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## Headlines thursday 4 may 2023

- [Kherson Ukraine residents prepare for curfew after night of heavy shelling](#)
- [US Russia accuses Washington of being behind drone attack on Kremlin](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: Putin's 'criminal actions' must be punished in The Hague, says Zelenskiy](#)
- [False flag or genuine attack? What we know about the Kremlin drone incident](#)

Residents evacuate Kherson after deadly Russian strikes – video report

[Ukraine](#)

## **Kherson prepares for 56-hour curfew after night of heavy Russian shelling**

Citizens of Kherson stock up on food and water as Ukraine forces step up shelling of Russian positions

[Russia-Ukraine war – latest news updates](#)

*Peter Beaumont in Mykolaiv*

[@petersbeaumont1](#)

Fri 5 May 2023 07.42 EDTFirst published on Thu 4 May 2023 04.06 EDT

Residents of the key southern Ukrainian city of Kherson are stocking up on food and water after another night of heavy Russian shelling and before an announced 56-hour curfew due to begin on Friday evening.

A number said they planned to stay indoors before the curfew and planned closure of the city, adding that they had slept in their clothes or gone to shelters because of the intensity of the Russian attack.

Others said they had sent some family outside the city or moved to safer locations further from the river, as they said they were anticipating “something big” over the coming days as Ukrainian forces also stepped up their shelling of Russian positions.

The violence in Kherson has increased markedly this week, with 23 people killed by Russian strikes in the region on Wednesday, including a deadly bombardment of a supermarket that killed eight people.

There is mounting speculation about the timing of the long-anticipated Ukrainian spring counteroffensive, which officials have suggested may be

imminent.

On Thursday morning, Andriy Vanin, 54, described the situation. “We live in the northern part of the city, as far from the river as you can get. We couldn’t sleep last night,” he said. “Until 1am it was very noisy with a lot of shelling. After 1am there was a break and we tried to sleep, then at 4.30am the Ukrainian artillery started shelling the Russian positions on the left bank.

“Yesterday I had to go out around the city. I drive along the city. I was near one of the places that was shelled. It felt like walking on a razor blade. Now I don’t want to leave the house. From tomorrow night we’ll be under a strict curfew announced by the authorities. First thing is safety but I assume this has something to do with the counteroffensive.

“Right now it’s quiet in my district. We are going out to buy drinking water and bread. There’s a couple of small markets nearby but we are going do it fast, like in half an hour, because of the shelling.”

Kateryna Symonova, who lives in the city centre, owned a bar before the war and now works at the technical university. She said: “It was really loud. We heard a lot of bombing. Big and close and we could hear it all the time. It was bad enough that the whole apartment all was shaking. We went down to basement for a time after it started at 10pm.

“We assume they’ll start again today. Now they’re closing the city and I guess it means something big is coming. We have enough food and water and I’ve sent my parents out of Kherson so it’s just me and my husband.

“Now even though the curfew doesn’t start until tomorrow evening, most people have decided to stay at home. It’s really scary to go outside. But it’s also really scary staying at home.”

Oleksandr Tolokonnikov, a spokesperson for the Kherson regional administration, said: “Yesterday was a tough day. The last report we had was that an 89-year-old woman was killed at 8pm but we have not heard of any casualties since.”

Describing the purpose of the curfew and city closure, he said it was designed as a measure aimed at “saboteurs” that would allow the Ukrainian armed forces to strike Russian positions on the far side of the Dnipro River.

“First of all, it’s a counter-saboteur measure but also during this period Ukrainian armed forces can strike the Russian forces who are shelling the city. If people are in houses, the military can work freely,” he said.

The headline and subheading of this article were amended on 5 May 2023 to better reflect the situation in Kherson, as described in the text.

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Drone seen exploding over the Kremlin – video

[Russia](#)

## **White House dismisses ‘ludicrous’ Russian claims US planned Kremlin drone strikes**

‘We had nothing to do with it,’ says Washington spokesperson, accusing Kremlin counterpart of lying, ‘pure and simple’

- [Russia-Ukraine war – latest news updates](#)

*Pjotr Sauer, and Julian Borger in Washington*

Thu 4 May 2023 13.36 EDTFirst published on Thu 4 May 2023 05.57 EDT

The White House has dismissed as “ludicrous” claims by [Russia](#) that Washington orchestrated drone strikes on Moscow, saying the US was not involved in the attack and accusing Russia of lying.

Asked about an accusation by the Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, that Washington had ordered Wednesday’s strike, John Kirby, the US National Security Council spokesman, said: “One thing I can tell you for certain is that the US did not have any involvement with this incident, contrary to Mr Peskov’s lies, and that’s just what they are: lies.”

He said the US was still gathering evidence on the attack.

“We haven’t come to any conclusions one way or another,” Kirby told reporters at the White House on Thursday. “We’re doing the best we can to try to find out what happened.”

Earlier on Thursday, Peskov claimed the US had “dictated” the plan of what Russia said was a drone attack on the Kremlin intended to kill [Vladimir](#)

[Putin](#). Peskov did not provide any evidence to support the allegations.

Peskov said: “We are well aware that decisions on such actions, on such terrorist attacks, are not made in Kyiv, but in Washington. And Kyiv is doing what it is told to do. It is very important that in Washington they understand that we know this, and understand how dangerous such direct participation in the conflict is.”

The president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, and other Ukrainian officials have [denied Russian allegations that Ukraine was involved in a drone attack](#) on the Kremlin that was intended to kill Putin.

Dramatic video footage on Wednesday showed [two flying objects](#) approaching the Kremlin and one hitting the rooftop of the Kremlin Senate, an 18th-century mansion within the grounds of the president’s official residence.

Putin was not in the building at the time of the attack, Peskov said on Wednesday.

The White House press secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre, said earlier: “The United States is certainly not encouraging or enabling [Ukraine](#) to strike beyond its borders.”

Throughout the 14-month conflict, the Kremlin has repeatedly asserted, without providing evidence, that the west started the war in Ukraine. Russian officials have also accused western nations of orchestrating attacks inside Russia.

