are to ask the high court in London on Wednesday to strike out a case against them alleging the exploitation of Malawian farmers and their children as a result of their drive for profits.

British American Tobacco and Imperial Brands, both based in the UK, deny the allegations. They are asking that the case be dismissed on the grounds that lawyers for the farming families cannot prove the tobacco they grew ended up in their cigarettes and other products.

The watershed case was brought after [investigations by the Guardian into child labour in the tobacco fields](#). Families are trafficked from southern Malawi, allege Leigh Day solicitors, their lawyers, to tobacco-growing regions in the north. Once there, they have to build their own homes from branches and leaves and work seven days a week in the fields. They receive a small portion of maize each day to feed their family and live largely by borrowing money until harvest time at the end of the season, when they are paid for the crop. Loans and the costs of farming supplies are deducted and some end up in debt.

The lawyers argue their conditions of work breach the definition of forced labour, unlawful compulsory labour and exploitation under Malawian law. They also say that they breach the UK Modern Slavery Act, article 14 of the European convention on human rights and the International Labour Organization definition of forced labour.

Several thousand of Malawi's poorest tobacco tenant farmers have joined the claim. They sell all their crop to a leaf-buying company in Malawi, which they say supplies BAT and Imperial.

Leigh Day, the London-based firm representing thousands of Malawian farming families, says BAT and Imperial want proof that the families' tobacco ended up in their products. But the companies have refused to disclose documents they hold which will show whether their tobacco is sourced from the specific families bringing the claim.

A spokesman for Imperial said: "It would be inappropriate to comment on this ongoing litigation, other than to reiterate that we will defend the claim."

A BAT spokesperson said: "BAT believes that there is no legal or factual basis to bring these claims, therefore BAT has made an application for the claims to be struck out or stayed.



“We are unable to provide further comment ahead of the hearing.”

Martyn Day, senior partner at Leigh Day, said: “The heart of the claim is that two of the largest tobacco companies in the world cynically exploited impoverished tobacco farmers from Malawi and their children.

“Fortunately the two defendant companies are based here in Britain giving our courts jurisdiction to adjudicate these claims.” He said he was optimistic the judge would allow the claims to progress toward a full trial.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/may/19/tobacco-firms-in-move-to-strike-out-malawi-exploitation-case>

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

## [US news](#)

# Nancy Pelosi calls for US diplomatic boycott of Beijing Winter Olympics

US House speaker says leaders who attend Games would lose moral authority because of China's treatment of Uyghur minority

01:56

Nancy Pelosi calls for diplomatic boycott of 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics – video

*Reuters*

Tue 18 May 2021 22.17 EDT

US House speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) has called for a US diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, criticising China for human rights abuses and saying global leaders who attend would lose their moral authority.

US lawmakers have been increasingly vocal about an Olympic boycott or venue change, and have lashed out at American corporations, arguing their silence about what the State Department has deemed a genocide of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in [China](#) was abetting the Chinese government.

[Boycott questions over Beijing Winter Olympics raise eerie echoes of 1936 | Sean Ingle](#)  
[Read more](#)

Pelosi, a Democrat, told a bipartisan congressional hearing on the issue on Tuesday that heads of state around the world should shun the Games, which are to take place in February.

“What I propose – and join those who are proposing – is a diplomatic boycott,” Pelosi said, in which “lead countries of the world withhold their

attendance at the Olympics.”

“Let’s not honor the Chinese government by having heads of state go to China,” she added.

“For heads of state to go to China in light of a genocide that is ongoing – while you’re sitting there in your seat – really begs the question, what moral authority do you have to speak again about human rights any place in the world?” she said.

An independent United Nations panel said in 2018 it had received credible reports that at least 1 million Uyghurs and other Muslims had been held in camps in China’s Xinjiang region. Beijing describes them as vocational training centers to stamp out extremism, and strongly rejects accusations of abuse and genocide.

A spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Washington, Liu Pengyu, said that US attempts to interfere in China’s domestic affairs over the Olympics were doomed to fail.

“I wonder what makes some US politicians think they actually have the so-called ‘moral authority’? On human rights issues, they are in no position, either historically or currently, to make wanton groundless criticism against China,” Liu said.

Republican congressman Chris Smith, who led the hearing, said corporate sponsors should be called to testify before Congress and be “held to account ... Big business wants to make lots of money, and it doesn’t seem to matter what cruelty - even genocide - that the host nation commits,” Smith said.

[Winter Olympics: threat of boycotts clouds China's 'joyful rendezvous' in the snow](#)

[Read more](#)

Demands from across the world for some form of boycott of the Beijing Games are growing. [British MPs have urged athletes to boycott the event](#) and [human rights groups](#) have also called for a boycott.

Joe Biden's administration has said it hopes to develop a joint approach with allies to participation in Beijing's Olympics.

Sarah Hirshland, the chief executive officer of the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee, said in a written statement the committee was concerned about the "oppression of the Uyghur population," but barring US athletes was "certainly not the answer".

"Past Olympic boycotts have failed to achieve political ends," she said.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/19/nancy-pelosi-calls-for-us-diplomatic-boycott-of-beijing-winter-olympics>

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

## Alcohol

# Any amount of alcohol consumption harmful to the brain, finds study

UK study of 25,000 people finds even moderate drinking is linked to lower grey matter density



The study found no evidence that drinking wine has health benefits compared with beer or spirits. Photograph: Garo/Phanie/Rex/Shutterstock

The study found no evidence that drinking wine has health benefits compared with beer or spirits. Photograph: Garo/Phanie/Rex/Shutterstock

[Natalie Grover](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 13.26 EDT

There is no safe amount of alcohol consumption for the brain, with even “moderate” drinking adversely affecting nearly every part of it, a study of more than 25,000 people in the UK has found.

The [study](#), which is still to be peer-reviewed, suggests that the more alcohol consumed, the lower the brain volume. In effect, the more you drink, the worse off your brain.

“There’s no threshold drinking for harm – any alcohol is worse. Pretty much the whole brain seems to be affected – not just specific areas, as previously thought,” said the lead author, Anya Topiwala, a senior clinical lecturer at the University of Oxford.

Using the [UK Biobank](#), a substantial database designed to help researchers decode the genetic and environmental factors that lead [some people to develop diseases while others do not](#), researchers in this study analysed data from 25,378 participants such as age, sex, education, self-reported alcohol consumption, brain size and health from MRI scans, information about hospital and outpatient visits, and memory tests.

Higher volume of alcohol consumption per week was associated with lower grey matter density – the researchers found, with alcohol explaining up to a 0.8% change in grey matter volume, even after accounting for individual biological and behavioural characteristics.

This might seem like a small figure, but it is a larger contribution than any other modifiable risk factors. For example, it is four times the contribution of smoking or BMI, said Topiwala.

Widespread negative associations were also seen between alcohol consumption and integrity of white matter, the brain fibres that scaffold the billions of neurons that make up grey matter. In addition, an individual’s underlying conditions such as high blood pressure and high BMI made the negative association between alcohol and brain health stronger, the researchers found.

Contrary to previous research that suggested there is a benefit to drinking wine in moderation compared with beer or spirits, the study found no evidence to suggest alcoholic beverage type conferred differences in risks to the brain.

The associations of wine-drinking with higher educational attainment and socioeconomic status may explain the perceived health benefits, the authors suggested. “If you look at who is moderately drinking, at least in this country, they are better educated, wealthier people that would do much better on a memory test ... just because of who they are, than people that are less educated,” said Topiwala.

[Dear Gwyneth Paltrow, welcome to everyone else's sad-potato life](#)  
[Read more](#)

The findings are robust to many alternative assumptions, said Colin Angus, a senior research fellow from the Sheffield alcohol research group at the University of Sheffield.

“In the grand scheme of things, these effects appear small, although it’s hard to compare them against the impact of alcohol on other health outcomes, such as increased risks of cancer, without further research to understand how the association between alcohol and brain health feeds through into more tangible outcomes, such as dementia or Alzheimer’s.”

In 2016, the Department of Health introduced [new alcohol guidelines](#) in the UK, recommending that both men and women drink no more than 14 units of alcohol each week.

Topiwala said the study showed evidence of harm below that threshold.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/may/18/any-amount-of-alcohol-consumption-harmful-to-the-brain-finds-study>.

## [The Pacific project](#)[Solomon Islands](#)

# More than 100 unexploded bombs found in Solomon Islands backyard

A man digging a hole for a new septic system found the second world war ordnance, which are part of a deadly legacy of the war in the Pacific



The explosive ordnance disposal of the Solomon Islands police force were called in and removed 101 US 105mm high explosive projectiles from the site. Photograph: Royal Solomon Island Police Force

The explosive ordnance disposal of the Solomon Islands police force were called in and removed 101 US 105mm high explosive projectiles from the site. Photograph: Royal Solomon Island Police Force

Supported by





**Judith  
Neilson  
Institute**  
for Journalism  
and Ideas

[About this content](#)

*Georgina Kekea in Honiara and [Kate Lyons](#)*

[@MsKateLyons](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 22.08 EDT

One hundred and one unexploded second world war bombs have been discovered in a backyard of a home in Honiara, the capital of [Solomon Islands](#) in the south Pacific.

The unexploded ordnances (UXO) were found by a man who was digging a hole for a new septic system at his property in a residential area.

[Australian and British bomb disposal workers killed by blast in Solomon Islands](#)

[Read more](#)

Following the discovery, the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) was called in and removed 101 US 105mm High Explosive Projectiles from the site. Police say they were being stored securely while work was done to defuse the bombs.

“A man in eastern Honiara has just found over 100 WW2 shells in his back garden digging a hole for a new septic system,” wrote Lachlan Strahan, Australia’s high commissioner to Solomon Islands on Twitter. “Australia’s explosive ordnance disposal expert Warrant Officer Ian Percy is helping the Royal Police Force to deal with this terrible WW2 legacy.”



Bombs were dropped on Solomon Islands during the second world war and were also left in munitions depots and not disposed of properly. Photograph: Supplied

EOD Inspector, Clifford Tunuki warned Solomon Islanders wanting to build on land that may have high UXO deposits to have their properties cleared by a UXO clearance company before commencing work.

The find is part of a devastating legacy in the Pacific from the second world war. Thousands of bombs were dropped on [Pacific islands](#), including Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Palau, many of which failed to explode. Munitions depots were also established across the islands.

After the war, allied countries were supposed to properly dispose of the UXO but they did not always do so. Earlier this month, two men were killed when a second world war bomb exploded in a residential area in Honiara.



The late Charles Noda (L) and Raziv Hilly(R) were killed when a second world war bomb exploded while they were cooking in a backyard in Honiara earlier this month. Photograph: Kukum SDA Church

Raziv Hilly and Charles Noda were part of a group of Seventh Day Adventists who were cooking in the backyard of a private residential area for a fundraiser when the explosion occurred on 9 May.

A 105mm high explosive US projectile was buried 30cm beneath the ground where they were cooking. Raziv, a civil engineer, took the brunt of the explosion and died shortly afterwards. Noda, an accountant and auditor, died six days after the explosion from his injuries. Noda's wife was also injured in the blast and was taken to hospital.

Last year, an Australian man and his British colleague working on a project to map munitions in Solomon Islands were [killed by an explosion in a residential area of Honiara.](#)

[Solomon Islands map](#)

There have been calls for Japan, the US and other allied forces to develop a plan to remove the ordnance from Pacific countries.

Opposition leader, Mathew Wale said it was incumbent on the Solomon Islands government to urge Japan and the governments of the allied forces to develop a comprehensive plan.

“I also call on the government to explore the possibility of applying a Coroners inquiry if this option can be used in such circumstances,” he said.

“We are dealing with an unknown situation where the deaths occurred from the actions of foreign states and so proper postmortem and recommendations from a professional authority must be sought if we are to properly address ensuing issues. The incidents are not isolated and so should not be taken lightly by the government,” Wale added.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/19/more-than-100-unexploded-bombs-found-in-solomon-islands-back-yard-second-world-war>

## 2021.05.19 - Coronavirus

- ['We were being blamed for spreading coronavirus' Confronting hate against east Asians](#)
- [Tunisia Lockdown ends, despite Africa's worst Covid death rate](#)
- [Japan Flaw in vaccine booking system causes chaos](#)
- [Travel Britons face four-hour passport queues, warns Border Force worker](#)
- [Live Coronavirus: India passes US for record daily deaths; 60% of all vaccines given in just three countries](#)
- [Taiwan Authorities raise Covid alert level amid rise in infections](#)
- ['Hoping for a good season' Italy prepares to welcome back tourists](#)

# Confronting hate against east Asians – a photo essay

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/may/19/confronting-hate-against-east-asians-a-photo-essay>

## Global development

# Tunisia lockdown ends, despite Africa's worst Covid death rate

Pandemic fatigue and economic woes blamed for lack of action despite rapid rise in number of cases

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Many Tunisians see the economic pain of lockdown as a greater risk than the virus. Photograph: Mohamed Messara/EPA

Many Tunisians see the economic pain of lockdown as a greater risk than the virus. Photograph: Mohamed Messara/EPA

Global development is supported by



[About this content](#)

[Simon Speakman Cordall](#) in Tunis

Wed 19 May 2021 02.00 EDT

Tunisia has ended its one-week lockdown, despite having the highest reported deaths per capita of any country in Africa.

Covid-19 cases in Tunisia were initially low last year, with a sweeping [six-week lockdown](#) involving the closure of borders and shutting down all but essential commercial activity appearing to halt the spread of the virus. However, since easing that original lockdown cases have increased, with daily reported infections and deaths now the highest in Africa, according to [Our World in Data](#).

At least [11,899](#) of Tunisia's 11.7 million people have died as a result of the virus, with 327,473 people infected. If its spread continues unchecked, the US [Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation](#) website projects that the death toll will be close to 50,000 by September.

While the government has led in rhetoric, evidence of consistent action has been scant. Moreover, political instability and financial necessity are



fostering a pandemic fatigue that is driving instances of the virus upwards across the country.

A big rally in support of the Palestinian cause went ahead in the capital, Tunis, last weekend, though with most people wearing masks. Rachid Ghannouchi, parliamentary speaker and founder of Ennahda, the self-styled Muslim Democrats, was [pictured](#) among a large crowd of masked mourners in the north-west town of Kef, despite [lockdown travel restrictions](#).



A pro-Palestinian demonstration in Tunisia held on Saturday to protest against Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, despite lockdown restrictions. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty

Vaccines have been available in Tunisia since March. However, take-up is low amid widespread scepticism, even among [healthcare workers](#), is high. So far, fewer than one in five Tunisians have registered for vaccinations on the government's site, with [accusations of queue-jumping](#) rife.

Matters were not helped over Ramadan, when a hidden-camera [prank TV show](#), featured an Angelina Jolie lookalike inviting local celebrities to front the country's vaccine initiative, only for them to witness "recipients" of the vaccine fall sick and die. The World Health Organization [complained](#) about

the programme, broadcast on a channel owned by the [former presidential candidate](#) Nabil Karoui.

The health sector, once a source of national pride, is at risk of buckling under the pandemic. Funding for health has been falling for years, economists have said, with the decline accelerating dramatically after cash was diverted to strengthen domestic security as Islamic State became more powerful.

[Why is the world still being hit by wave after wave of Covid when we know how to stop it? | Helen Clark and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf](#)  
[Read more](#)

Earlier this month healthcare workers staged a [three-day strike](#) over conditions and pay across the sector. Elsewhere, video [footage obtained](#) by the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle showed patients sleeping on the floors of a crowded waiting room, while one lay on top of a cupboard. Oxygen masks are [at a premium](#) as demand for oxygen constantly threatens to eclipse supply.

Dr Mohamed Ghedira, an anaesthetist and public health advocate who has worked in Covid wards across the country, was keen to play down the suggestion of chaos, pointing to good treatment outcomes. “Hospitals and private clinics are saturated, which means that patients can wait a long time before finding a bed available, especially for patients who are intubated and require intensive care,” he said.

The dramatic surge in Covid patients was placing intense strains upon Tunisia’s medical staff, whose numbers have been depleted through a steady exodus of professionals abroad, Ghedira said.

While Tunisia’s initial response to the pandemic may have won plaudits, it came at a cost that is shaping present policy. “Unemployment has exploded from 15% at the start of 2020 to 17.4% at the end of the year,” said Radhi Meddeb, an economist. He said the virus had had a devastating impact on a faltering economy that had shrunk by 8.8% during the pandemic, “leaving little if no room for manoeuvre for the government in terms of social support”.

Despite offers of [tax relief and government loans](#), many Tunisians have found the economic burden of lockdown beyond them. Much of the workforce is made up of day labourers who are not eligible for government schemes.



Closed shops in Ariana, near Tunis. As Muslims around the world celebrated Eid al-Fitr, the Covid lockdown meant there were no festivities in Tunisia. Photograph: Chedly Ben Ibrahim/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

The announcement of the lockdown itself, initially [ruled out in early April](#), was met with protests. Many cafes and restaurants stayed open in defiance of the restrictions. Its ending, Meddeb said, had been driven as much by the street as by MPs.

Dr Zied Mhirsi, [director of Global Health Strategies](#), which promotes public health worldwide, said: “This inability to implement public health measures is a reflection of the growing absence of trust in the government, which is in my opinion the most worrying sign.

“Roles and responsibilities are split within different ministry directorates and institutions, and that does not help for quick decision-making. It is also important to note that we have weak contact tracing, testing, monitoring and evaluation capabilities,” he said.

As in many countries, the economic pain of lockdown was seen as a greater risk than the virus, said Youssef Cherif, head of Columbia University's Global Center in Tunis. "This low public concern has led to an increase in cases and to thousands of deaths in the last few months.

"Those who were directly hit, including my family, feel it, but those who were spared the grief and sorrow of this virus continue to live normally – until they are stricken."

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/may/19/tunisia-lockdown-ends-despite-africas-worst-covid-death-rate>

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

## Japan

# Flaw in Japan Covid vaccine booking system causes disarray

News that online system is open to abuse overshadows efforts by Tokyo to speed up slow rollout

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Japan's defence minister has urged people not to exploit the Covid vaccine booking system while it is being fixed. Photograph: Behrouz Mehr/AP

Japan's defence minister has urged people not to exploit the Covid vaccine booking system while it is being fixed. Photograph: Behrouz Mehr/AP

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Wed 19 May 2021 01.00 EDT

A flaw in Japan's coronavirus inoculation programme has been exposed barely a day after the government opened a facility in Tokyo designed to speed up the country's [slow vaccine rollout](#).

The glitch – which allows people to make jab reservations using false information – has proved an embarrassment for the government, which is facing renewed criticism for its handling of the pandemic.

Officials said they would fix the problem after it was exposed by newspaper journalists who reserved jabs intended for those over 64 using arbitrary code and application numbers. They later cancelled the appointments.

Two mass vaccination centres in Tokyo and Osaka, run by the self-defence forces, opened this week in an attempt to speed up jabs for 36 million people aged 65 and over.

[Tokyo's restaurateurs rail against alcohol ban as Covid measures bite](#)  
[Read more](#)

But reporters from the Mainichi and Asahi newspapers said they had managed to make reservations using two sets of random code numbers that had not been issued by local authorities, and despite being younger than the target group.

Reservations made using false information would deny a vaccination slot to people with a legitimate right to a jab, the Mainichi warned.

The defence minister, Nobuo Kishi, admitted that “it would have been better if we had fixed it from the start”, but criticised the newspapers for acting “maliciously” – despite their role in bringing the defect to light.

While adjustments are made, Kishi urged people not to exploit the system by making reservations for jabs that are intended for older people.

Only 3% of Japan's 126 million people have received at least one dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine – the only one to have been approved by the country's health authorities – since its rollout began in mid-February. That is



the slowest rate of any major economy, and far behind countries such as Britain and the US.

So far, 3.6 million frontline health workers have received their first dose, along with 1.1 million older people, according to the prime minister's Office [website](#).

The defence ministry said the flaw stemmed from a failure to cross-reference data in its reservation system with that used by local governments.

Kishi said reservation procedures were kept separate as the government thought it "inappropriate" for the defence ministry to hold private information on millions of citizens seeking vaccination.

The mass immunisation centres were flooded with reservations soon after bookings were accepted on Monday, amid reports that smaller venues run by local governments were struggling to cope with demand.

Tokyo and Osaka are currently subject to strict measures that were introduced in late April after a dramatic rise in [Covid-19](#) cases. The restrictions, which target [bars and restaurants](#), go further than those introduced during two previous states of emergency.

But on Wednesday, experts voiced scepticism that the measures could be lifted as planned at the end of the month, citing stubbornly high infection rates driven by new variants, and [pressure on health services](#).

"Looking at the state of infections in Osaka and Tokyo, we are hardly in a situation where we can lift the state of emergency at the end of May," Prof Atsuo Hamada, an expert on infectious diseases at Tokyo Medical University, told the Mainichi.

Japan reported [5,230 cases](#) and 216 deaths on Tuesday, including 121 that had previously gone unreported by authorities in the western prefecture of Hyogo.

Another extension to the state of emergency would further complicate preparations for this summer's [Tokyo Olympics](#).

Calls for the Games to be cancelled have intensified in recent weeks, but organisers and the International Olympic Committee have insisted they will open on 23 July. Earlier this week, the Tokyo Medical Practitioners' Association called for the Olympics to be cancelled, warning they could contribute to a rise in Covid-19 infections and deaths.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/19/flip-in-japan-covid-vaccine-booking-system-causes-chaos>

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



## [Travel & leisure](#)

# Britons face four-hour passport queues this summer, warns Border Force worker

Manually checking Covid-19 paperwork and quarantine requirements at UK airport arrivals ‘now takes 15 minutes per traveller’



Britons returning from holidays abroad can expect four-hour passport queues in cramped, poorly ventilated arrival halls to become the norm this summer, a Border Force worker has told the Guardian. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

Britons returning from holidays abroad can expect four-hour passport queues in cramped, poorly ventilated arrival halls to become the norm this summer, a Border Force worker has told the Guardian. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

[Miles Brignall](#) and [Rupert Jones](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 13.05 EDT

Britons returning from holidays abroad can expect four-hour passport queues in cramped, poorly ventilated arrival halls to become the norm this summer, a Border Force worker has told the Guardian.

Amid claims from passengers arriving at London's [Heathrow airport](#) that they were "terrified" they could catch Covid while waiting in long queues, the worker at Heathrow's passport control said the matter is only set to worsen this summer unless the government eases the workload on staff.

"Staff are already struggling to cope but only because of what they are being asked to do. Normally a Brit arriving at passport control would clear immigration in 30 seconds," the worker said, speaking anonymously.

"The current requirements to manually check Covid-19 testing paperwork and quarantine requirements mean that each person is taking 15 minutes to process.

[‘It’s pretty common’: fake documents add to Border Force officials’ Covid woes](#)

[Read more](#)

"Everyone is back at work – including formally shielding staff – but the truth is that there simply isn't the capacity for staff to carry out the checks demanded by the government.

"Flights are currently running at around 15% of normal capacity. If they return to anywhere near their normal level, and the processes remain as they are, it's going to be a very frustrating summer of long, four- to six-hour waits," he said.

Passengers arriving at Heathrow on Monday described how they were waiting for [up to three hours to clear passport control](#) alongside travellers from India and other high-risk destinations.

Those arriving from red list countries – connected to the prevalence of Covid variants – are supposed to be separated from other passengers before being processed at passport control and then put on buses to quarantine

hotels. However, a member of the security staff at Terminal 2 told the Guardian that the reality “was very different”.

[England's traffic-light system: is travel to 'amber' countries allowed?](#)  
[Read more](#)

Steve Myall, who had flown in to London from the US on Monday, documented his experience on Twitter. During his two-hour wait to be processed he said he had been directed to sit next to a family who had arrived from a red list country, despite the US being on the UK's amber, or medium risk, list.

[Despite warnings from ministers](#), thousands of British holidaymakers have flouted government advice and boarded flights to red and amber list destinations, after international travel resumed on Monday.

Yvette Cooper, the Labour MP and chair of the home affairs select committee, warned that UK airports could pose a “super-spreading risk”, if left unchecked.

Q&A

**England's traffic light system: what does it mean for international holidaymakers?**

Show

Ministers say that from 17 May at the earliest international travel for leisure may be able to resume, and that countries would be placed in a traffic light system, with green, amber and red lists that would set out the rules for things such as testing and quarantining for those returning to England:

**Green:** passengers will not need to quarantine on return (unless they receive a positive result) but must take a pre-departure test as well as a PCR test on arrival back in the UK. A handful of countries and territories are on the initial green list including Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Portugal and the Falkland Island.

**Amber:** travellers will need to quarantine for 10 days, as well as taking a pre-departure test and two PCR tests (on day two and day eight) with the option of paying for a private Covid-19 test on day five (the [test to release scheme](#)) to end self-isolation early.

**Red:** arrivals will be subject to [restrictions currently in place for red list countries](#), which include a 10-day stay in a managed [quarantine hotel](#), as well as pre-departure testing and two PCR tests.

Which list a country is put on will depend on a number of factors including the percentage of the population that has been vaccinated, infection rates and the prevalence of “variants of concern”.

Given travel is a devolved matter, the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will decide whether to follow suit or adopt a different approach.

[Rupert Jones](#) and [Aubrey Allegretti](#)

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

“It’s irresponsible, frankly, not to sort this out because if you have people waiting for long periods of time in a not brilliantly ventilated arrivals hall, that’s a super-spreading risk,” she told the BBC.

“There’s a real risk that we’ll end up just going backwards again. And this is against a long [history of errors and mistakes in the policies at the border](#),” the MP said.

A London Heathrow spokesperson said Border Force is responsible for separating red-list passengers in their immigration halls.

“Those from the red list are directed into a dedicated channel. After crossing the border, government contractors then escort red-list passengers to a segregated area of our baggage hall to collect their luggage before taking them to dedicated hotel quarantine transportation.

Sign up to the daily Business Today email

“There are numerous measures to keep passengers and colleagues safe, including requirements for negative tests pre-departure for international arrivals, enhanced cleaning regimes, dedicated Covid marshals to enforce social distancing and mandatory use of face coverings throughout the airport.”

A government spokesperson said: “Protecting public health is our priority and as we reopen international travel safely we will maintain 100% health checks at the border to protect the wider public and our vaccine rollout.

“While we do this, wait times are likely to be longer and we will do all we can to smooth the process, including the rollout of our e-Gate upgrade programme during the summer and deploying additional Border Force officers. Arrangements for queues and the management of returning passengers are the responsibility of the relevant airport, which we expect to be done in a Covid-secure way.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/may/18/britons-face-up-to-four-hour-passport-queues-this-summer-warns-border-force-worker>

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

[Coronavirus live](#)

[World news](#)

# Coronavirus live news: India passes US for record daily deaths; 60% of all vaccines given in just three countries

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2021/may/19/coronavirus-live-news-india-reports-record-new-deaths-60-of-all-vaccine-doses-given-in-just-three-countries>

## [Taiwan](#)

# Taiwan raises Covid alert level amid rise in infections

Authorities impose mask-wearing and limit gatherings after outbreak spreads to half of island's counties

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



People wait to get a rapid test after a surge of coronavirus infections in Taipei, Taiwan. Photograph: Ann Wang/Reuters

People wait to get a rapid test after a surge of coronavirus infections in Taipei, Taiwan. Photograph: Ann Wang/Reuters

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Wed 19 May 2021 03.14 EDT



The whole of [Taiwan](#) will move into level 3 of its four-tier coronavirus alert system, after cases spread to more than half the island's counties, infecting more than 1,300 people and killing two.

The Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) reported 267 new local cases on Wednesday, following 240 on Tuesday, and 333 on Monday.

The outbreak remains concentrated in the cities of Taipei and New Taipei, which went into level 3 at the weekend, but cases have been reported in eight other cities or counties, including 28 in Changhua, 16 in Taoyuan, and eight in the southern city of Kaohsiung. There were 49 cases without an identified source, while 80 were linked to places in Wanhua, the centre of the northern outbreak.

The level 3 alert does not establish lockdown measures, but mandates mask-wearing outside the home and limits gatherings to five indoors and 10 outdoors. Public venues, sporting venues, entertainment and recreation venues have been closed, but shops and restaurants remain open with enhanced social distancing and customer registration requirements. Level 4 would be triggered after 14 consecutive days of more than 100 cases.

Of those infected, 26 people were in hospital on ventilators, the CECC said.

Shih-chung Chen, the minister of health and welfare, announced that 400,000 new doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine were on the way from Europe, via the Covax scheme. Medical staff and frontline workers at quarantine hotels and testing stations will be prioritised for the doses once they have been released for use.

Taiwan's vaccination rate is low, with the government yet to procure sufficient doses for the entire population, and take-up by the community has been low prior to this outbreak. In the past week, there has been an increased number of vaccinations, and some of the 300,000 doses that were once feared to expire before they could be used are expected to be used within the week.

Taiwan has ordered 20m doses, including from Moderna, for its population of 24 million, but most are yet to arrive and have been affected by global shortages.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/19/taiwan-raises-covid-alert-level-amid-rise-in-infections>

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

## [Coronavirus](#)

# ‘We’re hoping for a good season’: Italy prepares to welcome back tourists

Industry that accounts for 14% of county’s GDP hopes to bounce back as Covid travel restrictions are relaxed

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



The tiny Italian island of Giglio will next week vaccinate its entire population of about 1,400, as well as seasonal workers, as it readies for the summer season. Photograph: Angela Giuffrida/The Guardian

The tiny Italian island of Giglio will next week vaccinate its entire population of about 1,400, as well as seasonal workers, as it readies for the summer season. Photograph: Angela Giuffrida/The Guardian

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Giglio

Wed 19 May 2021 00.00 EDT

If anyone is strategically placed to take note of the people setting foot on the tiny Italian island of Giglio it's Rosalba Pellegrini. Her bar and pastry shop, Fausto, faces the port, where ferries arrive from Porto Santo Stefano, a town on the Tuscan peninsular of Monte Argentario. A smattering of people, mainly hikers and cyclists, descended from the midday boat on Monday.

“We’ve seen a few new faces coming over the last couple of weekends, but otherwise it is very, very quiet,” she said.

That could be about to change now that [Italy](#) has dropped Covid-19 quarantine measures for tourists arriving from EU and Schengen area countries, as well as the UK and Israel. The quarantine has also been removed for visitors travelling from the US, Canada, Japan and the United Arab Emirates onboard Covid-tested flights. All tourists will need to provide evidence of having been fully vaccinated with an EU-approved Covid-19 vaccine, of having recovered from the virus or tested negative 48 hours prior to travelling.



Rosalba Pellegrini: ‘We practically all live off tourism, so it’s fundamental for the island’s survival.’ Photograph: Angela Giuffrida/The Guardian

Like other small Italian islands, Giglio will next week vaccinate its entire population of about 1,400, as well as seasonal workers, as it readies for the

summer season.

“We did surprisingly well last summer even though the season started late,” added Pellegrini. “But it’s been a long and tough winter. We practically all live off tourism, so it’s fundamental for the island’s survival.”

Giglio boasts several pristine bays with crystal clear water and is a paradise for walkers, but it is mostly known beyond Italy for the tragedy of the Costa Concordia, the cruise ship which partially sank just metres away from the island’s shore in January 2012, killing 32 people. The huge, rusting hulk of the vessel loomed over Giglio’s port – attracting plenty of day-trippers who called by for a quick photograph – before being removed in July 2014.

Sergio Ortelli, the mayor of Giglio, has since worked hard to promote the island to foreign tourists.

“Giglio was passed by during the Costa Concordia period as many people associated the island with terror,” said Ortelli. “So we did a big tourism campaign all over the world and organised cultural events to try and get people back. Giglio is not a big island but it is welcoming, and we’re ready to host people.”

### [Map](#)

Ortelli expects all islanders to be vaccinated by the end of next week. “In June last year, I became the first mayor in Italy to make it obligatory for people to wear face masks outside,” he said. “Now that we have the vaccine, I hope to become the first mayor to remove the requirement for face masks outside.”

There is much enthusiasm on the island for the jab. “We’re all very willing to do it,” said Federica Andolti, who works at Bumbabar, a bar and restaurant in Giglio Castello, a medieval village perched on the top of the island. “Up until recently, only Tuscans could visit, or those who had a second home. We’re hoping for a good season, and one without any Covid.”

Italy introduced its travel “green pass” before the launch in June of the EU’s equivalent to try to salvage an industry which, before the pandemic,

accounted for 14% of GDP.

## Cases

“Few countries are intertwined with tourism as Italy,” Mario Draghi, Italy’s prime minister, said this month.

Alongside the plan, the country’s vaccination programme has accelerated in recent weeks. Over 28 million people had received one dose as of Tuesday, while almost 9 million are fully vaccinated. Italy registered 4,452 new infections on Tuesday and 201 more deaths as Draghi’s government further eased restrictions, including shortening the nightly curfew and potentially scrapping it completely on 21 June. All of Italy’s 20 regions, apart from the Aosta valley, are now in the low-risk “yellow zone”, allowing people to travel freely between each.

We are very enthusiastic about getting going again and are ready to welcome people back

The research institute Demoskopika painted an optimistic picture on Monday, estimating that at least 39 million foreign and domestic tourists would take trips in Italy this summer, up 12% on last year.

“The vaccine plan and [travel] green pass are undoubtedly an incentive for the process of tourism recovery,” Raffaele Rio, the president of Demoskopia, told Ansa news agency.

Across the sea from Giglio on Monte Argentario, people like Stefania Marconi, who manages Torre di Cala Piccola, a hotel overlooking a small bay, are counting on the recovery.

The hotel reopened on Friday. “We are starting to get bookings, but, like last year, we had to invest a lot in preparing and a lot of work goes into making sure everything is safe,” said Marconi. “But we are very enthusiastic about getting going again and are ready to welcome people back.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/19/were-hoping-for-a-good-season-italy-prepares-to-welcome-back-tourists>

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



## 2021.05.19 - Spotlight

- [Chips with everything How one Taiwanese company drives the world economy](#)
- [Architecture Why are our cities built for 6ft-tall men? The female architects who fought back](#)
- [Kris Hallenga How cancer survivor convinced a generation to check their breasts](#)
- [Japan Tokyo's restaurateurs rail against alcohol ban as Covid measures bite](#)
- [Travel Five of Anthony Bourdain's favourite food destinations](#)
- [The gobsmacking truth about vaccines Extra Life: A Short History of Living Longer review](#)
- ['There is still so much hatred' Looking back on Holocaust documentary The Last Days](#)
- [Never too late In my late 40s I realised writing a novel had become like Everest](#)



## Taiwan

# Chips with everything: how one Taiwanese company drives the world economy

A Covid-driven global shortage of microchips has put manufacturer TSMC at the heart of the world's recovery, as well as US-China tensions



It is hard to overstate the importance of the Taiwanese semiconductor maker TSMC to the world's economy, and to vehicle manufacturers. Photograph: Tyrone Siu/Reuters

It is hard to overstate the importance of the Taiwanese semiconductor maker TSMC to the world's economy, and to vehicle manufacturers. Photograph: Tyrone Siu/Reuters

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei, and [Martin Farrer](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 21.43 EDT

Living on an island long coveted by a large and increasingly powerful neighbour, the residents of [Taiwan](#) have given some thought to where might be the best place to go should the worst happen. Some think it might be the hills, others historic buildings that China will want to preserve. By the same reasoning, some believe it is the factory run by the world's biggest computer chip maker, TSMC.

Taiwan has for decades been both a global strategic flashpoint and one of the world's economic powerhouses. In an industrial park about an hour's drive from Taipei, those twin identities merge almost perfectly in the form of the factory run by TSMC, the world's largest maker of computer chips – a facility so vital that some Taiwanese think it could be the safest place to flee to should [China](#) one day invade.

It is hard to overstate the importance of the Taiwanese semiconductor maker to the world's economy. TSMC dominates production of the world's most sophisticated semiconductors, and counts Apple and Qualcomm among its biggest customers. It is a global hegemony that China envies.

The current worldwide shortage of chips that began early in the coronavirus pandemic is now reaching crisis proportions, making TSMC's role even more pivotal.

[Global shortage of computer chips could last two years, says IBM boss](#)  
[Read more](#)

Financial markets are increasingly alarmed about how the shortages are fuelling inflation in western economies and – with executives predicting the [chip scarcity could last for years rather than months](#) – are casting a spotlight on how a company that few people have heard of can have such a grip on the world's economy.

## **Tough road ahead**

The chip shortage has sent the cost of new and used cars and trucks soaring, which in turn fed a 4.2% jump in US consumer prices in April. Stock markets saw an instant correction as investors calculated that inflation meant

the US Federal Reserve would begin to raise interest rates to take the heat out the economy sooner than expected.

Ever since they emerged from the shock of the pandemic recession last year, carmakers have been unable to get their hands on enough semiconductors to make cars to meet demand. Chips are not used just in computers – they are the brains behind a whole range of everyday devices and are integral in car production as vehicles do more and more of the thinking for drivers.

Ford said in April that it would make only half its normal number of vehicles through to June because of the chip shortage. Other manufacturers such as GM, Volkswagen and Jaguar Land Rover have also been affected.



Around 5,000 unfinished cars parked outside the Volkswagen Navarra factory in Pamplona due to a lack of semiconductors. Photograph: Ander Gillenea/AFP/Getty Images

The end result was that US cars were 10% more expensive in April than they had been in March, the biggest monthly gain since records began. Secondhand cars were up 21% from last April as the shortage of vehicles coincides with consumers, many cashed-up because of pandemic restrictions on holidays and eating out, going out in search of something to spend their money on. The pattern is repeated in many countries. Car sales and prices

are rising quickly in the UK in the wake of the third lockdown, while they [are also booming in Australia](#).

A simple solution would be make more chips, but the market for these components is finely tuned, and adding manufacturing capacity – known as “fabs” – is [extremely complex](#), expensive and takes a long time. When carmakers shuttered factories in the first wave of the pandemic in 2020, manufacturers such as TSMC and Samsung in Korea shifted production to chips for consumer electronics where demand continued to build as people spent more time at home during lockdowns.

Carmakers compounded the problem by failing to place enough future orders, believing the economic shutdown would be longer lasting. But the world economy, helped by massive government intervention, has roared back more quickly than many thought, leaving a shortage of components. Analysts calculated this week that the car industry would lose \$110bn this year because of production lost due to the dearth of chips.

## **‘Dependency poses a threat’**

Mark Williams, chief Asia economist at the consultancy Capital Economics, said the car industry’s problems showed how semiconductors have become an essential input in products that aren’t traditionally considered electronics, and also how dependent the world is on Taiwan to produce them.

“This dependency poses a threat to the global economy that can be mitigated but won’t be fully addressed in the foreseeable future,” he said.

So what appears to be a strength also places Taiwan in a tight spot. The concentration of chip production in Taiwan, which could be disrupted by earthquakes and drought as well as any possible military threat from across the Taiwan Strait, is a risk to the global economy.

Superpowers the US and China are striving desperately to catch up with Taiwan’s hi-tech champion, amid growing diplomatic and geopolitical tension between Washington and Beijing. TSMC is believed to be considering expanding its current plans to pump billions of dollars into

cutting-edge factories in the US state of Arizona, Reuters reported this month.

China is also desperate to increase its ability to make the most sophisticated chips but, according to Capital, has failed to reduce its dependence on overseas producers such as TSMC. In fact, TSMC is [reportedly considering ventures in China worth billions – including a new facility in Nanjing](#). In 2018, Chinese companies such as Huawei stockpiled chips in response to threats of US export controls, exacerbating the shortage. Trump-era sanctions on China's leading chip maker, SIMC, have not helped.

[China v Russia v America: is 2021 the year Orwell's 1984 comes true?](#)  
[Read more](#)

Ultimately, the best way out of the current situation is to spread the load, said John Lee, who is co-running a [joint project by the thinktanks SNV and MERICS](#) analysing the semiconductor value chain. “The smart way to build resilience across the global supply chain is greater coordination across different countries, rather than chasing self-sufficiency with the huge risk and expense that would involve,” he said.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/19/chips-with-everything-how-one-taiwanese-company-drives-the-world-economy>.



## Architecture

# Why are our cities built for 6ft-tall men? The female architects who fought back



A daily struggle ... Matrix founding member Anne Thorne carries a pushchair up the steps of a subway in Aldgate, east London. Photograph: Christine Wall

A daily struggle ... Matrix founding member Anne Thorne carries a pushchair up the steps of a subway in Aldgate, east London. Photograph: Christine Wall

Fed up living in a world designed by and for men, 80s design activists Matrix declared war on every urban obstacle in their way. And their impact is still being felt today



[Oliver Wainwright](#)

[@ollywainwright](#)

Wed 19 May 2021 01.00 EDT

When Le Corbusier developed his proportional system [Le Modulor](#) in the 1940s, the great architect had in mind a handsome British policeman. His system would go on to shape the entire postwar world, dictating everything from the height of a door handle to the scale of a staircase, all governed by the need to make everything as convenient as possible for this 6ft-tall ideal man. Its influence even extended to the size of city blocks, since these responded to the size and needs of the car our imaginary hero drove to work. The Swiss-born, Paris-based architect had originally proposed 1.75m, based on the average height of a Frenchman, but it later grew. “In English detective novels,” said Le Corbusier, explaining his change of mind, “the good-looking men, such as policemen, are always 6ft tall!”

This may have created a dynamic world for the dashing man, pictured by Corbusier with bulging calves, pinched waist, broad shoulders and a huge lobster claw of a hand raised aloft. But this modernist worldview failed to account for women, as well as children, elderly and disabled people – anyone, in fact, who fell outside the statuesque ideal.



Shaping the city ... Le Corbusier's Modulor. Photograph: CCI/Rex/Shutterstock

By the 1980s, some women had had enough. After decades of struggling with prams and shopping trolleys, navigating dark underpasses, blind alleyways and labyrinthine subways in the urban obstacle course mostly made by men, it was time for a different approach. “Through lived experience,” wrote [the Matrix Feminist Design Co-operative](#), when they launched their manifesto in 1981, “women have a different perspective of their environment from the men who created it. Because there is no ‘women’s tradition’ in building design, we want to explore the new possibilities that the recent change in women’s lives and expectations have opened up.”

Forty years on and 27 years since they disbanded, the surviving members of Matrix have taken over a corner of the Barbican, as part of the London arts centre’s new Level G programme, an experimental space in the foyer designed to entertain anyone hanging around. Following the recent [vigils for Sarah Everard](#), whose murder prompted a national reckoning over women’s safety, and coming after the Black Lives Matter protests for social and spatial justice, the provocative display couldn’t open at a more fitting time.

Called [How We Live Now](#), the exhibition begins with a work by the



Birmingham Film and Video Workshop, shown on Channel 4 in 1988, that documented women's experiences of navigating [Paradise Circus](#), part of the postwar city centre conceived as an island in a gyratory roundabout, hemmed by a ring road and accessed by subways, steps and high-level walkways. A reviewer in the Daily Telegraph, who had been expecting something "amateurish, boring and full of loony leftist women" was instead enraptured by the film's display of common sense about the ills of car-dominated planning. The makers "did not suggest any wilful discrimination", the critic wrote, "but simply inability on the part of male architects to envisage what women actually do and need in their buildings".

A case in point, shown in another section of the exhibition, is the Essex Women's Refuge. The complex, designed by a male architect, had got basic things wrong, from the shared kitchen, which was far too small, to the location of the children's play areas, which were completely separate from the main communal areas, with no visual or aural connection for passive supervision. Matrix worked on the centre in 1992. Using what became a regular tactic, they presented the women with big cardboard models of different spaces, which they could rearrange to test out different configurations, along with using ribbon marked like a ruler to measure their existing spaces, which were added to the plans as a comparison.



Pioneering ... members of Matrix in the 1990s (Mo Hildenbrand, Sheelagh McManus, Raechel Ferguson (back row); Janie Grote, Annie-Louise Phiri, Julia Dwyer (front row). Photograph: Jenny Burgen

“These were all simple techniques,” says Jos Boys, a founder member of Matrix, who curated the exhibition with the Barbican’s Jon Astbury. “But they made the women feel part of creating the project. A key part of everything we did was to make the language and practice of architecture more transparent and accessible to non-experts.”

