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‘Jaw-dropping’ fall in life expectancy in poor areas of England, report finds

Sir Michael Marmot’s report says Covid figures from Manchester reveal sharp decline in social conditions

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Ashton-under-Lyne is among Greater Manchester’s poorest areas and has seen widening social and health inequalities. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Ashton-under-Lyne is among Greater Manchester’s poorest areas and has seen widening social and health inequalities. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

[Patrick Butler](#) *Social policy editor*

Wed 30 Jun 2021 02.27 EDT

Boris Johnson's post-Covid [levelling-up agenda](#) will fail unless it addresses declining life expectancy and deteriorating social conditions in England's poorest areas, a leading authority on public health has warned as he published figures showing the impact of the pandemic on Greater Manchester.

Sir Michael Marmot revealed the coronavirus death rate in [Greater Manchester](#) was 25% higher than the England average during the year to March, leading to “jawdropping” falls in life expectancy and widening social and health inequalities across the region over the past year.

The deteriorating health equalities picture in the region and across similarly deprived areas of the country was a result of longstanding, avoidable socioeconomic inequities and ethnic disadvantage, exacerbated by a decade of spending cuts and amplified by Covid and the effect of prolonged lockdowns, he said.

The pandemic has brutally exposed just how unequal England actually is

Andy Burnham, mayor of Greater Manchester

Marmot proposed a “moral and practical” plan for government investment in jobs, housing, local services and education to tackle longstanding health and social inequalities in [Manchester](#) and similar areas. “If government is serious about levelling up, here’s how to to it,” he said.

Ministers’ ambition to level up regional differences has been criticised for overly focusing on large economic infrastructure projects. Marmot’s proposals suggest the focus should be widened to address the social conditions that cause inequalities at community level. “Levelling up really ought to be about equity of health and wellbeing,” he said.

The findings of the Greater Manchester report were “generalisable” across other deprived areas of England, added Marmot, saying: “It’s pretty bad for life chances to live in poorer parts of London, too. Levelling up shouldn’t only be about the Midlands and the north-east and the north-west [of England]. Deprived parts of London need attention as well.”

Marmot is the director of the UCL Institute for Health Equity and an eminent public health expert known for his landmark work on the social determinants of population health. Just prior to the pandemic he published research linking UK austerity cuts to the [first falls in life expectancy](#) for more than 100 years.

His latest report shows life expectancy in north-west England fell in 2020 by 1.6 years for men and 1.2 years for women in 2020, compared with 1.3 years and 0.9 years across England as a whole. Within the region, life expectancy dipped most sharply in the poorer areas. Such a rapid decline was in life expectancy terms “enormous”, Marmot said.



Longstanding, avoidable socioeconomic inequities had caused deprivation in the Greater Manchester region, said the report. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Life expectancy had gone down all round the country but the degree to which people were affected depended on two things: level of deprivation and the region of the country in which they lived.

Covid-19 mortality rates varied within the region from around 400 males per 100,000 in the poorer boroughs such as Salford and [Tameside](#) to fewer than 250 per 100,000 in more affluent Trafford. For women they ranged from just

under 250 per 100,000 in Manchester, to 150 per 100,000 in Stockport. Almost all local authority areas in the region had mortality rates above the England and Wales average.

[boroughs chart](#)

Marmot called for a doubling of healthcare spending in the region over the next five years, as well as a refunding of local government, to tackle and prevent these inequalities and growing problems such as homelessness, low educational attainment, unemployment and poverty.

Future spending should prioritise children and young people, who had been disproportionately and disproportionately harmed by the impacts of Covid restrictions and lockdowns, and had experienced the most rapid increases in unemployment and deteriorating levels of mental health.



Andy Burnham: ‘People in low-paid, insecure work have often had little choice in their level of exposure to Covid.’ Photograph: Phil Noble/Reuters

A decade of government spending cuts had left the poorest parts of England in a [weakened state when Covid hit](#) in 2020, and there was an urgent need to do things differently, Marmot said, adding that as the UK emerges from the pandemic it would be a “tragic mistake to attempt to re-establish the status quo that existed before”.

As well as damaging communities and harming health prior to the pandemic, funding cuts had “harmed local governments’ capacity to prepare for and respond to the pandemic and have left local authorities in a perilous condition to manage rising demand and in the aftermath of the pandemic,” the report said.

Even before the pandemic the UK had witnessed a stagnation in health improvement that was the second worst in Europe, and widening health inequalities between rich and poor. “That stagnation, those social and regional health inequalities, the deterioration in health for the most deprived people, are markers of a society that is not functioning to meet the needs of its members.”

[Deprivation graphic](#)

The report was commissioned by the Greater Manchester Health and Social care Partnership.

The mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, said: “The pandemic has brutally exposed just how unequal England actually is. People have lived parallel lives over the last 18 months. People in low-paid, insecure work have often had little choice in their level of exposure to Covid, and the risk of getting it and bringing it back home to those they live with.

“Levelling up needs to start in the communities that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. To improve the nation’s physical and mental health, we need to start by giving all of our fellow citizens a good job and good home.”

The Department of Health and Social Care was approached for comment.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/30/life-expectancy-key-to-success-of-levelling-up-in-uks-poorer-areas-covid-pandemic>

Greater Manchester

‘Our town centres were dying long before the virus came’

Deprivation in Greater Manchester may have been exacerbated by Covid but its sources go back much further, say local people

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Ashton-under-Lyne in Greater Manchester is part of Tameside, which is ranked 20th most deprived area out of 151. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Ashton-under-Lyne in Greater Manchester is part of Tameside, which is ranked 20th most deprived area out of 151. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Tue 29 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

The pandemic's devastating impact on Tameside, [Greater Manchester](#), might not be visible from a walk along Ashton-under-Lyne's high street but, in Lee Walker's opinion, the effect of decades of underinvestment is starting to show.

When asked about the causes of health and social inequality in Tameside, he gesticulates at the empty shops around him.

"Covid's had an impact but our town centres were dying long before the virus came along," says Walker, 42, manager of a bus and coach operator in Greater Manchester.

On the index of multiple deprivation – which ranks local authorities in England by various factors including health outcomes, unemployment levels and educational attainment – Tameside ranks 20th most deprived out of 151.

[Life expectancy key to success of levelling up in UK's poorer areas](#)
[Read more](#)

The borough has been hard hit by the pandemic and [in December held](#) the unwanted record of the local authority with the highest proportion of Covid deaths in the UK. It is, therefore, exactly the kind of place the government has in mind while pledging to address inequalities and ["build back better"](#).



Student nurse Grace Kenney in Ashton-under-Lyne. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Walker diagnoses a number of issues facing the town, from littering to low police numbers but, fittingly for a bus driver, his main bugbear is with local transport.

“[Greater] Manchester doesn’t have the worst transport system but the government has slashed budgets in recent years, and it is poorer areas like Droylsden and Denton which suffer,” he says. “I know [Andy Burnham](#) is trying to make public transport affordable for everyone but the system is underfunded.”

Grace Kenney, a student nurse from Oldham who recently moved to Ashton, says: “Greater Manchester has a lot of poverty stricken areas and you can see it before your eyes.

“Homelessness and drugs are a big problem in the area, as is council clean-up ... There’s litter and rubbish everywhere and it makes the area a much less attractive place to live.”

Noting the government’s proposed 1% pay rise for nurses, as well as her own lack of financial support during her course, Kenney says she is “not surprised” that recruiting healthcare workers has been a problem in the area.

While Kenney has just moved in, married couple Rachel, 43, and Steven Perry, 62, are on their way out – having decided to relocate to Portsmouth – where they believe infrastructure is better and care services more widely available.

“You can’t get a doctor’s appointment so I’m not surprised the death rate round here has been so high,” says Rachel.



Rachel and Stephen Perry have decided to leave Ashton-under-Lyne for Portsmouth where they believe services are superior. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Both are retired because of ill-health and Steven often needs to use a wheelchair after suffering severe injuries during the Falklands war while serving in the Royal Navy.

“What I want to see is a lot more money into places like this,” he said. “The government lets these big cheese developers come in and they’ve not consulted people. The people who live here haven’t seen the benefit. As far as I’m concerned they’ve ruined Manchester.”

Ali Dumencibasi, owner of Hanson’s cafe, famed locally for its fish, chips and peas, has helped run his family’s business for over 25 years.

You can’t get a doctor’s appointment so I’m not surprised the death rate round here has been so high

Steven Perry, Falklands veteran

“There’s a general consensus that a lot of money is wasted in Ashton on pointless projects like the market,” he said. “Instead of ripping it down it could have been significantly improved for a fraction of the price.

“Places like this undoubtedly need more investment but it’s not just Ashton – I’m always hearing from customers that things have got worse in Hyde and Oldham too.”

Labour MP Andrew Gwynne knows the area: he grew up in Tameside and now represents neighbouring Denton and Reddish, as well as being chair of the Greater Manchester all-party parliamentary group. He said: “What we’ve seen over the last 11 years is the stripping out of social infrastructure and that has really clobbered a community like Tameside.

“Reducing funding to Tameside council has resulted in the stripping back of key public services, including intervention programmes like Sure Start, which were starting to make a real difference in Tameside.

“The pandemic has had a huge impact but there were already endemic problems. As a man, you’ll live 12 years longer in Denton West than in Denton South and that’s in a small geographic community like Denton; that isn’t right in any book and we have to tackle it.

“We urge government, and our local Tory MPs, to work with us to address inequality and truly build back better in Greater Manchester.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/30/our-town-centres-were-dying-long-before-the-virus-came>

[Byelections](#)

Chance of holding Batley and Spen as low as 5%, say key Labour figures

Party throws its weight behind Kim Leadbeater as Keir Starmer's team fear backbench revolt if she loses



Labour candidate Kim Leadbeater campaigning in the run-up to the Batley and Spen byelection this Thursday. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Labour candidate Kim Leadbeater campaigning in the run-up to the Batley and Spen byelection this Thursday. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

[Heather Stewart](#) *Political editor*

Wed 30 Jun 2021 02:00 EDT

Senior Labour figures believe the party has only a 5% to 10% chance of holding the West Yorkshire seat of Batley and Spen in Thursday's

byelection, as Keir Starmer's team brace themselves for a backbench revolt if the Tories take the seat.

The constituency formerly held by the murdered MP Jo Cox is being contested for Labour by her sister, Kim Leadbeater, in a contest marred by allegations of [dirty tricks](#) and [intimidation](#).

Leadbeater, who lives locally, has been chased and heckled on the campaign trail. The [Jo Cox](#) Foundation issued a statement on Tuesday expressing concern about the impact of intimidation on public figures.

[Labour activists 'egged and kicked' on Batley and Spen campaign trail](#)
[Read more](#)

“Addressing this intimidatory and abusive culture matters. It matters for the diversity of our public life, it matters for the way in which the public can engage with representative democracy, and it matters for the safety and emotional wellbeing of the people it affects. We can and must debate our differences passionately, but not at the price of legitimising violence,” the foundation said.

Labour has poured resources into Batley and Spen in recent weeks, with scores of MPs descending on the constituency to knock on doors after the race was triggered by sitting MP Tracy Brabin winning the West [Yorkshire](#) mayoralty.

Former Labour MP and Russia Today presenter [George Galloway](#) is standing as an independent, under the banner of the Workers Party, claiming the race is a referendum on Starmer's leadership.

Labour party strategists have played down the party's hopes of a win on Tuesday, increasingly fearing that Galloway will attract enough votes to allow the Conservatives to scrape home.

One MP who has been canvassing in the area said: “At the beginning, I would have said it was not like Hartlepool. Now, I've changed my mind – I think we're going to lose it.”

Labour sources pointed out the Tories could have won the West Yorkshire seat in the December 2019 general election had it not been for the Brexit party and a candidate for the Heavy Woollen District Independents taking more than 8,000 votes between them.

Nevertheless, another defeat after Hartlepool – and after the Liberal Democrats snatched Chesham and Amersham from the Conservatives despite the “vaccine bounce” – would be greeted with horror by Labour MPs in potentially vulnerable red wall seats.

“Everyone will be watching Batley and Spen,” said one backbencher, who said a poor result for Labour could suggest “there’s potentially another 20-50 seats across the north that we are going to lose”.

They warned that fear could prompt a “kamikaze” attempt on Starmer’s leadership – though it is unclear whether any candidate could gather the 40 signatures necessary to trigger a contest.

Several MPs said Angela Rayner was the only MP who could attract the necessary names – but her allies denied reports that she could launch a challenge, attributing them to, “men in suits going around claiming to speak for Angela, when she’s more than capable of speaking for herself.”

Despairing backbenchers said they will be watching Starmer’s response on Friday closely, with many grumbling that it remains unclear what Labour’s distinctive message to the electorate is.

But the shadow sports minister, Alison McGovern, who was a friend of Jo Cox and has worked with Leadbeater on the Jo Cox Foundation, rejected the idea a poor result would be a blow for Starmer personally.

“If we manage to pull off a miracle then it will be because of Kim: she’s just a great person,” she said, adding, “whatever happens, of course we have got to argue for Keir to be the prime minister, and we have got to argue for Labour to be the government: that’s on us. But that’s not because of a byelection, it’s due to having lost in 2019 and really needing to win.”

Starmer has already shaken up his team since Labour lost last month's Hartlepool byelection, with key figures including political director Jenny Chapman departing.

Lady Chapman is being replaced by Luke Sullivan, a longtime party official who knows Labour MPs well after a long stint at the side of former chief whip Nick Brown. More senior appointments are expected to be announced in the coming days.

['He's never spoken up about Muslims': Keir Starmer leaves Batley voters disaffected](#)
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Former Starmer aide Simon Fletcher, a well-respected party veteran who also worked for Jeremy Corbyn and Ed Miliband, used a New Statesman article on Tuesday to urge the party to "avoid creating the impression that it has fallen into a pit of self-loathing".

Starmer's team said he will host a series of town hall-style meetings across the country in the run-up to Labour's September conference. But Fletcher warned against another "listening exercise".

"What if the issue is in fact that what people want to hear is that Labour stands for something with conviction?" he wrote. "If Labour is not to be left permanently stranded in opposition, it must now be bolder and leave people in no doubt about its intentions."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/30/chance-of-holding-batley-and-spen-as-low-as-5-say-key-labour-figures>



[Euro 2020](#)

England beat Germany as Sterling and Kane send them to Euro 2020 last eight

01:59

Southgate praises England's intelligence in win over Germany – video

[David Hytner](#) at Wembley

[@DaveHytner](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 13.51 EDT

For England, it was always going to be about finding the moment, the one to blow apart a tight game, to cut through so much negative tournament history – particularly at the hands of [Germany](#). And for long spells, as the tension rose to near unbearable levels at a raucous and emotional Wembley, the home crowd wondered whether it would come.

Gareth Southgate had reverted to a 3-4-3, ignoring the clamour for greater fantasy and more creative players. It was the [England](#) manager sticking

bravely to his principles, seeking security, the platform for the moment, and a part of the equation was patience, which was not in abundant supply inside the stadium.

[England 2-0 Germany: Euro 2020 player ratings from Wembley](#)
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Germany had shown their quality in the first half, particularly early on, yet England came to match them physically and tactically. The longer the second half wore on, the greater the assurance of those in white shirts. Could they find the incision, the note of clarity?

Southgate had called for a hero, somebody to score a goal that will live for ever, and with 15 minutes to go he found one. Yet again, it was Raheem Sterling. After his match-winners in the group stage [against Croatia](#) and [the Czech Republic](#), Sterling bristled with confidence and hard running. The qualities were stamped all over the goal that ignited English dreams.

Southgate had introduced Jack Grealish from the bench and the midfielder was involved in the move, taking a pass from [Harry Kane](#) and ushering in the overlapping Luke Shaw on the left. But it was Sterling who started the move and it was he who finished it, driving into the box to guide home Shaw's low delivery. Sterling has scored 15 times in his past 20 England appearances.



England players celebrate Harry Kane's goal. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

The abiding image of the occasion from a German point of view would come shortly after. It was of Thomas Müller, his face contorted in despair. It was always going to be about moments and Germany's came on 81 minutes when the veteran was sent clean through by Kai Havertz.

A few minutes earlier, Müller had blasted a free-kick into the wall from the edge of the area. Now he had to find the equaliser. Wembley fretted. Yet the finish was dragged low past Jordan Pickford's right post. There was relief for Sterling, who had left a back-pass short for John Stones, sparking the opening.

England sensed only their second knockout phase victory at a [European Championship](#) – the first had been against Spain on penalties in 1996 – and also an end to the crushing sequence of German dominance over them. Germany had won the past four meetings in the knockout rounds of major finals.

[Harry Kane](#)

It fell to Kane to make sure and, after his struggles in front of goal, it felt impossibly sweet for him and everybody with England in their hearts when

he stooped to nod home a Grealish cross. It had followed another thrust by Shaw and was the prompt for the mother and father of all parties to break out in the stands.

For Southgate, there was personal atonement for his infamous penalty miss here against Germany in the Euro 96 semi-final but, more broadly, the sense that England had located the ignition key. The hard truth is the nation is not noted for an ability to beat established teams in the knockout rounds of major finals. Since the World Cup triumph of 1966, the only serious scalp has been that of Spain.

Now the sense of possibility cannot be ignored, particularly with the draw to the final having opened up. Ukraine await next, in the quarter-final in Rome. Pickford has come to radiate assurance behind a miserly defence and the statistics show it is four clean sheets out of four; the last time that happened for England at a tournament, Bobby Moore ended up lifting the Jules Rimet trophy.

[England fans emerge from dream into strange new light after Germany win | Barney Ronay](#)

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Southgate's players had to suffer, with Germany subjecting them to a harrowing opening 10 minutes, pressing high and running at the England backline. Rice was booked for a foul – Havertz wasted the free-kick on the edge of the area – but how the young midfielder managed the game thereafter. Alongside Kalvin Phillips, he was excellent. They were not alone.

England dug out a foothold, with Bukayo Saka showing a couple of flashes on the right, even if there was the worry in the first half about whether they could retain possession or show the needed precision with it.

Sterling extended Manuel Neuer with a shot from distance on 16 minutes and Harry Maguire headed high from a Kieran Trippier cross. Kane fed off scraps – again – although he almost found one in first-half stoppage time. Sterling burst into the area and, when the ball broke kindly for the captain, he looked favoured to score. Mats Hummels nicked the ball away from him.

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Germany had regrets before the interval, the biggest coming after Havertz released Timo Werner. The angle was tight but Werner still had plenty of goal at which to aim. Pickford made a vital block. The goalkeeper would continue to excel after the interval, tipping over a Havertz rocket.

Southgate had wanted to mirror Germany's formation, to contain the threat of Joshua Kimmich and Robin Gosens in the wing-back positions, which was achieved. And he got the timing of Grealish's introduction just right. Grealish contributed fully, although not as much as the irrepressible Sterling. England have glory in their sights.

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[England](#)

England step into strange new light as fear turns to joy in win over Germany

Fans celebrated wildly and ghosts were laid to rest as England advanced to the Euro 2020 quarter-finals in style

01:59

Southgate praises England's intelligence in win over Germany – video



[Barney Ronay](#) at Wembley

[@barneyronay](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 16.53 EDT

Well, that was unexpected. On a grey, boisterous, increasingly wild night at Wembley Stadium England's footballers did something new. When it comes to these grand, operatic international tournaments [England](#) shrink.

England are fearful. At best England flutter, briefly, before being broken on the wheel. Except not this time. Instead Gareth Southgate's fine young team produced a performance of slow-burn fire to beat Germany – yes, really – 2-0 and progress to the quarter finals of [Euro 2020](#).

At the end, as the crowd basked and bounced in the seats it was hard to shake the feeling of people emerging from a fever dream into some strange new light. The last 18 months have been a gruelling, bruising alternative timeline. But it seems good things can also happen here too.

[Gareth Southgate praises 'immense' England but warns against complacency](#)

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England will now travel to Rome to play Ukraine in the quarter finals on Saturday, a little giddy, but with a sheen of complete conviction. Before this game the players had promised to slay the dragons of the past, to move on. And at times this did feel like something shifting. But not without a final heave.

In the hours before kick-off a large crowd had gathered in the dank concrete piazza just off Wembley Way, bobbing and leaping and bellowing in the cold summer rain. Don't Take Me Home is still the song of choice, and for all the gruelling repetitions it is a winsome, wistful number at heart. Following England to these summer adventures is at bottom an act of escapism. Wembley in the rain felt like a box with the lid taken off.

As the players emerged before kick-off there was a vast, rolling wave of noise around this grey concrete bowl. Even the colours had something stirring, the German flags packed in a knot at the western end, the cross of St George unfurled around the fences, painted names providing a tour of the country from Grimsby to Taunton to Leicester.

The German anthem was solidly booed, God Save The Queen belted out in the classic arms-spread pose. The English national anthem has been described as a plea to a being that doesn't exist to preserve something that shouldn't. On days like these it looks like an invitation to an extremely aggressive, slightly frightening hug.

England were in white, [Germany](#) all black, and for a few moments at the start [Germany](#) seemed to have more bodies, more options, more angles. On his touchline Southgate paused, a little concerned. The waistcoat is of course long gone. Russia 2018 felt like an extended summer wedding party, Southgate the best man. But there is pressure here, and expectation, and plans expensively laid.

Southgate prowled his touchline, more thickly bearded, more gnarled, less wildly engaged with the spectacle. He is such a fundamentally decent man, but so exposed also to anger and hostility, it is easy to fear that this might finally get to him. Most of the time he sounds like the last sensible person left in the country.



Bukayo Saka battles for the ball with Germany's Robin Gosens. Photograph: Alex Morton/Uefa/Getty Images

Steadily England began to drag the evening their way. This is a team that sets out first to stop the game, and to stop the opponent. Bukayo Saka, still only 19 but such a mature, pedigree footballer, put Robin Gosens flat on his back with a shimmy and the crowd roared back into life.

England produced waves of pressure, a smothering white-shirted weather front of free kicks into the box, cautious overloads on the flanks. Raheem Sterling pirouetted and twirled and ran in behind repeatedly on the left. There was pressure, half chances and sense of pushing insistently at a door.

Harry Kane was free right in front of goal just before half-time, but Mats Hummels made a fine challenge. At times watching Kane in these Euros has been baffling. He has seemed unable to move above a jog, weighted down by the invisible mahogany sideboard strapped to his shoulders. But Kane had his moment as England finally showed their teeth.

With 68 minutes gone Southgate made his first change, sending on Jack Grealish, his most extravagantly creative player. Five minutes later there was a surge in the centre, a sudden quickening driven by a burst from Sterling.

Luke Shaw produced the perfect cross. Sterling, still not breaking stride, tucked it past Manuel Neuer.

In the England end there was a tiny pause, a breath drawn. And then: chaos, whoops, wild chest-beating joy. Bodies tumbled across the seats. Shirtless men reeled around on the tarpaulins at the front. Legs, arms, hands, open mouths seemed to fuse into one single writhing substance known as Deliriously Happy England Fan.

[England fans enjoy delirious Wembley party as Germany are swept aside](#) | Jonathan Liew
[Read more](#)

It would take a hard heart not to feel delighted for Sterling in particular, a 10-year veteran these days, all will and resolve, but a footballer who still has that slightly tender look: head up, eyes wide, a little watchful. He has carried England's attack at these Euros.

By now this was only heading one way. Before the end Kane, energised now, made it two with a neat finish from a Grealish cross. Cue: delirium stage two, followed by the final whistle.

There were lingering hugs and bellows of joy around the stands, but above all a feeling of relief as the crowd blinked and boggled at this most unexpected chain of events. Football may or may not be coming home. It doesn't really matter much. But these England players created a moment of their own here, a team playing without fear, without baggage, not haunted by the ghosts of the past, and uplifting in all the right ways.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jun/29/england-fans-emerge-from-dream-into-strange-new-light-after-germany-win>



[Euro 2020](#)

Gareth Southgate praises ‘immense’ England but warns against complacency

- Sterling and Kane on target in 2-0 win against Germany
- England face Ukraine in quarter-final on Saturday

01:59

Southgate praises England's intelligence in win over Germany – video

[Jacob Steinberg](#) at Wembley

[@JacobSteinberg](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 16.39 EDT

Gareth Southgate hailed England’s “immense” performance in their historic 2-0 victory against Germany and urged his players to achieve something special after reaching the quarter-finals of Euro 2020.

England's manager was full of pride after his side rose to the occasion in front of 41,973 fans at Wembley, defeating one of their fiercest rivals with late goals from Raheem Sterling and Harry Kane, but he does not want to see any complacency against Ukraine in Rome on Saturday.

[England beat Germany as Sterling and Kane send them to Euro 2020 last eight](#)

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Southgate kept his emotions in check after the final whistle, even though it was a moment of personal redemption after his missed penalty against [Germany](#) at Euro 96, and he refused to say that beating Joachim Löw's side had sent a warning to the rest of the tournament's sides.

"I think the players were immense right the way through the team," Southgate said. "To know so many millions of people after such a difficult year at home can have that enjoyment is very special. When we got in the dressing room we were talking about Saturday. Today was immense. But emotionally and physically there is a cost.

"It's a dangerous moment for us. The warmth of success, the feeling we only have to turn up to win the thing, we know it's going to be an immense challenge. The players know that. They should feel confident from the way they've played. We came here with an intention and we've not achieved that yet.

"I'm just thinking about Saturday. It was lovely to be on the side to see the second goal go in. It was a really special moment. We've not achieved what we want to achieve yet. We can look back on today in the future. I want to get Saturday right."

England, whose switch to 3-4-3 paid off, had lost four successive knockout matches against Germany since the 1966 World Cup final. They had also won only one knockout tie in [European Championship](#) history.

"Today is a big result," Southgate said. "We haven't put together a semi-final [England made the last four at Russia 2018] followed by a quarter-final since 1966. These players keep writing history. They have the chance again.

We've only been to one European Championship semi-final. They have the chance to do something really special."

Harry Maguire, outstanding in England's back three, echoed Southgate's call for focus and stressed that being on the supposedly easier side of the draw was irrelevant. "I'm not going to play it down, it means everything to beat them," Maguire said. "We changed our formation to counteract theirs. We were aggressive all over the pitch. Credit to the coaching staff. The gameplan worked brilliantly and we executed it really well.

"The side of the draw means absolutely nothing. You've seen in recent matches in this tournament that if you don't play to a level you'll get punished. We don't get carried away. If we don't perform we'll lose. Come Saturday we know it's business again."

England were accused of being too negative during the group stage but Declan Rice argued that they had silenced the doubters. "A lot of people had written us off: complaints about the performances. not scoring enough goals," the midfielder said. "You read a load of things. As players you put them to the back of your mind but you want to prove people wrong.

[England fans enjoy delirious Wembley party as Germany are swept aside | Jonathan Liew](#)
[Read more](#)

"I think today with a full house, everybody had that fire in their belly to go out there and, one, knock Germany out of the tournament and, two, for us to progress to the next round. It's history. In the press conferences all week players have been asked about past games with Germany but we've created our own little bit of history today."

Germany's defeat marked an end to Löw's 15 years in charge. Hansi Flick, the former Bayern Munich manager, is to take over from the 61-year-old. "All I can say is in these 15 years there were a lot of positive things," Löw said.

"We won the World Cup in 2014 and then the Confederations Cup in 2017. Since 2018 we have had problems. In the end we haven't managed to

impose our style of play on teams.

“I have met people who have supported me and have become very important in my life. There are experiences I had that I wouldn’t have wanted to miss. The disappointment will stay for a while but I am sure that there are a lot of positives I can take from these 15 years.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jun/29/gareth-southgate-warns-immense-england-against-complacency>.

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[England](#)

England fans in UK can't go to Rome for Euros quarter-final due to Covid rules

FA says it can't sell tickets domestically for Saturday owing to Italy's five-day quarantine period



Tickets for the Euro 2020 quarter-final at the Stadio Olimpico, Rome will be available from the UK embassy, with English fans resident in Italy getting priority. Photograph: Paul Greenwood/BPI/Rex/Shutterstock

Tickets for the Euro 2020 quarter-final at the Stadio Olimpico, Rome will be available from the UK embassy, with English fans resident in Italy getting priority. Photograph: Paul Greenwood/BPI/Rex/Shutterstock

[Paul MacInnes](#)

[@PaulMac](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 16.37 EDT

English expatriates will be called upon to roar Gareth Southgate's side to success in their [Euro 2020](#) quarter-final against Ukraine on Saturday after Covid restrictions stopped domestic fans from travelling to Rome.

The Football Association has confirmed it will not be selling tickets to the [England](#) Supporters Travel Club, the official arm of England's away support, after the requirement by the Italian government that all British citizens quarantine for five days on arrival in the country.

Tickets will instead be made available through the UK embassy in Rome, with English fans resident in the country getting priority.

Saturday night's fixture, which follows [England's historic defeat of Germany in the last 16](#), is to be played in front of a heavily reduced crowd at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome. Total capacity will reach only 18,000, with the FA able to distribute roughly 12.5% of the total, or just over 2,000 tickets.

With an estimated 30,000 UK citizens living in [Italy](#), there will now be a rush to get hold of a precious seat. There is no mechanism established yet for distributing the places, with the embassy's phone line likely to be under siege.

Embassy staff have prior experience in the tournament, however, having helped Welsh fans make it to an encounter at the Olimpico with Italy in the group stages. The work done by embassy staff was praised by supporters.

Current quarantine rules for British citizens entering Italy run until the end of July. On arrival travellers who have been in the UK in the previous 14 days must self-isolate for five days, and then test negative for the disease to be released.

In a statement to ESTC members on Tuesday night, the FA said: "Unfortunately, the FA will not be selling any tickets via the ESTC for this fixture given the travel restrictions in place across both countries, and as such are working with Uefa and the British embassy in Italy to facilitate as many ticket sales to English residents in Italy as possible."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jun/29/england-fans-in-uk-cant-go-to-rome-for-euros-quarter-final-due-to-covid-rules>

Wednesday briefing: England's dreaming

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[National Gallery](#)

Gainsborough's Blue Boy to return to UK after 100 years

'Masterpiece of British art' heads to National Gallery in London thanks to loan from gallery in California



Restoration work is carried out on Thomas Gainsborough's *The Blue Boy* at the Huntington Gallery in San Marino, California. Photograph: AP

Restoration work is carried out on Thomas Gainsborough's *The Blue Boy* at the Huntington Gallery in San Marino, California. Photograph: AP

[Mark Brown](#) *Arts correspondent*

Wed 30 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Thomas Gainsborough's [The Blue Boy](#), a popular painting that left Britain a century ago to a public outpouring of anger and sadness, is to return temporarily to the [National Gallery in London](#).

It was announced on Wednesday that the artwork would come home 100 years to the day since it was last seen in the UK. It is a crowd pleaser, [described by newspapers at the time as “the world’s most beautiful picture”](#).

Once owned by the Duke of Westminster, it was purchased by the American railway magnate Henry E Huntington a century ago for a then world record price of \$728,000.

Since then it has been a star exhibit at the [Huntington Art Gallery in San Marino, California](#), never loaned and never likely to be loaned again.

Gabriele Finaldi, the director of the [National Gallery](#), said the 2022 loan was “a unique opportunity for visitors to see Gainsborough at his dazzling best”. He called it “a painting of supreme poise and elegance ... without doubt a masterpiece of British art”.

After it was bought by Huntington, The Blue Boy went on display at the National Gallery as part of a farewell tour. Over three weeks more than 90,000 people came to see it. The gallery’s director at the time, Charles Holmes, mournfully wrote “*au revoir*” on the reverse in the hope it would come back.



The Blue Boy was painted in approximately 1770. Photograph: The National Gallery/PA

Its departure was met by a public outcry, although not everyone was concerned about it staying.

Before Huntington was revealed as the buyer, the Manchester Guardian expressed hope that The Blue Boy would find its way to France because, while British galleries were full of French art, “there is very little sign of any interest in France in English art”. “It would be a splendid thing if The Blue Boy were to pass into the French national collection,” wrote the Guardian’s correspondent.

Instead it went to the US where it has been adored. Its frequent appearances in popular culture include Tim Burton’s 1989 film Batman, [hanging on the walls of Gotham museum](#) when it was taken over by Jack Nicholson’s Joker. It was casually vandalised by a philistine henchman. A copy also hung on the wall of [the apartment of the mother of Joaquin Phoenix’s Joker](#) in the 2019 origin story movie.

Elsewhere it has been the inspiration for [Jamie Foxx’s valet costume](#) in Quentin Tarantino’s Django Unchained; and taken pride of place – along with the Japanese fighting fish – [in the office of the villain Vincent Ludwig in Naked Gun](#).

The painting first appeared in public at the Royal Academy in 1770, the year it was painted, when it was titled A Portrait of a Young Gentleman. By 1798 it was being called The Blue Boy, a nickname that stuck.

As well as bringing a showstopper home, albeit temporarily, the free National Gallery display will explore how Gainsborough was responding to the legacy of [Anthony van Dyck](#) and grand manner portraiture.

The Blue Boy will hang in room 46 from 25 January until 15 May 2022.

This article was downloaded by calibre from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/jun/30/gainsborough-blue-boy-return-uk-national-gallery-london>

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland voters split on need for Brexit checks, poll reveals

High political stakes in NI protocol shown in research released hours before unveiling of new UK-EU deal



The survey found 47% of people agreed that the protocol was appropriate for Northern Ireland and 47% disagreed. Photograph: Artur Widak/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

The survey found 47% of people agreed that the protocol was appropriate for Northern Ireland and 47% disagreed. Photograph: Artur Widak/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

[Lisa O'Carroll](#) *Brexit correspondent*
[@lisaocarroll](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

Voters in Northern Ireland are evenly split over the need for Brexit checks on goods coming in from Great Britain, a [new survey](#) has shown just hours before a new deal between the EU and the UK is revealed.

The EU will on Wednesday say it is retreating from the threat of a trade war and confirm a “package” of arrangements to take the heat out of the bitter dispute over the sales of British sausages, secondhand cars and potted plants in [Northern Ireland](#).

Sources said it will unveil “a package of measures” along with an agreement to accede to the UK’s request for a three-month extension on a grace period for the sale of chilled meats, which led to an ugly dispute, dubbed the sausage war.

The peace deal comes as detailed research commissioned by Queen’s University Belfast reveals that a majority of voters, 67%, agree that Northern Ireland does need “particular arrangements” to manage [Brexit](#) because of the land border with Ireland, but they are equally divided on whether the protocol agreed in 2020 is the answer.

When asked if the protocol was appropriate for Northern Ireland, 47% agreed and 47% disagreed.

But concern about its impact on shopping is widespread with 69% concerned about the cost of products while 61% are concerned that the range of products might be reduced by checks on goods crossing the Irish Sea.

Unionists have been leading a campaign to get the protocol scrapped. A high court verdict on a request for a judicial review is expected to be handed down at 10am on Wednesday.

While the EU and the UK hope the extra breathing space over the summer will create the conditions for a new deal – including some sort of veterinary agreement and a trusted-trader scheme to wave through big-brand meats such as Marks & Spencer sausages – the survey shows that the protocol will have a lasting impact on voter behaviour.

Three-quarters of the 1,500 respondents said the position of Northern Ireland assembly candidates on the protocol will be relevant when choosing how to vote next year.

“People in NI are highly exercised by the protocol, both for and against – and in equal proportions,” said Katy Hayward, a professor at Queens and a co-investigator of the three-year project into governance in Northern Ireland. “The political tensions are compounded by the low levels of trust in the political parties.”

Trust in local parties was low (just 20% trusted the DUP on the protocol and 40% Sinn Féin), but a similar survey in March showed that just 3% trusted the UK government and 6% trusted Whitehall civil servants.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/30/northern-ireland-voters-split-on-need-for-brexit-checks-poll-reveals>

Brexit

OpenStreetMap looks to relocate to EU due to Brexit limitations

Open-source UK tech company cites copyright issues, rising costs and prospect of more influence in EU



Since Brexit, mapping databases are not protected by a joint UK-EU copyright law. Photograph: OpenStreetMap

Since Brexit, mapping databases are not protected by a joint UK-EU copyright law. Photograph: OpenStreetMap

[Alex Hern](#)

[@alexhern](#)

Wed 30 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

OpenStreetMap, the Wikipedia-for-maps organisation that seeks to create a free and open-source map of the globe, is considering relocating to the EU,

almost 20 years after it was founded in the UK by the British entrepreneur Steve Coast.

OpenStreetMap Foundation, which was formally registered in 2006, two years after the project began, is a limited company registered in England and Wales. Following [Brexit](#), the organisation says the lack of agreement between the UK and EU could render its continued operation in Britain untenable.

“There is not one reason for moving, but a multitude of paper cuts, most of which have been triggered or amplified by Brexit,” Guillaume Rischard, the organisation’s treasurer, told members of the foundation in an email sent earlier this month.

One “important reason”, Rischard said, was the failure of the UK and EU to agree on mutual recognition of database rights. While both have an agreement to recognise copyright protections, that only covers work which is creative in nature.

Maps, as a simple factual representation of the world, are not covered by copyright in the same way, but until Brexit were covered by an EU-wide agreement that protected databases where there had been “a substantial investment in obtaining, verifying or presenting the data”. But since Brexit, any database made on or after 1 January 2021 in the UK will not be protected in the EU, and vice versa.

Other concerns Rischard listed include the increasing complexity and cost of “banking, finance and using PayPal in the UK”, the inability for the organisation to secure charitable status, and [the loss of .eu domains](#).

The increased importance of the EU in matters of tech regulation also played a role: “We could more effectively lobby the EU [and] EU governments and have more of an impact, especially in countries where there is no local chapter,” Rischard wrote.

The move may still not happen if the foundation can’t find a suitable country to relocate to. Ireland is out, because of a requirement for directors to be residents; France too, because of the difficulty in guaranteeing English-

language services. “The negative side is that it would mean a lot of work, and cost time and money,” Rischard added.

In just a few years, OpenStreetMap has succeeded in producing highly detailed maps that rival those created by national bodies and big tech companies such as Google and Nokia. A large network of volunteers combines remote work, such as tracing satellite imagery to update natural features, with on-the-ground expertise, touring city centres to ensure that shops, restaurants and offices are correctly recorded.

The organisation’s maps are used by companies including Apple, Microsoft and Uber, and the increasing reliance of some of the world’s largest companies on the open-source map has [sparked controversy within the community](#): by 2020, for instance, Apple alone had contributed more than 13m edits to the atlas, leading some to worry that a shift in focus could prevent it from achieving its original goal of providing maps to underserved communities.

The OpenStreetMap Foundation did not reply to a request for comment.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/30/openstreetmap-looks-to-relocate-to-eu-due-to-brex-it-limitations>

Special educational needs

English county councils warn of £1.3bn special educational needs deficit

Local authorities say they face ‘a financial cliff edge’ due to ‘an explosion’ in number of children needing support



A survey by the County Councils Network and Society of County Treasurers shows the deficit for 40 authorities has gone up from £134m to a projected £1.3bn. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

A survey by the County Councils Network and Society of County Treasurers shows the deficit for 40 authorities has gone up from £134m to a projected £1.3bn. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

Sally Weale Education correspondent

Wed 30 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

County councils in England are warning of a £1.3bn [special educational needs](#) deficit which threatens to derail their finances and undermine capacity

to support recovery efforts after the pandemic.

They say the total deficit is set to increase eightfold in just five years as a result of “an explosion” in the number of children requiring additional support and they warn they are facing “a financial cliff edge”

A survey by the County Councils Network (CCN) and the Society of County Treasurers shows the combined deficit for 40 authorities has gone up from £134m in 2018-19 to a projected £1.3bn in 2022-23.

The CCN is calling for an injection of additional funding in the forthcoming spending review to help bring deficits down to a manageable level. It is also urging the government to complete and publish its much anticipated [review](#) into provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (Send), set up in 2019 to address problems with capacity, funding and support for children.

Local authorities have seen spending on children with Send increase sharply in recent years as a result of legislative changes in 2014 which extended their responsibilities for young people up to the age of 25.

There has also been an increase in the number of young people with education, health and care plans (EHCPs) from 354,000 in 2019 to more than 430,000 in 2021. These legally binding documents guarantee support services for children with the greatest needs.

In view of the pressure on budgets, the government has allowed councils to carry over deficits until 2023, which has provided a breathing space but is “little more than a sticking plaster,” according to the CCN.

Keith Glazier, the CCN’s children and young people spokesperson, said: “We have a statutory and moral obligation to support these young people, but local authorities are building up significant deficits.

“With limited options and a lack of funding available, we are being backed into a corner and face a financial cliff edge in two years’ time when these deficits will be on our budget books and will need to be addressed. This

could mean we take funds from other services or money from our pandemic recovery efforts.”

Tim Oliver, leader of Surrey county council, said his authority had seen a “massive” increase in the number of EHCPs with 10,000 children now fully funded. “As we speak today we have an accumulated deficit in excess of £85m.

“We have some children who cost hundreds of thousands of pounds a year to support. We have a statutory obligation to do that, but I’m afraid it’s just not financially sustainable.”

A Department for Education spokesperson said: “We have announced the biggest increase in school funding in a decade and increased high needs funding for councils to provide services for families and children with special educational needs and disabilities to more than £8bn this year – an increase of nearly a quarter over two years.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jun/30/english-county-councils-warn-of-13bn-special-educational-needs-deficit>

Extreme weather

Canada heatwave: dozens dead as searing plus-40C temperatures grip west

Police say a spate of sudden fatalities in normally temperate Vancouver is being caused by the unprecedentedly hot weather



A record-breaking heatwave in Vancouver, Canada has been blamed for a spike in sudden deaths. Photograph: Jennifer Gauthier/Reuters

A record-breaking heatwave in Vancouver, Canada has been blamed for a spike in sudden deaths. Photograph: Jennifer Gauthier/Reuters

Associated Press

Wed 30 Jun 2021 00.42 EDT

A searing heatwave that settled over western Canada for several days has been blamed for helping to cause the deaths of dozens of people in the

[Vancouver](#) area.

With a new record temperature for [Canada](#) of 47.9C (118F) set on Monday, police in the Burnaby area of Vancouver said they responded to 25 sudden-death calls in a 24-hour period starting on Monday.

The deaths were still under investigation and many of the deceased were seniors, Cpl Mike Kalanj of Burnaby Royal Canadian Mounted police said.

[The 'heat dome' explained: why the Pacific north-west is facing record temperatures](#)
[Read more](#)

Temperatures in the Vancouver area reached just under 32C (90F) (32 Celsius) Monday, but the humidity made it feel close to 40C (104F) in areas that were not near water, Environment Canada said.

The record-breaking heatwave could ease over parts of British Columbia, Yukon and the Northwest Territories by Wednesday, but any reprieve for the prairie provinces was further off, forecasters said.

In Vancouver, the police department said it had redeployed dozens of officers and asked the public to call 911 only for emergencies because heat-related deaths had depleted front-line resources and delayed response times.

“Vancouver has never experienced heat like this, and sadly dozens of people are dying because of it,” Sgt Steve Addison said in a news release. “Our officers are stretched thin, but we’re still doing everything we can to keep people safe.”

On Tuesday afternoon, he said, police had responded to more than 65 sudden deaths since the heatwave that has [spread across the pacific north-west of the Americas](#) began on Friday.

“The vast majority of these cases are related to the heat,” Addison said.

In a typical four-day period in British Columbia, there would be around 130 deaths reported but between Friday and Monday the total was 233, [CBC reported](#).

Ingrid Jarrett, chief executive of the British Columbia Hotel Association, said residents in parts of the Lower Mainland, Victoria and the Okanagan regions had been booking air-conditioned rooms so they can continue working and also get some sleep.

Environment Canada said the weather system shattered 103 heat records across British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon and Northwest Territories on Monday. Those records include the new Canadian high temperature of 47.9C at Lytton, British Columbia, smashing the [previous record set in the same village a day earlier](#).

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/30/canada-heatwave-dozens-dead-as-searing-plus-40c-temperatures-grips-vancouver>

International trade

UK making trade deals with countries abusing human rights, says TUC

TUC says UK should use its leverage to ensure countries respect labour and human rights



General secretary of the TUC, Frances O'Grady, criticised the government.
Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

General secretary of the TUC, Frances O'Grady, criticised the government.
Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

[Richard Partington](#) *Economics correspondent*
[@RJPartington](#)

Wed 30 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Boris Johnson's government has been accused of rushing into post-Brexit trade deals with countries where workers' rights are systematically violated or denied, including five out of the 10 worst offenders worldwide.

Trade union leaders and Labour said the UK government was turning its back on workers around the world and neglecting its commitment to fundamental human and labour rights in the scramble to demonstrate the benefits of Brexit by striking free trade deals outside the EU.

According to research from the TUC, the union umbrella group, and its international partner, the ITUC, more than a third of the non-EU nations with which the UK has secured trade deals are abusing workers' rights.

Five out of the 10 “worst countries in the world for workers”, according to the ITUC’s annual global rights index have agreed post-Brexit deals over the past two years. As many as 14 of the 24 countries where UK officials are currently negotiating trade deals also have poor track records, including Brazil, Malaysia and India.

It emerged earlier this year that the UK foreign secretary, [Dominic Raab](#), had [told staff that Britain intended to trade with countries with poor human rights records](#).

The TUC said the government needed to suspend some trade deals and use its leverage to ensure countries respect labour and human rights.

Frances O’Grady, general secretary of the TUC, said: “A government that readily agrees deals with countries which abuse rights abroad is one that won’t stick up for rights at home either. It’s time for ministers to stop the clandestine approach to trade deals and bring working people to the negotiating table.”

Emily Thornberry, the shadow trade secretary, said ministers had a moral obligation to make clear to other countries that if they wanted preferential trade deals they needed to uphold the rights of workers. Instead, she said:

“Liz Truss and her colleagues have done the opposite, handing out trade deals to dozens of governments with the worst track records in the world for abusing and exploiting their workers, and actively launching negotiations with several more.”

The five countries identified among the worst 10 in the world for workers' rights by the ITUC include Colombia, where 22 trade unionists were murdered in the past year, and Zimbabwe, where 13 nurses were arrested for requesting adequate allowances for PPE in response to Covid-19. The others are Honduras, where crackdowns on protest have been imposed; Egypt, where 26 steelworkers were prosecuted for striking over non-payment of wages, and Turkey, where 109 workers were subjected to violent treatment and mass detention for protesting against unfair dismissals.

According to the ITUC report, abuses of the right to strike, the right to establish and join a trade union, the right to trade union activities and the right to free speech and assembly are at an eight-year high. Sharan Burrow, the ITUC general secretary, said: "When Covid-19 hit, we learned who the heroes are. Workers everywhere cared for the sick, put food on our tables, and kept the economy moving. But despite all that, workers are under attack like never before."

A Department for International Trade spokesperson said: "None of the continuity trade agreements we have signed – and which have been scrutinised by parliament – have eroded any domestic standards in relation to workers' rights."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/30/uk-making-trade-deals-with-countries-abusing-human-rights-says-tuc>

The age of extinctionWildlife

Tories' 'toothless' UK policies failing to halt drastic loss of wildlife

More money is being spent destroying the environment than protecting it, MPs' report finds



HS2 has destroyed part of the woodland at Grim's Ditch in Aylesbury Vale, Buckinghamshire – a scheduled ancient monument. Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

HS2 has destroyed part of the woodland at Grim's Ditch in Aylesbury Vale, Buckinghamshire – a scheduled ancient monument. Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

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[Phoebe Weston](#)

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Tue 29 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

The government's underfunded green ambitions and “toothless” policies are failing to halt catastrophic loss of wildlife, a committee of MPs has said in a new report that finds the biodiversity crisis is still not being treated with the urgency of the climate crisis.

The UK is the most wildlife-depleted country out of the [G7](#) nations and, despite pledges to improve the environment within a generation, properly funded policies are not in place to make this happen, according to the report from the environmental audit committee (EAC).

The government's [25-year environment plan](#) to [protect 30% of land and sea](#) by 2030 and its promise to deliver [biodiversity net gain](#) on infrastructure projects look good on paper, but inadequate monitoring and a lack of compliance means the government is not delivering on them.

Nature is still not being taken into account in policymaking and more money is being spent destroying the environment than protecting it, the report

found. Funding cuts and a lack of ecological expertise in government and local authorities is worsening the situation, MPs said.

Caroline Lucas, Green MP for Brighton Pavilion, said: “We are losing species at a terrifying rate and multiple warnings are not being heeded. The collapse in biodiversity has to be pushed up the political agenda, and nature protection and restoration given the priority and resources it needs, before it’s too late.

“The Treasury still sticks to an outdated mindset, which sees GDP growth as the key measure of progress and nature as an expendable resource. That has to change, as the report makes clear.”

The EAC report urges the government to increase [Natural England’s funding](#) year-on-year so the agency can protect nature at the vast scale needed.

For seas, destructive bottom trawling should be restricted or banned in all marine protected areas and more “no-take” zones must be established.

The committee’s recommendations include creating a legally binding target for soil health, a natural history GCSE, and banning tree-planting on peat soils and floodplains. Important ecosystems such as ancient woodland and peatland must be looked after, whether they are a “protected area” or not.

[A feather in their cap: RSPB’s victory that saved millions of birds](#)
[Read more](#)

Other recommendations include creating a commission to track public expenditure that harms biodiversity, removing harmful subsidies and redirecting money into nature conservation.

Ministers should also spend at least £3m a year on increasing biosecurity to tackle invasive species, which cost the UK economy £1.8bn a year.

The report found the climate emergency has risen up the political agenda and is increasingly being factored into decision-making in the public and private sector, but this has not yet happened with biodiversity.

Government data released at the end of last year found [public sector investment](#) in conservation fell in real terms by 33% in five years.

Philip Dunne, chairman of the committee, said despite countless policies to improve the natural environment, they remain “grandiose statements lacking teeth and devoid of effective delivery mechanisms”.

He said: “We have no doubt that the ambition is there, but a poorly mixed cocktail of ambitious targets, superficial strategies, funding cuts and lack of expertise is making any tangible progress incredibly challenging.”

