



# The Guardian

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## 2021.06.13 - Opinion

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## OpinionPornography.

# Harassment of girls at school just reflects back the world of adults

Barbara Ellen



Half the population watches porn so it's no surprise that it has installed itself in our children's lives too



Harassment and online sexual abuse of schoolchildren is so routine they barely bother reporting it. Photograph: Antonio Guillem Fernández/Alamy

Harassment and online sexual abuse of schoolchildren is so routine they barely bother reporting it. Photograph: Antonio Guillem Fernández/Alamy

Sat 12 Jun 2021 12.00 EDT

Does the pornification of school culture in the UK merely reflect the adult world back at us?

Ofsted reports that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are [so routine](#) for schoolchildren that they barely bother reporting it; 90% of girls and 50% of boys have been sent explicit pictures (“dick pics”). Girls, the biggest targets of harassment, report everything from unwanted touching, rape jokes and upskirting to being asked for nude images and having nudes shared on SnapChat and WhatsApp “like a collection game”.

The [report](#) was prompted by harrowing testimonies of sexual harassment in schools posted on the Everyone’s Invited website. It’s been pointed out that a similarly shocking report from the Commons women and equalities committee in 2016 did not lead to enough change. Also, last week, the OnlyFans site (which allows people to post homemade pornography) was [reprimanded](#) by the children’s commissioner for not doing enough to deter

underage contributors. (OnlyFans states that it will meet the commissioner and correct any misinformation.)

Clearly, the pornification of not just school life, but children's whole lives, is a writhing, multi-headed hydra of a problem that's not going to go away. Part of this is the curiosity, bravado and silliness of youth (boys and girls). However, for some time now, children have had unlimited access to hardcore porn, with some of us worrying about the long-term damage that highly explicit material wreaks on young minds too immature to process it.

this isn't just about porn itself, it's about generalised porn-friendly culture

Then there's the other major factor: you. Well, maybe. Because this isn't just about porn itself, it's about generalised porn-friendly culture. How, increasingly, we live in a culture that normalises pornographic imagery and behaviour. Ofcom reports that half of the UK adult population [watched porn](#) in lockdown. Pornhub alone was visited by 50% of all British men and 16% of women in September 2020. Despite the huge growth of online pornography in the UK (predating the pandemic), the sector has been poorly regulated, with Ofcom looking into, among other things, the regulation of video-sharing platforms for the first time this year.

Usually, anything to do with porn, particularly its curtailment, soon erupts into debates about individual rights and myriad definitions of morality. Whatever your personal take on porn, it belongs in the adult world alone. The significant thing here is that – yet again – there's evidence appearing to support the view that adult pornographic culture has become normalised to the point of leaking disastrously into children's lives.

We could argue forever about whether pornography belongs in a civilised adult society. Now it's time to acknowledge how strongly pornified culture has installed itself in our children's lives. With 90% of girls and 50% of boys already receiving dick pics, what will it take?



## Harry Dunn's extraordinary parents would not be silenced



A memorial area for Harry Dunn. Photograph: Andrew Boyers/Reuters

Is Harry Dunn finally going to receive some kind of justice?

Dominic Raab says that the path has become clear for a virtual trial of Anne Sacoolas whose [car hit the 19-year-old's motorbike](#), killing him, while she was driving on the wrong side of the road outside an RAF base in Northamptonshire in 2019. After the accident, Sacoolas returned to America, claiming diplomatic immunity as the wife of a US government intelligence officer. Now President Biden is said to be taking a personal [interest in the case](#). (His first wife and child were killed in a car crash.) Time will tell if it comes to anything. If it does, it will chiefly be down to the superhuman efforts of Dunn's family.

Since Charlotte Charles and Tim Dunn's son was killed, they've been put through unimaginable distress, not least, it appears, at the hands of Raab, who, they claim, dealt with them from the start in a cold, dismissive way. Along the way, they've felt patronised, fobbed off, blocked, even intimidated. Their meeting with then-President Trump at the White House to try to discuss the issue turned farcical, when Trump suddenly announced

that Sacoolas was in the next room, with the implication that they should meet her and everything would be magically sorted out. Because that's what grieving parents want – to star in an impromptu edition of *Surprise, Surprise*. They refused.

Despite all the opposition, and the relentless stress, Harry's parents doggedly fought on, which was probably not in the script. They were supposed to put up with it, drop the matter, understand that greater international forces were at play, quietly mourn Harry and just as quietly move on. In short, behave like little people who didn't matter. That they refused to do so says everything you need to know about their characters. What great and loving parents to Harry Dunn they still are.

## **Only a heel would try to improve my perfect Crocs**



Cobblers: a Croc shoe with heel. Photograph: Courtesy of Balenciaga

Is the fashion house [Balenciaga](#) trolling our toes with high-heeled Crocs? Balenciaga has produced a stilettoed Croc. I will pause for a moment for you to savour the elegance of the concept. (It resembles a milk crate propped up on a car jack.) However, the “sexy” heel defeats the point of Crocs. Crocs are supposed to be ugly, sexless and extremely comfortable. Therefore, it



makes no sense to put a heel on them and make them uncomfortable and still sexless.

Crocs occasionally enjoy a style-renaissance; recently, it was reported that second-hand Crocs were being pursued in the same way that people hunt down rare trainers. Still, the core Croc market remains the same: all types and ages, including women like me, who've clearly given up on ourselves. The seasoned Croc wearer has strict personal rules: for me, "classic" black or white (no funky colours), to be worn only during summer, no fleece lining and absolutely no socks.

Few among us would have the audacity to try to change the comfy, gender-free flatness of the Croc. The fashion crowd may be trying to spin this stiletto-thing as a big Croc moment, but one presumes they'll be wearing them [ironically](#). While the Croc community welcomes all newcomers, they will never be recognised as true members of our moulded, foam-footed tribe.

Barbara Ellen is an Observer columnist

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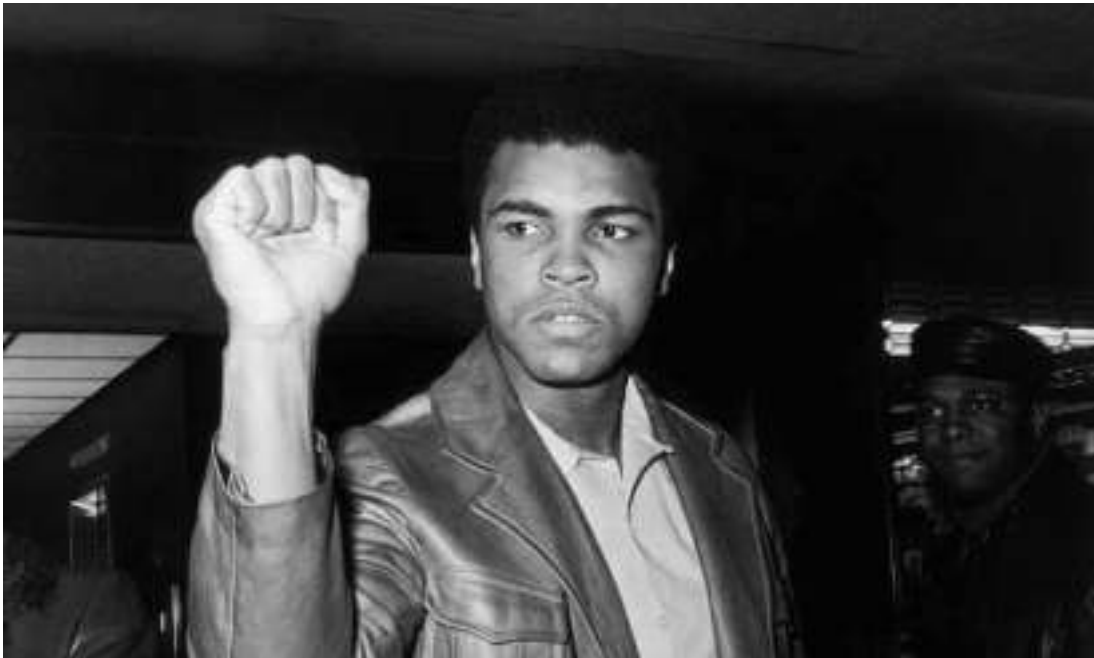
[OpinionSociety.](#)

**It's impossible to keep politics out of sport. And that's just as it should be**

[Kenan Malik](#)



From Muhammad Ali's defiance to England players 'taking a knee', all athletic endeavour is grounded in social context



Muhammad Ali, not just a boxer for those growing up amid the racism of the 70s, but a symbol of pride. Photograph: Santi Visalli Inc./Getty Images

Muhammad Ali, not just a boxer for those growing up amid the racism of the 70s, but a symbol of pride. Photograph: Santi Visalli Inc./Getty Images

Sun 13 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

‘Fans don’t want politics brought into football.’ Many would agree with Tory MP [Lee Anderson’s sentiment](#). And so, he carried on, in response to England footballers “taking the knee” before a match: “For the first time in my life I will not be watching my beloved England team while they are supporting a political movement whose core principles’ aim is to undermine our way of life.”

But, wait, who is it now introducing politics into football? Those taking the knee or those who insist that to do so is helping to “undermine our way of life”? Or both? And why is it that those obsessed with flying the flag suddenly find their patriotism so thin they cannot support the national team if players do a bit of kneeling? Or even cheer on [opposing teams](#)? It seems there’s greater loyalty to the culture wars than to the nation.

As it happens, if, in some other universe, I somehow found myself in the England team, I would not take the knee. Not because I fear for our way of life, but because I agree with Crystal Palace forward [Wilfried Zaha](#), who views it as a meaningless ritual in which he refuses to partake. But if players find it meaningful and important, let them do it.

Were I among the spectators at Wembley, I certainly would not boo; it has always felt odd to me to barrack one's own team. But, again, if supporters want to boo that's their right. Some may be racist, others not. What they are definitely not, though, is representative of "[the majority of England fans](#)".

The controversy over 'taking the knee' invests a relatively vapid act with some kind of deep, existential significance

A majority of England fans actually support the gesture, though barely a third think it important in [tackling racism](#). As for it being hated because it is seen as supporting the "Marxist" Black Lives Matter movement, a YouGov poll last year showed that more people support players [wearing a BLM logo](#) on their shirt than taking the knee. Like much in the culture wars, the controversy over "taking the knee" invests a relatively vapid act with some kind of deep, existential significance. Beyond the inanities and hypocrisies of the debate are, however, more profound issues, not least the untangling of the relationship between sport and politics.

Most fans would probably agree that politics should be kept out of sport. We want sporting prowess to be "pure", expressions of sublime skill or awe-inspiring endurance that are intrinsic to the sport and capture the genius of human athleticism. When we watch Lionel Messi floating through a gaggle of defenders as if with the ball fixed to his boot, or a picture-perfect cover drive from Virat Kohli, or Simone Biles's triple-twisting double tuck in her floor routine, too fast for the eye to follow – each transfixes us by transforming our assumptions of what is humanly possible.

But sport, even in its most inspirational moments, does not exist in a vacuum. Whether football or basketball, cricket or gymnastics, social and political contexts shape both the sport and our response to it.

The relationship between sports and politics operates at many levels. Many sports were designed to enforce social needs, from Japanese martial arts, celebrated as a means of spiritual development and social ordering, to cricket, an instrument through which Victorians sought to teach the ruling class to rule and the plebs to obey.

The cleavage between rugby union and rugby league betrays the two codes' class origins. The Glasgow rivalry between Celtic and Rangers is deeply invested in religious sectarianism and the politics of Irish nationalism. The current row between Russia and Ukraine over the [latter's shirt](#) at the Euros is just the latest expression of national hostilities spilling out into the sports field. And sportsmen and women have often used their platforms to make a political point, from US sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos raising black-gloved fists on the podium at the 1968 Olympic games, to NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick who in 2016 first took the knee during the national anthem as a protest against racist violence, to Manchester United's Paul Pogba and Amad Diallo raising a [Palestinian flag](#) after a Premier League match last month.

Most of us want the humanness of sporting achievement to transcend the immediacy of its political and social environment. Few want sporting tribalism to be consumed by political divisions. Nevertheless, most recognise that sport cannot be detached from its social grounding. Nor would we want it to be. For it is that grounding that imbues sport with much of its meaning.

As a child in 1970s Britain, [Muhammad Ali](#) was for me far more than a boxer. He brought an uncommon grace to the most brutal of sports. What defined him, though, was not just his skill in the ring but his attitude outside it, too – his willingness to defy the authorities, his contemptuous rejection of the expected role of a black man in a racist society, his courage in refusing to fight in Vietnam, despite the authorities stripping him of his world title and his boxing licence, his insistence that “I don't have to be what you want me to be”.

To a boy growing up in a Britain in which racism was vicious and visceral to a degree almost unthinkable now, Ali was a soul-affirming symbol of defiance and pride. And, inevitably, he was condemned. Boxing, wrote

Jimmy Cannon, the doyen of ringside writers, had never before “been turned into an instrument of mass hate”. Ali was “using it as a weapon of wickedness”.

All of which brings us back to taking the knee. Harry Kane or Marcus Rashford kneeling at Wembley this afternoon will be no Muhammad Ali moment and those who argue that it is a form of “virtue signalling” have a point. But nor is it a “Marxist” gesture or one “undermining our way of life”. Those obsessed by its maleficence are equally anti-virtue signalling.

I’m no flag-waving patriot, but I hope England win today against Croatia. And that they win their next six games, too (sorry, Scotland), which would see them crowned as European champions. For, yes, it is quite possible to separate sporting tribalism from political posturing, even as we recognise the relationship between politics and sport.

Kenan Malik is an Observer columnist

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## Opinion**Boris Johnson**

# **The Observer view on Boris Johnson's stance over Ireland at the G7 summit**

Observer editorial

The prime minister's dishonest diplomacy and willingness to jeopardise Northern Ireland's stability for Brexit will greatly diminish Britain's role in the world



Boris Johnson with UN secretary general António Guterres at the G7 summit in Carbis Bay, Cornwall. Photograph: Hollie Adams/EPA

Boris Johnson with UN secretary general António Guterres at the G7 summit in Carbis Bay, Cornwall. Photograph: Hollie Adams/EPA

Sun 13 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

This weekend's G7 summit is the first time the leaders of some of the world's most powerful democracies have met in person since the start of the pandemic. There should have been a laser focus on coordinating global action on the pandemic and laying the ground for more ambitious

international agreement at November's UN summit on averting catastrophic climate change. Yet thanks to Boris Johnson's dogmatic approach to Brexit, the Northern Ireland protocol and EU-UK trade relations are providing a major distraction, with officials from the [Biden administration warning](#) the UK it must compromise on border checks in order to avoid inflaming tensions in Northern Ireland.

A decade ago, it would have been unthinkable that British refusal to implement a trade agreement with its allies and closest trading partner might undermine the trust and good faith so important to achieving international cooperation. It is a symbol of how much Johnson appears willing to stake in terms of Britain's global reputation and stability in [Northern Ireland](#) for the sake of a fanatical commitment to the idea that the UK should not agree to regulatory alignment with the EU, even to the extent agreed by countries like Canada and Japan.

The [Good Friday agreement](#) that carved a settlement in which people living in Northern Ireland could feel Irish, British or both, was predicated on both Ireland and the UK being members of the single market and customs union, eliminating the need for any border between the two countries. A hard Brexit in which the UK refuses point-blank to align with EU standards and regulations for some goods is impossible to achieve without either imposing border checks on the island of Ireland, or in the Irish Sea, or compromising the integrity of the EU's single market.

The compromise reached was that Northern Ireland would remain aligned with EU rules and regulations that affect trade in goods, avoiding the need for border checks on the island of Ireland, but necessitating checks on goods moving between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. It was a true compromise: the UK accepted the Good Friday agreement necessitated some alignment for Northern Ireland. The EU agreed to separate its four freedoms to enable Northern Ireland to remain in the single market for goods; for the UK, a non-member state, to enforce the border checks to protect the single market, requiring significant trust in the UK; and for the arrangement to be subject to a democratic vote [every four years](#) in Northern Ireland assembly.

Johnson's actions on signing the protocol jeopardised the trust that would be needed to make this unique agreement function. It was critical that he built

support for these arrangements with unionists; instead, he brazenly lied by claiming the protocol would [require no checks](#) in the Irish Sea. Last autumn, he tried to get a bill through parliament that would have allowed the UK to [unilaterally break](#) this international agreement. The government has done little to prepare for the end of the protocol's grace periods that delay introduction of border checks; instead of negotiating to extend these, the UK announced it would be extending them without any dialogue. It is again threatening to do this in relation to chilled meats. David Frost, the UK chief negotiator, has chosen to approach sensitive negotiating moments by writing aggressively grandstanding opinion columns accusing the EU of acting belligerently and in bad faith.

The EU hasn't always helped matters – its decision to temporarily invoke article 16 measures to guard against the movement of vaccines into the UK from Ireland was undoubtedly a grave error, which it [has admitted](#). But responsibility for the erosion of trust between the UK and the EU, and the consequences for Northern Ireland, lies overwhelmingly with Johnson and Frost.

The risks for Northern Ireland are grave. The 1998 Good Friday agreement was always going to require care and nurture from political parties in Northern Ireland, and the UK and Irish governments, to protect the fragile equilibrium that brought peace. Theresa May jeopardised this by forming a political alliance with the DUP, junking the UK government's status as a neutral arbiter. For Johnson, Northern Ireland has been an afterthought in his dogmatic drive for the hardest of Brexits. The UK refused to agree to a level of regulatory alignment with the EU that, for example, countries such as Japan and Canada agreed to, regardless of the costs for [Northern Ireland](#). This risks further inflaming tensions in Northern Ireland ahead of the marching season.

There are also broader consequences of Johnson's actions. This [G7](#) summit serves as a useful reminder that the international cooperation needed to confront the biggest global challenges is fostered on trust, friendship and personal relationships. His approach to diplomacy instead centres around dishonesty, tearing up compromises and threats of unilateral action. He will greatly diminish Britain's role in the world and its ability to help broker the

international action so urgently needed to address climate catastrophe, microbial resistance and the threat of another pandemic.

But there is perhaps no greater indictment of Johnson's premiership than his determination to put picking a symbolic fight with our European allies ahead of the stability and security of a part of the UK. The nation will continue to pay the price for the incompetent and dishonourable way he is choosing to govern Britain.

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## [OpinionIran](#)

# The Observer view on Iran's rigged presidential election

## [Observer editorial](#)

It is not only Iranians who will suffer if a hardliner wins, it could have profound consequences for world peace



Supporters hold a poster of the hardline candidate Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran on 11 June. Photograph: Sobhan Farajvan/Pacific Press/Rex/Shutterstock

Supporters hold a poster of the hardline candidate Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran on 11 June. Photograph: Sobhan Farajvan/Pacific Press/Rex/Shutterstock

Sun 13 Jun 2021 01.30 EDT

Iran's beleaguered voters do not have much of a choice in this Friday's presidential election. The regime, dominated by the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a fiercely anti-western conservative, has cynically [manipulated the contest](#) to ensure that a like-minded hardliner, most probably Ebrahim Raisi, head of the judiciary, wins.

While the result is hardly a cliff-hanger, its impact may nonetheless be far-reaching – in Iran and internationally. The possibly negative consequences for talks on curbing Iran’s nuclear programme, for peaceful relations with [Israel](#), Saudi Arabia and the west, for the wars in Syria and Yemen, for the geopolitical balance and for Iran’s own citizens are alarming.

Iranians have never been well served by the fundamentalists who hijacked the 1979 Islamic revolution. This extraordinary country, rich in human talent, culture, history and resources, is woefully misgoverned. Yet matters have gone from [bad to worse](#) since the last presidential poll in 2017, thanks mainly to incompetent, corrupt leadership and American malevolence.

Efforts by [Hassan Rouhani](#), the current centrist president, to improve ties with the west were crucially undermined in 2018 when Donald Trump reneged on the UN-approved nuclear deal with Tehran and imposed punitive sanctions. This breakdown emboldened hardliners who already controlled key ministries and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

This extraordinary country, rich in human talent, culture, history and resources, is woefully misgoverned

Ensuing, severe economic problems, and accompanying social unrest, were met by deadly crackdowns on protesters and civil society activists, notably in 2019; by increased executions and imprisonment of political opponents; and by rising anti-western antagonism, exemplified by Raisi’s inhumane treatment of [innocent dual nationals](#) such as Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

All this has had an understandably chilling effect on democratic engagement, in particular among younger Iranians who despair of positive change. Election turnout is predicted to fall below 40% as social media posts [urge a boycott](#) under the hashtag “No Way I Vote”. Low participation would hurt regime credibility, but hardliners will lose no sleep over that.

By fixing the election, Khamenei, supreme leader since 1989 and now aged 82, has moved closer to achieving his religiously and ideologically defined ideal of a devout “Islamic society” cleansed of secular and western taints.



He aims to project [Iran as a model](#) for Muslim-majority countries around the world. Aides speak of a need to “purify the revolution”.

This old man’s dreams are dangerous in the extreme. If his protege Raisi wins, he is expected to extend Khamenei’s policy of packing the government with supporters from the IRGC and Basij paramilitaries. Hopes of domestic reform and a new start with Europe and Saudi Arabia, encouraged by recent informal contacts, may be dashed. Instead, Tehran will probably move closer to China and Russia.

In grave jeopardy, too, will be indirect negotiations with the US on reviving the [nuclear deal](#), which approach a climax in Vienna this week. Washington has offered a partial lifting of sanctions in return for renewed Iranian compliance. But a last-minute success for Rouhani would not suit many hardliners. Like Israeli hawks, they would be happy if the talks collapsed.

Speaking of which, the much-anticipated defenestration this week of prime minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) and the formation of a new government in Jerusalem will do little to reduce tensions. Whoever is in charge, Israel remains committed to a semi-covert shadow war, evidenced by its recent attack on Iran’s Natanz nuclear facility.

If victorious on Friday, Iran’s hardliners can also be expected to continue, and may crank up, pressure on Israel via proxies in Gaza, Syria and Lebanon. Buoyed by success, they could incite Hamas to resume hostilities, spark more trouble in the Gulf or rekindle the smouldering conflict in Yemen. Recent Shia militia [drone attacks](#) on US forces in Iraq point to another area of possible escalation.

Perhaps such worries are overblown. Let’s hope so. Yet this election travesty has again demonstrated an uncomfortable truth: for all the hostility directed at it from abroad, [Iran](#) remains its own worst enemy.

[Notebook](#)[New York](#)

# New York's Little Island includes a message about the Thames garden bridge

[Rowan Moore](#)



London may have had a lucky escape when the grandiose project was abandoned



Little Island has received good reviews but is incredibly expensive.  
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Little Island has received good reviews but is incredibly expensive.  
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Sun 13 Jun 2021 01.15 EDT

Little Island, a garden built over the Hudson River, designed by the British designer Thomas Heatherwick and the landscape architect Signe Nielsen, has opened to some [good reviews](#). “It’s a bewitching, and utterly New York-y, place,” says the design website Curbed, with “wraparound views... even the bathrooms are a surprise, tucked beneath a hillock and gleaming like buried treasure in their own cave”. Given that London passed on the opportunity to have its own Heatherwickian plants-over-water project, the never-built [garden bridge](#), Little Island poses a question: did the Thames miss a trick or dodge a bullet?

There is a dissident note, voiced by Henry Grabar on [Slate](#). He points out that Little Island is very small and incredibly expensive: 2.4 acres and \$250m, plus many millions more in running costs, or more than \$100m per acre, if you like. There are less glamorous parks all over New York dying, literally, for the lack of a fraction of such funding. Pressure of numbers means that, for now at least, you have to book timed entry tickets for visits

to Little Island after midday, which seems at odds with the casual, happy-go-lucky spirit you want from a park. The tab is being wholly picked up by the media mogul Barry Diller, so the island is defended by some on the basis that it's a free gift, so everyone should be grateful. At the Garden Bridge, no Diller-like donor ever came forward and it was the project's escalating expense that did for it in the end. It would also have experienced the same crowds v Eden conflict that is likely to persist at Little Island.

## The art of giving



Bourse de Commerce opened as an art gallery in Paris in May. Photograph: Christophe Petit-Tesson/EPA

In other plutocratic baubles news, the historic Paris Bourse has been converted to house the art collection of the luxury goods magnate [François Pinault](#), its elliptical centre now dominated by a grandiose concrete wall by the Japanese architect [Tadao Ando](#). You could say that these trophies are part of the rich tapestry of life, but you do wish for an old-fashioned billionaire philanthropist, such as the Scottish-American steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie, who managed to fund thousands of libraries and university buildings as well as prestige projects such as his concert hall.

## Life in the city



Auckland in New Zealand is, apparently, the world's most liveable city. Photograph: [benwehrman.com/Alamy](https://www.benwehrman.com/)

Auckland in New Zealand has been named the world's most "[liveable](#)" city, boosted by the nation's outstanding Covid record, alongside five other Australasian metropolises in the top 10. Not killing people through virus mismanagement is certainly a good definition of "liveable", but as always with such surveys their criteria don't seem to include the things that really make a city great – energy, excitement, a certain unique spirit. They prefer calm, orderly places such as Auckland.

The New Yorks of Andy Warhol, the Harlem Renaissance or the Paris of Toulouse-Lautrec wouldn't have done well in their rankings.

## **Instant beauty**





Robert Jenrick, the local government secretary, has come up with a great planning policy wheeze. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

In one of several half-baked planning policy wheezes, the government wants to introduce a “[fast track to beauty](#)” whereby developers would get planning permission more quickly if their proposals conform to pre-agreed principles of aesthetic desirability. In practice, this is likely to mean some kind of neo-Georgian style. Now, a committee of MPs has decided that, “given the problems with defining beauty”, the idea is unworkable.

There’s the germ of a good idea in the notion of simplifying arcane planning procedures, but the problem is surely evident in the name – how often, in art, nature or life, does the beautiful come about as a result of being “fast-tracked”? Not very often.

Rowan Moore is the Observer’s architecture critic

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[Opinion](#)**Rape and sexual assault**

# Can women rely on the Parole Board getting it right if it frees men like Colin Pitchfork?

[Catherine Bennett](#)



The law promises females better protection from violent men. But freeing the murderer is troubling



Colin Pitchfork was given a 30-year minimum sentence in 1988 for raping and murdering the 15-year-old Leicestershire schoolgirls Lynda Mann and Dawn Ashworth. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Colin Pitchfork was given a 30-year minimum sentence in 1988 for raping and murdering the 15-year-old Leicestershire schoolgirls Lynda Mann and Dawn Ashworth. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Sun 13 Jun 2021 02.30 EDT

Following two previous applications to the Parole Board, Colin Pitchfork, the rapist and murderer of two girls, has been successful in the third: it recommends his release on licence. Pitchfork is 61. His victims Lynda Mann and Dawn Ashworth were both 15 when they died.

Pitchfork has especial notoriety, even for a killer and attacker of children, because of his extreme brutality and deviousness in avoiding arrest. He has been memorialised, also, as the first criminal to be convicted via his DNA. After David Baker, lead detective in police investigations, read that a scientist, Alec Jeffreys, was working on genetic fingerprinting, 5,000 local men were screened. But Pitchfork's arrest owed much, as a TV dramatisation showed, to luck. He paid a friend, Ian Kelly, to supply DNA for him, an ambitious trick that might, had Kelly not openly boasted about it, have left him free to reoffend. Pitchfork pleaded guilty and was sentenced to

life imprisonment for murder, 10 years for each count of rape, three for conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and three for two separate offences of indecent assault (the girls were 16). Lord Lane, then the lord chief justice, said: “From the point of view of the safety of the public I doubt if he should ever be released.”

In 2009, thanks to the murderer’s “exceptional progress”, Pitchfork’s barrister, Edward Fitzgerald QC, got his minimum term reduced to 28 years. Much the same argument, based on the presumably no longer psychopathic Pitchfork’s good behaviour in jail, appears now to have convinced the Parole Board.

The [response](#), from the public as well as distressed relations of the victims, Detective Baker and a local MP, Alberto Costa (who has requested reconsideration of the decision) has prompted reassurances from legal figures that all is as it should be. The board knows what it is doing and will have read oh, ever so many documents written by, according to the Law Society’s Stuart Nolan, on the [Today programme](#), “people who are the best to give assessments as to those matters”.

Echoes of the high court in 2018, when the above Edward Fitzgerald QC acted for a different sex offender, [John Worboys](#), were perhaps unfortunate. Unsuccessfully (the Parole Board’s “irrational” decision would be overturned). Fitzgerald extolled its “specialist expertise”, it having heard all the evidence.



The Parole Board's decision on John Worboys was overturned. Photograph: Metropolitan Police/PA

The public is further advised not to complain about the wrong things: however inadequate we might think Pitchfork's sentence, it was imposed before whole life terms came in. So maybe it's worth saying at this point, yes lawyers, thank you, point noted, along with the traditional hint that that amateur concern about apparently lenient treatment is invariably primitive as well as ignorant. Is it permissible, however, to wonder how the Parole Board, while observing its duties to rehabilitation, can be sure of protecting public safety, that key requirement for Pitchfork's release?

It's not the murderer's fault, of course, that this, coming so soon after the Worboys reversal, should now coincide, following the death of Sarah Everard – police constable Wayne Couzens last week pleaded guilty to her kidnapping and rape and also admitted responsibility for her killing – with heightened awareness about male violence towards women and girls, with abject rape prosecution figures, grotesque court judgments and evidence of disturbing police attitudes all, also, contributing to women's disillusion with the criminal justice system. Can we be sure, as with the Worboys decision, that an institutionally perverse if otherwise familiar understanding of what women should expect to endure from random men has not shaped the board's notion of acceptable risk? Either way, it is amid an overdue

acknowledgement of the relentless sexual harassment of young women and girls, with demands for corrective action, that the board wants Pitchfork, sadistic murderer of young girls, released. The further agony this entails for the families and friends of his victims is not, presumably, a safety issue.

Regrettably for the board, some women find its assurances of monitoring to ensure Pitchfork does not resume his habits of flashing at, brutally assaulting and sometimes killing schoolgirls, vitiate, for various reasons, the very confidence they are intended to build in a man known to be cunning and plausible. Even if extreme precautions were consistent with abundant faith in the redeemed Pitchfork they might be too much for the overstretched probation service by which he would be supervised. Last week, reacting to the Usman Khan inquest, HM Inspectorate of Probation said that staff should “[use professional curiosity](#) to question superficial compliance” by criminals who remain highly dangerous. Recalling, also, the crimes committed by Joseph McCann when supposedly under supervision it notes: “The assessment and management of risk of harm to the public is the weakest area of performance.” Meanwhile, according to recent Ministry of Justice figures, [murders on licence](#) have doubled in five years.

The family lawyer Dr Charlotte Proudman, discussing Pitchfork on BBC Radio 4’s *Woman’s Hour* last week, said, if he could be considered safe: “It does pose the question of whether the justice system is fit for purpose.”

Following the Worboys debacle, members of the public can ask the secretary of state to [reconsider](#) a Parole Board decision for reasons that are limited but include irrationality, as in: “The decision makes no sense based on the evidence of risk that was considered and that no other rational panel could come to the same conclusion.”

What rational panel could dismiss the possibility that Pitchfork is still, given his pitiless history, the nervousness reflected in the recommended monitoring and the limitations of the probation service, a threat to women? Well, maybe, admittedly, a panel that, like some leading rational law practitioners, would rather prioritise that part of the population Pitchfork left alone.

There is another possibility. By way of reassurance on public safety the Parole Board promises, in an unaccountable snub to seance and dowsing professionals, Pitchfork's co-operation with lie-detector tests. Unreliable, inadmissible in courts, increasingly categorised as pseudoscience, these tests fail, a [recent study](#) states, "to protect the public". No rational panel would touch them. Would that do?

Catherine Bennett is an Observer columnist

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## [The weekly stats uncovered](#) **Coronavirus**

# What were some of the collateral effects of lockdowns?

[David Spiegelhalter](#) and [Anthony Masters](#)

Hospital waiting lists rose, but traffic accidents fell – Covid-19's consequences will emerge in time, but it's not all quantifiable

[Coronavirus – latest updates](#)

[See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Around 3 million more adults were inactive in the UK during lockdown.

Photograph: Drazen\_/Getty Images

Around 3 million more adults were inactive in the UK during lockdown.

Photograph: Drazen\_/Getty Images

Sun 13 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

In [early 2020](#), there were bans on most social contact, international travel stopped, workplaces and schools shut. Lockdown had arrived. These policies

may have limited the spread of the virus, but what collateral harms and benefits on physical health were there?

Despite [recommendations](#) to continue to seek help, normal healthcare endured severe disruption. In [England](#), waiting lists for hospital treatment now [exceed 5m](#), up more than 500,000 from before the pandemic. During the first wave, [nearly 90,000](#) joint replacement surgeries were cancelled, leaving many struggling with pain. Cancer investigations and diagnoses fell and although there is no sign yet of any [excess cancer](#) deaths, this may only become apparent in subsequent years.

When it comes to getting off the sofa and exercising, lockdowns [favoured the sofa](#) – during the first wave, around 3 million more adults were “inactive”, taking less than 30 minutes exercise a week.

It's not all bad news. In recent years, seasonal flu is estimated to have killed between 4,000 and 22,000 people and it was [essentially eliminated](#) in 2020-2021. UK [road casualties](#) dropped by around 70% in April 2020 and by 30% across the first six months of lockdown. But the reduction was smaller for fatalities, around 20% in the same period. This pattern was stronger in [Japan](#): lockdowns decreased collisions, but quiet roads may have led some people to drive faster.

There is typically a bump in deaths between 15 and 29 due to non-natural causes, reflecting a higher-risk lifestyle. But the pandemic has mitigated this; in [England and Wales](#) in 2020, there were more than 300 fewer death registrations of that age than the 2015-2019 average. Those 300 fewer grieving families do not know who they are, unlike those of the 115 registered deaths involving Covid-19 of that age. The pandemic and its responses were an overall lifesaver for younger people.

Pandemic measures have changed our social and economic lives, mental health, education, the environment and so much more. These effects will be felt long into the future and not all can be quantified with statistics.

David Spiegelhalter is chair of the Winton Centre for Risk and Evidence Communication at Cambridge. Anthony Masters is statistical ambassador for the Royal Statistical Society

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## The shifting patterns of English

# May I have a word about enjoying a spot of sabrage instead of being a sillytonian?

[Jonathan Bouquet](#)

Popping champagne corks with a sword sounds like a delightful way to take your mind off those out to deceive us



Usain Bolt succeeds at sabrage on Melbourne Cup day, 5 November, 2019.  
Photograph: James Gourley/Getty Images

Usain Bolt succeeds at sabrage on Melbourne Cup day, 5 November, 2019.  
Photograph: James Gourley/Getty Images

Sun 13 Jun 2021 03.15 EDT

Precious things, words. Neglect them and they all too soon disappear. I was reminded of this sad truth when I read a caption in a newspaper last week: “Nick Lane, of Defined Wines in Canterbury, practises the Napoleonic

tradition of extracting a cork ahead of a sabrage competition among British winemakers.”

Overlooking “ahead of”, I was delighted to see the word sabrage - opening a bottle of champagne with a sabre - making an appearance. I’ve seen it done once, but never knew it had a name. I can see, though, that there aren’t many opportunities you can drop it into conversation, so perhaps desuetude is inevitable.

Looking up other words that have fallen by the wayside, I came across some gems: ambodexter: one who takes bribes from both sides; betrump: to deceive, cheat, elude; quacksalver: one who dishonestly claims knowledge of or skill in medicine, a pedlar of false cures; losenger: a false flatterer, a lying rascal, a deceiver; coney-catch: to swindle, cheat, trick, dupe, deceive; sillytonian: a silly or gullible person, esp one considered as belonging to a notional sect of such people. I feel that in these troubled times all of them could be wielded to describe our political classes and the host of experts who daily profess to know best, especially the last one, which seems perfect to describe the alumni of that boarding school in Berkshire that produced so many of our leaders.

And now a question from my wife: “What exactly,” she asked with some asperity recently, “does ‘the devil is in the detail’ mean?” It’s a current favourite with, as she puts it, “smug media twats”. And as I waffled on, I too was aware of all sense draining from this stupid phrase. Not for the first time, she is right.

Jonathan Bouquet is an Observer columnist

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[Names in the news](#) [Noel Gallagher](#)

## Not that Noel Gallagher's looking back in anger. Well, not much

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)



Other performers can learn from the irreversible break-up that made Oasis one of the greats





Noel Gallagher was on to something when he explained why the band broke up. Photograph: Brian J Ritchie/Hotsauce/Rex/Shutterstock

Noel Gallagher was on to something when he explained why the band broke up. Photograph: Brian J Ritchie/Hotsauce/Rex/Shutterstock

Sat 12 Jun 2021 11.00 EDT

In an age of celebrity blandness, where famous people usually decline to say much of interest in public, Noel Gallagher is reliably forthright in doling out his opinions. Last week, doing the rounds, he let rip at hard-to-hit targets such as Prince Harry (“woke snowflake”) and [Little Mix](#) (“not in the same league as Oasis”). So familiar are his “better in my day” grumbles that they’re essentially white noise now; they should make a relaxation app out of them, to soothe sleep-troubled woke snowflakes who are unbearably anxious about the prospect of Little Mix *not* winning a Brit next year.

But in among all the “Dad, put your phone down” stuff, there was wisdom. On the Sky Arts documentary [Noel Gallagher: Out of the Now](#), he dug into the Oasis split, explaining that their break-up was “the best thing for me and for the band”. Prior to that, he said, they were “not lauded as one of the greats of all time”. I saw them trudge through a handful of joyless festival sets in the 00s, which were, like Little Mix, “not in the same league as

Oasis”. Calling it a day made them into greats, because it meant they never quite had the chance to become fully spoiled.

If Oasis ever reunite it will be surprising, giving the acrimony between the brothers, which means that for now, they have a definite ending. It is becoming increasingly rare. Bands previously thought dead in the water, confirmed split-up forever, are returning for reunion and anniversary tours; the only certain holdouts are the Smiths and, well, that’s probably for the best.

The resistance to calling it a day exists throughout the entertainment world. There is a current debate about “origin stories” such as [Cruella](#) and whether that means Hollywood is out of ideas (it isn’t), while franchises have long been the bread and butter of the box office – [Fast & Furious 9](#) is on its way to UK cinemas this month. The year’s big TV talking point, the Kate Winslet-starring [Mare of Easttown](#), is the subject of much speculation around a second season, despite telling a neat, perfectly formed, beautifully concluded story.