The key was to make the language of architecture more transparent and accessible

Boys describes what now sounds like an unimaginable heyday of community action, participatory planning, squatting, workers’ co-operatives and technical aid centres, with public money readily available. Much of what Matrix worked on was funded by the Greater London Council under Ken Livingstone, before it was abolished in 1986 by the then prime minister, Margaret Thatcher. Their projects included the groundbreaking [Jagonari women’s educational resource centre](#) in Whitechapel, east London. Working for – and with – a group of South Asian women, Matrix ran workshops with demountable models, asked the women to bring pictures of buildings from their home countries that they liked, and took them on a “brick picnic” walk to discuss what building materials and colours they preferred.

The result, completed in 1987 and now home to a childcare centre, incorporated a variety of Asian influences, deliberately not linked to any Hindu or Islamic imagery. It included decorative metal latticework over the windows, to provide both visual interest and security, mosaic patterns around the doors, squat toilets and sit-down sinks for washing large saucepans from communal meals. Every part of the building was fully wheelchair accessible too, a rarity in those days.

“They understood exactly what our requirements were without being patronising or judgmental,” wrote their client, Solma Ahmed, in a glowing tribute written three decades later, in support of an unsuccessful bid for Matrix to be retrospectively awarded the RIBA gold medal. “We said what

we needed in that building: safety, security, childcare, sensitive to women's cultural and religious needs while breaking some myths about Muslim women in particular. They were [the] perfect fit."



Groundbreaking ... Jagonari women's centre in Whitechapel, east London. Photograph: Shahed Saleem for The Survey of London.

When people have encountered Matrix in the past, they have sometimes asked what exactly feminist design looks like. How would a city designed and built by women be different? But, in Boys' mind, that misses the point. They weren't promoting a feminist aesthetic, but a way of looking, listening and designing that takes account of people's very different needs and desires, one that embodies "the richness of our multiple ways of being in the world". It's about who gets to build it, too: a large part of Matrix's work was devoted to publications, manuals and events, explaining routes into the building trades and running training courses.

The members of the co-operative, who numbered between 12 and 16, were all paid the same, and, as public sector funding dried up, their model struggled to remain viable. While they went on to many different things – from academia to running restaurants, to setting up their own architecture practices – their short but explosive moment would inspire future generations, particularly in recent years as students have rediscovered their

work. The demand is now such that Matrix's seminal 1984 book, *Making Space: [Women](#) and the Man Made Environment*, long out of print, is to be republished by Verso this year.

[City with a female face: how modern Vienna was shaped by women](#)  
[Read more](#)

A final section of the exhibition includes architects, artists and film-makers who are keeping the spirit alive, such as Winnie Herbstein. Her [2018 film installation Studwork](#), which took a wrecking ball to assumptions of gendered roles in construction, featured Glasgow's Women in Construction course and the Slaghammers feminist welding group. There are the socially driven practices like Muf and Public Works, campaign groups like [Part W](#) and Black Females in Architecture, as well as [feminist design collective Edit](#), who designed the clever structure of the exhibition itself. There might no longer be the pots of cash available from the public purse, but these practices are finding ways to carve out space for more excluded, marginal voices.

As Matrix write: "Consciously or otherwise, designers work in accordance with a set of ideas about how society operates, who or what is valued, who does what and who goes where." The question is who gets included, whose values we prioritise, and what kind of world we want to create.

[How We Live Now](#) is at the Barbican, London, until 23 December.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/may/19/why-are-our-cities-built-for-6ft-tall-men-the-female-architects-who-fought-back>

# Kris Hallenga: the woman diagnosed with cancer at 23 who convinced a generation to check their breasts

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/may/19/kris-hallenga-the-woman-diagnosed-with-cancer-at-23-who-convinced-a-generation-to-check-their-breasts>



## Japan

# Tokyo's restaurateurs rail against alcohol ban as Covid measures bite



A man looks at an almost empty street in Shimbashi, in Tokyo, Japan.  
Photograph: Yuichi Yamazaki/Getty Images

A man looks at an almost empty street in Shimbashi, in Tokyo, Japan.  
Photograph: Yuichi Yamazaki/Getty Images

Owners of izakayas in the Shimbashi district of Japan's capital are facing an existential threat

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Tue 18 May 2021 20.00 EDT

A vivid rainbow heralds the arrival of dusk in Tokyo, but the fabled promise of a pot of gold must seem like a cruel joke to restaurateurs in Shimbashi, where office blocks stand in happy proximity to hundreds of watering holes.

In pre-coronavirus days, nightfall would be the cue for the neighbourhood's neon lights to flicker into action and for touts armed with laminated menus to beckon office workers inside with promises of cheap food and drink.

But as Tokyo begins the fourth week of its [latest coronavirus state of emergency](#), the usual post-work bonhomie that spills out on to Shimbashi's narrow backstreets has been replaced by anger and despondency.

“Take a look ... it's empty,” says Yasuko Matsui, the owner of a small restaurant serving Nagasaki-style noodles. “We're not allowed to serve alcohol, so no one is interested in eating out. Imagine going to a pub or restaurant where you can't even order a drink.”

A ban on alcohol is one of several restrictions Tokyo's eateries have been told to observe as the city attempts to arrest a fourth wave of Covid-19 infections, two months before it is due to host the [Olympic Games](#). Even

those that switch to serving only soft drinks must close at 8pm. As an incentive, the government is offering daily subsidies of between ¥40,000 (£258) and ¥200,000 (£1,292) depending on the establishment's size, along with the threat of a ¥300,000 fine for noncompliance.

Even alfresco drinking is discouraged, with burly men in hi-vis jackets and baseball caps positioned on street corners to deter “displaced” carousers from congregating in a nearby park.



A man reading a newspaper in a Shimabashi izakaya in June last year. Photograph: Charly Triballeau/AFP/Getty Images

Japan's third state of emergency, which targets Tokyo, [Osaka](#) and several other virus-hit prefectures, went into effect on 25 April and was supposed to end on 11 May, but has been extended until the end of the month.

While cases have fallen in recent days, infections remain stubbornly high, adding to concerns that the cycle of restrictions and periods of relative freedom – combined with a [slow vaccine rollout](#) – will fail to make a significant dent in the capital's Covid-19 caseload.

Tokyo reported [732 cases](#) on Tuesday – down from 925 the same day last week – bringing its total to more than 153,000, with almost 2,000 deaths.



## Japan cases

Japanese health experts have long pointed to the heightened risk of Covid-19 transmission when groups of people sit in confined, poorly ventilated spaces and remove their masks to eat, drink and chat.

But for Shimbashi restaurateurs, the measures represent an existential threat. “The subsidies are too low, given that we can’t serve alcohol and have to close very early in the evening,” said Matsui, adding that her restaurant was “just about surviving” by offering special deals to the lunchtime office crowd.

Others complain that the subsidies don’t come close to matching the profits generated by alcohol sales. One bar owner, who asked not to be named, said his takings had fallen by about 60% since the start of the pandemic.

“We will probably be able to survive, but there are lots of smaller places around here that were encouraged by the government to take out loans earlier in the pandemic. Now they have to start paying them back, but they can’t. We are going to see a lot of places going bankrupt.”

Elsewhere in the neighbourhood, diners pack into the few restaurants that have decided to open up, while others display signs stating that they will remain closed until the end of the state of emergency. A small number look as if they will never reopen.

Their pain is being felt across Tokyo – whose endless gastronomic possibilities have helped earn it more Michelin stars than any other city in the world – and other parts of the country.

While sales at fast-food chains have grown during the pandemic thanks to higher demand for takeaways, those at bars and izakayas, a type of informal bar that serves drinks and snacks, plunged by almost 40% in March compared with the same month last year, according to the Japan Foodservice Association.

A report by Tokyo Shoko Research, a corporate analysis firm, says 842 restaurants nationwide filed for bankruptcy in 2020, up 5.3% from a year

earlier. But it is at smaller izakaya pubs – a fixture of Japanese social and cultural life – where the virus is causing most damage. In the year through to the end of March, 175 went out of business – an annual rise of 17%, it said.

“People stayed away from pubs to avoid crowds,” the report said. “Small restaurants are also suffering from the cost of investing in equipment to prevent the spread of the virus, such as partitions.”

Global-Dining, a large restaurant chain based in Tokyo, is fighting back. It recently filed a suit seeking damages from the metropolitan government, claiming the order to close is illegal and infringes on its constitutional right to conduct business.

As the clock ticks towards 8pm – when her restaurant would normally be heaving – Matsui is preparing to lower the shutters after another evening of frustration. “We’re trapped in a vicious cycle and the politicians aren’t listening to us any more,” she said. “It feels like they have got their hands around our throats.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/19/tokyo-alcohol-ban-covid-lockdown-izakayas-shimbashi>

## Food and drink

# Five of Anthony Bourdain's favourite food destinations



Anthony Bourdain in his No Reservations television series, 2005.  
Photograph: Discovery Channel/Rex

Anthony Bourdain in his No Reservations television series, 2005.  
Photograph: Discovery Channel/Rex

The co-author of *World Travel: An Irreverent Guide* reveals the places and dishes at the top of the late chef and food presenter's list

*Laurie Woolever*

Wed 19 May 2021 01.30 EDT

From kebabs and sausages devoured after a night of boozing to ease the blow of tomorrow morning's hangover, to spicy noodles, grilled birds and fish. From complex braises and soups and stews whose particular flavour profiles tell their own stories, to the classics of French *cuisine ancienne* –

[Anthony Bourdain](#) ate it all, and made it his mission to share it with the world.

Whether you've been to every place he explored or never even owned a passport, it remains a joy to see the world through his hysterical and sometimes profane lens. What he left behind, and what you'll find in *World Travel*, was a 20-year history and road map of how to be a happy, mindful, curious and well-fed traveller.

## Happy Paradise, Hong Kong



Tony (as he preferred to be called) went to Hong Kong at the start of his television adventure, and returned often. As he said in a mid-career episode of *No Reservations*, “I’m constantly asked, ‘What’s the greatest food city in the world?’ And I always say that no one can say you’re wrong if you say Hong Kong.”

He loved the roast goose and pork, the seafood and the homey, comforting classics of the city’s *dai pai dong* (outdoor food stall) restaurants. He loved the electric night markets and street food, as well as its fine dining.

And, on his last visit there, in 2018, he was enamoured with Happy Paradise, owned and operated by [chef May Chow](#), whose cooking is hyper-modern *and* steeped in Cantonese tradition. He took particular note of the sautéed prawns with pan-roasted pumpkin, dried shrimp roe, and prawn oil (tossed with fresh egg noodles in their current menu incarnation); medium-rare tea-smoked pigeon, Hakka-style yellow wine chicken served with oyster mushroom fried rice and chrysanthemum butter, “all of it truly, stunningly delicious”.

*Main dishes about HK\$250 (£23); set menus HK\$480-\$680HK, [happyparadise.hk](http://happyparadise.hk)*

## Restaurant Paul Bocuse, Lyon



Photograph: Jeff Pachoud/AFP/Getty Images

The gloriously tradition-bound culinary culture of Lyon held a decades-long fascination for Tony. He visited the city, in the company of chef (and native son) Daniel Boulud, in 2014, eating well at every stop, which included an elementary school cafeteria, bouchons and bistros, a private hunting cabin, and one of the temples of Lyonnaise haute cuisine, Restaurant Paul Bocuse.

In the company of the late chef himself, he enjoyed a menu of classics, including black truffle soup VGE (named for former French president Valéry



Giscard d'Estaing), whole seabass baked in a decorative crust with sauce Choron, and “the legendary *lièvre à la royale*,” a dish of slowly-cooked wild hare “coated by a sauce of its own minced heart, liver and lungs, that has been thickened with its own blood ... the rich glorious sauce finished with truffles and chartreuse ... absolutely the Lost Ark of the Covenant of *cuisine ancienne*.”

Main around €80euros (£70), set menus from €180, [bocuse.fr](http://bocuse.fr)

## Bún Bò Huế Kim Chau, Huế, Vietnam



Tucking into bowls of bún bò Huế in Vietnam. Photograph: Mint Images Limited/Alamy

It took more than a decade of non-stop world travel, with many return visits to Vietnam, for Tony to finally make it to Huế, in the central region. Once the seat of imperial power for the Nguyễn dynasty, Huế remains a centre of Vietnamese intellectual, cultural, religious and culinary importance. While Huế's cuisine is characterised by small, delicate and visually striking presentations of steamed rice cakes and crepes stuffed with shrimp, pork and vegetables, the dish that stole Tony's heart was the lusty bún bò Huế soup, specifically that served at Bún Bò Huế Kim Chau, in Dong Ba market.

“In the hierarchy of delicious, slurpy stuff in a bowl, bún bò Huế is at the very top,” he said, while perched on a stool, enjoying a taste in the morning humidity. “An elaborate broth of mixed bones scented with lemongrass, spice, and fermented shrimp paste ... rice noodles heaped with tender, slow-cooked beef shank, crabmeat dumplings, pig’s foot, and huyet-blood cake. Garnished with lime wedge, cilantro, green onions, chilli sauce, shredded banana blossoms, and mung bean sprouts ... the greatest soup in the world ... as sophisticated and complex a bowl of food as any French restaurant. It really is just the top of the mountain.”

*Bún Bò Huế Kim Chau at Dong Ba Market; bowl of bún bò Huế about VND50,000 (£1.55), [chodongba.com.vn](http://chodongba.com.vn)*

## Ganbara, San Sebastián



Photograph: Alamy Stock Photo

“We could make the argument,” said Tony, in an episode of Parts Unknown, “that there’s no better place to eat in Europe than the city of San Sebastián. There are more Michelin-starred restaurants per capita than anywhere on Earth. But even the everyday joints are superb. The love of food, the insistence on the very best ingredients, is fundamental to the culture, and to life here.”

“I come here every time, like a heat-seeking missile,” Tony said about Ganbara, the pintxos bar first introduced to him by Juan Mari and Elena Arzak, whom he considered a kind of second family. In a reverie that casts aside his reputation for always seeking out the new and obscure, Tony said about the place, “The house specialty, what they’re most famous for, is the be-all and end-all for me: seared wild mushrooms and foie gras with a raw egg yolk over the top, to sizzle and commingle with the hot fungi.”

*Pintxos from €9-€20 (£7.80-£17 each); typical meal about €57, [ganbarajatetxea.com](http://ganbarajatetxea.com)*

## Pastrami Queen, New York



Photograph: Robert K Chin/Alamy

Arguably the culinary capital of the US, New York offers an awful lot of just about every type of food in the world, much of it made by people only recently arrived from everywhere else on the planet. A feature could be made from the places that Tony adored in New York, but for our purposes, let's focus on the endemically New York pleasure of Pastrami Queen, on the Upper East and West Sides of Manhattan.

When it comes to kosher-style dining, Katz's Deli and Barney Greengrass may be more famous and have a deeper history and lore in New York, but



when speaking to Variety magazine about his home town favourites in 2017, Tony said, “The first thing I get when I’m back in New York is a pastrami sandwich. Pastrami Queen is a really good pastrami sandwich – if not the best, among the very best. Just a good, nice mix of fat and lean. It’s the real deal, served warm on fresh, soft rye bread with the right kind of mustard ... It’s a quintessential New York meal for me.”

*Pastrami sandwich with mustard, Russian dressing and two pickles, \$22 (£16), [pastramiqueen.com](http://pastramiqueen.com)*

**Laurie Woolever is the co-author of [World Travel: An Irreverent Guide](#) (Bloomsbury, £18.99)**

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2021/may/19/five-of-anthony-bourdains-favourite-food-destinations>

## [TV review](#) **Television & radio**

# **Extra Life: A Short History of Living Longer review – the gobsmacking truth about vaccines**

Want a booster shot of knowledge? David Olusoga and Steven Johnson's new show will teach you about the magic, and the horrors, behind the medical breakthroughs of our time



Do you believe in magic? ... Dr Anthony Fauci marvels at advanced vaccines in Extra Life: A Short History of Living Longer. Photograph: Vanessa Carr/BBC/Nutopia

Do you believe in magic? ... Dr Anthony Fauci marvels at advanced vaccines in Extra Life: A Short History of Living Longer. Photograph: Vanessa Carr/BBC/Nutopia



[Lucy Mangan](#)

[@LucyMangan](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 18.00 EDT

In 1900, the average global life expectancy was 32. Today, a tiny blink of historical time later, it's twice that. In a developed country, you will most likely live to see your grandchildren and can hope not unreasonably to see a great-grandson or daughter, too. The new four-part series *Extra Life: A Short History of Living Longer* (BBC Four), presented by [historian David Olusoga](#) and US science writer Steven Johnson, explores how a handful of medical breakthroughs got us from there to here.

The first episode – naturally enough in the age of Covid – focused on the revolutionary power of vaccines. They are part of what Johnson called the “invisible shield” of public health progress, programmes and policies that we, until early last year, could take for granted. He and Olusoga, talking via Zoom, took it in turns to explain first the [precursor to vaccination, variolation](#) (the ancient practice of smearing infected matter from a smallpox sufferer into a cut in the flesh of a healthy person, to protect him or her from the disease's worst ravages), and then the development of vaccines. The speed with which humanity moved from Edward Jenner's linking of milkmaids' apparent immunity to smallpox via cowpox infection to

producing effective vaccines for a novel zoonotic virus mere months after it emerged, to say nothing of producing and [distributing them on an extraordinary scale](#), was breathtaking.



Scrutinising the record ... historian David Olusoga in Extra Life.  
Photograph: Joe Taylor/BBC/Nutopia

But the defining feature of this series – which next week looks at the development of medical drugs, and thereafter the use of data and the attenuation of social behaviours – is that it embeds the unquestionable success stories in context. While Johnson delivers mainly scientific facts and explanations, Olusoga notes the enduring effects of power dynamics, the repeated exploitation of the disenfranchised, and how often medical or any kind of progress is achieved by standing not only on the shoulders of giants but on the broken bodies of those who had little say in how they were used.

The knowledge of variolation, for example, which had existed elsewhere since at least the mid-1500s, came to America when an African man was trafficked across the Atlantic and in 1706 bought by a Puritan congregation in Boston as a gift for their minister, Cotton Mather. He, Olusoga puts it with customary attention to linguistic detail, “forced him to take on a new name”, Onesimus, after a slave in the New Testament. When Mather asked whether Onesimus had ever had smallpox – rife in Africa at the time – he replied,

“Yes and no,” and described the variolation procedure he had undergone in Africa before his capture. Such inoculation gained mainstream acceptance when President Thomas Jefferson embraced it, after trying it out on his slaves first.

The programme devoted a significant amount of time to weaving such threads (along with such ethical [travesties as the Tuskegee syphilis trials](#)) into the picture of [distrust we see now among ethnic minority communities](#) and the relatively high rate of vaccine refusal therein. Thus are the effects of racism compounded.

But if we must learn from the failings of the past, we can, both presenters insisted, learn from its successes, too. Gene sequencing enables scientists to engineer vaccines that are essentially software downloads into our cells. Dr Anthony Fauci, chief medical adviser to the US president, himself remains enraptured by this so-advanced-as-to-be-indistinguishable-from-magic situation. “If you had told my mentors you don’t even need to get the pathogen in your hand to make a vaccine, they would have laughed at me. All you need is a computer screen!”

Epidemiologist Larry Brilliant, who worked with the WHO on its worldwide campaign to eradicate smallpox, described watching the scabs of the last known victim of the disease fall to the ground and knowing “that was the end of an unbroken chain of transmission going all the way back to Rameses V. That disease was gone, in that moment.” The campaign had involved the cooperation of 73 countries, including cold war enemies the US and USSR, and had lasted from 1967 to 1975. Eight years to end for ever something that was killing 2 million mostly poor people a year. We can be so terrible, and we can perform such wonders. Extra Life entwined these two facts to full effect and jabbed us with a small inoculation against ignorance. Three booster shots still to come. Roll up your sleeves.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/may/18/extra-life-a-short-history-of-living-longer-review-the-gobsmacking-truth-about-vaccines>

## Documentary films

# **‘There is still so much hatred’: looking back on Holocaust documentary *The Last Days***

The makers of 1998’s Oscar-winning film, along with one of its subjects, discuss why a remastered version landing on Netflix still has much to teach us



Filming *The Last Days* at Auschwitz. Photograph: Focus Features

Filming *The Last Days* at Auschwitz. Photograph: Focus Features

[Radheyana Simonpillai](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 10.54 EDT

The last time June Beallor saw the Auschwitz survivor Irene Zisblatt, they watched *Sex and the City* together. That was 20 years ago.



Beallor is one of the producers behind *The Last Days*, the Oscar-winning 1998 documentary executive-produced by [Steven Spielberg](#) about the Hungarian Jewish experience during the Holocaust, which has now been remastered and re-released on Netflix. Zisblatt, who escaped from Auschwitz as a teen, is one of the film's subjects. The 91-year-old is also a big fan of *Sex and the City*. Her favourite character is Carrie Bradshaw, the fashion columnist played by Sarah Jessica Parker, because "she was always looking for the next thing".

[The Night Porter: Nazi porn or daring arthouse eroticism?](#)  
[Read more](#)

On a Zoom call with the Guardian, they reminisce about that get-together at Beallor's California home. She was hosting a reunion for the people involved with *The Last Days*. The director, James Moll, missed the festivities because he was out of town filming. But fellow [Holocaust](#) survivors Bill Basch, Alice Lok Cahana and Renee Firestone and the associate producers Bonnie Samotin and Elyse Katz all attended the poolside gathering, which took place on a Sunday.

Beallor recalled one of the producers mentioning in hushed tones that the latest *Sex and the City* was about to come on, thinking they couldn't possibly get away with sneaking in the episode with present company. But then Zisblatt and her cohort flipped around enthusiastically. "They were like, 'Wait a minute, we know about *Sex and the City*,'" says Beallor. And that's how the group ended up enjoying an episode of Carrie's "next thing" together.

This isn't how I expected to start the conversation with the people behind a Holocaust documentary. But these moments of levity appear common with this group. They also feel necessary.

"You need it when the subject matter is so heavy," says Moll, who joins Beallor, Zisblatt and the latter's daughter Robin Mermelstein in the conversation on the occasion of *The Last Days*' restoration and global streaming release.



The documentary focuses on the Hungarian Jews who were targeted by the Nazis during the final stages of the Holocaust. As the Nazis were losing the second world war, they redirected more resources towards completing their “Final Solution”. The film’s thesis is that the Nazis were so fueled by hatred that they would sacrifice their position in the war in order to carry out the genocide, deporting 438,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz within a six-week period. Survivors Zisblatt, Basch, Cahana, Firestone and the late Democratic politician Tom Lantos recount on camera their own ordeals from this period in horrifying and heartbreaking detail.

The Last Days was produced by the Shoah Foundation, founded by Spielberg in 1994 following the response to Schindler’s List, his monumental film about Oskar Schindler’s work to rescue Jews from concentration camps. When Schindler’s List won best picture at the Oscars, Spielberg made a plea in his acceptance speech. He asked educators to teach the Holocaust in schools and utilize the voices of the survivors, who until then were encouraged to put the trauma behind them.

“[Schindler’s List] was a catalyst,” says Beallor. She explains that in telling the story of the Holocaust, Spielberg built trust among survivors who felt they could finally open up about their experiences and be heard. As the founding executive directors of the Shoah Foundation, Beallor and Moll were tasked with collecting testimonies from more than 50,000 survivors who committed their stories to the digital archive for safekeeping.

“Once word got out that the Shoah Foundation existed,” Moll continues, “the phones were ringing off the hook with survivors wanting to tell their stories.”

Zisblatt was among those who gave testimony immediately after Schindler’s List’s release, though she says she has only seen “bits and pieces” of Spielberg’s film. “There are things that I just can’t handle,” she says from her Florida home.



Irene Zisblatt visits her grandparents' grave with her daughter Robin.  
Photograph: Focus Features

Zisblatt was 13 years old when she arrived in Auschwitz in 1944. Before being separated from her family for ever, her mother gave Zisblatt four diamonds to hold on to until she could exchange them for bread. Because nowhere was safe, Zisblatt would swallow the diamonds, retrieve them from her own waste, clean them off and repeat that cycle. She describes that ordeal and more in *The Last Days*. In her book, *The Fifth Diamond*, she also writes about enduring Dr Josef Mengele's experiments during her time in Auschwitz.

Zisblatt is wearing the four diamonds during the Zoom call. They're housed in a pendant that hangs from her neck. She only wears the diamonds when educating about the Holocaust, which she does often. Zisblatt speaks at schools, colleges and on frequents trips to Poland for the March of the Living, an educational program that brings students from around the world to Auschwitz on Yom HaShoah, the Holocaust Remembrance Day.

She has published a version of *The Fifth Diamond* suitable for younger readers and developed a study guide to make it easier for educators to teach it to kids.

“I want them to feel proud of who they are, grateful for what they have and protect our future,” says Zisblatt, describing what motivates her. She says she has a meeting set up with four senators who are advocating to make Holocaust education mandatory in schools across the US. “Our generation had failed to find the tools to stop genocide. But [the next generation] have a chance to do that.”

A new generation will probably discover *The Last Days*, as it’s released in 33 languages on Netflix worldwide. Until now it has only been available on DVD.

“It’s going to be very interesting to see how the film plays for today’s audience,” says Moll, who has been trying to restore the film for years.

Beallor and Moll consider how the film will speak to the recent rise in antisemitism and xenophobia in the US, and the education people have been receiving about micro-aggressions and systemic racism from the #BlackLivesMatter movement. But I wonder how the film will speak to the crisis between Israelis and Palestinians.

On the morning we’re discussing *The Last Days*, [the Guardian](#) was reporting that eight children were killed by Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City. The war between the state and Hamas continues to escalate after Israeli forces began removing Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem’s Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

“There’s so many things going on in the world today that are born from hatred and fear,” says Moll. “The Holocaust definitely shows the dark side of what human beings are capable of.”



James Moll interviews Irene Zisblatt. Photograph: Focus Features

“I don’t like to be overly political,” Moll continues. “I don’t want to hit anybody over the head. I want people to hear these testimonies from the survivors, from Irene, make what they will of it and process it themselves. [I] don’t want to be prescriptive about that.”

Zisblatt volunteers a response. She returns to a moment depicted in *The Last Days*, when she and her daughter visit her old Hungarian village more than 50 years after the Holocaust. They meet with old neighbours and friends, some of whom worry that Zisblatt has returned to reclaim her family’s property, which they bought after the Holocaust. They’re defensive about their claim to land that Zisblatt wasn’t interested in.

Zisblatt reveals an upsetting detail that isn’t in the film. During that visit, one of her childhood friends looked at her family and remarked: “Hitler left enough of you to reproduce.” Moll and Beallor are hearing that exchange for the first time.

“I didn’t want to share that with you because I didn’t want the world to know that there is still so much hatred in my own town,” Zisblatt explains to the film-makers. “I didn’t want the world to see how much hatred is still going on, after all of this suffering.”

- The Last Days is available on Netflix from 19 May

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/may/18/the-last-days-holocaust-documentary-re-release>

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

## [Never too late](#)[Life and style](#)

# Never too late: ‘In my late 40s I realised writing a novel had become like Everest’

Amanda Hampson always dreamed of writing, but it wasn’t until age 50 after a complicated life and ‘all sorts of jobs’ that she was able to publish her first novel



‘As much as anything it’s about giving something your best shot. You get better at that as you get older’: author Amanda Hampson. Photograph: Christian Trinder/Penguin

‘As much as anything it’s about giving something your best shot. You get better at that as you get older’: author Amanda Hampson. Photograph: Christian Trinder/Penguin

*As told to* [Celina Ribeiro](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 13.30 EDT

Name: **Amanda Hampson**

Age: **66**

***Debut novelist at 50***

I had always thought that I would be a writer. I grew up in a relatively isolated place in New Zealand. My parents always read. We used to go to the library every Friday. That was a really important part of my life. I had signed up as a cadet journalist at the local newspaper thinking “OK, this is the way you get in”. But that was all – pfft – gone.

It was 1971, but it may as well have been 1951. I was 16 and pregnant. My parents didn’t support me. I had to leave home. I initially lived in one of those hotels, you know, where old men live. Then my parents put me in a home for unmarried mothers. I ran away from that, and I was pretty much on my own.

People talk now about the ‘good old days’, but there were a lot of things about it that were really bad

I had just turned 17 when my son was born. I could go home on the understanding that I went home alone. I had absolutely no choice. There wasn’t a single mother’s pension back then. Girls did not have the choice of keeping their children. I didn’t go back to school. I gave up my son for adoption and didn’t find him for 21 years.

It was a terrible period. People talk now about the “good old days”, but there were a lot of things about it that were really bad.

I worked in all sorts of jobs. I worked in government office jobs. I got married very young – I was only 19 – and we went to live in London. I worked as a car cleaner. I worked in a garment factory. Then we came to Australia and I worked in office jobs again and got into the events industry. I worked in that for years.

I was writing just for myself, and reading.

When I was in my late 40s I realised that writing a novel had become like Everest. And the more wonderful books you read, the more intimidating it



is. I thought “I’ve just got to start, because if I don’t do this I’ll be really disappointed in myself”. It was like a green flag moment. I just got on and did it, and ended up doing it for about five years.

You’ve got those little puddles of time you find to write in

I was working and looking after kids while I wrote *The Olive Sisters*. My children were quite young. My daughter was born when I was 39 and my youngest son was born when I was 42. So I think that’s why it took a fair bit of time.

I’d get up very early. Even now I often get up at 5.30am. You’ve got those little puddles of time you find to write in. My children still joke about how I would say, “OK, I just need an hour without interruption.” And then the door would open very, very quietly, and a whisper: “There’s no milk!”

That book was accepted by Penguin. I was 50. It was amazing.

It’s not like people go “Amanda Hampson! She’s got a book out!” You’ve got to go out to booksellers. Doing all sorts of things to get your book out there.

As much as anything it’s about giving something your best shot. You get better at that as you get older – doing something to the absolute limit of your capability. *The Olive Sisters* ended up a bestseller.

So many things in life are about getting back in the saddle

You think that if something’s a blazing success it will just be up, up, up. After the first book I separated from my partner and had two children, who were 10 and 13, to look after. The next book came out, and it was not such a big success. In the meantime *The Olive Sisters* was optioned by an American producer for a movie. I was given the opportunity to write the script, and that went on for years. In the end, the finance just didn’t come through.

So many things in life are about getting back in the saddle. Just over and over again. That's my experience.

I am prone to making rash and impulsive statements. I had said to my eldest son – we had become great friends – “When you turn 40, I'll take you anywhere in the world. Just you and I.” As a writer, I had no idea how I was going to finance that, but I thought it was important. Then he rang me one day and said: “New York Marathon.” And I said, “Right. I'm in.” I had never even run for the bus. So I started training. It took a year and a half. It's like writing. You run one kilometre, then you run two. I had a sore knee the entire time I was training. Then we went off to New York and it was just the most amazing experience. I was 59.

About six months after the marathon my youngest son, who was 17, said: “Mum, let's go and do the Camino de Santiago.” He got injured after three days and went off to France. I continued walking the 800km alone.

I really love the idea of writing about women of my generation ... finding what they want for themselves

When I separated from my children's father I decided that being a parent was more important than having a relationship. But I really came into my own on that walk. I finally came into being completely comfortable with being single. I think a lot of women of my generation are not. We were under enormous pressure to get married, have kids, have a nice house. But I think for older women being single – it's pretty fantastic.

I really love the idea of writing about women of my generation, finding independence, and finding what they want for themselves. When I wrote my first novel my protagonist was 50 – it was not that fashionable back then. There's a lot of books being written now with older characters.

I had a young tradesman here the other day and I was working on the computer. He said to me “What did you used to do?” Well, I literally levitated out of my chair. I said “Listen, buster” – which is not a phrase I've ever used before or since – “I didn't *used* to do anything! I'm still doing it!”

My sixth novel is out in May. As long as I keep enjoying it, I'll keep writing. I don't think I'm going to write 50 books. But maybe a dozen.

- *Amanda Hampson's latest novel Lovebirds* [is available now through Penguin](#)

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/may/19/never-too-late-in-my-late-40s-i-realised-writing-a-novel-had-become-like-everest>

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

## 2021.05.19 - Opinion

- [Britain's borders: wide open to Covid, slammed shut for people in need](#)
- [Preston is a lesson for Labour: show communities you can deliver change](#)
- [EU citizens made Britain their home – now they face a hostile environment](#)
- [Let's face it, 2021 is shaping up to be an awful year for small talk](#)
- [The politics sketch Angela 'Three Jobs' Rayner finds Tory sleaze a moving target](#)
- [Has Brexit fatally dented the City of London's future?](#)
- [Cartoon Ben Jennings on the lifting of lockdown](#)
- [If lockdown easing goes awry, it has nothing to do with Johnson's Modi operandi, OK?](#)

## [Opinion](#)Immigration and asylum

# Britain's borders: wide open to Covid, slammed shut for people in need

[George Monbiot](#)



The government's lax attitude to the Indian variant only exposes how aggressive it is to migrants who pose no threat



A young girl is held by a member of Border Force at Dover Marina, September 2020. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

A young girl is held by a member of Border Force at Dover Marina, September 2020. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Wed 19 May 2021 02.00 EDT

Once again, through gross neglect, the government is in danger of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Its astonishing dithering over the Indian variant of Covid-19 sustains its unbroken record of incompetence and procrastination.

Boris Johnson's government delayed the inclusion of India on the government's red list even after nations with lesser rates of infection were listed, perhaps so that he could proceed with his planned visit to [secure the Indian trade deal](#) that would prove Brexit is working. Again, there was a crucial fortnight in which the government could have acted but didn't. The result is that we now face a possible third wave of infection.

But this story of ineptitude is even more remarkable than it first appears. For throughout the time when the virus, in all its variants, has been waved through immigration control with a nod and a smile, the government has been deploying ever more extreme measures against travellers who present

no threat to the people of this nation. The shocking and repeated failures to protect the UK from recurring waves of infection, and to establish and enforce clear rules and insist on quarantine, have all occurred while the government boasts of “[taking back control of our borders](#)”.

### [India variant could lead to serious third wave of Covid in UK](#)

[Read more](#)

During the first three months of the pandemic – from 1 January until lockdown on 23 March last year, 18 million people arrived in the UK from abroad. But only [273](#) of them were obliged to quarantine. By contrast, across the 12 months to March 2020, [23,075 people](#) were thrown into immigration detention centres: prisons for people who have not been convicted of any crime but are suspected of entering – or remaining in – the country without the correct paperwork. Astonishingly and incomprehensibly, on 13 March 2020 the government [dropped](#) any obligation on passengers arriving in this country to self-isolate. As a result, we know that on 31 March 2020, a week into lockdown, there were 895 people in detention and none in official quarantine.

Only on 8 June was quarantine reintroduced, and even then the system was so leaky and ill-enforced that it might as well not have existed. While [other nations](#) imposed strict border measures from the outset, [preventing widespread infection](#), an analysis by the Covid-19 Genomics UK Consortium discovered that, as of 22 May 2020, the virus had been introduced to the UK by travellers on at least [1,300 occasions](#).

Yet during this period of extreme latitude towards the virus, the Home Office has [ramped up its regime of cruelty and paranoia](#), in the name of securing our borders against the terrifying threat of people who might not have the right visa. During the first wave of the pandemic, the government pushed its new immigration bill through parliament, to “end free movement” and introduce its [points-based system](#), modelled on the vicious Australian scheme. One of the consequences of the government’s new rules has been to exclude [vital frontline workers](#) who might have helped to manage the virus.

As Covid-19 raged, the Home Office considered ever more [extreme and bizarre measures](#) to deter the small number of people attempting to cross the



Channel in boats: new radar systems, [walls and nets](#) across the sea, wave machines and any other fantastical scheme Priti Patel's civil servants could conjure up as they sought to satisfy the escalating demands of their boss.

A year into the pandemic, border controls against the virus remained a total farce. When, in February, the government at last introduced its red list to prevent new variants from arriving, the Home Office [failed to brief immigration officials](#) on what their new duties were or how they should be discharged. As a result, the border remained as watertight as a colander.

At the same time, victims of torture who had the temerity to seek asylum in this country were [thrown indefinitely into solitary confinement](#) – because the correct way to treat torture is with torture. In mid-April this year, as visitors from India continued to enter the country without quarantining, Patel launched her New Plan for Immigration, which is one long exercise in catch-22 logic, designed to make it almost [impossible for refugees to secure asylum here](#). She again promoted her favourite fantasy: dispatching refugees to an [imaginary offshore prison](#), an idea that appears to have been inspired by the sadistic Australian penal colonies of Nauru and Manus.

Since Brexit, border security guards have been catching EU citizens and throwing some of them, [arbitrarily and to their great distress](#), into the [detention centres](#) usually populated by travellers from poorer nations. In some cases they appear to have been legally entitled to travel here, but no one in the government seems to care. I guess the one thing you can say for the Home Office under Priti Patel is that it is becoming an equal-opportunities oppressor.

[Cruel, paranoid, failing: inside the Home Office](#)  
[Read more](#)

The detention centres, incidentally – chaotic, overcrowded and insanitary – have been afflicted by repeated outbreaks of Covid-19. Staff moving in and out of them are [likely to have helped spread the virus](#) through the wider community. It wouldn't be surprising if the net impact of the UK's border controls had been to broadcast the disease.

While the Indian variant was merrily crossing our borders, Patel was talking to the Indian government. But not about the virus. She was preparing her new [Migration and Mobility partnership](#) agreement with India, which was [launched with a fanfare](#) and photo-op on 4 May. This introduces no new measures to prevent infection. Instead it creates a firewall of a different kind: between “young professionals”, who are generally from more privileged backgrounds, with offers of lucrative jobs or funded positions here, and the riffraff who might wish to tend to our elderly, clean our toilets or perform other undervalued tasks – against whom, the new partnership ensures, the hounds of hell will be unleashed.

All these extreme measures are taken with a nod to the rightwing press, most of which is owned by billionaires: Rupert Murdoch, Frederick Barclay and Jonathan Harmsworth (Lord Rothermere). While these men cross our borders freely, their papers claim to be deeply affronted by the thought that other people might enjoy the same right. Yet they also seem intensely relaxed about the free movement of the virus: in fact these newspapers have contained repeated demands for greater leeway for UK residents to travel abroad and return without quarantine.

So here we are, a nation persecuting innocent visitors and its essential labour force, imprisoning refugees fleeing from imprisonment, and welcoming the virus with open arms.

George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/19/britain-borders-covid-government-indian-variant-migrants>

## [Opinion](#)[Economic policy](#)

# Preston is a lesson for Labour: show communities you can deliver change

[Matthew Brown](#)

Our council has boosted the economy and won over Labour voters. It's a model that could work across the UK

- Matthew Brown is Labour leader of Preston city council



Municipal funding has backed a new University of Central Lancashire engineering building at the Preston site. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Municipal funding has backed a new University of Central Lancashire engineering building at the Preston site. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Tue 18 May 2021 11.02 EDT

Preston city council was the only Labour-led authority in Lancashire to [retain all its seats](#) in the recent local elections. Despite the losses the party experienced across the UK, Preston's success shows what can happen when a Labour council puts forward a transformative political vision. It was a similar story in other areas where the party offered a politics that spoke directly to working people, such as Manchester, Merseyside and Salford. Throughout Britain, communities want change – and Labour must be clear about how it can deliver this.

Preston's success lies in a [strategy](#) the council has been pursuing for nearly a decade known as community wealth-building. In the past, the council relied on global developers and the promise of major retail investment to deliver economic opportunities. In 2011, when a major shopping centre development that would have brought £700m investment to the area failed to materialise, we decided to take matters into our own hands and pursue a model that would bring resilience to our local economy, ensure wealth remained within the area and give people a say over their economic destinies.

A central part of our approach is encouraging big institutions such as hospitals and universities to join this movement for economic and social progress. These “anchor institutions” are unlike conventional businesses: they're publicly owned, won't get up and leave, spend billions annually and employ thousands of people in the area. In [Preston](#), the council has encouraged them to pay the real living wage and to buy much more from local businesses rather than remote corporate giants. We've also ensured the council and public pension fund invests locally, and we've used the planning system to support local employment in large commercial developments.

These policies are transforming Preston. Our city is being regenerated by common endeavour, with the public sector delivering more contracts to local companies and employing many more local workers. As well as buying, hiring and investing locally, we're building a more democratic economy by expanding worker and employee ownership. Preston is currently planning a regional cooperative bank, providing support to food purchasing cooperatives, exploring district and community energy production and putting key city developments into municipal ownership. Our intention is to scale up the Preston model and build a popular municipal socialism.

[Look to Preston for an answer to Labour's – and Britain's – woes | Phil Jones](#)  
[Read more](#)

Of course, this model isn't the answer to everything, and the city still faces significant challenges – particularly deprivation, the historic loss of well-paid manufacturing jobs and the recent shocks of lockdown restrictions. But before Covid-19 struck, community wealth-building had contributed to our highest employment rate for decades. We had the highest number of workers receiving the real living wage of all local authority areas in Lancashire, and we've created opportunities for the people who live here, rather than relying solely on the investment decisions of big businesses to create jobs and growth.

As we recover from Covid-19, local governments won't achieve the social, economic or environmental progress we need by relying on old forms of development. The pandemic has exposed how depending on property investors and high-street retailers to deliver economic growth is inherently precarious. These sectors, particularly shopping centres and retail, have taken a huge hit, and it will take years before they fully recover from the pandemic. Depending on this type of extractive growth, where wealth is siphoned out of communities for the benefit of distant shareholders, is no longer a feasible model.

Community wealth-building is a rejection of this approach. Though it was barely mentioned a decade ago, its principles are now being adopted by numerous local and regional leaders, whether by Paul Dennett in Salford, Mark Drakeford in Wales, Joe Cullinane in North Ayrshire, Steve Rotherham in Merseyside, or Sadiq Khan, who is working with London's anchor institutions to lead the city's recovery through purchasing and recruitment. There is also a growing number of US cities, including New York, San Francisco and Chicago, adopting these strategies to expand worker and employee ownership, introduce public banking and explore how individual data can be brought into collective ownership.

This movement is being instigated by communities and local politicians, rather than central government, and has the potential to shape the political and economic agenda in places ahead of Westminster. For [Labour](#), this could

be decisive. If the party is to capture voters' imagination, it will need to put forward a genuine alternative to economic insecurity and inequality. After decades of disinvestment, free-market economic policies and austerity, the party needs to offer a bold and radical agenda for transforming local communities. It's only by showing communities that it can deliver these changes that [Labour](#) will have a chance of winning.

- Matthew Brown is Labour leader of Preston city council

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/18/preston-labour-communities-change-voters-uk>

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

## OpinionMigration

# EU citizens made Britain their home – now they face a hostile environment

Rafael Behr



How many people will become lost in the bureaucratic labyrinth of the Home Office before the June deadline?





‘Those who have been granted settled or pre-settled status find it is no guarantee against discrimination and exclusion.’ EU citizens in the UK lobbying parliament in 2017. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

‘Those who have been granted settled or pre-settled status find it is no guarantee against discrimination and exclusion.’ EU citizens in the UK lobbying parliament in 2017. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Tue 18 May 2021 11.44 EDT

Since the pandemic stopped British citizens moving freely across [Europe](#), the sacrifice of that same freedom to Brexit has not been felt much. It isn't even a cost in Eurosceptic lore, where the right to live and work in 27 other countries was never treated as a reciprocal benefit. It was resented as a licence for *them* to come over *here*. Revoking it was priority number one for the UK in talks with Brussels.

The referendum result was interpreted as a duty to satisfy people who saw no value in freedom of movement at the expense of people who had built their lives around it. That included plenty of UK citizens at work or in retirement in mainland Europe. The price of a dark blue passport was someone else's world turned upside down.

That particular argument is over, but Brexit is only “done” in the sense that Boris Johnson is done thinking about it. Moving on is hardly an option for millions of EU nationals who had the welcome mat pulled from under their feet. The total number is unknown. They were not counted on the way in because they arrived as citizens, not aliens. That is what freedom of movement meant. Rights conferred by EU membership must now be traded for conditional status, achieved by navigation of a bureaucratic labyrinth – the Home Office’s “[EU settlement scheme](#)”.

At least 5.4 million people have applied. Not all of them will be valid candidates, but the volume suggests that previous counts, putting the number of EU nationals in the UK at about [3.6 million](#), fell short. The deadline for applications, when a “grace period” expires, is 30 June 2021. The current backlog of unprocessed cases is about 320,000. No one knows how many more are entitled to stay but have not yet applied. Some will be unaware of the obligation; some need help with the process. There are at least 3,660 children currently or recently [in care](#) who qualify, but who are relying on local authorities to do the paperwork on their behalf and on time. Probably more.