The environment secretary, George Eustice, said he would respond formally to the EAC review in due course.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/30/toothless-tory-policies-drastic-loss-of-wildlife-uk-aot>

2021.06.30 - Coronavirus

- [Economy UK Covid recovery at risk as furlough scheme phased out, say economists](#)
- [Jobs UK unemployment drops as firms hire staff](#)
- [Covid loans Fraud and error will cost UK taxpayers tens of billions, say MPs](#)
- [Inflation Borrowing could push cost of debt above £100bn](#)
- [Live Coronavirus: Thailand suffers record deaths; Kim Jong-un warns of 'grave incident' in North Korea](#)
- [Brazil Covaxin contract suspended after irregularities](#)
- [Australia State of Queensland says Pfizer vaccine supply will run out in days](#)
- [North Korea Covid outbreak fears after Kim Jong-un warns of 'huge crisis'](#)

[Covid crisis watch](#)**Economics**

UK Covid recovery at risk as furlough scheme phased out, say economists

Business leaders also warn of renewed threat to jobs and growth as Delta variant drives up infections

- [UK unemployment drops as firms hire staff amid Covid rebound](#)
- [Opinion: how will UK economy emerge from shadow of Covid?](#)



The extension of Covid restrictions to 19 July is putting Britain's economic recovery under pressure. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

The extension of Covid restrictions to 19 July is putting Britain's economic recovery under pressure. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

[Richard Partington](#) *Economics correspondent*

[@RJPartington](#)

Wed 30 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Britain's economic recovery from Covid-19 is coming under pressure amid worker shortages and lengthier pandemic restrictions, as the Delta variant of coronavirus drives up infection rates.

As the government begins to wind down the furlough scheme on Thursday – despite delaying its roadmap out of lockdown by four weeks until 19 July – the Guardian's monthly snapshot of economic developments suggests the pace of recovery has plateaued.

Figures from the [Office for National Statistics](#) show debit and credit card transactions fell by 5% over the week to 17 June, while retail footfall declined for the third week in a row at the tail end of a springtime boom after Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed.

Business leaders are sounding the alarm over a renewed threat to jobs and growth as the Delta variant of coronavirus has driven up infection rates and forced a delay in the final lifting of lockdown restrictions, which ministers had originally pencilled for 21 June.

[How will the UK economy emerge from the shadow of Covid-19?](#)
[Read more](#)

Meanwhile, firms are coming under mounting pressure from chronic staff shortages and rising supply-chain prices, threatening a burst of inflation pushing up the cost of living in Britain.

Employment remains below pre-pandemic levels, but employers' groups warn cuts to the furlough scheme from the start of July will endanger jobs and put Britain's economic recovery at risk.

Frances O'Grady, the general secretary of the [TUC](#), said: "Ministers must not pull the plug on our recovery by cutting off support too soon.

"We need a cast-iron commitment from the chancellor that he will extend furlough for as long as is needed, rather than ending it abruptly in three months' time. Working families need this certainty now – not a rollercoaster approach to protecting livelihoods."

For more than a year, the Guardian has [tracked the economic fallout](#) from the pandemic on a monthly basis, following infection rates, eight key growth indicators and the level of the FTSE 100. Faced with the deepest global recession [since the Great Depression](#), the [Covid crisis watch](#) also monitors Britain's performance compared with other countries.

On the dashboard in the past month, British retail sales have dipped as UK consumers swapped supermarket and online shopping for trips to pubs and restaurants after the relaxation of pandemic controls earlier this spring. After rising in each of the previous four months, [measures of consumer confidence also plateaued in June](#).

From Thursday, businesses will be forced to contribute 10% of an employee's wage, rising to 20% in August, as taxpayer furlough support is cut from the current level of 80%. Employees will continue to receive the same amount. About 1.5 million workers are still receiving emergency wage top-ups, according to [official figures](#).

Steve Turner, the assistant general secretary of the trade union Unite, said industries such as hospitality, aviation and the automotive sector were "still on the ropes" and being hit hard by repeated lockdowns, supply chain disruption and inconsistent government decisions.

"If the government tells us we now must 'live with Covid', then we need the systems in place to help protect jobs as employers look ahead to continued uncertainty. That means proper furlough support for all workers, including freelancers and others excluded, coupled with sick pay that allows workers to support themselves and their families if they are ill," he said.

Despite the risks to the economy business activity continued to grow at among the fastest rates since the late 1990s in June, as progress with the Covid vaccine helped lift demand for goods and services. Companies responded to rising workloads by [taking on extra staff](#), helping unemployment fall for the fourth month in a row.

Firms are however running into supply constraints amid acute staff shortages and rising raw material prices and transport costs. Hospitality venues, logistics and warehousing are under particular pressure, with [warnings](#)

[chilled food will struggle to reach some shops](#) this summer because of a lack of drivers and production workers.

Inflation [jumped to 2.1% in May](#), stoking concerns that the Bank of England and other major central banks around the world will raise interest rates or wind down their quantitative easing bond buying programmes to prevent the economy from overheating.

However, many economists argue the current burst in inflation is likely to prove temporary and warn there are bigger risks to a sustainable economic recovery from removing support too soon. Business leaders also warn the outlook for jobs is worsening as the Delta variant pushes up infection rates and leads to lengthier pandemic restrictions in the UK and several other countries.

Jagjit Chadha, the director of the [National Institute of Economic and Social Research](#), said risks remained from winding down furlough, higher company debt levels incurred during the pandemic, and continuing restrictions.

Writing in the Guardian, he said the Treasury and the Bank needed to adopt a flexible approach to maintaining emergency support while risks to the recovery remained.

“[It’s] far too early to get out the bunting,” he said.

“As an economy sensitive to the fluctuations in world trade, the UK is acutely subject to the maxim that this won’t end for anyone until it ends for everyone. This means that for as long as the crisis casts its shadow, the denuded prospects for tourism, international trade and labour mobility may act as a drag on UK activity.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jun/30/uk-covid-recovery-at-risk-as-furlough-scheme-phased-out-say-economists>

[Covid crisis watch](#)**Economics**

UK unemployment drops as firms hire staff amid Covid rebound

Our latest snapshot of key economic indicators finds business activity surging but stock markets slipping

- [UK recovery at risk as furlough phased out, say economists](#)
- [Opinion: how will UK economy emerge from shadow of Covid?](#)



A waiter serves customers at tables outside a restaurant in Soho, London. Covid restrictions on dining indoors and outdoors have largely been lifted as the UK economy reopens. Photograph: Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty Images

A waiter serves customers at tables outside a restaurant in Soho, London. Covid restrictions on dining indoors and outdoors have largely been lifted as the UK economy reopens. Photograph: Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty Images

[Richard Partington](#) *Economics correspondent*
[@RJPartington](#)

Wed 30 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Delta variant fuels sharp rise in Covid-19 infections

Daily new confirmed coronavirus infections have risen sharply over the past month, fuelled by the Delta variant. The government [delayed its plan for relaxing pandemic restrictions in England by four weeks](#), while countries around the world have launched tougher travel restrictions. The [latest figures](#) to 28 June show 22,868 people tested positive for Covid-19 across the UK, the highest level since January. However, vaccines appear to have weakened the link between infections and hospital admissions and deaths. More than 44 million people have had a first shot of a Covid-19 vaccine. More than 32 million have had a second.

Public transport usage rises above pre-pandemic levels

The number of trips taken on public transport has risen above pre-pandemic levels for the first time since Covid-19 spread to the UK. According to [Apple mobility data](#) – which records requests made to Apple Maps for directions – bus and train journeys are now 11% higher than levels in January 2020. As the easing of pandemic restrictions and the vaccine programme enables more people to venture away from home and some office workers resume commuting, walking and driving levels have also risen sharply.

Stock markets slip on inflation and Delta variant concerns

Global stock markets have come under pressure in the past month from the double threat of rising inflation and lengthier pandemic restrictions. Financial investors are concerned that a burst of inflation in several large economies will force central banks to raise interest rates. Prolonged Covid-19 restrictions amid the spread of the Delta variant have also weighed on company shares, denting the value of travel firms in particular. The [FTSE 100](#) has dipped in recent weeks from a high of 7,184 in mid-June, slipping to about 7,100, and taking the index of leading UK company shares back to where it started the month.

Bank of England target breached as inflation climbs

UK inflation [jumped to 2.1% in May](#), driven by higher fuel prices, clothing costs and rising prices for meals and pub and restaurant drinks as lockdown restrictions were relaxed. The rise in the consumer prices index (CPI) measure of inflation from 1.5% a month earlier breached the Bank of England's target rate of 2%, stoking fears over a sustained rise in the cost of living after lockdown. Threadneedle Street expects the strength of Britain's economic recovery to [push inflation above 3% by the end of the year](#), although believes it will then fade as the post-Covid boom slows down.

Surge in business activity hampered by supply shortages

Britain's economy surged ahead in June as private-sector businesses secured extra work and created thousands of new jobs, but analysts warned cost pressures were mounting for companies amid labour shortages and continuing disruption to global supply chains. The flash IHS Markit/Cips purchasing managers' index, a closely watched barometer of private sector activity, fell slightly to 61.7 in June from 62.9 in May. Although there were concerns about rising prices for raw materials, the reading was above the 50 mark that separates expansion from contraction and still among the highest levels since records began in 1998. Growth in the eurozone accelerated.

However, the growth rate for private-sector activity in the US and China fell slightly.

Unemployment drops as employers hire staff

[Unemployment rate](#)

Britain's jobs market is stabilising after UK unemployment fell for the fourth month in a row in April, as businesses took on more staff in response to pandemic controls being relaxed. The [unemployment rate fell to 4.7%](#) in the three months to April, representing about 1.6 million people, in a modest improvement from 4.8% in the three months to March. The number of staff on company payrolls rose for a sixth consecutive month, rising by 197,000 to 28.5 million. However, this remains about 500,000 below pre-pandemic levels. Young adults, workers in hospitality and those living in London have borne the brunt of job losses in the past year.

Retail sales fall in May as hospitality reopens

British retail sales [fell 1.4% in May](#) from the previous month as consumers returned to pubs and restaurants after the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, leading to a drop in spending on food in supermarkets. However, the dip followed an exceptionally strong April, while household goods stores and garden centres continued to fare well as people spent money in anticipation of the summer and the lifting of restrictions on outdoor gatherings. Overall, total retail sales remain 9.1% higher than pre-pandemic levels after a boom in online shopping during lockdown, but in-store sales remain 1.3% lower.

Economic recovery boosts government tax take

The government's budget deficit – the difference between expenditure and income – was [lower than expected in May](#) as the reopening of the economy prompted a rush to the shops and pushed VAT and fuel duty receipts higher. Official figures showed the deficit was £24.3bn, undershooting the £28.5bn estimate from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) by £4.2bn.

Analysts said the stronger-than-expected economic rebound was on course to hand Rishi Sunak a £30bn windfall compared with the OBR's forecast for the current financial year.

Easing of pandemic restrictions boosts economic growth

The UK economy grew for a third consecutive month in April as the easing of Covid-19 lockdown measures fuelled a rebound in consumer spending. Official figures show [GDP rose by 2.3% in April](#), the fastest pace since July 2020, amid a rise in spending in shops, bars and restaurants, as well as a pickup in bookings for caravan parks and holiday lets. Growth of 2.3% in April followed 2.1% growth in March and 0.4% growth in February, after the economy performed better than expected during the national lockdown at the start of the year. However, further ground remains to be recovered, with the economy still about 4% below its pre-pandemic level.

House prices soar amid stamp duty holiday

House prices continued to rise sharply in May as buyers rushed to take advantage of the government's stamp duty holiday before it is gradually phased out from the start of July. The latest snapshot from Halifax, Britain's biggest mortgage lender, showed the [average price of a UK home rose by 1.3% in May](#), taking the average selling price to a record £261,743. Halifax said almost £22,000 had been added to the average house price since May 2020, when the UK went through the first easing of national lockdown restrictions. It marks a 9.5% annual increase, the fastest rate of growth in seven years.

And another thing we've learned this month ... worker shortages risk undermining economic recovery

[Chart for job ads online](#)

Businesses across the UK are [struggling with staff shortages](#) as lockdown measures are relaxed, in a development employers' groups say could endanger the economic recovery from Covid-19. Office for National Statistics [figures compiled using adverts from the recruitment website Adzuna](#) show the total volume of online job adverts is substantially higher than pre-pandemic levels, at 129% of its February 2020 average. Roles in hospitality, transport and warehousing are under particular pressure, with logistics organisations [warning that chilled food will struggle to reach some shops](#) this summer because of a lack of drivers and production workers. Some economists say shortages will lead to rising wages, pushing up prices of goods and services for consumers. [Business leaders are calling for looser post-Brexit immigration rules](#) amid a [decline in EU jobseekers in the UK](#). Some politicians blame the furlough scheme, with almost 2 million workers still temporarily away from their jobs and receiving emergency wage support from the state. But others say employers should offer higher pay to lure new recruits.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jun/30/uk-unemployment-drops-as-firms-hire-staff-amid-covid-rebound>

Business

Covid loan fraud and error will cost UK taxpayers tens of billions, say MPs

Cross-party group says prioritising speed and relaxing controls meant increased exposure to potential abuses



Meg Hillier, the chair of the public accounts committee, said there was a concerning lack of urgency about the financial risks of the schemes. Photograph: Isabel Infantes/EMPICS Entertainment

Meg Hillier, the chair of the public accounts committee, said there was a concerning lack of urgency about the financial risks of the schemes. Photograph: Isabel Infantes/EMPICS Entertainment

[*Kalyeena Makortoff*](#) *Banking correspondent*
[@kalyeena](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

Taxpayers will lose tens of billions of pounds to Covid-19 support schemes because the government dropped basic fraud checks and rolled out the programmes in haste, a parliamentary report has claimed.

The report, published by the public accounts committee (PAC), acknowledged that the government acted quickly to provide vital support to vulnerable businesses at the start of the pandemic. However, the decision to prioritise speed and financial aid meant taxpayer exposure to fraud and error was “significantly increased”.

The PAC blames the government’s twin decisions to relax the usual fraud controls in programmes such as the popular bounce-back loan scheme (BBLs) – which allowed companies to self-declare information such as earnings as part of their applications – and to support businesses and individuals it had no previous relationship with.

According to figures released by the business department, the combined impact of fraud and defaults will mean that nearly half of the £46.5bn bounce-back loans distributed during the pandemic will never be repaid.

The PAC said government departments had not been making enough use of counter-fraud expertise when they designed new programmes, to make sure they minimised losses.

Fraud and error already cost the public purse £51.8bn annually, according to the Cabinet Office estimates. That is before any Covid-19 loan schemes, including BBLs and furlough, are taken into account.

But that number could surge, according to figures released by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which previously estimated that fraud, and loan losses due to defaults, [could cost the taxpayer about £26bn](#).

Bounce-back loans have been the most popular among the Covid-19 loan schemes, with more than £46.5bn released to more than 1.5m businesses who said their operations were at risk due to Covid-19 lockdown measures.

The scheme – which ran from May 2020 to March 2021 – offered businesses loans worth up to £50,000, capped at 25% of turnover, [at an interest rate of 2.5%](#). The first 12 months were payment- and interest-free for borrowers.

Those loans were distributed by dozens of commercial banks, including major high street lenders such as HSBC, Lloyds and Barclays. While it is up to those banks to chase customers for repayments, any losses will be footed by the taxpayer, as the loans come with a 100% government guarantee.

The report said the arrangement had left BEIS “reliant on banks that it admits lack incentives given it is not their money on the line”.

The PAC chair, the Labour MP Meg Hillier, said there was a concerning lack of urgency among government departments, including BEIS, about the financial risks linked to Covid support programmes. “The Covid emergency masks a more worrying underlying approach to managing risk and taxpayers’ money,” she said.

The PAC is now issuing a raft of recommendations, which include calls for the Treasury and Cabinet Office to annually publish a report identifying the risks that fraud and error pose to public money, strengthen fraud reporting requirements on Covid-19 support schemes and reveal any plans to recover taxpayer money.

Guardian business email sign-up

It is also calling on government departments to introduce more robust counter-fraud measures, and address inconsistencies on how penalties and sanctions are applied.

A government spokesperson said their priority had been to act quickly to protect workers and businesses. They said the loan, furlough and grant schemes provided a “lifeline to millions across the UK – helping them to survive the pandemic and protecting jobs”.

“These schemes were designed to minimise fraud from the outset and we have rejected or blocked thousands of fraudulent claims. We won’t tolerate those who seek to defraud taxpayers and will take action against

perpetrators, including through criminal prosecution,” the spokesperson added.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jun/30/covid-loan-and-error-will-cost-uk-taxpayers-tens-of-billions-say-mps>

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Inflation

Post-Covid inflation could push interest on UK's debt above £100bn, warns BIS

Bank for International Settlements says inflation spike could raise the cost of borrowing to post war highs



BIS warned of the ‘daunting’ issues confronting policymakers during the post-pandemic recovery. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

BIS warned of the ‘daunting’ issues confronting policymakers during the post-pandemic recovery. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

[Phillip Inman](#)

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Tue 29 Jun 2021 17.39 EDT

Inflation could spike this year, putting pressure on central banks to raise the cost of government borrowing to post war highs, according to the Bank of

International Settlements, which warned of “daunting” issues confronting policymakers during the post-pandemic recovery.

With UK government debt spiralling to £2.2tn due to the costs of the pandemic, a jump in interest rates to levels last seen in the 1990s could more than double the cost of national borrowing.

Swiss headquartered BIS, often dubbed the central bank’s central bank, said in the short term national money policymakers should maintain ultra low interest rates to maintain the post-pandemic recovery. The warning came in its annual economic report, which was released Tuesday.

However, they should signal to financial markets and consumers that they will prevent inflation becoming a persistent problem, if necessary with a hike in interest rates.

“The uneven recovery creates daunting challenges for policymakers,” the BIS report said.

“The sustainability of debt can change if interest rates start increasing,” Agustin Carstens, the BIS general manager added. “You don’t want to be surprised.”

The report contains predictions for various nations, including the UK, based on a variety of scenarios. In one of the bleaker forecasts, BIS said UK interest rates could return to 1990s levels, which average 6%, increasing the current levels of annual debt servicing from £47bn to nearer £100bn a year.

Inflation has increased across much of the global economy as governments have eased lockdown measures and vaccination programmes have allowed more people to shop and mothballed businesses to reopen.

Annual price increases reached 5% in the US last month and trebled over two months in the [UK to reach 2.1% in May](#). House prices in the UK are growing at their fastest rate in 17 years, [data released Tuesday by Nationwide showed](#), with the annual price increase jumping to 13.4% in May.

Some economists, including former Bank of England governor Lord King and the Bank's ex-chief economist Andy Haldane, have argued for an increase borrowing costs to limit consumer spending power and ease the upward pressure on inflation.

However, the majority of academics and City economists believe some of the main drivers of inflation, including shortages of raw materials and essential components in cars and computers, are unlikely to persist into next year.

The BIS report stated: "As inflation concerns persist, communication will be tested to the fullest. Central banks face a delicate balancing act.

"On the one hand, they need to reassure markets of their continued willingness to support the economy as necessary. On the other, they also need to reassure them of their anti-inflation credentials and prepare the ground for normalisation."

Asked if that meant central banks should react now to calm inflation, Carstens told Reuters:

"It would not be appropriate to tighten monetary policy today just to reduce measured inflation and sacrifice a recovery of the economy."

Referring to bottlenecks in supply chains that have delayed shipments of goods around the world, he added: "As of today, we at the BIS consider that it will most likely be temporary."

The US Federal Reserve came under fire earlier this year for appearing to say that it would maintain low interests even if inflation increased and remained at elevated levels for several years.

Earlier this month chairman Jerome Powell appeared reverse that policy by saying interest rates would begin to rise in 2023, based on its forecast of the recovery.

Carstens, who headed Mexico's central bank before joining the BIS, said high levels of inflation would lead to a "substantial tightening in global financial conditions," making it more expensive for companies and

governments to borrow and causing markets to pull money out of developing countries.

“The main challenge (for the rest of the year) is how to coordinate market expectations with the conduct of policy,” Carstens said. “I think one of the hiccups we saw in the last months was the market going ahead of the Fed,” he said.

The report also looked at how Covid’s disproportional damage to lower-paid workers and the leap in stock markets driven by trillions of dollars of stimulus was intensifying concerns about inequality.

These concerns have been increasing since the financial crisis more than a decade ago. The current surge in global house prices – another of the BIS’s main macro economic concerns at present – typically favours the old at the expense of the young.

“It would be unrealistic, and indeed counterproductive, to gear monetary policy more squarely towards tackling inequality,” the BIS said, as it could reduce some of the flexibility needed to help economies and control inflation, both of which should help to reduce inequality longer-term.

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[Coronavirus live](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Coronavirus live news: Thailand suffers record deaths; Kim Jong-un warns of ‘grave incident’ in North Korea

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Brazil

Brazil suspends Covaxin contract after ‘serious accusations’ of irregularities

\$324m deal to buy 20m doses of Indian jab has become a headache for Bolsonaro after sleaze allegations



A leading opposition senator filed a formal criminal complaint on Monday against President Bolsonaro. Photograph: Andressa Anholete/Getty Images

A leading opposition senator filed a formal criminal complaint on Monday against President Bolsonaro. Photograph: Andressa Anholete/Getty Images

Staff and agencies

Tue 29 Jun 2021 18.25 EDT

Brazil will suspend a \$324m Indian Covid-19 vaccine contract that has mired President [Jair Bolsonaro](#) in accusations of irregularities, health minister Marcelo Queiroga announced on Tuesday.

The deal to buy 20m doses of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin shot has become a headache for Bolsonaro after whistleblowers went public with alleged irregularities.

A former employee at the health ministry recently told the prosecutor's office that he told the president that he was [pressured to sign a contract](#) that would increase the average price of doses by 1,000%.

Bolsonaro, whose popularity has faded as Brazil's Covid-19 death toll climbed past 500,000, has denied any wrongdoing, saying on Monday he was not aware of any irregularities. But thorny questions refuse to go away, and may pose problems for him in the run-up to next year's presidential vote.

Queiroga said at a news conference his team would investigate the allegations during the suspension.

"According to the preliminary analysis, there are no irregularities in the contract but, for compliance, the health ministry chose to suspend the contract," the ministry said in a statement.

Brazilian federal prosecutors have opened an investigation into the deal, citing comparatively high prices, quick talks and pending regulatory approvals as red flags. It is also [being scrutinised by a senate panel](#) investigating the government's handling of the pandemic.

At a hearing on Friday, Luis Ricardo Miranda, head of imports at the health ministry, told senators he refused to approve an import licence because an invoice for a first shipment asked for upfront payment and was sent by a company not mentioned in the contract.

Government officials have denied any irregularity in the contract and said that the whistleblower's claims would be investigated.

[Brazil could have stopped 400,000 Covid deaths with better government response, expert says](#)
[Read more](#)

One of the leading opposition senators on that panel filed a formal criminal complaint against Bolsonaro at the supreme court on Monday. Senator Randolfe Rodrigues said he wanted the court to investigate “the serious allegations” and to find out why Bolsonaro “did not take any action after being notified of the existence of a giant corruption scheme in the health ministry.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/29/brazil-cancels-covaxin-contract-after-serious-accusations-of-irregularities>

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Coronavirus

Australia Covid: Queensland says Pfizer vaccine supply will run out in days

State health minister voices anger at federal authorities on vaccine rollout amid further outbreaks and a lockdown in Alice Springs

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)
- [Australia Covid live updates](#)



People walk along the beach at Surfers Paradise, in Queensland's Gold Coast. The state authorities have said supplies of the Pfizer Covid vaccine are running low in the Australian state. Photograph: Jono Searle/EPA

People walk along the beach at Surfers Paradise, in Queensland's Gold Coast. The state authorities have said supplies of the Pfizer Covid vaccine are running low in the Australian state. Photograph: Jono Searle/EPA

[Helen Sullivan](#) in Sydney
[@helenrsullivan](#)

Wed 30 Jun 2021 01.06 EDT

The Australian state of Queensland has just eight days of the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine left, authorities warned on Wednesday, as confusion over who should receive the AstraZeneca jab continued and outbreaks across the country grew.

The state's health minister, Dr Yvette D'ath, said the federal government had denied Queensland's request for more doses of the Pfizer vaccine, despite having given another state, Victoria, 100,000 doses three weeks ago.

"So we are getting to that point that we'll have to start prioritising only second doses if the commonwealth do not have any vaccine left," she said. "And they need to tell us. Is what they gave Victoria the end of it? Have we only got what is allocate and no contingency stock left until that big delivery in October? Because we all need to know."

Large parts of Queensland have begun a [snap three-day lockdown](#), triggered by an unvaccinated Covid-positive hospital worker who travelled between Brisbane and north [Queensland](#).

The state of New South Wales – home to Sydney and the centre of a major outbreak – confirmed 22 new infections, all of which were linked to previous cases and half of which had been in isolation for all or part of the time they were infectious.

A 72-hour lockdown was announced for the Northern Territory town of Alice Springs because a mineworker who spent more than six hours at the town's airport – but did not leave the airport – was believed to be infected. The man was tested for Covid and the result was negative, but four of his five household contacts had subsequently been infected.

"We will operate on the assumption that he has Covid-19 and we will operate on the assumption that he was infectious while in the Territory," chief minister Michael Gunner said on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, state leaders and health officials addressed continuing confusion sparked by Prime Minister Scott Morrison's [comments on Monday night](#) that

people under 40 could receive an AstraZeneca jab and that the government would indemnify doctors who administered the vaccine in such cases. The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (Atagi) still advises against under-40s receiving AstraZeneca due to the risk of rare blood clots.

02:10

Queensland premier Anastacia Palaszczuk rebukes Morrison over AstraZeneca vaccine directive – video

New South Wales premier Gladys Berejiklian said in response to questions about Morrison's comments: "The New South Wales government always follows the health advice, and the health advice from the federal regulatory bodies is that those over 60 should be getting AstraZeneca."

Victorian state health minister Martin Foley said the confusion was an "unfortunate reflection of the rushed conversation that the prime minister kicked off late on Monday night without talking to anyone."

When Queensland chief health officer Dr Jeanette Young was asked whether those under 40 should get the AstraZeneca vaccine she said: "No, I do not want under-40s to get AstraZeneca," and that she didn't "want an 18-year-old in Queensland dying from a clotting illness who, if they got Covid, probably wouldn't die."

The latest cases include two healthcare workers in two states. In New South Wales, multiple wards of the Fairfield and Royal North Shore hospitals were locked down and not accepting new patients after a student nurse tested positive for Covid. None of the patients who came into contact with the nurse had yet tested positive, said state chief health officer Dr Kerry Chant.

In Queensland, authorities announced that one of the state's cases was a clerical worker at Brisbane's Prince Charles hospital. The woman had been offered a vaccine but had not had any doses. D'ath added that the woman should not have been posted outside the Covid-19 ward without being vaccinated and the government was investigating who was responsible.

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[North Korea](#)

North Korea Covid outbreak fears after Kim Jong-un warns of ‘huge crisis’ in ‘antivirus fight’

Leader speaks of a grave incident and sacks officials for neglecting duties in fighting ‘global health crisis’

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has criticised officials for neglecting their duties in fighting the ‘global health crisis’, leading to fears of a Covid outbreak in the country. Photograph: 朝鮮通信社/AP

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has criticised officials for neglecting their duties in fighting the ‘global health crisis’, leading to fears of a Covid outbreak in the country. Photograph: 朝鮮通信社/AP

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo and agencies

Wed 30 Jun 2021 00.40 EDT

The North Korean leader, [Kim Jong-un](#), has sacked several senior party officials over a “grave” coronavirus incident that had threatened public safety, fuelling speculation that the [coronavirus](#) has breached the country’s defences.

“In neglecting important decisions by the party that called for organisational, material and science and technological measures to support prolonged anti-epidemic work in face of a global health crisis, the officials in charge have caused a grave incident that created a huge crisis for the safety of the country and its people,” the state-run KCNA news agency quoted Kim as telling a meeting of the ruling party’s politburo.

KCNA did not explain the nature of the transgressions, but analysts believe Kim’s outburst indicate [North Korea](#) is no longer free of Covid-19.

[North Korea pulls out of Tokyo Olympics, citing coronavirus fears](#)
[Read more](#)

[North Korea](#) closed its borders with China and Russia at the start of the pandemic, halted international air travel and imposed strict limits on domestic travel. It has told the World Health Organization it has not found a single case of Covid-19 after testing more than 30,000 people.

That claim has been [greeted with scepticism](#) by the international community, with experts warning that the country’s threadbare health services are ill-equipped to deal with an outbreak.

Earlier this month, Kim called for officials to brace for prolonged pandemic restrictions, indicating that he had no plans to ease border restrictions, despite the harm they were inflicting on an economy already battered by natural disasters and international sanctions imposed in response to the regime’s nuclear and [ballistic missile](#) programmes.

North Korea also faces a wait for vaccines. Covax, the global vaccine-sharing initiative, said in February that the North could receive 1.9 million

doses in the first half of the year, but those plans have been delayed due to global shortages.

Kim told the meeting on Tuesday that the party officials had shown a “lack of ability”, and accused them of “self-protectionism and passiveness”.

Members of the presidium of the politburo – the highest decision-making body of the ruling Workers’ party – and the politburo were recalled and replacements named at the meeting on Tuesday, KCNA said.

Ahn Chan-il, a North Korean defector who is now a researcher at the World Institute for North Korea Studies in Seoul, said the report “basically means North Korea has confirmed cases”.

Ahn told Agence France-Presse: “The fact that the politburo discussed this, and that the KCNA reported it, signals Pyongyang is probably in need of international aid.

“Otherwise they would not have done this, as it inevitably involves acknowledging the regime’s own failure in its anti-epidemic efforts.”

North Korea’s attempts to prevent a Covid-19 outbreak have contributed to one of the [worst economic crises](#) in its 73-year history, amid shortages of food and medicines and warnings of rising unemployment and homelessness.

Border closures mean trade with China has plummeted, while international aid workers and many diplomats have left. This month, Pyongyang admitted it was battling a food crisis after Kim, who last year tearfully thanked North Koreans for their virus-prevention efforts, warned that the country faced its “worst-ever situation”.

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said Kim’s comments “indicate that health conditions are already deteriorating inside the country.

“Kim will likely find scapegoats for the incident, purging disloyal officials and blaming their ideological lapses. This may provide Pyongyang

justification for demanding that citizens hunker down more, but it could also be political preparation for accepting vaccines from abroad.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/30/north-korea-covid-outbreak-fears-after-kim-jong-un-warns-of-huge-crisis-in-antivirus-fight>

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The Guardian For 200 years

The outspoken Domestic workers

‘I want them to feel human again’: the woman who escaped slavery in the UK – and fights to free others



‘I didn’t want to go to the UK, but I wasn’t given a choice’ ... Analiza Guevarra in west London. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

‘I didn’t want to go to the UK, but I wasn’t given a choice’ ... Analiza Guevarra in west London. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Analiza Guevarra ended up in a living hell in London after fleeing poverty in the Philippines. Now, her organisation rescues scores of people in domestic servitude every year

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[About this content](#)

[Annie Kelly](#)

Wed 30 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

The streets of west London were dark and empty as Analiza Guevarra walked towards a large, white mansion block in South Kensington in February 2019.

Just after 5am, she stood at a corner, well away from any street lights. “I’m here,” she tapped into her phone. Seconds later, her phone pinged back. “I’m coming, I’m carrying a green bag. Please wait for me.”

Guevarra squinted down the gloomy street until she saw a woman emerge from one of the buildings clutching a holdall. She beckoned to her. The woman, panting with fear, slid up the icy street towards her. When she got close, Guevarra grabbed her hand and told her to run.

When they arrived at the nearest underground station, Guevarra turned towards her companion. “She kept looking around to see if she was being followed,” she says. “But I was telling her: ‘You’re safe now.’”

There is nothing in the Philippines. All the women in my neighbourhood eventually have to leave

The woman was Gloria, a Filipino domestic worker who had been brought to London by a wealthy Qatari family and exploited and abused. Gloria had posted frantic calls for help on a Facebook message board and [the Filipino Domestic Workers Association](#) (FDWA) had responded. This small but very busy organisation, which operates from a church in south London, has rescued hundreds of women from domestic servitude behind the closed doors of London’s most exclusive neighbourhoods.

Domestic servitude is one of the most prevalent forms of modern slavery in the UK and largely affects foreign domestic workers from places such as the [Philippines](#) and Indonesia. “The places we go in London, the streets are full of expensive cars and the houses cost millions of pounds, but inside there are women being treated like slaves and nobody knows,” says Guevarra.

Guevarra is one of the FDWA’s most active members. She spends her days scouring social media sites for messages from women trying to escape abusive employers. Gloria was her first solo rescue. When I ask her if she was scared, she smiles and shakes her head.

“I thought: ‘Maybe I should be scared, as I know these rescues can go wrong,’” she says. Yet Guevarra did not hesitate. “I’ve been in her position. I was the only person coming to help her.”

I meet Guevarra at the FDWA’s church, where many Filipino domestic workers come to worship and share stories about their lives. She is tiny and

softly spoken, her face opening into a beautiful smile when she shows me photos of her four children in the Philippines. Yet she carries a heavy sadness, the legacy of all she has endured.

She and her brother and sister grew up in a small town in the south of the Philippines. “Everyone around us was poor, but we were poorer,” she says. Her mother wanted her to finish school, but she left when Guevarra was five. One of Guevarra’s most vivid memories is of clinging to her mother’s dress as she walked out the door. “I still remember how it felt, understanding that we were being abandoned.”

The following years were hard for Guevarra and her siblings. “I remember this time as just surviving, every day waking up and thinking: ‘Today I will try to live through this.’”

When she met her husband, it felt as if she had found a place of safety. “He wasn’t perfect, but I had someone I trusted and he made me feel like I wasn’t lonely for the first time in my life,” she says.

[Guardian 200 series](#)

They were just 18, but their families put pressure on them to marry. It happened so suddenly that Guevarra did not have time to work out how they would survive financially. “By the time I was 25, I had four young children and we were struggling. We were both working many different jobs, but there was never enough money.”

The spectre of her childhood poverty haunted her. “I remember washing out the plastic bag that my mother had carried fish in from the market, because it was the only thing I could find to take my books to school,” she says. “I felt very ashamed and scared that this was going to happen to my children.”

As with many women in the Philippines, the decision to move abroad for domestic work began to seem less like a choice and more like a necessity. “There is nothing in the Philippines. All the women in my neighbourhood eventually have to leave,” she says.

There are now at least 53 million domestic workers in the world, the vast majority of whom are women such as Guevarra, who travel from poor countries to richer ones to work in private households. In the Philippines, [nearly 17% of people live in poverty](#). Official remittances sent by overseas workers in 2020 were [valued at \\$33.2bn](#) – nearly 10% of the country's GDP. According to the UN's International Labour Organization, domestic workers are one of the workforces most vulnerable to abuse, trafficking and exploitation.

In Qatar, if you leave an employer without permission, you can end up in jail. I had no idea it was different in the UK

“We'd all heard the stories about the terrible things that happen and I knew that it was like the roll of a die,” Guevarra says. “But I had to go for my children. I planned to go for three years, make enough money to get them through school and pay off our debts and come home.” She signed up with an agency and got a job in Qatar.

Leaving her children, who were 12, 10, eight and six, was a terrible trauma after her abandonment. In the end, she waited until they were at school. “I kept remembering the feeling of clutching at my mother as a little girl,” she says, in tears. “So I didn't even say goodbye.”

She arrived in Doha in November 2015 after a long, exhausting flight. “When I came into the house, I thought they would show me to my room or give me something to eat, but my new employer said: ‘Put your bag down and start work!’ It was the middle of the night, but I had to leave my bags in the hallway and start cleaning the floors.”



‘I didn’t even say goodbye’ ... Guevarra with her family in 2012.
Photograph: Courtesy of Analiza Guevarra

Guevarra was one of four domestic workers employed by the family in a large house with eight small children, including one-year-old twin boys and a three-year-old. At the time, the *kafala* system, which made it illegal for migrant workers to change job or to leave the country without their employer’s permission, was still in place ([it has since been reformed](#)). The domestic workers were expected to work 14 hours a day, seven days a week. Guevarra’s employer would scream at them for not working hard enough and encouraged her children to abuse them, spit at them and pull their hair. “We were treated like we were not human,” she says.

In July 2017, the family told Guevarra that they were travelling to the UK for medical treatment for one of their children – and that she was going with them. “I didn’t want to go to the UK, but I wasn’t given a choice,” she says.

The family applied for an overseas domestic worker visa on her behalf. This allows foreign families travelling to the UK to bring their domestic staff – maids, chauffeurs, nannies – with them for up to six months. [Domestic workers](#) who apply for this visa – which costs £516 – are supposed to have a confidential interview at a British consulate before it is granted and another

when they arrive in the UK with an immigration official. Guevarra says that neither happened.



‘Once you have been through it yourself, it’s quite easy to see which women need help’ ... Guevarra speaks to the FDWA at their church in south London. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

“We went to the British embassy in Doha, but my employer was there and they just gave him the visa,” she says. “When I arrived in the UK, my employer just passed my passport over. I was not told that I had a right to the national minimum wage, that I had any employment rights or that if I was abused then I could get help.”

Guevarra says her life in London became a living hell. Without her colleagues, she had to work from 5am until 1am every day, sleeping just three or four hours. She was made to sleep on the floor of the nursery and was woken up constantly by the children. She was soon delirious with fatigue.

The family did not even give her food, so she had to scavenge and steal what she could without them noticing. They also refused to pay her full wages. In total, she was paid £680 for two months of working 18- to 20-hour days, seven days a week.

But the worst thing, she says, was the isolation. She was not allowed to leave the house without a member of the family and was told not to talk to anyone, especially other Filipinas.



Four years on ... Guevarra's children in 2019. Photograph: Courtesy of Analiza Guevarra

Guevarra also bore the brunt of her employer's stress and anger. "There was no way I could look after eight children and do everything else she asked of me," she says. Then her employer went from verbally to physically abusive. She started to slap Guevarra on the face and head and push her over. One day, she beat her to the ground, kicking her repeatedly in the stomach as she lay on the kitchen floor.

"That's when I knew I had to go," she says. Guevarra had been beaten enough as a child to know that things would only get worse. "I believed they would end up killing me."

Yet she was too scared to go to the police. "In Qatar, if you leave your employer without their permission, you can end up in jail. I had no idea it was any different in the UK," she says. The family had recently moved apartments, but a Libyan couple who lived in their old building had become aware of her plight and offered to help her.

One day, very early in the morning in September 2017, she slipped out of the apartment with a bag and made her way there. The couple gave her a job. However, it soon became clear that, while they were not abusive, they still expected her to work relentlessly for less money than she had been promised and controlled her freedom of movement.

They did, though, allow her to go to church – which is how Guevarra found the FDWA. “I had Googled where the Filipino community worshipped and found out about the church. The moment I walked in, they told me: ‘Now you are in good hands. You are no longer a slave.’” And I just cried. On that day, I felt free for the first time in a year and a half.”



‘I realised that it was happening all over London’ ... Guevarra (*centre*) with fellow members of the FDWA. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

That Sunday, another three women had come to the church seeking help. “One woman, her family was from Dubai, she suffered very bad violence. I realised that it was happening all over London.”

The FDWA gave Guevarra a place to stay and accompanied her to the police. Since then, she has been confirmed as a survivor of modern slavery by the government, but has also been trapped in immigration limbo. She wants to get discretionary leave to remain, so that she can work to pay off

the £4,000 debt that she says her family owes their creditors in the Philippines. “If I go back now, I’ll have no option but to leave again to the Gulf and I’m scared the same will happen again,” she says.

She may not be able to control her own fate, but that has only made her more determined to fight for other women found by the FDWA. “They saved my life and now I want to save others,” she says.

['I want to go home': Filipina domestic workers face exploitative conditions](#)
[Read more](#)

Despite the nature of their work, the community at the FDWA is joyful. At their weekly meetings, there is line dancing and laughter; food is shared out. “Everyone is listened to and respected; we are a family to each other,” says Guevarra.

She says that she and a small band of FDWA volunteers rescue more than 100 domestic workers in London every year. “You see some terrible things. One woman hadn’t been out of the house for a year. Another one got Covid and they just put her in a room and left her there,” she says. The FDWA says that the abuse of domestic workers has got worse during the pandemic: sick people dumped outside apartment buildings or at hospitals; extreme violence; wage theft.

It has been harder to reach domestic workers during the pandemic, but in the coming weeks Guevarra and her colleagues will resume their outreach programmes. They will head to places where they know domestic workers will be looking after their employer’s children.

“Once you have been through it yourself, it’s quite easy to see which women need help,” says Guevarra. They slip them notes with the FDWA’s number on them, or sit next to them on park benches, whispering that they are not alone.

Guevarra also does one of the hardest jobs at the FDWA – caring for domestic workers who get sick. “I have sat with two women who were dying from cancer, so far from their families,” she says. “They left with such hope

and now they're going home to their children as ashes. I held their hand as they died, so they wouldn't be alone."

Guevarra hasn't seen her own children for six years. When she arrives home, she will have missed their childhoods. I ask how she keeps going. "This work is my life; it keeps me hopeful," she says. "Our employers felt like they could treat us like animals. When I found the FDWA, I felt human again. I want to make others feel that, too. It makes it all worth something."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/30/i-want-them-to-feel-human-again-the-woman-who-escaped-slavery-in-the-uk-and-fights-to-free-others>

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Wolfgang Tillmans

Interview

Wolfgang Tillmans on space, Brexit and Covid: ‘Let’s hope we get on a dancefloor soon’

Alex Needham



‘I normally stay out of the sun’ ... Tillmans on Fire Island, in a photograph entitled *Animalistique*. Photograph: Wolfgang Tillmans, courtesy Maureen Paley, London/Hove

‘I normally stay out of the sun’ ... Tillmans on Fire Island, in a photograph entitled *Animalistique*. Photograph: Wolfgang Tillmans, courtesy Maureen Paley, London/Hove

From tiny weeds to distant galaxies, the photographer likes to scrutinise the interconnectedness of everything. He talks about coping with lockdown – and living through his second pandemic



[@alexneedham74](#)

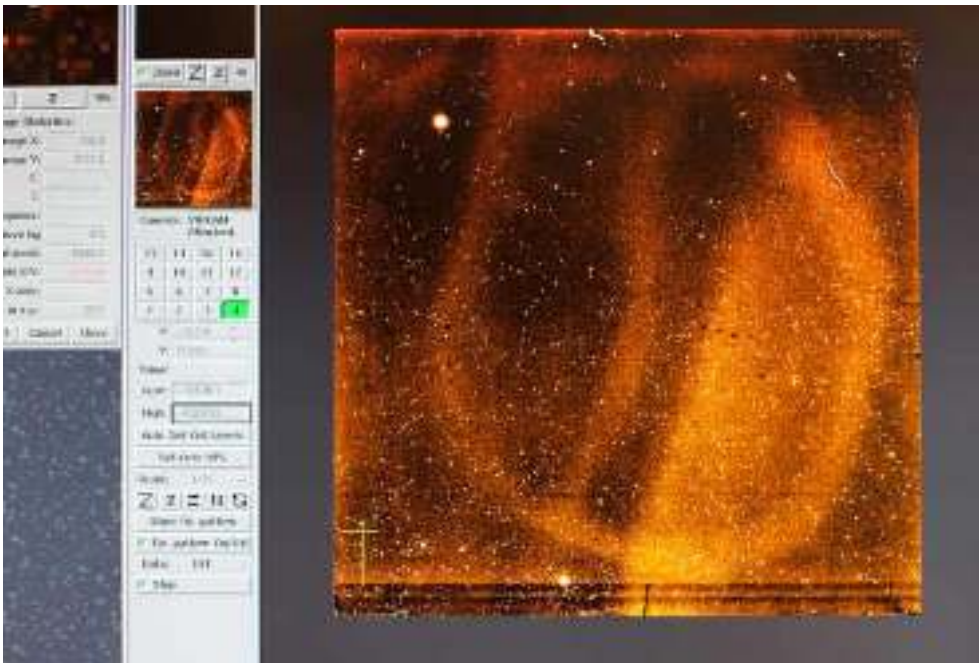
Wed 30 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

[Wolfgang Tillmans](#) and I talk on the phone on 23 June, which he calls the “fifth anniversary horribilis”, referring to the Brexit vote. He’s at home in Berlin: a day later, he will travel to the UK to install his new exhibition, [Moon in Earthlight](#), in the seaside town of Hove. To conform to Covid protocols, he’ll be doing it on his own, without his usual assistants, carefully placing his photographic images around the space – a former Regency flat owned by his gallerist [Maureen Paley](#).

These photographs range from an image of wet concrete pouring out of a nozzle to one of a root’s tendrils creeping along a gap in the pavement. They are presented in a variety of formats, from huge printouts suspended on bulldog clips to small photographs tacked to the wall. Like all his shows, Moon in Earthlight will serve as an installation in its own right, a manifestation of Tillmans’ tender scrutiny of the universe. It also includes a collection of astronomical yearbooks dating back to 1978, when the artist was a stargazing 10-year-old.

“Mm!” he says. “It was the first passion in my life. I spent days and nights observing the sky or the sun and its sunspots. What it taught me was the

importance of observation and that whatever you're looking at is always a little bit at the limit of visibility. Like, is this a blur or a star?" One image, an amber blob on a computer screen, depicts exactly that. It's the view from "a very large telescope in Chile. The fantastic pictures that we see by Nasa are processed, developed pictures that once looked like that screen. I asked the astronomer, 'So what is this?' And he said, 'That's a galaxy.'"



'It was my first passion' ... Dead Pixels and Sensor Flaws, one of Tillmans' space images. Photograph: © Wolfgang Tillmans, courtesy Maureen Paley, London / Hove

Tillmans' work seems driven by an insatiable curiosity. He made his name in the 90s, photographing everything from Concorde to jeans drying on a radiator with a singular, searching perspective, winning the Turner prize in 2000 and going on to exhibit in the world's heavyweight art institutions (his postponed show in New York's [MoMA](#), To Look Without Fear, will now take place in September 2022). Some of his portraits have become familiar even to non-gallery-goers: for instance, the shot of a green-haired Frank Ocean in Tillmans' shower, which became [the cover of Ocean's 2016 album Blonde](#).

Sometimes Tillmans' subject is just the reaction between light and photographic chemicals. [Saturated Light \(Silver Works\)](#), a collection of

abstract images, was made by feeding photographic paper into a printer. Despite this plethora of modes (and he makes music, too, including a club banger, [Can't Escape Into Space](#), released this Friday in a remix by DJ [Honey Dijon](#)) his work usually reveals something of Tillmans himself, from his political beliefs to his sexuality, and, above all, his sense of playfulness. One image in the new show is called *Animalistique*, and shows him crawling naked by the sea on New York's gay holiday spot Fire Island. Nice tan, I say. "It's just the camera exposure," he replies with a smile. "I try to stay out of the sun normally."



Tillmans' *Resolute Rave*. Photograph: Wolfgang Tillmans, courtesy Maureen Paley, London/Hove

Given his urge to explore, and his obsession with the interconnectedness of things, was lockdown challenging? "In Berlin, there was never a lockdown [so strict] you couldn't leave the house. So I spent a lot of time walking and observing the seasons. The transformation that happens between March and May is immense – I hadn't experienced it in a solid block of time since I was at school. That was powerful and interesting. But as we got into the second and third waves, it all got a little less interesting."

It's no surprise that Tillmans got bored: he is by nature a man about town. His pictures hang on the walls of [Berghain](#), Berlin's famous techno club; he

was a regular at [Adonis](#), the riotous monthly gay night in London; and I first met him in 2002, dancing to [electroclash](#) in a Soho sweatbox now flattened by Crossrail. Has he missed clubbing? “No, not at all,” he says, deadpan. “I prefer a cup of tea.”

He laughs. “I feel out of practice in terms of moving among people without fear, the way you bump into each other and rub shoulders. Giving each other an elbow instead of a hand is funny and nice, but after 16 months it gets inscribed in our behaviour. I hope this won’t be the start of a pre-emptive inhibition in us. But I was reminding myself that in the [pandemic paintings by Bruegel](#), and other painters from the 1400s, showing village fetes, lots of people are very close together at a time when there was no penicillin. Humans just senselessly long to be together. We need to feel other bodies nearby. I hope the deprivation won’t last much longer. We don’t know what it has done to young people who can never relive being 16. Let’s hope we get on a dancefloor soon.”



‘I prefer a cup of tea’ ... Wolfgang Tillmans. Photograph: Sarah Bohn

He calls Covid “the second viral pandemic of my life” – the first being [Aids](#), the illness that in 1997 claimed the life of his partner, painter [Jochen Klein](#), when Klein was just 30 and Tillmans 29. “With the very big difference of Covid not having any stigma and that, from day one, the entire economy and

politics of the world put their efforts into curing it. This year is the 40th anniversary of Aids, and there is still no vaccine, which is due to the particular nature of HIV. But I think any anti-vaxxers [should remember that] all the people who died of HIV and Aids-related causes would have loved to take any vaccine possible.”



Subversive ... pyramids, 2005 © Wolfgang Tillmans, courtesy Maureen Paley, London / Hove. Photograph: © Wolfgang Tillmans, courtesy Maureen Paley, London / Hove

Tillmans’ work often expresses the transience of things, whether it’s entire civilisations (there is a picture of the pyramids in the new show, positioned on its side to subvert “the supposed certainty they radiate”) or the fleeting joy of a nightclub snog. As well as his experience of Aids, he credits this sense of precariousness to being born in Germany in 1968, just 23 years after the end of the second world war – the same distance, he points out, that 1998 is from us now. “When you think how unthinkable horrible conditions and ideology were at the heart of Europe, it’s amazing that the civil rights revolution of the 60s could happen so soon afterwards and that things could change so dramatically for the better. But somehow it also made me realise things can go into reverse – that any advances that I enjoyed in my life can never be taken for granted and need to be defended.”

It's something he saw up close this month, having opened an exhibition in Budapest, Hungary, just a fortnight before [Viktor Orbán's regime passed a law](#) banning representations of LGBTQ+ people on TV before children are in bed, or in materials used in schools. "In systems that are going autocratic," says Tillmans, "the autocrats need to establish enemies within instead of focusing on the problems that society really has." On a protest march in Budapest, he noticed some people were waving EU flags to signal their opposition to the anti-gay law. "It was touching to see that, despite all its shortcomings, the EU is seen as a hope, as an ally for a free society."

