



# The Guardian

卫报

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## 2021.06.20 - Opinion

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## [OpinionChina](#)

# The Observer view on China's human rights abuses in Hong Kong

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Western leaders must stand up against Beijing's assault on democratic freedoms and demand the release of imprisoned journalists



A pro-democracy protester is taken to hospital after falling sick outside a court in Hong Kong. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

A pro-democracy protester is taken to hospital after falling sick outside a court in Hong Kong. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

Sun 20 Jun 2021 01.30 EDT

China did not wait long to demonstrate its contempt for last weekend's criticism by G7 countries of human rights abuses in Hong Kong. By ordering the [arrest of the editor-in-chief](#) and four senior executives of the *Apple Daily* newspaper for allegedly conspiring with "foreign forces", Xi

Jinping and the Communist party sent a crude message of defiance to the west.

That China's president and his Beijing apparatchiks were responsible for this provocatively timed injustice is not in serious doubt. Hong Kong's 2019-20 pro-democracy protests, which *Apple Daily* supported, shook the CCP's power monopoly and *amour propre* in ways not seen since Tiananmen Square. It has been punishing the ex-British colony ever since.

China's assumption of direct control over Hong Kong affairs, contravening binding undertakings made at the 1997 handover, is increasingly blatant. The CCP's imposition of a made-in-Beijing security law last year and the exclusion from the legislative assembly of "[unpatriotic](#)" opposition members has fatally eroded Hong Kong's legally guaranteed autonomy.

The assault on press freedom and free speech form part of this wider crackdown on democratic freedoms that are routinely denied to people in mainland [China](#). *Apple Daily*'s true offence is to have opposed Beijing's illegitimate takeover through the exercise of principled, informed, critical journalism. Xi and his censorious commissars just can't bear it.

The fact that citizens rallied to support the newspaper last week, buying copies in huge numbers, is a cheering sign that Beijing's bullying has not crushed Hong Kong's independent spirit. The brave stand taken by Jimmy Lai, *Apple Daily*'s owner, who is already in jail on trumped up charges, and editor-in-chief Ryan Law, deserves deep respect.

The shameful antics of their persecutors provide, in contrast, an insight into the insecure mindset of party apparatchiks who live in ultimate fear of Xi's wrath. Hong Kong security chief John Lee claimed those arrested had used their journalism "as a tool to endanger national security". How fragile and feeble is the Chinese state that mere words cause it to tremble so.

Those arrested last week must be released immediately and all charges dropped. The same applies to more than 100 individuals, including politicians and activists, held under the security law since last year. If they have any ethical scruples at all, journalists working in Chinese state media should back their colleagues at *Apple Daily*.

That China has again dishonoured itself by shirking its responsibility to abide by the [Sino-British joint declaration](#), uphold international law, and support universal values as defined by the UN, is sadly no surprise, given its conduct since Xi took power. Its serial misdeeds speak to a sense of impunity that is now having a wider, negative influence around the world.

In neighbouring Myanmar, for example, the murderous behaviour of the military junta that seized power in February reflects a similar belief that the international community can be ignored, and that hard-won global civil and human rights may be overturned at will. These cowardly generals continue to be sustained by the support of Beijing.

Stirred into action by the sheer egregiousness of the Myanmar crisis, the usually divided UN General Assembly voted on Friday for an [arms embargo](#). No fewer than 119 countries called on the junta to release political detainees, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and respect the result of last year's election. Guess what? China abstained.

Chinese disdain for international norms is now habitual, ranging from abuses in Xinjiang to its refusal to help establish Covid-19's exact origin. The failure to apologise for last month's random, chaotic descent to Earth of [debris from a Chinese rocket](#), which could have proven disastrous for many below, aptly symbolises the arrogant, insouciant exceptionalism of the Xi era.

Western leaders last week demanded China start respecting “[fundamental freedoms](#)” in Hong Kong and elsewhere. Tougher, concrete action to achieve that aim is going to be needed.

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## [Opinion](#)**Conservatives**

# The Observer view on the Tory byelection defeat in Chesham and Amersham

## [Observer editorial](#)

The Lib Dem victory shows that voters are finally seeing through the lack of substance behind Boris Johnson's appeal



Boris Johnson in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, on 18 June. Photograph: Reuters

Boris Johnson in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, on 18 June. Photograph: Reuters

Sun 20 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

The resounding Conservative defeat in last week's byelection in [Chesham and Amersham](#) should ring alarm bells for Boris Johnson. There are many

ways to dismiss this result as an anomaly: opposition to HS2 and planning reforms; a strong local campaign by the Liberal Democrats; a lacklustre Tory candidate. All of these were factors, but this huge swing against a government that won an overwhelming majority just 18 months ago – in one of its heartland seats – hints at the electoral consequences of substituting empty rhetoric and divisive culture wars for competent governance in a national crisis. It suggests that Johnson's appeal may not be as universal as his backers believe.

The byelection result is further evidence of the long-term realignment in English politics. Just as Labour has been losing support among alienated Leave voters in its heartland seats, last month's local election results highlight how the Conservatives are losing support among working-age graduates, many of whom voted Remain, in what were traditionally Conservative strongholds in affluent areas of London and the south-east. This has become more noticeable since the [2019 election](#), when many socially liberal Conservative voters who backed Remain supported Boris Johnson because they could not countenance the idea of Jeremy Corbyn as prime minister and, despite their pro-European sentiments, just wanted to see Brexit done.

While the [Liberal Democrats](#) capitalised on strong opposition to HS2 and the liberalisation of planning rules to achieve their victory, these issues cannot be divorced from Johnson's failure to build national support for the reforms required to make headway on his "levelling-up" agenda. The byelection defeat speaks to the flaws in Johnson's approach. He can only achieve long-term electoral success if he holds together a coalition of socially liberal, university-educated voters in Tory heartland seats with the so-called "red wall" seats the Conservatives won from Labour in 2019.

Many Conservative MPs backed Johnson for prime minister despite concerns about his competence because they believed he was uniquely placed to do this. But Conservative losses in areas like Surrey, Kent and Cambridgeshire in the local elections suggest that Johnson's resort to populist rhetoric is not enough to keep this coalition together.

Dangers are looming for the Conservatives that mean they should adjust course. First, Johnson has used promises to reduce regional inequality and



even out economic growth across the country to continue to appeal to Leave voters who once voted Labour. But so far this is just rhetoric, while Conservative policies of the past decade continue to make people's lives much harder, from [cuts to public services](#) that have disproportionately affected less affluent parts of the country, to reducing financial support for lower-paid parents, in some cases by thousands of pounds a year. The costs of Brexit will only make reducing regional inequalities even harder. And the government seems set to inflict further hardship on lower-income families with plans to cut universal credit by £20 a week from September.

Perhaps because the Conservatives realise their levelling-up agenda lacks any substance, there has been a relentless focus on culture wars issues: ministers picking fights with anti-racism protesters over statues, with student societies over their decisions about which portraits to display, and with the BBC over whether the audience should sing lyrics at the [last night of the Proms](#). Fomenting the culture wars may deliver cheap press hits, but trying to win votes by sowing the seeds of division and turning citizens against each other is not only morally deplorable, but of limited benefit electorally. On a subject such as immigration, for example, the [views of the British public](#) are pragmatic rather than fuelled by prejudice and hostility; 90% of voters believe immigration is essential so long as its levels are determined by economic need. Yet the government continues to maintain breathtakingly cruel immigration policies under the guise of the hostile environment – which means young people who have grown up in Britain face thousands of pounds of fees and a Kafkaesque bureaucracy to regularise their status – situating it far to the right of the public.

The culture wars strategy is the sign of a prime minister whose only mission was to deliver a hard Brexit. Completely lacking in a constructive vision, he is using these tactics to distract from the rank incompetence of his government. His terrible judgment has [directly contributed](#) to the lethality of the second wave of the pandemic, and the avoidable deaths of countless people. His commitment to delivering the hardest of Brexits regardless of its costs has contributed to instability in Northern Ireland and boosted support for Scottish independence. He is running the country as he ran the Vote Leave campaign: using the classically populist tactics of misinformation – such as lying about the [implications of the Northern](#)

[Ireland protocol](#) for border checks in the Irish Sea – and privileging rhetoric over substance.

It is an unsustainable way to govern, and voters will eventually, on balance, turn against him. How quickly this happens will also depend on whether opposition parties are able to articulate an alternative vision for Britain as the Conservatives' failures become more evident. But the Chesham and Amersham result is a reminder that [Boris Johnson](#) is not coated in political Teflon; that he will at some point suffer the consequences of his incompetence; and that borrowing from the populist playbook can end in failure.

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[NotebookArt](#)

# No one got Angela Carter like Corinna Sargood

[Susannah Clapp](#)



The illustrator's vivid depictions of her annual visits to Mexico reveal why she was the author's kindred spirit



‘Child of the radio age’: Angela Carter circa 1981. Photograph: Jane Bown/The Observer

‘Child of the radio age’: Angela Carter circa 1981. Photograph: Jane Bown/The Observer

Sun 20 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

I have been relishing an illustrated book by Corinna Sargood. I love this artist’s paintings of Mexican life: bright scenes on wood, some in tin frames, crammed with tiny figures: a harpist, a bullfighter, a psychiatrist appealing for patients through a loudspeaker. They often have moving parts and secret windows; in one, miniature doors swing open to show the painter and her carpenter husband reading in bed. [\*The Village in the Valley\*](#), published this month by Prospect Books, is Sargood’s account of the annual visits that inspired the pictures: bullets whizzing through the air at night, days spent making furniture and new friends.

The book has an additional interest. Sargood was [Angela Carter](#)’s illustrator and close friend. Their imaginations were highly attuned; when Carter died in 1992, Sargood’s drawings decorated a shocking-pink invitation to a memorial in Brixton. She used her first visit to Mexico to work on linocuts

for *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales*, which Carter was editing. Being too ill to travel, the writer had instructed the artist: “Do Mexico for me.”

I was struck by another aspect of Carter’s imagination when writing background material for a collection of her radio plays, released last week on [Audible](#), among them, a dramatisation of the murders on which Peter Jackson based *Heavenly Creatures* and a raunchy *Puss in Boots*. Carter called herself a “child of the radio age” and I had always admired the precision of her audio directions: one specifies the noise made by the fingernail of a lady vampire. Still, I had not realised just how highly she valued the medium. Her praise of its transporting qualities is fervent. It may have started in nostalgia but it has lately acquired a prescient ring: we are now in a new radio era, the audio age. Not that BBC executives seem to have noticed: they have been busy chipping away at the drama slots.

## Take the Coward’s way



Modern reproductions of Noël Coward’s smoking jackets. Photograph: Ian West/PA

Noël Coward: Art & Style, scheduled for 2020 but delayed by the pandemic, opened at London’s Guildhall Art Gallery last week. His early visual talent was remarkable: ink and watercolour drawings from teenage

notebooks include a startling, sprite-like figure in Bowie-style jumpsuit and Struwwelpeter hair. The friendships are intriguing; in particular, the photographs of Vivien Leigh have an unexpected tenderness. The clothes, of course, are the stars. There is a serpentine reconstruction of the white satin gown Gertrude Lawrence wore in [Private Lives](#) and a gold lamé, fur-trimmed theatre cape by Lucile that would have been hell in the stalls: it looks heavy enough to be a coronation robe. Coward's much anticipated dressing gowns are luxurious but surprisingly boxy. Who thought it was a good idea to make so many men's gowns stop at the knee? It exposes a section of the male leg that, if not in pyjamas, is seldom a chap's most amusing part.

## Pets win prizes



Liliane Rovère, Guy Marchand and Jean Gabin (canine version).  
Photograph: Christophe BRACHET - MONVOISIN PRODUCTIONS

Watching the final episode of [Lupin](#) on Netflix, I worried about the disappearance of the dog that had once belonged to a journalist. Trained to bark whenever he heard the villain's name, he was one of the series' more ingenious touches, not least because he was called J'Accuse.



The names of pets are a good guide to the spirit of a drama. Shakespeare did well with the dog called Crab in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Tom Stoppard has excelled with tortoises: Pat, Plautus and Lightning. Names in *The Archers* – Meg, Scruff – are mostly stolid. As so often, the winner is *Call My Agent!*. The terrier carried around by [Liliane Rovère](#) poses a challenge for the forthcoming English-language version. He is called Jean Gabin. Which of our stars is chic enough to give his name to a mutt?

Susannah Clapp is an Observer columnist

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# Boris Johnson's blue wall starts to crumble – cartoon

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## [Opinion](#) [Transgender](#)

# Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie captures the hypocrisies of too many ‘social justice’ zealots

[Kenan Malik](#)



The writer offers a lucid account of debate where people take offence and act cruelly



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: scathing of ‘people who ask you to ‘educate’ yourself’. Photograph: Manny Jefferson/The Guardian

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: scathing of ‘people who ask you to ‘educate’ yourself’. Photograph: Manny Jefferson/The Guardian

Sun 20 Jun 2021 02.30 EDT

‘The more she wrote, the less sure she became. Each post scraped off yet one more scale of self until she felt naked and false.’ So wrote Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie about Ifemelu, the central character in her 2013 novel *Americanah*. Through a series of beautifully observed novels that deftly map the fractures of the contemporary world – *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* – Adichie has become one of the most eloquent voices of anglophone Africa. She has also become a fierce protagonist in debates over racism, feminism and free speech.

Much of Adichie’s work wrestles with questions of identity in a globalised world and, in particular, what it means to be black and to be a woman. In a world of contested identities, this has inevitably drawn her into a number of controversies, most notably with trans activists. Last week, she published a three-part essay entitled [It Is Obscene](#), which [went viral](#), picked up by newspapers [across the world](#). The essay is both a passionate defence of

herself against her critics and a blistering polemical reflection on the state of public debate today.

In 2017, Adichie gave [an interview](#) on Channel 4 News in which she insisted that “when people talk about ‘Are trans women women?’, my feeling is trans women are trans women”. She added that “if you’ve lived in the world as a man with the privileges that the world accords to men and then change gender, it’s difficult for me to accept that then we can equate your experience with the experience of a woman who has lived from the beginning as a woman and who has not been accorded those privileges that men are”.

The interview, and her subsequent defence of JK Rowling’s views on trans rights as “[reasonable](#)”, led to a backlash about her “[transphobia](#)”. Among her fiercest critics was another Nigerian novelist, Akwaeke Emezi, who identifies as non-binary – neither male nor female. “I trust that there are other people who will pick up machetes to protect us from the harm transphobes like Adichie & Rowling seek to perpetuate,” Emezi [tweeted](#) in January.

In *It Is Obsolete*, Adichie criticises two writers who attended her creative writing workshops in Lagos. She befriended both, she says, and helped them get published. But both, in her view, betrayed her friendship by targeting her on social media and spreading malicious falsehoods. She never names Emezi, but leaves no doubt that they are the second writer to whom she refers. Emezi [responded](#) that Adichie’s essay “was designed to incite hordes of transphobic nigerians to target me”.

The personal stories of trust and betrayal become, in the third part of Adichie’s essay, a backdrop for a ferocious critique of social media and the nature of public debate. She is particularly scathing of “people who ask you to ‘educate’ yourself... while not being able to intelligently defend their own ideological positions, because by ‘educate’, they actually mean ‘parrot what I say, flatten all nuance, wish away complexity’”.

Many will recognise the trends that Adichie describes. Thanks to the blurring of the private and the public, what once might have been disagreements within a friendship are now often played out on social media.

The growth of the politics of identity has placed people into silos and ensured that disagreement is often seen as a challenge to one's being. The view that social justice requires the enforcement of the right social etiquette means that too often "what matters is not goodness but the appearance of goodness", as Adichie puts it. The result is a culture in which people are quick to take offence but also easily drawn to being vicious or cruel, and one in which people are rarely seen as acting in good faith.

Much of this can be seen in the contemporary debate over trans rights. Trans people clearly face discrimination and bigotry, an issue recognised by feminists such as Adichie and Rowling. But most of the debate about trans rights takes place at the level of language and identity. When feminists disagree with trans activists over what it is to be a woman, this is seen not as a legitimate debate, and the right of women to engage with their own identities, but as a questioning of the "existence" of trans people.

Identities are important, but they are not the same as existence. Challenging the boundaries of particular identities is not to deny someone's existence. There are certainly bigots who would harm trans people and deny them basic rights, even existence. Adichie is not one of them. Nor are most of the feminists deemed to be "transphobic". Painting Adichie or Oxford University academic [Selina Todd](#) or Rowling as bigots only turns what might have been an important debate about how to defend both trans and women's rights into a self-defeating tussle over identity.

It also means that women who have the "wrong" view of identity become ostracised. The latest case is that of textile artist [Jess de Wahls](#), whose work has been barred by the Royal Academy from its shop because of her supposedly "transphobic views".

Trans activists often argue that too much of the public debate focuses on controversies over feminists such as Adichie or de Wahls challenging trans views on identity, rather than on the harm and discrimination that trans people face. There is truth to that, but that is the almost inevitable consequence of placing greater store on the policing of what is acceptable to say about identity than on challenging material harm.



At the same time, there are questions to be asked of Adichie. In turning private anger into a public display, *It Is Obscene* itself becomes the kind of performance Adichie warns against. Her publication of private emails without consent crosses a boundary. She rightly denounces the self-righteousness of many of her critics, but there is a self-righteous to her polemic, too. And in condemning young people as being given to “a cold-blooded grasping, a hunger to take and take and take, but never give”, she is in danger of making the kinds of generalisations that she rightly critiques.

The very character of public debate that Adichie so lucidly dissects also frames her response to it. Without breaking out of the cage of identity debates, we will be able to defend the rights neither of women nor of trans people.

Kenan Malik is an Observer columnist

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## OpinionAlcohol

# It's not our health that concerns you, guys. It's women having fun

Barbara Ellen



The WHO's alcohol action diktat plays into a much wider contempt for females



Women are groomed to police one another's drinking. Photograph: Mykhailo Lukashuk/Getty Images/Tetra images RF

Women are groomed to police one another's drinking. Photograph: Mykhailo Lukashuk/Getty Images/Tetra images RF

Sat 19 Jun 2021 12.00 EDT

Has the [World Health Organization](#) met any women before? On such occasions, are its representatives dismayed that women aren't lowering their eyes and curtsying?

I only ask, because part of the WHO's draft global alcohol action plan for 2022-2030 reads like something you might have found nailed to a church door in medieval times. Among other things, it recommends no drinking for "[women of childbearing age](#)". At first, I misread it and thought it was advising against drinking for pregnant women or any woman who wished to become pregnant in the near future. But no, the WHO advice is for all women of "childbearing age". That women must turn away from their wine and vodka jelly shots in order to... what? Prep for the glory of their gestational futures? Preserve their uterine integrity? Go full Gilead, accept they're not fully human and embrace their God-given destiny as walking, talking vessels for wombs?

The WHO has been [slammed](#) as sexist and paternalistic, which sounds about right. Sure, there's a humorous side to this. (We're British. Take away alcohol and what sex do we have anyway?) But the WHO advice is inherently problematic and verges on sinister. There's the narrow-minded presumption that all women want to have children when some women don't. It's unscientific to focus solely on alcohol when myriad factors play into fertility. Nor does it make sense to focus only on female drinking, as it is now believed that [male alcohol intake](#) has an effect on [fertility and foetal health](#).

There's also the distinct whiff of judgment about female lifestyle choices, which in turn taps into a deeply entrenched societal need to control the behaviour of women, who have always been held in far greater contempt for drinking. Whenever there are news reports on new year revellers or marauding British tourists, it's striking how many more photos of intoxicated women are used and how sexually impure and compromised they're made to look, with skirts hitched up and bra straps showing.

Even today, it appears to be accepted that “nothing is as disgusting as a drunk woman”. Really – *nothing*? Astonishingly, for all the feminist advances, this misogynistic credo is also frequently accepted without question by women – sneering at other women – as much as it by men. Nor does it always come from concern for the safety of inebriated women at the hands of predatory men. Too often, it's about women being mass-groomed to police one another.

In this way, the WHO advice stops being only about health. After all, most pregnant women, or women who wish to become pregnant, could be trusted to make the right choices without any stern talk of “prevention”. On some unspoken level, it's about the levels of purity, and modesty expected even, of 21st-century womanhood. The message: women, if you dare to enjoy yourselves, you will be punished and you will be judged.

## **Has Ronaldo burst the sponsors' bubble?**



Cristiano Ronaldo: not a Coke fiend. Photograph: Reuters

I take it that Cristiano Ronaldo doesn't want to teach the world to sing? The Portugal captain moved two bottles of Coca-Cola away at a Euro 2020 press conference, saying "agua" (water). The action briefly knocked £2.8bn off Coca-Cola's market value and Uefa said it would fine teams if sponsors were treated disrespectfully. Ukraine's Andriy Yarmolenko was among those to make light of this, moving bottles of Coca-Cola and Heineken closer, saying: "Please contact me." England's Gareth Southgate and Harry Kane refused to join Ronaldo's protest – I suppose you could say they bottled it. (The *Observer's* sponsors would like me to apologise for that joke.)

All this has been heralded as a watershed moment, not only for the dark art of sports advertising product placement, but also for star player rebellion-cum-activism. Anti-obesity groups praised Ronaldo for using his influence to promote health consciousness, which is understandable. There are millions sloshing around sports advertising and many children who would be better off being steered clear of sugary drinks by players they admire.

Still, it's got to raise a smile that, by moving around some bottles, Ronaldo could end up cast as an anti-consumerist living saint. Ronaldo is a multimillionaire, earned not just from playing football, but also from

sponsorships. Moreover, he has half-a-billion social media followers – his Instagram posts command up to a \$1m. Think of him as a Kardashian in football shorts. Is he principled or just so stinking rich that he thinks he can do what he wants? Ronaldo's stance against sugary drinks is commendable, but, when it comes to sports-based consumerism, he's very much a player.

## **Never fear, Matt, Rees-Mogg is here to save your honour**



Agony uncle: Jacob Rees-Mogg. Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

Do you know what I like to see? Politicians being sweet and loving towards each other. Dominic Cummings has once again unleashed his alter ego – the Phantom Whistleblower of Westminster. Cummings has fired new terror texts into the outside world, with one featuring the prime minister describing Matt Hancock as “[totally fucking hopeless](#)”. Harsh but fair, though with the caveat to Boris Johnson: you hired him.

Cummings must now be the frontrunner for Most Vengeful Former Employee of the Millennium. Still, who should rush to Hancock's reputational rescue, but leader of the house, [Jacob Rees-Mogg](#)? After



waving away questions about Cummings' texts as "trivia... ephemera... unimportant", he described Hancock as "the brilliant, the one and only successful genius who's been running health over the last 15 months".

Is this the same Hancock the rest of us have witnessed "running" health? But never mind that, are you crying yet? Rees-Mogg was so tender in public, one can only imagine what happened in private. Perchance, Rees-Mogg cupping Hancock's hurt little face in his hands and whispering: "Got your back, buddy, you'd better believe it." Isn't it cute when politicians are proper besties, like 4-eva? Next week: Gavin Williamson braids Oliver Dowden's hair and doesn't care who sees.

Barbara Ellen is an Observer columnist

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[Names in the news](#)[Megan Rapinoe](#)

## Megan Rapinoe's making the world a better place, with nice lingerie

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)



The footballer has joined an underwear collective, as Victoria's Secret chases the activism bandwagon



Megan Rapinoe. Photograph: Stephen Lovekin/REX/Shutterstock

Megan Rapinoe. Photograph: Stephen Lovekin/REX/Shutterstock

Sat 19 Jun 2021 10.00 EDT

After a rocky couple of years, dogged by controversy, it was inevitable that one-time lingerie giants Victoria's Secret would undergo a "rebrand". And here it is, although I'm not sure if anyone anticipated the infamous catwalk Angels being transformed into "[The VS Collective](#)". It sounds as if they spend their free time handing out flyers for rent strikes or bickering about how to run their permaculture co-op.

The Collective is "an ever-growing group of accomplished women who share a common passion to drive positive change" and includes US footballer [Megan Rapinoe](#), the Chinese-American free skier Eileen Gu and model, *Vogue* cover star and "body advocate" Paloma Elsesser. "At Victoria's Secret, we are on an incredible journey to become the world's leading advocate for women," said the company's CEO, Martin Waters, who also announced the funding of scientific research into the treatment of women's cancers. In a very 2021 move, they are launching a podcast.

In my own 2021 move, I have been rewatching *Mad Men*, so I see Don Draper's opportunistic brain behind every sticky corporate step. Historically, what Victoria's Secret sold was "sexy" and the consumer's notion of sexy changed long before the brand's did. Today, consumers want brands to be "good", whatever that means, which is why huge corporations whip out the rainbow branding for Pride Month, while donating money to anti-LGBTQ+ politicians, as US congresswoman Pramila Jayapal recently pointed out in a [series of tweets](#).

As I was rolling my eyes at the idea of underwear being an opportunity for corporate activism, I was searching for a swimming costume. A friend recommended a small, independent British business that makes only the stock it knows it will sell, so I've been refreshing the page every couple of days to see if it has the one I want. It is harder than getting Glastonbury tickets.

I mention it because its models are un-airbrushed, fat, thin, pregnant, black, white, brown, older, younger, able-bodied, disabled, and this is casual, matter of fact, and it doesn't feel like lip service. To see costumes on the bodies that will be wearing them made perfect sense: this is what it will look like. I remain deeply cynical about massive corporations using the language of activism for profit but if it means an end to the domination of "aspirational" women's bodies that resemble no body a real person is ever likely to see, let alone possess, it is better than what went before.

**Chrissy Teigen: sorry to bother you, but I'd like to apologise**



Chrissy Teigen: mea culpa. Photograph: London Entertainment/REX/Shutterstock

For connoisseurs of the celebrity apology – will [insert famous person here]’s unfortunate [insert mishap here] result in the Contrite, the Defensive, the Spiritual or the Grovelling? – last week provided such a tangle of interconnected sorries so complex that it required a PhD on the peripheries of fame to figure them out.

To recap: in May, US model [Chrissy Teigen](#) was accused of trolling, via Twitter, Courtney Stodden, who had become tabloid fodder at the age of 16 after marrying a 51-year-old actor. On Monday, she wrote a long post on Medium acknowledging that she had been “a troll, full stop” and apologising for her actions (a considered combination of the Contrite and the Spiritual). After this, a fashion designer called Michael Costello came forward to accuse Teigen of bullying, at which point, the seemingly mild-mannered pop star Leona Lewis appeared, in a plot twist nobody could have predicted, to accuse Costello of being awful to her at a fitting, so Costello then had to issue his own mea culpa: “If I have hurt you in 2014... I want to apologise to you,” he said, a classic Defensive.

This knotty web of contrition, a back and forth between Twitter and Instagram and DMs and Stories, shows how far down the rabbit hole of

social media many famous people have gone, living a digital life more vivid than the real one. At least it is so convoluted and bizarre that the whole apology fiasco might have finally reached its tipping point, where we will no longer hear about how much people have “changed and grown” once a week.

## **Sabrina Verjee: a record breaker at one fell swoop**



Sabrina Verjee: putting men to shame. Photograph: Steve Ashworth

Sabrina Verjee [has become the latest woman to annihilate a record in the jaw-dropping world](#) of ultrarunning, completing the Lake District's 214 Wainwright fells in five days, 23 hours, 49 minutes and 12 seconds. She trimmed more than six hours off the previous fastest time, set by Paul Tierney in 2019.

The vet's achievement is a feast of amazing statistics. Verjee ran 325 miles and ascended 36,000 metres, including Scafell Pike. She stopped for food breaks or brief periods of rest. She became the first woman to do all the Wainwrights in 2020, but said that completing them in under six days had “become an obsession”.



I am fascinated by these women who compete in ultra-endurance events alongside men – and can beat them. Research is limited, because these are niche pursuits, meaning the sample sizes are small, but one theory among many is that the longer the distance, the more it becomes about mental, rather than physical strength, and women are better equipped for endurance in that way.

“If what I have done inspires more people – especially girls and women – to get out there and challenge themselves, then that’s an added bonus,” said Verjee.

Rebecca Nicholson is an Observer columnist

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## Observer letters Prisons and probation

# Letters: Colin Pitchfork's release was justifiable

The child-murderer had been in an open prison for years and in and out of the community



Colin Pitchfork. Photograph: REX/Shutterstock

Colin Pitchfork. Photograph: REX/Shutterstock

Sun 20 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Catherine Bennett's article in respect of the Parole Board's decision to release Colin Pitchfork misses the key fact he had been in an open prison for four years before the decision to release ("[Can women rely on the Parole Board getting it right if frees men like Colin Pitchfork?](#)", Comment).

In order to get to an open prison, the secretary of state for justice had to accept the recommendation and did so. The Parole Board had a dossier of more than 1,200 pages and all witnesses agreed the release test was met.

The rate of serious reoffending for those released by the Parole Board is just 0.5%, which is comparable to international systems. While the majority of the public may have concern about the decision, it is one that was entirely foreseeable given Pitchfork had been in and out of the community over the last four years.

The Parole Board will shortly have the ability to conduct parole hearings in public. This will help improve transparency and public understanding of the process.

**Dean Kingham**, committee member for Association of Prison Lawyers and Parole Board lead  
Leavenheath, Suffolk

Thank you, Catherine Bennett, for a sensible article on the proposed release of Colin Pitchfork, a man who raped and murdered two children. Paedophiles are highly skilled at deception. It pleases social workers' vanity to think they have reformed people and he will have played up to that. Some well-intentioned people don't understand the simple truth that nasty people have to appear nice to get the chance to be nasty. Let him have books, education courses, nice food, a digital television – any luxury he likes – but keep him where he is. Murdered women and children don't get "a second chance".

**Angela Singer**  
Cambridge

## **Our trains, electric?**

As a resident of the West Country, I was surprised to read about the "recently electrified" train service that Boris Johnson could have used to reach Cornwall instead of his private plane (Bay watch: a Cornish notebook, News). Rail electrification has yet to reach Devon and Cornwall and I am unaware of any concrete plans to rectify this sorry state of affairs.

Had the PM travelled to St Ives by train, he would have seen what an antiquated and very long journey it is. Sadly, this government prefers to spend on roads rather than provide a greener rail network.

**Jill Owen**  
Exeter

## **The horror of Alzheimer's**

I read Mark Kermode's review of *The Father* ("[Far too much to say before I go](#)", the New Review) with an interest arising out of a long professional and personal concern as a social worker with people suffering from dementia, particularly Alzheimer's. In my experience, the sadness and despair provoked by Alzheimer's is often accompanied by expressions of terror and horror, twin modes of the Gothic genre. However, such undertones are often ignored or denied by those supporting people with dementia. To lose one's agency is to become a representation of a kind of living death.

At the end of my working life, I returned to university to research in literature and elsewhere the representation of Alzheimer's disease which is, often unwittingly, referenced in the language of the Gothic. The contribution of art to portray both the reality and the humanity surrounding this appalling condition cannot be gainsaid, alongside the need to intensify medical research.

**Dr AG Austin**  
Penylan, Cardiff

## **The unsung heroes of Bath**

Oliver Dowden's statement that "we should not be drawn into rewriting history" shows a disappointing grasp of how history is recorded ("[Everything you wanted to know about the culture wars but were afraid to ask](#)", the New Review). Written history may be fixed in our minds, but history experienced by those without the means to write and publicise is missing.

In Bath, we have a beautiful built record of 18th- and 19th-century wealth. Much of this wealth came from slavery. The city should take pride in revealing and acknowledging this history, where the labour of unknown and unrecorded slaves extracted from another continent contributed to a unique legacy in stone.

**Cate Le Grice-Mack**  
Bath

## **Demise of UK shipbuilding**

Your powerful piece on the catastrophic decline of fishing and Hull mentions the last major UK fishing vessel delivered in 2018 (“[All at sea](#)”, the New Review, last week). It doesn’t mention that it was built jointly in Poland (EU) and Norway (non-EU). Like fishing under successive governments, the UK shipbuilding industry – except for warship building, which is taxpayer funded – has dwindled to a negligible remnant.

Hull (at Hessle) used to be home to the major UK tugboat builders, Dunston. After the Navy’s civilian manned tugboat work was privatised to Serco in a contract worth more than £1bn, Serco promptly ordered new vessels to be built in the Netherlands and Romania. The Dutch builders have been “global players” ever since. And Serco carries on regardless.

**Robert Straughton**  
Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria

## **A sharp observation**

I barely dare to criticise anything by William Keegan, but the idea that “our prime minister knew there would be problems at the NI/GB border” (“[Now the G7 is having its energy sapped by Brexit](#)”, Business & Cash) may fall foul of Hanlon’s razor: never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity.

**Neil Mathur**  
Cambridge

## **Something rotten?**

Twenty-five years ago, at the first rehearsal of an amateur production of Noel Coward’s *Hay Fever*, I was handed a slice of birthday cake. “It’s Frank’s 60th.” “Who is he playing?” “Your daughter’s boyfriend.” We were not clever enough to claim it was an “age-blind” production. Colour-blind and gender-blind casting can lead to interesting and imaginative

productions. They widen opportunities for actors to take on great roles that they would not otherwise be cast in.

However, with theatres closed for over a year, actors are having a terrible time. Casting Ian McKellen, an 82-year-old millionaire, as Hamlet, seems as inappropriate as having the Red Arrows at a climate control conference (“[What does old mean? Quite honestly, I feel about 12](#)”, the Observer Magazine).

**Edward Blincoe**

Fowey, Cornwall

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

# For the record

This week's corrections

Sun 20 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

The caption of a photo that accompanied an interview with the neuroscientist David Eagleman told only half the story: the image showed brain waves recorded not just during REM sleep, but while waking up as well ([Q&A](#), 13 June, the New Review, page 24).

A travel article highlighting 10 pubs with rooms for hikers wrongly linked the main photo with the section about Creggans Inn at Loch Fyne, Argyll. The picture was of the Lake District and was meant to relate to the Old Dungeon Ghyll hotel in the Langdale valley, although the image actually showed West Water, which is some distance away ([Walking wonders](#), 13 June, the Observer Magazine, page 31).

Mushrooms were mistakenly described as plants; they are classified within fungi ([Mush-have bag](#), 13 June, page 42).

Poetic injustice: we rendered Sir John Betjeman's beloved Kennet as Kennett. The former has its source in Wiltshire, while the latter river runs through Suffolk and Cambridgeshire ([Is it time to dream again of when 'the trout wave lazy in the clear chalk streams'?](#), 6 June, page 38).