The pandemic has drowned the sound of the clock ticking down to the deadline. People have been trapped abroad by travel restrictions. That can blemish a record of days spent on UK soil, spoiling an application by changing the calculation regarding “settled” and “pre-settled” status. (This is just one hellish sub-chamber in the bureaucratic maze.)

[Home Office sends letters warning of immigration status to UK citizens](#)  
[Read more](#)

It is safe to presume a heap of cases will be bungled by the [Home Office](#). Add those to deserving cases that won’t even be considered in time, and there could easily be hundreds of thousands of EU nationals falling into a legal void on 1 July. Some will get residency permission reinstated, but it will not be backdated. A stretch of unlawful migrant status will then haunt their record.

In theory, the grace period could easily be extended. In other areas where the timetable for Brexit implementation has felt tight – chiefly the [Northern](#)

[Ireland protocol](#) – the UK is all for flexibility and cutting itself some slack. But the domestic political incentives there are different. Johnson is under pressure from his own side to ease the passage of agricultural goods crossing the Irish Sea. No Tory is demanding equivalent compassion for Polish care workers.

The settlement scheme is a machine that issues permissions to stay in Britain, but with suspicion as a byproduct. Any slips and it becomes a conveyor, whisking people into the Home Office's "hostile environment", churning out a caseload of trauma and injustice; a sequel to the Windrush scandal.

Confidence is hardly boosted by reports that officials recently misdirected a mailshot urging the wrong people to sort out their immigration status. Dual nationals with British passports were among the recipients of the [letter](#) warning that, among other threats, NHS access could be lost if prompt action was not taken.

Those who have been granted settled or pre-settled status find it is no guarantee against discrimination and exclusion. Private landlords, who are legally obliged to verify a tenant's immigration status, are unfamiliar with the new categories and often unwilling to take a chance. The same goes for some employers and mortgage lenders. Any period of legal limbo can result in a loss of benefits, or bills for NHS services.

What will happen to EU nationals at border crossings is also unknown. Travel volumes are low right now but the [signs are not great](#). Visitors have been barred from entering the country; some have been held in detention centres. Most of those cases appear to be breaches of new visa requirements that should not, in theory, affect "settled" EU nationals. But some of them will have no paperwork to prove their privileged status, having been trapped overseas by the pandemic. Who would bet on them getting discretionary leniency from a Border Force officer at Heathrow?

None of this is intended as relitigation of the Brexit argument. Nor is it a claim that migration policy on the continent is a rolling showcase of Enlightenment values. Last week, Michel Barnier, plotting a long-shot candidacy in next year's French presidential election, [floated the idea](#) of

shutting his country's borders completely. Sinister rhetoric about white Europe being overrun with dark-skinned foreigners has encroached much further into mainstream debate in many EU states than in Britain. The issue here is not abstract ideals of what Europe means or once meant, but present legal reality in Britain.

The Tories think their [Brexit](#) model is fair to EU nationals because it allows them to stay, as long as they meet the official criteria. What they do not grasp is the insecurity and injury inherent in the conversion from belonging in a country to being tolerated there; from being somewhere by right, in perpetuity, to being there on time-limited conditions. The more zealously those conditions are applied, the more it will hurt. The shift does not apply to British passport holders, but that does not mean we are unaffected. The political winds changed, and overnight millions of people who thought they had a kind of citizenship became instead a kind of alien. It is not only EU nationals who feel the chill in that wind.

- Rafael Behr is a Guardian columnist

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/18/eu-citizens-made-britain-home-hostile-environment-home-office>

## OpinionLanguage

# Let's face it, 2021 is shaping up to be an awful year for small talk

Joel Golby

After more than a year of doing very little, it's hard to think of anything to say to friends in the pub – as I found out



‘I have never rushed through the first two pints to get through to ‘actual conversation’ faster in my life.’ Photograph: Javier García/REX/Shutterstock

‘I have never rushed through the first two pints to get through to ‘actual conversation’ faster in my life.’ Photograph: Javier García/REX/Shutterstock

Tue 18 May 2021 10.00 EDT

When you start to think about language, or look at it in any close sort of way, you quickly learn that it is a fascinatingly ineffective tool for the job at



hand. So we have this handful of noises we can make with our teeth and tongue and throat, yeah? And we can stitch together a few of those noises into words. All the languages are ancient and inspired by one another, and possibly come from the same shapeless root. So all of the complexity of human thought and emotion is poured into the shapes of these grunts we came up with thousands of years ago, right? And that's it now, we're stuck with it as the primary form of communication. I am using the same set of tools as my ancestors did to try and describe mind-bendingly modern realities like [millennial witches on TikTok](#) *who are obsessed with a green rock called moldavite*. It seems like trying to make fire with a stone and two twigs. We should have moved on by now.

One of the most fascinating aspects of language, of course, is [small talk](#), a special dialect we created to make time spent in a room with somebody slightly less awkward (if we had never evolved language, or society, we would not have either of these problems). It's the beige, ambient noise we make at someone's brother-in-law when we are forcibly introduced to them at a barbecue. *So what have you been up to?*, for example. *And did you have to come far? Yeah it has been a bit grey lately, hasn't it? It's interesting you mention that, actually: normally I don't really get hay fever, but this year I did*. From early social interactions I have had since the easing of lockdown – I am now expecting some firmly worded “excuse me?” texts from everyone I have spent time outside pubs with over the past few weeks – I can safely say that 2021 is set to be the worst year for small talk on human record. We've either forgotten how to do it, or we have actively erased the function from our brains through lack of use.

Part of this is very simple – small talk is built on the iron foundation of “what have you been doing lately?”. And in normal times a breezy recap of something you did in the last fortnight should suffice. But we've all been locked indoors experiencing almost the exact same year-long trauma, and nothing of even small talk-level note has happened to any of us, and anything that has happened is too wincingly repetitive to even say. What's more, so many of the important things happening in the actual world in 2021 have been so awful and depressing that they don't qualify for small talk, as they would immediately kill the vibe. I found myself explaining at length how my bike got a puncture to someone at the pub this weekend. I have

never rushed through the first two pints to get through to “actual conversation” faster in my life.

This isn't a permanent problem, and it is one that will be eased by the reopening of bars and restaurants over the next week, but it will take a while for the old muscle memory to come back. The sad fact is that in the small talk void, there's been a necessary inversion of social hierarchy: suddenly, “adults who have recently taken on hobbies and got way too into them way too quickly” – previously, the worst people on Earth to talk to – are now vital to getting Britain back talking again. We need someone who, 16 weeks ago, didn't care about running but now has a slightly gaunt jawline and ferocious opinions about elasticated gymwear just to start us off. They will become social pariahs again in a couple of months, as they should have always been, and go back to wherever it is they dwell – outside climbing centres, maybe, or wherever you can buy kayaking equipment – but for now we really need them.

The lack of small talk isn't just a pub-garden problem, of course: it's harder to find the energy to text or email or WhatsApp when the only thing that's happened to you worth talking about lately is “that time you went to the supermarket and didn't have to queue to get in”. The best small talk is an ongoing structural support for better conversations – think of it as the linguistic equivalent of stretching your quads out before actual exercise. It's hard enough knowing what to say to friends I haven't seen for months beyond “so you decided in the end not to do anything new or interesting with your hair” – and that goes double for the friends-of-friends I'm going to slowly start to bump into now socialising is opening back up again. The next time I go to a picnic I will simply have nothing to say to someone's sister who I think tried to get on MasterChef once but never actually made it past the auditions.

What's the solution? My plan is to go absolutely, conversationally rogue: no more tentative, warm-up pre-conversation before the actual chat, just go straight in with my four-pint “Have you ever seen a dead body?” hard stuff. We have a once-in-a-generation chance to take linguistic norms by the reins and remould them into a shape that suits our modern society. I, for one, am going to take it.



- Joel Golby is the author of Brilliant, Brilliant, Brilliant Brilliant Brilliant

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/18/the-pandemic-has-robbed-us-of-small-talk-the-solution-go-big>.

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

[The politics sketch](#) **Angela Rayner**

# Angela ‘Three Jobs’ Rayner finds Tory sleaze a moving target

[John Crace](#)



Labour's urgent question on the ministerial code comes to nothing in Mordaunt's mist of misdirection



Not the glorious debut Rayner had been hoping for. Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

Not the glorious debut Rayner had been hoping for. Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

Tue 18 May 2021 13.33 EDT

It probably seemed like a good idea at the time. A slam dunk of an urgent question on the enforcement of the ministerial code and publication of the register of ministers' interests for Angela Rayner's first outing at the despatch box since [being given three promotions](#) just hours after being sacked for her part in Labour's poor results in the local elections? What better way to make a name for herself in her new jobs than by getting the opposition benches fully behind her with a nice bit of Tory sleaze?

Only it didn't quite work out as planned. Not only were there just a handful of Labour MPs in the chamber, the Tory backbenchers had turned up – socially distanced – mob-handed to see off any potential threats to their party's reputation. It turned out that the best way to unite the [Conservatives](#) was to accuse them of being on the take.

Rayner had started decently enough with a few well-timed jabs at the prime minister. Last year, Boris Johnson had declared a £15K holiday to Mustique;

now we learned from a newspaper investigation that the real cost was double that and had been paid for by someone completely different to the person who had originally been named as the donor. Then there was the blocking of the [independent commissioner](#)'s report and the delay in the register of ministers' interests. And how could the independent adviser be truly independent if the prime minister could prevent him from investigating?

That was merely for openers, though. Then the shadow chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster took aim at both Priti Patel and Matt Hancock for pushing forward mates for PPE contracts and Lord Lister, Johnson's top adviser, who was taking money from a property developer for whom he approved a record-breaking taxpayer-backed loan. "When ministers and advisers use the public purse as a personal cashpoint," she concluded, "the public has a right to know."

Michael Gove declined to answer the urgent question in person. Mikey is a strange mixture of over-confidence and cowardice, so it was hard to tell if the reason he was avoiding Rayner – who can be a tricky opponent in the chamber – was because he couldn't be bothered or was just too timid. So it was left to his deputy, Penny Mordaunt, to deal with the allegations.

Something she did all too easily, mainly by ignoring them. There were plenty of ongoing inquiries, she said, so it would be wrong to prejudge their findings that Boris Johnson might be the sort of person who was inclined to take as many freebies as possible. How very inconvenient. In any case, she added, all that Rayner had to offer was smear and innuendo. The charge she was making was that ministers had come into politics purely to see what they could get on the take, when the reality was that they had worked their socks off over the past year to protect the country from the pandemic. Given the UK is near the top of the global death lists, God knows how many more people would have died if ministers hadn't been working so hard.

The few opposition MPs in the chamber looked understandably confused. The accusation that had been made had not been that the government had not been working hard – however ineffectually at times. Rather, that ministers had failed to do due diligence and been too quick to recommend mates and Tory donors with no track record in delivering PPE. You can still

be any combination of careless, stupid and greedy and believe you are acting in the public good.

Thereafter the urgent question rather died on its feet. A few Tories did say it would be a nice idea if [Christopher Geidt](#), the newly appointed independent adviser, could publish the list of ministerial interests by the end of the month, but most merely expressed outrage that anyone could imagine Johnson and others might have had some conflicts of interest. Opposition MPs were just swatted away with the same arguments as Rayner had been.

Come the end, Rayner was only too happy to get away. This hadn't been the glorious debut she had hoped. She had had no smoking gun. There might well be a time after the inquiries had reported when sleaze would cut through to the electorate again. But now was not that time. Right now the public were more interested in the India variant, vaccines, foreign holidays and Brexit. Still, you win some, you lose some. And next time she would be a little more selective over the battles she chose to fight.

- The Guardian at 200: Join John Crace and Marina Hyde in conversation with Anushka Asthana as part of our [digital festival](#) on Tuesday 8 June. [Book tickets here](#).

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/may/18/angela-three-jobs-rayner-finds-tory-sleaze-a-moving-target>

[Project Syndicate economists](#)[Financial sector](#)

# Has Brexit fatally dented the City of London's future?

[Howard Davies](#)

Although the Square Mile will remain Europe's largest money marketplace it will no longer be the continent's de facto financial centre



The City of London's financial district. Photograph: Tim Grist Photography/Getty Images

The City of London's financial district. Photograph: Tim Grist Photography/Getty Images

Tue 18 May 2021 11.32 EDT

Nearly five years after the [Brexit](#) referendum, and in the five months since [Brexit](#) itself, there has been little debate about the future of the City, the financial centre of London. Those who voted in June 2016 to leave the EU believe, whatever the evidence to the contrary, that the impact will be

minimal, and that the warnings of job losses and business relocation are exaggerated. Remain voters are programmed to think the opposite and, whatever the evidence to the contrary, forecast gloom and doom. What can we learn from what has actually happened?

We have to acknowledge, first, that Covid-19 has confused the picture mightily over the last 18 months. People have not found it easy to change location, even if they wanted to. More important, there are some temporary regulatory arrangements that blunt the impact of the UK's departure from the single financial market. There is a Temporary Permissions Regime in London for some EU-based firms, and the European Commission has allowed euro-denominated instruments to be cleared in London until 2022, to avoid the disruption any sudden change on 31 December 2020, might have brought. So what we are seeing today may not reflect Brexit's full longer-term impact.

Nonetheless, changes that have occurred so far permit us to start assessing the future of the City and the financial operations based there. One move that generated headlines was the abrupt shift of trading in European equities from [London to Amsterdam](#) at the start of the year. An average of €9.2bn (£7.9bn) in shares was traded daily on the Amsterdam exchange in January, four times the volume in December 2020, while London's daily average dropped sharply, to €8.6bn. The switch can be traced to regulation: the European Commission has not granted "equivalence" to UK trading venues, and is in no rush to do so.

That was a crucial early goal by the Remain team in this match, you might think. But the Leave team hit back quickly. Very few job moves resulted from this switch, they say: most of the traders remain in London. And they point out that London continues to lead Europe as a centre for raising new capital. In the [first quarter of this year](#), €8.3bn was raised through London IPOs, compared with €5.4bn in Frankfurt, €5.6bn in Amsterdam, and just €0.1bn in Paris.

The Remain team advances again: equities are not the only, or even the most important, instrument. The UK share of euro-denominated interest-rate swaps [fell from 40% to 10%](#) from July 2020 to January 2021, while the EU share rose from 10% to 25%. New York was the beneficiary of some of the



business lost to London, as many forecasted. And they point to [the move of banking assets](#) worth perhaps €1tn out of the UK, mainly to Frankfurt.

But both sides acknowledge that from an economic point of view, the city in which trades are booked is less significant than the city in which traders pay their taxes. Soon after the Brexit vote, consultants [Oliver Wyman](#) estimated that 75,000 jobs would quickly be relocated to other EU centres. Others produced even higher estimates. Have those pessimistic forecasts been borne out?

The Leave team can claim another goal. A [detailed survey](#) from consultancy New Financial last month identified 7,400 positions that had been moved from London to a eurozone financial centre – just 10% of the estimates in 2016. The biggest beneficiaries have been Dublin, Paris, Luxembourg, Frankfurt, and Amsterdam, in that order.

But the study can be interpreted in another way. Two years ago, the same authors identified 269 firms that had relocated some activity. Now they find that 440 have done so, and they regard that as an underestimate of the number that will eventually do so. They expect the relocated jobs number to rise further.

Moreover, there are signs that the property market may be reacting. Over the last two years, [property prices](#) have risen 20% in Paris, almost 40% in Amsterdam, but just 6% in London.

But it will not be one-way traffic. Just as firms based in the UK no longer have unfettered access to the EU's markets, so most EU-located firms will need authorisation to conduct business with London-based clients. So perhaps 300-500, mainly smaller, European firms will need to set up in London. The net result will be an outflow of jobs from London, but not on anything like the scale widely expected in 2016.

Sign up to the daily Business Today email

That is because firms have found ways to work around the regulatory obstacles. They have also found that moving staff is costly and difficult. London retains many attractions: schools, cultural life, and many long-

established expatriate social networks. It will take time for any putative rival in the EU to develop a plausible matching offer.

It seems likely, therefore, that London will remain Europe's largest financial marketplace, by a considerable distance. It will remain plugged into a global network: transactions with European clients are perhaps a quarter of its business. But it will no longer be the continent's de facto financial centre.

For the EU, London will shift from being its principal onshore financial centre, to an important offshore centre. Other cities will pick up business, though the signs are that a multipolar system will develop, with no single winner. There will still be a profitable role for London, but the Golden Age of the City as Europe's financial capital will recede, as Golden Ages tend to do.

*Sir Howard Davies, the first chairman of the UK's Financial Services Authority, is chairman of the NatWest Group. He was director of the LSE and served as deputy governor of the [Bank of England](#) and CBI director general.*

[© Project Syndicate](#)

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/may/18/has-brex-it-fatally-dented-the-city-of-londons-future>

[Guardian Opinion cartoon](#)  
[Politics](#)

# Ben Jennings on the lifting of lockdown – cartoon

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/picture/2021/may/18/ben-jennings-on-the-lifting-of-lockdown-cartoon>

## [Opinion](#)Coronavirus

# If lockdown easing goes awry, it has nothing to do with Johnson's Modi operandi, OK?

[Marina Hyde](#)



You can tell the Indian variant of Covid is a concern: Matt Hancock is being wheeled out again



Boris Johnson leaving Downing Street on 14 May. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/ZUMA Wire/Rex

Boris Johnson leaving Downing Street on 14 May. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/ZUMA Wire/Rex

Tue 18 May 2021 07.50 EDT

When the prime minister stood up in February and unveiled his roadmap out of lockdown for England, he promised it would be “cautious but irreversible” – your clearest indication that it would at some point feature a signature lack of caution, which in turn could herald some truly incendiary reversals.

While we settle in for a couple of feverish weeks awaiting the data on the Indian variant, a recap. Yesterday, on the very day people were allowed back inside the pubs, they were already being told not to get drunk in them, and strongly encouraged to remain outside enjoying May’s seasonal charms. (I’ll have a pint of lager with a hailstone top, please.) Yesterday, on the very day people were permitted to travel again – with countries arranged into green, amber and red lists, as long advertised – [Matt Hancock](#) explained that people should definitely not travel to amber list countries. Then why are they permitted to? Is our travel policy some kind of dare?

[UK Covid live news: health chief in hotspot town says it's 'striking just how transmissible' Indian variant is](#)

[Read more](#)

It's all about individuals using their common sense and taking responsibility, apparently. Which, I think you'll agree, means so much more coming from a government that let at least [20,000](#) – TWENTY THOUSAND – people enter the UK from India just in the period Johnson was delaying imposing his travel ban. Was that not a moment for common sense, and indeed caution? It seems not. Instead it was a moment for bunching people up in [six-hour queues](#) in the fresh April air of the Heathrow arrivals hall.

Instinctively, the renewed ubiquity of Hancock feels ominous. No one has had to come out and take more body blows for the team during this pandemic than Hancock, and even seeing his face now produces the Pavlovian sense that some shit is heading inexorably towards a fan. Hopefully it will be Zeno's shit – like the [philosopher's paradox](#), always halving its distance to the fan but never actually making contact with it. But to listen to the various government lines, it is almost as if the pre-blame game is already afoot. Yesterday, a minister [briefed](#) Politico's Playbook: "The risk is that a small number of idiots ruin it for everyone else." Well quite. It IS only a small number of idiots – but unfortunately, they all work in Downing Street.

This government is blessed with lower numbers of vaccine-hesitant citizens than almost anywhere else in the world that doesn't enforce jabs at gunpoint if necessary; and however wrong/infuriating/selfish you think those refuseniks are – and I have a lot of sympathy with people's frustration – factoring them in is part of the equation. Plus, it is potentially a profoundly smaller part of the equation than what happens at the border.

When the vast majority of the country is observing a lockdown, the big remaining levers to pull belong to the government. Among those who dutifully abided by every edict there will be utter fury if it turns out that all their sacrifice was undone at the border, which – spoiler alert – is not actually controlled by "a few idiots" in Bolton.

[Covid experts warn against foreign holidays, so why is Boris Johnson so keen?](#) | [Polly Toynbee](#)  
[Read more](#)

Thousands and thousands of people have entered the UK every single day of the pandemic, and the wisdom of that has veered between “an acceptable risk” and “the number one mistake” at various different stages. But once the vaccine rollout roared into gear, it was clear that giving ourselves the longest head start against outside variants was the best course of action. A temporary closing of borders to gain a bigger cushion wouldn’t exactly have been an unpopular policy. People spent much of this latest lockdown absolutely fuming at [pictures of influencers](#), the Beckhams, and various other super-rich types going about their holidays while everyone else wondered how it was “essential travel”.

That more than 20,000 passengers were allowed to enter from India when Johnson was dithering/angling for a photo op with Narendra Modi was the farthest possible point from common sense – and countless people said it at the time. The absurdity yesterday even drew an interjection from Dominic Cummings – the only person to break his silence more frequently than Prince Harry – who judges our border policy to be a “[joke](#)”. High praise indeed.

You’ll note we have spent rather a lot of the past 14 months being told to “take responsibility” and “use common sense” by a government serially incapable of either. If it does all go tits up, they’d better hope the terrible weather continues well past “freedom day” on 21 June. At least hailstorms aren’t rioting weather.

Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/18/lockdown-easing-johnson-modi-indian-variant-covid-matt-hancock>



## 2021.05.19 - Around the world

- [Robert Durst Murder trial reopens after 14-month pandemic recess](#)
- [Spain PM vows to 'restore order' after 8,000 migrants reach Ceuta](#)
- [Mediterranean More than 50 feared drowned after migrant boat sinks off Tunisia](#)
- [China Panic as 300-metre-high skyscraper wobbles](#)
- [US Joe Biden poised to sign anti-Asian American hate crimes bill](#)
- [Michigan Biden tours Ford facility as protests over Gaza-Israeli conflict erupt](#)
- [Uttar Pradesh Indian mosque bulldozed in defiance of high court order](#)
- [Galápagos Islands Rock formation Darwin's Arch collapses from erosion](#)
- [US More than 90% of black Americans say they have been racially profiled while shopping](#)
- [Bangladesh Journalist arrested and charged over alleged document theft](#)

## Robert Durst

# Robert Durst murder trial reopens after 14 months recess because of pandemic

The millionaire real estate heir and subject of *The Jinx* will be undone by his own words, says prosecution



Robert Durst in court in Inglewood, California, on Tuesday as his murder trial resumed. Photograph: Al Seib/AFP/Getty Images

Robert Durst in court in Inglewood, California, on Tuesday as his murder trial resumed. Photograph: Al Seib/AFP/Getty Images

*Associated Press*

Tue 18 May 2021 23.04 EDT

Robert Durst, the multimillionaire real estate heir accused of murder, will be condemned by his own words, a prosecutor has said during a new round of opening statements at his murder trial.

Speaking at the trial in Los Angeles, deputy district attorney John Lewin wove a combination of Durst's statements — what he said were truth and lies — to outline evidence that will show the 78-year-old killed his best friend and a neighbour to cover up the mystery of his wife's disappearance.

[Robert Durst: Berman murder trial opens with jury watching The Jinx](#)  
[Read more](#)

“One of the hallmarks of Bob Durst is that despite all the lies he tells, he doesn't take or use the mental energy to even remember them because his life has been spent privileged in getting away with whatever he wants,” Lewin said.

“The evidence is going to show that's going to be his undoing in a lot of ways in all three of these cases.”

Durst is only charged with one count of murder – the killing of his best friend, Susan Berman, at her Los Angeles home in 2000.

Durst [denies murdering Berman](#), who was his longtime confidante and once an unofficial spokeswoman when Kathie Durst vanished in New York in 1982.

But Lewin said the killing of Berman, who was shot in the back of the head at close range, and Durst's admission that he fatally shot and dismembered a drifter in Texas in 2001, are both tied to the mystery of Kathie Durst.

“Everything starts with Kathie Durst's disappearance and death at the hands of Mr Durst,” Lewin said. Robert Durst says he had nothing to do with her disappearance.

Durst, who suffers from myriad maladies, sat in a wheelchair as he followed the proceedings on a tablet computer that provided a real-time transcript because he has impaired hearing.

Lewin provided an abbreviated opening statement to refresh jurors on what they last heard over six days in March 2020 before the case was [recessed an unprecedented 14 months](#) because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Defense lawyers will present their own summary of the evidence on Wednesday. Last year, they stunned the audience when they said they would put Durst on the witness stand.

Durst was acquitted of murder in a Texas court after testifying he killed Morris Black when the man pulled a gun on him and they wrestled for the weapon in the Galveston rooming house where they both lived.

Durst had gone into hiding in Texas after New York prosecutors reopened the investigation into Kathie Durst's suspected death. He killed Black because he had discovered Durst's identity and was trying to leverage the wealthy scion to buy a house for the two of them, Lewin said.

Durst killed Black about nine months after Berman was found dead in her Benedict Canyon home in December 2000. Police were directed to the home by a note with only her address and the word, "CADAVER" written in block letters.

Durst told the makers of [The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst](#) in 2010 and 2012 that he didn't write the note. He told the filmmakers and investigators in 2015 that whoever wrote the note had to have been Berman's killer.

"You're writing a note to the police that only the killer could have written," Durst said.

Lewin said that now amounts to a confession after defence lawyers [conceded before trial that Durst wrote the note](#). Evidence had shown he once penned a note to Berman in identical handwriting, with her address similarly misspelled "Beverley" Hills instead of Beverly.

The defence argues Durst found Berman's body, panicked and ran. He sent the note to police so she would be found, though her body was discovered before police got the note.

Durst killed Berman to keep her from talking to police about how she helped him cover up his wife's disappearance, Lewin said.

Lewin played a clip of testimony from Nick Chavin, a mutually close friend of the defendant and victim, who said Berman once told him that Durst had killed Kathie.

He said Durst told him he killed Berman after the two had dinner in New York in 2014.

“I had to,” Durst said on the sidewalk, according to Chavin. “It was her or me, I had no choice.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/19/robert-durst-trial-reopens-after-14-months-recess-because-of-pandemic>

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

## [Spain](#)

# Spanish PM vows to ‘restore order’ after 8,000 migrants reach Ceuta

Record arrivals deepen diplomatic standoff with Morocco, which recalls ambassador for consultation



A Spanish soldier looks at people who have swum over the border from Morocco into Ceuta on Tuesday. Photograph: Brais Lorenzo/EPA

A Spanish soldier looks at people who have swum over the border from Morocco into Ceuta on Tuesday. Photograph: Brais Lorenzo/EPA

[Ashifa Kassam](#) in Madrid

[@ashifa\\_k](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 14.50 EDT

Spain’s prime minister arrived in the north African enclave of Ceuta vowing to “restore order” after an unprecedented [8,000 migrants crossed into the](#)

[territory](#) over 36 hours, deepening the tense diplomatic standoff between Madrid and Rabat.

After a day of veiled recriminations, [Morocco](#) on Tuesday recalled its ambassador from Spain for consultation. Relations with Spain need a moment of “contemplation”, a diplomatic source told Reuters.

Thousands of people – ranging from teenagers from neighbouring Morocco to sub-Saharan Africans and mothers cradling babies – swam and made use of inflatable rafts to navigate their way around the breakwater that marks the border between the two countries. About 2,000 of them are believed to be minors.

After being initially caught off-guard by the arrival of more than 5,000 migrants on Monday, [Spain](#) swiftly deployed its army and an extra 200 police officers to patrol the border.

The sudden influx of migrants – which left Spain scrambling to cope with a humanitarian and diplomatic crisis – came amid heightened tensions between Madrid and Rabat over Spain’s decision to allow a Western Sahara independence leader to be treated for Covid-19 in [Spain](#).

### [Ceuta](#)

On Tuesday, Morocco’s ambassador to Spain appeared to draw a direct link between the hospitalisation of the Polisario Front leader, Brahim Ghali, and the migrants. Speaking to Europa Press ahead of a meeting with Spain’s foreign minister, Karima Benyaich said there were actions that have consequences and responsibility “must be accepted”.

She added: “There are attitudes that cannot be accepted.”

Morocco annexed the Western Sahara region on the west coast of Africa in 1975, and scored a diplomatic victory last year when Donald Trump’s US administration [recognised Rabat’s sovereignty over the region](#) in a deal aimed at normalising relations between Israel and Morocco.

Profile



## Western Sahara

Show

Western Sahara is a mostly desert territory which covers around 250,000 sq km, bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Mauritania to the east, and to the north Morocco, which annexed much of its land in 1975. It had until then been a Spanish colony.

That same year the Polisario Front independence movement also declared the formation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, which is recognised by dozens of countries around the world and is a full member of the African Union. It controls only around 20% of Western Sahara.

After a 16-year insurgency, a UN-brokered truce in 1991 brought an uneasy peace, and the promise of a referendum on independence for the indigenous Sahrawi people. That vote never took place, and this year fighting broke out again after nearly three decades.

Before Donald Trump's statement recognising Morocco's claim over the disputed region, there was little international backing for its claim of sovereignty.

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Spanish officials said the independence leader had been allowed to access medical treatment in Spain for “strictly humanitarian reasons”.

The Spanish prime minister, [Pedro Sánchez](#), said anyone who had entered Ceuta and the nearby Melilla enclave irregularly would be “immediately returned”, in keeping with a bilateral agreement that allows for the return of Moroccans who swim into the territory.

“This sudden arrival of irregular migrants is a serious crisis for Spain and for [Europe](#),” he added.

“As the president of Spain, I believe firmly that Morocco is a partner country, it’s a country that is a friend of Spain and it should continue this way. To be effective, this cooperation needs to always be based on respect. Respect for mutual borders.”

In Ceuta, armoured vehicles lined the beach and Red Cross personnel helped the new arrivals as they battled hypothermia and exhaustion after emerging from the water. One young man died during the treacherous crossing on Monday, according to Spanish officials.

The EU commissioner for home affairs, Ylva Johansson, described the situation as worrying and said: “Spanish borders are European borders.”

She added: “The most important thing now is that Morocco continues to commit to prevent irregular departures, and that those that do not have the right to stay are orderly and effectively returned.”



Spain’s PM, Pedro Sánchez (second left), and the interior minister, Fernando Grande-Marlaska (left), visit the Guardia Civil headquarters in Ceuta. Photograph: Fernando Calvo/La Moncloa/AFP/Getty Images

She called on Morocco to do more to protect relations with the EU. “The European Union wants to build a relationship with Morocco based on trust and shared commitments. [Migration](#) is a key element in this,” she said.

Spain's interior ministry said about 3,800 people had already been sent back to Morocco. An exception exists for unaccompanied minors, who are allowed to remain legally in Spain under government supervision.

"This is an extraordinary and exceptional situation," said Fernando Grande-Marlaska, Spain's interior minister. A local football stadium had been converted into an impromptu processing centre for the migrants, while 200 police officers had been called in to increase security.

The Spanish government delegation in Ceuta said people began crossing into the territory in the early hours of Monday, streaming in steadily from neighbouring Morocco all day.

It marked the second influx into Ceuta in recent weeks; at the end of April more than 100 young Moroccans swam into the Spanish territory. Most were returned to Morocco within 48 hours under the conditions of a recent agreement between the two countries.

The arrival of Ghali in Spain last month sparked a vociferous protest from Rabat, with Morocco's foreign ministry describing Spain's move as "inconsistent with the spirit of partnership and good neighbourliness" and warning it would have consequences.

On Tuesday, the conservative leader of Ceuta pointed to a "change in Morocco's attitude" to explain the arrival of 6,000 migrants in the territory of 84,000 people.

"We are not even in a position to calculate the number of people who have entered," Juan Jesús Vivas told the broadcaster Cadena Ser. "The mood among Ceuta's population is now one of anguish, uncertainty, unease and fear."

On Monday, Mohammed Ben Aisa, the head of the Northern Observatory for Human Rights, a nonprofit group that works with migrants in northern Morocco, linked the crossings to the diplomatic row.

"The information that we have is that the Moroccan authorities reduced the usually heavy militarisation of the coasts, which comes after Morocco's

foreign ministry statement about Spain's hosting of Brahim Ghali," Ben Aisa told Associated Press.

An increase in migrants was also reported at Melilla, with 80 people making their way across the double fence that sits along the border with Morocco.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/18/spanish-pm-vows-restore-order-migrants-reach-ceuta>

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

## Refugees

# More than 50 feared drowned after migrant boat sinks off Tunisia

Rescuers found 33 survivors from Bangladesh clinging to oil platform in Mediterranean, says defence ministry



A rescue operation involving Turkish and Libyan forces last week in which almost 100 people were saved from a sinking inflatable boat in the Mediterranean. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

A rescue operation involving Turkish and Libyan forces last week in which almost 100 people were saved from a sinking inflatable boat in the Mediterranean. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

*Agence France-Presse in Tunis*

Tue 18 May 2021 10.26 EDT

More than 50 people are feared to have drowned after their boat heading from Libya to Europe sank, Tunisia's defence ministry has said.

Mohamed Zikri, a defence ministry spokesperson, said 33 survivors of the shipwreck were picked up after clinging to an oil platform off the southern coast of Tunisia.

“There are 33 survivors, all apparently from [Bangladesh](#),” Flavio Di Giacomo, a spokesperson for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), told AFP. “At least 50 are missing.”

The boat, crammed with more than 90 passengers, left the Libyan port of Zuwara on Sunday.

It was not immediately clear what caused the boat to sink, but vessels leaving the north African coast for Europe are often heavily overloaded makeshift crafts, departing at night even in rough weather to avoid detection from the coastguard.

Tunisian rescuers were bringing the survivors to the port of Zarzis, 100km (70 miles) north-west of Zuwara. “We don’t know the nationality of the more than 50 who are missing,” Di Giacomo added.

At least 1,200 migrants died in the Mediterranean last year, most of them crossing the central part of the sea, according to the United Nations.

Libya is a [key\\_gateway](#) for Europe-bound migrants. According to the IOM, a Geneva-based UN agency, more than 500 people have died trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea from the shores of north Africa to Italy and Malta since the start of 2021.

On Monday, the Tunisian navy said it had rescued more than 100 migrants, mainly from Bangladesh and Sudan, whose boat was “on the verge of sinking”.

Several boats were also stopped by Libyan coastguards and brought back to shore overnight Sunday.

“Two days ago about 680 migrants were intercepted at sea and returned to Libya,” Di Giacomo said. “Almost 9,000 have been intercepted at sea and returned to Libya in 2021 so far.”

Safa Msehli of the IOM said support for search and rescue teams “should be contingent on no one being arbitrarily detained or subjected to human rights violations”, warning that “without such guarantees, such support should be reconsidered”.

The [European Union has for several years supported Libyan forces](#) to try to stem migration, despite often grim conditions in detention centres in Libya.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/18/migrant-boat-sinks-off-tunisia-mediterranean>

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



## [China](#)

# Panic as 300-metre-high skyscraper wobbles in China

SEG Plaza in Shenzhen, one of country's tallest buildings, evacuated after it inexplicably starts shaking

00:49

People flee in panic as 300-metre skyscraper wobbles in China – video

*Agence France-Presse*

Tue 18 May 2021 13.19 EDT

One of China's tallest skyscrapers was evacuated on Tuesday after it began to shake, sending panicked shoppers scampering to safety.

The near 300 metre (980ft) high SEG Plaza in Shenzhen, southern China, inexplicably began to shake at around 1pm, prompting an evacuation of people inside while pedestrians looked on open-mouthed.

The building was closed by 2.40pm, according to local media reports.

Completed in 2000, the tower is home to a major electronics market as well as various offices in the centre of one of China's fastest-growing cities.

Officials are investigating what caused the tower in the city's Futian district to wobble, according to a post on the Twitter-like Weibo platform.

"After checking and analysing the data of various earthquake monitoring stations across the city, there was no earthquake in Shenzhen today," the statement said.

The district said in another statement later on Tuesday that everyone inside had been safely evacuated and that no further movements of the building had

been detected.

Experts “found no safety abnormalities in the main structure and surrounding environment of the building”, and the interior and exterior components of the building appeared undamaged, the district said.

Bystander videos published by local media on Weibo showed the skyscraper shaking as hundreds of terrified pedestrians ran away outside.

“SEG has been completely evacuated,” wrote one Weibo user in a caption to a video of hundreds of people milling about on a wide shopping street near the tower.

The building is named after the semiconductor and electronics manufacturer Shenzhen Electronics Group, whose offices are based in the complex.

It is the 18th tallest tower in Shenzhen, according to the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat skyscraper database.

Chinese authorities last year banned the construction of skyscrapers taller than 500 metres, adding to height restrictions already enforced in some cities such as Beijing.

The new guidelines for architects, urban planners and developers aimed to “highlight Chinese characteristics” and also banned tacky “copycat” buildings modelled after world landmarks.

Five of the world’s tallest skyscrapers are located in China, including the world’s second-tallest building, the Shanghai Tower, which stands at 632 metres.

Shenzhen is a sprawling metropolis in southern China, close to Hong Kong, which has a booming homegrown tech manufacturing scene.

Many Chinese tech giants, including Tencent and Huawei, have chosen the city to host their headquarters.

It is also home to the world's fourth-tallest skyscraper, the 599-metre Ping An Finance Centre.

Building collapses are not rare in China, where lax building standards and breakneck urbanisation lead to constructions being thrown up in haste.

Last May, a five-storey quarantine hotel in the south-eastern city of Quanzhou collapsed due to shoddy construction, killing 29.

The devastating 2008 Sichuan earthquake caused more than 69,000 deaths and the disaster ignited a storm of public controversy over poorly constructed school buildings – known as “tofu dregs” – which collapsed killing thousands of students.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/18/panic-as-300m-high-tall-skyscraper-wobbles-in-china>

## [Joe Biden](#)

# Joe Biden poised to sign anti-Asian American hate crimes bill

Legislation, which passed the House on Tuesday, marks a bipartisan denunciation of attacks that have proliferated during pandemic



A vigil in Alhambra, California, against anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander racism in the wake of a deadly attack on an Atlanta spa. Photograph: Étienne Laurent/EPA

A vigil in Alhambra, California, against anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander racism in the wake of a deadly attack on an Atlanta spa. Photograph: Étienne Laurent/EPA

*Guardian staff and agency*

Tue 18 May 2021 21.37 EDT

Joe Biden is poised to sign legislation aimed at curtailing a striking rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, after Congress

approved the bill in a bipartisan denunciation of brutal attacks that have proliferated during the pandemic.

The bill, which the House passed on Tuesday in a 364-62 vote, will expedite the review of hate crimes at the justice department and make grants available to help local law enforcement agencies improve their investigation, identification and reporting of incidents driven by bias, which often go underreported. It previously passed the Senate, and Biden has said he will give it his signature..

[Asian Americans reported 3,800 hate-related incidents during the pandemic, report finds](#)  
[Read more](#)

“Asian Americans have been screaming out for help, and the House and Senate and President Biden have clearly heard our pleas,” said Grace Meng, a Democratic congresswoman who helped lead efforts to pass the bill in the House.

To many Asian Americans, the pandemic has invigorated deep-seated biases. Donald Trump repeatedly referred to the virus, which emerged in Wuhan, China, as the “China virus” or the “Kung flu.” And as cases of the illness began to rise in the US, so too did the attacks, with thousands of violent incidents reported in the past year.

Representative Judy Chu, a Democrat of California, said it’s painful for many to “open up the newspaper every day and see that yet another Asian American has been assaulted, attacked and even killed”.

In February, an 84-year-old man died after he was pushed to the ground near his home in San Francisco. A young family was injured in a Texas grocery store attack last year. And in Georgia, six Asian women were killed in March during a series of shootings targeting workers at [massage parlors](#). Prosecutors are seeking hate crimes charges. The women who were killed are mentioned in the text of the bill.

“You start to think, ‘Well, will I be next?’” Chu said.

Yet to some activists, including organizations representing gay and transgender Asian Americans, the legislation is misguided. More than 100 groups have signed on to a statement opposing the bill for relying too heavily on law enforcement while providing too little funding to address the underlying issues driving a rise in hate crimes.



Congresswoman Judy Chu delivers remarks during a press conference about hate crimes bill. Photograph: Shawn Thew/EPA

“We have had hate crimes laws since 1968, it’s been expanded over and over again, and this new legislation is more of the same,” said Jason Wu, who is co-chair of GAPIMNY-Empowering Queer & Trans Asian Pacific Islanders. “These issues are about bias, but also rooted in inequality, and lack of investment and resources for our communities. Not a shortage of police and jails.”

The group Stop AAPI Hate said the bill was step but lamented that it centers a law enforcement approach over community-led reform.

“Because the act centers criminal law enforcement agencies in its solutions, it will not address the overwhelming majority of incidents reported to our site which are not hate crimes, but serious hate incidents,” the group said in a statement.

The bill also represented a rare moment of bipartisanship in a Congress that has struggled to overcome partisan gridlock, while underscoring an evolution in Republican thought on hate crimes legislation. Many conservatives have historically dismissed hate crimes laws, arguing they create special protected classes so that victims of similar crimes are treated differently.

“I’m glad Congress is coming together in a bipartisan way,” said congresswoman Young Kim, a California Republican who is Korean American. “Let’s also recognize that we cannot legislate hate out of our people’s hearts and minds.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/18/joe-biden-anti-asian-american-hate-crimes-bill>



[Joe Biden](#)

## Biden tours Ford facility in Michigan as protests erupt over Gaza-Israeli conflict

President's visit to highlight push for electric cars came as protests erupted over escalating Israeli and Palestinian clashes



Protesters march through neighborhoods near a Ford Motor Company plant in Dearborn, Michigan, on Tuesday to protest escalating clashes between Israelis and Palestinians. Photograph: Seth Herald/AFP/Getty Images

Protesters march through neighborhoods near a Ford Motor Company plant in Dearborn, Michigan, on Tuesday to protest escalating clashes between Israelis and Palestinians. Photograph: Seth Herald/AFP/Getty Images

[Daniel Strauss](#) in Dearborn, Michigan  
[@danielstrauss4](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 17.57 EDT

As [Joe Biden](#) toured a Ford Motor Company facility to highlight his push for more electric vehicles on Tuesday, protests erupted in parts of Michigan over the escalating clashes between Israelis and Palestinians.

Biden toured Ford Motor Co Rouge electric vehicle center to tout part of his American Jobs Plan, which incentivizes Americans to use electric vehicles and proposes building a national network of charging stations.

Biden's visit to the plant here in Dearborn, [Michigan](#), was no coincidence. The state and region have deep roots in the American auto industry and would be one of the primary locations for production of a new era of electric vehicles. Biden's visit also came ahead of Ford rolling out an electric version of its F150 pickup truck, one of the company's most iconic products.

"I just got a tour of a groundbreaking electric vehicle center here alongside UAW workers," Biden said at the Rouge center. "They showed me the technology they're using to build the fully electric F150 ... The future of the auto industry is electric. There's no turning back."

Biden added that "the American auto industry is at a crossroads. The real question is if we'll lead or we'll fall behind in the race to the future."

But Biden's visit to Michigan to tout his domestic priorities came under the shadow of ongoing bombings in Gaza City and [Israel](#).

On Monday the Washington Post reported that in the weeks ahead of the most recent fighting the [Biden administration](#) had quietly approved selling \$735m worth of precision-guided weapons to Israel. That fact in particular came up repeatedly at the pro-Palestinian protests in Dearborn, which has one of the largest concentrated Arab communities in the country.

At one of the protests outside a police station here, hundreds gathered to decry Israel's brutal treatment of Palestinians, waving flags and carrying signs. Some of the attendees blamed Biden himself and cited the weapons sales.

"We are a loving, welcoming people, but you are not welcome in Dearborn today," said Amer Zahr, president of the New Generation of Palestine group,

said of Biden.

While Biden tours the Ford facility pro-Palestinian protesters gather outside the Dearborn, MI police station. [pic.twitter.com/WfEIOdK76s](https://pic.twitter.com/WfEIOdK76s)

— Daniel Strauss (@DanielStrauss4) [May 18, 2021](#)

[pic.twitter.com/7sd9NaWTnG](https://pic.twitter.com/7sd9NaWTnG)

— Daniel Strauss (@DanielStrauss4) [May 18, 2021](#)

“We know that Biden is here in Dearborn at the Ford plant so we want him to hear our voices and hear that he needs to ceasefire, cut the funding that is happening right now,” said Zeyna Salloum, 37.

Salloum brought a sign that said Biden is a war criminal. “He’s supporting the bombing of civilians with American money,” she added.