As a German who first came to the UK as an exchange student in 1983, and who later studied in Bournemouth and lived in London, [Tillmans campaigned hard against Brexit](#). "When you consider how grave the consequences are," he says, "it's striking how inactive people were. There was one demonstration a year after the vote, where there were a million on the streets, but that was just way too late." He's aghast with the Brexit we've ended up with – leaving the customs union and the common market, "so you can change some fantasy laws, the shape of your plugs, I don't know. It's a particularly British obsession, this idea of European cooperation as rule-taking."



'Britain is a unique creator of fictions' ... two of Tillmans' anti-Brexit posters. Photograph: Wolfgang Tillmans/Between Bridges

Did it show him a side of the British character he hadn't seen before? "The depth of exceptionalism has surprised me," he says. "Certain characteristics that all my life I saw as humorous or quirky are actually quite serious. I guess the colonial experience of being a rule-giver was deeply ingrained. To have your cake and eat it isn't an experience that is considered normal elsewhere. There's an amazing British quality in building ideas into a phenomenon, like in pop music. Britain is a unique creator of fictions and realities through that, but to see the whole country and identity be subject to a fiction was a bit sad. I believe the UK has benefited from contact with the continent, and so it is upsetting."

It's also antithetical to Tillmans' whole ethos – piecing together connections rather than ripping them apart. The overarching subject of the new show, he says, is "forms of human activity. The picture of the Queen's golden jubilee from 2002 or a sexual health clinic education kit in a refugee camp in Kenya, and then the pyramids and then a sink with two weeds growing out of it. And pictures of nightlife interspersed. It's a fascination with the shapes and forms that us humans create organising our lives, and then pictures of the larger setting that this is in – space."

No wonder he hated [Brexit](#). Set against Tillmans' all-enveloping vision, it seems very small indeed.

- [Wolfgang Tillmans: Moon in Earthlight is at Morena di Luna in Hove on Saturdays and Sundays from 3 July to 5 September.](#)

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‘I felt betrayed’: how Covid research could help patients living with chronic fatigue syndrome

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[The pain that can't be seen](#)[Fibromyalgia](#)

Fibromyalgia flattens me. Here's what helps me cope with constant pain

[Nikki Marshall](#)



A flare-up starts with instant exhaustion and a brain fog so dense I might struggle to speak

- [Full Story: 'The pain can feel like an evil flower blossoming inside me'](#)



‘I can think of just two days this year that were pain-free. They were golden.’ Illustration: Hannah Izzard/Guardian Design

‘I can think of just two days this year that were pain-free. They were golden.’ Illustration: Hannah Izzard/Guardian Design

Wed 30 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Sometimes it hits in the middle of hot yoga. One moment I’m working hard, dripping sweat; the next I’m flat on my back in corpse pose, trying – usually failing – to practise calm acceptance. When the class ends I might need help rolling up my mat.

A few months back the first twinges flared when I was the designated driver at a family gathering. I felt like a demented cattle dog trying to round up the drinkers, barking at them to skip goodbyes so I could get us home before it smashed me.

[Fibromyalgia and treating chronic pain](#)
[Read more](#)

Once it came on like a ton of bricks between getting up from the couch and walking to the sink to wash dishes. “Perfect timing!” my then partner said as he gave me a hug and helped me to bed.

It's fibromyalgia, a chronic pain condition I don't know nearly enough about.

For me, a flare-up starts with a wave of exhaustion that can swamp me within seconds, accompanied by a brain fog so dense I might struggle to speak. Then the pain begins. It's a rusty feeling in my hands and feet that moves up and seeps into my wrists and ankles, elbows and knees, shoulders and hips. There are muscle aches too, that trampled feeling you get as you're coming down with a cold or flu.

It's never agony – [I've had endometriosis for nearly 40 years, I know about agony](#) – but rather whole-body discomfort that steamrollers me. So I lie down and breathe and wait for sleep to come. I'm grateful that these attacks usually strike during time off rather than at work; and that when I wake up the next morning the worst will be over.

[Sufferers of chronic pain have long been told it's all in their head. We now know that's wrong](#)
[Read more](#)

But aside from these flares, a low hum of pain is ever present. Once I'm up and walking I can hike for hours, but every time I get out of a chair I look as though I'll struggle to cross a room. ("I'm a hobbler!" I'll say cheerily to concerned colleagues, as if that's a thing.)

Much of the time it feels as though everything is uphill; as though my flesh hurts just being on my bones. It's grinding and relentless and exhausting.

I can think of just two days this year that were pain-free. They were golden.

When I say I don't know much about fibromyalgia, I don't even know for sure that I have it. There's no test for fibro so it's a diagnosis of exclusion – what's left behind when doctors rule out everything else.

What happened for me was that about five years ago I said to my GP: "I think I have to finally face up to the fact that I have fibromyalgia." She said: "Let's look at some treatment options for you."



‘I’ve even taken ice baths – they were horrendous but left me feeling revved up and exhilarated for days’

If that sounds cavalier on her part, it wasn’t. She’d sent me to specialist after specialist over the years and I’d undergone test after test. Plus she was treating my mother for fibro; she’d been diagnosed 30 years earlier.

Mum is a force of nature, someone who is always busy doing, who can’t stop until she has to. She calls a fibro attack “the wheels falling off”. They can spin off for both of us within minutes, whether we’re apart or together, if there’s a sudden drop in atmospheric pressure before a storm. That’s an obvious trigger; others aren’t so clear.

Last year my mother told me she was about my age when her attacks got really bad. Just lately, she tried to reassure me, they were easing. “Mum,” I said, “You’re 25 years older than me! You’re saying I have 25 years ahead of me as bad as this?!”

More dismaying are the medical professionals who aren’t up to date with [current findings about chronic pain](#), and those who don’t believe in symptoms that can’t be seen.

A couple of years ago I saw an orthopaedic surgeon about a trashed achilles tendon. “I see you have ‘fibromyalgia’,” he said, his voice dripping with

scorn, before sending me off for an X-ray. When I returned with the scan he pointed triumphantly at the long-ruptured tendon. “See that? That’s not ‘fibromyalgia’,” he crowed.

“I never said it was,” I replied. “The pain is completely different.” It didn’t matter what I said. He wasn’t listening.

Did I say dismaying? I should have said infuriating. He’s made me fearful of mentioning fibro to any doctor.

Not that anyone has ever run through its symptoms with me. Online resources about it are scant but here are some associated symptoms and conditions:

- Fatigue, sleep disorders
- Memory troubles, difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety and depression
- Restless legs
- Dizziness and balance problems
- Headaches and migraines
- Light and noise sensitivity
- Bowel and bladder problems
- Skin tingling and burning
- Palpitations
- Face and jaw pain
- Lower back pain
- Dry eyes

- Sensitivity to cold and cold flashes

I can put up my hand to every last one of them. The last 10 I didn't realise had anything to do with fibromyalgia until now, writing this – although I've sought treatment for nearly all of them. I'm staggered by this, and angry as well.

['I struggle every day with the loss of my former life': what it's like to live with chronic pain](#)

[Read more](#)

At least it's made me more certain of my diagnosis. I was unsure because people with fibro are often described as being "hypersensitive" to pain, with many experiencing it in response to touch – to the extent they have to recoil from hugs.

And that's not me, I told myself. Sensitive? No way. I can face down pain like nobody's business. After the internal organ-tearing torment of [endometriosis](#), a broken bone or a kidney stone is momentary discomfort. I'm good at getting on with it. When I heard that achilles tendon pop I ran another 7km to finish a race – then didn't seek treatment for 10 years.

It's only now that I finally, fully understand that it's not me but my central nervous system that's sensitive – it's been burnt out, overloaded, fried by the endo pain and now it's lighting up and misfiring all over my body, gaslighting me in the process.

03:08

What is chronic pain and how does it work? – video explainer

That's true for everyone with fibro and chronic pain. We may have [central sensitisation](#), but don't call us sensitive, OK?

I began working on this piece – and [an accompanying podcast](#) – out of a hunger to understand fibromyalgia better, and an awareness that so many others must be feeling in the dark and desperate for information like me. And at first I focused on describing what those scene-stealing, show-stopping, wall-of-sound flare-ups feel like. What I didn't properly appreciate

is that the background pain – the wearying, unceasing white noise of twinges and aches and ailments – is fibro as well.

But dwelling on the bad stuff doesn't do anyone any good. Just writing this has knocked me around – it's made me pay too much attention to the pain, to feel it more.

So here's what helps me – a ladder of treatments and good habits I've built over the past year, rung by rung (pain is a wonderful motivator):

- Amitriptyline: a daily medication that was developed in the 1950s as an antidepressant; it's now more commonly used to run interference against the brain's perception of pain.
- Getting plenty of sleep – working from home during the pandemic has been a game-changer – and tracking it on a health app.
- Yoga, which I practise almost every day; I figure if I'm going to feel muscle pain I might as well have done something to deserve it. Its lessons about how to meet challenge with grace help hugely – as do the endorphins and the half hour of deep relaxation I dive into after every class.
- Walking: 7,500 steps a day, as recommended by my sports doctor for maximum benefit, minimum wear in women of my age (52).
- Mindful breathing: in moments I manage to think of nothing but my breath I can make pain melt away. ([This article about the strange peace experienced by ultrarunners](#) if they surrender to the “pain cave” is fascinating.)
- The understanding and support of people around me: a simple “I'm sorry you're feeling this way” can mean the world.
- An anti-inflammatory diet; right now I'm trying high-fat, low-carb and I think it's helping.

- I've even taken ice baths – they were horrendous but left me feeling revved up and exhilarated for days.

A happy buzz makes the hurt recede, so I savour every bit of pleasure and joy that comes my way. I try to be upbeat, grateful for all that I can do – I know that [many people have it so much worse](#) – and thankful for the grit, resilience and determination to take care of myself that this has gifted me.

To everyone living with chronic pain: I'm sorry you're feeling this way.

And please, fibro, please – let me keep the hugs!

Sufferers of chronic pain have long been told it's all in their head. We now know that's not true. [The pain that can't be seen](#) looks at why doctors are playing catch-up on chronic pain conditions like endometriosis, migraine and more – and what they have to do with long Covid.

- *If you have fibromyalgia or chronic pain, we'd love to hear what has worked for you. Please let us know in the comments*

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Climate crimesClimate change

Climate crimes: a new series investigating big oil's role in the climate crisis

A new Guardian series examines attempts to hold the fossil-fuel industry accountable for the havoc they have created



A question is echoing ever louder: who should be held responsible?

Illustration: Guardian Design

A question is echoing ever louder: who should be held responsible?

Illustration: Guardian Design

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Wed 30 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

As the impacts of the climate crisis multiply across the US, from intensified drought and wildfires in the west to stronger hurricanes in the east, a question is echoing ever louder: who should be held responsible?

According to an unprecedented number of lawsuits filed by US cities and states that are currently making their way through the court system, the answer is fossil fuel companies.

The lawsuits marshal a sweeping array of well-established facts that detail how for decades, major petroleum corporations knew that burning fossil fuels wreaked havoc on the environment. Industry elites heard dire warnings from their own scientists who predicted the urgency of the climate crisis nearly 60 years ago. But instead of taking swift action, the oil conglomerates staged a coordinated disinformation campaign to suppress political action and public awareness around the growing scientific consensus pointing to a climate emergency.

Now, the lawsuits conclude, fossil fuel companies should pay for the damage they have helped to cause to the planet.

The Guardian's new series, *Climate crimes*, will examine these attempts to hold the industry accountable and investigate the tactics used by the companies to elide their own role in global heating. It will also interrogate the central question that emerges from these lawsuits: is the climate crisis in fact a crime scene?

There is a good reason to think we will know more soon. The legal process for the roughly two dozen climate change lawsuits currently pending in the US is likely to reveal more damning information that could further detail the extent of the oil industry's deceptions. Investigative reporting has already revealed that the companies undertook their own climate change research decades ago – in 1979, for instance, an Exxon study said that burning fossil fuels “will cause dramatic environmental effects” in the coming decades, and concluded that “the potential problem is great and urgent.” By copying the playbook utilized by big tobacco, the firms were able to sow doubt about the existence of the problem that persists to this day.

The legal headaches for the industry are only likely to get worse. As the lawsuits move through the courts and reveal in greater detail what the oil companies knew and when, other states and cities can be expected to join the litigation. That in turn could add to the popular and political pressure on the petroleum giants to take the climate emergency seriously – and, perhaps, to make restitution.

In addition to the lawsuits, there are other signs that the tide is turning for the fossil fuel industry. Over the course of a single day in May, the industry

faced a series of embarrassing rebukes, as a Dutch court ordered Shell to [cut its emissions by 45%](#) and activist investors [won seats on the ExxonMobil board of directors](#).

At the same time, after decades of denying the true nature of the threat from global heating, the oil industry now says it is committed to a greener future through renewable energies and zero-carbon targets. Is this a sincere attempt to ameliorate a global crisis – or just one more public relations move by the petroleum giants to stave off the regulations and policies the planet urgently needs?

To help raise awareness around the climate crisis and the role of fossil fuel companies, and to amplify the project's impact and reach, the Guardian is sharing all stories in this series with Covering Climate Now, a global news collaboration of more than 400 news outlets.

We also want to hear from fossil fuel insiders who can help us tell the story of the industry's role in climate change. Get in touch with us here.

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[Climate crimes](#)[Climate change](#)

Big oil and gas kept a dirty secret for decades. Now they may pay the price



Communities are now demanding the oil conglomerates pay damages and take urgent action to reduce further harm from burning fossil fuels. Illustration: Guardian Design/Getty Images

Communities are now demanding the oil conglomerates pay damages and take urgent action to reduce further harm from burning fossil fuels. Illustration: Guardian Design/Getty Images

Via an unprecedented wave of lawsuits, America's petroleum giants face a reckoning for the devastation caused by fossil fuels

- [Are you a fossil fuel industry insider? We want to hear from you](#)

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[About this content](#)

[Chris McGreal](#)

Wed 30 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

After a century of wielding extraordinary economic and political power, America's petroleum giants face a reckoning for driving the greatest existential threat of our lifetimes.

An unprecedented wave of lawsuits, filed by cities and states across the US, aim to hold the oil and gas industry to account for the environmental

devastation caused by fossil fuels – and covering up what they knew along the way.

Coastal cities struggling to keep rising sea levels at bay, midwestern states watching “mega-rains” destroy crops and homes, and fishing communities losing catches to warming waters, are now demanding the oil conglomerates pay damages and take urgent action to reduce further harm from burning fossil fuels.

[Series teaser](#)

But, even more strikingly, the nearly two dozen lawsuits are underpinned by accusations that the industry severely aggravated the environmental crisis with a decades-long campaign of lies and deceit to suppress warnings from their own scientists about the impact of fossil fuels on the climate and dupe the American public.

The environmentalist Bill McKibben once characterized the fossil fuel industry’s behavior as “the most consequential cover-up in US history”. And now for the first time in decades, the lawsuits chart a path toward public accountability that climate activists say has the potential to rival big tobacco’s downfall after it concealed the real dangers of smoking.

“We are at an inflection point,” said Daniel Farber, a law professor at the University of California, Berkeley and director of the Center for Law, Energy, and the Environment.

“Things have to get worse for the oil companies,” he added. “Even if they’ve got a pretty good chance of winning the litigation in places, the discovery of pretty clear-cut wrong doing – that they knew their product was bad and they were lying to the public – really weakens the industry’s ability to resist legislation and settlements.”

For decades, the country’s leading oil and gas companies have understood the science of climate change and the dangers posed by fossil fuels. Year after year, top executives heard it from their own scientists whose warnings were explicit and often dire.

In 1979, [an Exxon study](#) said that burning fossil fuels “will cause dramatic environmental effects” in the coming decades.

“The potential problem is great and urgent,” it concluded.

[Interactive teaser](#)

But instead of heeding the evidence of the research they were funding, major oil firms worked together to bury the findings and manufacture a counter narrative to undermine the growing scientific consensus around climate science. The fossil fuel industry’s campaign to create uncertainty paid off for decades by muddying public understanding of the growing dangers from global heating and stalling political action.

The urgency of the crisis is not in doubt. A [draft United Nations report](#), leaked last week, warns that the consequences of the climate crisis, including rising seas, intense heat and ecosystem collapse, will fundamentally reshape life on Earth in the coming decades even if fossil fuel emissions are curbed.

To investigate the lengths of the oil and gas industry’s deceptions – and the disastrous consequences for communities across the country – the Guardian is launching a year-long series tracking the unprecedented efforts to hold the fossil fuel industry to account.

The legal process is expected to take years. Cities in California filed the first lawsuits back in 2017, and they have been tied down by disputes over jurisdiction, with the oil companies fighting with limited success to get them moved from state to federal courts where they think the law is more favorable.

But climate activists see opportunities long before verdicts are rendered in the US. The legal process is expected to add to already damning revelations of the energy giants’ closely-held secrets. If history is a guide, those developments could in turn alter public opinion in favor of regulations that the oil and gas companies spent years fighting off.

A string of other recent victories for climate activists already points to a shift in the industry's power.

Last month, a [Dutch court ordered Shell to cut its global carbon emissions by 45%](#) by the end of the decade. The same day, in Houston, an activist hedge fund [forced three new directors](#) onto the board of the US's largest oil firm, ExxonMobil, to address climate issues. Investors at Chevron also [voted to cut emissions](#) from the petroleum products it sells.

Earlier this month, developers of the Keystone XL pipeline [cancelled the project](#) after more than a decade of unrelenting opposition over environmental concerns. And although a federal court last year threw out a lawsuit brought by 21 young Americans who say the US government violated their constitutional rights by exacerbating climate change, the Biden administration recently agreed to settlement talks in a symbolic gesture aimed to appease younger voters.



Miles of pipe ready to become part of the Keystone pipeline are stacked in a field near Ripley, Oklahoma. Photograph: Sue Ogrocki/AP

For all that, American lawyers say the legal reasoning behind foreign court judgements are unlikely to carry much sway in the US and domestic law is largely untested. In 2018, a federal court knocked back New York City's

initial attempt to force Big Oil to cover the costs of the climate crisis by saying that its global nature requires a political, not legal, remedy.

Other regional lawsuits are inching their way through the courts. From Charleston, South Carolina, to Boulder, Colorado, and Maui, Hawaii, communities are seeking to force the industry to use its huge profits to pay for the damage and to oblige energy companies to treat the climate crisis for what it is – a global emergency.

Municipalities such as Imperial Beach, California – the poorest city in San Diego county with a budget less than Exxon chief executive’s annual pay – faces rising waters on three sides without the necessary funding to build protective barriers. They claim oil companies created a “public nuisance” by fuelling the climate crisis. They seek to recover the cost of repairing the damage and constructing defences.

The public nuisance claim, also pursued by Honolulu, San Francisco, and Rhode Island, follows a legal strategy with a record of success in other types of litigation. In 2019, Oklahoma’s attorney general [won compensation of nearly half a billion dollars](#) against the pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson over its false marketing of powerful prescription painkillers on the grounds it created a public nuisance by contributing to the opioid epidemic in the state.

Other climate lawsuits, including one filed in Minnesota, allege the oil firms’ campaigns of deception and denial about the climate crisis amount to fraud. Minnesota is suing Exxon, Koch Industries, and an industry trade group for breaches of state law for deceptive trade practices, false advertising, and consumer fraud over what the lawsuit characterises as distortions and lies about climate science.

[How cities and states could finally hold fossil fuel companies accountable](#)
[Read more](#)

The midwestern state, which has seen temperatures rise faster than the US and global averages, said scorching temperatures and “mega-rains” have devastated farming and flooded people out of their homes, with low income and minority families most at risk.

Minnesota's attorney general, Keith Ellison, claims in his lawsuit that for years Exxon orchestrated a campaign to bury the evidence of environmental damage caused by burning fossil fuels "with disturbing success".

"Defendants spent millions on advertising and public relations because they understood that an accurate understanding of climate change would affect their ability to continue to earn profits by conducting business as usual," [Ellison said in his lawsuit](#).

Farber said cases rooted in claims that the petroleum industry lied have the most promising chance of success.

"To the extent the plaintiffs can point to misconduct, like telling everybody there's no such thing as climate change when your scientists have told you the opposite, that might give the courts a greater feeling of comfort that they're not trying to take over the US energy system," he said.



The ExxonMobil Baton Rouge refinery in Louisiana. Photograph: Kathleen Flynn/Reuters

Fighting the facts

Almost all the lawsuits draw on the oil industry's own records as the foundation for claims that it covered up the growing threat to life caused by its products.

Shell, like other oil companies, had decades to prepare for those consequences after it was forewarned by its own research. In 1958, one of its executives, Charles Jones, [presented a paper to the industry's trade group](#), the American Petroleum Institute (API), warning about increased carbon emissions from car exhaust. Other research followed through the 1960s, leading a White House advisory committee to express concern at "measurable and perhaps marked changes in climate" by the year 2000.

API's own reports flagged up "significant temperature changes" by the end of the twentieth century.

The largest oil company in the US, Exxon, was hearing the same from its researchers.

Year after year, Exxon scientists recorded the evidence about the dangers of burning fossil fuels. In 1978, its science advisor, James Black, warned that there was a "window of five to ten years before the need for hard decisions regarding changes in energy strategy might become critical".

[There is a "window of five to ten years before the need for hard decisions regarding changes in energy strategy might become critical."](#)

Exxon set up equipment on a supertanker, the Esso Atlantic, to monitor carbon dioxide in seawater and the air. In 1982, the company's scientists drew up a graph accurately [plotting an increase in the globe's temperature to date](#).

"The 1980s revealed an established consensus among scientists," the Minnesota lawsuit against Exxon says. "A 1982 internal Exxon document ... explicitly declares that the science was 'unanimous' and that climate change would 'bring about significant changes in the earth's climate'."

Then the monitoring on the Esso Atlantic was suddenly called off and other research downgraded.

What followed was what Naomi Oreskes, co-author of the [report *America Misled*](#), called a “systematic, organised campaign by Exxon and other oil companies to sow doubt about the science and prevent meaningful action”.

The report accused the energy companies of not only polluting the air but also “the information landscape” by replicating the cigarette makers’ playbook of cherry picking data, using fake experts, and promoting conspiracy theories to attack a growing scientific consensus.

Many of the lawsuits draw on a raft of Exxon documents held at the University of Texas, and [uncovered by the Columbia Journalism School and the Los Angeles Times](#) in 2015.



An Exxon advertisement in the New York Times. Photograph: The New York Times

Among them is a 1988 Exxon memo laying out a strategy to push for a “balanced scientific approach,” which meant giving equal weight to hard evidence and climate change denialism. That move bore fruit in parts of the media into the 2000s as the oil industry repositioned global heating as theory, not fact, contributing to [the most deep-rooted climate denialism](#) in any developed country.

The company placed advertisements in major American newspapers to sow doubt. One in the New York Times in 2000, under the headline “Unsettled Science”, compared climate data to changing weather forecasts. It claimed scientists were divided, when an overwhelming consensus already backed the evidence of a growing climate crisis, and said that the supposed doubts meant it was too soon to act.

Exxon’s chairman and chief executive, Lee Raymond, told industry executives in 1996 that “scientific evidence remains inconclusive as to whether human activities affect global climate”.

“It’s a long and dangerous leap to conclude that we should, therefore, cut fossil fuel use,” he said.

Documents show that his company’s scientists were telling Exxon’s management that the real danger lay in the failure to do exactly that.

In 2019, Martin Hoffert, a professor of physics at New York University, [told a congressional hearing](#) that as a consultant to Exxon on climate modelling in the 1980s, he worked on eight scientific papers for the company that showed fossil fuel burning was “increasingly having a perceptible influence on Earth’s climate”.

Hoffert said he “hoped that the work would help to persuade Exxon to invest in developing energy solutions the world needed”. That was not the result.

["They deliberately created doubt when internal research confirmed how serious a threat it was."](#)

“Exxon was publicly promoting views that its own scientists knew were wrong, and we knew that because we were the major group working on this. This was immoral and has greatly set back efforts to address climate change,” said Hoffert.

“They deliberately created doubt when internal research confirmed how serious a threat it was. As a result, in my opinion, homes and livelihoods will likely be destroyed and lives lost.”

Exxon worked alongside Chevron, Shell, BP, and smaller oil firms to shift attention away from the growing climate crisis. They funded the industry's trade body, API, as it drew up a multimillion dollar plan to ensure that "[climate change becomes a non- issue](#)" through disinformation. The plan said "victory will be achieved" when "recognition of uncertainties become part of the 'conventional wisdom'."

The fossil fuel industry also used its considerable resources to pour billions of dollars into political lobbying to block unfavourable laws and to fund front organisations with neutral and scientific sounding names, such as the Global Climate Coalition (GCC). In 2001, the US state department told the GCC that President George W. Bush rejected the Kyoto protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions "[in part, based on input from you](#)".

Exxon alone has funded more than 40 groups to deny climate science, including the George C. Marshall Institute, which [one lawsuit claims orchestrated a "sham petition"](#) denying man-made global climate change. It was later denounced by the National Academy of Science as "a deliberate attempt to mislead scientists".



Climate activists protest on the first day of the Exxon Mobil trial outside the New York state supreme court in October 2019. Photograph: Angela Weiss/AFP/Getty Images

Drilling down

To Sharon Eubanks the conspiracy to deny science sounded very familiar. From 2000, she led the US justice department's legal team against nine tobacco firms in one of the largest civil cases filed under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (Rico) act, which was designed to combat organised crime.

In 2006, a federal judge found that the industry had spent decades committing a huge fraud on the American public by lying about the dangers of smoking and pushing cigarettes to young people.

Eubanks said that when she looked at the fossil fuel industry's strategy, she immediately recognised big tobacco's playbook.

“Big Oil was engaged in exactly the same type of behaviour that the tobacco companies engaged in and were found liable for fraud on a massive scale,” said Eubanks. “The cover up, the denial of the problem, the funding of scientists to question the science. The same pattern. And some of the same lawyers represent both tobacco and big oil.”

The danger for the fossil fuel industry is that the parallels do not end there.

The legal process is likely to oblige the oil conglomerates to turn over years of internal communications revealing what they knew about climate change, when and how they responded. Given what has already come out from Exxon, they are unlikely to help the industry's case.

Eubanks, who is now advising attorneys general and others suing the oil industry, said a turning point in her action against big tobacco came with the discovery of internal company memos in a state case in Minnesota. They included language that talked about recruiting young people as “replacement smokers” for those who died from cigarettes.

“I think the public was particularly stunned by some of the content of the documents and the talk about the need for bigger bags to take home all the money they were going to make from getting people to smoke,” said Eubanks.

The exposure of the tobacco companies internal communications shifted the public mood and the politics, helping to open the door to legislation to curb smoking that the industry had been successfully resisting for decades.

Farber, the Berkeley law professor, said the discovery process carries a similar danger for the oil companies because it is likely to expose yet more evidence that they set out to deceive. He said that will undercut any attempt by the energy giants to claim in court that they were ignorant of the damage they were causing.

Farber said it will also be difficult for the oil industry to resist the weight of US lawsuits, shareholder activism, and shifting public and political opinion. “It might push them towards settlement or supporting legislation that releases some from liability in return for some major concessions such as a large tax to finance responses to climate change.”

The alternative, said Farber, is to take their chance on judges and juries who may be increasingly inclined to take the climate crisis seriously.

“They may think this is an emergency that requires a response. That the oil companies should be held responsible for the harm they’ve caused and that could be very expensive,” he said. “If they lose, it’s catastrophic ultimately.”

The Guardian is sharing stories in its Climate crimes series with [Covering Climate Now](#), a global news collaboration of more than 400 news outlets

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Hong Kong

‘They can’t speak freely’: Hong Kong a year after the national security law

Powerful chilling effect as dissenters are detained, often without charges, and face life in prison

- [The arrested: Hongkongers caught up in the security law](#)



Jimmy Lai, the founder of Apple Daily, a pro-democracy newspaper, is awaiting a national security trial. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

Jimmy Lai, the founder of Apple Daily, a pro-democracy newspaper, is awaiting a national security trial. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP



[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

One year after Beijing imposed a national security law (NSL) on [Hong Kong](#), the city has been drastically and fundamentally changed. Political opposition has been largely crushed, pro-democracy newspapers have been forced to close or self-censor, political and advocacy groups have disbanded. Thousands of residents have fled overseas.

At least 128 people have been arrested under the NSL or by its dedicated police department, including three minors, dozens of politicians, and journalists. More than half have been charged with national security offences that carry up to life in prison, and only 17 were granted bail.

But with [the first case reaching trial](#) just last week, the law – which broadly outlaws acts of secession, subversion, foreign collusion and terrorism – remains untested. Analysts say the rushed arrests and slow prosecutions are a deliberate strategy designed to stoke fear, and that interventions in due process risk the right to a fair trial.

The Guardian has tracked the use of the NSL since [its introduction](#). Relying on police press statements, social media posts and news reports, it determined that at least 128 people have been arrested, some of them multiple times, by the police's national security department (NSD).

Hong Kong police and the national security bureau gave different figures – 113 and 115 respectively – while the department of justice said it “does not maintain any record of the statistical information”.

The bureau said 64 people had been charged, but that the others remain under investigation. The low rate of charges so long after arrest is deliberate, said Eric Lai, the Hong Kong law fellow at Georgetown University and a co-author of two recent reports by [the Georgetown Center for Asian Law](#) examining the NSL.

“It’s totally in their control whether and when they will prosecute the arrestee under police bail,” said Lai. “[Not doing so] creates a silencing effect in society, an idea that everyone could be arbitrarily arrested, even without charges, and so they can’t speak freely and participate in political society.”

Jeffrey Wasserstrom, a historian of modern [China](#) at the University of California, Irvine, and an author on Hong Kong, said authorities already had the ability to “arrest, detain and prosecute people for many actions that displeased them,” but that the NSL had added the fear of long sentences and provided greater potential to punish people for speech. “This has a powerful chilling effect,” he said.

Few people in Hong Kong are still willing to speak publicly in opposition to the government, and interviews with foreign media have been cited in at least one case (against Jimmy Lai) and two bail hearings (against the [former legislator Claudia Mo](#)).

High-profile activists such as [Jimmy Lai](#) and Joshua Wong are among those awaiting national security trials. But there are others, like [Margaret Ng](#), [Martin Lee](#), Lee Cheuk Yan and Albert Ho, who have been [charged or convicted](#) under pre-existing laws covering unauthorised protests, anti-pandemic gathering bans and the colonial-era sedition law.

Among the cases tracked by the Guardian, dozens of people arrested by the NSD – which has vastly expanded powers – were charged with fraud, money laundering, [non NSL-sedition](#) and other crimes unrelated to the new law, blurring the line between common law and national security.

An Amnesty International report released on Wednesday said: “The authorities are exercising these virtually unchecked investigative powers in cases potentially unrelated to national security.”

This risked normalising the NSD operating outside its scope (which gives some immunity from human rights laws), and limited what could be done to prevent “potential human rights violations during the investigative process,” Amnesty said.

‘Dual-track justice’: concerns for due process

Members of the judiciary have expressed fear for the future of Hong Kong’s respected court system. At least two judges have left, citing the NSL.

The Georgetown report found significant concerns that defendants’ rights to due process were being curtailed in NSL prosecutions.

The first NSL trial began on 23 June, 51 weeks after the defendant, Tong Ying-kit, was arrested on day one of the law, after he allegedly drove his motorcycle into a group of police officers during protests.

Tong’s plea for trial by jury was turned down by the high court – for the first time in its 176 year history – after Hong Kong’s justice secretary argued that juror safety could be at risk.

Lai said his team were “deeply concerned about due process”, citing the jury decision, the presumptive denial of bail to national security defendants – including dozens of people arrested for [holding a peaceful pre-election primary](#) – and questions as to whether some defendants were pressured into dismissing their chosen counsel and engaging pro-Beijing lawyers.

“We can see the government, the prosecution, even the judge is trying to endorse a dual-track justice system in Hong Kong,” he said. “One that

follows the ordinary practices and the other that creates a new norm.”

The Georgetown report said it was too early to say definitively, but “taken together, the moves by the government ... put the fundamental right to a fair trial at risk”.

Tong is on trial for the crimes of inciting secession and terrorism, as well as dangerous driving, but his case also has a free-speech element. Prosecutors said a flag mounted on his motorbike that read “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times” was a separatist rallying cry from people seeking “regime change”.

According to an analysis of the Georgetown Center’s and the Guardian’s data, about 30 of the NSL arrests appeared to relate to seditious or secessionist speech or possession of materials. Most involved no other alleged crimes. Most of the 53 people arrested over the [pan-democrat primaries](#) had no other accusations against them.

In the last year, political opposition has all but disappeared. Pan-democrat legislators have resigned or been disqualified; [dozens of them have been arrested](#). Activists have been jailed, gone to ground or fled overseas alongside untold thousands of other residents. Political parties and advocacy groups have disbanded, church charities shuttered, academia upended. The city’s most vocal pro-democracy newspaper, Apple Daily, has been forced to close and other media intimidated or muzzled. Fundamental changes to elections have sailed through.

Lai and his co-authors said there was still opportunity for the government to “de-escalate” its use of the NSL, and he maintained this was in its interest – if it wanted to remain an international finance centre and model city that respected human rights and the rule of law.

It may be too late. In a report last week, [Human Rights Watch accused](#) the Hong Kong government of having “systematically dismantled human rights” with the NSL.

“Hong Kong people are watching the Chinese government take rapid-fire steps to destroy their democratic society,” said Maya Wang, the senior China

researcher at Human Rights Watch. “They used to talk about politics, run for office and criticise the government, but that’s not just off limits now, it’s punishable by up to life in prison.”

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Global development

‘I refuse to visit his grave’: the trauma of mothers caught in Israel-Gaza conflict

Many women have lost children, been separated from newborns or are unable to breastfeed and bond with their babies because of the war



May Al-Masri holds a picture of her son Yasser, killed by a rocket outside her home. She was pregnant at the time. Photograph: Stefanie Glinski/The Guardian

May Al-Masri holds a picture of her son Yasser, killed by a rocket outside her home. She was pregnant at the time. Photograph: Stefanie Glinski/The Guardian

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[About this content](#)

[Stefanie Glinski](#) in Gaza

Wed 30 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

In the last month of her pregnancy, May al-Masri was preparing dinner when a rocket landed outside her home in northern [Gaza](#), killing her one-year-old son, Yasser.

Masri had felt the explosion's shockwave when the attack happened last month, but was largely unharmed. Running outside once the air had cleared, she found her husband severely wounded and her child's body covered in blood.

With her husband in a West Bank hospital – and likely to be there for months to come – Masri gave birth to a healthy boy a few weeks later. However, the trauma of the attack, and the grief of her loss, have made it difficult for the 20-year-old to bond with or breastfeed her newborn baby.

May's [escalation of violence](#) in the long-running Israel-Palestine conflict killed 256 Palestinians and 13 Israelis. Yasser was one of the 68 [children killed in Gaza](#), according to the authorities there.

While crumbling buildings and signs of devastation can be seen throughout the small strip of land, it is the hidden impact of war, the trauma, that outweighs visible destruction.

“Trauma, stress and proximity to explosions have led to many miscarriages during the war, as well as a higher number of stillbirths,” says psychologist Helana Musleh, who works at northern Gaza’s al-Awda hospital where Masri delivered her baby.



Devastation in Gaza after intense conflict in May. Photograph: Stefanie Glinski/The Guardian

“Abnormal situations such as war can create severe fear and depression that can affect both the mother’s and child’s health. Hormonal changes can even prevent women from being able to breastfeed their children,” says Musleh.

Scrolling through images on her phone, Masri pulls up one of her favourites of Yasser sitting on the floor with a wide smile on his face. Tears roll down her cheeks as she strokes her fingers over the screen, her baby, Ahmad, resting on her lap, tightly wrapped in a blanket. “I refuse to visit his grave,” she says. “I have deleted all the photos of the explosion’s destruction. I can’t look at it.”

Masri has moved in with her mother; her own house was too damaged to be habitable. She gave birth in a blur, without having contractions, without producing milk for Ahmad, who is named after one of Masri's uncles, who was also killed.

“Once again, it is women and children who have been hardest hit by the latest escalation of violence in Gaza,” says Samah Kassab, a humanitarian programme officer at ActionAid who works with women such as Masri. “We hear about new mothers unable to breastfeed or bond with their babies, and about children who are bed-wetting and unable to speak to their friends and families because of fear and anxiety.”

During 11 days of furious fighting, from 10 to 21 May, 97 women gave birth at al-Awda hospital; 31 had caesarean sections. “Giving birth doesn't stop during war, of course, but delivering under high stress can cause complications,” says hospital director Dr Ahmad Ismail Mohanna, adding that the number of women experiencing birth difficulties remained high.

Wissam Maher Mater, 25, has still not been able to see her baby, now almost two weeks old.



Wissam Maher Mater looks at a picture of her baby, now almost two weeks old. She has been unable to see him because he is in a different hospital, in

intensive care. Photograph: Stefanie Glinski/The Guardian

“During the war, a rocket hit right outside my house, smashing our windows and doors,” Mater says. She passed out. “From that moment on, I wasn’t able to calm down any more – even once the war had stopped. I wasn’t sure my baby would survive in my womb.”

After complications and a delivery by caesarean section, Mater’s child was rushed to the children’s hospital’s intensive care unit on the other side of the city as his lungs were not strong enough to allow him to breathe unaided. Mater continues to recover in hospital herself, miles away from her baby.

[How does a pregnant woman get to hospital when there's no road? By stretcher ...](#)

[Read more](#)

“I haven’t been able to see him or breastfeed him. I don’t even know my child,” she says. The only assurance of his wellbeing is a photo sent to her by the nurses taking care of him – an image Mater can barely take her eyes off.

Although there [is a shaky ceasefire](#) between Israel and Hamas, many of those being cared for at al-Awda hospital fear [further escalations](#) and violence, and worry for their children’s future safety.

“Even if I wanted to leave and provide my newborn son with a better future, there is no place to go,” Masri says.

This article was downloaded by calibre from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/30/i-refuse-to-visit-his-grave-the-trauma-of-mothers-caught-in-israel-gaza-conflict>

[Brigid Delaney's diary](#)[Coronavirus](#)

I missed four lockdowns. Now I'm living in Sydney with a fridge stuck in my bedroom

[Brigid Delaney.](#)



Lockdown luck has previously been on my side, but flying into Mascot feels like I'm entering the tiger's maw



‘Someone makes a meme of me which looks like I’m in the middle of a garland of roses but on closer inspection is actually Covid spikes.’

‘Someone makes a meme of me which looks like I’m in the middle of a garland of roses but on closer inspection is actually Covid spikes.’

Tue 29 Jun 2021 23.26 EDT

Thursday

To bastardise Cold Chisel, the last plane into Sydney’s almost gone.

There’s around a dozen of us on this Virgin flight, entering a city – as they say on the news “that’s on a knife’s edge”. Covid numbers are up but Gladys won’t lock down, surely?

I’m flying to Sydney because I’ve signed a lease on a flat and have arranged a truck for the transportation of the fridge to the flat. Lockdown luck has so far been on my side. I’ve missed four lockdowns in two states now, each by a matter of days.

But flying into Mascot feels different this time, less like I’ve made another lucky escape and more like I’m entering the tiger’s maw.

That night the New South Wales government issues a stay-at-home order for a week for seven LGAs, including the one I'm moving into.

[I became a super commuter and felt like if there was a system, I had gamed it. Then came the pandemic | Brigid Delaney](#)

[Read more](#)

Friday

I pick up the keys to the new flat and meet the removalist, Mohammed. I ask him if he's had a busy day and he says yes – he's been flat-out because there's rumours of a longer lockdown and there were all these last-minute bookings because “people are freaking out and putting their furniture in storage and moving with their kids to their parents' house outside the lockdown zones”. That seems weird. Not the bit about people fleeing the eastern suburbs, but the storage bit.

But I guess Mohammed is not paid to ask why.

He's picked up my friend Alyx's fridge from Newtown. It's enormous and I almost perish under it as Mohammed tries to take it down a flight of stairs with me trying to steady it from below. It's so enormous it doesn't fit in the kitchen so it must go in the bedroom. This doesn't bode well. How many well-adjusted people have an enormous fridge in their bedroom?

Before Mohammed leaves, I ask him again about the rich people putting stuff into storage this morning. He repeats the story; rich people, storage, leaving the eastern suburbs. “Wild,” I say, before tweeting it.

First stop as a new resident. I go to my new local and buy a coffee. The owner is packing up the outside tables. “The whole city is in lockdown,” he tells me, before giving me the cafe's copy of Friday's AFR. It's fresh and untouched by human hands. This must be serious.

People on the internet are getting upset about my storage tweet. They don't believe it, it *doesn't make sense*. In fact they know rich people and, like, rich people don't use storage. Storage is *common*.

I go to Bondi Junction to buy furniture. The Westfield is super empty. It's just me and a guy with a baby strapped to his chest who is running between levels trying to find the Nespresso store. "Pods! I need pods for lockdown."

I tweet a picture of Bondi Junction Westfield and write that it looks empty. People freak out because there was Covid there last week and someone makes a meme of me which looks like I'm in the middle of a garland of roses but on closer inspection is actually Covid spikes.

But Bondi Junction Westfield is probably the safest spot in Sydney at the moment – for a start it's as empty as a back paddock, it's had a deep clean and its staff have all been tested.

That night in Potts Point, it's the last dinner before lockdown. I drink martinis and eat a lot of focaccia and cured meats with some friends who have spent the week at a trial. The details of the trial and the looming lockdown and the eerily emptying streets of Potts Point and the grim cheer of the waiters infuse the night with a sort of manic energy.

I remember the last time I had a last night before lockdown. We were at a pub in Castlemaine in March 2020 and everything seemed heightened, the conversation vacillating between giddy and intense. The days of lockdown blur into one stodgy lump, but the night before it starts and the night after it lifts seem to have a peculiar intensity about them – bright, golden bookends on a shelf full of dull texts.

Saturday

On Saturday, the first full day of lockdown – I go down to the lobby of my hotel. It's deserted, the streets are empty and there is one lone clerk at the desk, behind a plastic barrier, wearing a mask.

The clerk tells me that most of the guests have gone, or never checked in the first place.

It's like a scene from *Death in Venice* ("Listen!" said the solitary, in a low voice, almost mechanically; "they are disinfecting Venice -why?")

I go to my new apartment. It's empty except for a fridge in the bedroom.

Suddenly I feel very tired.

Sunday

I wake up feeling crook, so sleep for a bit then get a Covid test. In the sunshine, on the way to the testing site (on foot) the parks are packed and there is an almost festive atmosphere. A man has strung a long rubber rope between two trees, and is trying to tightrope walk. A four play tennis on the nearby courts, people line up in a socially distanced way for fig, pistachio and honey danishes. I keep away from people but am seemingly followed by a woman on a long, torturous phone call. "I know everyone thinks I'm a bad person, and what I did was very very bad, but I can't think of myself like that. I *have* to like myself. I have to!"

How did they handle it in Melbourne for so long? I am in awe.

I wonder what she's done.

The testing clinic is in a very beautiful location with a view of the Harbour bridge. There is no queue.

Have you been tested before?

Yes.

And suddenly there she goes, with the swab up the nose.

Friends ring and offer to drop food at my hotel. They're baking sourdough again.

Back in my lodgings, I isolate and read Thomas Mann's *Death In Venice* and rewatch Bo Burnham's comedy special *Inside*. The combination of SOURDOUGH offerings, fear of having caught and spread the Delta variant, Bo Burnham slowly going insane in a room in 2020 and Thomas Mann's anti-hero in cholera-ridden Venice ("his head burned, his body was

wet with clammy sweat, he was plagued by intolerable thirst”) send me into a depression spiral.

Of course this spiral is out of all proportion to my actual reality. I have been isolating for only a few hours and the lockdown is in its second day. How did they *handle it* in Melbourne for so long? I am in awe.

Monday 6.50am

Wake to a text from St Vincent’s pathology. A negative result. Yay! That was quick. My confinement is over. I didn’t even start writing a novel. I didn’t even finish *Death in Venice* (even though it is only 42 pages long). The gloom lifts despite the rain, despite the fact I have moved into an apartment in Plague Town with no internet or furniture and a fridge in the bedroom. I have no bed. Plus – we are locked down for another two weeks, at least.

But that’s OK. It’s my turn now.

- Brigid Delaney is a Guardian Australia columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/30/i-missed-four-lockdowns-now-im-living-in-sydney-with-a-fridge-stuck-in-my-bedroom>



[Euro 2020](#)

‘It’s coming Rome’: how the papers covered England’s Euro victory over Germany

Dream result hailed as an escape from the nightmare of past defeats – and a glorious release from the pandemic



Front pages of the papers on Wednesday after England beat Germany 2-0.
Composite: Various

Front pages of the papers on Wednesday after England beat Germany 2-0.
Composite: Various

[Martin Farrer](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 23.05 EDT

England's historic [victory over Germany](#) in Euro 2020 is the stuff of dreams for the front pages of Wednesday's papers, with the win doubling as a release from a 55-year football nightmare and 18 months of a gruelling pandemic.

Half of the **Guardian's** front page is devoted to a euphoric image of the players celebrating Harry Kane's goal sealing the 2-0 win, England's first over Germany in a knockout tie since 1966.

Guardian front page, Wednesday 30 June 2021: England 2 Germany 0 - Like emerging from a dream into a strange new light
pic.twitter.com/Klbddb7dQU

— The Guardian (@guardian) [June 29, 2021](#)

The piece alongside the picture is headlined “Like emerging from a dream into a strange new light” as chief sports writer Barney Ronay pinpoints the lifting of a weight from the English part of the nation.

“At the end, as the crowd basked and bounced in the seats it was hard to shake the feeling of people emerging from a fever dream into some strange new light,” he writes. “The last 18 months have been a gruelling, bruising alternative timeline. But it seems good things can also happen here too.”

The Guardian’s main story, however, focuses on the findings of the Marmot report: “‘Jaw-dropping’ fall in life expectancy in poor areas”.

The **Mirror** goes all-out on the football. Its front page features the same picture as the Guardian of the players celebrating with Kane, and has the headline “Time to dream” after what it calls “England’s night of glory”.

Tomorrow's front page: Time to dream
[#TomorrowsPapersTodayhttps://t.co/0qh03N17Cl](https://t.co/0qh03N17Cl)
pic.twitter.com/8erb864171

— The Mirror (@DailyMirror) [June 29, 2021](#)

Both papers have the punning headline “It’s coming Rome” on their back pages, as they look forward to Saturday night’s quarter-final against Ukraine in the Italian capital.

GUARDIAN SPORT: It’s coming Rome [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)
pic.twitter.com/THxAXmfsJq

— Neil Henderson (@hendopolis) [June 29, 2021](#)

The **Telegraph** has an enormous picture of Harry Kane wheeling away after scoring, and the headline: “Finally something to cheer about”.

□The front page of tomorrow's Daily Telegraph:

'Isolation hitting poor pupils hardest'[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)

Sign up for the Front Page newsletter □ <https://t.co/x8AV4Oomry>
[pic.twitter.com/FnPOav0H4x](https://t.co/FnPOav0H4x)

— The Telegraph (@Telegraph) [June 29, 2021](#)

The Wembley crowd was raucous, it reports, but “wanted something more, perhaps even more so for all the football and the life they have missed in the last 16 months”. Its main lead is “Isolation hitting poor pupils hardest”.

It’s a similar Kane picture on the front of the **Times** with the headline “Dream result: England end their Germany nightmare”. That runs above the main splash which is “Bid to end school Covid chaos”.

TIMES: Bid to end school Covid chaos [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)
[pic.twitter.com/IYExIfwp8L](https://t.co/IYExIfwp8L)

— Neil Henderson (@hendopolis) [June 29, 2021](#)

The **Express** also chooses to run with a picture of Harry Kane and the headline “No, it wasn’t a dream! We really did beat Germany”. But its main story concerns police action, or lack of it in the paper’s view, over the harassment of chief medical officer Chris Whitty. “Have police lost the plot?”

EXPRESS: Have police lost the plot? [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)
[pic.twitter.com/HUJc4Vohuk](https://t.co/HUJc4Vohuk)

— Neil Henderson (@hendopolis) [June 29, 2021](#)

England’s match-winner, Raheem Sterling, gets the top billing he deserves from the **Sun** which features a picture of him celebrating his crucial first goal. The headline is an elaborate nod to the famous 1996 anthem Three Lions (Football’s Coming Home): “55 years of hurt never stopped us Raheeming!”. The back page is a picture taken from behind of England

coach Gareth Southgate celebrating the win and the headline “No more looking back”.

Tomorrow's front page: 'England fans are daring to dream that football could finally be coming home' <https://t.co/tlBRvwmKI8pic.twitter.com/XzvxpsI9Gz>

— The Sun (@TheSun) [June 29, 2021](#)

The **Mail** also devotes its entire front to the football with the headline: “By George we did it!” alongside a picture of a beaming Prince George as he sat alongside his parents at Wembley. “England erupts as we beat old foe at Wembley – ending 55 years of hurt,” the strapline adds.

Wednesday's [@DailyMailUK](#) [#MailFrontPages](#)
<pic.twitter.com/kwJ3Ept9dg>

— Daily Mail U.K. (@DailyMailUK) [June 29, 2021](#)

The **i** leads with “Jabs stockpile to help UK live with Covid” underneath another picture of Kane and the headline “Lionhearts 2 – Germany 0”.

Wednesday's front page: Jabs stockpile to help UK live with Covid-19
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)

□ Preparations for mix-and-match booster scheme [@HugoGye](#)
[@PMGallagher1https://t.co/sQFiWrLDbM](#)

□ Hopes of quarantine-free travel dashed [@RichardVaughan1](#)
<https://t.co/V67jgEryzJ> <pic.twitter.com/al6vMd60Gw>

— i newspaper (@theipaper) [June 29, 2021](#)

The **Star** doesn't pass up the chance to hit a sardonic note with its splash headline of “England DON'T lose to Germany” coupled with a picture of wildly celebrating fans gathered at a large screening of the match.

STAR HISTORIC EDITION! England DON'T lose to Germany
[#TomorrowsPapersToday pic.twitter.com/InmQ112ctp](#)

— Neil Henderson (@hendopolis) [June 29, 2021](#)

Metro riffs off the quote of '66 with the headline: “The jinx, it’s all over” and features a triumphant Kane helping end the team’s “55-year curse”.