Other recently amended articles include:

[One year on: the BLM event that divided a Gloucestershire town](#)

[Lukaku scores twice and sends message to Eriksen in Belgium's win over Russia](#)

[The Father review – Hopkins a wordy Oscar winner](#)

[Jackie Collins: the reality of life in Joan's shadow](#)

[Edinburgh fringe performers feel 'jilted' as Covid closes venues again](#)

[June Plum, Wellingborough: 'Strong, clean flavours that delight' – restaurant review](#)

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

# Is there an ‘acceptable’ risk of death?

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

The pandemic has led to discussion of what are unacceptable risks to life and what measures are needed to push these down



In Slough, the number of cases of the new Covid-19 India variant is rising and surge testing is taking place. Photograph: Maureen McLean/REX/Shutterstock

In Slough, the number of cases of the new Covid-19 India variant is rising and surge testing is taking place. Photograph: Maureen McLean/REX/Shutterstock

Sun 20 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

At the recent [press briefing](#), we were warned “we must learn to live” with this virus, with people continuing to die. So is there is an “acceptable” number of Covid-19 deaths?

Prof Chris Whitty, the government's chief medical adviser, [highlighted](#) that we live with seasonal flu, which kills thousands each year. Like deaths from air pollution, these deaths are estimated from statistical models and this can introduce volatility. The number of flu deaths in England over the winter of 2017-18 was estimated as 26,400 in 2019, but dropped to [22,000 by 2020](#).

On average, over the five pre-pandemic years, there were about 10,000 seasonal flu deaths. Is that a reasonable standard for acceptability? For [British road deaths](#), the worst year was during the blackout in 1941 when 9,000 died, almost matched by 8,000 deaths in 1966. That was clearly not considered acceptable, with every effort made to reduce mortality to current levels of fewer than 2,000 a year.

One organisation has dared to define acceptable fatal risks. The [Health and Safety Executive](#) says life cannot be safe and an “acceptable” lethal public risk is one in a million a year. For the UK, [that would mean](#) about 67 deaths each year. However, that does not mean any risk above that level is unacceptable: there is a second, higher threshold of “unacceptable” risks to workers of one in 1,000 a year. That would correspond to about 67,000 UK deaths, exceeded in [a year of pandemic](#).

Within this very broad band, HSE says tolerable risks should be made “as low as reasonably practicable”, adopting measures to push down risks, but ensuring actions are commensurate with costs.

With an infectious disease, risks are contagious. Measles offers one potential comparator; the UK achieved elimination but that turned out to be fragile and the country [lost its measles-free status](#) in 2019 .

It is challenging to balance the harms and benefits of interventions unless communities are in a stable situation. Fortunately, vaccinations and improving treatments are moving us towards such managed stability.

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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## OpinionBrexit

# Brexit ‘purity’ is breaking up the union. Just ask the people of Belfast

Nick Cohen



Dogmatic obsession means that Johnson won't lift a finger to help Northern Ireland





Edwin Poots, in front of the statue of Edward Carson at Stormont, lasted 21 days as leader of the DUP. Photograph: Mark Marlow/PA

Edwin Poots, in front of the statue of Edward Carson at Stormont, lasted 21 days as leader of the DUP. Photograph: Mark Marlow/PA

Sat 19 Jun 2021 14.00 EDT

Brexit is the plague that will still be infecting Britain when Covid has gone. It spreads unnoticed because neither government nor opposition shows the smallest interest in finding a vaccine. The public doesn't blame them because it is sick of hearing about the sickness. I understand why. I am sick of writing about it. But given that the Labour party won't hold our leaders to account, it remains a matter of democratic propriety to remind voters that the [Brexit](#) movement lied to them.

The crisis Brexit brought to [Northern Ireland](#) passes most people by as well. But the possible breakup of your country should not be a small matter, nor should the danger that it might bring violence with it.

Before the 2016 referendum, Arlene Foster said it was “disgraceful” of Tony Blair and John Major to warn Brexit could [jeopardise the unity of the UK](#). Foster was then first minister of Northern Ireland and leader of the

Democratic Unionist party, which enjoyed hegemonic control of the Ulster unionist vote. In the space of a little over a month this spring the DUP deposed her, then deposed her successor, [Edwin Poots](#), and is now looking for a new leader and a coherent strategy as the consequences of Brexit destroy the party and the unionist cause.

In 2016, Kate Hoey, a nominally Labour and de facto ultra-Ulster unionist politician, was bustling round the TV studios to announce that Major and Blair's warning of national disintegration showed their "[economic illiteracy](#)". Last week, she was reduced to trying to explain to angry loyalists in the market town of Newtonards, County Down, how the hard Brexit she had championed had partitioned the UK and put a border in the Irish Sea.

["I refuse to blame Boris,"](#) she said, even though anyone not lost in self-delusion could see that "Boris" had sold out Northern Ireland to appease the English right in Ukip and on his own backbenches. As I have said before, it's not the liars you need to worry about, it's the people who want to be lied to. Their number includes not just a large proportion of Conservative voters but the supposed hard men and women of Ulster unionism.

For all their flag-waving, they don't understand that the Conservative party is a unionist party in name only. English Tories are fine with the UK as long as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland let them have their way. Whenever there's a choice between the need to keep the United Kingdom united and the imperatives of Brexiter posturing, the posturing always wins. Conservatives will not make the smallest concession to hold the country together.

"In 50 years' time," one Belfast politician told me, "students will be writing essays on what on earth unionists were thinking when they went along with Brexit." There isn't a rational answer now and won't be in the 2070s. Brexit has made a united Ireland possible, maybe inevitable. It has pushed young and bright voters from the Protestant tradition away from the DUP towards the more moderate Ulster Unionist party, the centrist Alliance party and, in a few cases, the nationalist SDLP.

Johnson could ease the tension in Ireland and remove the need for checks on 80% of the goods crossing into Northern Ireland by accepting European Union food safety and sanitary standards. The Irish government reported that Joe Biden had told Johnson at the G7 summit that a temporary agreement on food standards would pose [no barrier to a UK-US trade deal](#).

Johnson won't do it, because an agreement with the EU would dilute the doctrinal purity of Brexit. Conservatives once accused the left of being in thrall to the utopian fantasies of continental philosophers. Now, sovereignty has become for Tories what Marxist-Leninism was for communists: a perfect theoretical idea that cannot be questioned, whatever the suffering or cost.

Even now, as unionism disintegrates in the 100th anniversary year of the [creation of the Northern Irish](#) statelet, Ulster unionists join with Conservatives in refusing to accept compromise. The DUP says it hates the border in the Irish Sea but it is not demanding that Johnson accepts EU standards to mitigate its worst consequences. Compromise on the border has become like compromise on the use of the Irish language in Northern Ireland, which did for the career of Poots (who, after his 21 days as leader of the DUP, will be lucky to be the answer to a pub quiz question in 50 years' time). The DUP wants the border's complete destruction or nothing and as so often in the history of Ulster unionism will likely end up with nothing.

Alternatively, Johnson might tell the people of Northern Ireland the truth that they are in a great position. His hard Brexit left them in the EU single market. They can say to any multinational company that, uniquely in Europe, an investment in Northern Ireland offers unconstrained access to both the British and EU markets.

Johnson cannot tell the truth and not just because a history of charlatanry renders him incapable of speaking plainly. To please his base, he needs to pick a fight with the old enemy of the EU and to boom out threats to tear up agreements he signed and break promises he made. What else can he do? If he sold the advantages of staying in the single market to one part of the UK, the rest of the UK might wonder why he had gone to such lengths to take us out of it.

The consequences are still coming, however bored the wider public is with the unfolding of Brexit and the fate of Northern Ireland. Last week, figures arrived showing British food and drink exports to the EU [fell by £2bn](#) in the first three months of 2021 and yet more businesses reported that they could not operate at full capacity because [EU workers had vanished](#). Meanwhile, the OECD warned that the UK could suffer [more economic damage](#) than other G7 industrialised nations because the impact of leaving the EU heightens the disruption brought by the pandemic.

Stupidity marches doggedly on, whether we ignore it or not, weakening individuals' capacity to rebuild their lives and threatening the integrity of the country the right professes to love and is doing so much to destroy.

Nick Cohen is an Observer columnist

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## Headlines saturday 19 june 2021

- [Live Coronavirus live: third wave definitely under way, says UK expert](#)
- [Exclusive English councils refuse six in 10 requests for Covid self-isolation pay](#)
- [NHS App gains 2.7m users as people rush to show vaccine status](#)
- [Employment People must be given right to work from home, says Rayner](#)

[Coronavirus live](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

# Coronavirus live news: Brazil records more than 500,000 deaths from Covid; US has given more than 317,100,000 jabs – as it happened

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## Coronavirus

# English councils refuse six in 10 requests for Covid self-isolation pay

Exclusive: unions say one of key policies to limit virus spread is ‘failing’ in face of rising infections

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



A Covid-19 test collection and drop-off point in Hackney, east London.  
Photograph: Emerson Utracik/REX/Shutterstock

A Covid-19 test collection and drop-off point in Hackney, east London.  
Photograph: Emerson Utracik/REX/Shutterstock

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

Fri 18 Jun 2021 18.00 EDT

Almost two-thirds of workers in England seeking grants to help them self-isolate are being refused help, sparking warnings from trade unions that a key policy to limit Covid-19 is “failing” in the face of rising infections.

Councils are continuing to refuse more than six out of 10 applications despite the government increasing funding for the vital anti-Covid system in March to £20m a month, freedom of information requests by the Trades Union Congress found.

One council, Hackney in east London, said it had rejected 91% of requests for the £500 payments. saying that the government’s criteria were “extremely tight”. It had to reject some requests because they did not produce the right paperwork even though it acknowledged it can be difficult if families are ill or self-isolating.

Gateshead council, in north-east England, which rejected 97% of claims because they did not meet strict eligibility criteria, said: “We have to refuse many people who we know need help.”

A quarter of the 94 councils who responded also said they had run out of funds to make the payments at some point during the programme.

The self-isolation scheme is a key part of the government’s infection control measures, but with more people being rejected than approved there are fears people with Covid are continuing to go out to work. From March to May, between 13% and 17% of people who tested positive did not stick to self-isolation requirements, according to a [survey](#) by the Office for National Statistics.

The TUC also highlighted the lack of public awareness of the scheme, with polling that showed four out of five people do not know about the availability of the money to help them self-isolate when they or others in their household test positive for Covid.

The organisation described it as “a failing scheme few people have heard of”.

The figures come as Whitehall officials urge ministers to do more to help people self-isolating, according to an internal government assessment, reported this week by the Politico website. It said the isolation policy had only “low to medium” effectiveness because people on low incomes and in precarious work did not have adequate support.

Government scientific advisers have [warned of exponential growth](#) in the Delta variant, with infections doubling weekly in many models and hospital admissions rising to well over 1,000 per day even with the final step of lockdown easing delayed until 19 July.

“No one should be forced to choose between doing the right thing and self-isolating, and being plunged into hardship,” said the TUC general secretary, Frances O’Grady. “But too many are still going without the financial support they need to self-isolate. The self-isolation payment scheme is failing. And it has been crystal clear since the start of the pandemic that the UK’s measly statutory sick pay isn’t enough to live on.”

Nine out of 10 applications were rejected in Gateshead, while only five out of 10 were refused in the Mendips in Somerset. Hackney said the government criteria were “extremely tight, and we can often not make payments even in difficult circumstances”.

Reasons for refusal included not being told to isolate by NHS test and trace, not receiving an in-work benefit and not being in valid employment or self-employment.

In the London borough of Newham, where infection rates have tripled in the last month from a low base to 34 per 100,000 people, the council is offering separate £200 “micro-grants” for people who are not eligible for the £500 support payment.

A spokesperson for the Department of [Health](#) and Social Care said: “Since it launched in September 2020, the government has made £176m available to local authorities to run the scheme. In March this year, we increased funding and extended the eligibility to help even more people.

“The department is working with all 314 local authorities in England to ensure as many people as possible are aware of the support available to them following the initial announcement and will continue to listen to feedback on the scheme.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/18/english-councils-refuse-six-in-10-requests-for-covid-self-isolation-pay>.

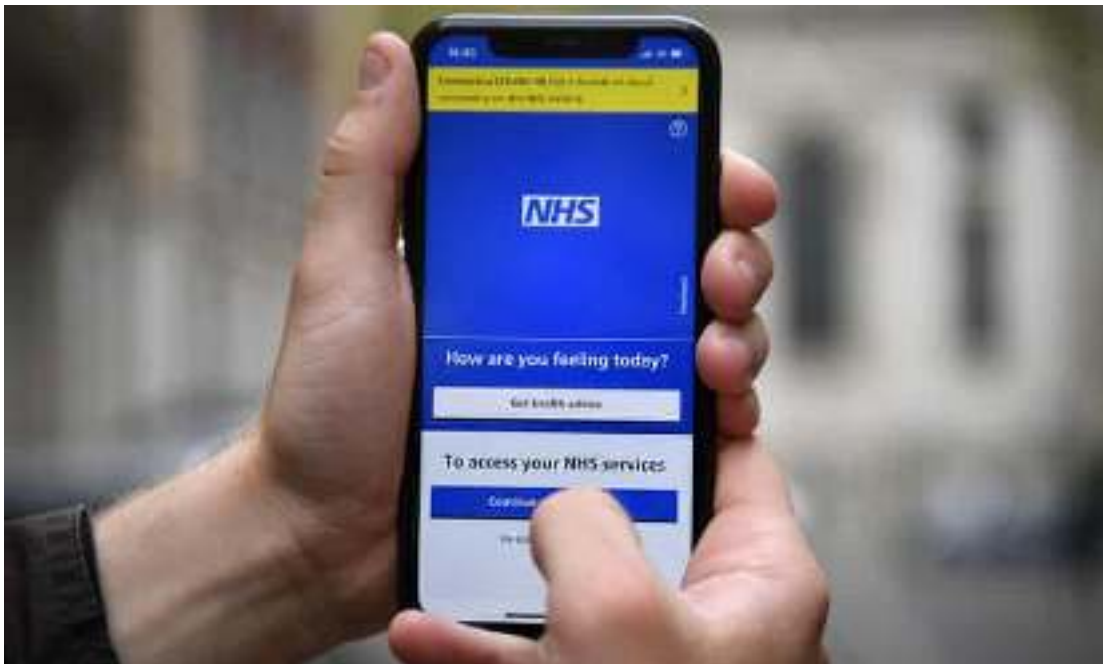
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[NHS](#)

## NHS app gains 2.7m users as people rush to show Covid vaccine status

App enables users to show vaccine status and recent tests, in order to travel abroad or attend events

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



The app, separate from the NHS Covid-19 app, already had functions such as booking GP appointments. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

The app, separate from the NHS Covid-19 app, already had functions such as booking GP appointments. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

[Tobi Thomas](#)

[@tobithomas](#)

Sat 19 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

The [NHS](#) app has gained an additional 2.7 million users since a new version of the app has allowed people to show whether they have received the coronavirus vaccine.

The app, separate from the NHS Covid-19 app, began enabling people to show proof that they had received the vaccine from 17 May, in order to travel internationally or attend sporting events, such as Wimbledon and Euro 2020 matches. The app already had other functions in order to access medical services, such as booking GP appointments.

Between 17 May and 14 June, almost 5 million distinct users logged on to the app, with the Department of Health and Social Care stating that more than 6 million users had been reached in total.

The health secretary, Matt Hancock, said: “Technology undoubtedly plays a huge role in how we deliver healthcare now and in the future and it is great to see so many people downloading, using and benefiting from the NHS app.

“It is vital we embrace the momentum we have built in using technology and innovation in the health and care sector over the last year as we look beyond the pandemic to improve treatment, care and the experiences of patients.”

The surge in app downloads also led to an increase in the numbers of people registering their preference for organ donation within the app. More than 51,000 records were added, over five times more than in April.

Over the past month, about 614,000 repeat prescriptions were ordered and 50,000 GP appointments were made.

The app also allows users to display the results of any recent coronavirus tests. This means that those who are yet to be vaccinated can take a lateral flow test and record the results on the app before attending a venue.

Matthew Gould, the chief executive of the NHS’s digital innovation unit NHSX, said: “The Covid-19 status service was stood up in weeks, by a



team working flat out to deliver on time an important service for users.

“It has been good to see it used to open up sporting events, facilitate travel, and encourage the use of NHS services online.”

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## Labour

# Workers must be given right to do jobs from home, says Labour

Exclusive: employers should not be able to ‘dictate terms’ when guidance to work from home lifted, says Angela Rayner

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



It was the first major announcement made by Angela Rayner since gaining the portfolio of shadow cabinet minister for the future of work. Photograph: Michael Mayhew/Allstar

It was the first major announcement made by Angela Rayner since gaining the portfolio of shadow cabinet minister for the future of work. Photograph: Michael Mayhew/Allstar

[Aubrey Allegretti](#) *Political correspondent*  
[@breeallegretti](#)

Fri 18 Jun 2021 17.30 EDT

Workers must be given a right to do their jobs from home, [Labour](#) has demanded as it piled pressure on the government not to let its consultation on flexible working be kicked into the long grass.

In the first major announcement made by Angela Rayner since gaining the portfolio of shadow cabinet minister for the future of work, she said employers should not be able to “dictate terms” to staff when the guidance urging people to work from home is [expected to be lifted next month](#).

A right to disconnect, meaning workers would have a reasonable expectation of not having to work or check calls and emails outside their normal hours, is also being supported by Labour, to ensure homes do not become round-the-clock offices.

The announcement comes as attention turns to how to hold on to some of the positive benefits experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, which for some have included home working – saving time and money on commuting and being able to spend longer with their families.

Ministers have promised to introduce an employment bill to upgrade workers’ rights and help give people a better work-life balance, and the government has launched a consultation on giving workers a right to ask for flexible working.

[Deloitte’s UK employees to decide ‘when, where and how they work’](#)  
[Read more](#)

But some critics fear the right to request more flexible working conditions – such as working from home, or starting earlier or later – will be too easily turned down by employers and fail to meaningfully improve the situation.

Labour has gone further, and said the right to flexible working should be guaranteed and negotiated by trade unions or elected staff representatives, given Downing Street this week said the government had no plans to introduce a right to work from home.

Over the summer, it is also expected to announce detailed plans for how small and medium-sized business should be helped to adapt to flexible working practices, along with support for more rights to protect workers from remote surveillance.

Rayner said: “As restrictions lift and we adjust to a ‘new normal’, we need a new deal for working people. As a starting point, this must mean the right to flexible working – not just the right to ask for flexibility – and a duty on employers to accommodate this unless there is a reason a certain job can’t be done flexibly.

“It is clear that the government won’t act to strengthen rights for working people, and we cannot have a drawn-out consultation process that simply kicks this urgent issue into the long grass, leaving workers in a vulnerable position and allowing employers to dictate terms to their staff.”

Andrew Pakes, deputy general secretary of the Prospect union, said: “Labour is right to focus on how we ensure flexible working works for workers, including on the right for a digital switch-off from work.

“While digital technology has kept us connected over the last year, coupled with pandemic working patterns and an increase in working from home, it has left many people struggling to switch off.”

The right to disconnect has been shown to have strong cross-party support, with a [recent poll](#) finding 65% of Labour and 53% of Conservative voters backed the policy.

A government spokesperson said: “The 2019 manifesto contains a clear commitment to consulting on making flexible working the default, unless employers have good reasons not to. Ensuring workers have a work-life balance is extremely important, and we have reconvened the Flexible Working Taskforce to better understand and promote flexible working.”



## 2021.06.19 - Coronavirus

- ['Prices are ridiculous' Holidays in UK cost more than Europe as demand grows](#)
- [Covid passports How Boris Johnson's big plan fell flat](#)
- [AstraZeneca EU fails in court action to secure 120m doses](#)
- ['Going to be weird' Download festival opens with no social distancing](#)

## [Travel & leisure](#)

# **‘Prices are ridiculous’: UK holiday costs more than Europe as demand grows**

Summer travel saga means people are booking up UK cottages and campsites as owners cash in

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



A mobile home and caravan park near Redruth in Cornwall, England.  
Photograph: mambo/Alamy

A mobile home and caravan park near Redruth in Cornwall, England.  
Photograph: mambo/Alamy





[Miles Brignall](#)

Sat 19 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

When Donna Brunton started looking for a backup UK holiday, fearing her family's £2,500 all-in trip to a four-star beach hotel in Malta would not go ahead, she almost fell off her chair when she saw the prices.

“A holiday park in north [Cornwall](#) was quoting £3,699 for the four of us to stay seven nights, self-catering in what looks like an upmarket caravan. The only sites available were all thousands of pounds. I just couldn't believe what I was seeing – the prices were just ridiculous,” said Donna, a nurse from Consett, County Durham.

[Premier Inn owner reports bookings surge at UK tourist hotspots](#)

[Read more](#)

As the [on-off-on summer travel saga](#) continues, the prospects for holidaying at home are looking financially ruinous.

Cottage owners, hotels, campsites and [Airbnb](#) hosts are cashing in on a captive market as millions scramble for the last remaining vacancies. With prices soaring, holidaymakers are in the grip of a staycation inflation spiral.

Even before the government [pulled Portugal from the list of green](#) (non-quarantine) countries it was near impossible to find reasonably priced accommodation in popular resorts. The holiday lets firm Sykes Cottages set the tone for the year when it was accused in February of doubling some charges by the chairman of the south-west Tourism Alliance, Alistair Handyside – himself a cottage owner.

Center Parcs ran into a storm over its summer pricing and was accused of charging more than it would cost for a family of four to visit the Caribbean. However, that hasn't stopped both companies from largely selling out this summer, such has been the demand from those desperate to get away for their first holiday in two years.

[caravan price](#)

[tent price](#)

[hotel price](#)

[car hire price](#)

According to the holiday-let data analysts, AirDNA, summer accommodation prices in Cornwall were 30% higher for July this year compared with 2019 – £135 average a night – even before everything sold out.

Those visiting “bracing” Skegness this July will pay an average nightly rate of £120 – £35 a night more than in 2019 – which amounts to a 40% increase. Prices in Pembrokeshire, Wales, are up 27% this year.

Guardian research has found hotels that charged £120 a night in 2019 are now demanding £150-£175, with those in popular destinations having all but sold out for most of the school holidays.

Caravan parks, traditionally the budget end of the market, do have availability but will typically cost £1,800 for a seven-night family-of-four stay in August – [even in unfashionable Lowestoft](#).

The car-hire specialist insurer iCarhireinsurance.com said this week that rental prices have more than doubled at several UK destinations this

summer as consumers tried to avoid public transport – adding to the sense of gloom among those stuck at home, but without a booking.

“We are supposed to be flying to Malta on 22 July but being a nurse I can’t afford to isolate when we get back,” said Brunton. “I was also concerned at the cost of the Covid testing, which is going to be £1,200 for the four of us – that was until I saw the prices of staying in the UK.

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“I mean, how can it cost over £1,000 more to stay in a self-catering Cornish holiday park than in a four-star hotel beside the beach in Malta – including flights to get there and all the meals thrown in? It would have taken us seven hours to drive to Cornwall and I’d have been cooking and cleaning just as at home. In the end I booked a week in a hotel in Chester and a few other nights in Glasgow and York. However, once a few meals out and other costs are added in I can see it costing about the same as our last decent holiday – to Jamaica. It’s madness,” she said.

But the surge in demand has a silver lining – it has turned some holidaymakers into hosts: an increasing number of people have decided to cash in on their home’s location by advertising it on Airbnb.

In Great Yarmouth, on Norfolk’s east coast, the number of active listings on Airbnb is 43% higher than at the same time last year, and up 34% in Scarborough, according to AirDNA. Landlords in some popular seaside destinations have not been renewing contracts of their long-term tenants, offering their homes on Airbnb instead.

Rory Boland, Which? Travel Editor, says there are UK holidays to be had if you avoid the coast and the other most popular destinations.

“Looking to other parts of the country,” said Boland, “will likely mean finding a cheaper holiday, and more choice over where to stay – you could also find fewer crowds too.”

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## [Health policy](#)

# UK Covid passports: how Boris Johnson's big plan fell flat

Idea to incentivise pubs and restaurants to use scheme now widely regarded as unworkable

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The NHS app, on which the pass has been built, has been surprisingly smooth, but ministers now anticipate its use will mainly be confined to international travel and some pilot mass events. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

The NHS app, on which the pass has been built, has been surprisingly smooth, but ministers now anticipate its use will mainly be confined to international travel and some pilot mass events. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

Jessica Elgot and Aubrey Allegretti

Fri 18 Jun 2021 11.01 EDT

Boris Johnson is the last prime minister on earth that his MPs would have expected to be in favour of a “papers for your pint” policy.

So it sent a shock wave through Westminster when, shortly after the review of Covid certification was launched, the prime minister said he was broadly supportive of the idea, even floating the idea of incentivising pubs and restaurants to use them to ditch social distancing rules

What happened to the prime minister’s big idea? Although the review has not yet been released, it is common knowledge that the scheme is now widely regarded as unworkable.

Plans to use Covid passes have been radically scaled down – a combination of unworkable timeframes, business opposition and a looming parliamentary defeat.

The NHS app, on which the pass has been built, has been surprisingly smooth, but ministers now anticipate its use will mainly be confined to [international travel](#) and some pilot mass events such as Wimbledon.

The prime minister told MPs in March he had been converted to the idea. “I find myself in this long national conversation thinking very deeply about it”, he said, adding that the public “want me as prime minister to take all the action I can to protect them”.

One government source said: “I rather suspect somebody suggested to Boris that if we could just test people to show that they weren’t posing any risk, pubs could open and have people packed into them, wouldn’t that be brilliant?”

For some in No 10, part of the initial thinking behind domestic certification was motivated by concerns that young people would be much more hesitant to get vaccinated because they were less likely to get seriously ill if they caught Covid.

[Would Covid passports be damaging to public health? | Melinda Mills and Stephen Reicher](#)

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Focus groups were held to test what messages young people were most receptive to without feeling too aggressively “nudged” – and the message of domestic certification offering them the freedom to visit some social venues such as pubs chimed most strongly. A government source said they thought the certificates would “focus minds”.

Michael Gove, the Cabinet Office minister tasked with the review, had been enthused by the Israeli green pass system, which worked with either a vaccination, negative test or proof that you had previously tested positive for coronavirus – and thus now had antibodies.

Gove and the deputy chief medical officer, Jonathan Van-Tam, flew to Israel in April to meet the country’s health minister, Yuli Edelstein.

The green pass, which was a QR code on smartphones, was used by citizens to access leisure facilities such as gyms and swimming pools, indoor restaurants and cafes, hotels, sports venues, theatres and cinemas. But the scheme has since been scrapped, with most citizens fully vaccinated.

There were significant issues with the Israeli scheme that concerned officials. Children were effectively banned from indoor spaces that required a green pass, because they had not been vaccinated. And huge numbers of cafes and bars simply did not enforce the requirement to show the pass.

But the key problem that the British scheme would have encountered is that the timings of vaccinations and reopenings of restaurants and pubs did not match up.

“This was the main stalling point,” one Whitehall source said. “Before the green pass, they hadn’t opened anything. It was an enabler. The timeline for them was perfect – it persuaded young people to get both jabs. We are not in that position. We’ve already opened pretty much everything.”



The government always intended to have tests as an alternative to vaccination to allow people to use the Covid pass. But that also ran into major difficulties. “For pubs and restaurants a lot of their trade depends on spontaneity,” one Whitehall source said.

For some pilot mass events, lateral flow tests are being allowed as proof of Covid status. But officials believed that the potential for fraud in self-declaring results was far too great if the scheme had widespread rollout.

“The testing options are very difficult. For a while the plan was that all testing would have to be supervised testing,” one official said. “Obviously that requires huge resource and is massively inconvenient to have to go to a testing site each time.”

At the same time, another major problem was brewing – a huge rebellion by more than 40 Conservative MPs was being quietly coordinated. Labour was preparing to help those MPs defeat the government, with Keir Starmer saying he thought [“British instinct” would be against the scheme](#). The Liberal Democrats were also fiercely opposed.

Privately, some cabinet ministers had doubts – including the business secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, and the Commons leader, Jacob Rees-Mogg.

Steve Baker, the libertarian former minister who has been a key opponent of strict lockdown measures, said he sprang into action when Johnson’s support for the ideas seemed serious.

[Scientists urge caution after Tony Blair backs UK ‘Covid pass’](#)

[Read more](#)

“Those of us who really object on principle, on civil libertarian grounds, which is people across left and right, leaped into the breach,” he said. “I managed to build a coalition. I think we will have made it look to government, correctly, that there is a voting block which would make it probable that it would be defeated.”

Baker said the breadth of opposition was “very, very strong” and said it would have been an opportunity for opposition parties. “I think it became

clear that it was one of those moments where, whatever Labour splits might be, they would actually take the opportunity to defeat the government on it,” he said. Labour sources confirmed that Starmer had intended to whip the party to oppose.

There were some MPs who might have been persuaded, had the bulk of scientific opinion and the business and hospitality lobby been in favour of the scheme. The opposite was true.

“In private, Boris’ view seemed to be ‘why not let landlords decide?’ The industry basically felt it was being stitched up,” one source close to the review said.

In a joint statement, UK Hospitality, the British Beer and Pub Association and the British Institute of Innkeeping said vaccine passports could prevent “millions” of young people who had not received their jabs visiting the pub “for months”

Key clinical bodies submitted evidence to the review expressing deep reservations. The Royal College of GPs said it “risks negatively impacting on some patient groups more than others and by doing so widening existing inequalities”.

There were certainly some experts and some industries who thought the benefits of the scheme could outweigh practical difficulties. Major sporting bodies such as the Premier League and Wimbledon were “very supportive,” one source close to the review said.

The most surprising legacy of the review, something that has astounded Whitehall, is that technology was not the obstacle. The NHS app, which shows your vaccination status, has been rolled out smoothly and is expected to be used for international travel.

“I wouldn’t completely rule out their utility in the long-term,” one government source said. “Perhaps more so in the winter if it is a way of preventing us closing premises.”

Though Baker feels a coordinated effort has now killed any widespread usage, he said that he and many other MPs still had questions about the long-term use of surveillance tools such as the test-and-trace app aimed at combating Covid.

“I think we should expect social distancing, masks and test and trace to continue, and a big question for me is when do we shut down that entire operation?” he said.

“The people who think it’s a good idea for coronavirus will also think it’s a good idea for flu and they’ll think it’s a good idea to adjust our civil liberties to manage the pressures on the NHS. That could create intolerable divisions in government and the parliamentary party.”

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# EU fails in court action to secure urgent 120m doses of Oxford Covid vaccine

But Brussels court says AstraZeneca should have used UK plants in the past to fulfil EU deliveries

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Ursula von der Leyen said: ‘This decision confirms the position of the commission: AstraZeneca did not live up to the commitments it made in the contract.’ Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

Ursula von der Leyen said: ‘This decision confirms the position of the commission: AstraZeneca did not live up to the commitments it made in the contract.’ Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

[Daniel Boffey](#) in Brussels

Fri 18 Jun 2021 11.58 EDT

The EU has failed in [a legal attempt](#) to secure an urgent 120m vaccine doses from AstraZeneca by the end of this month, while securing a judgment that sites in Oxford and Staffordshire should have been used in the past to make good on deliveries.

The court of first instance in Brussels ordered the Anglo-Swedish company to deliver just 10m more than it has already provided by the end of September, and make “best efforts”, including potentially the use of UK facilities, to provide the further 220m jabs to which it is contractually committed.

The ruling was welcomed by both sides. [AstraZeneca](#) said it would easily be able to meet the court’s dose demands, adding that it had defeated attempts to force it to use UK facilities to cater for the EU.

The European Commission said it had won the argument. In response to claims that the commission had expensively failed in achieving the central objective of getting more jabs more swiftly, lawyers claimed the case had pushed AstraZeneca to increase its performance in recent months.

Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, said: “This decision confirms the position of the commission: AstraZeneca did not live up to the commitments it made in the contract. It is good to see that an independent judge confirms this.”

The court ordered AstraZeneca to pay just 30% of the commission’s legal fees, with a cap set at €4,000 (£3,440).

[The EU had been enraged](#) by AstraZeneca’s refusal earlier this year to use its UK sites to make good on a huge shortfall in deliveries.

The pharmaceutical giant had originally been expected to supply up to 300m doses to the EU in the first six months of this year [but that forecast was cut to just 100m](#) after production problems.

AstraZeneca’s chief executive, Pascal Soriot, had said he was unable to use his UK facilities for the EU as he had a prior contract with the British

government which demanded priority for its residents on doses made in Britain.

The commission, with the support of member states, had sought a court order for AstraZeneca to deliver 120m vaccine doses cumulatively by the end of June 2021, and a total of 300m doses by the end of September 2021.

The EU's executive branch had further sought an order that the company's two UK sites would be used.

[Covid live: Delta variant becoming globally dominant, WHO says as expert calls Africa's case trajectory 'very, very concerning'](#)

[Read more](#)

Instead, the judge ordered delivery of a total of 80m by 27 September 2021, an additional 10m on its current deliveries, and left it to the company to decide how to meet its further contractual commitments.

The court recognised, however, the company's failure to use the vaccines made at an Oxford Biomedica plant in the UK to fulfil its EU contract was inconsistent with making "best reasonable efforts".

Jeffrey Pott, AstraZeneca's general counsel, said: "We are pleased with the court's order. AstraZeneca has fully complied with its agreement with the European Commission and we will continue to focus on the urgent task of supplying an effective vaccine, which we are delivering at no profit to help protect people in Europe and around the world from the deadliest pandemic in a generation."

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## [Download festival](#)

# ‘It’s going to be weird’: Download festival opens with no social distancing

10,000 rock and heavy metal fans look forward to weekend of moshing without masks at Covid pilot event



Festivalgoers watch Death Blooms on stage on the first day of Download Festival at Donington Park. Photograph: Joe Giddens/PA

Festivalgoers watch Death Blooms on stage on the first day of Download Festival at Donington Park. Photograph: Joe Giddens/PA

[\*Jessica Murray\*](#)

Fri 18 Jun 2021 15.23 EDT

Moshing is surely the final stage of the journey back to normality in a post-lockdown world. Hundreds of sweaty people slamming into each other with full bodily contact might not appeal to everyone, but it is impossible not to



appreciate how monumental a step it is after more than a year of being told to stay 2 metres apart.

“After being distanced for so long, it’s going to be weird. But I’m going to be straight in there. You’ve got to throw yourself in at the deep end,” said Shay Fagan, 22, one of 10,000 rock and heavy metal fans arriving at [Download Pilot festival](#) on Friday eager to return to the mosh pit.