Yet there are one-offs that have stuck to their guns. [I May Destroy You](#), deservedly sweeping the Baftas for its creator and star, Michaela Coel, will not return for a second season, according to HBO. And why would it? *Fleabag* – you may have heard of it – had two seasons, but Phoebe Waller-Bridge has been adamant that she told the story she wanted to tell and it’s “done”. They will be remembered as greats because they ended brilliantly and clearly and when it was right.

**Keira Knightley’s plain speaking on every woman’s fear**



Keira Knightley: 'I don't know anyone who hasn't been flashed at or groped.' Photograph: Abaca Press/Alamy

Appearing in this month's *Harper's Bazaar*, [Keira Knightley](#) discussed the moment I imagine every woman had in the aftermath of the death of Sarah Everard, when all of those near-automatic safety precautions taken when walking alone at night, or somewhere remote, or unfamiliar, became solid and pulled into focus.

The act of putting keys between fingers, accepting that we do it, pushing away the thoughts of why we do it. The text before leaving, to be followed by the text when we get to our destination. The weighing up of being a lone passenger in a stranger's taxi versus a lone walk home. She found it "fucking depressing", she said, to realise she took measures without even thinking about them.

Profiles like this tend to be picked over for the newsiest moments; the one that gained traction was when Knightley was asked if she had experienced harassment. "I mean, everybody has. Literally, I don't know anyone who hasn't been, in some way, whether it's being flashed at, or groped, or some guy saying they're going to slit your throat, or punching you in the face, or whatever it is," she said, with weary specificity.

That this became news was surprising to me. [In March, it was reported that 97% of women in the UK have been sexually harassed](#); last week saw yet more sobering stories about the horrors teenage girls now routinely face in schools. So of course Knightley doesn't know a woman who hasn't been harassed. The real news would have been if she did.

## **Marilyn Monroe, the first kitchen goddess, for sale**



Marilyn Monroe: what am I bid for her cookery books? Photograph: Matty Zimmerman/AP

It was once a cliché to deride social media as being filled with people banging on about what they had for breakfast. Simpler times. It would be a kinder place now if it were still filled with that and, besides, I never understood the complaint. I enjoy finding out what people had for breakfast, lunch and dinner, because I am nosy and greedy.

Now, a pair of cookery books that once belonged to Marilyn Monroe are [up for auction](#) and they indulge both of these stellar personality traits, revealing that the star enjoyed hot cereal, two slices of toast and a cup of milk or cocoa for breakfast. Not very Instagrammable, but definitely filling.

The two books, *The New Fannie Farmer Boston Cooking School Cook Book* and *The New Joy of Cooking*, are expected to fetch \$75,000 at auction, in part because they are filled with typed and handwritten notes, doodles and shopping lists. “A few pages have small stains from cooking,” the listing reads. Autographs are one thing, but splashes of Marilyn Monroe’s boeuf bourguignon really take celebrity collecting to the next level. Cookery books should be tatty, filled with notes and stains, signs that they have been used, loved and savoured.

Rebecca Nicholson is an Observer columnist

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## Opinion[Data protection](#)

# Letters: how your medical data can save lives

It is easy to mistrust big data collection, but for health the benefits are well established



‘Medical records can ensure that pharmaceuticals are used safely and effectively.’ Photograph: Phanie Agency/Rex Features

‘Medical records can ensure that pharmaceuticals are used safely and effectively.’ Photograph: Phanie Agency/Rex Features

Sun 13 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Kenan Malik entered an argument with many facets (“[Tell me how you’ll use my medical data. Only then might I sign up](#)”, Comment). The truth is that smaller, but substantial, de-identified health datasets have existed in the UK for years and have contributed appreciably to clinical knowledge that saves lives. They are a major resource to ensure that pharmaceuticals are used safely and effectively.



It is right to ask if such data will be protected. Re-identification by resourceful people is probably impossible to prevent, but the likelihood that it could be done reliably on a large scale seems remote. On informed consent, it is impossible to retrospectively obtain consent from all people in a dataset for the thousands of questions raised. Hence we need to accept a general commitment that our data will be used to improve public health and ensure that a mechanism is in place to enforce this. Readers will be aware of the rare cases of thrombosis attributed to the AstraZeneca vaccine and the problems this caused for the vaccination programme. The planned national database would be a vital resource in investigating and quantifying such risks.

It is easy to be swayed into a natural distrust of all big data collection but we should remember that, for health datasets, the benefits are already well established.

**Jim Slattery**  
Cambridge

## **Landlords should foot bills**

There is an easy solution to the problem leaseholders face for the cost of necessary fire safety work in buildings that have been clad with flammable material before the Grenfell Tower tragedy (“[£100,000 bill for post-Grenfell fire safety costs will destroy me](#)”, News) – landlords, not leaseholders, should pay for the cost of this work.

Leaseholders do not own their property, the freeholder does. Why should leaseholders pay to maintain the structure of a building they do not own? A spokesperson for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government said “it is the responsibility of buildings’ owners to make their buildings safe – and we have been clear that owners should do this without passing on costs to leaseholders”. If it wants to be able to enforce its advice then the law needs to be changed.

**Dr Kenneth Smith**  
London E2

## **Global tax plan won’t work**

I bet the tech giants are laughing their socks off. Even if they pay the 15% to any country, it's still a fraction of what their land-based competitors pay ([“G7 nations agree landmark global tax plan”](#), News). Most will find loopholes and still avoid paying taxes even at this low rate and they will continue to underpay and overwork their employees. We can't deny the efficiency of their operations, nor their greed and utter ruthlessness.

**David Reed**

London NW3

## **Royal links to slave trade**

David Olusoga's article ([“A year on, the battered and graffitied Colston is finally a potent memorial to our past”](#), Comment) about Edward Colston's statue doesn't refer to his link to the royal family.

Although Colston was described in official records as “a slave trader”, his appointment as deputy governor of the Royal African Company placed him second only to its founding governor, the Duke of York, later to be King James II. For decades, the company shipped more than 200,000 men, women and children to the Caribbean, many branded with the duke's initials “DoY”.

**Brian Waller**

Newall with Clifton,  
Otley, North Yorkshire

## **Good flows from fountains**

Dalya Alberge's article ([“Nor any drop to drink: why Victorian fountains are filled up with cement”](#), News) is a reminder that from 1859 drinking fountains offering free water were installed throughout London, including public parks and gardens. Of those that remain, the majority are broken and dry. Rome, Paris and Zurich keep their old drinking fountains in working order, recognising the value they add to life in a modern city.

The Victorian drinking fountain movement, with its origins in Liverpool, installed fountains from Lerwick in Shetland to Penzance. Using less plastic bottled water is one of the easiest ways to reduce our carbon footprint. How

much easier would it be if our fountains worked?

**Sebastian Bulmer**

London W2

## **Penalise frequent fliers**

Your report about long-haul travel ([“From bear-watching to safaris, bookings surge for 2022 long-haul trips”](#), News) underlines the urgency of a frequent flyer levy for the small proportion of the population who take most flights, enhancing the UK’s aspirations for a leadership role at Cop26.

**Tim Root**

Muswell Hill & Hornsey Friends of the Earth, London N4

## **End primary school boarding**

As a survivor of English boarding schools aware of the plight of the children of the First Nations incarcerated in residential schools in Canada, I welcome your extensive coverage of the cultural genocide at Kamloops in British Columbia ([“The school took away my brother at five. A year later, he was in an unmarked grave”](#), News).

The plight of children in British boarding schools was not of the same order but nor was it negligible. I was sent off at seven and abused by the school doctor. Similar awful details are being revealed at Scotland’s national child abuse inquiry, now looking at boarding schools. Children of seven are still being sent off to board, which no child deserves. The time has come to phase out primary school boarding.

**Simon Partridge**

London N2

## **Extend settled status deadline**

In relation to Mark Townsend’s report ([“Fears for rights of EU citizens still waiting for settled status”](#), News), the Federation of Poles in Great Britain has asked the prime minister to extend the deadline for applying for settled status by six months. Hundreds of thousands of hitherto legally resident EU citizens and their families, whose applications have not been made or

languish in the Home Office, are likely to face a future of rejection, exploitation and blackmail after 30 June.

**Wiktor Moszczynski**, spokesman, Federation of Poles in Great Britain  
Brentford, London

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## [For the record](#) [UK news](#)

# For the record

This week's corrections

Sun 13 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

A front-page article ([“No 10 ‘tried to block’ data on virus spread in schools”](#), 23 May) incorrectly said that by 12 May there were 2,111 cases of the “India” Covid-19 variant (now known as Delta); that number should have been 1,313. The 164 cases linked to schools represented 12.5% of the total, below the 13% we stated.

The First Nations-led Yellowhead Institute, referenced in an article about the discovery of unmarked graves of Indigenous children in Kamloops, is based at Ryerson University in Toronto, not at the University of Toronto ([“The school took away my brother at five. A year later, he was in an unmarked grave”](#), 6 June).

It was Cornwall council, and not the Disc charity as we mistakenly said, which provided the figure of 130 homeless people who have been moved from hotels to make way for guests attending this weekend's G7 meeting ([“Homeless lose beds as summiteers take over hotels: charity”](#), 6 June).

An analysis piece ([“Agreement to tax Google, Facebook is historic. Will Brexit Britain stay onside?”](#), 6 June) said Joe Biden had “a headwind of support for higher taxes on corporations and the super-rich to pay for his recovery programmes”. The intended word was “tailwind”.

Other recently amended articles include:

[Catching up in Britain: experts assess the scale of the challenge](#)

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

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## [Opinion](#)Conservatives

# In waging culture wars, Boris Johnson can count on a cabinet of mercenaries

[Nick Cohen](#)



No dispute is too trivial for ministers to ignore, an obsession that will harm them



Illustration: Dom McKenzie

Illustration: Dom McKenzie

Sat 12 Jun 2021 14.30 EDT

When Napoleon marched on Moscow in 1812, the Russian general Mikhail Kutuzov ordered his forces to sit back. They abandoned their capital and conserved their energies until Napoleon, his supply lines fatally extended, had to retreat and see winter, disease and guerrilla attacks destroy his army and his reputation for invincibility.

The Tories might have sat back and let a vicious left destroy itself. Instead, they have gone on the offensive. No dispute is too trivial to ignore now. No scab too small to pick. Like all swaggering hard cases, they look for fights and if a real conflict isn't on offer they will pick one with any passerby.

Imagine trying to explain to foreign diplomats at the G7 how the decision of the middle common room of Magdalen College, Oxford, to remove a portrait of the Queen became the lead story in the Conservative press and drove government ministers into [fits of fury](#). Oxford University is one of 166 higher education [institutions](#) in the UK, you might begin, and Magdalen is one of 39 colleges at Oxford. It has a junior common room for undergraduates, a senior common room for the academics and a middle

common room for graduate students. Our guests need to understand that, in the middle of a health and economic crisis, one third of one thirty ninth of one hundred and sixty sixth of the higher education system became a national story because our right has decided that manufacturing offence from nowhere will keep it in power.

Like many of their counterparts on the left, second-rate Conservative politicians have become culture war mercenaries. Their careers depend on a war without end. Gavin Williamson is a failed education secretary. But he secures his position by condemning obscure students in an Oxford college and pledging his allegiance to the Queen, who can manage perfectly well without it. [Oliver Dowden](#) was once a moderate Conservative. The culture secretary was a Remainer who worked for David Cameron. Transforming himself into a thuggish censor is his way of assuring the new regime that he is an obedient soldier worthy of promotion out of his backwater department.

Dowden is now [purging cultural institutions](#) of ideologically unsound trustees and insisting that those who remain declare their support for government policies. When the left behaved like this, the right once complained of cancel culture and modern Stalinism. Now it is Conservatives who are demanding that the government appoints “panels of patriots” to force the [National Trust and museums](#) to airbrush accounts of colonialism and the slave trade from the historical record, as surely as [Stalin airbrushed images](#) of his fallen rivals from Soviet picture libraries.

The sight of Munira Mirza directing the culture war in Johnson’s Downing Street makes the Stalinist comparison apt. I have [written before](#) on how the head of the No 10 policy unit and her Revolutionary Communist party switched in the early 2000s from the far left, where it denounced liberals and social democrats as sellouts and frauds, to the alt-right, where it carried on denouncing liberals and social democrats as sellouts and frauds.

A [piece by Matt d’Ancona](#) on the Tortoise site describes the current power of Mirza and of her husband, Dougie Smith, a Johnson fixer, who in his spare time made money by [organising orgies](#) for wealthy punters in Mayfair.

As an allegory for today’s moronic furies, the picture of a former revolutionary communist and [a raddled old swinger](#) fuelling raging click-

bait campaigns to divert the masses is hard to better. Johnson and his cabinet make no secret of their admiration. “When it comes to culture wars,” one senior minister told d’Ancona, “we win. Keir Starmer has no answer to this stuff, because his party is so crazily woke.”

So it may be. But for most of the 21st century, conservatives did not feel the need to pick fights. They understood that culture wars were fought as much within the liberal-left as between left and right. They could sit back and reap the benefits as intolerant leftists drove natural supporters away. I have seen them shun and silence progressive Muslims and ex-Muslims who wanted to oppose reactionary Islam, Jews who wanted to confront antisemitism, traditional socialists who believed that the notion of “white privilege” ignored the effects of class, and feminists who believed in the material reality of biological sex. As last week’s court ruling that [Maya Forstater](#) had the right to say that sex should not be conflated with gender identity showed, all Conservatives have needed to do was quietly reassure alienated progressives that they at least would allow space for argument.

In *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy’s [General Kutuzov](#) scorns the advice of his officers who want him to meet Napoleon in the field. They think “fighting is fun”, Kutuzov snorts. They do not understand that “we can only lose by taking the offensive. Patience and time are my warriors, my champions.”

Conservatives have decided it would be fun to fight their real and imagined enemies on every front

Conservatives are taking the offensive everywhere now. They have run out of patience and decided it would be fun to fight their real and imagined enemies on every front. The red mist has descended and they don’t know when to stop.

We had a foretaste of how the centre-right might end up charging into far-right politics last week. Boris Johnson and the motor-mouthed Dowden criticised the English cricket authorities for going “[over the top](#)” when they suspended a fast bowler for sexist and racist tweets he had written when he was a teenager. Fair enough – there is something sinister about the online secret policemen who hunt for dirt from years ago to smear their targets.

When real racists booed England football players for taking the knee, however, Johnson was reluctant in the extreme to censure them. He only managed to [mutter a few words](#) after Gordon Brown demanded he give the national team his public support. Are angry white men screaming at black footballers his base now, a core constituency he dare not challenge?

“Respectable” American Republicans thought they could manipulate culture wars to their political advantage. They ended up with Donald Trump, their country disgraced and a fascistic mob invading their legislature. As true conservatives once knew, it’s best to avoid picking fights when you have no idea how they will end.

Nick Cohen is an Observer columnist

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## Headlines thursday 10 june 2021

- [Live UK Covid: Matt Hancock says earlier first lockdown would have meant 'overruling scientific consensus'](#)
- [Exclusive Hancock 'warned of care home risk in March 2020'](#)
- [Dominic Cummings MPs demand proof of Hancock claims](#)
- [Sage Modelling warns of risk of 'substantial' third wave](#)



[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)

[G7](#)

# G7 summit: Boris Johnson praises Joe Biden as ‘breath of fresh air’ after talks – as it happened

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## [Social care](#)

# Matt Hancock ‘was warned of Covid care home risk in March 2020’

Exclusive: leading UK operators say they repeatedly raised concerns about not testing people discharged from hospital

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The claims are likely to increase pressure on Matt Hancock, the health secretary, when he faces MPs on Thursday to defend his handling of the pandemic. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

The claims are likely to increase pressure on Matt Hancock, the health secretary, when he faces MPs on Thursday to defend his handling of the pandemic. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

[Robert Booth](#) *Social affairs correspondent*

Wed 9 Jun 2021 15.54 EDT

Some of the UK's biggest care home operators have told the Guardian they repeatedly warned Matt Hancock's department about the risk of not testing people discharged from hospitals into care homes in March 2020.

Their claims are likely to increase pressure on the health secretary when he appears before MPs on Thursday to defend his handling of the Covid pandemic to a parliamentary inquiry.

Care England, which represents the largest private chains where thousands of people died in the first months of the virus, told the Guardian it raised "the lack of testing in hospitals and in the care sector" several times in correspondence with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) as well as NHS England in late March 2020.

The Care Provider Alliance also called on the government to prioritise testing for care residents to stop the spread of the virus, warning on 26 March 2020 that without it "there is no way of knowing whether they are going to infect others".

It also emailed Hancock directly saying: "All people discharged from hospital to social care settings ... MUST be tested before discharge."

Yet despite the pressure from frontline care operators, Hancock didn't make testing for hospital discharges mandatory until mid-April, after the first wave death toll had peaked weeks later.

The care homes issue is likely to be a key focus of questions when Hancock faces cross-examination from MPs on the combined health and social care and science and technology committee inquiry on Thursday.

Hancock's testimony comes two weeks after Dominic Cummings, the prime minister's former adviser, accused him of serial incompetence that should have led him to be sacked.

He also alleged Hancock had in effect misled Downing Street into believing that testing on patients being sent to back to care homes was being carried out when it wasn't.

Hancock denies this, saying that his position was that hospital discharges would be tested only when enough testing became available.

The UK already had capacity for 10,000 daily tests at the start of April 2020. Between 17 March and 15 April, when tests were finally required before admission into care homes, about 25,000 people were discharged from hospitals into facilities, the National Audit Office has found.

Pete Calveley, the chief executive of Barchester, which lost 1,100 residents to Covid over the pandemic, told the Guardian that in March and April “we were saying absolutely no one should be discharged from hospital without a negative test” and that message was conveyed to the DHSC via Care England.

Representatives of smaller care home groups also said they were “consistently” urging testing of discharges earlier on when it was not happening.

“To officials and the minister for care we were saying that people were being discharged out of hospitals into care homes untested,” said Nadra Ahmed, the chair of the National Care Association, which represents independent care providers.

“We were raising the issue with the department on a regular basis. One of our questions was, ‘What are you doing after you test someone [before they are discharged]. Are they in an isolation wing?’”

Cummings told the select committee inquiry last month that “we were assured that the people who were being sent out would be tested” and that “it was only in April after the prime minister and I had both ourselves been ill, that we realised that what we were told would happen never did happen, or only happened very partially and sporadically.”

However, only weeks later, on 13 May, Johnson told the Commons: “We had a system of testing people going into care homes.”

The issue of testing has become highly charged and Hancock is facing a high court hearing in October over an allegation from a [bereaved relative](#) of a

deceased care home resident that the government breached the Human Rights Act and the Equality Act when their policies allowed people to be discharged into care homes without being tested.

The government last month produced figures which suggest only 1.6% of care home outbreaks in the first six months of the pandemic were caused by infected people being discharged from hospitals. They imply that transmission from the community was a far greater cause of the devastation in social care. But the data has been dismissed by care operators, which point out that only some people were being tested so it is impossible to know that.

Calveley, who said two-thirds of his 240 care homes were infected, added: “It beggars belief to say it wasn’t the residents coming back and it must have been staff, because no one was being tested.”

He said that Barchester homes with block bookings to take hospital discharges had outbreaks and that hospitals sent residents back in ambulances unannounced, sometimes with Covid symptoms.

A DHSC spokesperson said that in February 2020 “the scientific understanding did not suggest asymptomatic individuals posed a significant risk in terms of transmission. Those with symptoms would have been tested on admission or during a hospital stay and were isolated accordingly.”

They added: “Further guidance was issued on 19 March 2020 setting out how we would continue to support the safe and timely discharge of people who no longer needed to stay in hospital. Throughout this time, government worked tirelessly to build a national testing system from scratch, the result of which is that everybody who needs a test can now get one.”

## [Dominic Cummings](#)

# MPs demand proof of Hancock claims from Dominic Cummings

Chair of committee that heard former No 10 adviser's explosive allegations says it hasn't received the evidence it was expecting

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Dominic Cummings said Hancock should have been sacked for incompetence and dishonesty. Photograph: House of Commons/PA

Dominic Cummings said Hancock should have been sacked for incompetence and dishonesty. Photograph: House of Commons/PA

[Jessica Elgot](#) *Deputy political editor*

[@jessicaelgot](#)

Wed 9 Jun 2021 10.37 EDT

MPs have written to [Dominic Cummings](#) demanding that he provide proof for a number of serious allegations against the health secretary, Matt Hancock, who will face a parliamentary inquiry on Thursday.

Cummings, who left his post as Boris Johnson's most senior aide last year, spoke to a joint committee inquiry into lessons learned from the Covid outbreak last month where he repeatedly said Hancock should have been sacked for incompetence and dishonesty.

Cummings said during the hearing that he would hand over [further written information](#) to substantiate several claims, including that the former cabinet secretary, Mark Sedwill, told Johnson in mid-April 2020 that he had "lost confidence" in the ["honesty" of Hancock](#).

In a letter from the committee chairs Greg Clark and Jeremy Hunt, seen by the Guardian, the MPs set out key claims that they ask him to back up with evidence.

"During the session you made several commitments to provide us with further documentary information; you also made several serious allegations for which we have requested you provide any evidence you might hold," they wrote. They said that if evidence could not be provided, the claims would be seen as "unsubstantiated".

The MPs requested evidence for claims including:

- That Hancock was briefed by the government's chief scientific adviser Sir Patrick Vallance that not all Covid patients received the treatment they needed.
- That Sedwill lost confidence in Hancock, about which Cummings said he had made a contemporary note.
- Allegations that Hancock interfered with testing capacities during April in order to hit targets.
- That Hancock gave assurances patients were being tested before being discharged from hospital into care homes.



The letter also requested that Cummings provide messages he had promised to show the committee, including texts with Hancock in January about pandemic preparedness, as well as relevant exchanges with the prime minister, officials and journalists.

“Before the session you also tweeted about a ‘crucial’ document you would give to the committees. We would be grateful to receive that document,” the letter said.

It also asked Cummings for evidence for a number of other claims, including that officials believed the UK would not accept an “east Asian-style” test-and-trace system, that the prime minister obstructed a tighter border regime, as well as evidence that Johnson ignored scientific advice in the run-up to the autumn lockdown.

No 10 insiders have privately cast doubt on the former aide’s ability to supply watertight evidence for his claims.

One former colleague of Cummings said they did not believe there was a “smoking gun” document that would condemn Hancock, saying that emails and texts would add weight to what Cummings said in his evidence rather than reveal new information.

Crucial discussions happened in cabinet room meetings between a select group of ministers and staffers and, particularly the PM’s own rogue behaviour, were all mostly in person, the insider said.

Questions to be put to the health secretary in the hours-long evidence session on Thursday were expected to include how and when decisions about the first, second and third national lockdowns in England were made, the government’s pandemic preparedness, the impact of the Delta variant discovered in India and Johnson’s roadmap.

The letter gave a deadline of last Friday but Hunt confirmed on Tuesday that [no additional information had been received](#). “We haven’t received the written evidence to back those claims up that we were expecting,” he said.

He said Cummings “made some very serious allegations” against Hancock and promised to put those claims to the health secretary, when he faced the same committees on Thursday, “to give him his rightful chance to respond”.

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## [Health policy](#)

# Sage modelling warns of risk of ‘substantial’ Covid third wave

Growing pessimism over 21 June reopening plan amid fears of surge in cases to rival January’s second wave

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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A rapid vaccination centre outside Bolton town hall on Wednesday. Covid hospitalisations are surging in hotspot areas including Greater Manchester. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

A rapid vaccination centre outside Bolton town hall on Wednesday. Covid hospitalisations are surging in hotspot areas including Greater Manchester. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

[Heather Stewart](#), [Ian Sample](#) and [Jessica Elgot](#)

Wed 9 Jun 2021 14.44 EDT

New modelling for the government's Sage committee of experts has highlighted the risk of a "substantial third wave" of infections and hospitalisations, casting doubt on whether the next stage of Boris Johnson's Covid roadmap can go ahead as planned on 21 June.

Government sources suggested the outlook was now more pessimistic but stressed that a decision would be taken after assessing a few more days' worth of data on the effect that rising infections are having on hospitalisations.

The prime minister is due to announce on Monday whether the lifting of the remaining restrictions – nicknamed "freedom day" by anti-lockdown Tory MPs – will have to be delayed.

Johnson is understood to be personally frustrated at the prospect of delaying the reopening, but a No 10 source said there were now clearly signs for concern in the data.

Key ministers and officials are expected to discuss a range of options on Sunday, when Johnson will still be hosting the G7, including a two- to four-week delay, as well as the possibility of a watered-down reopening that keeps some rules in place.

A Whitehall source said it was "broadly correct" that the outlook was now more pessimistic. "Cases are obviously higher and they are growing quickly," the source said.

Prof Neil Ferguson, of Imperial College London, said modelling updated this week suggested there was a risk of a surge in infections and hospitalisations that could rival the second wave in January.

Johnson sounded markedly less confident than in recent days when he was asked about the case for a delay as he visited a windfarm in Cornwall on Wednesday as part of the buildup to the G7 summit.

"What everyone can see very clearly is that cases are going up and in some cases hospitalisations are going up," he said. "I think what we need to assess is the extent to which the vaccine rollout, which has been phenomenal, has

built up enough protection in the population in order for us to go ahead to the next stage.

“And so that’s what we’ll be looking at. And there are arguments being made one way or the other, but that will be driven by the data. We’ll be looking at that and we’ll be setting it out on Monday.”

The prime minister had previously repeatedly said he had seen nothing in the data to justify a delay.

Ferguson said the cases of the Delta variant were now doubling in less than a week, close to what was seen before Christmas when the Alpha variant took hold and sent infections soaring in January to a daily peak of 68,000. What is unclear is how long the doubling will continue with so many adults vaccinated, and what proportion of new cases will turn into hospitalisations and deaths.

“There is a risk of a substantial third wave,” Ferguson said. “It could be substantially lower than the second wave or it could be of the same order of magnitude, and that critically depends on how effective the vaccines are at protecting people against hospitalisation and death.”

He suggested there may be a case for postponing the reopening to get more shots into arms and reduce the size of any summer surge. “Clearly you have to be more cautious if you want measures to be irreversibly changed and relaxed,” he said. “Having a delay does make a difference. It allows more people to get second doses.”

Ministers have been encouraged by the enthusiasm with which younger people are taking up the opportunity to get their jab. The NHS announced that 1 million people had booked appointments through its website on Tuesday as eligibility was extended to 25- to 29-year-olds.

The next two to three weeks will be crucial for scientists on Sage to work out what the rise in hospitalisations – and potentially deaths – might look like in the months ahead.

Ferguson said: “One of the key things we want to resolve in the next few weeks is do we see an uptick in hospitalisations – we are seeing it in some areas – matching the cases, and what is the ratio between the two, because vaccination has substantially changed that.”

Evidence is firming up around the Delta variant being 60% more transmissible than the Alpha variant, with estimates ranging from 40% and 80%. The variant is somewhat resistant to vaccines, particularly after one dose.

While Ferguson believes we may see fewer deaths in the third wave compared with in January, the latest modelling does not rule out what he called a “disastrous” third wave if transmission and vaccine resistance are at the higher end of the best estimates.

The latest official data showed 7,540 new confirmed cases of the virus in England. Hospitalisations are not yet rising sharply nationwide, though they are surging in hotspot areas including Greater Manchester.

Chris Hopson, the chief executive of NHS Providers, said trusts in hard-hit areas were confirming that the vaccines provide good protection against the virus.

“There is a growing sense that thanks to the vaccine, the chain seen in previous waves between rising infections and high rates of hospital admissions and deaths has been broken. That feels very significant,” he wrote in a blogpost for the British Medical Journal.

But Hopson warned that the NHS was already “running hot” in many areas, and an increase in Covid admissions would set back efforts to tackle the long backlog of treatment for other health problems that has been caused by the crisis.

## 2021.06.10 - Coronavirus

- [Live India reports 6,148 deaths after toll revised up; call for 'complete access' for pandemic origins analysts](#)
- [India Global record deaths posted after state revises data](#)
- [Travel One in five Britons considering holiday to amber-list country](#)
- [AstraZeneca Jab linked to slightly higher risk of blood disorder](#)



[Coronavirus live](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

# WHO warns of autumn resurgence in Europe – as it happened

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## [India](#)

# Covid: India posts global record deaths after state revises data

India records 6,000 deaths in 24 hours, stoking suspicions death toll is much higher than reported

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Family members perform the last rites for a victim of Covid-19 at a cremation ground in Guwahati, Assam. Photograph: Dasarath Deka/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Family members perform the last rites for a victim of Covid-19 at a cremation ground in Guwahati, Assam. Photograph: Dasarath Deka/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

[\*Peter Beaumont\*](#)

Thu 10 Jun 2021 07.05 EDT

India's daily tally of coronavirus deaths has reached more than 6,000 after a single state dramatically revised its data for fatalities during the second wave, increasing fears that the country's toll is much higher than reported.

While the daily total would be a global record for a single day, it appears that Bihar's addition of approximately 4,000 extra deaths after a court challenge accounts for deaths that occurred throughout India's devastating second wave of infections.

The new total comes as official figures for nationwide infections in India showed a third day under 100,000, suggesting the latest surge may be declining.

According to health ministry figures, 6,148 people died in the previous 24 hours, taking total fatalities to almost 360,000, the world's third highest. The previous world record, according to an AFP tally, was 5,527 in the US on 12 February, although this was also because of an upwards revision of earlier deaths.

The revision came amid allegations that the state of Bihar had undercounted its death toll, which had led the high court in Patna to order a detailed audit that now includes those who died from Covid complications after recovering from the disease, and also those who died on the way to the hospital.

### [India covid deaths](#)

Similar accusations have been levelled at other state governments after a recent coronavirus surge resulted in crematoriums being overwhelmed in many places and hundreds of bodies being dumped in rivers or buried in shallow graves.

With record-keeping poor even in normal times, many experts believe India's death toll is several times higher than the official number, meaning it could be more than a million, which would make it the world's highest.

The newly reported deaths had occurred last month and state officials were investigating the lapse, a district health official said, blaming the oversight on private hospitals. "These deaths occurred 15 days ago and were only

uploaded now in the government portal. Action will be taken against some of the private hospitals,” said the official, who declined to be identified as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

[‘They stormed the ICU and beat the doctor’: health workers under attack](#)  
[Read more](#)

Suspicious have been heightened by the fact that death rates in many countries, for example in Brazil and the US, are several times higher than in India.

While India’s official Covid-19 death toll stands at 359,676, C-Voter, an Indian research and polling agency, estimated last month that at least 1.8 million Indians may have died from Covid-19. If these numbers are accurate, it would mean that India has been by far the worst-hit country.

“Under-reporting is a widespread problem, not necessarily deliberate, often because of inadequacies,” said Rajib Dasgupta, head of the Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health at New Delhi’s Jawaharlal Nehru University. “In the rural context, whatever states may say or claim, testing is not simple, easy or accessible,” he said.

The government dismissed those estimates as exaggerated. But the main opposition Congress party said other states must follow Bihar’s example and conduct a review of deaths over the past two months. “This proves beyond a doubt government has been hiding Covid deaths,” said Shama Mohamed, a Congress spokesperson, adding that an audit should also be ordered in the big states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

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## Coronavirus

# One in five Britons considering holiday to amber-list country

Survey finds willingness to consider trip to countries such as Spain increases to a third among young people

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Beachgoers in Benalmadena, Spain. Popular destinations such as Spain, France, Greece and Italy are on the amber list. Photograph: Jon Nazca/Reuters

Beachgoers in Benalmadena, Spain. Popular destinations such as Spain, France, Greece and Italy are on the amber list. Photograph: Jon Nazca/Reuters

[Robert Booth](#) *Social affairs correspondent*

Wed 9 Jun 2021 17.30 EDT

One in five people are still considering taking a holiday to foreign countries on England's amber list, including Spain and [Greece](#), despite stringent testing and quarantine requirements, polling has revealed.

The willingness to consider going to restricted destinations increases to a third of 18- to 24-year-olds, despite them being the least likely to be vaccinated, a survey by Survation showed.

Holidaymakers [scrambled to get back from Portugal](#) this week after it was switched from green to amber on the government's traffic-light system, sparking criticism from holidaymakers and the travel industry.

Travel agents are calling for ministers to allow people who have had both doses of vaccine to travel to amber countries without testing and 10 days' quarantine on return. The government has defended the system – which demands testing and quarantine for travellers from all but 11 countries and territories – saying it protects freedoms in the UK by restricting the spread of new variants.

On Monday, [Matt Hancock](#), the health secretary, indicated greater travel freedoms were unlikely in the short term.

“Restoring international travel in the medium term is an incredibly important goal,” he told MPs. “It is going to be challenging and hard because of the risk of new variants.” The next scheduled reassessment of the traffic light categories is due on 24 June, but top European destinations including Spain, France, [Italy](#) and Greece all remain amber for now.

One of the UK's largest tour operators, Tui, has cancelled all holidays to amber countries up to 20 June. Its chief executive, Andrew Flintham, has called for the government to reveal the methodology behind the traffic light decisions.

“There are destinations around the world with little or no Covid-19 cases and good vaccination rates, so we need to understand why these remain on the amber list,” he said.

Labour has said the amber list should be scrapped. [Lisa Nandy](#), the shadow foreign secretary, said at the weekend: “We think it’s pointless. We think it’s confusing and that confusion is actually dangerous at the moment.”

The polling concluded on 2 June and was commissioned by Prenetics, a Covid testing company that was involved with test events including the Snooker world championship and Premier League football.

Abta, which represents travel agents, is calling on the government to scrap the need for testing to and from an amber destination country if travellers have received both doses of the vaccine. It also wants it to cut the costs of tests, including removing VAT charged on PCR tests, which can cost about £120 per person.

Asked about the public’s continued desire to go to amber countries, an Abta spokesperson said: “We are talking about the most popular overseas holiday destination on the amber list. We normally have 18 million people going to [Spain](#) each year. That’s why demand is strong and people really need a holiday. There’s a high percentage of the population that takes vacations overseas every year and they are really missing it.”

They said the difficulty of finding bookings in the UK now and the cost of UK holidays was also fuelling pressure to go to amber destinations.

A spokesperson for easyJet said: “Almost all of Europe has been placed into amber, and UK citizens may feel they have minimal viable options for a holiday but to book to an amber destination ... Our research with Yale school of public health has shown that much of Europe is safe and should be on the green list, so we continue to urge the UK government to add more countries to the green list.”

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## Coronavirus

# AstraZeneca vaccine linked to slightly higher risk of blood disorder

Analysis in Scotland finds small increase in risk of treatable condition called idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura

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The researchers estimate there are an additional 11 cases of ITP for every million doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine administered. Photograph: Dado Ruvić/Reuters

The researchers estimate there are an additional 11 cases of ITP for every million doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine administered. Photograph: Dado Ruvić/Reuters

[Ian Sample](#) *Science editor*  
[@iansample](#)

Wed 9 Jun 2021 11.00 EDT

Data from Scotland's Covid vaccination programme has revealed a possible small increase in the risk of a treatable and often mild bleeding disorder after the first dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.

Doctors examined the medical records of 5.4 million people in Scotland for instances of blood clots, unusual bleeding, and a condition called idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP), where a reduction in blood platelets can lead to easy bruising, bleeding gums and internal bleeding.

The analysis conducted with Public [Health](#) Scotland found the risk of ITP was marginally higher in the 1.7 million people who had received a first dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine than in a comparison group that did not receive the shot up to 14 April 2021.

Writing in [Nature Medicine](#), the researchers estimate there are an additional 11 cases of ITP for every million doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine administered. The side-effect is mostly observed in older people with chronic health problems such as coronary heart disease, diabetes or chronic kidney disease, and typically appears from the second to fourth week.

The increased rate of ITP after the Oxford/AstraZeneca shot is similar to that seen with other vaccines such as the flu, MMR and hepatitis B jabs, where 10 to 30 additional cases of ITP occur per million doses. Catching coronavirus itself carries a substantially higher risk of ITP.

The study found weaker evidence for an increased risk of clots in the arteries and bleeding events after the AstraZeneca vaccine. There was no sign of a greater risk from ITP, clotting or bleeding in the 800,000 people in Scotland who had received the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid vaccine up to 14 April.

“Overall, this is pretty reassuring,” said Aziz Sheikh, a senior author on the study and professor of primary care research and development at the University of Edinburgh. “At the population level, we are seeing low risks from the vaccine and there are treatments for people who develop ITP.”

In May, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that under-40s should receive [an alternative to the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid vaccine](#) given the low levels on infection in the UK and the very rare risk of a potentially serious condition called VITT or vaccine-induced thrombosis and thrombocytopenia. In line with that advice, most under-40s in the UK now receive either the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna jabs, which are based on a different technology to the Oxford/AstraZeneca shot.

“If people experience bruising or bleeding after the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, it is important to let their GP know because there are good treatments available for ITP,” Prof Sheikh said. “The wider message is that the risk of these outcomes is much lower with the vaccine than if you develop Covid-19.”

Stephen Evans, a professor of pharmacoepidemiology at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said ITP developed in about 340 per 100,000 people who developed Covid. “Even if the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine does have an increased risk of ITP, its benefit outweighs its risk. For the majority of people ITP does not cause serious problems, but it is not the case for everyone.”

Adam Finn, a professor of paediatrics and member of JCVI at the University of Bristol, said ITP was often diagnosed when no other cause for low blood platelets could be found. “It may cause bleeding and treatments are available to prevent this but in many cases the condition is mild and self-limiting,” he said.

“Overall, this study adds somewhat to the understanding of the haematological problems that occur in very small numbers of recipients of this vaccine and, given its importance to the global effort to control the pandemic, ongoing efforts to clarify the characteristics, causes and mechanisms of these events are extremely important,” he added.



## 2021.06.10 - Spotlight

- ['Your baby's heart has stopped' Hell and healing after the stillbirth of my son](#)
- [Anita Neil How Britain's first Black female Olympian was forced to quit in her prime](#)
- ['Makes you sick' Fury in Rio as pregnant 24-year-old killed amid police raid](#)
- [Acropolis now Greeks outraged at concreting of ancient site](#)

## Pregnancy

# **‘Your baby’s heart has stopped’: hell and healing after the stillbirth of my son**



‘In the mornings, I woke up having forgotten and thinking I was still pregnant. Then I would remember ...’ Illustration: Shonagh Rae at Heart Agency/The Guardian

‘In the mornings, I woke up having forgotten and thinking I was still pregnant. Then I would remember ...’ Illustration: Shonagh Rae at Heart Agency/The Guardian

In 2010, Katie Allen was days from giving birth to her second child when she felt his movements slow. She talks about the ordeal – and how she was helped through it



[Katie Allen](#)

Thu 10 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

I woke to the barely there contractions of early labour. It was a few days before my due date in my second pregnancy – a pregnancy seemingly without complications. The Moses basket was out and my hospital bag packed; everything was ready for our baby boy. He was kicking as normal.