Tomorrow's Paper Tonight ☐

ENGLAND 2 GERMANY 0 ☐

THE JINX, IT'S ALL OVER

Yes, it really happened! Three Lions end 55-year curse ☐ ☐ ☐
[#TomorrowsPaperToday pic.twitter.com/JWObHmojop](#)

— Metro (@MetroUK) [June 29, 2021](#)

And we should also spare a thought for the vanquished Germans. Their footballers have inspired many self-pitying, hand-wringing Fleet Street headlines in the past but this time it’s their turn. The country’s biggest-selling paper, **Bild**, splashes with “Jogi, Alles Aus” (“Jogi, it’s all over”) as [coach Joachim Löw steps down](#). It also notes Thomas Müller’s shocking miss (Müller verballert Ausgleich), player Joshua Kimmich’s tears, and the royal celebrations.



Photograph: Bild

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jun/30/its-coming-rome-how-the-papers-covered-englands-euro-victory-over-germany>.

2021.06.30 - Opinion

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- How will the UK economy emerge from the shadow of Covid-19?
- A heatwave in Seattle? Extreme weather is no longer 'unprecedented' – it has become the norm
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The looming famine in Tigray is an avoidable catastrophe

[George Monbiot](#)



The ruination of a once-thriving area of Ethiopia is the result of war and its associated crimes. The world needs to wake up



Refugees in Mekele, in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia: ‘A great weight of evidence suggests hunger is being used as a weapon of war.’
Photograph: Ben Curtis/AP

Refugees in Mekele, in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia: ‘A great weight of evidence suggests hunger is being used as a weapon of war.’
Photograph: Ben Curtis/AP

Wed 30 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

It is hard to believe it’s happening again, even harder to believe that so few people seem to know or care. A massive famine is unfolding in Tigray in northern Ethiopia. [Five million](#) people are in need of food aid, and perhaps [900,000](#) are already starving.

In other words, it’s looking horribly reminiscent of the start of the 1984 famine, in which a million people died, most of them in Tigray. Like the last cataclysm, this has nothing to do with “natural causes”. It’s caused by war and its associated crimes. This time, however, the man in charge is a Nobel peace laureate: the Ethiopian prime minister, Abiy Ahmed. A great weight of [evidence](#) suggests that his troops, and those of his Eritrean allies, are using hunger as a weapon of war.

In February, Abiy's government [dissolved the boards](#) of the most effective aid groups: the Relief Society of Tigray and the Tigray Development Association. Since then, their warehouses have been destroyed by soldiers, their offices looted and their vehicles stolen. The Ethiopian and Eritrean armies have [blocked](#) supply lines, turned back convoys of food and medicine, burned grain stores, felled orchards, slaughtered oxen and [ordered](#) farmers not to till their fields.

This week the Ethiopian government [declared a ceasefire](#), ostensibly to “enable farmers to till their land”, but more plausibly to regroup after an astounding reversal: Tigrayan rebels have recaptured the regional capital. In any case, it's too late. Tillage should have happened over the past three months. People who are starving today can't wait for possible harvests in November.

Like his homicidal predecessor, Mengistu Haile Mariam, Abiy flatly denies the famine. Last week he claimed: “[There is no hunger in Tigray](#).” If justice is ever done, we might one day witness the remarkable spectacle of a Nobel laureate on trial for crimes against humanity.

All this would be bad enough. But what sharpens the crime is that Tigray was, until the war began last November, a world-renowned success story.

[Tigray rebels vow to drive out ‘enemies’ despite ceasefire declaration](#)
[Read more](#)

The traditional explanation of famine, which appears to [resist all evidence](#), is that hunger is caused by a surfeit of people. A rising population overtakes the land, which can no longer provide sufficient food for those who depend on it. But a fascinating [study](#) shows that in Tigray the opposite has happened.

It used photographs dating back to 1868, taken from the same vantage points, to assess the condition of the land. Since then, the population of [Ethiopia](#) has risen from 6.6 million to 115 million. A catastrophe? Far from it. The researchers found more trees, more vegetation, less erosion, less degradation. The region, they discovered, is “greener than at any time in the last 145 years”.

Why? Because the main driver of land degradation and hunger is not population. It's policy. In 1868, the best land was owned by feudal lords. Other people were driven on to steep slopes. Pressed to the margins, without secure tenure, they were forced into destructive forms of land use: mostly uncontrolled grazing. But in the 1970s, land was redistributed to the people. Beginning in the 1980s, the rebels in Tigray, who later formed the national government, launched a programme to protect the soil, catch rainwater and reforest the land. Livestock were fenced out of large areas, steep slopes were terraced, stone walls and soil bunds were built to stop erosion, and trees planted and ponds dug to prevent water from flashing off the land.

The scale of these works is [astonishing](#). Every fit person over the age of 18 spends 20 days a year on collective projects to rehabilitate the land. Entire landscapes, torn apart by gullies and sheet erosion, have been remodelled. The stone and soil moved by hand must amount to millions of tonnes. This might explain an extraordinary finding: the greenest places in Tigray are those with the [highest population density](#). Because of the vast effort required, these works would have been impossible with fewer hands.

There have been similar results in other places: the [Karoo Midlands](#) in South Africa, Machakos in [Kenya](#), the Loess plateau in China and the [Adarsha catchment](#) in India. In all these cases, population growth has been accompanied by environmental repair.

But Tigray is the outstanding example. The restoration works have caused a huge reduction in soil erosion and water loss, a [resurgence of wildlife](#) and [improvements in crop production](#) that have easily outstripped population growth. Incomes have risen. Children spend more time at school. In 2015-2016, when a major drought struck, the system helped to [avert famine](#). The reason for its success is local control and enthusiasm for the programme: people feel it belongs to them. As welfare and security have improved, and women have greater rights and opportunities, population growth has fallen.

Of course, there are plenty of places where higher numbers of people, combined with total institutional failure, harm both the natural world and human welfare. But the important point is that population growth, degradation and famine are not intrinsically connected. What counts is the quality of government.

So there are no excuses. No part of the catastrophe in Tigray is natural or inevitable. Abiy, with his allies in [Eritrea](#), is turning a thriving, prosperous region into the scene of another historic disaster. And he won't stop until the world wakes up.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/30/famine-tigray-ethiopia-war-crimes>

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Climate crimesClimate change

The climate crisis is a crime that should be prosecuted

Mark Hertsgaard

Fossil fuel companies lied for decades about climate change, and humanity is paying the price. Shouldn't those lies be central to the public narrative?

- [Are you a fossil fuel industry insider? We want to hear from you](#)



‘It is now beyond urgent that rich and poor countries alike quit fossil fuels in favor of renewable energy and other climate-smart practices.’ Illustration: Chris Burnett/The Guardian

‘It is now beyond urgent that rich and poor countries alike quit fossil fuels in favor of renewable energy and other climate-smart practices.’ Illustration: Chris Burnett/The Guardian

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[About this content](#)

Wed 30 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

Every person on Earth today is living in a crime scene.

This crime has been going on for decades. We see its effects in the horrific heat and wildfires unfolding this summer in the American west; in the mega-storms that were so numerous in 2020 that scientists ran out of names for them; in the global projections that sea levels are set to rise by [at least 20ft](#). Our only hope is to slow this inexorable ascent so our children may figure out some way to cope.

[Big oil and gas kept a dirty secret for decades. Now they may pay the price](#)
[Read more](#)

This crime has displaced or killed untold numbers of people around the world, caused countless billions of dollars in economic damage and ravaged vital ecosystems and wildlife. It has disproportionately affected already marginalized communities around the world, from farmers in coastal Bangladesh, where the fast-rising seas are salting the soil and slashing rice yields, to low-income residents of Houston, Chicago and other cities, whose [neighborhoods suffer higher temperatures](#) than prosperous areas across town.

This crime threatens today's young people most of all and calls into question the very survival of civilization. And yet, the criminals responsible for this devastation are still at large. Indeed, they continue to perpetrate their crime, and even make money from it, not least because their crime remains unknown to most of the public.

It's enough to make your blood boil, especially if you're a parent. My daughter just turned 16, and I've been thinking about the safest place she can spend her adult life since she was a baby and [I first started writing](#) about adapting to climate change. The orange skies blanketing her hometown of San Francisco after last summer's record wildfires were a heartbreaking, infuriating sign that California will not be that safe haven.

The crime in question is the fossil fuel industry's 40 years of lying about climate change. Arguably the most consequential corporate deception in history, the industry's lies have had the effect of blunting public awareness and governmental action against what scientists say is now a full-fledged climate emergency. As a candidate in 2020, Joe Biden said he would [support efforts to prosecute the oil giants](#) for their lies. It remains to be seen whether he will keep that promise.

Journalists have dedicated years to documenting the crime scene evidence. Then in 2015, the Los Angeles Times, Inside Climate News, and the Columbia Journalism School blew the case open by tracing the crime link to ExxonMobil, then the world's largest oil company.

Internal records showed that by the late 1970s, Exxon's own scientists were briefing its top executives that man-made global warming was real, potentially catastrophic, and caused mainly by burning fossil fuels. Climate activists seized on the revelations, launching the hashtag #ExxonKnew.

Further investigations found that Chevron, Shell, BP and other oil giants likewise knew that their products threatened to render the earth's climate uninhabitable. In short, it wasn't just that Exxon knew. They all knew.

And they all chose to lie about it.

Beginning in the 1990s, oil companies spent millions upon millions of dollars on public relations campaigns to confuse the press, the public, and policymakers about the dangers posed by burning fossil fuels. Their aim was "to reposition global warming as theory, not fact," [one planning document stated](#). Front groups and friendly politicians spread the companies' lies. News outlets, especially in the United States, swallowed and regurgitated those lies to an unsuspecting public.

[Are you a fossil fuel industry insider? We want to hear from you](#)
[Read more](#)

Humanity ultimately wasted precious decades arguing about whether global warming was real rather than defusing the threat. Instead of launching a transition to renewable energy, the consumption of fossil fuel increased. More than half of the total greenhouse gases now overheating the planet were emitted after 1990—after Exxon and other fossil fuel giants privately knew what havoc they were seeding.

Exxon "could have ended the pretend debate over climate change as early as the 1980s," the author and activist Bill McKibben later wrote. "When scientists like Nasa's Jim Hansen first raised public awareness of climate change [in 1988], think of what would have happened if Exxon's chief executive had gone to Congress, too, and said that their internal scientific efforts show[ed] precisely the same thing."

While pockets of the American public may already know about big oil's crime, the vast majority of its victims almost certainly do not. How could

they? Big oil's record of lying never became part of the public narrative about climate change, largely because most news outlets did not incorporate it into their continuing coverage of climate change.

News outlets also owe the public an apology for mishandling this story

The initial Exxon Knew revelations in 2015 received relatively little follow up coverage beyond the outlets that published them. Television, which even in the internet era remains the primary source of news for most people, [ignored the revelations entirely](#). There were a few stories in the business press and independent media, especially years later when New York state and other local governments began suing oil companies for damages. But the media as a whole seems to have forgotten that big oil's climate lies ever happened.

It's long past time to right these wrongs. To date, the oil companies, the executives in charge of them, the propagandists they've employed and the politicians they've funded have largely escaped blame, much less had to pay—whether through financial penalties or prison time – for the immense damage they have done. News outlets also owe the public an apology for mishandling this story, along with a commitment to doing much sharper coverage in the future.

Humanity cannot get back the 40 years lost to big oil's climate lies. It is now beyond urgent that rich and poor countries alike quit fossil fuels in favor of renewable energy and other climate-smart practices. Equally crucial, we must fortify our communities against the fearsome climate impacts that, because of our decades of delay, can no longer be avoided.

All this will cost money – lots of it. The world's governments will be arguing from now through the make-or-break UN climate summit in November about who pays how much. Restoring big oil's lies to their rightful place at the heart of the climate story would offer an answer to that riddle, one that Joe Biden should be pressed on: big oil knew – shouldn't big oil pay?

The Guardian is sharing stories in its Climate crimes series with [Covering Climate Now](#), a global news collaboration of more than 400 news outlets

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[Covid crisis watch](#)[Economics](#)

How will the UK economy emerge from the shadow of Covid-19?

Jagjit Chadha

End of furlough, corporate sector debt and continuing crisis in other nations all mean it is too soon to get out the bunting

- [UK recovery at risk as furlough phased out, say economists](#)
- [UK unemployment drops as staff hired amid Covid rebound](#)



‘Monetary policy responded well to the initial lockdown with a cut in interest rates from the Bank of England and an increase in the size of the quantitative easing programme.’ Photograph: Antonio Olmos/The Observer

‘Monetary policy responded well to the initial lockdown with a cut in interest rates from the Bank of England and an increase in the size of the quantitative easing programme.’ Photograph: Antonio Olmos/The Observer

Wed 30 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

It seems likely that later this year or early next the economy will return to the level of overall activity we recorded at the end of 2019. But even if activity in aggregate returns to pre-crisis levels, with services and construction in the lead, neither manufacturing nor agriculture seems likely to do so. We also expect to see considerable regional variation in the short run, with the economic prospects of London showing most resilience and the Midlands and Northern Ireland looking particularly vulnerable. More importantly, the economy has lost about two years of economic growth and sectors that are so important to UK plc, such as hospitality and the arts, may bear the scars for some time to come. It is far too early to get out the bunting.

There are three specific areas to watch carefully in the second half of this year.

First, in the labour market, as the [furlough scheme winds down](#), we need to understand what fraction of those employees will be taken back on by firms and how many roles will be made redundant. Related to this, what specific support might be offered to help those losing their jobs, or entering the labour market, to search for work or train for new careers?

Second, there has been a good rate of new company startups and, so far, firms have not suffered large-scale bankruptcies and debt default. This tends to be a good indicator of future employment and may support future productivity, but the composition of these new firms has been strongest in sectors that are best able to withstand social distancing. These may not necessarily be the best firms to promote enduring prosperity. It is also of concern that the corporate sector is now carrying even more debt, which may act as a drag on hiring and investment.

Third, as an economy sensitive to the fluctuations in world trade, the UK is acutely subject to the maxim that this won't end for anyone until it ends for everyone. This means that for as long as the crisis casts its shadow, the denuded prospects for tourism, international trade and labour mobility may act as a drag on UK activity. So as well as an ethical issue, self-interest also dictates that we ought to be taking the lead in arguing for [waivers on intellectual property](#) so that the vaccine technology can be shared with the world.

We cannot think simply in terms of a fixed capacity for production in the economy for which policy simply acts to stoke demand. Government and Bank of England policies should be used to support the most efficient and dynamic production of goods and services. Attention must be paid to maintaining the credibility of our institutions to manage inflation risks and the stability of the financial system. But as we face obstacles to the recovery from Covid-19, the Treasury and the central bank must also show flexibility to support our continued fightback from the pandemic.

[UK unemployment drops as firms hire staff amid Covid rebound](#)

[Read more](#)

At present our hapless fiscal framework – the rules the government sets for managing the public finances – is under scrutiny by the Treasury and we wait for its next iteration. But we do not need more arbitrary rules; fiscal policy needs to be directed at the regional and household inequalities that the pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated.

Last spring, monetary policy responded well to the initial lockdown with a cut in interest rates from the Bank of England and an increase in the size of the quantitative easing programme. With the recovery in train, it is now time to complete the task of forward guidance and explain better what might happen to the Bank's base rate and the stock of asset purchases as the economy bounces back. It is simply not enough to focus our attention on small changes in the base rate that may or may not matter. What matters is that financial capital is matched with the most productive prospects at the best global terms.

Not so long ago, the only thing that seemed to matter was how and when we delivered Brexit, and what that might mean for an economy that had suffered a prolonged period of underinvestment. Now, as we think about how to plot a way out of the Covid crisis, it is precisely those gaps in human and physical capital that we need to nurture to deliver sustainable and balanced growth across the country. It is the biggest problem we face. Can we solve it?

Jagjit S Chadha is the director of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research

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OpinionClimate change

A heatwave in Seattle? Extreme weather is no longer ‘unprecedented’ – it has become the norm

[Arwa Mahdawi](#)



This is serious enough for the 1% to start building bunkers ready for environmental collapse



The sun shines near the Space Needle in Seattle on 28 June, as temperature records in the city were broken. Photograph: Ted S Warren/AP

The sun shines near the Space Needle in Seattle on 28 June, as temperature records in the city were broken. Photograph: Ted S Warren/AP

Wed 30 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

A few years ago, the author and academic Douglas Rushkoff got invited to a swanky private resort to talk to a bunch of obscenely rich hedge fund guys about the future of technology. He thought they were going to ask him how technology was going to improve the world, but they were far more interested in discussing the “Event”, their cutesy term for the collapse of civilisation. “How do I maintain authority over my security force after the Event?” one CEO, who had just finished building an underground bunker system, reportedly asked. The rest of the conversation, detailed by Rushkoff in a [Guardian feature](#), continued in that vein.

That Rushkoff piece was published in 2018, but I’ve found myself thinking about it a lot over the past few days. Why? Because the Event is starting to feel imminent. If that sounds alarmist, just take a look at the weather. Severe storms have caused extensive flooding in Detroit. Canada just set its [highest temperature on record](#): a village in British Columbia reached 46.1C (115F) on Sunday. The US’s [Pacific north-west](#) also broke heat records over the

weekend, with Portland, Oregon, reaching 44.4C (112F). Seattle, which isn't exactly known for its sunshine, just had triple-digit temperatures for three days straight, breaking another record. The US National Weather Service in Washington has [called the current heatwave “historic, dangerous, prolonged and unprecedented”](#).

I'm not sure that there is any word that has been more egregiously overused recently than “unprecedented”. Every day seems to bring “unprecedented” floods, heat or wildfires. Surely it's time to stop pretending “precedent” means anything any more – as the Oregon Climate Office [tweeted](#) in response to the Portland heatwave: “The past is no longer a reliable guide for the future.” Extreme weather is no longer exceptional; it has become the norm. The climate crisis is not around the corner, it is here. And things are only going to get worse.

Of course, you don't need me or the Oregon Climate Office to tell you all this. That's what is most frustrating about the climate crisis: none of what is happening should be a surprise to anybody. The climate crisis is not some big secret – it hasn't been for a long time. You know how serious it is; I know how serious it is; the 1% who are building bunkers and fretting about how to control their private militias after environmental collapse know how serious it is; the billionaires who are spending their fortunes on getting the hell off Earth and going to space know how serious it is. As for the oil companies who have helped exacerbate the crisis? They've known how [serious it is for decades](#). With the exception of a few determined deniers, politicians are also clear that they know how important the climate crisis is. Joe Biden has called it an “[existential threat](#)” to humanity. And Boris Johnson, the world's most un-serious man, has urged the world to “[get serious](#)” about stopping a climate catastrophe.

But lofty rhetoric isn't enough, is it? We need action: and there's not nearly enough of that. In March, Biden promised a [\\$2tn infrastructure plan](#) that would allow “transformational progress in our ability to tackle climate change”. Since then, however, he seems to have prioritised compromising with Republicans more than driving through transformational progress and just came out with a [watered-down bipartisan infrastructure bill](#) that goes nowhere near far enough when it comes to addressing climate problems. I've [tried to be optimistic](#) about Biden, but it's starting to look as if he's not going

to be the transformative figure so many people hoped he'd be. We can't fight extreme weather with hot air, but that's all politicians seem willing to give us.

Arwa Mahdawi is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#)Conservatives

The lord chancellor and park yobs agree: it's all about how many mates you've got

[Marina Hyde](#)



A shared assumption unites Robert Buckland's defence of the PM's untruth and the shameful harassment of Chris Whitty



A still taken from a video appearing to show Chris Whitty being harassed, London, June 2021. Photograph: PA

A still taken from a video appearing to show Chris Whitty being harassed, London, June 2021. Photograph: PA

Tue 29 Jun 2021 08.59 EDT

On Monday, the prime minister could be found gibbering at the camera on a factory visit, wearing not just a hard hat and a hi-vis jacket but also a white lab coat. Finally, he possesses all three Infinity Garments. I'm sure he'll wield his power responsibly.

In fact, Johnson [attempted to claim credit](#) for removing Matt Hancock from his position as health secretary when news of his affair broke. "That's right," said the prime minister, "and that's why when I saw the story on Friday we had a new secretary of state for health in on Saturday." I mean ... at least when Trump did this sort of thing he wasn't dressed as three kids' TV characters at once. What actually happened, you'll recall, is that Johnson didn't sack Hancock, and his official spokesman repeated a [single line](#) multiple times: that the prime minister had accepted Hancock's apology, and considered the matter closed.

Yet last Friday is now a movie that upset even Johnson's fandom, and therefore needs to be [retconned](#) by Monday, like it's [The Last Jedi](#) or something. Ideally, screaming fanboys will soon be arguing over which version of Hancock's departure from government is actually canon. Is it the one we all saw with our own eyes on Friday, where the prime minister was too wet and personally compromised to do the obviously right thing and sack Hancock? Or is it the one the prime minister retrospectively reframed on Monday, where he kind of sort of did sack him?

The problem with what we might call The Rise of Shitetalker is that these untruths are moving too quickly even for Johnson's most agile ministers. On Monday, Michael Gove [explained to reporters](#) that Johnson had done the right thing by not sacking Hancock, sadly unaware that the official implication was now that Johnson had sacked him. Honestly Michael: get your head in the game. What's the matter with you?

Perhaps the answer to that question lies concealed somewhere in his wife's most eye-catching [column](#) for the Mail on Sunday, in which Sarah Vine explained how, apart from David Cameron, literally every politician she'd ever known treated their wife and family like shit (I paraphrase – but only like the prime minister does, so it's fine). This, we learned, was not a prudent way at all to treat one's wife. "The problem with the wife who has known you since way before you were king of the world is that she sees through your facade," remarked Sarah mildly. "She knows your fears and your insecurities. She knows that, deep down inside, you are not the Master of the Universe you purport to be. And some people don't like to be reminded of that."

Well, now. I can't help feeling that if we keep hacking away at this thorny thicket of prose, we might eventually come upon a sleeping princess of meaning encased therein. Either that, or Sarah will drop a fully formed [visual album](#) on Tidal one of these nights.

In a crowded field, though, easily the grossest defence of Johnson came from justice secretary Robert Buckland, who kicked off this week in politics by explaining to the Today programme that Johnson's popularity should be the only arbiter of morality. "The public are not interested in this issue because it has no bearing on the public interests," claimed the actual lord

chancellor. “It’s what’s going on out there that matters, and that’s why the prime minister has his finger on the pulse of the nation ... the truth is, a lot of people just don’t like the PM and they can’t get over the fact he’s popular in the country.”

So we move on – they always want you to just move on – to the [video](#) of drunk idiots harassing Chris Whitty in a London park. This is a very depressing piece of footage. Of course, there have always been idiots. But there is something rather Johnson-era about this sort of clip, where a yobbish disdain for boundaries feels increasingly part of daily life. Written on the laughing, leering faces of Whitty’s tormentors is a set of assumptions: that it doesn’t matter how many passing members of the public can see their behaviour and clock it for what it is, that their behaviour doesn’t actually matter, that it’s all a laugh, and that being popular online is miles more important than being decent.

I think we can be fairly confident these two weren’t listening to Radio 4 at 8.10 that morning – but if they had been, they’d have heard the justice secretary imply pretty much the same thing. Funny that government ministers are now calling for them to be brought to justice. After all, we got a glimpse of the lord chancellor’s apparent worldview on Monday morning. Are these guys popular? Do they have a load of mates? Then stop banging on about it – they haven’t done anything wrong.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#) **British Museum**

How did Osborne, king of cuts, become the British Museum's fundraiser-in-chief?

[Charlotte Higgins](#)



The former chancellor's new role is just one example of the merry-go-round of appointments at the top of arts institutions



‘There is some poetic justice in the fact that George Osborne will be judged on his ability to raise millions of pounds for the British Museum.’

Photograph: Vuk Valcic/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

‘There is some poetic justice in the fact that George Osborne will be judged on his ability to raise millions of pounds for the British Museum.’

Photograph: Vuk Valcic/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

Tue 29 Jun 2021 11.10 EDT

George Osborne’s appointment as [chair of the British Museum](#) trustees has caused an understandable outcry. That the chancellor responsible for a 30% cut over the past decade to its funding should become its leader is a wild irony. And of course it wasn’t just the British Museum that suffered because of him. Osborne’s cuts, when chancellor, hurt theatres, festivals, museums, libraries – because apparently scraped-together thousands from dance companies would, laughably, help salvage public finances in the wake of the banking crisis.

The appointment has been seen, too, in the context of a government consistently in breach of the arm’s-length principle that supposedly protects the arts from direct political interference. The culture secretary, Oliver Dowden, has weighed in on everything to [what gets sung](#) at the Last Night of the Proms to the fate of statues, issuing thinly veiled threats to English

arts organisations that future funding will depend on adherence to his policy on [contested heritage](#). If you look at the government's desire to insert former Mail editor Paul Dacre as [chair of Ofcom](#), the appointment of Tory donor Richard Sharp to the [chairmanship of the BBC](#), and the scandalous vetoing of academic [Aminul Hoque's second term](#) on the board of the National Maritime Museum, then it all adds up to a determined drive to stop the lefties having their way with culture.

But this does not quite answer the question of why the board of the British Museum – a group of apparently independent-minded people including Mary Beard, Grayson Perry and Muriel Gray – selected Osborne as their new chair. Because this was not some No 10 stitch-up: the job was [advertised in the Guardian](#) and Sunday Times, candidates applied for it and were scrutinised, and the favoured applicant was voted for, unanimously, by the entire board. So what happened?

The reality is that the most important factor in Osborne's appointment is not politics, but money. So it will be in the appointment of a new chair of the Royal Opera House, for which he was also tipped. The British Museum is planning a huge development project, one that is supposed to fix the ailing building, in all the unglamorous ways that a 3,000-room building with dodgy old electrics needs fixing, prior to a grand redisplay of its entire collection. No budget has been publicly mentioned for this, the Rosetta Project. But the museum's director, Hartwig Fischer, [talks in terms of the "projet grand Louvre"](#), which cost around £780m at 1993 prices; or the redevelopment of the Rijksmuseum, which reopened in 2013 having cost €375m (£320m). Osborne's most important role will be to leverage funds from the government (yes, there is no greater irony) and from private sources, AKA his friends among super-rich bankers and fund managers and hedge funders.

His appointment is an epiphenomenon rather than the result of a conspiracy: the logical consequence of a culture of governance of major arts institutions that, though it certainly leans Tory-wards, goes back way further than the chaotic expostulations of Dowden and co. This culture is hard to define and harder to eradicate. It relates to a narrow understanding of what sort of person might be qualified to undertake a major cultural trusteeship; the actual reality of so doing (unpaid and onerous, the roles automatically rule

out those who cannot afford to give up time to them); and a kind of institutional conservatism that can overtake a group of people, though they may be individually progressive.

Those with voices that conflict with the mainstream can struggle to make an impact in such a context. Novelist [Ahdaf Soueif's account](#) of why she resigned as a British Museum trustee in 2019 is as instructive as it is depressing – she experienced, she wrote, a cumulative sense of the museum's "immovability" on questions such as its sponsorship by BP and the legacies of colonialism. In the end, she felt that the most powerful thing she could do on that board was to leave it.

The combination of desperation for money and the endless reproduction of the same kind of leader has led to a curious situation for the governance of London arts organisations – and it's very much the opposite of the band of "woke" warriors Dowden claims is in charge of the English arts. The current interim (and former) chair of the Royal Opera House is Simon Robey, founding partner at the bank that [Osborne has just joined](#). He is doing the job because the recently appointed chair at Covent Garden, Carphone Warehouse tycoon David Ross (who ["facilitated" the prime minister's holiday](#) to Mustique in 2019), was persuaded to stay on as chair of the National Portrait Gallery. Robey's former-banker wife, Victoria Robey, once married to Sharp, is the [chair of the London Philharmonic](#). Ross took over the Royal Opera House from [interim chair](#) Suzanne Heywood, widow of the late cabinet secretary Jeremy Heywood. She is a managing director of Exor, an entity controlled by the Agnelli family that owns companies from Ferrari to Juventus FC. An [advisory committee](#) for Exor is chaired by Osborne.

On it goes. It is tentacular, incestuous. It is also, complicatedly, public-spirited; no one is forcing these wealthy people to volunteer their energies to public organisations. There is some poetic justice in the fact that Osborne will be judged on his ability to raise millions of pounds, perhaps hundreds of millions, for the [British Museum](#). Between gritted teeth, and for the museum's sake, I suppose I hope he manages it.

- Charlotte Higgins is the Guardian's chief culture writer

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OpinionKeir Starmer

It will take a Labour crisis for Keir Starmer to learn to speak his mind

Rafael Behr



The mantra of party unity is wearing thin when no one knows what it is they are supposed to be unifying around



Keir Starmer and Labour's Batley and Spen byelection candidate, Kim Leadbeater: 'His allies caution against extrapolating any national lessons.'
Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

Keir Starmer and Labour's Batley and Spen byelection candidate, Kim Leadbeater: 'His allies caution against extrapolating any national lessons.'
Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

Tue 29 Jun 2021 12.18 EDT

Keir Starmer is more likely than most people in Britain to be prime minister, but the odds are still stacked against him. Most opposition leaders fail to reach Downing Street. The ones who make it tend to start with more than 197 MPs. That will be Labour's tally if, as widely expected, the party loses the Batley and Spen byelection on Thursday.

Starmer's route to No 10 is arduous by any historical measure. He has to repair a fractured electoral coalition or discover a new one. He needs a message that works in heartland seats lost to Boris Johnson in 2019 and also in places that have been Tory since 2005 or longer, while simultaneously unseating Scottish Nationalists. He has less than three years; probably two. It would be easier to imagine him completing that mission if he wasn't going backwards.

The leader's allies caution against extrapolating any national lessons from Batley and Spen, which is an unusually [fractious contest](#). The normal electoral calculus has been thrown off by [George Galloway](#), a practised electoral carpetbagger, who arrived with the explicit purpose of undermining Starmer's authority. But vulnerability to sabotage is not much of a defence. If Labour looked like a party on the up-and-up, an opportunist such as Galloway would not have fancied his chances. Vultures are drawn to carrion.

Batley and Spen is different to Hartlepool, the formerly safe [Labour](#) seat that swung hard to the Tories in May; and both are different to Chesham and Amersham, the Tory seat that went Liberal Democrat two weeks ago. The dots are not easily joined, except as a sequence of [Labour](#) excuses, which is not the traditional prelude to general election triumph. MPs and activists report deep malaise. The party brand is broken, they say. Voters are either unable to say what [Labour](#) stands for or are persuaded it stands for people not like them.

That is the accumulation of sour smells emitted under a succession of leaders (or pumped towards the electorate by Tory campaigns). It is the feeling that Labour wastes other people's money; that it conspired against Brexit and sneers at leavers; that it is embarrassed by the opinions of people whose votes it nonetheless expects as some kind of historical tribute. Most worrying, say veteran MPs, is the absence of any argument on the doorstep. The hot disappointment expressed over Jeremy Corbyn's leadership indicated at least a flame to be rekindled. Now they find cold ashes of contempt.

[As we lose respect for our politicians, democracy itself is taking a hit | Polly Toynbee](#)

[Read more](#)

Starmer is not the cause of those problems, but there is a vagueness about him that doesn't help. The dominance of pandemic news explains why the opposition leader has not been heard, but not why he has so little to say. There have been speeches that no one hears, but those of us who do seek them out for clues about Labour's direction are not better informed.

Even to an attentive audience, Starmer has nothing memorable to say. His boldest action was probably [withdrawing the whip from Corbyn](#) after the former leader refused to apologise for belittling the scale of antisemitism in Labour. The subsequent backlash cowed him into a mistrustful truce with the left. That disappoints the rival faction that hoped the exile of Corbyn heralded a purge of Corbynism.

Starmer did nothing to cultivate that expectation in the leadership contest. His unofficial campaign slogan was “unity in ambiguity”. He criticised the 2019 manifesto for offering too much policy, but would not say which parts should have been discarded. It was a shrewd way to secure a mandate from a membership that was substantially recruited under Corbyn. But it implied an oath of continuity that no incoming leader should swear to a predecessor, least of all one who led the party to historic defeat.

Starmer is stranded somewhere between his party’s romantic attachment to its recent past and the urgent electoral requirement to prove that Labour has changed. Beneath that dilemma lies a repressed and more fundamental disagreement between those who would reluctantly dilute radical socialism because voters don’t like it, and those who reject it as wrong in principle. Is the plan to reform capitalism or abolish it? Should Labour even have a leftmost boundary, keeping out Marxist revolutionaries and people who defend terrorism on the grounds that imperialism is worse?

That is a fight the party’s moderates should have had when they tried to unseat Corbyn in the summer of 2016. Instead, [Owen Smith](#) tramped from hustings to hustings largely agreeing with the man he claimed was unfit to be prime minister. The [result](#) of that bungled challenge, fortifying the incumbent, is well remembered across the party. It is a reason there is unlikely to be a challenge to Starmer in the aftermath of another byelection defeat, despite whispered threats.

There is a shortage of compelling alternatives. Starmer’s popularity ratings have taken a knock since the end of last year, but he still has more prime ministerial bearing than anyone else on the Labour frontbench. And there are always available fantasies of a sudden change in the political weather. Boris Johnson’s leadership looks scandal-proof right now, but he might be one vast public abomination away from implosion. There are economic headwinds

that could blow the Tories off course, and divisions that might plunge the government into civil war, thereby allowing Labour to defer its own internal reckonings.

But that leaves Starmer a prisoner of strategic caution. He is always tacitly negotiating his positions with the passionate minority that has strong views on what it means to be true to the left, and taking his eye off the voters who don't care. He is addressing the country with his back turned so he can still face the party. That is the price he pays for making unity the purpose of his candidacy to lead. Labour unity is not a principle that means anything to most of the public. And its value decays to nothing when there is confusion over what everyone is supposed to unite around.

The likely trajectory is a purgatory of semi-loyalty, with disappointed MPs complaining about the direction but not offering any alternatives. Of course, the last thing the Labour leader wants is a challenge. The road to Downing Street is hard enough without stopping to fight the party along the way. Then again, that is one detour successful opposition leaders have found themselves taking. And without such a battle, Starmer seems condemned to be voiceless. Unless some crisis comes along that forces him to say aloud what he really believes, it isn't clear how else we are supposed to know.

- Rafael Behr is a Guardian columnist

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[Guardian Opinion cartoon](#)
[Chris Whitty](#).

Ben Jennings on Chris Whitty being harassed in the street – cartoon

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[Miami condo collapse](#)

Search for Miami collapse survivors continues as death toll rises to 12

- Nearly 150 still missing after building came down
- [Condo collapse prompts questions about role of climate change](#)

01:24

Hopes of finding survivors in Miami building collapse flagging – video

[Amanda Holpuch](#) in New York

[@holpuch](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 12.38 EDT

Family and friends of the nearly 150 people still missing after a [Florida](#) condominium collapsed last week faced a sixth wrenching day of waiting, as search and rescue crews continued to sift through the mangled remains of Champlain Towers South.

Another victim was found Tuesday in the rubble, bringing the death toll to 12, with 149 still unaccounted for.

[Miami calls for inspections of older buildings over six stories after collapse](#)
[Read more](#)

The search for survivors in the [Miami](#) suburb of Surfside went on without much cause for hope. None have been rescued since Thursday, and two bodies were recovered on Monday.

“We have people waiting and waiting and waiting for news,” the Miami-Dade mayor, Daniella Levine Cava, told reporters.

“We have them coping with the news that they might not have their loved ones come out alive and still hope against hope that they will. They’re learning that some of their loved ones will come out as body parts. This is the kind of information that is just excruciating for everyone.”

Officials and experienced rescuers have urged people to remain hopeful and emphasized it is still a rescue operation. Families of the missing have been invited to the site to observe and Levine Cava said authorities have been in detailed contact with them.

“Some are feeling more hopeful, some less hopeful, because we do not have definitive answers,” she said. “We give them the facts. We take them to the site.”

Elected officials pledged Tuesday to conduct multiple investigations into the collapse of the oceanfront tower, vowing to convene a grand jury and to look closely “at every possible angle” to prevent any other building from experiencing such a catastrophic failure.

Levine Cava said she and her staff will meet with engineering, construction and geology experts, among others, to review building safety issues and develop recommendations “to ensure a tragedy like this will never, ever happen again”.

The state attorney, Katherine Fernandez Rundle, said she will pursue a grand jury investigation to examine factors and decisions that led to the collapse of the 12-story building.

The White House announced on Tuesday that Joe and Jill Biden would visit Surfside on Thursday.

Late on Monday, officials identified three more victims: Marcus Joseph Guara, 52, Michael David Altman, 50 and Frank Kleiman, 55. Kleiman’s wife, Ana Ortiz, 46, and her son, Luis Bermúdez, 26, [also died in the collapse](#).

The community held a vigil and created memorials on the beach and along fences surrounding the collapsed tower. The fences are decorated with

photos, flowers and handmade signs. Rescuers have also been leaving objects such as photos and toys they find in the debris at the memorial.

Elite rescue teams are assisting with the search, including [the famed Topos](#), a volunteer group formed in response to Mexico City's 1985 earthquake, and members of the Israel Defense Forces.

Such efforts have been complicated by weather conditions, including heavy rain on Monday.

This is a frustration for family members of the missing, the mayor of Surfside, Charles Burkett, said at a press briefing on Tuesday. He and other officials spoke with relatives at a meeting Tuesday morning, he said.

“There was frustration, there was a little anger, there were some questions about why the work has to stop when there [are] thunderstorms and lightning.”

The mayor said officials were unable to provide a firm answer for families who asked how long people can survive such a situation.

“Nobody is giving up here. No one is stopping,” Burkett said.



Search and rescue teams look for possible survivors in the partially collapsed 12-story Champlain Towers South. Photograph: Chandan Khanna/AFP/Getty Images

The search and rescue process is necessarily slow and deliberate: crews must balance the urgency of rescue with the chance that abrupt moves could collapse voids in the debris that may be shielding survivors.

“Every time there’s an action, there’s a reaction,” the Miami-Dade assistant fire chief Raide Jadallah said on Monday. “It’s not an issue of we could just attach a couple of cords to a concrete boulder and lift it and call it a day.”

Rescuers are using heavy machinery to move larger pieces of concrete.

Speculation is mounting over previous inspections reports and warnings issued about the building, but it will likely take months to determine why a portion of the tower fell suddenly around 1.30am last Thursday.

A pool contractor who visited the building 36 hours before the collapse told [the Miami-Herald](#) he saw unusual levels of standing water in the garage.

The contractor, who asked not to be named, told the paper the deepest puddle he saw was near an area of the building [a 2018 inspection report](#) identified as having a “major error” in its original design.

The 2018 report did not indicate the structure was at risk of collapse, but recommended that “concrete deterioration needs to be repaired in a timely fashion”.

The president of the Champlain Towers South condo association urged residents to back a \$15m repair to the building in an April letter shared by [the Wall Street Journal](#).

In the letter, the president of the association, Jean Wodnicki, said issues identified in the 2018 inspection could have gotten worse.

“That estimate indicated that the concrete damage observed would begin to multiply exponentially over the years, and indeed the observable damage

such as in the garage has gotten significantly worse since the initial inspection,” Wodnicki wrote.

Federal, state and local agencies have been deployed to the scene and Biden said on Monday he supports an extensive investigation.

The White House press secretary, Jen Psaki, said: “We want to play any constructive role we can play with federal resources in getting to the bottom of it and preventing it from happening in the future.”

The Associated Press contributed reporting

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/29/miami-condo-collapse-survivors-search-deaths>

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Huawei

Huawei lawyers claim emails prove US has no grounds to extradite CFO from Canada

Lawyers will try to persuade Canadian court to permit new documents to be introduced as evidence to clear Meng Wanzhou



Huawei's chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, arrives at a court hearing in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, on Tuesday. Photograph: Jennifer Gauthier/Reuters

Huawei's chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, arrives at a court hearing in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, on Tuesday. Photograph: Jennifer Gauthier/Reuters

[Patrick Wintour](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 18.18 EDT

US justice department's battle to extradite [Meng Wanzhou](#) from Canada has taken a fresh turn as lawyers for Huawei's chief financial officer claimed that internal emails and bank documents prove there is no grounds to extradite her to the US.

Meng, 48, was arrested on a US warrant at Vancouver airport in late 2018, and has been battling extradition to the US. Her detention infuriated the Chinese government and has helped drag relations between Beijing and Ottawa to their lowest point in years.

The US accuses [Huawei](#) of using a Hong Kong shell company called Skycom to sell equipment to Iran in violation of US sanctions. It says Meng, 48, committed fraud by misleading HSBC about the company's business dealings in Iran.

But Meng's legal team argue that documents from HSBC show that Huawei was open about its links to Skycom. In a statement, Huawei [Canada](#) said: "These documents consisting of emails and other HSBC records show there is no evidence of fraud on HSBC.

"They show that Huawei's control over Skycom was not kept from senior HSBC executives, that the continuing nature of Skycom's business with [Huawei](#) in Iran was not kept from HSBC executives and that internal HSBC risk assessments were made based on knowledge of the true facts".

It added "the reputational risks were managed with the knowledge of senior HSBC executives".

Huawei lawyers will now try to persuade the Canadian court to permit the internal documents to be introduced as evidence.

Government lawyers in Canada are likely to contest Huawei's interpretation of the documents and have argued that they are irrelevant to the extradition process and should be reserved for a fraud trial in the US.

Huawei has claimed that Meng's arrest was prompted by the US as part of a trade war with [China](#) launched by Donald Trump.

Meng's lawyers have been battling to gain access to the HSBC documents first in a case in February in the UK that proved unsuccessful and then in March in Hong Kong where it reached an out of court settlement with HSBC. The terms of the settlement was not published, but it appears HSBC gave Huawei access to the papers, with a confidentiality clause attached.

But last week the Canadian courts accepted an application from Canadian prosecutors and media groups that the information could not be kept under seal, an outcome that may not in reality have disappointed Huawei since it made it more likely the evidence would be admissible in court to challenge the extradition claim.

US prosecutors allege Meng gave a PowerPoint presentation to HSBC in August 2013 that the US claims "involved untrue representations" by downplaying her firm's control of Skycom, describing the firm simply as a business partner. The US says Huawei in reality controlled Skycom's operations in Iran until at least 2014.

HSBC, according to the US government, "relied on those and other misrepresentations in deciding to continue the banking relationship with Huawei".

HSBC "cleared more than \$100m worth of transactions related to Skycom through the United States between 2010 and 2014", says the US.

But Huawei argues the new documentation shows Meng did not mislead the bank, and so the basis for her extradition to the US is undermined.

HSBC had already given the internal documents to the US justice department in a bid to avoid prosecution by the US, but not to Meng's lawyers.

[Path to freedom narrows for detained Canadian duo caught in US-China feud](#)

[Read more](#)

The Chinese government has sharply criticised HSBC's cooperation with the US government over the case.

HSBC has said it had no legal option but to cooperate with the US authorities. But the bank has been caught in a political quandary since it is headquartered in the UK and the bulk of its profits are made in China.

Meng has been living in one of her Vancouver homes on bail since her arrest at the city's airport in December 2018. Days after Meng's arrest a former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor were arrested by the Chinese government on espionage charges. They remain in detention.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/jun/29/huawei-meng-wanzhou-cfo-extradition-emails>

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The age of extinctionEnvironment

Offsets being used in Colombia to dodge carbon taxes – report

Fossil fuel levy can be avoided by buying carbon offsets that may have no benefit for climate



People hold a mock coffin with the words ‘Our Amazon’ in a demonstration during the youth global climate strike in Cali, Colombia, in September 2019. Photograph: Ernesto Guzman Jr/EPA

People hold a mock coffin with the words ‘Our Amazon’ in a demonstration during the youth global climate strike in Cali, Colombia, in September 2019. Photograph: Ernesto Guzman Jr/EPA

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Wed 30 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Forest protection carbon offsets that [may have no benefit](#) to the climate have been used by polluters to avoid paying carbon taxes in Colombia, according to a report.

In 2016, a levy of about \$5 (£3.60) was introduced in the South American country to cover the use of some fossil fuels. However, companies that emit carbon dioxide can avoid paying the tax by buying carbon offsets from Colombian emission reduction projects, including those that conserve threatened natural carbon banks such as peatlands, forests and mangrove swamps.

According to the report, a new analysis of large-scale forest protection schemes in the Colombian Amazon by Carbon Market Watch claims that they may be dramatically overstating their impact on preventing deforestation. The report warns that millions of carbon credits have likely been generated with no benefit to the climate.

It finds the issue of “hot air” carbon credits from forest protection schemes in Colombia could be the “tip of the iceberg”, with 75 similar projects permitted to sell credits under the country’s domestic tax system.

About 5m credits have been bought from the projects considered in the report, nearly all by Primax Colombia SAS, a fossil fuel company covered by the carbon tax. This would represent a loss of about \$25m to the government, according to the report, which has been published as part of an investigation with the Latin American Center for Investigative Journalism (CLIP).

Carbon Market Watch, an accredited observer of UN climate negotiations, has called on Verra, a US nonprofit which administers the world’s leading carbon credit standard used by one of the projects analysed in the report, to suspend the scheme from their registry.

The analysis comes amid growing concern over the environmental integrity of emission reductions from forest protection schemes approved by Verra, frequently used by major polluters to substantiate “net zero” and “carbon neutral” claims.

Last month, an [investigation by the Guardian and Unearthed](#), Greenpeace’s investigative journalism unit, into 10 schemes approved by Verra found they face a significant credibility problem, with experts warning the system is not fit for purpose.

Verra is in the process of reviewing its rules for its Redd+ projects but has so far ruled out retrospectively cancelling credits that have already been approved.

Gilles Dufrasne, policy officer at Carbon Market Watch, said: “This scandal is yet another striking example of carbon market standards failing to uphold environmental integrity of offset projects. It harms the climate, reduces government revenues and threatens the continuation of climate finance payments from international donors. We hear time and again that the voluntary carbon market helps countries go beyond their existing climate commitment, but here it has actually undermined national efforts.”

Forest protection schemes, known as Redd+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation), generate credits by preventing environmental destruction against a baseline often based on historical loss.

Concerns that projects were producing “hot air” credits by exaggerating their environmental impact by using dramatic deforestation baselines have long dogged Redd+ projects and in 2018, the Colombian environment ministry introduced rules requiring schemes to comply with a national baseline development by the government, known as a forest reference emission level (FREL).

The report said some schemes are not using the national baseline and are claiming credits against a much higher deforestation scenario, probably producing credits of little benefit to the climate. While more finance for forest conservation is needed, Carbon Market Watch said it could not come at the expense of environmental integrity.

Verra said the analysis was methodologically flawed. A spokesperson said: “It compares the project’s baseline to the country’s Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL), but the assessment of Colombia’s FREL by the UNFCCC has not yet been finalised, and in any event a FREL represents an average across an entire country or region and is not site-specific.

“Verra emphasises that all VCS projects follow approved methodologies and are validated by independent third-party auditors. All emission reductions and removals are verified by such auditors as well.”

In response to the report, the Colombian environment ministry said it was developing a strategy to strengthen the integrity of the current system by improving the environmental credibility of the carbon market and governance of the carbon tax exemption mechanism, among other measures.

Primax Colombia did not respond to request for comment.

The Pacific projectNauru

Deep-sea mining could start in two years after Pacific nation of Nauru gives UN ultimatum

The International Seabed Authority has two years to finalise regulations governing the controversial industry



Deep sea mining off the Papua New Guinea coast. Photograph: Nautilus minerals

Deep sea mining off the Papua New Guinea coast. Photograph: Nautilus minerals

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Wed 30 Jun 2021 02.04 EDT

Deep-sea mining has been given the go-ahead to commence in two years, after the tiny Pacific island nation of [Nauru](#) notified the UN body governing the nascent industry of plans to start mining.

Triggering the so-called “two-year rule”, which some have called the nuclear option, the International Seabed Authority (ISA) now has two years to finalise regulations governing the controversial industry.

If it is unable to do so, the ISA is required to allow mining contractors to begin work under whatever regulations are in place at the time.

[Mining’s new frontier: Pacific nations caught in the rush for deep-sea riches](#)
[Read more](#)

Nauru’s president, Lionel Aingimea, notified the ISA of the intention of Nauru Ocean Resources Inc (NORI), a subsidiary of a Canadian company called DeepGreen, to apply for approval to begin mining in two years in the

Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ) in the North Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and Mexico.

Aingimea's letter, dated 25 June, asked the ISA "to complete the adoption of rules, regulations, and procedures required to facilitate the approval of plans of work for exploitation in the area within two years" from 30 June.

Nauru believed draft deep-sea mining regulations were nearly complete after seven years of talks, Aingimea's letter said.



A rare deep-sea cirrate octopod. Sir David Attenborough has backed calls for a halt to deep sea mining, which conservationists warn could have huge impacts on wildlife and climate change. Photograph: NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research/PA

Environmental groups, the EU Parliament, several Pacific nations including Fiji and Papua New Guinea, and Sir David Attenborough, have called for a moratorium on deep-sea mining, arguing that too little is known about its impact.

Last week, more than 350 scientists from 44 countries [signed a petition](#) calling for a moratorium on deep-sea mining "until sufficient and robust scientific information has been obtained".

Jessica Desmond, Oceans campaigner for Greenpeace Aotearoa, said: “We are currently in the middle of a climate and biodiversity crisis, we know that deep sea ecosystems are some of the most important ecosystems on the planet and we are seeing this relentless and reckless push to mine these areas, despite the fact that scientists are very clearly warning us that the outcomes could be disastrous.”