The festival, the UK’s largest rock event, normally welcomes about 80,000 people to Donington Park in Leicestershire each June, but this year it is operating at reduced capacity as a pilot of large-scale events ahead of next month’s full reopening in England and Wales.

All attendees were required to submit negative lateral flow and PCR Covid test results before arrival, but once inside the festival gates there were no social distancing or face masks required.

There was also no leaving, with all attendees required to camp for the full duration of the three-day festival.



A festivalgoer arrives on the first day of Download Festival at Donington Park. Photograph: Joe Giddens/PA

“Once you’re in, you’re in. But I normally stay for the full five days anyway,” said Fagan, who has attended the festival six times.

To get her Download fix last year when the event was cancelled, she and her friends camped out in a back garden for a mock festival.

“It’s been really sad without gigs. I haven’t seen any live music since February 2020,” said her friend Connor Pritchard, adding he would be straight into the first “wall of death” – a form of moshing where the crowd splits in half and runs at each other.

“It’s a little taster of what life could be again,” said Hayley Mackay, 28, who had travelled up from London. “We were a little apprehensive because when we were queueing up it felt like so many people, but we feel like it’s going to be safe.”



Jamie and Lauren McAloon, who married at the Download pilot festival. Photograph: Jessica Murray/The Guardian

The event was a particularly special occasion for Jamie and Lauren McAloon, from Glasgow, who tied the knot in a humanist wedding ceremony in front of the main stage surrounded by their Download “family”.

The couple met at the festival in 2008, and Jamie proposed there in 2011 – they were due to get married last year and made the last-minute decision to go ahead with it at the Download pilot after it was announced in May.

“This is our second home, this is where everything has happened. We had to get married here, even if it was in the rain,” said Jamie.

The event was organised in just a few weeks but features a strong lineup of some of the biggest rock bands in the country, including Enter Shikari, Bullet for My Valentine and Frank Carter & the Rattlesnakes.

As the first bands took to the stage on Friday evening, it didn’t take long for the crowd to erupt and an energetic mosh pit to form, beer flying through the air.

“I think we deserve a dance, what do you think?” shouted Han Mee, lead vocalist of Hot Milk, as a sea of people clad in soggy ponchos surged towards the stage.



Han Mee of Hot Milk onstage. Photograph: Andy Gallagher/Alamy Live News/Alamy Live News.

With the end of restrictions pushed back by [four weeks in England](#) and [Wales](#), there is a lot riding on test events such as Download Pilot to prove that festivals and the live music sector can open back up safely.

[Notting Hill carnival taken off the streets due to Covid pandemic](#)  
[Read more](#)

“It’s emotional and hugely exciting. And I’m confident that, providing you put people in an environment where they are all tested or vaccinated, people can enjoy music very safely,” said Melvin Benn, the director of Festival Republic, which runs a number of large-scale events including the Download, Wireless and Leeds festivals. “I pay tribute to the fans who are coming because they are putting themselves forward as test dummies, so to speak.”

Researchers will be using CCTV cameras to monitor crowd density across the site, and to try to pinpoint any areas of Covid transmission – whether that be in the mosh pit, the crowd, the queue for the bar or the campsite.

Benn said he had pushed the government to allow a camping festival in the events research programme, and when they agreed, Download was his first choice.

“The [Download festival](#) community is an exceptional community, the music is marginalised to a large extent, so the festival where they can gather means a huge amount,” he said. “This audience needed that gathering probably more than any other.”

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## 2021.06.19 - Opinion

- Does the left now stand a chance in the Unite leadership election?
- Rothsay's decline as a seaside resort is not unique, but its beauty most certainly is
- Does this byelection point to a strategy that can defeat Johnson? Don't count on it
- Why it suits Boris Johnson to have a cabinet of all the hopeless
- I used to think hay fever didn't really exist. I know much better now

## [OpinionUnite](#)

# Does the left now stand a chance in the Unite leadership election?

[Sienna Rodgers](#)

The leftwing vote is no longer so stretched with the withdrawal of Howard Beckett, but that doesn't mean it is in the bag



Howard Beckett, one of Unite's assistant general secretaries. Photograph: Andrew Milligan/PA

Howard Beckett, one of Unite's assistant general secretaries. Photograph: Andrew Milligan/PA

Sat 19 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

The election for general secretary at the trade union Unite has the potential to dramatically reshape the labour movement and the left in Britain – and it has just been shaken up with a last-minute candidate withdrawal. [Howard](#)



[Beckett](#), head of legal and politics in the Labour-affiliated union and a fierce critic of party leader Keir Starmer, has withdrawn from the race and endorsed fellow assistant general secretary Steve Turner.

After repeatedly setting and missing deadlines, Beckett and Turner struck a deal, just before ballot papers needed to be printed. A [joint statement](#) reveals that Turner has pledged to implement a “blended manifesto” if elected, taking the best ideas from his and Beckett’s platforms. This means he would support Beckett’s Unite TV initiative, giving each region and nation a studio from which to broadcast on YouTube, and would back a structural change to promote federalism within the union, giving policy independence to Unite in Wales.

A sigh of relief can be heard from those on the Labour left who hope that Unite does not go the same way as the other two big party-affiliated unions, Unison and the GMB, which have both seen leftwing general secretary challengers defeated in recent months. But the left’s victory is not secure, as they have not managed to coalesce behind just one potential successor to the outgoing leader [Len McCluskey](#), with Sharon Graham still standing.

Turner, a former bus worker, is in charge of manufacturing at Unite. During the campaign, he has won the endorsement of United Left, the biggest leftwing organisation within the union, and secured the most branch nominations. On the basis of those nominations, you would think Turner could easily take the crown – but the last Unite leadership election shows nomination figures aren’t everything, as McCluskey had 1,185 branches (versus 187 for Gerard Coyne) but only narrowly won with 45.5% of the final vote (versus 41.3% for Coyne). Turner is hoping that victories such as this year’s “[Battle for Barnoldswick](#)” – in which he led negotiations to prevent hundreds of job losses for members at Rolls-Royce – can see him through.

[If Unite’s left allows its leadership vote to split, history’s judgment will be severe](#) | [Ronan Burtenshaw](#)  
[Read more](#)

The left’s other candidate, Graham, is the union’s executive officer for organising and leverage, which means she has excellent relationships with



union reps on the ground. Her allies say people underestimate her, as it was predicted she would not get on the ballot, yet she received an impressive number of nominations and showed clear breadth of support. Despite extensive talks with Graham, she will not be dropping out to clear the path for Turner. Supporters claim that it's vital there should be a woman on the ballot. Her key messages can be summed up as “the three Ws”: Westminster, women and workers. Graham does not want [Unite](#) to be focused on Westminster, reckons only she can fully understand the concerns of women in the union, and is pitching herself as “the workplace candidate”.

The “mainstream” candidate Coyne lost out to McCluskey in 2017, but only by around 5,550 votes, so is running again to finish the job of defeating the “hard left”. Central to his bid are accusations that the current leadership mispends money and involves itself too much in [Labour](#) politics – allegations that were more easily directed towards Beckett than Turner. Coyne has already sought to highlight their new alliance/relationship, responding to their joint statement that “if you vote Turner, you get Beckett”. His camp is confident that the numbers still stack up in his favour, particularly if criticisms of the “backroom deal” encourage more members to vote.

Now that the conversation can move on from which left candidates should drop out, all three contenders will be more closely scrutinised – and will have to stand on their own records.

Sienna Rodgers is editor of LabourList

## [OpinionScotland](#)

# Rothesay's decline as a seaside resort is not unique, but its beauty most certainly is

[Ian Jack](#)



Perhaps the visitors who crush into Skye might turn left at Glasgow next time, towards this lost resort



‘I saw the hotel first as a child from the deck of a steamer, and by the time I reached 30 had enough confidence to sit on its veranda one June and ask for a Campari and soda.’ Photograph: John Peter Photography/Alamy

‘I saw the hotel first as a child from the deck of a steamer, and by the time I reached 30 had enough confidence to sit on its veranda one June and ask for a Campari and soda.’ Photograph: John Peter Photography/Alamy

Sat 19 Jun 2021 04.00 EDT

The Glenburn Hotel in Rothesay, on the island of Bute, has one of the finest views in Britain; quite possibly the loveliest afforded from any of our big seaside hotels. The Grand in Scarborough, the other Grand in Brighton, the Imperial in Blackpool: from their best rooms, the view is of nothing but a stretch of promenade followed by the empty sea and the sky. But the Glenburn looks over a bay where ferries and fishing boats come and go, and yachts ride at anchor against a backdrop of hills that are cut into by the narrows known as the Kyles of Bute and by a sea loch, Loch Striven, sometimes described as “gloomy”, which has hardly more than half a dozen houses dotted along its eight-mile length. This is a complicated and contrasting geography, in which a Highland landscape, all fish farms, heather and sheep, can be viewed from a comfortable lowland town that

once had three cinemas, concert parties with chorus girls and a fleet of electric trams.

From the Glenburn's iron veranda, 107 steps lead down to the sea, through a terraced garden filled with Bute's typical flora: New Zealand cabbage palms, foxgloves, hydrangea, rhododendron. Perhaps Mrs Craik, the Victorian three-decker novelist, sat here to write her poem, Sweet Rothesay Bay, which became a melancholy popular song, sung by home-going crowds on pleasure steamers and corseted women standing beside upright pianos. The hotel is of her era. In the 1840s, the fashion for hydropathy, the water cure, reached Britain from Germany and took a particular hold in [Scotland](#) – oddly, given the country's easily accessible and free-of-charge wetness – which built many more hydropathic hotels than England, Wales or Ireland ever did.

The Glenburn was the first of them. Opened in 1843 and rebuilt on a bigger scale after a fire in the 1892, it is, in the words of the Pevsner-inspired Buildings of Scotland book, “an imposing, even intimidating palace set high on the hillside ... in towered four-storeyed symmetry, classical in detail with arched loggias, verandas and flanked wings”. A brick chimney, tall enough for a small factory and built to serve the laundry and the steam heating, goes unmentioned.

Lack of demand ended the hotel's cold-bath and wet-blanket therapies in the 1930s, but its superior atmosphere survived into the last decades of the last century, when Scottish trade unions still held their conferences in Rothesay's Winter Gardens and the leaders of the mineworkers, the boilermakers and the amalgamated engineers put up at the Glenburn and drank late whiskies in the bar. It was known – and still is by older Rothesay people – as “the Hydro”. I saw it first as a child from the deck of a steamer, and by the time I reached 30 had enough confidence to sit on its veranda one late afternoon in June and ask for a Campari and soda. The bay stretched blue and unruffled towards the green hills. Only the rattle of a yacht's anchor chain broke the quiet. I wondered – as many others have done – how such a lovely place could be so unvisited.

For 20-odd years, coach tours came to the rescue. They drove up from Lancashire and Yorkshire in most months of the year and filled the

Glenburn's bedrooms with pleasant couples, married since 1946, who went around the town in light rainwear, ate cones of Zavaroni's ice-cream, and looked sceptically through shop windows at items advertised as antiques. Sometimes pleasure boats – smaller than the old steamers – took the bus parties on cruises up the Kyles; as late as 1999, I heard the voice of Gracie Fields ("Sallee, Sallee, pride of our allee") float across the water from one of them. They weren't sad, these people from the defunct mill towns, but there hung about them and the tours they took – Rothesay one night, the Trossachs the next – a sense of things ending. As, [during Covid](#), things did.

A Malaysian family [bought the hotel](#) from Shearings, the coach company, in 2016 but hung on to the old trade despite plans to turn the Glenburn into a spa – returning it halfway to its origins, hot water rather than cold, by building a pool, steam rooms, saunas and beauticians' quarters in the woods behind it. Then Shearings went bust, the coaches stopped, and the bedroom curtains were drawn against the view across the bay.

None of this is new: as a holiday resort, Rothesay has been in retreat since the late 1950s; as an administrative capital since 1975, when Buteshire was abolished as a county. The island's population has halved from a postwar peak of around 12,000. The court, Woolworth's and the [local newspaper closed](#) in this century. Two fishmongers have become one. Three out of four banks have gone. The last greengrocer is up for sale. Only two of the dozen Presbyterian churches that had congregations in 1960 still hold services. Of the Kyles Hydro, said to have been even more splendid than the Glenburn, only the gateposts remain. The Royal Hotel in the middle of town is a gaunt shell held up by scaffolding.

Seaside resorts on the British mainland contain similar facts, of course, but the loveliness of Bute makes its abandonment more striking. The putting green, the pretty wooden shelters on the prom, the benches all along the front dedicated by their relatives to the dead who "always loved this view ... this island ... this spot" (and in this way mark a double absence – both of the deceased and of the living for whom the bench and shelter were intended): all lie empty, save for a family of putters laughing at each other's efforts. Over the railings, rusty now owing to lack of paint, the tide goes out to reveal artificial inlets in the rock and long lines of stones stretching into

the sea, marking tidal swimming pools and boating stations that are now archaeological and need interpretation.

The visitors who might be here are instead crushing into Skye, defecating in Highland ditches, and hammering in camper vans and Porsches up the [so-called Route 66](#), the road around the north of Scotland, which has been successfully marketed as a destination and a challenge. The attraction of solitariness, part of the Highlands' appeal since the 18th century, is being destroyed by its own popularity: wiser travellers from the south should turn left earlier, towards the little resorts created in the 19th century and vacated in the 20th.

Will anyone buy the Glenburn? One evening last week I went to the hotel and at the top of the garden staircase looked out across the bay at a modern superyacht, the Elandess, which had been anchored there for several days. The Elandess is owned by Lloyd Dorfman, the British founder of Travelex, the world's largest dealer in foreign exchange, with personal wealth estimated at \$1.2bn. By the end of the week, the rumour had run around town. The yacht was awaiting Dorfman, who was coming to look over the Glenburn with a view to buying it. People smiled when they told the story; it was such good news. But it turned out to be invented. Someone who worked on the pier, tired of being asked about the yacht's long stay, had made it up.

This week, as has happened before in Bute, the money weighed anchor and sailed away.

- Ian Jack is a Guardian columnist

## [OpinionPolitics](#)

# Does this byelection point to a strategy that can defeat Johnson? Don't count on it

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



Talk of a 'progressive alliance' chasing the votes of the educated middle class misses something: you can't win with them alone





‘It will take more than a blast of byelection dynamite in the affluent commuter belt to bring down the supposed “blue wall”.’ Sarah Green of the Lib Dems after being declared winner in the Chesham and Amersham vote. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

‘It will take more than a blast of byelection dynamite in the affluent commuter belt to bring down the supposed “blue wall”.’ Sarah Green of the Lib Dems after being declared winner in the Chesham and Amersham vote. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

Fri 18 Jun 2021 12.33 EDT

Walls keep tumbling down, first red and now blue. The scale of the Lib Dems’ [upset victory in Chesham and Amersham](#) suggests an intriguing possibility: that the realignment that saw traditionally Labour seats fall to the Tories in 2019, and which [won them Hartlepool](#) just last month, might now deliver once rock-solid Tory areas to their opponents. Could it be that what the Brexit gods giveth with one hand, they taketh away with the other?

[Chesham and Amersham has shaken Tory MPs’ faith in Boris Johnson](#) | [Katy Balls](#)  
[Read more](#)



It's a heartening thought, but not a reliable one. For one thing, the south is hardly a coherent political bloc, about to shear off from the Tory glacier. For every Chesham, there is a Southampton or Swindon, pro-leave redoubts that have more in common with the north-east and the Midlands than they do with the Bobo – [bourgeois, bohemian](#) – metropolitan outskirts. It will take more than a blast of byelection dynamite in the affluent commuter belt to bring down the supposed “blue wall”.

Even so, a realignment of sorts is under way, its most obvious UK manifestation still the Brexit referendum, which convulsed British politics five years ago next week, and in which education was the [single best predictor](#) of a vote for leave or remain. But this is not about the UK alone. The same shift is happening all over the world.

Plot it [on a graph](#) and the change stares right back at you. Fifty years ago, parties of the left fared best among those with the least education and the lowest income, while the right flourished among those with the most of both. These days, the right still does well among the affluent, but on education the two camps have swapped places: these days, and far too crudely put, if you're a graduate you vote left; if you're not, you don't.

That's as true in Germany, Canada or France as it is in parts of Sussex and Surrey, where college-educated ex-Londoners have fled high house prices and are making bits of the home counties look, and vote, like liberal north London: less “gin and Jag”, more “£3,000 road bike and trips to the Everyman cinema”, in the words of the political consultant Gabriel Milland. In that light, the byelection result offers a prospect to make progressive mouths water. With these demographic shifts accelerating in the post-Covid era thanks to the Zoom-enabled exodus of graduates from the cities, and now that anti-Tory tactical voting has proved it can bag a win even in bluest Bucks, surely a nationwide progressive alliance would sweep Boris Johnson from power.

Not so fast. Take a look at the place where polarisation by education is most marked: the US. “I love the poorly educated,” Donald Trump [once said](#), and with good reason: the poorly educated loved him back, breaking from the Democrats in their millions to send him to the White House in 2016 and come within a whisker of keeping him there in 2020. Joe Biden racked up

52.3% of the two-party vote, courtesy of a coalition of the young, the educated and America's minorities, but had that vote dropped by just a fraction – to 52% – Trump would still be president. Indeed, most observers reckon that, given the shape of today's US electorate, Republicans will retake both the House and Senate in 18 months' time.

Enter David Shor, a 29-year-old data wizard currently [making waves](#) in Democratic politics with a jolting analysis of where his party is going wrong, not least in its reliance on, and dominance by, the well-educated. What makes his views especially arresting is that he is on the party's left, a self-described socialist who [voted twice](#) for Bernie Sanders.

In Shor's view, the Democrats are too influenced by people just like him: young, hyper-educated ultra-liberals whose views are massively out of step with the median US voter they need if they are to win elections. (He reports that half the people who give money to Democratic campaigns have not one but *two* degrees.) The issues that interest those activists and the way they talk about them are simply out of sync with non-college educated working people. He reserves particular fury for the slogan "[defund the police](#)", which, his numbers show, alienated not only blue-collar white guys, but significant numbers of black and Hispanic voters. Democrats lost enough of those to make last November a photo-finish, saved in large part by the offsetting fact that Biden himself – not young, not hyper-educated, not ultra-liberal – defied the Democratic archetype and appealed to the less educated.

Shor makes one crucial point. It's not only political candidates who help create this vote-losing impression. It's the wider world of progressive activists, journalists and people sounding off on Twitter. When they take up some fringe position, [says Shor](#), regular people lump "the entire movement into this one big blob and say, 'This whole group of people is crazy.'"

Part of the problem is language. "If you go out and start talking about 'racial justice' or 'social justice' or 'climate justice', you just sound like a super-educated weird person," says Shor. It's not that working people don't care about racism or the climate, they just don't speak about it in the same way. It means dialling down the ideology and the jargon – note that Hispanic Americans reject the [Twitter-approved term "Latinx"](#) to describe

themselves – and focusing instead on the kind of unfairness and human suffering that even those whose instincts are socially conservative cannot ignore.

I confess that when I spoke to Shor I felt a shudder of recognition. Here in Britain, Labour is lumped in with a “big blob” of its own. Too often a loud part of that blob sounds like either a select priesthood, speaking to itself about questions that would strike most people as abstract angels-on-a-pinhead theology, or a self-appointed police force dispensing constant, scolding judgment, wagging its finger at the latest supposed infraction of progressive standards. It’s exhausting and so unappealing that even a serially dishonest and incompetent government – but one that seems to accept you, your country and your way of life without pursed-lipped judgment – seems preferable by comparison.

That’s not the only reason why a strategy centred on graduates and cities is doomed. There are just not enough of them and their votes, says Shor, are not distributed with the necessary geographic efficiency. That’s true of Britain and the US: remember, remain may have come close in 2016, but it won [a mere third](#) of Britain’s parliamentary constituencies.

Thursday’s byelection result will prompt a lot of excited talk of what educated, progressive voters might do if they join together. But it will never be enough. The harder truth is that those who want change will have to speak to voters about the things they, the voters, care about, and in a way that makes sense to them. It will require discipline and coherence, even from those who think they’re doing noble work “widening the debate” or “raising awareness”, when in fact they’re just making progressives look weird. There is no short cut – via Chesham and Amersham or anywhere else.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#)**Boris Johnson**

# Why it suits Boris Johnson to have a cabinet of all the hopeless

[Marina Hyde](#)



From Matt Hancock to Gavin Williamson, these proven failures have become the prime minister's human shields



‘Matt Hancock remains health secretary in the most eyecatching miscasting since the Bond movie in which Denise Richards played a nuclear physicist.’

Photograph: Reuters

‘Matt Hancock remains health secretary in the most eyecatching miscasting since the Bond movie in which Denise Richards played a nuclear physicist.’

Photograph: Reuters

Fri 18 Jun 2021 10.28 EDT

How are you enjoying Dominic Cummings’ mission to dump on Matt Hancock from the greatest possible height? I am beginning to think of it as Operation Moonshit. This week Cummings opted to release a [series of WhatsApp messages](#) dating back to the first wave of Covid last year, in which Boris Johnson referred to his secretary of state for health as both “hopeless” and “totally fucking hopeless”. Which at least suggests range.

[The evidence is clear – there was no excuse for Hancock’s care homes strategy.](#)

[Read more](#)

So, then, to the unbearable hopelessness of Matt Hancock, who somehow still remains health secretary in the most eyecatching miscasting since the

Bond movie in which Denise Richards [played a nuclear physicist](#). If you wished to distil the minister's entire pandemic performance into one six-second clip, you could do a lot worse than this week's footage of a reporter shouting "[Are you hopeless?](#)" through Hancock's open car window. As the Range Rover pootles off, from the back seat comes the reedy reply: "I don't think so ... " (Incidentally, I understand that convention states all cabinet ministers have to be driven around in Range Rovers, but surely Matt should be downgraded to an Evoque. Or even one of those toy cabriolet versions you occasionally see in the park driven by some remorseless three-year-old future landlord.)

It goes without saying that the only people who should be defending themselves out of Range Rover windows are football managers on deadline day, when they've just managed to push an osteoporotic 37-year-old striker through a medical, and an undisclosed fee through their Swiss bank account. For a secretary of state to be doing it is so ridiculously humiliating that I'm surprised Hancock has not issued a [small enamel badge](#) to honour himself.

Cummings, meanwhile, is burdened with glorious purpose, and currently styling himself as some sort of [Westminster Loki variant](#). Although Dom was played by Benedict Cumberbatch in Brexit: the Uncivil War, the character's self-regard is now so preposterously misplaced that it would seem more apt to shave Tom Hiddleston's head and bring him on instead.

There is precedent for this in other universes, of course. In Marvel's, Hulk has been played by both Edward Norton and Mark Ruffalo, with the latter once opining: "Hulk is like my generation's Hamlet." Everything's smaller and crapper in the UK, as we know, which makes me wonder if the role of Dominic Cummings is not perhaps my generation's Hamlet.

Having said all that, there's a sense Cummings struggles for audience outside SW1. These days I have taken to spending a lot of time in the MailOnline comments section (present but not involved), and down there the strongly prevailing view of Cummings is that he is a complete rat and so disloyal as to render anything he says immediately discountable. Outside the Westminster bubble that he's so fond of pricking, these outpourings from the god of mischief are currently being roundly ignored. Or to put it

another way, the public don't want to be told they need their eyes tested by the [little boy who cried eye test](#).

As for what's next, there'd doubtless be a market for Johnson's WhatsApp verdicts on Gavin Williamson, but we'll presumably have to wait for Cummings to release those in the event of the education secretary cocking up exams for the second summer running (he has already cocked up [education and catch-up](#) for the second spring running).

All of which brings us to the heart of matters – the prime minister who keeps those he judges serially hopeless in post. Unlike the England football captaincy – a position as operationally meaningless as that of regimental goat – the role of health secretary in a pandemic is a profoundly critical one. Likewise that of education secretary in a period of disrupted learning and life chances.

So to stick with known and proven failures says vastly more about [Boris Johnson](#) than anyone else. Despite his matey posturing, the prime minister appears so completely indifferent to the death and myriad forms of suffering his own hopelessness has wrought that he would rather retain Hancock and Williamson as human shields than upgrade his personnel. This is the weak leadership of a man who judges – perhaps rightly – that if he permits the bell to toll for one of his cabinet ministers, it hastens the moment it tolls for him. So he leaves them where they are, ruining further lives and livelihoods with apparent impunity.

Meanwhile, leaks and “friends” of the PM supply us with a constant stream of his moans about money and what a bore being prime minister is. Like “[pulling a giant 747 down a runway](#)”, was this week's gem. Poor Boris Johnson. And – much, much less importantly – poor everyone else.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist



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## [Opinion](#) Hay fever

**I used to think hay fever didn't really exist. I know much better now**

[Zoe Williams](#)



This year, hay fever season is unbelievably bad, everyone has it – and none of the suggested remedies are any help to my teenage son



‘For about two hours at the start of June, he’s happy. And then he gets hay fever.’ Photograph: Goads Agency/Getty Images/iStockphoto (Posed by model)

‘For about two hours at the start of June, he’s happy. And then he gets hay fever.’ Photograph: Goads Agency/Getty Images/iStockphoto (Posed by model)

Fri 18 Jun 2021 11.16 EDT

My 13-year-old son hates autumn, winter and early spring – anything that isn’t shorts weather – and he keeps up a constant drumbeat of how insufficient the British climate is to his sunshine needs and all the places he’ll be more likely to live when he’s older, such as California. Then, for about two hours at the start of June, he’s happy. And then he gets hay fever. It was years before I really believed in it. I thought it was like when people say they have an allergy when really they are on a diet. I definitely remember, when I was a kid, that it was just something you said for an extra 15 minutes on your exam times.

More years passed before it entered my parental toolkit, and I could reliably put my hands on a packet of antihistamines every day. My learning curve veered sharply upwards the year I had to take him to A&E because he

couldn't breathe, and *that* was hay fever – particularly since, on the same day, my daughter had broken her foot and I thought it was a sprain. So I was back in A&E a day later, having to explain why hay fever was higher up my list of emergencies than broken bones. Trampolines and pollen shot up my risk register over this period.

This year, it is unbelievably bad, and everyone has it. We're in a constant cycle of lateral flow tests because the Delta variant is apparently very like hay fever, yet nobody in the family has Covid and everybody's still sneezing. Mr Z, who also had hay fever when he was young, is on a constant research jag, and wanders around dispensing advice that graduates from useless to worse than useless. "It gets a lot better after you're 40," he said at one point. "That doesn't help," replied my seething, and also quite nasal, first-born. Then it was: "I used to make it go away with a really cold pint of fizzy lager." "Yeah, that doesn't help either."

We also read that you could cure it with sex, but decided, tactfully for once, not to mention it.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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- [Voting rights Republicans dig in and prepare to sink Democrats' bill](#)
- [Hong Kong Apple Daily staff treat 'every day like it is our last' as leaders appear in court](#)
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## Mike Pence

# Conservative Christians jeer ‘traitor’ Pence for refusing to overturn election

- Former vice-president heckled at conference in Florida
- Pence makes only passing reference to deadly Capitol attack



Mike Pence told the gathering: ‘Thank you for the privilege of serving as your vice-president with Donald Trump. It was the greatest honor of my life.’ Photograph: Stephen M Dowell/AP

Mike Pence told the gathering: ‘Thank you for the privilege of serving as your vice-president with Donald Trump. It was the greatest honor of my life.’ Photograph: Stephen M Dowell/AP

[David Smith](#) in Orlando

[@smithinamerica](#)

Fri 18 Jun 2021 15.03 EDT

Mike Pence, the former US vice-president, has been heckled as a “traitor” for his refusal to overturn last year’s election result during a speech to a gathering of religious conservatives.

Pence, who is widely seen as laying the groundwork for a White House run in 2024, had entered an auditorium in Orlando, Florida to a standing ovation on Friday. But a small group began shouted abuse including “traitor!” as he began a 28-minute speech. The dissenters were quickly escorted out by police.

[Republicans dig in and prepare to sink Democrats’ voting rights bill](#)  
[Read more](#)

Earlier, in a corridor outside the ballroom, an attendee named Rick Hurley, wearing a red “Make America great again” cap, also vented his frustration over Pence’s role in certifying Donald Trump’s defeat on 6 January amid false claims of voter fraud.

“We need to start fighting!” Hurley shouted at anyone who would listen. “We need to stop being so damned nice. What the hell’s going on? Why is Pence coming today? Donald Trump has his pen in his back still.”

Before being taken aside by police, he also remarked: “I’m ready to fight. I’m going to boo him off stage. I’ll take the bullet. I’ll walk to the front of the stage and look him in the eye and and say, ‘What are you doing here?’

In an interview, Hurley said he had been at the US Capitol on 6 January. “I want to know why Pence is here today.” he said. “He stabbed Donald Trump in the back and took the coins like Judas.”

But Ralph Reed, organiser of the Faith & Freedom Coalition’s annual Road to Majority conference, was at pains to give Pence a warm welcome and honor him as stalwart of the Christian conservative movement.

And the ex-vice president, who earlier this month admitted that he and his former boss may never “see eye to eye” on the events of 6 January, when some Trump supporters called for him to be hanged, did not dwell on that disagreement during his remarks.

He instead told the gathering: “Thank you for the privilege of serving as your vice-president with Donald Trump. It was the greatest honor of my life.”

Pence made only a passing reference to the deadly insurrection that implied an equivalence with racial justice protests and Joe Biden’s policies: “We’ve all been through a lot over the past year: a global pandemic, civil unrest, a divisive election, a tragic day in our nation’s Capitol, and a new administration intent on transforming our country.”

Since leaving office, Pence has bought a house in Indiana, announced plans for a podcast and signed a two-book deal for his memoir. Despite the anger of some Trump supporters, he is seen as a potential candidate for the Republican nomination for president in 2024.

His conference speech on Friday duly listed the Trump administration’s achievements – from supreme court appointments to coronavirus vaccines – and took aim at Biden for rapidly unravelling its legacy with “a tidal wave of leftwing policies”.

Pence quipped: “Democrats have been so busy advancing their liberal agenda, sometimes I feel like the left hand doesn’t know what the far left hand is doing.”

He went on to rail against “an explosion” of runaway spending, proposed tax increases, plans to cut military funding and the cancellation of construction on Trump’s signature border wall.

“Literally in five months, they turned the most secure border in the world into the worst border crisis in American history,” Pence said to applause. “You know, when I was vice-president, I visited our southern border. And yes, it’s past time for our current vice-president to go to the border, put our policies back into effect and end the Biden border crisis today.”

He also threw out false assertions to go after “culture war” targets currently in vogue in conservative media including “cancel culture” and “defund the police”.



Among them was critical race theory which, developed by academics starting in the 1970s, examines how racism embedded in law and institutions creates an uneven playing field for people of color in America. Numerous Republican controlled states have moved to ban it from being taught in schools.

Pence crudely misrepresented the intellectual tool by stating: “Instead of teaching all of our children to be proud of their country, critical race theory teaches children as young as kindergarten to be ashamed of their skin color. Critical race theory is racism, pure and simple – and it should be rejected by every American of every race.”

“The truth is it’s past time for America to discard the left wing reflex to see systemic racism across our nation. As my friend Senator Tim Scott says so well, America is not a racist country – America is the most just, noble and inclusive nation ever to exist on the face of the earth.”

In another wildly contentious claim, Pence said: “The United States military is the greatest force for good the world has ever known.”

Pence closed a morning session that included Republican senators Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio and Rick Scott, all potential rivals for the 2024 nomination. Trump himself has not yet declared whether he will run or whether Pence would again be his running mate.

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## US politics

# Republicans dig in and prepare to sink Democrats' voting rights bill

- Mitch McConnell says his party will not back Democrats' plan
- Opposition all but certain to ensure S1 bill's failure in Senate



Mitch McConnell on Thursday. He said said Republicans would not support S1 even if a revised version, with changes amenable to Republicans, was introduced. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Mitch McConnell on Thursday. He said said Republicans would not support S1 even if a revised version, with changes amenable to Republicans, was introduced. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

[Hugo Lowell](#) in Washington

Fri 18 Jun 2021 12.55 EDT

Senate [Republicans](#) are preparing to unanimously block Democrats' marquee election reform legislation, in a move that sets the stage for a bitter showdown over the future of voting rights across America and the survival of the filibuster rule.

[Republicans slap down Manchin's voting rights compromise – US politics live](#)

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The Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell and a dozen top lieutenants said on Thursday that they would vote down the bill known as S1, predicting that not a single Republican would cross the aisle to join Democrats.

McConnell also said Republicans would not support S1 even if a revised version, with changes amenable to Republicans, was introduced.

“Equally unacceptable, totally inappropriate – all Republicans, I think, will oppose that,” he said.

The opposition from McConnell, who commands deep and authoritative control over Republicans in the Senate, is all but certain to ensure the failure of S1 when the bill is set to be introduced on the Senate floor next week.

Democrats are relying on S1 to expand ballot access and tighten controls on campaign spending as they attempt to roll back a wave of new Republican voter restrictions, passed in response to Donald Trump's lies about a stolen 2020 presidential election. The Republican measures are set to have a particular impact on communities of color, and are seen as likely to suppress the Democratic vote.

The bill was revised this week to include a number of Republican priorities, including voter ID requirements, after longtime Senate Democratic holdout Joe Manchin indicated he would extend his support if his party made the changes to secure bipartisan support.

But McConnell's forceful denunciation, making clear that no election reform bill has a chance of passage, suggests the futility of seeking bipartisanship with a Republican party openly committed to thwarting Democrats' legislative agenda.

The expected blanket opposition from Republicans came soon after the revised S1 bill gained a notable endorsement from senior Democratic figure and voting rights advocate Stacey Abrams, who said on CNN she would absolutely support the proposal, and heralded it as the first step to preserving democracy.

Abrams, a former Georgia candidate for governor credited with helping deliver Joe Biden the presidency, is unpopular with Republicans – and they quickly used her words of support to call the revised S1 bill unacceptable.

“When Stacey Abrams immediately endorsed senator Manchin's proposal, it became the Stacey Abrams substitute, not the Joe Manchin substitute,” said Roy Blunt, the top Republican on the Senate Rules committee, which oversees election issues.

The resistance from McConnell and his lieutenants is likely to head off the growing push for election reform legislation, but it also threatened to reopen the simmering tensions over whether to impose new limits on the filibuster.