The Russian ambassador to the UK previously [claimed](#), without providing evidence, that British special forces were involved in a Ukrainian drone attack on Moscow’s Black Sea fleet last October.

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Several hawkish senior Russian officials called on Putin to take retaliatory action shortly after Wednesday's strike. The former president Dmitry Medvedev said the attack on the Kremlin had left Moscow with no option but to "eliminate" Zelenskiy and his "clique" in Kyiv, while Vyacheslav Volodin, the chair of the State Duma, said new weapons should be used to "destroy the Kyiv terrorist regime".

However, there are early signs that the Kremlin is keen to project a sense of normality. Peskov said on Thursday that Putin would not give a special presidential address in connection with the attack and that the normal working situation was in place. He said Putin was planning to work from the Kremlin on Thursday.

Peskov also said any retaliatory steps would be "carefully considered and balanced" by the Russian leadership.

Observers noticed that footage of the drone was not shown on state television on Wednesday evening, as news anchors instead read out the Kremlin's official statement of the attack.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of the Wagner military group, cautioned against the use of nuclear weapons after the strike. In an audio message posted on his Telegram channel, Prigozhin said: "As someone who is a radical person, I can say that the use of nuclear weapons in response to a drone, of course, is out of the question."

Margarita Simonyan, the head of RT, the Russian state-controlled international news television network, said the Kremlin's somewhat muted

response indicated the drone attack was not a false-flag operation by the Kremlin with the aim of justifying further escalation.

Simonyan tweeted: “If the drone attack on the Kremlin was a cunning plan by Moscow to justify firing a kill shot at the Kyiv regime, the situation would look very different by now. The air would be filled with statements promising tough responses, an emergency meeting would have been broadcast followed by an emergency address to the nation.”

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**Ukraine war liveUkraine**

# **US denies involvement in Kremlin drone attack and says Moscow lacks strength to mount large attacks – as it happened**

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Russian police officers guard Red Square in front of the Kremlin.  
Photograph: Getty Images

[Russia](#)

## False flag or genuine attack? What we know about the Kremlin drone incident

Ukraine has denied Russian claims it tried to kill Vladimir Putin, and some experts have said it could have been a Russian stunt

[Russia-Ukraine war – latest news updates](#)

*[Jonathan Yerushalmi](#) and [Pjotr Sauer](#)*

Thu 4 May 2023 07.03 EDTFirst published on Wed 3 May 2023 23.35 EDT

Footage of a drone exploding over the Kremlin – the centre of Russian power and the symbolic heart of the country – has triggered a wave of accusations that stretch from Moscow to Washington, igniting social media-fuelled conspiracy theories and confounding experts around the world.

Russia has accused Ukraine of carrying out a daring assassination attempt on Vladimir Putin. [Ukraine has denied](#) it had anything to do with the incident, with Volodymyr Zelenskiy saying: “We don’t attack Putin, or Moscow.”

The US has made noncommittal statements so far. Meanwhile, many experts on Russia have raised the possibility that the strike could have been a false-flag operation from Moscow.

Here’s what we know.

## **Ukraine’s response**

President Zelenskiy has said his only concern is to defend Ukraine’s cities and villages against the Russian invasion. “We don’t attack Putin, or Moscow. We fight on our territory,” he said.

In the past, Ukraine has [launched drone strikes](#) inside Russia and Crimea, although it typically does not claim responsibility for them. A strike on the Kremlin would be its most audacious to date.

“If we presume it was a Ukrainian attack, consider it a performative strike, a demonstration of capability and a declaration of intent: ‘Don’t think Moscow is safe’,” Mark Galeotti, a Russia specialist and security analyst, wrote on Twitter.

Galeotti said characterising the strikes as an attempt on Putin’s life – as Moscow has – was “playing to Kremlin talking points”.

Drone seen exploding over the Kremlin – video

Putin’s spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said the president was not in the Kremlin at the time of the attack. Galeotti said: “He notoriously rarely goes to the Kremlin, let alone stays there overnight.”

Mick Mulroy, a former US deputy assistant secretary of defence and CIA officer, told the BBC that Ukraine tracked Putin’s movements closely, so it was likely they knew he was not in the Kremlin at the time.

The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, has said that anything coming from the Kremlin should be taken with a “very large shaker of salt”.

## A daring Ukrainian strike?

Ukraine has previously demonstrated the ability to strike deep inside Russian territory, in one instance using drones to hit a strategically important [airbase near Ryazan](#), a city 150 miles from Moscow.

Kyiv appears to have increased its drone attacks on Russia recently, mostly focusing on targeting oil refineries. On Thursday morning alone, Russian officials reported incidents involving drones at two oil refinery facilities in southern Russia.

Ukraine’s military has indicated it was betting on drones to hit targets inside Russia.

A defence industry insider, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the [Economist](#) in March that the army was due to gain “significant and hi-tech capacity” in its drone programme in the coming weeks and months.

And while Wednesday’s strike on Moscow marked the first attack on the Russian capital since the start of the war, leaked US intelligence documents have shown that Ukraine made plans to attack Moscow on 24 February, the anniversary of the invasion. The leaked documents, part of a trove of classified information leaked on a gaming server, showed Kyiv eventually abandoned its plans after US pressure.

Ukraine typically declines to claim responsibility for attacks on Russia or Russian-annexed Crimea, though Kyiv officials have frequently celebrated such attacks with cryptic or mocking remarks.

For instance, Kyiv has vehemently denied taking part in last year’s assassination of Daria Dugina, the daughter of the political philosopher Alexander Dugin. However, US intelligence agencies believe parts of the Ukrainian government authorised the car bomb attack near Moscow that killed Dugina.

Some Ukrainian officials have put the responsibility for the attack on Russian opposition groups working inside the country. Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to the Ukrainian president, said: “The emergence of unidentified, unmanned aerial vehicles at energy facilities or on the Kremlin’s territory can only indicate the guerrilla activities of local resistance forces. As you know, drones can be bought at any military store.”