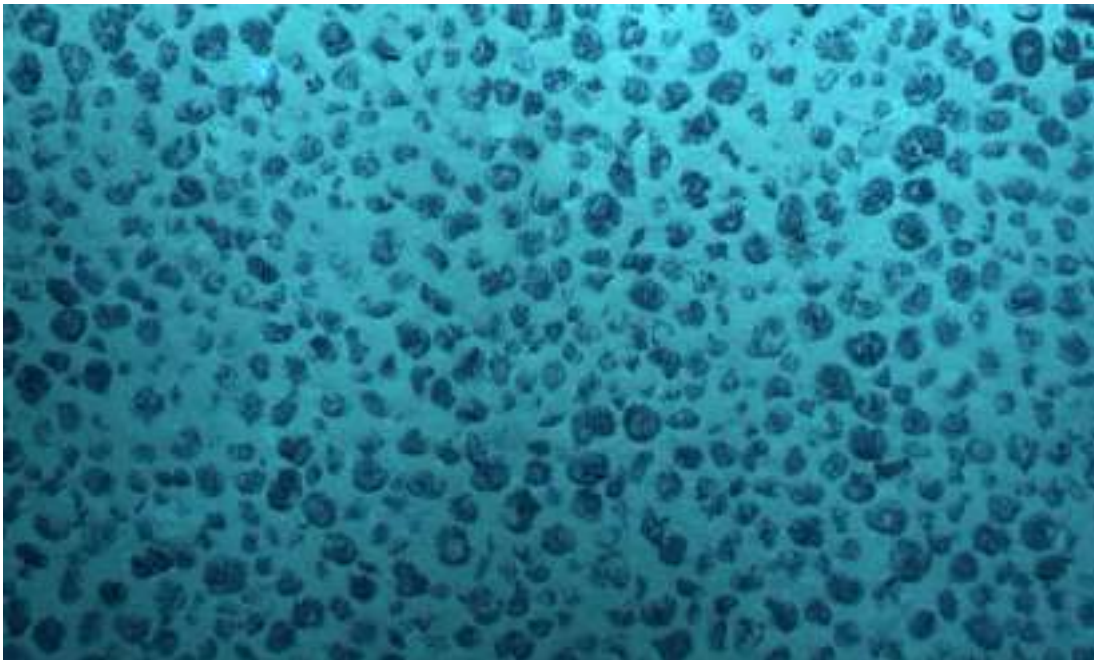
“It’s very disappointing, it’s very foolhardy... and very dangerous,” said Duncan Currie, an international lawyer who has worked in oceans law for 30 years. He represents the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition which is calling for a moratorium on deep sea mining.

Currie said the two-year rule was designed to be used if a country was ready to mine and then found their path to do so blocked by a few countries in the ISA, or if progress toward adopting regulations to govern deep-sea mining had stalled, but that neither situation was the case.

“A very important consultation is happening next week,” said Currie, in reference to a 3 July deadline for responses to draft standards and guidelines. “They can hardly complain that things aren’t happening when they’re happening next week.

“If we’re in a situation where a company has tested all their equipment and they’re frustrated by the regulatory environment, we might expect to see this, but we haven’t seen that.”

DeepGreen is looking to extract polymetallic nodules from the seabed. The nodules, which resemble potatoes and are thought to take millions of years to form, are rich in manganese, nickel, cobalt and rare earth metals, key components of batteries for electric vehicles. DeepGreen argues deep-sea mining is a less environmentally and socially damaging alternative to terrestrial mining, and is crucial for transitioning to a greener economy.



Rocks called ‘polymetallic nodules’ are seen on the seabed in the Clarion Clipperton Zone of the Pacific Ocean. Photograph: GSR/Reuters

DeepGreen is in the process of merging with blank-cheque company Sustainable Opportunities Acquisition Corp (SOAC) to become The Metals Company. The Metals Company plans to list on the Nasdaq in the third quarter.

But SOAC said in a filing to the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) last week it was not yet known whether mining the seabed would have less impact on biodiversity than mining for the same quantity of metals on land.

“We cannot predict ... whether the environment and biodiversity is impacted by our activities, and if so, how long the environment and biodiversity will take to recover,” it said.

DeepGreen has deals with Nauru, Tonga and Kiribati for CCZ exploration rights covering 224,533 square km, roughly the area of Romania.

DeepGreen did not respond to requests for comment for this story. In response to questions about invoking the two-year rule [for a previous story](#), a spokesperson told the Guardian last week that the two-year rule was “only available to sponsoring states to use, not contractors like DG, which cannot

invoke it” but that it was a “a valid option available to all member states of the International Seabed Authority”.

The Nauru government did not respond to requests for comment.

With Reuters

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/30/deep-sea-mining-could-start-in-two-years-after-pacific-nation-of-nauru-gives-un-ultimatum>

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Sweden

Swedish opposition leader tasked with forming new government

Moderate Ulf Kristersson given three days to gain support before vote in parliament



Ulf Kristersson is the leader of the Swedish parliament's largest opposition party. Photograph: Tt News Agency/Reuters

Ulf Kristersson is the leader of the Swedish parliament's largest opposition party. Photograph: Tt News Agency/Reuters

Agence France-Presse in Stockholm

Tue 29 Jun 2021 13.31 EDT

[Sweden](#)'s speaker of parliament has asked Ulf Kristersson, the leader of the rightwing opposition's largest party, to see whether he could rally the votes to succeed the ousted prime minister, Stefan Löfven.

Löfven [announced on Monday he would resign](#) rather than call a snap election after losing a confidence vote last week, leaving it up to the speaker to begin the search for his replacement.

The speaker, Andreas Norlén, did not formally propose Kristersson as the next candidate for prime minister, but on Tuesday he gave the leader of the conservative Moderate party three days to sound out potential support to pass a vote in parliament.

“He is the leader of the largest party among the group of parties that toppled prime minister Stefan Löfven ... it’s reasonable that he is allowed to investigate the possibility” of taking over, Norlén told a press conference after meeting with party leaders.

The government was toppled after Löfven’s Social Democrats fell out with the Left party propping it up.

Although filed by the far-right [Sweden](#) Democrats, the confidence motion came after the Left party said it was planning one of its own to protest a plan to ease rent controls.

Kristersson’s Moderate party and the Christian Democrats were quick to back the motion, which was passed by 181 MPs in the 349-seat parliament.

[Swedish PM Stefan Löfven resigns after losing confidence vote](#)
[Read more](#)

Under the Swedish system, a prime minister must be tolerated by parliament – meaning they can secure office as long as a majority does not vote against them.

Parliamentary deadlock meant the process to find a prime minister took four months after the 2018 election, but Norlén stressed that the process “could not take that long” this time around.

The speaker aims to hold a vote on a new head of government next week, and should that fail a new vote will be held every week. Should four

attempts to elect a new prime minister fail, a snap election would be called automatically and be held within three months.

The next general election in Sweden is scheduled for September 2022 and will go ahead regardless of a snap election, meaning Swedes could be heading to the polls twice in the space of a year.

In a social media post, Kristersson said he would now begin “focusing on the important talks” with other parties but did not speculate on his chances of success.

Kristersson was given the same mission twice in 2018 but then failed to find enough support among the other parties.

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France

French parliament votes to extend IVF rights to lesbians and single women

Under current law only heterosexual couples can access medically assisted reproduction methods



The laboratory of reproductive biology CECOS, the medically assisted procreation unit of Tenon Hospital in Paris. Photograph: Philippe Lopez/AFP/Getty Images

The laboratory of reproductive biology CECOS, the medically assisted procreation unit of Tenon Hospital in Paris. Photograph: Philippe Lopez/AFP/Getty Images

Agence France-Presse in Paris

Tue 29 Jun 2021 13.54 EDT

French gay rights campaigners are celebrating a milestone for equal rights after parliament finalised adoption of a bill giving lesbian couples and single

women access to fertility treatment for the first time.

Under current French law, only heterosexual couples have the right to access medically assisted procreation methods such as in vitro fertilisation (IVF).

Lesbian couples and single women who want children have to travel abroad for IVF using donor sperm.

That is set to change under the bill pushed through by President Emmanuel Macron's government, which passed a final vote in the National Assembly on Tuesday after two years of protests and 500 hours of debate.

The draft law, which was backed by 326 MPs to 115 against, with 42 abstentions, winds back some of western Europe's strictest rules governing medically assisted pregnancies.

The legislation brings [France](#) in line with a dozen European countries, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Spain, that do not discriminate between heterosexual and same-sex couples, or between couples and single women, when it comes to reproductive rights.

The Inter-LGBT association said it welcomed the change, which it described as a "forceps birth" after years of foot-dragging by successive governments and further delays wrought by the coronavirus pandemic.

A spokesperson for the association of French same-sex families, Fabien Joly, has warned that demand is so strong it could lead to sperm bank shortages.

The government has promised to try to make up for lost time, saying that women will be able to begin treatment in the autumn with a view to becoming pregnant by the end of 2021.

"It's a good day for our country," the health minister, Olivier Véran, told French public radio ahead of the vote.

While campaigning for the presidency in 2017, Macron said he was in favour of extending fertility treatment to lesbian and single women.

But once elected, the centrist leader repeatedly put off changing the law, mindful of the mass protests triggered by a same-sex marriage bill in 2013 that caught the government of his predecessor, [François Hollande](#), off guard.

However, public opinion this time is squarely behind the move, which will make France the 11th country in the 27-member EU to allow medically assisted procreation for lesbian couples and single women alike.

A recent Ifop poll found that 67% of French people supported the measure.

Calls for [protests by the largely Catholic anti-gay marriage movement](#) yielded only a tepid response.

Under the proposed law, [which was first ratified by the National Assembly in October 2019](#) but then held up in the Senate, France's healthcare system will cover the cost of fertility procedures for all women under 43.

The right-wing Republicans party, which has a majority in the Senate, and the far-right National Rally had strongly opposed the bill.

"You will produce children that have been deprived of a father," the Republicans MP Patrick Hetzel argued.

In the end the Senate grudgingly backed the bill after introducing hundreds of amendments, but rightwing lawmakers continued to resist having the state cover the cost of the treatment.

In the event of disagreements, the National Assembly, which is controlled by Macron's Republic on the Move party and its allies, has the final say.

The outcome of the vote on Macron's only major social reform so far is therefore seen as a foregone conclusion.

The legislation addresses several issues arising out of the huge increase in the use of fertility treatment in recent years.

Controversially, it allows children conceived with donor sperm to learn the donor's identity when they become adults, ending the anonymity that donors in France have been guaranteed until now.

And it allows women in their 30s to freeze their eggs – a procedure currently available only to women undergoing treatment for conditions that could affect their fertility, such as radiation therapy or chemotherapy for cancer.

But it stops short at legalising surrogacy, a practice used by some couples to have children that is still widely rejected in France.

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[Nigeria](#)

Biafra separatist leader arrested and extradited to Nigeria

British national Nnamdi Kanu has been wanted since 2015 when he was charged with terrorism and incitement



Kanu was wanted by Nigerian authorities for broadcasting fierce monologues on Radio Biafra, which he ran from his home in London. It is believed he was not extradited from the UK. Photograph: AP Photo/AP

Kanu was wanted by Nigerian authorities for broadcasting fierce monologues on Radio Biafra, which he ran from his home in London. It is believed he was not extradited from the UK. Photograph: AP Photo/AP

[*Emmanuel Akinwotu*](#) in Lagos

Tue 29 Jun 2021 16.30 EDT

The fugitive leader of a prominent Biafra secessionist group has been arrested and extradited to [Nigeria](#) to face trial, in a move likely to inflame

separatist unrest in south-east [Nigeria](#).

Nnamdi Kanu, a British national who has lived in south London, had been wanted by Nigerian authorities since 2015, when he was charged with terrorism offences and incitement, after broadcasts aired on Radio Biafra, [a digital station he founded and ran from his home in Peckham](#).

Nigeria's attorney general, Abubakar Malami, said on Tuesday that Kanu had been extradited to the capital Abuja, after cooperation between Nigerian intelligence services and Interpol.

"He has been brought back to Nigeria in order to continue facing trial after disappearing while on bail," Malami said. He accused Kanu of "engaging in subversive activities" and also alleged that Kanu was responsible for armed attacks.

Malami did not say where Kanu was extradited from, although British government officials have said he was not arrested in the UK. British MPs have in the past raised concerns for Kanu's wellbeing while held in detention in Nigeria.

A lawyer for Kanu confirmed the arrest. "He was brought before the Federal High Court ... today on an 11 count charge, though without our knowledge," Ifeanyi Ejiofor said in a statement.

Kanu is the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (Ipob), a secessionist group which has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation in Nigeria. In recent months, police have blamed Ipob for a series of arson attacks and killings targeting police units and civil authorities across southern Nigeria.

Kanu was first arrested in Nigeria in 2015, and was granted bail on medical grounds in 2017 before fleeing the country.

[Why Nigerian protesters still march to Radio Biafra's explosive beat](#)
[Read more](#)

His prominence in Nigeria has soared in recent years, as secessionist sentiment for an independent country of Biafra in south-east Nigeria has

seen a marked rise.

Secessionist sentiment was inflamed by the 2015 election of President Muhamadu Buhari who was a brigade major during the Biafra civil war, one of the darkest chapters in Nigerian history where an attempt to form an independent Biafran state was quelled.

Millions of people in south-east Nigeria died, many from starvation after a government blockade of the region prevented food supplies and humanitarian support.

Earlier this month, Twitter deleted a post by Buhari for violating its rules on abuse, after he referred to the civil war in a threat against armed Biafran groups.

“Those of us in the fields for 30 months, who went through the war, will treat them in the language they understand,” the president said, drawing mass condemnation.

In retaliation for the deletion, the government soon after banned Twitter in Nigeria.

The legacy of the war is still bitter. Authorities censor cultural depictions of the conflict and the war is not taught in most schools.

Since 2015, secessionist protests have met a brutal response by Nigerian security forces. More than 150 people were killed at pro-Biafra rallies between August 2015 and August 2016 according to Amnesty International.

Security operations in south-east Nigeria, a largely ethnically Igbo region, have received allegations of rights abuses against civilians. Armed attacks blamed on pro-Biafran groups have soared this year.

Since fleeing Nigeria, Kanu had been sighted in different countries including Israel.

His fierce monologues on Radio Biafra, taunting President Buhari, targeting ethnic groups and calling for armed uprising have drawn an international following – and also the ire of Nigerian authorities.

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War crimes

Serbian secret police chiefs face verdict over atrocities in Croatia and Bosnia

Tribunal in The Hague to give judgment on Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović for role in ethnic cleansing in 1990s



A guilty ruling for Jovica Stanišić (l) and Franko Simatović will indicate extent of Belgrade's involvement in ethnic cleansing. Photograph: Michael Kooren/Reuters

A guilty ruling for Jovica Stanišić (l) and Franko Simatović will indicate extent of Belgrade's involvement in ethnic cleansing. Photograph: Michael Kooren/Reuters

[*Julian Borger*](#) *World affairs editor*

Tue 29 Jun 2021 13.28 EDT

The longest running war crimes case will come to a head on Wednesday with a verdict at The Hague tribunal on two former Serbian secret police

chiefs for their role in atrocities in [Croatia](#) and Bosnia.

It is historic not just because of its length, but also because of what it will say about Belgrade's covert role in the 1992-95 Bosnian conflict and about the legal accountability of covert state sponsors of paramilitary groups.

“This exhaustively litigated case against two high-level Serbian officials is the litmus test to prove Belgrade's orchestration of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Croatia during the early 1990s. The link to Belgrade's leadership would be damning,” said David Scheffer, former US envoy on war crimes issues and vice-president of the American Society of International Law.

Jovica Stanišić, the former head of the state security service (DB) and his deputy, Franko “Frenki” Simatović, were [first indicted in 2003](#) for allegedly arming and orchestrating paramilitary groups responsible for war crimes in the Croatian and Bosnian wars. They were once two of the most powerful men in Serbia. Stanišić was also reported to be a CIA informant and the agency took the unusual step of submitting a classified document to the court describing his help.

They were acquitted in 2013, with a majority of the trial judges ruling that the prosecution had not proved “the requisite intent to further the common criminal purpose”. However, a retrial was ordered in 2015 when an appeals chamber ruled that the trial judges had misinterpreted the legal threshold for proving complicity.

In particular it said they had erred by requiring evidence of “specific direction” of crimes as proof of aiding and abetting a broad conspiracy to carry out ethnic cleansing on non-Serbs. That principle of “specific direction” has since been overturned by other judges. The second trial began in June 2017 and Wednesday's verdict will mark its culmination, after 228 days in court and 80 witnesses.

“The tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has never, in its almost 30-year history, convicted any Serbian official for crimes in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many scholars agree that that does not reflect the reality of the conflict,” Iva Vukušić, a history lecturer at Utrecht University, said.

“It shows just how hard it is to indict, and convict, for crimes committed by allegedly independent actors across a border where no clear chains of command exist.”

Stanišić and Simatović were key members of the regime of Slobodan Milošević, who tried to carve a greater Serbia out of the ruins of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. While Stanišić was in overall charge of the formidable DB secret police, Simatović ran its special operations unit.

Stanišić meanwhile appears to have played a double game. Former CIA officers told the [Los Angeles Times](#) in 2009 he had given the agency details of the inner workings of the regime, the location of Nato hostages and mass grave sites.

Vladimir Dzuro, a Czech police officer who questioned both men while serving as an investigator for the international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), said Wednesday’s verdict will be a critical moment in setting the record straight on Belgrade’s hidden hand behind the atrocities in Croatia and Bosnia.

“I believe we established through our investigations that DB, under Jovica and Frenki’s command, organised, supplied, financed and directed various paramilitary units that operated outside Serbia, specifically in the Serb-controlled territories in Croatia and Bosnia,” said Dzuro, who gives an account of his tense encounters with Stanišić and Simatović in his memoir, *The Investigator: Demons of the Balkan War*.

“Those special units were, for example, [Arkan Tigers](#), Scorpions or Red Berets that became infamous for their brutality, and their crimes were well documented in our indictment.”

The case is the last major Balkan war crimes trial being handled by the international residual mechanism for criminal tribunals, the successor to both the ICTY and an equivalent court dealing with the Rwanda genocide. Ratko Mladić, the former Bosnian Serb military commander, [lost his final appeal](#) against his genocide and crimes against humanity convictions earlier this month.

If Stanišić and Simatović are convicted on Wednesday, it is unlikely to change minds in the region, especially among Serbs, who have tended to see war crimes evidence as politically motivated.

“If after all, Stanišić and Simatović would be sentenced for war crimes, it would be understood here as a part of political pressures that intensified lately,” Čedomir Antić, an historian at Belgrade University, who pointed to Stanišić’s reported CIA links. He added: “It could be understood only as an anti-Serb campaign.”

“People have already decided what they believe,” Vukušić said, but added that it would help inform historians of the era if the mass of secret evidence submitted in the two trials was made available.

“This is the longest legal saga in The Hague, to my knowledge at any court. It was also conducted, to a large extent, behind closed doors, presumably Serbia provided documents but on the condition they are not made public,” she said. “Now the question remains will these records ever be public?”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2021/jun/29/serbian-secret-police-chiefs-face-verdict-over-atrocities-in-croatia-and-bosnia>

Donald Trump

Trump in financial and political danger as company faces possible criminal charges

New York prosecutors may soon bring indictment against Trump Organization tied to perks for top executives

- [Trump contempt for Covid taskforce revealed in new book](#)



Donald Trump at his first post-presidency campaign rally, in Wellington, Ohio. Photograph: Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

Donald Trump at his first post-presidency campaign rally, in Wellington, Ohio. Photograph: Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

[David Smith](#) *Washington bureau chief*
[@smithinamerica](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 01.30 EDT

Donald Trump is facing a potentially crippling financial and political blow as state prosecutors consider filing criminal charges against his family business this week.

[Obama: Trump broke 'core tenet' of democracy with 'bunch of hooey' over election](#)

[Read more](#)

Prosecutors in [New York](#) could soon bring an indictment against the Trump Organization related to the taxation of lucrative perks that it gave to top executives, such as use of apartments, cars and school tuition.

The 45th president is not expected to be personally charged but the legal drama could bankrupt his company by damaging its relationships with banks and other business partners, as well as clouding his political comeback.

Ron Fischetti, a lawyer for the Trump Organization, held a virtual meeting with prosecutors last Thursday for about 90 minutes in an effort to dissuade them from pursuing criminal charges against the company.

“The charges are absolutely outrageous and unprecedented, if indeed the charges are filed,” Fischetti [told the Associated Press](#) on Friday. “This is just to get back at Donald Trump. We’re going to plead not guilty and we’ll make a motion to dismiss.”

Fischetti and his colleagues had until Monday to make their final arguments against charges being brought, according to a report in the Washington Post.

The long-running investigation by Cyrus Vance, the Manhattan district attorney, began after Trump’s former lawyer and fixer, Michael Cohen, [paid hush money](#) ahead of the 2016 presidential election to two women who alleged that they had sexual encounters with Trump; Trump denies the claims.

There is now a particular [focus on Allen Weisselberg](#), 73, the longtime chief financial officer of the Trump Organization, the private real estate conglomerate. Prosecutors are examining his son Barry’s use of a Trump

apartment at little or no cost, cars leased for the family, and tuition payments made to a school attended by Weisselberg's grandchildren.

Such gifts and perks are worth tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars. If the Weisselbergs failed to account properly for that money on tax returns and other financial filings, they could be in legal jeopardy. But Fischetti insists that any criminal charges based on fringe benefits would represent a speculative break from precedent.

"We looked back 100 years of cases and we haven't found one in which an employee has been indicted for fringe benefits and certainly not a corporation," he told the AP. "[To be a crime] it would have to be for the benefit of the corporation with the knowledge of the corporation. They don't have the evidence at all."

Even so, a point of intrigue is whether Weisselberg will remain loyal to the former president or turn informant, potentially testifying against Trump – the company's owner – his son Don Jr and Eric, who are executive vice-presidents, and his daughter, Ivanka.

Trump, beaten by Joe Biden in last November's election, has long sought to dismiss the investigation as a "witch-hunt" and remains politically active. [He returned to campaign rallies](#) on Saturday, intends to be heavily involved in the 2022 midterm elections and could run for president again in 2024. But there are signs that the walls are closing in.

Vance, investigating "possibly extensive and protracted criminal conduct", has been scrutinising Trump's tax records, subpoenaing documents and interviewing witnesses, including Trump insiders and company executives. A grand jury was recently empaneled to [look at the evidence](#).

Meanwhile, Letitia James, the New York state attorney general, said she was assigning two lawyers to work with Vance on the criminal investigation while she continues her own civil investigation of Trump's business.

James's office has been examining whether the Trump Organization inflated the values of some properties to obtain better terms on loans, and lowered their values to obtain property tax breaks.

Court records show some overlap between Vance's and James' separate investigations, including their interest in Seven Springs, a 212-acre estate outside Manhattan that Trump purchased in 1995. James is examining a \$21.1m tax deduction taken when Trump agreed not to develop the property, after local opposition thwarted his plan to build a golf course, and a separate plan to build luxury homes was shelved.

Trump has angrily denounced both investigations. In a statement [released on Monday](#), he claimed the case was an extension of the Democrats' "witch hunt" against him. "They will do anything to stop the MAGA movement (and me)," he said, referring to the Make America Great Again campaign slogan and insisting that the Trump Organization had merely done "things that are standard practice throughout the US business community, and in no way a crime".

[‘He’s not a quitter’: faithful out in force as Trump gets back to the campaign trail](#)

[Read more](#)

The ex-president added: "Having politically motivated prosecutors, people who actually got elected because they will 'get Donald Trump', is a very dangerous thing for our Country. In the end, people will not stand for it. Remember, if they can do this to me, they can do it to anyone!"

Trump's loss of power in Washington now deprives him, his family and his company of legal protections he enjoyed while in the White House.

The District of Columbia attorney general's office, for example, is suing the Trump Organization and presidential [inaugural committee](#) over the alleged misuse of more than \$1m for use of event space at the [Trump hotel](#) in Washington during [Trump's inauguration](#) in January 2017.

Ivanka, who was a senior adviser at the White House, sat for a deposition with investigators last December, but is in no imminent danger of criminal charges.

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Ethiopia

Tigray rebels vow to drive out ‘enemies’ despite ceasefire declaration

Celebrations on streets of Mekelle after soldiers and officials appointed by Ethiopian government flee city



People who were injured in a deadly airstrike on a market in Togoga, a town in Ethiopia’s Tigray region, wait on a bench for medical treatment. Photograph: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP/Getty Images

People who were injured in a deadly airstrike on a market in Togoga, a town in Ethiopia’s Tigray region, wait on a bench for medical treatment. Photograph: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP/Getty Images

[Emmanuel Akinwotu](#) *West Africa correspondent* and [Lizzy Davies](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 06.30 EDT

Dissident leaders of Ethiopia’s war-hit Tigray region have dismissed a government ceasefire declaration and vowed to drive out “enemies” from the

region, after rebel fighters advanced on the Tigrayan capital.

[Federal security forces and officials from the central government appointed interim administration fled Mekelle on Monday night](#). Residents took to the streets in jubilation, firing celebratory gunfire and fireworks into the sky.

An overnight statement from the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) hailed the advances of the Tigrayan fighters, and declared Mekelle was fully under its control, vowing to drive out "enemies" from the federal government.

"The government of Tigray calls upon our people and army of Tigray to intensify their struggle until our enemies completely leave Tigray," the statement said. "The government and army of Tigray will carry out all the tasks necessary to ensure the survival and security of our people."

TPLF spokesman Getachew Reda told AP "we'll stop at nothing to liberate every square inch" of Tigray and rejected the unilateral ceasefire Ethiopia's government declared on Monday as a "sick joke".

Tigrayan forces also entered the key town of Shire on Tuesday, according to eyewitnesses, cementing a swift series of territorial gains in the northern region, forcing the Ethiopian military and its allies into retreat.

"Everybody is welcoming them and celebrating. Now there are a lot (of Tigrayan forces) and most of them are in uniform," one resident told Reuters.

Shortly after TDF forces advanced on Mekelle, the Ethiopian government declared a "unilateral ceasefire", in a rare attempt at de-escalating the war. The ceasefire "will enable farmers to till their land, aid groups to operate without any military movement around and engage with remnants (of the TPLF) who seek peace", the statement said, adding that efforts continued to bring Tigray's former leaders to justice.

Ethiopia said the ceasefire would last until September, the end of the crucial planting season in the region.

The government's forces invaded Tigray in November, sparking global outrage and condemnation of the prime minister, and Nobel peace prize winner, Abiy Ahmed. The government said it had acted after rebel attacks on military bases, and the TPLF, [which formerly ruled Ethiopia for nearly three decades](#), was ousted within six weeks.

Close to a million civilians have been internally displaced and many have fled to neighbouring Sudan, sparking a humanitarian crisis. The presence of Eritrean forces and local ethnic militia groups in the fighting have deepened fears that worsening ethnic and historic divisions will have a lasting impact on the region.

For months, the TDF appeared to have been subdued as the guerilla-style conflict wore on, but in recent weeks it launched a series of counter offensives. A surge in fighting coincided with Ethiopia's national elections earlier this month, which were not held in Tigray. Though the TDF did not hold any major cities and towns for months, its leaders repeatedly boasted they were in the ascendancy and regrouping in remote rural areas.

Residents had recently reported fighters advancing near the city, with the rebels boasting of inflicting major losses on federal forces. Last week, residents reported that flights to Mekelle were restricted, and as fighting intensified, officials were said to be denying permits for aid operations in towns outside of the city.

The US welcomed the ceasefire announcement but hinted that Ethiopia and Eritrea could face further sanctions if hostilities did not reduce. "We will not stand by in the face of horrors in Tigray," said Robert Godec, acting assistant secretary of state for the US state department's Bureau of African Affairs. Godec urged Eritrea to formally agree to the ceasefire.

The chair of the House of Representative [Africa](#) subcommittee, Karen Bass, also said, "Every effort must be made to make this ceasefire meaningful, including discussions with all parties to the conflict."

Britain, the US and Ireland have called for an emergency UN security council public meeting, which could happen on Friday, diplomatic sources told AFP. The security council has failed to hold a public session on Tigray

since the war broke out, with many African countries, China, Russia and other nations deeming the crisis an internal Ethiopian affair.

The eight-month conflict has been marked by large-scale atrocities. Earlier this month, 64 people were killed and 180 injured in a government airstrike on a market in the town of Togoga, according to local health workers and residents.

Ethiopia said the airstrike targeted rebel fighters, but survivors and health workers said the attack was on a busy market and killed and injured dozens of people, including children.

Aid agencies have been heavily restricted by Ethiopia's government from providing desperately needed aid. About 350,000 people are on the brink of famine according to the UN. Abiy has denied that hunger exists in Tigray.

Peter Smerdon, a spokesperson for the World Food Programme in Nairobi, said it had been forced to suspend operations in Tigray in the turbulence of recent days, but was now pressing for "full and immediate access" so that aid supplies could resume quickly.

"Before this surge in fighting we already knew that people were undoubtedly starving to death – we don't know in what kind of numbers – in areas that we could not reach; mainly rural areas cut off from the main roads, where we couldn't reach either because of fighting or because we were turned around at checkpoints by parties to the conflict. So it's a matter of life and death for people, for us, to resume our operations as soon as possible," he said.

But humanitarian organisations needed a guarantee that their workers would be safe in the field, he added. At least 11 aid workers – most recently three employees of Médecins Sans Frontières – [have been killed](#) in Tigray since November.

The conflict in Tigray has been marked by several atrocities, including multiple massacres and sexual violence. Many have been linked to Ethiopian federal soldiers and their Eritrean allies.

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- [Hancock CCTV footage Security may have been breached, minister says](#)
- [Hancock affair PM has 'serious questions' to answer on conduct, says Labour](#)
- [Hancock and Coladangelo Questions that need answers](#)

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)
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Javid says ‘no reason to go beyond 19 July’ for lifting England lockdown measures – as it happened

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[Matt Hancock](#)

Ministers should not have cameras in their offices, Sajid Javid says

New health secretary confirms recording device in his office has been disabled after Hancock leak

00:33

Javid says there must be 'no going back' once Covid restrictions eased – video

[Aubrey Allegretti](#) and [Matthew Weaver](#)

Mon 28 Jun 2021 04.59 EDT

Cabinet ministers should not have security cameras in their offices, the new health secretary has said, after [his predecessor was forced to quit](#) when CCTV footage showed him breaking Covid rules by kissing an aide and paid adviser.

Speaking on his second day in the job since taking over from [Matt Hancock](#), Sajid Javid confirmed the recording device in his new office had been disabled.

Some Tory MPs have been livid at the revelation a CCTV camera was recording movements in what they say is a private space where confidential meetings should be able to be conducted.

Javid said it was “common sense” there should be no cameras in ministers’ offices and that he had never experienced the practice in his previous jobs, including as chancellor and home secretary.

“I’m not sure why there was one here,” he said, ahead of a statement in parliament this afternoon where he is expected to confirm the final stage of Covid restrictions will not be lifted next Monday but [on 19 July instead](#).

Javid said the easing next month would be “irreversible” and that “there’s no going back” – a marked departure from his disgraced predecessor, who is [facing further scrutiny](#) over whether his affair began with his university friend Gina Coladangelo before she was appointed as an adviser to the Department of Health and Social Care with a salary of up to £15,000.

Earlier, the justice secretary, [Robert Buckland](#), said he did not think he had any security cameras installed in his office.

01:03

Buckland: ministerial offices should be swept for hidden cameras – video

“I’m sure that many of my colleagues will be asking the same question and making sure that the offices are swept, just in case there are unauthorised devices in there that could be a national security breach,” he told Sky News.

A review into where security cameras are placed in DHSC began over the weekend.

Further questions have also been raised about security in Whitehall after it was reported Hancock and another health minister, James Bethell, [used personal email accounts to deal with government business](#) – potentially meaning they could bypass disclosure rules.

Buckland said: “If other emails were used perhaps in an emergency or in a rush, then there should be a way of collecting that information. I think it’s much simpler to just use the government system, and then everybody knows where the data is stored. I think it’s really important not just from a historical point of view but from a public accountability point of view that all data appropriately disclosable is available, and that’s why I think it’s wise to use government systems.”

A DHSC spokesperson said all ministers “understand the rules around personal email usage and only conduct government business through their departmental email addresses”.

The deputy Labour leader, Angela Rayner, has called for a full investigation into Hancock’s email use.

She told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "I've written to ensure that there is an investigation into ministers using private emails to conduct official government business in secret, agreeing contracts in private, etc. We need full transparency on this and a full investigation."

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[Matt Hancock](#)

Hancock affair: PM has ‘serious questions’ to answer, says Labour

Sir Keir Starmer queries award of Covid contracts, issuance of aide’s parliamentary pass and leak of CCTV



Matt Hancock leaves No 10 followed by Gina Coladangelo. Their clinch, caught on CCTV, led to his resignation. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

Matt Hancock leaves No 10 followed by Gina Coladangelo. Their clinch, caught on CCTV, led to his resignation. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

[Aubrey Allegretti](#) *Political correspondent*
[@breeallegretti](#)

Sun 27 Jun 2021 14.02 EDT

Boris Johnson still has “huge questions to answer” in the aftermath of Matt Hancock’s resignation over his affair with a friend and paid adviser, Labour has said, as the government was urged to launch an investigation into a “potential abuse of public money”.

Downing Street was struggling to contain the scandal, which broke last week after CCTV footage emerged of the married health secretary and Gina Coladangelo kissing in his Whitehall office only weeks before.

Pressure is still building as Tory MPs are among those demanding reassurances there was no wrongdoing over Coladangelo’s appointment to a role paying up to £15,000 a year as a nonexecutive director at the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). She started in September 2020 and stepped down from her post over the weekend.

Sir Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, said the new health secretary, [Sajid Javid](#), and Johnson himself have “serious questions to answer”.

[Hancock and Coladangelo: questions that need answers](#)
[Read more](#)

He said the government should come clean on how Covid contracts were awarded, why Coladangelo [was given a parliamentary pass by another health minister](#) and about how the CCTV images that led to Hancock’s downfall was leaked.

“If anybody thinks that the resignation of [Matt Hancock](#) is the end of the issue, I think they’re wrong ... the resignation is far from the end of the matter,” he said.

Caroline Slocock, who founded the Civil Exchange thinktank and was private secretary to Margaret Thatcher, told the Guardian she had “quite significant concerns” that the focus on Hancock’s breach of Covid rules had “let him off the hook” for “potentially an abuse of public money”.

She claimed there had been a “murky series of events” and that, given Coladangelo worked as a communications director, “it’s quite hard to see”

how she was qualified to advise DHSC on its central policy areas of health and social care.

Sloccock said Hancock had “at best, essentially appointed an old chum”, and added: “To get your mistress to be marking your homework is not acceptable.”

A Tory MP and former minister also said there were “more questions” that needed answering, including about [Hancock reportedly relying heavily on a personal email account to conduct government business](#), taking Coladangelo to the G7 and the “apparent favouring” of family and friends for Covid contracts. “It’s very serious,” they said. “None of this has been clarified.”

Another said the answers to the lingering questions “will probably influence” whether Hancock ever returns to the frontbench, while a third admitted the former health secretary had “few fans” in his own party.

Labour has also written to the cabinet secretary and information commissioner over the claims about Hancock’s personal email use.

Angela Rayner, the party’s deputy leader, said “the buck doesn’t stop with Hancock and this matter is not closed”.

She added: “This government is rotten to its core. We need to know how wide this goes and how much government business is being conducted in secret.”

Sir [Ed Davey](#), leader of the Liberal Democrats, challenged Javid to “abolish Conservative cronyism” at the DHSC, starting by ruling that Tory peer Dido Harding will not be made the next chief executive of NHS England.

“The public expects so much better from the government during a pandemic,” he added.

Javid will be tested when he addresses the Commons with a statement on Monday afternoon, [expected to confirm England’s final stage of lockdown easing will not go ahead on 5 July](#) – the midway review point promised by the government when it announced the four-week delay expected to end on 19 July.

It will be the former chancellor's first performance at the dispatch box since he quit in a row with Johnson and Dominic Cummings in February 2020.

Tory MPs loyal to Hancock rallied around him by attacking the installation of CCTV in his Whitehall office, which captured images – leaked to the Sun newspaper last week – of him and Coladangelo kissing while stricter social distancing rules were still in place.

One said the video monitoring was “utterly unacceptable” while a second said malicious people had bugged the health secretary's office and were snooping on him.

Brandon Lewis, the Northern Ireland secretary, said it is “something we need to get to the bottom of” because a lot of what goes on in government departments is “sensitive and important”.

But another senior Conservative said the row over the cameras, [which has prompted an internal Whitehall investigation](#), was a “distraction” from the “absolute car crash” of Hancock's career.

The scandal has also prompted renewed speculation about a cabinet reshuffle. Johnson avoided a mass switch of his top team by appointing Javid and not moving any other ministers.

[Government to investigate leak of Matt Hancock CCTV footage](#)
[Read more](#)

But some insiders think that, given Hancock was likely to be demoted anyway, his departure has increased the chances of a reshuffle just before parliament's summer recess begins on 22 July.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, is one of those said to be most at risk, and several Tory MPs want to see Hancock's ally, health minister Lord Bethell, moved on too.

“We need a reshuffle and we need it soon,” a senior Conservative said. “Most ministers are looking slightly beyond what they are doing and awaiting it – they don't have their full focus on the jobs.”

A DHSC spokesperson said all ministers “only conduct government business through their departmental email addresses”.

The government has also insisted Coladangelo’s appointment followed the correct procedure and that secretaries of state are entitled to make direct appointments.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/27/pm-must-answer-huge-questions-over-hancock-affair-says-labour>

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[Matt Hancock](#)

Hancock and Coladangelo: questions that need answers

PM likely to be quizzed over several aspects of former health secretary's employment of his aide



Matt Hancock with his former adviser Gina Coladangelo in May. The pair were seen kissing on CCTV footage. Photograph: Tom Nicholson/Reuters

Matt Hancock with his former adviser Gina Coladangelo in May. The pair were seen kissing on CCTV footage. Photograph: Tom Nicholson/Reuters

[Aubrey Allegretti](#) *Political correspondent*
[@breeallegretti](#)

Sun 27 Jun 2021 13.05 EDT

Despite Matt Hancock seeking to draw a line under public scrutiny of his affair with friend and adviser Gina Coladangelo by [quitting as health secretary](#), many questions about the pair's relationship remain unanswered.

These are some of the unknowns that MPs will probably be putting to Boris Johnson, who initially stood by Hancock, and the man promoted back into the cabinet to replace him, Sajid Javid, next week.

[Government to investigate leak of Matt Hancock CCTV footage](#)
[Read more](#)

How did Coladangelo gain a parliamentary pass?

A Tory health minister, Lord Bethell, was listed as Coladangelo's sponsor for a parliamentary pass, which will have granted her access to the Westminster estate – letting her bring in guests, mingle with MPs and use the bars and restaurants.

Such passes can only be given to those who “genuinely and personally provide parliamentary secretarial or research assistance to the sponsoring member”. But the Sunday Times said Coladangelo had never worked for Bethell.

Labour has written to the Lords commissioner for standards, who arbitrates on alleged breaches of the members' code of conduct.

MP Anneliese Dodds, Labour chair, said the [Conservatives](#) had “serious questions to answer about how Gina Coladangelo gained the right to enter parliament unchecked”.

She added: “We need to know why was she sponsored by one of Matt Hancock's chums in the Lords and what work she did for him.”

What did Coladangelo do?

Coladangelo was then appointed as a nonexecutive director to the board of Hancock's department. This role came with some significant responsibilities.

According to the department's website, the board “supports and advises ministers and the department on strategic issues ... horizon scans for emerging issues ... sets the overall strategic direction for the department ... oversees and monitors performance”.

In effect, the board appears to have an important oversight responsibility. But few details are known about what the 43-year-old former communications director did to earn her £15,000 taxpayer-funded salary.

[Boris Johnson may pay political price for not sacking Matt Hancock](#)
[Read more](#)

Other people on the board include Chris Whitty, England's chief medical officer, and senior DHSC civil servants, as well as a government adviser on the union, Doug Gurr.

However, there is also speculation that Coladangelo had a closer relationship with Hancock and advised him on press relations, having been seen accompanying him to the BBC and the G7.

MPs will want further details about exactly how much Coladangelo had been advising Hancock, and on what issues.

Peter Riddell, the commissioner for public appointments, said recently that such roles were “not regulated at all” and take place more and more “without competition and without any form of regulatory oversight”.

How was Coladangelo's appointment made?

Given the pair's romance was secret until a few days ago, concerns have been raised about whether it was proper for Coladangelo to be handed a taxpayer-funded job advising the man it was later discovered she was having an affair with.

The government has not said if their relationship began before or after Coladangelo's appointment or if this was declared as a potential conflict of interest at any point – but Downing Street insisted the correct procedures had been followed.

That suggests that Hancock did not declare any relationship prior to the appointment being made – but it does not explain whether the former secretary of state declared it once the affair began.

On Friday, Hancock was determined to stay in post – and neither he nor Coladangelo quit their respective posts until Saturday evening.

Alex Runswick, senior advocacy manager at Transparency International UK, has suggested the process for installing nonexecutive directors in Whitehall “should be regulated to ensure any conflicts of interest are properly managed and to provide public confidence in the probity of these appointments”.

Did Coladangelo have any other influence across government?

Labour has been keen to paint any alleged impropriety as further evidence of a more deep-seated “chumocracy”. Government figures have also admitted privately that Hancock’s personal standing was tarnished by a number of controversial links between him and businesses handed Covid contracts.

Hancock was found to have breached the ministerial code by failing to declare a stake in a family company that won an NHS contract.

Partnering Health Limited (PHL), of which Coladangelo’s brother Roberto is a director, won a £28m NHS contract.

There is no suggestion of any wrongdoing and PHL said it had only ever secured contracts through “the robust tender and procurement processes put in place by local clinical commissioning groups” – not through the DHSC.

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[Coronavirus](#)

Vaccine inequality: how rich countries cut Covid deaths as poorer fall behind

Developed countries are seeing the benefits of quickly vaccinating their populations, but concerns remain about the unequal share of global vaccine supplies

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Mon 28 Jun 2021 05.08 EDT Last modified on Mon 28 Jun 2021 05.52 EDT

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A woman is vaccinated with Covishield at a health centre in Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh. Of the 29m vaccines administered in the region, nearly 60% have been given to men. Photograph: Prakash Singh/AFP/Getty

A woman is vaccinated with Covishield at a health centre in Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh. Of the 29m vaccines administered in the region, nearly 60% have been given to men. Photograph: Prakash Singh/AFP/Getty

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Nayanika Guha

Mon 28 Jun 2021 01.15 EDT

Deep-rooted structural inequalities and patriarchal values are to blame for India's worrying Covid vaccine gender gap, campaigners and academics have warned.

As of 25 June, of the 309m Covid vaccine doses delivered since January 2021, 143m were administered to women compared with nearly 167m to men, according to [CoWin](#), India's national statistics site – a ratio of 856 doses given to women for every 1,000 given to men. The difference is not accounted for by India's gender imbalance of [924 women to 1,000 men](#).

Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state with the highest number of people living in rural areas, has administered 29m vaccines. Of this figure, which includes first and second doses, 42% were given to women. West Bengal, the fourth most populous state, is also lagging behind with women receiving 44% of doses. Dadra and Nagar Haveli, a predominantly rural union territory in western India, has one of the starkest disparities: just 30% of vaccines went to women. Daman and Diu, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir

are among the other regions performing badly. A handful of states, including Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, have given more doses to women than men.

Data on transgender people, non-binary people, or people of other marginalised genders has not been accurately tracked, with all groups falling under a singular category of “other”.

“Women are not seen as an important part of the family, community or society structure. [The vaccine gender gap] is reflective of the gender inequality prevalent in India, and even internationally,” said Bhagyashri Dengle, executive director of Asia Pacific and gender transformative policy and practice for Plan International.

Sofia Imad, a junior fellow at Mumbai-based thinktank IDFC Institute, has researched attitudes to vaccination among the urban poor population in Mumbai and Pune. She said there were a number of reasons why women were either unable or reluctant to get the vaccine.

“There is hesitancy because of rumours about side-effects, and how the vaccine affects fertility and menstruation,” said Imad. “But there are other factors such as women not being able to access the technology needed to register for it, not having information on where the centres are or not being able to go to the centres alone.

“Women often also need permission from their husbands to get vaccinated. Even if they get that, if their husbands are unavailable to accompany them ... they miss out.”



Street art depicting measures to stop Covid spreading, Mumbai. Many vaccination centres are not within walking distance of households making it difficult for women to access them. Photograph: Francis Mascarenhas/Reuters

Ram Kumari, 26, from Gurugram, Haryana, said: “I didn’t even know we had to register on the phone. I don’t have a smartphone. My husband has one, but I don’t know how to use it.”

She added: “I want to get the vaccine, and I thought of going to the government hospital, but it is too far to walk. I have no way of getting there, especially alone.”

The fifth National Family Health Survey, conducted in 2019–20, showed a [clear digital gender divide](#). Of those surveyed, 58% of women had never used the internet, compared with 38% of men.

Julie Thekkudan, a women’s rights and gender justice expert with more than 18 years of experience, said: “Most men do not consider it important to register their wives on the CoWin app. Their health is not considered a priority and if they do not work outside the home then they are not considered at risk.”

She added: “Mobility also becomes an issue. If public transport is not easily available, and [the vaccination centre] is not walkable, what can working-class women do?”

Anecdotally, women report that men are given preference for getting the vaccination in many mixed-gender households. Neerja Sharma, 46, from Jaipur, Rajasthan, said: “My husband thought that it was right for him to get vaccinated first. Due to the possible side-effects of Covishield, he needed me to take care of him while he was sick. And if I got ill along with him, who will cook and look after the house and our son?”



People queue to get vaccinated outside a Hindu temple in Hyderabad, 25 June 2021. Photograph: Noah Seelam/AFP/Getty

Another concern for many women is that information on side-effects and how to deal with them is not readily available in an accessible language or format. There are also unfounded fears the vaccine could cause infertility, or [interrupt menstrual cycles](#), particularly among rural communities.

Imad said: “A lot of the information that women get is through WhatsApp, which may not be reliable. Women have two kinds of concerns – one is that you cannot get the vaccine while menstruating, and the other that vaccination will affect your future cycles.

“Accredited social health activists haven’t been trained on the Covid-19 vaccines and haven’t been given any communications materials. They need access to community health worker materials so that they can alleviate concerns at the grassroots level.”

[High in the Himalayas, villagers hit by Covid are left to fend for themselves](#)
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As companies prepare to go back to in-person working, getting vaccinated has become a priority for workers. A [Covid-19 vaccination trends survey](#), conducted in India in April this year, found more than 50% of companies plan to facilitate vaccination for their employees and their dependents.

However, a [study published in March by Krea University in Andhra Pradesh](#) found that 93% of rural women and 77% of urban women are in informal employment, where most employers do not see it as their responsibility to ensure workers are vaccinated.

Earlier this month, the ministry of health and family welfare said anyone could walk in to a vaccination centre without preregistration on the app, making it more accessible for women.

But Thekkudan said more needed to be done to close the vaccination gender gap. “We need to encourage walk-ins and facilitate door-to-door vaccinations. We also need to create public health awareness materials, translated into regional languages and depicted pictorially. It is essential to put this vaccination drive into ‘mission mode’.”

Dengle of Plan International said it was not just an issue of access. “[We have to] address the social norms and root causes that create this gap. And it needs to start young: are we teaching our children stereotypes such as women belong in the kitchen? An inclusive curriculum is just one of the ways in which we can start addressing gender inequality which leads to such gaps in the larger scheme of things.”

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UK job furlough scheme

Beware scaling back UK furlough scheme too soon, warns Resolution Foundation

Thinktank warns of ‘dangerous complacency’ with strength of jobs market and pay growth both weaker than thought



There is growing evidence of worker shortages in specific jobs [such as lorry drivers](#), but the TUC warned these appeared to be ‘isolated pockets’.
Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

There is growing evidence of worker shortages in specific jobs [such as lorry drivers](#), but the TUC warned these appeared to be ‘isolated pockets’.
Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

[*Jasper Jolly*](#)
[@jjpjolly](#)

Sun 27 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

The strength of the UK jobs market and rates of pay has been overstated, according to new research, just as the government prepares to cut back its wage support scheme for furloughed workers this week.

There is a risk of “dangerous complacency”, the Resolution Foundation warned, as people are still working fewer hours than they were before the pandemic and headline pay growth is overstated.

[The UK economy is barely out of first gear, so now is no time to hit the brakes](#)

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Total hours worked in the UK economy are still about 7% below pre-crisis levels, a fall comparable with the depths of recession, according to the thinktank’s analysis based on a poll of 8,000 workers. Underlying annual pay growth remains slower than before the pandemic hit Europe, it added.

From Thursday, the government’s coronavirus job retention scheme will be scaled back. Employers will have to pay 10% of wages for furloughed workers, with the government paying employers another 70% of wages up to a maximum cap. Up to now the government has paid 80% of wages, with no mandatory contribution from employers. Furlough is planned to end completely on 30 September. The latest available data showed that 3.4m people were still on furlough at the end of April.

[Bosses in some sectors](#) – notably in hospitality venues such as restaurants and pubs – have complained of labour shortages as they reopen. [Evidence of hiring difficulties](#) has prompted [hopes of pay rises for workers](#), while economists around the world are on the lookout for early signs of inflation.

However, the foundation, which researches on living standards, said the data suggests the UK labour market is “lukewarm” rather than overheating, and that it was “nonsense” to portray a tight UK labour market.

The average pay growth over the last two years is running at only 2.2%, the foundation said, compared with official data which shows pay growing at double the speed. Official measures of pay growth – which showed [booming 5.6% year-on-year pay growth](#) in the three months to April – have been

overstated because of the comparison with the first lockdown, in which large parts of the economy ground to a halt.

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Data from Incomes Data Research, a pay research organisation, showed that the median pay rise in the three months to May was only 2%, based on analysis of pay settlements for 1.3m workers. That compares with a current inflation rate of 2.1%, above the Bank of England's 2% target.

"The UK economy is bouncing back rapidly after a deep and painful recession. It's particularly welcome to see so many furloughed staff back working again," said Gregory Thwaites, research director at the Resolution Foundation.

"But these encouraging signs risk breeding dangerous complacency, as people overplay the health of the labour market, and underplay the risks that still lie ahead."

Kate Bell, the head of economics at the Trades Union Congress, cautioned that evidence of significant upward pressure on pay was still limited. She said that the tapering of the furlough scheme should be pushed back at least a month until restrictions on businesses are removed, including [a total ban on nightclubs reopening](#) until at least 19 July.

"Nobody really knows how fragile the current situation is," Bell said. "There are a lot of workers in the hospitality sector still on furlough. We don't know what is going to happen to those businesses and those workers."