McConnell's hard-line approach to doom S1 is backstopped by the filibuster – the 60-vote supermajority rule that gives a united minority party ability to block any legislation – and his knowledge that Manchin remains opposed to changing that rule, even though its existence thwarts the passing of much of Biden's ambitious domestic agenda.

But now, with Manchin's own version of S1 in peril, some Democrats are suggesting that a party-line vote that confirms the legislation would have become law were it not for Republican opposition, would force the West Virginian to confront a reckoning with the filibuster.

[Stumbling block: how West Virginia politics explains Joe Manchin](#)  
[Read more](#)

The Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer has already started making the case for imposing new limits on the filibuster by lining up votes on measures certain to be blocked – and demonstrate that Republicans have turned the rule into a weapon of bad-faith politics.

Schumer's idea is to show Manchin, and a handful of other Democrats opposed to curbing the filibuster, that Republicans are only interested in sinking all Democratic policies, and that he has no choice but to defuse the rule in order to pass their legislative priorities.

The pressure to change Senate rules is also growing from Democrats in the House, where the majority whip Jim Clyburn is pushing for Manchin to support carving out an exception to the filibuster for election reform bills, according to a source familiar with the matter.

It was not immediately clear on Friday how Manchin might proceed should Republicans filibuster his own version of S1.

But as Republicans sounded the death knell for the bill, Manchin, on a recent Zoom call reported by the Intercept, told the centrist group No Labels that he was considering whether to call for lowering the filibuster threshold to 55 from 60 votes.

Such a change would still not pave the way for the passage of S1, but it would significantly improve the prospects of other Democratic measures just short of 60 votes, from narrower voting rights bills to a 9/11-style commission to investigate the Capitol attack.

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## Hong Kong

# Hong Kong: Apple Daily staff treat ‘every day like it is our last’ as leaders appear in court

Newspaper staff gather outside court ahead of appearance of editor-in-chief Ryan Law and chief executive Cheung Kim-hung



Supporters of Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper gathered outside court on Saturday for the appearance of the editor in chief Ryan Law and chief executive Cheung Kim-hung. Photograph: Leung Man Hei/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

Supporters of Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper gathered outside court on Saturday for the appearance of the editor in chief Ryan Law and chief executive Cheung Kim-hung. Photograph: Leung Man Hei/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

*Agence France-Presse*

Sat 19 Jun 2021 00.45 EDT



Two executives from Hong Kong's pro-democracy Apple Daily have appeared in court, charged with collusion after authorities deployed a sweeping national security law to target the newspaper critical of Beijing.

Editor-in-chief Ryan Law and chief executive Cheung Kim-hung are accused of colluding with foreign forces to undermine China's national security over a series of articles that police said called for international sanctions.

They were denied bail, with chief magistrate Victor So saying there were insufficient grounds "for the court to believe that the defendants will not continue to commit acts endangering national security".

It is the first time the political views and opinion published by a Hong Kong media outlet have triggered the security law, imposed last year by Beijing to stamp out dissent in the financial hub.

Dozens of supporters queued on Saturday to get seats in court, including many former and current employees of Apple Daily. One staff member, who gave her surname as Chang, said she and many other employees treat "every day like it is our last" working for the paper. "At first, authorities said the national security law would only target a tiny number of people," she said. "But what has happened showed us that is nonsense."

[Hongkongers queue to buy Apple Daily copies after editor-in-chief arrested](#)  
[Read more](#)

Another staff reporter, who gave her first name as Theresa, said she felt Apple Daily's legal troubles were a warning shot. "I think what has happened to Apple Daily today can eventually happen to every other news outlet in the city," she said.

Apple Daily and its jailed owner Jimmy Lai have long angered Beijing with their support for the city's pro-democracy movement and criticism of China's authoritarian leaders.

More than [500 police officers raided the paper's newsroom](#) on Thursday, carting away computers, hard drives and reporters' notepads. Five

executives were also arrested. Law and Cheung were charged on Friday while the three others were released on bail pending further investigations.



Well known pro-democracy protester Grandma Wong is dragged away by police inside the court grounds in Hong Kong on Saturday. Photograph: Peter Parks/AFP/Getty Images

Multiple international media companies have regional headquarters in Hong Kong, attracted to the business-friendly regulations and free speech provisions written into the city's mini-constitution.

But many are now questioning whether they have a future there and are drawing up contingency plans as Beijing presses on with a broad crackdown on dissent in the city.

[Local media have a tougher time](#), with journalist associations saying reporters are increasingly having to self-censor.

[From packed streets to silence: documenting the fall of Hong Kong](#)  
[Read more](#)

Hong Kong has steadily plunged down an annual press freedom ranking by Reporters Without Borders, from 18th in 2002 to 80th this year. Mainland



China languishes 177th out of 180, above only Turkmenistan, North Korea and Eritrea.

Hong Kong and Chinese officials say the arrests were not an attack on the media. Apple Daily is by far the most outspoken of Hong Kong's pro-democracy media outlets. Earlier this week, security secretary John Lee described Apple Daily as a "criminal syndicate".



Pro-democracy activists holding a copy of Apple Daily newspaper and banner protest outside court in Hong Kong on Saturday. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

Its wealthy owner Lai, 73, is [serving multiple jail sentences](#) for his involvement in democracy rallies in 2019. He has also been charged under the national security law and has had his Hong Kong assets frozen.

Authorities froze a further HK\$18m (US\$2.3m) of Apple Daily's company assets on Thursday. Police say they also plan to prosecute three companies owned by Apple Daily under the security law, which could see the paper fined or banned.

It is the first time companies, rather than an individual, have faced a national security investigation.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/19/hong-kong-apple-daily-court-editor-in-chief-ryan-law-cheung-kim-hung>

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## European Commission

# Lack of citizens at EU's citizens' debate raises eyebrows

Analysis: legitimacy of Future of Europe talks called into question as only a quarter of citizens likely to take part



Ursula von der Leyen insists citizens will 'play a leading and active part in building the future of our union'. Photograph: Reuters

Ursula von der Leyen insists citizens will 'play a leading and active part in building the future of our union'. Photograph: Reuters

[Jennifer Rankin](#) in Brussels

Fri 18 Jun 2021 10.51 EDT

The socially distanced places are set, the guests will soon arrive. Everything is ready for the EU's most ambitious attempt to debate with citizens. Everything, except most of the citizens who are meant to be involved.

The Conference on the Future of Europe, an 11-month consultation whose centrepiece will be [citizens' assemblies across the EU](#), holds its first working session at the European parliament in Strasbourg on Saturday. While a full complement of EU politicians and officials are expected in the Rhine city, only about 27 citizens are likely to take part – a quarter of the total who would usually participate in such meetings, [according to the conference website](#).

That might seem odd for a project billed by European Commission president, [Ursula von der Leyen](#), as one where citizens “play a leading and active part in building the future of our union”. An EU official insisted, however, that everything was going to plan. “There is no delay: the European citizens’ panels will start meeting as of September or October, and we are on time for this.” Although the project has been under discussion for more than three years, the selection of citizens’ panels – representative groups of people from all corners of the EU – is incomplete.

Guy Verhofstadt, the veteran EU politician and a co-chair of the conference, dismissed suggestions that the absence of many citizens at the start undermines the legitimacy of the project. “The decisions will not be taken in June. The decisions will be taken in March, in February [2022] when the conclusions will be taken,” he said this week. “What you are saying is that the whole purpose of this conference is to liaise with citizens. Not at all. The purpose of this conference is to elaborate a vision, a new vision of the future of [Europe](#) ... and we want to do that based on the input of citizens.” Meanwhile, organisers expected 67 EU citizens to take part in an event in Portugal on Thursday.

Verhofstadt, an ardent federalist, is seen by some EU governments as one of the problems of the troubled project, which has been marred by inter-institutional EU turf wars, since first adopted by Von der Leyen, as she battled to get MEPs to vote her in as commission president. The idea was first [floated by Emmanuel Macron](#) in March 2019, as the French president sought to draw lessons from Brexit. It is no accident that the conference will end during the first phases of the French presidential elections in spring 2022.

After the onset of coronavirus, many governments see the project as an unwelcome distraction. EU ministers successfully diluted Verhofstadt's role: the Belgian is one of three co-chairs on an executive board, part of the conference's elaborate structure.

The top-heavy bureaucratic structure, plus a founding [declaration replete with jargon](#), such as "[subsidiarity](#)" and "stakeholders", have not inspired some observers. The historian Timothy Garton Ash described the conference as "[an orgy of introspection](#)". Even sympathetic observers fear the project [lacks clear goals](#) and could boost Eurosceptics, if there are no tangible benefits.

Others argue it is too soon to write off the democratic experiment. The political scientist Alberto Alemanno was [one of the project's fiercest critics](#), but has been won round by the final plans. "This might be the first time the EU institutions and the member states have created an institutional mechanism they might end up not being in control of," he said, citing the potential for citizens' assemblies to interpret the task in their own way. The EU law professor thinks the focus on issues (global heating, jobs and health, for example) rather than the arcane business of EU treaty change, shows leaders have learnt lessons from the 2002-03 Convention on the Future of Europe that resulted in the ill-fated European constitution, [rejected by French and Dutch voters in 2005](#).

The pan-European citizens' assemblies – which would involve 800 people in locations yet to be decided – were a first for the EU, he added. "This conference carries the potential to act as a Trojan horse, both for new ideas and dynamics within the union. In the absence of member states' control, some of these ideas and dynamics may actually stick."

Damian Boeselager, the first and only MEP for Volt, a pan-European movement that wants greater public involvement in politics, is also enthusiastic. "A debate about the future of Europe itself has value and needs to be had," he said. The benchmarks for success should be the project's reach and whether it results in "concrete changes" to how the EU works. "It's not a good result if this is a consultation process that ends up with a report for the European council [of EU leaders], then they discuss it for two minutes and it's done," he said. But first the EU needs to find some citizens.

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## Headlines friday 18 june 2021

- [Live UK politics: Lib Dems hail ‘shockwave’ victory over Tories in Chesham and Amersham byelection](#)
- [Chesham and Amersham Lib Dems win byelection in stunning upset](#)
- [Brexit 'Disaster' as billions lost in British food and drink exports to EU](#)
- ['Deeply ashamed' Ministers apologise to rape victims, promise justice overhaul](#)
- [Rape review What victims' groups and legal professionals say](#)

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)  
[Politics](#)

# UK Covid: 10,476 new infections reported as Delta variant case rise by over 33,000 in a week – as it happened

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2021/jun/18/lib-dems-victory-tories-chesham-and-amersham-by-election-covid-coronavirus-politics-live>



## [Liberal Democrats](#)

# Lib Dems win Chesham and Amersham byelection in stunning upset

Sarah Green takes formerly safe Buckinghamshire seat despite senior Tories' canvassing

02:16

Lib Dems smash 'blue wall' with surprising win in Chesham and Amersham byelection – video report

[Heather Stewart](#) and [Haroon Siddique](#)

Fri 18 Jun 2021 02.47 EDT

The [Liberal Democrats](#) have pulled off an extraordinary victory in the Buckinghamshire constituency of Chesham and Amersham, taking the formerly safe seat from the Tories in a byelection.

In a shock result, the Lib Dem Sarah Green secured 21,517 votes, leaving the Conservative Peter Fleet trailing with 13,489, and giving the Lib Dems a majority of 8,028.

The contest was called after the death of [the local MP Cheryl Gillan](#), who had represented the constituency since 1992 and held it in 2019 with a majority of 16,223.

Ed Davey's party will hope the surprise win shows that a swath of seats across the home counties could be within their grasp at the next general election.

Davey said his party secured a huge swing of 25 points to win Chesham and Amersham, claiming: "The Tory 'blue wall' is beginning to crumble ... This is a huge victory for the Liberal Democrats. The people of Chesham and Amersham have sent a shockwave through British politics.

“We were told it was impossible for any party to beat the Tories here in Buckinghamshire. We were told this seat was too safe and the Tories too strong. This Liberal Democrat win has proved them utterly wrong.”

Congratulations to [@SarahGreenLD](#) who has just sent a shockwave through British politics. If [@libdems](#) can beat the Tories here, we can beat them anywhere. The blue wall can be smashed by [@libdems](#)

— Ed Davey MP [@EdwardJDavey](#) [June 18, 2021](#)

Green said she was “humbled by the faith you have placed in me” and promised she would hold the government to account.

“This Conservative party has taken people across the country for granted for far too long,” she said.

Speaking on Friday morning, the policing and crime minister, Kit Malthouse, said the result was very disappointing and that there would be “significant post-match analysis” to discover what went wrong.

### [Graphic](#)

He denied, however, that the Tory party was ignoring its traditional home counties supporters in favour of creating a new base in the north of England and said it was common for governments to lose byelections.

“It’s worth pointing out that only just a month ago we had fantastic results across the home counties and local elections,” he told Sky News. “So there’s some complex things going on there which people need to understand and no doubt people at party headquarters will be focusing on the result and trying to understand how we can win Chesham and Amersham back at the next opportunity.

“It’s tough and disappointing as I say. We would have hoped for a better result ... can’t pretend anything otherwise but we’ve seen this byelection phenomenon in the past. Our job now is to win back the trust and the people in that lovely part of Buckinghamshire.”

01:28

Defeated Tory: Lib Dems 'threw kitchen sink' at Chesham and Amersham – video

Senior Conservative figures including the party co-chair Amanda Milling had poured into Chesham and Amersham to canvass in recent days, determined to show that the [“blue wall” across the home counties](#) remains intact.

Boris Johnson also made a visit to the area to back Fleet earlier this month, telling local paper the Bucks Free Press (BFP): “I think he’s a superb candidate, he’s a local man, he’s lived here for a while and has a long career in business. He has a huge amount to offer parliament and the constituents.”

The prime minister highlighted hopes of turning the nearby Chilterns into a national park, and ensuring development takes place on brownfield land, not the green belt. And he claimed that if Fleet won, he would be the tallest Tory MP. The BFP said the candidate, who towered over Johnson as they toured the streets, was “around 6ft 9in”.

The result will alarm Tory strategists at Conservative HQ. Johnson has [made significant gains](#) in former Labour-held areas in the Midlands and the north-east, including snatching the Hartlepool seat from Keir Starmer’s party last month in a rare gain for a governing party in a byelection.

### [Graphic](#)

But he also needs to avoid alienating his party’s more traditional supporters.

Some home counties Tory MPs, including the former prime minister Theresa May, who represents Maidenhead, and Damian Green, whose seat is Ashford, in Kent, have recently been highly critical of Conservative policies, including Johnson’s planning reforms and his cuts to overseas aid.

The Lib Dems appear to have succeeded in picking off disenchanted Conservative voters in Thursday’s byelection, and Davey will hope it marks the beginning of a renaissance for his party after a very disappointing performance in the 2019 general election.

At last month's local elections, the Lib Dems took control of Amersham town council.

Lib Dem activists on the ground had insisted the race for the seat looked "neck and neck", with former Tory voters on the doorsteps complaining they felt neglected by the governing party.

The Lib Dems said the government's proposed planning reforms had also featured heavily in the campaign.

Turnout in the byelection was just over 52%. The Green party candidate, Carlyne Culver, got 1,480 votes, with Labour's Natasa Pantelic receiving 622.

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## [Food & drink industry](#)

# British food and drink exports to EU fall by £2bn in first quarter of 2021

Industry body says analysis of HMRC data shows structural rather than teething problems with Brexit



Sales of British cheese to the EU were down by two-thirds compared with 2020. Photograph: Michael Kemp/Alamy

Sales of British cheese to the EU were down by two-thirds compared with 2020. Photograph: Michael Kemp/Alamy

[Lisa O'Carroll](#)

[@lisaocarroll](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

British food and drink exports to the EU fell by £2bn in the first three months of 2021, with sales of dairy products plummeting by 90%, according to an analysis of HMRC data.

Brexit checks, stockpiling and Covid have been blamed for much of the downturn, but the sector has said the figures show structural rather than teething problems with the UK's departure from the EU.

"The loss of £2bn of exports to the EU is a disaster for our industry, and is a very clear indication of the scale of losses that UK manufacturers face in the longer-term due to new trade barriers with the EU," said Dominic Goudie, the head of international trade at the Food and Drink Federation (FDF).

He called on the government to "stop prevaricating" over proposals to help exporters "shut out of trading with the EU".



The Food and Drink Federation's analysis of HMRC's trading figures. Illustration: Food and Drink Federation

Sanitary and phytosanitary checks, which have been in the headlines in relation to Northern Ireland, apply to all food and drink exports going to the EU.

The [HMRC figures](#) show dairy products down more than 90% and exports of cheese down by two-thirds compared with 2020. Whisky fell 32%, chocolate 37% and lamb and mutton 14%.





The Food and Drink Federation’s analysis of HMRC’s trading figures by product. Illustration: Food and Drink Federation

Overall food and drink exports to Ireland fell by 70.8% year on year, to Spain by 63%, Italy 61% and Germany 55%.

Trade in the other direction was also hit. UK imports from the EU of wine were down 20%, fruit 15.7% and vegetables 13.9%. Imports of cheese, chicken and beef from Ireland and elsewhere also fell.

The decline in exports to the EU meant sales to the rest of the world, which have stabilised, now account for more than 50% of all British exports of food and drink.

The easing of Covid restrictions drove “strong growth” in exports to pre-pandemic levels in China, Japan, Hong Kong and South Korea.

Exports to China were up by a quarter, driven by growth in the sale of pork, whisky and vegetable oils, said the FDF’s Trade Snapshot report.

There is also fresh hope of a boom in whisky exports to the US after Washington and London agreed [to suspend retaliatory tariffs](#).

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jun/18/british-food-and-drink-exports-to-eu-fall-by-2bn-in-first-quarter-of-2021>

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## [Rape and sexual assault](#)

# Ministers apologise to rape victims and promise overhaul of system

Charities welcome apology but say plans to reform rape prosecutions in England and Wales lack urgency



Protesters at a Reclaim the Night march in Manchester in 2018. Rape convictions have fallen to a record low. Photograph: Joel Goodman/Lnp/REX/Shutterstock

Protesters at a Reclaim the Night march in Manchester in 2018. Rape convictions have fallen to a record low. Photograph: Joel Goodman/Lnp/REX/Shutterstock

[Alexandra Topping](#) and [Caelainn Barr](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 17.23 EDT

Ministers have apologised unreservedly to rape victims, saying they are “deeply ashamed” that thousands of survivors have been failed on the

government's watch, as they pledged an overhaul of the criminal justice system.

A long-awaited government review into a precipitous decline in rape prosecutions promises sweeping reform of how cases are handled in [England](#) and Wales, including targets for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and police to increase the number of prosecutions, and plans to shift the focus of investigations from the victim's credibility to the perpetrator.

But while charities and victim groups welcomed the apology, they said the measures lacked urgency and were underfunded.

Vera Baird, the victims' commissioner for England and [Wales](#), said it was right that ministers had "voiced their shame" and resolved to reverse the downward trend in prosecutions, but added that there was "no hiding that this review presents some missed opportunities".

The lord chancellor, Robert Buckland QC MP, said he was "deeply sorry" many victims had been denied justice "as a result of systemic failings" after years of austerity. "We will not rest until real improvements are made – from transforming the support given to victims, to ensuring cases are investigated fully and prosecuted robustly," he said.

### [Graph showing the decline in rape prosecutions](#)

The police and the CPS have been ordered to work together to increase the number of rape cases making it to court and return prosecutions to 2016 levels before the end of this parliament.

A pilot named Operation Soteria, which pushes police and CPS to focus investigations on suspects rather than complainants' credibility, will be rolled out across four forces by the end of the year with the intention of implementing a national "radical new operating model". Funding of £3.2m to cover the project for 12 months will come from the Home Office.

Sarah Crew, the National [Police](#) Chiefs' Council's lead for rape, said the service was "absolutely committed to doing better", while the director of

public prosecutions, Max Hill, said he was “determined to lead meaningful and lasting change”.

“Scorecards” that measure “timeliness, quality and victim engagement ... and implementation of the action plan” will be published every six months. The crime and policing minister, Kit Malthouse, has been given responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the rape review, and will head a monthly external taskforce including the victims’ commissioner, the domestic abuse commissioner, victims’ groups and representatives from the criminal justice agencies.

“We’ve taken a hard and honest look at how the entire criminal justice system deals with rape, and in too many instances it simply has not been good enough,” said Malthouse, who added that the police and CPS would be “more accountable than ever”.

In a warning shot across the bow for the agencies involved, the review states that should the already-launched [CPS-police joint action plan](#) not be enough to improve outcomes, “further proposals ... will be considered”.

The review followed a series of revelations in the Guardian and sustained campaigning from victims’ groups about the failings over rape prosecutions.

It recommends an overhaul of the treatment of rape complainants, in an attempt to tackle the growing number of those dropping out of cases – in the past five years the attrition rate has [increased from 25% to 43%](#).

A pilot allowing victims to pre-record their evidence and cross-examination, to spare them the trauma of attending court, is being extended from three to six courts and if successful will be rolled out nationally.

In a raft of proposals, the review also advises that victims:

- Should no longer be subject to a “digital strip search” of their communications, and only evidence that is pertinent to a rape case should be used at court.

- Have their phones returned within 24 hours, with a replacement being provided during that time.
- Have access to therapeutic and clinical support, with the ambition of boosting the number of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) by 700.
- Receive clear and prompt engagement from first report to trial, and better information about their rights.

The review was announced in an attempt to halt a major drop in rape prosecutions, which have fallen to historic lows since 2016, while rape reports have doubled.

Prosecutions in 2016-17 stood at 5,190 and fell nearly 60% in four years to 2,102 in 2019-20, even as the number of reports to police increased.

Convictions have also fallen to a record low. According to Guardian analysis of the most recent quarterly figures, there were 1,917 fewer rapists convicted in the year to December 2020 than in 2016-17, a decline of 64% – the CPS secured 2,991 convictions four years ago, compared with 1,074 last year.

Andrea Simon, the director of the End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW), said that while the review showed a desire to fix the justice system for rape survivors, there was “a distinct lack of urgency, measures which reflect the ambition needed and resourcing of plans to make this a reality”.

[Graph showing a fall in the percentage of rape cases resulting in a charge or summons](#)

In a joint statement, Evaw, the Centre for Women’s Justice, Imkaan and Rape Crisis said the review proposed pilots and consultations that may not see results for years, instead of taking urgent action. They added that not enough work had been done to support minority groups and their access to justice.

The organisations have previously [accused the government of failing to engage with victims](#), and Simon noted: “Unfortunately these recommendations reflect this failure to hear from survivors themselves.”

The review also examined why the number of prosecutions had fallen to such a degree. [A legal case brought by Evaw and the Centre for Women’s Justice](#) accusing the CPS of raising the bar for charging [was dismissed](#) in March. The review concludes that the reasons are “complex”, and include an increase in demands for digital data, investigative delays, “strained relationships” between different parts of the criminal justice system, a lack of specialist resources and “inconsistent” support for victims.

The report does not directly mention the impact of austerity or cuts, despite the fact that since 2010 the CPS has faced [a 25% budget cut and a 30% reduction in staff](#), while police forces in England and Wales [lost 21,732 officers between March 2010 and March 2018](#) (15% of their total number).

As part of the review, the Law Commission will consider reforms “to increase the understanding of consent and sexual harm and improve the treatment of victims, while ensuring that defendants receive a fair trial”. It will also examine rape myths and the use of victim’s sexual history and medical records as evidence.

- *In the UK, [Rape Crisis](#) offers support for rape and sexual abuse on 0808 802 9999 in England and Wales, 0808 801 0302 in [Scotland](#), or 0800 0246 991 in [Northern Ireland](#). In the US, [Rainn](#) offers support on 800-656-4673. In Australia, support is available at [1800Respect](#) (1800 737 732). Other international helplines can be found at [ibiblio.org/rcip/internl.html](#)*



## Rape and sexual assault

# What victims' groups and voices from legal profession say about rape review

Proposals of landmark review welcomed but lack of urgent measures and funding are causes for concern



Women march to Trafalgar Square during a global protest against rape culture in 2012. Photograph: Patricia Phillips/Alamy

Women march to Trafalgar Square during a global protest against rape culture in 2012. Photograph: Patricia Phillips/Alamy

[Caelainn Barr](#) and [Alexandra Topping](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 17.23 EDT

A landmark rape review has acknowledged the depth of systematic failures in the criminal justice system. The proposals have been welcomed but victims' groups and voices across the legal profession expressed concerns that it does not produce the urgent measures and funding that are needed.

**Dame Vera Baird QC, the victims' commissioner for England and Wales:**

“I welcome that ministers have today rightly voiced their shame at this abysmal record and resolved to reverse this downward trend. This is important. Even so, there is no hiding that this review presents some missed opportunities.

“I welcome and support those proposals likely to make a difference.”

**Sumanta Roy, the head of research, evaluation and development at the women's organisation Imkaan:**

“Where is the leadership from the police and CPS [Crown Prosecution Service] to show us that black victims would feel confident to report rape and receive justice through the [criminal justice system]? Without effective leadership and a focus on these issues this will send a message to perpetrators that they can continue to commit these crimes with impunity.”

**Claire Waxman, London's victims' commissioner:**

“It has taken two years for us to see this review, and we have no more time to waste. My message to ministers is that we simply can't wait a further two years for these recommendations to take effect – they have to be done immediately.”

**Derek Sweeting QC, the chair of the Bar Council:**

“The investigation and prosecution of allegations of rape has been crying out for reform ... but without better funding for every part of the criminal justice system which deals with these cases, the government's ambitious action plan will fail.

“Barristers both prosecute and defend these cases, so we see all sides of the challenge in providing access to justice through a critically under-resourced criminal justice system. The Bar Council will continue to engage with government on this issue. In return, the government needs to deliver the resources to make good on its promises.”

## Emily Hunt, an independent adviser to the rape review:

“[While] individual investigations and charging decisions should never be politicised, the fact of the matter is the police and CPS are funded by us: the people of this country. They should be accountable to us for failing to do their jobs, and it is easy to see that the plummeting rape prosecution rates in this country over the last five years are nothing but a massive failure of doing their jobs.

“Independence should not mean operating with impunity. It should not mean no accountability. It should not mean getting to continue on as if everything is fine. Everything is not fine.”

- *In the UK, [Rape Crisis](#) offers support for rape and sexual abuse on 0808 802 9999 in England and Wales, 0808 801 0302 in [Scotland](#), or 0800 0246 991 in [Northern Ireland](#). In the US, [Rainn](#) offers support on 800-656-4673. In Australia, support is available at [1800Respect](#) (1800 737 732). Other international helplines can be found at [ibiblio.org/rcip/internl.html](http://ibiblio.org/rcip/internl.html)*



## 2021.06.18 - Coronavirus

- [Live Covid: Israel to send 1m vaccines to Palestine in reciprocal deal; England offers jabs to all over-18s](#)
- [Work Ministers will not tell employees to return to office after lockdown](#)
- [Netherlands Free herring offered as Covid job incentive](#)
- [UK's green list Travel update will be 'cautious', insiders warn](#)

[Coronavirus live](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

# Uganda introduces sweeping new coronavirus rules, Netherlands to ease restrictions from next week – as it happened

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[Working from home](#)

## Ministers will not tell workers to return to office when lockdown ends

Decision will be left in the hands of businesses following damaging headlines last summer



The City of London remains very empty of office workers. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

The City of London remains very empty of office workers. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

[\*Aubrey Allegretti\*](#) and [\*Heather Stewart\*](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 15.14 EDT

Workers will not be told by ministers that they [should return to their offices](#) when the final phase of lockdown [restrictions are expected to be lifted next month](#), government sources have told the Guardian.

In a significant change of approach from last summer, the government is minded to let companies make their own decisions – a strategy that could lead to conflict and confusion among staff.

Boris Johnson was accused of rushing too quickly to get quiet city centres back to pre-pandemic levels when restrictions were lifted last July.

His former closest adviser, Dominic Cummings, said last month that the prime minister's "main concern" was prioritising helping the economy recover quickly at the expense of Covid cases rising again.

But Johnson is said to favour a more cautious approach in the run-up to the final stage of his roadmap out of lockdown for England, pushed back from 21 June to 19 July.

Current guidance that [tells people to work from home where possible](#) is likely to be changed to a more agnostic approach.

One government source explained there had been a shift in thinking. "The message we are hearing from business is not demanding a return, there is no pressure from that direction," they said.

"The pandemic has made everyone reappraise how they balance their lives. [The flexible working consultation](#) actually pre-dates the pandemic – it's about how people prioritise their different responsibilities including caring and children.

"It's a train that has been in motion for a long time. But I think this past year has made everyone see that presenteeism isn't always necessary."

A second government source said Johnson was likely to "take a step away" from prescribing where people should work at the end of the roadmap, admitting: "I don't think we are going to be prescriptive either way – [we will] let people make their own decisions."

Another Whitehall insider said there was a general feeling that the headlines of last summer had been damaging and not entirely representative of the government's position.

“The government’s never told anyone where to work – apart from when there has been a national health emergency,” they said.

[Labour demands clarity on plans to make working from home a ‘default right’](#)

[Read more](#)

“Once the advice to work from home lifts, there’s an argument to say it shouldn’t be something the government takes a view on.”

Some Whitehall workers are also expecting to spend significantly less time in the office than they did pre-pandemic.

One major department has told staff they will be able to spend only 60% of their time in the office from 19 July.

That has led to resentment among some workers, who feel the savings will not have been fairly re-invested in equipment to let them work from home or in a salary boost so they can afford to live in properties more suited to home-working, with a dedicated home office as opposed to having to work in a bedroom or shared spaces such as a living room.

Meanwhile, a consultation on flexible working promised by the Conservatives in their 2019 manifesto will report this year and will probably recommend making flexible working the default – unless employers have a good reason not to.

But if the decision about where people should work this summer is left up to employers or staff, there will probably be a significant tussle as to who should have the final say.

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) said the default should be that “businesses control where work is done” and that while firms will “need to talk with workers about this ... it can’t be unduly onerous to do so”.

Meanwhile trade unions are pushing for employees to be given a right to flexible working conditions – including doing their job from home.

Mike Clancy, general secretary of the Prospect union, has been pushing for a “right to disconnect” – to ensure people working from home cannot be asked to work significantly more.

He said a right to flexible working should not just include where work is conducted, but also start and finish times.

Angela Rayner, Labour’s deputy leader, also said there should not be “one-sided flexibility” for employers to let them “dictate terms to their workers”.

Jo Mackie, an employment lawyer at Slater Gordon, told the Guardian that workplaces were going to have some people who did not want to go back – possibly for legitimate reasons such as childcare or because they were living with someone at serious risk of Covid who cannot be vaccinated.

Although millions of people have been stuck working from home for the past year and may be fearful of returning to an office, she said steps such as ensuring mask-wearing, social distancing between desks and use of hand sanitiser would help: “It’s a genuine worry but it’s a worry that you can reasonably take care of.”

It is unlikely the government will legislate to force people to go back to work, Mackie said, suggesting instead that whatever advice is issued next month, employers should focus on communicating with staff to hear their concerns and follow common sense.

Downing Street insisted this week that no final decision had been taken on changing the work from guidance and that there would be no new legal right to work from home.

A spokesperson for the Business, Energy, Skills and Innovation department said: “We are wholeheartedly committed to protecting and enhancing workers’ rights and have already pledged to consult on making flexible working the default unless employers have good reason not to.

“Flexible working is about much more than working from home, and is crucial to opening up employment opportunities to people regardless of their gender, age, disability or location.”

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## [Netherlands](#)

# Netherlands offers free herring as Covid jab incentive

Country becomes the latest to encourage uptake by offering a traditional early-summer delicacy

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Workers at a vaccination centre in the Hague enjoy a *Hollandse nieuwe*, or new-season Dutch herring. Photograph: [Hollandse Hoogte/Rex/Shutterstock](#)

Workers at a vaccination centre in the Hague enjoy a *Hollandse nieuwe*, or new-season Dutch herring. Photograph: [Hollandse Hoogte/Rex/Shutterstock](#)

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

Thu 17 Jun 2021 10.23 EDT

After Russia offered cars, Washington state spliffs, Indonesia live chickens and Hong Kong the chance of a £1.2m apartment, the latest country to reward people who show up for their Covid shots is the [Netherlands](#) – with soused herring.

Early batches of *Hollandse nieuwe*, or new-season Dutch herring, a traditional delicacy consumed to the tune of 75m a year, are being [distributed to vaccination centres](#) around the country as an encouragement for people to get their jabs.

The incentive is not, admittedly, quite as big as that in California, whose \$116.5m (£83.5m) lottery draw offered 10 top prizes of \$1.5m each to winning vaccinees, or New York's Vax n Scratch, which gave away free state scratchcards with a chance to win a \$5m prize.

[Also in the US](#), Ohio ran a draw offering five full scholarships to any of the state's universities or colleges, Maine gave away 10,000 fishing and hunting licenses and West Virginia tempted reticent recipients with hunting rifles and custom trucks.

In the race to reach herd immunity, some administrations are even more creative. [Washington state's](#) Joints for Jabs scheme, which runs until 12 July, allows licensed pharmacies to reward over-21s who get their a first or second dose with a pre-rolled spliff.

Moscow's mayor, Sergei Sobyenin, has promised that everyone who gets the first of their two doses of vaccine between 14 June and 11 July will be entered into a weekly prize draw with a chance to win one of five cars worth 1m roubles (£10,000) each.

In Hong Kong, where the pandemic has largely been kept under control but low vaccination rates could yet lead to a major outbreak, shopping vouchers, flights and a sumptuous HK\$10.8m flat are among the prizes in various vaccination draws.

[Elsewhere in Asia](#), the rural Mae Chaem district of northern Thailand credits its rather more modest cow lottery – with 27 cows to be won – with encouraging more than 50% of its mainly elderly residents to register for their shot.

In Indonesia's West Java province, a sceptical, elderly and predominantly Muslim population worried that Covid vaccines are not halal is being persuaded by the promise of a live chicken.

Hesitancy is low in the Netherlands – polls show more than 80% of the population want to be vaccinated – but authorities say all encouragement is welcome.

The first barrel of *Hollandse nieuwe* – young herring caught from mid-May when their fat content is considered just right, then gutted, soured and consumed raw either whole or on bread with chopped onion – is usually auctioned off for a good cause.

This year, with an auction impossible, due to Covid restrictions, it was presented “on behalf of the Dutch people” to the head of the municipal health services organising the country's vaccination campaign.

More barrels have been sent to vaccination centres nationwide, where the fish – whose annual arrival on 15 June is celebrated with ceremonies and flag-waving – is being offered to staff and to everyone who shows up for their shot.