Ilya Ponomarev, a Kyiv-based former Russian official, told CNN he believed the attack was the work of what he called Russian partisans, not the Ukrainian military.

“It’s one of the Russian partisan groups. I cannot say more, as they have not yet publicly claimed responsibility,” he claimed.

If Kyiv or domestic opposition groups were indeed responsible for the incident, it would once again expose vulnerabilities in the heart of Russian power.

## False-flag accusations

A number of experts have accused Russia of staging a false-flag event, an operation carried out with the intent of blaming an opponent for it.

The strike came at a potential turning point in the war, as Ukraine prepares to mount a long-anticipated counteroffensive. When asked why Russia would accuse Ukraine of trying to assassinate Putin, Zelenskiy said: “It’s very simple. Russia has no victories. He [Putin] can no longer motivate his society, and he can’t just send his troops to their death any more ... now he needs to somehow motivate his people to go forward.”

Mulroy said: “Russia may be fabricating this to use as a pretext to target President Zelenskiy – something they have tried to in the past.”

Western analysts have said Moscow’s response in the aftermath of the strike was highly coordinated, and questioned why no reports of explosions emerged prior to the Kremlin’s official announcement, 12 hours after the explosion was said to have taken place.



Public seating has been erected in Red Square in the lead up to the 9 May Victory Day parade. Photograph: Getty Images

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW), a US thinktank, said Russia probably staged the attack in order to emphasise the existential threat to Russia's citizens and to prepare for wider mobilisation.

It [said](#) it was "extremely unlikely that two drones could have penetrated multiple layers of air defence and detonated or been shot down just over the heart of the Kremlin in a way that provided spectacular imagery caught nicely on camera".

The incident also coincided with preparations for Russia's Victory Day holiday on 9 May, which is usually marked with a military parade across Red Square next to the Kremlin. "The Kremlin may use the strike to justify either cancelling or further limiting May 9th celebrations," the ISW said.

## What could happen next?

Podolyak, the Ukrainian presidential adviser, [told the BBC](#) that attacking Moscow made no sense for Ukraine, but it would help Russia justify attacks on civilian targets.

The statement from Putin's office pointed to a significant response. The former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev said it was time to "physically eliminate Zelenskiy and his clique", while the parliament speaker, Vyacheslav Volodin, called for the use of "weapons capable of stopping and destroying the Kyiv terrorist regime".

According to the ISW, influential nationalist bloggers have called on Moscow to escalate the war, while criticising the Kremlin for allowing Ukraine to cross multiple Russian "red lines" with no adequate retaliation.

However, the thinktank's analysis also shows that bloggers with closer Kremlin affiliations have been advocating against military escalation. "This messaging from pro-Kremlin milbloggers [bloggers who cover war] could support the assessment that the purpose of this false-flag attack was to justify increased mobilisation measures rather than any sort of escalation," the ISW said.

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# Erdogan's earthquake: how years of bad government made a disaster worse

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Lana Del Rey and Harry Styles – could AI make them duet partners?  
Composite: EPA, Getty

[Harry Styles](#)

## **Harry, sing Lana Del Rey! How AI is making pop fans' fantasies come true**

Longed-for duets between favourite pop singers are now being generated by AI. Fans are enthralled, but artists are worried: 'I can't help but think that I can be easily replaced'

*[Ismene Ormonde](#)*

Thu 4 May 2023 04.50 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 May 2023 05.51 EDT

Last month, a video of [Harry Styles](#) covering a song from 2003 Disney film The Lizzie McGuire Movie went viral on TikTok. Except Styles has never – at least not publicly, or to anyone's knowledge – performed this song. Instead, it joins the many examples of fake performances created by artificial intelligence.

Fans were delighted. “Suddenly I am no longer afraid of AI,” commented one listener, and on videos of other AI-generated Styles songs (he’s made to duet with Taylor Swift, for example) there are multiple requests for more. “Make him sing take me to church [by Hozier],” writes one fan, and “SING SAD GIRL BY LANA [del Rey]”, bellows another. Fans wanting their favourite artists to cover songs they enjoy is hardly a new phenomenon, but with advances in AI, there’s no need to involve the artist at all.

Musicians are therefore worried – about being made to perform material they otherwise wouldn’t, or being usurped by a fantasy. “I can’t help but think that I can be easily replaced,” says [Flora Rose](#), a singer-songwriter on TikTok. “I’m spending months crafting my debut EP, [and meanwhile] people can make tracks in one click.”

When it comes to the arts, AI tends to provoke horror or ridicule – as when [an AI photograph](#) won a major photography competition, or when ChatGPT declared young adult weepie The Fault in Our Stars “one of the best books of all time”. In February, the lawyer behind a lawsuit on behalf of visual artists whose work was being used to generate AI art called any generative image “an infringing derivative work”.

The music industry has taken a similar stance. Last month, [Universal Music Group](#) asked streaming platforms to decide whether they wanted to be on “the side of artists, fans and human creative expression,” or “the side of deep fakes, fraud and denying artists their due compensation”.

The problem with UMG’s statement is that it assumes fans and artists are on the same side of this debate. A report by [JP Morgan](#) in April argued that “AI music is just not very good,” and “people don’t listen to it.” But the popularity of AI covers – over [9m views](#) on a [fake collaboration between Drake and the Weeknd](#) before it was taken down – puts this into question, and in the comments of these covers on TikTok, sentiment is overwhelmingly positive. Phoebe, 23, a Styles fan from London, says she loves “the idea of hearing Harry cover one of my favourite songs, without relying on him to sing it on stage”.

Singer-songwriter [Victoria Canal](#) says she doesn't think AI covers can "replace the heart of an artist's original voice. It's fun and shocking to hear an AI Drake song, but I don't think it has the potential to take work away from Drake". But AI music is still sounding alarm bells across the industry: Drake recently called an AI cover of himself rapping an Ice Spice song "[the last straw](#)".