Others said they attended the protest to bring awareness to Palestinian identity.

“I’m here to support a free Palestine with my kids to teach them how to participate and how they love their origin of country,” Ramiz Karwash, 41, said with his daughter sitting on his shoulders. He stressed he was there to send Biden a message about the bombings and the war in [Gaza](#).

The conflict has divided lawmakers on Capitol Hill, with Republicans largely stressing support to Israel and some Democrats doing the same, while others called for better treatment of the Palestinian people. Biden himself has [reportedly privately told](#) the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, that he could only hold off applying pressure on how Israel interacts with the Palestinian government for so long.

Abdul El-Sayed, a public health doctor, liberal activist and former Democratic candidate for governor of Michigan, spoke at the police station protest on Tuesday said his hope was “obviously that we need a ceasefire immediately”.

“I hope that this ends peacefully immediately,” he said. “My worry is that once the immediate atrocities being committed end that we will walk away and the same kinds of policies of displacement, of human rights violations are going to continue.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/18/biden-michigan-protests-gaza-israeli-conflict>

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

## India

# Indian mosque bulldozed in defiance of high court order

Local officials in Uttar Pradesh demolish mosque that had stood since time of British rule



Images of rubble taken in the aftermath of the destruction of the mosque in Ram Sanahi Ghat, Uttar Pradesh, India. Photograph: Supplied

Images of rubble taken in the aftermath of the destruction of the mosque in Ram Sanahi Ghat, Uttar Pradesh, India. Photograph: Supplied

[\*Hannah Ellis-Petersen\*](#) and *Mohammad Sartaj Alam*

Tue 18 May 2021 14.17 EDT

A local administration in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh has defied a state high court order and bulldozed a mosque, in one of the most inflammatory actions taken against a Muslim place of worship since the demolition of the Babri Mosque by a mob of Hindu nationalist rioters in 1992.

The mosque, called Masjid Gareeb Nawaz Al Maroof, in the district of Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh, had stood for at least six decades, since the time of British rule, according to documents held by its committee.

On Monday, police and security services moved into the area and cleared it of people, then brought in bulldozers and demolished the mosque buildings. Debris was then thrown into a river, according to images and local accounts. Security services have been deployed to prevent anyone coming within a mile of where the mosque stood.

The state government of Uttar Pradesh is controlled by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata party (BJP), which also governs at national level.

The chief minister is a hardline Hindu nationalist called Yogi Adityanath, who is known for his vitriol against Muslims. He has made speeches laced with Islamophobia, referred to Muslims as terrorists, and passed legislation openly discriminatory to Muslims.

A local imam, Maulana Abdul Mustafa, who is on the mosque committee, said the mosque was “hundreds of years old” and that “thousands of people have been coming here five times a day to offer *namaz* [prayer]”.

“All Muslims were scared, so no one went near the mosque or dared to protest when the mosque was being demolished. Even today, several dozen people are leaving their homes and hiding in other areas out of the fear of the police.”

Adarsh Singh, Barabanki district magistrate, denied the presence of the mosque. “I do not know any mosque,” he said. “I know there was an illegal structure. The Uttar Pradesh high court declared it illegal. That’s why the regional senior district magistrate took action. I will not say anything else.”





The scene after the demolition of the mosque. Photograph: Supplied

The demolition was in violation of a high court order issued on 24 April, which stated that buildings in the state should be protected from any eviction or demolition until 31 May “in the wake of the upsurge of the pandemic”.

The mosque has been contested by the local administration. On 15 March, a notice was issued to the mosque committee questioning the presence of an “unofficial mosque”, requesting evidence for the permissions they had for the land and citing a court ruling where illegal religious constructions could be demolished if they caused obstructions.

The mosque committee say they sent a detailed response, including documents demonstrating the building had an electricity connection from 1959 and showing no mosque structures were obstructing the road, but the local administration did not take the response on to official record.

On 18 March, the mosque committee went to the Allahabad high court citing concerns that the mosque faced “imminent demolition”. The high court ruled that the local administration was only seeking documentation, rather threatening to demolish the mosque.

In the following days, local Muslims say the administration began building a permanent structure to block access to the mosque.



On 19 March, local Muslims were prevented from entering the mosque for Friday prayers, causing tension and protests in the area. Over 35 local Muslims who were protesting were arrested and put in jail, where many are still held, and police reports were filed against the demonstrators.

In a ruling on 24 April, taking in the circumstances of the pandemic, Allahabad high court then ordered that “any orders of eviction, dispossession or demolition ... shall remain in abeyance until 31.05.21”.

In a press statement, the district administration of Barabanki described the demolished structures as a “residential complex” and said a court order from 2 April had proved the “residential construction in question is illegal”. They made no mention of the mosque on the site, even though its presence had previously been officially acknowledged in the notice served to the mosque on 15 March and again in the high court petition on 18 March.

Members of the mosque committee said they had also not been made aware of any court ruling regarding the mosque made on 2 April . Despite the court order to delay all demolitions till the end of May, the administration went ahead with the demolition of the mosque structures on Monday afternoon.

A statement by Zafur Ahmad Faruqi, chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf board, said: “I strongly condemn the patently illegal and high-handed action ... by which they have demolished a 100-year-old mosque.”

Faruqi said the demolition was “against the law, a misuse of power and in utter violation of the clear orders dated 24.04.2020 passed by the Hon’ble High Court” and called for a high-level judicial inquiry.

The district where the mosque is located is adjacent to Ayodhya, where the Babri mosque stood [before its demolition in 1992](#). In a court ruling in 2019, judges declared that the land legally belonged to Hindus, rather than Muslims, and a new Ram temple is under construction on the site where the Babri Mosque stood formerly.

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

## [Galápagos Islands](#)

# Galápagos rock formation Darwin's Arch collapses from erosion

Boat tourists reportedly saw the rocky structure collapse into the Pacific Ocean



Darwin's Arch, before and after it collapsed. Composite: Alamy; Facebook  
Darwin's Arch, before and after it collapsed. Composite: Alamy; Facebook

[Rhi Storer](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 08.56 EDT

Darwin's Arch, a rock formation south-east of Darwin Island in the Galápagos archipelago, has collapsed due to natural erosion, Ecuador's environment ministry said.

Images on [the ministry Facebook page](#) on Tuesday show two rocky pillars

left at the northernmost island of the Pacific Ocean archipelago, which lies 600 miles (1,000km) off South America.

The post said: “This event is a consequence of natural erosion. Darwin’s Arch is made of natural stone that at one time would have been part of Darwin Island, which is not open to visits by land.

“This site is considered one of the best places on the planet to dive and observe schools of sharks and other species.”

Informamos que hoy 17 de mayo, se reportó el colapso del Arco de Darwin, el atractivo puente natural ubicado a menos de un kilómetro de la isla principal Darwin, la más norte del archipiélago de [#Galápagos](#). Este suceso sería consecuencia de la erosión natural.

□Héctor Barrera [pic.twitter.com/IBZJWNbgHg](https://pic.twitter.com/IBZJWNbgHg)

— Ministerio del Ambiente y Agua de Ecuador (@Ambiente\_Ec) [May 17, 2021](#)

The diving website [Scuba Diver Life](#) said visitors on a diving boat had witnessed the collapse at 11.20am local time on Monday, adding that no divers had been harmed.

The arch is famous as a diving spot for underwater encounters with sea turtles, whale sharks, manta rays and dolphins.

The rock formation was named after the British scientist Charles Darwin, who visited the islands in 1835 on HMS Beagle and developed his theory of evolution by examining Galápagos finches.

The Galápagos islands, declared as one of the first Unesco world heritage sites in 1978, contain flora and fauna not seen anywhere else on earth and are part of a biosphere reserve. About 30,000 people live on the archipelago, spread across four inhabited islands.

Jen Jones of the Galápagos Conservation Trust said the charity was “sad to hear the news about Darwin’s Arch collapsing. It really was an icon of the

Galápagos landscape and a marker for one of the most awe-inspiring wildlife experiences on Earth, as beneath the waves can be found one of the largest aggregations of sharks in the world.

“The collapse of the arch is a reminder of how fragile our world is. While there is little that we as humans can do to stop geological processes such as erosion, we can endeavour to protect the islands’ precious marine life. Galápagos Conservation Trust is working with partners to protect these sharks both within the Galápagos marine reserve and on their migrations outside in the wider eastern tropical Pacific.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/18/galapagos-rock-formation-darwins-arch-collapses-from-erosion>

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

## Race

# More than 90% of Black Americans say they have been racially profiled while shopping

A report, which included testimonials, found that 52% of Black shoppers would stop frequenting a store after being profiled



Shoppers Cassie Howard, left, and Paris Black browse an Ulta store in Chicago. Photograph: Charles Rex Arbogast/AP

Shoppers Cassie Howard, left, and Paris Black browse an Ulta store in Chicago. Photograph: Charles Rex Arbogast/AP

[Priya Elan](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 15.46 EDT

In a new survey, more than 90% of African American shoppers said they had experienced racial profiling while buying or browsing – a phenomenon

sometimes known as “[shopping while Black](#)”.

The State of Racial Profiling in American Retail [report](#), carried out by [DealAid](#), surveyed 1,020 consumers who identified as Black or African American.

[Racial profiling leads minorities to shop online rather than in stores](#)

[Read more](#)

The report found that 52% of such shoppers said they would stop going to a shop after being profiled.

The report follows a study [in January](#) from the French beauty company Sephora which found that minority groups are more likely to shop online than go into a shop, in order to avoid racial profiling.

The extensive new report included testimonials from those who answered the survey.

One recalled: “The last time that I went to the hair store to buy extensions, the cashier/owner tried to subtly follow me around the store. When I had been looking at a product around a corner for a while (not visible in view), she showed up around the corner and asked if I was looking for something specific. I told her ‘No, I’m just deciding’ and she (seemingly) walked away.

“When I came around the corner, I realized that she was still there, she was just watching me from a different angle.”

Another said: “My wife is Caucasian. I was following behind her at a clothing store when she was approached by an employee who warned her that she was being followed by a ‘strange’ black man..”

A third reported hearing an announcement which said “code five in the pharmacy department” and then being observed closely.

The report found that the two most common types of micro-aggressions were being “treated differently than customers of other races” – 50.3% of those surveyed – and being “ignored and made to wait excessively”,



reported by 47%. More than three-quarters of respondents said they were followed and closely watched.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/18/black-shoppers-racial-profiling-report>

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

## Rights and freedom**Bangladesh**

# Bangladeshi journalist arrested and charged over alleged document theft

Rozina Islam's family claim reporter was assaulted and subject to 'mental torture' by officials



Friends and colleagues of Rozina Islam at a protest in Dhaka demanding her release. Photograph: Suvra Kanti Das/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Friends and colleagues of Rozina Islam at a protest in Dhaka demanding her release. Photograph: Suvra Kanti Das/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Rights and freedom is supported by



# HUMANITY UNITED

[About this content](#)

[Redwan Ahmed](#) in Dhaka

Tue 18 May 2021 13.49 EDT

One of Bangladesh's most prominent investigative journalists, known for her anti-corruption reporting and criticism of the government's response to Covid-19, has been arrested and charged under the country's Official Secrets Act.

Rozina Islam, 42, a senior investigative journalist at the Bengali daily Prothom Alo appeared before a Dhaka court on Tuesday morning charged with stealing official health ministry documents . The court turned down the police's appeal that she be remanded in their custody to be interrogated.

Islam's family claim she suffered physical assaults and "mental torture" at the hands of officials while she was detained for five hours in the room of a personal assistant at the health ministry before being moved to a police station in Dhaka.

She now faces criminal charges under the Penal Code and Official Secrets Act for the theft and photographing of sensitive state documents. According

to the court documents seen by the Guardian, the documents Islam has been accused of stealing are said to concern the purchase of Covid-19 vaccines.

While being taken to the jail from the courts, Islam briefly told reporters that she is facing charges because of her anti-corruption reporting. “I am being wronged because of reports against the health ministry,” she told journalists.

Islam’s reporting has been critical of the Bangladeshi government’s handling of the pandemic, including investigations into bribery and corruption in the recruitment of medical staff and irregularities in the health ministry’s procurement.

The health ministry denied that Islam was harmed while being held there and that protests by her family outside the ministry delayed her being moved to the police station.

Islam’s arrest has caused outrage in the wider media community and among human rights groups who have demanded her immediate release.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) called on Bangladeshi authorities to immediately release her.

“We are deeply alarmed that Bangladesh officials detained a journalist and filed a complaint under a draconian colonial-era law that carries ridiculously harsh penalties,” said Aliya Iftikhar, CPJ’s senior Asia researcher in a [statement](#).

Islam’s bail hearing has been set for Thursday and she remains in detention.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/may/18/bangladeshi-journalist-arrested-and-charged-over-alleged-document-theft>

## Headlines tuesday 18 may 2021

- [Coronavirus Local lockdowns possible in England if Covid rates rise, says minister](#)
- [Live UK Covid: minister confirms return to local lockdowns an option if Indian variant situation deteriorates](#)
- [Long Covid Symptoms ease after vaccination, survey finds](#)
- [Vaccines Pfizer/BioNTech Covid vaccine has approved storage period extended](#)

## [Coronavirus](#)

# Boris Johnson to press on with lifting Covid lockdown despite variant fears

Prime minister says no conclusive evidence exists to delay full reopening of economy on 21 June

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Boris Johnson wants to continue with the plan to lift Covid lockdown, which would mean all remaining restrictions on businesses and social contact would be lifted by 21 June. Photograph: John Sibley/Reuters

Boris Johnson wants to continue with the plan to lift Covid lockdown, which would mean all remaining restrictions on businesses and social contact would be lifted by 21 June. Photograph: John Sibley/Reuters

[Jessica Elgot](#) and [Damien Gayle](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 10.11 EDT

Boris Johnson has told his cabinet that he intends to proceed with the roadmap for lifting England's lockdown despite concerns over a new coronavirus variant, but said the government would monitor the data over the coming days.

The prime minister told reporters on Tuesday he saw no conclusive evidence to delay the full reopening of the economy on 21 June, though sources have suggested it may not be as comprehensive a lifting of restrictions as [previously billed](#).

“I don't see anything conclusive at the moment to say that we need to deviate from the roadmap. We've got to be cautious and we are keeping everything under very close observation. We'll know a lot more in a few days' time,” Johnson said. “We will be letting people know as much as we can, as soon as we can.”

Convening his cabinet on Tuesday, Johnson stressed his desire to continue to work through the planned lifting of lockdown, which would mean all remaining restrictions on businesses and social contact removed from 21 June.

The health secretary, Matt Hancock, told the meeting “comprehensive work” to provide more vaccines and surge testing in outbreak areas was continuing.

Johnson also played down [suggestions that vaccine hesitancy](#) was playing a role in the sharp rise in cases in Bolton and Blackburn, as well as recently in Bedford where surge testing has been put in place in two schools. On Tuesday, Nuneaton became the latest area where surge testing is being deployed after an increase in cases linked to the coronavirus variant first identified in India.

“This country is quite extraordinary. There was a poll I think done last night which showed that of all the countries in the world we are the most positive about vaccinations, the numbers are incredibly high,” Johnson said.

“And I know that some people have been more vaccine-hesitant than others, but actually across the whole of society, the numbers continue to go up in every group in every age group, and that's very, very encouraging.”



Johnson's spokesman said the government was still unclear on a number of factors that could affect the planned reopening on 21 June.

“At this stage we don't have information on something like transmissibility, which would be a key factor in informing what decisions we have to make, so while we don't have that data it's simply not possible to make those kinds of decisions at this point,” the spokesman said.

Earlier, the environment secretary, [George Eustice](#), said local lockdowns remained a possibility in some parts of England.

“If we do have a deterioration in some of these areas, then of course we can't rule out that we would put in place certain local lockdowns. At the moment we are doing a lot of intensive surveillance in those areas, with surge testing to identify it and deal with it,” he told Times Radio.

There is heightened concern over the potential spread across the UK of the new variant of coronavirus first detected in India. On Monday, [public health experts said](#) the B.1.617.2 variant was expected to become the dominant strain in the UK within days.

Speaking to BBC Breakfast on Tuesday, Vicky Head, the director of public health for Bedford, said she was “really worried” about the local increase in Covid-19 cases linked to the new variant.

The town has the second-highest rate of coronavirus in [England](#), with 214 new cases recorded in the seven days to 13 May. Head said cases in Bedford had jumped from “three or four” a day to up to 10 times that figure over the past month.

“What we think now is that pretty much all of our cases are likely to be the variant from India,” Head said, adding that surge testing was being planned to identify those who have the virus but are not showing symptoms, to ensure they self-isolate.

## [Cases](#)

Easing of restrictions continues across England, with mass events beginning again, including a Premier League football match between Manchester

United and Fulham on Tuesday, which is expected to draw 10,000 fans to Old Trafford.

Eustice was challenged on Radio 4's Today programme over whether the match muddies the waters about government recommendations and guidance on social distancing and other measures to curb the spread of coronavirus. Many Manchester United fans are expected to travel to the match from nearby Bolton, which had the highest case rate in the country as of 11 May, with 255 cases per 100,000 residents.

The minister insisted the government was “keeping a close eye” on the situation in the town. “What we’re doing in places like Bolton ... is that we are doing surge testing in those areas so that we can monitor the situation closely and see what’s happening and obviously we can’t rule out measures that we might take in the future,” Eustice said.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/18/local-lockdowns-possible-england-if-covid-rates-rise-says-george-eustice>

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)  
[Coronavirus](#)

# UK Covid: Johnson says threat posed by Indian variant will be clearer ‘in a few days’ – as it happened

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2021/may/18/uk-covid-live-news-local-lockdowns-indian-variant-latest-updates-live>

## [Long Covid](#)

# Long Covid symptoms ease after vaccination, survey finds

Exclusive: Fifty-seven per cent of people with illness say they were better overall after jab

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



The results could reassure those with long Covid that they are unlikely to suffer a worsening of symptoms after vaccination. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

The results could reassure those with long Covid that they are unlikely to suffer a worsening of symptoms after vaccination. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

[Natalie Grover](#) *Science correspondent*

Tue 18 May 2021 01.00 EDT

Covid-19 vaccines tend to alleviate the [symptoms of long Covid](#), according to a large survey of more than 800 people that suggests mRNA vaccines, in particular, are beneficial.

Though Covid-19 was initially understood to be a largely respiratory illness from which most would recover within a few weeks, as the pandemic wore on increasing numbers of people reported experiencing symptoms for months on end. There is no consensus definition of the condition of these people who have symptoms ranging from chronic fatigue to organ damage, let alone a standardised treatment plan.

As vaccines hit the mainstream, concerns arose that vaccination could precipitate relapses or a worsening of symptoms. But conversely, anecdotal reports suggested that vaccines helped some people with long Covid.

The analysis, which is yet to be peer reviewed, was based on a survey conducted by the advocacy group LongCovidSOS involving 812 people (mostly white, female participants) with long Covid in the UK and internationally, who were contacted via social media. The participants (a small proportion of whom also said they had [ME/CFS](#)) were asked to wait at least a week after their first dose to avoid their responses conflating with side-effects of the vaccine.

Scores across 14 common long-Covid symptoms were compared before and after the first vaccine dose. Data showed that 56.7% of respondents experienced an overall improvement in symptoms, with 24.6% remaining unchanged and 18.7% reporting a deterioration in their symptoms.

In general, those who received mRNA vaccines (Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna) reported more improvements in symptoms, compared with those who got an adenovirus vaccine (Oxford/AstraZeneca). In particular, those who received the Moderna vaccine were more likely to see improvements in symptoms such as fatigue, brain fog and muscle pain, and less likely to report a deterioration, the analysis found.

“This survey will reassure people that they would have to be quite unlucky to really have an overall worsening of symptoms,” said analysis author

Ondine Sherwood, from the patient advocacy group LongCovidSOS. “The data is very encouraging, but we don’t know how long the benefits last.”

Dr David Strain, also an analysis author and a senior clinical lecturer at the University of Exeter medical school, said: “There isn’t a blood pressure tablet that fixes everybody ... and similarly, there’s not one long-Covid treatment that’s going to fix everyone – but the fact that one treatment does fix something means that there’s bound to be other treatments out there that will fix others.”

This data cannot definitively prove that the vaccine made the subjects’ symptoms better – they may have been getting better anyway after months of being symptomatic. However, in the 130 people in the survey who received both doses of vaccine, some patients got better after their first dose – then started to experience a resurgence in symptoms – and then got better again after their second, noted Strain.

Given that the improvement in symptoms in about half of the participants had abated by the time they completed the survey, the study could indicate that the improvement (if attributed to vaccine effect) was transient, said Nisreen Alwan, an associate professor in public health at the University of Southampton.

It is unclear why some people get long Covid, but immunologists – in particular Dr Akiko Iwasaki, professor of immunology at Yale University – have [hypothesised](#) that long Covid could be explained by one or a combination of reasons: the persistence of the virus remaining within the body; fragments of the virus lingering after infection; and the immune system overreacting and hurting healthy tissue in response to the infection.

The analysis suggested Covid-19 vaccines helped to reset the immune system, letting the body know that its defences should respond to the virus but not attack itself any more, said Strain, cautioning that this explanation was speculation, and had to be ratified with further research.

Prof Danny Altmann, a professor of immunology at Imperial College London who is working alongside Iwasaki, said: “How could a vaccine make a subset of long-term sufferers feel better? It’s tempting to hypothesise

that this was the subset who had symptoms due to a reservoir of virus that was never properly cleared, and the enormous boost of a potent vaccine equipped them with the immune response to do this. This needs mechanistic investigation of the actual immune responses.”

There is no consensus on the prevalence on long Covid. The latest data published by the Office for National Statistics suggests that in the four-week period ending 6 March, an estimated [1.1 million people self-reported having long Covid in the UK](#).

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/may/18/long-covid-symptoms-ease-after-vaccination-survey-finds>

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



## Vaccines and immunisation

# Pfizer/BioNTech Covid vaccine has approved storage period extended

Increased flexibility of vaccine expected to have ‘significant impact’ on rollout in EU member states

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



The approved storage period for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine when kept in a fridge between 2C and 8C has been extended from five days to one month. Photograph: Dinendra Haria/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

The approved storage period for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine when kept in a fridge between 2C and 8C has been extended from five days to one month. Photograph: Dinendra Haria/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

*PA Media*

Tue 18 May 2021 02.22 EDT

The Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine can be stored at fridge temperature for much longer than previously recommended, according to the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

The previous advice was the vaccine needed to be kept at an ultra-low temperature, between -70C and -80C, until a few days before use when it could be transferred to a standard medical fridge.

The EMA said in a statement it had extended the approved storage period for an unopened thawed vial when kept in a fridge between 2C and 8C from five days to one month.

“The change was approved following assessment of additional stability study data submitted to EMA by the marketing authorisation holder,” the agency said.

Increased flexibility in the storage and handling of the vaccine is expected to have a “significant impact” on the planning and logistics of vaccine rollout in EU member states.

The updated advice comes days after research suggested a 12-week gap between Pfizer doses significantly increases the immune response in older people.

The antibody response in people aged over 80 is three-and-a-half times greater in those who have the second dose after 12 weeks, compared with a three-week interval, the study led by the University of Birmingham, in collaboration with Public [Health](#) England, found.

BioNTech said on 10 May there was no evidence its jab needed updating to protect against variants.

The UK government has ordered a further 60m doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid vaccine as part of its plans for a vaccination booster programme this autumn.

It is thought that the most vulnerable groups of people, including the elderly, will be offered another jab before next winter.

The extra order brings the total number of Pfizer doses ordered by the UK to 100m.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/may/18/pfizer-biontech-covid-vaccine-has-approved-storage-period-extended>

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

## 2021.05.18 - Coronavirus

- ['I would want to be vaccinated first' Covid experts on England's relaxed rules](#)
- ['Urgent. Oxygen needed' Nepalis mobilise to take charge in Covid crisis](#)
- ['It feels really special' Manchester venues optimistic as doors reopen](#)
- [US Biden vows to send 20m doses of approved vaccines overseas](#)

## Coronavirus

# ‘I would want to be vaccinated first’: Covid experts on England’s relaxed rules

Perhaps go to the pub – but not for long – and do not go abroad, say scientists and clinicians

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Gyms can be risky because people breathe forcefully, but a sauna could be safe if you sit by yourself. Photograph: Tyrone Siu/Reuters

Gyms can be risky because people breathe forcefully, but a sauna could be safe if you sit by yourself. Photograph: Tyrone Siu/Reuters

[Nicola Davis](#) and [Natalie Grover](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 02.00 EDT

With restrictions in England relaxing this week, we ask the experts about the risks involved with some of the main changes.

## **Groups of up to six people or two households can now meet indoors, with overnight visits allowed**

Prof Susan Michie, a member of the government's Covid-19 behavioural science team, and the Independent Sage group of scientists, said indoor meeting was riskier than outdoors.

“The scientific evidence over the last few months has been increasingly pointing to aerosols being the major route of transmission,” she said.

If people are planning to meet indoors, opening the windows or doors to improve ventilation is important.

But Michie cautioned against being lulled into a false sense of security around familiar faces, noting that while people tend to think that those they don't know are more risky than people they do know, [that is not necessarily the case](#).

David Heymann, a professor of infectious disease epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said everyone had to weigh up the risks themselves. “I will go inside to visit friends who are vaccinated,” he said, adding he had been vaccinated. “I wouldn't go into a place where people are not vaccinated myself, because that's my own risk assessment.”

## **People can meet in groups of up to 30 outdoors**

While meeting outdoors is, in general, lower risk than gathering indoors, there could still be a risk of spreading the virus – for example, if an infected person sneezes, speaks loudly or sings in the direction of somebody's face, said Michie. “But mostly when you're outdoors, the aerosol that's coming out of an infected person's mouth is quite quickly dispersed.”

## **Care home residents can have up to five named visitors (two at a time), provided the visitors test negative**

Although there will be some risk of false negatives with lateral flow tests, people in care homes are likely to have had their vaccination, so the risk to them is greatly reduced, said Heymann.

“If I were going in to visit an elderly person in a care home, I would want a test,” he said. “If the test was negative, I would probably still wear a mask, just because I want to protect those others from getting infected should the test have been a false negative.”

## **Pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants can serve customers indoors**

Drinking alcohol can reduce inhibitions – meaning it can make it harder to stick to rules one has made – and it can also make some people more likely to sit close, touch and hug. “So alcohol can be associated with increasing [the chance of] people being in a risky situation, even when their intentions are good,” said Michie.

“While there are concerns over variants, I wouldn’t go to the cinema or on holiday abroad or visit a care home.” Michie added. “But I would consider going to a restaurant or pub if well ventilated and not crowded – but infrequently, and not for a long period of time.”

## **Venues such as museums, galleries and cinemas can reopen**

As with other contexts – ventilation is key. If you are at the Science Museum, which is huge and cavernous, people can wander around distanced from one other, so the risk of infection – should another visitor have Covid – is lower than in some other settings, said Michie. “If you think about a cinema, you’re sitting quite close to other people ... you’re in an enclosed



space with no obvious ventilation. And you're there for two or three hours," she said.

However, Gabriel Scally, a visiting professor of public health at the University of Bristol and a member of the Independent Sage committee, suggested cinemas might not be so risky. "Cinemas may well be safer than other indoor venues because of their ability to have effective social distancing and because they mostly have mechanical ventilation systems," he said. "However, the quality of the ventilation system needs to be assured, in that it either needs to bring in a high proportion of fresh air source to change the air in the cinema regularly, or to have effective filters that will trap the virus if they have a recirculating air system."

## **Organised adult sports, including gym classes, can begin again**

Michie said it is difficult to make an informed choice about whether to go because it is hard to know how well ventilated gyms are, adding that when people exercise they do two problematic things.

"They exhale deeply, and so if you are infected you are more likely to spread the virus than if you are sitting in a theatre, and secondly, you inhale a lot, and so if there is any virus in the air, you are more likely to get infected," said Michie.

## **Steam rooms and saunas can reopen**

"I would want to be vaccinated before I went into a sauna; other people may feel that they want to take the risk, like they do when they smoke or do other things," said Heymann. "It's really individuals who need to be empowered to understand the risks and then just make their own decision."

The virus is relatively sensitive to humidity and temperature, and so the likelihood is that in a sauna the virus will not survive very long, said Dr Julian Tang, a clinical virologist and honorary associate professor at the University of Leicester.

He added: “But of course, it depends on how close those people are sitting together, because the virus could transmit quickly before it has a chance to be impacted on by that heat and humidity.”

## International travel

One problem with international travel is that even if people go to low-risk countries where Covid cases are scarce, they may end up in tourist hotspots and mingle with people from lots of different countries.

Complicating matters further, said Michie, is that people are being made to wait for hours at airports, which increases the risk of transmission between them.

“I think that it would be very good to ... really encourage people to holiday within Britain this year,” she said.

Sally agreed. “This is not the summer for travelling abroad,” he said.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/18/i-would-want-to-be-vaccinated-first-covid-experts-on-englands-relaxed-rules>

## Global development

# **‘Urgent. Oxygen needed’: Nepalis mobilise to take charge in Covid crisis**

Amid political turmoil and an overwhelmed health system, young activists are stepping up in response to the pandemic



Covid-19 patients receive oxygen as they wait outside a government hospital due to a lack of beds in Kathmandu, Nepal. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty

Covid-19 patients receive oxygen as they wait outside a government hospital due to a lack of beds in Kathmandu, Nepal. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty

Global development is supported by



[About this content](#)

[Pete Pattison](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 01.00 EDT

A ping and: “ICU bed needed. Please it’s urgent.” Another ping: “Where can I find Remdesivir. EMERGENCY.” Ping: “Very urgent oxygen cylinder needed, patient at last stage.” The messages never let up; a constant stream of posts pleading for hospital beds, oxygen, plasma and medicine.

It’s not Nepal’s government helpline, but an online group set up by a 24-year-old public health graduate.

When Prashikchhya Parajuli and her friends saw the rise of coronavirus cases in India, they knew Nepal would be next. They launched a Viber group to share health advice with the public, but it was soon swamped with messages begging for help. In response to every desperate request, advice is given, phone numbers are shared and tips on where to find a hospital bed are passed on.

“There is a public health crisis and a political crisis,” says Parajuli. “People are crying out for help but they are not being heard. The government is preoccupied with its own survival. So everyone is doing their best from their

own side. Even those who have lost loved ones are still trying to help. It's heart-wrenching.”

People are crying out for help but they are not being heard. The government is preoccupied with its own survival

*Prashikchhya Parajuli*

In Nepal, the battle against the pandemic is being fought not just by medics in hospitals, but by volunteers and activists through social media, online groups and community organising, while political leaders are widely seen as [incompetent and indifferent](#).

Last week the prime minister, KP Sharma Oli, [lost a vote of confidence](#) in parliament but retained his post after rival political parties were unable to form a new government. The political turmoil began in December, after Oli dissolved parliament and called for early elections in an apparent effort to avoid a power-sharing agreement. The move was deemed unconstitutional, prompting weeks of political manoeuvring by rival parties just as cases of Covid-19 were starting to soar.

The country's fragile health system has been overwhelmed, with [44% of people tested](#) in the first week of May found to be infected with the virus. According to [official figures](#), in the past week there have been on average [183 deaths](#) and more than 8,600 new cases a day, up from less than 200 cases a day in the first week of April. But experts say the true figures are likely to be much higher.

[Nepal says its Covid response is under control – everyone can see it's not true](#)  
[Read more](#)

“The situation is stretched. It's really bad,” says Anup Bastola, chief consultant at Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital in Kathmandu. “I get calls asking for ventilators many times every day ... It's a terrible time. I warned people there would be a second wave, but I never thought it would happen like this.”

Elke Wisch, Unicef's country representative, says there is an urgent need for in-kind donations to combat the "alarming" rise in cases. "Care staff are stretched to the limit, hospitals and health centres are unable to cope and there is not enough oxygen to support the rapidly increasing number of people requiring treatment," she says.

And so, Nepalis are turning to social media – and one another – for help.

"It is the government's responsibility to deal with this, but if the government is not doing enough, we have to step up. It's a crisis," says Luna Ranjit, a member of the [Covid Alliance for Nepal](#), which is mobilising a response on multiple fronts.

The alliance has focused efforts on securing vaccines for the country, where [only around](#) 1% of the population has received two vaccine doses. "The most urgent need is oxygen, but if we are going to stop these surges coming again and again, we need vaccines," says Ranjit.

With India pausing the export of vaccines, the alliance has been [lobbying the US embassy in Nepal](#) and US lawmakers to redirect some of the country's excess supply to Nepal.

But Ranjit accepts the limits of a citizen-led response. "It seems like civil society is shouldering the bigger burden but our efforts are not centralised and so there is lots of duplication," she says. "It's somewhat haphazard."



People wait to refill oxygen cylinders in Kathmandu, 13 May. Covid cases are rising fast in Nepal, where there is an acute shortage of oxygen for patients. Photograph: Niranjana Shrestha/AP

This has not stopped the efforts of dozens of groups, inside and outside Nepal, often composed of urban young people who were schooled in the response to the 2015 earthquake. They include teams who are [making ventilation equipment and PPE](#), [providing food relief](#), [setting up helplines](#) and [importing oxygen](#).

Samaya Khadka, of volunteer-run network [Covid Connect Nepal](#), says his team has been working for two weeks without rest to find hospitals beds, oxygen and ventilators for hundreds of worried families. After requests are verified, the team start calling hospitals and any contacts they have for help.

We are working almost 24 hours a day. Yesterday we were up until 3am until we found a hospital bed for someone

*Samaya Khadka, Covid Connect Nepal*

“We are working almost 24 hours a day. Yesterday we were up until 3am until we found a hospital bed for someone,” says 20-year-old Khadka, who has a team of more than 150 young volunteers across the country. “If we save just one life, it’s worth it.”



The need is far greater than the available resources. On Saturday Khadka's group received 315 requests for help, but were only able to solve 19 of them. However, he says, when their energy flags, they are encouraged by the grateful messages to them on social media.

Ping: "With your help we found a ventilator ... Now his condition is much better. Thank you very much. Hats off to you guys." Ping: "Thanks for all that you guys are doing at this time of crisis." Ping: "I'm so glad we have you to lean on in this situation. Much love."

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/may/18/urgent-oxygen-needed-nepalis-mobilise-to-take-charge-in-covid-crisis>

## Manchester

# ‘It feels really special’: Manchester venues optimistic as doors reopen



Caroline Wilson enjoying the film *Minari* at Home Manchester. Photograph: Mark Waugh/The Guardian

Caroline Wilson enjoying the film *Minari* at Home Manchester. Photograph: Mark Waugh/The Guardian

Spread of the India Covid variant was not enough to dampen a day of reunion

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)

[Alex Mistlin](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 14.27 EDT

On the long march out of lockdown, this was probably the most significant day yet. A day of reopenings and reacquaintances after months of restrictions and rules.

And while the mood in [Manchester](#) seemed much sunnier than it has for some time – with museums, galleries, cinemas and music venues opening their doors – there were unmistakable clouds too.

In nearby Bolton and Blackburn with Darwen, [the variant of the Covid virus first detected in India is spreading fast](#).

Not fast enough (yet) to spoil the atmosphere at Ezra & Gil cafe on Hilton Street, where the mood at 9.30am was mostly one of relief. But Covid was clearly on the minds of some customers.

Founded in 2014, the space is a former clothing showroom in Manchester's bohemian Northern Quarter.

Some people were eating inside, but there were still a couple of tables free. Others preferred to sit outside, defying the morning drizzle.

“It's really good to be open and nice to see some old faces that we gained during lockdown,” said the manager, Liz Harper.

“We've stuck to all the safety measures we've introduced since the first lockdown and we're still at half capacity, as we want people to feel safe. It's not ideal for business but I don't think it's a bad idea if it encourages people to feel safer.”

Harper said she was “slightly concerned that there's a risk of Manchester going back into a local lockdown”, but said she would cope with whatever was thrown at her.

“No one's expressed concerns so far this morning but we've all seen the news and if it takes a local lockdown to nip it in the bud, then so be it.”

About a mile away at Home Manchester, the city's centre for contemporary theatre, film, art and music, visitors had two new exhibitions and a full slate of film screenings to choose from.

“During awards season I try and go to the cinema twice a week, so I booked this ticket straight away,” said the 50-year-old civil servant Caroline Wilson as she waited patiently to see *Minari*, one of this year’s Oscar-winners. “I can’t put into words how happy I am to be back at Home.”

Charlie Coffey, 21, a student at the University of Manchester, was equally excited. H had come to see the *Soul Journey to Truth* exhibition, after a final year at university blighted by Covid.



Charlie Coffey visiting an exhibition at Home Manchester. Photograph: Mark Waugh/The Guardian

“You take for granted all these wonderful things you can do out in the city,” he said.

Coffey’s mother, Kath Booth, 49, said that while it was great to “have a wander around” she was concerned about some of the conflicting health guidance issued in the last few days.

“I’ve just had my second vaccine, so I feel much safer than before but I saw Jeremy Farrar said he wouldn’t eat indoors just yet, and I did wonder if we should wait another week before coming out.”

Despite being open indoors, many Covid-safety measures remained in place at Home, with visitors being asked to practise social distancing, regularly sanitise their hands and respect the venue's one-way system.



Home's Dave Moutrey. Photograph: Mark Waugh/The Guardian

Dave Moutrey, the director and chief executive of Home, said: "After being closed for 241 days, today feels really special.

"Once the step-by-step plan was in place, we've been able to move into a much more focused period of planning to get an exhibition on the wall and the building ready for the public.

"We're one of the most visited tourist attractions in [Greater Manchester](#), with almost a million visitors a year, so it's vitally important to the city both economically and socially that we're back open.

"More than anything though, it's been great to see the joy on our customers' faces as we've welcomed them back into the building for the first time today."



Reporter Alex Mistlin has his first hug. Photograph: Mark Waugh/The Guardian

That joy was clear enough for this writer – greeting a friend at Home with a bear hug, the first for more than a year.

Not far from Home is the Deaf Institute, a bar and music venue on Oxford Road across from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Manchester’s music venues have been a springboard for a number of bands such as The Smiths, Oasis and more recently Blossoms.

“It’s been a massive effort to get the venue Covid-safe, and we’re looking forward to running a full programme of DJ sets, album playbacks and music-documentary screenings,” said Natalie Wardle, 27, the sales and marketing manager.

Full live shows will have to wait until 21 June – at the earliest.

“There’s a lot of complications that prevent us from doing a proper gig at the moment,” she said.





Natalie Wardle, who works at the Deaf Institute music venue on Oxford Road. Photograph: Mark Waugh/The Guardian

At the Dog Bowl, a bowling alley and arcade on Whitworth Street West, Beth Tyson, 27, was sizing up the pins with four of her housemates.

In truth, the Dog Bowl had not been her first choice. “I booked it about two weeks ago,” said the IT sales professional from Bolton.

“We were supposed to be in Tenerife, so I thought, let’s do something else instead.

“We’re all in our mid-20s, and it’s been really hard missing out an important year of socialising, so being out like this at last is surreal.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/may/17/it-feels-really-special-manchester-venues-optimistic-as-doors-reopen>



## Joe Biden

# Biden vows to send 20m doses of US-approved Covid vaccines overseas

- US has already promised 60m doses of AstraZeneca to allies
- Biden pledges US will ‘arsenal of vaccines’ for the world



Joe Biden: ‘No ocean is wide enough, no wall is high enough to keep us safe. Rampant disease and death in other countries can destabilize them and pose a risk to us as well.’ Photograph: Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images

Joe Biden: ‘No ocean is wide enough, no wall is high enough to keep us safe. Rampant disease and death in other countries can destabilize them and pose a risk to us as well.’ Photograph: Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images

[Joan E Greve](#) and agencies

[@joanegreve](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 17.30 EDT

Washington will send 20m doses of US-approved coronavirus vaccines overseas by the end of June, Joe Biden confirmed on Monday.

In combination with the [60m doses of AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine](#) that the US has already promised to foreign allies, the Biden administration will send 80m vaccine doses abroad over the next six weeks.

[US health officials defend controversial Covid mask guidance change](#)  
[Read more](#)

“Our nation is going to be the arsenal of vaccines for the rest of the world,” Biden said in a speech at the White House.

“No ocean is wide enough, no wall is high enough to keep us safe. Rampant disease and death in other countries can destabilize them – those countries – and pose a risk to us as well,” he added.

The Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are approved for use in the US, and Monday's move marked the first time the US would be sharing vaccines authorized for domestic use. The AstraZeneca vaccine is not yet approved in the US. It previously shared 4m doses of its AstraZeneca stockpile with Mexico and Canada in March.

On Monday, the president said the US would be sending more vaccine doses to foreign countries than either China or Russia has, and he emphasized his administration would not be asking for “favours” from allies in exchange for the vaccines.

The White House has not said which countries will receive the shots. The press secretary, Jen Psaki, said the administration would announce more in the coming days about how the administration is deciding where to send vaccines.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director of the World Health Organization (WHO), welcomed the move, saying partners of the WHO-backed Covax vaccine distribution platform would “stand ready to support equitable distribution”.

I welcome [@POTUS](#) & WHO's commitment to donate 80M [#COVID19](#) vaccine doses to countries in need. Your commitment to global health is deeply appreciated! [#COVAX](#) partners stand ready to support equitable distribution. Solidarity is the only way to save lives & livelihoods everywhere. <https://t.co/vep8m7aR51>

— Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (@DrTedros) [May 17, 2021](#)

On Monday, Biden celebrated the news that coronavirus cases are decreasing in all 50 US states for the first time since the pandemic started, marking a crucial moment in the country's fight against the virus.

The president also announced that Tuesday's data will show 60% of American adults have received at least one coronavirus vaccine dose.

Biden has set a goal of getting 70% of American adults at least partially vaccinated by 4 July, and the president emphasized that unvaccinated Americans still face the risk of infection.

"Ultimately, those who are not vaccinated may end up paying the price," Biden said. "We're not done fighting this virus."

Many US allies had called on the Biden administration to send more vaccine doses to other countries, noting that the pandemic will not truly come to an end until vaccines are widely available around the world.

Biden said last week that almost half of the world's leaders had contacted his administration asking for help in getting access to more vaccine doses.

"I literally have, virtually 40% of the world leaders calling and asking, can we help them," Biden said. "We're going to try."

A recent surge of coronavirus infections in Taiwan, formerly one of the world's Covid-19 mitigation success stories, has led to its stock of 300,000 doses rapidly running out, with only about 1% of its 23 million people vaccinated. The state department did not respond when asked what specific assistance was being offered to Taiwan.

*Reuters and Associated Press contributed to this report*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/17/biden-20m-doses-covid-vaccines-overseas>

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

## 2021.05.18 - Spotlight

- [Delivery text scams The nasty new fraud wave sweeping the UK](#)
- [The long read A Jewish case for Palestinian refugee return](#)
- [Parent trap Why the cult of the perfect mother has to end](#)
- ['I can't believe someone's written this' The Muslim punk sitcom breaking new ground](#)

## Money.

# **Delivery text scams: the nasty new fraud wave sweeping the UK**



When the Guardian asked readers if they had fallen victim to the scam, it received more than 120 responses in five days. Illustration: Steven Gregor/The Guardian

When the Guardian asked readers if they had fallen victim to the scam, it received more than 120 responses in five days. Illustration: Steven Gregor/The Guardian

It starts with a text about a fee for a parcel ... and can end with criminals emptying your bank account. Victims and experts explain how to avoid it



[Hilary Osborne](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 05.00 EDT

When Julia Whittaker, 70, received a text in early March saying she had missed a delivery from [Royal Mail](#), and she needed to pay a £2.99 fee to receive her parcel, she followed the instructions, and clicked through to make a payment. “It’s happened before where people haven’t paid the correct postage, and you are asked for the difference,” she says.

Nothing seemed awry until she got a call from somebody who claimed to work the fraud department at her bank, Santander, saying there was suspicious activity on her account. She hung up, called back a number she says she found on the bank’s website, and spoke to someone who said he was called Dominic, who told her a payment of £750 to Amazon had been paid from an address in a different city. Over the next few days, the man convinced her that her account had been compromised, and persuaded her to visit a branch twice and transfer £35,000 to a different bank, where it would be safe from the criminals.

I wanted to hide away. I wanted to hide under the duvet and never come out

*Julia Whittaker*



“I was suspicious – I kept thinking: ‘This isn’t real,’ but he was very, very convincing,” she says. “It was my daughter who said she’d read about something similar in the Guardian – and that it was a fraud.”