Agnes Leewis, the director of the Dutch fish marketing board, said the decision was only logical. Thanks to the centres' staff, she said “we can now hopefully trust that everyone in the Netherlands will feel like a ‘new Dutch’ in a very short time”.

As for recipients, she said: “A herring for a jab. Who could possibly resist?”



## [Air transport](#)

# UK's green list update will be 'cautious', insiders warn

List will be reassessed by 28 June but sources do not expect rapid growth as Delta variant cases rise

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The next travel green list update will be based on public health considerations only, a government source said. Photograph: Nicolas Economou/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

The next travel green list update will be based on public health considerations only, a government source said. Photograph: Nicolas Economou/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

[Heather Stewart](#) and [Aubrey Allegretti](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 14.38 EDT

Holidaymakers should not pin their hopes on a slew of extra countries being added to the quarantine-free green list when it is updated later this month, government sources have warned.

With ministers monitoring data daily on the spread of the Delta variant, after stage four of the reopening roadmap was postponed by a month to 19 July, Whitehall insiders say the mood remains extremely cautious.

Cases of the Delta variant are rising rapidly in the UK, with 11,007 new infections reported on Thursday – the highest figure since 19 February.

Portugal was the only mainstream European holiday destination on the original green list, and [it was then removed on 3 June](#) as the Delta variant spread.

The government has promised to update the list again by 28 June, with details likely to be announced next week to give travellers and holiday firms time to adjust their plans.

“My sense is that we’ll continue to be very cautious in thinking about how we take any steps that could increase transmission,” said a government source.

Another said the decision would be made by No 10, not the Department for Transport – and would be based purely on public health considerations. Boris Johnson has described the 19 July date as a “terminus” and is keen to avoid taking any steps that could risk a fresh delay.

It came as Ireland’s chief medical officer advised the public against non-essential travel to the UK amid concerns over the Delta variant. Dr Tony Holohan said a decision on advice on travel to Northern Ireland from the Republic has not been formally made but said they are “concerned” about the situation across the border.

Meanwhile, Downing Street has confirmed that ministers are examining the idea that double-vaccinated people could be allowed to return from amber list countries without quarantining – though any change is unlikely to take effect in the near future.

The prime minister's official spokesman insisted "no decisions have been made".

"We want people to be able to travel abroad as soon as it is safe to do so. Currently we have set out a traffic light system for international travel. We're always learning more about the virus and its variants. At this stage in the pandemic, our current approach is the right one, but we keep our measures under review, and that was set out clearly in both the roadmap and the global travel taskforce report," he said.

The government's four-step roadmap to reopening, published in February, said vaccinations "could offer a route" to the "safe and sustainable return" of foreign travel.

"Once more is known about the evidence of vaccines on transmission and their efficacy against new variants, the government can look to introduce a system to allow vaccinated individuals to travel more freely internationally," the roadmap said.

The NHS app has been updated to include the user's vaccine status, so that British travellers will be able to prove they are protected against the virus.

Currently travel to countries on the amber list is strongly discouraged, aside from exceptional circumstances. Travellers returning from red list countries must quarantine in a hotel.

Johnson has been repeatedly criticised by Labour for what they claim are his lax border policies. Keir Starmer argued at Wednesday's prime minister's questions that the rapid rise of the Delta variant in the UK could be blamed on Johnson's [failure to add India to the red list](#), from which travel is effectively banned, in early April.

"The British people did their bit by following the rules and getting vaccinated but the prime minister squandered it by letting a new variant into the country. That was not inevitable. It was the consequences of his indecision," he said.



Johnson insisted the UK had the “toughest border measures anywhere in the world” – a claim hard to square with the fact that some countries, including Australia and New Zealand, bar almost all overseas arrivals.

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## 2021.06.18 - Spotlight

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- [Office, hybrid or home? Businesses ponder future of work](#)
- [Technology How remote work opened the floodgates to ransomware](#)
- [Euro 2020 Underdogs and proud: Scotland's fans reflect a nation growing in its sense of self](#)

# The best video games of 2021 so far

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## [Working from home](#)

# Office, hybrid or home? Businesses ponder future of work



Workers in face masks make their way down streets in the City of London. Many bank staff will soon have to return to their daily commutes. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

Workers in face masks make their way down streets in the City of London. Many bank staff will soon have to return to their daily commutes. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

The government's work from home guidance in England could end next month, leaving three options

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

*[Joanna Partridge](#) and [Kalyeena Makortoff](#)*

Fri 18 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

The government could announce an end to its work from home guidance in England next month, leaving companies with three broad choices: bring everyone back to the office; introduce a flexible working regime; or allow people to work from their home office, kitchen table or garden shed permanently.

Here we look at the pros and cons of each option.

## **1. Back to the office**

Major investment banks have taken some of the most hardline positions on return-to-office plans, meaning staff will soon have to return to their daily commutes into London.

The boss of Goldman Sachs, David Solomon, dashed bankers' hopes of splitting their time between home and office in February when he called [remote working an "aberration"](#) that needed to be corrected "as soon as possible".

Morgan Stanley's chief executive, James Gorman, told his New York bankers this week that anyone who felt safe [going out to a restaurant should be returning to the office](#).

Gorman said the bank would take a different approach in countries such as the UK, where fewer than 25% of its 5,000 London staff have been going to work in person, due to stricter Covid restrictions, but insisted offices were where bankers learned their craft. "That's where you build all the soft cues that go with having a successful career that aren't just about Zoom presentations," he said.

Goldman's US staff marched back to their desks on Monday and its 6,000 UK bankers are expected to return to the Plumtree Court offices in London as soon as government work from home orders are lifted, potentially on 19 July.

About 30% of Goldman's UK staff are going into the London office on a regular basis and are being tested twice a week by on-site medical staff as part of safety measures. While it has stopped short of demanding UK staff

disclose their vaccination status, [as has been asked of their American counterparts](#), an anonymous survey revealed “the majority” of its London workforce will have had at least one jab by next week.

Solomon is reportedly concerned that staff have been abusing work from home privileges, citing an incident last year when a junior employee approached him in the middle of the working day while they were dining in the Hamptons – 80 miles outside New York City. The chief executive said he was particularly worried about how to train the next generation of bankers if most staff were working from home.

The JP Morgan chief executive, Jamie Dimon, has also raised concerns about a lack of mentoring for young staff and a small drop in productivity on Mondays and Fridays. Likewise, the Barclays boss, Jes Staley, has bemoaned the challenges faced by young graduates and new hires, who needed to be immersed in the “culture and the values” of the bank by meeting colleagues face to face.

## **2. Hybrid working**

For the majority of large corporates, the [future is hybrid](#). Some of the UK’s largest office occupiers, from the big four accountancy firms to major tech firms, all intend to allow more flexible working after the pandemic, with staff splitting their time between their desk and a remote location.

Working from home is increasingly being demanded as a permanent arrangement by staff, especially younger workers. But company bosses are also aware of the bank bosses’ argument: the benefits of bringing teams together in a communal workplace to foster collaboration and corporate culture, while also helping to train younger employees and new starters, who may not have the luxury of a dedicated workspace at home.

As a result many corporates have opted for the compromise of hybrid working.

The accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers has [announced a flexible working policy](#) for its 22,000 UK staff, allowing them to split the week between their home and office, which the chair, Kevin Ellis, said was a

“direct response to soundings from our people”. The company expects workers to spend 40-60% of their time with colleagues, whether at PwC’s offices or on client visits, and with the freedom to work remotely the rest of the week.

Despite the firm stance taken by Goldman, some City firms have gone hybrid too. The FTSE-listed fund manager Schroders is among those that have told staff they will [not be required to return to the office full-time](#).

The consumer goods group [Unilever](#), the owner of brands including Dove soap, Marmite and Ben & Jerry’s ice-cream, has said staff will never return to a five-days-a-week office pattern. Its chief executive, Alan Jope, has [called the previous approach](#) “very old-fashioned”.

Even technology firms, which should be at the vanguard of video conferencing, are favouring a half-and-half approach. Google’s chief executive, Sundar Pichai, announced a hybrid policy [in May](#), with staff spending about three days in the office “and two days wherever they work best”, similar to the approach adopted by Amazon. However, he added that once the pandemic is over “we will be able to come back together in our offices to see all the people we have missed”.

More than two-thirds (66%) of businesses continue to offer some remote working, according to a [survey](#) from the British Chambers of Commerce. The poll of more than 900 businesses showed almost three-quarters of firms expected at least one team member to continue working remotely over the coming year. However, companies’ ability to offer flexible working varies greatly according to sector, and is far more prevalent in service businesses such as financial or law firms, and far less simple to implement in hospitality, retail or manufacturing.





Some companies have seized the opportunity to wave goodbye to the office.  
Photograph: Joe Giddens/PA

### **3. Permanent remote working**

During the pandemic some companies have seized the opportunity to wave goodbye to the office for good, slashing rental costs. Bosses have sent laptops and monitors, and in some cases desks and office chairs, to their workers, equipping them to work from home for good.

The outsourcing firm Capita [announced last year](#) that the majority of its 900 new hires, taken on to manage London's congestion charge and low-emission zones for its contracts with Transport for London (TfL), would be allowed to work remotely and encouraged to do so from home. [Capita](#) has also expanded its [office closure plans](#) as part of a cost-cutting drive, with the goal of permanently closing a quarter of its office space by the end of 2021.

Yet just 4% of firms across all sectors intend to have their staff work exclusively from home, excluding major meetings and away days, according to a survey by the Federation of Small Businesses.

“Smaller firms tend to be more flexible and adaptive than big corporates by nature, enabling teams to arrive at arrangements that work for all,” said the FSB’s national chair, Mike Cherry.

Some larger companies have also decided to adopt permanent remote working, and not just as a means of cutting costs.

Facebook’s chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, [told workers earlier in June](#) that all full-time employees would be allowed to work remotely if their job allowed it, something he intends to do himself 50% of the time.

“We’ve learned over the past year that good work can get done anywhere, and I’m even more optimistic that remote work at scale is possible,” he wrote in a staff memo.

About one in three staff at [Natwest Group](#), representing more than 20,000 workers, will become largely remote workers, able to live and work anywhere in the UK and [only required to attend their office in person](#) for two days a month.

The number of remote working roles advertised in the UK has risen steadily over the past year, reaching approximately 145,000 jobs in May, equivalent to about 5% of advertised jobs. This means the number of remote jobs being advertised has more than trebled compared with last August, and increased sixfold since February 2020, according to the labour market data company Emsi.

However, talent consultants warn that working from home does not suit all staff, with some finding it hard to remain productive and motivated.

Few workers want to do away with visiting their workplace, said Natalie Douglass, the director of talent strategy consulting at New Street Consulting Group.

“What a lot of workers have discovered over the past year is that having the option to work remotely can be good but not having the option to go to the office at all can make a job much harder,” Douglass said.

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## Cybercrime

# How remote work opened the floodgates to ransomware

With workers outside the ‘castle walls’ of their companies, criminals have it easier – and cryptocurrency hasn’t helped



A tanker delivers gas to a Speedway station after Colonial Pipeline was hit by ransomware. Photograph: Shawn Thew/EPA

A tanker delivers gas to a Speedway station after Colonial Pipeline was hit by ransomware. Photograph: Shawn Thew/EPA

[Kari Paul](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 06.00 EDT

Ransomware has roared into the headlines in recent weeks after criminal hacking networks, tentatively linked to Russia, launched attacks on the major US [meat packing plant JBS](#) and [the nation’s largest fuel pipeline](#).

Joe Biden and his administration are scrambling to address the growing threat, [pressing Vladimir Putin](#) in a highly anticipated meeting on Wednesday to take action against the rise of ransomware attacks. Biden [said he gave Putin](#) a list of 16 areas – mostly in critical infrastructure - that are “off limits” for cyber-attacks.

Ransomware has long posed a cybersecurity threat to companies and infrastructure, but experts say the problem has exploded in recent years. Last year was especially egregious, with ransomware victims in the US paying out [nearly \\$350m](#), according to the global security group the Institute for Security and Technology – a 311% increase over 2019.

The FBI director, Christopher Wray, highlighted this startling figure at a congressional hearing. “Ransomware alone, the total volume of amounts paid in ransomware has tripled over the last year,” [Wray said](#). “We think the cyber threat is increasing almost exponentially.”

Experts attribute the surge to a number of factors, but they say one of the most critical has been the shift to remote working during the pandemic.

“When you are working from home, you are not behind the castle walls any more,” said John Hammond, a cybersecurity researcher at the security firm Huntress. “You are working with your own devices, away from the safe perimeter of corporate networks.”

Criminals have found an increasingly lucrative path in ransomware attacks, in which a hacker breaks into a company or government’s network and seizes data or systems, demanding payment for their return. Employees on computers outside the safety of office networks face more risks. Company networks generally only allow trusted devices to connect, reducing the risk of outside actors or malware entering. They also often have stronger protections in place than the average consumer wifi network.

[Age of the cyber-attack: US struggles to curb rise of digital destabilization](#)  
[Read more](#)

“The transition that we’re seeing to working from home has contributed dramatically to the rise in successful ransomware attacks,” said Israel

Barak, the chief information security officer at the security firm Cybereason. “There are a lot more open doors to access networks now that employees are working remotely.”

One of the most consequential ransomware hacks in recent months, on the Colonial Pipeline – which shut down systems that supply 45% of the eastern United States’ fuel – [has now been attributed](#) to the breach of a virtual private network, commonly used by remote employees to connect to a company system.

VPNs are the most secure way for employees to connect to a corporate network from home, but they can [pose their own risks](#) if they are out of date or do not use multi-factor authentication.

A spokesman for Colonial Pipeline said the VPN that was compromised was an older model and not the VPN that employees were actively using to remotely access the Colonial network.

But experts say any time employees work offsite using their own networks, risks are involved. There have been a [number of documented attacks](#) on companies carried out through VPN access since the pandemic began, [including](#) on the Japanese game developer Capcom and a [European industrial firm](#).





Stephanie Hinds, acting US attorney for the northern district of California, speaks about the Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack during a news conference. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/UPI/Rex/Shutterstock

In June 2020, the justice department [identified a Russian ransomware group](#) that was deliberately targeting people who work from home during the pandemic to access corporate and government networks.

Corporate and government offices have a number of measures in place meant to keep bad actors out, said Joseph Carson, the chief security scientist at the cloud security firm [Thycotic](#). That includes secure internet routers with unique passwords, firewalls that monitor incoming traffic and keep out threats, and company devices with additional security in place.

“Most of those protections are pretty much useless when the devices have been moved to the public internet,” he said.

Though not a ransomware attack, the hack of Twitter in 2020 July was more [directly attributed](#) to remote working. Hackers called several Twitter employees claiming to be IT department employees and offered to help connect through the company’s virtual private network being used by employees working from home. The 17-year-old hacker behind that heist [collected \\$117,000](#) in bitcoin from the attack.



Security breaches at large have also been on the rise over the past year. The vast majority of IT teams – 82% – experienced an increase in cyber-attacks in 2020, [according to a survey](#) from security firm Sophos.

Attacks are rising not only because of remote working but as criminals become more organized and ransomware attacks become easier to execute, said Rahul Telang, a professor of information systems at Carnegie Mellon. The rise of cryptocurrency, which is easier to send online and less traceable than traditional money orders, has facilitated the trend.

“Bitcoin has made it much easier for these people to extract money,” he said. “We have got the combination of information security getting significantly worse with the rise of cryptocurrency.”

Meanwhile, the House homeland security committee has recently advanced multiple bills aimed at enhancing cybersecurity in the wake of the Colonial Pipeline hack.

The Biden administration is also working to improve cybersecurity responses. It [issued a letter](#) to corporate executives and business leaders on what the private sector needs to be doing to protect against ransomware threats – including practices like multifactor authentication, encryption and skilled security teams. Companies were also advised to back up data and test systems regularly.

“The threats are serious and they are increasing,” Anne Neuberger, a cybersecurity adviser at the National Security Council, said in the letter. “We urge you to take these critical steps to protect your organizations and the American public.”



[Euro 2020](#)

**Underdogs and proud: Scotland's fans reflect a nation growing in its sense of self**



Thomas Walker's pugs, Minnie and Mia. The Scottish fan was one of many saying that football was lifting the nation's spirits. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Thomas Walker's pugs, Minnie and Mia. The Scottish fan was one of many saying that football was lifting the nation's spirits. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Excitement and expectation has accompanied qualification and even the 'Auld enemy' can't dint spirits

[Libby Brooks](#) and [Matthew Weaver](#)

Fri 18 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

"It depends if you're realistic or optimistic," says Thomas Walker, who has been walking his pugs, Mia and Mini, around the perimeter of the [Euro 2020](#) fan zone on Glasgow Green. "The match with England is going to be tough".

Walker is buying a saltire flag for the much-awaited Scotland-England clash on Friday, after the men's squad's first qualification for a major tournament in 23 years. Standing at the merchandise stall by the fan zone entrance, he explains how he played in this park as a child in the 70s. He's glad to see it so vibrant again, especially after the pandemic. "This is good for people," he says. "And after Brexit it's nice to see we can still play together. Even though I've not got a ticket, watching it in the house still lifts your spirits."

David Little is inside the zone, watching the Finland-Russia game. The 20-year-old student is enjoying modest online notoriety after deciding to mark the team qualifying for their first major competition in his lifetime by [visiting a street in Scotland](#) named after each of the 26 squad members and posting the results of his mission on social media.

What does qualifying for the Euros mean for his generation of football fans? "It's massive. There's been a lot of near misses. It feels like a turning point – we've got a young squad and hopefully it's the first of many to come."



Thomas Walker with Minnie and Mia. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

After Monday's 2-0 defeat by the Czech Republic, the country was awash with mordant humour about a new generation of Scots coming to terms with the cycle of buoyant hope followed by crushing disappointment. But Euro 2020 has also been an opportunity to reflect on how Scotland's sense of national self has developed over the past quarter of a century, as they face the 'Auld enemy' on Friday.

"Scots are just delighted to be at a major championship", says Laura Montgomery, former medal winner for – and now chief executive of – Glasgow City FC, who has been instrumental in the development of the flourishing national women's game. "The joy of qualifying for the Euros was unbelievable. Most of us absolutely love our little country, and we're also good at making fun of ourselves for not doing so well. We're famous for carrying large, vocal support to games, so you can see how much it means to us".

With trains from Glasgow and Edinburgh to London fully booked over the next 24 hours, Scottish supporters' groups are playing down reports of thousands of ticketless fans descending on Wembley, suggesting Covid

restrictions and the lack of viewing zones in London are likely to constrain travel.

To mark Scotland qualifying for the first major tournament in my lifetime, I decided to visit a street for each of the 26 named Scotland [#EURO2020](#) squad members. Several stupidly long walks, runs, cycles and bus/train journeys later, I finally completed my mission. [pic.twitter.com/vydFp2vcKO](https://pic.twitter.com/vydFp2vcKO)

— David Little (@\_DavidLittle\_) [June 14, 2021](#)

By Thursday lunchtime all of the tables outside the Barrel Vault pub at London's St Pancras station were taken up by Scottish fans, mostly in kilts. Paul Petrie and his two workmates Joe Kelly and Davey Corns flew down from Dundee to Luton on Tuesday.

“We’re the advance party,” says Petrie, dressed in vintage 1978 replica kit with an Archie Gemmill’s squad number 15 on the back. They came just to soak up the atmosphere as fans arrive off the trains from King’s Cross. They do not have tickets for the game but plan to watch at the Oxford Arms in Kentish Town – if it passes a recce planned for later.

Kelly says: “My big worry is that they are not showing the game on a big screen anywhere, so there’s going to be a lot of Scotland fans with no bookings wandering the streets, and that’s just going to cause trouble.”

Davey Corns, who first travelled to London to watch [England](#) play Scotland in 1975, jokes, “My biggest worry is Raheem Sterling.”

Petrie adds: “Even if we lose, they’ll be no trouble. If we just watched Scotland for the winning you’d never go.”

[Glasgow’s Euro 2020 fan zone prompts mixed feelings amid pandemic](#)  
[Read more](#)

The next two tables are taken by a group of 10 students from Edinburgh university, who caught the morning train packed with supporters. “Even for



half-eight in the morning it was pretty rowdy,” says Blair Jones. Most of the group are booked into a hostel in Waterloo. “We booked for nine but there are 10 of us so one of us is doing an all-night on the street,” Jones says. “But it’ll be fine, half of Edinburgh has come down and everyone’s got mates of mates.”

Even at this late stage, they hope the game can be screened in Hyde Park where they reckon 15,000 Scots will gather. Fraser Clark says: “It was clear that the Tartan Army was going to travel, they always do, so not to put a screen up is bit negligent.”

What is not contained is the all-consuming excitement and extravagant expectation accompanying Scotland’s qualification, although most commentators dismiss suggestions that an upswing in support for independence has had an impact – Scotland supporters are a mixed bunch politically.

Montgomery says: “With independence on the rise, two referendums, maybe another one coming, it’s been an interesting time politically and you could say the country has been quite divided. This helps bring people together. Even for those not massively into football, they’re still watching the games.”



Drinking it in: Scottish football fans at King's Cross. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

She also says the male-centric narrative around the sport is changing, after the women's team's notable successes in qualifying for the 2017 European Championships and the 2019 World Cup.

When one of Scotland's sporting greats, Andy Murray, joked that he would be supporting "anyone but England", after teasing about Scotland's absence from the 2006 World Cup, he was voicing the historical gripe of the underdog. But this year, the genuine respect among Scottish supporters for Gareth Southgate's principled management of his squad has been striking, particularly after the [SFA's U-turn](#) over [the team taking the knee](#) during Euro matches.

The cessation of regular home nations games has inevitably reduced the intensity of feeling, says Paul Goodwin of the Scottish Football Supporters Association, as well as the difference in football financing. "The English premiership and the amount of money it entails means it is in a different stratosphere.

"England don't see Scotland as rivals any more," says Goodwin, "although a certain part of Scotland won't grow out of it. That's not about seeing it through the prism of nationalism, but a big country-small country dynamic".





Scotland fans in Glasgow. Photograph: Jane Barlow/PA

“Scotland is more confident in how we see ourselves since the parliament opened, and has embraced going to Europe: 25 years ago the big thing was going to Wembley, now the Tartan Army is more interested in going to Riga.”

Stuart Cosgrove, host of BBC Radio Scotland’s satirical football show *Off The Ball*, says football now is far less of a cultural shorthand for the modern nation.

“It used to be that the Scotland team was a metaphor for how we saw ourselves, but these days our cultural and political confidence is far greater than our sporting confidence. On Monday, nearly all headteachers opened up their schools to football and allowed the children to watch – my wee boy went wearing his strip, had a glass of Irn-Bru and danced to Yes Sir I Can Boogie in the playground. For me that spoke to new confidence as a nation, as opposed to 23 years ago, a belief that it is legitimate to celebrate ourselves.”

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## 2021.06.18 - Opinion

- How Daniel Morgan's murder exposed dark ties between the press and police
- England's school assessment system favours the sharp-elbowed and the wealthy
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- Compulsory care-home staff jobs may sound sensible but would create a catastrophe
- Australia has prosecuted a brave individual. People who speak up keep getting arrested

## [Opinion](#)[Metropolitan police](#)

# How Daniel Morgan's murder exposed dark ties between the press and police

[Duncan Campbell](#)

A report on the 1987 killing of the private investigator paints a picture of incompetence, dishonesty and arrogance



Daniel Morgan's family host a press conference following the publication of the report into his murder, 15 June 2021. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

Daniel Morgan's family host a press conference following the publication of the report into his murder, 15 June 2021. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

Fri 18 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

It is half a century since Sir Robert Mark, the Metropolitan police commissioner brought in to clean up a force riddled at the time with corrupt detectives, famously announced that it was his intention to arrest more criminals than he employed. The findings of the independent panel into the [1987 murder](#) of the private detective Daniel Morgan now provide a telling echo of that time, in terms of the behaviour both of the police and of those parts of the press that cheerfully rewarded and encouraged the bent coppers and dodgy private detectives who supplied them with tales.

Much has been made of the time – eight years – it has taken the panel to conclude its investigation, and the cost – £16m – involved in carrying out the inquiry. But picking through the 1,200 pages of the report and its baleful conclusions of incompetence, dishonesty, arrogance and worse would be a very worthwhile exercise for anyone concerned about the state of British policing, the criminal justice system and, not least, the relationships, past and present, between the media and the police.

The basic facts are well known: a young private detective was found murdered in a pub car park in south [London](#) in 1987 with an axe in the back of his head; there was talk that he had been about to blow the whistle with the help of a newspaper on the subject of police corruption. So whodunnit? Five police investigations failed to provide the answer and all are examined by the panel in detail. There are many different aspects to the panel's findings that will require much further scrutiny but one is worth particular attention.

From the earliest days of the murder investigation, there were suspicions that the media had a part to play. Morgan had announced that he was planning to sell his story about corrupt relationships between the police and criminals. Although the panel came to the conclusion that, in the end, this did not stand up as the motive for the murder, the report goes into great detail about relations between the press – the [News of the World, in particular](#) – and the police.

Long before the panel started taking evidence, it was already clear that Rupert Murdoch, the owner of the News of the World, the Sun, the Times and the Sunday Times, had a fairly relaxed attitude to the payment of police officers for information and suggested to his own staff that bribing the

police had been going on for a hundred years. [Clandestinely recorded in March 2013](#), at a staff meeting after the hacking balloon went up, he suggested that, “I would have thought 100% – but at least 90% – of payments were made at the instigation of cops saying, ‘I’ve got a good story here. It’s worth 500 quid’ and you would say, ‘No, it’s not’ or, ‘We’ll check it out’ or whatever and they’d say, ‘Well, we’ll try the Mirror’ ... It was the culture of Fleet Street.”

It was indeed part of the culture of many parts of Fleet Street. One crime correspondent, now no longer with us, was famous for meeting detectives once a week in a central London bar and handing them envelopes stuffed with cash to thank them for their tipoffs during the week. The former drugs squad detective Norman “Nobby” Pilcher, famous in the 1960s for busting the likes of John Lennon, George Harrison and Dusty Springfield, [said only last year](#), at the time of the publication of his memoir, *Bent Coppers*, that when he busted someone famous, the reason the suspect’s arrest was always caught on camera in time for an appearance on the front pages was that his corrupt colleagues cheerfully sold the information to the press in exchange for large sums of money.

The relationship between the [News of the World](#) and the very highest levels of the police also comes under critical scrutiny in the panel’s report on the decision by the former commissioner, Lord Stevens, to take on a job with the [News of the World](#) after leaving office at the Met. Given the relationship between some journalists at the [News of the World](#) and some of the suspects in the murder, this inevitably raised eyebrows at the time.

The panel puts it baldly: “It is clear that, at the very least, Lord Stevens failed to exercise due diligence before entering into a contract with the News of the World ... It is appropriate for the panel to state that the demonstrated links between personnel at the highest levels of the [Metropolitan police](#) and people working for a news organisation linked to criminality associated with the murder of Daniel Morgan, are of serious and legitimate public concern. For senior police officers to take up employment with media outlets or other organisations, whose record involves criminal activity, is profoundly damaging for the reputation of the police service.”

One trusts that the Murdoch media empire will be as severe in condemnation of the News of the World in, for instance, the paper's mad hounding of the detective investigating the murder as they have been of the BBC over the Martin Bashir and Diana, Princess of Wales interview. By a twist of fate, Boris Johnson spoke about the role of the media this very week, in the wake of the hounding of BBC and the former Guardian journalist Nicholas Watt. "The media must be able to report the facts without fear or favour," [said the prime minister](#). "They are the lifeblood of our democracy." This must have brought a wry smile to the face of one former News of the World reporter, Stuart Collier. In 1990 – just after the Daniel Morgan murder – [Collier was pursuing a story](#) about Darius Guppy, an Old Etonian schoolmate of our prime minister who would later be convicted of fraud. Guppy, in a famously recorded conversation, had asked Johnson, then a working journalist himself, to find Collier's address so that he could have him beaten up. Johnson asked how badly the journalist was to be hurt and finally agreed to help: "OK, Darry, I've said I'll do it. I'll do it, don't worry." When the matter was raised years later, the prime minister said he had been joking.

By chance, also, the report comes just after the Daniel Morgan case was mentioned in *Line of Duty*, the fictional television drama about the investigation of corruption within the service. Indeed, there are more than a few passages of the report, such as those referring to "person Z10 and person R16", that could have come straight from a *Line of Duty* script. But Morgan's murder was nonfiction and all of us in the media and beyond should be grateful to [Alastair Morgan](#), the brother of the murdered man, whose terrier-like determination prompted the inquiry and who has been the keeper of his brother's flame ever since. Without his tenacity, this murder would have slipped from view but is now, quite rightly, back in the news, that lifeblood of democracy. It would be great if this renewed attention could finally – finally – lead to a successful conclusion to the case.

- Duncan Campbell is a freelance writer who worked for the Guardian for more than 20 years
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## [OpinionExams](#)

# England's school assessment system favours the sharp-elbowed and the wealthy

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



It's a good sign that teachers, not algorithms, are in control this summer. But they face huge pressure to inflate grades



Illustration: Ben Jennings/The Guardian

Illustration: Ben Jennings/The Guardian

Fri 18 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

Their leavers' proms are cancelled due to Covid, their summer festival tickets hanging by a thread. And they still can't celebrate the end of exams by going clubbing. But at least this year's GCSE and A-level students have now finished school for summer, albeit with more of a whimper than a bang. For teachers, however, the exam stress is just beginning.

Friday 18 June is the deadline in England for schools submitting estimated grades – based on assessment papers children sat this spring, but also performance throughout the course – which will determine the class of 2021's futures in the absence of normal exams. The good news is there won't be a repeat of last year's debacle, when swathes of teacher-predicted grades for exams that children couldn't sit were abruptly downgraded by an exam board algorithm. The bad news is that we may be heading for a different debacle instead: an emotive high-wire summer of appeals, favouring sharp-elbowed parents who know how to work the system, in a year when deepening inequalities have already been alarmingly baked in by the pandemic.

This week, [a Tes survey](#) to which more than 2,800 teachers responded found that one in four had experienced [parents pressuring them](#) to raise grades – including threats of legal action if their little darlings didn't get what they needed, and parents who happened to be solicitors emailing in pointedly from work addresses. Things seemed particularly intense in private schools, where families may have imagined their fees were buying them A\*s.

But more heartbreakingly, a third of teachers also reported pressure from pupils, including sobbing children whose dreams depended on those grades. The safe distance that used to exist between children and the faceless, anonymous exam boards determining their futures has disappeared. No matter how fat the dossiers of supporting data teachers have laboured to compile, failure and rejection will feel more personal this year. Only 2% of teachers admitted caving under pressure. But unless the other 98% all have nerves of steel, hearts of stone and senior leadership teams admirably oblivious to how their results compare with the school next door, some are surely kidding themselves.

Grade inflation seems inevitable, sometimes for the best of reasons; in a normal year there are always some children who have a meltdown in the exam hall and miss out on grades that were within their reach, and under this system they're more likely to triumph. Well, fair enough. Better too generous than too mean when dealing with the life chances of teenagers in a national crisis. But what if that generosity isn't evenly distributed?

The class of 2020 entered lockdown only a few weeks before their exams, but children sitting assessments this spring have endured over a year of disrupted education in which experiences varied wildly. The lucky ones got online lessons and a laptop to themselves; those who were unlucky struggled with photocopied worksheets and no broadband at home. Even once schools reopened, children in Covid hotspots where constant outbreaks sent them into one spell of self-isolation after another were living in a different world to students who didn't miss a day. [Exams](#) are never entirely fair, and nor are the home circumstances from which children approach them. But this year looks more of a lottery, geographic and social, than ever.

Meanwhile class WhatsApp groups are rife with indignant rumours about the different approaches schools have taken to this spring's assessments, with some coaching children on exactly what to revise and others aiming for exam-like conditions. Some parents will inevitably be nervous too about unconscious bias creeping into teachers' judgments, even though an [Ofqual review](#) found no evidence of children being disadvantaged on grounds of class, race or sex in last year's teacher predictions compared to exams.

Exam boards can demand evidence to back up suspicious-looking grades, but it's unclear exactly how that will work. Kevin Stannard, the director of innovation and learning at the Girls' Day School Trust (representing independent schools), has already [raised fears](#) of a "Mexican standoff in August" if heads simply refuse to change the decisions they've made. Universities face a bunfight for places, with some [quietly restricting offers](#) to offset the risk of more sixth formers getting A\*s than they have places. Meanwhile, an uneasy question mark hovers over younger teens. Will the first intake to sit "normal" GCSEs or A-levels be punished by an abrupt return to earth after two years of pandemic grade inflation, making them look like relatively weaker candidates to future employers?

There are no easy answers to holding exams in a pandemic, and better education secretaries than Gavin Williamson might have struggled with the resulting dilemmas. But the system in Wales – where children will [get provisional grades](#) this month, leaving more time for appeals, or for those who haven't done as well as they hoped to revise their plans before final grades are confirmed in summer – looks kinder than the high-stakes August results day planned for England. And if this year's results do show a widening gap between rich and poor kids, that will only make the case for a properly funded educational catch-up programme for children of all ages even more pressing, to help level the playing field in years to come. After all they've willingly sacrificed through the pandemic, teenagers deserve better than this.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
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## [Opinion](#)Rape and sexual assault

# Survivors of rape need justice – not more pilots and postponement

[Andrea Simon](#)

There's an apology to victims for the fall in prosecutions – but this review lacks the urgent measures needed to fix the crisis



Protest against the new policing bill and violence against women, New Scotland Yard, London, 14 March 2021. Photograph: Joshua Windsor/Alamy

Protest against the new policing bill and violence against women, New Scotland Yard, London, 14 March 2021. Photograph: Joshua Windsor/Alamy

Fri 18 Jun 2021 05.50 EDT



It has taken two years, several delays, and involved no meaningful survivor engagement, but the government has finally issued an apology to victims and published its findings and recommendations from the [“end-to-end” review](#) of how rape cases are handled in the criminal justice system in England and Wales.

The figures are stark: the latest Home Office data shows 52,210 rapes were recorded in England and Wales in 2020, but only 843 resulted in a charge by the end of the year, that’s fewer than [1 in 60 cases](#). And those are the cases that make it to court – some women drop out of the system, and many fail to report at all. In particular, there are significant obstacles to justice for those most poorly served by the criminal justice system such as black, minority, deaf and disabled women, among many others.