Bell said that the TUC's affiliate unions had seen some evidence of worker shortages in specific jobs [such as lorry drivers and care workers](#), but warned that these appeared to be "isolated pockets".

"A recovering labour market is not the same as a recovered one," said Thwaites. "Labour shortages in hospitality aren't a huge problem, and there is no real evidence of a new pay boom. Instead these things are part of the bumpy ride that emerging from a pandemic inevitably involves."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/28/beware-scaling-back-uk-furlough-scheme-too-soon-warns-resolution-foundation>

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[Sydney](#)

Buck naked: nude sunbathers fleeing deer fined for breaking Sydney lockdown

Police fined two men \$1,000 each after helicopter and rescue crew sent to help the pair who became lost in bushland after wildlife encounter

- [NSW Covid restrictions; NSW hotspots map](#)
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00:48

Two nude sunbathers got lost in NSW park after being startled by a deer, police say – video

[*Mostafa Rachwani*](#)

[*@Rachwani91*](#)

Sun 27 Jun 2021 23.08 EDT

New South Wales police have fined two men for breaching coronavirus restrictions after they were startled by a deer while sunbathing naked on a beach south of Sydney and ran into the bush, becoming lost and needing to be rescued.

Police sent a helicopter to search for the pair, who were fined \$1,000 for breaching public health orders amid a coronavirus outbreak that has seen residents in greater [Sydney](#) locked down and banned from travelling outside their local area.

It is unclear how the deer startled the men, and what made them dash into the bush to escape it.

[Sydney Covid lockdown restrictions: NSW update to coronavirus rules](#)
[Read more](#)

Authorities located a 30-year-old man naked and carrying a backpack on the walking track near Lady Wakehurst Drive in the Royal national park, about 40km south of Sydney's city centre.

After a further search, they were also able to find a 49-year-old man, who was "partially clothed" according to a statement from NSW police.

The men told officers they had been on a nearby beach when they ran into bushland after being startled by a deer.

The men were taken to St George police station and issued the fines for the breach of public health orders that prohibit residents of greater Sydney from travelling outside the city.

The news also provided a diversion for many on Twitter, who had tuned into Monday morning's NSW press conference to get an update on the state's Covid-19 outbreak.

next level signing

1. while sunbathing naked
2. startled by
3. a deer pic.twitter.com/xO0QqJ15sQ

— □ points of □ (@ernmalleysscat) [June 28, 2021](#)

Let those among us who have NOT been startled by a deer while sunbaking naked and then run into a forest before getting lost requiring police to render assistance cast the first stone. [#covid19nsw](#)

— Adam Liaw (@adamliaw) [June 28, 2021](#)

it would be very funny if a deer appeared on screen at the press conference right now, scaring the premier, health minister and police commissioner into the bushes. just saying

— Naaman Zhou (@naamanzhou) [June 28, 2021](#)

The NSW police commissioner, Mick Fuller, told reporters about the sunbathers at the press conference, saying it was “difficult to legislate against idiots”.

“Clearly putting people at risk by leaving home without a proper reason, and I think then on top of that, getting lost in the national park and diverting important resources away from the health operation, I think they should be embarrassed,” Fuller said.

“But, again, they both received a \$1,000 fine. Now, it’s only a small percentage of the New South Wales people that are not following the health guidelines, but I can assure you, if you breach the health orders or the guidelines, you will be punished.”

Police said 44 fines had been issued on Sunday for breaches of public health orders, with four of those also being \$200 infringements for failing to wear a fitted face covering.

“Police have received hundreds of calls from the public over the weekend reporting potential public health order breaches, and would like to thank the vast majority of the community for their cooperation with the new rules.”

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The warnings come after greater Sydney, the Central Coast, Blue Mountains and Wollongong were plunged into lockdown on Saturday, as authorities scramble to contain an outbreak of the more infectious Delta variant of Covid-19.

As part of the lockdown, residents can only leave their homes for necessary reasons, such as to buy food and groceries, for work or education if

impossible at home, for medical reasons or for outdoor exercise and “outdoor recreation”.

Fuller was asked if sunbathing naked on a remote beach constituted outdoor recreation but his answer was interrupted by a man issuing him a “notice of cease and desist” and claiming he was the “prime creator of this Earth”.

What happens when the police commissioner of NSW comes face-to-face with a self-appointed "prime creator of this Earth"

Pandemics are a WILD RIDE pic.twitter.com/WoIy9sJV3r

— Health Nerd (@GidMK) [June 28, 2021](#)

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2021.06.28 - Spotlight

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Interview

Belinda Carlisle on punk, cocaine, body image and Buddhism: ‘I was born a little bit of a rebel’

[Emine Saner](#)



‘I wanted to prove that I wasn’t stupid, that I wasn’t a loser like they said I was’ ... Carlisle. Photograph: Nick Spanos

‘I wanted to prove that I wasn’t stupid, that I wasn’t a loser like they said I was’ ... Carlisle. Photograph: Nick Spanos

As the singer for pioneering all-female band the Go-Go’s, Carlisle took on a sexist music industry – at a cost. She talks about overcoming addiction, the media’s obsession with her weight and finding happiness in her 60s



[@eminesaner](#)

Mon 28 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

It hardly matters – who really cares about these things? – and yet it does. This year the Go-Go's will be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, and earning a place at the museum in Cleveland, Ohio, for all its naffness, is still a mark of influence and recognition. "I always said: 'Fuck them, I don't care,'" says Belinda Carlisle, the band's lead singer. "But when it actually happens, it's: 'Oh, this is not so bad.'"

The Go-Go's have had a reappraisal in the past year, thanks mainly to a documentary by the film-maker Alison Ellwood. It tells the story of how these scrappy young LA punks put together a band (the lineup shifted until arriving at the current five members) and made history – incredibly, they are still the only female band who write their own music and play their own instruments to have reached the top of the US album charts. That was in 1982. As with many female artists, belittled for years by the male-dominated music industry and press, the recognition feels long overdue.

The documentary also refocuses perceptions of Carlisle. After leaving the Go-Go's, she became a glossy pop star, but I love seeing the older images of her wearing a bin bag dress, or facing down sexist thugs while on an early

UK tour supporting Madness. On the phone from her home in Bangkok, Carlisle, now 64, is warm and unguarded. She laughs at the memory, but also adds it was “very intimidating. We would come off stage crying.” But that tour, and the kudos they had earned on the US new wave scene for touring Britain’s ska clubs, was the turning point for the band. “It exploded after that,” she says.

Until then, record companies refused to see the potential for the Go-Go’s, even if executives would go to their shows and see their adoring fanbase. “There had never been a female band that had been successful on a large level so they couldn’t think out of the box,” says Carlisle. “There had been the Runaways, and Fanny, on a cult level, but not mainstream. We never thought in terms of gender – we didn’t want to be a good ‘female band’, we wanted to be a good rock’n’roll band. Thank God for Miles [Copeland, who signed them to his label]. He understood us.”

Why has no all-female band matched their achievement in nearly 40 years? “I really have no idea,” says Carlisle. “I don’t think it has to do with sexism, because something like the Go-Go’s, with the right material, could be huge. But you need a record company that really loves music, and a lot don’t nurture their artists like they used to.”



The Go-Go's in 1980 (l to r): Gina Schock, Jane Wiedlin, Carlisle, Margot Olavarria and Charlotte Caffey. Photograph: Kerstin Rodgers/Redferns

The music landscape is so different now, with bands having lost ground to solo artists. In the DIY spirit of the 1970s, says Carlisle, “There were tons of clubs to play in and learn as you went along, and a scene that supported bands that were horrible, like us, in the beginning.” And for female artists, she points out, there is so much pressure to be polished and sexy in a way the Go-Go's never were. They played at the Billboard awards in the US a few years ago, and sat watching the younger female artists perform. “We're no prudes – we've seen everything and done everything. But it was so sexualised. It's an industry run by men. I don't see the empowerment in sexualising music that women perform.”

Growing up in Thousand Oaks, a city just outside Los Angeles, all Carlisle wanted to do was travel the world, and as a teenager, she thought being a rock star would be a good way to do it. The oldest of (eventually) seven, in a volatile household, she wanted to escape. Her stepfather was an alcoholic whose idea of discipline was a beating – years later, he sobered up, and, Carlisle says, “there were a lot of amends made”. But as a child, it left her with a drive to show him, and others, they were wrong. “I wanted to prove that I wasn't stupid, I wasn't a loser, I wasn't what they said I was.” She was “a nightmare” teenager, she says: “Hitchhiking, running away, dropping acid. But at the same time, I was a cheerleader, so I managed to be both people. I was born a little bit of a rebel, and that was one of the reasons punk music appealed to me.”

When she moved to LA at 18, she embraced the city's new punk scene, a small community at that point. “We'd have parties, we'd show up at the same clubs. I lived in a punk rock commune for a couple of years with Jane [Wiedlin, guitarist and Go-Go's co-founder] – this derelict building in the bad part of Hollywood, and it was all bands and music. And drugs, of course. There were about 50 of us who were the original, I guess, Hollywood punks. I'm so lucky to have experienced that.”

Carlisle had been in two bands before the Go-Go's formed. They had no idea what they were doing – Charlotte Caffey, their guitarist, was asked to join

“because she knew how to plug a guitar into an amp. That was what was great about the scene – you got a lot of support and even got guitar lessons from other bands. We just had a blast, it was a girls’ club. No guys allowed, no boyfriends. We had girl roadies, female management.” To go, as she puts it, “from zero to 100 in three years” felt like an explosion.

Their debut album, *Beauty and the Beat*, gave them two of their biggest hit singles, *We Got the Beat* and *Our Lips Are Sealed*. Drugs had been a problem for the band virtually from the start. In her 2010 memoir, Carlisle wrote that she was always “scared shitless – scared that I wasn’t any good and the audience would see me as the fake I feared I might be”. So drugs and alcohol helped. “I don’t think I ever went on stage completely sober for years and years,” she says now. Reading her book, it sounds as if she had impostor syndrome. “I felt like that for quite a long time,” she says. “When the *Go-Go’s* album went to No 1, I remember sitting in my kitchen, and I was on a bender, thinking: ‘I can’t believe it, I don’t deserve this.’ Maybe it’s because it happened so quickly. I think it also had to do with my issues from growing up and feeling uncomfortable in my skin.”

She says she knew she was in trouble with drugs “from the very beginning”. “I always had that little voice: ‘What are you doing?’” In the early days, she was “an acid head. But when I was introduced to coke, I thought: ‘Oh my God, when I get money, I’m going to buy lots of this.’ And I did.” She laughs. Three years after their album hit No 1, Carlisle had spent most of her money on drugs, clothes and, of all things, a racehorse.



‘I don’t think I ever went on stage completely sober for years and years’ ... Carlisle performs in London, 1981. Photograph: Steve Rapport/Getty Images

Not to glamorise it, but it does sound wild. At a party for the band in New York, Liza Minnelli and Andy Warhol turned up. Rod Stewart threw a party for them in Rio; Carlisle spent much of the night driving around the city looking for cheap cocaine. As rock legend has it, Caffey partied so hard that even notorious hellraiser Ozzy Osbourne once threw her out of his dressing room. “Oh my God, I had a great time,” says Carlisle. “I had a complete blast, but it does become a problem normally at some point. It was fun until it stopped being fun, and then it just became a real fucking nightmare.” Drugs were one of the reasons the band broke up. “I mean, everybody was just off their trolley,” she says.

Another reason was money. As songwriters, Caffey, Wiedlin and bassist Kathy Valentine earned more than Carlisle and drummer Gina Schock, which caused a lot of ill-feeling. “I can see both sides,” says Carlisle. She acknowledges that the song is vital, “but at the same time, you can’t really quantify what it is that makes the Go-Go’s. All of us equally busted our asses.” Although she admits that, at the time, “I was incapable of being creative. I couldn’t really find it in me to ask for what I thought was fair because I was such a mess.”

Carlisle managed to stop taking cocaine around the time she launched a solo career. It sounds as if it was a bit of a shock to be out on her own. Under greater scrutiny than ever, she was told she would be more successful “if I was a lot sexier, and sang songs like ‘stick it in me’. That’s literally what one person said. I was horrified, because that had never happened before. No man would ever have told the Go-Go’s to do that.” The media, too, became even more obsessed with Carlisle’s size; she had often been called the “plump” one of the band, but being marketed as a pop star came with added pressure, and she ended up developing an eating disorder. “It was horrible. I look back now, and I was normal – I would fluctuate in weight and that was never an issue. I think one of the things that people loved about the Go-Go’s was we were normal girls. But when you’re that young, and weight was always mentioned when I was in the paper, that really messes with your head. That was one of the reasons I got into drugs, because I could keep my weight down.”

Although the Go-Go’s always had a commercial flavour, Carlisle’s solo career was pure 80s pop. Did she not want to have more of a punk edge? “I grew up with California radio,” she says. “I didn’t really feel that it would be authentic to do a punk album, but I thought I’d go back to my really early roots of growing up with the radio on – I would lie in front of the speaker and sing along to all the hits. I just loved those really melodic, lush productions.”

Her debut album was successful, but when her second album came out in 1987, with its hit single Heaven is a Place on Earth, it made Carlisle a huge star; then the pressures and temptations of touring got too much. By the time she was working on her fourth album, which flopped, Carlisle was back on cocaine, pausing only while she was pregnant with her son. She was dropped by her record company the day before she turned 40: “I was in a really bad place from age 40 to 47,” she says. She kept working, including occasional Go-Go’s reunions, but she says she can’t listen to her 1996 album A Woman and a Man, “because it brings back really bad memories of where I was at. I could have phoned it in and done a better job.”

Carlisle and her husband, the film producer Morgan Mason, lived in the south of France with their son, and Mason was reaching his limit; Carlisle

had made attempts to get well, but never stuck to it. “It was a horrible cycle. I was just sick of the lies and the drama, and I hated myself,” she says. It came to a head in London in 2005, when she was recording an album of French songs; she didn’t show up for rehearsals, instead going on a cocaine binge in her hotel room. She had the sudden realisation that she could die there, alone. “I just knew that it was only a matter of time before I died,” she says.

Back home in France, she decided to stop everything. “I went out, got a big bottle of wine to celebrate my sobriety, and then the next morning, I woke up and that was it. I was over cigarettes, over pills, over everything. I just stopped and got myself some help.” Carlisle joined AA, and managed to finish her record. “That album got me through the early days of sobriety. I was able to be creative, and I didn’t really care if anybody ever heard it.”



The Go-Gos at the Sundance film festival, 2020 (l to r): Kathy Valentine, Jane Wiedlin, Belinda Carlisle, Gina Shock, and Charlotte Caffey. Photograph: George Pimentel/2020 Getty Images

Those years, while being extremely difficult, were also “the beginning of the most interesting part of my life”, she says, “because I’d always been defined by what I did for a living”. The Dalai Lama’s book *The Art of Living* helped, and Carlisle read a lot about Buddhism; a few years earlier, she had

embraced the practice of chanting to help quiet her mind. “I was doing a lot of soul-searching. I wanted to connect to something bigger than myself.”

These days Carlisle seems pretty healthy – she is up at 4am to do yoga or pilates. “I have a very active life,” she says. “I never really had that from the ages of 17 to 47.” Impressively, her marriage survived – she and Mason have been married for 35 years. Seven years ago, they moved to Bangkok on the advice of friends (their son, James, now grown up, lives in the US). She loves the city’s energy. “I don’t know if we’ll be here for ever, because that’s not our nature, but in the meantime, we really enjoy it. It’s a very exciting city.”

Carlisle is working on a new album, and there is a UK tour this autumn. “I would never, ever have thought that I would still be working at this age, but I still love to do it,” she says. The Go-Go’s – newly, and finally, lauded – will probably play some dates, too, having forgiven and forgotten the feuds over the years (at least one of them ended in a lawsuit).

What has she learned about making relationships work? “I’m still trying to figure it out, 40-odd years later,” she says with a laugh. “It’s familial. It’s not colleagues, it’s sisters. I know that we all love each other but the dynamics are really complicated. We may have taken others within the band for granted; we do not do that now. Forgiveness is important.” Still, she says, “it’s kind of tumultuous”; one of them is always in trouble with the others. “It’s not me this week,” she says, sounding relieved. But, contrarian and rebel that she is, there is also the barest touch of regret.

Anniversary vinyl editions of *Belinda*, *A Woman and a Man* and *Live Your Life Be Free* are available to order now. Tickets for Belinda Carlisle Decades are on sale at alttickets.com

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Sufferers of chronic pain have long been told it's all in their head. We now know that's wrong

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‘Health systems should be prepared’: doctors brace for tsunami of long Covid

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Publishing

Why do writers need agents? To keep track of the rejections



‘Writers need agents more than agents need writers.’ Illustration: Calum Heath/The Guardian

‘Writers need agents more than agents need writers.’ Illustration: Calum Heath/The Guardian

That 10% fee buys a novelist like me more than the chance of a big book deal – from a hand with the DIY to a shoulder to cry on after yet another knockback

Chris Paling

Mon 28 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

A few weeks after the sudden death of my agent, Deborah Rogers, in 2014 the colleague deputed to take me on phoned. “I’ve found something in Deborah’s desk.”

“Yes?”

“A letter from you. To you.”

“Ah.”

“It looks like she’d read it. Remember it?”

Of course I remembered it. Frustrated after months of trying to get a response to a novel, I had written a letter to myself, enclosed a self-addressed envelope, and asked her to tick the appropriate response: “Novel read”, “novel needs work”, “novel submitted”, “novel sold for a: £1,000, b: £10,000, c: £100,000”. Petty-minded and, given her support and encouragement over the years, unforgivable. But, being Deborah, she took it well.

The phone rang the morning she received it.

“Hello.” Deborah rarely announced herself when calling.

“Hello.”

“Well, I was so ashamed. When I read the letter I stuffed it into my drawer. We need to talk. What are you doing tomorrow?”

The following day, we talked over lunch and she sold the manuscript for a decent sum. And, like those that preceded and followed it, it earned a few decent reviews and a few sales.

Writers need agents more than agents need writers. They have needed them since the late 19th century, when an increasingly literate public fed by the magazines and single-volume prints made possible by the invention of Linotype printing created a lucrative industry. Until then, authors operated on a “half profits” system with publishers, in which they shared earnings 50/50 once the publishers had deducted their expenses (and when they got round to sending the cheque). The new breed of agents empowered authors by leasing their copyrights to publishers in return for royalties and an advance on those royalties. Nowadays, conversations with fellow writers at

some point usually address the thorny question of sales: “Have you earned out?”

“No. You?”

“No.”

I don’t know many writers who routinely “earn out”, ie clear their advance. I suspect few writers do.

AP Watt is the man usually credited with establishing many of the business practices of the agent. Henry James, one of his clients, wrote to his brother William: “He takes 10% of what he gets for me, but I am advised that his favourable action on one’s market and business generally more than makes up for this.”

Being an effective business middleman like Watt, though, is less interesting than the more complex roles the literary agent played and still plays. The French TV hit *Call My Agent!* focuses on the ego-massaging and competing demands made by the film and TV industries on the staff of a Paris talent agency; the writers could equally have found material in the relationship between literary agent James Brand Pinker and Joseph Conrad, which is chronicled in more than 1,000 letters. Pinker was Conrad’s confidant, travel agent and shoulder to cry on. It wasn’t until the publication of *Chance*, late in Conrad’s life, that his reputation was established and his books began to sell, but by then he was gout-ridden and suffering from recurring bouts of malaria during which he would wake up and speak in his native Polish. Pinker supported him by sending him a cheque each week and essentially running the family’s affairs.

Modern-day versions of Pinker regularly cite being called to take on extracurricular responsibilities. One, with a long list of established clients, takes a toolbox each time he visits a particular author’s house (she doesn’t come into the office) because she saves up odd jobs for his visits. Another longstanding agent routinely sends reams of paper to one of her clients because he claims to be too poor to afford enough to complete his works in progress.

I have had five agents in a long writing career: three literary and two film. Another I was about to sign on with, but pulled out at the last moment when I discovered he was notorious for having two mobile numbers – one for his mega-sellers, the other for the rest; he would only ever answer one of his lines. I have been thinking about them all over the past couple of years as I've been editing my sporadic journals into what has now become a book. As its title, *A Very Nice Rejection Letter*, suggests, my career has been untroubled by huge success, but it also points towards another key role played by those who take 10% (plus VAT) of your earnings: the bad-news spinner. My former film agent devised a cunning strategy: instead of reporting each rejection as it came in, she would save up the “nicest” of them and deliver them when pestered for updates. When I was clearing out my archive (seven slightly damp box files transferred from loft to loft over several house moves) I discovered I had kept many of my rejection letters, but not the scripts and stories. The most damning one came from BBC Light Entertainment: “Forgive me, but this isn't within sight of being an acceptable script. On this evidence I can't envisage that you can win over the hundreds of professional authors who devote full-time to writing. It would be hypocritical – and unhelpful – if I said otherwise.”

[There's no female conspiracy in publishing – your book might just not be good | Lauren Spieller](#)

[Read more](#)

Despite the inevitable knockbacks, once you have become enslaved to what Truman Capote describes as the “noble but merciless master”, you've had it. You're addicted. Worse, as he went on to suggest: “When God hands you a gift, he also hands you a whip and that whip is intended solely for self-flagellation.” Writers are good at self-flagellation. It makes the hurt delivered by others easier to bear.

The British version of *Call My Agent!* has begun shooting. I assume they are sticking close to the brightly lit glamour of film and TV rather than the sepia-tinted world of book publishing. When re-reading my 2007 diary I discovered a number of entries recording my monthly attendance at a group of mid-list novelists (publishing rule No 6 – there is no such thing as a low-list novelist) in a chilly upstairs room in a West End pub. Among us were some well-known if senior names. I went anticipating sparkling conversation

and often came away depressed by the whingeing over the impossibility of getting decent typewriter ribbons nowadays, the lack of interest from the TV and film industries and, a perennial one, the impossibility of getting a response from your agent.

I bumped into one of the members the other day. He told me he had recently canned his agent for that very reason. The distraught agent responded (having presumably gone through 12 months of email traffic) by citing an occasion (the only occasion, according to my friend) in which he had responded on the same day.

The saddest thing to witness at these gatherings was the way in which these impoverished individuals scuttled to the bar on their way in, careful not to meet anybody's eye, then affected to notice the group only after they had bought their glass of house red wine, which they would then nurse for the next three hours so they didn't have to revisit the bar and buy a round. Any who did find success tended to come once more to boast about it and then disappear. One writer – with whom I had shared an early low-flying career trajectory – reported getting a call from a Hollywood mogul one evening. She answered the phone to be informed: “I'm going to make you a very rich woman.” And I think he did. The call was from Harvey Weinstein.

Despite the responses, I persisted in writing and persisted in part because many of the early rejections came from an eccentric BBC radio producer, Mitch Raper. I worked for the BBC then as a Radio 4 producer and would encounter him shuffling along the corridors of Broadcasting House, box of tissues perched precariously alongside his coffee and stopwatch on his script. His output was prolific and he also took the time to respond to every story he was sent. Mitch didn't commission a story from me but his gentle assurances that I was a capable writer and should continue to learn my trade stayed with me. Rookie writers need validation. Many owe their careers to Mitch.

I was taken on by Deborah Rogers when a BBC colleague read a novel I had written (the rejections put paid to my radio- and TV-play-writing career) and offered to show it to a friend. Several months later, I was waiting in the reception area of a literary agency in north London. Deborah opened the door to her office and ushered me in, pointing to the only place on the low

sofas not cluttered with manuscripts. One of her many strengths was that she didn't differentiate between her prize winners and mid-listers. Nothing in my writing career will ever match the moment Deborah greeted me in the reception, my latest manuscript under her arm, with the announcement: "I can sell this." Three weeks later she did, to Jonathan Cape, which went on to publish seven of my novels.

The agent who inherited me after Deborah's death also died suddenly, much too young, and I've recently been taken on by another one. We get on well, I think, although he did admit he read the latest manuscript from behind the sofa because the later journal entries in what has become the new book are about the process of him selling the book to Constable and Robinson. I think this is what is meant by "meta".

I haven't so far sent him a multiple-choice letter to respond to the latest novel. I'm sure he'll be back to me soon. I don't have a film agent now but perhaps I'll start casting round for one when the inevitable frenzy begins to snap up the film rights to the meanderings of this mid-list novelist. But I know I'm not alone. Saul Bellow recognised that rejections are not necessarily a bad thing. It is within your power to choose whether they signal the beginning or the end of a career. As he wrote: "They teach a writer to rely on his own judgment and to say in his heart of hearts: 'To hell with you.'"

A Very Nice Rejection Letter: Diary of a Novelist by Chris Paling is published by Constable on 17 June.

This article was downloaded by calibre from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/jun/28/why-do-writers-need-agents-to-keep-track-of-the-rejections>

2021.06.28 - Opinion

- My English will never be 'perfect' – and that's what keeps a language alive
- Even the best job will never love you back. So where do we find our life's purpose?
- Will vaccination become part of the back-to-school ritual?
- We've got the first Alzheimer's drug in decades. But is it a breakthrough?

[OpinionLanguage](#)

My English will never be ‘perfect’ – and that’s what keeps a language alive

[Nesrine Malik](#)

As a child, I mixed English with Arabic. Now I know there’s no such thing as a fixed language that belongs to one special group



A sign for English lessons in Nawalgarh, Rajasthan, India. Photograph: Alamy

A sign for English lessons in Nawalgarh, Rajasthan, India. Photograph: Alamy

Mon 28 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

My first day in an English-speaking school was miserable. It was full of little humiliations: the kind that with the hindsight of adulthood seem trivial but in childhood plant the seed of a feeling of inadequacy that one can never expel.

My family had just moved to Kenya, where English was the official language. I was seven and could not speak a word of it, having grown up until that point in an Arabic-speaking country, and been educated at an Arabic school.

I sat silently in class in a daze, hoping no one would notice my inability. But I drew attention because I had put my schoolbag in the wrong place. And the teacher, who finally had to resort to gestures to get through to me, demanded to know where it was.

Out of some childish impulse to hide my awkward self and belongings, I had stashed my inappropriately large bag, overstuffed with provisions by an anxious mum, in a cupboard at the back of the class. I sat in silence as the teacher's interrogation grew more irate. In the end I blurted out where I had put the bag, but in Arabic. The teacher blinked. The whole class laughed. My eyes stung. The bullying started that day and didn't stop until I had learned enough English to lose the stain of difference.

The funny thing is, impossible though it seemed at that moment, I don't actually remember learning English, which I suppose is down to the speed with which children pick up a new language. All I recall is one day sitting in humiliated isolation and the next being able to read a whole grade-one book from cover to cover.

Despite the quick uptake, my language challenges weren't over. My English was lopsided – all bloated vocabulary from too much reading to overcompensate for a late start, but no confidence to use the words in conversation. It jostled with, but failed to replace, my first language: Arabic.

Today, even after almost four decades of education and work in the English language, I still falter by the standards my teachers set. My accent is all over the place. I still often have to pause in speech and translate thoughts in my head from Arabic first, which affects my articulacy; and I still mispronounce words.

I am also often corrected, something that reflexively takes me back to that moment under the spotlight in the classroom. It's not an unkind correction, most of the time, more an amused question. When I say "meLAN-kolly" did

I really mean “MELON-kolly”? “Interwined”, it was gently pointed out, perhaps had a T in the middle (it shouldn’t: much more evocative without it). And the most British correction of all comes in the form of a polite, “How are you pronouncing that? I think it might be X, but I could be wrong.” It’s not as uncommon an impulse as one would think. A [recent survey](#) revealed that many people are more than happy to correct friends, family and strangers when they make mistakes.

I don’t have time for that kind of preciousness about language any more. Having spent so many years trying to “improve” my English, I realised that the more I tried to follow norms, be they related to accent, pronunciation or even inflection and tone, the more hesitant and overly formal my English became. The English I ended up speaking is (as all languages are) dynamic and porous to other influences, and all the more expressive for it.

In my childhood home, the English we learned in school merged with Arabic in ways so organic I couldn’t tell you when it began or who started it. Where Arabic sentence constructions seemed hard, simpler English ones replaced them, and vice versa. We added “ing” to Arabic words to turn them into verbs. Other times, we transposed simpler Arabic sentence structures on to more cumbersome English ones, dropping words like “am” and “is”, which don’t exist in Arabic. To this day, we still say “I tired” or “I hungry”.

This isn’t a quirk of upbringing: it’s the experience of the majority of English-speaking people. Far more people speak English in the rest of the world than in native-English-speaking countries. I am even reluctant to use the word “native”, because it implies some ownership – some source of correct, consistent, unevolving English that exists only in a small number of nations, and that others have corrupted.

English is listed as a national language in [more than 50 countries](#) across the world. It is used by the Indian government as a supplement to Hindi, and it is the language of the Indian judiciary. In some African countries, a version of English is the main language of officialdom, education and the media. With this adoption, a process called “[nativisation](#)” can occur – with local accents, grammar and even cultural concepts (for example, the position of “senior wife” in polygamous west African countries) influencing the English and subtly changing it.

Even standard English has undergone “nativisation” of its own through history, absorbing huge amounts of French vocabulary for example, with even a sprinkling of Arabic in there too. No version of English we speak now is “pure”, so policing pronunciation, or indeed any other arbitrary code of language, is futile – the equivalent of patrolling an ever-shifting border.

The purpose of language is to facilitate communication. The magic of language is its capacity to spontaneously evolve to facilitate that communication, incorporating and accommodating the influences, and thus the needs, of those who use it. Caring about the integrity of the English language and allowing it to breathe and change go hand in hand. One could even say they were intertwined.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist

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Opinion **Work-life balance**

Even the best job will never love you back. So where do we find our life's purpose?

[Zoe Williams](#)



The pandemic has made everyone think about what really matters, and it isn't 'hustle culture', working around the clock or pledging yourself to your employer like a serf



‘Will we ever return? Will the extroverts return and the introverts stay at home?’ Photograph: The Good Brigade/Getty Images

‘Will we ever return? Will the extroverts return and the introverts stay at home?’ Photograph: The Good Brigade/Getty Images

Mon 28 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

Everyone’s fixated on offices. Will we ever return? Will the extroverts return and the introverts stay at home? Will the high performers go back and the coasters stick to Zoom? Or will it be the other way round? Maybe anyone with a sense of purpose and direction can work from their bedroom, perched on an ironing board, and you only need IRL colleagues if you’re aimless and chaotic. But that conversation is actually standing in for (and masking) a more profound one about work itself. “Hustle culture” – working all the time, finding your fulfilment and identity there, pledging yourself to your employer like a serf, having a side-hustle to plug any gaps, configuring yourself as an instrument of productivity – has taken quite a hit over the past 18 months.

Some of us have been forced by catastrophe to think about what really matters. Some have realised that, for all that we loved our job, our job didn’t love us back. Some have worked so hard that we’ve forgotten what the point was, and emptied the tank of drive and ambition. And some have had such a

prolonged period of inactivity that our muscles of activity for activity's sake have simply atrophied.

For all that to have aligned at once is a once-in-a-generation event. At the height of the pandemic, 63% of people [supported a four-day week](#); only 12% were against it. It sounds like a bigger shift when you call it a three-day weekend. Either way, it is as far from hustle culture as you can imagine.

So we're ready for part two of this conversation: where, if not from work, is a person supposed to get their sense of achievement? Intimate relationships count for a lot, but you don't wake up every morning with a drive to do them better. Where do you direct your competitiveness, your urge not just to improve but to measure your improvement? It can't just be triathlons.

The people to ask are retirees. They've solved this puzzle. They're just keeping quiet about it.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/28/even-the-best-job-will-never-love-you-back-so-where-do-we-find-our-lifes-purpose>

OpinionCoronavirus

Will vaccination become part of the back-to-school ritual?

[Emma Brockes](#)



A chasm is emerging, particularly among parents, over how to deal with Covid risk in New York



Schoolchildren crossing 10th Avenue Photograph: John Angelillo/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

Schoolchildren crossing 10th Avenue Photograph: John Angelillo/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

Mon 28 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

There is a new, and presumably temporary, pastime in [New York](#), which is to list the ways in which the city is back. Exhibit one: calling your favourite neighbourhood restaurant for a table and being told, flatly: “We can get you in at 5pm or 9pm.” Exhibit two: below 14th Street, queues round the block to get into a tiny space for the privilege of paying \$25 for a double gin and tonic. And exhibit three: an assertion by the city’s major corporations, and after 18 months of apparent humility in the face of employee distress, that staff need to get their asses back in the office.

This week, Morgan Stanley became the latest company in the city to lift pandemic restrictions on in-person work, providing employees and visitors to its offices [are vaccinated](#). This is, increasingly, a requirement by the city’s biggest private employers; earlier this month, Goldman Sachs announced that employees would [have to be vaccinated](#) to enter its buildings, while JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America have asked staff to provide their

vaccine status on a voluntary basis, prior to what they hope will be a majority return to the office.

The consequence for those who choose not to be vaccinated isn't hard to discern. Anecdotally, there is evidence of the social – and presumably professional – pariah status of the anti-vaxxer in corporate America. One friend, who works at a global HR company in midtown, operates within a new office framework wherein vaccinated people may move around the office unrestricted, while unvaccinated people must not only remain masked but are prohibited from using the coffee room or the company's leisure facilities, and from going on corporate jollies. A big arrow inscribed with the word "lunatic" may as well descend from the ceiling above these people's desks.

It's hard to get up much civil liberties outrage around this, in spite of the unappealing motives of the vaccine enforcers. Clearly, the banks don't give a toss about public health. If the net result of their vaccine mandates is an acceleration towards herd immunity, however, for once we may all be on the same side. (There is another question, about whether new, more employee-friendly working habits established during the pandemic will die just as quickly as they rose, but this probably isn't a good test of it: people don't, generally, pursue a career in banking for its amazing work/life balance.)

Meanwhile, tensions between vaccinated and unvaccinated people roil employee relations in much smaller contexts. Another sign of the city springing to life post-pandemic is the feverish hiring of babysitters. The honour system of declaring, to playground cohorts, the vaccination status of one's child's caregiver is causing predictable problems. In my extended circle, there is a single family whose after-school babysitter is unvaccinated and although I've never met the woman, her status is sufficiently well known within the neighbourhood that I'm fully aware of her reasoning. ("What's the point? Vaccinated people still get sick.")

If one disregards, for a moment, the deadly implications of people deciding to opt out of getting vaccinated, it has become something of a sport to discuss and abhor other people's pandemic behaviours. There is the mum who still brings wet wipes to the park and swabs down the slide before her kid can use it. There is the family who won't use a taxi for fear of exposure

to germs – they’re all vaccinated – but who is flying to Europe in August. There’s the mum who, as I heard another parent describe it, “is double-masked standing in the middle of a field”. There’s no disguising the enjoyment that comes from witnessing and discussing the insanity of others.

The big question for New Yorkers is how the schools will manage vaccination status in September. The assumption is that even if the under-12s are greenlighted to get their shots over summer, the Department of Education will shrink from insisting children are vaccinated before entering school buildings. This doesn’t make a lot of sense; a child can’t attend state school in New York without a health form attesting to his having had all the other vaccinations. The assumption is, however, that there will be sufficient pushback from parents worried about the shallowness of the trials on young children to make mandating Covid vaccinations too disruptive. On this basis – enragingly – masks are still likely to be required in the classroom, too. There aren’t a lot of consolations for this – but looking beyond summer to autumn and the nights drawing in, at least we’ll still have something to bitch about.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist

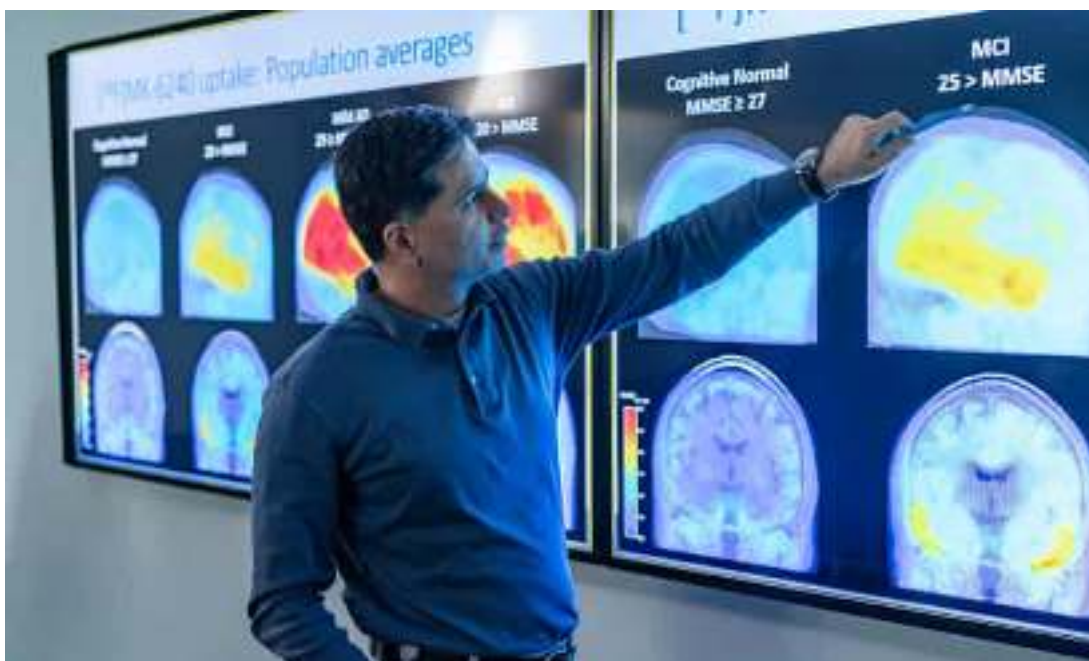
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OpinionAlzheimer's

We've got the first Alzheimer's drug in decades. But is it a breakthrough?

Han Yu

Aducanumab's approval masks the fact that we're still very far from sure what causes the most common form of dementia



Brain scan images at Biogen's headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
Photograph: David A White/Biogen/EPA

Brain scan images at Biogen's headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
Photograph: David A White/Biogen/EPA

Mon 28 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

In June 2021, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first Alzheimer's drug in 18 years: aducanumab (also known by its brand name Aduhelm). At the time of writing, the drug is also under review in the EU, Japan and several other countries.

For the roughly [30 million people worldwide](#) who live with Alzheimer's, this is unprecedented news, and must seem like cause for optimism. Unlike existing drugs, which only feebly suppress cognitive symptoms, aducanumab attempts to get at the underlying cause of the disease, to stop and cure Alzheimer's.

Having seen the disease up close and personal, I too long for a cure. Yet I'm not exactly overjoyed by the news of aducanumab. And it has been criticised by the Harvard professor of medicine Aaron Kesselheim, part of an FDA advisory committee that voted, almost unanimously, to *not* approve the treatment.

To understand the controversy, we need to start with the brain of an Alzheimer's patient. It typically harbours two kinds of pathology: first, plaques, or deposits, that are scattered between nerve cells; second, fibres that form tangles inside the cells. The plaques consist of a protein fragment known as beta-amyloid. The tangles consist of a protein known as tau.

Scientists have long suspected that these two substances are the underlying cause of Alzheimer's. Of the two, beta-amyloid has garnered far more interest, for some good reasons. In 1991, John Hardy's team from St Mary's hospital medical school in London discovered that genetic mutations affecting [beta-amyloid cause early-onset Alzheimer's](#), a rare inherited form of the disease that exhibits the same brain changes as the more common, late-onset version. The discovery led Hardy to propose the amyloid hypothesis, which suggests that excessive beta-amyloid buildup is the cause of Alzheimer's.

The amyloid hypothesis has been updated regularly to explain new findings, and [has become the dominant](#) model in the study of Alzheimer's. The latest update places the blame not on the end state beta-amyloid plaques, but on intermediate deposits known as beta-amyloid oligomers.

The amyloid hypothesis is able to explain a range of phenomena related to Alzheimer's, but it also struggles to answer important questions. Chief among them is why decades of clinical trials with anti-amyloid drugs have failed. From inhibitors that prevent the formation of beta-amyloid in the first place to vaccines that remove existing beta-amyloid, we have hit a brick

wall in our efforts to stop cognitive decline. Until aducanumab – well, sort of.

Developed by Massachusetts-based Biogen, aducanumab is a vaccine comprising antibodies to beta-amyloid. It burst on to the scene in March 2015 when [an early-stage clinical trial](#) showed that it drastically reduced levels in the brain. More impressively, the cognitive and functional skills of those who took the drug didn't decline as much as those who were given a placebo.

That trial was hailed a game-changer, a confirmation that if you reduce beta-amyloid by enough, you *will* see a clinical benefit. There is, however, a tiny problem. This supposed game-changing study only tested 165 people, and they were divided into smaller groups of 30 or so each. With these tiny sample sizes the cognitive findings carry little value beyond their usefulness as marketing hype. Not only that, but the trial didn't even measure oligomers, the current most likely culprit. It merely measured plaques and assumed that oligomers also went down.

Undeterred, Biogen pushed forward with two large trials in autumn 2015 that were supposed to confirm the cognitive effect. But the plan went awry. In March 2019, an interim analysis showed that the trials were unlikely to succeed, and they were stopped in their tracks.

Then, a plot twist: seven months later, Biogen declared that the interim analysis was, well, wrong, and that at its highest dose aducanumab did slow cognitive decline in one of the trials (in the other one, not enough participants received that increased dose). Biogen pushed ahead for FDA approval.

Ordinarily, one positive study isn't enough to get you the green light. But the FDA put Biogen on the Accelerated Approval pathway, designed to speed up the process for potentially valuable therapies for serious diseases. As a result, less weight was placed on having definitive evidence of cognitive benefit: the fact that beta-amyloid plaque was reduced was deemed to be enough.

This is a problem, according to critics of the amyloid hypothesis. The connection between the two – plaque reduction, and cognitive improvement, that is – is far from certain. In fact, some believe beta-amyloid may not be the underlying cause of the disease at all.

Recall that other marker of Alzheimer's, tau tangles. Tau proteins help to support axons – the long, thin part of a nerve cell that sends electrical signals to other nerve cells. If tau malfunctions, axons collapse, and brain signals will stall. That, say some, is the real cause of Alzheimer's. Still others suggest that Alzheimer's is a metabolic disease, in which the brain suffers from reduced glucose use and energy production. According to this view, Alzheimer's can almost be thought of as a "type 3 diabetes" caused by impaired insulin signalling and reduced metabolism, which starves neurons.

For proponents of these theories, the continued dominance of the amyloid hypothesis represents a failure to think innovatively, and a frustrating block on meaningful progress. There is some truth to this, but equally, if there were an obvious alternative, it too would likely have borne fruit by now.

Yes, anti-amyloid drugs don't have a good track record, but neither do tau or metabolic treatments. And each theory has its fair share of unanswered questions, of things that don't stack up.

In any case the approval of aducanumab has made sure that, for the foreseeable future, the amyloid hypothesis isn't going anywhere. After all, it has shown researchers and companies that pursuing anti-amyloid drugs can pay in the region of [\\$56,000](#) (£40,000) per year per patient. Granted, if post-marketing studies show that aducanumab doesn't actually work, approval can be revoked. But these studies are tricky to conduct: patients will not want to enrol in a trial and potentially receive a placebo when they can get an "approved" drug from their doctors.

More interesting than the aducanumab controversy are the several continuing trials designed to test anti-amyloid drugs on cognitively healthy people (for example, [the A4 study](#)). The researchers behind these are motivated by the idea that once cognitive symptoms appear, any reduction in beta-amyloid may be too little too late. In other words, prevention, not treatment, may hold the key to defeating Alzheimer's, and those at risk may

in the future be encouraged to take what might be thought of as “statins for the mind”.

If the results of these studies, which are anticipated in one to four years, also turn out to be dismal, that may indeed be it for the amyloid hypothesis. But until then, there’s still a spark of hope. And as we labour to solve the riddle of this debilitating disease, close to an answer but with firm evidence of success still tantalisingly out of reach, hope is a precious commodity.

- Han Yu is professor of science communication at Kansas State University and author of *Mind Thief: The Story of Alzheimer’s*

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[Miami condo collapse](#)

Miami condo collapse: death toll rises to nine as crews search pile for survivors

- Progress against fire and international help boosts effort
- Anxiety grows among residents of neighbouring tower



Rescue workers search the rubble of the Champlain Towers South.
Photograph: Lynne Sladky/AP

Rescue workers search the rubble of the Champlain Towers South.
Photograph: Lynne Sladky/AP

[Richard Luscombe](#) in Miami

[@richlusc](#)

Sun 27 Jun 2021 23.56 EDT

Officials in Florida insisted on Sunday there was still hope of finding survivors in the rubble of a [collapsed oceanfront condominium building](#), as

firefighters finally controlled a large blaze inside the wreckage that hampered three days of rescue efforts.

[Engineer reportedly warned in 2018 of ‘major damage’ at Miami condo complex](#)

[Read more](#)

But the death toll rose to nine after the discovery of four more bodies in the ruins of the Champlain Towers South apartments, in the [Miami](#) suburb of Surfside.

The latest four victims were identified by police as Christina Beatriz Elvira, 74, Luis Bermudez, 26, Leon Oliwkowicz, 80, and Anna Ortiz, 46.

The Miami-Dade mayor, Daniella Levine Cava, said the victims were brought out overnight, leaving 152 unaccounted for.

“We were able to recover four additional bodies in the rubble, as well as additional human remains,” the mayor told reporters.

“As of today, one victim has passed away in the hospital and we’ve recovered eight more victims on site, so I am confirming today that the death toll is nine. We’ve identified four of the victims and notified the next of kin.

“My deepest condolences to the families, the friends, the communities of those who’ve lost their lives, and my prayers are with the families and the whole community as they mourn this tragic loss.”

Crews used cranes to remove [large chunks of concrete](#) from the site where the 12-storey block crashed down in the early hours of Thursday.

The cause of the catastrophe is not known, but it was revealed on Saturday that consultants flagged “[major structural damage](#)” to the 40-year-old tower in 2018 and recommended repairs that were not carried out.

We are getting it done as we continue to sweep these piles with our canines, with our cameras, with our sonar

Mayor Daniella Levine Cava

The hunt for survivors reached its fourth day as international crews arrived. They included a team of engineers and search specialists from Israel, which would “make every effort to help save human life and offer support to the Jewish community and to our American friends”, Israeli defense minister Benny Gantz said, acknowledging Surfside’s sizable Jewish population.

Levine Cava welcomed their presence, and that of Mexican experts bolstering state and federal crews.

“We have the best, we have the right people and the right number, and we are getting it done as we continue to sweep these piles with our canines, with our cameras, with our sonar,” she said. “We’re continuing our efforts to find people alive.”

She added that the dousing of a fire that filled the disaster site with thick smoke through the early stages of the rescue operation, causing workers to evacuate, provided new hope.

“Saturday afternoon, and through the night on Sunday, there was clearer visibility,” she told CBS’ Face the Nation.

The [Florida](#) state fire marshal, Jimmy Patronis, told reporters Miami-Dade fire rescue carved a trench 120ft long and 20ft wide underneath the wreckage, which he said acted as a firebreak and allowed better access. Patronis also welcomed the easing of thunderstorms he said contributed to the shifting of some debris.

00:33

Video shows collapse of Miami-area condo building

Miami-Dade police [released the names of four victims](#). They included 54-year-old Stacey Fang, whose 15-year-old son was pulled alive from the rubble on Thursday.

Friends and families of the missing received updates at a hotel, many breaking down as they learned crews had found remains. There was an increasing sense of frustration at a perceived slow trickle of information.

Levine Cava said the relatives' numbers had grown. Family members of the missing and the dead were due to go to the disaster site on Sunday to observe, grieve and pray.

Many of those unaccounted for come from South America. One Briton, 38-year-old [Bhavna Patel](#), who is pregnant, is missing, with her husband and one-year-old daughter.

Among those waiting was Rachel Spiegel, whose mother, 66-year-old Judy Spiegel, lived on the sixth floor. She said: "We're trying to hold it together. I know my mom is a fighter. I know she loves us. I know she doesn't want to give up."

00:51

Aerial footage shows destruction after Miami building collapse – video

Anxiety was growing among residents of the fallen tower block's sister building, Champlain Towers North, which was built a year later in 1982, with apparently identical materials and specifications. Engineers conducted a basic survey of the building on Saturday.

"They didn't find anything out of the ordinary," said the mayor of Surfside, Charles Burkett.

"What we're doing now is saving lives and bringing people out of the rubble. What we're going to do in the next phase, after we address support for the families, is a very deep dive into why this building fell down."

Burkett said he did not plan a mandatory evacuation but added that if he lived there: "I'd be gone."

Several occupants of its 130 apartments were leaving.

"We just want to move out, just for safety," one resident, who did not want to be identified, [told the Washington Post](#).

On Saturday, Levine Cava announced a 30-day audit of all buildings "at the 40-year point and beyond", which she said would be an "an aggressive

review of, as well as situations in these buildings to make sure they are safe”.

But she noted she only had authority over county buildings, and that individual municipalities were responsible for their jurisdictions.

Ron DeSantis, the [Florida](#) governor, has promised a full inquiry. He said on Sunday that while looking after victims’ families and the displaced is the first priority, “the next most important thing is why did this happen.



A make-shift memorial in Surfside, Florida. Photograph: Michele Eve Sandberg/REX/Shutterstock

“There’s folks from the feds here, we have state engineers, they have local folks. It’s important that we get a definitive explanation. Clearly, if there’s anything that can be done to prevent something like this, we’ve got to do everything we can.”

Charles Kesl, a Surfside commissioner, welcomed the news.

“I want to know if there’s underground collapses and movement, which is quite possible, and if the building has been sinking a little bit,” Kesl told the Guardian.

“There have been sinkholes in the neighborhood in the past 20 years. We have a lot of powerful water movement, we’ve got rising sea levels, we’ve got a water table that’s been saturated with salt water. There’s been no geological kinds of tests.

“We need to figure out what’s happened and we need to do it in a somewhat timely manner.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/27/miami-condo-collapse-surfside-champlain-towers-2018-report-dead-missing>

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Sharks

California shark attack: surfer survives great white bite near San Francisco

- Man, 35, bitten on leg by shark estimated at 6ft to 8ft
- Great whites on rebound in west coast ecosystem



A great white shark swimming just under the surface. Photograph: By Wildestanimal/Getty Images

A great white shark swimming just under the surface. Photograph: By Wildestanimal/Getty Images

[Richard Luscombe](#)

[@richlusc](#)

Mon 28 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

A surfer was severely injured in an attack by a great white shark off [California](#) on Saturday, one month after researchers found that numbers of

the predator were growing in the region.