As the day went on, my contractions remained mild and far apart. I kept to the plan discussed with our midwives: stay at home as long as possible, no rushing to the maternity ward. I took our two-year-old son, Alex, for a walk with a friend and we collected conkers. When I sang Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star at Alex's bedtime, the baby kicked hard, as he had done most days, as if he recognised the song, knew our routine.

Not long after, a shiver went through me. Something felt wrong. The baby's movements had slowed.

I called the number for our community midwives. Had I tried drinking something cold, eating the things that made him kick, the midwife asked. I had, but I tried again while on the phone. Nothing. She told me to go to my hospital, King's in south London, and to explain I had hardly felt the baby move for a while.



I took a minicab, leaving my husband at home with our sleeping son. I imagined someone would scan the baby, reassure me and send me home to try to sleep before my labour really got going. At the very worst, they would tell me the baby was in some kind of danger and he would be delivered by emergency C-section. His father would miss the birth, but they would have all the years that followed.

The maternity ward was quiet. It felt empty, but it probably wasn't. I was seen immediately by a friendly but calm midwife. She was silent as she scanned our baby, running over and over him, then stopping in one place.

I don't know who told me. I have different versions in my mind, though only one can be true. I think the midwife went out and came back with a doctor. I do remember the words. "Your baby's heart has stopped."

Another doctor came in, scanned and told me the same. I refused to believe it.

I asked the doctors to restart his heart. It couldn't stop beating while he was still attached, surely? I'm alive, so he must be, I said. Get him out, save him.

"It doesn't work like that," the doctor said. "He's died."

Still, I would not believe it. I told them that my brother and my father had both died so there was no way my son could die. The doctors had to tell me again: our baby was dead.

I called my husband and, as the phone rang, I contemplated telling him to come, but not why. Maybe it could wait. But that felt wrong, so I told him: "The baby's heart stopped." I didn't say the words "dead" or "died".

Our friend, who was on standby to look after Alex, arrived at our house and my husband came to the hospital. By then it was late at night. We were taken to a delivery room where a brilliant midwife looked after us. She kept us talking, distracted us with stories, organised an epidural. When I was so distressed that I couldn't stop wailing "sorry" and that it was all my fault, she brought in doctors to reason with me, to explain that sometimes babies

just die. All through the night, the labour speeding up, I kept hoping they were wrong, that our baby would come out alive.



The handprints of Finn, Katie Allen's stillborn son. Photograph: Courtesy of Katie Allen

He was delivered on the morning of Sunday 26 September 2010. He had died at some point on the Saturday and was stillborn. We called him Finn.

The midwife I had called the night before arrived for Finn's birth and stayed with us afterwards. She asked if we wanted her to take photos of us holding him. I am so glad she did. We didn't know what to do; we were still in total disbelief that our son was not alive.

I thought stillbirth happened centuries ago. I did not know a full-term baby could simply stop living in the womb

In truth, I thought stillbirth was something that happened centuries ago. I knew babies could die from complications during delivery or after birth, but I had told myself it hardly ever happened, and I did not know a full-term baby could simply stop living in the womb.

Tragically, our kind of loss is not as rare as you would hope. Every day in the UK, about [14 babies die before, during or soon after birth](#), according to the stillbirth and neonatal death charity Sands.

Finn was one of those babies. Back home without him, I tidied, cleaned and made biscuits all exactly the same size – anything to feel in control. At night, I felt for him kicking. In the mornings, I woke up having forgotten about the hospital, and for a moment thinking I was still pregnant. Then I would remember.

I clung to our toddler's routine: naps, meals, walks to collect more conkers. He loved dancing to Lady Gaga and Abba, and they were playing most of his waking hours. Alex was old enough to ask where his promised baby brother was, but too young to understand the answer.

One of the hardest things in those early days was telling people what had happened. Friends were expecting happy news and baby pictures; instead we had to find the words to say our son had died just before he was born.

People were kind and supportive, but didn't know what to say. The house filled with flowers and cards. Friends donated to our fundraiser for the NSPCC, which we held in Finn's memory. Many wrote letters and emails, dropped off cakes. Some stayed to talk.

My friend Naomi phoned every morning, asking: "Is today a good day or a bad day?" She promised me I would get through the worst days, that they would become fewer, and, of course, she was right.

Other parents invited us on trips to the park. Friends took me out in the evenings, distracting me and, at the same time, repairing my battered self-esteem. Despite my grief, and my enduring sense of guilt about Finn's death, their invitations told me I was still good company.

We went away with another family the weekend before Finn's funeral. My brother looked after Alex so that my husband and I could get out of the house alone. Through the [Sands stillbirth and neonatal death charity](#), I made new friends who had also lost babies. We talked about what had happened to us, how others had reacted, our fears about trying again.



Katie Allen and her husband Ralph with Finn in a picture taken by the midwife. Photograph: Courtesy of Katie Allen

Some friends asked what had happened, and I was grateful to be given the chance to share our birth story, as distressing as it was. My oldest friend asked if I might show her photos of Finn, and it made him feel more real to me and eased my guilt about not having the usual baby pictures to share.

We had outstanding support from the NHS right from the moment the scan confirmed Finn had died. Our community midwives and health visitor answered our questions about practical elements, such as what would happen now I wasn't breastfeeding, how to organise Finn's funeral, and what to expect from the postmortem – which ultimately found no cause for Finn's sudden death. A bereavement midwife dropped round a disc with photos taken of Finn at the hospital, for us to look at when we were ready. There were prints from his hands and feet, too. We had excellent care from the hospital psychotherapist.

Some people said nothing; usually people I didn't know well, such as those at our toddler's music group. They had seen me with a bump. Now the bump was gone and yet I was never with a baby. They probably assumed I had left the baby with a nanny or relative. I let them believe it. But the longer that went on, the more I worried about someone asking.

With hindsight, at both that group and at Alex's nursery, I wish I had emailed someone in charge and asked them to tell the other parents what had happened. All the guessing by them and counter-guessing by me could have been avoided.

There were some more hurtful moments – but thankfully they were rare. A baby announcement arrived in the post and its picture of a newborn floored me. I would never begrudge anyone else their healthy baby, but that card left me sobbing: “Why can't I have my baby too?”

There was a dinner just weeks after Finn's death when no one mentioned what had happened to us. I suspect our friends wanted to give us a night off from our grief, but we wondered if the message was not to talk about our son any more.

With all these situations – unanswered emails, the nursery gate, strange dinners – I felt it would always have been better to say something rather than nothing to a grieving person. Even a simple “How's it been going?” gives the person a chance to talk – or they can respond with a “fine” or “so-so” if they would rather not.

Then again, not all things that were said to us were helpful. One reaction to Finn's death stood out. It was from someone I didn't know well, but whom I had promised to let know that our baby had arrived safely. I texted that I was sorry to share sad news and that Finn had died. Then came the reply that “everything happens for a reason”.

The phrase infuriated me. With all the pain and injustice in the world, how could someone believe that? It also deepened my guilt. The reason was surely something I had done, or would have done had Finn lived – I clearly wasn't fit to be his mother.

Things just happen, no reason. Nature is wonderful and cruel

I like to think that, in different circumstances, I would have dismissed “everything happens for a reason”. But in shock and desperately wanting life

to make sense, it consumed me. I made lists of possible reasons and asked anyone who would listen if they believed it.

The days became easier with the passing of time and with the psychotherapist's support. We saw her again when I was pregnant for a third time, with Ella, who is now nine. I let go of "everything happens for a reason". Things just happen, no reason. Nature is wonderful and cruel. Alex and Ella grew, went to nursery, to school. We talked, and still talk, about Finn. The photo of us holding him is on the wall in our house.

I returned to work, covering economics at the Guardian. My job as a reporter was busy and rewarding, but something niggled at me. I wanted to write something longer, more creative. Then the character of Rachel Summers came to me and I began writing her story. Her son is stillborn like Finn, and Rachel, too, is told that "everything happens for a reason". She is certain she knows the reason. The day she found out she was pregnant, she had stopped a man from jumping in front of a train. The man must have taken her baby's place and she resolves to track him down. What started as a character became a novel that I hope brings baby loss a little further out of the shadows. Its title is that phrase that so tormented me, *Everything Happens for a Reason*. I still hate those words.

Yet I know it's hard to find the right words when someone is grieving. Despite losing a son, a brother and my parents, I still struggle to write something that might be of comfort in condolence cards. Ultimately, I know that whatever I say, I can never give a bereaved person their loved one back. But I do believe that the better we become at talking about death, the less isolating grief will feel.

*[Everything Happens for a Reason](#) by Katie Allen is published by Orenda Books, price £8.99). To order a copy for £8.36 with free UK p&p go to [theguardian.com/bookshop](http://theguardian.com/bookshop)*

# Anita Neil: Britain's first Black female Olympian – who was forced to quit in her prime

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## Rights and freedomBrazil

# **‘Makes you sick’: fury in Rio as pregnant 24-year-old killed amid police raid**



Demonstrators attend a protest against the death of Kathlen Romeu, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Wednesday. Photograph: Ricardo Moraes/Reuters

Demonstrators attend a protest against the death of Kathlen Romeu, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Wednesday. Photograph: Ricardo Moraes/Reuters

Kathlen Romeu's death marks latest fatality among Black favela residents as police clash with drug gangs

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# HUMANITY UNITED

[About this content](#)

[Flávia Milhorange](#) in *Rio de Janeiro*

Thu 10 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

In early June, Kathlen Romeu posted a photo of herself and her boyfriend on a Instagram, with a caption announcing that she was pregnant. “I am discovering myself as a mother, and I am scared thinking about how it is going to be,” the 24-year old interior designer [wrote on 2 June](#). “I laugh, I cry and I am afraid.”

[Police killing hundreds in Rio de Janeiro despite court ban on favela raids](#)

[Read more](#)

Just a few days after writing those tentative, hopeful words, she was dead: another victim of Rio de Janeiro’s relentless conflict between police and drug gangs.

According to the city authorities, she was struck by a single stray bullet during a confrontation between officers and criminals.

But the death on Tuesday of yet another young Black favela resident during a raid by heavily armed police has prompted an outburst of fury in [Brazil](#) –

and fresh calls for a rethink of the so-called war on drug gangs.



A family member is comforted as he grieves during Kathleen Romeu's burial service on Wednesday in Rio. Photograph: Bruna Prado/AP

In the past year, Rio has seen a dramatic upsurge in [deadly police incursions](#) into the favelas – despite a supreme court order to halt such operations during the Covid pandemic.

Lins de Vasconcelos, the neighbourhood where Romeu died, is just a couple of miles from Jacarezinho, where last month police killed more than 20 young men in the [deadliest police raid](#) in the city's history.

After Romeu's death, local residents blocked a highway connecting southern and northern zones of Rio. Protesters blocked traffic, calling for justice and holding signs saying: "We want peace."

"We want the police to stop these operations that oppress and exterminate us," said Luciano Norberto dos Santos, whose brother was also killed by the police in 2009.

Romeu was visiting her grandmother, Sayonara Fátima de Oliveira, in Lins de Vasconcelos, which, like many favela neighbourhoods, is a stronghold of one of the city's many drug factions.

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Oliveira told [local media](#) that gunfire suddenly broke out and her granddaughter fell on the floor.

“Before I realised, there were police officers everywhere,” she said.

Romeu was taken to hospital but died soon afterwards from internal bleeding.

The police [said](#) officers on patrol had returned fire after coming under attack and rushed to help Romeu as soon as they realized she had been struck. “The officers were the first to reach Kathlen. They fought for her life,” said Ivan Blaz, a police spokesperson.

Nadine Borges, the vice-president of the human rights commission at the Brazilian Bar Association, which is providing legal assistance to Romeu’s family, said that witness testimony suggested the fatal shots had come from the police position.

“We are heading towards a precipice where security forces are increasingly authorized to carry out killings,” Borges added. “This is really shocking.”

[‘They came to kill’: Rio’s deadliest favela police raid sparks calls for change](#)  
[Read more](#)

On Wednesday, Romeu’s boyfriend, Marcelo Ramos, [posted a tearful video on Instagram](#), laying the blame on the police. “The culprit has a name: it’s the state, it’s the unprepared police. A month ago, there was the Jacarezinho massacre, now it’s Kate – and next month another family will lose someone close.”

Many Brazilians reacted with grief and fury. Ícaro Silva, a popular Black actor, re-posted Romeu's last Instagram photo, with the comment: "The news is repeated so often it makes you sick. Innocent. Black. Dead. Police operation."

He added: "Black lives matter. And it is absurd and hellish to have to say that."

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## Greece

# Acropolis now: Greeks outraged at concreting of ancient site



An online petition signed by 3,500 people calls for the concrete pathways to the Acropolis to be removed. Photograph: Yannis Kolesidis/EPA

An online petition signed by 3,500 people calls for the concrete pathways to the Acropolis to be removed. Photograph: Yannis Kolesidis/EPA

Installation of new pathway and lift has been criticised by archaeologists and called ‘a scandal’

[Helena Smith](#) *in Athens*

Thu 10 Jun 2021 00.00 EDT

When seen through the eyes of Manolis Korres, the architect who has long presided over the restoration of the Parthenon, the Acropolis needs no improvement at all.

In the face of such architectural mastery, he thinks of himself more as a maestro of order, making a monument that has survived explosions, fire, looting and earthquakes more understandable to the public.

“Many generations of scholars have tried to bring order to this chaos, myself included,” he said, while taking in the maze of marble slabs and scaffolding-encased ruins around him. “The issue is to safeguard what is here. In a hospital you have to take care of patients, for me the patients are stones.”



‘Many generations of scholars have tried to bring order to this chaos, myself included’ – Prof Manolis Korres. Photograph: Helena Smith/The Guardian

The wiry professor, a world-renowned authority on the fifth century BC site and current head of the Acropolis Monuments Conservation committee, is regarded as a national treasure in [Greece](#). No man, say supporters, knows more about the Periclean treasure, or the sacred rock on which it stands.

But at 73, 70 years after he was first taken as a child on the shoulders of an uncle to visit the temples, the architect has also come under criticism for interventions conducted during lockdown and deemed to have gone too far.

The installation of a new pathway paved in reinforced concrete across much of the hill’s open space in the name of facilitating people with disabilities has been met with dismay. So, too, has Korres’ proposed plan to overhaul



the ancient citadel's majestic gateway, or Propylaia, by reinstating a Roman staircase that would both broaden the entrance, correct previous erroneous interventions and return it to some of its original form.

Critics complain that both pander to mass tourism rather than saving the site from the ravages of time.

Prior to the pandemic, about 3.5 million tourists made the ascent to see the Acropolis, the country's most visited site.

In the six months that the temples were closed to the public on account of Covid-19, a new lift capable of carrying two wheelchairs at a time was also installed on the rock's northern flank, replacing an older elevator that had ceased to operate years ago. That, too, has been criticised as a modernist eyesore.

The alterations – the most significant on the site for more than a century – replace an older pathway that followed the ancient Panathenaic way and was much narrower in size. Opposition has been fierce. More than 3,500 signatories have endorsed an open letter on the online activist network Avaaz calling for the pathways to be removed and other projected changes to be cancelled. Following the completion of the corridors on the northern and eastern area of the site, plans are afoot to extend the walkways west and south.

“It's as if the Parthenon itself has been lowered to street level and surrounded by a cement pavement,” said Despoina Koutsoumba, president of the Association of Greek archaeologists. “There has been a great deal of pressure, especially from the cruise industry, to increase visitor capacity so that even larger crowds can be accommodated.”

### [Graphic](#)

Dr Tasos Tanoulas, until recently director of restorations at the Propylaia, also deplored the decision to cover so much of the rock's face with reinforced concrete, saying the move would lead inexorably to “degradation of the natural landscape and a devaluation of the rock as a natural monument in its own right, as a natural fort”. In a letter to World [Heritage](#) Watch – the

Berlin-based body established to ensure that prime sites are not sacrificed to economic interests – Tanoulas argued the alterations appeared to “compete with and diminish” the architectural and sculptural splendour of the monuments.

Yannis Hamilakis, a professor of archaeology and modern Greek studies at Brown University, went further, saying the changes amounted to “a scandal of global proportions” given the monument’s significance as a world heritage site.

“The most scandalous thing, perhaps, is that these works have been carried out without prior systematic study,” he said. “They’re clearly an attempt to recreate an imagined fifth century BC Acropolis, a neo-classical colonialist and nationalist dream which converges with the government’s agenda for further commercialisation of the site.”

If proof were needed, he said, the French designer Christian Dior will be among the first to take advantage of the new expanded pathways with a fashion shoot on the Acropolis next week.

But the changes have also won praise, and according to Korres, have the added advantage of being ‘reversible’. “What we have done is patch rock destroyed by the vicissitudes of time. We didn’t have the freedom to use flagstones or other materials because they weren’t used in the past but, if desired, all this surface,” he said pointing to the paving, “could be removed in a day because of the membrane underneath.”

Greece’s culture minister, Lina Mendoni, a respected archaeologist herself, defended the measures, saying they had been ratified at multiple levels, including the powerful central archaeological council Kas. “They’ve all been approved by people whose credibility cannot be disputed,” she said during a tour of the site. “Since 2004 [when Athens held the Olympic Games] we’ve been talking about improving access for people with disabilities.”

Each year about 150 people are seriously injured negotiating the outcrop’s slippery limestone surface, she revealed. “Many break legs. Each incident is recorded in the site’s logbooks. Whatever you do on the Acropolis ignites

debate. If you don't do anything, you're criticised; if you do, you're criticised."

Tour guides gathered around the monument's ticket booths on Wednesday agreed the new pathways were overdue. "There are ambulances up here at least four times a week," said Athina Pitaki who has been guiding visitors around the site since 1978. "I've been up here long enough to see all the changes and in reality it's much better now. It hasn't affected the monuments. They're still as impressive as ever and for the first time people can enjoy them without always fearing they're about to fall."

Korres knows he is in for a fight. Flooding at the site described as "a predictable consequence" of the new paving following heavy rains last December has intensified the outcry. Critics, led by Dr Tanoulas, claim it would be impossible to detach the reinforced concrete because it would require mechanical means and damage the rock.

But it is controversy the amiable professor appears to relish. "A hilltop can't flood," he smiles. "Any intervention raises the issue of aesthetics and is a controversial process. It's always about weighing what is gained and what is lost."

The map on this article was amended on 10 June 2021 to remove an incorrect reference to the Temple of Athena Nike.

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## 2021.06.10 - Opinion

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- The G7 corporate tax plan could make the world a fairer place to do business
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# There is an evictions crisis happening right under our noses

[Aditya Chakraborty](#)



Warnings about the end of a government ban in England overlook the methods landlords have already been using to turf out tenants



Illustration by Sébastien Thibault

Illustration by Sébastien Thibault

Thu 10 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

For weeks, newspapers and campaigners have been warning of a looming evictions crisis. Of landlords free again, as of this month, to set the bailiffs on their tenants. Of hundreds of thousands of people [losing their homes](#). Of an entire market teetering on a “[cliff edge](#)”. A terrifying prospect – except it doesn’t lie in the distance. An evictions crisis is already here and it is ripping through people’s lives.

That is not what I expected when I began writing this column. I was looking for signs of a storm brewing now that the evictions ban in [England](#) is over and it’s legal again for landlords to send in bailiffs to turf out tenants. Then I headed to Hackney, east London, to one of the Victorian townhouses lined along a roaring main road. Marching to the top, I walked into a flat whose tenants didn’t feel protected by the ban.

Let’s call the couple inside John and Radha. He takes big, geometric photos of buildings, while she collects linocuts. They both love cities – the wilder and more various the better. In their 50s and 70s, they don’t fit the clichés about “generation rent”, yet have rented for two decades along this one road.

They've been in this neat, airy one-bedroom apartment for the past seven years, paying £1,300 a month. "I consider it an honour to have been a custodian of this neighbourhood," says John, and tells of chasing after a handbag thief, only to wind up in hospital.

Recently, he has come to rely on medics. In summer 2019, he caught chickenpox in one eye and was prescribed steroid drops. As the first wave of Covid hit, the hospital halted face-to-face appointments. Without checkups, John developed serious glaucoma and went blind in his left eye. Doctors can't say if he will ever see with it again. They performed emergency surgery just before Christmas, sending him home with orders to take it easy. At a point when he needed stability, his housing situation collapsed.

When the pandemic broke out, the couple's landlord, James Smith (I won't name him as we are not naming the tenants), worried that house prices might crash and his flat could suffer what he described in an email to me a "considerable loss in value". He wasn't the only property owner worrying in that time of confusion, but arguably any fall would have to be enormous for him to lose out: the Land Registry shows that Smith bought the flat in 2003 for £162,000; today, similar properties nearby sell for almost three times as much. He put it on the market, agreeing that in any sale John and Radha could stay six months before leaving (from August 2020, the government ruled that landlords had to give tenants that much notice). Although the couple were shielding, they agreed to the viewings. But when in mid-February Smith tried to arrange another appointment, John didn't reply. And Smith reports, his estate agents complained of "no calls being returned to arrange access". John didn't feel well, he said, and had a lot on his mind.

Smith was frustrated. "Have to assume you are refusing access for viewings," he wrote. "That leaves eviction the only option. However unwell you are, no communication is the worst option for you and everyone else." John replied, agreeing to the viewings and asking for some small repairs, but Smith denies receiving the email.

What had been an amicable relationship, in which the rent didn't go up for seven years and the tenants barely complained about a thing, quickly broke down. Smith emailed and called a number of times. Radha said that when his name flashed up on their phones, "my heart would jump out of my



chest”. They usually didn’t pick up and their lack of response spurred a vexed Smith to send erratic and exasperated messages. He would at some points express concern over John’s health and at another castigate them for not responding: “You have taken over control of someone else’s property” – making the couple sound like illegal squatters, rather than tenants who since 2014 have paid him well over £100,000.

One Saturday in mid-May, he asked Radha if the couple wanted to renew the tenancy, saying that if he didn’t hear by first thing on Monday “the UK’s main evictions company will take over from there”. Last week, he forwarded John an exchange with a law firm, with the subject line “Hackney Eviction – Step 1”. John didn’t reply. Smith needed to carry out an electrical inspection, John kept asking for some small repairs, and neither side got what they wanted.

Despite these threats, Smith has never served notice, let alone begun legal proceedings. He said to me “in exasperation, with no end to the dispute in sight”, eviction appeared to be the only way to resolution. He said he wanted to “end the ... misunderstanding” and “restore relations”. Yet such is the powerlessness of renters in London, who have less legal protection than their counterparts in Lithuania or Leith or pretty much [anywhere else in Europe](#), that John and Radha are already braced to be thrown out. They are already talking about backup plans and moving out. Their panic is such that Radha sometimes vomits with anxiety.

Since February, John has developed severe psoriasis, the pain of which rules his days and gives him sleepless nights, and for which he goes into hospital three times a week. There they coat him with paraffin wax, then coal tar, then cream, in treatments that take four hours and leave him “emotionally knackered”.

Psoriasis is often triggered or made worse by [stress](#), and Radha said: “I need to support John and protect his health.” She is already scouting out other accommodation. They stand to lose their home not because they fancy a move – given the seriousness of John’s conditions, that’s the last thing they want. It will be because they feel they have no choice.

Call this a shadow eviction, of a kind that has gone unremarked in the media and in politics but is as much a theme of this pandemic as soaring house prices. At the London Renters Union, Michael Deas notes a large and growing number of tenants in much worse situations than John and Radha. They're being forced out by "harassment from their landlords, threats of violence and sometimes actual violence. Many of these are illegal evictions and hardly anyone knows about them." And the landlords making them obviously didn't care a fig for any government ban.

"Something real is happening, and it's happening to hundreds of thousands of people," says David Renton, housing barrister and author of new book [Jobs and Homes: Stories of the Law in Lockdown](#). "The mere threat of an eviction is forcing them to leave, without any need for court action."

To see what he means, compare two key bits of evidence. First, the [number of landlords](#) taking tenants to court in England and Wales has collapsed, even though the courts have been open for business for months. This looks as if the ban is working – until you look at the data on [how many tenants](#) are telling their local councils in England that they are homeless, where numbers are only slightly below pre-lockdown levels.

These are pieces, rather than the whole jigsaw, as you might expect in a country that demands you get a licence to watch the BBC on your TV but keeps no national records of who is renting out what properties to whom. Still, the picture that emerges is of landlords skirting the formal processes of eviction even while distressed renters are telling local authority officers that they've been made homeless.

This is what the evictions crisis looks like right now, unnoticed and undiscussed in this strange, sunny interlude between lockdown's end and the abolition of furlough in a country whistling its way to some pretence of normality. Now add to that the slow resumption of normal evictions business, under a government that [burns £5bn](#) on stamp duty holidays to overheat the housing market while doing nothing to help tenants who have fallen behind on their rent. Something is very wrong with this picture.

- Aditya Chakraborty is a Guardian columnist

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## OpinionXinjiang

# How China went from celebrating ethnic diversity to suppressing it

[Thomas S Mullaney](#)

The brutal clampdown in Xinjiang represents an about-face from the communist party's original approach to cultural differences



‘In the early 1950s ... the CCP committed to officially recognising more minority peoples than any other Chinese regime in history’ A 1952 poster of Mao Zedong Photograph: Alamy

‘In the early 1950s ... the CCP committed to officially recognising more minority peoples than any other Chinese regime in history’ A 1952 poster of Mao Zedong Photograph: Alamy

Thu 10 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

China's mass detention of Uyghur Muslims – the largest of a religio-ethnic group since the second world war – is not the inevitable or predictable

outcome of Chinese communist policies towards ethnic minorities. I've spent the past 20 years studying ethnicity in China and, when viewing the present situation in [Xinjiang](#) through the prism of history, one thing becomes clear: this is not what was “supposed” to happen.

In the early 1950s the Chinese Communist party (CCP) was holding on to revolutionary victory by its fingernails. The postwar economy was in shambles, and the outbreak of the Korean war brought a nuclear hegemon to its doorstep, in the form of the United States. Not the moment most regimes would choose to enlarge their to-do lists. The CCP did, however, committing to officially recognising more minority peoples than any other Chinese regime in history. While Chiang Kai-shek's nationalists had begrudgingly accepted the official existence of five groups in the 1930s and 40s, the Communists recognised 55 in all (plus the Han majority), many with populations under 10,000.

A remarkable amount of time and capital was dedicated to the celebration and bolstering of these groups. Perhaps the largest social survey in human history sent thousands of researchers into minority communities, filling libraries with their reports. Linguists created writing systems for minorities who did not already have them. The scale of the People's Republic of China's investment in groups it designated as “minorities” has been staggering.

Here's the irony: the Chinese communists don't believe that “ethnic identity” truly exists – not in the long run. Rooted in Marxism-Leninism, the party maintains (at least, it did) that class is the only fundamental dimension of human identity. Other collective identities, such as nationality, religion and ethnicity are long-lasting but ultimately ephemeral fictions, constructed by those at the top of the economic pyramid to distract the poor from seeking comradeship with fellow proletarians.

Why would the party invest in something it doesn't think exists? To neutralise it.

While other countries have used denialism as a tactic to combat perceived threats of internal ethnic diversity – insisting on the singularity and indivisibility of one's nation by recognising as few minorities as possible, or

perhaps none at all – the Chinese communist game plan was the opposite: to recognise ethnic diversity into irrelevance. To shepherd it into extinction.

By embracing so many ethnic identities the goal has been to preempt threats of local nationalism; to ensure that the country's minority nationalities never aspire to national self-determination or nation states. After all, if the state was recognising and championing minority groups, what legitimate reason would anyone have to break off and form their own political entity?

A slow-acting process of disintegration was supposed to unfold, less a fiery melting pot than a leisurely slow cooker. Identities once important enough to declare independence over, even to die for, were supposed to matter less and less in one's daily life. The goal was technically *not* assimilationist. A hundred years from now – even 200 or 500 – there should still be Tibetans, Uyghur, Miao, and so on. But these monikers should not matter, except on festive occasions.

The plan has been remarkably effective. For some minority groups, such as Manchu and Zhuang, it is not uncommon for individuals to speak nothing but flawless Mandarin. Meanwhile, the provinces of Yunnan, Guangxi and Guizhou – once sites to some of the bloodiest ethnic violence in world history – have been transformed into “colourful” and “harmonious” lands of diverse cultures ready to welcome authenticity-seeking tourists.

This plan is not benign or nonviolent, let's be clear. The occupation of Tibet in 1951, the suppression of the [1958 Amdo rebellion](#), and many other episodes demonstrate the bloody extent to which the state has gone and will go to maintain control. Ethnic violence was widespread during the Cultural Revolution in 1966, moreover, as Maoist fanatics defaced mosques, dynamited Tibetan temples, and attacked those wearing ethnic clothing – vestiges of the “old China” they sought to destroy.

As violent as these moments were, however, they were episodic and short-lived. Each time, the state snapped back to the earlier playbook of celebration and neutralisation.

What happened? How did mass detention, the systematic destruction of mosques, and imprisonment for showing signs of Muslim religiosity become

state policy in Xinjiang? Three reasons, primarily: growing inequality, the forces unleashed by China's experiment with capitalism, and the rise of ethnic scapegoating, fuelled by rampant Han Chinese resentment.

The Chinese Communist party's ethno-political game plan has always depended on the gulf between rich and poor growing smaller, not larger. Within the Han Chinese majority, as many basic aspects of the "Chinese dream" fall out of reach – as even graduates of prestigious universities huddle in cramped apartments in outskirts of cities they can't afford to live in, for instance – resentment and intolerance has increased. It's not uncommon to find people taking aim, online, at affirmative action policies and the celebration of minorities. While the party has long policed Han nationalism – or "chauvinism" as it still calls it – the sheer scale of this angry Han Chinese malaise is beyond anything Beijing ever planned for.

Meanwhile, when minority regions continue to fall behind the coastal Han provinces, and when lucrative local jobs go to internal Han migrants, a tiny subset find their way back to the always present, destabilising potentials of ethnic identity: separatism, national self-determination, transnationalism, and other things that keep party members up at night. Even for those without any separatist ambitions – by far the majority of minorities – capitalist forces have turned ethnic identity into a form of commodity: a product that, in some locales, is their only "cash crop". Capitalism has made ethnic identity both more volatile and more resistant to the party's hoped-for disintegration.

[Only an international effort can put an end to China's crimes in Xinjiang.](#)  
[Jewher Ilham and Sophie Richardson](#)

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This is the forest fuel, collecting over many years of drought, that caught fire in the 21st century. September 11, the 2009 protests that turned into riots in [Ürümqi, Xinjiang](#), and the 2014 Kunming rail station [attack](#): these events provided the justification for Beijing's brutal clampdown on Muslim Uyghurs in the name of its "People's war on terror". They triggered a weakening, perhaps an abandonment, of ethnic policies that served the party for half a century, and which it spent a fortune building.



Will things snap back, as they did before? It's doubtful. The about-face in CCP ethno-politics seems to be melding with other, powerful forces. China's multitrillion-dollar infrastructure gamble – the “belt and road” initiative – marches straight through the north-west, where Xinjiang is. Climate migrants will need many places to go when sea water begins to fill the populous Pearl river delta, among other regions. Meanwhile, the “one country, two systems” approach to Hong Kong is de facto dead, and the PRC [looks eerily close](#) to contemplating military invasion of Taiwan. Should the party abandon the “56 nationalities of China” model, it would be just one more longstanding policy jettisoned in an already drastic list.

So again, the situation in Xinjiang was not “supposed” to happen. It may well augur the end of China's ethnic diversity policies. As for what could replace them, the current prospects seem grim.

- Thomas S Mullaney is professor of Chinese history at Stanford University

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## [Opinion](#)[Corporate governance](#)

# The G7 corporate tax plan could make the world a fairer place to do business

[Arun Advani](#) and [Lucie Gadenne](#)

Giant companies that pay little tax will compete on a more level playing field. Now we have to make the new rules work



‘How is your local coffee shop, paying the 19% corporate tax rate on its profit, supposed to compete with the likes of Starbucks?’ Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

‘How is your local coffee shop, paying the 19% corporate tax rate on its profit, supposed to compete with the likes of Starbucks?’ Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

Thu 10 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

A decade ago, a [series of scandals](#) rumbled through the corporate tax world, as we all learned how big companies often paid little tax. [Amazon](#), Google

and Starbucks were hauled before parliament to explain why their tax bills were so low. What was truly shocking wasn't the way they had broken the law, but the fact that they hadn't. The global corporate tax system was incredibly leaky. International agreements to ensure no double taxation were, and are, actually leading to double non-taxation of company profits.

Large companies routinely avoid paying their fair share of taxes by “shifting” their profits to low-tax countries. This has led to a [dramatic decline](#) in the amount of tax governments collect from corporations. What's more, profit shifting gives multinational companies a huge advantage over smaller ones: instead of competing to offer a better service, they just can keep costs low by paying less in tax. How is your local coffee shop, paying the 19% corporate tax rate on its profit, supposed to compete with the likes of Starbucks, which paid minimal tax despite [large sales](#)?

This problem wasn't new a decade ago, but it might soon be solved. Last week, after a meeting of the G7 finance ministers in London, the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, breathlessly announced a [“historic agreement” on corporate tax](#). The deal comes in two parts. First, a minimum tax on worldwide profits, with a rate of “at least 15%”. The US badly wants this, to fund the Biden administration's spending plans. In exchange, the US is willing to agree to a small slice of profits from big companies being shared across other countries where they operate. The details are yet to be ironed out, but the idea is that companies such as Amazon should pay some tax where their customers are.

Many have described the deal as a return to multilateralism, after four years of an isolationist Trump presidency. That may be partly right. Part of the push to agree the deal at the [G7](#) is that China is not represented, and the US has been keen to isolate China economically. But coming to an agreement at all has been achieved less through global cooperation, and more through hardnosed threats and negotiation.

[G7 tax reform: what has been agreed and which companies will it affect?](#)  
[Read more](#)

In 2013, soon after those scandals of a decade ago, the OECD group of wealthy countries [started a review](#) with the snore-inducing name “base erosion and profit shifting” (or BEPS to those in the know). The idea was to

create a new international agreement that would end the corporate tax “race to the bottom”. It failed to do this.

Instead, the current agreement was reached because countries started to go it alone and introduce digital taxes on some of the tech giants. These companies are based in the US, and the Biden administration made no secret that it was unhappy about these taxes, [threatening tariffs in retaliation](#). The deal announced at the G7 includes an agreement that countries will remove such digital taxes.

So will the new system work? As ever with tax issues, it is complicated. There are problems for both “pillars” of the deal – the minimum rate and revenue sharing.

First, the minimum tax rate. The US proposal was initially 21%, before being quickly knocked down to 15%. In Europe, France (among others) is also pushing for a higher rate. The UK should join this push. Sunak made a big show of a [planned increase in corporation tax to 25% by 2023](#) in March. If companies have the choice between paying 25% on profits when booked in the UK, or 15% on profits booked elsewhere, it is clear which they will prefer.

The details of how the minimum rate will operate are also crucial. While tax rates are fairly straightforward to understand, the definition of profit can be fiendishly complicated. Different countries have their own rules for whether and how, say, investing in a new factory reduces a company’s taxable profits. Clarity and consistency is going to be the difficult bit, so that profit is measured in the same way everywhere, but it isn’t going to attract the same attention.

Second, the definition of which companies are captured under the revenue-sharing arrangements may leave out some companies that inspired this whole thing. The current proposal requires, among other things, companies to have a profit margin above 10%. [Amazon](#) would not meet this test. There are discussions of how to fix this, including treating Amazon Web Services – which is very profitable – separately from the rest of Amazon, but it highlights again that details are important. And whatever deal is reached, we should expect companies to respond in ways that suit them: they will

continue to be “[fully compliant](#)” with all local laws and regulations in the countries where [they] operate” as Microsoft recently put it, but that doesn’t mean they’ll want to pay more tax.

If this deal goes ahead, there will be losers and winners. The tax havens that have for so long relied on providing “professional services” to the companies that nominally locate there will lose out: Bermuda and the Channel Islands will seem a lot less attractive to companies once their low tax rates are no longer available. The deal is also not great for poorer countries, which are unlikely to get much tax from a revenue-sharing deal based around where sales are made.

What about the UK? Although we’ll get a small slice of tech company profits, it seems likely that this [will be less than](#) we would have got from those companies under a digital services tax. The other parts of the deal – the minimum tax and potentially bringing more companies into the tax-sharing agreement than are covered by the digital taxes – mean that the overall effect will still probably be higher tax revenues. The recently launched EU Tax Observatory has crunched the numbers for EU countries, and looking at similarly sized economies – France and Germany – suggests the [UK stands to gain roughly £2.5-5bn](#) from the deal, [while losing £400m](#) from removing its digital tax.

Nevertheless, the deal is important for the UK. Although the money raised is small compared with total tax receipts of [more than £700bn](#), the minimum tax will – if it can be made to work – start to level the playing field between large and small companies. Just as tax havens will be less able to compete by offering low tax rates, large companies will find it harder to compete by paying less tax and undercutting the local competition. This is an important goal, and the UK should support it wholeheartedly.

- Arun Advani is assistant professor of economics at the University of Warwick. Lucie Gadenne is associate professor of economics at the University of Warwick

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## OpinionRace

# **The fearful boo those who take the knee. But that won't stop the world from changing**

[Hugh Muir](#)



Although Boris Johnson refused to condemn the fans, that doesn't detract from the bravery of the England footballers





‘Players take the knee, as an act of solidarity and strength.’ Tyrone Mings taking the knee before England v Romania at Riverside Stadium in Middlesbrough, 6 June 2021. Photograph: Laurence Griffiths - The FA/The FA/Getty Images

‘Players take the knee, as an act of solidarity and strength.’ Tyrone Mings taking the knee before England v Romania at Riverside Stadium in Middlesbrough, 6 June 2021. Photograph: Laurence Griffiths - The FA/The FA/Getty Images

Wed 9 Jun 2021 09.30 EDT

Booooo! As has become their ritual, England’s footballers [took the knee](#) this weekend. And as has become their ritual, a section of the England fans, newly permitted to congregate at stadiums post-pandemic, took the opportunity to barrack those for whom taking the knee has become a statement, a gesture of belonging, solidarity and a token of faith.