These are urgent issues to be addressed, but the review’s answer can not be that rape is just a difficult crime to prosecute. In most rape cases, it is not a question of whether sexual intercourse occurred, but whether there was consent or not. This is what, the review claims, can lead to a focus on the victim and their “state of mind” during investigations and prosecutions.

We have seen numerous cases where there has been compelling evidence – multiple victims of the same perpetrator, suspects who had been caught blatantly lying about events, proof of injuries or damage to clothing – and where it seemed highly implausible that the victim would have consented to what was happening, but incredibly decisions were made not to proceed with a charge.

Harmful myths and stereotypes about how “credible” victims behave, and the fact of “one person’s word against another” should not be used to suggest that a prosecution is impossible. [Police](#) investigations have too often and for too long failed to place the proper emphasis on suspects and their offending behaviour and history.

A move towards a new model of “suspect-centric” policing is one of the ambitions of the review, and the recommended pilot, Operation Soteria, has the potential to be transformative. However, this is a regional project with limited funding, and it may be years before there is a national rollout.

Because we know what happens in courtrooms has an impact on decision-making at all the preceding stages of a rape investigation, we had hoped there would be more in-depth interrogation into what is going wrong in courts and recommendations to address these issues. This could include a ban on the use of sexual history evidence, and a special commission on juries to consider a range of things, including juror education.

We also know how retraumatising the criminal justice system can be for victims and how intrusive disclosure practices, including “digital strip searches” make them feel like suspects, rather than victims of a crime. The review proposes that victims should no longer be subject to a digital strip search of their communications, and only evidence that is pertinent to a rape case should be used in court; it also recommends better access to therapeutic and clinical support. Immediate action also could be taken to give all rape victims the option of prerecording their evidence by video, but instead there is a yet another pilot in a handful of crown courts.

The police and the Crown Prosecution Service have been ordered to work together to increase the number of rape cases making it to court and to return prosecutions to 2016 levels before the end of this parliament, and political leadership is vital for turning these promises into action. We welcome the responsibility given to the crime and policing minister, Kit Malthouse, to oversee the much-needed changes. Prosecution levels will be monitored and there is a plan to introduce “scorecards” to measure the implementation of the recommendations, but a scoring system doesn’t automatically equal greater accountability. Poor performance must be met with real consequences for senior leaders of the police and CPS.

Right now words need to be matched by resources, something there is little mention of in the review. Since 2010, there has been a reduction in specialist sexual offences units, meaning less experienced and knowledgeable police officers to work on rape cases. Reduced funding for the specialist women’s sector has made it more challenging for victims to report to the police and to stay engaged with the system.

At every step of this review specialist women’s groups have wanted to help inform a new and better justice system for the women and girls they know are being routinely failed. EVAW, along with Imkaan, Rape Crisis England

and Wales and the Centre for Women's Justice co-authored [a report](#) with a bold slate of recommendations to deliver justice. Disappointingly few of these have made their way into the report.

To rebuild the public confidence that has been so deeply damaged by the collapse in rape prosecutions, we urgently need to start seeing improvements, and investments in levelling up across the whole system to deliver the justice all rape victims and survivors deserve. Transforming the response to rape cannot wait another two years for more trials and pilots to complete. Women have been waiting for justice for too long already.

- Andrea Simon is director of the End Violence Against Women Coalition
- *In the UK, [Rape Crisis](#) offers support for rape and sexual abuse on 0808 802 9999 in England and Wales, 0808 801 0302 in [Scotland](#), or 0800 0246 991 in [Northern Ireland](#). In the US, [Rainn](#) offers support on 800-656-4673. In Australia, support is available at [1800Respect](#) (1800 737 732). Other international helplines can be found at [ibiblio.org/rcip/internl.html](http://ibiblio.org/rcip/internl.html)*

## OpinionCare workers

# Compulsory care-home staff jobs may sound sensible but would create a catastrophe

[Polly Toynbee](#)



There are already vacancies in England that cannot be filled. So what will happen if vaccine-hesitant workers decide to leave?



St Cecilia's care home in Scarborough, North Yorkshire. Photograph: Gary Calton/The Observer

St Cecilia's care home in Scarborough, North Yorkshire. Photograph: Gary Calton/The Observer

Thu 17 Jun 2021 12.36 EDT

It's a no-brainer, isn't it? Of course every care and NHS worker should be vaccinated against Covid and anything else that puts them and their patients at risk. Those who remember people who had contracted polio at school with leg irons or paralysed arms know how to thank modern medicine for our salvation.

Facts, scientific facts, that's the dose the vaccine-refusers need. Or so every good rationalist believes. But why do we never learn our lessons? Look where that facts-based approach got us remainers in the Brexit referendum. Humans don't live by reason alone – maybe scarcely at all. And our government knows it, ruling by raw emotion and focus group, guided by what people feel regardless of truth. It leaves the very sensible Labour opposition flailing.

Why compulsory vaccination, and why only for [care homes](#)? For the NHS all that's been announced is a "consultation" – but with strong opposition from the British Medical Association, Royal College of Nursing, unions, the NHS Confederation and NHS Providers, that's likely to go nowhere. The care sector can be ordered around because it's powerless and defenceless – as shown by the absence of that long-promised [social care plan](#) while the system collapses.

If all unvaccinated care workers were sacked, in some parts of the country care homes would cease to function at all. They would be closed overnight as unsafe, leaving nowhere to send the frail but into hospital beds. London and the south-east would be among the hardest hit: in the capital only [23% of homes](#) have at least 80% of their staff vaccinated, only 40% in the south-east. Imagine if only a proportion of those workers walked away: they can earn more shelf-stacking in Aldi, and hospitality in that part of the country is crying out for staff. There are already [112,000 care-worker vacancies](#), so compulsion, the "rational" thing to do, risks turning a crisis into a catastrophe.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland say they have no plans for compulsion: instead they have given their care workers [£500 pandemic gratitude bonuses](#); the English government gave theirs nothing. No 10, polling every day, looks as if it's engaging in dog-whistle politics here against people from ethnic minorities – many of whom have long had strong grounds to mistrust authorities and are more hesitant to take the vaccine.

Behind the scenes there is division: the very sensible NHS England – still quite separate from Matt Hancock's politically driven Department of [Health and Social Care](#) – has quietly put out its own evidence that persuading staff to get vaccinated can and does work, gradually, if done in the right way.

NHS England reports "a sharp rise in people overcoming hesitancy", and a large study by the [Vaccine Confidence Project](#) finds that, among the previously unwilling, 17% more men and 23% more women have come forward for vaccination, an increase of 21% among Muslims and 18% among Christians. This was achieved, says NHSE, through the health service's uniquely close local connections, with GPs and local staff

persuading their own communities: “Targeted engagement with faith leaders, pop-up clinics in places of worship, sports stadiums and local community centres, as well as strong, vocal backing from high-profile voices.” East London’s Dr Farzana Hussain personally rang up every one of her vaccine-hesitant patients.

Dr Bola Owolabi, director of NHSE health inequalities, says that vaccine uptake among black British staff has risen by [more than 200%](#) over the last two months.

It is vanishingly hard to find anyone close to the colossal workforce crisis in both care and the NHS who thinks compulsion is the way to go. The message it sends care workers is brutal, yet again: doorstep clapping is forgotten, and these underpaid, overworked staff feel fiercely resentful of government.

I just visited St Cecilia’s in Scarborough, North Yorkshire – one of four homes owned by Mike Padgham, who has become the go-to voice, representing 250 small independent care-home owners in the north. Simon, his senior nurse, and Alison, his team leader, worry about the 10 vacancies in St Cecilia’s. Staff are trying to recruit friends and family, and they praise the bravery of those who didn’t quit when hospitals sent them untested, infected cases: Covid killed four residents.

Padgham says six of his 100 staff are not vaccinated, but gradual persuasion has been working. “How can I sack them when they have stuck with us through the pandemic? I can’t move them away from the frontline either, as they’re needed.”

Small homes are closing at an accelerating rate, “but we have no political power”. Almost all his residents are state-funded, so why don’t his members strike and refuse to take in any more? He says many homes already near financial collapse would be tipped over and, besides, “the public have no sympathy: they think we’re raking it in”.

With growing anger, he waits for a government plan that never comes. “They must decide what to do with private homes: stay private or be



nationalised? We could become like GPs, technically private businesses but paid a fixed rate. Do something!”

But there will be no plan until next year, and probably not then either, so another spending review will pass in the autumn with no solution because every answer is super-expensive. And the signs are that all Boris Johnson cares about is easing care costs for property-owning families, not new money to create a professional, respected, trained, decently rewarded workforce. Instead, it's all stick with no carrot for those who risked their lives to care for others in the pandemic.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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## Opinion Witness K case

# Australia has prosecuted a brave individual. People who speak up keep getting arrested

Kieran Pender

The Witness K trial has shown how our democracy should not work



“This case has been a tale of espionage, intrigue, conspiracy and secrecy. But at its heart, the prosecution of this whistleblower is a damning indictment on the government that approved it, the laws that enabled it and the secrecy provisions that kept much of it hidden from public view.”

Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

“This case has been a tale of espionage, intrigue, conspiracy and secrecy. But at its heart, the prosecution of this whistleblower is a damning indictment on the government that approved it, the laws that enabled it and the secrecy provisions that kept much of it hidden from public view.”

Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

Fri 18 Jun 2021 22.28 EDT

Sitting in the magistrates court in Canberra this week, I felt like I was watching a scene from Franz Kafka's *The Trial* – the famous novel in which a man is arrested and prosecuted by a mysterious authority for an unknown crime.

Separated from observers by a makeshift black partition sat Witness K, a former intelligence officer. Black tape obscured glass in the courtroom doors and masked security cameras. For the first time in court proceedings that have meandered since charges were laid in 2018, Witness K's voice was heard: "Guilty, your honour."

Late on Friday, magistrate Glenn Theakston sentenced K to a three-month suspended jail term.

He should never have been prosecuted.

This case has been a tale of espionage, intrigue, conspiracy and secrecy. But at its heart, the prosecution of this whistleblower is a damning indictment on the government that approved it, the laws that enabled it and the secrecy provisions that kept much of it hidden from public view. This is not how our democracy should work.

[Witness K should be shown 'judicial mercy' not used to deter others, court told](#)

[Read more](#)

It was a story that began in the heat of Dili in 2004. Australia's war-torn neighbours were rebuilding from the conflict with Indonesia that had precipitated Timor-Leste's independence. Crucial to that reconstruction project were the royalties to natural resources – oil and gas – that sit beneath the Timor Sea.

Negotiating with Australian representatives, Timorese officials did not know that the deck was rigged. They were negotiating with a mirror behind them, because Australian spies had bugged their offices.

It was, and remains, a stain on Australia's conscience. But rather than apologising, our government has doubled down – refusing to admit any wrongdoing while prosecuting the people who exposed it.

The prosecutions of Witness K and his former lawyer, Bernard Collaery, have been battles of attrition, with dozens of court appearances – many held in secret – and interlocutory applications. The government has spent millions in legal fees.

While Witness K's pro bono counsel, Robert Richter QC, sought non-conviction and a good behaviour order, a much heavier penalty was imposed by Theakston (although not as severe as the maximum possible two-year jail term).

Meanwhile, Collaery has pleaded not guilty, and is appealing secrecy orders imposed in his case. The dispute seems destined to go to the high court, where Australia's apex court will be required, by law, to hear the matter behind closed doors. So much for open justice.

There is immense public benefit in knowing about wrongdoing committed in our name. There is no public interest in prosecuting the brave individuals who expose it. Such prosecutions also have a chilling effect on the willingness of other Australians to speak up.

Witness K and Collaery are not our only truth-tellers to be prosecuted. Richard Boyle blew the whistle on unethical debt recovery practices at the tax office; he has been vindicated by several independent reviews but will endure a weeks-long criminal trial in Adelaide scheduled for September.

Former army lawyer David McBride spoke up about war crimes allegedly being committed in Afghanistan; he too has been vindicated and he too faces trial for speaking up.

Legally, the public interest is what guides prosecutorial action. Prosecutors can drop a prosecution at any time before trial if they determine the case is no longer in the public interest. For Witness K, it is too late. For Collaery, Boyle and McBride the clock is ticking. Their prosecutions should be dropped immediately.

We cannot rewrite history, and the stain of Witness K's prosecution cannot be erased. But we can change the law to ensure people are protected, not punished, when they speak up about wrongdoing in the future.

First, our federal whistleblowing law should be urgently reformed. Five years ago, an independent review told the government that the Public Interest Disclosure Act was broken and needed to be fixed. The experience of whistleblowers was not a happy one, it said. Half a decade later, the government is happy to green-light whistleblower prosecutions but has not changed the law to make it easier for whistleblowers to speak up lawfully.

Second, the National Security Information Act, which has enabled much of the K and Collaery cases to be heard behind closed doors, must be amended to better safeguard open justice. A balance can and should be struck that protects national security without sacrificing this fundamental democratic principle. As was alarmingly underscored by the Witness J case – a different ex-spy, who was charged, sentenced and imprisoned in complete secrecy – the NSI Act gets the balance completely wrong.

Last, prosecutorial guidelines should be revised to recognise the vital democratic role played by those who speak up about wrongdoing. Our regulators need to do a better job supporting, empowering and protecting whistleblowers. Almost every Australian employee has whistleblower rights on paper. But these have not worked well enough in practice.

People who speak up about serious wrongdoing do the right thing. They are crucial agents of democracy. And yet they keep being arrested.

Reform is urgently needed to protect Australia's whistleblowers and to stop these Kafkaesque scenes reoccurring in our courtrooms.

- Kieran Pender is a senior lawyer with the Human Rights Law Centre, leading its work on whistleblower protections

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## 2021.06.18 - Around the world

- [US Juneteenth becomes federal holiday celebrating end of slavery](#)
- ['Like a coward' Officer injured in Capitol attack says Republican ran from him](#)
- [US Supreme court upholds Obamacare](#)



## [US news](#)

# Juneteenth becomes federal holiday celebrating end of slavery in US

Biden signs bill at jubilant ceremony as US takes steps to confront shameful history



A Juneteenth celebration in Los Angeles in 2020. Photograph: Jae C Hong/AP

A Juneteenth celebration in Los Angeles in 2020. Photograph: Jae C Hong/AP

*Guardian staff and agencies*

Thu 17 Jun 2021 19.20 EDT

The US will officially recognize Juneteenth, which commemorates the end of slavery in America, as a federal holiday after [Joe Biden](#) signed a bill into law on Thursday.

At a jubilant White House ceremony, the president emphasized the need for the US to reckon with its history, even when that history is shameful.

“Great nations don’t ignore their most painful moments,” Biden said, before he established what will be known as Juneteenth National Independence Day. “Great nations don’t walk away. We come to terms with the mistakes we made. And remembering those moments, we begin to heal and grow stronger.”

Just before signing the bill, Biden added: “I’ve only been president for several months, but I think this will go down for me as one of the greatest honors I will have had as president.”

Kamala Harris, also in attendance, reflected on the historic nature of the day and the presence of Black lawmakers who worked diligently to advance the bill.

Harris, who is the first Black woman to serve as vice-president, told those at the White House for the bill signing: “We are gathered here in a house built by enslaved people. We are footsteps away from where President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

“And we are here to witness President [Joe Biden](#) establish Juneteenth as a national holiday. We have come far, and we have far to go, but today is a day of celebration.”

02:00

Biden signs bill marking Juneteenth as federal holiday celebrating end of slavery in US – video

Juneteenth commemorates the day in 1865 when news of the Emancipation Proclamation reached the people of Galveston, Texas, freeing slaves in the last rebel state. Abraham Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, but the proclamation wasn’t enforced in Galveston until federal soldiers read it out on 19 June 1865.

Black Americans are rejoicing at the move, but many say more is needed to address systemic racism.

Republican-led states have enacted or are considering legislation that activists argue would curtail the right to vote, particularly for people of color. Legislation to address voting rights issues, and institute policing reforms demanded after the killing of George Floyd and other Black Americans, remains stalled in the Congress that acted swiftly on the Juneteenth bill.

[Juneteenth Independence holiday: here's what you need to know](#)  
[Read more](#)

“It’s great, but it’s not enough,” said Gwen Grant, president and CEO of the Urban League of Kansas City. “We need Congress to protect voting rights, and that needs to happen right now so we don’t regress any further,” she added. “That is the most important thing Congress can be addressing at this time.”

Federal recognition of Juneteenth also comes as Republican officials across the country move to ban schools from teaching students “[critical race theory](#)”, the history of slavery and the continuing impacts of systemic racism.

The Senate unanimously [passed the bill](#) earlier this week, but in the House, 14 Republicans voted against it.

Most federal workers will observe the holiday on Friday. The Washington DC mayor, Muriel Bowser, and Maryland governor, Larry Hogan, announced that state and city government offices would be closed on Friday in honor of Juneteenth. District of Columbia public schools will also be closed on Friday.



A Juneteenth historical marker in Galveston, the city where Juneteenth began. Photograph: Jennifer Reynolds/AP

Before 19 June became a federal holiday, it was observed in the vast majority of states and the District of Columbia. Texas was first to make Juneteenth a holiday, in 1980.

In Texas, residents celebrated the role their state played in the historic moment.

“I’m happy as pink,” said Doug Matthew, 70, a former city manager of Galveston who has helped coordinate the community’s Juneteenth celebrations since Texas made it a holiday.

He credited the work of state and local leaders with paving the way for this week’s step by Congress.

“I’m also proud that everything started in Galveston,” Matthew said.

Pete Henley, 71, was setting up tables on Thursday for a Juneteenth celebration at the Old Central Cultural Center, a Galveston building that once was a segregated Black school. He said the Juneteenth holiday would help promote understanding and unity.

He said his family traced its roots back to enslaved men and women in the Texas city who were among the last to receive word of the Emancipation Proclamation.

“As a country, we really need to be striving toward togetherness more than anything,” Henley said. “If we just learn to love each other, it would be so great.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/17/juneteenth-slavery-federal-holiday-biden-signs-bill>

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## [US Capitol breach](#)

# Officer injured in Capitol attack says Republican ran from him ‘like a coward’

Michael Fanone said on Wednesday he was ‘very cordial’ in interaction with Andrew Clyde in Capitol elevator earlier that day



Andrew Clyde in Washington. Fanone said when he tried to shake Clyde’s hand ‘he just stared at me. I asked if he was going to shake my hand, and he told me that he didn’t who know I was.’ Photograph: Michael Brochstein/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Andrew Clyde in Washington. Fanone said when he tried to shake Clyde’s hand ‘he just stared at me. I asked if he was going to shake my hand, and he told me that he didn’t who know I was.’ Photograph: Michael Brochstein/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

[Martin Pengelly](#)  
[@MartinPengelly](#)



Thu 17 Jun 2021 15.02 EDT

A Republican congressman “ran as quickly as he could, like a coward” when a police officer injured in the attack on Congress on 6 January saw him and tried to shake his hand, the officer said.

“I was very cordial,” Michael Fanone [told CNN](#) on Wednesday of his interaction with Andrew Clyde, in a Capitol elevator earlier that day.

[Michael Wolff to publish third exposé of Trump, covering last days in office](#)  
[Read more](#)

Fanone, of the DC metropolitan police, [was assaulted and injured](#) after he rushed to help defend the Capitol from supporters of Donald Trump who rioted in service of his attempt to overturn his election defeat.

Fanone returned this week with a colleague from the US Capitol police, in an attempt to speak to Republicans including Clyde who [voted against](#) awarding the congressional gold medal to officers who defended the building.

When he saw the Georgia representative, Fanone said, he “extended my hand to shake his hand. He just stared at me. I asked if he was going to shake my hand, and he told me that he didn’t who know I was. So I introduced myself.

“I said that I was Officer Michael Fanone. That I was a DC Metropolitan police officer who fought on 6 January to defend the Capitol and, as a result, I suffered a traumatic brain injury as well as a heart attack after having been tased numerous times at the base of my skull, as well as being severely beaten.

“At that point, the congressman turned away from me.”

Fanone said Clyde “pulled out his cellphone and started thumbing through the apps”, apparently trying to record the encounter. Once the elevator



doors opened, Fanone said, the congressman “ran as quickly as he could, like a coward”.

Clyde has not so far provided comment.

Eric Swalwell, a California Democrat, and the Illinois anti-Trump Republican Adam Kinzinger [tweeted](#) in support of Fanone.

Swalwell said: “To honour Trump, House [Republicans](#) will dishonour the police.”

Gerry Connolly, a Virginia Democrat, [told CNN](#) the congressional gold medal vote on Tuesday was “a new low” for the 21 Republicans who voted no.

“They voted to overturn an election,” he said. “But in their vote today, they kind of sealed the deal of basically affiliating with the mob. They now are part of the insurrectionist mob.”

Clyde made headlines in May when he told a congressional hearing many in that mob on 6 January behaved as if there for “a normal tourist visit”.

As the Washington Post [reported](#), pictures taken as rioters searched for lawmakers to capture and kill showed Clyde rushing to barricade a door.

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## US healthcare

# US supreme court upholds Obamacare after Republicans seek to gut law

Justices affirm constitutionality of Affordable Care Act amid Republican attacks on key provision



The US supreme court has upheld the Affordable Care Act, Barack Obama's signature legislative achievement. Photograph: Getty Images

The US supreme court has upheld the Affordable Care Act, Barack Obama's signature legislative achievement. Photograph: Getty Images

[Jessica Glenza](#)

[@JessicaGlenza](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 10.48 EDT

The [US supreme court](#) has upheld the Affordable Care Act, better known as Obamacare, after Republicans attempted to gut an important provision of the law during the Trump era.

In a 7-2 decision, the court ruled Republican states ultimately did not have “standing” or the right to sue. The ruling avoided the issue of whether the tax provision of the law called the “individual mandate”, and therefore the entire law, was unconstitutional.

The ACA was the most important health reform law in generations and was Barack Obama’s signature legislative achievement during his time in the White House. However, the provision over which Republican states sued, the individual mandate, has long been a sore spot for many Americans.

Supporters of Obamacare, from health insurance plans to advocacy groups to the Democratic House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, quickly heralded the court’s decision as preserving a “lifeline” in a “devastating” pandemic.

Thanks to the tireless advocacy of Americans across the country and the work of Democrats in Congress, the Affordable Care Act endures as a pillar of American health and economic security alongside Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

— Nancy Pelosi (@SpeakerPelosi) [June 17, 2021](#)

“Today, the court ensured that the ACA will continue to be a critical lifeline for the people most in need by rejecting yet another frivolous challenge,” said Lambda Legal senior attorney and healthcare strategist Omar Gonzalez-Pagan. Lambda is a civil rights group which focuses on the LGBTQ community.

The individual mandate required tax authorities to penalize Americans with a \$695 fee if they failed to buy health insurance. At the time, Congress passed the provision hoping it would expand insurance coverage, making it more affordable for insurance companies and Americans.

The mandate immediately became a target for Republicans, leading to a [disastrous midterm election for Democrats](#), nearly a decade of rhetoric calling for the law’s repeal and sustained legal attacks.

In 2012, the supreme court also heard a challenge to the constitutionality of the individual mandate, which it upheld as part of Congress's taxing powers. The law was again challenged in 2015.

When Donald Trump swept into power in 2016, Republicans tried to make good on promises to overturn the law. However, provisions protecting women, the disabled, the poor and sick proved too controversial to overcome, and the legislation was [sunk in a dramatic vote](#).

As a result, Republicans attacked the individual mandate in a tax-cutting measure – they reduced the penalty from \$695 to \$0 in a 2017 tax cut bill that disproportionately benefited the wealthy. In turn, Republican states, led by Texas, argued the individual mandate was unconstitutional if it did not raise revenue, and sued to overturn it.

When the Trump administration declined to defend the ACA, California stepped in to try to preserve the law. As a result, the case was named [California v Texas](#).

“We proceed no further than standing,” wrote Stephen Breyer, the court's most senior justice and regarded as a member of the liberals of the bench.

He continued in the opinion.

“To find standing here to attack an unenforceable statutory provision would allow a federal court to issue what would amount to ‘an advisory opinion without the possibility of any judicial relief’,” Breyer wrote, referring to the \$0 penalty.

Had Republicans prevailed in their attempt to strike down the entire law,

protections for an estimated 133 million Americans with “pre-existing” health conditions would have ended, potentially disqualifying them from health insurance. An estimated 21 million people might have lost health insurance, among them 12 million low-income people who obtain health insurance through the public program Medicaid. Insurance companies would also have been able to lift spending caps on expensive health treatments.

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## Headlines thursday 17 june 2021

- [Live UK Covid: minister suggests ‘totally hopeless’ text does not represent Johnson’s considered view of Hancock](#)
- [Scotland Country was eight hours from running out of some PPE in Covid first wave](#)
- [Coronavirus Double-jabbed UK tourists could skip amber-list quarantine](#)
- [England Covid cases doubling every 11 days as Delta takes hold](#)

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)

[Politics](#)

# UK Covid: Whitty says he expects further surge in winter; more than 11,000 new cases recorded – as it happened

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## Scotland

# Scotland was eight hours from running out of some PPE in Covid first wave

Audit Scotland says supplies of items such as gowns and masks ran very low in April last year

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



A box of face masks at a procurement warehouse in Cannerside, Larkhall, in March 2020. Photograph: Andrew Milligan/PA

A box of face masks at a procurement warehouse in Cannerside, Larkhall, in March 2020. Photograph: Andrew Milligan/PA

[Libby Brooks](#) *Scotland correspondent*

Thu 17 Jun 2021 04.58 EDT

Some stocks of PPE in [Scotland](#) came within eight hours of running out at the height of the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a report by the country's public spending watchdog.

Audit Scotland said centrally held supplies of key items ran "very low" in April 2020. At points, long-sleeved gowns came within eight hours of running out, there were only 24 hours' worth of hospital-grade FFP3 masks, and two days' worth of visors.

Opposition parties said the report demonstrated a "catastrophic failure" of preparedness, but the auditor general for Scotland, Stephen Boyle, said the Scottish government and NHS National Services Scotland "worked well together under extremely challenging circumstances."

Boyle said the challenge now would be in "developing a longer-term approach to PPE supply and distribution that includes both business-as-usual needs as well as preparing for future pandemics."

As global supply chains faltered due to extreme demand and overseas factories closing, PPE prices doubled in early 2020.

The report said 29 contracts for PPE worth a total of £98m were awarded to new suppliers with no competition between March 2020 and June 2021,.

Audit Scotland reiterated its [earlier finding that](#) despite three preparedness exercises since 2011, ministers had failed to follow up on recommendations to improve availability of PPE and the capability of social care.

Scottish Labour's deputy leader and health spokesperson, Jackie Baillie, said: "Despite all the warnings and pandemic planning exercises, frontline workers were put in danger by the government's failings. This must never happen again.

"The Scottish government's procurement process was not fit for purpose and it is clear that they handed out big-money contracts without the normal due diligence, and questions remain as to whether this represents value for the taxpayer."

A Scottish government spokesperson pointed out that Scotland never ran out of PPE. “Work undertaken by the Scottish government and its partner organisations at that time included setting up a whole new Scottish supply chain from scratch, with the creation of hundreds of jobs,” they said.

“The Scottish government agrees with Audit Scotland that we need to learn from this pandemic and bring that learning into planning for future pandemics, and that work is already under way.”

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# Double-jabbed UK tourists could skip amber-list quarantine under proposals

Ministers looking at loosening travel restrictions for fully vaccinated travellers returning to England

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



Arrivals at Heathrow airport: changes are being considered to the traffic light system under which places are graded according to Covid case and job rate. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

Arrivals at Heathrow airport: changes are being considered to the traffic light system under which places are graded according to Covid case and job rate. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

[Aubrey Allegretti](#) *Political correspondent*  
[@breeallegretti](#)

Wed 16 Jun 2021 18.54 EDT

British travellers who have had two Covid vaccines could be allowed quarantine-free entry into England under plans being considered by ministers, the Guardian understands.

As the government grapples with allowing more trips abroad while trying to prevent the importation of new variants, changes are being considered to [the traffic light system](#) under which places are graded according to their Covid case and job rate, determining whether and how people coming from them must isolate.

Only a handful of countries feature on the isolation-free green list, with 50 territories on the red list – meaning arrivals must stay in a quarantine hotel for 14 days.

The amber list, which features the vast majority of countries [and to which Portugal was recently added](#), has prompted much more confusion. Official government advice urges people not to travel to these places, but there are no laws in place to stop people arriving from them and [quarantining](#) at home for up to 10 days, or using the test-to-release system to leave the house from day five.

Currently, travellers leaving the UK are allowed to use the NHS app to prove their vaccine status and cut quarantine in some countries.

But in a move that will be seen as further encouraging people to get both jabs, the Guardian has been told that ministers are contemplating loosening travel restrictions for the amber list to let anyone who has had two Covid vaccines escape quarantine. Those who have not been fully inoculated would still face the same restrictions currently in force for amber list countries.

Matt Hancock, the health secretary, is said to be open to the idea, according to the Telegraph. It follows an announcement by the government that [Covid vaccines will be mandatory for social care workers](#).

The suggestion that travellers could face more incentive to get jabbed also has prompted speculation about the future of the traffic light system, and, if it does remain in place, how likely it is that travellers will be allowed to visit red list countries – given the barriers to returning from them – for the rest of 2021.

Last week, the former prime minister Theresa May accused ministers of having implemented a chaotic system of international travel restrictions. She complained: “We are falling behind the rest of Europe in our decisions to open up ... It’s incomprehensible that one of the most heavily vaccinated countries in the world is one that is most reluctant to give its citizens the freedoms those vaccinations should support.”

Chris Grayling, the Tory ex-former transport secretary, also said the government’s decisions would cost hundreds of thousands of jobs and leave the aviation industry “decimated for the future”.

The former health minister Stephen Hammond accused the government of ignoring the data and making “illogical” choices about the green, amber and red lists.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2021/jun/16/vaccinated-british-travellers-could-skip-quarantine-on-return-under-new-plans>

## Coronavirus

# Covid cases in England doubling every 11 days as Delta variant takes hold

Scientists say cases rising exponentially but vaccine progress should help reduce increase

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



PCR testing at a leisure centre in Bedford last month. Photograph: Paul Childs/Reuters

PCR testing at a leisure centre in Bedford last month. Photograph: Paul Childs/Reuters

*PA Media*

Thu 17 Jun 2021 04.02 EDT



Covid-19 cases are rising exponentially across [England](#) driven by younger and mostly unvaccinated age groups, according to scientists.

A study commissioned by the government found that infections increased by 50% between 3 May and 7 June, coinciding with the rise of the Delta coronavirus variant that is now dominant in the UK.

Data from nearly 110,000 swab tests carried out across England between 20 May and 7 June suggests Covid cases are doubling every 11 days, with the highest prevalence in the north-west and one in 670 people infected.

MPs have [approved an extension](#) of coronavirus restrictions in England until 19 July, despite a rebellion by Conservative backbenchers.

Boris Johnson was spared defeat in a Commons vote as Labour backed the plans for a four-week delay to the end of lockdown measures, aimed at buying more time for the vaccine programme. MPs voted 461 to 60, a majority of 401, to approve regulations postponing the reopening.

Experts from Imperial College London said their findings showed a “rapid switch” between the Alpha variant and the Delta variant in the last few weeks, with the latter now accounting for up to 90% of all coronavirus cases.

But they stressed that the UK was in a much different position than in autumn last year when exponential growth triggered a second wave of coronavirus infections.

Stephen Riley, a professor of infectious disease dynamics at Imperial and one of the study’s authors, said: “Prevalence is increasing exponentially and it is being driven by younger ages. It appears to be doubling every 11 days.

“Clearly that is bad news ... but the key thing to point out here is that we are in a very different part of the epidemic in the UK and it is very difficult to predict the duration of the exponential phase.”

The scientists said their findings from the React study suggested that imminent expansion of the vaccine programme to people aged 18 and above

“should help substantially to reduce the overall growth of the epidemic”.

Paul Elliott, the director of the React programme and chair in epidemiology and public health medicine at Imperial, said: “I think we can take quite a lot of comfort from the fact that when we look in the details, it does appear that there is very, very good protection in the older ages, where there is virtually everyone double vaccinated.

“And in the younger group, under the age of 65, where a much smaller proportion have been vaccinated or double vaccinated, most infections are occurring in the unvaccinated group. And the government has clearly announced that they want to vaccinate all adults in the period between now and 19 July. I think that will make a very big difference and increase the total amount of population immunity.”

The research, which has been published as a pre-print, shows the bulk of infections are among children aged between five and 12, as well as young adults aged between 18 and 24. Infections in these age groups are about five times higher than in over-65s.

The researchers said data showed that the “weakened link” between infection rates and hospital admissions was “well maintained” for over-65s, while “the trends converged below the age of 65 years”.

Riley said: “We have observed this reconvergence in the pattern of hospitalisations and deaths versus infections, especially in an age group under 65. These patterns are consistent with two vaccine doses being highly effective.”

The health secretary, Matt Hancock, said: “These findings highlight the stark context in which we took the difficult decision to delay step 4 of the roadmap out of lockdown.”

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- [Analysis How do we learn to live with Covid in the UK?](#)
- [Premier Inn Owner reports bookings surge at UK tourist hotspots](#)
- [Schools Leaders in England reject catchup national tutoring programme](#)
- [EU UK excluded again from Covid-safe list, but US added](#)

## Coronavirus

# How do we learn to live with Covid in the UK?

**Analysis:** Lockdown extension brings questions on when and how UK can draw a line under social distancing



Pedestrians walk past a sign asking members of the public to social distance due to Covid-19 in central London. Photograph: Niklas Halle'n/AFP/Getty Images

Pedestrians walk past a sign asking members of the public to social distance due to Covid-19 in central London. Photograph: Niklas Halle'n/AFP/Getty Images

[Ian Sample](#) *Science editor*

[@iansample](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 04.20 EDT

The Commons vote to [delay step four of England's roadmap](#) out of lockdown has focused attention on when and how the country can draw a line under social distancing and, in the words of the prime minister, “learn to live with the virus”.

While the surge in cases in Blackburn – one of the original Delta variant hotspots – may have peaked for now, Public [Health](#) England expects recent rises in the north-west to be mirrored across the UK. What that means for hospitals and lives will become clearer in the next four weeks.

Whatever the epidemic does, the overwhelming view among senior scientists is that coronavirus is here to stay. The cold assessments came from the left and right of Boris Johnson at Monday's Downing street briefing. From one side, Sir Patrick Vallance, the chief scientific adviser, said the virus “will be with us forever”. From the other, Prof Chris Whitty, England's chief medical officer, warned of Covid illness and deaths “for the rest of our lives.”