Whittaker had fallen victim to a scam in which fraudsters send out messages claiming to be from Royal Mail, or other courier firms, saying that there is a fee that needs to be paid before a parcel can be delivered. The texts and emails include a link to a webpage that asks for payment details and other personal information. The fraudsters use these either to set up accounts or payments in the victim’s name, or to start a more elaborate con where they pose as a bank employee and talk the victim into moving money to an account they control.

The scammer who spoke to Whittaker told her he suspected the security breach stemmed from someone at her local branch. He said he had set up an account in her husband’s name at another bank, and that she needed to move her money into it to keep it safe. On the first day, she transferred £25,000, and on the second day, she went back and moved £10,000 – money she and her husband planned to use to move home.

“In the end, I was shouting at him, asking why he couldn’t just close my account, but he said it was under the control of the Financial Conduct Authority,” she says. “It was very sophisticated.”

After she had talked to her daughter, and realised she had been defrauded, she contacted Santander, and it put a stop on her account. With the help of her children and an independent fraud expert, Richard Emery, she wrote to the bank, and it has since refunded every penny. But at first she felt terrible. “I wanted to hide away. I wanted to hide under the duvet and never come out.”

Scams making use of delivery firms’ names are not new, but the online shopping boom – and confusion over new fees that have come in since the Brexit transition period ended on 31 December – have given fraudsters a bigger pool of potential victims to phish in. Previous incarnations – which have involved cards put through letterboxes asking recipients to phone premium-rate numbers, as well as texts – tended to happen around

Christmas, when people expected parcels from friends and, in more recent years, online deliveries.

With lockdown, we have all become mail-order shoppers, meaning more chance of a spam text landing with someone who is expecting a parcel. Action Fraud, the UK's national reporting centre for these types of crimes, wasn't able to give figures across the delivery industry, but says that between June 2020 and January 2021 it received 2,867 crime reports mentioning DPD, and that victims reported losing £3.4m over the same period. In December, the equivalent of 533 fake DPD emails a day were sent on to the [suspicious email reporting service, which was launched](#) last year.

When the Guardian asked readers if they had fallen victim to the scam, it received more than 120 responses in five days. Some were from people who had been taken in by the text and the website, and put in their details before smelling a rat. Others had got as far as pressing enter before they realised something was amiss. Others had been caught out completely.

Among the victims were doctors, teachers, psychologists and business owners, many of whom said they were busy when the texts landed, and were mortified to have been taken in by them. Texts had claimed to be from Royal Mail, Hermes, DPD and DHL, with similar messages involving an unpaid fee that needed to be met before a second delivery attempt could be made.

Neil from Grimsby described receiving a “completely convincing text from [Royal Mail] about a surcharge due for a parcel that coincided with something I ordered”. A reader who did not want to be named said she was expecting a couple of items when she received a message saying she owed £2. “Without thinking – and knowing that there have been additional tariffs on some things, due to Brexit – I clicked on the link and completed the form. Though it asked for bank and card details, I thought little of it, as no passwords were asked for.”

A student who ordered a dress online says she was expecting an import charge as it was coming from abroad. So, although she is “usually so good at spotting scams”, a text asking her for a fee slipped through. “It took me to a page exactly like the Royal Mail site,” she says. “As soon as I did it, I realised it was a scam. I went to block my cards ... mobile banking was

down, and I got scammed [out of] £300. I later found out that they had used the money to buy an electric scooter.”

Louise Tully, 35, a neighbourhood manager from Great Yarmouth, was caught out in the run-up to her daughter’s birthday when “parcels were arriving nearly every day”. The message she got claimed to be from DPD. “With hindsight, I should have been alerted when it charged me and asked for my card details. But I just filled out the webpage and carried on.” A few days later, she got a call claiming to be the fraud team from NatWest and ended up being duped into giving her details, which the fraudsters used to set up Apple Pay linked to her account. “They instantly tried to pay for hundreds of pounds’ worth of goods and then my bank contacted me to alert me.” In total, the criminals tried to spend £600, but Tully has been fully refunded. “I felt so foolish,” she says. “It made me paranoid about my banking, and I reset all my passwords and info.”

It made me feel I was vulnerable, and brought me in touch with the darker side of humanity

### *Rose*

Not all the frauds happened as quickly. Rose from Cambridge received an email claiming to be from DPD in December, when she was waiting for some face cream to be delivered. She says she filled in her details because she “wasn’t thinking straight ... I got home, came to my senses and rang up my bank, which cancelled my card.”

All seemed well until February, when she was called by a man saying he was from her bank’s fraud department and someone had attempted to use her account to spend £745 on kitchen equipment. He appeared to be calling from Halifax’s phone number, and said he was able to see what she was doing on her phone’s banking app. “That’s why I was so convinced,” she says. “I said a couple of times: ‘Halifax wouldn’t ask that,’ but he said: ‘This is coronavirus time, it’s not a normal time.’”

Rose says she had a strange feeling that she was being bullied, yet she wanted to do the right thing. “I’ve never quite felt like that before,” she says. Like other victims, she was persuaded to move money into an account to

keep it safe. She had transferred more than £8,000, and was about to move more, when the app crashed. Then he ended the call. She rushed to her bank, which she realised was closed, and then made calls to try to get her money back. It was only after several weeks that she was refunded. “It made me feel I was vulnerable,” she says. “It brought me in touch with the darker side of humanity.”

Royal Mail says it works with law enforcement agencies, and organisations such as the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, to share information and try to protect people from scams. A spokesperson says the company will only send email and SMS notifications “in cases where the sender has requested this when using our trackable products that offer this service”. Royal Mail adds: “In cases where customers need to pay a surcharge for an underpaid item, we would let them know by leaving a grey ‘fee to pay’ card. We would not request payment by email or text. The only time we would ask customers to make a payment by email or by text is in some instances where a customs fee is due. In such cases, we would also leave a grey card telling customers that there’s a fee to pay before we can release the item.”

It has advice about how to spot a fake notification, and what to do about it, [on its website](#).

UK Finance, which represents the banking industry, says banks will never ask customers to transfer money to a safe account or get in touch out of the blue to ask for a pin, full password or passcode. It says customers should follow advice in its [Take Five to Stop Fraud](#) campaign, and also report scam texts by forwarding them to 7726 (which should work with every mobile service provider).

“If you receive a text message, phone call or email claiming to be from a trusted organisation, such as a parcel delivery company or your bank, stop and think before you part with your money or information. And don’t click on any links or attachments in case it’s a scam,” says Katy Worobec, the managing director of economic crime at UK Finance.

Although most of the readers who replied to our call-out chose not to give their full names, they wanted to go on the record to help prevent other people from falling victim to the fraudsters. Another Rose told us her father

had received a text in April saying he had missed a delivery from Royal Mail and needed to pay a £1.45 charge to receive his parcel. The doctor, who is in his late 60s, had already submitted his details when his wife told him she thought it was a scam. “They rang their bank and cancelled all their cards,” Rose says. “A couple of hours later, they received a call, supposedly from the bank’s ‘fraud team’. My dad assumed that this was all part of what had happened and when asked to generate a code on his secure key device did so. That evening they realised that £20,000 had been withdrawn from their account.”

[Loan sharks target new victims via WhatsApp and Facebook](#)  
[Read more](#)

The couple’s bank has agreed to repay the money. Her father has been left shaken and “rather embarrassed” by what happened, “but hopes that by telling people about it, others may avoid falling into a similar trap. As events developed, each part felt entirely plausible.”

Rose adds: “It seems to me this is very sophisticated fraud, and that many people would have fallen for it. I received a similar text myself last week, and got as far as putting my postcode into it. If it hadn’t been for what had happened to my dad the week before, I very well might have paid the redelivery charge that they were asking for.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2021/may/18/delivery-text-scams-the-nasty-new-wave-sweeping-the-uk>

# A Jewish case for Palestinian refugee return

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/may/18/a-jewish-case-for-palestinian-refugee-return>

## [Parents and parenting](#)

# Parent trap: why the cult of the perfect mother has to end



‘Mothers are trying too hard, and society is not trying nearly hard enough.’  
Photograph: ChristinLola/Getty Images/iStockphoto

‘Mothers are trying too hard, and society is not trying nearly hard enough.’  
Photograph: ChristinLola/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Worldwide, mothers are overworked, underpaid, often lonely and made to feel guilty about everything from epidurals to bottle feeding. Fixing this is the unfinished work of feminism

[\*Eliane Glaser\*](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 01.00 EDT

It’s the middle of a dark, November night, and I’m about to have my first baby. But instead of the joyful experience I’d hoped for, I am being rushed into the operating theatre to have an emergency caesarean under general anaesthetic. I have a dangerous complication and my son’s life is at risk.



Four hours earlier, I'd been sent home by a midwife who told me I couldn't stay in hospital and have an epidural because labour wasn't properly "established".

It's a week later and I'm back home with my son who, thankfully, made it. But I'm struggling. If someone asks me how I am, in a kindly voice, my voice cracks. I'm spending a lot of time sitting on the bed in a milk-stained dressing gown. In a few days, my partner will go back to work.

It's five years later. I'm tired and hungry and alone with the children, who are bickering in the bath. It has been a long evening of trying to keep my temper. My son whacks his little sister. I shout so loud my throat hurts, pull him out of the bath, and shut him in his room. I'd slipped him a towel, but I'm still overcome with remorse. After they go to bed, I sink wretchedly into parenting websites, searching for reassurance. But all I find is cheery, zero-tolerance tips on positive reinforcement and leading by example.



'Too often the downsides of motherhood are hushed up.' Photograph: George Marks/Getty Images

Too often the inevitable downsides of motherhood are hushed up lest young women are "put off". Yet the scraps of honesty that escape the school-gates stiff upper lip have always brought me huge relief. Realism is a political act:

it builds solidarity and better conditions. And this desire to join the dots spurred me to write a manifesto to improve child-rearing for all. Because as a mother, I have felt desperately lonely, existentially bored and excruciatingly humiliated by glaring strangers on the bus. I have clung on, panicked, to my professional and social identity while tumbling through babyworld and hurtling between the incommensurate time zones of school and work. I have felt as if I am failing every single day since my son was born 11 years ago.

All this, despite the fact that I am well resourced and well supported. I didn't have fertility treatments, or miscarriages, or postnatal depression, or difficulties breastfeeding. And this was all before the pandemic.

I am also, I hasten to add, a very happy mother. My children have lit up my life. I miss them pathetically when they go for a sleepover. But the good bits, though plentiful, don't need affirming. The idealisation of motherhood is everywhere in our culture – from the gaga coverage of baby royals to the subtly reactionary ideology of contemporary TV: even the lesbian workaholic protagonist of the [French comedy Call My Agent](#) renounces her high-powered career to become a stay-at-home mum in the end.

Motherhood is one of our modern, enlightened society's awkward little secrets. Here we are with more than 100 years of feminism under our belts, including 50 years of [second-wave feminism](#), during which many consciousness-raising hours were spent unpicking domestic enslavement. Yet mothers are still underpaid, overworked, exploited, overlooked, frazzled, isolated and perpetually guilty.



‘Expectations on mothers have been ramped up.’

Photograph: Cavan Images/Getty Images/Cavan Images RF

If anything, feminism’s longevity compounds the problem: the dial hasn’t shifted, but we want to move on. Calls for affordable childcare or [flexible working](#) are met with stifled yawns. The political energy has been sapped before meaningful change has occurred. I read articles about the rise of the hands-on dad. Yet when I go to a PTA coffee morning or a school curriculum meeting, mums outnumber dads by 20 to one.

In the UK, [half of all mothers develop a mental health problem](#) before or after birth, [according to the National Childbirth Trust \(NCT\)](#). And 10% to 15% experience postnatal depression; many researchers believe the prevalence is even higher. Around 30% of domestic abuse [begins in pregnancy](#). Suicide is the [leading cause of death for mothers](#) during their baby’s first year. Research commissioned by the [Red Cross and the Co-op](#) in 2016 found that nearly half of mothers under 30 feel lonely often or all the time; 82% feel lonely some of the time. Fewer than [7% of couples, according to a 2019 study from University College London](#), split the domestic load – let alone the mental load – equally. Most mothers work part time, where pay is lower and prospects for [promotion are reduced by more than half](#). By the time a woman’s first child is 12, she is paid, on average,

33% less than a man, according to the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#). Becoming a father gives men's earnings a boost.

At a time when women are supposed to be more liberated than ever before, modern motherhood has become rigidly perfectionist

Some things have got worse. This statistical reality is concealed by the rhetoric of feminist progress, choice and empowerment. At a time when women are supposed to be more liberated than ever before, modern motherhood has become rigidly perfectionist. Support networks of extended families and tight-knit communities have fallen away, but expectations have been ramped up.

If mothers really did what NCT classes, the advice industry and the media recommend, they would have children in their 20s, not drink while trying to conceive, avoid alcohol, caffeine and a host of delicious foods when pregnant, and steer clear of DIY materials and cleaning products. They would choose a “natural” midwife-led birthing centre and eschew anaesthesia. They would breastfeed exclusively and on demand for at least six months. They would not sleep-train their baby. They would not work – or only very part time – during the first three years.

And they would pay full attention at all times while looking after their children, playing with them assiduously and enthusiastically. They would never lose their temper nor put them on a time out. And they would praise them for good behaviour, loudly and continuously.

This is not a realistic way to live.



Rhetoric of empowerment ... a woman in labour in a hospital ward.  
Photograph: RyanJLane/Getty Images

Any complaints from mothers about such standards are liable to be read as criticism of their children, evidence of bad motherhood, or signs of unthinking privilege – hence the ubiquitous retort: “So you think you’re the first person to have a baby?” Motherhood has become a curiously politics-free zone: [there’s no sign of a mothers’ #MeToo](#).

In a social media-scrutinised, global-competitive world, every aspect of children’s lives must be optimised. Domestic life has become Instagram-filtered, privatised, and atomised. The sunny agora of the mum messageboard thread offers solidarity, but also passive-aggressive disapproval. Mothers today can find themselves cooking three separate dinners, while their own mothers would probably have briskly ignored the complaints of fussy eaters.

Then there is the myth that our historic counterparts were selflessly devoted to their offspring – and that things only changed when women entered employment or further education. Think of the tut-tutting about the shift from home cooking to ready meals.



Of course, historical records reveal this morality tale to be false. Before the 20th century, children were sent out to wet-nurses, parked in prams in the street, watched by older children or neighbours, or put to work. [Mothers in a number of western countries today spend more time](#) looking after their kids than they did 50 years ago.



‘Children were once parked in prams in the street, watched by older children or neighbours.’ Photograph: Getty Images

Children were also taken to work – on the backs of agricultural workers, or placed in a basket hung from a nail in factories. Working from home was commonplace for women and men. Yet combining family with a job is now a daily struggle for every mother I know. And public attitudes are, if anything, more punitive and sexist: in the extensive media coverage of recent novels exploring uneasy relationships between working mothers and their nannies, there is a howling silence about the fathers.

From the early 20th century, feminists have championed the right to avoid having children, yet somehow advances in fertility technology have only reinforced the assumption that motherhood is an essential part of being a woman. [And as couples worldwide are having fewer children](#), each child becomes freighted with concern. The biological clock can tick just as loudly for women who have been led to believe they can be whoever they want to

be. Meanwhile, their male peers seem less disposed than ever to settling down.

Parenting in the past was a more varied and often more relaxed affair. “Never hug and kiss them. Never let them sit in your lap,” advised the American behaviourist John Watson in his 1928 childcare guide. “If you haven’t a nurse and can’t leave the child, put it out in the backyard a large part of the day. Build a fence around the yard so that you are sure no harm can come to it.” If you must watch the child, “make yourself a peephole so that you can see it without being seen, or use a periscope”.



The Duchess of Cambridge gave birth to Prince George (standing on car) ‘without recourse to any powerful painkillers’, according to the Mail Online. Photograph: Tim Rooke/Rex/Shutterstock

I’m not suggesting we revive the periscope, but this approach does shed a forgiving light on today’s exacting standards and presumptions of maternal decrepitude. In her 1901 polemic *The Mind of a Child*, the teacher and suffragette Ennis Richmond cheerfully admitted that she could “only stand an hour or two of being on all fours, rumped and dragged at, and deafened”.

[The Book You Wish Your Parents Had Read by Philippa Perry review – how to raise your kids](#)



### [Read more](#)

In fact, it was not until later in the 20th century that popular parenting experts believed mothers should play with their children as both duty and instinctual pleasure; before then it was considered harmfully overstimulating. In a 1951 pamphlet, *The Emergence of Fun Morality*, the American psychologist Martha Wolfenstein objected to how government-issued childcare literature was mandating reluctant mothers to “make play an aspect of every activity”.

Losing your temper, to which no human being is immune, is universally frowned-upon. With a handful of exceptions ([Philippa Perry's The Book You Wish Your Parents Had Read](#) usefully decodes the button-pushing), modern parenting advice, reinforced by absolutist extrapolations from research on the infant brain, is dauntingly strict towards mothers. Even if you're at your wit's end, you must always, as the American psychologist and life coach Suzanne Gelb told her readers in her 2019 child-rearing manual *It Starts With You*, be your “best”.



Mothers who try to be good all the time ‘give up all pleasure, all personal life, enabling them to assume the role of victim,’ wrote Simone de Beauvoir in 1949. Photograph: Bettmann Archive

By contrast, earlier critics recognised maternal ambivalence in all good-enough mothers. In a remarkable 1949 [essay](#), the [paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott](#) explained that of course every mother “hates her infant from the word go”: after all, he “treats her as scum, an unpaid servant, a slave”; his love for her is “cupboard love”, so that “having got what he wants, he throws her away like orange peel”. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir pointed, in fact, to the dangers of self-sacrifice: mothers who try to be good all the time “give up all pleasure, all personal life, enabling them to assume the role of victim”, she wrote in 1949. Their “displays of resignation spur guilt feelings in the child” which are “more harmful than aggressive displays”.

Of course, there has been progress, too. Hospital birth in the early 20th century was no picnic, and modern parenting experts have increased children’s safety and wellbeing. Medical advances have revolutionised maternal and infant life chances.

But in too many areas, the clock has run backwards. Take the modern cult of natural motherhood. In the early 20th century, first-wave feminists lobbied for wider access to pain relief in childbirth, with official support. The “sufferings of women”, [noted](#) a 1940s government committee, are “a question of great national importance”. The writer and activist [Shulamith Firestone](#) was more blunt: pregnancy, she wrote in *The Dialectic of Sex* in 1970, was “barbaric”; childbirth was like “shitting a pumpkin”.



Natural high? A woman holds her baby after a water birth. Photograph: Rafael Ben-Ari/Alamy

[Why does writing about motherhood provoke so much rage?](#)

[Read more](#)

Yet over the past decade, epidural use has fallen in the UK – by 70,000, according to an NHS report. While this may be a good choice for some women, a pain relief-free birth is now being held up as a badge of honour. “11 hours’ labour and all natural!” crowed the Mail Online after the birth of “gorgeous George”: the Duchess of Cambridge gave birth “without recourse to any powerful painkillers”. When Katie Goodland, fiancée of footballer Harry Kane, used the hypnobirthing technique during her labour in 2018, Kane tweeted that he was: “So proud” of her “for having the most amazing water birth with no pain relief at all”. This time there was at least some pushback. Kane insisted in response that “any women can give birth however they would like”.

It is certainly interesting that in an era when technology-driven convenience is privileged in every other realm, natural birth and natural motherhood – an intensive style of parenting which involves extended breastfeeding, co-sleeping, washable nappies and organic homemade purees – are on the rise. Naturally, they have become huge industries, too – with a proliferation of

hypnobirthing classes and self-care products; you can even [purchase](#) bamboo baby-led weaning bowls.

Natural motherhood is exclusively presented as woman-centred. Midwives are portrayed as helping women achieve the drug-free births everyone is assumed to want

The parenting culture wars – natural v medicalised birth, breast v bottle, full-time work or stay at home, attachment parenting or leaving babies to “cry it out” – provide an impression of even-handed debate. In reality, women’s choices are covertly weighted by the fact that only the natural side is considered virtuous and valid.

In a maddening inversion, natural motherhood is exclusively presented as woman-centred. Midwives, for example, are portrayed as helping women achieve the drug-free births everyone is assumed to want. But being [cajoled and ignored when demanding anaesthesia](#) – and being guilt-tripped into parenting in a way that is not compatible with work outside the home – is not what I call feminism. Natural motherhood is often neither natural nor woman-centred; it implies that the life of every mother – but not father – should revolve around the child.



A Bolivian Indian mother carries her baby in a papoose. Photograph: Getty Images

I am for the child, but I am for the mother, too. In the febrile public debate, their interests are opposed in a zero-sum game. But mother and child are not rivals: it is in each of their interests that the other is well and content.

The Thalidomide scandal shocked many into questioning medical provisions for mothers. Yet the pendulum has now swung too far the other way. As a result of paternalistic warnings about medication in pregnancy, women are ceasing to take remedies for conditions as serious as [bipolar disorder](#) and [epilepsy](#), even when the risk to them is overwhelming. Intolerance of everyday imperfection is resulting in exhausted and bitter mums, sidelined and resentful dads, and children who are risk-averse and unable to tolerate disappointments.

[Mothers are trying too hard, and society is not trying nearly hard enough.](#) Yet the good news is that the conditions of contemporary motherhood are so retrograde that big improvements are well within reach: proper care before, during and after birth; a rethink of work for both women and men, and the transformation of society's incessant chastising of mothers into due value and respect.

Motherhood is feminism's unfinished business.

Buy a copy of *Motherhood: A Manifesto* by Eliane Glaser (£16.99, HarperCollins) for £14.78 at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com)

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/may/18/parent-trap-why-the-cult-of-the-perfect-mother-has-to-end>

## [TV comedy](#)

### Interview

# **‘I can’t believe someone’s written this’: the Muslim punk sitcom breaking new ground**

[Coco Khan](#)



A band apart ... (clockwise from bottom left) Sarah Kameela Impey, Anjana Vasan, Juliette Motamed, Faith Omole, Lucie Shorthouse.

A band apart ... (clockwise from bottom left) Sarah Kameela Impey, Anjana Vasan, Juliette Motamed, Faith Omole, Lucie Shorthouse.

Raucous comedy *We Are Lady Parts* follows an all-female group’s journey on to the toilet circuit. Its cast believe it’s time for new voices to be heard





[@cocobyname](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 04.00 EDT

It is loud when I enter the virtual room. Raucous laughter and excited chatter fill the air, and for a moment I feel like a teacher quieting an unruly class. It is a fitting start, given that I'm here to interview the cast of Channel 4's new musical comedy, a six-part series following the exploits of an anarchic all-female, all-Muslim punk band setting out to make some noise.

[The Guide: Staying In – sign up for our home entertainment tips](#)  
[Read more](#)

Beginning life as a “blap” (Channel 4's term for its roster of comedy shorts, where shows such as [GameFace](#) and [Stath Lets Flats](#) were born), *We Are Lady Parts* features several of the original blap actors, including Juliet Motamed as Ayesha, Lady Parts's swearsome drummer, and Anjana Vasan as shy and nerdy PhD student Amina Hussein. Amina is far more interested in finding a husband than developing her secret musical talents (some strict Muslims regard music as forbidden). But Saira sees something special in her, and when the auditions for a new guitarist at the halal butcher prove fruitless, she makes the desperate Amina an offer: join the band in exchange for a date with the suitor of her dreams.



The stakes are high: can an extra guitarist give Lady Parts the edge they need to get out of playing in their bedrooms (and occasionally the halal butcher) and break into the toilet circuit? And can Amina finally catch a break in her pursuit of love? What follows is an exuberant exploration of female self-expression and sisterhood, complete with slapstick dream sequences, surreal puppet outtakes and tongue-in-cheek earworms performed by the cast. (“I’m gonna kill my sister / She stole my eyeliner,” starts one track, before descending into the worryingly catchy chorus of: “It’s an honour killing / It’s an honour killing.”)

“I remember getting the email for the audition,” says actor Sarah Kameela Impey, who plays Lady Parts’s lead singer Saira. “I’d already seen the blap and thought: ‘Wow, I can’t believe someone’s written this; I can’t believe these characters can exist on screen, and I can’t believe I wasn’t seen for the part!’ I knew I had to do everything possible to be seen.”

Joining them on their journey are Faith Omole, as Earth-mother bassist Bisma, in a rare on-screen portrayal of Black family happiness (and an even rarer one as a Black British Muslim), and Lucie Shorthouse, as their veiled and vaping, foul-mouthed manager, Momtaz. The series is loosely based on screenwriter Nida Manzoor’s own life navigating the diverse creative collectives of London. Manzoor and her siblings wrote the show’s songs – a hobby of theirs since childhood – teaching them to the cast who, in true punk fashion, were learning their instruments as they went along.

The cast reckon that their rumbustious series is arriving at just the right moment. “The script felt like kismet,” says Omole, who prior to Lady Parts was largely working on stage, including Shakespeare at the Globe. “The [Black Lives Matter](#) movement was happening and I think a lot of people were thinking: ‘Now is the time for new voices to be heard.’”

Vasan, who viewers may recognise from the Riz Ahmed drama [Mogul Mowgli](#), agrees: “Sometimes you get character breakdowns on a script and the description will literally just be ‘Muslim’, as if that explains how you’re supposed to play the character. But here was a script that didn’t do that, and not just with one character but so many.”



Veiled threat ... (l-r) Lady Parts's Momtaz, Bisma, Amina, Ayesha and Saira. Photograph: Laura Radford

Interestingly, few of the cast actually identify as Muslim or have Muslim heritage. Were they nervous about taking on such roles? For Vasan, it was always a question of authenticity. "That starts with the script. I had such a strong connection to Amina's character, and when me and [Manzoor] spoke about her we ended up talking more about Amina's relationship to music than her faith. It was very matter-of-fact. Amina wears a headscarf because she's a Muslim. That's it. Then we move on to all the other aspects of her personality. This story was safe in [Manzoor's] hands."

"Obviously, as an actor you have to be respectful and sensitive to the material," agrees Shorthouse. She is perhaps best known for her performance as a hijabi character in the drag musical, [Everybody's Talking About Jamie](#). "But it excites me that there are these roles now, and I hope some day there will be more Muslim actors to play them."

We Are Lady Parts's writing is pleasingly knowing. By the end of the first few episodes, a litany of Muslim stereotypes have been poked fun at ("Well, don't blame me if you run away to Syria and marry a jihadi," says Amina's mum, casually). And the "meta" aspect of a show about women finding their voice, written by a woman from a marginalised community, is clear ("Some

people might find it offensive,” says Amina, about a Lady Parts song titled Voldermort Under My Headscarf. “Well, fuck people in the eye sockets!” Ayesha retorts, in a line I imagine is straight from Manzoor’s heart).

What is particularly striking is how refreshingly cheerful it all is. The series is reminiscent of the Canadian sitcom [Schitt’s Creek](#) and the joy it spread for showing a same-sex couple without the constant terror of homophobia. Will the series explore racism or Islamophobia at all? The cast are keen not to give away any spoilers.

“The show goes to some emotional places, without being heavy handed,” says Vasan, cagily. “Black and brown women just existing will be scrutinised, and that’s before making art. There’s some references to that in the show.”

“What’s really nice about the heavier, emotional moments is that they are everyday moments, and that’s their power,” says Motamed. “The everyday things that break your heart, leave you devastated or hang heavy on you. But you carry on because you’re a woman trying to make everyone happy.”

With its female focus, it is likely We Are Lady Parts will draw comparisons to comedy hits such as [Derry Girls](#) and [Chewing Gum](#) – but, with its surprisingly catchy and infectious tracks, I can’t help but think of [Krupt FM](#), the pirate radio station featured in BBC Three’s People Just Do Nothing. KruptFM went on to play many of the UK’s major music festivals as fans of the show rocked up to hear the music they fell in love with, played by the actors in character. Could the same thing happen for Lady Parts?

“I’d love to get artist passes to all the festivals as Lady Parts, and just walk around,” says Impey. “It’d be a mystery – are they real?”

“My dream is to hear a Lady Parts song in the background when I’m in the shopping centre,” says Omole.



Off the rails ... We Are Lady Parts. Photograph: Laura Radford/Channel 4

What about nightmares: do they have any fears around the show? “Well this is my first TV gig, so I’m terrified,” says Motamed. She was scouted for by the production team through the soulful electronica she creates as Azadi.mp3. “I pretended to play the drums at the audition. I couldn’t believe I landed it! But all of [the cast and crew] are so supportive of each other. We’re all so proud of this project.”

Here’s my fear: that We Are Lady Parts will be written off as another clunky and forgettable diversity initiative, where shallow representation is used to paper over the cracks of a shoddy show before anyone even watched it. Or that prejudice and our ongoing culture wars mean people simply won’t tune in to a show about Muslim women. All of this would be a crying shame. Because We Are Lady Parts does something that many diverse shows have not: it delivers on the potential of representation. In short, it actually is funny. And not in an “in-joke” way, but in the classic slapstick way of people falling over, and wry observations about the complexities of modern womanhood, as articulated in Bisma’s comic book, *Apocalypse Vag*.

“That was the biggest pressure, more than playing a rare Muslim role and what that means for people, it was just doing a good job with the material

and being funny,” says Vasan. “Because without funny, none of it will matter.”

Another “Yeah!” erupts from the cast. “I swear we don’t always talk in unison like this,” she laughs. But it sure is magic when they do.

*We Are Lady Parts begins Thursday, 10pm, Channel 4 with the full series available on All 4*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/may/18/we-are-lady-parts-muslim-punk-sitcom-channel-4>

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

## 2021.05.18 - Opinion

- Johnson's voter ID checks are not about electoral fraud, they're about power
- Covid experts warn against foreign holidays, so why is Boris Johnson so keen?
- I live in Sheikh Jarrah. For Palestinians, this is not a 'real estate dispute'
- Could you take down a grizzly bear with your bare hands? My husband believes he can

[Opinion](#)[Identity cards](#)

# Johnson's voter ID checks are not about electoral fraud, they're about power

[Simon Jenkins](#)



Britain's elections have a clean bill of health, and yet the government is wilfully hindering people's right to vote





Ballots are counted in Cardiff during the 2019 general election. Photograph: Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

Ballots are counted in Cardiff during the 2019 general election. Photograph: Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

Tue 18 May 2021 01.00 EDT

The government's voter identity scheme should be abandoned. It is unnecessary, inconvenient and a [disincentive to vote](#). More serious, voter cards for those without a current form of photo ID would be another step, however modest, towards the regulation and surveillance of daily life, an obsession of governments worldwide since the digital revolution.

A classic test of state liberalism is how soon after an emergency a regime chooses to dismantle any acquired emergency powers. Boris Johnson has gloried in his daily display of control, this week permitting Britons to hug, but "with caution". In his post-pandemic [Queen's speech](#) he announced that proof of ID would now be required by those wishing to exercise the right to vote. This, he says, will prevent election fraud. Voters without driving licences should apply to their local council with a photograph. Their details will presumably be registered. Those who do not register will be denied the vote.

The need for this innovation is trivial. Voting is a bond of public trust, the harmless giving of a validated name and address in exchange for a ballot paper. In Cabinet Office [research](#) in 2019, of 266 cases of electoral fraud investigated in 2018, just one in five (57) related to complaints made about the voting process and only eight cases nationwide related to identity impersonation. There have been just [three convictions](#) of personation at polling offices in the past seven years.

[More than 2m voters may lack photo ID required under new UK bill](#)  
[Read more](#)

In 2014, the Electoral Commission advised that there was no reason why photo ID in some form should not be used at polling stations as [92.5%](#) of people had one. That left 7.5% adrift. Pilot studies in other countries into the introduction of voter ID, the most thorough from Canada, showed that between 5% and 10% of some groups – recent immigrants, ethnic minorities and young people – experienced increased difficulty. In Britain it is thought older people were also deterred.

An [London School of Economics review](#) of the assembled data in 2019 found itself baffled. Three and a half million mostly poorer voters have no access to photo ID, and would need to get it from a town hall. Few voters said they were worried about fraud, with far more concerned about low turnout. As for the issue of impersonation, said the LSE, it was so minimal as to render it “hard to justify this level of disenfranchisement”. The whole business is ridiculous.

The reality of identity cards lies elsewhere. In their forms they are beloved of bureaucracies. In Britain they are an occupational disease of ministerial office, reflecting a craving to regulate any human activity under a minister’s control. ID cards were introduced in the first world war, supposedly to trap German spies, and promptly abolished in 1919. They returned in 1939, and Whitehall refused to let them go. They were retained by Clement Attlee’s government after 1945 “because of the cold war”, but were hated by the public who were being asked to show them by police.

Johnson’s hero, Winston Churchill, campaigned in opposition to “set the people free” of ID cards, and he duly abolished them in 1952 amid bonfires

across the land. It then emerged that Whitehall had expanded the cards' National Information Register from just three categories of personal data to 39. I sense Johnson is eager to go down this path, in spite of his role model.

Since the turn of the present century, an ever-authoritarian Home Office has itched to restore the cards. Under Tony Blair, it claimed they would “combat terrorism”, while the NHS wanted a similar database to combat disease. Both would be secure against hacking, by criminals, blackmailers or insurance companies. Billions of pounds were blown on consultants.

By 2006, the ID lobby had won. The Blair government proposed a new digitised ID card tied to a [National Identity Register](#), this time covering a grotesque [50 categories](#) of personal data on every citizen. It included up to 10 fingerprints, facial and iris scans and lists of all past places of residence. The records would be totally secure, yet somehow shared with other government departments and local authorities. This techno-dazzled home secretaries such as David Blunkett and Charles Clarke. Gordon Brown even wanted retailers to be able to check shoppers against the database.

The 2006 card became so controversial it was eventually made voluntary, destroying its counter-terrorism role. As its launch costs soared to in excess of £12bn, it lost all contact with common sense or value for money. It was pointed out that driving licences and passports were a perfectly adequate proof of identity where one was really needed.

[Johnson the civil libertarian wants to have his voter ID card and eat it | Marina Hyde](#)  
[Read more](#)

What had become an obsessional Whitehall data trawl was repealed by David Cameron's government in 2011. As with Churchill, it was announced that information so far amassed on the data register would be destroyed. But as Edward Snowden later disclosed, such pledges are useless from ministers who feel “national security” licenses mendacity. In 2013, a database belonging to the NHS also collapsed under a blizzard of National Audit Office criticism. Dodgy consultants were ripping off Whitehall left, right and centre. An estimated [£10bn](#) was lost by the NHS – as if it had money to

burn. Meanwhile, [regular leaks](#) of health records show that all digital data is now inherently insecure.

In his futuristic novel [The Circle](#), Dave Eggers envisaged a control-freak society in which everyone is a walking open ID card. A Big Brother national register knows where everyone is, their histories, lives, ailments, friends, misdemeanours, entitlements and disqualifications. The individual is a prisoner of his or her present and past, an existence shared with everyone. To disconnect and retreat into privacy is a crime, and mobs set out to find you. Anyone who thinks this just a fantasy should watch the film [The Social Dilemma](#) and former Google design ethicist Tristan Harris's devastating account of the power of digital algorithms over 3 billion human beings.

Cynics might shrug and tell us to get wise. The internet thrust us all into the electronic universe, as evolution once thrust us into the natural one. We expect the state to protect and sustain us. We can hardly object if the state wishes to know – and tell – all about us.

Yet the very absurdity of voter ID indicates the carelessness of its backers. I always feared individual freedoms would be most at risk from a government of journalists. It is a profession instinctively hostile to the privacy of the individual. That is why voter ID is not about voting. It is about the abuse of power. You may think the 50 shades of you that were listed in the 2011 National Identity Register are a [forgotten horror](#). Think again.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/18/boris-johnson-voter-id-checks-electoral-fraud-power-elections-vote>

## OpinionCoronavirus

# Covid experts warn against foreign holidays, so why is Boris Johnson so keen?

[Polly Toynbee](#)



As the delay on restricting arrivals from India suggests, the prime minister might have political reasons for his lax approach



Passengers disembark from a UK flight to Madeira in Portugal on Monday.  
Photograph: Tom Pilgrim/PA

Passengers disembark from a UK flight to Madeira in Portugal on Monday.  
Photograph: Tom Pilgrim/PA

Tue 18 May 2021 03.00 EDT

“Fly now pay later”, offers one finance company, which gives [loans for holidays](#), including those to Portugal and other green-listed countries. We may all end up paying later for those flying off to sun, sea and Covid. One travel company, Tui, alone has [19 flights](#) to Portugal next week, eight of them now using Dreamliners, which have space for up to 345 people.

Prof Martin McKee, of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, says he finds the new travel rules bizarre. “Why Portugal? It might be OK if people only met Portuguese- and British-vaccinated people – but they’ll mix with others from France, Italy and Spain, mixing at airports, waiting in queues.” Oxford University professor John Bell, of the government’s vaccine task force, is optimistic that the vaccines will protect against the variant first detected in India, but still strongly [warns against](#) foreign holidays this summer, for fear of importing fresh mutant strains. With [about half](#) of the UK population unvaccinated, a wait of several weeks after getting jabbed before vaccines are as effective as possible, and with



some still vulnerable after vaccination, risk abounds. [In the past week](#), infections and deaths rose: watch ministers now blaming any resurgence on vaccine refusers, nudging blame on to [poor people and ethnic minorities](#).

How much like deja vu this feels, how like last summer. The dash to places like Greece brought back [more than half of imported Covid cases](#), according to a Public Health England paper; McKee also notes that it accelerated infections in Greece. This was when the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, was subsidising the country to eat meals sitting indoors, breathing on each other, but not for a takeaway sandwich with a friend on a park bench. “Paying people to sit inside, studies show, did harm,” says Prof Susan Michie, a participant in the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) through the behavioural science group.

Here we go again, opening up foreign travel and pubs, restaurants and entertainment venues indoors, despite the health secretary, Matt Hancock, [warning](#) that this new variant transmits faster and could spread “like wildfire” among the unvaccinated. Ministers ignore their own preconditions for easing up, the [fourth of which](#) requires that our “assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new variants of concern”. But that test has surely been failed, with the risk fundamentally changed as new variant hotspots multiply. University of Warwick models [indicate](#) that if it is 40% more transmissible, that would mean 6,000 hospitalisations a day – above the second wave’s peak.

The prime minister, an [admirer of the mayor from Jaws](#), is a stranger to the precautionary principle. He now shifts responsibility from state to individual: “I urge everyone to be cautious and take responsibility when enjoying new freedoms today.” But who can be responsible for other breathers in a restaurant or cinema?

Note the mood change in the air. Blame for his cavalier failure to shut borders as Covid rampaged through India is pouring out of his own Tory press, the [Telegraph](#) and [Sunday Times](#) hammering him for letting in 20,000 potentially infected travellers from India for three weeks after Pakistan and Bangladesh flights were stopped. From everywhere comes the damaging charge that Johnson delayed because he put (over-hyped) [hopes of a trade](#)



[deal](#) with India ahead of life and death of his people, only cancelling his India trip a day before he was due to fly.

The India scandal flashes red political alarms, because Johnson owes his place in No 10 to that dog-whistle Brexit pledge to “take back control of our borders”. He slams the door to EU builders, carers and farm workers but leaves the border wide open to places running hot with Covid.

The mystery is why holidays abroad are given such priority. Though the risk is hard to quantify, leading experts warn against travel. Yvette Cooper, the chair of the home affairs select committee, which first [warned of border-closure failures](#), tells me: “No department is responsible for border decisions, with no transparency on how the Joint Biosecurity Centre decides where people can travel.” She urges rules to make hauliers take lateral flow tests on the ferry or Eurotunnel.

[The UK needs a robust border policy, but right now we can't see if it is working](#)  
[Read more](#)

But here's Cooper's most telling question (after revelations in David Cameron's “love DC” lobbying texts to chums): “Who exactly has Boris Johnson's ear on this? Who's texting him?” What commercial interests in reckless foreign travel hold sway? That's the right question, after yet another contracts-for-chums revelation where Hancock [helped a former minister](#) secure a £180m PPE deal and Lord Udney-Lister sat on a board that granted a massive state loan to a company that he [hadn't fully disclosed his links to](#). Who knows what secret influencers stop Johnson putting life and death before commerce?

For a prime minister greedy for popularity, he oddly ignores public opinion on the borders: the public puts safety well above foreign holidays. [Ipsos Mori finds](#) 79% of Britons are alarmed at Covid-19 variants coming into the UK, with 67% wanting to stop variants spreading by barring arrivals to the UK from any foreign country. As many as 42% support introducing another national lockdown if needed. Johnson would pay a high political price for a third wave.

Most senior Covid experts are perplexed by the government encouraging foreign travel, beyond a few special family and work cases. The UK is beautiful – I went to Berwick-on-Tweed and Northern Ireland last summer – and I feel no need to fly away now. Labour should take the lead on this, urging citizens to holiday here. That's a backing-Britain triple win, with less Covid risk, more help for struggling UK hospitality and fewer climate-killing flights.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/18/covid-experts-warn-against-foreign-holidays-so-why-is-boris-johnson-so-keen>

## Opinion[Palestinian territories](#)

# I live in Sheikh Jarrah. For Palestinians, this is not a ‘real estate dispute’

[Lucy Garbett](#)

The threat to our neighbours’ homes is the latest chapter in a long campaign to erase the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem



Israeli border police in Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem, on 12 May. Several Palestinian families in the area face imminent eviction. Photograph: Maya Alleruzzo/AP

Israeli border police in Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem, on 12 May. Several Palestinian families in the area face imminent eviction. Photograph: Maya Alleruzzo/AP

Mon 17 May 2021 08.51 EDT

[Sheikh Jarrah](#) today smells of dirty socks and rotting flesh. Israeli police vehicles, known as “skunk trucks”, have been spraying Palestinian homes,

shops, restaurants, public spaces and cultural institutions with putrid water at high pressure. The water causes vomiting, stomach pain and skin irritation, and was originally developed by an Israeli company to [repel protesters](#). The stench lasts for days on clothes, skin and homes, leading Palestinians to joke that Jerusalem all smells like shit. Protesters are also targeted in other ways. They are brutally beaten, arrested by the police, some on mounted horses, attacked by settlers and sprayed with rubber bullets.

These forms of collective punishment aim to stop the growing movement to save Sheikh Jarrah and halt the dispossession of 27 Palestinian families of their homes there. My family has lived in Jerusalem for several generations since they fled the Armenian genocide in 1915. In 1948, during the Nakba, they were expelled from their home in West Jerusalem and found refuge in the city's eastern part. Now we live in Sheikh Jarrah and my neighbours are about to be expelled from their homes.

Every day for the past month, Palestinians from all walks of life have gathered in the neighbourhood to share iftar, the breaking of Ramadan fast, outside homes that are under threat: laughing and sharing jokes, together despite the gravity of the situation. Chants and singing start after prayers, only to be met by settlers' taunts and police repression.

Now the neighbourhood has been transformed into a military zone. Checkpoints at every turn allow residents only into the area, blocking us off from the world. We must endure this harassment from settlers and police alike for simply living in our homes.

While Sheikh Jarrah makes the headlines, this type of harassment and settler violence is not new. Last September, on the day my grandmother passed away, my car was graffitied with "Arabs are shit". Just two weeks ago, to celebrate Orthodox Easter, I tried to attend the annual parade held by the Syriac and Armenian communities I am part of. Along with other Palestinians, I was assaulted by police officers and prevented from entering the Old City. A few weeks later, worshippers were brutally assaulted as they prayed in al-Aqsa mosque. As Palestinians, we feel every expression of our identity is being erased and marginalised.

Israel's discriminatory policies in Jerusalem, including planned displacement, is constant. We are [discussed](#) as a "demographic timebomb" by Israeli planners and officials. In this city, the idea of a "demographic balance" between Arabs and Jews underpins municipal planning and state actions. Since the [illegal occupation](#) of East Jerusalem in 1967, Israeli policy has focused on keeping a 70:30 ratio of Jews to Arabs in the city – later [adjusted](#) to a 60:40 ratio when authorities said this was "not attainable". This is done in myriad ways, including settlement construction wedging in Palestinian neighbourhoods, home demolitions and revocation of residency rights.