That JP Morgan report insists that "superfans fall in love with the artist, not just the music." Canal agrees, saying AI "can't replace the heart of an artist's original voice and recording, and people can feel that". But existing artists with strong personal brands such as Styles, Drake, or Taylor Swift, already have an emotional connection in place with their fans. "Pop stars are a projection of our desires," says [Holly Herndon](#), a musician who has experimented with Holly+, an AI clone of her own voice. "We resonate most with idealised fantasies", she says, rather than the artist themselves.

AI covers are "linked to [Styles], but separate," Phoebe says. "Being a fan of someone is about the community around it, and I love how AI covers give us more content to talk about."

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But it's not just fan service which AI is facilitating. Stan culture – fervent internet-based fandom – has become increasingly critical and demanding of its idols. Consider the online reaction to Frank Ocean, whose radio silence over new music annoyed fans long before his [Coachella set was found wanting](#), or to [Charli XCX](#), who is often besieged by fan criticism of new music or concert setlists.

Fandoms often “treat pop stardom like sports,” says DJ Louie XIV, host of the pop-music podcast [Pop Pantheon](#). “You pick a favourite artist and become very invested in the idea of them ‘winning’ over the others in the field.” As fans ask for more, sometimes at the cost of an artist’s own creative freedom, AI could be satisfying those needs more than the artists themselves.

But many fans see AI covers as an opportunity for collaboration and communication. “AI songs could give artists the chance to grasp what their fan bases want from them,” says Sara, who runs a Taylor Swift fan account on Twitter. Herndon believes that in the near future, it will be just as common for artists to “assume the identities of other people” as it is to use samples, and “artists will experiment with letting others perform as them, and share in the profits”. UMG and Drake might not agree – but last week, Canadian singer Grimes tweeted that she would [split royalties by 50%](#) on any successful AI song using her voice. “I like the idea of open sourcing all art and killing copyright,” she wrote.

But as AI programs advance, it will become difficult to tell the difference between real and generated music – and fans could end up horrified by what their idols are being made to sing. Grimes later wavered, writing in [another tweet a few days later](#) that she “may do copyright takedowns … don’t wanna be responsible for a Nazi anthem.”

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Daniel Craig and Gemma Arterton in *Quantum Of Solace*. Photograph: Sony Pictures/Allstar

[US writers' strike 2023](#)

## **From Bond to Heroes: what was affected by the 2007 writers' strike?**

As WGA members put their pens down again, a look back on the last industry-shifting strike

*[Charles Bramesco](#)*

Thu 4 May 2023 02.04 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 May 2023 10.09 EDT

Earlier this week, the Writers Guild of America officially launched an industry-wide strike in light of the Alliance of Motion Picture and [Television](#) Producers' continued refusal to meet them on reasonable ground in their negotiations for a new collective contract.

The union has fought for a guaranteed number of on-the-job weeks for TV staffers, pay structures to compensate for the residual fees eliminated by streaming, and regulations to rein in the looming existential threat of artificial intelligence. The organization representing the studios and networks countered with a staunch refusal to curtail the amount of work that can legally be done for no money, and proposed a “day rate” for comedy writers that essentially turns the process of making TV into a form of freelance employment at-will. These groups must now play chicken for the soul of art in America, which directly hinges on the fundamental human right to do your job under financially livable conditions. The other path at this decisive fork leads to a clear dead end for moving pictures.

This crisis concerns the dynamics between management and labor, but as consumers, it’s our tendency to see the conflict in terms of what it will mean for us regular folks. Fortunately for those keen on playing armchair analyst, recent history supplies a clear precedent for the rocky times to come. The WGA last went on strike for 14 weeks beginning at the tail end of 2007, as the rapid expansion of new media and the online economy terraformed the landscape of movies and television. The stoppage had a cataclysmic effect on output as in-progress projects died on the vine, shows went haywire without the guidance of their writers, and films were rushed into, through, and out of production. One hopes that the AMPTP won’t allow matters to turn so dire again, but in the event that they do, we already have a notion of just how widespread the collateral damage could be.

The WGA also went on strike in 1988, during which time executives at Fox circumvented the lack of available writers by developing *Cops*, a compilation of unscripted vérité footage documenting the encounters of on-duty police officers; reality TV likewise exploded in 2008 as a quick and cheap way to generate content unencumbered by creative inspiration. *The Apprentice* had been on a steady season-by-season ratings decline come 2007, until NBC diverted its resources toward retooling the show as *The Celebrity Apprentice* and created a monster hit during the thick of the work freeze. (It’s one of many possible Point A’s that set us on the way toward the Point B of the phrase “Trump’s America”.) The spiking trend quickly cooled into the accepted wisdom that reality programming meant fast, easy, reliable paydays, and other networks followed suit. In the post-strike months, *The Learning Channel* – having debuted its original programming in 1993 with

Great Books, a literature survey co-produced by Walter Cronkite – premiered Toddlers in Tiaras, Cake Boss, I Didn't Know I Was Pregnant, 19 Kids and Counting, The Little Couple, and a distaff Cops clone called Police Women of Broward County.



Striking writers in 2007. Photograph: Damian Dovarganes/AP

Late-night programs live and die by their writers' rooms, and their changing status conveyed the effects of the strike in real time. Ellen DeGeneres crossed the picket line to continue on with her show, excising the monologue and explaining that she couldn't bring herself to lay off the hundred-plus employees who would be affected by a shutdown. Conan O'Brien took a different approach to looking out for his people: while paying their salaries out of his own pocket, he returned to the air with a statement expressing his solidarity with their cause, then held the show hostage with deliberately tedious footage meant to draw attention to how badly he needs his writers. Stupid, surreal and often hilarious in spite of themselves, segments from this odd limbo period saw O'Brien check in with the idle writers as they played the video game Rock Band, and challenge himself to beat his personal record for longest continuous spin of his wedding ring on his desk.