If you ask those who take the knee why they do so, I am sure the reasons will differ. Some are black players who want to challenge the perception that their status as sporting superstars protects them from the realities of being black in Britain, in a white-dominated country, in a white-dominated sport. They have always felt it; taking the knee allows them to articulate it.



Some are young black sportsmen who want to show that whatever their own exalted fortunes, their existence within the bubble of elite sport does not blind them to the realities of what life is like for those outside that bubble, who can't walk safely, who can't get jobs, who don't have futures, who have police officers ram their knees on to their necks.

Some are not black but bond day in and day out with those black men and want to support them. Some may just have become part of the ritual and see no harm in it.

But I guess the reasons for [the booing](#) are also myriad. Football crowds trample on niceties almost as a matter of faith. It is an achievement when any minute's silence is observed and completely predictable when an anthem is booed or a player or manager abused for appearance or perceived proclivities. So this booing does not take the nihilists who go to international matches outside their comfort zone. But still, the booing episodes do tell us something about where we are in Britain post-Black Lives Matter, post-George Floyd, mid-pandemic.

One could dismiss this as a football terraces thing, but I suspect it is the sharp end of something that's happening more widely in society. I think we have reached the point in the race in Britain debate where a section of white establishment Britain is saying: "That's it. We have heard your plight and George Floyd was terrible and yes, perhaps you do need a few more jobs and we can do that, but you keep going on about it and you are making us feel responsible and uncomfortable: we have heard you, but we have heard enough."

Six months ago the pollsters Opinium asked people what they thought about BLM and were told that [55% of adults polled](#) believed BLM had increased racial tension. Since then Boris Johnson and the Spectator/Telegraph nexus, clearly recognising the symptoms and benefits to them of fear and compassion fatigue, have played on those misgivings. The manoeuvre has underpinned their culture attacks and continues to guide their thinking on contentious issues such as free speech and contested statues.

Indeed, true to type, just hours after the latest outburst of booing, when others were soul searching, the prime minister's spokesperson pointedly

[refused to condemn](#) the booing. Of course he did: for where there are boos, there are votes, as far as he is concerned. A man who mined cheap laughs [with references](#) to black “[piccaninnies](#)” and “watermelon smiles” couldn’t credibly do anything else.

But this is where the reactionary force meets the resolute object.

Because, despite the boos, despite the culture-war attacks, there is still no indication that those who want or choose to take the knee, or those in wider society who believe it is right to question the skewed narrative told through conduits such as [statues in the public realm](#) – a public realm that, incidentally, we as black Britons and taxpayers help to fund – are ready to have their campaigns shut down and see their momentum halted.

Here the equal and opposite message is: “Really sorry if you are getting tired of hearing about this, but the truth is that for all the telling, you are only just beginning to hear this. If you’re uncomfortable, welcome to our world: our lives are uncomfortable. You want to tinker, we want wholesale change.”

Alastair Campbell once observed that as a publicist and campaigner, he did not believe a message started getting through until it was heard at least 100 times. We haven’t reached 100, not even 50. We are at the start of that cycle, not the end.

Not everyone here is a combatant. Among those white players who take the knee to support their teammates, there will be those who don’t have very strong views but merely see support – polite acquiescence perhaps – as a decent thing to do. There were fans in the England crowd who tried to drown the booing with their own applause. That too is unsurprising, for even to those who have no strong view there is something distasteful watching violence – verbal or physical – inflicted for no compelling reason.

Those players, those fans, represent millions of Britons, who want no part in the private indecency of social media denigration or the boorishness of public bullying.

Still, for all that, things are messy and they will continue to be so, because actually, this increasingly angry, fractious process is historically how change

happens: in the face of the storm and of opposition. One can no more be surprised that some football fans boo those who claim or give a nod to racial justice than wonder why the American deep south didn't cheer Martin Luther King, why Margaret Thatcher linked Nelson Mandela to terrorists and why the Victorian male establishment gave so little encouragement to the suffragettes.

Democratic politics may in time facilitate social change, through votes and ballots, but before that the tussle on the ground is heated, uncivil and unflinching.

Those of us old enough to have seen spasms of ephemeral protest in recent years can see this is something different. Not a squall but a tide. Not another call for make and mend, but a generation's demand for societal and philosophical realignment.

So the agitation will go on and the kneeling will go on and the booing will continue too, as will the flailing, bewildered scream of people who feel the world changing, but have nothing to add but the sound of fear and ignorance. It is an awful sound to be sure, but it is history's soundtrack.

The kneeling, the boos: they complement each other, but they are not the same. Players take the knee, as an act of solidarity and strength. What is the boo but a sign of weakness.

- Hugh Muir is an editor at the Guardian

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[OpinionEuro 2020](#)

## **What Euro 96 can teach us about life: make life easy for those around you and grind through the tricky bits**

[Adrian Chiles](#)



Last week, I met England football greats Tony Adams and Teddy Sheringham to talk about the historic tournament. But I left with some lessons that go far beyond football



Alan Shearer celebrates England's third goal against Holland in Euro 96, a brilliant team effort that can teach us all something about life. Photograph: Shaun Botterill/Getty Images

Alan Shearer celebrates England's third goal against Holland in Euro 96, a brilliant team effort that can teach us all something about life. Photograph: Shaun Botterill/Getty Images

Wed 9 Jun 2021 11.47 EDT

Warning: I am about to bang on about football. Reassurance: it's not really about football.

Players and ex-players are forever finding new ways of disappointing me and impressing me. Last week, it was the latter. I got to speak at length with a couple of key figures in the famous European Championships of 25 years ago, during which England were surprisingly brilliant until, unsurprisingly, going out to the Germans on penalties. I went to get their memories of Euro 96 but came away with something extra. [From Tony Adams](#), who by then was in absolute crisis with his drinking, I heard how for that tournament he managed to get on the wagon, white-knuckled, one last time to be the team captain they all revered. [From Teddy Sheringham](#), I got what I can only describe as four lessons in life.

Lesson one: success is down to grinding through the tricky bits, and the odd bit of luck, as much as the moments of inspiration and triumph. The trouble is the tricky bits tend to get forgotten. Through the rose-tinted lenses of [England](#) fans' hindsight spectacles, their team were imperiously brilliant before the Germans beat them, which is what the Germans always did. Yes, there was plenty of the sublime on show, but Teddy was at pains to remind me that it wasn't all like that. England's first game was a laboured draw against Switzerland. Then came a poor first half against Scotland followed by a second in which the Scots were awarded a penalty. Mysteriously – Uri Geller went on to claim it was down to him – the ball moved off the spot just as poor Gary McAllister was running up to strike it. The penalty was saved and moments later, Paul Gascoigne scored one of the greatest-ever [England](#) goals.

Job done, but, as Teddy points out: "It wasn't all such plain sailing. Things weren't as swimmingly great as we remember. Sometimes you just have got to dig in."

Lesson two: the need for clarity. Tactically, the England manager Terry Venables was ahead of his time, but his real gift was explaining his ideas clearly; you can have the best tactics in the world but if you can't get players to understand them they'll not be worth much.

"He simplified everything," says Tony. "He was just so articulate; you could understand it." Teddy recalls countless occasions, under other managers, of players coming out of team meetings plainly baffled about what they'd just been told. Crucially, says Teddy, this manager understood that if everyone in the room didn't get his ideas, they simply wouldn't work. "I always remember him saying to me personally that when he spoke to a group, it was no good only the best two players understanding what he wanted; he'd make sure all 20 of the players got it, and he'd go around the room until he was sure that was the case."

Lesson three: empowerment is vital, and how you listen is as important as what you say. "I'll give you an example," says Teddy. "One half time I suggested something to him when he was my manager at Tottenham." Teddy proposed he try moving out wide from his central attacking position, as he felt the central defender marking him closely would thus be dragged out with him, making it easier for his teammate Darren Anderton to attack through the middle. "Terry said: 'OK, if you want to do that, try it, son.' And it was, like, wow. A lot of managers would have gone: 'No, you are my centre forward; you stay there, that is where I want you to play.' But his attitude was: if that is what you think on the pitch, try it, do it, and see what happens. If it doesn't work, then do something else. That is what football is there for: to try and outwit the opposition."

Lesson four: focus not on making it easier for yourself, but on making it easier for those around you. England's third goal against Holland in Euro 96 was a thing of inspired beauty. At the heart of it was Sheringham. If you're not into football you may well not have read this far but, if you have, then please search for footage of these few seconds of magic on the internet.

In short, Teddy received the ball from Paul Gascoigne in a position from which 99.9% of strikers would have been quite unable to resist shooting at goal. But he had a better idea. He was aware, apparently by using eyes in the back of his head, that Alan Shearer was free to his right. Wrong-footing just

about everyone in Wembley, not least the Dutch defence, he feigned to shoot but instead rolled the ball into the path of Shearer, who scored. To this day, Alan Shearer is incredulous and grateful in equal measure. “I’ve said a million times,” he texted me yesterday. “I can’t believe he passed it. Teddy was amazing, the best.”

For a quarter of a century now, I have wanted to meet Teddy and ask him about that goal. I wasn’t disappointed; his framing of it is fascinating. “First of all, the play was fantastic. Gazza’s pass to me was class because he rolled it in front of me for me to do exactly what I wanted with it. That gave me the time to maybe just have that little bit of peripheral vision to see what else was going on around me. Maybe I could have scored, but if you roll a ball to your top scorer, your main man scoring goals for fun, it seemed the right thing to do and it worked out well.”

And this, I think, is the key bit: “Gazza made it easy for me; I made it even easier for Shearer, and he scored the goal.”

It’s possible I am just a bit giddy at the prospect of a month’s football or perhaps just starstruck at breathing the same air as Teddy Sheringham for an hour. But this thought seems profound to me: if we all focus on making life easier for those around us, only good things will follow.

- [Adrian Chiles](#) is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist



## 2021.06.10 - Around the world

- [Alexei Navalny Russian court outlaws anti-Putin organisation](#)
- [Russia FSB agents who tracked Navalny before poisoning also tailed author – Bellingcat](#)
- [France Man who slapped Emmanuel Macron to appear at fast-track trial](#)
- [Infectious diseases More research funding needed to avoid drug-resistant pandemic, warns report](#)

## Alexei Navalny

# Russian court outlaws Alexei Navalny's organisation

Court has in effect liquidated the opposition politician's movement by classifying it as 'extremist'



A worker paints over a graffiti depicting Alexei Navalny in Saint Petersburg. Legal aides representing the Navalny movement said they believed the court was attempting to fast-track the hearing. Photograph: Anton Vaganov/Reuters

A worker paints over a graffiti depicting Alexei Navalny in Saint Petersburg. Legal aides representing the Navalny movement said they believed the court was attempting to fast-track the hearing. Photograph: Anton Vaganov/Reuters

[Andrew Roth](#) in Moscow

Wed 9 Jun 2021 16.29 EDT

A Russian court has [outlawed opposition politician Alexei Navalny's](#) nationwide political organisation on the grounds it is “extremist”, in a landmark step for Vladimir Putin’s crackdown on political dissent.

The court decision, which had been anticipated, in effect liquidates Navalny’s non-violent opposition movement and bars his allies from running for office for years, as the Kremlin seeks to erase the jailed opposition leader from Russian political life.

Legal aides representing the Navalny movement had said they believed the court was attempting to fast-track a hearing and deliver a verdict on Wednesday, but [would be slowed down by their “numerous appeals”](#).

The verdict came down shortly before 11pm local time. “The Anti-Corruption Foundation has been recognised by a court decision as an extremist organisation,” the group first reported the verdict on Twitter.

In a statement posted on Instagram soon afterwards, Navalny denounced the hearing as a travesty of justice and vowed to continue defying the Kremlin.

“When corruption is the foundation of the government, fighters against corruption are cast as extremists,” the statement said. “We will not abandon our goals and ideas. It’s our country and we don’t have another one.”

The court hearing has coincided with a [fierce crackdown on other opposition politicians and even lawyers](#) who have defended the [growing tide of political prisoners in court](#). Navalny’s lawyer, Ivan Pavlov, has been charged with revealing pre-trial investigation secrets in a treason case against a former journalist and faces a short prison term and disbarment.

“Putin has rewritten the constitution for himself, every article in the constitution about civil rights has begun to read like a joke, and yet we’re the extremists,” said Georgy Alburov, an investigator for Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), one of the organisations labelled as extremist on Wednesday.

The ruling will render both Navalny’s regional headquarters and his anti-corruption foundation toxic, threatening his political activists and

investigators with long jail terms if they continue their work. It could also target financial donors and even journalists that mention Navalny's organisations in the media.

The trial marks a change of attitude in the Kremlin, which for years had harassed Navalny and his allies but resisted a widespread ban on street opposition. But since Navalny was targeted in a novichok poisoning last year, the Kremlin has grown more aggressive, overseeing Navalny's jailing on embezzlement charges from 2014 and the arrest of thousands of protesters in cities across Russia who came out to demand his release.

"It's gone beyond criticism of the government," a prosecutor said in the closed court hearing according to a partial transcript published by Pavlov. "You are leading people out on the street in order to change the government by force."

The government has refused to admit journalists to the hearings because the prosecution's case contains secret evidence.

Navalny has been sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison and faces further criminal prosecution, making it likely that his sentence could be prolonged if the Kremlin deems that the opposition leader remains a threat. He appeared by video at a court hearing on Tuesday after being returned to his prison colony following a 24-day hunger strike.

[The Guardian view on Russia's opposition: given hell, but not giving up | Editorial](#)

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Putin this week also signed a new law that will prevent the founders, leaders and funders of extremist groups from running for political office for years, tainting much of Russia's non-systemic democratic opposition in the run-up to parliamentary elections later this year.

The verdict comes days before Putin meets the US president, Joe Biden, in Geneva and is now likely to feature high on the agenda of that meeting, which was expected to focus on security issues.

Navalny's daughter on Tuesday lamented the "fast downfall of democracy" in Russia while accepting a moral courage award for her father from the Geneva-based group UN Watch.

Traditionally, groups on Russia's list of designated extremist organisations are terrorist and hate groups, including Islamic State and various neo-Nazi groups. Others include non-violent religious groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, who have faced surveillance, raids and arrest for holding religious meetings.

Yet it is novel for a non-violent political organisation that has sought to consolidate Russia's fractured opposition, hold mass protests and expose government corruption through slick investigations that have angered many of Putin's powerful friends and allies.

Navalny, who began his political career as a muckraking blogger on LiveJournal, has painstakingly built his political efforts into a guerrilla newsroom, an investigative unit, regional headquarters that helped coordinate protests, and even a campaign strategy hub that sought to channel votes toward the most promising opponents of the ruling party, United Russia.

Russia has sought to portray Navalny as a tool of western intelligence agencies. Moscow's prosecutor announced in April that it would seek to liquidate Navalny's organisation for "creating conditions for changing the foundations of the constitutional order, including through the scenario of a 'coloured revolution'". It had already suspended his organisations' activities and added them to a financial terrorism watchlist that effectively froze their bank accounts.

Many of Navalny's top aides, including Leonid Volkov and the FBK head, Ivan Zhdanov, have fled Russia for Europe. Regional activists have begun going to ground, with administrators of his more than three-dozen headquarters wiping social media pages of personal information before an expected crackdown in regions across the country.

After the verdict, Zhdanov said that the team will continue publishing exposes of corrupt officials.

“Navalny’s team will not stop its activities, they shouldn’t hope for that,” Zhdanov, who lives abroad, told the independent Dozhd TV.

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## [Russia](#)

# FSB agents who tracked Navalny before poisoning also tailed author – Bellingcat

Open-source investigations report that the agents shadowed Dmitry Bykov, who fell severely ill with similar symptoms in 2019



Dmitry Bykov speaking at a Moscow book fair in March. Photograph: Sergei Karpukhin/TASS

Dmitry Bykov speaking at a Moscow book fair in March. Photograph: Sergei Karpukhin/TASS

*AP in Moscow*

Wed 9 Jun 2021 15.55 EDT

Russian agents who had tailed opposition leader [Alexei Navalny](#) before his poisoning also shadowed a journalist who had earlier fallen severely ill with similar symptoms, according to the investigative organisation Bellingcat.

Dmitry Bykov, an author and journalist who is an outspoken critic of President [Vladimir Putin](#), spent five days in a coma after he became sick aboard an aeroplane while on a lecture tour in 2019.

Doctors attributed the illness to bacterial food poisoning. But the illness and circumstances bore strong resemblance to the case of Navalny, who last year [fell sick aboard a domestic flight](#) and was hospitalised in a coma before being transferred to Germany for treatment, where doctors said he had been poisoned with a Soviet-developed nerve agent novichok.

[A cup of tea, then screams of agony: how Alexei Navalny was left fighting for his life](#)

[Read more](#)

Bellingcat, an Amsterdam-based international organisation that focuses on open-source investigations, identified what it said were several alleged agents of Russia's Federal Security Service who had trailed Navalny directly before his poisoning. In a report Wednesday, it said cellular phone records and airline ticket purchases showed that two of these agents [had travelled to the same cities as Bykov](#) and at the same time.

Navalny spent five months in Germany recuperating from the poisoning. He was arrested upon his return to [Russia](#) in January and subsequently ordered to spend 2 1/2 years in prison on the grounds that his convalescence in Germany violated a suspended sentence that had been handed in an embezzlement conviction.

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## [France](#)

# Man who slapped Emmanuel Macron to appear at fast-track trial

Medieval martial arts enthusiast and ultra-rightwinger Damien Tarel claims act was not premeditated

00:15

Emmanuel Macron slapped in the face during walkabout – video

*Reuters in Paris*

Thu 10 Jun 2021 05.48 EDT

A medieval martial arts enthusiast who slapped the French president, [Emmanuel Macron](#), across the face will appear before a judge in a fast-track trial on Thursday.

Damien Tarel had acknowledged [striking Macron](#) while the president was on a visit to a professional training college, but told investigators it was not premeditated, the prosecutor Alex Perrin said in a statement.

The unemployed 28-year-old said during interrogation he had been close to the anti-government *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests) protest movement that shook the Macron presidency, and held ultra-rightwing political beliefs.

“He maintained that he acted out of impulse and ‘without thinking’ to express his discontent,” Perrin said in a statement late on Wednesday.

Tarel’s attack on the president stunned the country. Macron later described it as an isolated incident and said violence and hate were a threat to democracy.

The president had been on a trip to the Drôme region in south-east [France](#) to take the country’s pulse after the pandemic and with less than a year to go

before the next presidential election.

Acquaintances of Tarel described a man who loved period role play and was not a troublemaker. The prosecutor said he was not a member of any political or militant group.

Tarel was arrested along with a second man from his home town of Saint-Vallier. Police found weapons, a copy of Adolf Hitler's autobiographical manifesto, Mein Kampf, and a communist red flag in the second man's home, Perrin said.

The second man will not face any charges related to the slapping but will be prosecuted for illegal possession of arms in 2022.

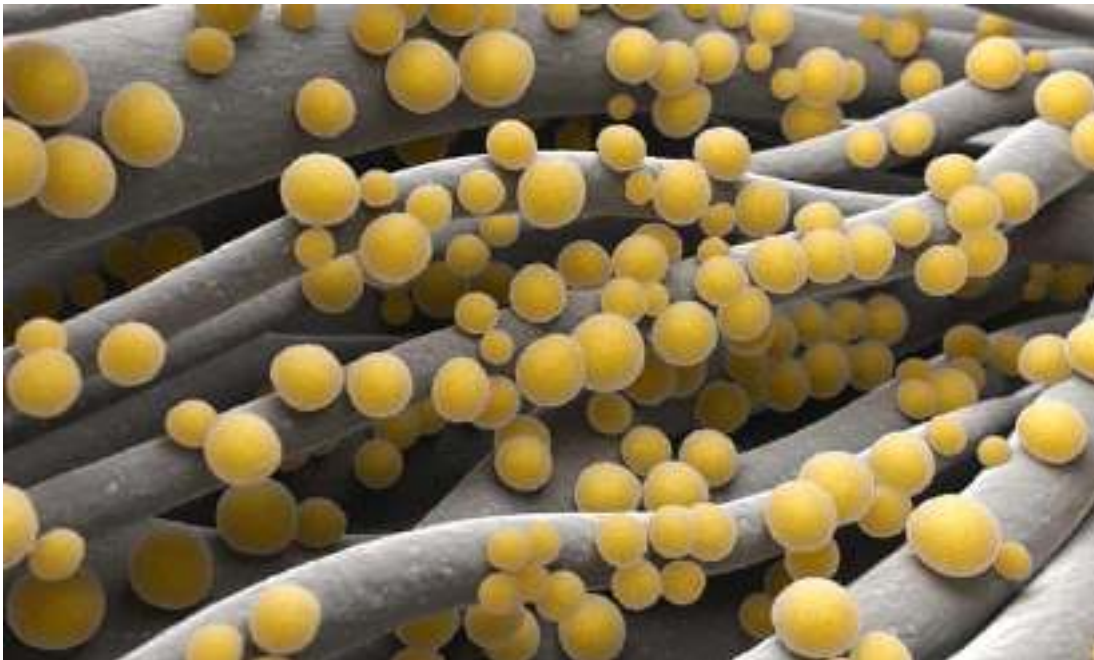
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## Pharmaceuticals industry.

# More research funding needed to avoid drug-resistant pandemic, warns report

Smaller firms are developing most antibiotics targeting superbugs but often at risk of bankruptcy



Staphylococcus aureus bacteria, one of the superbugs targeted by the development of new drugs. Photograph: iLexx/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Staphylococcus aureus bacteria, one of the superbugs targeted by the development of new drugs. Photograph: iLexx/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[Julia Kollewe](#)

Thu 10 Jun 2021 05.17 EDT

Small drugmakers and biotech firms that are developing the bulk of new antibiotics need far more financial support, according to a new report, which warned that without these life-saving medicines there could be a pandemic of drug-resistant infections, worse than Covid-19.

The Access to Medicine Foundation, an Amsterdam-based non-profit group, said small and medium-sized firms, which account for three-quarters of all late-stage antibiotics in development, struggle to secure enough funding and are often at risk of bankruptcy, potentially leaving new medicines stranded on the lab bench.

“If the loss of such promising products continues, the pandemic of drug-resistant infections will pose a bigger global health emergency than Covid-19,” the foundation’s report warned. [Last year, 138 vaccines or drugs targeting 18 bacterial and fungal infections were in development worldwide, down from 175 projects](#) two years earlier.

[The next pandemic? It may already be upon us | Laura Spinney](#)  
[Read more](#)

[Antimicrobial resistance \(AMR\)](#) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines, making common infectious diseases such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and gonorrhoea harder to treat.

Jayasree Iyer, executive director of the Access to Medicine Foundation, said: “Small and medium-sized companies are very critical for antimicrobial research. Big pharma has been leaving this space – only a small handful of companies are still developing drugs.”

Big pharma is also involved in the \$1bn AMR Action Fund, a collaboration with the WHO, European Investment Bank and Wellcome Trust, which was launched last July to support clinical-stage antibiotic research and aims to bring two to four new antibiotics to market by 2030.

The foundation’s report highlighted four small US firms: Bugworks, Entasis, Qpex and Cidara, which are developing new drugs targeting the superbugs *Candida auris*, *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, *Acinetobacter baumannii* and *Staphylococcus aureus*.

To support such projects, Iyer called for subscription-based models, such as the UK’s – where governments make regular payments in return for on-

demand supply of effective antibiotics – as well as international partnerships with bigger firms.

Iyer said China's role, as the world's biggest producer and user of antibiotics, was key to the development of these life-saving medicines. Some small drugmakers work with partners in China and the report said: "There are compelling signs that China will become a global hub for the development, manufacturing and commercialisation of antibiotics and anti-fungals."

She dismissed concerns that China was becoming too powerful in controlling the supply of drugs globally. "We need China and the US to set up incentives and to work together."

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/jun/10/more-research-funding-needed-to-avoid-drug-resistant-pandemic-warns-report>

## Headlines friday 11 june 2021

- [G7 summit Boris Johnson hails UK's 'indestructible relationship' with US](#)
- [Live G7: Johnson rejects claim offer of 100m Covid vaccine doses to poorer countries is too little](#)
- [Harry Dunn Joe Biden 'actively engaged' in case, says Boris Johnson](#)
- [Analysis G7 leaders face make-or-break moment in climate crisis](#)

## G7

# Boris Johnson hails UK's 'indestructible relationship' with US

PM seeks to underline closeness of two nations despite Joe Biden's concerns over Northern Ireland

- [G7 summit: latest news and reaction](#)



The British prime minister, Boris Johnson (right), poses with the US president, Joe Biden, in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, on Thursday. Photograph: Xinhua/Rex

The British prime minister, Boris Johnson (right), poses with the US president, Joe Biden, in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, on Thursday. Photograph: Xinhua/Rex

[Heather Stewart](#) *Political editor*

Fri 11 Jun 2021 02.54 EDT



Boris Johnson has claimed the UK has an “indestructible relationship” with the US, after his bilateral meeting on Thursday with President Joe Biden.

The prime minister is known [not to be keen](#) on the well-worn phrase “special relationship”, believing it makes the UK look weak.

But in an interview with the BBC after the pair met, he sought to underscore the closeness between the two nations, despite [Biden’s concerns about the damaging standoff with the EU](#) over the Northern Ireland protocol.

“Look, I don’t mind the phrase ‘special relationship’ because it is special. But you know, it encompasses a reality which is that the UK and the US have a real congruence of views on some stuff that really matters to the world. And so we believe very strongly in democracy, we believe in human rights, we believe in the rules-based international order, we believe in the transatlantic alliance,” Johnson said.

Asked what he would call the connection between the two countries, he said, “you can call it the ‘deep and meaningful relationship’, whatever you want, the ‘indestructible relationship’. It’s a relationship that has endured for a very long time, and has been an important part of peace and prosperity both in Europe and around the world.”

Johnson denied Biden had told him to resolve the standoff with the EU over the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol, instead reiterating the importance to both the UK and the US of the Good Friday/Belfast agreement.

It emerged as Biden arrived in the UK that senior US diplomats had warned the UK’s combative Brexit negotiator, David Frost, that his actions risked inflaming tensions in Northern Ireland.

01:09

Joe Biden a 'breath of fresh air', says Boris Johnson after meeting – video

Lord Frost will attend the [G7](#) summit on Friday. Asked about the row with the EU, Johnson said repeatedly that the two sides would “sort it out”.



But the prime minister appeared to criticise the EU's approach to implementing the protocol. "There are ways of enforcing the protocol, ways of making it work, that may be excessively burdensome," he said. "I just give you one statistic: 20% of the checks conducted across the whole of the perimeter of the EU are now done in Northern Ireland, three times as many as happen in Rotterdam."

Pressed on whether an agreement could be reached over the weekend, with EU chiefs and the French, German and Italian leaders present, he said the summit would be focused on other questions.

"No, no, no, no. We're focusing here on a huge range of things that the G7 wants to look at. So we're looking at the post-pandemic world, we're looking at what we can do to make sure that we don't have the world caught unprepared again, or the western world anyway, for a pandemic in the way that we were."

After the meeting with Biden, the UK promised to continue working with the EU to find a solution – but is also not ruling out taking unilateral action. The French president, Emmanuel Macron, said as he prepared to fly to Cornwall that "[nothing is negotiable](#)" about the protocol.

A ban on chilled meats including sausages and mincemeat being exported from Great Britain into Northern Ireland, which abides by EU agrifood rules, is due to come into force on 30 June.

Other G7 leaders will arrive in Cornwall on Friday, and they are due to discuss the recovery from the pandemic at the first formal session in the afternoon, before meeting the Queen at the Eden Project.

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)

[G7](#)

# G7: Boris Johnson calls for lessons of pandemic to be learned and says world must ‘level up’ – as it happened

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2021/jun/11/g7-summit-live-boris-johnson-joe-biden-covid-cornwall-leaders-latest-updates>

## UK news

# Joe Biden ‘actively engaged’ in case of Harry Dunn, says Boris Johnson

Family of teenager killed in crash outside military base in England welcome issue being raised with president



Harry Dunn died in August 2019 after the car of a US citizen, Anne Sacoolas, collided with his motorbike. Photograph: PA Media

Harry Dunn died in August 2019 after the car of a US citizen, Anne Sacoolas, collided with his motorbike. Photograph: PA Media

[Alexandra Topping](#)

Fri 11 Jun 2021 03.03 EDT

The US president, Joe Biden, is “actively engaged” and “extremely sympathetic” in the case of the teenage motorcyclist Harry Dunn, according to [Boris Johnson](#).

The family of the teenager, who was killed when a car crashed into his motorbike outside a military base in Northamptonshire, have welcomed the issue being raised at “the first available opportunity” with Biden, ahead of the G7 summit of world leaders in Cornwall.

Asked if the two men had made progress when discussing the case, which has become a [serious international row](#), Johnson said he understood there were “limits” to what Biden could do.

“As you know, he has his own personal reasons for feeling very deeply about the issue. And he was extremely sympathetic, but this is not something that either government can control very easily because there are legal processes that are still going on,” he told the BBC.

“But he did express a great deal of sympathy, as indeed this government continues to do for the family of Harry Dunn.”

He added both the US executive and legal and judiciary system were “working together”.

The teenager died in August 2019 after the car of a US citizen, Anne Sacoolas, collided with his motorbike, moments after she had left the RAF base where her husband worked for a US intelligence agency. Sacoolas’s lawyer [has since told a US court](#) that she was working for the intelligence agency at the time.

Washington asserted that she had diplomatic immunity, meaning there could be no criminal prosecution, and she flew back to the US days after the collision.

But the Crown Prosecution Service [disagreed and issued an extradition request](#), ordering the 43-year-old to face trial for causing Dunn’s death by dangerous driving, an offence that can lead to a maximum sentence of 14 years.

A spokesman for the Dunn family, Radd Seiger, told the PA Media agency: “Harry’s parents are very pleased to see that the PM has taken the

opportunity to raise the case with President Biden at the first available opportunity.

“This rightly shows just how important this issue is and we are very grateful to the prime minister and his team for doing so.

“As all parties know, there is no greater force on earth than the love between a mother and child. The family will continue to pursue justice until it is done.”

A challenge to the diplomatic immunity asserted on Sacoolas’s behalf, which was [upheld in the high court in November](#), will be heard in the court of appeal next year, while the teenager’s parents, Charlotte Charles and Tim Dunn, have brought a [civil claim against the suspect](#) and her husband in the US state of Virginia.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/11/joe-biden-actively-engaged-in-case-of-harry-dunn-says-boris-johnson>

## [G7](#)

# G7 leaders face make-or-break moment in climate crisis

Analysis: message in Cornwall is clear – leaders must act now or go down in history as the ones who threw away last-ditch chance



Boris Johnson, right, and Joe Biden on stage at a G7 meeting at Carbis Bay, Cornwall. Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty

Boris Johnson, right, and Joe Biden on stage at a G7 meeting at Carbis Bay, Cornwall. Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty

[Fiona Harvey](#) *Environment correspondent*

Fri 11 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

Global leaders arriving in Cornwall for the G7 summit have already found themselves in a [changed world](#): masks and social distancing have replaced the usual hugs, handshakes and cheek-pecking, the entourages have slimmed

down, and the usual media circus has been muted, with protesters having to content themselves with writing sand messages on the beach.

Boris Johnson has faced ridicule and accusations of hypocrisy for travelling to [Carbis Bay by private jet](#). Some of the other leaders have been more concerned about the extent to which quarantine rules apply to them.

But amid the ever-present reminders that 2021 is a year unlike any other, one of the biggest changes will be entirely invisible: carbon dioxide is now at a higher level in the atmosphere than at any point in the last 4m years, [newly released data has shown](#). The world has entered uncharted territory where global heating is concerned, and greenhouse gas emissions are rising strongly still.

The message could not be clearer: if the world fails to act now, the future will be changed beyond anything the coronavirus pandemic has brought about. Lord Stern, the climate economist, said: “This is a crucial moment in history. Either we recover [from the pandemic] in a strong and sustainable way, or we do not. We are at a real fork in the road. This decade is decisive.”

Scientists have made it clear that greenhouse gas emissions must be halved by 2030 if the world is to [stay within 1.5C of global heating](#) – the threshold beyond which extreme weather will take hold, small islands and low-lying areas will face inundation, and swathes of the world will face water stress and heatwaves.

Stern pointed to the chequered progress of the past 10 years, in which the cost of renewable energy has plunged and technology such as electric vehicles has increased, but in which progress on cutting emissions overall has been painfully slow. “The last decade was not very good, and this next decade could be just as bad or worse, if we make the wrong choices,” he said.





A sand drawing calls on world leaders to ‘share the vaccine and waive the patent’ at Watergate Bay near Newquay, Cornwall. Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP/Getty

G7 countries are responding: all of the leaders coming to [Cornwall](#) – from the US, the UK, Japan, Canada, Germany, France, Italy and the EU – have affirmed their commitment to holding temperature rises to no more than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, the lower limit set out in the 2015 Paris agreement.

All have long-term targets to reach net zero emissions by 2050, and nearly all have targets to cut carbon in the next decade. The UK has led with a goal of cutting emissions by 68% by 2030 and 78% by 2035, based on 1990 levels. The US will halve emissions by 2030, based on 2005 levels, and the EU will make cuts of at least 55% by 2030, on a 1990 baseline.

However, current plans under the Paris agreement from Japan and Canada have been criticised by campaigners as inadequate, and they are under pressure to toughen their targets before [Cop26](#), the crucial UN climate talks to be held in Glasgow this November.

There has been also been progress in the run-up to the Cornwall summit: all of the G7 countries have agreed to [halt the funding of coal and coal-fired](#)



[power overseas](#), a huge step forward in making a global move away from the dirtiest fossil fuel.

Yet none of this is enough. Global carbon dioxide output is [forecast to jump by an almost record amount this year](#), as the world returns to economic growth using fossil fuels, instead of making the leap needed to renewable and low-carbon energy. G7 countries are falling behind on the “green recovery” from Covid-19 that experts have been urging for more than a year, and reliance on coal has increased in some parts of the world, including the US.

The situation is worse in non-G7 countries. China, the world’s biggest emitter and second biggest economy, is not represented at the [G7](#), as a non-democracy and because of its status as a developing country. China’s reliance on coal has increased further in the recovery from Covid-19, despite the country’s long-term goal of net zero emissions by 2050.

Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency, said that while rich countries were cutting their emissions, some developing countries would continue to increase theirs unless they could gain far more investment in shifting to a low-carbon economy.

[Brexit rains on Boris Johnson’s G7 parade](#)

[Read more](#)

“More than 90% of emissions in the next two decades will come from emerging economies, but they are less than 20% of global clean energy investments,” he said. “If we can’t accelerate the clean energy transition in these countries, I believe this will be the most critical faultline in global efforts to reach climate goals.”

To fund the shift to clean energy, and to cope with the effects of climate breakdown, developing countries will need [help from the rich world](#). So far, promises of finance have not been met. Under a longstanding pledge, made in 2009, poor countries were supposed to receive \$100bn a year from public and private sources by 2020. [That target has been missed](#), and the pressure is now on the G7, the grouping of the world’s wealthiest economies, to find a

way of plugging the gap – a crucial step in gaining developing countries' backing for any climate deal at Cop26.

Jennifer Morgan, executive director of Greenpeace International, said: "If you look at climate finance, we are far behind. Yet [given the sums the G7 are spending on coronavirus] it is pretty clear that there is enough money, and these economies are pumping money into fossil fuels."

Stern has led a call for a doubling of climate finance from public funds in rich countries, from about \$30bn in 2018 to about \$60bn a year from 2025. Funding for the climate would also need to be accompanied by commitments on vaccine access for poorer countries, as [leading figures have repeatedly warned that the two crises are interrelated](#).

Boris Johnson can hope the minor storm over his arrival by private jet will blow over quickly. More damaging is the row he leaves behind him in parliament. The government's decision to cut overseas aid from 0.7% to 0.5% of GDP has been criticised by former prime ministers and provoked a sizeable rebellion from the prime minister's own party.

At the G7, it has [undermined the UK's stance](#) on climate finance and darkened any prospect of Johnson persuading other world leaders to provide the cash needed to fulfil climate finance promises. Paul Bledsoe, strategic adviser to the Progressive Policy Institute in the US, said: "It's baffling and heartless. It's stunning that at a moment of global crisis, as host of G7 and Cop26, the UK is the only country in the world that is reducing aid to the poorest countries."

There are, however, still ways in which the G7 could address climate finance, he said. The International Monetary Fund is offering finance known as "special drawing rights", that could be used to raise tens of billions for the climate emergency. Poorer countries could also be offered "debt for climate swaps" in which they would be forgiven debt in exchange for preserving forests or other carbon sinks.

"The challenge for the G7 is to think creatively about these opportunities," he said.

What is most likely to emerge from the meeting is a fudge of warm words on climate finance, with renewed commitments to long-term goals to reach net zero emissions, and promises of action in the next crucial decade. Whatever the G7 comes up with, however, it is unlikely to measure up to the challenge.

Last month, the IEA said that if the 1.5C limit was to be maintained, [all further exploration and development of new fossil fuels around the world must cease](#) from this year, and came up with a series of milestones, such as phasing out fossil-fuelled vehicles, and fossil fuels for home heating, in the next two decades.

The G7 could make a collective commitment to embrace these policies and goals, said Morgan. “If not, it would be a complete failure of their leadership.”

When the G7 leaders fly away from Cornwall’s beaches, the last thing they may see is the writing on the sand, warning of the climate crisis. They will know that they have until November to come up with credible plans for Cop26.

“We need to see a positive dynamic for Glasgow,” said Morgan. “If not, they will go down in history as the group of leaders who had the chance of dealing with the climate emergency and who did not step up.”