Since 1967, an estimated [14,500 Palestinians](#) have been [stripped](#) of their residency status. In order to obtain ID cards, Palestinian Jerusalemites have to constantly prove that Jerusalem continues to be their "centre of life", through proof of rental agreements and bills in their name. This comes with a surprise home visit, to check you really do live in the house, and has included looking to see if toothbrushes have been used in the bathroom. If Jerusalemites leave the country or reside in the West Bank, their residency status is revoked, leaving them without official documents and unable to return home. Every five years I must present myself at the Israeli Ministry of Interior with proof of my residence in Jerusalem and provide transcripts of any course I have taken during my university studies in the UK. On each visit, we are subjected to humiliating and invasive questioning, and each time we worry they may take away our only way to remain.

There have been many attempts to portray the cases of dispossession in Jerusalem, and Sheikh Jarrah specifically, as isolated, individual incidents, painting them as "[real estate disputes](#)" that drag on for years in court. But for Palestinians, Sheikh Jarrah is simply a microcosm of life in Jerusalem. It symbolises the continuing ethnic cleansing of our land and homes. Palestinians are enduring erasure, marginalisation and displacement, and they are prevented from the basic right of returning to their original homes and properties.

A grocery store owner in Sheikh Jarrah recently told me: "Our entire lives have just been this ... oppression, oppression, oppression. They won't let us live." Now, Palestinians everywhere are taking to the streets and demanding their right to life, a life that is free and dignified in their homeland. Sheikh

Jarrah is the battle for Jerusalem. After a long experience with Israel's regime of dispossession, we know what is at stake: our very place in the city. And as bombs drop on Gaza and demonstrations erupt all over the country, Israeli mobs with police complicity march in the streets chanting "death to Arabs", attempting to lynch Arabs and destroy Palestinian shops and cars. Palestinians, no matter where we reside, are standing up together. Our only option is to live free, and for that to happen, Israel's impunity must end.

- Lucy Garbett is a researcher at the London School of Economics and Social Science based in Jerusalem

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/17/palestinians-sheikh-jarrah-jerusalem-city-identity>

## [Opinion](#)[Opinion polls](#)

# Could you take down a grizzly bear with your bare hands? My husband believes he can

[Emma Beddington](#)



A poll asking which animals people could beat in a fight has kept our household entertained. It's a shame we can't even outwit the clothes moths





Most people polled were realistic, but 7% of men said they could take down a grizzly bear. Photograph: Buddy Mays/Getty Images

Most people polled were realistic, but 7% of men said they could take down a grizzly bear. Photograph: Buddy Mays/Getty Images

Tue 18 May 2021 02.00 EDT

If you haven't spent the last few days arguing over the US YouGov poll reporting on which [animals people think they could beat in a fight](#), what have you been doing? It was the most fun we have had in months: admittedly, a bar so low it would challenge a limbo champion.

In case you were too busy reading Spinoza or something, most respondents were encouragingly realistic, but 7% of American men believe they could take a grizzly bear unarmed and 9% fancy their chances against an elephant. At the other end of the scale, 28% of American men and women did not believe they had the wherewithal to defeat a rat unarmed and 31% did not rate their chances against a house cat: I suspect [100% of vets would agree](#).

My best friend went off piste, saying she could beat a pig, which was not a poll option: "If I'm gonna fight an animal to the death, it had better be tasty." My spouse started reasonably for a man who once fought off a furious swan with a deckchair (by "fought off" I mean cautiously and

respectfully persuaded it to retreat), and threw in the towel after “medium dog”. He declined “eagle”, stating: “I do not know them,” as if one could only fight a species to which one has been formally introduced, and “kangaroo”, alleging, based on absolutely no marsupial encounters ever, that they were “nasty bastards”. However, as discussions continued, his assertions became bolder until, eventually, he claimed that he could perhaps beat a grizzly in the right circumstances; described, bafflingly, as “*mano a mano*, in Tesco”. This was despite having watched [Man v Bear](#), an idiotic television trial of strength in which the man never wins.

I suppose this is the can-do spirit someone in our household needs. But, given our failure to deal with clothes moths, outwit squirrels or evacuate a dozy wasp, I’m dubious. Nature will always get the upper hand somehow, and thank goodness for that.

Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/18/could-you-take-down-a-grizzly-bear-with-your-bare-hands-my-husband-believes-he-can>

## 2021.05.18 - Around the world

- [India Cyclone Tauktae brings 165km/h winds and heavy rain](#)
- [Disability 500 global firms put disability inclusion on boardroom agendas](#)
- [Global development Petra Diamonds pays £4.3m to Tanzanians 'abused' by its contractors](#)
- ['Cooling off' period China divorces drop 70% under new law but young may be avoiding marriage](#)
- [US Supreme court to hear abortion test case that could rip up precedent](#)

## India

# Cyclone Tauktae: Indian navy in search for 81 oil workers missing at sea

Air and sea rescue operation under way after barge carrying workers sinks following powerful storm



People stranded at sea by Cyclone Tauktae exit an Indian navy helicopter after they were rescued. Photograph: Francis Mascarenhas/Reuters

People stranded at sea by Cyclone Tauktae exit an Indian navy helicopter after they were rescued. Photograph: Francis Mascarenhas/Reuters

*Reuters in Ahmedabad*

Tue 18 May 2021 09.42 EDT

The Indian navy has mounted a massive air and sea rescue mission for 81 missing oil workers and crew whose barge sank in heavy seas after a powerful cyclone struck the west coast of the country.

About 180 of those onboard the barge were rescued from the water as it sank off Mumbai. Efforts had started to move crew stuck on a second barge that was driven aground by the storm, the navy said.

“There are waves of 20 to 25 feet, the winds are high and the visibility is low,” said a navy spokesman, Vivek Madhwal. “Ships and have aircraft have been deployed for the search and rescue mission.”

Cyclone Tauktae, the most powerful storm to batter the west coast in two decades, ripped out power pylons, trees and caused house collapses killing at least 19 people, authorities said.

The storm made landfall in Gujarat state on Monday, piling pressure on the authorities at a time when India is [grappling with a staggering rise in coronavirus cases and deaths](#), as well as a shortage of beds and oxygen in hospitals.

Gujarat’s chief minister, Vijay Rupani, said 160 state roads have been destroyed, 40,000 trees uprooted and several houses damaged.

Heavy rain and high winds continued to lash the state but authorities said they were making sure that medical supplies including oxygen were being delivered to hospitals.

“Our priority is to clear the roads, so there is no impact on oxygen movement,” said Gaurang Makwana, the top official of Bhavnagar district in Gujarat.

The navy said five ships backed by surveillance aircraft were scouring the site of the sinking of the barge P305 in the Mumbai High Field, where the country’s biggest offshore oil rigs are located.

On Monday, the crew sent an SOS that the ship had lost control as the cyclone roared past the Mumbai coastline. Naval ships were deployed to the area and on Tuesday, as it started sinking, many of the crew were rescued from the sea.

The oilfields are about 45 miles south-west of Mumbai and the barges were deployed by Afcons Infrastructure, a construction and engineering company

based in Mumbai engaged in contract work for Oil and Natural Gas Corp, the country's top exploration company.

0

Cyclone Tauktae: 150,000 people evacuated from India's west coast – video

ONGC said in a statement it was extending help to the navy and coastguard in the rescue effort.

Everyone has been rescued from another vessel, Gal Constructor, which had gone adrift with 137 people onboard, the navy said.

['Everybody is angry': Modi under fire over India's Covid second wave](#)  
[Read more](#)

More than 200,000 people were evacuated from their homes in Gujarat before Tauktae, packing gusts of up to 130 mph, made landfall.

No damage has been reported at refineries located in Gujarat and seaports that were expected to be in the storm's path.

At the Jamnagar refinery, the world's biggest oil refinery complex, which is owned by Reliance Industries, no damage was reported, said a company spokesperson.

Operations at the Mundra port, India's largest private port, have resumed, a port official said.

Tropical cyclones are less common in the Arabian Sea than on India's east coast and usually form later in the year. But experts say changing climate patterns have caused them to become more intense, rather than more frequent.

In May 2020, nearly 100 people died after Cyclone Amphan, the [most powerful storm to hit eastern India in more than a decade](#), ravaged the region and left millions without power.

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



## Disability.

# 500 global firms put disability inclusion on boardroom agendas

Valuable 500 network says companies will publish quarterly reports into representation



Valuable 500 founder Caroline Casey before a 1,000-mile trek across South America in 2017 to launch her campaign about disability in the workplace. Photograph: Isabel Infantes/PA Media

Valuable 500 founder Caroline Casey before a 1,000-mile trek across South America in 2017 to launch her campaign about disability in the workplace. Photograph: Isabel Infantes/PA Media

[Richard Partington](#)

[@RJPartington](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 02.00 EDT

Business leaders from 500 of the world's biggest companies have agreed to publish quarterly reports into disability representation, amid evidence of a lack of progress tackling diversity among multinational firms.

The [Valuable 500](#) global disability network said it had reached its target to get 500 major companies to put disability inclusion on their boardroom agenda, including companies such as Microsoft, Unilever, Google and Coca-Cola.

Launched at the annual Davos gathering of business leaders hosted by the [World Economic Forum in 2019](#), the organisation represents firms with annual revenue worth more than \$8tn (£5.7tn), and employing more than 19 million employees across 36 countries.

It said its members would be held accountable to raising disability representation through quarterly updates and reporting on their progress, aiming to tackle the "shocking state" of disability representation in business.

According to research published by the Valuable 500, there are no executives or senior managers who have disclosed a disability at any of the UK's biggest firms in the FTSE 100, while only 12% report on the total number of employees who are disclosed as disabled.

The findings show the average representation of people with disabilities among employees is only 3.2%, compared with the percentage of the wider population with a disability, which is 18%.

As few as five FTSE 100 companies have issued board-level statements about disability, while only 10 have set goals related to inclusion, and almost one in three fail to meet government website accessibility requirements.

However, Valuable 500 said there were hopes for the future, as 17 FTSE 100 firms had issued public commitments to advancing disability inclusion, while big UK businesses were among the members joining the organisation.

After securing 500 members, the organisation said 13 of the companies would undertake further work to improve disability inclusion by working with other firms in the network as part of the second phase of its campaign,

including the insurance firm Allianz, the BBC, Sony, Sky and the accounting firms EY and Deloitte.

Caroline Casey, the founder of the Valuable 500, said the “leadership silence” among business leaders on disability was being broken.

She said: “There is much further to go to achieve true inclusion in the workplace. However, I am confident that as we enter phase two of the campaign, the brilliant businesses on board will continue to have an important and global impact on driving forward disability inclusion worldwide.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/may/18/500-global-firms-put-disability-inclusion-on-boardroom-agendas>

## [Rights and freedom](#)[Global development](#)

# Petra Diamonds pays £4.3m to Tanzanians ‘abused’ by its contractors

Firm settles over allegations claimants were shot, stabbed and beaten by guards at mine that produced one of Queen’s favourite gems



Artisanal diamond miners in the Shinyanga region of Tanzania. Photograph: Raid-UK

Artisanal diamond miners in the Shinyanga region of Tanzania. Photograph: Raid-UK

Rights and freedom is supported by



# HUMANITY UNITED

[About this content](#)

[Kate Hodal](#)

[@katehodal](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 01.30 EDT

The British mining company Petra Diamonds has agreed to pay £4.3m in compensation to dozens of Tanzanians who allegedly suffered serious human rights abuses at a mine famed for producing a [flawless pink diamond for one of the Queen's favourite brooches](#).

The 71 Tanzanian claimants, represented in the London high court by the British law firm Leigh Day, alleged grave violations by the company, among them being shot, beaten, stabbed, assaulted, detained in cramped and filthy holding cells, and handcuffed to hospital beds.

The abuses were allegedly carried out by security personnel contracted by Petra's local subsidiary, Williamson Diamonds Ltd, which has a majority share of the mine, and by Tanzanian police who worked at and around the mine.

Ten of the claims were brought by family members of illegal diggers allegedly killed at the mine in Shinyanga, one of Tanzania's poorest regions.

An additional 25 claims are being investigated as part of the settlement, which could increase the total payout.

In a [statement](#), the London Stock Exchange-listed company, which says it is an “ethical diamond seller”, noted that it had appointed a new security contractor, closed the on-site lock-up where the UK corporate watchdog Rights and Accountability in Development (Raid) claimed to have found evidence that [local residents had been detained and beaten](#), and launched an independent grievance mechanism to resolve future complaints transparently and quickly. The company said it would also fund community projects and establish a medical support programme.

[Mine that produced Queen's diamond investigates claims of abuses by guards](#)

[Read more](#)

“Petra acknowledges that past incidents have taken place that regrettably resulted in the loss of life, injury and the mistreatment of illegal diggers,” the statement said. “The agreement reached with the claimants, combined with the other actions put in place, are aimed at providing redress and preventing the possibility of future incidents.” Petra had agreed the settlement on the basis of “[no admission of liability](#)”, it said.

George Joseph Bwisige, leader of a group seeking compensation for abuses at the mine, said: “I have been waiting a long time for Petra Diamonds to recognise what its operations did to me and fellow members of my community.”

[Anneke Van Woudenberg, executive director of Raid](#), said: “Petra Diamonds should allow effective independent monitoring of the security and human rights situation going forward. Without this, it will be hard to have faith that the company has truly changed its ways.”

## [China](#)

# China divorces drop 70% after controversial ‘cooling off’ law

Law requires couples to wait 30 days before formalising divorce – but some say it has made young people more likely to avoid marriage



China's marriage rate is declining. The number of divorces also plummeted at the start of this year. Photograph: Héctor Retamal/AFP/Getty Images

China's marriage rate is declining. The number of divorces also plummeted at the start of this year. Photograph: Héctor Retamal/AFP/Getty Images

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 05.18 EDT

The number of divorces in [China](#) dropped more than 70% in the first quarter of this year, after a controversial law forcing a “cooling-off period” for couples came into effect.



According to [data](#) published by the ministry of civil affairs, 296,000 divorces were registered during the first three months of 2021, down from 1.05m in the previous quarter, and 1.06m in the same time period the year before, according to [state media](#).

China's divorce rate had been rising steadily, and the simultaneously declining marriage rate has been linked to the low birthrates [driving China's demographic crisis](#). In response, the government has promoted traditional family values and marriage, and [discouraged divorce](#). The [cooling-off period](#) is part of a sweeping civil code that came into effect on 1 January, covering laws including marriage, adoption and property ownership.

[Chinese city launches domestic violence database for couples considering marriage](#)

[Read more](#)

The law requires couples who are mutually seeking a divorce to wait for 30 days before formalising it. If the couples don't show up for two appointments between 30 and 60 days after applying, their application is automatically cancelled. The cooling-off period [isn't supposed to apply to those divorces](#) involving domestic violence, but several cases of violence or murder have [raised questions about the reality of this in practice](#).

The announcement of the cooling-off period sparked anger at the time, especially among women, and drew suggestions from young people that they were now more likely to avoid marriage altogether.

The new data also drew criticism, with online commenters querying whether the rates were down because people changed their minds or because the process had been made so difficult, noting reported struggles to get divorce appointments before the time ran out. In February Chinese media [reported](#) fully booked appointment slots in Shenzhen, Shanghai and other cities, with some being sold by scalpers.

"If you try all means to obstruct it, of course it dropped. Anyway, there's no statistic on how much the pain has increased," said one person on Weibo.

“Marriage is not necessary for happiness, but divorce must be for happiness. This data can only show that 70% of people have lost the opportunity to pursue happiness,” said another.

Observers said more data was needed to draw further conclusions, noting [variable rates in different locations](#), and China’s economic rebound improving livelihoods and relationships.

“In recent years, both ‘flash marriage’ [also called blitz marriage] and ‘flash divorce’ have become fashionable,” said Lijia Zhang, a writer, journalist [and social commentator](#). “I am sure the recent introduction of the cooling-off period has played an important role [in reducing divorces].” Zhang said another factor could be a newly introduced measure to prevent couples from using a fake divorce to avoid limits on house purchases.

Chen Yaya, a gender researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, [told Sixth Tone](#) that now the cool-off period was in place, there needed to be focus on problems which could be solved. “For example, researching its effects on women, and how to eliminate the negative ones,” she said.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/18/china-divorces-drop-70-after-controversial-cooling-off-law>

## Abortion

# **‘Alarm bells are ringing’: activists brace for US abortion case that could rip up precedent**

Justices to rule on Mississippi ban on terminations after 15 weeks in most consequential case for reproductive rights in decades



Republican state lawmakers are keen to test the resolve of the new conservative majority on the supreme court to uphold the landmark Roe v Wade ruling. Photograph: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

Republican state lawmakers are keen to test the resolve of the new conservative majority on the supreme court to uphold the landmark Roe v Wade ruling. Photograph: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

[Jessica Glenza](#)

[@JessicaGlenza](#)

Tue 18 May 2021 04.00 EDT

US reproductive rights groups are bracing for the [most consequential abortion case](#) in decades, after the supreme court agreed to hear a case that flies in the face of precedent.

The case could dramatically alter decades of rulings on abortion rights and eventually lead to dramatic restrictions on abortion access.

[Abortion, gun control: conservatives steer pet cases towards supreme court with Barrett on bench](#)

[Read more](#)

In the case, Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization, Mississippi's last abortion clinic is challenging the constitutionality of [a ban on abortions later than the 15th week](#) of pregnancy.

[Since 1973](#), the landmark supreme court case Roe v Wade has provided US women the constitutional right to obtain an abortion until a fetus can live outside the womb, generally around [24 weeks](#).

The state is not asking the court to overrule Roe v Wade, or later cases that reaffirmed it. But many supporters of abortion rights are alarmed and many opponents of abortion are elated that the justices could undermine earlier abortion rulings.

If the court upholds Mississippi's law, it would be its first ratification of an abortion ban before 24 weeks. Such a ruling could lay the groundwork for allowing even more restrictions on abortion. That includes state bans on abortion once a fetal heartbeat is detected, as early as six weeks.

"It is incredibly concerning that the supreme court has taken a case that, based on its own precedents, it should have dismissed months ago," said Elizabeth Nash, principal policy associate with the Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive rights research organization.

"Make no mistake: the purpose of any abortion ban – including this 15-week ban in Mississippi – is to snowball into an outright ban on all abortion at any point in pregnancy and for any reason," Nash said.

The case will become the first to be heard by a conservative bench remade by Donald Trump, which includes the devout Catholic [supreme court justice Amy Coney Barrett](#).

“Alarm bells are ringing loudly about the threat to reproductive rights,” said Nancy Northup, CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, a legal group representing Mississippi’s last abortion clinic, Jackson Women’s Health Organization.

“The supreme court just agreed to review an abortion ban that unquestionably violates nearly 50 years of supreme court precedent and is a test case to overturn Roe v Wade,” Northup said.

Abortion is legal in all 50 states, even as advocates say increased restrictions currently make it unavailable to many women. Restrictions on reproductive rights disproportionately affect low-income and minority women.

If Roe were overturned, [more than 20 states](#) would ban abortion outright. Many states, including Mississippi, have enacted “trigger” laws to immediately outlaw abortion should the supreme court make such a decision.

If Mississippi’s law were to be upheld and Roe not entirely overturned, states may be able to make abortion illegal at 15 weeks. That would narrow the window in which women can seek abortions by more than two months. Roe set the legal standard of viability in 1973, and it has become a linchpin of abortion rights law in the US.

“Once viability is gone, all bets are off,” the law professor Mary Ziegler said on [Twitter](#). She said [anti-abortion activists](#) were “banking on”, much earlier limits, hoping the court will allow states to ban abortion after six or eight weeks. That is before many women know they are pregnant.

And there has never been a strong alternative to viability proposed by pro-choice forces. So if not viability, what? Abortion foes are banking on a six/eight weeks. But once viability is gone, all bets are off. /fin

— Mary Ziegler (@maryziegler) [May 17, 2021](#)

Even before the court took up the case, 2021 has become the [most hostile year](#) on record for reproductive rights in the US. The new makeup of the supreme court has prompted optimistic Republican lawmakers to pass more restrictions, hoping to send test cases to the court.

Since January, more than 500 abortion restrictions have been introduced across 46 states. Sixty-one restrictions and eight bans have been enacted across 13 states. In 2011, 42 restrictions and six bans were enacted.

Even as some Republican state politicians disagree with colleagues over severe abortion restrictions – some recently introduced bills would [charge women and doctors with murder](#) – such rhetoric remains a [cornerstone of Republican organizing and fundraising](#).

About [six in 10 Americans](#) believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases, according to the Pew Research Center, a remarkably steady level of support. However, the partisan divide over abortion rights has grown. In recent years, Democrats have grown more likely to believe abortion should remain legal and available.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/18/us-supreme-court-abortion-test-case-mississippi-precedent>

## Headlines monday 17 may 2021

- [Coronavirus England ban on indoor gatherings may need to be reimposed, warns expert](#)
- [Live UK Covid: Boris Johnson urges 'heavy dose of caution' as Britain lifts many more restrictions](#)
- [Scotland People urged to stay cautious as Covid restrictions are eased](#)
- [Explainer How the rules are changing today](#)



## Coronavirus

# England ban on indoor gatherings may need to be reimposed, warns expert

Sage member suggests latest Covid lockdown easing may be reversed if hospital admissions rise

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



People queue outside a mobile vaccine centre in Bolton on 16 May.  
Photograph: Phil Noble/Reuters

People queue outside a mobile vaccine centre in Bolton on 16 May.  
Photograph: Phil Noble/Reuters

[Matthew Weaver](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 03.56 EDT

A leading scientific adviser to the UK government has warned that [Monday's lockdown easing](#) in England may have to be reversed and also cautioned against meeting indoors.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, Sir Jeremy Farrar, director of the Wellcome Trust and a member of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) suggested the ban on indoor gatherings should have remained in place and might need to be reimposed.

He said: "I think it is reasonable to just be sensible about knowing where transmission is occurring – mostly indoors ... with lots of different people, different families different communities, and I would just restrict that at the moment, personally."

Asked if he would be meeting friends indoors, he said: "No, I won't be for the moment," and added: "Meeting outdoors is much less of a risk."

This echoes the preferences of fellow Sage members [Prof Sir Mark Walport](#) and Prof Catherine Noakes, who have urged the public to ["stay outside as much as you can"](#).

Farrar conceded that it was "reasonable" to lift restrictions now, but he said it was "the most difficult policy decision in the last 15 months".

And he warned the restrictions may have to be reintroduced, if hospital admissions increase in the coming weeks. He said: "We just have to get the information and be reassured that the vaccines have decoupled increased number of cases from people getting sick."

He added: "We don't know that yet and that's why I think a very careful lifting is reasonable, but we may have to reverse that, if there is escape from the vaccine."

Farrar said: "I think we will see an increase of cases and infections over the coming weeks, as some of the restrictions are lifted. The key question is whether we have decoupled increased transmission ... from the number of people that get ill and need to go to hospital. If we've decoupled them, then the country can cope with a marginal degree of increase in transmission."

## [Chart](#)

He also suggested travel restrictions may have to continue to stop passengers from the UK passing the coronavirus variant first detected in India on to other countries.

Farrar said: “Britain is very connected, and that’s also a concern not only for importation of new variants coming into the country, but also people travelling out of the country there is a risk that this variant B.1.617 could be transmitted from the UK ... I think travel should still be very cautious and only when absolutely essential.”

The business secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, defended the lifting of restrictions.

He said: “There is nothing in the evidence now that we’ve seen that suggests that the vaccine isn’t very effective against the Indian variant.”

However, speaking on Sky News, he said: “We can’t guarantee that everything will be fine. We’ll look at the data, and we’ll make judgments, according to the data that we see. So far so good. We’re reopening on 17 May as we said we should in the way that we said we would. And now we have to see what happens. I’m confident that we’ll be able to get to 21 June and open up normally but I can’t guarantee that now.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/17/england-ban-on-indoor-gatherings-may-need-to-be-reimposed-warns-expert>

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)  
[Coronavirus](#)

# Matt Hancock says 86 council areas have five or more cases of Indian variant – as it happened

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2021/may/17/uk-covid-live-boris-johnson-caution-britain-lifts-restrictions-coronavirus-latest-updates>

## Scotland

# Young Glaswegians urged to book Covid jabs following surge in cases

Ministers highlight infection rate in Moray and Glasgow as most of country moves down to level 2

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Nicola Sturgeon and the deputy first minister, John Swinney, both stressed that coronavirus still posed a threat. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

Nicola Sturgeon and the deputy first minister, John Swinney, both stressed that coronavirus still posed a threat. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

[Severin Carrell](#) *Scotland editor*

[@severincarrell](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 10.45 EDT

Health officials have urged thousands of Glaswegians in their 20s and 30s to book a Covid vaccination after a rapid surge in cases linked to the

coronavirus variant first identified in India.

Greater Glasgow and Clyde health board will invite every adult aged 18 to 39 in a large swathe of the southside of the city to book an appointment from next week after the rate of cases in the city rose to 100.3 per 100,000.

The areas affected covered the postcodes G41, G42, G5, G51, G52 and densely populated neighbourhoods of the Gorbals, Govanhill, Pollokshields and Strathbungo, as well as Maxwell Park and Battlefield.

The health board has recorded 635 new cases over the last seven days; the Scotland-wide infection rate stands at 34.8 per 100,000 people.

The initiative came after ministers warned people in Scotland to remain very cautious and vigilant about social contact and travel as Covid-19 restrictions were eased across much of the country.

Nearly all of mainland Scotland has moved down to level 2, while many islands are at level 1, the second lowest Scottish tier, allowing people to socialise indoors, visit pubs and hug loved ones for the first time in months.

Tighter restrictions remain in force in Moray and Glasgow after Covid-19 infection rates in both council areas climbed sharply in recent weeks. Both areas have been kept in level 3; Glasgow has experienced the toughest relative restrictions in Scotland continuously since September last year.

John Swinney, Scotland's deputy first minister, said the situation in Glasgow, where the health board plans to urgently accelerate second dose dates, highlighted how volatile the situation could be.

"I think there is obviously grounds for a lot of optimism and the relaxation of restrictions enables people to get on with more and more of their lives," he said on BBC Radio Scotland.

"But the situation that we face in Glasgow and in Moray illustrates just how fragile the progress that we are making is – so I suppose what I would say to members of the public is that we need to continue to tread carefully and cautiously and warily as we relax these restrictions."



That message was repeated in a tweet from [Nicola Sturgeon](#), the first minister. “This is a long-awaited moment but remember that the virus still poses a big threat, so please continue to be cautious and very careful,” she said.

Covid restrictions ease further today as many parts of Scotland move to level 2 (sadly not yet Glasgow City or Moray) and many islands to level 1. This is a long awaited moment but remember that the virus still poses a big threat, so please continue to be cautious & very careful.

— Nicola Sturgeon (@NicolaSturgeon) [May 17, 2021](#)

While Glasgow’s infection rate continues to climb, Moray appears to have stabilised. Cases there were at a seven-day average rate of 59.5 per 100,000, a slight rise from 58.4 after falling for four consecutive days.

The latest data also shows a steep rise in infections in East Renfrewshire, a largely prosperous council area adjoining Glasgow, to 86.9 per 100,000, with 83 positive cases there over the past seven days.

Swinney said the situation in Moray and other council areas was being very closely monitored but the regulations had to be applied consistently.

“The last thing we want to do is to have local authority areas going in and out of restrictions like a yo-yo. That’s the worst of all possible models for the business community and the wider community,” he said.

“Obviously we’re still facing quite an acute problem in Glasgow. We’ve got a great deal of testing infrastructure that’s been deployed.”

Under the lower tiers across much of Scotland, pubs can serve alcohol indoors until 10.30pm, with pre-booked slots; indoor events can resume with maximum audiences of 100; adult contact sports can restart outdoors; and universities and colleges will be able to return to a more blended model of learning.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/may/17/scots-urged-to-stay-cautious-as-covid-restrictions-are-eased>

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

## [Coronavirus](#)

# 17 May reopening: how Covid measures across Britain are changing

Coronavirus restrictions are set to be eased in England, Wales and most of Scotland from Monday

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Hospitality and entertainment venues across Britain will welcome customers back inside from Monday. Photograph: Kevin J Frost/Alamy

Hospitality and entertainment venues across Britain will welcome customers back inside from Monday. Photograph: Kevin J Frost/Alamy

[Clea Skopeliti](#)

Sun 16 May 2021 16.47 EDT

Coronavirus restrictions will be eased further on Monday in England, Wales and most of Scotland. [Northern Ireland](#) will review its measures on Thursday, with a view to lifting more restrictions on 24 May.

The next phase of relaxation comes [despite the spread of the coronavirus variant first detected in India](#), though Boris Johnson warned on Friday that the variant could make it “more difficult” to achieve the final step in England’s roadmap in June.

Here’s a look at the changes coming into force on Monday.

## **England**

The rules on gatherings are changing to allow bigger groups and indoor household mixing. The government is also reviewing its social distancing guidance to emphasise “personal responsibility rather than rules”.

- Groups of up to six people or two households can meet indoors and overnight visits are allowed.
- People can meet in groups of up to 30 outdoors.
- Up to 30 people can attend weddings, receptions wakes and other life events.
- The number of people who can attend a funeral is determined by how many people the venue can accommodate with social distancing.
- Care home residents can have up to five named visitors (two at a time), provided visitors test negative.

Restrictions on leisure, hospitality and entertainment are also being relaxed in a long-awaited development for pubs, restaurants and cinemas among others.



Customers get lucky with the weather outside a restaurant in Liverpool. From Monday, pubs, cafes and restaurants welcome customers back indoors  
Photograph: Jon Super/AP

- Pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants can serve customers indoors.
- Museums, galleries and cinemas can reopen, as can bowling alleys and arcades.
- Theatres, concert halls and sports stadiums can reopen.
- Organised adult sports, includes gym classes, can begin again.
- Steam rooms and saunas can reopen.
- All holiday accommodation, including hotels and B&Bs, can open.

The rules regarding international travel change on 17 May as the government scraps the legal restriction on going abroad.

Travellers no longer require a permitted reason to fly internationally, and people returning to [England](#) will need to follow restrictions outlined in the traffic light system, depending on which country they have come from.

## Wales

The rules are easing to allow hospitality venues to serve customers indoors, but restrictions on household mixing in private homes remain in place. Indoor socialising in homes remains limited to extended households, meaning two households can mix with each other (and no one else).



The Phillips family reunite in Cardiff during the May Day bank holiday. Six people from six households can meet outside from next week Photograph: Gareth Phillips/The Guardian

- Indoor hospitality can reopen, with venues allowed to seat six people from up to six households (not including children under 11) together at a table
- Six people from six households can meet outside
- All holiday accommodation can fully reopen
- Entertainment venues, such as cinemas, bingo halls, bowling alleys, indoor-play areas and theatres can begin welcoming back customers
- Indoor visitor attractions, including museums and galleries, can reopen



- Up to 30 people can attend indoor wedding receptions and wakes, while the cap is raised to 50 for organised outdoor events
- International travel can resume, in line with the traffic light system used by England and [Scotland](#) – but the government continues to advise against non-essential foreign travel.

## Scotland

Unlike England and [Wales](#), Scotland has continued to use a tiered system, meaning different levels of restrictions are imposed depending on local infection levels.

With the exceptions of Moray and Glasgow, which will remain in level three, mainland Scotland is moving to level two restrictions on 17 May. Most Scottish islands will be in level one.



While most of Scotland moves into level two on under its tiered system, Glasgow and Moray remains in level three Photograph: Andrew Milligan/PA

For most of Scotland in **level two**, restrictions will change to mean the following:



- Up to six people from no more than three households can meet indoors in a private home or hospitality venue. Children under 12 are not included in the number making up a group, but they are included in the number of households.
- Overnight visits are allowed
- Up to eight people from eight households can meet outdoors
- Hospitality venues can serve alcohol indoors until 10.30pm
- Entertainment venues such as cinemas, theatres and bingo halls may reopen
- Outdoor adult contact sport and indoor group exercise can restart
- Up to 50 people can attend weddings and funerals
- International travel to be allowed, in line with rules in England

Orkney, Shetland, Na h-Eileanan Siar, all islands in Highland (except Skye) and the Argyll and Bute islands of Coll, Colonsay, Erraid, Gometra, Iona, Islay, Jura, Mull, Oronsay, Tiree and Ulva will move to **level one**.

In level one, up to eight people from three households can meet in an indoor public place, while 12 from 12 households can meet outdoors. The limit for weddings and funerals rises to 100 attendees.

As Glasgow and Moray remain in **level three**, there is no change to restrictions in these areas.

## 2021.05.17 - Coronavirus

- ['Everybody is angry' Modi under fire over India's Covid second wave](#)
- [Business GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi report strong results in trials of Covid vaccine](#)
- [Tokyo Olympics More than 80% of Japanese oppose hosting Games – poll](#)
- [Lockdown scrutiny 'MPs must take back control of lawmaking,' says human rights barrister](#)

## India

# **‘Everybody is angry’: Modi under fire over India’s Covid second wave**

From an approval rating of 80% earlier in the year, now tough questions are being asked of PM’s leadership



Pyres burn at a crematorium in Delhi. Photograph: Arun Sankar/AFP/Getty Images

Pyres burn at a crematorium in Delhi. Photograph: Arun Sankar/AFP/Getty Images



[Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#) in Delhi

Mon 17 May 2021 00.00 EDT

The missing persons complaint was filed at Parliament Street police station in Delhi as a matter of some urgency: it concerned the “disappearance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi” and 10 of his cabinet ministers during the pandemic.

Nagesh Kariyappa, the general secretary of the Indian national students’ union who [filed the report](#) to police on Friday, said he wanted the absence of political leadership when India had been brought to its knees by Covid-19 to be a matter of official record. “Where are the so-called leaders who had promised to make India a global leader but have instead made people suffer like this?” said Kariyappa.

As a devastating second wave of coronavirus has [engulfed India in recent weeks](#), taking India’s tally of cases above 20m and the official death toll to more than a quarter of a million – a figure most experts consider to be a vast undercount – the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) government led by Modi has faced an unprecedented and visceral wave of public anger.

Modi came to power in 2014 on promises of growth and prosperity, and won another sweeping majority in 2019. He has deflected civil unrest, economic

decline and some backlash against his [Hindu nationalist agenda](#) to remain India's most popular prime minister in years, his approval rating hitting 80% earlier this year.

But with so many people losing loved ones due to a lack of hospital beds, oxygen, ventilators and vital medicines across the country, and with a chronically underfunded, under-resourced healthcare system pushed to the brink of collapse, tough questions are being asked for the first time about Modi's competence and leadership.

"Modi's image will depend on how the mass suffering is interpreted, and whether he can successfully deploy his skills at narrative shifting, but I think he will have to pay a price," said Ashutosh Varshney, director of the Centre for Contemporary South Asia at Brown University in the US.

"This is too immense a period of suffering and it will be too hard to convince people that this was just down to 'divine will' or individual failures to wear a mask etc."

In the city of Panchkula, in the BJP-ruled state of Haryana, Chetan Tikoo stood cremating his 75-year-old father who had died from Covid. Gesturing to the many burning pyres of other Covid victims at the crematorium, Tikoo said the consequences of the government's handling of the pandemic were "here for you to see".

"Everybody is angry," said Tikoo. "It is a collective failure. This is how I look at it. Whether it is the state government or the central government, everybody has failed. The planning was bad and the government should have definitely not held state elections."



Modi supporters at an election rally in Kolkata in March. Photograph: Bikas Das/AP

Outside Mankian village in Haryana, a village that previously voted for the BJP, anti-Modi sentiment is now so high that a sign was recently erected prohibiting any BJP politicians from entering the village.

Karamchand Singh, an autorickshaw driver from Ramgarh village who has been struggling to make ends meet during the pandemic, said he had voted for Modi in 2019 but had now lost all faith in him. “Look at the number of people who have died,” he said.

The prime minister stands accused of turning a blind eye to warning signs of the second wave, ignoring the advice of scientists and fuelling a culture of complacency at the top levels of government by allowing state elections, political rallies and religious festivals to go ahead and “victory” to be declared over the pandemic. The vaccination programme, meanwhile, has been crippled by severe shortages blamed on an earlier lack of orders from the government, and state governments have been pitted against each other for supplies.

“There is barely anyone in [India](#) that hasn’t been touched by this pandemic, and the level of anger and outrage that’s being directed towards Modi,



particularly from the urban middle classes where he traditionally has a strong base of support, is the highest it's been since he was elected prime minister," said Milan Vaishnav, director of the south Asia programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"It's palpable, you see it on social media, you see when talking to friends and family, you even see it in the fact that Modi has become the butt of jokes on WhatsApp."

This week anti-government posters appeared in neighbourhoods across Delhi emblazoned with the question "Modi, why did you send our children's vaccines abroad?". More than 20 people have been arrested for displaying the posters.

Modi's home state of Gujarat has been accused of some of the most egregious misreporting of the toll of the pandemic. Death certificate records gathered by the state newspaper suggest up to 17 times more deaths than official records show.

As the crisis has unfolded, Modi, who has built his reputation as a strongman politician who leads from the front, has become conspicuous by his absence from the public eye. It has led to accusations of abandonment and abdication of responsibility.





Narendra Modi leaving a function at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi in November. Photograph: Manish Swarup/AP

“Alongside vaccines, oxygen and medicines, the PM has also vanished,” tweeted the opposition leader Rahul Gandhi this week, while India’s Outlook magazine ran a cover this week with the words “Missing. Name: Government of India. Age: 7 years.”

The government’s decision to push ahead during the pandemic with the controversial [£2bn renovation of the parliament building](#) and surrounding Central Vista area in Delhi, a project that has been described as Modi’s “vanity project” and includes the construction of a palatial new residence for the prime minister, has also drawn criticism.

The BJP has begun a concerted campaign to try to seize back the initiative, pushing a strong narrative of “positivity” as the way forward. The government has instructed diplomats to counter the coverage in international media that Modi’s government is failing.

While the government was quick to centralise the credit for defeating the pandemic in February, it is now decentralising blame, shifting responsibility for the spread of the second wave on to state governments, in particular Delhi and Maharashtra.

The BJP vice-president, Bajjayant Panda, said that “by no stretch of imagination can it be stated that the prime minister or his cabinet had taken the virus lightly”. He maintained the government had been “fully aware” that a second wave might come about and accused states such as Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Punjab and Kerala – all ruled by opposition parties – of ignoring “multiple warnings” and turning down central government offers of help.

“Healthcare is a state subject under the constitution of India. However, whenever there has been oxygen shortage or a shortage of hospital beds anywhere in the country, the centre and its agencies have tried to rise to the occasion,” he said. “Had those warnings been heeded by the government of Maharashtra and the caseload been brought under control then there would

have been no chance for the emergence of the new variant that is roiling the state and the rest of the country now.”



A notice outside a vaccination centre in Delhi. Photograph: Mayank Makhija/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

While Modi’s well-cultivated image of competence and strength may have taken a battering, Vaishnav, like many political observers, remains sceptical that he will pay any long-term political price. The main opposition Congress party is riddled with disunity, has performed dismally at recent state elections, and its de facto leader remains Gandhi, who lost crushingly to Modi in the 2019 general election.

“At the national level, in terms of party organisation, in terms of messaging and in terms of leadership, we don’t have a single opposition, and that is a huge gift to Modi,” said Vaishnav.

Nonetheless many have pointed to the BJP’s recent [defeat in the West Bengal state elections](#) as an indicator that is at state level where dissatisfaction with Modi could play out damagingly for his party, and even pave the way for the possibility of an opposition alliance between powerful regional parties to challenge the BJP on a national level.

The state elections in Uttar Pradesh in March next year, where the BJP-controlled government is led by one of Modi's closest and most hardline allies, will be the first test of the political toll of the pandemic on Modi and the BJP.

“There will be some fall for Modi out of this,” said Varshney. “The big question that remains to be seen is, how big will the fall be?”

*Additional reporting by Tripti Nath*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/17/everybody-is-angry-modi-under-fire-over-indias-covid-second-wave>

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

## GlaxoSmithKline

# GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi report strong results in trials of Covid vaccine

News will offer some some relief for GSK chief Emma Walmsley, who has been under pressure from investor

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



GlaxoSmithKline vaccine was developed with the French company Sanofi.  
Photograph: Cezary Kowalski/SOPA Images/Rex/Shutterstock

GlaxoSmithKline vaccine was developed with the French company Sanofi.  
Photograph: Cezary Kowalski/SOPA Images/Rex/Shutterstock

[\*Kalyeena Makortoff\*](#)

[\*@kalyeena\*](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 05.21 EDT

GlaxoSmithKline is in the running to bring a new Covid-19 vaccine on to the market by the year end, thanks to positive results from early trials that will allow the formula to enter into late-stage studies within weeks.

The news will offer some relief for GSK as it plays catchup with rivals, and to its chief executive, Emma Walmsley, who has come under pressure since activist investor Elliott Management [took a sizeable stake](#) in the company in April.

The vaccine, created with its French partner, Sanofi, was originally expected to gain regulatory approval in the first half of 2021, but was [delayed in December](#) after it failed to produce a strong immune response in older people.

GSK said on Monday interim results from a phase 2 trial showed a “strong neutralising antibody response” in all adult age groups, and raised no safety concerns, clearing the way to move to phase 3.

“We believe that this vaccine candidate can make a significant contribution to the ongoing fight against Covid-19 and will move to phase 3 as soon as possible to meet our goal of making it available before the end of the year,” Roger Connor, the president of GSK’s vaccines arm, said.

The vaccine uses similar technology deployed in Sanofi’s seasonal flu vaccine, and will be used alongside a so-called adjuvant created by GSK, which will act as a booster to the jab.

The phase 3 trial is expected to start in the coming weeks and involve 35,000 adults from a wide range of countries. It will also assess the efficacy of two vaccine formulas against variants that first emerged in Wuhan (D614) and South Africa (B.1.351). The pharmaceuticals firm said it hoped to gain regulatory approval for the vaccine in the fourth quarter of the year.

“Our phase 2 data confirm the potential of this vaccine to play a role in addressing this ongoing global public health crisis, as we know multiple vaccines will be needed, especially as variants continue to emerge and the need for effective and booster vaccines, which can be stored at normal

temperatures, increases,” said Thomas Triomphe, the executive vice-president and head of Sanofi Pasteur, the company’s vaccine unit.

The UK had pre-ordered 60m doses of the GSK/Sanofi vaccine as of December.

Sign up to the daily Business Today email

The phase 3 trial announcement could give GSK more confidence to [push back against American hedge fund Elliott Management](#).

The activist investor, which is known for waging aggressive campaigns for change at companies including BHP and Premier Inn owner Whitbread, took a multibillion-pound stake in the company last month. However, Elliott’s intentions at GSK are still unclear.

GSK shares were down 0.3% on Monday at £13.66 each.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/may/17/glaxosmithkline-sanofi-trials-covid-vaccine>

## [Japan](#)

# Tokyo Olympics: more than 80% of Japanese oppose hosting Games – poll

Japan expanded a coronavirus state of emergency on Friday as the nation battles a fourth wave of Covid infections

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)

03:05

Could the Tokyo Olympics still be cancelled? – video explainer

*Agence France-Presse*

Sun 16 May 2021 23.04 EDT

More than 80% of Japanese people oppose hosting the Olympics this year, a poll published on Monday showed, with just under 10 weeks until the Tokyo Games.

The latest survey comes after Japan expanded a coronavirus state of emergency on Friday as the nation battles a fourth wave of virus infections.

The surge has put pressure on the country's healthcare system, with medical professionals repeatedly warning about shortages and burnout.

[Hospitals overwhelmed as Covid cases surge in Osaka](#)

[Read more](#)

The weekend [survey](#) by the Asahi Shimbun daily found 43% of respondents want the Games cancelled, and 40% want a further postponement.

Those figures are up from 35% who backed cancellation in a survey by the paper a month ago, and 34% who wanted a further delay.



Only 14% support holding the Games this summer as scheduled, down from 28%, according to the poll of 1,527 replies from 3,191 telephone calls.

If the Games do go ahead, 59% of respondents said they want no spectators, with 33% backing lower fan numbers and 3% a regular capacity Games.

For months, polling has found a majority in Japan oppose holding the Games this summer. A separate [poll](#) by Kyodo News published on Sunday showed 59.7% of respondents back cancellation, though further postponement was not listed as an option.

[Tokyo Olympics ‘moving fully ahead’ as protester disrupts press conference](#)  
[Read more](#)

Olympic organisers says tough anti-virus measures, including regular testing of athletes and a ban on overseas fans, will keep the Games safe. But the Kyodo poll found 87.7% of respondents worry that an influx of athletes and staff members from abroad may spread the virus.