Fiction TV took it on the shins hardest during the strike, as the suits cut episode orders and outright canceled whichever shows they didn't consider

worth retaining. (Casualties of this slash-and-burn doctrine included the long-running sitcom *Girlfriends*, the modestly acclaimed dramedy *Men in Trees*, cult sci-fi series *The 4400* and the New Orleans-set procedural *K-Ville*.) Soap operas attempted to forge ahead with non-union writing crews, and fans vehemently rejected the pale imitation of the genuine article. Fox pried control of *Family Guy* from creator Seth MacFarlane and completed three episodes without his approval. Tina Fey's background at Saturday Night Live allowed her to take the truncated *30 Rock* onstage for in-person performances at New York's Upright Citizens Brigade. Many shows never recovered from the disruption to their narrative, *Heroes* being the favored example of a mythology that went off the rails after a strong freshman season. *Pushing Daisies* maintained a more consistent level of quality, but ABC's capricious rulings cut the show short before it could connect with a wider audience.

Because the scripting of a movie represents a more finite, closed-off act than the ongoing interplay between writing and shooting for TV, the film sector fared somewhat better, though not without its fair share of disasters. Many would-be blockbusters found themselves racing against the clock to get something on paper before the strike went into effect, a situation that led to Michael Bay – by no means a man of letters – taking it upon himself to sculpt an outline for *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* into a screenplay he could use. The James Bond picture [Quantum of Solace](#), widely criticized upon release for its difficult-to-follow plot, also suffered from a lack of on-hand scribes that forced star Daniel Craig to take a crack at writing himself during shooting. George Miller had begun casting his superhero crossover *Justice League: Mortal* by 2008, but Warner Bros wanted to rework the concept, which the strike wouldn't allow. The studio shut the production down instead, and closed a sliding-doors portal to a pop-cultural universe drastically different from our own.

This contentious chapter of history foretells a bleak road ahead, though the fight for fair wages is nowhere near as alarming as a future without it. If writers can't earn a living from their craft, there will be no more writers. Businesspeople confident that ChatGPT can whip up the next *Get Out* or *Mad Max: Fury Road* will be disappointed to find that there's no synthetic substitute for human thought, and as audiences increasingly wake up to this fact, the profit margins those C-suiters are so fond of will start moving in

directions that don't make them happy. Corporate greed, motivated by an untenable mandate from Wall Street to somehow sustain exponential growth forever, represents a suicide spiral for showbiz. Recognizing the worth of the professionals that give value to these networks and studios goes beyond dealmaking savvy, or even a moral imperative – it's simply and objectively correct, the only feasible way forward for financiers, artists and viewers alike.

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Breaking up is never easy ... Illustration: Eleni Kalorkoti

[Friendship](#)

## **‘I didn’t want her in my life’: how to break up with a friend**

No one wants to end a long-term friendship – but sometimes a rift is unavoidable. Experts suggest the most ethical ways to approach the conversation

Lizzie Cernik

Thu 4 May 2023 05.00 EDT

In a recent viral video, New York psychologist [Arianna Brandolini was called “callous”](#) by some after she posted a TikTok guide to breaking up with a friend. While she claimed that phrases such as “I’ve treasured our season of friendship” and “I have no capacity to invest” could be useful, others disagreed. Some even found her approach so “cold and insincere”, they said they would rather be ghosted.

While the clinical approach is clearly not for everyone, leaving a friendship is rarely easy, no matter how you choose to do it. So, what are the best and most ethical options for ending it? Can you ever resolve your differences? And when is it essential to leave?

## **Explain – without the therapy speak**

When it comes to challenging conversations, psychologist and psychotherapist [Anna Sergent](#) says it’s kinder to avoid the sort of language more commonly used by therapists. “Therapy speak isn’t new. As far back as the 1940s, [paediatrician Donald Winnicott broke down psychology concepts for people on the radio](#),” she says. “It started as a positive thing, to help people understand the behaviours of their children. But using it for a breakup conversation puts a barrier between you and them. They might feel intimidated or unclear what you mean. It’s better to give specific examples about things you feel have gone wrong.”

If the person gets upset, she says you should reiterate that you don’t mean to be hurtful, while making it clear why the friendship is having a negative impact on you. “Listen to their arguments to see if things can be resolved, but if you’re absolutely sure you don’t want to be in that relationship, it’s

kinder to stick to your guns. Sticking with a friendship through guilt isn't a positive outcome for either of you."

[Cognitive behavioural psychotherapist](#) Navit Schechter says that when you communicate your concerns, it's important to take ownership of your own feelings. "For example, if you think someone is being selfish, don't make accusations and use labels; explain exactly how their behaviours make you feel and that you want to end the relationship as a result."

It's a technique that worked for Amy, 39, when she broke off a six-year friendship. "My friend called me just as I was about to give birth," she says. "Her parents had paid for a six-week trip abroad for her, and she was complaining they wouldn't pay her rent while she was away. She never even asked me how I was." For Amy, it seemed typical of her friend's selfish attitude. A few weeks later, she sent her friend a message explaining exactly why her behaviour was upsetting, and said that she wanted to end the friendship. "She didn't understand why I hadn't brought it up before, but I don't think I'd fully recognised it until then. That incident made me really reflect properly on her behaviour from the past." The pair haven't spoken for years, but Amy does not regret her decision. "I was very clear about what went wrong and why I didn't want her in my life. I just couldn't rely on her and that's something I need from a friendship."

## Let the friendship drift

In some situations, Schechter suggests it might be more appropriate to simply let the friendship "cool off naturally". "We live in an emotionally avoidant society where people like to push their feelings down, which is why some people find it easier to ghost," she says. But this can be painful for the person on the receiving end, as well as making things awkward in mutual groups. "If you've ghosted someone completely, other friends may feel like they're in the middle or have to choose sides," she says. To keep the peace, you can choose to simply see the person less often.

Unlike romantic relationships, which are often monogamous, Schechter says it's sometimes easier to drift away from friends. "Friendships can change over time. It's perfectly fine to have friends you see once or twice a year or

just in a group,” she says. “You can always build new relationships if you feel you’re missing something, for example friends with common interests.”