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## 2021.06.11 - Coronavirus

- [Live Coronavirus: England confirms 42 deaths with Delta variant; Russia daily cases highest since February](#)
- [Europe Risk of Covid autumn surge is high despite drop in infections, says WHO](#)
- [Edinburgh festivals Millions offered in emergency funding after events curtailed again](#)
- [Green for hugs, red for no touching US events introduce pandemic colour coding](#)

[Coronavirus live](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

# Covid live: UK reports 8,125 daily cases, most since February – as it happened

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## Europe

# High risk of autumn Covid surge in Europe despite drop in infections, says WHO

Organisation urges governments to be cautious as societies open up and Delta variant advances

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Hans Kluge, the WHO Europe's regional director, said community transmission would continue as travel and social gatherings increased. Photograph: Donat Sorokin/Tass

Hans Kluge, the WHO Europe's regional director, said community transmission would continue as travel and social gatherings increased. Photograph: Donat Sorokin/Tass

[Jon Henley](#) *Europe correspondent*  
[@jonhenley](#)

Thu 10 Jun 2021 09.53 EDT

Covid-19 infections, hospitalisations and deaths are falling fast across Europe, but the risk of a deadly autumn resurgence remains high as societies open up and the more transmissible Delta variant advances, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) has said.

The warning came as new case numbers continued to plunge in most of the continent, falling in some areas to their lowest levels since August, and multiple governments, including France and [Germany](#), relaxed restrictions further.

Urging people and governments to exercise “caution and common sense” over the summer, the WHO Europe’s regional director, Hans Kluge, said on Thursday that community transmission was still widespread and would continue as travel and social gatherings increased.

“We’ve been here before,” Kluge said. “Last summer, cases gradually rose in younger age groups, then moved into older age groups, leading to a devastating ... loss of life in the autumn and winter of 2020. Let’s not make that mistake again.”

Katy Smallwood, a senior emergency officer, said the Delta variant first detected in India was of particular concern. “It is not yet prevalent in the European region but in some countries has already displaced the dominant Alpha variant,” she said.

“We’ve seen very significant evidence of significantly higher transmissibility, we’ve seen initial basis for increased risk of hospitalisation, and we’ve seen some evidence of immune escape, especially after only one dose of vaccine. Our assessment is that this does pose a significant risk in terms of community transmission.”

Kluge said a new WHO campaign, Summer Sense, would encourage people to “enjoy the summer, but safely ... If you want to travel, think about the need. If you decide to, do it safely.” Governments must “make use of a better epidemiological situation to further increase testing, tracing, hospital capacity. Learn the lessons from last year.”

Both officials warned that while Europe was vaccinating at a much faster rate, with 30% of people having received at least one dose and 17% fully vaccinated, coverage “was still far from sufficient to protect the region from a resurgence” and “many among vulnerable populations above the age of 60 remain unprotected”.

Kluge said Europe had so far recorded 55m infections and 1.2m deaths, but cases, hospital admissions and deaths had now fallen for two consecutive months, with 368,000 new cases reported last week, barely 20% of the April weekly figure.

Thirty-six of the WHO Europe region’s 53 countries were easing restrictions. “But we are by no means out of danger,” Kluge said, calling for “everyone to exercise caution, reduce risks and keep safe”.

“If you choose to travel, do it responsibly,” Kluge said. “Be conscious of the risks. Apply common sense and don’t jeopardise hard-earned gains. Wash your hands, keep a distance, choose open settings, wear a mask.”

To avoid a repeat of last year, he said, governments must “stick firmly to protective measures ... even as cases decline” by acting fast on any signs of increasing cases, expanding testing and sequencing and stepping up contact tracing.

The top priority of governments must be to “continue protecting elderly people, people with comorbidities and frontline workers”, he said, noting that the risk of severe disease or death in children was up to 800 times lower than in the over-70s.

France, where new cases have fallen by 39% in a week, was among several countries to ease restrictions on Wednesday. An evening curfew has been pushed back from 9pm to 11pm; cafes and restaurants may serve indoors;



shops, museums and cinemas can increase capacity; and gyms are open for the first time since October.

### [German health minister facing calls to resign over mask furore](#) [Read more](#)

There was a reminder, however, that the pandemic was not over yet as the prime minister, Jean Castex, was again obliged to self-isolate after his wife tested positive. The government's spokesperson, Gabriel Attal, warned people to remain cautious.

“We must stay vigilant, we cannot afford to think that because the situation is improving fast that that means the end of the pandemic,” Attal said. “We need to keep being careful, keep social distancing, keep wearing masks ... That's the best protection [against] false hopes and disappointments.”

Italy and Belgium also reopened bars and restaurants for indoor service this week, with opening hours extended until 11.30pm in Belgium and Italy's night-time curfew pushed back to midnight. Several EU countries launched Covid health passes, allowing access to activities and events with large crowds for people who are fully vaccinated, immune or have tested negative.

In Germany, where schools in Berlin this week returned to normal after months with split classes or part-time teaching, the leading virologist Christian Drosten said that by autumn or winter the pandemic [could become an epidemic](#), which might be expected to recur every year but be controlled by vaccine boosters.

Drosten said cases would almost certainly rise after the summer holidays but should by then be controllable – although he, too, warned that this was in danger of being undermined by people failing to get their second vaccine dose or believing that vaccines were no longer necessary.

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## Edinburgh festival

# Edinburgh festivals offered millions in emergency funding

The Fringe, international and book festivals forced to curtail August's event for second year running

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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‘Edinburgh will still be the home to the biggest arts festival in the world, but for now we’re just going to have to put the city’s public health first’.  
Photograph: Jane Barlow/PA

‘Edinburgh will still be the home to the biggest arts festival in the world, but for now we’re just going to have to put the city’s public health first’.  
Photograph: Jane Barlow/PA

[Severin Carrell](#)  
[@severincarrell](#)

Thu 10 Jun 2021 14.26 EDT

The Edinburgh festivals have been offered millions of pounds in emergency funding in the face of widespread fears they may never fully recover from the severe impacts of the Covid pandemic.

The Fringe, international and book festivals, which help make up the world's largest annual arts season, have been forced to very [significantly curtail this August's events](#), the second year running it has done so. One of the most famous, the military tattoo staged at Edinburgh castle, has again been cancelled.

Many senior figures in the August festivals now believe it is unlikely the events will ever return to their record-breaking scale of 2019, when they sold more than 4m tickets over a four-week run, with well over a million people attending events.

The international festival will provide only about a [quarter of its normal programme](#) this year; the book festival has [abandoned its traditional home](#), a tented city in Charlotte Square gardens in the new town, for Edinburgh's art school; and the Fringe will dramatically [shrink in size this year](#), with a far smaller number of venues staging events outdoors, on the streets and in open-sided marquees.

The Scottish government and the Edinburgh council leader, Adam McVey, insist they are fully aware of the scale of the crisis facing the festivals, which generate up to [£1bn a year in income](#), and the knock-on effects on the city's economy. But McVey said the immediate priority was coping with the ongoing and "dynamic" Covid crisis.

"Edinburgh will still be the home to the biggest arts festival in the world, but for now we're just going to have to put the city's public health first," he said.

The Scottish government has offered the cultural sector more than £25m in [emergency funding](#), drawing on Covid relief money from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in London. McVey said the council was

also offering a further £300,000 to the city's smaller arts organisations, to spread out the emergency aid.

[Culture sector cautiously welcomes budget but says further support needed](#)  
[Read more](#)

Some argue that a more scaled-back festival season would be a bonus: in common with other global tourist destinations such as Barcelona and Venice, many Edinburgh residents found the festival season suffocating, its littered streets jammed with tourists and taxis; squares and parks taken over by late-night ticket-only Fringe venues; and property and rental prices vastly inflated by speculators cashing in on Airbnb rentals.

One influential sponsor suggested the enormous scale of the festivals and the continuing growth in audiences pre-pandemic also bred complacency and impeded innovation and self-criticism about the quality of what was offered.

Nick Barley, the director of the [Edinburgh international book festival](#), historically the world's largest, said the pandemic gave the festivals and the city a chance to re-evaluate the scale and type of their events, and to reinvent themselves.

“The race is on to do something else, which is to bring numbers back up to a really healthy level but not to the crazy over-festivalised level of 2019,” he said. “This is also an issue which affects Venice, Barcelona, any city which has had tourism and culture as part of this unholy duality, which got slightly out of control in the 2010s. We’re all trying to work out how we can do it in the post-Covid era.”

There is broad consensus among festival directors, promoters and political leaders that this year is about survival. Fergus Linehan, the international festival's director, said that while this August's events would be much smaller, they needed to “keep the flame burning [and] keep the festival in people's minds and hearts”.

Staging next year's festivals will be their biggest test, to see whether audiences have overcome their anxieties about mass gatherings. The

international festival, born in 1947 amid the deep recession and ruins of the second world war, celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2022.

While Fringe producers fear many highly skilled technicians and performers could leave the industry due to the collapse in live performances during the pandemic, Linehan said 2022 could be a vast celebration. Next year's festival could provide artists and audiences with the chance for a "huge civic moment of everything through from civic celebration to requiem, giving thanks to everyone."

Barley said the crisis had forced his festival to reshape how it staged its events, embracing the digital streaming it was forced to use last year when all of its in-person events were cancelled. One major sponsor, the investment firm Baillie Gifford, which part-owns Tesla and Spotify, has put Barley in touch with a former Spotify executive to develop new ways of monetising the festival online.

"That's the race, and it's a pretty exciting race. For Edinburgh, the challenge surely has to be how to become the world's leading hybrid festival city, one which is as good in real life as it is online – whether you're in the new town or in Texas. If we can crack that then we have a festival city that works for the 21st century."

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/jun/10/edinburgh-festivals-offered-millions-in-emergency-funding>

## US news

# Green for hugs, red for no touching: US events introduce pandemic color coding

Event hosts are using stickers, lanyards or bracelets to differentiate who is comfortable with what kind of touch



At in-person events hosts have been giving out red, yellow, and green stickers to attendees, with signs explaining the colors' code. Photograph: Leigh Prather/Alamy Stock Photo

At in-person events hosts have been giving out red, yellow, and green stickers to attendees, with signs explaining the colors' code. Photograph: Leigh Prather/Alamy Stock Photo

[Gloria Oladipo](#)

Thu 10 Jun 2021 15.44 EDT

To encourage better respect towards people's boundaries, event hosts are using colored accessories to help people communicate their comfort around

physical touch, reports [the Wall Street Journal](#).

As coronavirus restricts continue to be lifted, many physical acts of socializing – hugs, handshakes and everything in between, have become less comfortable for people. While some are excited to begin up-close-and-personal socializing, others are fiercely protective of their physical space. Hence, the creation of the colored-coded accessories, sometimes stickers, lanyards or bracelets, to differentiate who is comfortable with what kind of touch.

At in-person events like the ones hosted by the Chesterfield chamber of commerce, located near Virginia's capital, hosts have been giving out red, yellow and green stickers to attendees, with signs explaining the colors' code. At an event hosted by the chamber, a sign explained that red means no physical contact wanted, "no exceptions". Those wearing a yellow band are only OK with elbow contact, like an elbow bump. Green means that "hugs [are] welcome".

Danielle Fitz-Hugh, president of the chamber, noted the variety of comfort levels around physical touch as in-person gathering becomes more frequent. "The greens are just ready to party," said Danielle Fitz-Hugh to WSJ.

Similarly, at an annual conference hosted by the south-east chapter of the American Association of Airport Executive in Georgia, guests could grab a wristband. Placards explained that green for those "Celebrating like it's 2019", yellow for anyone feeling "2020 has me confused", and red for "Wake me up in 2022".

In addition to public events, [some offices](#) have also started implementing the red-yellow-green systems to better support those working in person.

The red-yellow-green accessories are one of many pandemic-era tools that have been created to help people feel more comfortable at in-person gatherings. Other innovations include directive signs, sometimes customized, that inform others to remain socially distanced from someone.

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## Food

# You can tell a lot about a person from their food secrets



Grace Dent: ‘My ultimate soothing snack is crisp, vinegary chips with plenty of salt and lots of gravy.’ Photograph: Ilka & Franz/The Guardian. Food stylist: Lucy-Ruth Hathaway. Hair and make-up: Sarah Cherry using NARS Cosmetics. Set build: Lost Boys. Food styling assistant: Valeria Soledad Russo.

Grace Dent: ‘My ultimate soothing snack is crisp, vinegary chips with plenty of salt and lots of gravy.’ Photograph: Ilka & Franz/The Guardian. Food stylist: Lucy-Ruth Hathaway. Hair and make-up: Sarah Cherry using NARS Cosmetics. Set build: Lost Boys. Food styling assistant: Valeria Soledad Russo.

Comfort Eating, our restaurant critic’s new weekly podcast, is a fascinating, funny glimpse behind closed doors. What are the snacks that see her celebrity guests through tough times?



[Grace Dent](#)

[@gracedent](#)

Fri 11 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

My new Guardian podcast, Comfort Eating, in which I talk to famous folk about their food secrets, is my dream opportunity for an honest chat. Interviewing celebrities is always a bit of a tussle: they arrive semi-spikily, bearing lists of things they don't want to talk about, or they don't want to be there at all, or they've been a prisoner all day in a hotel suite, repeating dull anecdotes about their latest project.

Many times, the most exhilarating part of any TV interview comes right before the cameras roll. That's when the audio person asks, "OK, quickly, just tell me what you had for breakfast?" It's not a real question even; it's just the time-worn way audio people nudge celebs to make a noise so they can tinker with the sound levels. But it's the bit I love the most – and the bit when famous people are most off-guard. "Two [Creme Eggs](#) ... I can never stop at one. They remind me of being a little boy," one gym-honed British thesp replied. Or, from the mouth of a sylph-like sex symbol: "Ritz biscuits with Primula cheese and Branston pickle. I carry them in my suitcase to keep me sane."

What we eat to make us feel comforted is very personal. It's also often a little embarrassing

Hang on ... *what?!* Let's talk about this! For me, these are the real questions. Go-to breakfasts, secret snack concoctions, favourite biscuits and the details of their regular Domino's pizza order: that's when you see the real human being. Name-checking a favourite restaurant tells me very little about a person, but you can tell a lot from what they eat behind closed doors. What we eat, in pyjamas, to make us feel comforted, happier, self-soothed or loved is very, very personal. It's also often a little embarrassing.

I cannot, for example, eat beans on toast without a large puddle of bright yellow Heinz salad cream – the full-fat one, not the healthier “light” one; I need my pourable sunshine on full beam. Whenever I've started a new relationship, I've kept my salad cream habit quiet. Especially with beans. I mean, some people find it abhorrent. But it takes me back to the 1970s, when I was not much more than a toddler, stood on a chair in a kitchen in Carlisle, spreading Heinz sandwich spread – which is essentially just salad cream with bits of chopped carrot and cucumber in it – on toast and feeling ever so grownup. It's a taste that's comforted me an entire lifetime. The same goes for Ambrosia rice pudding, eaten from the tin with a big spoon of strawberry jam stirred in. At the end of a long, terrible day, this, on the sofa, is the equivalent of a long bath and a cuddle. As for breakfast, each time I mush up boiled egg in a mug with, yes, more salad cream, to sustain me through deadlines, I'm whisked back to cold mornings before infant school with Terry Wogan on Radio 2 and donating teddies to the Blue Peter bring-and-buy sale.

By prising the details of secret snacks out of celebs, I've gone into the most surprising, emotional places

In my weekly podcast, I want to explore exactly this kind of thing: what we eat, how we eat it, and why. I've talked to [Rafe Spall](#) about his ideal Indian takeaway order, and how it takes him straight back to Friday nights in the 80s with his dad, [Timothy](#). And [Russell T Davies](#) made me the snack that

helped him through writing [It's A Sin](#) – I don't want to spoil it, but Cordon Bleu cookery it certainly isn't.

Over the past few months, I've spoken to people about their Nando's order, and Nice 'N' Spicy Nik Naks, and the whys and wherefores of the Pizza Hut ice-cream factory. Or at least that's what the chat started off about: we were soon talking about school dinners, first loves, bad dates, terrible auditions, messy break-ups, sibling rivalry and hideous house-shares. [Food](#), you see, is the backing track to all of these life things. By prising the details of secret snacks out of celebs, I've gone into the most surprising, emotional places.

The Comfort Eating podcast is a side of celebrities you don't normally see, a way to their heart via their stomach

For the Comfort Eating photoshoot, I wanted to pay tribute to my ultimate soothing snack by filling the bath with deep-fried chipped maris pipers. Yes, as a restaurant critic, I spend an excessive amount of time in posh restaurants, eating fancy, ornate tasting menus. But a real treat for me is crisp, vinegary chips with plenty of salt and, in full acknowledgment of the northern English stereotype, lots of gravy. I've tried to leave this penchant behind as I've grown older and apparently wiser, but I just can't quit it. When [a cook recently made me Canadian poutine on MasterChef](#), it was a truly emotional moment. In one bite, I was 15 and foolish again, eating chips out of a polystyrene tray outside a youth club while [Blue Monday by New Order](#) belted out through the open doors.

Snacks such as these link us to the past and make the present and future feel not quite so frightening. The Comfort Eating podcast is about this. It's a side of celebrities you don't normally see, a way to their heart via their stomach. I, for one, will take a story about Findus crispy pancakes or mint Viennetta over their motivation for being a thespian any day.

[Comfort Eating with Grace Dent](#), supported by Ocado, launches on Tuesday 15 June. Subscribe now wherever you get your podcasts.

[The Guardian at 200](#): as part of our digital festival, Grace Dent will be in conversation with Jessie Ware on Monday 14 June. [Book tickets here](#)

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## [TV review](#)[Television](#)

# Clarkson's Farm review – Jeremy the ignoramus rides again

Eight hours of a buffoon screwing things up for our supposed entertainment is bad enough, but it's his total contempt for farming that makes this such a grim harvest



Jeremy Clarkson inside the cab of his £40,000 Lamborghini tractor in Clarkson's Farm. Photograph: Amazon Prime Video

Jeremy Clarkson inside the cab of his £40,000 Lamborghini tractor in Clarkson's Farm. Photograph: Amazon Prime Video



[Lucy Mangan](#)

[@LucyMangan](#)

Fri 11 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

The latest extrusion from the Amazon/Jeremy Clarkson factory is called [Clarkson's Farm](#). We will rename it Jeremy Buys a Tractor for the duration of this review, because that is what it amounts to.

In Jeremy Buys a Tractor, Howard, the man who farms the 1,000 acres of the Cotswolds Clarkson has owned since 2008, retires. Clarkson thus sets himself the challenge, for no earthly reason other than to furnish a conceit for his next series, of farming Diddly Squat – as the collection of rolling fields is hilariously named. “I have literally no clue,” he says, as he gazes from tree-lined boundary to tree-lined boundary, performatively ignorant master of all he surveys. “But it’s going to involve some tractoring!”

Inexhaustibly pleased with this coinage, Jeremy goes to a local dealership to buy a tractor. The unignorant dealer recommends a modest machine that will do the job nicely. Jeremy orders a 10-ton, £40,000 Lamborghini model from Germany. The European hitch is not compatible with British farming equipment and Jeremy cannot understand the Teutonic onscreen instructions. There is no manual.



It is also – he discovers when he attempts to manoeuvre it inside – too big to fit in his tractor shed. Oh. The. Hilarity. Everyone told him it was too big and everyone he meets, from the National Farmers' Union rep, to the land manager Charlie, to the shepherd Ellen (“I don't know if we're allowed to say 'shepherdess' these days,” he says, of course), tells him as well.

It is so tiring. Are you tired? Is Jeremy tired? Or will he remain unto death a source of endless wit and fascination to himself and just enough people to make everything feel worthwhile? You can ponder these things to distract yourself from the embarrassment of watching him spray fat stupidity around a farm sale, where he goes to furnish Diddly Squat with all the equipment Howard presumably took with him.

The rest of the episode is taken up with him gazing in bafflement at a cultivator and a seed drill and pointlessly messing up various things for our theoretical entertainment and non-edification. Eventually, he does what he would have done if contractual obligations to fill eight hours of telly hadn't militated against it and hires 21-year-old Kaleb Cooper, a former Diddly Squat employee, to do it all.

Kaleb, incidentally, is [This Country's Kerry and Kurtan Mucklowe](#) to the life (“Been to London once on an art trip. I stayed on the coach. Go to Banbury if I need something desperately. Otherwise – Chipping Norton, Chadlington, Heythrop, that's me”). He is a testimony to the acuity of their comedy, but with endless practical intelligence replacing the Mucklowes' gormlessness. The genuine incredulity and dismissal with which he treats Clarkson's meaningless shtick are the only things here to gladden the heart. In a good and just world, he would have been allowed to take over the farm and the programme, too. But we are where we are.

There is more wearisome, meretricious rubbish in this episode – and then in the others – that there is no point detailing here. The pandemic hits in episode five, but doesn't really change Diddly Squat life much, besides scuppering some plans for the sheep as restaurants close and demand for lamb goes down. The series amounts to less and less as time goes on. From the staged conceit to Clarkson's contempt, the bad faith of every aspect of Jeremy Fills the Airwaves is so nakedly on display that each moment feels as if it is hollowing itself out from the inside. (I would particularly like to

know what farmers, who would face ruination if they acted as stupidly as the dilettante multimillionaire does here, make of this – and of his wondering why they, members of a demographic with a high suicide rate, don't just kill themselves.)

Of course, in one sense, it doesn't matter. Birds gonna fly, fish gonna swim, Clarkson gonna Clarkson and scoff at the "government red tape" that surrounds every farming endeavour until the cows come home. In another sense, it matters a lot. For every Clarkson sucking up money, resources, time and publicity, there are other, newer, brighter, more entertaining, more valuable things not getting made. The most generous interpretation that can be put on Jeremy Buys a Tractor is that Clarkson, by being so visibly idiotic (and incompetent and impractical), is subtly repositioning himself as the buffoon his fans can start to laugh at, rather than the self-indulgent petrolhead they want to be. But that still leaves him with a long career row left to hoe, alas.

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## Fast and Furious

# **‘My brain has liquefied!’: what happened when one careful Skoda driver binged every Fast & Furious film**



Pedal to the metal ... Tim Jonze gets behind the wheel for his Fast & Furious epic. Composite: Graeme Robertson/Allstar/Universal

Pedal to the metal ... Tim Jonze gets behind the wheel for his Fast & Furious epic. Composite: Graeme Robertson/Allstar/Universal

Eight films. Twenty-four hours. One nervous breakdown. Ahead of the latest instalment, one writer caught up on the pec-drenched petrolhead franchise



[Tim Jonze](#)

[@timjonze](#)

Fri 11 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

They say that if you stare into the abyss, the abyss stares back at you. But what if you stare at every single one of the eight Fast & Furious films in a row? Does anything stare back at you then? And if so, does it have beautiful blue eyes like [Paul Walker](#)?

Somebody had to find out. OK, technically nobody had to find out. But somebody was *about* to find out, because I had been signed up to do just that – crank up the original, The Fast and the Furious, then put my pedal to the metal and not stop watching until the credits ran on the eighth film in the franchise. Ride or die, as they say – or at least ride or have a nervous breakdown.

This month sees the release of F9, the latest instalment of the street-racing and heist saga that has grossed \$6bn worldwide. And yet, thanks to my radar for avoiding anything involving explosions and the biceps of shaven-headed men, it has completely passed me by. I assumed they're just not for me. My life was fast and furious once, but these days I'm a knackered dad who wouldn't dream of doing more than 20mph in a 20mph zone after a run-in

with a speed awareness course. The only high-speed crash I've had recently is denting my Skoda Yeti when I tried to manoeuvre it into the Guardian lifts. I'm hoping these films might revive my youthful spirit so I can at least start doing stunts outside my daughter's schoolgates.



Hold on tight ... Tim Jonze getting ready to rev up his streaming service. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

It's 9am, the kids have been dropped off and I'm ready to start my engine. The Fast and the Furious starts with a heist on a lorry containing, er, DVD players (it's 2001) and then moves swiftly on to a homoerotic cafe scene in which Walker gets into a brawl for ordering a tuna sandwich. "No one likes the tuna in here!" is a line that sets the tone for the following 16 hours.

Walker plays an undercover cop called Brian O'Conner, who infiltrates an illegal street-race gang, despite looking and acting exactly like an undercover cop. [Vin Diesel](#) plays Dominic Toretto, the head of the hijacking team who befriends O'Conner despite the fact that he catches him doing what looks suspiciously like undercover cop stuff. But in the same way it's not an "acting" or a "dialogue" movie, it's not really a "plot" movie, either: instead, there are parties where meathead men show off their guitar riffs to women wearing leather bras. There are multiple crashes involving innocent members of the public whose pending insurance claims will, I imagine, be

dealt with in the sequels. And there is a race at the end where Dom and Brian compete to smash into a train for, as far as I can tell, no reason whatsoever.

It's a terrible movie on almost every front and I have no idea how the entire cast and crew weren't served with an injunction preventing them from ever working in Hollywood ever again. That small quibble aside, I love it. It's so dumb and silly and simple, I want to watch another. Which is good news because, after making a quick coffee in my topless Paul Walker mug, it's time to cue up 2 Fast 2 Furious.

2 Fast 2 Furious is the same as The Fast and the Furious. By that, I mean, it's virtually identical. I have to check I've not replayed the first one by mistake. We are in Miami this time, and Vin Diesel has been replaced by Tyrese Gibson, but in essence it's a replica: cars gleam, abs gleam, lots of ladies' bottoms gleam and stay right in the centre of the camera for quite some time. This time our heroes are enlisted to take down a criminal mastermind using nothing but prolonged eye contact and the ability to drive sports cars through the air on to boats (if you're considering re-enacting this stunt at home, please ensure you do it as correctly demonstrated in the film: press the accelerator down really hard and scream).

It ends and, in keeping with the breakneck lifestyle of the characters, I realise it will be a tight squeeze to finish The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift before I have to pick my daughter up from school – so off we go! Tokyo Drift has an entirely new cast, but who needs the stars of a franchise when you've got a high-school race between new antihero Sean Boswell (Lucas Black) and some jock whose girlfriend is *the prize* for the winner – there are some badass female characters in these movies, often ones who can win street races in crotch-high boots not entirely conducive to clutch control. I'm not sure Andrea Dworkin was ever the target audience, though, really.





Paul Walker as Brian O'Conner in the original, *The Fast and the Furious*.  
Photograph: Universal Pictures/Allstar

Boswell drives so recklessly in the US that he has to move to Tokyo and drive recklessly over there instead. He pisses off the Yakuza and befriends a man called Han Lue (Sung-Ho Kang), whose personality is either “quietly charismatic” or “eats lots of crisps”, depending on your point of view. Han teaches him how to “drift”, which is kind of a metaphor for living in the moment. Just living in the moment explains a lot about these films – like, for instance, why each film has a scene where two hot women that have nothing to do with the story snog for a bit.

Was this film good? I suspect it was totally rubbish, but because my brain is starting to liquefy by this point I didn't really mind it. I leg it to school to grab my daughter just in time and hurry her home at breakneck pace. Am I starting to absorb the films' speed-demon ethos? Or have I just got six more of these bloody films to get through and a deadline to meet?

*Fast & Furious* from 2009 is up next, a film so fast and furious it doesn't even have time for definite articles. My children are home, and even though my wife refuses to refer to this as “work”, she reluctantly sorts out their tea and bathtime while I shamefully shut the living-room door and tell them they can't come in to watch their cartoons. The old cast are back and

confusingly, so is the man who eats crisps who died in the last film. A lot of effort is made playing around with timelines here to make it all make sense, which seems rather silly given that nothing else about these films makes any sense.

Dom's wife, Letty, has perished in a car crash, and so he visits the site and hallucinates her final moments. Like Dom, I am beginning to wonder where reality starts and ends. The crashes and explosions are entering my eyes and ears, for sure, but what my brain is doing with that information is unclear.



‘Without even realising, I’ve been living fast and furiously, dicing with death like Toretto himself.’ Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

There’s a lot of stuff to tie up in this film because, clearly, nobody thought they would be making one sequel to the original, let alone eight: why did Brian abandon Mia (Dom’s sister, played by Jordana Brewster)? Why did he let Dom walk off with the keys to his car rather than arrest him? When these questions are put to Brian directly, he stares into the camera and says: “I don’t know.”

Fair enough! Two hot women snog for a bit. The racers are using satnav. It’s actually all quite boring and ends with Dom going to prison for 25 years without parole, which means quite literally nothing, because, as I soon learn,



he spends the entire franchise having his atrocious criminal record repeatedly wiped.

I convince my wife to join me for Fast 5. She asks what she has missed and the avalanche of facts pouring from my mouth startles me: I start talking about how it's not about cops and criminals, but instead people with or without a moral code; how it hammers home valuing loyalty to your family above all (er, sorry about the cartoons earlier), even if it's your adopted family. I realise I know what "racing for pink slips" means and I have an in-depth knowledge of how to achieve complicated stunts (eg the way to escape from a moving train in a car is to accelerate really fast while screaming). Not only can I explain what's happened, I realise I can also explain what is *about* to happen – "they'll pull into a warehouse in a minute and the police will mysteriously just give up on the chase". I could probably go on Mastermind with this as my specialist subject, and I really hope nobody makes me do that for another Guardian feature.

By its fifth instalment, the franchise has ditched the dumb-but-charming street racing theme for flashy, all-star heist action. The Rock is here to make Vin Diesel look about as hard as Matt Hancock, and there's a car chase with a bank vault swinging around on the streets of Rio. "This is just car noises," says my wife, before admitting she's quite enjoying it. I'm pleased for her critical input because I can no longer tell if it's any good beyond knowing that the optimum time to watch Fast 5 is not immediately after watching Fast & Furious 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The Rock is here to make Vin Diesel look about as hard as Matt Hancock

The film ends, as they all seem to do, with a barbecue where they drink Corona and say grace. Mia refuses a beer because she's pregnant with Brian's child – admirable health consciousness from someone who has recently staged a heist on a police station.

It is now pushing midnight and I fall asleep. Five hours later, I hear my son wailing to get up, but I ignore him and put on Fast & Furious 6. Dom and Brian are racing each other. Again. Is this all just a weird dream? Are there

really going to be nine movies about this? Brian is a dad now, but that criminal record won't wipe itself, so he heads to London to fight criminals – this time on the same side as the Rock. Letty is back from the dead. [Rita Ora](#) appears to say “This is London baby!” and somehow manages to turn just that into a terrible performance. Han's girlfriend, Gisele (played by a pre-Wonder Woman Gal Gadot) dies and, despite the constant reminders of the importance of family, the crew get over it extremely quickly and never mention it again. They're fighting a tank with cars and I'm very, very tired.

I sense that I don't really want Fast & Furious 6 to end. But then I realise that's just because I don't want to watch [Furious 7](#) and F8. To be fair, this one almost *doesn't* end. Its running length feels like 724 minutes. I'm also no longer watching. I'm enduring. Waiting for all the bullets in all the guns to run out and all the glass to smash so I can find some peace. I realise that I've not kept up with any news for over 24 hours. Then I realise that I've also forgotten to take my daily medication to stop my blood clotting and killing me with a stroke. Without even realising, I've been living fast and furiously, dicing with death like Toretto himself.



‘It’s easy ... Just accelerate and then scream’ ... Diesel and Michelle Rodriguez in Fast & Furious. Photograph: Universal Pictures/Allstar

Despite all this, Furious 7 might just be my favourite one. Brian's got a toddler. Jason Statham blows up a hospital. And the world might end thanks to a rogue facial recognition device that can only be controlled by a girl who used to be in Hollyoaks (Nathalie Emmanuel). A car jumps through a skyscraper – twice (you've got to accelerate and scream, etc).

[Why Fast & Furious is the best film franchise of all time | Arwa Mahdawi](#)  
[Read more](#)

Then something truly strange happens. [At the end](#), Dom walks off without saying bye and Ramsey asks him why. Dom says: "It's never goodbye" – but is it Dom or Vin Diesel? Because Paul Walker died – in a car crash – before finishing this movie, and they were great buddies IRL, too. We next see Dom at traffic lights. A CGI version of Walker is driving down the uncanny valley and pulls up at the lights next to him. A montage of their time together plays while Diesel delivers a moving sermon about his buddy ("You'll always be my brother"). I feel extremely wobbly. Oh God, I'm not going to start crying to a Fast and Furious movie, am I? "It sounds like you might," says my wife. I pull myself together and load up F8.

This is the final slog, the Gladiators' travelator. "You said you'd make the kids' tea tonight," says my wife. "But I *have* to watch more [Fast and Furious](#)," I snap back, like the monster I've become. It's hard to imagine, but this film is stupider than the previous seven put together. Dom is now fighting his own team because bad girl Cipher (Charlize Theron) is holding hostage the secret son he never knew he had with the girlfriend he had back in the fourth film until she magnanimously said he should go back to his dead wife who was no longer dead. The mother of this child is executed in front of the poor screaming baby (genuinely dark and inappropriate). The next minute, Deckard Shaw (Jason Statham), the most evil man on Earth only one movie ago, is completing a highly technical gun battle while holding said baby in an infant childseat ... I think because his mum, who is Helen Mirren, told him to.

It's probably amazing, or terrible, or something else, but I'm just relieved that it's over. Watching the entire franchise hasn't made my life any more fast or furious. If anything, I feel more knackered than before. But I've never

been happier to turn off the telly, make my wife a cup of tea and do a long shift of childcare and I think, really, that's what the message of the film is all about. As my brother Dom Torretto might say, raising a cold Corona to the sky: salute mi familia!

- [F9: The Fast Saga is out 24 June](#)

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## [Pop and rock](#)

Interview

# Daryl Hall & John Oates: ‘We had a lethal ability to experiment’

[Alexis Petridis](#)



Daryl Hall (right) and John Oates: their song You Make My Dreams has become an online hit – 41 years after its original release

Daryl Hall (right) and John Oates: their song You Make My Dreams has become an online hit – 41 years after its original release

Their 80s hits are now hitting the billion-streams mark, but the duo’s genre-resistant pop often chafed against the zeitgeist. They recall the triumphs – and makeup choices – of the past 50 years



Fri 11 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

I'm half an hour into my interview with John Oates when he insists I need to look at YouTube as a matter of extreme urgency. "You've never seen this?" he says, incredulous, down the phone from his home in Nashville. "My friend, I don't know you very well, but you're missing a great moment in music history. Your life will change. Your perceptions of us will never be the same again."

This is [the 1973 video Daryl Hall & John Oates made for She's Gone](#), the standout track from their album *Abandoned Luncheonette*, and a staple of their live sets to this day. It's certainly striking viewing. The pair are slumped, poker-faced, in armchairs ("That's the furniture from our apartment," notes Oates). Daryl Hall is resplendent in a pair of platform sandals; Oates is wearing a bow tie and dress shirt with no sleeves. A woman walks in front of the camera – this, Oates informs me, is the songwriter Sara Allen, Hall's former partner and the co-author of a string of Hall & Oates hits – followed by a man with a moustache wearing a sparkly devil costume. The latter helps Oates into a penguin suit dinner jacket with an enormous pair of flippers attached to the arms, in which he listlessly mimes a guitar solo. All three march around the armchairs together, then walk off.



Perhaps understandably, the local TV show for which they recorded the video declined to show it (“They called our record company and said: ‘Who do these guys think they are? They are mocking us! They will never appear on TV again!’”), but you can see why Oates has chosen to exhume it. For one thing, it points up the sheer oddness of Hall & Oates in the 1970s, of which more later. And for another, as Oates suggests, it helps to explain why the duo so successfully navigated the 80s. Many of their 70s peers struggled in the new world of music videos and synthesisers, but Hall & Oates thrived: if you’d been filmed marching around a set of armchairs wearing flippers, you were ready for MTV.

The MTV years were the commercial apex of Hall & Oates’s career. In the 80s, they had five consecutive platinum albums and five US No 1 singles, a relentless succession of the kind of impermeable hits that continue to rack up millions of streams and ensure that the duo still play arenas: Maneater, Out of Touch, I Can’t Go for That (No Can Do), Private Eyes.

As if to prove the point about their vast continued popularity, they are reissuing the 7in of their 1981 single You Make My Dreams for Record Store Day this weekend. It wasn’t even released as a UK single at the time, but developed an afterlife owing to its use in the 2009 film [\(500\) Days of Summer](#): 12 years later, it’s by far their biggest track. It was played after Joe Biden’s victory speech last November, a month after it notched up its one billionth global stream, a state of affairs that seems to baffle the duo.

Hall, primarily the singer, who is on the phone at home in New York state, suggests the song’s success has something to do with its “aggressive positivity”, but admits: “I’m not really sure, that’s the truth.” Oates, primarily the guitarist, offers a lengthy and eloquent discourse on the pan-generational appeal of classic rock, then shrugs: “It’s just a fuckin’ great groove and a simple, direct statement. I could have cut all the crap I just said and said that.”

They met while both fleeing a fight that had broken out in a Philadelphia dance hall in 1967. Oates was a folkie, fond of country and blues. Hall had served a remarkable musical apprenticeship on Philadelphia’s “very intense, very racially integrated” soul scene. As a teenager, he was friends with soft

soul bands the Delfonics and the Stylistics; at the city's answer to Harlem's Apollo, the Uptown Theater, he hung out with the Temptations and Smokey Robinson. When his own band, the Temptones, won a local talent competition, the prize was to record a single with producers [Gamble and Huff](#), who would shortly change the face of pop with the symphonic soul and disco on their Philadelphia International label.

Ken Gamble attempted to lure Hall to the new label as an artist and writer, but he chose to move to New York with Oates. "We were trying to forge our own version of the Philly sound and we thought that the only way we could do that was by separating ourselves from Gamble and Huff – they were doing what they were doing, and we wanted to do something different."

They released their debut album in 1972, but, from the outside at least, the next eight years of their career look like fascinating chaos. They had huge hits – the aforementioned She's Gone, Sara Smile and Rich Girl – but they also had what Hall calls "a lethal ability to experiment". One minute they sounded like a pop-soul band; the next they were releasing War Babies, produced by Todd Rundgren and backed by his prog band Utopia, home to songs with titles such as Johnny Gore and the "C" Eaters, and War Baby Son of Zorro. One minute they were on black R&B radio, the next they were on tour with Lou Reed in full Rock 'n' Roll Animal mode ("a strange cat, man ... his audience was even stranger, like ... junkie-wannabes").

They looked like regular 70s singer-songwriters, but were [absolutely plastered in makeup on the cover of their 1975 album, Daryl Hall & John Oates](#). "That was [makeup artist] [Pierre La Roche](#)," says Oates. "He was responsible for Bowie's look, he worked with Jagger. I remember sitting with him at dinner; he was a very flamboyant character and he said: 'I will immortalise you!' It's the only album cover anyone ever asks us about, so I guess he was right." In 1977, Hall made Sacred Songs, an Aleister Crowley-inspired solo album, with Robert Fripp, which so horrified their record label, RCA, that it refused to release it for three years.