Japan has seen a smaller virus outbreak than many countries, with fewer than 11,500 deaths so far. But the government has come under pressure for a comparatively slow vaccine rollout.

The Kyodo poll found 85% of respondents considered the rollout slow, with 71.5 percent unhappy with the government’s handling of the pandemic.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/17/tokyo-olympics-more-than-80-of-japanese-oppose-hosting-games-poll>

## [UK news](#)

# ‘MPs must take back control of lawmaking,’ says human rights barrister

Adam Wagner, an expert on Covid rules, believes ministers have assumed far too much say over our lives



MPs have not been given adequate chance to scrutinise the extreme restrictions placed on day-to-day life, says Adam Wagner. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

MPs have not been given adequate chance to scrutinise the extreme restrictions placed on day-to-day life, says Adam Wagner. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA



[Haroon Siddique](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 02.00 EDT

Lawmaking during the coronavirus pandemic has been anti-democratic, sidelining parliament and handing huge control over people's private lives to a small group of ministers without adequate scrutiny, a prominent human rights barrister has said.

Adam Wagner, described in the House of Lords as “perhaps the only person in the [country who can make sense of this variety of \[Covid\] regulations](#)”, urged MPs to “take back control” after a period in which laws have been passed “by the swish of a minister's pen”.

Although [the end of many restrictions is in sight](#), he worries that a dangerous precedent has been set. “The government has been allowed through a very small group of people – this is a tiny group of people who are creating these laws within government – to sort of have full control over our private lives,” he told the Guardian.

“It should have been a much more open and democratic process. When the government is appointed, they don't just get to create laws, the executive doesn't have carte blanche, it doesn't have the power to do whatever it wants – democracy doesn't work like that. When you have an executive having

power over every other institution, parliament, the courts, we don't call that democracy.”

While the myriad of rules and regulations have left many confused – a survey found nine out of 10 police officers thought they were unclear – Wagner has been a scrupulous chronicler on [social media](#) and in [op-eds](#) about what is law, what is guidance and regulation changes, which have occurred at an average rate of approximately one a week.

[End of England's hug 'ban' highlights confusion over law and guidance](#)  
[Read more](#)

His role as specialist adviser to the joint committee on human rights inquiry into the government's response to Covid-19 and work for clients including Reclaim the Streets, [the group behind the banned vigil for Sarah Everard](#), and people [including a severely disabled child](#) – affected by [hotel quarantine](#), has given him a front seat view of laws he describes as “made on the hoof”.

He says of “hotel detention” as he calls it, likening it to detention of prisoners or mental health patients: “That system is extraordinary ... it's the wild west ... here we have in this country a system of totally unscrutinised detention of ordinary people who have committed no crime, there's no reason apart from the fact they happen to be in a particular country at a particular time and they have to get back. I think some of the stories that will come out about what's happening in those places will really shock people.”

Hotel quarantine, like lockdown laws, which have [led to 85,000-plus fixed penalty notices](#), was introduced under secondary legislation whereby ministers can create legislation without prior parliamentary approval or meaningful parliamentary debate. “In the biggest emergency situations you can understand it but I think we've gone well outside that emergency justification,” said Wagner.

“We're in a position now where MPs have kind of sidelined themselves that they don't expect to see criminal laws in advance before coming into force, they don't want to debate these laws, to get into the detail and frankly that is their job. I think they've let us down.”

In some rare cases, such as with hotel quarantine, MPs have been allowed, usually 24 hours before it coming into force, a prior debate and vote on secondary legislation, but there is no opportunity to amend. The result, Wagner says, is “a sham debate, and a sham approval, because when you’ve got a big majority for the government, the prospect of MPs actually voting it down and risking being blamed for Covid variants entering the country is zero”.

When it comes to protests, Wagner said it would have been unthinkable a year ago that they would be banned as the Sarah Everard vigil was, with the effective support of ministers and courts, despite the right to protest being protected by the [Human Rights Act](#).

Referring to [the policing bill](#), which grants powers for Priti Patel to define what constitutes “serious disruption” by demonstrators, he said: “The home secretary should be kept as far away from the right to protest as possible.”

He says: “MPs have just got to take back control of lawmaking from ministers ... The idea that important changes to our law have to come in through primary legislation where MPs get proper debates, there can be votes on amendments, back and forth between the Lords and the Commons has just gone out of the window.”

The government referred the Guardian to comments by health minister Lord Bethell to the [House of Commons justice committee](#) last month. He said the government has been responding to a virus that “has changed at short notice, without giving us very much warning of its intention”, adding: “It is undoubtedly the case that when we have had the opportunity for meaningful debate and scrutiny, the scrutiny of parliamentarians has improved regulations, it has improved the accuracy and the thoughtfulness of them and wherever possible we have sought to do that.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/may/17/mps-must-take-back-control-of-lawmaking-says-human-rights-barrister>

## 2021.05.17 - Spotlight

- ['In my mind there was no way out' Mel B on domestic abuse, trauma and recovery](#)
- [Great British Farce if parkrun does not return but clubs and casinos do](#)
- ['My cheapo garden fairy lights do this too' Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirror Rooms](#)
- ['I am desperate to bring people in again' Small museums in England on reopening](#)
- [Back with a bang UK theatre bets on bold reopening](#)

## [Domestic violence](#)

Interview

# Mel B on domestic abuse, trauma and recovery: ‘In my mind there was no way out’

[Simon Hattenstone](#)



Mel B: ‘I just have to learn how to deal with it. You can’t erase those kind of traumas.’ Photograph: Harry Borden/Contour/Getty Images

Mel B: ‘I just have to learn how to deal with it. You can’t erase those kind of traumas.’ Photograph: Harry Borden/Contour/Getty Images

Four years after escaping her marriage, the former Spice Girl talks about confidence, family – and why the pandemic has led to a rise in abusive relationships





Mon 17 May 2021 01.00 EDT

Melanie Brown is in her tracksuit talking to me from her Leeds home. Her mother has popped round and is chomping away on an Easter egg she has just found, despite the fact that Brown has made her some “amazing” spicy curry soup for lunch. Her oldest daughter, Phoenix, is going to extreme measures to get her attention. Meanwhile, tiny yorkshire terrier Cookie has jumped into Brown’s arms, as her French bulldogs Yoshi and Yoda and golden doodle Luna wander around making mischief. It’s a picture of contented domestic chaos.

But it wasn’t always like this. Four years ago Brown, better known as Mel B or Scary Spice, was living in Los Angeles, married to the American film producer Stephen Belafonte and, she says, terrified for her life. [In her 2018 memoir \*Brutally Honest\*](#), she documented the horror of her day-to-day existence – alleging physical, sexual, verbal and financial abuse.

Over the previous decade her life had become an elaborate lie as she announced to the world she had never been happier than with Belafonte. And yet she was seen with bruises on her face and arms, and stories emerged about how the famously extroverted Brown had become withdrawn and remote.

I experienced the deceit first-hand. [The first time I interviewed her, in 2014](#), she presented her life as one long hedonistic, sex-tastic idyll. [When I talked to her in 2018 she apologised](#) and admitted it had been a pack of lies – the only way she knew to hide her shame and, more importantly, to survive. “It was my duty to lie because in my mind there was no way out,” she says today. “You’re living in a nightmare, and then tell the outside world that everything is fine because you’re so embarrassed, and riddled with guilt, and worried that nobody’s going to believe you.” There were times, Brown says, she thought Belafonte would kill her, and other times when she felt suicidal.

Back in 2018 she was still loud, funny and filthy, but there was also something fragile about her. She had only recently come out of the relationship, and the trauma was just beginning to hit her. Today she seems stronger.

For the past three years she has had little time for music or television, apart from [a Spice Girls reunion tour](#) and an appearance in the talent show *The Masked Singer*. When she has not been focusing on rebuilding herself and her relationship with her family, she has been campaigning against domestic violence. Brown works with [the charity Women’s Aid](#), telling her story about domestic abuse and encouraging others to tell theirs. She has just made a devastating four-minute film about domestic abuse, *Love Should Not Hurt*. It is wordless and accompanied by a gorgeous piano soundtrack composed by Fabio D’Andrea, who also directed the film. The juxtaposition of gently entrancing music and chilling imagery works brilliantly, as we see a successful, wealthy woman kicked, punched and spat on by her partner. At the same time the couple present an image of enraptured bliss to friends. The film ends with a sobering statistic from the World Health Organization: one in three women globally are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, or sexual violence from a non-partner.

For so long, Brown says, she believed she was alone – convinced that nobody would understand how she got into that situation. Then she met up with a group of abuse survivors at a refuge in Leeds. “There were around 20 women sitting cross-legged on the floor and we all told our story. I told mine, then one woman went: ‘Oh my God, I went through the same thing.

He took my car keys away on week three.’ We all had exactly the same story.”

Brown and Belafonte were together for 10 years. At first, she says, she really did believe he was wonderful. He told her that everything he did was because he loved her and he wanted to make life easier for her. She hadn’t heard of the term coercive control. “It starts with tiny things,” she says. Such as? ““Oh, don’t wear that dress – I’ve bought you this dress.”” Telling you what to wear is not so tiny, I say. “It wasn’t like: ‘Put this dress on!’ It was: ‘Look what I’ve bought for you! I saw you looking at it on Net-a-Porter.’ And you think: ‘Oh my God, that’s so sweet!’” when actually they’re starting to take over everything.”

Brown says he insisted she wore certain colours. “For the first year when I left my ex, I would only wear white because I felt I was clearing myself of that.” And there is another reason, she says: “I didn’t even know what colour I liked any more because those choices were taken away from me for so long. And I just accepted it.” She was so desperate to escape reminders of Belafonte that she had a tattoo saying “Stephen, till death do us part, you own my heart” cut out and had her vagina surgically scraped and new tissue put in.

She had no self-esteem left. “I felt so much self-hate. I’d lied to so many people. Then I felt very angry that I’d let that person get away with all that for 10 years.” She admits she ignored a warning from Belafonte’s previous partner that he had a history of domestic violence. “My then-husband said: ‘Oh, she’s crazy.’ And he was so convincing. I believed him over her. I was frightened to believe her.” In 2003, Belafonte did not contest a charge of beating his then partner, the model Nicole Contreras.

Brown was ashamed of what she had become. And that shame was heightened by her former sense of self. She wasn’t simply a Spice Girl – she was Scary Spice, who roared with confidence in her leopard-print outfits, showed her claws and told it as it was. Away from the stage, she was the strong, independent woman with three children from three men (22-year-old Phoenix’s father is Brown’s ex-husband, the dancer Jimmy Gulzar; 14-year-old Angel’s father is actor-comedian Eddie Murphy; and nine-year-old

Madison's father is Belafonte). She was fearless. Until Belafonte came along.

The strange thing is, she says, that before marrying Belafonte she knew so little about domestic abuse. Strange because she had grown up next to a refuge for battered women. Brown was raised in Leeds by her white, Yorkshire-born mother, Andrea, and her black father, Martin, who was from Saint Kitts and Nevis. Her family was huge, close and gregarious – her mother is one of seven children, and she grew up surrounded by aunts, uncles and cousins. It's only recently that she has started thinking about the refuge and the boy she briefly befriended there. "I'd never understood why Billy was there for only two weeks and when I went to play with him he was gone. It was a safe house. I knew there was somewhere women would flee to, but I never really understood it growing up. I never totally understood it till I was in my own situation."

After marrying Belafonte, she became more and more remote from her family. "He'd say: 'Why are you calling your mum today? Come on, let's go out.' Then you turn around and realise: 'Shit, I used to call my mum every day; I haven't spoken to her in a week!' Then that becomes a month and two months." It was only when she began speaking to abuse victims in Leeds that she realised how common coercive control is. "It's like abusers have all read the same handbook. Before you know it you don't have your own front door key, or you don't even drive your own car any more. Those 'privileges' which we worked so hard to get – your nice car, your nice house – are slowly taken away from you. Your power is taken away and the only person you have to rely on is your abuser." She doesn't once refer to Belafonte by name.

In 2017, hours before a trial relating to the alleged domestic violence was due to start in Los Angeles, Brown and Belafonte reached a private settlement. She had accused him of drugging her, hitting her, choking her and forcing her to make more than 20 sex tapes. He denied the allegations, and claimed she was addicted to cocaine and alcohol, impairing her ability to look after her children. Brown has admitted that at her nadir she would snort cocaine for breakfast. Before gaining joint custody of Madison, she had to undergo four months of drug and alcohol tests to prove she was clean.

Brown, 45, says she is still trying to work out why it took her so long to walk out on him. “I tried to leave seven times, so you can imagine how desperate I was in those 10 years. I didn’t have anywhere to go, I didn’t have my own credit card, I didn’t have a car, I’ve got three kids, I was very on the edge of self-destruction.” How close did she come to killing herself? “I self-medicated. I tried everything but trying to end it all, because that to me would mean he would win.” Most importantly, it would have left her daughters without a mother. “It seems like the simplest thing, get up and leave, but when you’ve got kids involved there’s other coercive control that comes on top of it, like: ‘I’m going to take your kids away, I’m going to tell everyone you’re a drug addict and alcoholic’ – which he did.”



Mel B with the Women’s Aid report on domestic abuse, at Downing Street in 2019. Photograph: Sonja Horsman

She adds: “The abuse was directed at me – it was never on my kids. But obviously my kids heard things and they saw things.”

In the end, she left when she heard her father was dying from cancer. She rushed from LA to Leeds to see him one last time. He hadn’t spoken for months and had been in a coma. She says he opened his eyes and told her he loved her; she told him she was finally leaving Belafonte.

Brown is particularly concerned about domestic abuse at the moment because of the pandemic. In March, Refuge, which runs the national domestic abuse helpline, reported [a 61% increase in calls and contacts logged over the previous year](#). In January, Women's Aid reported that some domestic abusers were using the lockdown rules to intensify or conceal violence, coercion and control.

"The pandemic has heightened everything," Brown says. "It's like an abuser's dream. They don't have to tell their partner: 'You're staying in because I told you.' They could just say: 'You're staying in because of lockdown. It's not just my rules now – it's the government's rules.' I'm four years out of an abusive relationship. If that was me four years ago in lockdown, I don't think I would have survived. My work was my salvation. Being on TV and doing what I loved was the one thing he couldn't touch, the one time he had no say on what I wore, how I did my hair, what I said." She pauses. "Nine times out of 10 I'd get home and have to deal with it then."

Brown does believe there is cause for optimism in the shape of the new Domestic Abuse Act, designed to protect those who experience domestic abuse and strengthen measures to tackle perpetrators. "It's not perfect, but it's a step in the right direction," Brown says. While it covers coercive control and economic abuse, which Brown regards as big victories, the act doesn't provide access to legal services for migrants.

I notice Brown looking away from the camera, and for the first time today there is that familiar roar of laughter. It's a welcome relief. "*Phoenix!*" She turns back to Zoom. "Phoenix is flashing me! This is *so* inappropriate." Phoenix tells her she's off to the park. "What park are you going to? Ah, don't *leave* me." But Phoenix is off. "She's 22," she says, as if she can't quite believe it. "My gosh!"

When she returned to Leeds, she says her mother assumed she would make a quick recovery now she was safe. But Brown knew it wouldn't be so simple. "My mother said: 'You're going to be fine now – you're back home.' And I thought, I know I'm not fine. I jump when somebody comes into the room, I wake up in night sweats still thinking I'm back in that bed in LA. There are so many things that have an after-effect that will probably go on for my

entire life. I just have to learn how to deal with it. You can't erase those kind of traumas." Does she still have nightmares? "Not so much now. It was nearly every night. Now it's maybe twice a month."

Brown had planned to return to LA after a couple of weeks. But to her surprise Phoenix and Angel wanted to stay in Leeds. (Madison has been in LA for the past six months.) To her even greater surprise, she moved back in with her mother for the first time since she was 16.

I ask whether she has learned to trust people again. To an extent, she says. "I have a very different life to the one I had in LA. In LA you're surrounded by people and you don't know what their intentions are. Here I'm surrounded by normal, northern, salt-of-the-earth family. So I was really fortunate to be able to just slip back into that. I lived at my mum's for a year. Bless her, she made me come and live there with my kids. She just wanted to help me build myself back up, remind myself who I was." Did it feel safe back home? She smiles. "It felt very safe."



With her mum, Andrea, at the launch of Brutally Honest in 2018. Photograph: Richard Young/REX/Shutterstock

But even here there were problems. She says when she came home she was so angry – at herself, and even at her mother. "I was like: 'Mum, you were



meant to know if I was in trouble – you were meant to have come and saved me.’ She said: ‘I didn’t realise it was that bad.’” Hold on, I say, but when you spoke to her you would tell her you were fine? “Well, sometimes I’d call her crying but didn’t have the words or courage to say what I needed to say.”

Part of the problem was that they couldn’t even discuss what had happened. “It took time before we could even talk about it without me crying or her crying or both of us crying. That’s why they have support groups for families, because it’s not just you who goes through abuse – it’s your family. So you all need to come together and forgive and heal. You all have to be there for each other.” Now she says there is no way she could have come this far without her mother.

Has she managed to regain trust in men? “For a good year and a half I couldn’t even bear for somebody to stand near me or be hugged. Apart from hugging my kids and my family, anything else would make me feel traumatised. I was like, well, if I don’t touch anybody and don’t let anybody come near me, I’ll be OK. You can’t live like that. But the trust issue is always going to be there.” She says she can’t imagine being with somebody unless she has known them a long time – which she certainly never felt in the past. “It takes someone who is going to understand and be compassionate and take everything super-super-slow.”

Is she in a relationship now? She nods. “I’m with someone who’s very kind. Very, very kind. And more than anything we’re really good friends from way back.” Is that someone in Leeds? “I’m not telling you!” she screams, old-school. “It’s *private*! Please, everything else is out in the open. Jesus!” And she bursts out laughing.

She calls out mid-sentence. “Mother!” The formality surprises me. “*Motheerrrrr!*” she shouts again. Does she always call her mother? “Yes! Mother, you’re eating chocolate. I thought you were going to eat healthy! My soup’s downstairs, Mother.” She ticks her off affectionately. Andrea comes into the camera’s view, waves and looks bashful about the Easter egg. And now we’re drowned out by barking dogs. “This big fluffy one is pregnant,” she says, pointing to Luna. She says she loves being back in Leeds, points to the window and tells me there are cows and sheep in the back garden.

She gives me a quick tour, pointing to a leopard-skin chest of drawers. “I’ve got my leopard-skin chest here, of course.” Perhaps you could pop out of it next time the [Spice Girls](#) tour? “Ha! I won’t fit in it. My boobs are too big to be able to fit in that. Hahahaha!”

It’s great to hear some of the batty, fun-loving Mel B of old. I ask if she has learned to like herself again. She thinks about it. “Yeah,” she says. “I genuinely do. It took me a long time to say that, but I think I’m really engaging, and I’m really nosy, which makes for a good listener. Yeah, I think I’m great.”

In the UK and Ireland, Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123 or by emailing [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie). In the US, the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) is 1-800-273-8255. In Australia, the crisis support service [Lifeline](#) is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at [befrienders.org](http://befrienders.org).

For domestic abuse information and support, contact Women’s Aid at [womensaid.org.uk](http://womensaid.org.uk)

---

This article was downloaded by calibre from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/may/17/mel-b-on-domestic-abuse-trauma-and-recovery-in-my-mind-there-was-no-way-out>

[Sportblog](#)[Athletics](#)

# Great British Farce if parkrun does not return but clubs and casinos do

[Sean Ingle](#)



Bureaucracy may prevent one of the nation's greatest public health initiatives from resuming after the end of lockdown



A parkrun in London's Bushy Park in 2014. Photograph: Neil Hall/Reuters

A parkrun in London's Bushy Park in 2014. Photograph: Neil Hall/Reuters

Mon 17 May 2021 03.00 EDT

Slowly, if a little unsteadily, the endgame out of lockdown approaches. From Monday England's pubs and casinos can swing open their doors. Next month, clubs can join them. All of which makes the uncertain fate of parkrun, one of Britain's greatest ever public health initiatives, even more extraordinary. It had planned to resume on 5 June. Instead it has become mired in a bureaucratic nightmare worthy of Kafka and faces indefinite postponement.

You might ask why, given that parkrun has spent six months working with Sport England, Public Health England and the DCMS on a framework to resume again. But those who must give their approval – local authorities and landowners – don't appear to be listening. So far less than a third of the 589 events have approval, far short of the magic figure of 80 or 90% needed.

[The remarkable story of Harry Edward: Britain's first black Olympian](#)  
[Read more](#)

“The reality is we’ve got three million registered partners in England and around 200,000 people take part in a normal week pre-Covid,” parkrun’s chief executive, Nick Pearson, says. “But at the moment, we’ve only got three permissions in London, where we have 57 events, and half a million registered parkrunners. It would be totally irresponsible to allow those three events to open.”

The MP David Davis says it will be a national embarrassment if parkrun doesn’t return this summer. I prefer a Great British Farce. Certainly it can’t be right when some local authorities claim it will take months for Safety Advisory Groups to approve parkrun. Or when others cite the need for isolation tents. One council even wants parkrun to provide the precise temperature that volunteer vests must be washed at to make them safe. It is dizzying, discombobulating, and wholly unnecessary. Especially given that the science overwhelmingly shows that the risk of transmission outdoors is tiny and – contrary to expectations – even lower at the start line than during the run.

What needs to be hammered into officials is the extraordinary benefit of parkrun, especially as we come out of lockdown. People often say that if exercise was a pill it would be the greatest drug ever invented. For the past 17 years parkrun has acted as a free dispensary.

Over the weekend I spoke to Jodie Binch, who set up the Brierley Forest parkrun on a former colliery site near Mansfield with her colleague Dave Herbert. Before lockdown they would get around 200-250 people each week. But the value to the community was far greater than that.

“There is a certain magic to parkrun that comes from the fact that it’s inclusive to everybody: young or old, fit or unfit, runner or walker,” she said. “And because it’s free, for people in socially deprived areas it’s a fantastic form of exercise and joining in the community. The elderly also like to volunteer with us. It gets them out every Saturday. They’ve got specific places on our course and everybody knows their names.”



Edward Porter, a 78-year-old who is a 48-race veteran, poses with Jodie Binch, the organiser of the Brierley Forest parkrun. Photograph: Jodie Binch

And it really is universal. The fastest parkrun ever, 13 mins 20 secs, was by the London 2012 Olympian Andy Baddeley. But the stragglers are just as celebrated when they finish around the hour mark. Indeed, parkrun actually takes great pride in the fact that the average finishing time has slowed from 22 minutes in 2005 to nearly 30 minutes now. It shows that its ethos of creating an environment that is inclusive and fun is working.

Alongside Binch sat Edward Porter, a 78-year-old whose struggles have included spending time in a homeless shelter. “It’s changed my whole life,” he said. “I started by volunteering. Now I have run it 48 times. It really is like a big family.”

All parkruns have stories like these. In recent years it has even started up in prisons. Michelle Glassup, who helps run parkrun at Feltham Young Offenders Institute, says the effect on the inmates’ mood is striking. “For that hour every Saturday they do not stop smiling,” she says. “It’s a fitness element, it’s a wellbeing element. But we also use it for our boys’ Duke of Edinburgh journey too. And I still get messages from those who continue using parkrun when they get out. They thrive off the routine and community every Saturday.”

And the stark and simple truth is that parkrun is needed more than ever. Last month Sport England released its latest Active Lives Survey, which showed that 12.3m adults did less than 30 minutes of exercise a week – even though its definition of exercise is loose enough to include brisk walking. It also found that 1.2m more people had become inactive during lockdown.

Meanwhile a new article in the [Journal of Sports Sciences](#), looking at the role of physical activity in ameliorating the mental health implications of Covid 19, notes that “data emerging in April 2020 indicated a deterioration in mental health among UK residents across all age groups ... [but] physical activity demonstrates a dose-response relationship with mental health status.”

Parkrun recognises this. A few years ago it created a partnership with the Royal College of GPs, which has led to 1600 GP practices around the country prescribing it to patients to boost their physical and mental health.

“We don’t want to be in conflict with anybody,” says Pearson. “We have done an enormous amount of work to make this process as easy as possible for councils to help us return. Parkrun is courteous and responsible. Now we just want to go back to helping communities across the country.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/may/17/great-british-farce-if-parkrun-does-not-return-but-clubs-and-casinos-do>



## Art

# ‘My cheapo garden fairy lights do this too’ – Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirror Rooms

### **Tate Modern, London**

The Japanese artist turns her visual hallucinations into a flaring and dimming clockwork universe. But I seem to be immune. Perhaps if I brought a small child or was interested in taking selfies ...



A short trip ... Yayoi Kusama's Filled with the Brilliance of Life, 2011/2017. Photograph: Eduardo Ortega/Yayoi Kusama. Courtesy Ota Fine Arts and Victoria Miro

A short trip ... Yayoi Kusama's Filled with the Brilliance of Life, 2011/2017. Photograph: Eduardo Ortega/Yayoi Kusama. Courtesy Ota Fine Arts and Victoria Miro

[Adrian Searle](#)

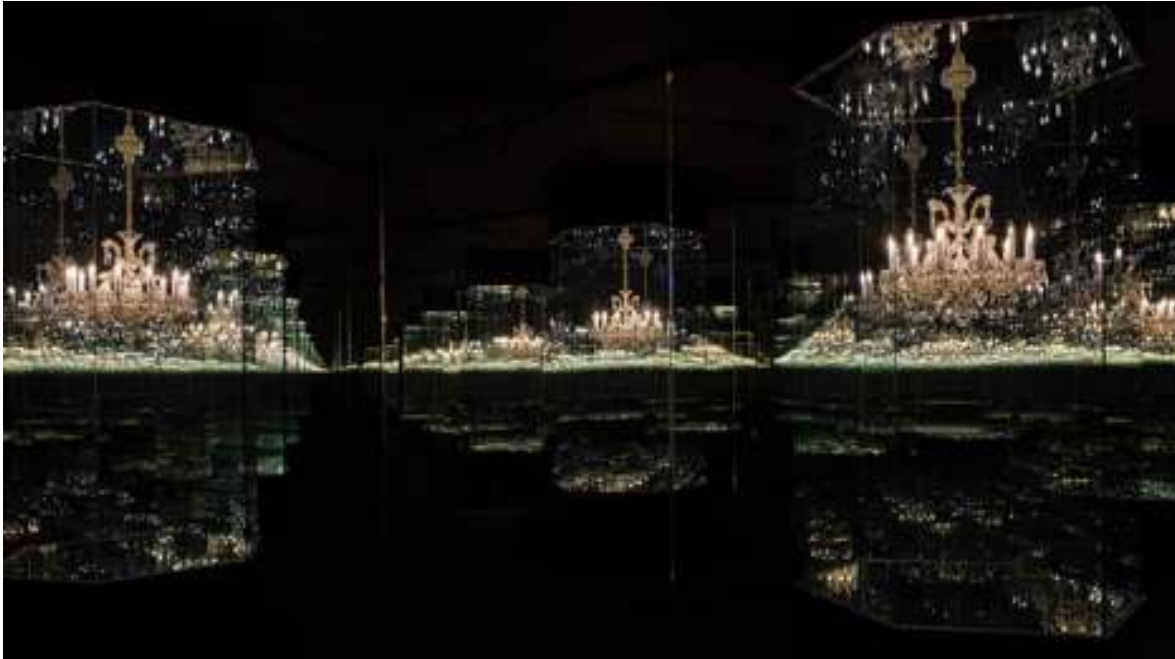
[@SearleAdrian](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 05.18 EDT

All done with lights and looking glasses, Yayoi Kusama's year-long display of Infinity Mirror Rooms is already booked-out until late October. Viewers must queue and wait, at £10 a head, for two, two-minute dives into Kusama's universe. Hardly enough time to get your bearings, let alone lose them, which seems to be the point of her disorientating halls of mirrors.

Tate Modern says it is being relatively generous about how long viewers may spend in the artist's installations: at some venues, visitors get only 30 seconds to adjust to her glimmering darkened spaces. Then you're out, matey, ready or not, wowed or otherwise. Time for a selfie though, if that's your thing. And for many, I fear, it is. Although such installations are perceptually complex and disorientating, their spectacular effects are all too readily assimilable to Instagram. This really is a bit absurd. Many people are hungry, I suppose, for some kind of transformative, mystical or even transcendental experience, and one that requires neither fasting nor drugs, let alone months or years of mental and physical preparation. Inner visions, like dreams, are no good as selfie opportunities. They're all in your head.

Kusama's art is driven by her inner experiences, reporting back on things only the mind can see. [Beset by visual hallucinations](#), Kusama has for almost the entirety of her long life been prey to proliferating and insistent visual disturbances. She has found ways to accommodate her fixations and subjective perceptions of unseen forces into her work, using it as source, material and energy.



Thrown rainbows ... Chandelier of Grief 2016/2018. Photograph: Yayoi Kusama. Courtesy Ota Fine Arts and Victoria Miro

Walking into her Chandelier of Grief, I never quite lose my sense of planes, edges and boundaries, the black carpet under my feet, the hexagonal chamber containing a slowly revolving crystal chandelier, its lights flaring and dimming, the crystals throwing fleeting little rainbows of colour here and there. The multiple mirrored reflections seemingly revolving alternately clockwise and anticlockwise, flattening out along the horizontal plane and simultaneously plunging below us and soaring ever upward over our heads. It is as if we were in a clockwork universe of endlessly proliferating, rotating gears, a [Keplerian](#) machine of cycles and epicycles which has no end, all of which sounds a great deal more engaging than I actually found it.

In her larger, the walk-through Infinity Mirrored Room – Filled with the Brilliance of Life, little hanging lights glow and dim as they cycle through their programmed sequence of colour changes. My cheapo garden fairy lights do that too, even when I don't want them to. As well as mirrors and a walkway, reflecting pools of water redouble the confusion. The mechanics of Kusama's looking-glass theatres snag me, but not in particularly interesting ways. The staging of her lights and mirrors remind me less of star-fields or pinging neurons and networks of firing synapses, as of airports or refineries at night, or of being E-ed up and bathing in a disco glow, or

being caught in a silent killing field of computer-game tracer fire and sci-fi force fields. None of which I plan to do any time soon. Beam me up and get me out of here before I faint from the excitement of it all.

Kusama's Infinity Mirror Rooms just don't do it for me. I appear to be immune to them. Maybe I'd appreciate them more if I visited with a small child, and could share in their easy wonderment, except I'd worry they might drown in one of those shallow pools. Maybe a drawn-out expectation of the moment, the booking, the waiting for the day and the minute, all that queuing, might help develop a sense of occasion.



Inner experiences ... Yayoi Kusama in 2013. Photograph: Mike Segar/Reuters

Kusama's light installations are the main event here, and are augmented by series of portrait photographs of the artist, taken over her long career, as well as pictures of performances, which are both sexy and silly, earnest and ridiculous. In a recently rediscovered short film by British academic John Jones, we see a young Kusama walking in red thigh-length boots about her studio, posing behind a stepladder festooned with little sculptures and high-heeled shoes, and lying naked from the waist down in a nest of white phallic sculptures, kapok-stuffed white gloves and other floppy forms.



As much her work looks back to surrealism, the film, shot in the mid-1960s, has both a touching innocence and an oddly prurient feel that some might take as period charm. How long you can linger to see all this, and the box-like recent sculpture whose peepholes afford colourful views of globular little dots, before the next punters are shepherded through, I cannot say.

[Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirror Rooms is at Tate Modern, London](#), 18 May to 12 June 2022.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/may/17/japanese-yayoi-kusama-infinity-mirror-rooms-review-tate-modern>

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

## England holidays

# **‘I am desperate to bring people in again’: small museums in England on reopening**



Open day ... the Thackray Museum of Medicine in Leeds is ready to welcome back visitors after an 18-month closure. Photograph: David Lindsay

Open day ... the Thackray Museum of Medicine in Leeds is ready to welcome back visitors after an 18-month closure. Photograph: David Lindsay

As indoor attractions welcome visitors back, four museums tells us how they'll showcase new exhibitions after a particularly tough year

Mon 17 May 2021 01.30 EDT

## **Wordsworth Grasmere, Lake District**

From the new rooftop viewing deck of the Wordsworth museum, the veil of Grasmere looks mottled and spongy on a waterlogged day. The hills are smudged out by an ethereal cloud line that seeps into the fields beyond the four chimneys of Dove Cottage. From up here, it's clear that the inspiration for Wordsworth's poetry started right at his front door.

The rooftop deck, along with new garden paths and two glass walls inside the museum that look on to the hills and village, are designed to reconnect Wordsworth's poetry to the landscape in which he created it – a key aim of the £6.5m transformation of his former home into a 21st-century attraction. Period paintings of the Lakes also punctuate the new gallery-like space, and the singsong of cuckoos and linnets that Wordsworth describes in his poems is played through the rooms.



Photograph: Gareth Gardner

Grounding the attraction in its location, the museum has been rebranded as Wordsworth Grasmere for its reopening, and community involvement has never been greater. After a year-long closure, it should have launched to much fanfare on the 250th anniversary of Wordsworth's birth last April, but then Covid hit.



Dove Cottage briefly opened last August with immersive audio and new exhibits that restore the cottage to what it would have looked like in Wordsworth's day. But building work on the neighbouring museum (which now has 50% more permanent gallery space) and the new roof deck was hit by Covid, and these two key elements will finally open on 18 May.

"Lockdown's been pretty tough for us because we'd already gone a year without visitor income when Covid hit," says museum director Michael McGregor.

There's a space with looped readings of Wordsworth's works, including The Prelude spoken by Sir Ian McKellen

If it weren't for emergency funding from the Arts Council, Culture Recovery Fund and the local authority, the museum would be in severe difficulty. "Now that funding is tailing off, we need to get people in, but the visitor market is by no means anywhere near back to pre-pandemic levels," says McGregor.

Continuing Covid restrictions means Dove Cottage and the museum will open with capacity capped at 50%, but few other adaptations have been needed.

The brief for the museum overhaul was to reimagine Wordsworth, giving contemporary context to a man who died in 1850, in a bid to reverse declining visitor numbers. "The project is built on three foundations: people, poetry and place," says McGregor.

Technology enhances the journey through the museum, starting with a double-height wall of illuminated poetry quotes and ending in an audio-visual space with looped readings of Wordsworth's works, including The Prelude spoken by Sir Ian McKellen, set to a Lakes landscape film.

The Cumbrian slate-coloured galleries also give space to diverse voices through films and manuscripts, including a prominent feminine influence on Wordsworth's life – his sister Dorothy, who wrote the [Grasmere Journals](#).

*Adult £12, child £5, fives and under free, family £20-£32.00 (or*

£8.50/£4/£15-£23 without cottage entrance), [wordsworth.org.uk](http://www.wordsworth.org.uk)  
Lorna Parkes

## Thackray Museum of Medicine, Leeds



Photograph: David Lindsay

When the Thackray Museum of Medicine was forced to put its £4m reopening plans on hold because of the third lockdown in November, it became the first museum in the UK to be used as a vaccine hub instead. Thackray's medical director, Prof Simon Kay, even volunteered at the centre, which has now delivered 50,000 jabs.

The museum, housed in a Grade II-listed Victorian workhouse on the grounds of St James's Hospital, has amassed a nationally important collection of 55,000 objects covering the history of healthcare. Thackray himself was a local maker of surgical instruments.

After an 18-month closure to upgrade the museum, including building work setbacks, Covid came as a kick in the teeth for the team at Thackray. But they've continued to work throughout the pandemic to adapt for a Covid-safe reopening on 17 May, and have incorporated an outdoor cafe seating area.

Staff had to think long and hard about the new interactive, tactile displays . “Some interactives will be in ‘quarantine’ when we open but for most we’ve adapted procedures so we can keep our galleries interactive,” says Sue Mackay, director of collections and programming.

As fate would have it, one of the new galleries, Response to Crisis, includes a wall dedicated to epidemics

As the museum benefits from a large footprint, it hasn’t needed to reduce visitor capacity to enable social distancing (but will introduce timed entry). Laid out over two floors and 11 galleries, Thackray charts the medical innovations that have changed our lives, through displays co-created with academics, medics, schools, community groups and artists.

The visitor journey follows the trajectory of medicine: out of the dark and into the light. It starts on a dimly lit, recreated Victorian Leeds street with immersive audio and video, then moves upstairs into light-filled galleries exploring innovations including antiseptic, imaging, diagnostics and assisted birth. Visitors can assess MRI scans on a light box and even try their hand at operating a machine to detect polyps in a colon.

As fate would have it, one of the new galleries, Response to Crisis, includes a wall dedicated to epidemics. Now the museum is collecting evidence related to the Covid pandemic, such as vaccine vials and oral histories, to add to its archive. Another exhibit, Disease Detectives, is about understanding germs – a topic that has never seemed more pertinent.

*Adult £11.95, child £8.95, under-fives free, family £18-£43,*  
[thackraymuseum.co.uk](http://thackraymuseum.co.uk)

**LP**

## **The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic, Boscastle, Cornwall**



Photograph: PR

When first established in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1951 by film director Cecil Williamson, the Museum of Witchcraft met with fierce opposition from some of the town's god-fearing residents. Moving to an abandoned mill on the Isle of Man it gained its own resident witch – Wiccan founder Gerald Gardner – though the two men eventually fell out and Williamson returned to the mainland. There was further opposition when it relocated to Windsor and then Bourton-on-the-Water in the Cotswolds, and it finally found a home in Boscastle harbour in 1960, where it has remained ever since.

Renamed The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic by current director Simon Costin, it is home to the world's largest collection of artefacts relating to witchcraft, ritual magic, cunning folk and Wicca, and houses an extensive library of occult literature.

As a small, independent museum it isn't eligible for public funding; its main source of income is from door takings. For Costin that has meant not taking a wage over the last 12 months.

The museum is home to the world's largest collection of artefacts relating to witchcraft, ritual magic and Wicca

“I have a day job as a set designer. It could have been crippling for us had I not set aside my wage at the museum for six years in order for there to be some kind of reserve,” says Costin. “That’s what saved us. Staff were furloughed and topped up on full pay.

“And social media has really helped. We would have chewed through that money without Instagram. We have about 75,000 followers, which is remarkable for a small museum. We guided people to our online shop – to our books, jewellery and ritual objects like our handmade wooden athame [ceremonial blades]. That helped us survive.”

The museum opens its doors on 17 May but can only accept 25% capacity based on timed entrances, which means no more than 32 people in the building at a time. “We had to weigh up if it was actually worth us opening but I am so desperate to bring people in again.

“The shop has been moved from the front of the museum to avoid any congestion, which means we’ve lost a whole gallery. Items from the shop are now numbered and behind glass there. It works a bit like Argos,” Costin concludes. Except, instead of a folding chair or battery rechargers, it’s charms, amulets and black candles on sale.

This year also marks the museum’s 70th anniversary and includes a new exhibition, In the Land of the Bucca, themed around the folk magic, customs, myths and legends of Cornwall. To round off a visit, the shop will be selling pewter Cornish piskies (fairies) as lucky charms. You’ll have to go elsewhere for your Cornish pasties.

*Adult £7, child £5, under-fives free, [museumofwitchcraftandmagic.co.uk](http://museumofwitchcraftandmagic.co.uk)*

**David Bramwell**

## **Wilberforce House Museum, Hull**





Wilberforce House Museum exterior view, Hull Photograph: Prabhulal Prasanna

When lockdown came in March 2020, Wilberforce House Museum closed its doors to an uncertain future. Some staff were seconded to other jobs, working in Hull's parks and libraries, but for others the museum work did not stop. Simon Green, director of museums for the city, soon realised there was an opportunity and a challenge: "We were fortunate to have the support of the council and realised we needed to deliver exhibitions digitally."

For Wilberforce House it was actually the culmination of a long process that had been going on for a decade, updating and rethinking the displays to reflect modern approaches to the questions of slavery and abolition. There was also a recognition that although William Wilberforce had been an important part of the campaign to end slavery in the British Empire (culminating in the anti-slavery acts of 1807 and 1833), he was only one part of it, and slavery still exists. "We get visitors from the US who can spend two or three hours examining the house carefully," says Green. "We have had to respond to that kind of scrutiny."

In place of outdated mannequins, the rethink has brought displays that emphasise the horrors of slave ships

In place of outdated mannequins, the rethink has brought displays that emphasise the horrors of slave ships: one new item is a simple outline that shows the space allocated to a single enslaved person. “I can’t actually get into it,” says Green. “It’s a sobering experience to try.” Items related to William Wilberforce himself still take pride of place, but there are also explanations of other campaigning lives in Hull: Lil Bilocca, for example, a trawlerman’s wife who responded to the 1968 triple trawler tragedy with a blistering campaign for safety. Harold Wilson’s government adopted all the proposals, but Lil lost her job in the fishing industry, received death threats and, unlike William Wilberforce, died in 1988 with her successful campaigning unrecognised and almost forgotten.

For the museum, last summer’s brief easing of regulations brought a painful realisation: it could not actually reopen. The house is a relatively small merchant’s dwelling that backs on to the historic River Hull, and free access with social distancing was impossible. Now the plan is to test small group guided tours that can be prebooked online. The reopening for Wilberforce will come in late June, although Hull’s other museums and galleries will be back, with online booking, on 17 May.

“It’s been a challenging time,” says Green, “But also a chance to reflect on what we do.” The next objective is a major realignment towards maritime heritage, backed by a £38m national lottery grant with a new museum that Lil Bilocca might have appreciated: a North Sea cod trawler, the Arctic Corsair, veteran of the Icelandic cod war, to open with a new visitor centre.

*Free admission, [humbermuseums.com](http://humbermuseums.com)*

**Kevin Rushby**



## Reopening cultureTheatre

# Back with a bang: UK theatre bets on bold reopening

Theatregoers want to ‘get underneath the skin’ of societal issues, says National Theatre’s Clint Dyer



Technical rehearsals for Cruise at the Duchess theatre in London’s West End. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Technical rehearsals for Cruise at the Duchess theatre in London’s West End. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

[Lanre Bakare](#)

[@lanre\\_bakare](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 01.00 EDT

Britain’s cultural institutions are at a crossroads moment, according to the National Theatre’s deputy artistic director, who says the public want

challenging art rather than “comforting” work as venues reopen and lockdown eases.

Clint Dyer, the playwright and actor who took on the NT role in January, said that before the pandemic mainstream theatre often comforted rather than confronted its audience. “A lot of the work in the mainstream was there to say: ‘Oh, this is the world that we know you like seeing,’” said Dyer.

He believes that in the 15 months since theatres closed their doors there has been a shift in audience appetite, with theatregoers wanting to “get underneath the skin” of societal issues. “We don’t want the superficial any more,” he said. “People thought you can have a good night out if we rub off the rough elements, but now I think people are more willing to engage with the rough elements.”

There has been a fear that the large-scale redundancies during the pandemic – an estimated [40% of theatre workers](#) lost their jobs – could be followed by a reopening packed with “safe” work. Instead, “bold” is the adjective being used to describe much of what is to come.

The West End, which rarely takes risks when failures can be financially ruinous, has *Cruise*, a musical about HIV, at the Duchess theatre and a six-week season from Sonia Friedman called *Re:Emerge*, which pairs new writing by [Yasmin Joseph](#), Amy Berryman and Joseph Charlton with established acting talent including Gemma Arterton and Emma Corrin.

Elsewhere, the Kiln Theatre opens with a debut play by Amy Trigg about a woman in her 20s navigating life with spina bifida, Hampstead Theatre is doing a revival of Alfred Fagon’s *Death of a Black Man*, while Battersea Arts Centre is making all its shows [pay-what-you-can](#).

Ian Rickson, the artistic director and co-curator of *Re:Emerge*, said the political climate had contributed to a reopening that is more adventurous than may have been expected. “You’ve got all these weather fronts outside the industry, whether that’s Black Lives Matter or Kill the Bill or climate change. There’s been a consciousness shift,” he said.

“However catastrophic Covid-19 has been, it’s allowed artists and citizens to really think about who we are, how we’re connected to each other, and – specifically in terms of theatre – what work we want to make.”

There are more cautious voices. Indhu Rubasingham, the artistic director of the Kiln theatre, is optimistic that audiences will give new writing their backing, but says the sector is “dependent on box office revenue” and [under pressure to get bums on seats](#).

“We can’t guarantee a 100% success rate, but we have to be bold and imaginative in order for our sector to survive,” she said. “The temptation for short-term survival is to be conservative, but that’s not going to result in long-term survival.”