Ammanda Major, head of service quality and clinical practice at counselling services charity [Relate](#), says some problems can be solved by adopting an acquaintance-style relationship. “With childhood friends, it’s common for people’s lives to move in very different directions. But do you need to cut that person off completely? Or could you move to a different position? Although she says each situation is unique, if there’s room to keep someone in your life, even at arm’s length, it could be a healthier and less reactive choice in the long-run. “It also gives you the option to revisit that friendship later down the line.”

## **Don’t be afraid to leave an abusive friendship**

Sometimes, staying in a friendship is too damaging, putting you at risk of either physical or mental harm. In these rare situations, Schechter says it can be acceptable to ghost or block someone, if the person might be a danger to you, or has done something unforgivable. “Specific situations where leaving abruptly might be the best solution include unprovoked attacks, such as physical or verbal abuse, bullying, or a huge betrayal, such as cheating with your partner.”

For Ellie, who is in her 40s, ending a friendship of 30 years was painful but she believes that, ultimately, it was the right decision. “She could have extreme mood swings and be possessive and demanding. When she came to my house, either my partner or I would stay sober in case she had too much to drink and became volatile.” Over time, her behaviour got worse. “One day, she became verbally abusive and told me I was an awful mother and that my kids and husband hated me. She had said it before but this time she was sober. From that moment, I knew we’d never speak again.”

Although she does still miss her friend, Ellie says her mental health has improved significantly since ending the friendship. “I do not regret our break up, because I am at peace now.”

## **Consider the alternatives**

Before pulling the plug on a friendship, however, it's important to recognise that there may be a deeper reason why a friend can trigger negative feelings. As Major says: "In 30 years of therapy, I have never used words like 'toxic' to describe people or situations," she says. "Instead, we try to analyse behaviours to determine why an action is causing upset. Sometimes, it's easier to transfer your pain on to someone else, and believe that they're the reason for your distress when issues or disagreements occur."

Sarah, 42, admits she has previously been "too quick" to dump friends. "I had a lot of trauma growing up, which led to low self-esteem," she says. "I started to notice I was a doormat in my relationships and giving more than I was getting out of them." As a result, she found herself running in the opposite direction and cutting people out if she felt they were taking advantage. After some self-reflection, she saw that sometimes her actions were more an indication of her own insecurities. "I started to realise that people have different capacities and that's not always about me."

Schechter says that good communication can help to avoid the breakdown of a difficult friendship. "Breaking up with a friend, especially a long-term friend, feels like quite an extreme action," she says. And, although people might believe that walking away is the ultimate act of self-care, she argues that compassion, for yourself and others, could be more powerful. "For example, if a friend is demanding you always go to places that are convenient for them, it might be an idea to talk to them and understand why this is happening. At the same time, communicate why this is hard for you and why you'd prefer it to become more balanced."

In a highly polarised world, rows over political opinions are another common reason that friendships dissolve. In cases where someone is deeply intolerant of your lifestyle choices, their views make you feel unsafe, or their opinions incite hate or aggression, then leaving is probably the best solution. "It's best to be open and honest, and tell the person that you don't feel your values match any more and that you can't justify the friendship," says Sergent. For run of the mill disagreements, she says a certain amount of friction can be healthy. "Sometimes people think they need to hang out with a certain sort of person, and cancel friendships with people who have different beliefs or interests. But you can discover new things about yourself by being with people who are different."

## *Some names have been changed*

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‘Female researchers deserve our attention but what they really deserve is a level playing field.’ Photograph: David Crosling/AAP

[OpinionResearch](#)

## **‘Put a man on it’: the very short story of my medical research career**

[Ranjana Srivastava](#)



I was incredulous when I was told what my grant application lacked. I was happy to stand on the shoulders of giants, I just didn't want them to carry me

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Thu 4 May 2023 02.07 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 May 2023 02.51 EDT

“Put a man on it.”

In a career filled with good advice, this one struck me for its sheer audacity.

I had recently met a social scientist to whom I described the plight of my oldest cancer patients from migrant and refugee backgrounds, whose vulnerability and lack of agency to navigate complex healthcare conspired to achieve some of the poorest outcomes in the country. When I lamented that my advocacy seemed like draining the sea with a teaspoon, the scientist wisely counselled that I needed to collect good evidence to inform better systems. When I confessed that I needed help designing a research project, she offered the energies of her team. I was excited by the prospect of pairing

my clinical experience with her proven research capability to help needy patients.

The next step was to find research money. I sought more advice, this time from a senior doctor I had met at a conference who had an impressive research background. She read my application and made many helpful observations, including the fact that, given my lack of a track record, I would not win a competitive grant. I pointed out that the social scientist had the research credentials I lacked but she shook her head impatiently and told me what my application really needed.

“Put a man on it.”

I was simply incredulous that this could be construed as good advice, that too coming from an accomplished woman.

The problem of [gender inequity in research funding](#) is all too familiar.

[A recent American study](#) found that an elite class of principal investigators who hold three or more concurrent NIH (National Institutes of Health) grants grew in number over the past 30 years but, even after controlling for career stage and degree, women were significantly underrepresented. And despite evidence of diminishing returns for annual grants over US\$600,000, the dollars remain concentrated in the hands of a select few.

The authors also observe that women and faculty from underrepresented ethnic and racial groups face disparity at two levels – initial application and reapplication – suggesting a trend of inequitable resource allocation that follows an unsuccessful applicant across career stages.

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In the UK, [a study of cancer research](#) funding showed a 70-30 split in the number of grants awarded to men and women. As a result, men received grants valued at nearly £2bn with grants to women totalling £500m.

In Australia, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the major funder of scientific research, found that more men than women apply for grants, a higher proportion of men are awarded grants and greater overall funding is awarded to men. In response, the agency introduced a major overhaul. This led to a welcome finding of equal numbers of applications and equitable funding at the early career stage but these results were soured by the realisation that, at the most senior level of funding, only 21% were women. The direct consequence of this imbalance is that about 35% more grants and 67% more total funding were awarded to men than women in the first three years of the new scheme. Gender equity remains a work in progress although the [NHMRC should be commended for its new set of measures.](#)

For a moment, I thought that my veteran adviser was being pragmatic. After all, if I wanted a competitive grant, what I offered simply wasn't enough. The benefit of having diverse researchers is that they generate diverse ideas and focus on typically neglected and underserved populations, which improves national health and wellbeing, so I wondered whether the end would justify the means.