[Tiger sharks are not scared of hurricanes, US researchers say](#)
[Read more](#)

The 35-year-old man was able to swim to shore at Gray Whale Cove beach close to San Francisco, where rescuers applied a tourniquet to his right leg.

First responders applied “advanced life support measures”, [Cal Fire’s San Mateo-Santa Cruz unit](#) said, then transported the man to the trauma unit at Zuckerberg San Francisco general hospital.

The man was [released](#) on Sunday. The shark that attacked him was estimated at [between 6ft and 8ft](#), the San Mateo county sheriff’s office said, indicating it was probably a juvenile.

“It was only one bite and there were about 10 lacerations to the back of the right thigh,” Brian Ham, battalion chief of the San Mateo fire department [told Bay Area’s CBS5](#).

“Usually [the sharks are] within the surf zone, so they’re within 100ft to 200ft of the actual beach. It’s shallow but a shark can attack very close to the beach.”

Last month, marine ecologists at Montana State University [found](#) that great white numbers were up in northern California’s so-called “red triangle”, which runs north from Monterey Bay to Bodega Bay and about 20 miles offshore to the Farallon Islands. Gray Whale Cove is at the center of the coastal stretch.

The seven-year study, funded by Stanford and the Monterey Bay Aquarium and supported by Oregon State University, concluded there were 266 adult and sub-adult great whites in the triangle, a “modest” increase on a decade earlier.

But the researchers said it was a “clear indication” that ocean conditions were improving, with associated benefits to marine life.

“We are cautiously optimistic that this is a good news story for the ocean ecosystem off California,” [Paul Kanive](#), lead author and a veteran member of the California white shark tagging team, [told Newsweek](#).

“The findings are a good indicator of the overall health [of the system]. As an apex predator, white sharks need a healthy structure of other animals in the lower levels in the food chain. The preferred prey of the white shark, coastal seals and sea lions, have rebounded to very high numbers, thereby providing sustainable and plentiful food sources for the sharks.”

The biologists tagged sharks between 2011 and 2018, taking more than 1,500 photographs and using distinctive, jagged dorsal fins for identification.

[Sharks use Earth’s magnetic field as ‘GPS’ guidance system, study says](#)
[Read more](#)

Similar research published in 2011 suggested the presence of 219 adult and sub-adult great whites in the same region. The headline figure in both studies was the average of a possible range in numbers.

Preservation measures including California’s 1994 ban on the killing of great whites in state waters to three miles are credited with the species’ resurgence.

Despite their reputation as the most dangerous shark species to humans, the likelihood of a white shark killing or injuring a surfer is one in 17m, according to [research published in 2015](#) – a 91% drop from 1950 to 2013 as the number of attacks remained constant while the human population increased.

“The probability of people encountering a white shark is very low,” Kanive [told the Mercury News](#). “It’s a very rare event.”

This article was downloaded by calibre from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/28/california-shark-attack-surfer-survives-great-white-bite>

[Business live](#)

[Business](#)

Travel shares hit by summer ‘washout’ fears from tighter restrictions – as it happened

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US news

Revealed: neo-Confederate group includes military officers and politicians



Donald Trump supporters stand gather for his first post-presidency campaign rally in Wellington, Ohio, on Saturday. Photograph: Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

Donald Trump supporters stand gather for his first post-presidency campaign rally in Wellington, Ohio, on Saturday. Photograph: Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

Leaked data shows other high-profile members have overlapping membership in more explicitly racist or violent groups

[*Jason Wilson*](#)

[*@jason_a_w*](#)

Mon 28 Jun 2021 11.06 EDT

Leaked membership data from the neo-Confederate Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) organization has revealed that the organization's members

include serving military officers, elected officials, public employees, and a national security expert whose CV boasts of “Department of Defense Secret Security Clearance”.

But alongside these members are others who participated in and committed acts of violence at the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, and others who hold overlapping membership in [violent neo-Confederate groups](#) such as the League of the South (LoS).

The group, organized as a federation of state chapters, has recently made news for increasingly aggressive campaigns against the removal of Confederate monuments. This has included legal action against states and cities, the flying of giant Confederate battle flags near public roadways, and Confederate flag flyovers at Nascar races.

Last Monday, the [Georgia](#) division of SCV commenced legal action against the city of Decatur with the aim of restoring a Confederate memorial obelisk which was removed in June 2020, and later replaced with a statue of the late congressman and civil rights activist John Lewis.

Last year, in a widely criticized move, the University of North Carolina’s board of governors proposed creating a \$2.5m charitable trust which would pay the state’s SCV organization to maintain a Confederate “Silent Sam” statue which had been removed from the campus.

That deal fell apart in recent weeks. But critics – including former members – alleged that the SCV commander for the state, Kevin Stone, associated with extremists and other “[scary](#)” individuals who had been recruited to the group.

Stone, who who also co-founded the SCV Mechanized Cavalry, a motorcycle club associated with the SCV, reportedly led a takeover of the branch which pushed out anti-racist members.

College of Charleston historian, Adam Domby, whose book, [The False Cause](#), details the history of the neo-Confederate movement, said in a telephone conversation that “throughout its history, the SCV has been linked

with white supremacist groups, and historically it has avowedly supported white supremacist groups”.

Jalane Schmidt, a professor of religion at the University of [Virginia](#) in Charlottesville, has been active in the campaign to remove the statues that the Unite the Right rally sought to defend in 2017, and is working on a book about the history of neo-Confederate groups including SCV in [Virginia](#).



Sons of Confederate Veterans last year rededicated removed statues of Ku Klux Klan founder Nathan Bedford Forrest at its National Confederate Museum in Columbia, Tennessee. Photograph: Adrian Sainz/AP

In a telephone conversation, she pointed to an 1 April ruling of the Virginia supreme court which reversed lower court rulings in favor of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Monument Fund in their quest to ensure Charlottesville’s monuments stayed in place.

“According to the supreme court, the SCV and the Monument Fund were wrong all along, and we could have taken down our statues in 2017,” she said.

Instead, the statues were still standing when Unite the Right was organized. As a result of the rally, Schmidt added: “People are dead.”

SCV's attempts to preserve Confederate monuments have become more difficult in the face of intensifying demands for their removal since the rise of the anti-racist [Black Lives Matter movement](#), and the neo-Confederate-inspired mass murder of Black church-goers by Dylann Roof in South Carolina in 2015.

SCV last year rededicated removed statues of Confederate president Jefferson Davis and Confederate general and Ku Klux Klan founder Nathan Bedford Forrest at its National Confederate Museum in Columbia, [Tennessee](#).

The data

The national membership data was provided to the Guardian by a self-described hacktivist whose identity has been withheld for their safety.

The data reveals the names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of almost 59,000 past and present members of the organization, including 91 who used addresses associated with government agencies for their contact email, and 74 who used addresses associated with various branches of the armed forces.

They noticed that the organization's website had been misconfigured, allowing access to membership rolls, recruiting data, and other information about the internal workings of the group. The website has had the security issue for a number of years, according to the hacktivist.

The membership data shows members' names, addresses, telephone numbers, whether they are active or not, and their email addresses.



Hundreds of white nationalists, neo-Nazis and alt-right members gathered at the Unite the Right rally on August 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia. Photograph: Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

The Guardian identified members who were listed as active, and whose contact information included addresses associated with government agencies, the armed forces, educational institutions, and non-government organizations.

There was some previous reporting on an earlier version of the membership database, made public by Atlanta Antifa, which noted the presence of Georgia state legislators in the group's data.

But the Guardian has found additional legislators, and active members who are in positions of influence and responsibility that stretch far beyond the walls of state legislatures.

High-profile members

One member listed as active in the data is Scott Wyatt, who represents the 97th district in Virginia's house of delegates, which comprises rural counties north of Richmond, which served as the Confederate capital for much of the civil war.

Duane AJ Probst, who was elected coroner of Osage county, Missouri in 2020, after reaching the rank of Lt Col in the US Army National Guard, is also listed as an active member of the group.

In a telephone conversation, Probst confirmed his membership, saying that he had joined in the last “four or five years” after he discovered a relative had fought for the Confederacy, had attended meetings until around two years ago when he became too busy for regular attendance.

He said that in his experience of the local group in Missouri, it was “a friendly organization that doesn’t advocate white supremacy”, and the main activities he had been involved in were dinners and lectures.

On the question of statues, Probst said that “the men who forged the country were flawed”, and that “I don’t know that taking down a statue is going to ameliorate any issues”, adding that he was not opposed to adding plaques to monuments since “perspectives change as time goes on”.

On the presence of extremists in SCV, Probst said he had never encountered any, but that “it doesn’t surprise me. There are militant members of every organization.”



A heart shaped group of flowers placed at the corner of Fourth Street and Water Street, where Heather Heyer was murdered by white supremacist

James Fields at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, on 12 August 2017. Photograph: Tasos Katopodis/EPA

Probst, who ran for coroner as a Republican, added that: “I am a member of a political faction in this country. There are members of that faction who are loony in my opinion. That doesn’t mean I have to walk away from the organization. Instead I fight for the values I think it represents.”

Another member of the group who is listed as active, Dr Danny W Davis, is both a professor and program director at Texas A&M University and a training consultant to the US army reserve. His membership data includes a US army contact email address.

Davis states on his publicly available CV that he has “Department of Defense Secret Security Clearance”, that he is a “Training Consultant to US Army Reserve, San Antonio, Texas”, and the “Director, Certificate in Homeland Security Program”.

Davis’s CV includes details of courses Davis has taught and developed, including “Domestic Terrorism: The Internal Threat to America”, which is described as “a comprehensive survey of domestic terrorism”. The CV also points to Davis’s 20-year military career, which ended in 1997 with Davis a lieutenant colonel.

In a telephone conversation, Davis confirmed his active membership in the group, saying that he had joined because he had “three great grandfathers” who had fought for the Confederate army.

On the question of statues he said that “when we start taking down monuments, I think that’s wrong”, and that to him they “represent men who were fighting for something they believed in”.

Davis said that those beliefs “included slavery, but not only slavery”, adding: “Do I think the right outcome came out of the civil war? Yes.”

Davis said “I am not a white supremacist” and said he was surprised to hear about the overlap between the group and extremist organizations, saying that

members were mostly “re-enactors”, “people like me who are interested in history”, and “military veterans”.

He said that he includes rightwing extremists in his graduate courses on domestic terrorism, and that he is currently revising a course to include the 6 January assault on the US Capitol, as well as the activities of “Antifa and BLM in the north-west”.

A number of members listed as active members use email addresses associated with the Citadel, a public military academy located in Charleston, South Carolina.

A total of 13 members using Citadel or Citadel alumni email addresses appear in the membership database, with six listed as active members.

One of those active members is retired National Guard Brig Gen Roger Clifton Poole, who has twice served as interim president of the college, and remains a professor in The Citadel’s School of Business.

Wyatt and Poole did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Radical neo-Confederates

Alongside these SCV members, however, are others who have overlapping membership in more explicitly racist or violent groups, or who have been involved in political violence at events like Unite the Right, the event where Heather Heyer was murdered by white supremacist James Fields in 2017.

They include North Carolina lawyer, Harold Crews, who is listed as an active member of the SCV. Crews is also a member of the League of the South, and marched with the group at Unite the Right in 2017.



White supremacist groups clashed with hundreds of counter-protesters during the Unite The Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, on 12 August 2017. Photograph: DDP/Rex/Shutterstock

Crews was involved in scuffles with counter-protesters on the day. Later, backed by a disinformation campaign pushed by white nationalist blogger, Brad Griffin, who was then LoS's public relations officer, [Crews persuaded a judge to issue a warrant](#) for the arrest of DeAndre Harris, who was badly beaten in a parking garage by six Unite the Right attendees.

While the public positions of SCV emphasize the preservation of Confederate "heritage", LoS is an openly secessionist group which seeks to separate the states which joined the confederacy as a new white supremacist state. Crews served as the North Carolina chair of LoS, and hosted a podcast called Southern Nationalist Radio, where his guests included LoS founder Michael Hill.

Other active members who attended Unite the Right include Virginian, George Randall, and North Carolina based James Shillinglaw. On the day of the rally, Shillinglaw was captured on video beating a counter-protester with a flagpole.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Randall and Shillinglaw are also LoS members.

Also on the membership rolls, but listed as currently inactive, is long time Georgia-based far-right activist Chester Doles. Doles, a former Klansman and member of the neo-Nazi National Alliance who marched at Unite The Right with the Hammerskins white power gang, was pictured in 2013 wearing the insignia of the SCV Motorized Cavalry, a motorcycle club made up of members of SCV.

Doles was apparently a member of the group long after he was imprisoned first in Maryland in 1993 for beating a black man, and later for weapons charges in Georgia.

Crews, Doles, Randall, and Shillinglaw did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

This article was amended on 28 June 2021 to remove an incorrect statement that Decatur is a majority-black city; and to refer to Nathan Bedford Forrest by his full name.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/28/neo-confederate-group-members-politicians-military-officers>

[France](#)

Le Pen's far-right party suffers blow in French regional elections

Rassemblement National fails to win region in south of France stronghold after rivals form 'Republican front'



Marine Le Pen said local democracy was suffering a 'profound crisis' and criticised the alliances made to stop her party winning. Photograph: Ian Langsdon/EPA

Marine Le Pen said local democracy was suffering a 'profound crisis' and criticised the alliances made to stop her party winning. Photograph: Ian Langsdon/EPA

[*Kim Willsher*](#) in Paris

Sun 27 Jun 2021 16.26 EDT

[Marine Le Pen](#)'s far-right party has suffered a serious electoral blow when it failed to win a regional election in its stronghold in the south of France.

The Rassemblement National (National Rally) had [pinned its last chances on taking the Provence-Alpes-Côte-d’Azur region](#) (PACA) after emerging victorious from last week’s first-round vote, although by a small margin.

However, an alliance of rival parties to form a “republican front” against the RN – including the withdrawal of the Socialist party and left-wing alliance candidate – prevented the far right taking the region.

Sunday’s result was a final bitter disappointment for the RN, which had been predicted to do well in at least five regions in the first-round vote last Sunday. In the end, the RN came first only in PACA, and then only by a narrow margin.

Exit polls suggested that the Les Républicains candidate in PACA, Renaud Muselier, had polled a convincing 56.6% of votes against the RN’s Thierry Mariani’s 43.4%.

Afterwards, Le Pen said local democracy was suffering a “profound crisis” and criticised the “unnatural alliances” made between political rivals to confound a RN victory and “prevent us from showing that we can run a region”.

[Are Marine Le Pen’s chances of becoming French president being exaggerated? | Arthur Goldhammer](#)
[Read more](#)

In a brief but defiant post-election speech, Le Pen added that the abstention rate showed a “discontentment” among electors that was a “major signal for all the political class and society”.

While many saw these elections as a warm-up for next year’s presidential election, neither the supposed 2022 leadership frontrunners – [Emmanuel Macron](#) or Le Pen – have been left with much to celebrate.

Abstention was again a major factor in the election. Despite appeals by politicians and the prime minister Jean Castex for voters to turn out, almost

two-thirds of French electors shunned the polling stations in regional elections on Sunday.

For the first round last Sunday, there was a record 66.74% abstention. This time just under 66% of voters failed to turn out.

Political analysts said the lack of interest in the regional elections is because [France](#) had become focused on the presidential election next year and the legislative elections that follow shortly afterwards.

Philippe Ballard, who stood for the RN in the Île-de-France region, insisted the far-right party was increasing its popularity in the country and this would be played out in next year's leadership race.

Stanislas Guerini, MP for Macron's governing La République En Marche (LREM), admitted the results were also "a disappointment" for the governing party that failed to win a single region. "We have work to do," he said, adding that he "rejoiced" in the fact the RN had not gained any region.

Xavier Bertrand, a former minister when Nicolas Sarkozy was president, who was reelected in the Hauts-de-France with 52.8%, saw his hopes of representing the mainstream right in next year's presidential boosted.

This is the second election since the redrawing of France's electoral map, which saw the country's 22 regions reduced to 13. (The first was held in December 2015, when people voted on the basis of the new regional order, which then formally took effect in January 2016.)

The main winners appeared to be the mainstream left Parti Socialiste and left-wing allies, and the centre-right Les Républicains. Both parties have been absent from the French political landscape since Macron's centrist LREM party's election success in 2017.

This article was amended on 29 June 2021 to make clear that there have been two elections based on France's revamped electoral map, rather than one.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/27/le-pens-far-right-party-suffers-blow-in-french-regional-elections>

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- [Live UK Covid: government help for pupils at risk of ‘lifelong’ loss of earnings from Covid ‘feeble’, MPs told](#)
- [England Ministers set to end automatic isolation for pupils](#)
- [Masks Cambridge hospital’s mask upgrade appears to eliminate Covid risk to staff](#)

[Chris Whitty](#)

Chris Whitty may get police protection as PM condemns ‘despicable harassment’

Ministers speak out after video emerges of chief medical officer apparently being manhandled

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00:26

Social media video appears to show Prof Chris Whitty being accosted in public – video

[Aubrey Allegretti](#) and [Nicola Slawson](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 04.57 EDT

Chris Whitty may be given police protection after another video surfaced of England’s chief medical officer being subjected to “appalling abuse”.

Senior politicians have condemned the latest incident, with Boris Johnson saying he was “shocked at seeing the despicable harassment” and Priti Patel, the home secretary, saying she was horrified by the “terrible” behaviour towards a “remarkable public servant” who is one of the [most senior government officials](#) tackling the Covid crisis.

The health secretary, Sajid Javid, said such behaviour would not be tolerated and that those responsible “should be ashamed”. The vaccines minister, [Nadhim Zahawi](#), said they were “thugs” and should face charges.

Video emerged on social media on Monday of people filming in selfie mode appearing to manhandle Whitty, while he struggles to get away.

The Metropolitan police [confirmed](#) they were investigating, saying in a statement: “We are aware of a video being shared online showing an incident in St James’s Park [in Westminster]. Officers spoke to all those involved at the time and their details were taken. We are in contact with the victim and the circumstances continue to be investigated.”



Chris Whitty apparently being accosted by one of the men. Photograph: Instagram

In the video, Whitty manages to duck his head under an arm of one of the men holding on to him. As he tries to walk away a man can be heard saying: “Just one photo, please,” while another says: “One photo mate.”

They then pull him back towards them putting their arms around him as he again attempts to get away.

Patel said Whitty was a “an incredibly respected figure” and told Times Radio: “I am horrified by what has happened to Chris. The police are involved as well and we’re speaking to Chris to look at what we can do to support him.”

She suggested he could be offered police protection. When asked if he needed it, Patel said: “It’s important we make sure that Chris is given the right kind of support. It is terrible to see such an important public figure –

someone that day in, day out has been serving our country in the way in which he has to keep us safe – being subject to such appalling abuse.”

Earlier this month Whitty was followed down a street by a prominent anti-vaccine activist who yelled at him for being a “liar”.

In February he was also called a “liar” multiple times while waiting for a takeaway lunch at a street food stall, [prompting condemnation](#) when the footage emerged.

Last week Whitty’s deputy, Jonathan Van-Tam, was confronted in the street outside the Ministry of Defence building by an anti-vaccine activist who accused him of poisoning Matt Hancock.

Footage of the incident, which was shared on Facebook, shows the activist following him and yelling at him. Downing Street condemned the abuse, calling it “appalling behaviour”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/29/vaccines-minister-condemns-video-of-chris-whitty-being-harassed-by-thugs>

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UK Covid: Sturgeon admits probable link between Scotland football fans' behaviour and rise in cases – as it happened

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Schools

Ministers set to end automatic isolation for pupils in England

Move means hundreds of thousands of children will no longer have to stay at home after contact with Covid case

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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A quarter of a million children missed school in England in a single week this month, the most disrupted week since schools fully reopened. Photograph: Jason Cairnduff/Reuters

A quarter of a million children missed school in England in a single week this month, the most disrupted week since schools fully reopened. Photograph: Jason Cairnduff/Reuters

[Aubrey Allegretti](#), [Jessica Elgot](#) and [Natalie Grover](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 04.14 EDT

Hundreds of thousands of pupils will no longer have to automatically isolate after contact with a positive Covid case when schools return in September in [England](#), ministers are expected to announce.

A quarter of a million children [missed school in a single week](#) because of coronavirus infections, self-isolation or school closures this month – the most disrupted week since schools fully reopened across the country in March.

It came as the new health secretary, Sajid Javid, said most Covid restrictions in England [“must come to an end”](#) on 19 July.

Addressing MPs as the UK recorded 22,868 daily Covid cases – the highest since the end of January – and three deaths, Javid said 19 July would be the “end of the line” for limits on social gatherings and said his priority would be trying to “return the economic and cultural life that makes this country so great”.

But, in a move likely to anger some Conservative backbenchers, he did not rule out keeping measures such as masks and social distancing in place.

The Guardian understands that ministers plan to overhaul the system for pupils, under which they are separated into bubbles – sometimes numbering more than 200 children – and forced to quarantine at home if anyone in their group tests positive for Covid.

An announcement is expected to be made in coming days to give schools time to prepare for the return in September, likely to be replaced with a testing regime.

A senior government source said: “We will have a different system when schools return in September which combines proportionate protections when someone tests positive with trying as much as possible to keep schools open.”

The schools minister, Nick Gibb, confirmed on Tuesday morning that the government was conducting trials of daily testing in secondary schools which were due to be completed on Wednesday. This regime would enable

schoolchildren to go into school provided they receive a negative result, eliminating the need for the entire classroom to self-isolate when a single child contracts the virus.

“We’ll look at the data and see whether that is an effective alternative to self-isolation,” Gibb told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme.

While the government is still waiting for final advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on [whether to vaccinate under-18s](#), the source said there was a window during the school holidays to vaccinate over-16s before the return to school, if inoculation is recommended by the committee.

Gibb wrote to headteachers on Monday warning them to prepare for the return of on-site Covid testing in the new school year. Test kits and personal protective equipment for use at the start of the autumn term will start to be delivered from Tuesday.

Secondary schools set up testing sites in March when children returned to classrooms after England’s third lockdown but after three tests on site, pupils were tested at home.

Javid used his first appearance at the dispatch box since February 2020 to burnish his credentials as a new cabinet “hawk” and present himself as keener than his predecessor Matt Hancock to press on with the lifting of restrictions faster.

He said the “big task” he would undertake was to “restore our freedoms” that “save for the greatest of circumstances, no government should wish to curtail”. Hancock resigned as health secretary on Saturday after breaking social distancing rules and prompting conflict of interest concerns over an affair with an aide.

Protecting life and the NHS remained important, Javid told MPs, but he added coronavirus would not be eliminated and that ministers and the public must “learn to live with it”.

Tory MPs largely welcomed Hancock being replaced with an experienced secretary of state who has run five government departments, including the Treasury and Home Office. But they pressed him to offer specific guarantees.

Steve Brine, a former health minister, said he was “looking for a change in policy as much as a change of tone” and called for the rules on isolation bubbles to be overhauled. “Haven’t our young people suffered enough?” he asked. “Are we really going to continue to do this to ourselves?”

Jason McCartney, the Tory MP for Colne Valley, said children and families were being forced to isolate up to four times in a matter of months. He said it was “having a huge impact on education, mental health and wellbeing” and called for extra PCR testing and a new approach to the policy.

Areas in northern England have been particularly affected by the rise in children isolating, with [government figures](#) showing one in 30 children in state schools were out of the classroom on 17 June. That included 9,000 pupils with confirmed Covid and 16,000 with suspected coronavirus, and more than 7,000 whose schools had shut because of outbreaks.

Javid revealed he had asked for “fresh advice” on the issue, and that the current rules had been decided based on “the data that was available at the time”, adding: “Clearly data is changing all the time and we must make sure that we keep that under review.”

He signalled he was keen to implement the pilot in place in some local authorities, under which people are tested daily instead of needing to isolate. But he stopped short of promising Tory MPs that all restrictions would be removed next month.

Mark Harper, the chair of the Covid Recovery Group, said he had been told some government figures were “preparing the ground for the return of restrictions in the autumn and winter” and urged Javid to rule out further lockdowns later in the year, but the health secretary only said he intended to “remove all restrictions as quickly as possible”.

Javid also sought to defend himself against potential accusations of bullishness on the 19 July stage four of unlocking, saying: “No date we choose comes with zero risk for Covid.” Under stage four, nightclubs are due to reopen and limits on indoor mixing and large events are to be dropped.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jun/28/ministers-set-to-end-automatic-isolation-for-pupils-in-england>

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[Coronavirus](#)

Cambridge hospital's mask upgrade appears to eliminate Covid risk to staff

Hospital infection study shows use of FFP3 respirators at Addenbrooke's 'may have cut ward-based infection to zero'

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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A ward is cleaned at Addenbrooke's hospital. After the change in protective equipment, the incidence of infection on Covid and non-Covid wards was similar. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

A ward is cleaned at Addenbrooke's hospital. After the change in protective equipment, the incidence of infection on Covid and non-Covid wards was similar. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

[Nicola Davis](#) and [Denis Campbell](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 05.49 EDT

An [NHS](#) hospital that upgraded the type of face masks used by staff on Covid-19 wards recorded a dramatic fall of up to 100% in hospital-acquired coronavirus infections among those workers, research shows.

Addenbrooke's hospital in Cambridge upgraded the masks from fluid-resistant surgical masks (FRSMs) to filtering face piece 3 (FFP3) respirators, with the change made in late December in response to its own staff testing data.

Public [Health](#) England (PHE) had, until recently, recommended that healthcare workers caring for Covid-19 patients should use FRSMs as respiratory protective equipment.

PHE recommended that an FFP3 respirator should be used if an aerosol-generating procedure was being carried out, such as inserting a breathing tube into a patient's windpipe.

Guidance has been updated recently to oblige NHS organisations to assess the Covid-19 risk to staff and provide FFP3 respirators where appropriate.

Addenbrooke's has been testing staff for Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic, even when workers showed no symptoms.

Tests indicated that healthcare workers caring for Covid-19 patients were at greater risk of infection than staff on non-Covid wards, even when using the recommended respiratory protective equipment. In response, the hospital's infection control committee upgraded the type of masks used by staff on Covid-19 wards.

After the change in protective equipment, the incidence of infection on the two types of ward was similar.

The research has not yet been peer-reviewed, but is being released early because of the urgent need to share information relating to the pandemic.

Dr Chris Illingworth, from the MRC Biostatistics Unit at Cambridge University, said: "Once FFP3 respirators were introduced, the number of cases attributed to exposure on Covid-19 wards dropped dramatically – in

fact, our model suggests that FFP3 respirators may have cut ward-based infection to zero.”

[Covid coughing study suggests NHS staff at far greater risk than thought](#)
[Read more](#)

The call for better PPE comes as experts warned hospital acquired cases of Covid could continue to pose a challenge even after vaccination, after a study found outbreaks of the Delta variant among healthcare workers in three hospitals in India over a four-week period in April this year, despite many of those involved having received two Covid jabs.

The study, [which has been released as a preprint](#), shows that in one hospital, 30 staff members among an overall workforce of 3,800 developed Covid with symptoms, with most of the infections involving the Delta variant – 11 were apparently linked to one “super-spreader” event.

In a second hospital, of 4,000 healthcare workers, there were 118 symptomatic infections and in a third hospital, of 1,100 healthcare workers, there were 70 symptomatic infections. Again, the majority of those affected had the Delta variant.

The team add that clusters of more than two infected individuals were only found for the Delta variant.

“The data we present is basically consistent with people who are vaccinated then passing [the infection] on to others,” said Prof Ravi Gupta, of the University of Cambridge, a co-author of the study.

“Whilst vaccines will protect the healthy against severe disease in the community the Delta variant raises the possibility of severe illness in hospital settings where there are vulnerable patients,” he added.

The team say their findings highlight the need for infection control measures to continue in the post-vaccination era.

Dr David Strain, a senior clinical lecturer at the University of Exeter medical school, who was not involved in the research, agreed, noting that while a

growing body of data shows vaccinations protect people against Covid, including severe disease, the new work highlights that there remains a risk of carriage and spread of the Delta variant in fully vaccinated individuals.

“This would be particularly relevant for healthcare workers who have higher exposure to patients with the virus, and also have a higher potential of coming into contact with the extremely vulnerable for whom the 90% protection that vaccine offers still leaves them at risk,” he said.

“Additionally, with this evidence that fully vaccinated individuals can now catch and spread the virus, albeit without getting sick, we need to be vigilant as to whether this puts people at risk of long Covid,.”

Saffron Cordery, the deputy chief executive of NHS Providers, said the findings were a reminder there is no room for complacency.

“As we have seen, vaccines are breaking the link between infections, hospital admissions and deaths from Covid-19. That is why it’s so important that as many people as possible who are eligible take them up,” she said.

“But they are not a panacea, and trust leaders recognise the continuing importance of rigorous infection control, effective personal protective equipment, and social distancing in countering the spread of Covid-19.”

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2021.06.29 - Coronavirus

- [Live Coronavirus: Delta variant makes up 20% of cases in France; fears of fifth wave in Tokyo](#)
- [Russia Moscow's cafes 'sacrificed' as government plays Covid catch-up](#)
- [Bangladesh Troops to enforce lockdown as Covid death toll hits record high](#)
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Scottish health minister tests positive – as it happened

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[Russia](#)

Moscow's cafes 'sacrificed' as Russian government plays Covid catch-up

Capital's restaurants are latest flashpoint as ministers scramble to contain rise in coronavirus cases

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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A customer's QR code is scanned at a McDonald's fast food restaurant in central Moscow. Photograph: Sergei Bobylev/Tass

A customer's QR code is scanned at a McDonald's fast food restaurant in central Moscow. Photograph: Sergei Bobylev/Tass

[Andrew Roth](#) in Moscow

Tue 29 Jun 2021 03.38 EDT

The tables inside the Primavera Italian restaurant in Moscow's Shchukino district should have been packed on a Monday afternoon, but the only diners were sat outside braving a thunderstorm.

For Moscow's bustling restaurant business, it was the first day of a tough new QR-code regime that requires diners to provide proof they have been vaccinated or have a negative PCR test to eat indoors. And the diners did not appear to have received the memo.

"It's hell," said Oksana, the Primavera's manager, clutching a QR-code scanner after she turned away another dejected couple hoping to sit inside. "I've had two tables inside for the whole day because no one has a QR code. Thunderstorms. Stores, everywhere else is open. Why [are the restrictions] just for restaurants?"

For months, Moscow was the rare European capital where restaurants and bars remained packed through much of the pandemic, a parallel reality seemingly oblivious to the country's estimated [hundreds of thousands of Covid deaths](#) and a vaccination drive that has inoculated only 11% of the population.

Now, cafes and restaurants look likely to take a hit from the city's long-delayed response to the coronavirus epidemic. After the government's lacklustre campaign to get Russians to get jabs of Sputnik and other domestically produced vaccines, cafe owners have said they feel like they're being "sacrificed" as the government scrambles to contain [an "explosion" in new cases](#).

[Russia coronavirus cases](#)

"The state is just solving their problems sacrificing the small restaurant business," said Artem Temirov, a co-founder of the popular Chernyy Cooperative coffee shop, which served about 40% fewer customers than usual on Monday. "No support at all from them because they let you work, the coffee shops are open, it's still not a lockdown. And they don't care how you pay the bills, they need to show that they are fighting the Covid pandemic."

As a minor culture war erupts over the Russian government's decision to limit resort vacations, non-essential surgeries, and other facets of public life for the unvaccinated, restaurants and cafes look likely to be the next flashpoint. When Coffeemia, a popular upscale chain, announced it would be following the new rules, readers on Instagram criticised the restaurants for acting "like slaves" and compared the new rules to the Holocaust.

"The comments under this post are the portal to hell. Hang in there," one response read.

The growing inventory of health certificates needed for daily life has become something of a joke.

"Can I have your QR code? Your PCR test? Your antibodies test? Now what would you like?" one anecdote read over the radio went. "A Big Mac and cola," was the reply.

But for the city's restaurateurs, the new QR-code regime was no laughing matter. On a normal Monday, Tamada, a Georgian restaurant in Shchukino, would have served 160 people by midday, mostly office workers wolfing down cheesy *khachapuris*, or "business lunches", of stewed meats or shashlik. On Monday, only 40 had come in, most sitting on a summer terrace that would also require QR codes next month.

"All we can do is pray people get vaccinated and then that they come out to eat," said Zara, the lone waitress at Tamada.

On Tuesday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Peskov conceded that the government would fall short of its target of vaccinating 60% of the country by September.

"We see that the number of people willing to get vaccinated has begun growing more or less only as recently as this week. Before that, the pace of vaccination was slow, regrettably," he told journalists.

The city says 2.5 million QR codes have already been acquired and undoubtedly the system will become more orderly. But restaurant owners are worried how long they can survive under the current conditions.

If revenues fell 40-50%, Temirov said, his coffee shop would not be profitable but could survive a month or two by borrowing money to pay salaries. If revenues fell more than 50%, that would be “a catastrophe”. They would try to make up the difference by [increasing online sales of their coffee](#). But questions remained as to what help they might receive from the government.

“They failed with the campaign around vaccination because three months ago they were saying that Russia defeated Covid, everything is fine,” said Temirov. “And now they urgently try to assure people that the vaccination is the only way to survive. Where were they the whole year?”

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[Coronavirus](#)

Bangladesh troops to enforce lockdown as Covid death toll hits record high

Most people will be confined to homes and public transport closed, leaving thousands of migrant workers stranded

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Thousands were stranded in Bangladesh's capital on Monday as authorities shut public transport ahead of a sweeping Covid lockdown. Photograph: Habibur Rahman/ZUMA Press Wire Service/REX/Shutterstock

Thousands were stranded in Bangladesh's capital on Monday as authorities shut public transport ahead of a sweeping Covid lockdown. Photograph: Habibur Rahman/ZUMA Press Wire Service/REX/Shutterstock

[Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#) *South Asia correspondent*

Tue 29 Jun 2021 05.14 EDT

Bangladesh is preparing to enter its most severe lockdown yet, with people allowed to leave their homes only in an emergency and soldiers set to patrol the streets, as a deadly resurgence of Covid-19 infections sweeps the country.

As the national Covid positivity rate exceeded 20% and Sunday saw the country record its highest single-day death toll of the pandemic so far, the government announced a set of tough measures in an effort to curb the spread, including the closure of public transport networks and confining the population to their homes for a week.

Cabinet secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam said troops would be deployed from Thursday to help enforce the lockdown. “The armed forces will be on patrol. If anyone ignores their orders, legal action will be available to them,” he told reporters late on Monday.

Islam added that “if needed, it [lockdown] will be extended”.

Most of the south Asian nation’s 168 million population will be confined to their homes by Thursday as part of the restrictions. Only essential services and some larger garment factories supplying international markets will be allowed to operate.

The halting of buses and trains last week has already left tens of thousands of migrant workers living in the capital, Dhaka, stranded and unable to get home. In [scenes reminiscent of India’s lockdown last year](#), many migrant workers began walking home along the roads in the sweltering summer heat while others crammed into ferries, with no social distancing possible.

Officials have linked the surge in infections to the second Covid wave which swept neighbouring India in April, fuelled in part by the highly transmissible Delta variant. India and Bangladesh share a long and porous border and thousands of migrant workers have crossed over from India in recent weeks.

More than two-thirds of new virus cases in Bangladesh’s capital are now of the Delta variant, a recent study by the independent Dhaka-based International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research reported.

Authorities in Bangladesh fear a repeat of scenes in India, and [more recently Nepal](#), where the deadly Covid-19 wave overwhelmed hospitals, led to oxygen shortages and brought the healthcare system to its knees.

Bangladesh reported more than 8,300 new infections on Monday and 119 deaths on Sunday. The country has reported a total of nearly 900,000 infections and just over 14,000 virus deaths, but experts say the actual toll is likely to be much higher due to underreporting.

[Chart](#)

Only about 3% of the population is vaccinated, due to a shortage of supplies in Bangladesh. The country had initially relied on vaccines from India but the rollout stalled when the Indian government banned all foreign exports of vaccines in order to meet domestic demand.

The World Health Organization's Covax scheme, set up to distribute vaccines to poorer countries, is also facing supply shortages and so Bangladesh has recently turned to China and Russia for vaccines.

The implementation of the lockdown in Bangladesh has been staggered. Restrictions on activities and movement were first imposed across Bangladesh in mid-April as cases and deaths jumped to their highest levels since the start of the pandemic. Infections declined in May but started to rise again this month, sparking harsher restrictions.

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Coronavirus

Surge in Covid-19 cases in Tokyo, less than a month out from Olympics

Fears of a possible fifth wave as Tokyo reported 317 infections on Monday and the ninth week-on-week rise



Torchbearers pose for cameras during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic torch relay at Tsujido Kandai Park in Fujisawa. Photograph: Keizo Mori/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

Torchbearers pose for cameras during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic torch relay at Tsujido Kandai Park in Fujisawa. Photograph: Keizo Mori/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Tue 29 Jun 2021 00.09 EDT

A rise in daily cases of the [coronavirus](#) in Tokyo has triggered fears of a possible fifth wave of infections, less than a month before the city is due to

host the [Olympics](#).

Tokyo reported 317 infections on Monday – an increase of 81 from the same day last week and the ninth week-on-week same-day rise in a row.

The rise in cases, coupled with evidence that the more transmissible Delta variant is spreading, raises the likelihood that Tokyo will still be subject to emergency measures in some form when the Olympics open on 23 July.

[Japan's emperor voices concern about Covid spread during Olympics](#)
[Read more](#)

Yasutoshi Nishimura, the minister overseeing Japan's pandemic response, this week said the government would “not hesitate” to call a new state of emergency if necessary.

“The number of new infections in the capital and other areas in the greater Tokyo metropolitan area is clearly trending upward,” he said in an interview with the public broadcaster NHK.

The perils of holding an event on the scale of the Olympics during a pandemic were underlined this month when two members of the Ugandan team tested positive for Covid-19 – the second while staying in the town hosting their training camp. Both had the delta variant of virus, local media reported.

In response, the chief cabinet secretary, Katsunobu Kato, said Japan would tighten quarantine requirements for athletes and other participants from areas where the delta strain has been detected.

The president of the Japan Olympic Committee, Yasuhiro Yamashita, conceded that cases would emerge in connection with the Games.

“No matter what measures you take, infected people will come in ... it is unavoidable,” Yamashita said. “Strict border controls at airports are extremely important.”

Signs that the virus is rebounding emerged just days after the government [lifted a state of emergency](#) in Tokyo and nine other regions, despite evidence

that it had failed to dramatically reduce infections.

The capital is now subject to relaxed “quasi” emergency measures, with bars and restaurants asked to [stop serving alcohol](#) at 7 pm and close an hour later.

[Japan](#) has avoided a catastrophic Covid-19 outbreak, but its initially slow vaccine rollout, coupled with restrictions on the government’s ability to enforce business closures, have led to repeated rebounds after emergency measures are lifted or relaxed.

The country has reported almost 800,000 cases since the start of the pandemic and 14,700 deaths – one of the highest tolls in the region.

John Coates, a senior member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), sparked anger in Japan last month when he said the Olympics would [go ahead](#) even if Tokyo was under a state of emergency.

“All the measures we are undertaking will ensure a safe Games regardless of whether there is a state of emergency or not,” Coates, an IOC vice-president who is in charge of preparations, said after a virtual meeting with organisers.

“Provided that we can protect the Japanese public, the most important thing is giving athletes a chance to compete.”

Recent surveys indicate high levels of public opposition in the host city. In a poll of Tokyo residents by the Asahi Shimbun newspaper, 38% of respondents wanted the Games to go ahead as planned, while 27% called for a further delay and 33% said they should be cancelled.

A poll by the Mainichi Shimbun found that 58% opposed holding the event this summer, with 30% in favour.

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2021.06.29 - Spotlight

- ['I struggle every day with the loss of my former life' What it's like to live with chronic pain](#)
- [Michael Ball My breakdown made me a better performer – and a better person](#)
- [Where there's a grille The hidden portals to London's underworld](#)
- [Illusions of empire Amartya Sen on what British rule really did for India](#)

‘I struggle every day with the loss of my former life’: what it’s like to live with chronic pain

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jun/29/i-struggle-every-day-with-the-loss-of-my-former-life-what-its-like-to-live-with-chronic-pain>

Stage

Michael Ball: ‘My breakdown made me a better performer – and a better person’



Michael Ball ... ‘I’m not Mr Showbiz.’ Photograph: PR

Michael Ball ... ‘I’m not Mr Showbiz.’ Photograph: PR

As his new show, *Hairspray*, leads the return to theatres, the singer talks about his mental health struggles, going back to his mining-town roots – and how the government has let down the performing arts



[Emine Saner](#)

[@eminesaner](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

It is only an hour and a half before curtain-up, and if Michael Ball is feeling a rising panic at the idea of spending this time speaking to me through his iPad, rather than on his usual warmup, he is hiding it well. A trouper. It will be only the second performance of *Hairspray*, in which Ball plays the matriarch Edna Turnblad, and he is still on a high from opening night. “It was one of the most extraordinary nights I’ve ever had in the theatre,” he says. Despite an audience of only 1,000 – fewer than half the London Coliseum’s capacity – “they did twice the work,” Ball says. “I’ve never heard an ovation like it for the cast. They were up, and there was cheering and screaming. It’s just electric, and we needed to hear it. It’s been a long time.”

The culture secretary, Oliver Dowden, was there; [he was photographed with Ball](#) – who was, in Edna’s pearls, handbag and wig, almost Thatcherite – looking delighted. “I had a nice chat with him,” says Ball, with a theatrical grimace. Theatres, and the whole ecosystem around them, have been devastated by the pandemic. “And so we’ve got to say our piece, and the most important thing I said for us would be Covid insurance for producers,”

says Ball. “It’s all very well opening theatres, but if there’s nothing to put into them, what’s the point? Producers need to have confidence that they can put productions together knowing that, if they have to be cancelled, they’re covered. I was banging the gong, in a frock, so I don’t think he knew quite what hit him. But he listened.”



As Edna Turnblad in Hairspray. Photograph: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian

Ball is “cautiously optimistic” that the West End will bounce back, but there has been a big impact on regional theatre and on many performers. Should there have been more financial support? “Yes, but I’m sure everyone thinks there should have been for their own industry,” he says. But many in the arts are freelancers “so they’re left high and dry; they’re not furloughed”. A disregard for the cultural and financial value the arts bring to the country seemed to have been revealed – the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, [implied that people should retrain for jobs in other sectors](#), and a 2019 campaign advising, among other things, that a [professional ballet dancer could get a job in tech](#), resurfaced. “This business is hard enough ... to then be told: it’s not even viable, go and retrain in IT or whatever,” he says. “You just think: ‘How to make a bad situation worse.’”

Ball has fared well over the past year. While his arena dates with his singing partner, the tenor Alfie Boe, were cancelled, their Christmas album went to

No 1, and his solo album, released in May, got to No 2. He even got his first No 1 single, last year, when [he recorded You'll Never Walk Alone with Captain Sir Tom Moore and the NHS Voices of Care choir](#), for charity. He continued to present his Sunday morning Radio 2 show, and occasionally BBC One's The One Show.

This year, he made Wonderful Wales With Michael Ball, a four-part series for Channel 5, in which he travels through the nation – it is part travelogue, part homecoming. “Having not been out of the house much for a year, to suddenly be travelling all over the most glorious country, meeting amazing people, doing all this stuff and going on a personal journey, it was ...” He smiles. “Yeah, I have been lucky.”

Ball's mother is Welsh and his father is English. Despite growing up in Devon and Surrey, he says: “I feel Welsh,” then stops and questions himself. “Do I? Yes, I do if it comes down to the crunch. I think it's because, as a family, we moved around a lot and I didn't feel rooted properly. But the one constant in my life was Wales, and my gran and Mountain Ash [her town in the Cynon Valley], and I always felt a kinship with that.”

His grandmother, Agnes, known as Lil, was a huge influence on him as a performer. He remembers going to stay with her, and she “always encouraged us to do that old-school, ‘make your own entertainment’ kind of thing. So she and I would put on little things to entertain the family.” She had impeccable timing. “She really encouraged that creativity in all of us as kids – we had this amazing dressing-up box, so we could create costumes and plays.”

I don't know that I'm particularly easy to live with. I'm very impatient, and I like my own way

In the series, he goes back to her street, a modest terrace that, as a child, he thought of as “the longest street in the history of the world”. Lil died a long time ago, but Ball met people who remembered her. “She was that generous, outgoing, embracing, wise woman who you'd go to if you had a problem. I would say that, wouldn't I? But that's how the community felt, talking to people who were still around in the street where she lived.” Ball based his

Edna Turnblad on her. “I genuinely am playing my gran,” he says with a laugh. When he played Edna in the first run, for which he won the first of his two Olivier awards in 2008, his mother and uncle came to the show, “and when they saw me, they cried because I look like her”.

Mountain Ash was a close-knit mining community; Ball’s uncle was a miner, as was his grandfather. That also wasn’t something he had given that much thought to before. “Going back there and finding out what it was like to be a miner for my ‘grancha’ – he died because of it, he died from dust on the lungs – it was a bloody hard life.”

Ball has had huge success, and, though he is undeniably showbizzy, he has never seemed grand. Did going back to Wales and seeing the life of his grandparents put his own success in perspective? “I’m very aware of it,” he says. “My parents came from working backgrounds, and became successful and middle class, and therefore were able to give us as kids the best they thought they could.” He adds: “I never put myself into any kind of class.”



in a 2019 staging of *Les Misérables*. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Ball, 58, has defied labels, even if critics seem to have their own image of him. He is an unashamedly mainstream singer, with a legion of devoted fans,

and also the man who played a no-cheese, no-chat run at the Donmar Warehouse, with an unusual repertoire that included Radiohead, Bowie and Joni Mitchell. He can play the romantic lead, camp it up, sing at the Proms; the daytime TV host who will also take on Stephen Sondheim's less crowd-pleasing work (such as the tricky one-act musical [Passion](#)). Ball likes to say he has never been fashionable so he can never go out of fashion. "It's easy to knock something," he says of the snobbery he has come up against in his career. "I'm really proud of so much of what I've been able to do."

Ball's mother was a teacher, and his father was an apprentice at the Longbridge car plant who worked his way up and became a sales director, which meant the family moved around a lot, including three years spent in South Africa. It's quite often the way that children who are uprooted create shortcuts to friendships, and this was true for Ball. "I've always been pretty good at making friends quickly, so wherever we would go, I would find people to latch on to," he says. "I was also pretty good at being on my own and making up fantasy worlds."

Back in the UK, he was sent to boarding school, which he hated. It was a sporty school, "and I wasn't. I could be very entertaining. I could be funny." He was good at mimicking the teachers and doing impressions of things that had been on TV. He loved, he says, "making people laugh and making people happy. That was my thing." His teacher at the Surrey County Youth [Theatre](#) suggested he apply for drama school. He got a place at Guildford School of Acting, "and I found my tribe. Suddenly it was: 'This is what I'm meant to be doing.'" He loved performing, "being somebody else. I loved surprising people, making people laugh. I love moving an audience and having that connection." And, he adds with a laugh, "I quite like being the centre of attention."

He was lucky, he says, that graduating coincided with "the time of the great British musicals – the Andrew Lloyd Webber and Cameron Mackintosh extravaganzas that were happening." A huge early break was getting the role of Marius in the original London production of *Les Misérables* in 1985, co-directed by Trevor Nunn, then the artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. "I'd been going to the RSC since I was about 12, and I'd seen a number of productions that Trevor had done," says Ball. "So to then be working with him, it was the dream come true."



With Imelda Staunton (Mrs Lovett) as Sweeney Todd in 2011. Photograph: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian

It wasn't to last. Ball has long been open about the mental health crisis he experienced, even when it was still quite rare for celebrities, especially men, to talk about such things. He had been ill with glandular fever and, though he went back to work after about six weeks, he was exhausted. He had a panic attack on stage, then they started happening "on the way to work, randomly, anywhere," he says. "I just withdrew." Ball left the show, spent about nine months virtually housebound and thought he would never work again. He felt unable to seek help, muddling his own way through. When Mackintosh called, offering him a part in a recast *Phantom of the Opera*, it was a lifeline, and Ball grabbed it.

An announcement comes over the public address system, welcoming the audience to the Coliseum and inviting them to start taking their seats. Ball still doesn't look anxious about the time. The breakdown, he says, "made me a better performer, and a better person. I wish it hadn't happened, but I'm quite glad it did in a way. You get to the other side, and you learn of the vulnerability of all of us. I think that's been very useful over this last year. It's recognising that you're on a spiral down, and how to stop that."

Ball never sought professional help, but he recognises the importance of it. Although, he adds: “We have people out there saying: ‘Go and get help,’ and it’s all very well, but there has to be the help out there.” A friend, he says, has been trying to get help, but is on a long waiting list.

The potential for a panic attack “is always there” for him. “If I get really tired, stressed, run down, I can feel that thing happening.” It underscored for him, too, that, despite appearances, you never know what someone is going through. He knows people might have thought about him: “‘Oh, he just breezes along, it’s all absolutely marvellous.’ No, that’s my act, that’s what I do to survive. No one wants to hear me being miserable, so that’s not what I do. We’re all, to a greater or lesser extent, plagued by the same things.”

He credits his partner, Cathy McGowan, for being a stabilising influence on him. They met when McGowan, a former TV presenter, interviewed him when he was appearing in Lloyd-Webber’s [Aspects of Love](#), and have been together for 30 years. Ball is stepfather to McGowan’s daughter, Emma, and grandfather to Emma’s children. Their relationship has lasted, he says, “because we love each other. My life is better with her in it than it would be without her in it. When you’ve been together for 30 years, you know each other really well, and you build a life and a family and a home.” If a relationship survives a pandemic, he says with a smile, “you know you’re on to a winner. We get each other.”



Michael Ball on his Wonderful Wales adventure. Photograph: Channel 5

Someone comes into the room to call him for makeup, and he waves cheerily at them. “We fight as any couple does, and we make up like any couple does, but our life is together, and I love it,” he says, turning back to the screen. “I really feel very lucky.”