Like Rickson, Rubasingham believes the impact of the pandemic and social movements such as Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion are influencing arts programming. “I think we’re in a real fulcrum moment,” she said. “Parts of society want change, but then I think there’s also fear of that change because it challenges traditional power bases. I’m intrigued to see which side of the fulcrum we’re going to fall.”

Oscar winners and other awards season favourites are on offer for cinemagoers, with Chloe Zhao’s elegiac road movie, Nomadland, finally hitting screens. Sound of Metal, Riz Ahmed’s portrait of a musician coming to terms with hearing loss, which has been available on streaming platforms, will also be an option for many. Pedro Almodóvar and Tilda Swinton’s short collaboration, The Human Voice, Billie Piper’s romcom, Rare Beasts, and Kelly Reichardt’s First Cow are also out.

Major chains including Odeon, Cineworld and Vue are expected to reopen most if not all of their sites from Monday. Smaller chains and independents such as Curzon, Everyman and London’s Prince Charles Cinema will also open.

In the museums sector, the charity Art Fund said 55% of the 300 museums it surveyed feared for their long-term future after visitor numbers and profits plummeted during lockdown. It found that footfall was down 75% in the last

financial year compared with the previous 12 months, and income was down by 62%, with 37% of museums in the survey facing a new deficit.

Last-minute preparations have been taking place to get venues ready to accept visitors and start their recovery. Many of English Heritage's sites have been preparing to reopen. Bobbin Mill in Cumbria, which produced bobbins for Lancashire's weaving industry, is one of many sites to have undergone a deep clean after being shut for the duration of lockdown.

The National Trust said it was looking forward to welcoming visitors to its houses from Monday, following the reopening of its parks, gardens and countryside locations. Hilary McGrady, the director general, said: "Our places are nothing without our visitors there to enjoy them and our staff and volunteers have been working hard behind the scenes cleaning chandeliers, polishing floors and dusting books to get everything ready."

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2021/may/17/back-with-a-bang-uk-theatre-bets-on-bold-reopening>.

## 2021.05.17 - Opinion

- [Starmer's pitiful pitch to England's north-east is a recipe for more disasters](#)
- [Why are Palestinians protesting? Because we want to live](#)
- [Animals are our overlooked allies in the fight against Covid](#)
- [What do you even say to young people about climate change?](#)

## [OpinionLabour](#)

# Starmer's pitiful pitch to England's north-east is a recipe for more disasters

[Alex Niven](#)

The defeat in Hartlepool suggests Labour has simply revived the 'pints and flags' tactics that failed in the Miliband years

- Alex Niven is a lecturer in English literature at Newcastle University and the author of *New Model Island*



'It is hard not to conclude that Starmerism is little more than a nostalgic revival of this lethargic pre-2015 period.' Starmer in Hartlepool, April 2021. Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

'It is hard not to conclude that Starmerism is little more than a nostalgic revival of this lethargic pre-2015 period.' Starmer in Hartlepool, April 2021. Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

Mon 17 May 2021 02.00 EDT

Labour's drubbing in the Hartlepool byelection was the most dramatic and symbolic of all the varied results from May's elections. Party figures have eagerly repeated a familiar metaphor since those results: that Labour has a "mountain to climb", citing its 2019 election losses as evidence of the scale of the challenges it faces. But the collapse of Labour's vote share in the north-east of England last week can't be explained by long-term factors alone. This was a campaign spearheaded by the leader's office, to which Keir Starmer devoted much time and energy. The [loss of Hartlepool](#), a seat that has voted Labour since its creation, was his failure.

The circumstances behind this extraordinary defeat tell us much about the party under Starmer. The [Labour](#) leadership seems to imagine "red wall" seats such as Hartlepool as dim hinterlands full of patriotic, socially conservative, working-class voters – the polar opposite of a caricatured "metropolitan elite". According to this reading, the task of rebuilding support in these areas is a simple case of airlifting Saint George flags into town during election campaigns and repeating hollow, patronising clichés about "trust" and "competence".

But people in the north-east are like people everywhere else: intelligent enough to want more than mere competence and diverse enough that they deserve to be treated with nuance. Neither were apparent in the "[pints and flags](#)" pitch that Labour made to the Hartlepool electorate. It's certainly true that many northern voters – like many southern voters – are socially conservative (though many others are not). But focusing on ambiguous cultural matters like patriotism – the result of a policy offer derived from endless focus groups and attempts to [speak to the voters](#) – will only result in a strategy that seems a weak mirror-image of the status quo. When Johnson's Tories are offering this anyway, and much more effectively, Labour looks pitiful and inauthentic.

[The Green party is showing Labour how to connect with its former heartlands | Lynsey Hanley](#)  
[Read more](#)

After over a year in which Starmer has had the chance to develop a more proactive, dynamic strategy for winning back (or retaining) seats like Hartlepool, he has instead revived the messages that dominated Ed



Miliband's unsuccessful 2010-2015 tenure as Labour leader. Then, as now, Labour was engaged in a hapless, hopeless attempt to stem a decline in its traditional voter base – by flirting with the [Blue Labour](#), “faith, flag and the family” approach recommended by the likes of Jon Cruddas and Chukka Umunna, for instance. This tendency suggested that Labour could reconnect with voters in its heartlands by acknowledging their “[legitimate concerns](#)” about immigration and posing as the party of law and order. Then, as now, voters simply bypassed Labour in favour of rightwing parties that were making these claims with greater conviction.

Perhaps not coincidentally, it was in these years and in this ideological climate that some of Starmer's key allies, such as Rachel Reeves and Jenny Chapman, were rising steadily through the ranks of the parliamentary Labour party after arriving in Westminster in 2010. It is hard not to conclude that Starmerism – if such a thing can even be said to exist – is little more than a nostalgic revival of this lethargic pre-2015 period, when the Labour party was a top-down, managerial affair, with low membership figures and little in the way of policy ideas emerging from its grassroots.

Where the north is concerned, the party's return to this elitist pre-2015 mode of operating has involved the repetition of tactics that failed to stop voters deserting the party in droves during the 2010s – an exodus pre-empted in the later New Labour years, when Peter Mandelson famously and erroneously claimed that Labour should not worry about voters in traditionally working-class areas because they had “[nowhere else to go](#)”. That Mandelson is now apparently a major presence in [Starmer's backroom team](#) is both unfortunate and ironic.

Instead of reprising past failures, if Labour is to have any hope at all of making progress in places like the north-east, it will need an electoral offer that is assertive and original. At its root, this is a very basic question of realising that the country has moved on since the Miliband years (let alone the turn of the century, when Mandelson was a driving force in Tony Blair's New Labour government).

Voters excited by nationalist imagery will probably now stick for ever with the more confidently patriotic posturing of Johnson's Tories. But in the north, as throughout the rest of the country, there are younger demographics

that Labour must learn to understand if it is to begin the task of electoral renewal and prevent further decline. Despite the anti-Corbyn rhetoric of party moderates, a starting point here has to be the sort of strategy adopted in the runup to the 2017 election, when Labour deprived the Conservatives of their parliamentary majority by focusing on bold, principled policies that were especially popular with younger voters.

There were manifold limitations to Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, most obviously its final collapse in the 2019 general election. But in 2017 Labour retained Hartlepool with a huge 17-point increase in the vote share. This refutes the view that defeat in last week's byelection was inevitable – and offers pretty clear evidence that novel, clearly articulated ideas are at the very least more successful than outdated, condescending attempts to shift rightwards on cultural issues.

Whichever way you look at it, the next few years are bound to be difficult for Labour as it seeks to rebuild a voter coalition from several sometimes diametrically opposed groups. But it must start crediting voters in places like the north-east with the ability to know when they are being talked down to, or when they are being treated with the respect that comes when a party offers a coherent political programme and asks that voters get behind it.

Confident, radical messages and policies will, over time, build support for Labour even in the suburbs and smaller towns of the north-east, where younger workers and families are already relocating in search of cheaper housing, while keeping the party's support in big cities onside. It's in this newer, 21st-century demographic that Labour must continue to put its trust, not an outdated and unimaginative vision of a north that no longer exists.

- Alex Niven is a lecturer in English literature at Newcastle University and the author of *New Model Island*



## Opinion Palestinian territories

# Why are Palestinians protesting? Because we want to live

[Mariam Barghouti](#)

Just as the Black Lives Matter protests were not only about one killing, we are facing a whole regime of oppression



‘The protests are a complete reclamation of faith, not in international policymakers, not in negotiation committees, not in humanitarian observers and NGOs, but in ourselves.’ Palestinian protesters in Ramallah, 9 May 2021. Photograph: Abbas Momani/AFP/Getty Images

‘The protests are a complete reclamation of faith, not in international policymakers, not in negotiation committees, not in humanitarian observers and NGOs, but in ourselves.’ Palestinian protesters in Ramallah, 9 May 2021. Photograph: Abbas Momani/AFP/Getty Images

Sun 16 May 2021 10.26 EDT

I started going to demonstrations when I was 17. At first, I went to protests against Israel's military occupation. Then we also began to protest against the authoritarianism of the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, and the [sickening rivalry](#) between Palestinian political factions. For Palestinians, protest has become a way of life – a way to [be steadfast](#), to persevere.

Over the past decade, much of this burden of protest has been borne by individual Palestinian families facing expulsion or violence at the hands of soldiers and settlers. The threat of evictions or demolitions will spark a local protest, in the hope of preventing this or that particular outrage. But right now the attention of the world is on us not as individuals, but as a collective, [as Palestinians](#). It is not only about one village or one family or “only those in the West Bank” or “only those in Jerusalem”.

What we are in the streets protesting about now is not one killing or one violent raid, but a whole regime of oppression that destroys our bodies, our homes, our communities, our hopes – just as the protests for Black lives that spread across the US last year were not only about [George Floyd](#) or [Breonna Taylor](#) or any one killing.

This is what colonialism does: it suffocates every part of your life, and then it finishes by burying you. It is a strategic, deliberate process, and it is only obstructed or delayed because oppressors are almost always confronted and challenged by those under their rule. In the end, who wants to be chained down for being born who they are?

Last week, I was near the illegal settlement of [Beit El](#) by Ramallah in the West Bank as the Israeli army sent jeeps rushing towards demonstrators, journalists and medical staff, firing high-velocity teargas canisters directly at the crowd.

The sound of those canisters spiralling towards us in the dozens still makes me tremble. It reminds me of the day in December 2011, in the village of Nabi Saleh, when an Israeli soldier fired a teargas canister, from close range, directly at the face of 28-year-old Palestinian stone-thrower [Mustafa Tamimi](#), who died as a result of the injury.

I remember the face of then six-year-old Janna Tamimi, his cousin, as she screamed in her fragile voice: “Why did you kill my best friend?” Behind her was the illegal settlement of Halamish. Mustafa’s protest was against the settlement expansion and the impunity of settler violence as he and his community were imprisoned in the village, with no access to water springs or public services.

[Once this violence in Israel and Gaza ends, there can be no return to 'normal'](#)  
[| Jonathan Freedland](#)

[Read more](#)

The fact that these protests are leaderless is a sign of what has been festering for decades among all Palestinians. This is the coming-of-age of a generation born since the [pitiful Oslo accords](#) of 1993-1995, who grew up during decades that only solidified Israel’s settlement expansion and grip on Palestinian lives.

More than this, it is a continued growth of stamina, endurance and loss of faith. But at the same time, it is a complete reclamation of faith, not in international policymakers, not in negotiation committees, not in humanitarian observers and NGOs, but in ourselves.

“Why do you always have to put yourself on the frontlines?” my mother reprimanded me years ago, as she threw away my clothes that were soaked in noxious “*kharara*”, [skunk water](#), sprayed by the Israeli military.

Often used in protests in the West Bank, Israeli forces have also now been spraying it on the streets of Sheikh Jarrah and the homes of Palestinians. It’s an attempt to make our [lives so unbearable](#) that we are driven out.

I wanted to tell my mother, if it isn’t me, it’s someone else. I wanted to tell her how in Gaza the [unarmed protests of 2018](#) were met with the sniping down of hundreds, as Israeli soldiers turned it into an unrelenting sniper free-for-all, deliberately causing [debilitating injuries](#).

But we both knew that what made her so angry was the horrible recognition that we had no choice but to protest – that as long as injustice persists, and

our dreams for better realities continue to push us towards confrontation, getting soaked in skunk water meant that I was at least alive.

This is exactly why we are protesting, because we are ready to be alive.

- Mariam Barghouti is a Palestinian writer and researcher

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/16/palestinians-protesting-live-regime-oppression>

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



## OpinionMedical research

# Animals are our overlooked allies in the fight against Covid

Melanie Challenger

It's important to recognise the vital role they've played in development of vaccines and treatments



‘Limulus amebocyte lysate tests, the standard for screening vaccines for dangerous bacteria, are manufactured using the blood of horseshoe crabs.’

Photograph: Alamy Stock Photo

‘Limulus amebocyte lysate tests, the standard for screening vaccines for dangerous bacteria, are manufactured using the blood of horseshoe crabs.’

Photograph: Alamy Stock Photo

Mon 17 May 2021 04.00 EDT

A few weeks ago, I received my first shot of a vaccine against Covid-19. As the newly vaccinated exited the clinic, there was a mix of relief and elation

on people's faces. We exchanged little smiles of solidarity. If we could have burst into spontaneous applause, I'm sure we would have done.

Recently, the lead scientist for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, Prof Sarah Gilbert, [was honoured](#) with the RSA Albert Medal. There are rumours that Gilbert's team, along with the pioneers of the mRNA vaccines, are up for a Nobel prize. It is quite right that gratitude should follow their gamechanging achievement.

But the success of the vaccines offers an opportunity to acknowledge a different constituency. If we think back to [clap for carers](#), the ritual of recognition that marked those grim weeks of Britain's first lockdown, its value was in shining a light on the keyworkers who are kept from view by circumstances and sometimes snobbery. For 10 weeks of the pandemic, we reflected on those otherwise invisible individuals on whom society depends.

Yet in every stage of our journey to create vaccines, we've had a large number of assistants we've neither appreciated nor applauded. Millions of animals have been a part of our rigorous process of drug safety and efficacy testing. The main reason we don't honour them is that they possess an uncertain moral status in our eyes. That may be uncomfortable, but does that mean that the role of animals should be ignored?

To take a few examples: Limulus ameobocyte lysate tests, the standard for screening vaccines for dangerous bacteria, are manufactured using the neon-blue [blood of horseshoe crabs](#). Pretty much any vaccine you've had will have been safety-tested using this because it's chock-full of immune cells that are super-sensitive to bacteria.

Acquiring this blood is not a pretty business. The crabs are harvested, often by fishers, and then strapped in rows and bled. And these spectacular creatures are already under threat due to fisheries and habitat loss. In the US, manufacturers are careful to try to secure the wellbeing and release of the crabs. Only about 15% die. But in China, where the regional species is endangered, nearly all will be killed in the process. There are synthetic versions of the test, but they haven't been taken up by many pharmaceutical companies at present and the US is yet to give regulatory approval.

When it comes to preclinical trials of vaccine candidates (trials that aren't ethically permitted on humans), mice are the most popular animal. Early in the pandemic, scientists discovered that wild lab mice are largely unaffected by this coronavirus. So [transgenic mice](#) have been bred, genetically engineered to simulate our immune response. And ferrets, which do show a similar progression of disease to ours, have also been used in early trials. Some of these animals will play a role in the development of the antiviral treatments the [UK government hopes](#) patients may be taking by this autumn.

In Britain, the bar for using primates in biomedical research is very high. But scientists working on Covid-19 vaccines have used both rhesus and crab-eating macaques, along with common marmosets, especially for efficacy testing. Animal testing is largely justified by the idea of some hard moral border between us and other species. Using animals within our own order unsettles us: scientists choose primates precisely because they're genetically similar to us, but that closeness is disquieting. Primates have rich and complex social lives. They also experience their pain and captivity, and their inability to consent creates rather than resolves the ethical problems. Yet we are rarely given the chance to reflect on all this.

The trouble is we often hide animal testing from public view. That is broadly true of the infrastructure that enables us to eat and wear animals, too. Many labs that run animal experiments are highly secretive because of the considerable threats they face from activists. And scientists and companies are also sensitive to the fact that public opinion is [on the move](#). Before the pandemic, public acceptance of animal testing in biomedical research had been consistently trending downwards for decades.

For now, the UK's Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act of 1986 is the strictest law governing research animals anywhere in the world. That is something to be proud of. Most research is conducted using the "three Rs". These principles of "reduction", "refinement" and "replacement" were initiated in 1959 by two British scientists, William Russell and Rex Burch. They have become the standard for minimising the use of animals and any associated suffering.

Still, animal research is actually growing rather than declining. New gene-editing technologies allow us to modify an animal's immune system so that it is more like ours, making it a better research model than it would be naturally. That has undermined the move towards replacement. And this pandemic has also intensified demand.

There are some new initiatives, such as the [Center for Contemporary Sciences](#), spearheaded by scientists Aysha Akhtar and Jarrod Bailey, set up to explore cutting-edge human-based methods: the “human-on-a-chip” model, for example. In essence, a human organ is used to produce a micro-version of itself on which tests can be conducted. This is exciting technology, but we're not yet at the point of substitution.

This moment in history has prompted a reassessment of our relationship to the rest of nature, not least because the origins of this pandemic, in one way or another, lie in our invasive use of other animals and their habitats. At the same time, throughout the past century, the use of animals in biomedical tests has hugely reduced deaths from disease outbreaks. Forty years' worth of research using monkeys, rats and mice led to the polio vaccine in the 1950s, which saved millions of lives. Then there was the TB vaccine. The flu vaccine. To put it bluntly, countless animals have given their lives to save ours.

On 12 May, the UK government [launched its action plan](#) to “reinforce its position as a global champion of animal rights”. Key to this is the recognition by law of the [sentience of other animals](#). It's a positive move. But the current plan is uneven in its rationale and silent on a number of fronts, including animal testing.

Acknowledging the animals that have had a role in life-saving vaccines and treatments for Covid-19 is not to take a position for or against their continued use in research. It is instead to accept that there is something wrong in obscuring or forgetting their part and the price they pay. Supporters just as much as opponents of animal testing should recognise the magnitude of their role. It would be the mark of a conscientious – and grateful – society.

- Melanie Challenger is the author of *How To Be Animal: A New History of What It Means to Be Human*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/17/animals-overlooked-allies-fight-against-covid-vaccines>

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

[First Dog on the Moon](#)Climate change

## What do you even say to young people about climate change?

[First Dog on the Moon](#)



I'M SO SORRY ABOUT HOW YOUR FUTURES HAVE TURNED TO DUST! I TRIED TO STOP IT!

- [Sign up here to get an email](#) whenever First Dog cartoons are published
- [Get all your needs met at the First Dog shop](#) if what you need is First Dog merchandise and prints

Mon 17 May 2021 02.46 EDT

[climate change](#)

---

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



## 2021.05.17 - Around the world

- ['Catastrophic' Sierra Leone sells rainforest for Chinese fish plant](#)
- ['On bad days, we don't eat' Hunger grows for thousands displaced by conflict in Chad](#)
- [New Zealand Government to cut 'low-skill' immigration and refocus on wealthy](#)
- [Airline industry Ryanair reports record £701m loss as Covid forces it to slash flights](#)
- [Suez canal Dredging starts to extend double lane after Ever Given grounding](#)

[Seascope: the state of our oceans](#) [Sierra Leone](#)

## ‘Catastrophic’: Sierra Leone sells rainforest for Chinese harbour

Controversial deal with China would be ‘disastrous’ for fishing and protected rainforest, say opponents



The beach earmarked for development fringes the Western Area Peninsula national park, home to endangered species including pangolins. Photograph: Issouf Sanogo/AFP/Getty

The beach earmarked for development fringes the Western Area Peninsula national park, home to endangered species including pangolins. Photograph: Issouf Sanogo/AFP/Getty

Seascope: the state of our oceans is supported by

# the David & Lucile Packard FOUNDATION

[About this content](#)

[Karen McVeigh](#) and Kabba Kargbo in Freetown

[@karenmcveigh1](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 01.00 EDT

A \$55m (£39m) deal struck by the government of [Sierra Leone](#) with China to build an industrial fishing harbour on 100 hectares (250 acres) of beach and protected rainforest has been criticised as “a catastrophic human and ecological disaster” by conservationists, landowners and rights groups.

The gold and black sands of Black Johnson beach fringe the African nation’s [Western Area Peninsula national park](#), home to endangered species including the duiker antelope and pangolins. The waters are rich in sardines, barracuda and grouper, caught by local fishermen who produce 70% of the fish for the domestic market.

After reports of a Chinese-backed fishmeal plant began circulating on social media, A statement that appeared to be from the Sierra Leonean fisheries ministry confirmed the deal, but denied the planned construction was a “fish mill”. The facility would be a harbour for tuna and “other bigger fishing” vessels exporting to international markets, it said. It would include a “waste-

management component” to “recycle marine and other wastes into useful products”.

The government said the beach, one of many along the nation’s 250-mile (400km) coastline, was the “most suitable place” for construction, and revealed the finance ministry had set aside a compensation package of 13.76bn leone (£950,000) for affected landowners. But the statement leaves more questions than answers, say those objecting to the plan.



The planned development is on Whale Bay, known for its cetaceans and also a key fish-breeding area, say opponents of the scheme. Photograph: Issouf Sanogo/AFP/Getty

Two legal campaign groups, the Institute for Legal Research and Advocacy for Justice (ILRAJ) and Namati Sierra Leone, have written to the government, under the 2013 Right to Access Information Act, demanding to see the environmental and social-impact assessment studies, and the report showing that the beach was, as claimed, the most suitable place for construction “in terms of bathymetry, social safeguards (minimum resettlement costs) and environmental issues”. They are also seeking a copy of the grant agreement between [China](#) and Sierra Leone.

Basita Michael, a lawyer for the ILRAJ, said: “The press release was very vague. It left us wondering how did we arrive here and how come we are only hearing about this now. We have a right to know more.”

James Tonner, who owns land at Black Johnson with his mother, Jane Aspden Gbandewa, has written an open letter to the president, [Julius Maada Bio](#), calling for him to intervene and stop the construction, which Tonner said would be “disastrous for the country and the planet”.

It would destroy pristine rainforest, plunder fish stocks and pollute fish breeding grounds and several ecosystems, Tonner said. The beach is on Whale Bay, so-named because whales and dolphins are seen there.

[Chinese fishmeal plants leave fishermen in the Gambia all at sea | Hannah Summers](#)  
[Read more](#)

Tonner, who lives in London, has set up a [crowdfunding page](#) to fund a judicial review into the deal. The government could be acting unconstitutionally if it acquired the land compulsorily, he said, because the constitution requires any such move to be in the public interest. The compensation stated by the government was also unfair, he argued, claiming that the rate was about 30 times lower than the market value of the land.



Tito Gbandewa: ‘If they do this here, the water will be dirty, there will be a lot of oil and noise, the trawlers will be all around.’

“Under the constitution, the government can sequester land if it is in the public interest,” Tonner said. “Even if this just a deep-water harbour, it is not in the public interest because it’s not a suitable site. There are fish breeding sites in the lagoon. It will wipe out the local fish people live on.”

Tito Gbandewa, Tonner’s stepfather, is a former fisherman who runs an ecotourism business on the beach and owns about 1.2 hectares. He said: “If they do this here, the water will be dirty, there will be a lot of oil and noise, the trawlers will be all around.

“Our own fishermen won’t have a place to fish. Everything will be spoiled. Tourism will be finished.”

Dr Sama Banya, president emeritus of the [Conservation](#) Society of Sierra Leone, echoed Gbandewa’s comments, saying the proposed development would have a “disastrous” impact on tourism and “the very fish industry that it’s supposed to support”.

Emma Kowa Jalloh, Sierra Leone’s fisheries minister, insisted that the plan was for a harbour and not a fishmeal factory. She said: “I can categorically tell you there is no fish mill [sic] going in at Black Johnson. What we are doing is a fish harbour that will be built by the Chinese government. A fish mill is something where you go and catch all the baby fish and grind it into food to give to piggeries, and fish in aquaculture – and that is so not true.”

It would be built with a Chinese government “grant” and equity from Sierra Leone in the form of land, she said. Half of the land needed was government-owned, she said, including the seafront, up to 200 metres from the sea. The rest has been acquired through compulsory acquisition, she said.

“People are making this fuss about it,” the minister added. “I would just appeal to people: ‘be patient, we want to be developed, we want to grow, we want to be classified as an upcoming country. There must be development and somebody has to sacrifice.’

“I’m not saying everything is going to be 100% perfect but we will make sure that it is near-perfect.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/may/17/sierra-leone-sells-rainforest-for-chinese-fishmeal-plant>

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



## Global development

# **‘On bad days, we don’t eat’: Hunger grows for thousands displaced by conflict in Chad**

As war forces more to flee, humanitarian organisations facing funding shortfalls and increasing demand are unable to keep pace



Refugees from Central African Republic arrive in Chad. More than 400,000 Chadians have been displaced in the conflict between the country’s army and rebel fighters. Photograph: Aristophane Ngargoune/UNHCR

Refugees from Central African Republic arrive in Chad. More than 400,000 Chadians have been displaced in the conflict between the country’s army and rebel fighters. Photograph: Aristophane Ngargoune/UNHCR

Global development is supported by

# BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation

[About this content](#)

[Zeinab Mohammed Salih](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 02.15 EDT

The number of people having to leave their homes in the Lake Chad region of central [Africa](#) has more than doubled over the past year with agencies warning they are struggling to feed people.

The fighting, which last month [claimed the life of the president of Chad, Idriss Déby, has displaced more than 400,000 Chadians](#), according to the International Organization for Migration, a rise from 169,000 at the start of 2020. More than 65,000 people were displaced in the first quarter of this year.

The World Food Programme (WFP) said it had been struggling to feed those in need. The agency expected a further 100,000 people living in the Kanem region, east of Lake [Chad](#), to need food in the coming months, as the conflict between Chad's army and the rebel forces, the Front for Change and Concord, showed no signs of easing.

“With current resources, WFP is able to provide emergency food assistance to some 223,000 out of the 401,000 internally displaced people in Lake

Chad,” said Claude Jibidar, local WFP representative.

“We still need \$67m [£48m] to support all internally displaced people until the end of the year, but funding is not forthcoming and many do not know where their next meal will come from.

[Almost 30 million will need aid in Sahel this year as crisis worsens, UN warns](#)

[Read more](#)

“The humanitarian community is working to keep up with the pace of displacement but is still unable to provide an adequate and timely response.”

Bokoey Libyana left his village after it was attacked by Boko Haram last October. “They kidnapped our brothers ... they also took about 10,000 of our cattle,” said the 52-year-old, whose five children are now out of school. “I need them to work. They spend most of their time collecting wood, so they can sell it in the market to buy food.”

Libyana shares his monthly aid rations with other families. “When we get our share of food from the WFP, we need to send some of that to the orphans of our brothers who were killed by Boko Haram.”

The family now live in Fourkhouloum, home to about 70,000 displaced people. The nearest healthcare facility is 19km (12 miles) away.

Bokoey Maidray, 47, has been in Fourkhouloum for nearly a year and is struggling to feed four wives and 15 children. “When days are like honey we can eat, have more than a meal. But when they are bad, we don’t eat,” said Maidray, who had hoped to return home last month, but was prevented by another attack on his village. “Boko Haram came back again to burn my house on 11 April, the same day of re-electing the president, they burned down all the houses there.”

According to WFP, 66% of Chadians live in severe poverty. The oil-rich country ranked 187 out of 189 nations in the human development index in 2020.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/may/17/on-bad-days-we-dont-eat-hunger-grows-for-thousands-displaced-by-conflict-in-chad>

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

## [New Zealand](#)

# New Zealand to cut ‘low-skill’ immigration and refocus on wealthy

Government signals sweeping changes to address ‘reliance on temporary migrant labour’



Jacinda Ardern with the tourism minister, Stuart Nash (left), who said New Zealand ‘can’t afford to simply turn on the tap to the previous immigration settings’. Photograph: Greg Bowker/Getty Images

Jacinda Ardern with the tourism minister, Stuart Nash (left), who said New Zealand ‘can’t afford to simply turn on the tap to the previous immigration settings’. Photograph: Greg Bowker/Getty Images

[Tess McClure](#) in Wellington

[@tessairini](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 05.18 EDT

New Zealand has become an increasingly appealing destination for those seeking a haven – from Covid-19, economic recession or chaotic international politics. In recent years, the country gained a [reputation for “billionaires’ boltholes”](#), as mega-rich speculators including Peter Thiel bought up remote properties in scenic, isolated regions.

But in a post-Covid world, the emigration dream will be less accessible – at least for those who don’t fall into the mega-rich category. On Monday, the [New Zealand](#) government announced it would be narrowing pathways for those hoping to migrate and work in the country, particularly those it classed as “low-skill” and low-wage workers. It simultaneously announced new measures to attract rich investors.

“When our borders fully open again, we can’t afford to simply turn on the tap to the previous immigration settings,” the tourism minister, Stuart Nash, said in a speech on Monday evening, which signalled sweeping changes ahead for immigration.

“Covid-19 has starkly highlighted our reliance on migrant labour – particularly temporary migrant labour. The pressure we have seen on housing and infrastructure in recent years means we need to get ahead of population growth,” he said.

High levels of migration have contributed to 30% of New Zealand’s total population growth since the early 1990s, Nash said. New Zealand’s dependency on temporary workers – the highest in the OECD – “means businesses have been able to rely on lower-skilled labour and suppress wages rather than investing capital in productivity-enhancing plant and machinery, or employing and upskilling New Zealanders into work”, he said.

Initial changes would be focused on the temporary and skilled migrant worker immigration categories. The minister’s speech was light on the precise details of how those visa categories would be changed, but he said the government would “strengthen both the minimum employer requirements and labour market test to be met before a migrant can be hired”.

The government would “encourage employers to hire, train and upskill more New Zealanders to fill skill shortages”, Nash said.

The proposals are part of a wider suite of changes to immigration in New Zealand. The government also announced new strategies to target wealthy investors. Nash said these would allow more than 200 wealthy international investors to come to New Zealand over the next 12 months.

In a pre-budget speech to business leaders on Thursday, the prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, had flagged changes ahead. “Let me be clear. The government is looking to shift the balance away from low-skilled work, towards attracting high-skilled migrants and addressing genuine skills shortages,” she said.

On Monday, Ardern said the government was using Covid-19 as an opportunity to reconsider areas such as immigration. She would not be drawn on how many people would be affected by the changes, saying it was about outcomes for New Zealand, not “crude numbers”. The Labour government’s immigration policy after initially being elected to power in 2017 was to reduce net migration by about a third – cutting 20,000 to 30,000 migrants from the then total of about 73,000.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/17/new-zealand-to-cut-low-skill-immigration-and-refocus-on-wealthy>.



## Ryanair

# Ryanair reports record £701m loss after Covid forced it to slash flights

Airline says vaccine rollout will help it recover from the ‘most challenging’ time in its history

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Ryanair planes parked on a stand at Stansted airport. The airline said passenger numbers dropped to 27.5 million last year from 149 million in the year before. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

Ryanair planes parked on a stand at Stansted airport. The airline said passenger numbers dropped to 27.5 million last year from 149 million in the year before. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

[\*Kalyeena Makortoff\*](#)  
[@kalyeena](#)

Mon 17 May 2021 04.00 EDT

Ryanair has posted the biggest annual loss in the company's 35-year history, after Covid travel restrictions and national lockdowns [nearly wiped out traffic last year](#).

The airline swung to an €815m (£701m) loss in the 12 months to 31 March, compared with a €1bn profit a year earlier, after passenger numbers plunged 81% in what it said was its "most challenging" year to date.

But the airline struck a hopeful note, suggesting the vaccine rollout would help the company recover from an unprecedented year of disruption for the aviation industry. [Ryanair](#) said it could break even this year, in the absence of further disruption.

Europe's largest discount airline said passenger numbers dropped to 27.5 million last year from 149 million in the year before. It blamed the poor figures on European governments it claimed imposed uncoordinated flight bans, travel restrictions and national lockdowns with little notice during the outbreak.

Ryanair expects traffic to recover as governments begin to lift international travel restrictions, with forecasts for around 80 million to 120 million passengers during the current financial year. It expects to fly just 5 million to 6 million passengers between April and June.

While the airline expects European air travel to be "materially lower" for the foreseeable future, it forecasts a "strong recovery in air travel, jobs and tourism" in the second half of the year.

"Unless there are some very adverse developments, either a fallover in vaccine delivery or some variant that looks like it's resistant to the vaccine, all of the indications are that there's going to be stronger demand than usual for European holidays," said Ryanair's chief executive, Michael O'Leary.

Sign up to the daily Business Today email

The comments came as the [UK reopened for foreign travel on Monday](#), with the government scrapping legal restrictions on going abroad.

While travellers will no longer have to give a permitted reason to fly internationally, those returning to England will need to follow a [traffic light system](#) that will require them to isolate at home or in a hotel depending on which country they have visited.

O’Leary said UK travellers had been booking flights to destinations beyond the green list, including Spain and the Balearic Islands, for June, July and August, proving passengers were “discounting short-term restrictions”.

He also played down fears over a new variant first discovered in India, noting that the UK health secretary, Matt Hancock, was confident that current vaccines were effective against the disease.

Ryanair said airfares were lower than normal at this time of year due to the continued lag in bookings. “But I’m very happy with a yield penalty in the short term, while we repair our volumes,” O’Leary said.

While passengers made 500,000 bookings in the first week of April, that number grew to 1.5m in the second week of May, with bookings up 50% over the past weekend alone. Ryanair hoped to return to pre-Covid traffic levels in 2022-23.

The airline will take advantage of the recovery by raising more money on the bond market in the coming days, but aims to slash debt levels after the pandemic. “The objective of the group in the next year or two will be to repair the balance sheet,” O’Leary said, adding that he wants to get back to a “zero net debt position in the next two to three years”.

“So anybody looking for share buybacks or dividends will have to wait,” he added.

He also took aim at the plane manufacturer Boeing, after deliveries of the 737 Max were again delayed in April. The airline has been waiting nearly two years for the aircraft after fatal crashes grounded the new models. The airline confirmed it had received an undisclosed sum in compensation.

“We think the management of Boeing in Seattle has been very complacent,” O’Leary said, claiming the manufacturer had failed to properly manage the relationship with regulators.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/may/17/ryanair-loss-covid-flights-vaccine>

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

## [Suez canal](#)

# Suez Canal starts work to extend double lane after Ever Given grounding

Grounding of the container ship in a southern section of the canal in March delayed the passage of hundreds of vessels through the waterway



The Ever Given, a Panama-flagged cargo ship, is seen in Egypt's Great Bitter Lake Photograph: Mohamed Elshahed/AP

The Ever Given, a Panama-flagged cargo ship, is seen in Egypt's Great Bitter Lake Photograph: Mohamed Elshahed/AP

*Guardian staff and agencies*

Sun 16 May 2021 21.07 EDT

Egypt has started dredging work to extend a second lane that allows for two-way traffic in a southern section of the canal near to where a giant container ship [got stuck for six days](#) in March.

The state-owned Suez Canal Authority (SCA) announced last week that it was planning to extend a second canal lane that opened in 2015 by 10km to make it 82km long, and would widen and deepen a single lane stretch at the southern end of the canal.

The work had begun following directives from Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi “to immediately start implementing the proposed development plan and put in place a timetable for completion as soon as possible”, the SCA said on Saturday.

[Ever Given crew fear joining ranks of seafarers stranded on ships for years](#)  
[Read more](#)

The [grounding of the 440-metre-long Ever Given](#) container ship in a southern section of the canal from 23 to 29 March delayed the passage of hundreds of vessels through the waterway, disrupting global trade.

The new project will extend the two-way section south of the Great Bitter Lake and will be carried out in part by the largest dredger in the Middle East, [the Mohab Mamish, which arrived in Egypt last month](#).

The Ever Given, still loaded with thousands of containers, is being held in the Great Bitter Lake between two stretches of the canal, amid a dispute over an SCA compensation claim against the ship’s Japanese owner Shoei Kisen.

The six-day blockage in March [disrupted global shipments](#). Some ships were forced to take the long alternate route around the Cape of Good Hope at Africa’s southern tip, requiring additional fuel and other costs. Hundreds of other ships [waited in place](#) for the blockage to end.

About 10% of world trade flows through the canal, a pivotal source of foreign currency to Egypt. About 19,000 vessels passed through the canal last year, according to official figures.

*Associated Press and Reuters contributed to this report*

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



# Table of Contents

[The Guardian.2021.05.19 \[Wed, 19 May 2021\]](#)

[Headlines wednesday 19 may 2021](#)

[Coronavirus Pandemic laid bare existing weaknesses in UK government, says NAO](#)

['Double whammy' Climate crisis to put millions of British homes at risk of subsiding](#)

[Israel-Gaza conflict France adds to ceasefire pressure on US as violence rages](#)

['There is no safe place' Israel airstrikes hitting affluent heart of Gaza](#)

[Day of anger Clashes in Jerusalem and West Bank amid protests and strikes](#)

[Guardian morning briefing Dominic Cummings teases Covid document drop. Get up to speed quickly.](#)

[Hospitals UK NHS trusts accused of burying dozens of patient safety reports](#)

[Trump Organization New York investigation is now criminal matter, says attorney general](#)

[Daniel Morgan Anger as Priti Patel delays publication of report into private detective's murder](#)

[Tobacco industry BAT and Imperial ask London court to strike out Malawi exploitation case](#)

['Moral authority' Nancy Pelosi calls for US diplomatic boycott of Beijing Winter Olympics](#)

[Alcohol Any amount harmful to the brain, finds study](#)

[Unexploded bombs 100 shells found in Solomon Islands yard by man digging hole for septic system](#)

[2021.05.19 - Coronavirus](#)

['We were being blamed for spreading coronavirus' Confronting hate against east Asians](#)

[Tunisia Lockdown ends, despite Africa's worst Covid death rate](#)

[Japan Flaw in vaccine booking system causes chaos](#)

[Travel Britons face four-hour passport queues, warns Border Force worker](#)

[Live Coronavirus: India passes US for record daily deaths; 60% of all vaccines given in just three countries](#)

[Taiwan Authorities raise Covid alert level amid rise in infections](#)

['Hoping for a good season' Italy prepares to welcome back tourists](#)

#### [2021.05.19 - Spotlight](#)

[Chips with everything How one Taiwanese company drives the world economy](#)

[Architecture Why are our cities built for 6ft-tall men? The female architects who fought back](#)

[Kris Hallenga How cancer survivor convinced a generation to check their breasts](#)

[Japan Tokyo's restaurateurs rail against alcohol ban as Covid measures bite](#)

[Travel Five of Anthony Bourdain's favourite food destinations](#)

[The gobsmacking truth about vaccines Extra Life: A Short History of Living Longer review](#)

['There is still so much hatred' Looking back on Holocaust documentary The Last Days](#)

[Never too late In my late 40s I realised writing a novel had become like Everest](#)

#### [2021.05.19 - Opinion](#)

[Britain's borders: wide open to Covid, slammed shut for people in need](#)

[Preston is a lesson for Labour: show communities you can deliver change](#)

[EU citizens made Britain their home – now they face a hostile environment](#)

[Let's face it, 2021 is shaping up to be an awful year for small talk](#)

[The politics sketch Angela 'Three Jobs' Rayner finds Tory sleaze a moving target](#)

[Has Brexit fatally dented the City of London's future?](#)

[Cartoon Ben Jennings on the lifting of lockdown](#)  
[If lockdown easing goes awry, it has nothing to do with](#)  
[Johnson's Modi operandi, OK?](#)

[2021.05.19 - Around the world](#)

[Robert Durst Murder trial reopens after 14-month pandemic](#)  
[recess](#)

[Spain PM vows to 'restore order' after 8,000 migrants reach](#)  
[Ceuta](#)

[Mediterranean More than 50 feared drowned after migrant](#)  
[boat sinks off Tunisia](#)

[China Panic as 300-metre-high skyscraper wobbles](#)

[US Joe Biden poised to sign anti-Asian American hate crimes](#)  
[bill](#)

[Michigan Biden tours Ford facility as protests over Gaza-](#)  
[Israeli conflict erupt](#)

[Uttar Pradesh Indian mosque bulldozed in defiance of high](#)  
[court order](#)

[Galápagos Islands Rock formation Darwin's Arch collapses](#)  
[from erosion](#)

[US More than 90% of black Americans say they have been](#)  
[racially profiled while shopping](#)

[Bangladesh Journalist arrested and charged over alleged](#)  
[document theft](#)

[Headlines tuesday 18 may 2021](#)

[Coronavirus Local lockdowns possible in England if Covid](#)  
[rates rise, says minister](#)

[Live UK Covid: minister confirms return to local lockdowns](#)  
[an option if Indian variant situation deteriorates](#)

[Long Covid Symptoms ease after vaccination, survey finds](#)

[Vaccines Pfizer/BioNTech Covid vaccine has approved](#)  
[storage period extended](#)

[2021.05.18 - Coronavirus](#)

['I would want to be vaccinated first' Covid experts on](#)  
[England's relaxed rules](#)

['Urgent. Oxygen needed' Nepalis mobilise to take charge in](#)  
[Covid crisis](#)

['It feels really special' Manchester venues optimistic as doors reopen](#)

[US Biden vows to send 20m doses of approved vaccines overseas](#)

#### [2021.05.18 - Spotlight](#)

[Delivery text scams The nasty new fraud wave sweeping the UK](#)

[The long read A Jewish case for Palestinian refugee return](#)

[Parent trap Why the cult of the perfect mother has to end](#)

['I can't believe someone's written this' The Muslim punk sitcom breaking new ground](#)

#### [2021.05.18 - Opinion](#)

[Johnson's voter ID checks are not about electoral fraud, they're about power](#)

[Covid experts warn against foreign holidays, so why is Boris Johnson so keen?](#)

[I live in Sheikh Jarrah. For Palestinians, this is not a 'real estate dispute'](#)

[Could you take down a grizzly bear with your bare hands?](#)

[My husband believes he can](#)

#### [2021.05.18 - Around the world](#)

[India Cyclone Tauktae brings 165km/h winds and heavy rain](#)

[Disability 500 global firms put disability inclusion on boardroom agendas](#)

[Global development Petra Diamonds pays £4.3m to Tanzanians 'abused' by its contractors](#)

['Cooling off' period China divorces drop 70% under new law but young may be avoiding marriage](#)

[US Supreme court to hear abortion test case that could rip up precedent](#)

#### [Headlines monday 17 may 2021](#)

[Coronavirus England ban on indoor gatherings may need to be reimposed, warns expert](#)

[Live UK Covid: Boris Johnson urges 'heavy dose of caution' as Britain lifts many more restrictions](#)

[Scotland People urged to stay cautious as Covid restrictions are eased](#)

[Explainer How the rules are changing today](#)

[2021.05.17 - Coronavirus](#)

['Everybody is angry' Modi under fire over India's Covid second wave](#)

[Business GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi report strong results in trials of Covid vaccine](#)

[Tokyo Olympics More than 80% of Japanese oppose hosting Games – poll](#)

[Lockdown scrutiny 'MPs must take back control of lawmaking,' says human rights barrister](#)

[2021.05.17 - Spotlight](#)

['In my mind there was no way out' Mel B on domestic abuse, trauma and recovery](#)

[Great British Farce if parkrun does not return but clubs and casinos do](#)

['My cheapo garden fairy lights do this too' Yayoi Kusama: Infinity Mirror Rooms](#)

['I am desperate to bring people in again' Small museums in England on reopening](#)

[Back with a bang UK theatre bets on bold reopening](#)

[2021.05.17 - Opinion](#)

[Starmer's pitiful pitch to England's north-east is a recipe for more disasters](#)

[Why are Palestinians protesting? Because we want to live](#)

[Animals are our overlooked allies in the fight against Covid](#)

[What do you even say to young people about climate change?](#)

[2021.05.17 - Around the world](#)

['Catastrophic' Sierra Leone sells rainforest for Chinese fish plant](#)

['On bad days, we don't eat' Hunger grows for thousands displaced by conflict in Chad](#)

[New Zealand Government to cut 'low-skill' immigration and refocus on wealthy](#)

[Airline industry Ryanair reports record £701m loss as Covid forces it to slash flights](#)

[Suez canal Dredging starts to extend double lane after Ever Given grounding](#)