But what does it mean to live with coronavirus? Siân Griffiths, emeritus professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, who co-chaired the 2003 Sars inquiry for the Hong Kong government, said it called for a new balance between knowing the virus was around and needed to be dealt with, and the knowledge that we needed to get back to a life that was not focused on the virus.

“I don't think we'll live in a restricted society. We'll move into a more careful society, a more cautious society and one where we understand the science and the process and we have learned from the traumas of the pandemic,” she said.

Prof Dame Anne Johnson, president of the Academy of Medical Sciences, said: “There will be more deaths from coronavirus, with winter waves a particular threat, but learning to live with Covid is not about how many deaths society can bear. We see upsurges caused by respiratory viruses every winter. We don't make an estimate of what deaths we can tolerate, we say we wish to minimise those deaths by having a vaccination campaign.”

Johnson said that we will not wake up one day and suddenly decide to face the virus. The process has already begun, with changes in behaviour adopted in the pandemic likely to carry on long after formal restrictions are lifted. “What we want is to do the things that least disrupt our lives and minimise the risk of infection without having to go into these awful lockdowns,” she said. Good hygiene, remote working, mask wearing, better ventilation, not going to work or mixing with people when we have symptoms, cycling rather than taking public transport, avoiding needless flights – all of these and more will play a part in the post-lockdown world, she said.

The vaccination programme is central to when life can return, if not to normal, then something far closer than today. By the autumn, most adults will have had the chance to get two shots of vaccine. “Once everybody who is eligible is vaccinated then you have put your wall in place, but we are not there yet,” said Griffiths. “The wall is missing some bricks, in terms of some vulnerable groups, some vaccine sceptics, but mainly the younger people, and until your wall is there you can’t say let’s move forward.” Seasonal boosters for at-risk groups are likely if their immunity wanes, and ongoing natural infections will contribute to community immunity.

What else needs to happen? David Heymann, professor of infectious disease epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and head of the Centre on Global Health Security at Chatham House, said we would not learn to live with the virus until we took responsibility for the risks, as we do with the flu, sexually transmitted infections and other viruses. “The first thing we have to do, is governments have to be willing and able to transfer the risk assessment and the response to the people instead of doing it through the people.

“It’s not a matter of saying we’ll accept this number of deaths, we should never accept deaths. We need to learn how we ourselves can make sure we don’t infect ourselves or infect others, but that’s just not been possible yet because governments have done that job,” he said.

Heymann said that transferring the responsibility for keeping ourselves and others safe should have started earlier. “There was a golden opportunity before Christmas to tell people, if you might get in a situation where you



could be infected – say, at a closed, indoors party with people drinking – you should remember you could infect family members and should take proper precautions if you’re visiting them. That messaging is extremely important now because people have to assume responsibility,” he said.

George Davey Smith, professor of clinical epidemiology at the University of Bristol, said people would first need to be convinced that vaccines were having a major impact on the risk of severe disease. “There is a job to do in reducing people’s fear levels. It’s going to be a gradual thing.”

Griffiths said the hope was to get coronavirus under the same level of control as influenza. In a typical year, influenza still kills thousands of people in the UK, but deaths are minimised by a vaccination campaign that targets the most vulnerable and is crucially informed by a global flu surveillance network. A similar surveillance system is needed for coronavirus, and ultimately, other pandemic threats. “Just as we live with flu in the winter season, we’ll live with Covid alongside,” she said.

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## Whitbread

# Premier Inn owner reports bookings surge at UK tourist hotspots

Whitbread says 17 May reopenings are fuelling strong demand at sites from the Highlands to Brighton



Premier Inn's UK hotel sales were worth 73% of their pre-pandemic level between reopening and 14 June as domestic tourism boomed after months of lockdown. Photograph: Lee Smith/Reuters

Premier Inn's UK hotel sales were worth 73% of their pre-pandemic level between reopening and 14 June as domestic tourism boomed after months of lockdown. Photograph: Lee Smith/Reuters

[Jasper Jolly](#)

[@jjpjolly](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 04.40 EDT

The owner of Premier Inn hotels has reported strong demand at UK tourist spots as Britons holiday domestically, but hotels at airports and in central London continue to struggle.

Whitbread, which also owns restaurant brands including Beefeater and Brewers Fayre, has suffered a [torrid year of enforced closures](#), but said on Thursday that it had seen “encouraging trends” since 17 May, when Covid rules in England were eased to allow hotels to reopen.

UK hotel sales were 73% of their pre-pandemic level between reopening and 14 June as domestic tourism boomed after months of lockdown. Holiday locations with Premier Inn hotels include Skegness, Scarborough, Brighton, Cornwall, south Wales, the Lake District and the Highlands.

That gave glimmers of hope after what the chain had previously described as “one of the most challenging years” in its 279-year history. [The company lost £1bn](#) in the year to the end of February. It announced [up to 6,000 redundancies in September](#).

Whitbread said: “We expect leisure demand in coastal and other tourist locations to remain very strong throughout the summer, while the full recovery of leisure demand is dependent on the final release of lockdown, and the return of unrestricted events.”

Shares rose nearly 4% in early trading, making Whitbread the top riser on the FTSE 100.

Sales across hotels and restaurants were still heavily affected by lockdown restrictions in its latest financial quarter, the 13 weeks to 27 May. Hotel sales were down 60% compared with the same period in 2019 – the most recent pre-lockdown equivalent – while food and drink sales fell 86%.

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Hotels at airports and in central London, both of which are reliant on a recovery in international travel, have continued to lag even after reopening.

Alison Brittain, Whitbread's chief executive, said trading since 17 May "has been encouraging", and added that forward bookings "continue to improve, benefiting from the anticipated post-lockdown bounce in leisure demand, and a continued gradual improvement in business bookings".

Brittain added that she believed Whitbread's financial firepower would allow it to keep investing in new hotels while others struggled. During the most recent quarter Whitbread opened 10 hotels in the UK and three in Germany to try to capitalise on the recovery.

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## Schools

# School leaders in England reject catchup national tutoring programme

Some schools struggling to find tutors, and union says scheme ‘feels like a pressure rather than a help’



Nearly two-thirds of heads in the poll said support for pupil mental health and wellbeing should be a high priority. Photograph: Alamy

Nearly two-thirds of heads in the poll said support for pupil mental health and wellbeing should be a high priority. Photograph: Alamy

[Richard Adams](#) *Education editor*

Thu 17 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

The government’s flagship effort to help children in state schools catch up on learning lost during the pandemic is being rejected by headteachers in England, despite the tens of millions of pounds being spent on running it.

While more than two-thirds of school leaders in England polled by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) said they supported using tutors for catchup, just 3% saw the government's national tutoring programme (NTP) as a priority.

The lack of support comes after warnings that schools in some parts of the country have struggled to find tutors through the NTP, and fears over its future after a contract to run parts of the scheme was won by Randstad, a Dutch multinational.

[Labour flags concern over outsourcing of England catch-up tuition](#)  
[Read more](#)

The NAHT poll received responses from more than 700 headteachers in England, 70% of whom backed small group or one-to-one tutorials as the best use of government catchup funding, so long as it was run by the schools themselves. Nearly two-thirds (63%) said support for pupil mental health and wellbeing should also be a high priority.

Extending the school day was extremely unpopular among headteachers, with just 2% saying it should be a priority for catchup learning. A longer school day had been strongly supported by Sir Kevan Collins, the government's former education recovery tsar [who quit](#) after his £15bn catchup plan was rejected by the Treasury and No 10 as too expensive.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the NAHT, said the poll results matched what he had been hearing from school leaders about their need for flexible funding and resources.

“The national tutoring programme is a great idea in principle and could have a really positive impact, but the current bureaucracy surrounding it and the difficulties schools are facing accessing tutors means that it is starting to feel like yet another hoop to jump through and a pressure rather than a help,” Whiteman said. “It also doesn't help that schools still don't even know what their allocations will be for next year, making planning incredibly difficult.

“The government doesn’t fall into this trap with other professions. It doesn’t tell doctors how to practise medicine. In fact, one of the biggest successes of the whole pandemic – the vaccination programme – is a demonstration of exactly that. The government invested enough money into getting the vaccines and then handed over to the NHS and stepped back to let them crack on. If only they’d do the same for education.”

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, told an education festival that A-level and GCSE exams would go ahead as normal in 2022. He said plans were being developed to ensure grades were fair for students.

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## Travel

# UK excluded again from EU's Covid-safe travel list, but US added

British tourists face continued restrictions as bloc opens up to other vaccinated travellers

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UK tourists are being permitted to travel to the Greek island of Mykonos, despite EU guidance. Photograph: Ted Horowitz/Getty

UK tourists are being permitted to travel to the Greek island of Mykonos, despite EU guidance. Photograph: Ted Horowitz/Getty

[Daniel Boffey](#) in Brussels

Wed 16 Jun 2021 08.34 EDT

British tourists face continued restrictions on travelling to the EU this summer even as the bloc opens up to others, including residents of the United States.

Eight countries are to be added to a list of countries from where the EU says non-essential travel is safe, but the UK has not been included.

Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Lebanon, the US, Taiwan, Macau and Hong Kong will join Australia, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Rwanda, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and China on a “white list”.

Diplomatic sources said that while the UK’s level of cases per 100,000 people had been within the criteria for inclusion on the list, the exponential growth of infection by the Delta variant had proven to be an obstacle.

“There are serious concerns about Delta and surge of numbers,” an EU diplomat said. The expansion of the white list was agreed at a meeting of EU ambassadors in Brussels.

The decision means that member states remain advised to prohibit non-essential travel to those coming from the UK even as the EU looks forward to opening up for the summer holiday season to people from around the world.

The debate over whether to fully reopen, and Boris Johnson’s decision to delay stage four of his roadmap to normality, had played a part in the EU debate over British tourists, sources said.

Deaths are relatively low and stable in the UK and the Covid vaccines have been shown to work well in protecting people.

But positive Covid cases are up 38.8% week on week and the number of people hospitalised has risen by 22.1%. The Delta variant is believed to make up [more than 90% of new cases](#).

In contrast, in Belgium the Delta variant is believed to be just 1.9% of new cases and it is believed to account for 2% to 4% in France. The Delta

variant is believed to be about 60% more transmissible than the variant first identified in Kent.

To add to the woes of British tourists, the UK government has also refused to put any EU member states on a green list of countries to where travel is permitted without a need to quarantine.

The EU's white list only provides guidance to EU member states and fully vaccinated UK tourists are already being permitted into a number of EU countries including Portugal and Greece.

From 1 July, a Covid passport scheme will also come into force to allow EU residents and people from some non-EU countries who are fully vaccinated, have had a negative test or can prove recovery from the disease to move freely within the union.

The expectation in Brussels is that EU member states will lift quarantine obligations as part of the scheme.

Member states, however, are at liberty to block even fully vaccinated UK travellers due to the emergence of "variants of concern".

Earlier this month the EU's ambassador to the UK, João Vale de Almeida, said he hoped this would not be the case.

"I hope many, many British citizens will come to our countries, and I hope many EU citizens will visit the UK," he said. "I think everybody is doing their utmost to create those conditions."

The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, who is travelling to the 27 member states in the coming weeks as she signs off on recovery spending plans, said she would be using the Covid passport during her visits.

Speaking before travelling to Spain and Portugal, she said: "[The Covid passport] is applicable from 1 July but if you want to, as a member state, you can sign up early voluntarily and that is what Belgium did: Belgium

allows as of today to travel with the certificate and they issue these certificates.

“Everyone who is fully vaccinated or tested negative or has recovered from Covid can get one and we have right now 15 member states who have already signed up and from 1 July all 27 member states have to apply for these EU digital certificates for Covid.”

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## 2021.06.17 - Spotlight

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# The best podcasts of 2021 so far

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## Coronavirus

# **‘Frances made this happen!’ Jo Whiley on how her sister saved lives in the pandemic**



‘I really want to point out that Frances is the most joyful character’ ... Jo Whiley. Photograph: Chris McAndrew/Camera Press

‘I really want to point out that Frances is the most joyful character’ ... Jo Whiley. Photograph: Chris McAndrew/Camera Press

The DJ was offered a vaccine before her learning disabled sister, who caught the disease. She discusses Frances’s illness, the campaign to change the priority list and the return of Glastonbury





[Emine Saner](#)

[@eminesaner](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

There is a lot of joy in little glimmers of normality these days. For Jo Whiley's sister, Frances, this includes being able to go back to bingo. "It means the world to her," says Whiley, the BBC [Radio 2](#) DJ. "And she won £30 last week, which was like she'd won a trillion pounds; she was so happy!" It was only in February that Frances was admitted to hospital with Covid and her family were told to prepare for the worst.

It was something the whole family had been dreading since the start of the pandemic. Frances has cri du chat syndrome, a genetic disorder that can cause significant learning disabilities and has other health issues such as diabetes. For the national lockdown in March 2020, Frances moved from her care home in Northamptonshire to her parents' house. But when she moved back into residential care a few months later, the idea of the virus infecting the residents, says Whiley, was "your worst nightmare. I would speak to a lot of other people who had children or siblings in care homes and we were all thinking the same thing – that we were petrified of Covid getting into the homes."

Whiley had been trying to get Frances immunised through her local medical centre, but was told they were sticking to the eligibility rules. “That was frustrating, because it seemed to us that people with learning disabilities should have been a priority,” says Whiley. It seemed doubly unfair [when Whiley was invited to book her own vaccine](#). She had had a heart condition as a child, so had been prioritised, although as an adult she is extremely fit – she competes in triathlons. “I would have done anything I could to swap places,” she says.



‘People with learning disabilities should know they are valued members of society’ ... Jo Whiley with Frances. Photograph: Courtesy of Jo Whiley

We speak on the phone, her familiar voice warm and intimate. Whiley is at the [BBC](#) – it is a few hours before her Radio 2 evening show. In February of this year, she had finished her show and was waiting for a train home to Northamptonshire when her mother called to tell her that some of the residents at the care home had tested positive, including Frances. Whiley went home and told her husband, Steve, and their children (they have four). They spent the next 24 hours in a state of low-level panic, waiting and trying to come up with ways to help. She read that an oximeter – a device to measure blood oxygen – would be helpful; one of Whiley’s sons got one and took it to the home so they could test the residents.

Whiley travelled to London the following day to do her radio show. When she got off the train in Northamptonshire after work that evening, her husband was waiting for her. “He said: ‘Frances has been taken to hospital.’ And that’s when I completely freaked out.”

Frances, terrified, was a challenging patient – she had tried to escape and would not tolerate wearing an oxygen mask. “She fought everything that was given to her,” says Whiley. “We spent about 72 hours of a rather hellish time waiting to see whether she was going to pull through or not. We ended up, at about four in the morning, speaking to the intensive care team, who said that there was nothing more they could do for her and we would be faced with the decision of taking her home and ...” She pauses. “Just waiting for her to pass. And that’s when we went into overdrive and I was putting out messages on social media just saying: ‘Can anybody help? What can we do?’”

Many disabled people don’t have many advocates, they don’t have people speaking up for them

Before Frances contracted Covid, Whiley had been using her profile to add to the call for learning-disabled people to be prioritised in the vaccine schedule. She continued to do so after Frances’s diagnosis, even though it was too late for her sister and some of her friends in the care home – one of whom died from Covid. “I did have a moment in the middle of the night and turned to Steve and India, my daughter, and said: ‘God, I think Frances is going to have to die for something to happen.’” The line goes silent and I think the signal has been lost, until I realise Whiley is fighting back tears. After a while, she says, voice breaking: “Thankfully, she didn’t.”

Days later, the government confirmed all people on the GPs’ learning disability register would be prioritised, meaning 150,000 people would be offered a vaccine more quickly. “I’m very grateful to my sister for having made this happen,” says Whiley.

Does she think that her sister’s experience – and the way she and others were not prioritised – reveals wider perceptions about learning-disabled people and whether their lives are valued equally? “I think there has been

an enormous lack of awareness,” says Whiley. She says the range of learning disabilities and their varying level of needs is huge, but many people “don’t have many advocates, they don’t have people speaking up for them. So they rely on others to stand up for them, to have those conversations, to point things out when things are not right and need to change. That’s what I really want to be involved in, those kinds of conversations, and I think we always have as a family.”

Whiley is two years older than Frances. They grew up in Northamptonshire, where their mother ran the village shop and post office and their father was an electrician. It feels as if Whiley has now, at 55, taken on a bigger advocacy role for her sister. “I think I used to sit back and just let my parents do everything. I feel like now is the time to take responsibility.” It is almost “like you know this day is going to come”, she says.

Not that Whiley feels weighed down by it, she points out. “I really want to point out that Frances is the most joyful character. She really enjoys making people laugh; she’s very entertaining. So she’s never been one of those people that I felt sorry for, or that anybody could feel sorry for, because she’s just a huge bundle of joy. She’s got flaming red hair, she’s got the flaming temper to go with it. She can have outrageous tantrums and be very difficult, but also she can be outrageously funny as well. More than anything, she’s extremely loving.”



... Whiley and Steve Lamacq at Radio 1 in 1994. Photograph: Martyn Goodacre/Getty Images

This is not to say that caring for someone with Frances's needs has been easy (Whiley says care workers and carers are "the linchpins: they keep everybody functioning, all our families, and we should be looking after them in every way that we can"). In her 2009 memoir, Whiley writes that, as a child, she would lie in bed with Frances, who barely slept, telling her stories all night to give her parents a rest. There were tantrums and destructive behaviour; holidays were out of the question because Frances could not tolerate a change of routine (although Whiley, without Frances, was taken by her parents each year to Sidmouth folk festival, which gave her a lifelong love of musical gatherings).

In the book, Whiley writes that rebelling as a teenager was not an option. "Frances did all the rebelling," says Whiley now. "She needed all the attention. I just didn't want to cause any more aggravation than what [my parents] were already going through. I think it's just not in my nature; I'm pretty easygoing."

Frances has brought huge positive aspects, including fun, joyful chaos and an awareness of differences, which Whiley says her children have adopted. "They've grown up with an auntie who's got quite extreme behaviour, so

they don't bat an eyelid," she says. As a child, Whiley was incredibly protective and would stare down anyone who dared gawp at her sister. Have things changed? Do people still stare? "Well, she's so loud that it's hard to ignore her," she says with a laugh. But even now, on occasion, "you'll get people tutting".

Attitudes have changed and progress has been made, says Whiley, but there is further to go. "There needs to be more inclusivity and visibility in society, media, sport, employment, giving people with learning disabilities a sense of purpose, independence and self-worth. They should know they are valued members of society." Treatment should be "first rate when it comes to their physical and mental health – and no one should underestimate the value and importance of social care", she says.

When Whiley became a broadcaster, it was partly with an eye on how she could bring Frances along with her. As a student, she volunteered at BBC Radio Sussex, then worked as a researcher on 90s TV shows including The Word, before being invited to try out for Radio 1, where she and Steve Lamacq later presented The Evening Session. Whiley has introduced Frances to her favourite DJs and pop stars; when she was a presenter on Top of the Pops, Frances came to the studio to watch. Music had been a huge part of both their lives – as teenagers, they would take the bus into Northampton most Saturdays to buy a new 7in single each.



‘It means the world to people to have that shared experience’ ... Whiley at Glastonbury. Photograph: PR

It was around this time that Whiley discovered Glastonbury and first went to the festival with friends. “We just got this coach, ended up at Glastonbury – had no idea what it was all about, what was going on,” she says. “And I was just addicted right from the very beginning.” As a regular presenter of the festival coverage, Whiley is involved in the celebration of Glastonbury across the BBC from 25-27 June – [a weekend of sets, documentaries and performances](#) recorded last month at an otherwise empty Worthy Farm.

Whiley’s programme will look at the 90s, when she used to present the coverage with John Peel. “I’ve been looking at all the cringey footage over the years of me and John, which is basically John being very droll while I’m being this complete buffoon. I was this little adoring fan, listening to every word he said and just saying stupid stuff that he could take the mickey out of.”

Did she ever feel she could relax and enjoy it, or did it feel like work? She always loved it, she says, even the scary bits when she was trying to fill airtime when some rock band or other was late getting on stage. Staying up too late is all the bad behaviour she will admit to, including one occasion



when she agreed to do a report for Radio 4's Today programme. "I must have had about two hours' sleep. I got up at maybe six o'clock and was walking around the backstage area to find the radio cabin. And it was just bodies everywhere, nobody was conscious; it was just me and the mud, regretting having drunk my last Jack Daniels at about four in the morning, and then blagging it, thinking: 'I think I got away with that.' And then thinking: 'I'm never going to do that again.'"

So many people have lost loved ones they will have been used to going to festivals with

There were those Glastonbury glory years at the height of Britpop in the mid-90s, when Whiley's radio show had become the centre of the cultural moment. "All those names were there. Robbie Williams was there in his bleached blond hair, when he'd escaped from Take That and just wanted to be in Oasis."

The other day, Whiley and one of her sons were in a cafe and they were playing Blur's greatest hits. "Every song that came on, we were just going: 'Oh my God, these songs are amazing,'" she says. "When you're in the thick of it, it doesn't feel like that. My kids keep saying: 'What we wouldn't give to have lived when you did,' but Steve and I were just doing a radio show; we were plucked out of obscurity. We were interviewing Damon [Albarn] and Noel and Liam [Gallagher] and Thom [Yorke], all these people, but it felt like we were all stumbling through something."

The effect of the pandemic on the live music industry has been "truly devastating", says Whiley. "Being on tour provides so many jobs and so many people are without work at the moment; it's so damaging to everyone's mental health. I hope we start having live gigs soon. It means the world to people to have that shared experience."

Does she think there was enough government support for the arts and musicians in particular? She pauses, choosing her words carefully (having been at the BBC for nearly 30 years, she appears wary of being seen as too political). "I think it's incredibly hard. Having lost a couple of friends, in recent months, to Covid, I just know that we have to be incredibly safe. I

wouldn't personally want the job of working out what's the right and wrong thing to do." But, she adds: "People definitely need to be supported financially."

There will be a melancholy chill when festivals and gigs start again. "So many people have lost loved ones they will have been used to going to festivals with," says Whiley. "People who should have been there and won't be. They'll be remembering the parent who isn't there at Glastonbury with them, or the best mate, or the road manager."

"I suggested to my producer the other day that we play Elbow's My Sad Captains and she went: 'Are you sure?' because it's all about lost friends. And I went: 'You're right. I'm not ready for this and I don't think the audience is at the moment.' It almost heightens the sadness when people go on about how normal [life is starting to return]. Yeah, it's more normal, but there's also this underlying tragedy."

And then there are those glimmers. Having come so close to losing Frances, things are more settled. Frances, now vaccinated, is happily back at her residential home and Whiley can see the positive outcome of such a frightening experience. "Frances's situation changed the situation for many people," says Whiley. "To have lots of messages from people on Twitter, showing the photographs of their brothers and sisters with their thumbs up, smiley faces, and people saying how they thought it had saved their lives – it was just an extraordinary experience."

*Jo Whiley presents [The Glastonbury Experience 2021](#), which will be broadcast on BBC TV and radio, BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds from 25-27 June*

# Inside the mind of a murderer: the power and limits of forensic psychiatry

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[V&A](#)

## V&A museum's new 20th and 21st Century gallery is refitted for the social justice era

The refurbished space breaks the last century and a quarter into new thematic sections, with special attention paid to diversity



‘A clear, definitive message’ ... installation shots of the new gallery.  
Photograph: Peter Kelleher

‘A clear, definitive message’ ... installation shots of the new gallery.  
Photograph: Peter Kelleher

[Lanre Bakare](#) *Arts and culture correspondent*  
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Thu 17 Jun 2021 03.08 EDT

In November 2019, after almost 30 years, the V&A's 20th Century gallery closed its doors. Split across the same two rooms that blend into the National [Art](#) Library, the ambition was to reopen having found a way to tell a new story of the 20th and 21st century, "focused on design and society".

The gallery was supposed to open last June. It was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and there's a frugal feel to the space with the same cases being used to display the collection (the plinths that the items stand on being the only new elements).

There is some seating now, with movable stools and nooks for visitors, but its lead curators, Johanna Agerman Ross and Corinna Gardner, have essentially had to remix rather than completely reimagine the story of design over the last century and a quarter.

Instead of being organised purely chronologically like the old space, things are now broken down into themed sections. Automation and Labour covers the period until 1930; Housing and Living takes us up to just before the second world war; Crisis and Conflict runs through the postwar period; Consumption and Identity takes on the 60s and early 70s; Sustainability and Subversion stretches until the millennium; and Data and Communication runs from 2000 to the present day.



‘There is a frugal feel to the space.’ Photograph: Peter Kelleher

The vast majority of items come from the V&A’s permanent collection, though 50 of the total 250 are new acquisitions. Part of the refresh involved the closure of the [Rapid Response Collecting gallery](#), and now items from that collection, which was set up in 2014, are dotted around the gallery like punctuation marks.

Some, like the same type of Nike Zoom Vaporfly Elite trainers Eliud Kipchoge wore when he broke the mythic two-hour marathon barrier, are exclamation marks signalling design’s innovative impact. Others, like the subway campaign in New York that flagged the rise of anti-Asian hate crimes, are more like full stops that show the discipline’s ability to convey a clear, definitive message.



Changing design ... a Vogue UK cover featuring a key worker. Photograph: Kieron Boyle/Victoria and Albert Museum

Much of it ties together, particularly the sustainability section that moves smoothly and logically from the southern California new age movement into the birth of Apple as an outsider tech company. Crisis and Conflict neatly combines the wartime designs of the Eames with the furniture that followed. There are fun new inclusions such as Kim Kardashian’s book of

selfies, and important new arrivals such as Margaret Calvert and Jock Kinneir's [road signage system](#).

The delay in opening dovetailed with the Covid-19 pandemic, but also the Black Lives Matter movement, which presaged examinations of collections and their lack of diversity. You can feel that shift in some of the new space with everything from the Nigeria football team's 2018 kit by Nike to Virgil Abloh's Ikea shopping bag and [Vogue UK's covers featuring key workers](#) rather than the usual celebrities or models, all nodding to the new voices changing society and design.

But the thematic premise throws up some jarring juxtapositions. Can you smoothly segue from a piece of Memphis furniture to a photograph of John Lewis and other SNCC civil rights organisers taking the knee? Part of that is down to the sheer ambition of a space that seeks to tell the tale of a period in which every conceivable element of human life was touched by design, while doing so on a budget.

But even when the vaults across design's history seem hard to follow, the desire to tell a new, more inclusive version of that story is obvious. It might not always succeed, but there is a real commitment to trying something different and add meaning to the phrase "build back better".

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## 2021.06.17 - Opinion

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## OpinionCoronavirus

# The evidence is clear – there was no excuse for Hancock’s care homes strategy

[William Hanage](#)

The health secretary’s failure to act on scientific worst-case scenarios informed policy, with catastrophic results



Illustration: Eva Bee/The Guardian

Illustration: Eva Bee/The Guardian

Thu 17 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

The UK has suffered some of the worst consequences of the pandemic among developed nations, in terms of both deaths and economic disruption. But instead of learning from its mistakes, all the evidence suggests that the

British government is trying to rewrite history while the pandemic is still going on.

When the health secretary, Matt Hancock, appeared in front of MPs last week to answer questions about the government's early handling of the virus, part of the questioning centred on [the devastation that the virus had been allowed to wreak in care homes](#) among residents and staff.

While it is genuinely hard to pick the worst failure of the UK's pandemic response, this has to be a contender. The numbers remain to be fully catalogued and may never be fully known, because testing was in such short supply early on in the pandemic, but the Office for National Statistics estimates [42,000](#) care home residents in England and Wales have died of Covid. This outcome was entirely predictable in the absence of meaningful infection control.

Care homes are an example of what epidemiologists call a “congregate setting”. These are places where people are gathered together in tight groups, making a lot of contacts and with little ability to distance, guaranteeing the virus a captive audience. Other examples include prisons and cruise ships.

We worry a lot about [respiratory viruses in care homes](#), because they are lethal. During the very early days of the pandemic in China scientists indicated that older people were especially vulnerable to the virus. As a result of these two facts, well known in January and February 2020, care homes were a disaster waiting to happen. However, until the middle of April last year UK hospitals were discharging patients into care homes without requiring that they be tested for Covid first, sparking goodness knows how many introductions, outbreaks and deaths.

Hancock has claimed that only [1.6% of care home outbreaks](#) were seeded from hospitals, citing Public Health England (PHE) research. But the research in question is biased by the fact that to detect an outbreak you need testing, and tests were in short supply over the most serious period of the spring surge in 2020. You cannot detect something if you do not look for it. Nobody is claiming that all outbreaks occurred via this route, but it was a known way the virus could get into vulnerable populations, and action was

not taken to stop it. In fact, [the same PHE research](#) states that “the majority of these potentially hospital-seeded care home outbreaks were identified in March to mid-April 2020, with none identified from the end of July until September where a few recent cases have emerged”, which suggests that once testing was finally mandated for discharge from hospitals to care homes in mid-April, it was helpful in preventing outbreaks.

Before mid-April, testing was also limited to those with symptoms – which was disastrous, given the potential for unwitting transmission from currently asymptomatic people. Hancock claimed that asymptomatic transmission was not appreciated at the point that decisions were being made, but that is nonsense. The minutes of the Sage meeting held on 28 January dwell on the issue – rightly so because this was one of the most important questions that would have determined what was needed to control the outbreak. The minutes state: “There is limited evidence of asymptomatic transmission, but early indications imply [some is occurring](#).” Did Hancock read this? If so, why did he not recognise that the consequences for the most vulnerable under his care would be catastrophic?

As it happens, a more reasonable explanation for the discharge policy is on offer, but if anything it reflects even less well on the early handling of the virus. The recent experience of the pandemic in [northern Italy](#) had made it clear that a serious surge of infections was headed towards the NHS, and planning for that meant that beds needed to be freed up. This surge was the consequence of delaying locking down until after a large wave had become inevitable. Hancock claims that to have taken action earlier would have meant “[overruling scientific consensus](#)” – which Stephen Reicher, a member of the independent Scientific Pandemic Insights Group on Behaviours (SPI-B), described as “quite simply untrue”.

When it comes to the consensus, I cannot claim to know the mind of every expert at the time, but I do know that I was very far from alone during February and March 2020 in [my very great concern for the UK](#), which was escalating with every passing day of inaction. As revealed in texts between the prime minister and Dominic Cummings, the former aide [warned](#) in March about the seriousness of the situation facing care homes and drew attention to the delay in rolling out testing.

Taken together, this collection of excuses unintentionally reveals the mindset that led to the UK's abysmal pandemic response throughout 2020. Whenever scientists conveyed the message "We don't know exactly how bad it is, but it might well be really bad and you should act accordingly," the political response was: "So you mean it might not be that bad," and to avoid making hard decisions. Uncertainty is not a reason for inaction, and unpalatable realities cannot be subservient to hopeful fantasies when you are dealing with a pandemic.

Among those realities is the Delta variant, which has just delayed England's long-promised reopening on 21 June. Even with the successful vaccine rollout, in which the UK has excelled, reopening was always expected to lead to more cases, more hospitalisations and more deaths. The question is how much vaccination blunts those worse outcomes, and if you're comfortable with that price – because people will still get sick and die, just in fewer numbers. Brilliant and urgent work by scientists with PHE has shown that the Delta variant is more transmissible, with some limited ability to evade vaccination, and is more dangerous. The most recent briefings suggest infection with Delta is about twice as likely to land you in hospital, especially if you are unvaccinated.

Setting a deadline for the end of a pandemic ahead of time is the very definition of offering a needless hostage to fortune. I am hopeful that vaccination will limit the resulting damage from Delta in the UK, even as I feel desperately anxious for those parts of the world not lucky enough to have ready access to vaccines.

Epidemiologists will be the first people to admit that managing a pandemic is extremely difficult. But the UK has not simply made a few errors here and there: there has been a persistent and pathological pattern, exemplified by Hancock, of serious mistakes from which nothing is learned, and which are soon repeated. As a result the country is waking up to yet another false dawn. Close to 130,000 have already lost their lives so far. They deserved better. So does the country.

- Dr William Hanage is a professor of the evolution and epidemiology of infectious disease at Harvard

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## OpinionCoronavirus

# Lockdown stole the fun of people-watching – now it's finally back

[Chibundu Onuzo](#)



This summer, I can once again observe strangers in real life, instead of through my window and on social media

Chibundu Onuzo is the author of *Welcome to Lagos*, and *Sankofa*



Commuters on the London underground, June 2021. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

Commuters on the London underground, June 2021. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 17 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

Last week, I made a trip into central London, and spent the day gloriously, nosily, watching strangers. In no particular order, here are some of the things I observed. A sartorially bold man in a matching print shirt and face mask. Three women walking abreast, refusing to yield the pavement to anyone. Four teenagers shouting out rap lyrics on the underground concourse. As they walked past, an elderly man flinched and clutched his belongings. They're not dangerous, I wanted to reassure him. Annoying, yes, and very bad rappers, but not dangerous.

I've missed traditional people-watching during the lockdown. Of course, we all watched people from our windows. The delivery drivers who always seemed to go to the wrong address. The mothers (and it was mostly mothers in my neighbourhood) on their school runs, herding children to the school gates. And of course, the righteous runners, cyclists and power walkers, refusing to let a global pandemic stand in the way of their fitness goals.



Yes, we still watched strangers from behind our blinds but it wasn't the same. First, there is something voyeuristic about watching someone when they can't watch you back. If they could see you watching, they probably wouldn't be picking their nose.

Then there's the imbalance of power, the invasion of privacy and the negative connotations that go with curtain-twitching. In television dramas, curtain-twitchers are often lonely, bitter people who have nothing better to do than watch other people living their lives and call the police if they look like they're having fun.

But people-watching, now that is a celebrated art, because both the watcher and the viewed are on a level playing field. I can look at you and you can look back. People-watching is egalitarian, democratic and probably good for the environment because instead of running down your phone battery for diversion, you're using your eyes. And most interestingly perhaps, there is the serendipity that can happen when the glances of two strangers meet.

I was on the tube once, when I just happened to look at a man at exactly the same moment he looked at me. He was nicely dressed and seemed tall, even though he was sitting down and so I couldn't say for sure. All the way to my stop, we kept glancing at each other and glancing away. I got off at King's Cross and thought to myself, "Well, that was that."

As the doors beeped and slid shut, the strange man leaped out of the tube carriage and landed on the platform beside me.