What is he like at home? What would McGowan say about him? “She would say I was a simple, complicated man,” he says. It’s the title of a song on his latest album, which he wrote. “I’m certainly not Mr Showbiz. The door closes and I’m at home, and it’s very real. Like anyone, I can be up, down. I think I’m quite nice. I don’t know that I’m particularly easy to live with. I’m very impatient, and I like my own way.” A smile. “As does she.”

His public image is so positive and cheery, though [he once said in an interview](#): “I don’t think I’ve ever been truly happy.” Ball has a great line in self-deprecation – was that a joke? “I have been truly happy,” he says. “But I’m also well aware that it won’t last. We’re on a journey that does this [he makes an up and down motion with his hand] all the way through it. I never used to, but I’ve learned to smell the roses, to stop and go ‘great’. Life is so surprising. I genuinely didn’t think I’d be doing what I’m doing. I hoped that people would continue to ask me to work. As soon as I get a job, I’m thinking: ‘What the hell am I going to do after this one?’ I’ve got to learn

not to do that so much.” He really does have to go now. The audience have been taking their seats and here he is, still in specs and black T-shirt. How’s he feeling? “Normally, I’m warmed up and I’m ready,” he says with a laugh. “I’m feeling a bit panicked.” But he looks completely at home.

Wonderful Wales With Michael Ball starts on Friday 9 July at 8pm on Channel 5

This article was amended on 29 June 2021 to correct two errors introduced during the production process. Ball’s solo album went to No 2, not No 1 as we originally said, and the government’s Cyber First campaign, suggesting ballet dancers could retrain in tech, was launched in 2019, not 2020.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/jun/29/michael-ball-my-breakdown-made-me-a-better-performer-and-a-better-person>

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Architecture

Where there's a grille: the hidden portals to London's underworld



Like something left over from the cold war ... the Camberwell Submarine.
Photograph: Judy Ovens

Like something left over from the cold war ... the Camberwell Submarine.
Photograph: Judy Ovens

From flues in statues to the Camberwell Submarine, a new book celebrates the vents, shafts and funnels that help the city breathe in all manner of disguises



[Oliver Wainwright](#)

[@ollywainwright](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 05.01 EDT

A gas lamp still flickers on the corner of Carting Lane in the City of Westminster, adding a touch of Dickensian charm to this sloping alleyway around the back of the Savoy Hotel. The street used to be nicknamed Farting Lane, not in reference to flatulent diners tumbling out of the five-star establishment, but because of what was powering the streetlamp: noxious gases emanating from the sewer system down below.

The [Sewer Gas Destructor Lamp](#), to give the ingenious device its proper patented name, was invented by Birmingham engineer Joseph Webb in 1895, and it still serves the same purpose today. As a plaque explains, it burns off residual biogas from [Joseph Bazalgette's great Victorian sewer](#), which runs beneath the Victoria Embankment at the bottom of the lane. It is the last surviving sewer-powered streetlamp in London, but it is one of many such curious vents, shafts and funnels scattered across the city, servicing the capital's underground workings in all manner of unlikely disguises, now brought together in a fascinating gazetteer, titled *Inventive Vents*.

“We were led to the topic by [Eduardo Paolozzi](#),” says Judy Ovens,

cofounder of [Our Hut](#), the architectural education charity behind the project. “We had always admired his robotic metal sculpture in Pimlico, but never realised it was actually designed as a ventilation shaft for an underground car park.”



Tall order ... Eduardo Paolozzi's Pimlico ventilation shaft. Photograph: Judy Ovens

Paolozzi's [striking metallic totem pole](#) set the team, and their army of volunteers, off on a subterranean treasure hunt. Listening for unusual hums emanating from statue plinths, looking out for wisps of steam rising from kiosk rooftops, and consulting engineers' maps, they have charted a plethora of hidden portals to the secret worlds that rumble away below the streets of the capital, compiled using the [Layers of London](#) website. From sewage pipes and road tunnels to tube lines and emergency government bunkers, the bowels of underground London have to expel fumes, suck in fresh air and allow people to maintain its mechanisms, all of which require access to and from its depths. The range of novel disguises in this 100-page book is remarkable, opening our eyes to an entire genre of structures hidden in plain sight, as varied and unexpected as the functions they serve.

Some try their best to blend into the background. Look closely at the stone plinths supporting statues in the City of London and you might spot grilles

giving away their dual purpose. The bronze statue of [James Henry Greathead](#), the engineer who pioneered the method of digging deep-level tunnels for the tube, appropriately stands atop an oval Portland stone plinth which also doubles up as a ventilation shaft for Bank station. Nearby, decorative grilles beneath the Duke of Wellington and his horse serve the same function. The draughty theme follows the duke across town: the [Wellington Arch](#) at Hyde Park Corner had its south side gutted in the 1960s to make room for vents for the road underpass below, given away by a small rectangular grille on one side.



The statue of James Henry Greathead outside the Royal Exchange – complete with sneaky vents. Photograph: Jonathan Lawder

The multiple layers of mouldings and twiddly details of classical architecture have proved useful for such deception, providing handy hiding places for grilles, vents and flues. When the Victoria Line was being constructed in the 1960s, residents of Gibson Square in Islington were horrified by the prospect of a concrete ventilation shaft erupting through their neat lawn. After a vocal campaign, classical architects Raymond Erith and Quinlan Terry were hired to provide a decorous disguise for the shaft, crafting [a strange miniature temple topped with a cage-like dome](#), and a frieze appropriately derived from the Tower of the Winds in Athens.

The PoMo-classical trickery continued at Paternoster Square in the 1990s, where William Whitfield cleverly distracted people from the existence of a massive underground carpark by erecting a gigantic Corinthian column, [crowned with a flaming golden urn](#). Awestruck by the gilded beacon, and the water features trickling down the base of the column, you might not notice the grilles running beneath the steps of its octagonal stone plinth, emanating exhaust fumes from below.



Gold standard ... William Whitfield's Corinthian column in Paternoster Square. Photograph: Beatrice Cox

While the City has often opted to camouflage its flues, across the river architects have been allowed to let rip. Lambeth is particularly fertile ground for vent-spotters, with a range of bold brutalist shafts bursting from the streets. One local favourite is the [Camberwell Submarine](#), an enigmatic chimney-topped bunker that looks like something left over from the cold war. It was designed by borough architects Michael Luffingham and Bill Jacoby in the 1970s, as ventilation for an underground boiler room for the nearby housing estates; but its concrete chimneys were recently extended by a whopping four metres, making it an even more surreal sight to stumble across (if now a little less like a submarine and more like an underground crematorium).

Meanwhile the Metropolitan Police Forensic Science Laboratory, at 109 Lambeth Road, may be unsigned, but it makes its presence known with [a striking concrete vent](#) for its own emergency substation, providing “full electrical resilience” in the case of a power cut. It is of a similar style to Victoria Line shaft up the road where, amid [the car crash of ugly towers](#) currently rising around Vauxhall station, this chiselled corduroy concrete wedge holds its own, jutting from the street corner with a powerful angular presence, like a piece of the Barbican gone astray. (The Barbican itself is no stranger to inventive vents, featuring a curious concrete spiral [based on the Fibonacci sequence](#).)

There are countless other marvels dotted around town. One of Terry Farrell’s first projects in the 1960s, when he was working at the London County Council in his 20s, still brings a moment of delight to an unlovely corner of Poplar. Now wedged between a cluster of towers, [a bulging pair of concrete funnels](#) signal the presence of the Blackwall Tunnel beneath the river, channelling exotic strains of Oscar Niemeyer to the East End. Nearby, [the momentous portal to the Limehouse Link tunnel](#) makes driving under the river as exciting as descending into an Aztec temple. Back in the City, one of Thomas Heatherwick’s earliest and most successful projects brings a dose of twisting whimsy to a yard around the corner from Paternoster Square, in the form of [a pair of origami-like Angel’s Wings](#) to vent an electricity substation. Meanwhile, if you stand for long enough outside the [octagonal kiosk at Oval station](#), you’ll see its rooftop netting rise and fall with the passing trains below, like the gentle breathing of some underground beast.



Divine expiration ... Thomas Heatherwick's Paternoster Vents, also known as Angel's Wings. Photograph: Beatrice Cox

But the most secretive vents are the most humdrum of all. A pair of round, well-like stone structures outside the Queen Elizabeth II Centre in Westminster might look like something to do with the nearby public toilets, but they were in fact installed to vent an underground government “citadel”. It was built in the 1950s to house an emergency telephone exchange as part of [a secret tunnel system](#) that linked Whitehall with other strategic points around the city, allowing the state to function in the event of a nuclear attack. The details are protected in the National Archives, awaiting declassification in 2026 – a timely moment for an expanded second edition of this gazetteer to unlock further secrets of London’s mysterious underworld.

- [Inventive Vents is published on 1 July, by Our Hut](#)

Illusions of empire: Amartya Sen on what British rule really did for India

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As we lose respect for our politicians, democracy itself is taking a hit

[Polly Toynbee](#)



Matt Hancock had to go. But the vitriolic byelection in Batley and Spen shows the dangers of vilifying MPs



Former health secretary Matt Hancock leaves his house in London, 17 June.
Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

Former health secretary Matt Hancock leaves his house in London, 17 June.
Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

Tue 29 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

A senior politician plunges Icarus-like out of the sky – a reminder that few careers carry such high risk. Why would anyone do it?

On the first rung of that political ladder, Labour candidate Kim Leadbeater faces the electors of Batley and Spen on Thursday. No one knows the hazards better than she does, standing for the West Yorkshire seat where her sister Jo Cox was brutally murdered. This campaign has turned unexpectedly vicious and abusive. And on top of that we've seen the explosive entry of [George Galloway](#), now leading his renamed Workers Party of Britain, divisively targeting the "Muslim" vote.

Keir Starmer is Galloway's [only target](#) as he aims to shipwreck this byelection to recapture Labour for "the left", or whatever his bizarre conservative religio-sectarian politics could be called. "I am eating Labour alive," he boasts to RT, the Russian TV channel. Outsiders [shout at](#)

[Leadbeater](#), bellowing aggressive questions while accusing her of “LGBT indoctrination in schools”.

The West Yorkshire mayor, Tracy Brabin, who has just stood down as the constituency’s MP, reports Labour campaigners “being egged, pushed and forced to the ground and kicked in the head”. Yet I find Leadbeater no victim. Out campaigning, she tells me: “I’m very resilient, but I’m upset for the people here. What happens when this circus leaves town, these outsiders with their own agendas and egos moving on? We have to live here together afterwards.”

The bitter irony is that while culture wars rain down on her from left and right, Leadbeater has spent the past five years working with the Jo Cox Foundation for “a more civilised public discourse”. Anyone watching this who has ever considered standing for elected office might have second and third thoughts.

In these final few days of the campaign, Leadbeater is hearing plenty of disgust at former health secretary Matt Hancock’s hypocrisy, making rules for others, ignoring them himself. Of course, Hancock should have gone over his crony contracts and the care home deaths, one among a cabinet serially disgraced, led by a disgraceful prime minister. The adviser on ministerial standards resigned, not they.

But even so, beware glee. At each ratcheting down of respect for politicians, democracy itself takes a hit. It’s a dangerous state of mind to worship democracy, yet despise its practitioners, ranking them down among estate agents, debt collectors and journalists. Despite the current exceptionally inadequate and unsavoury cabinet, despite Boris Johnson’s purging of the decent Tories, I respect most of those who go into politics. In my experience most are of good intent, even those I strongly disagree with.

Most would have easier lives and earn more in other occupations. Most will stay backbenchers, the few who reach ministerial rank lasting very few years. Good backbenchers pursuing specialist issues can make worthwhile reforms, without much glory. Politics has got far tougher. Long gone are the days of occasional stately visits to their constituencies: Duncan Sandys, MP up to 1974, boasted he only appeared once a year in his Streatham patch,

where I lived. Jack Straw says even Barbara Castle of blessed memory rarely visited Blackburn.

MPs were national lawmakers back then, not local councillors. Now every week in their surgeries as they cope with constituents' problems, voters are often aggressive, demanding and unreasonable. Yet MPs also get blamed for leaving the green benches empty in debates, resulting in slapdash lawmaking such as Chris Grayling's disastrous privatisation of probation, [renationalised this week](#).

Invasive scrutiny of every aspect of their lives, families neglected, children bullied for their parent's occupation – is the initial thrill of winning office worth it? We commentators should also remember this, sitting in our comfortable crow's nests firing down criticism as ministers come and go.

And is disrespect for politicians getting worse? Prof Bobby Duffy of the Policy Institute at King's College London, and formerly of Ipsos Mori, says they have always been disrespected. Even on the eve of D-day in 1944, only a third of voters thought politicians were motivated by doing their best for the country, according to a [Gallup poll](#). That question repeated in 2014, five years after the MPs' expenses scandal, found only 10% thought them unselfishly motivated. But don't panic, Duffy says, as they were never liked. He's right: graffiti in ancient Greece and Rome rudely denounced democracy's earliest practitioners. The necessary process of soliciting for votes and appeasing electors invites contempt.

Tough, articulate, intelligent with the deepest local roots and a strong sense of what she wants for constituency and country, Leadbeater is well able to stand up to all the bullying. But where is that "civilised public discourse" she's spent the years since Cox's murder campaigning for?

Still, don't lose hope. Though Keir Starmer is under attack for a lack of ferocity in the culture wars, the public may end up preferring a measure of civility in the Commons to bullying bluster. King's College research shows that more than half the electorate are [more attuned to nuance and moderation](#). They say people get the politicians they deserve. Labour winning in Batley and Spen would be a vote for better politics.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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We bought Grimsby Town FC to help renew the place we love

[Jason Stockwood](#)

Many clubs have been unmoored from their communities. My business partner and I want to change that in our home town



Grimsby Town v Port Vale at Blundell Park, 30 Apr 2021. Photograph: Gerard Austin/ProSports/Rex

Grimsby Town v Port Vale at Blundell Park, 30 Apr 2021. Photograph: Gerard Austin/ProSports/Rex

Tue 29 Jun 2021 04.00 EDT

When the sociologist Michael Young coined the [idea of a meritocracy in 1958](#), he imagined a dystopian future where those who had succeeded on the basis of their inherited advantages would instead congratulate themselves on having done so as a result of their skills and capabilities. In Young's satirical

essay, the elite believed their success was down to individual merit, while a disenfranchised underclass were considered deserving of their social position. Young's term is now frequently used with a straight face by those who understand neither its original negative connotations, nor what a travesty it is to suggest that merit is the primary factor determining a person's life chances today.

For a long time, I told myself that my achievements were the product of the meritocracy I was born into, where hard work was both a necessity and a sufficient condition of success. I grew up in [Grimsby](#), and like many entrepreneurial origin stories, mine began at school. To supplement my nonexistent allowance, I sold Opium (knock-off perfume, before you fall off your chair). My teachers called the police, and having spent the morning in the classroom, I sat out the afternoon in a police cell. Thirty years later, I had gone from working on the docks in [Grimsby](#) to dealing with private equity investors in New York as a tech CEO; from waking up in a house with ice inside the windows to a home with neighbours from “on the telly” and in the Premier League; from being the son of a single mum who worked three jobs to keep four sons fed and clothed, to becoming a parent who can afford to provide almost anything for my own children.

Yet I now know that the “meritocracy” people talk about is a reflection of their capital, both social and financial. Data and experience tells me I am an outlier in a country where [inequality has risen](#) and life chances have got worse for children born into circumstances like mine. It might sound odd, but these realisations are part of the reason I decided to buy [my home-town football club](#), Grimsby Town FC, with my business partner Andrew Pettit. A football club that finished 92nd out of 92 teams in the English Football League in May, and was [relegated to the National League](#). A club with one of the oldest stands in the football league, in dire need of investment, historically teetering on the edge of insolvency without the aid of local benefactors.

On paper, buying the club was a terrible financial decision – and yet when you consider the chance to rebuild civic value in the town where both Andrew and I grew up, it felt like one of the most valuable opportunities of our lives.

In Grimsby, problems that were already becoming clear when I was growing up in the 1970s and 80s have crystallised in the years since: industrial decline, the slow demise of the once-dominant fishing industry and the social problems that followed from a lack of job opportunities and a general sense of abandonment. My brush with the law was tame compared to the reality some children in Grimsby face today, coerced into [county lines drug gangs](#) where they face the threat of shocking violence. In several of Grimsby's wards, close to half of all children are [living in poverty](#). The town continues to be failed by those who purport to care for it: framed by television cameras as a symbol of deprivation and decline, poked by thinktanks and prodded by journalists, caricatured as a victim of the Brexit that its people [decisively voted for](#).

[Could a fan-friendly ownership model like Germany's work in English football? | Uli Hesse](#)
[Read more](#)

Yet this is nowhere near the whole story of the town I know and love. Grimsby deserves better than becoming the goldfish bowl of post-Brexit Britain, gawped at by the prosperous and socially conscious, a tourist attraction on the map of social and economic deprivation. Instead we should be looking to the town as a place where the voices we hear are not lamenting their lost past, but shaping their future. While many civic institutions and local businesses have faded away and shuttered over the years, professional football teams are one of the few institutions that have endured. Indeed, Grimsby Town FC has a 143-year history and a committed (if somewhat diminished) following today. The Mariners can still engender a sense of collective belonging and an identity that is deeply aligned to the performance of 11 men in black and white on a Saturday afternoon.

Often the only story you hear about Grimsby is about the lack of opportunity, aspiration and education. But dig deeper and you encounter people who avoided university because of the cost and are now building stable careers; twentysomethings running their own companies and people who neither wanted to leave nor felt they had to. "I love the town and never wanted to move away," said the newest and youngest trustee of Grimsby's new [OnSide Youth Zone](#). She went on to become a partner at a local accountancy firm and told me: "It's brilliant here. I grew up thinking

everyone lived near the beach.” Young people who have pride in the town and know its problems should have a much greater role in determining the policies that will shape its future. Though we clearly need the support of central government, solutions have to be built as a partnership with the community itself.

Andrew and I became the major shareholders of the club on 4 May this year. This investment seems like the perfect counterweight to the ownership model of the [“Super League” teams](#), a paradigmatic example of distorted capitalism where profit motives and dividend payments are regarded as the only measure of success. Football teams are viewed in high definition around the world but have become untethered from the communities that made them what they are today.

Buying Grimsby Town FC is an opportunity to place a football club and its values at the centre of a renewal that is already happening in the town, and to amplify the amazing community work that is being done by the football club’s charitable arm for education, diversity and inclusivity. We want to show that “levelling up” means recognising the myth of meritocracy and levelling the playing field, rather than assuming that opportunities trickle down. This can only work if it starts from within the community, with a shared identity that a 143-year-old football club is uniquely positioned to play a huge part in shaping.

- Jason Stockwood is a technology entrepreneur, visiting fellow at the University of Oxford’s Blavatnik School of Government and chairman of Grimsby Town FC

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OpinionSchools

How should our kids end the school year? In Belgium they'd sing drinking songs

[Emma Beddington](#)



Not everyone enjoys sports days and prize-givings. But the alternatives are often much, much worse



Another year without school fetes ... oh, well. Photograph: SolStock/Getty Images

Another year without school fetes ... oh, well. Photograph: SolStock/Getty Images

Tue 29 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

A second school year is drawing to a close without sports days, prize-givings and summer fetes in their usual form, and without parents in attendance. If Covid rates in schools in my neck of the woods are any indication, half the kids will be self-isolating, anyway, but it's sad to see the year fizzle out without a proper acknowledgment of how stoically staff and students have faced a grim succession of challenges. The thought of all the exhausted teachers finding creative, celebratory ways to mark the end of the school year makes me wish I could give each one a present of a month wrapped in cashmere blankets in a Swiss sanatorium.

I don't feel nostalgic for these events myself. In their brief time in British education, my sons have tried their utmost to keep me away – too embarrassing – but the equivalents we experienced while living in [Belgium](#) have had a lasting psychological impact.

At the “Fancy Fair”, a themed school fete, we watched a group of tinies perform a dance routine in bikinis made of CDs, and my son’s class of eight-year-olds sing a medley of “classic” Belgian pop standards, including a drinking song called *Chef, une Petite Bière, On A Soif* (bring us a beer, chief, we’re thirsty). A “wild west” themed event featured lashings of cultural appropriation and a lifesize papier-mache saloon bar with a heaving-bosomed serving girl and real giant bottle of whisky.

Prize day meant hours in a sweltering gym as the headteacher delivered long diatribes about the lack of rigour in education as infants whimpered and grandparents boiled, followed by a ceremony in which he read out children’s names in the order of their marks as they trooped across the stage, already ranked as winners and losers.

Even without this surreal and unforgiving Belgian gloss, if you or your offspring don’t excel at or enjoy running, jumping or exams, some of these events can feel uncomfortable. Maybe Covid has given us an opportunity to create some more inclusive traditions. I think roasting marshmallows on a giant bonfire of Department for Education guidance may prove popular.

- Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/29/how-should-our-kids-end-the-school-year-in-belgium-theyd-sing-drinking-songs>

The politics sketchPolitics

Sajid Javid, the TSB of health secretaries, arrives and says ‘yes’ to everything

Zoe Williams



MPs pile in to celebrate his appointment, and you can see their point, he's definitely preferable to Hancock



Sajid Javid in the House of Commons on his first day as health secretary.
Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

Sajid Javid in the House of Commons on his first day as health secretary.
Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

Mon 28 Jun 2021 17.35 EDT

The rumour was that [Matt Hancock's departure](#) became inevitable when the rest of the frontbench refused to go out and support him. Even so, it felt a bit iffy that, of a few words mangled by Sajid Javid, in his first performance as [the new health secretary](#), the first was the prefix “honourable” to the MP for West Suffolk. Dude, nobody’s asking you to go out and bat for the man. You just have to get the letters in the right order.

It was a performance with a difference from Javid, the difference being that he basically said “yes” to everything. Where it wasn’t a yes, it was a hard confirm. He was the TSB of health secretaries, the man who says yes not because you’re his brother-in-law but because he likes to. It will unfold over time what this pile-up of yessing actually means – will he give NHS staff a pay rise? Yes, it will certainly be a “fair” settlement – but before he greeted thirty brisk questions in the affirmative (a pass for Richard Burgon’s, but we’ll come to that), there was the business of his speech.

Nothing at all that we didn't already know, nothing even that we didn't know back on 14 June, [when we first learned that stage four of the road map would be delayed](#). It is still slated for three weeks hence, and if that comes as a surprise to anybody, it'll be those who now routinely disbelieve everything the prime minister says, and are looking for the angle. In other words, all of us. There is no angle. 19 July remains Freedom Day. Is Sajid looking forward to it? Yes!

Otherwise, vaccines are a huge success and the best way to avoid a disease remains being vaccinated against it. Javid knows this because he's been to St Thomas' hospital, once to see the spirit of public service embodied in its staff, once to see the vaccination centre, once to hear directly the challenges it has faced and continues to face. It is unclear whether these were three visits or one, and unclear too whether he knows that we know how close the hospital is to his workplace. He was probably saluting the vaccination clinic from committee room 10.

Javid nodded towards his very well-documented Ayn Rand fetish – famously, he reads the courtroom scene in the Fountainhead aloud at least twice a year – when he talked of the restoration of freedoms, “freedoms that save for the gravest of circumstances, no government should curtail.” In other words, we'll definitely all be free, soon and forever, so long as nothing bad happens. Would he prefer nothing bad to happen? Yes!

MP after MP piled in to celebrate his appointment, and you could see their point, it was definitely preferable to the other option, Hancock remaining in post. But it was all a bit breathy and King Lear, which of them doth say they love him most? For the record, it's Theresa Villiers. Richard Drax, conservative MP for West Dorset, was the more sonorous (welcoming him to his “rightful place”, like an exiled hero), but Villiers really gave it some welly.

The one Cordelia was Richard Burgon, who pointed out that Javid had done very well from the pandemic, earning a high hourly rate for consultancy, and wouldn't it be hypocritical if he didn't award NHS staff a pay rise, in light of his own accumulating riches? It didn't quite land: not because medics don't deserve a raise, but because it was one of eight questions asking the same thing. Sure, it's Westminster and they do things differently there. But haven't

any of these people ever been to a pub? Is there not an argument that, however good your point is, if someone's already made it, it's no longer good?

Social care, schoolchildren self-isolating, NHS pay, backlogs in cancer and other care. The same questions came up again and again, and it may only have been noticeable because the health secretary was so fervently in agreement with all of them, but it ultimately reinforced the ritualistic pointlessness of the discourse. Not so much Socratic questioning as the call-and-response you'd get in a panto. Catherine West, Labour's quiet radical MP for Hornsey and Wood Green, did ask a decent question about outsourcing GP surgeries to American health behemoths. Would Javid reassure her that he intends to keep the NHS public? Be assured, ladies and gentlemen. "It's something I cherish and will continue to support." The substance of his very fulsome yesses is a bit more ambiguous than the yes itself.

John Redwood, posing a boring question remotely on air extraction ("Would he encourage work on it to stop disease transmission?" "Why, yes!"), had taken a Zoom tutorial from Dracula, with the camera pointing up into his dark satanic chin, so that cheered things up a bit. An early pioneer of the power pose, he always seemed to embody the worst of modern conservatism, the preening Americanisms, the insultingly basic manipulations. Unfortunately, what came after him, post-Cummings and his hit job, was so very much worse that now Javid looks like an absolute prince. Give it a couple of weeks and this will pass. Which is more or less what he said about the rates of coronavirus.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/commentisfree/2021/jun/28/sajid-javid-the-tsb-of-health-secretaries-arrives-and-says-yes-to-everything>

Opinion**Matt Hancock**

Hancock has left the NHS in crisis. Don't assume Javid will save it

Andy Cowper

We've had the PPE and care home scandals, and a waiting list of 5 million. But the new health secretary backed the cuts that crippled the NHS



Matt Hancock with Gina Coladangelo before a television interview in London, 16 May 2021. Photograph: Tom Nicholson/Reuters

Matt Hancock with Gina Coladangelo before a television interview in London, 16 May 2021. Photograph: Tom Nicholson/Reuters

Mon 28 Jun 2021 10.18 EDT

Credit to Matt Hancock where it's due. Overtaking [Andrew Lansley](#) to become the 21st century's worst UK health secretary was no mean feat, but he managed it. Hancock's record and ignominious exit from an ignominious tenure put him in pole position in the Academy of Useless Ministers.

Everyone has private lives, but Hancock's affair with Gina Coladangelo became a public interest issue because he appointed her to the health department's board, on a reported [£15,000 salary for a few days' work](#) a year. This breaches pretty much all of the [Nolan standards](#) of public life, and drives a horse and cart through the [ministerial code](#).

Then, on top of the hypocrisy of breaking his own social distancing rules, is his track record as health secretary. This would have been unimpressive in normal times, but during a health crisis it was atrocious. PPE procurement shortages; the care home scandal: we now know that even the prime minister considered Hancock's performance "[totally fucking hopeless](#)".

[UK Covid live: PM implies he played role in Hancock's decision to quit – contradicting what No 10 said on Friday.](#)

[Read more](#)

It was Hancock's decision to set up the test-and-trace programme last year on a centralised and outsourced basis, with no penalty clauses for poor performance.

Much blame for the programme's failure was dumped on Dido Harding, who took over running it in May 2020 (and who now aspires to be the chief executive of [NHS](#) England). But test and trace was a Hancock creation.

The government's one big success has been the vaccination programme: for this, credit is due mainly to Kate Bingham's leadership of the vaccines taskforce, for the procurement; and to NHS England's Emily Lawson for the NHS-run planning and rollout (she's now joining the No 10 delivery unit).

NHS staff had been working in appalling conditions in vastly overcrowded Covid units with a lack of PPE, during which time hundreds of health workers died, but Hancock insisted that the government's offer of a meagre 1% salary increase was a "pay rise", despite inflation running at 1.5%.

And then there's Hancock's imprint on the forthcoming health bill. The government, traumatised by the political fallout from the Lansley reforms that created the 2012 Health And Social Care Act (whose story is [brilliantly](#)

[told here](#)), has for almost a decade [outsourced health policymaking wholesale](#) to the head of NHS England, Simon Stevens, who leaves at the end of July. These NHS-requested reforms largely euthanised the least effective aspects of the Lansley reforms.

However, when I obtained and published the [bill white paper](#) back in February, the first thing I noticed was that Matt Hancock had looked at the [NHS reform proposals](#), and decided that they needed more Matt Hancock.

He has made dramatic additions that greatly increase what would have been his power. Specifically, [the health secretary gets new powers](#) to intervene at any point of an NHS reconfiguration process; to transfer functions to and from specified arm's-length bodies, and the power to abolish those bodies. He also gets the ability to mandate NHS England to take on public health functions (which had been transferred to local government in the 2012 Act).

And Hancock leaves NHS England with an [underlying deficit](#); a [£9bn](#) capital and maintenance backlog; a high and longstanding level of [staff vacancies](#); and a backlog of more than [5 million people](#) waiting for treatment for the first time in the NHS's history.

What does all this mean for the NHS more broadly? The service went through major upheaval during the pandemic, keeping open as many services as it could, as well as scaling up critical care for those hospitalised with Covid-19. But those who were dissuaded or fearful of accessing healthcare during the peaks of the pandemic are now starting to come back. Rough estimates indicate that demand is increasing by about one-third over the usual level.

That demand is coming back into a system in which many staff are exhausted, stressed and in some cases traumatised by what they saw during the pandemic: patients dying alone; the deaths of colleagues. This comes on top of NHS staff's longstanding experience of having to manage gaps in the workforce, which is clearly draining.

[What's in Sajid Javid's in-tray at the department of health?](#)
[Read more](#)

The NHS backlog was already bad before Covid: independent analysis from 2020 shows that, even pre-pandemic, the NHS would have needed to treat an [extra 500,000 patients a year for four years](#) to get back to its standard of 18-week maximum waits for hospital care.

Covid has made this much worse. As the [Health](#) Foundation states: “Without a radical intervention to increase capacity, it is unrealistic to expect the 18-week standard can be achieved by 2024 with current infrastructure and staffing levels.”

The broader context is that the NHS has gone through a period of the lowest sustained funding growth in its history. Further analysis by the Health Foundation shows that from 2015 to 2019, NHS funding grew by 1.6% a year: well under half the historical average.

There is also the massive unresolved issue of social care. Our current system simply means that, without proper community support with living, dressing, washing and eating, vulnerable people’s health deteriorates so much that they need hospitalisation. And because they need this support, they are often stuck in hospital until it is available or until arguments over its funding are resolved.

The incoming health secretary, [Sajid Javid](#), will now be confronted by the real consequences of the austerity policies that he consistently supported. Increasing NHS funding may not instinctively appeal to him. Equally, going into the next general election with long NHS waiting times is unlikely to be a good move. Fixing the problems facing the NHS is not only about the money, but a great deal of it is about just that.

- Andy Cowper is editor of Health Policy Insight and a columnist for the British Medical Journal

2021.06.29 - Around the world

- [US Miami condo collapse prompts questions over role of climate change](#)
- [US Trump contempt for White House Covid taskforce revealed in new book](#)
- [Wildebeest, bustards and bongos Kenya begins first national census of wildlife](#)
- [Portland 'Heat dome' in Pacific north-west breaks records as city braces for 46C](#)

[Miami condo collapse](#)

Miami condo collapse prompts questions over role of climate change

Experts suggest vulnerability of south Florida to rising seas could lead to destabilization of further buildings



The disaster has highlighted the precarious situation of building and maintaining high-rise apartments in an area under increasing pressure from sea level rise. Photograph: Larry Marano/Rex/Shutterstock

The disaster has highlighted the precarious situation of building and maintaining high-rise apartments in an area under increasing pressure from sea level rise. Photograph: Larry Marano/Rex/Shutterstock

[Oliver Milman](#)
[@olliemilman](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 04.30 EDT

The shocking collapse of a 12-storey building in the Miami area last week has raised questions as to the role played by the climate crisis, and whether the severe vulnerability of south [Florida](#) to the rising seas may lead to the destabilization of further buildings in the future.

[Miami condo collapse: death toll rises to 10 as search enters fifth day](#)
[Read more](#)

The exact cause of the disaster that befell the Champlain Towers South building in Surfside on Thursday has yet to be fully determined, although [a 2018 engineering report on the structure](#) warned of “significant cracks and breaks in the concrete” and that design flaws and deteriorating waterproofing could cause “exponential damage” via the expansion of these cracks.

At the time of the building’s sudden collapse, repairs on its roof were taking place but the restoration of concrete had not started on the 40-year-old condo. A total of 10 people are confirmed dead due to the crumpled building, with 151 people unaccounted for.

The disaster has highlighted the precarious situation of building and maintaining high-rise apartments in an area under increasing pressure from sea-level rise. Experts say that while the role of the rising seas in this collapse is still unclear, the integrity of buildings will be threatened by the advance of salty water that pushes up from below to weaken foundations.

“When this building was designed 40 years ago the materials used would not have been as strong against salt water intrusion, which has the potential to corrode the concrete and steel of the foundations,” said Zhong-Ren Peng, professor and director of the University of Florida’s International Center for Adaptation Planning and Design. “Cracks in the concrete allows more sea water to get in, which causes further reactions and the spreading of cracks. If you don’t take care of it, that can cause a structure failure.”

The geography of the area can also prove challenging for construction.

Champlain Towers South was built near the coast of what is a narrow barrier island flanked by the Atlantic Ocean on one side and Biscayne Bay on the

other. Such barrier islands naturally shift position over time due to the pounding ocean, requiring a certain amount of engineering to keep them fixed in place.

01:24

Hopes of finding survivors in Miami building collapse flagging – video

Most of south Florida is just a few feet above sea level at a time when the region is experiencing a rapid increase in sea level, due to the human-caused climate crisis. Compounding this problem, the region sits upon limestone, a porous rock that allows rising seawater to bubble up from below.

This scenario means that [Miami](#) residents have become used to flooded car garages and water seeping up from drains on to roads, even on sunny days. The city is planning to build a major new sea wall to keep the ocean at bay but there is no simple defense against water rising from underfoot, placing the foundations of buildings at risk of being gnawed away by seawater.

The land beneath Champlain Towers South is also, unusually for eastern Florida, subsiding, according to a study released last year that found the condo was subsiding into the ground at a rate of around 2mm a year throughout the 1990s. Shimon Wdowinski, a professor with Florida International University's Institute of Environment who conducted the research, said he was "shocked" to see the building collapse and didn't immediately connect it to his study.

"It's common that we see buildings with minor damage from subsidence, but not really this," he said. "Things can go from stable and move slowly for a long period of time before suddenly accelerating to the point of collapse. It's not a linear process."

Peng said that building code upgrades in the wake of Hurricane Andrew, a category 5 hurricane that crunched into Miami-Dade county in 1992, have made new structures more resilient against major storms.

"But older buildings are still at risk and in any case the new building codes may need to be re-examined because they don't address the issue of sea-level rise," he said. "I think, at the very least, all new development should be

required to come up with a study on the sea-level rise impact before building is done.”

The challenge for Miami, however, will continue to escalate.

The region abuts seas that are [about](#) 8in higher than they were a century ago and this pace will quicken – [with another 17in of sea level expected by 2040](#). Depending on the melting of the vast ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica, south Florida could be assailed by a foot of extra sea level a decade in the second half of this century, according to Harold Wanless, a geographer at the University of Miami.

“It’s going to be an enormous to impossible job everywhere to deal with that,” Wanless said. “The sea level rise is accelerating and will do so more dramatically than most people anticipate.

“Every sandy barrier island, every low-lying coast, from Miami to Mumbai, will become inundated and difficult to maintain functional infrastructure. You can put valves in sewers and put in sea walls but the problem is the water will keep coming up through the limestone. You’re not going to stop this.”

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Books

Trump contempt for White House Covid taskforce revealed in new book

- Nightmare Scenario reports dismissive attitude to key body
- [US politics – live coverage](#)



Mike Pence listens as Donald Trump speaks during a coronavirus task force briefing at the White House. Photograph: Patrick Semansky/AP

Mike Pence listens as Donald Trump speaks during a coronavirus task force briefing at the White House. Photograph: Patrick Semansky/AP

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York

[@MartinPengelly](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 05.30 EDT

Amid chaos at the White House as the coronavirus pandemic worsened, [Donald Trump](#) took to referring derisively to the Covid taskforce chaired by

his vice-president as “that fucking council that Mike has”.

[New Michael Wolff book reports Trump’s confusion during Capitol attack](#)
[Read more](#)

The revelation about the president’s contempt for his key advisory body is [one among many](#) in a new book, Nightmare Scenario: Inside the Trump Administration’s Response to the Pandemic That Changed History, which is published in the US on Tuesday. The Guardian obtained a copy.

Previous revelations from the book have included that Trump wanted to send infected Americans [to Guantánamo Bay](#) and that he mused about John Bolton, his national security adviser, [being “taken out” by Covid](#).

Authors Yasmeen Abutaleb and Damian Paletta, both Washington Post reporters, also report in depth on how the extraordinary influence of “outside consultants” to Trump, including the controversial Stephen Moore, relentlessly undermined the work of the president’s scientific advisers.

The book is a deeply reported account of the beginning of a pandemic that has killed more than 600,000 in the US and a federal response hamstrung by incompetence and infighting.

Trump’s derisive term for his taskforce, the authors write, was “a signal that he wished it would go away” and “didn’t want anyone to exert leadership”.

“Many on the taskforce didn’t want the responsibility either, fearful of the consequences.”

Under the chairmanship of Vice-President Mike Pence – who is shown resisting [his own appointment](#) to replace the outmatched health secretary, Alex Azar – the taskforce was led by Dr Deborah Birx, a US army physician widely praised for [her role in the fight against Aids](#) but whose star waned under Trump.

Abutaleb and Paletta portray Birx as a confident leader unafraid to challenge powerful men, but also someone who “overplayed her hand” when she decided to praise and flatter Trump as a way to manage him.

Of an interview Birx gave to the rightwing Christian Broadcasting Network, in which she [praised](#) Trump's "ability to analyse and integrate data", the authors write: "It was the kind of sycophancy one expected from Pence or [treasury secretary] Steve Mnuchin, not a government scientist."

The authors also say Birx worked well with Pence and was admired by fellow workers, though by April 2020, the chief of staff, Mark Meadows, was deriding the taskforce as "useless and broken".

Birx served until the end of the Trump administration in January this year. Unlike her fellow taskforce member Dr Anthony Fauci, now chief medical adviser to Joe Biden, she [did not remain in public service](#).

Abutaleb and Paletta also report that in March, as cases spiraled and the US death toll passed 1,000, unofficial adviser Stephen Moore, Trump's "emissary [from] the conservative establishment ... strode into the Oval Office to convince the president" to end shutdowns and get the economy moving.

Moore is an economist who in 2019 was nominated by Trump to the board of the Federal Reserve, only to [withdraw](#) after outlets [led by the Guardian](#) reported controversies in his past.

[Top US general got into shouting match with Trump over race protests – report](#)
[Read more](#)

He told Abutaleb and Paletta Trump's controversial and soon dropped promise to reopen the US economy by Easter was "the smart thing to do", because "the economic costs of this are mounting and there's not a lot of evidence that lockdowns are working to stop the spread".

Lockdowns to stop the spread of Covid-19 remain in use around the world.

Moore is also quoted attacking Fauci, a common target for conservative ire over subjects including mask-wearing and the origins of Covid in China.

“Fauci is the villain here,” Moore says. “He has the Napoleon complex, and he thinks he is the dictator who could decide how to run the country.”

Moore also says conservative activists he advised as they staged protests against lockdowns and masks – and who he famously [claimed](#) were successors of the great civil rights protester Rosa Parks – asked: “What’s wrong with this fucking Fauci? Sometimes they’d call him Fucky, not Fauci.”

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The age of extinctionKenya

Wildebeest, bustards and bongos: Kenya begins first national census of wildlife

Count aims to provide crucial conservation data on animals including pangolins, turtles and antelope



A herd of wildebeest on annual migration is joined by a few zebra on the Masai Mara reserve, Kenya. Photograph: AfriPics.com/Alamy

A herd of wildebeest on annual migration is joined by a few zebra on the Masai Mara reserve, Kenya. Photograph: AfriPics.com/Alamy

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[Peter Muiruri](#)

Tue 29 Jun 2021 03.25 EDT

Planes, helicopters, boats and 4x4s are being deployed, hundreds of camera traps and satellite collars monitored, and an array of dung studied across [Kenya](#), as the country embarks on its first national census of wildlife.

The census, covering the country's 58 national parks and reserves, private and community conservancies, is due to be completed by the end of July. It will cost 250m Kenyan shillings (£1.6m) and includes a count of terrestrial and marine mammals, key birds such as ostriches and kori bustards, and endangered primates. The results are expected in August.

The aim of the count is to establish a baseline of wildlife status and distribution to inform policy direction. The country's tourism and wildlife cabinet secretary, Najib Balala, said the census would also recommend [modern strategies](#) for effective wildlife conservation and management. while monitoring the number and distribution of rare and threatened species such as pangolins and green and hawksbill turtles, whose numbers are in decline because of intense poaching.



Hirola, a rare species of antelope which is on the IUCN's 'critically endangered' list, in Kenya's Tsavo East national park. Photograph: Andrew Woodley/Alamy

While the country has conducted targeted counts for endangered animals such as elephants and rhinos, there has been little monitoring of other rare, endangered and threatened species “whose numbers and range have significantly declined in the past three decades”, [the government says](#). These include rare antelope species, including the sable, sitatunga, hirola and mountain bongo. The [mountain bongo](#) and [hirola](#) are listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as “critically endangered”.

According to the brief, key wildlife landscapes in Kenya have experienced challenges in terms of land tenure and its use, drought and the climate crisis, factors “likely to impact negatively on the wildlife population for certain species”.

“It is therefore important to undertake this national survey to establish a baseline data on wildlife population status and distribution for future use, to understand wildlife population trends and shifts in their distribution. We also need to know if any given area has the carrying capacity for particular animals, and the effects climate change and increase in human population have on wildlife conservation,” said Balala.

Balala said the count would also help mitigate rising cases of human-wildlife conflicts and reduce a mounting compensation bill, now standing at 14bn Kenyan shillings.

Ground and aerial techniques are being used to count large mammals in the open savannah, arid and semi-arid areas, while camera traps and dung counts are being used in forested ecosystems.



An aerial count taking place in Amboseli national park in 2013. The national wildlife census will be the first time data from all of Kenya's parks is coordinated. Photograph: Tony Karumba/AFP/Getty

Dr Patrick Omondi, acting director of the newly formed [Wildlife](#) Research and Training Institute, said the government was using “internationally recognised peer-review methodologies” to arrive at accurate data.

“Deployment of personnel and equipment depends on the size of a conservation area,” he said. “For example, we deployed a team of 50 and 13 aircraft, both fixed and helicopters, in the Tsavo ecosystem, the country's largest. Other methods include using satellite collars, especially for migratory animals, to prevent double counts. Aerial voice recorders are also being used to analyse the presence of specific animals in any given area.

[‘Moving a giraffe is a delicate process’: rising waters threaten Kenya's wildlife](#)

[Read more](#)

“In forested areas, we have set up camera traps to count nocturnal animals such as pangolins. This will be the first time that an African country is counting the number of pangolins, which are currently the world’s most trafficked animals. Aerial surveys will also be used for big marine life including whales, sharks, dugongs and sea turtles.”

Dr Paula Kahumbu, head of [conservation body WildlifeDirect](#), said if the census was conducted well, it would reveal the ecological emergency facing protected areas that affects not only the animals but the lives and livelihoods of millions of Kenyans.

But, she added: “The count alone is not enough. The census should report on the status of land and habitats, which are the critical life support system for the animals. The integrity of Kenya’s protected areas is being impacted by developments like roads and railways, hotels and military camps, which affect animal movements.



Paula Kahumbu and her colleagues at WildlifeDirect, an award-winning team of conservationists in Kenya. Photograph: Johann Vorster/Whitley

Awards 2021

“In addition, habitat quality, such as frequent forest and bush fires, excessive livestock grazing in parks, forest destruction, sand harvesting and destructive fishing practices reduce biodiversity, besides creating fertile grounds for the rapid spread of invasive species.”

Kahumbu said even numbers of animals once thought of as “common”, such as wildebeest, had plummeted by up to 90% in the Nairobi, Narok and Amboseli ecosystems, mainly due to habitat loss.

The 2020-30 [management plan](#) for Nairobi national park shows the collapse of a wildebeest migration that numbered 30,000 animals in the 1960s “with a mere 200 currently using the park”. The report also details [a 70% decline](#) in warthog, waterbuck, hartebeest and gazelle populations.

According to the government report, corridors that once linked the park to the greater plains were obstructed by development, urban sprawl and subdivision, or blocked by fences.

“Our parks, reserves, forests and conservancies are Kenya’s life-support system. They provide water, generate power, clean the air and provide resilience to the climate crisis and extreme weather conditions. Since they cannot exist as islands, urgent legislation is required to secure buffer zones, wildlife corridors and dispersal areas,” Kahumbu said.

Jagi Gakunju, a conservationist and tour operator in Masai Mara, said the exercise would be more successful if the government tapped into wildlife data collected by the numerous conservation bodies operating in Kenya.



A kori bustard among zebras at Amboseli national park, Kenya. Photograph: Martin Harvey/Alamy

Most private and community-based wildlife conservancies, he said, had been conducting their own censuses over the years, making their input vital.

“Nature Kenya, for example, is the local partner of [BirdLife International](#) and has invaluable data on birdlife, and so do other conservation bodies whose statistics feed into global databases. It would be good to review such data and determine how the current way of counting wildlife differs from what has been done in the past. The current exercise ought to be a buildup of the past initiatives,” said Gakunju.

Cynthia Moss, the US-born conservationist whose organisation [Amboseli Trust for Elephants](#) has been conducting the world’s longest research on elephants, said her organisation was willing to share data collected over nearly 50 years.

“I think the initiative is good for conservation,” she told the Guardian over the phone. “We have accumulated a lot of information over the years and are willing to share, should the authorities require it. In any case, the government has more resources than private conservationists.”

Find more [age of extinction coverage here](#), and follow biodiversity reporters [Phoebe Weston](#) and [Patrick Greenfield](#) on Twitter for all the latest news and features

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/29/wildebeest-bustards-and-bongos-kenya-begins-first-national-census-of-wildlife-aos>

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[Seattle](#)

‘Heat dome’ in Pacific north-west breaks records as Portland braces for 115F

Seattle, Portland and other cities broke records over the weekend and face even higher temperatures



People use dry ice to cool water and Gatorade due to an ice shortage during an unprecedented heat wave in Portland. Photograph: Maranie Staab/Reuters

People use dry ice to cool water and Gatorade due to an ice shortage during an unprecedented heat wave in Portland. Photograph: Maranie Staab/Reuters

[Gabrielle Canon](#) in San Francisco, [Dani Anguiano](#) in Portland and agencies
Mon 28 Jun 2021 15.11 EDT

Seattle, [Portland](#) and other cities in the Pacific north-west broke all-time heat records over the weekend, with temperatures soaring well above 100F

(37.8C).

But forecasters said Monday could be even worse, with the mercury possibly hitting 110F (43C) in Seattle and 115F (46C) in Portland. The high temperatures [could continue on Tuesday in some areas.](#)

The extreme weather was caused by an extended “heat dome” parked over the Pacific north-west. The days-long heatwave was a taste of the future as climate change reshapes global weather patterns, said Kristie Ebi, a professor at the University of Washington who studies global warming and its effects on public health.



People hand out water to those who might need it and invite them to their nearby cooling center for food and beverages, in Seattle on Sunday. Photograph: Karen Ducey/Reuters

“This event will likely be one of the most extreme and prolonged heatwaves in the recorded history of the inland north-west,” the National Weather Service [said](#). “Heat will not only threaten the health of residents in the Inland Northwest, but will make our region increasingly vulnerable to wildfires and intensify the impacts to our ongoing drought.”

Officials in Portland shut down light rail and street cars due to the high temperatures, districts halted summer school bus service and people braced

for possibly the hottest day of the scorcher.

In case you're wondering why we're canceling service for the day, here's what the heat is doing to our power cables.
pic.twitter.com/EqbKUgCJ3K

— Portland Streetcar (@PDXStreetcar) [June 27, 2021](#)

The high heat was straining the city's power grid and overhead wires that propel the Max trains, so service was being suspended through Tuesday morning. "The Max system is designed to operate in conditions up to 110F. Forecasts show it will likely only get hotter," the agency said in a statement.

The streets were mostly empty in south-east Portland during the hottest part of the afternoon on Saturday and Sunday. Restaurants with outdoor tables that would normally be packed were deserted and ice cream shops and food trucks across the city closed their doors for the weekend, as some reported temperatures of 106F in their kitchens.

With outdoor pools closed due to the heat, residents sought refuge on the Willamette River, kayaking and boating on the stretch of water that divides the east and west sides of the city.

In Eugene, Oregon, the US track and field trials were halted Sunday afternoon and fans were asked to evacuate the stadium due to extreme heat. The National Weather Service said it hit 110F in Eugene, breaking the all-time record of 108F.

Portland, Oregon, reached 112F Sunday, breaking the all-time temperature record of 108F, which was set just a day earlier.

The temperature hit 104F in [Seattle](#). The weather service said that was an all-time record for the city better known for rain than heat and was the first time the area recorded two consecutive triple digit days since records began being kept in 1894.

The heat wave stretched into British Columbia, with the temperature in Lytton, a village in the Canadian province, reaching 115F Sunday afternoon,

marking a new all-time high recorded in Canada. The heat wave also moved into [Idaho](#), where temperatures above 100F are forecast in Boise for at least seven days starting Monday.



Isis Macadaeg plays at Jefferson Park in Seattle. Photograph: Karen Ducey/Reuters

In eastern Washington, the Richland and Kennewick school districts halted bus service for summer school because the vehicles aren't air-conditioned, making it unsafe for students.

Typically, temperatures for this time of year in the region average 73F. Many residents and businesses do not have cooling systems. In Seattle, less than half of households have air conditioning, according to data from the US census. People flocked to cooling centers and cities reminded residents where pools, splash pads and cooling centers were available, urging people to stay hydrated, check on their neighbors and avoid strenuous activities.

Donna Meade told the Seattle Times: "I will get air conditioning. I thought I could live through the heat, but nope. We still have July, August and the smoke to get through."

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