My dismay turned to horror when my adviser suggested a man I should tie my fortunes to. He was one of those “elite” principal investigators whose pioneering work attracted eye-watering funds which helped him run a bigger lab with more qualified people, which catapulted him to more publications, more recognition and more grants.

What she didn't know was that he was an old friend from medical school who would probably have helped me – but his field wasn't remotely related to mine, and how would I ever look him in the eye again?

The bargain stuck in my throat. It seemed unethical and insulting, not only to my female collaborators but also other women. If I was going to have a late-blooming research career, I wanted to learn the ropes – how to write a strong application, leverage my experience and find the right partners, men and women.

To paraphrase Isaac Newton, I was happy to stand on the shoulders of giants, I just didn't want them to carry me.

Some months later, I received the rejection letter I expected. It said what every polite letter says – great idea, inadequate funds. There was nothing to help me improve.

Never having felt entitled to the grant, I was disappointed for my patients but fortunate to return to my “regular” job. For the other academics who had spent weeks polishing the application and cross-checking every word limit and every reference, the rejection was a lost career opportunity.

Seeking public money rightly requires strong justification but I found the grant process so tedious and time-consuming that I couldn’t summon the spirit to repeat it. It did, however, give me a fresh regard for female researchers, some of whom I got to know well.

During the day they conduct research, help patients, serve on thankless committees, while often also attending parent-teacher meetings and buying the groceries; by night they pore over grant applications to secure their lab’s future.

These women deserve our attention but what they really deserve is a level playing field. Suggestions for this include quotas, separate competitions and equal numbers of awards for men and women, balancing the composition of award committees, actively promoting women into senior academic roles, mentoring more women, and acknowledging that women’s careers are shaped to a far greater extent by their home responsibilities.

Australian taxpayers fund medical research to the tune of \$5bn. Amid [news showing that](#) 95% of federal government programs in the past 10 years have not been properly evaluated, any policy changes must be rigorously tested for impact.

Women don’t want their work to be easy but in academic research, as in so many aspects of life, true gender equity would be a welcome change.

Ranjana Srivastava is an Australian oncologist, award-winning author and Fulbright scholar. Her latest book is called *A Better Death*

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The City of London skyline. Photograph: Bim/Getty Images

[Nils Pratley on finance](#)[Executive pay and bonuses](#)

## **The LSE boss is usually a breath of fresh air – but not on executive pay**

[Nils Pratley](#)



Pay ratios at many FTSE 100 firms are stretched way beyond what was acceptable 20 years ago

- [\*\*LSE chief calls for UK firms to pay bosses more\*\*](#)

Thu 4 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 May 2023 01.51 EDT

Julia Hoggett has been a breath of fresh air as chief executive of the [London Stock Exchange](#) for the past two years. A sociologist by university background, she talks as if she genuinely cares about the role of the exchange in the UK economy – a concern that is often hard to detect within the parent company's obsession with global data and analytics products.

She's firmly within the new consensus that says core elements of the UK's governance and shareholder-protection regime should be dismantled to attract more companies to London, [as proposed by the Financial Conduct Authority](#) this week (this column's view: [sadly, that pragmatic analysis may be correct](#)). But she's also produced genuinely innovative ideas, such as a plan to [create a share-trading venue for privately owned firms](#) as a stepping stone to a full UK market listing.

Hoggett's latest free-thinking thoughts on how to boost the capital markets "ecosystem", however, deserve no applause. Rough gist: [UK-based executives need a pay rise to keep them loyal to London](#).

OK, the analysis is not quite so unsophisticated, but the spirit of her appeal for "a constructive discussion" about boardroom rewards isn't hard to decipher. "Often the same proxy agencies and asset managers that oppose compensation levels in the UK support much higher compensation packages in different jurisdictions, notably in the US," [argues Hoggett](#).

"This lack of a level playing field for UK companies is often not discussed, or if it is, the downside risks to our companies, our economy and our competitiveness are not part of the conversation."

She's obviously correct that proxy voting agencies are hypocrites who protest, say, a £10m boardroom package in the UK while nodding though a \$30m one at an equivalent company in the US. But, come on, the idea that executives in UK-listed companies must be bribed with more money or more share incentives is nonsense.

FTSE 100 executives are not underpaid v European peers, which is a more appropriate playing field for comparison. As for recruitment, the top end of the UK quoted-company ladder is remarkably international. All-comers are welcome – and they've been arriving for years.

Hoggett might look at the London Stock Exchange Group, the parent FTSE 100 firm, itself. It managed to hire as its chief executive David Schwimmer, an American who had been at Goldman Sachs, where they don't pay themselves badly, for 20 years. Schwimmer has been prepared to rub along on £4.7m (2022) and £6.8m (2021) in the UK. Before him, it was a Frenchman, Xavier Rolet.

There are rare examples of FTSE 100 chief executives fleeing to the US unexpectedly. Laxman Narasimhan [switched](#) from Dettol-to-Durex firm Reckitt Benckiser to Starbucks last year. On the other side of the ledger, though, Pearson persuaded its shareholders to swallow the hiring of ex-Disney executive Andy Bird on a US-style package with a bumper share

component; there was noise (Mickey Mouse rewards, etc), but [it got through](#).

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The point is that a healthy stock exchange also requires its leading companies to conform vaguely to local expectations of fair rewards. Not everybody can float in the mid-Atlantic accountable to nobody. Pay ratios at many FTSE 100 firms are already stretched way beyond what would have been acceptable 20 years ago.

Hoggett says she is seeking contributions to a “big tent” conversation around execution compensation. Here’s one: boardroom pay in the UK is already too high. And, if the wider reforming agenda on stock market rules and regulations comes to be seen as a backdoor way for UK executives to ramp up their pay, the outside world may conclude that the whole thing is a racket. Concentrate on reforms with broad appeal.