At least part of the problem was that, for all their Philadelphia roots and their LA recording sessions, they were spending their spare time hanging out on New York's downtown 70s music scene. "The New York Dolls, Patti Smith, Television – it was all happening," says Oates. "I was out every



night, going to the Mercer Arts Center and Max's Kansas City ... we couldn't avoid the influence of it. We wanted to remain true to who we were, but we didn't want to ignore the zeitgeist of what was happening in our lives. And so that's what we tried to do."



Hall and Oates in November 1981. Photograph: Paul Natkin/Wire Image

Both agree that they truly hit paydirt when they were allowed to produce themselves and record with their live band: the result was 1980's *Voices*, from whence *You Make My Dreams* and the US No 1 *Kiss on My List* sprang. In the late 70s, Hall had been one of the few straight white artists to publicly call out the Disco Sucks movement ("Because I straddled the line, because of my background, I knew it for what it was: a racist thing, totally racist"). On *Voices*, he and Oates minted a pop style that was equal parts soul and new wave rock, a pretty ballsy move in the pre-*Thriller* America of 1980, where the genres were sharply divided. Certainly, Michael Jackson took an interest, later telling Oates he loved to dance to *I Can't Go for That*, and that its bassline inspired *Billie Jean*.

"One of the things I don't think we get full credit for is opening up the minds of commercial radio for that possibility," says Oates. "We had our early success with black radio – the African American community had been as big a part, if not a bigger part of our success as anything. So to us it was

normal, that was the music we made, it appealed to a wide variety of people. I think we opened the door to more acceptance of what they defined as crossover music.” He sighs. “It’s all bullshit, those definitions, but nevertheless.”



Back to their roots ... Hall & Oates with David Ruffin and Eddie Kendrick in 1985. Photograph: Ebet Roberts/Redferns

The pair’s zenith may have come in 1985. They were asked to headline the reopening of the Apollo in Harlem, and insisted they would only perform if David Ruffin and Eddie Kendricks of the Temptations shared the stage: a few weeks later, Ruffin and Kendricks also shared Hall & Oates’s slot at the US leg of Live Aid. They began to feel they had achieved all they wanted to achieve. Hall talks about the Apollo gig “completing the circle ... we felt like we had gone all the way around”. Oates clearly enjoyed their success in time-honoured rock-star style – he took up motor racing and began flying the duo to gigs in his own plane – but concedes that he found “the act of becoming far more interesting than the victory lap”.

After 1990’s tellingly titled *Change of Season*, they more-or-less walked away: Hall & Oates have released only four albums in the past 30 years. “We almost felt like, what could possibly be the upside of where we are now?” says Oates. “If we release another record and it doesn’t go to No 1, is

that a failure? We just felt like we needed something else. I personally needed to step away from writing, recording, touring in order to do that. I got divorced, sold everything I owned, moved to Colorado and started my life over in the mountains.”

He returned to his musical roots, playing country and folk, while collaborating with everyone from Dan the Automator and Prince Paul’s hip-hop duo Handsome Boy Modelling School to [The Bird and the Bee](#), super-producer Greg Kurstin’s indie band. It’s evidence, like the steadily declining age of audiences whenever Hall & Oates chose to tour together, that the duo’s critical stock had begun rising dramatically in the decades since their 80s hits.



Daryl Hall and John Oates in concert in 1985. Photograph: LGI Stock/Corbis/VCG/Getty Images

Hall, meanwhile, worked with the funk duo Chromeo and appeared on UK dance act Nero’s chart-topping debut album, and started [Live from Daryl’s House](#), a YouTube series with a wildly eclectic list of guest performers that has proved immensely successful, spawning a restaurant/club in New York state. He says he started it, with a certain weird prescience, after some Hall & Oates shows were cancelled as a result of 2003’s Sars epidemic. “I thought: what if this happens on a larger scale? Maybe I should figure out a

way, if there ever comes a point where I can't travel, that I can bring the world to me."

He thinks the sheer range of guests involved – soul legends, singer songwriters, rappers, rock bands – helps explain, "maybe for the first time", where he and indeed Hall & Oates were coming from. "Not easy to peg, not easy to categorise," he says. "I blame myself, really, more than anybody, more than John. Live From Daryl's House is a way I can explain that musical language, where I can have all these completely different musical styles and swim in any of those waters. And that sort of explained me. Before that, I absolutely think people were confused."

Daryl Hall & John Oates's single, You Make My Dreams, [is released by CMG on 12 June](#) as part of Record Store Day.

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## 2021.06.11 - Opinion

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## [OpinionG7](#)

# The G7 helped to build this low-tax world. Are they really ready to change it?

[Mark Blyth](#)

Finance ministers finally seem willing to crack down on avoidance. But the rich may just slip through the loopholes



Illustration: Eleanor Shakespeare

Illustration: Eleanor Shakespeare

Fri 11 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Back in the 1980s there was a New York hotelier named [Leona Helmsley](#). What made her notorious was her 1989 trial for tax evasion, during which her housekeeper testified that she had once uttered the immortal line: “We don’t pay taxes, only the little people pay taxes.” While this may strike us as

self-evidently true today, it wasn't so then. Helmsley was sentenced to 16 years in jail. She eventually served 18 months. The point is, she did time for not paying her taxes.

The latest attempt at cracking down on people not paying their fair share, unveiled by [G7](#) finance ministers this week, suggests a return to the times when we actually expected people to pay their taxes. But all may not be as it seems.

In the years since Helmsley's trial, governments across the world actively enabled [tax evasion](#) by individuals and corporations (which is illegal) by vastly increasing the scope for [tax avoidance](#) (which is legal). I first became aware of this in 2010, when I [paid more taxes](#) than General Electric. This year, I paid more in income tax than an entire [subsidiary of Microsoft](#) did through corporation tax.

But it's not just corporations. Earlier this week, the non-profit US investigative news site ProPublica [showed us](#) that it's the billionaire class that pays least of all. My effective tax rate in the US, where I live, is just over seven times that of Elon Musk and 240 times (not a typo) that of the investor Warren Buffett. Jeff Bezos reported [such a low income](#) that he qualified for, and claimed, child tax credit in 2011.

In the early 90s, governments started buying into an argument about capital mobility, taxes and welfare states: in a world of global capital, investors will seek the best returns they can get globally. If those returns are reduced by "distortions" such as taxes, investment will flow to countries that tax less. Consequently, those expensive and expansive welfare states that neoliberal economists had always targeted had to go. Funding them through taxing the wealthy and corporations would lower investment and employment, so the story went.

Governments across the Organisation for Economic Co-ordination and Development (OECD) used this argument to cut taxes on both individuals and corporations. The UK's corporate tax rate fell from 34% to 19% between 1990 and 2019, while the US's rates fell from 35% to 21% over the same period. But rather than those reductions leading to an explosion of investment in both countries, investment levels actually fell, as the tax-

savings made were taken as profit and pushed into asset markets. In the UK, gross fixed-capital investment [fell](#) from 23.5% of GDP in 1990 to 17% in 2019. In the US, it [fell](#) from 23.5% to 19%.

While utterly failing to promote investment, what such changes did set up was ruinous tax competition between states. Countries “optimised” their tax regimes to the point where they became the core business model of the state. Ireland (through a 12.5% rate), Latvia (by acting as a conduit for Russian capital flight), and the UK (with its tax havens and opaque property markets) are but the most obvious examples. On the other side of the Atlantic, one could add Panama and Belize as tax havens and the states of [Delaware](#) and [Nevada](#) for corporate shell companies.

But it wasn’t just corporations: governments also did the same for individuals. Recently, the Rand Corporation [examined](#) how incomes in the US would look if the country hadn’t spent decades changing taxes and regulations to benefit the wealthy. Median earnings in 2018 were \$50,000. They “could have been” \$92,000. Changing taxes and regulations to benefit the top effectively cost the average US worker \$42,000 a year by 2018.

Tax-skewing only tells us one part of the story, though. As the ProPublica data details, the reason why “only little people pay taxes” is because we can’t avoid them. The rich can, mainly because income from wages gets taxed while income from loans does not. Consequently, if you are extremely wealthy you can pledge your assets (stocks, shares, houses, art) as collateral against loans that you can live off, tax free. You can then take your extra untaxed cash from these loans and use it to buy more assets, to get more loans, effectively settling the loans after death with a tax sheltering trust – avoiding tax even after you have reached the grave.

For corporations, the tax bounty is even more bounteous. Domiciling in low-tax havens and hiding true ownership is plain vanilla. Actually illegal but barely prosecuted crimes such as “smurfing” (structuring transactions to keep to a minimal value) and property market money-laundering (getting a shell company to buy a building in order to hide income) sit alongside legitimate strategies such as intra-firm transfer pricing (where different parts of a firm sell each other inputs so the tax headquarters can report a loss), state-enabled inversions (where a firm lowers its tax by changing its



nationality) and tax “sandwiches” (where firms can move royalties offshore through countries that have no withholding taxes). Collectively these cost countries between \$500bn and \$600bn a year in lost revenue.

Given all this, it’s heartening to see the US back at the table with the OECD fighting “base erosion”, the G7 agreeing on a minimum 15% global corporate tax rate,; the UK actually proposing raising corporate taxes, and the Biden administration using the ProPublica leak to make the case for higher individual taxes on the super-rich. But should we trust them to actually do so?

The deals on the table look good as long as you don’t look too closely. That 15% rate applies only to firms that have profit margins above 10%. How easy is it for a firm to game its margins? Very easy. Moreover, words are cheap. Let’s remember that David Cameron [pledged](#) in 2010 that he would raise taxes on banks to pay for the financial crisis bailouts. That never happened. This time round, right after signing the G7 agreement, the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, [sought exemptions](#) for the City of London from the G7 taxes he had just signed up to. Meanwhile, Biden may never get the G7 agreement through Congress, and the EU will surely go back to “fiscal probity” through spending cuts rather than tax increases.

Surveys show declining trust in governments everywhere, and a growing feeling that the economy is a rigged game. Both are not without justification. Governments took us down this low-tax rabbit hole, and they now promise to be the ones to dig us out of it. Given who funds their parties and their campaigns, I’m not holding my breath for any new Helmsleys to show up in the dock anytime soon.

- Mark Blyth is a political economist at Brown University. He is the author, with Eric Loneragan, of *Angrynomics*



## OpinionNorthern Ireland

# The Brexit sausages row looks like stalemate unless Joe Biden can solve it

Anand Menon

Boris Johnson is reluctant to stick to his trade deal and the EU won't make any concessions



A unionist protest against the Northern Ireland protocol at the Port of Larne in County Antrim, April 2021. Photograph: Artur Widak/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

A unionist protest against the Northern Ireland protocol at the Port of Larne in County Antrim, April 2021. Photograph: Artur Widak/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

Fri 11 Jun 2021 04.00 EDT

No matter how much everyone argues, you can't fudge sausages. The UK and the EU are at loggerheads, specifically over chilled meats, but more

generally over the infamous [Northern Ireland protocol](#). And frankly, it's hard to see a way out of the current impasse.

It will be for future generations to figure out what Boris Johnson [had in mind](#) when it comes to the protocol he negotiated, signed and persuaded parliament to approve. Did he not know what it implied in terms of trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland? Did he decide just to wing it, figuring that it would be enough to get him through the election he craved, with some “sandpapering” to smooth over any difficulties further down the line? Did he think the EU could be forced to cave? Did he sign it with no intention of implementing it, and damn the consequences?

What really defies belief is chief negotiator David Frost's claim that the EU's “[purist](#)” approach to implementing the Brexit deal has surprised our government. I mean, what is the EU if not legalistic? For five long years, the British government did little but express some understandable frustration about rigid Brussels legalism. It's a bit rich now to be coming out, effectively saying, “Oh my God, we didn't think the EU would get all legalistic on us.”

Anyway, we are where we are, and that is in a very tough spot. The UK has unilaterally delayed putting in place some of the measures the EU says the protocol implies (notably a ban on the export of chilled meat – including sausages – across the Irish Sea) and is threatening to delay still further. There are further arguments to come, as the [grace periods](#) end and – absent agreement on “technical” matters large and small – border checks begin on everything from food products and parcels on 1 October, to medicines at the start of next year.

The blunt fact is that the UK signed up to this agreement, and the EU has legitimate expectations that we will implement it. Yet both sides have a point.

For the EU, incredulity is mixed with frustration. The incredulity comes with London's refusal to honour its word and implement what is implied by the agreement it willingly signed up to. The frustration is due to the fact there is an easy way out of the current impasse. If the UK simply agreed to

align with EU rules on animal and plant health – even on a temporary basis – the need for the vast majority of checks would simply evaporate.

01:14

Brexit: solution to Northern Ireland protocol row 'easily doable', says Johnson – video

For the UK, such an outcome is unacceptable. For one thing, as Frost put it in a [speech](#) in Brussels in February 2020, the whole point of Brexit was to ensure the UK was free to make its own laws and would therefore refuse any automatic alignment with the EU (London would accept mutual recognition). Unionist fury at the protocol – which they see as putting Northern Ireland in the same economy (at least for goods) as the Republic of Ireland while distancing it from that of the UK – is real.

Squaring this set of particularly circular circles is not going to be easy. Either sausages from Great Britain are allowed into [Northern Ireland](#), or they are not. The UK argues, correctly, that there is currently no health issue here, as our rules are the same as those in place in the single market. The EU argues, also correctly, that that's not the point. The UK does not formally abide by EU rules and so, quite aside from future risks to health should the UK decide to alter its standards, that's just the price London has to pay for the sort of Brexit it has chosen to pursue.

It is, to say the least, hard to see how this one can be sorted. Which immediately raises the prospect of escalation. EU law specialist Catherine Barnard has [reminded us](#) that the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement [allows](#) either party to “suspend obligations” under that treaty in the event of breaches of earlier agreements. For non-lawyers, that means impose trade sanctions for breaches of the withdrawal agreement of 2019, which contains the protocol.

And the EU is very good at this sort of thing. In 2018, its retaliatory tariffs on the US saw key Republican heartlands such as Kentucky (home of then senate majority leader and Donald Trump ally Mitch McConnell) and Tennessee (home of Jack Daniel's), particularly impacted by [whiskey tariffs](#). We can be pretty certain that any action it takes against the UK would be calculated to cause political pain for the prime minister.

Not that escalation by the EU is necessarily going to provide a solution. It might simply cause the UK to dig in, citing unreasonable Brussels heavy-handedness.

01:51

Northern Ireland protocol 'has to be implemented', says Ursula von der Leyen – video

And so, what are the alternatives? One is that the EU backs down. Using some magical formula of diplomacy, traceability and guillotine clauses, Brussels agrees there is no unmanageable health risk implied by chilled meats entering Northern Ireland, particularly if it can be established they go no further into the single market than that. The EU can make concessions when it wants to. Having told Theresa May it was unthinkable that Brussels would allow a non-member state to police its external border, it promptly agreed just that for the current protocol.

Then there is the [G7](#). President Biden's public pronouncements on the row to date are redolent of a parent dealing with two squabbling children: "I don't care who started it, stop it." In private, EU officials maintain the US is not so balanced and points the finger squarely at the UK.

If this really is the case then maybe a few quiet words might be enough to make the UK back down. We do, after all, have form. The offending illegal clauses of the [internal market bill](#) never made it into law. The [EU ambassador](#) is safely ensconced in London with the privileges he sought.

What President Biden would propose to do about the unionist fury that would result from such an outcome is anyone's guess. But maybe, just maybe, instead of butchering the trade deal he signed a few months ago, Boris Johnson will tell Northern Ireland it has to make do with fewer sausages.

- Anand Menon is director of The UK in a Changing [Europe](#) and professor of European politics and foreign affairs at King's College London
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## [OpinionSmoking](#)

# Once unthinkable, a ‘smoke-free’ Britain may soon be a reality

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



With even tobacco addicts no longer believing that the government is being too draconian, change is in the air





Cigarette butts on a Glasgow litter bin. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Cigarette butts on a Glasgow litter bin. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Fri 11 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

Pulling a sweater from a drawer the other day, the smell of smoke took me by surprise.

It was only wood smoke, a legacy of pandemic socialising this freezing spring, when huddling around a garden bonfire was the only way of seeing friends. But it took me back decades, to the years when every night out meant coming home reeking of cigarettes, and every house party left a trail of beer bottles stuffed with fag ends floating in their ashy soup of dregs. Everyone smoked when I was growing up, pretty much everywhere. People lit up routinely on the bus, dads chain-smoked in cars all down the motorway to wherever you were going on holiday, and sweetshops sold candy cigarettes for little kids to pretend-smoke in the playground. The past is a foreign country, and sometimes better that way. But are we ready to consign it completely to history?

Oxfordshire county council [recently unveiled plans](#) to become the first county in England to go officially smoke-free – meaning fewer than 5% of locals smoking, down from 10% now – by 2025. Its aim of discouraging people from taking fag breaks even on the pavement outside offices, or in parks or in their own cars, seems doomed at first sight; councils have few legal powers to enforce such things, and a libertarian Tory government seems unlikely to grant new ones. The smokers’ rights organisation Forest is already protesting that it’s “no business of local councils if adults choose to smoke” – although technically speaking that’s exactly whose business it has been ever since David Cameron moved public health budgets from the NHS to local government.

Yet the time may be riper than it looks for a form of voluntary ban that is perhaps peculiarly British: exploiting smokers’ own innate embarrassment about a habit the majority want to quit. Half of smokers in 2010 thought the government was going too far in trying to make them stop, but a [YouGov poll](#) for the anti-smoking organisation Ash this week found that had fallen to 19% agreeing, with almost one in four thinking ministers could do more. Resistance, it seems, is running out of puff.

When my son started playing in an Oxfordshire village football team eight years ago, his coach would stand on the touchline bellowing instructions with a pint in hand, while spectators sneaked a crafty fag. Now club policy across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire youth leagues is for [smoke-free sidelines](#), with parents who insist on lighting up asked to do so furtively out of sight so that children don’t grow up thinking it’s normal.

It’s a similar story at school gates nationwide, with headteachers increasingly asking parents not to smoke while waiting to collect their kids. Whether or not it’s actually legally enforceable, insisting on your inalienable right to make children skip out of class through a cloud of carcinogens feels socially awkward to say the least. And now such tactics are reaching adult playgrounds too. Smoking is [banned on beaches](#) from Barcelona in Spain to [Veneto in Italy](#), on the grounds that nobody likes swimming in floating fag butts; Newcastle and Middlesbrough have outlawed smoking in [outdoor dining areas](#). This year the Welsh government [banned smoking](#) outside hospitals, schools and daycare settings, and in children’s playgrounds.

What separates these fresh-air bans from the [2007 prohibition](#) on smoking in pubs, restaurants and workplaces is that they're less about stopping innocent bystanders getting lung cancer than signalling social disapproval of smoking – or, as Oxfordshire's director of public health Ansaf Azhar says, “creating an environment in which not smoking is encouraged” – while offering more medical support for those keen to quit. The fewer places smokers feel comfortable indulging, and the more the habit is pushed to the margins, the closer that 5% target looks.

Since tobacco-related diseases [may have killed more people](#) over the past year than Covid, some will wonder if even that goes far enough. The greatest health risk to children comes from parents smoking over them at home, not having a stressed-out fag by the swings, so why not ban that instead of tinkering at the edges? The practical and political difficulties of enforcing prohibition inside private homes, however, make Oxfordshire's “softly softly” approach a more viable model.

For Big Tobacco's great weakness is that unlike booze, sex, cake and other vices of which public health specialists despair, smoking isn't actually much fun in and of itself. Strip away the cultural associations ingeniously built up around it – through advertising and sponsorship and gratuitous smoking on television, all now outlawed – and it's just the grim, faintly needy satisfying of an addict's craving. My friends and I coughed determinedly through our first fags because we thought it made us look older, wilder, more sophisticated: a bit Kate Moss. But teenage rebellion has moved on from hanging out of your bedroom window with a Silk Cut, and the biggest fall in smoking prevalence over the last decade was [among 18- to 24-year-olds](#). The young increasingly either vape instead, or see smoking as for old people – about as wild as a pipe and slippers.

And what the tobacco industry arguably never wanted us to find out is that without the illusion of glamour or the sheen of rebellion, there's nothing much left. Just a stinking ashtray the morning after a party and the brief, involuntary smoker's shudder of self-loathing triggered by tipping it into the bin.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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## [OpinionDisability.](#)

# After a year at home, children with disabilities deserve priority vaccination

[Frances Ryan](#)



Much has been said about pupils in England missing months of education, but little about the plight of those shielding



‘Every day treading water is another day where teenagers are struggling at home away from friends and teachers.’ Photograph: Oleksiy Boyko/Alamy

‘Every day treading water is another day where teenagers are struggling at home away from friends and teachers.’ Photograph: Oleksiy Boyko/Alamy

Thu 10 Jun 2021 11.46 EDT

They disappeared more than a year ago and many are still out of sight. When the pandemic hit, [53,000](#) under-18s in England with disabilities that made them vulnerable to coronavirus began to shield away at home.

Kept off school long after their classmates went back, and away from friends, they have found their childhoods put on hold. And while the vaccine rollout gave high-risk adults some reprieve in the new year, those aged under 16, who have not been eligible for any vaccine, [are still living in limbo](#).

Yet we have barely heard a thing about disabled children’s plight through the coronavirus crisis – a silence that has not been helped by the faux-reassuring narrative that “[no healthy child](#)” has died from the virus. Now that the UK regulator has at last approved the Pfizer vaccine for [12- to 15-year-olds](#), this blind spot is becoming even more glaring.



The debate about immunising young people is centred almost exclusively on whether every teenager should be vaccinated in order to ease transmission. Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) children, meanwhile – who are desperate for protection themselves – are barely being mentioned.

I've spoken to many families with disabled children who have been living in fear over the last year. Parents going to work terrified they will bring the virus home to their child, or even quitting their jobs to protect them. Children who are shielding 24/7 at home, missing classes, socialising and routine. Some have had to choose between their education and their health, while others have had no say in it. I've heard from parents whose children have effectively been banned from classrooms because their disability means they're unable to socially distance.

At the same time as missing school, children with disabilities have also had [respite care and community schemes](#) pulled; a survey by the Disabled Children's Partnership found [three-quarters](#) of families with special needs had lost out on care and support services during lockdown.

It is hard to imagine politicians and the media greeting this with a similar lack of interest if it was happening to “normal” children. There is much concern about the impact on pupils of missing months of school, and rightly so – but there's almost no recognition that some disabled pupils have missed an entire year, with no plan as to when they can return.

Disabled pupils are already [less likely to get A\\* to C grades](#) than their non-disabled peers owing to multiple structural barriers. The special educational needs and disabilities (Send) system was “[in crisis](#)”, according to the Ombudsman, before the pandemic threatened to push their life chances further back. This is only exacerbated by the fact that families with a disabled child are more likely to be in poverty, so often can't afford a laptop or broadband for home schooling, let alone the complex disability support their child needs.

Ministers appear to be doing little to help bring disabled pupils back to classes. Even as the Delta variant of Covid spreads in schools, the government has dropped its requirement for secondary pupils to wear masks

in class – much to the ire of [teaching unions](#) – – while the number of coronavirus tests being done in secondary schools is [reportedly decreasing](#).

It is striking that Britain still has no plans for inoculating high-risk children, while other countries such as the US and parts of Europe have already made significant gains in vaccinating all teenagers. Contact, the UK charity for disabled children and their parents, tells me it is “surprised” that the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation](#) (JCVI) thinks that “even CEV children are low risk, after they have been asked to shield for many months”. Data from the US shows that [nearly a third](#) of teenagers hospitalised with Covid this year required intensive care, and 5% required mechanical ventilation, while children with conditions ranging from congenital heart disease, diabetes, asthma, to sickle cell disease, [could be at increased risk](#) for severe illness from the virus.

[Vulnerable children 'forgotten' in Covid vaccine rollout, say UK charities](#)  
[Read more](#)

There has long been concern that Britain’s “age-based” rollout has failed to fully recognise the risk facing disabled young people; at the beginning of the rollout, many younger disabled adults [had to wait](#) for a jab while healthy older people were given priority.

The JCVI is currently considering whether to include teenagers in the vaccine rollout, but in doing so it must prioritise the needs of those with disabilities. If it is decided that teenagers *aren't* eligible for a vaccine, an exception should be made for any who are clinically vulnerable. If all teenagers are included in the rollout, CEV pupils should be at the front of the queue, just as CEV adults were. There is no reason this cannot be done alongside other priorities, such as giving jabs to children in variant hot spots such as Greater Manchester and urgently donating vaccines to adults in developing nations.

After the hardest of years, children with disabilities and their parents deserve action as soon as possible. Every day treading water is another day where teenagers are struggling at home away from friends and teachers, anxious about how to stay safe. There is one lesson that should not have to be taught: disabled children’s lives are worth just as much as anyone else.



- Frances Ryan is a Guardian columnist and author of [Crippled: Austerity and the Demonisation of Disabled People](#)

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[Seascape: the state of our oceans](#) Sri Lanka

## Sri Lanka's worst ever maritime disaster reveals the true cost of our identity crisis

Sandali Handagama

We must find a way to embrace shipping, the ocean and our place in the world without shackling ourselves to unpayable foreign debt



Sri Lankans salvage wreckage from the burning cargo ship X-Press Pearl. The fire has become the country's worst maritime disaster. Photograph: Eranga Jayawardena/AP

Sri Lankans salvage wreckage from the burning cargo ship X-Press Pearl. The fire has become the country's worst maritime disaster. Photograph: Eranga Jayawardena/AP

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Fri 11 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

Growing up in Sri Lanka in the 1990s, it was drilled into me from an early age that my island was destined to be a maritime hub. At school, I was taught that Sri Lanka was once the heart of the [maritime Silk Road](#), a network of trade routes that connected the east and west from 130BC to the mid-1400s.

My textbooks were filled with tales about how Sri Lanka's strategic positioning and rich natural resources were so prized that it was consecutively colonised by the Portuguese, Dutch and British empires for almost four centuries.

I had no reason to question this: sitting between China and the African continent, our teardrop island south of the Indian subcontinent looked to be at the geographical centre of international trade.

[Sri Lanka faces disaster as burning ship spills chemicals on beaches](#)  
[Read more](#)

Then there was the urban legend that Lee Kuan Yew, the father of Singapore, visited a newly independent Sri Lanka in the 1950s, and declared

that he would model his city-state after it. Shortly afterwards Sri Lanka descended into civil war, while Singapore raced ahead, becoming a [global maritime hub](#) and one of the busiest international ports in the world. It was only because of the war, we were meant to believe, that Sri Lanka had not developed like Singapore. We all grew up envisioning a newly prosperous Sri Lanka, a tropical paradise that was the natural hub of international shipping.

Establishing itself as a [maritime centre](#) remains at the heart of Sri Lanka's geopolitical ambitions. In the process, however, the country has become irreversibly indebted. In 2010, it used loans from China to build [Hambantota port](#). In 2017, the Sri Lankan government defaulted on its loans and a majority stake in the port was [leased](#) to China for 99 years.

I cried as I watched the blazing fire, because of what it meant for my country and its stunning beaches and biodiversity

Despite heavy competition with larger ports in India, a Chinese-funded port city is being constructed in Colombo, Sri Lanka's commercial capital. China's substantial investments in Sri Lanka's maritime provinces started a regional bidding war for control over the remaining container terminals in Colombo. China already owns 85% of the Colombo international container terminal; now Sri Lanka is [negotiating](#) with Japan and India over control of the east and west container terminals.

With the country carrying desperate levels of debt, and under extreme pressure to not only make a profit from the maritime industry but to also prove it has capable commercial shipping ports, it is not surprising that when [a cargo ship approached Colombo port in May](#), and asked for permission to repair a dangerous chemical leak, the port authority obliged.



Sri Lanka navy personnel clear debris from the X-Press Pearl, which had 25 tonnes of nitric acid and other chemicals onboard. Photograph: Chamila Karunaratne/EPA

According to a [statement](#) from the harbour master, Nirmal Silva, the ship – the Singapore-registered X-Press Pearl – gave the port a general notice on its arrival, then at anchor sought permission to repair the leak.

“Such reworking activities are not uncommon in the port of Colombo,” Silva stated. “This is normal, especially in a hub port such as the port of Colombo. It is a service not only in our port but also in other ports in general. We must be ready to provide all these services available in the shipping industry as a trans-shipment hub.”

Several other countries, however, felt no such pressure to handle the compromised cargo. Media outlets reported that the ship was denied entry at ports in Qatar and India prior to arriving in Sri Lanka. This was later denied in an [official statement by X-Press Feeders](#), the company that owned the ship. Instead, the company indicated that these ports had not accepted the leaking cargo.

“Applications had been made to both ports to offload a container that was leaking nitric acid but the advice given was there were no specialist facilities

or expertise immediately available to deal with the leaking acid,” the statement said.

Meanwhile, AFP News [reported](#) that the ship had told its local shipping agent of an acid leak onboard the vessel, but the agent had failed to alert local authorities.

The leak is thought to have caused a fire that has led to the [worst maritime disaster](#) in Sri Lanka’s history: a cargo ship filled with dangerous chemicals [burning and sinking](#) just off the island’s western coast. The country is facing an oil leak that could devastate the fishing industry and coastal environment, as well as the threat of the dozens of highly toxic chemicals on board, some of which have yet to be catalogued, let alone recovered.

[Sri Lankans face up to ‘unmeasurable cost’ of cargo ship disaster](#)  
[Read more](#)

From thousands of miles away in New York, I cried as I watched the blazing fire, because of what it meant for my country’s economy and its most valuable assets: its stunning beaches and unparalleled biodiversity. I felt dread at the prospect of losing more ground to powerful countries in a geopolitical tug-of-war if this puts more pressure on Sri Lanka’s ailing economy. Hopefully, the failures in oversight and accountability will serve as a vital learning experience and spur long-overdue environmental safeguards to prevent a repetition of this disaster.

But the disaster also harmed our collective dream of what we should be as a country. Desperate to prove ourselves at any cost in the service of our self-identity – and with the vast debt that we have incurred to secure that identity – Sri Lanka has been handed a bill for more than just the clean-up. It has suffered a blow to its reputation as an emerging maritime hub.

Whether this disaster will also be the moment when Sri Lanka stops shackling itself with unpayable debts and teaches a different vision to its children – one that accepts that Sri Lanka is not Singapore, but a country that embraces the ocean’s wonders rather than treating it like a dumping ground – time will tell.

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## 2021.06.11 - Around the world

- [Hong Kong Authorities to censor films that 'endanger national security'](#)
- [China Law to counter US and EU sanctions](#)
- [Christchurch massacre Move to make film all about Jacinda Ardern sparks anger](#)
- [Brexit Macron to Johnson: 'Nothing on NI protocol is negotiable'](#)

## [Hong Kong](#)

# Hong Kong film censors get wider 'national security' powers

Observers worry rule change in Chinese city will restrict pro-democracy movement even further



Anders Hammer, director of the Do Not Split documentary, films a protest in Hong Kong in 2019. Photograph: Oliver Haynes/Reuters

Anders Hammer, director of the Do Not Split documentary, films a protest in Hong Kong in 2019. Photograph: Oliver Haynes/Reuters

[Vincent Ni](#) *China affairs correspondent*

Fri 11 Jun 2021 08.35 EDT

Hong Kong's censors have been given expanded powers to vet films for national security breaches in the latest blow to the Chinese city's political and artistic freedoms.

In a statement on Friday, authorities said the film censorship ordinance had been expanded to include “any act or activity which may amount to an offence endangering national security”.

“When considering a film as a whole and its effect on the viewers, the censor should have regard to his duties to prevent and suppress acts or activities endangering national security, and the common responsibility of the people of Hong Kong to safeguard the sovereignty, unification and territorial integrity of the People’s Republic of [China](#),” the new guidance, which is effective immediately, states.

Films and cultural activities are often rigorously vetted on the Chinese mainland; only a handful of western films or documentaries ever see a commercial release each year. Hong Kong’s Film [Censorship](#) Authority, in comparison, has traditionally employed a much lighter touch and the city has long been a centre for Asian films.

[‘No political story allowed’: Hong Kong broadcaster falls silent on sensitive subjects](#)  
[Read more](#)

“[The latest move] is a highly worrying development that will certainly have an impact on the city’s film industry and cultural climate,” said Anne Sytske Keijser, a lecturer at Leiden University Institute for Area Studies who researches Chinese-language cinema.

Keijser said the latest move will probably lead to more creators self-censoring, and investors being deterred from developing and funding independent films and documentaries that might run foul of the new rules.

“I also worry what will happen to films and documentaries that have already been made about the protests over the past years. Will they simply no longer be screened or will their makers be targeted as well?” she said.

[The authorities said](#) the amendments “seek to provide censors with clearer guidelines on film examination and classification” following the implementation last year of a wide-ranging national security law.

The controversial legislation and an official campaign dubbed “patriots rule Hong Kong” have since tamed much dissent and effectively strangled the former British colony’s pro-democracy movement.

The trickle-down effect in the artistic sector is also evident, observers say. Earlier this year a university in the city cancelled a prestigious press photography exhibition that featured pictures of the huge protests in 2019, citing security concerns.

Right on cue: a film with storyline related to 2019 protests (although from the trailer looks totally innocuous) fails to get censors’ approval for screening. Will HK indie filmmakers become like their mainland counterparts, denied a home audience & only able to screen abroad?  
<https://t.co/smKx6PP6Fx>

— Antony Dapiran (@antnd) [June 11, 2021](#)

In March, the authorities decided not to exhibit at the opening of a new museum a photo showing the dissident Chinese artist Ai Weiwei holding up his middle finger at Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

M+, a multimillion-dollar contemporary art museum, said it would allow security officials to vet its collection for any potential national security law breaches before it opens to the public later this year.

Also in March, an award-winning documentary about Hong Kong’s massive protests was pulled hours before its first commercial screening after days of criticism from a pro-Beijing newspaper. It said the film’s content breached the new national security law.

Keijser said that the latest move might also spark more creativity in self-expression – contrary to the authorities’ intention.

“The film and arts scene of Hong Kong has proven to be both resilient and creative. People will find different, more oblique ways to voice their dissent,” she said.

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## China

# China rushes through law to counter US and EU sanctions

Foreigners could be placed on an anti-sanctions list and denied entry into China or expelled from the country



China has passed a law to counter sanctions on its individuals and companies by the US and its allies. Photograph: Greg Baker/AFP via Getty Images

China has passed a law to counter sanctions on its individuals and companies by the US and its allies. Photograph: Greg Baker/AFP via Getty Images

*Reuters*

Thu 10 Jun 2021 22.46 EDT

China has passed a law to counter foreign sanctions in response to US and EU pressure over trade, technology, Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

Individuals or entities involved in making or implementing discriminatory measures against Chinese citizens or entities could be put on an anti-sanctions list and may be denied entry into China or be expelled from the country. Their assets within China may be seized or frozen and they could be restricted from doing business there.

[Think 'sanctions' will trouble China? Then you're stuck in the politics of the past | Ai Weiwei](#)  
[Read more](#)

China's top legislature, the National People's Congress (NPC) standing committee, passed the law on Thursday, according to state television CCTV.

All 14 vice-chairpersons of the committee are under US sanctions for [passing the Hong Kong national security law](#) last year that critics say has crippled political freedoms.

The US and its allies have increasingly sanctioned Chinese officials over China's treatment of its Muslim Uyghur minority in Xinjiang and pro-democracy activities in Hong Kong, triggering counter-sanctions by China. Washington has also targeted Chinese companies such as Huawei and ZTE for violating US sanctions on Iran or North Korea.

The bill underwent a secret first reading in April and was passed on Thursday, barely two days after the NPC announced that it was doing a second reading of the bill. It skipped a third reading normally needed for other bills.

[Cold war or uneasy peace: does defining US-China competition matter?](#)  
[Read more](#)

The European Union Chamber of Commerce said its members were alarmed at the lack of transparency about the passing of the bill.

“China seems to be in a hurry. Such action is not conducive to attracting foreign investment or reassuring companies that increasingly feel that they will be used as sacrificial pawns in a game of political chess,” Joerg Wuttke, the chamber's president, said.



Foreign companies looking to do business in China may find themselves up against increasing scrutiny from Chinese regulatory authorities in relation to their operations both locally and abroad, said Shaun Wu, a partner at law firm Paul Hastings.

Chinese experts said Beijing was simply taking a page from the playbooks of the US and EU.

“China previously had neither the economic power nor the political will to use legal means to retaliate against US sanctions. It now has both,” said Wang Jiangyu, a law professor at City University of Hong Kong.

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## New Zealand

# Move to make Christchurch massacre film all about Jacinda Ardern sparks anger

Critics say focus on the prime minister glosses over the experience of the Muslims still struggling with aftermath of mosque shootings



New Zealand's prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, is set to be played by Rose Byrne in a film about her handling of the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings. Photograph: Vincent Thian/AP

New Zealand's prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, is set to be played by Rose Byrne in a film about her handling of the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings. Photograph: Vincent Thian/AP

[Tess McClure](#) in Christchurch

[@tessairini](#)

Fri 11 Jun 2021 00.18 EDT

Plans for a Hollywood film focusing on prime minister Jacinda Ardern's response to the [Christchurch mosque terror attacks](#) have prompted frustration and disgust in New Zealand, with accusations that Muslim victims have been sidelined.

The film is set to star Australian actor Rose Byrne as Ardern, [according to the Hollywood Reporter](#), and is called They Are Us – a line derived from one of Ardern's speeches at the time. It is to be directed by New Zealand film-maker Andrew Niccol, and produced by FilmNation.

On Friday, some New Zealanders criticised the decision to tell the story of Ardern's leadership against the backdrop of the mass murder of 51 Muslims by a white supremacist as “exploitative”, “insensitive”, and “obscene”.

[Ardern](#) has distanced herself from the movie, and issued a statement via a spokesperson saying “the prime minister and the government have no involvement in the film”.

['I can never ever forget': sister of Christchurch mosque victim on grief and acceptance](#)  
[Read more](#)

Writer and community advocate Guled Mire said the film's premise was “completely insensitive”. He said that while the film-makers may have consulted with some members of the Muslim community, many had no idea the news was coming. “It's hit all of us out of the blue,” he said. “Many victims themselves haven't even heard of this.”

He said the film's apparent focus on Ardern glossed over the experience of Muslims who survived the attack. “The reality is many victims are struggling right now. They're really still trying to pick up the pieces – financially, everything,” he said. “This tapped into that vulnerability to make the most out of the situation.”