"I noticed you were looking at me. Can I have your number? Would you like to go out sometime?"

He was slightly out of breath from his long jumping feat. I studied this complete and total stranger. No dating algorithm would have led us to cross paths. It was unlikely that we knew a single person in common. And yet, here we were, opposite each other on an underground platform because our eyes had met.

"No thank you," I said and walked away.

If I'm honest, he wasn't really my type. Nothing came of our encounter, but something *could have*. We might be married now and have four children and it would all have begun with "watching you, watching me".

The pandemic has left its sticky fingerprints on everything. How we work, how we socialise and, sadly, how we people-watch. In the past, people-watching was often driven by curiosity, but now there is an element of policing that has come into global people-watching norms.

These days, there is a distinctly passive-aggressive undertone to the people-watching on public transport. Are you [wearing your mask](#) properly? Is it covering your nose? Are your nostrils visible or, worst of all misdemeanours, have you turned your mask into a chin strap? Yes, we've heard that there are some people that are exempt from wearing face masks, but nobody ever seems to quite believe that the maskless specimen in front of them is one of these rare people. I must confess, I have moved down the carriage because I was sitting next to a maskless person who also happened to be coughing into their hands.

Is people-watching rude? It depends on your technique. If you've ever been asked by a stranger, "What are you looking at?" then you're probably doing it wrong. You've gone from people-watching to people-staring. The art is in the subtlety and brevity of the look. I suggest practising in front of the mirror or with close friends and family.

As a writer always on the hunt for characters to populate my fictional worlds, people-watching has proved invaluable. I love to read the new wave of auto-fiction, where authors draw from their experiences and write novels that are almost indistinguishable from their lives. But what if your life, like mine, consists mostly of, "woke up, went to Tesco, did some writing, went to bed"? Even the most talented of auto-fiction writers might struggle with such material. So to any writers just starting out, I recommend people-watching to add some sauce to your fiction. Also, if your characters are inspired by strangers, they can't sue.

I'm glad the world has opened up and I can once again watch strangers in real life, instead of watching them mostly through my window and on social media. Strangers on social media are perfect, photogenic and are always

standing in the sunlight. Strangers in real life are like you and me: normal people. So if you catch me watching you in public, watch back. Who knows what might happen next?

- Chibundu Onuzo is the author of *Welcome to Lagos*. Her latest novel, *Sankofa*, was published this month

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## [OpinionRussia](#)

# It used to feel that life hung in the balance during US-Russia summits. No longer

[Martin Kettle](#)



A transformed global context and the rise of China put any decisions made at Biden's meeting with Putin into perspective



Joe Biden, left, and Vladimir Putin in Geneva, Switzerland, 16 June 2021.  
Photograph: Mikhail Metzel/AP

Joe Biden, left, and Vladimir Putin in Geneva, Switzerland, 16 June 2021.  
Photograph: Mikhail Metzel/AP

Thu 17 Jun 2021 04.00 EDT

Joe Biden's meeting with Vladimir Putin in Geneva looked like a summit, sounded like a summit, and in some genuine senses really was a summit. But it was not an east-west superpower summit in the 20th-century sense. It was a bilateral meeting [between the leaders of two important countries](#) whose relations are possibly more difficult today than they were in the cold war. Yet life on Earth did not seem to hang in the balance yesterday, as it sometimes could do back then.

Throughout its history [Russia](#) has often been simultaneously strong and weak, at home and abroad. Now, in a century marked by growing Chinese power and the deep polarisation of its domestic politics, something similar can be said of the United States, too. Relative decline has not made either country less suspicious of the other. Perhaps the most significant thing about their meeting was therefore that it occurred at all. But these two countries no longer bestride the globe.

Biden's first presidential swing through Europe has been choreographed to vindicate his claim that [the US is back on the world stage](#) after the chaos of Donald Trump. That claim needs to be interrogated carefully. Biden's foreign policy team is full of experience. The administration is committed to alliances in ways Trump was not. Even so, the lessons of Geneva, and of the G7 and Nato meetings that preceded it, are that the US is back, but necessarily in a different way and in a different world.

The immediate evidence for this is that both the G7 and the Nato meetings focused [as much on China](#) as on Russia. In Cornwall the G7 attacked both countries: China for its internal repression and for the unexplained origins of the Covid pandemic; Russia for its use of biological and cyber weapons. In Brussels the next day, Nato leaders did the same: China was portrayed as an expansionist power whose increased military ambitions require an alliance response, while Russia's Ukraine policy, weapons buildup and hacking were described as aggressive threats.

There are important nuances in all this. Some European countries, jealous to guard their trade links with China and fearful of how the US may vote in 2024, are reluctant to join Biden's stronger critique. The G7 therefore failed to agree on an aid package to counter Beijing's massive and well-established overseas [Belt and Road initiative](#), or a vaccine aid programme that would address the scale of Asian and African need. Nato's communique also distinguished carefully between the Chinese "challenge" and the Russian "threat".

The shift of focus to China, driven by the US under both Biden and Trump, is nevertheless a big strategic event. The reorientation of Nato, in particular, is remarkable. But it throws into relief the massive question of whether the western nations possess either the will or resources to carry it through. The signs of division this week will have been noted in Beijing. The west may will the ends, but it does not yet will the means. Biden's visit to [Europe](#) was greeted with immense relief, but its practical effects have yet to be tested.

Any temptation to suppose the international order has simply hit the resume button after an unwelcome four-year pause should therefore be resisted. Nevertheless, a US-Russia summit in Geneva still has the capacity to resonate. It was in the lakeside Swiss city, after all, where the two sides

came together in 1955 in a tentative effort to ease the cold war. It was there that 1982's "walk in the woods" produced hopes of an end to the nuclear arms race. And it was in Geneva where, three years later, the [Reagan-Gorbachev talks](#) helped quicken a process that would lead to the peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union. That, however, was all more than 30 years ago.

Yesterday's Biden-Putin meeting offered surface continuity with aspects of that past, but crucially not the content. The US and Russia remain major powers, but each is diminished and must operate in the new global context. China's rise is not the only factor in this. The stagnation of European prosperity, the growing dynamism of Asia and the potential of Africa matter, too. This is also the era of the climate crisis and the daily deployment of cyberweapons, not just of the potentially world-ending nuclear Armageddon that dominated post-1945 international relations.

That certainly did not mean there was nothing for the US and Russia to discuss yesterday, or that the summit was unimportant. But the task facing the two is difficult in new ways. The US and Russia are fighting a permanent, mostly low-level conflict. Biden is right to explore the viability of more settled relations. Putin was right to emerge from his Covid-secure cocoon to explore whether Biden takes Russia seriously and is willing to do business with Moscow.

None of this is likely to happen soon, though. The best that can be hoped is for a gradually emerging process and some protocols. However, once the Geneva spotlight is dimmed there are, at least in theory, possible bargains that can be explored on cyber, on climate and even potentially on geopolitical issues such as Russia's near-abroad and the Middle East, just as there still are on arms. These are complex and interwoven issues. They require immense amounts of patient talk, with measured approaches to building necessary degrees of trust, not least with cautious allies. That is in short supply already, as this week showed. The difficulty of some of the compromises that could be involved suggest this may not change any time soon.

- Martin Kettle is a Guardian columnist

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## [OpinionAnxiety](#)

# My number one fear in life? Being boring

[Adrian Chiles](#)



It started 40 years ago, at school, when I was telling a story and saw a yawn begin stirring on my teacher's face. I've been on red alert for stifled yawns ever since



‘I once saw my psychologist stifle a yawn. Now, when I picture him, that’s all I see.’ Photograph: Casarsa/Getty Images/iStockphoto (posed by models)

‘I once saw my psychologist stifle a yawn. Now, when I picture him, that’s all I see.’ Photograph: Casarsa/Getty Images/iStockphoto (posed by models)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

I have a visceral fear of boredom, not on my own account but on everyone else’s. I never get bored myself. This isn’t because I’m always super busy doing lots of interesting things. I’m not. It’s just that I can always fill the quieter minutes, hours and days, which could be boring, with dark thoughts of fury, anxiety, regret, sadness or outright panic about something or other. There’s so much rich material to draw on. I’m resourceful in these matters. It’s enervating, distressing and even crippling, but it has this much going for it: it’s never boring.

My fear of boredom comes from a horror of being the source of anyone else’s boredom. I believe this started 40 years ago during a conversation with my history teacher, Miss Finney. I was banging on about something rather clever, I thought, when I saw the beginnings of a yawn stirring on her

face. These stirrings soon hardened into a firm setting of her jaw. She had plainly resolved, bless her, to do everything in her power not to let this yawn out. I heard tedious words continue to tumble out of my mouth while I watched her face spasm in an ecstasy of desperate, tiny contortions. I wanted to scream: “Just yawn!” but I was too scared of her.

It is psychologically ruinous to waste your head space doing other people’s thinking for them; in setting so much store by their feelings

I suppose it might not have been my fault; it’s possible she’d had a late night, but she didn’t look the type to have ever had a late night. I was emotionally scarred by the conviction that I was responsible for this fight to the death between Miss Finney and her yawn.

I’ve been on red alert looking for yawns ever since, especially stifled ones. A live audience is traumatic for me because one yawn, just one, will destroy me. I would rather they just walked out, yelling abuse. Anything but the yawn. I fully appreciate that – bitterest of ironies – you could well be bored reading this, but that’s OK because I can’t see you, you poor thing. This allows me to suspend my disbelief and kid myself that all is well.



‘Fear of others’ boredom is one of many reasons I can’t throw parties.’  
Photograph: Prostock-Studio/Getty Images/iStockphoto (posed by models)

The truth will always intrude in the end, though. A couple of months ago I was told that something I had written here had been clicked on more than any other story in the Guardian that day. But in the next breath this data purveyor added: “Not many read it to the end, though.” Despair and humiliation prevailed; I could see the yawns as they clicked their escapes from me. I’d much rather they had not clicked at all than got too bored to finish it.

In live television I have often broadcast to many millions of people, but that’s fine because, again, I can’t see any of them. In the studio itself I only have to keep, at most, a dozen people awake. But if I catch one of them doing a Miss Finney, I am crushed. I was once – I felt – playing a blinder while talking into a studio camera. I glanced at the cameraman for approval, hoping to see him all of a-snigger. But he was oblivious, engrossed in a copy of Woodturner magazine. I was less interesting than a piece of wood. This was hard to take.

It’s one of many reasons I can’t throw parties: one yawn from anyone and I want to throw everyone out.

No good comes of this nonsense, of course. It is psychologically ruinous to waste your head space doing other people’s thinking for them; in setting so much store by their feelings. It can lead you into all manner of ludicrous places. Therapy is an excellent example. It’s no good being worried if your counsellor is finding you boring. I fear there have been a few occasions when, upon seeing a shrink stifle a yawn, I’ve added just a little top spin on my troubles to keep them interested.

[Quiz: how boring are you?](#)

[Read more](#)

I saw a brilliant, attentive, compassionate German psychologist for a long time. He listened to me drone on, apparently fascinated, for hours and years on end. Once, only once, I saw him stifle a yawn. And now, when I picture him, that’s all I see.

This will be the death of me, possibly literally. My gravestone will read: here lies someone who can bore no more. Mind you, even that's not true. Henry James, among others, has been boring me from beyond the grave for years.

- Adrian Chiles is a Guardian columnist

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[OpinionBBC](#)

## The BBC's defenders must also be its harshest critics over Martin Bashir

[Dorothy Byrne](#)

Reappointing the TV journalist in 2016 was bad enough, but the report clearing staff over this matter is embarrassing



Martin Bashir pictured in Washington in 2013. Photograph: Nick Wass/Invision/AP

Martin Bashir pictured in Washington in 2013. Photograph: Nick Wass/Invision/AP

Wed 16 Jun 2021 11.34 EDT

For many years, as head of news and current affairs at Channel 4, the first thing I did every morning was read the Daily Mail or, on my day of rest, its

sister paper, the Mail on Sunday. I'm guessing from the revelations this week that that isn't something top [BBC](#) News executives do.

I read the Mail because it carries a lot of great stories, many of them actually true. Also, what the Mail says today, a Conservative politician is likely to say tomorrow and I like to hear news first from its true source. In contrast, it seems some BBC News supremos know nothing at all about some major stories, even when those stories are about their own institution, if they have not been broadcast on the BBC.

This week the BBC published a hilarious report into how on earth, or indeed in heaven, they managed to appoint as their religious affairs correspondent one of the most notorious television journalists of our time, Martin Bashir, and then promote him to editor, religion – which in British establishment terms is just one step down from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Some have asked if it was part of an evil BBC cover-up, but even Satan himself would draw the line at something this ridiculous.

[BBC report clears staff over rehiring of Martin Bashir](#)  
[Read more](#)

More than 25 years ago, the BBC's Panorama programme gained its greatest ever scoop. It wasn't, I regret to say, the exposure of the thalidomide scandal or terrible political corruption involving arms dealers, but an interview with a desperate young woman called Princess Diana. Boy, was the BBC proud of this – and they were, as far as I can make out, all boys. Hey, all those blokes got that vulnerable young woman to reveal her pain. Well done, chaps. Have a drink on me.

And other boys in TV gave them every award you can imagine. [Prince William has said](#) that the content of that interview was driven by the poison Martin Bashir allegedly poured into his mother's ear. We will never know by how much, but a scoop attained by deception and lies is tainted.

Some say that supporters of public service broadcasting shouldn't attack the BBC over the interview, because the scandal is being used by the right to undermine the institution. I, as someone who believes massively in the importance of the BBC, and led news and current affairs on the publicly



owned Channel 4 for nearly 20 years, think the opposite. If we who support our system of public service broadcasting don't call this out, we lose all credibility. What Bashir did was appalling, as was the BBC's cover-up at the time, and we must say so.

Very soon after that ghastly glorious success, people started asking questions, and the Mail on Sunday published an excellent piece of journalism exposing the way the interview had been obtained. It revealed that Bashir, in order to gain trust, had shown Princess Diana's brother [faked bank statements](#) indicating one of his own key employees was in the pay of the News of the World.

This was a story of huge significance that shocked British journalists. But the [BBC's report this week](#), written by a former BBC executive, finds that neither the head of news in 2016, James Harding, nor the head of current affairs, Joanna Carr, had ever read or heard of this exposé. With that level of ignorance about the biggest TV interview of our time, neither would ever have obtained a job at Channel 4.

A third executive on the interview panel did know something about it, but his investigation of the matter took the form of asking the bloke in charge of Panorama at the time of the interview for reassurance. Guess what! He got it.

But hey, they didn't have to just read the papers. That information appeared in a book too. Here is another potential source of information that was available to them when Bashir applied for that religious affairs role: the former director general of the BBC, Tony Hall, knew Bashir had faked those bank statements because he had been involved in the initial investigations.

Hall would certainly have been informed of the plan to appoint Bashir. He had himself been head of news when questions were raised about how the interview was obtained. The investigation then had found that Bashir was a good bloke but the poor freelance graphic designer tasked with creating the fake documents was a bad 'un. What Bashir had done was known



throughout the TV industry and regarded as a major scandal. And that information was known at the BBC in 2016, when Bashir was given the job.

One person who was senior in the BBC news and current affairs department when the appointment was made told me: “There were gasps of disbelief. Jaws dropped. Some of us were speechless.” Another described Harding, who’d previously edited the Times, as an “idiot abroad” who knew nothing about TV journalism’s history.

At Channel 4 we greeted the news with appalled mirth. And that was not just because of the Princess Diana interview. In the world of TV current affairs, there were repeated questions about how Bashir gained his scoops. The mother of one of the little girls killed by Russell Bishop – the so-called “babes in the wood” killer – said Bashir, while making a film for the BBC, had lost her dead child’s bloodstained clothing. Bashir denied this.

[Ex-BBC boss condemns Bashir deceit to land Diana interview](#)

[Read more](#)

I believe the BBC needs to investigate these allegations. Bashir went to work for ITV some time after the Diana interview. There, there were more questions, including highly publicised [complaints about his Michael Jackson interview](#).

Ironically, he was the subject of a letter of complaint sent by the BBC to ITV. BBC executives said Bashir had invented two false stories about them. He had allegedly told the Metropolitan police that the BBC was withholding important evidence about the [1999 Soho pub bomber](#), which was entirely untrue. The BBC also complained that Bashir had told the children of victims of the mass murderer Harold Shipman that Panorama was proposing to broadcast its film on the case before the trial, which could potentially have resulted in him getting off: a terrible lie.

A spokesperson for Bashir said: “Both of these claims are untrue and categorically denied. Mr Bashir did not have any such conversation with the Metropolitan police. Mr Bashir conducted only part of the work on this investigation, the majority was completed by a colleague. Regarding the second claim (concerning reporting on the Dr Harold Shipman case), Mr

Bashir only had dealings with one family and all of those meetings were conducted with a senior producer colleague.”

The BBC’s report this week does not reference that letter at all. But there was yet more damaging evidence about Bashir. After working at ITV, Bashir went to the US. There he was suspended by ABC for making crude and sexist comments at an awards ceremony, and then resigned from MSNBC after making derogatory comments about the US politician [Sarah Palin](#). One of the BBC’s interview panel looked into this and it was decided that making vile, sexist remarks in public didn’t make you ineligible to opine on religion and morality.

This week’s report does question that view, but it does not condemn the BBC for appointing Bashir. Apparently, he was the best man for the job at the time and had “[a deep grasp of theology](#)”. He also had, as was widely known within and without the BBC at the time he was appointed, a questionable grasp of ethics. His appointment was scandalous, and all true supporters of the BBC should say so.

Dorothy Byrne is the former head of news and current affairs at Channel 4

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## 2021.06.17 - Around the world

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- [China Country mourns passing of heroic pig that survived 2008 quake](#)
- [South Africa Bodies of 20 suspected illegal miners found near abandoned goldmine](#)
- [US New York grand jury stores up trouble for Trump Organization executives](#)
- [Air pollution More than half of Europe's cities still plagued, report finds](#)

## Myanmar

# Myanmar village destroyed amid clashes between military and anti-junta group

Residents say 200 homes in Kin Ma burned to ground after opponents of junta fought with regime's forces



A woman walking past the remains of houses after they were burnt in Kin Ma village in Myanmar. Photograph: PAUK TOWNSHIP NEWS/AFP/Getty Images

A woman walking past the remains of houses after they were burnt in Kin Ma village in Myanmar. Photograph: PAUK TOWNSHIP NEWS/AFP/Getty Images

*Staff and agencies*

Thu 17 Jun 2021 01.47 EDT

A village in central [Myanmar](#) has been torched by the military junta, killing at least two people and reducing about 200 homes to piles of ash and rubble, residents have told local media.

Security forces set fire to the Kin Ma village, in Magway region, on Tuesday afternoon after fighting with opponents of the junta, according to residents. More than 1,000 people are sheltering in the forest and nearby villages, while at least two elderly people, who had been unable to flee, were burned to death, villagers told the [Irrawaddy news site](#).

MRTV state television blamed “terrorists” for the fire, and said that media who reported otherwise were “deliberately plotting to discredit the military”. MRTV said 40 “terrorists” set fire to a house in Kin Ma, starting a fire that spread to 100 of the village’s 225 homes.

[Rise of armed civilian groups in Myanmar fuels fears of full-scale civil war](#)  
[Read more](#)

However, residents told Reuters that only 30 houses in the village remained, while some 200 homes had been burned to the ground. The blaze was large enough to be recorded by Nasa’s satellite fire-tracking system at 9.52pm on Tuesday, the news agency reported.



The smoking ruins of Kin Ma village in Magway region. Photograph: PAUK TOWNSHIP NEWS/AFP/Getty Images

Photographs of the village showed a haze of smoke above piles of rubble, where homes once stood. Burnt planks of wood, sheet metal, bricks and cooking pots were scattered around, with only a few trees left standing. Some images showed animal carcasses.

Dan Chugg, the UK ambassador to Myanmar said in a statement: “Reports that the junta has burned down an entire village in Magway, killing elderly residents, demonstrate once again that the military continues to commit terrible crimes and has no regard for the people of Myanmar.”

Myanmar’s military is already accused of burning hundreds of villages in 2017, during a brutal crackdown that drove about 700,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee to Bangladesh, and which has since led to a genocide case in the Hague. Security forces denied setting fires, and even blamed Rohingya for doing so in some instances.

According to interviews given to the outlet [Myanmar Now](#), security forces arrived at Kin Ma on Tuesday, searching for a man who was suspected of shooting at the house of a junta-allied official in another village. After fighting with opponents of the coup outside the village, and apparently losing 15 soldiers, the junta forces set fire to the village, local people told the outlet. The Guardian was unable to verify the claims.

The military’s seizure of power initially prompted huge protests, where millions took to the streets to call for the return of democracy. However, security forces unleashed brutal forces on protesters, [repeatedly opening fire on peaceful marches](#) and rounding up activists during night time raids. As street demonstrations have waned, some have taken up arms to protect their communities and oppose the junta.

UN special rapporteur for Myanmar, Tom Andrews, warned earlier this month of a rapidly deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in parts of the country, where he said junta bombs had displaced more than 100,000 people. People who had been forced to flee their homes were at risk of mass deaths from starvation and disease, he said in a grim warning.

The military has killed more than 860 civilians since seizing power in a coup on 1 February, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), a rights group that tracks casualties and arrests.

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## [China](#)

# China mourns passing of acclaimed pig that survived 2008 quake

Pig that became Chinese national icon after surviving 36 days under rubble has died



Zhu Jianqiang, or ‘strong-willed pig’, in January 2021. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Zhu Jianqiang, or ‘strong-willed pig’, in January 2021. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

*Agence France-Presse in Shanghai*

Thu 17 Jun 2021 03.40 EDT

A pig that became an unlikely national icon in [China](#) after surviving 36 days under rubble following an earthquake in 2008 has died at the age of 14.



Zhu Jianqiang, meaning “strong-willed pig”, shot to fame after being discovered alive after the magnitude-7.9 earthquake in south-western Sichuan province on [12 May 2008](#).

The earthquake left nearly 90,000 people dead or missing, and the pig’s miraculous story – it subsisted on a bag of charcoal and rainwater – was hailed as an inspiring symbol of the will to survive.

[China’s herd of wandering elephants takes a rest after 500km trek](#)  
[Read more](#)

Witnesses said the young Zhu Jianqiang had lost so much weight by the time it was pulled from the rubble that it looked more like a goat. A museum near the city of Chengdu bought the pig for 3,008 yuan (about £335) and kept it as a tourist attraction while it lived out its days.

It succumbed to “old age and exhaustion” on Wednesday night, the museum said on China’s Weibo platform.

In human terms, Zhu Jianqiang was 100 years old, the Global Times said, citing its breeder.

It was named China’s animal of the year in 2008 because it “vividly illustrated the spirit of never giving up”.

By midday on Thursday the Weibo hashtag “strong pig died” had drawn nearly 300m views. Weibo users hailed it as “the most famous pig in history”.

“It is indeed a strong animal, not just for surviving the earthquake but also for the 13 years of life afterwards,” said one Weibo post.

## [South Africa](#)

# **Bodies of 20 suspected illegal miners found near abandoned South Africa goldmine**

Remains were discovered close to disused mine shafts near Johannesburg



Illegal diamond miners are known in South Africa as ‘zama-zamas’. The bodies of 20 suspected illegal miners have been found near Johannesburg. Photograph: Sumaya Hisham/Reuters

Illegal diamond miners are known in South Africa as ‘zama-zamas’. The bodies of 20 suspected illegal miners have been found near Johannesburg. Photograph: Sumaya Hisham/Reuters

[Helen Sullivan](#)

[@helenrsullivan](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 00.14 EDT

Police in [South Africa](#) have discovered the bodies of 20 suspected illegal miners near an abandoned goldmine shaft south-west of Johannesburg.

Police said in a statement they were investigating the cause of the deaths, adding that the men's bodies "were found wrapped in white plastic bags" and bore "severe body burns".

"All the deceased are suspected to be illegal miners commonly known as 'zama zamas' operating in obsolete shafts in Orkney and Stilfontein," just under 200km (125 miles) south-west of Johannesburg, police said in the statement.

Thousands of "zama zamas" – which means "those who try their luck" in Zulu – operate in the country, according to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC). Most are in Johannesburg, South Africa's commercial capital, which is built on some of the world's richest gold deposits.

The first five bodies were discovered on Monday and 15 more on Tuesday, police spokesperson Brigadier Sabata Mokgwabone told AFP on Wednesday. The first group was found outside a disused mine shaft, local media reported. Fourteen more "decomposed bodies were found along Ariston Road near the railway line," police spokesperson Brig Sabata Mokgwabone told the [Sunday Times](#).

['There's a lot of money down there': the deadly cities of gold beneath Johannesburg](#)

[Read more](#)

Most illegal mining is run by crime syndicates. A 2018 report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime estimated that it costs South Africa more than [£753m a year](#). The practice is extremely dangerous, with the risk of injuries and deaths from explosives, toxic fume inhalation, collapsing mine shafts and gang violence.

Between 2012 and 2015 [more than 300 miners](#) working informally in illegal mines are estimated to have died. There are 6,000 "derelict and ownerless"

managed by South Africa's Department of Mineral Resources, local media [reported](#).

Informal mining is not restricted to abandoned mines. In 2009, at least 82 men – thought to have been illegal miners – died after an underground fire at an active mine owned by Harmony Gold.

The SAHRC estimates that informal mining involved as many as 30,000 people in the decade to 2015. Some miners may spend as long as six months underground, the Guardian reported in 2019, “sustained by makeshift underground villages where basic foodstuffs, airtime, alcohol and even sex are sold at dramatically inflated prices”.

South African police have [opened an inquest](#) into the 20 recent deaths.

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## Donald Trump

# New York grand jury stores up trouble for Trump Organization executives

Glimpses of the deliberations behind closed doors suggest a case is being built against Trump's CFO, Allen Weisselberg, which could be bad news for his boss



Manhattan's district attorney is reportedly in 'the final stages of a criminal tax investigation' of Allen Weisselberg, the Trump Organization's longtime chief financial officer. Photograph: Justin Lane/EPA

Manhattan's district attorney is reportedly in 'the final stages of a criminal tax investigation' of Allen Weisselberg, the Trump Organization's longtime chief financial officer. Photograph: Justin Lane/EPA

[Victoria Bekiempis](#)

Thu 17 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

Following a deluge of bombshell news about Donald Trump-related criminal investigations in New York, including the Manhattan district attorney's convening of a special grand jury, more details have emerged that might suggest intensifying legal woes for one of the former president's business lieutenants.

The New York Times [reported](#) on Tuesday that the Manhattan district attorney's office has apparently "entered the final stages of a criminal tax investigation" of Allen Weisselberg, the Trump Organization's longtime chief financial officer.

[New York attorney general opens criminal investigation into Trump Organization](#)  
[Read more](#)

The report that prosecutors might be nearing the final stages of their criminal tax inquiry into Weisselberg comes in the wake of [reports](#) that Jeff McConney – a senior vice-president and controller for the Trump Organization – has testified before the Manhattan special grand jury.

McConney, "one of the most senior officials" in this company, is also the first Trump Organization staffer called to testify – and is one of "a number of witnesses" who have been before the panel, ABC reported.

McConney's role as the Trump Organization's money man could have dramatic implications for an investigation into possible financial crimes at the sprawling business empire. The special grand jury [convened](#) by the Manhattan district attorney's office is expected to decide whether to indict Trump, other executives at his company or the business itself if presented with criminal charges by prosecutors.

The investigation is broad and relates to Trump's business affairs predating his presidency. The inquiry is examining whether the value of some property in his company's real estate portfolio was presented in a way that defrauded insurance companies and banks. The investigation is also trying to determine whether sketchy property valuations might have led to unlawful tax breaks, according to the Washington Post.

With Weisselberg, the Manhattan district attorney's office is reportedly probing whether he received any "fringe benefits" from the company on top of his salary, and if said benefits were taxed adequately.

Although Trump and Weisselberg were usually the "only two people in the room", when prepping tax paperwork and other financial documents, McConney brought them the "original documents and tranches of raw data", the Daily Beast [reported](#). So, McConney might have financial information that could potentially be used against Weisselberg or Trump.

Weisselberg's attorney said "no comment" when asked about the inquiry and Times report.

The Manhattan district attorney's office declined to comment.

Longtime defense attorneys told the Guardian that such revelations about grand jury witness testimony might give clues about prosecutors' strategy and thoughts about potential wrongdoing. When prosecutors start calling witnesses before grand juries, it typically means the investigation has hit the stage where prosecutors feel they have a criminal case against someone.

Daniel R Alonso, a partner at Buckley LLP's [New York](#) office whose past work includes serving as chief assistant district attorney with the Manhattan district attorney, said: "You've got to start with the proposition that it's pretty clear they're targeting Allen Weisselberg, the CFO. If that's correct, which it seems to be, it's an obvious move to get the testimony of the controller on record.

"It appears from the reporting that he's getting immunity," Alonso said of McConney. "They either don't think that he has criminal exposure or if he does, they're more interested in getting people higher up on the food chain if they can."





Allen Weisselberg stands behind Donald Trump and his son Don Jr.  
Photograph: Timothy A Clary/AFP/Getty Images

And because a controller has daily interaction with a CFO, “there are undoubtedly lots and lots of questions that the [district attorney] has asked him, or will ask him, or lots and lots of documents that they can show him that will make it difficult for him to feign a lack of memory,” Alonso also said.

McConney did not respond to an email request for comment.

Rebecca Roiphe, a former prosecutor with the Manhattan district attorney’s office who now works as a professor at New York Law School, explained that in New York state courts, a witness called before the grand jury can’t be prosecuted for what they testify about.

“You really don’t want to use the grand jury, at least in terms of calling witnesses, at an early stage of your investigation because you don’t want to have to accidentally give somebody immunity,” Roiphe said.

So, if prosecutors are calling witnesses before a grand jury, they have a strong sense of who they want to prosecute – they are not just calling people in a way that could jeopardize a case.



“They must have a sense that they have a criminal case against somebody, because of the grand jury practice of New York,” Roiphe said.

“It seems that it’s a more advanced investigation. It’s not just the detectives and prosecutors thinking in theory about an investigation – they’re actively interviewing witnesses and putting a possible indictment together,” said Jeffrey Lichtman, a longtime criminal defense attorney.

“They don’t just call these people out of the blue.”

There appears to be no shortage of high-profile figures willing to discuss Trump, his businesses, or his cronies.

Michael Cohen, Trump’s former fixer, has [met](#) with prosecutors in the Manhattan district attorney’s office. They have reportedly asked Cohen questions about Trump’s business activities. Cohen [pleaded guilty](#) to tax evasion, campaign finance violations and lying to Congress.

Jennifer Weisselberg, Allen Weisselberg’s former daughter-in-law, has [provided](#) investigators with extensive tax records and other financial documents. A representative for Jennifer Weisselberg said: “She is still being considered as a potential witness and she’s been in conversation with the district attorney about her information and her potential [grand jury] testimony if necessary.”

The adult film star [Stormy Daniels](#) – who claimed to have had sex with Trump about 12 or so years ago, and received \$130,000 in hush money during the 2016 presidential race not to discuss the alleged affair – said she would readily testify before a grand jury.

“I would love nothing more than my day in court and to give a deposition and to provide whatever evidence that they need from me,” Daniels reportedly [said](#).

Trump has claimed he did not have a sexual liaison with Daniels.

Trump’s attorneys did not respond to requests for comment.

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## [Air pollution](#)

# More than half of Europe's cities still plagued by dirty air, report finds

Data shows only 127 of 323 cities had acceptable PM 2.5 levels despite drop in emissions during lockdowns

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Cyclists in Cremona, Italy, during the Giro d'Italia last month. The city has been found by the EEA to have some of the most polluted air in Europe. Photograph: Tim de Waele/Getty Images

Cyclists in Cremona, Italy, during the Giro d'Italia last month. The city has been found by the EEA to have some of the most polluted air in Europe. Photograph: Tim de Waele/Getty Images

[Fiona Harvey](#) *Environment correspondent*

Wed 16 Jun 2021 18.00 EDT

More than half of European cities are still plagued by dirty air, [new data shows](#), despite a reduction in traffic emissions and other pollutants during [last year's lockdowns](#).

Cities in eastern Europe, where coal is still a major source of energy, fared worst of all, with Nowy Sącz in [Poland](#) having the most polluted air, followed by Cremona in Italy where industry and geography tend to concentrate air pollution, and Slavonski Brod in Croatia.

The three cleanest cities were Umeå in Sweden, Tampere in Finland and Funchal in [Portugal](#).

The European Environment Agency (EEA) took data from 323 cities in 2019 and 2020 and found that in only 127 of these, or about 40%, levels of fine particulate matter known as PM 2.5 were below World Health Organization recommended limits. Fine particulate matter has the biggest health impact of the [main sources of air pollution](#) and causes more than 400,000 premature deaths a year across Europe.

The data showed the average over the two years and was only available for cities where consistent reporting was available, so not all European cities were covered. The UK was excluded, as the government has opted out of membership of the environmental watchdog, although other non-EU member states such as Turkey, Switzerland and [Norway](#) are members.

The EEA said that lockdown measures had led to large reductions in the levels of nitrogen dioxide, an irritant gas associated with emissions from diesel engines, but that levels of particulate matter had stayed high. Nitrogen dioxide levels fell by more than 60% in some cities in the [lockdowns of April 2020](#), but decreases in levels of particulate matter were less dramatic, with falls of about 20% to 30% recorded in levels of large particulates (PM 10) last April.

The agency's experts said this was because there were many more sources of particulate matter than just road traffic, including the combustion of fuel for heating, for instance in wood-fired boilers, and in industry, as well as from agriculture, as emissions of [ammonia from fertiliser and animal](#)

[manure](#) combine with other pollutants in the atmosphere to form particulates.

Catherine Ganzleben, the EEA's head of group on air pollution, environment and health, said changes in behaviour spurred by the Covid-19 pandemic could have an impact in future. "If people go back to the daily commute, or if they choose teleworking instead, that will disrupt these pollution patterns," she said.

The new air pollution data will be available via a [web viewer](#) that will allow people to compare their cities with others across Europe.

Hans Bruyninckx, the executive director of the EEA, said: "While air quality has improved markedly over the past years, air pollution remains stubbornly high in many cities across [Europe](#). This city air quality viewer allows citizens to see for themselves in an easy-to-use way how their city is doing compared to others on air pollution. It provides concrete and local information which can empower citizens towards their local authorities to address the issues."

The map in this article was amended on 17 June 2021 to correctly identify the locations of Brescia and Vicenza.

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