Many of those injured and bereaved by the attacks face ongoing financial stress, lifelong physical issues and mental trauma, and [have called for a better response from government](#).

Mire said: “Nobody wants to see the fact that victims themselves and their families and witnesses are not able to receive the mental health support that they rightfully deserve. Nobody wants to talk about the lack of financial compensation for the government’s failings. Not a single official has been held responsible for this.”

The Guardian has approached production company FilmNation Entertainment and Niccol’s agency for comment.

Hollywood Reporter said the film “will tell the story of how Ardern rallied New Zealand following the terror attacks on two mosques in 2019 with a message of compassion and unity, and helped push through a ban of assault rifles”. They also report that the script was “developed in consultation with several members of the mosques affected”.

New Zealand writer Mohamed Hassan criticised those behind the film for turning the attacks into a “[white saviour narrative](#)”. He added: “The pain is still fresh and real. This is upsetting, obscene and grotesque.”

[New Zealand must address past failures to restore Muslims' sense of safety and belonging.](#) | [Mohamed Hassan](#)  
[Read more](#)

Aya Al-Umari, whose brother Hussein was murdered in the attack, said it was insensitive, tweeting the classic Kiwi-ism “Yeah nah”. “I don’t think this film will be received well in New Zealand. My guess is it’s Hollywood over-capitalising this,” she told Australian Associated Press.

Others voiced their anger on Twitter. Local producer Ahmed Osman said many survivors and families of the victims were still “living through [a] nightmare” and had not received sufficient support. The film amounted to “the glorification of the most tragic and traumatic thing that’s ever happened to them,” he said. “While we are at it, why don’t we make [a] film about the failings of the police and the SIS [Security Intelligence Service]. The monitoring of innocent Muslim and our community, the consistent harassment and racial profiling we go through.”

The slaughter of 51 Muslim New Zealanders is NOT the backdrop to a fkg film about white woman strength. COME ON.

— Tina Ngata (@tinangata) [June 10, 2021](#)

The film’s planned title, They Are Us, is drawn from a [quote by Ardern](#) in the immediate aftermath of the attacks: “They have chosen to make New Zealand their home, and it is their home. They are us. The person who has perpetuated this violence against us is not. They have no place in New Zealand.”

“They Are Us is not so much about the attack but the response to the attack ... how an unprecedented act of hate was overcome by an outpouring of love and support,” Niccol told the Hollywood reporter. “The film addresses our common humanity,” he said.

The Ardern quote became a widespread motto of solidarity after the attacks. But the line itself has been criticised for “othering” New Zealand’s Muslim community and whitewashing the country’s [ongoing problems with racism](#).

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## Brexit

# Macron warns Johnson ‘nothing is negotiable’ over Northern Ireland protocol

The G7 summit risks being overshadowed by the bitter standoff over Brexit



Talks on resolving the impasse over the implementation of the NI protocol collapsed without agreement earlier this week. Photograph: Jacques Witt/SIPA/REX/Shutterstock

Talks on resolving the impasse over the implementation of the NI protocol collapsed without agreement earlier this week. Photograph: Jacques Witt/SIPA/REX/Shutterstock

[Heather Stewart](#), [Kim Willsher](#) and [Peter Walker](#)

Thu 10 Jun 2021 16.10 EDT

The French president last night ramped up the pressure on Boris Johnson over the Northern Ireland protocol by insisting “nothing is negotiable” as the G7 summit of world leaders risked being [overshadowed by the bitter standoff](#) over Brexit.

In a defiant intervention as he prepared to travel to the UK, [Emmanuel Macron](#) warned Boris Johnson that France is not open to renegotiating any aspect of the protocol – and even appeared to raise questions about whether the UK could be trusted.

Asked about British demands for aspects of the protocol to be reworked, Macron told journalists at an Elysee press conference: “I think this is not serious – to want to have another look at something in July that was finalised in December after years of discussions and work.”

“We have a protocol,” he continued. “If after six months you say we cannot respect what was negotiated, then that says nothing can be respected. I believe in the weight of a treaty, I believe in taking a serious approach. Nothing is negotiable. Everything is applicable.”

His tough words came as Johnson was forced to play down divisions with US president Joe Biden, calling him “a breath of fresh air”, after it emerged that US diplomats had remonstrated with the UK’s [Brexit](#) negotiator, Lord Frost, about the risk of tensions being inflamed in Northern Ireland.

01:09

Joe Biden a 'breath of fresh air', says Boris Johnson after meeting – video

Talks on resolving the impasse over the [implementation of the protocol collapsed without agreement](#) earlier this week, and Frost has accused the EU side of “legal purism” in its interpretation of the agreement. He is expected to join the summit on Friday.

Both Downing Street and the [White House reaffirmed their commitment](#) to the Good Friday agreement after the talks, and stressed the need for the standoff to be resolved jointly, between the UK and the EU.



But Johnson's official spokesperson made clear afterwards that didn't mean the UK was stepping back from the threat of taking unilateral action – such as invoking Article 16 of the agreement, to suspend the protocol. “We continue to keep all options on the table, because time is short,” the spokesperson said.

EU analyst Mujtaba Rahman, of consultancy Eurasia Group, said he now puts a 30% probability on the risk of an [EU-UK trade war](#), in which he said the EU could retaliate by limiting UK fish exports and even interrupting the UK's electricity supply to Jersey and mainland Great Britain. He said an intervention by the G7 appeared necessary to resolve the situation. “All eyes are on Cornwall, as the relationship hangs on the precipice.”

The prime minister's spokesperson rejected Macron's comments, saying, “We are absolutely acting in accordance with what was agreed and what was set out.” He said the protocol had been agreed in “challenging circumstances”, and claimed the UK had already made more than 10 proposals for resolving the standoff, and “we are yet to hear back”.

“Our view is the EU continues to prioritise protection of the single market, even though there is very little risk to it.”

[Allies gird for a titanic struggle – if they can avoid falling out first](#)  
[Read more](#)

The prime minister insisted that discussions with Biden had been “very good” – though unusually the pair did not hold a joint press conference, instead giving separate statements on camera.

“There's no question that under President Biden there is a massive amount that the new US administration wants to do together with the UK, on everything from security, working together, protecting our values around the world together, but also on climate change,” the prime minister said. “So it's a big breath of fresh air. It's new, it's interesting, and we're working very hard together.

“One thing we all, absolutely want to do, and that is to uphold the Belfast Good Friday agreement, and make sure that we keep the balance of the

peace process going. That's absolutely common ground, and I'm absolutely optimistic that we can do that."

Biden was similarly effusive about what he called a "very productive meeting", referring in his post-talks comments to the "special relationship" between the US and UK, a term of which [Johnson is reportedly not a fan](#).

Biden said: "We affirmed the special relationship – that is not said lightly – the special relationship between our people and renewed our commitment to defending the enduring democratic values that both our nations share."

The pair exchanged gifts, with Biden giving Johnson a US-made bike, and the prime minister giving him a picture of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass, from an Edinburgh mural.

Earlier, Charles Michel, president of the European Council, who will meet Johnson in Cornwall alongside commission president [Ursula von der Leyen](#), said it was "paramount to implement what we have decided" over Northern Ireland.

Johnson and Biden were all smiles as they greeted each other on camera before their talks, the location of which had to be moved to the conference hotel from St Michael's Mount, just off the Cornish coast, because of poor weather.

When Biden said the pair had both "married above our station", Johnson replied: "I'm not going to disagree with the president on that or anything else." He added that it was "fantastic" to see Biden.

While Brexit does not formally feature on the formal agenda, with Johnson telling Atlantic magazine recently: "We've sucked that lemon dry," the US is concerned about Frost's tactics over the implementation of post-Brexit border checks in Northern Ireland.

Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, had hammered home Washington's message on the way to London on Thursday, telling journalists: "Any steps that imperil or undermine the Good Friday agreement will not be welcomed by the US."

Labour's Louise Haigh, the shadow Northern Ireland secretary, said: "It is worrying on the eve of such an important summit that Boris Johnson's actions are isolating Britain from our strongest allies. The prime minister personally negotiated the protocol, so has a responsibility to make it work, and protect the precious Good Friday agreement."

Other [G7](#) leaders arrive tomorrow, and Johnson will hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Japan, Canada and Italy.

The leaders will hold their first formal summit session in the afternoon, covering the recovery from the Covid pandemic, before meeting the Queen for a reception at the Eden Project.

This article was amended on 11 June 2021 to correct the spelling of the name of abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

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- [Live G7 summit: Macron tells Johnson that UK-France relations need 'reset'](#)
- [UK Boris Johnson to face pressure from EU on Northern Ireland](#)
- [Spending Calls for restraint misguided, warns Lord Stern](#)
- ['Enjoying yourself?' Queen jokes with G7 leaders in family photo – video](#)

**G7**

# G7: Macron says US is back under Biden as leaders meet in Cornwall - as it happened

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## G7

# G7: Boris Johnson to face pressure from EU on Northern Ireland

EU leaders expected to stress potential consequences of failing to find resolution, putting onus on UK to compromise

- [G7 summit: latest news and reaction](#)



Boris Johnson with the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, at the G7 summit in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, England. Photograph: Reuters

Boris Johnson with the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, at the G7 summit in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, England. Photograph: Reuters

[\*Heather Stewart\*](#)

Sat 12 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Boris Johnson will come under fresh pressure from EU leaders in Cornwall on Saturday in the increasingly bitter standoff over the implementation of the [Northern Ireland protocol](#).

The prime minister had hoped to skirt the subject of Brexit as he hosts G7 leaders. But his official spokesperson conceded on Friday that Downing Street expect it to be raised, as Johnson holds face-to-face meetings on Saturday, including with the EU Commission president, [Ursula von der Leyen](#), and the Council president, Charles Michel.

“It’s fair to say it may well come up,” Johnson’s spokesperson said.

Von Der Leyen and Michel are expected to stress the serious potential consequences of failing to find a resolution in the coming days, putting the onus on the UK to compromise.

But Johnson’s spokesperson said he in turn would want to convey the “challenges”, the protocol is bringing to the people of [Northern Ireland](#), and “the risks it poses to the agreement in the current form, and the need to find urgent solutions”.

The foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, also struck a defiant tone on Friday, accusing the EU of being unnecessarily rigid in the way it is interpreting the agreement, which the UK signed up to.

Raab told Sky News that in order for the dispute over the protocol to be resolved, “the EU must be less purist, more pragmatic and more flexible in the implementation of it. The ball is very much in the EU’s court in relation to that.

“The bottom line for us is that the threat, the risk to the Good Friday agreement, comes from the approach the EU has taken,” he added.

Comme toujours, une même union, une même détermination à agir, un même enthousiasme ! Le G7 peut commencer.  
[pic.twitter.com/RPqZ2XMGMb](https://pic.twitter.com/RPqZ2XMGMb)

— Emmanuel Macron (@EmmanuelMacron) [June 11, 2021](#)



## [How Tories changed their tune on Northern Ireland protocol](#)

### [Read more](#)

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, who will have a bilateral meeting with Johnson on Saturday, has already made his position clear, saying “nothing is negotiable”, and the protocol must now be implemented in full.

As the summit got under way in the Cornish resort of Carbis Bay, Macron met the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, and the Italian prime minister, Mario Draghi, as well as Von Der Leyen and Michel, to agree a common stance.

With less than three weeks to go until an EU ban on chilled meat products entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain is due to come into force, the US has also underscored the importance of protecting the Good Friday Agreement.

The UK claims it has submitted more than 10 proposals to the EU for resolving the impasse, and is yet to hear a reply. Talks between officials from the two sides are due to resume next week.

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[Nicholas Stern](#)

## Calls for G7 spending restraint misguided, warns Lord Stern

‘Premature austerity will threaten growth’ as world recovers from Covid-19, says climate economist



G7 leaders gather in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, for a weekend of talks on subjects including vaccines, pandemic recovery and the climate crisis. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

G7 leaders gather in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, for a weekend of talks on subjects including vaccines, pandemic recovery and the climate crisis. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

[Fiona Harvey](#) *Environment correspondent*

Sat 12 Jun 2021 04.00 EDT

Wealthy nations must ignore calls to rein in public spending as the economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic gathers pace, or risk a fresh crisis, the

climate economist [Nicholas Stern](#) has warned.

Leaders of the G7 industrialised countries are [meeting in Cornwall](#) this weekend, to discuss vaccines, the recovery from the pandemic, and the [climate crisis](#).

They must tie these issues together and forge a [green recovery](#) that would shift their economies permanently to a low-carbon basis, said Lord Stern, former World Bank chief economist and former adviser to the UK Treasury.

He warned that calls for spending restraint were misguided. “It would be a mistake to confuse fiscal responsibility with premature austerity,” he told the Guardian in an interview. “Fiscal responsibility is crucial, but in this case you must build up the fiscal position as growth returns. Premature austerity will threaten growth, it will choke off growth and make the fiscal position worse.”



Lord Stern said now was not the time to hold back. Photograph: Jonathan Nicholson/Getty Images

More investment is needed in the green economy to boost low-carbon technologies, such as renewable energy and electric vehicles, and to invest in the necessary changes to infrastructure, such as home heating, in order to

reach the targets of net zero emissions by 2050, which all the [G7](#) countries have signed up to.

Stern said now was the time to make such investments, rather than holding back. He pointed to the [recovery from the financial crisis of 2008](#), when some governments including the UK moved quickly to cut public spending in a quest to cut the deficit and “balance the books”. Many economists argue that such austerity policies hindered the return to growth and caused [unnecessary hardship](#).

Stern also warned governments to avoid the seemingly easier path of a Covid-19 recovery boosted by a [boom in pent-up consumer spending](#), which might seem attractive in the short term but would fail to build the foundations for long-term sustainable and low-carbon growth.

[Global economy set for fastest recovery for more than 80 years](#)

[Read more](#)

“We need strong investment to recover in a strong and sustainable way,” he said. “We want to avoid a consumption-led recovery, like the Roaring 20s of 100 years ago. That would be a mistake. What we really need is an investment-led recovery, if it is to be sustained and sustainable.”

With greenhouse gas emissions rebounding rapidly from their dramatic falls during last year’s coronavirus lockdowns, fears are rising that some governments are missing the opportunity to reset their economies with policies that promote low-carbon activity and phase out fossil fuels.

Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency, the global energy watchdog, said some countries were taking the actions needed, and urged all to [follow their example](#).

“Europe is going very much in the right direction, on its green recovery efforts,” he said. The EU has a “green deal” plan, covering all aspects of the economy from agriculture to transport and energy, and several member states have their own massive green recovery programmes, including France, which is funnelling about a third of its \$100bn recovery funds into [green and low-carbon ends](#).

Birol also pointed to the efforts of US president Joe Biden, who is pushing recovery [spending plans worth trillions through Congress](#), with a focus on renewable energy and low-carbon infrastructure. “In the US, I very much hope this recovery plan goes through which includes lots of critical measures for a green recovery,” he said.

But he warned that much more effort was needed in other G7 nations. “Other countries are following suit, but this is not yet a success story, on the green recovery among the G7,” he said. “There are steps in the right direction, but it is not there yet.”

He added that the G7 countries should be doing more to help developing countries cut their greenhouse gas emissions, in the global effort to reach net zero by mid-century, and to halve emissions by 2030, which scientists say is needed to [hold temperature rises within 1.5C of pre-industrial levels](#). He said a seven-fold increase in spending on clean energy investments, from \$150bn to more than \$1tn, was needed in the developing world.

“If you reduce emissions in Jakarta, or Bristol, Oslo or Detroit, it has the same effect,” he said. “But it is much cheaper to do so in developing countries – and they are receiving much less investment than the advanced economies.”

One of the key topics on the G7 agenda is supplying [climate finance to developing countries](#), to help them cut emissions and cope with the impacts of climate breakdown. Rich countries have [failed to meet the target](#) they set for providing such finance, which was supposed to reach \$100bn a year by 2020, but has fallen short by about \$20bn.

Stern said the developed world should aim to double the climate finance from public sources, from \$30bn a year in 2018 to \$60bn a year by 2025.

Birol added that the development banks funded by rich countries should be given a mandate to invest in low-carbon projects and a green recovery. He said: “The G7, being some of the richest nations, have a moral responsibility [to provide such help] but also a huge economic opportunity, to support green investment in the developing world.”

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## [The Queen](#)

# 'Enjoying yourself?': Queen jokes with G7 leaders in family photo – video

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## 2021.06.12 - Coronavirus

- [Live England likely to delay final stage of lockdown easing; cases in Russia hit three-month high](#)
- [Vaccine hesitancy Most who opposed Covid jab have ended up getting it, study finds](#)
- ['Discriminatory' MPs say Covid passports must be scrapped](#)
- [UK Delta variant causes more than 90% of new Covid cases](#)

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# Covid news: UK records a further 7,738 cases as Johnson cautious over lockdown easing – as it happened

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## Vaccines and immunisation

# Most people in UK initially opposed to Covid vaccine have had jab, study finds

Driving force behind change of heart was being able to travel and see family, researchers say

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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A Covid vaccine being prepared in London. Confidence grew among more hesitant people after evidence the vaccine was safe and effective, the researchers found. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

A Covid vaccine being prepared in London. Confidence grew among more hesitant people after evidence the vaccine was safe and effective, the researchers found. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

[Kevin Rawlinson](#)

Sat 12 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

More than half of the people in the UK who were firmly against getting vaccinated at around the time the first dose was administered have had a jab, a study has suggested.

Researchers at the University of Bristol and King's College London also found that about one in seven of the staunchest sceptics who have yet to be vaccinated have changed their minds and intend to get the jab when offered it.

Dr Siobhan McAndrew, a senior lecturer in quantitative social science at Bristol, said the driving force behind the change of heart was often the "concrete benefits of being vaccinated in terms of being able to travel and to see family and friends again".

She added: "Part of the rise in vaccine confidence relates to social proof: people feel more confident because they observe others taking their vaccine with confidence.

"The first people to be vaccinated were the oldest generations, who have a strong sense of civic obligation, and they helped set the norm that you should take up your vaccine when it is your turn. This encouraged others to move from saying they were fairly likely to accept the vaccine, to either accepting it or saying they were certain to do so."

The researchers also found that of those who deemed themselves "not very" or "not at all likely" to accept a vaccine when asked in November and December last year, 84% had since got vaccinated.

"Some people who were positive in principle were waiting and seeing – and their confidence has been strengthened by the evidence that the vaccine is safe and effective," McAndrew said. "Others had not made up their mind when asked in early winter. Over the course of the vaccine rollout, they have increasingly been persuaded that taking it was the right thing to do. For some, actually being invited helped them make up their mind."

But, while the data suggests people are becoming more comfortable with the idea of getting vaccinated, the researchers cautioned against being

complacent. They pointed to large disparities along racial and religious lines.

The study suggests white people tend to be less hesitant to get the jab than people from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the researchers partly blaming some people's past negative experiences with healthcare. The researchers did not break down the data so that different minority ethnic groups could be analysed individually.

Ipsos Mori interviewed a sample of 4,896 adults aged 16-75 in the United Kingdom between 1 and 16 April 2021, and 4,860 adults between 21 November and 22 December 2020.

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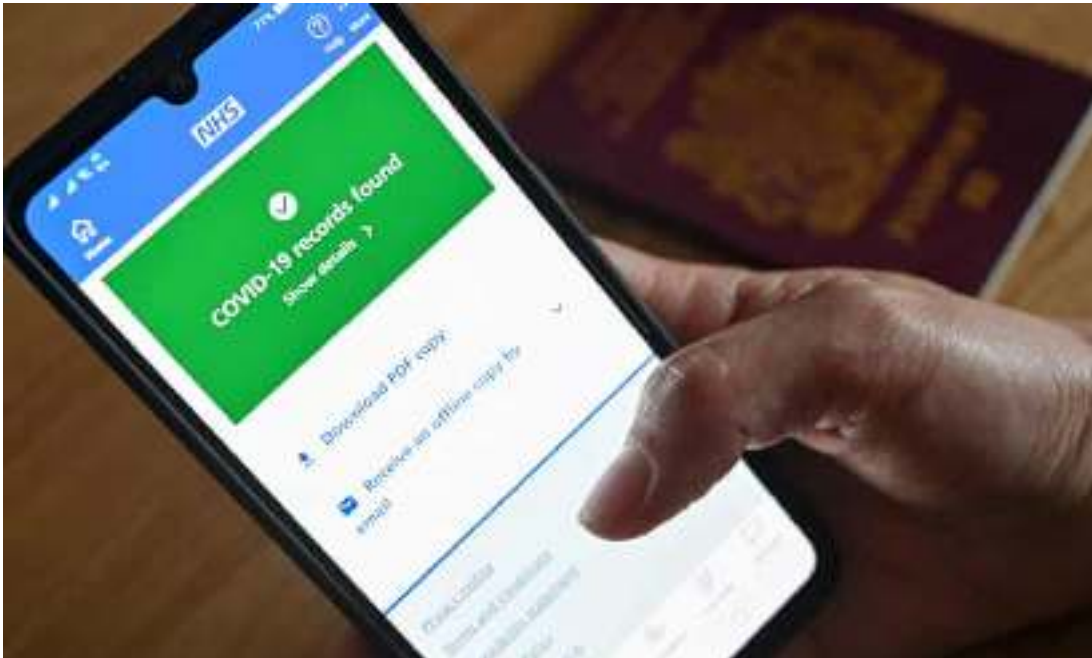
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## [Health policy](#)

# Covid passports will be discriminatory and must be scrapped, say MPs

Cross-party group warns against pushing ahead with system being used at England's Euro 2020 matches

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England football fans will be able to use the NHS app at Wembley stadium to show they have received two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine. Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

England football fans will be able to use the NHS app at Wembley stadium to show they have received two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine. Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

[Rajeev Syal](#)

Fri 11 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

Covid passports, which will be used by sports fans for the first time at England's [Euro 2020](#) match on Sunday, will “disproportionately discriminate” based on race, religion, age and socio-economic background, a cross-party committee has concluded.

MPs on the public administration and constitutional affairs committee (PACAC) said that the decision to allow certification, giving people access to events and venues if they test negative for coronavirus or have had the vaccine, could be seen as contempt of parliament.

The damning conclusions come as England football fans [prepare to use the NHS app](#) to show they have received two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine and are therefore at low risk of transmitting the disease before being allowed to enter Wembley stadium.

William Wragg, the Tory chair of the committee, said: “We are entirely unconvinced by the case for their introduction.

“As vaccine uptake statistics indicate, any Covid certification system will be a discriminator along the lines of race, religion and age. Frankly, the government needs to scrap any idea of introducing Covid passports.”

A report released on Saturday by the committee concludes that any certification system would discriminate and should be halted.

“The evidence of vaccine uptake is a clear indication that such a system would likely disproportionately discriminate against people on the basis of race, religion and socioeconomic background, as well as on the basis of age due to the sequencing of the vaccine rollout,” the committee found.

In late April, the transport secretary, Grant Shapps, announced that the NHS app [would be used as a Covid passport](#) to give holidaymakers the freedom to go abroad to specific “green list” countries.

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The committee criticised the government's decision to make an announcement that pre-empted inquiries of the PACAC and the government itself "without notifying or consulting parliament". The decision to push ahead with passports could, MPs concluded, be seen as contempt of parliament.

"The policy should have been set out in advance of any decision being taken to enable scrutiny, and the House should have been given the opportunity to vote on the proposals," the report said.

Internationally, health ministers from G7 countries last week agreed on the need to work together to develop "mutual recognition of testing and vaccination certificates across countries".

Domestically, a review into the potential use of the certification had been due to report last month, but was delayed and is now expected as part of Monday's announcement on [step four of the restrictions lifting](#).

In evidence to MPs, the Cabinet Office minister, Michael Gove, acknowledged that the government had been concerned about discrimination because of the low rate of vaccine take-up in some communities.

"We know that for a variety of reasons, of which this committee is familiar, that vaccine take-up among some communities – particularly but not

exclusively some BAME communities – was lower, so was there a risk of either direct or indirect discrimination? That is why we wanted to make sure that any form of Covid-status certification also allowed for testing,” Gove said.

A UK government spokesperson said: “We are considering a range of evidence around Covid-status certification, including equality and ethical concerns. The review is ongoing and no final decisions have been taken.”

Spectators for England’s Euro 2020 group matches against Croatia, Scotland and the Czech Republic will have to use Covid vaccine passports. It will be the first time that a sporting event in the UK has required Covid certification.

Fans can use the NHS app to demonstrate they have received two doses of the vaccine at least 14 days before, or they can show a negative lateral flow test taken within the previous 48 hours through a confirmation text, email or print out.

There will be 22,500 fans for England’s group matches at Wembley – 25% of its capacity – and if the vaccine passport system runs smoothly then it could open the way for larger crowds at the Euro 2020 semi-finals and final, which are also being held at the stadium.

While English fans at Wembley can use the NHS app, Scottish fans must take a lateral flow test or request a “Covid status vaccination letter” and Welsh supporters have to ask for a “Covid vaccination certificate”, which according to UEFA can take up to 10 working days to arrive.

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# Delta variant causes more than 90% of new Covid cases in UK

Variant first discovered in India is thought to spread more easily and be more resistant to vaccines

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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A new Covid testing centre at Reading town hall, Berkshire. ONS data suggests people in Great Britain are becoming less concerned about keeping their distance. Photograph: Geoffrey Swaine/Rex

A new Covid testing centre at Reading town hall, Berkshire. ONS data suggests people in Great Britain are becoming less concerned about keeping their distance. Photograph: Geoffrey Swaine/Rex

[Nicola Davis](#) *Science correspondent*  
[@NicolaKSDavis](#)

Fri 11 Jun 2021 08.22 EDT

More than 90% of Covid cases in the UK are now down to the coronavirus Delta variant first discovered in India, data has revealed, as the total number of confirmed cases passed 42,000.

Also known as B.1.617.2, the Delta variant has been linked to a rise in Covid cases in the UK in the past weeks. It is believed to spread more easily than the Alpha variant, B.1.1.7, that was first detected in Kent, and is [somewhat more resistant to Covid vaccines](#), particularly after just one dose. It may be also associated with a [greater risk of hospitalisation](#).

Now, Public Health England (PHE) has said that more than 90% of new Covid cases in the UK involve the Delta variant. [Indeed the most recent data](#) suggests the figure could be as high as 96% of new cases in England.

The PHE report further revealed that cases of the virus are doubling between every 4.5 and 11.5 days, depending on the region of England, and that it has about a 60% increased risk of household transmission compared with the Alpha variant. Confirmed cases in the UK to date have risen by 29,892 to 42,323.

The steep jump in cases is, in part, down to the use of a new technique to determine the variant present in a positive Covid sample. Previously, positive samples were sent to laboratories for whole-genome sequencing – a process that took five to 10 days to return results.

### [Graphic](#)

However, the new data includes results from a more rapid approach known as genotyping in which, rather than looking at the whole genome of the virus to work out which variant is involved, only key sections of the genome are examined. This gives results within 48 hours, with the report revealing it is highly accurate when it comes to picking up the Delta variant.

Using this approach, together with the more time-consuming genome-sequencing technique, the team says the most recent data shows 96% of Covid cases in England involve the Delta variant.

[Vaccines minister says England must be ‘really careful’ about 21 June exit](#)  
[Read more](#)

Dr Jenny Harries, the chief executive of the UK [Health](#) Security Agency, urged people eligible for vaccination to come forward to receive the jab.

“With numbers of Delta variant cases on the rise across the country, vaccination is our best defence,” she said, noting two doses provide significantly more protection than a single dose. “However, while vaccination reduces the risk of severe disease, it does not eliminate it,” she added.

That is backed up by the data. According to the report, since the start of February to 7 June, there were 33,206 Delta cases in England: while 19,573 were in unvaccinated individuals, 1,785 were among fully vaccinated people and 7,559 were among those who had received one jab, with the vaccination status of the remainder unclear.

In total, 383 people in England were admitted to hospital with the Delta variant over that period – 223 of whom tested positive for Covid before turning up at A&E – with 42 having had two doses of the jab, 86 having one dose and 251 unvaccinated.

Of the 42 deaths recorded in England within 28 days of a positive test involving the Delta variant, 23 were in unvaccinated people, with 12 among those who were fully vaccinated and seven among people who had had one dose.

The report chimes with [survey data from the Office for National Statistics](#) based on swabs collected from randomly selected households, which shows Covid infection levels are increasing in Britain.

According to the latest estimates, about 96,800 people in the community in England had Covid in the week ending 5 June – equating to about 1 in 560 people – compared with 85,600 people, or about one in 640, the week before. Rises were also seen in Scotland and Wales, while the trend was unclear for Northern Ireland.

## [deaths UK](#)

Again, the picture varies by region – although the low number of people testing positive means the figures have a higher degree of uncertainty.

“In the week ending 5 June 2021, the percentage of people testing positive has increased in the north-west, West Midlands, London and the south-east,” the report said, although it added there were early signs of a decrease in the percentage of people testing positive in the east of England.

There are also differences by age, with infection levels rising in younger adults up to 34 years old, and those aged 50 to 69 years old. As with the PHE report, the ONS data suggests the Delta variant is now dominant in England.

[Further data from the ONS](#) suggests people in Great Britain are becoming less concerned about keeping their distance from each other. According to the latest figures, the proportion of adults maintaining social distancing with people outside their household fell to 68% over the period 2-6 June compared with 74% the week before, while – as per last week – 50% of adults said they had met up indoors with someone not in their household, childcare or support bubble in the past seven days.

In addition, 12% of adults said they planned to go on a trip abroad before September, with 71% saying the trip would be a holiday. The use of face coverings outside of the home has remained high at 96% in the most recent week.

“With data showing that Delta is significantly more transmissible than Alpha, it is just as important as ever to follow public health advice, which has not changed,” said Harries. “Get vaccinated, work from home where you can and remember ‘hands, face, space, fresh air’ at all times. These measures work, and they save lives.”





## 2021.06.12 - Opinion

- Mixing Britons' food with politics invariably leaves a bad taste
- If Unite's left can't run a united leadership campaign, it will be harshly judged
- Reviving Friends is like getting back together with your ex: a bad idea
- In space, nobody can hear Jeff Bezos. So can Richard Branson go too?
- We're almost close enough to touch freedom. But is the end of lockdown a mirage?

## [OpinionFood](#)

# Mixing Britons' food with politics invariably leaves a bad taste

[Pen Vogler](#)

The Brexit sausage war is nothing new: it follows an inglorious lineage that stretches all the way back to Hogarth's Gin Lane



Paul Eddington, right, as Jim Hacker in *Yes, Minister*. Photograph: Moviestore Collection/Rex Feat

Paul Eddington, right, as Jim Hacker in *Yes, Minister*. Photograph: Moviestore Collection/Rex Feat

Sat 12 Jun 2021 04.00 EDT

It's summer at last! Time to gather a few neighbours round, start a fire, and throw another [sausage war](#) on to the flames. This one is about the complicated triangulation between the EU, Northern Ireland and Westminster over frictionless trade. Still awake? Let's put it in terms "the

public” can understand and, as former Brexit chief negotiator David Frost did, thunder about the right of “[the shopper in Strabane](#)” to get their favourite sausages or chicken nuggets. In fact, from Hogarth’s Gin Lane, right through to the pasty tax, politicians have scored political points around food, as a distraction from more important matters, such as whether children get fed.

If you were of telly-watching age in 1984, there might be a familiar whiff to Frost’s words. In Yes, Minister the not overly competent but endlessly fortunate minister, Jim Hacker, grappled with a rumoured proposal from Brussels to have the British sausage renamed the “[emulsified high-fat offal tube](#)”. Westminster is traditionally reluctant to get involved in our personal relationship with our shopping baskets and arteries. It still feels the pain of burnt fingers from the “hot pasty tax”; or Edwina Currie’s [throwaway 1988 remark](#) about the prevalence of salmonella in British egg production, which crashed consumer confidence overnight (it was reported that the industry had to slaughter four million hens). The knotty issues around processed meat products are delegated to food and health campaigners who would like Britons to eat a lot fewer, for the sake of our health, our waistlines and the welfare of the animals who end up in them.

It is more vote-winning, by far, to go to war against the food ideas of neighbouring states, than to try to change what your electorate eat. In Britain, that has nearly always involved meat, preferably beef. Eating beef locates you in a world of tradition, pride and defiant Englishness, which shares no common culture with nut-roast or spinach smoothies. Shakespeare was appealing to the patriotic audience of Henry V by showing English soldiers as eaters of “beef and iron and steel”. Thackeray, enjoying the excellent restaurants in Paris, had fun with his patriotic duty to celebrate the beef-eating Englishmen over the weedy French: “Fancy a hundred thousand Englishmen, after a meal of stalwart beef ribs, encountering a hundred thousand Frenchmen, who have partaken of a trifling collation of soup, turnips, carrots, onions, and Gruyère cheese. Would it be manly to engage at such odds? I say, no.”

British beef latterly, however, became a blunt weapon in the food culture wars, thanks to the BSE crisis, which saw the EU ban it between 1996 and 1999. France, as though remembering Hogarth’s insulting propaganda

images of weedy vegetable-eating Frenchmen compared to beefy Brits, continued the ban for a [further three years](#). It is hard to remain bullish on the international culinary stage when your national dish has been found to be so contaminated by a poorly regulated food chain that it could make you fatally ill.

As BSE shows, it is usually crises that force governments to act to make food fit and available for its populations. Hogarth's image of Gin Lane was part of a campaign by the concerned middle classes of the 18th century to do something about the "[gin craze](#)", the havoc wrought in inner-city populations by crude gin that anybody could distil in a back room and sell in a front parlour. Part of Hogarth's success lay in his description of pathetic drinkers in Gin Lane, laid waste by "Hollands", an import from the Low Countries, which he compared with the healthy working classes drinking English ale in its companion piece, Beer Street. The governments of the day experimented vainly with taxation, until alighting on legislation that outlawed small-batch distillation. (The current craft gin craze is thanks to [Sipsmith](#) who took on HMRC and persuaded it to deviate from its strict adherence to this 1751 Gin Act.) The recent tax on sugar, inspired by the obesity crisis, works in a similar way to the Gin Act, by forcing the change on to producers, and avoiding the vote-threatening reputation of a "lifestyle tax".

Agitation for changes to a whole population's diet on the grounds of health and wellbeing, whether that be gin or Turkey Twizzlers, are usually outsourced to a concerned class of campaigners and activists, and some heroic individuals. If you happened to read *Oliver Twist* during lockdown, you could be forgiven for thinking we were stuck in 1838, given that both Dickens and Marcus Rashford were campaigning, not even for good food, but for children to have food *at all*.

The sausage war makes good copy, but it is a diversion from the even more complex issue of how governments should give all its citizens access to good food. Britons are historically susceptible to this sort of red herring. As Hungarian-born adopted Briton, journalist and humourist George Mikes noted: "On the continent people have good food; in England they have good table manners." Issues of social class, of etiquette, the 19th-century obsession with French food, or posturing against [Europe](#), have always

distracted us from what we are all eating. Meanwhile, plenty of businesses snuck in under the radar to exploit poor people, from 19th-century bakers who put alum into flour to contemporary manufacturers of highly synthetic food, with the bluff that cheap food is what the poor need (in fact our food is among the cheapest in Europe; our expensive accommodation is what clobbers the least affluent).

Just because it is expedient for politicians to divert us with phoney wars doesn't mean that we are obliged to pay attention. Indeed, one perhaps unintended consequence of [Brexit](#) is a growing public interest in how food is produced from land and sea, and how it is processed. The amiable, blustering Jim Hacker is an excellent and entertaining lesson in how to hoodwink the public to your own political advantage. He ignored the inconvenient fact that the sausage kerfuffle was solved, made sure the public saw him standing up for the Great British sausage against those pesky EU bureaucrats, and became, yes, prime minister.

- Pen Vogler is author of *Scoff: A History of [Food](#) and Class in Britain*

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## [OpinionUnite](#)

# If Unite's left can't run a united leadership campaign, it will be harshly judged

[Ronan Burtenshaw](#)

The future of Britain's largest and most influential union is at stake – a joint candidate for general secretary is essential



‘Unite is one of the most combative trade unions in the country ... Thurrock bin workers won a six-week strike against a Tory council planning to slash their pay and conditions.’ Photograph: Guy Smallman/Getty Images

‘Unite is one of the most combative trade unions in the country ... Thurrock bin workers won a six-week strike against a Tory council planning to slash their pay and conditions.’ Photograph: Guy Smallman/Getty Images

Sat 12 Jun 2021 05.01 EDT



In 1970s Britain, there were more than 50 industrial correspondents reporting the day-to-day news of the trade union movement. Today, you can count the number on one hand. Perhaps this explains why a great deal more attention has been paid to the 1 July byelection in Batley and Spen than to another election that could produce a far more dramatic and long-lasting shift in the political landscape: the leadership contest of Unite, Britain's largest union and the [Labour](#) party's largest single source of funding.

When Unite does appear in the British media – almost always accompanied by criticism of its role in the Labour party – it tends to be under siege by the country's political and business establishment. That's no surprise: as well as a membership in excess of one million, it is also one of the most combative trade unions in the country. In recent weeks, its bus drivers in Greater Manchester [secured a landmark victory](#) against “fire and rehire” by defeating corporate giant Go-Ahead after 80 days of industrial action. Not long afterwards, Unite bin workers in Thurrock [won a six-week strike](#) against a Tory council planning to slash their pay and conditions.

From the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, [Unite](#) was crucial in determining how the crisis would play out for workers, and played a central role in the negotiations over the furlough scheme. But beyond its industrial impact, it has long been one of the most progressive forces in British politics. The union's funding support for organisations such as UK Uncut and the People's Assembly – years before the arrival of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader – was instrumental in turning the tide against austerity. From Palestine solidarity to the anti-war movement, much of the institutional infrastructure of the left in Britain today would be at risk of collapse without Unite's backing.

Both Unite's political and industrial future is at stake in this summer's election. There are four candidates running. Three – Steve Turner, Sharon Graham and Howard Beckett – come from what is seen as the union's left, while Gerard Coyne is firmly on the union's right, and was narrowly defeated by current secretary Len McCluskey in the union's last leadership contest in 2017.

Coyne has [defied expectations](#) by making the ballot once again. In both political and industrial terms, he would be the union's most rightwing



general secretary since Arthur Deakin in the 1940s and 50s. Coyne is not an outsider to Unite but rather a part of a well-established tradition, which can be traced back to Deakin's cold war campaign against radicals, which saw the old Transport and General Workers' Union ban "reds" of various stripes from serving in official positions for decades.

Unsurprisingly, Coyne is running a campaign with messages on opposing union corruption and largesse – themes that form the basis of every attack on the movement by the tabloid press and Tory governments in living memory. This shouldn't be surprising: in the 2017 general secretary election, he chose to close [his campaign](#) to "topple Len" by writing an appeal in the Sun. But Coyne is a strange standard-bearer for rectitude in this general secretary election. In 2017, he was [sacked](#) after being found to have used Labour party data to contact potential supporters in a campaign (Coyne appealed the decision, calling the disciplinary hearing a "show trial").

[Four candidates for Unite leader through to members' ballot](#)  
[Read more](#)

With the left divided, Coyne is the frontrunner to be Unite's next general secretary. In 2017, he missed out by just over 5,000 votes. This prospect has prompted considerable pressure for a joint candidacy on the left. Unity talks, which are ongoing between Turner, Graham and Beckett, are complicated – and realistically would need to be concluded by early next week.

Each of the candidates represents a distinct approach to the union and its future, as well as speaking to differing constituencies inside Unite itself. Any path to a single candidate will involve the kind of protracted negotiation trade unionists are more accustomed to conducting with employers.

Steve Turner enters the negotiations with the nominations lead. He represents the United Left caucus, which elected Len McCluskey, and rose from the rank-and-file of the union after joining as a bus conductor at 19 years of age. Turner's strength in the manufacturing sector saw him win nominations from some of Unite's most significant branches, such as the union's largest in Jaguar Land Rover. He is seen to represent a less confrontational political position, but he was a Corbyn supporter and has served as chair of the anti-austerity People's Assembly for many years.

Sharon Graham is in second place in the nominations and supports an organising model of trade unionism which she hopes can reverse many decades of decline across the movement. She brings with her an enthusiastic, young and diverse team from the union's Organising Department, which were decisive in aforementioned campaigns. The third-placed candidate is Howard Beckett. Unite's leading lawyer, and representative on Labour's national executive until a [recent suspension](#), he has built his campaign around commitments to take the fight to Keir Starmer and reinvigorate socialist politics.

A campaign that drew on each of their respective strengths could be formidable and inspire a broad coalition of support, particularly if it came with a clear vision for the union's future at the forefront of a revived workers' movement. All three recognise that it is only class conflict – which is to say, organising workers to fight back against the organised power of business interests – that offers any hope of reversing decades of stagnating wages and worsening conditions. In that essential respect, their perspectives are compatible. But none of their approaches would stand much of a chance under a Coyne leadership, which would be characterised by a conciliatory approach in politics and the workplace.

Finding unity will not be easy, but it is essential. Candidates in this race should be judged on the basis of their leadership, their character and their ability to put the workers' movement first. For Turner, Graham and Beckett, these qualities are being put to the test in the negotiations over a joint candidate. The stakes in this election are historic and they themselves will become historic figures, one way or the other, in the coming days. If they put their own ambitions before the best collective traditions of the labour movement, the judgment in years to come will be severe.

- Ronan Burtenshaw is the editor of Tribune



[Hadley Freeman's Weekend column](#)**Friends**

## Reviving Friends is like getting back together with your ex: a bad idea

[Hadley Freeman](#)



It felt, absurdly, like a chance to pretend that the past two decades hadn't happened. But trying to stop the progress of time never works



Friends: The Reunion: 'Seeing the reality was always going to be jarring.'  
Photograph: Warner Bros

Friends: The Reunion: 'Seeing the reality was always going to be jarring.'  
Photograph: Warner Bros

Sat 12 Jun 2021 04.00 EDT

I know I need to move on, but I just cannot stop thinking about the Friends reunion. Extreme 1990s enunciation: what *was* that anyway? I was never a diehard Friends fan – I liked it, sure, but let's be honest, it was no [Frasier](#). But I cannot imagine any fan of any stripe has spent the past 17 years thinking, "Man, I'd love to see a Friends reunion! And by 'reunion' I mean have James Corden ask the actors who had the loudest laugh."

I hadn't even planned on watching it, but when the evening came around I was amazed by my sudden keenness. Ooh, Friends! Back on screen! This felt like a genuine TV event, and one that would be less miserable than the last TV event I watched, which was Prince Harry telling Oprah how completely awful his family is. But Harry's show seemed like a sitcom (Arrested Development) compared with how deflated I felt by the end of the two-hour (!) nostalgia fest.

The problem was not actually with the show, although – in case I didn't make it clear already – the show was bad. The problem is with these reunions and reboots as a whole. Gossip Girl, Sex And The City and even Frasier are all coming back over the next year, their makers apparently undeterred that the recently revived This Life, Arrested Development, Gilmore Girls, [Will & Grace](#), Mad About You, Full House and Roseanne all died on arrival.

You can see the thinking of the TV bosses: movies are all just franchises now – so let's franchise our old sitcoms! But Spiderman, Batman and so on are revived with new actors, because it doesn't really matter who plays them. But it absolutely matters who plays Carrie Bradshaw, as the makers of the show The Carrie Diaries, about Carrie's high school years, discovered when it was cancelled after two seasons. The Friends actors are in an unusually awkward position, because while the ubiquitous reruns help them bank [\\$20m a year each](#), they have also kept them frozen in time on screen for the past 20 years, helping viewers maintain the delusion that we still look the same, too. Seeing the reality was always going to be jarring, like watching your own ageing process sped up. Although you can't say that the female Friends didn't put in the effort to reverse this, their faces as frozen and puffed up as pastry. At what age can they stop trying to look 25? The answer from the reunion show seemed to be: never. This was even more depressing than the sight of poor Matthew Perry, the walking and barely talking embodiment of America's opioid crisis.

That [Friends](#), Sex And The City and Frasier have all been given the revival treatment is telling, because they were all big in the 90s and beloved of twentysomethings. Well, those twentysomethings are now fortysomethings, a decade when you typically wonder where the past 20 years went, when Saturday nights changed from being about getting dressed while watching [Friends](#) and then going out to meet your real friends, to now being about hunting for the missing piece of a Peppa Pig puzzle behind a radiator and trying to remember what your friends look like. When I think of watching these shows in the late 90s and the early 2000s, I think of living in my first flat and feeling completely free, and also incredibly lonely. The only times I glimpse [Friends](#) or Frasier now is if they happen to be on when I turn on the TV for my kids, who then shout at me to switch over to Hey Duggee.

[Want to have a not-completely-terrible semi-locked-down celebration? Here's how | Hadley Freeman](#)  
[Read more](#)

These show revivals are predicated on nostalgia, but nostalgia is very rarely about the thing you think you're missing; it's about wanting to go back to how you felt at the time, and where your life was then, remembering only the happy parts and conveniently forgetting the bad. This is why people of my generation – a long euphemism for “me” – got a little too excited about the Friends reunion. It felt, absurdly, like a chance to pretend that the past two decades hadn't happened. But trying to stop the progress of time never works, as all that cosmetic surgery demonstrated all too well.

Afterwards, [Mindy Kaling](#) posted a [photo on Instagram](#) of Perry and Matt LeBlanc as they were 25 years ago, and their youth, health and beauty was heartbreaking. How did I not see it back then? For the same reason I never valued my own youth and beauty: you don't appreciate the clouds when you're lost in the fog, and then suddenly it lifts and all you can do is look back wistfully, time gilding the memories. These revival shows are the equivalent of getting back together with your long ago ex-boyfriend in an attempt to recapture your youth, and, contrary to what the Ross and Rachel and Carrie and Big storylines insisted, this is not a good idea. They were there for us back then. And now, for their sakes and ours, it's time to let them go.

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## [OpinionSpace](#)

# In space, nobody can hear Jeff Bezos. So can Richard Branson go too?

[Marina Hyde](#)



News that the Amazon overlord is about to jet off has got the Virgin boss clamouring to get there first. You can do it, Richard!





‘Jeff Bezos’s trip to space leaves you with a powerful sense that he’s just mic-dropped the entire tax avoiders’ WhatsApp group.’ Bezos in a Blue Origin crew capsule mockup in 2017. Photograph: Isaiah Downing/Reuters

‘Jeff Bezos’s trip to space leaves you with a powerful sense that he’s just mic-dropped the entire tax avoiders’ WhatsApp group.’ Bezos in a Blue Origin crew capsule mockup in 2017. Photograph: Isaiah Downing/Reuters

Fri 11 Jun 2021 10.13 EDT

It’s famously impossible to take a bathroom break during a rocket launch, meaning Jeff Bezos will soon experience what it’s like to be [one of his warehouse workers](#). Or, as the Amazon boss put it last week: “To see the Earth from space ... changes your relationship with humanity.” That’s hugely encouraging. I feel like we’re just one successful interstellar wormhole mission to a distant galaxy away from [allowing employees to unionise](#).

[The tech billionaire space race: who is Jeff Bezos up against?](#)  
[Read more](#)

Anyway, along with his brother, Mark, and an auction winner (bidding has [passed the \\$4m mark](#)), Bezos is [headed for space](#) next month – or at least for the edge of it. Kind of like the ring road of space, which is home to a thin

atmosphere, two discount carpet shops and a powerful sense that you just mic-dropped the entire tax avoiders' WhatsApp group.

Bezos announced that he'd be riding up in his Blue Origin rocket via a [mildly alarming video](#) last week in which a camera crew films a perfectly lit, remorselessly off-the-cuff chat between him and his brother. "I really want you to come with me," ad-libs Jeff to Mark. "I think it would be meaningful."

And why not? I trust the Bezos brothers have a normal and healthy sibling relationship, allowing Mark to use up their entire three minutes of zero gravity contemplating the big questions, such as: "Remember when you cracked my head open?"; "Did you know Mom messaged me last night to confirm I'm the favourite child?"; "Someone who wants a space-wedgie says what?"; and, "Would you call [your general look](#) Vin Diesel after dioxin poisoning?"

But enough of the bros. Needless to say, my first thought on reading this news was: poor Richard Branson. Just think how long Britain's Best Loved Businessman™ has been threatening to give us a 10-minute break by going to space. His [Virgin Galactic operation](#) has basically been issuing announcements that commercial space travel is "set to become a reality next year" since seemingly around 1986. How dare Bezos pull this shit? It must have felt a lot like this when people started buying their U2 CDs from Amazon instead of a Virgin Megastore.

And yet it seems all is not lost for the Virgin boss, whose most notable recent appearance was popping up last year to ask for a [bailout for his airline](#) on the basis that "creating positive social and environmental impact has always been at the heart of this brand". (To which the only possible reply was: it's an AIRLINE, you preposterous chancer.) Imagine my mirth to read, just days after the Bezos announcement, a report that Virgin Galactic is now [scrambling to send Branson up](#) on a suborbital flight two whole weeks before the Amazon overlord.

But of course. Of COURSE Richard can't cope with being the [galactic Salieri to Bezos's galactic Mozart](#). I've said it before but I'll say it again: men are incredible! As is the 21st century. It's wild to see the complex

aspirations and vast rivalries of the 20th-century space race basically now reduced to a willy-waver between two taxophobic billionaires whose personality is “disliking ties”.

As for whether the rumours are true, Virgin has declined to deny the report, saying gnomically: “At this time, we have not determined the date of our next flight.” But if Branson were to galactically gazump Bezos, it would surely serve as a tribute to the awesome pettiness of humankind. I’m sorry – of mankind.

Not that there wouldn’t be a woman involved, I’m sure. You always need at least one to serve as a prop in the obligatory picture in which Richard is guffawing away while carrying a lady in his arms. (Then again, in zero gravity women don’t even need men to lift them up, which leaves us with one unavoidable philosophical question: in space, what is the point of [Richard Branson](#)?)

Clearly, the true banter option would be for [fellow space-racer Elon Musk](#) to somehow pop up above the Kármán line around the middle of next week, simply using the location as the backdrop to insult a cryptocurrency. But failing that, the only way the whole race could be more dignified is if Branson himself bought the Blue Origin auction ticket, forcing Bezos to take him along at the same time, with the era-defining footage beamed back to Earth simply featuring the two billionaires attempting to pinch and scratch each other in slow motion, soundtracked with the historic words “Not in the face! Not in the face!”

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

## [Opinion](#)Life and style

# We're almost close enough to touch freedom. But is the end of lockdown a mirage?

[Zoe Williams](#)



Countless parties, not to mention weddings, not to mention wedding cakes, are ready to go, as we await another fateful government decision



‘I’ve been planning a housewarming, delayed since November’ (posed by models). Photograph: Henrik Sorensen/Getty Images

‘I’ve been planning a housewarming, delayed since November’ (posed by models). Photograph: Henrik Sorensen/Getty Images

Fri 11 Jun 2021 09.07 EDT

It’s very like a mirage, isn’t it, the route out of lockdown? From April’s distance, “freedom day”, 21 June, seemed likely to the point of being inevitable. It was so obviously going to happen that there wasn’t much else to be said, beyond: “Oh ho, that’s convenient, isn’t it, so close to the prime minister’s birthday on 19 June?”

I was planning a housewarming, delayed since November. Mr Z absolutely loves parties – gigantic ones. His ideal scenario is to pack a room so tight that somebody will definitely get set alight – because, in the end, with enough candles and enough bodies, it’s just a numbers game – and the only creature who can move around freely is a cat (which we don’t have), like in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*. You can raise any objection – 200 people? Really? What will they all eat? – and his answer is always: “Frazzles.”

By May, we were talking about [the Delta variant](#) and Boris Johnson was saying there was nothing to worry about, which is a very decipherable code

for: “This is the point to start worrying.”

The mirage was still very much intact, for me. It’s just the orientation of my character. There was the bright, sparkling pool – though, OK, it was starting to shimmer suspiciously and maybe those distant wildebeest were looking a bit hazy. Last month, we were still very much having a party – we just hadn’t invited anyone. Your basic Kevin Costner play: if you build it (in your mind), they will come. They just don’t know it yet.

It wasn’t the only event hanging on the road map. A young relative is getting married at the end of June and counting on the government lifting [the 30-person limit on English weddings](#). It’s my family reunion at the start of July, when all the core Williamses from across the country congregate in a house and go: “This was much more convenient when we did it in Nottingham,” and: “Ah, but when we went to Newport, the Isle of Wight contingent was there – and they’re the funny ones.” Then we start to rank branches of the family in order of conviviality and then we have a fistfight. I’m least worried about the reunion, as we didn’t do it last year, for the first time that I can remember, and relations between us all have never been better.

I’m most worried about the wedding. In your middle years, on your second or third marriage, you have quite a lot of flexibility around nuptials. They can be delayed, or the wedding breakfast can be replaced with a scone at the last minute, and nobody minds, because it’s more or less what they expected of you.

In the first flush of youth, a wedding is like a planet: loads of satellites hanging off it, hens and stags, honeymoons and rehearsals, post-match analysis barbecues. Six months ahead of the event, you’ve already been arguing about the guest list for what feels like half your life. If you have to knock down the numbers, you will inevitably lose untold deposits to marquee suppliers and macaron-mongers, whose contracts are so watertight they ought to have a side-hustle in international law.

The UK Weddings Taskforce estimates that 50,000 weddings have been planned for the four weeks from 21 June. It helpfully calculated the number of individual stems of flowers that would go to waste if the lockdown doesn’t end (300m), the amount of food in tonnes (275). If you picture the



volume of cake, the tragedy of cancellation becomes mountainous. But it's so much worse than that – it knocks the stars out of alignment. Some time soon, there'll be [a plague of mice](#).

By the start of June, the government was still gung-ho, but key newspapers – broadly speaking, the ones that you should always take with a pinch of salt except when they are delivering bad news while the official line is still good news – were speculating that, on a “data not dates” approach, the data wasn't in our favour. Rishi Sunak signalled to this paper that [he was comfortable with a four-week delay](#), which is chancellor-speak for: “If anyone makes the wrong call and we end up in a third wave, don't stick it on me.” At least someone's thinking ahead.

Now, we're almost close enough to touch the freedom. The most up-to-date rumours are that the full lifting is unlikely, but the rules for weddings will be eased, so maybe the prime minister is of my mind about the cake (and the mice). People up and down the country are making the best choices they can with the information in front of them, of which there isn't any.

[Johnson is in Cornwall for the G7 summit](#), nosing up to the hardest of hard deadlines to make the decision. He took a plane there, which doesn't have the best optics – the carbon profligacy of air travel and all that – but he probably didn't mean to. Most likely, he meant to get a train and missed it only after a cascade of other, also missed, appointments. You should beware of thinking about this too deeply, since you'll land on: “A man who finds it this hard to say whether or not a party will be allowed next week ... realistically, how useful is he going to be on the global challenge of the climate crisis?” And then you'll really be spooked; freedom or no freedom, mirage or no mirage, you'll forget you were even thirsty.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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## 2021.06.12 - Around the world

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## US politics

# Joe Biden's reforming agenda at risk of dying a slow death in Congress



Joe Biden leaves the House chamber with Representative Maxine Waters and Senator Bernie Sanders after addressing a joint session of Congress in April. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Joe Biden leaves the House chamber with Representative Maxine Waters and Senator Bernie Sanders after addressing a joint session of Congress in April. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Transformational change, such as a huge infrastructure bill and voting rights protections, are hamstrung by antiquated procedures that give an effective veto to the minority



[David Smith](#) in Washington

[@smithinamerica](#)

Sat 12 Jun 2021 03.45 EDT

Joe Biden's first hundred days surpassed progressive expectations with [the scope of their ambition](#). His second hundred days are being mugged by reality: the one that says Washington DC is a place where dreams go to die.

A once-in-a-generation [investment in infrastructure](#) and the climate crisis has hit a wall. Reforms on gun safety, immigration and police brutality are in limbo. Legislation to expand voting rights and reduce the influence of money in politics appears doomed.

[Biden's push for racial justice at stake in bipartisan infrastructure talks](#)  
[Read more](#)

The stalled agenda reflects Republican obstruction, Democratic disunity and the inherent messiness of "sausage-making" on Capitol Hill. But it also shines a light on taken-for-granted structures of American government and democracy that many argue are no longer fit for purpose because they favor gridlock and militate against sweeping change.

“The American system of government is a beta form of democracy,” said [Ezra Levin](#), a former congressional staffer who is co-executive director of the grassroots movement Indivisible. “We have a presidential system that hasn’t really substantially been updated since the 19th century.

“Nobody designing a democracy today would create as many veto points as we have and nobody, including the original founders, would have developed a system like the Senate filibuster where theoretically senators representing [11% of the population](#) can veto legislation that is wildly popular.”

Much has been written about Biden’s prospects of [emulating Franklin D Roosevelt](#) (FDR) and Lyndon B Johnson (LBJ) with a transformational presidency and eclipse Barack Obama by throwing caution to the winds. The excitement only grew with the passage of a \$1.9tn coronavirus relief package in March.

But that, it transpires, was the exception not the rule. The Democrats’ progressive wing is becoming increasingly frustrated as other promises go unrealised, fearing an all-too-familiar pattern of hopes dashed and dreams deferred that will only feed anti-Washington resentment.

Ro Khanna, a congressman from California who was a co-chair of Senator Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaign, [told the Associated Press](#): “There’s a lot of anxiety. It’s a question really for President Biden: what kind of president does he want to be?”

Joe Biden won a fairly significant personal victory but the 2020 elections were hardly a victory for the Democratic party as a whole

*Bill Galston*

The first problem is that Biden does not have a Roosevelt-like majority in Congress. Democrats have only a wafer-thin advantage in the [House of Representatives](#). The Senate is evenly divided between 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans, giving Vice-President Kamala Harris the tie-breaker vote. It is hardly a recipe for revolution.

[Bill Galston](#), a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution thinktank in Washington, said: “There was always the brute fact that the Democrats had the slimmest margin in the House of Representatives they’ve enjoyed since the 1940s and you can’t get any closer in the Senate than a tie broken by the vice-president.

“So the fact of the matter is that [Joe Biden](#) won a fairly significant personal victory but the 2020 elections were hardly a victory for the Democratic party as a whole. Anything but. So I really had to shake my head and chuckle when I read all of those early comparisons to FDR and LBJ.”

The balance of power leaves Biden’s entire legislative agenda subject to the whims of any individual senator. He got a taste of this last weekend when Joe Manchin, a conservative Democrat from West Virginia, [declared his opposition](#) to the For the People Act, a voting rights bill that many activists regard as crucial to protecting democracy and a direct response to restrictive new voting laws being passed in Republican-led states.



Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia has set his face against the For the People voting rights act and ending the filibuster. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

In a newspaper column, Manchin described the bill as the “wrong piece of legislation to bring our country together” and a barrier to Senate bipartisanship. This was despite polls showing clear support for it in his home state. His stand provoked anger among progressives and prompted civil rights leaders to [meet Manchin on Tuesday](#).

Mondale Robinson, founder of the [Black Male Voter Project](#), a member of the Just Democracy coalition, said: “There is nothing partisan about this. What’s partisan is what’s happened since 2020 where you have Republican state legislatures proposing bills and enacting laws that will restrict Black and brown people all over this country from being able to participate in our democracy.

“That’s sad to me. especially because some of the Black men that we talk to voted for the first time in 2020 in ways that are no longer legal in some of the states in this country, simply because [Republicans](#) saw that if they allow people to vote by mail or use drop boxes, which are some of the most secure ways to vote, they lose elections.”

Manchin has also joined the Democratic senator [Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona](#) in publicly refusing to end the filibuster, a procedural rule that requires 60 votes to advance most legislation, meaning that at least 10 Republicans would need to cross party lines to help Democrats achieve their priorities. Some senators propose reducing the voting threshold to 51.

Activists increasingly regard [blowing up the filibuster](#) as essential and fundamental. Robinson added: “The fact that Joe Biden has been more progressive than I thought is a testament to him understanding the moment and I feel like some other elected officials aren’t reading the tea leaves. Roosevelt had a majority that Joe Biden can only dream for and we don’t have those majorities right now.

What our lawmaking process does is make it all but impossible to enact sweeping, comprehensive change

*William Howell*

“So what it all leads back to is a need to eliminate the filibuster. We need to continue to make it clear to Senator Manchin he has a choice to do something or do nothing, and then someone has to press upon him that history will remember those choices.”

America’s founding fathers constructed a government of checks and balances that guarded against rash action: a chief executive, a bicameral Congress with veto power, an independent judiciary. Washington mythology held that they invented the filibuster to guard against the tyranny of the majority but this has repeatedly been [debunked by scholars](#) who say it was created by mistake and first used in 1837.

[William Howell](#), a political scientist at the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago, said: “The framers didn’t create the filibuster. It’s excessive even by their standards.

“What our lawmaking process does generally, and what the filibuster does in particular, is make it all but impossible to enact sweeping, comprehensive change. It leaves in its wake pervasive gridlock and sporadic opportunity to make incremental changes and that’s about it.”

Every major piece of legislation successfully enacted over the past decade has circumvented the filibuster through a process called budget reconciliation, Howell noted. This tool [may allow Democrats](#) to go it alone with the American Jobs Plan, which would invest heavily in bridges, railways and roads, “soft” infrastructure [such as caregiving](#) and clean energy.





Critics argue that the US has a 19th-century democracy not up to the demands of the 21st century. Photograph: Trevor Carpenter/Getty Images

Sheldon Whitehouse, a Democratic senator for Rhode Island, [tweeted](#) that he is “nervous” about Congress doing too little to address the climate crisis. “We must get Senate Dems unified on climate on a real reconciliation bill, lest we get sucked into ‘bipartisanship’ mud where we fail on climate,” he wrote.

The filibuster is hardly the only design fault. It comes on top of a Senate that is deeply unrepresentative because each state gets two seats, no matter the size of its population. That means small, predominantly white states carry as much heft as huge, racially diverse states such as California. An effort to make the District of Columbia the 51st state would begin to redress the balance but Manchin has again [vowed opposition](#).

Levin, the Indivisible organiser, said: “The 50 Democratic senators represent [41 million more Americans](#) than the 50 Republican senators. I think anybody objectively looking at how legislation is passed in this country has to come away with the conclusion that we are not set up to tackle 21st-century problems with a 19th-century democracy.”

I don't think it's fair to say that an op-ed from a single senator dictates the future of that legislation

*Ezra Levin*

Despite these headwinds, Levin is not giving up on Biden's progressive project, [pointing out](#) that Democratic presidents have been here before. In 1964, under Johnson, the Civil Rights Act passed the Senate after overcoming a 54-day filibuster, and the following year the Voting Rights Act took more than a month of full Senate debate to escape the threat.

“Neither of those things were passed with the snap of a finger,” he said. “It is fair to say the For the People Act is a tough fight. I don't think it's fair to say that an op-ed from a single senator dictates the future of that legislation. It's always easy to be cynical about these things but there's reason to hope. There are very real pathways forward to get this done.”

Groups supporting the legislation intend to press ahead with a \$30m campaign pressing Democratic senators to rewrite filibuster rules and pass the bill. Manchin has talked about supporting another voting bill, the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, but activists insist that both pieces of legislation are needed.

[LaTosha Brown](#), co-founder of Black Voters Matter, said: “What we are seeing is that, as America becomes younger and more diverse, the reality is we currently do not have a political infrastructure that can support the kind of democracy that is laid out in the constitution where people have free and fair access to the ballot.

“We need the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act as a step closer to strengthening our democracy and protecting those elements that have literally been fought and won through protest, through giving of lives.”





## US politics

# Watchdog investigates seizure of Democrats' phone data by Trump DoJ

At least two House members including Adam Schiff targeted in 2018, say officials familiar with the investigation



The records of at least 12 people connected to the House intelligence committee were eventually shared, including Adam Schiff, the panel chairman. Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

The records of at least 12 people connected to the House intelligence committee were eventually shared, including Adam Schiff, the panel chairman. Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

*[Adam Gabbatt](#) in New York and agency  
[@adamgabbatt](#)*

Fri 11 Jun 2021 15.30 EDT

The US justice department's internal watchdog launched an investigation on Friday after revelations that former president Donald Trump's administration secretly seized phone data from at least two House Democrats as part of an aggressive leaks inquiry related to the Russia investigation into Trump's conduct.

Democrats in Congress called the seizures a "shocking" abuse of power, while the White House labeled the revelations "appalling".

The announcement by the DoJ inspector general, Michael Horowitz, came shortly after the deputy attorney general, Lisa Monaco, made the request on Friday morning.

Horowitz said he would examine whether the data turned over by [Apple](#) followed department policy and "whether any such uses, or the investigations, were based upon improper considerations".

It was revealed late on Thursday that the US justice department under Trump had taken data from the accounts of at least two members of the House of Representatives intelligence committee in 2018 as part of an aggressive crackdown on leaks related to the [Russia investigation](#) and other national security matters, according to a committee official and two people familiar with the investigation.

[Revealed: rightwing firm posed as leftist group on Facebook to divide Democrats](#)  
[Read more](#)

Prosecutors from the previous president's DoJ subpoenaed Apple for the data, according to the people, who were granted anonymity to discuss the secret seizures first reported by [the New York Times](#).

The records of at least 12 people connected to the intelligence panel were eventually shared, including the chairman, Adam Schiff, who was then the top Democrat on the committee.

The California Democratic congressman Eric Swalwell was the second member, according to spokeswoman Natalie Edelstein. The records of aides,

former aides and family members were also seized, including one who was a minor, according to the committee official.

Apple informed the committee last month that their records had been shared, but did not give extensive detail. The committee is aware, though, that metadata from the accounts was turned over, the official said.

The records do not contain any other content from the devices, like photos, messages or emails, one of the other people said. The third person said that Apple complied with the subpoena, providing the information to the DoJ, and did not immediately notify the members of Congress or the committee about the disclosure.

While the justice department routinely conducts investigations of leaked information, including classified intelligence, opening such an investigation into members of Congress is extraordinarily rare.

Schiff tweeted: “Trump repeatedly demanded the DoJ go after his political enemies. It’s clear his demands didn’t fall on deaf ears. This baseless investigation, while now closed, is yet another example of Trump’s corrupt weaponization of justice. And how much he imperiled our democracy.”

Trump repeatedly demanded the DOJ go after his political enemies.

It's clear his demands didn't fall on deaf ears.

This baseless investigation, while now closed, is yet another example of Trump's corrupt weaponization of justice.

And how much he imperiled our democracy.

— Adam Schiff (@RepAdamSchiff) [June 11, 2021](#)

The disclosures, as first reported by the New York Times, raise questions about what the department’s justification was for spying on another branch of government and whether it was done for political reasons.

The Trump administration's attempt to secretly gain access to data of individual members of Congress and others connected to the panel came as the president was fuming publicly and privately over investigations – in Congress and by the special counsel Robert Mueller – into his campaign's ties to Russia. Trump called the inquiries a “witch-hunt”, regularly criticized Schiff and other Democrats on Twitter and repeatedly dismissed as “fake news” leaks he found personally harmful to his agenda. As the investigations swirled around him, he demanded loyalty from a justice department he often regarded as his personal law firm.

The House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, said in a statement that “these actions appear to be yet another egregious assault on our democracy” waged by the former president.

“The news about the politicization of the Trump administration justice department is harrowing,” she said.

Schiff, now the panel's chair, also confirmed in a statement on Thursday evening that the DoJ had informed the committee in May that the investigation was closed. Still, he said: “I believe more answers are needed, which is why I believe the inspector general should investigate this and other cases that suggest the weaponization of law enforcement by a corrupt president.”

The justice department told the intelligence panel then that the matter had not transferred to any other entity or investigative body, the committee official said, and the department confirmed that to the committee again on Thursday.

The panel has continued to seek additional information, but the department has not been forthcoming in a timely manner, including on questions such as whether the investigation was properly predicated and whether it only targeted Democrats, the committee official said.

It is unclear why Trump's justice department would have targeted a minor as part of the investigation.

Another Democrat on the intelligence panel, the Illinois representative Mike Quigley, said he did not find it even “remotely surprising” that Trump went after committee members’ records during the Russia investigation.

“From my first days as part of the Russia investigation, I expected that eventually, someone would attempt this – I just wasn’t sure if it would be a hostile government or my own,” Quigley said.

And the Florida congresswoman Val Demings, an impeachment manager in Trump’s first Senate trial, and who is now challenging Republican Florida senator Marco Rubio for his seat, tweeted: “It is outrageous but not surprising. We have a former president with no regard for the rule of law or for those who enforce the laws.”

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## France

# French soldiers kill Mali jihadist blamed for RFI journalists' murder

Bayes Ag Bakabo was prime suspect in 2013 kidnapping and shooting of Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon



Radio France International journalists Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon were found dead on 2 November 2013 after being kidnapped by armed men. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

Radio France International journalists Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon were found dead on 2 November 2013 after being kidnapped by armed men. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

*Agence France-Presse*

Fri 11 Jun 2021 23.53 EDT

French soldiers have killed a Malian jihadist suspected of being responsible for the kidnapping and death of two French journalists in 2013.

Florence Parly, the defence minister in Paris, said French forces in the Sahel region killed “four terrorists” during an operation in northern Mali on 5 June, including Bayes Ag Bakabo, the prime suspect in the deaths of Radio [France International](#) (RFI) reporters Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon.

“His neutralisation means the end of a long wait,” Parly said, adding that Bakabo had been in the village of Aguelhok preparing an attack against UN peacekeeping forces when he was killed.

Dupont and Verlon, both in their 50s and veteran journalists, were seized in the flashpoint northern Malian town of Kidal in November 2013 after interviewing a separatist Tuareg leader.

[UN official accuses France of impeding inquiry into journalists' Mali deaths](#)  
[Read more](#)

Their bullet-riddled bodies were found a few hours later, with al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claiming the killings as revenge for France’s decision to intervene against jihadist groups in the country earlier that year.

A French investigation concluded that Bakabo, also a known drug trafficker, drove the pickup truck used to kidnap the two journalists.

Parly expressed her “thoughts for the family and loved ones of Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon”.

The exact circumstances of their deaths have never been revealed, and relatives charge that military secrecy has hampered efforts towards that end.

In November, Agnes Callamard, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, noted that “the alleged perpetrators have been named but are yet to be arrested and prosecuted”. Callamard [pressed the governments of France and Mali “to advance the investigation](#) without further delay so that justice may be served”.

RFI’s parent company, France Medias Monde, said on Friday it was waiting for the investigation “to fully clarify the circumstances of the tragedy and



lead to the arrest of all the remaining members of the hit squad and their possible accomplices so they can be tried”.

The Friends of Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon group also noted the death of Bakabo, but said in a press release they “regret that this jihadist leader responsible for the double murder of RFI journalists was not arrested to be questioned on the circumstances of this tragedy”.

Parly said the operation “illustrates one of the main priorities of France in the Sahel region: taking down the main heads of terrorist groups that are causing havoc in the region”.

The news of Bakabo’s death emerged just a day after the French president, Emmanuel Macron, announced a drawdown of French troops in the Sahel region, who number 5,100 in bases across the arid and volatile region on the southern fringe of the Sahara.



French Barkhane soldiers will be replaced by support for local partners and counter terrorism operations, says Emmanuel Macron. Photograph: AP

Macron did not give figures for the drawdown, but made clear he wanted future French involvement to be limited to counter-terror operations as part of a multinational European force.

In Washington, a Pentagon spokesman, John Kirby, said the United States would still support counter-terror operations in the Sahel. “We’ll continue to provide a measure of support – the kind of support that we’ve been providing to the French as they needed in the region.”

### [French journalist kidnapped by jihadists in Mali](#) [Read more](#)

The Sahel is seen by many western politicians and experts as a major global security risk because of the growing strength of jihadist groups there, as well as its role as a crossroads for arms and people-smuggling.

Journalists covering the insurgency in the Sahel often find themselves targeted by armed groups, either because of their reporting or for their ransom value.

The French reporter [Olivier Dubois, 46, disappeared in April](#) and is believed to be in the hands of the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), the biggest jihadist alliance in the Sahel.

The 46-year-old freelancer was in the northern Malian town of Gao, where he had travelled to interview an al-Qaida-linked jihadist commander.

In 2020, French soldiers serving in the Barkhane force killed the head of AQIM, Abdelmalek Droukdel, in a major breakthrough, while regular airstrikes target other senior commanders. Another senior AQIM figure linked to the murder of the RFI journalists, Amada Ag Hama, was killed in a raid in northern Mali in May 2015.

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## The age of extinctionIllegal wildlife trade

# Finding fangs: new film exposes illicit trade killing off Bolivia's iconic jaguar

Undercover documentary investigates the trafficking of Latin America's big cat to meet demand in China



A jaguar caught by camera trap in Madidi national park, Bolivia.  
Photograph: Courtesy of WCS

A jaguar caught by camera trap in Madidi national park, Bolivia.  
Photograph: Courtesy of WCS

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Sat 12 Jun 2021 02.01 EDT

Elizabeth Unger was a 25-year-old biology graduate working as a PhD research assistant for big cat and climate projects in Latin America when she heard about the Bolivian authorities intercepting dozens of packages containing jaguar fangs sent by Chinese citizens to addresses in China.

“I was really blown away as [the story] was completely under the radar,” she says. Six years later, she is making her directorial debut with a film about the trade, which is contributing to a decline in the population of Latin America’s iconic big cat.

There are between 64,000 and 170,000 jaguars left in the world, a fraction of their previous population number, earning them a place on the [IUCN’s red list as near threatened](#). Habitat loss, human-wildlife conflict and local pet and skin markets, as well as trafficking, have all contributed to the drop in numbers.

I wanted people to relate to this animal. Its mysticism; the mystery, the poetry and the symbol for so many cultures

*Elizabeth Unger, film-maker*

Tigre Gente, which premieres at the [Tribeca film festival](#) this month, follows a Bolivian park ranger and a young Hong Kong journalist who goes undercover to investigate the trade in jaguar fangs.

The film moves from mist-shrouded jungle ravines in Bolivia's mega-biodiverse Madidi national park to the skyscrapers and bustling commerce of Hong Kong and Guangzhou.

Unger, 31, told the Guardian that as well as telling the story of the jaguar trade, "I really wanted to make people feel they could relate to this animal. Its mysticism; the mystery, the poetry of the apex predator of the [Americas](#) and the symbol for so many cultures."

One of the stars of the film is Marcos Uzquiano, director of Madidi national park, who leads a team of rangers on the hunt for poachers who kill jaguars for their teeth and pelts to sell for a few hundred dollars on the hidden market. Uzquiano, born and raised around the park, which has one of the continent's healthiest jaguar populations, shares Unger's awe and respect for the big cat. He calls it a "symbol of life and strength", which holds a mythical status for the local people.



Marcos Uzquiano, director of Madidi national park, with fellow rangers, who track wildlife traffickers in the film. Photograph: Handout

On the other side of the world in east Asia, the body parts of big cats have historically been used in traditional Chinese medicine. Today, jaguars and their body parts are still being trafficked in dangerously high numbers.

[A study](#) of jaguar trafficking between 2012 and 2018 published in the journal Conservation Biology last year found that “jaguar seizures increased over time, and most of the seized jaguar pieces were canines”. About 34% of the jaguar-part seizure reports were linked with China.

Investigative reporter Laurel Chor, 31, a Hong Kong native, secretly filmed the bustling wildlife markets in Myanmar and talked to Chinese citizens, including her own family, to examine the desire driving the rising demand.

“She is a badass,” Unger says of her female protagonist. “She had a history of trafficking investigations and research, and a deeper more nuanced look at the Chinese mentality behind the demand.”

[Wildlife traffickers target lion, jaguar and leopard body parts as tiger substitutes](#)

[Read more](#)



There are some heart-racing action sequences; a boat chase along a river as the rangers pursue suspected poachers who try to ram their boat. The rangers also go undercover with secret cameras to track down traffickers.

“They really are heroes and they care,” Unger says of the park rangers she spent three years with making the film. “I was just so grateful they allowed us to follow them for so long, especially in situations when we were definitely in the way.”



Director Elizabeth Unger in Bolivia's Madidi national park. Photograph: Handout

Unger says she hopes the film, partially funded by National Geographic, will help to battle “western misconceptions” about Chinese attitudes to wildlife consumerism.

“There’s only a small subset of the Chinese populations that actively buys these things but that’s a large group of people because [China](#) is massive,” she says, adding that anti-trafficking laws are starting to have an impact.

Towards the end of the film, Chor gives a talk about conservation to children at a Hong Kong school. By bringing the film to the big screen, the film-makers hope it will add impetus to the fight for the jaguar.

*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*

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