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‘Our brains and bodies do better with exercise and physical activity, and more exercise makes us less anxious and depressed.’ People playing football in Regent’s Park, London. Photograph: Jo Hale/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Health & wellbeing](#)

## The secret to why exercise is so good for mental health? ‘Hope molecules’

[Devi Sridhar](#)



What we long suspected is now scientific fact: there's a magic chemical connection between mood, strength and longevity

Thu 4 May 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 09.16 EDT

Exercise, in whatever form, and for however long, just makes life feel better. I feel it myself after a walk up Arthur's Seat here in Edinburgh, a jog around the Meadows, or a sweaty hot yoga session in Leith. The physical benefits of movement such as lowered blood pressure, reduced risk of [diabetes](#) and [cancer](#), and [healthy ageing](#), are well-known, and we're beginning to understand more about the mental health benefits as well.

One of the most interesting health research projects of the past decade or so has looked at how exactly exercise makes us feel good. Research shows that there appears to be a clear scientific reason, that we can see at a cellular level. When muscles contract, they secrete chemicals into the bloodstream. Among these chemicals are [myokines](#), which have been referred to as "hope molecules". These small proteins travel to the brain, cross the blood-brain barrier, and act as an antidepressant. They do this by improving our mood, our ability to learn, our capacity for locomotor activity, and protect the brain from the negative effects of ageing. This has been referred to as "[muscle-brain cross-talk](#)".

They're also responsible for improved metabolism, reduced inflammation, and increased muscle strength. Myokines are not solely responsible for feeling good: exercise also releases [neurotransmitters](#) such as dopamine, noradrenaline and serotonin that have a positive impact on our brains.

The nitty gritty of myokines and underlying cellular mechanisms is complex. But the basics aren't rocket science. Our brains and bodies do better with exercise and physical activity, and more exercise makes us less anxious and depressed. It's a case of laboratory and experimental science finally giving us a window into a phenomenon we recognise from our own lives, and from the many public health studies showing the benefits of exercise.

[The largest synthesis study](#) of the effect of exercise on major depressive disorder and depressive symptoms showed moderate to large effects of exercise on depressive symptoms. The authors argue that exercise is an efficacious treatment option for those suffering. This has led to "[social prescriptions](#)" from [GPs](#) such as more time outdoors, daily walks, and moving from a purely medical model of care to one best suited for the individual, mixing physical activity, community engagement and medicine when needed.

The links between physical activity and mental health are [acutely true for children](#) and young people as well. A [large study from Norway](#) showed that physically active teenagers in team sports had higher self-esteem and life satisfaction, particularly for senior high-school girls. This also was true for [university students](#) where a clear association was found between inactivity and poor mental health, self-harm and suicidal attempts.

But trends are going the wrong way. [Young people are spending more time on devices](#), and less taking part in sport and other physical activities. This has significant ramifications for mental health: [a study of 40,000 children](#) in the US found that after more than one hour per day of use, screen time was associated with less curiosity, lower self-control, less emotional stability and lower psychological wellbeing. Among 14- to 17-year-olds, those who used screens throughout the day were twice as likely to have been diagnosed with depression. With the stress of adolescence – whether peer pressure, post-

Covid-19 trauma, exams, isolation and uncertain economic futures – sport, especially team sport, is a good protective measure for mental health. But the links between mental health and sport are rarely part of conversations about “mentally healthy school environments”, sport in the education curriculum, or raising resilient adolescents.

We could do so much more to promote a healthy, lifelong relationship with exercise. It's a surefire way to improve people's health by preventing illness, rather than waiting until someone is already sick. And it's not just about staying a certain weight or being a certain size: it's about keeping our bodies functioning and strong.

It's about the ability to keep up with our children and grandchildren. Exercise is especially important with ageing to keep independence in daily life with activities such as going to the toilet, getting out of bed and up and off the sofa, and going for local food shopping. Being able to live independently, and avoiding going into residential care, [is linked to exercise and physical activity](#).

So when you're feeling low, it's tempting to do a Netflix binge, or spend hours scrolling on social media comparing others' lives to yours, and feeling increasingly sad. This is especially true for teenagers. The antidote we know clearly from epidemiology and biology is to just get moving: whether it's joining a team, going for a long walk, or finding a community gym or yoga class. You'll certainly feel more hopeful afterwards.

Devi Sridhar is chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh

***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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‘It’ll be man v nature, a battle with only one winner, which won’t be me.’  
Photograph: Isabel Pavia/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Gardening advice](#)

## The unspoken truth about gardening? It is a relentless, unwinnable war

[Adrian Chiles](#)



Peace is simply not possible in my garden. If I snooze, I lose. The green tide just keeps coming and I can never beat it back

Thu 4 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 May 2023 14.16 EDT

Television gardeners are a serene species. A snip here, a bit of potting there, their spades breaking earth rich and dark as they murmur wise and loving words. The soundtrack is as soft and gentle as the songs of the birds a-chirping their gratitude from the bushes and trees. All is well in the gardens of the television gardeners.

Cut to any gardening show I might present. There would be no birdsong for a soundtrack, only heavy metal, as brutal as the sound of my spade hitting another unmovable rock. When Lemmy got Motörhead together he said its music would be, “loud, fast, city, raucous, arrogant, paranoid, speed-freak rock’n’roll. It will be so loud that if we move in next door to you, your lawn will die.” Yes, Motörhead’s sound will be just the ticket for my gardening show. Not for me the standard vibe of working with nature. It’ll be man v nature, a battle with only one winner, which won’t be me.

There will be no Monty Don padding quietly into shot bearing little plants for potting up that he's lovingly grown from seed. No dog will snooze sybaritically on the path between the runner beans and the azaleas. Peace is simply not possible in my garden. If I snooze, I lose. As it grows and grows, I have to cut back and cut back. If I don't, I will be overwhelmed, inundated by a green tide. It's relentless. The waste is appalling. I borrowed a mate's chipping machine, like a giant paper shredder into which I feed branches and leaves from a mountainous pile. And the more I cut, the more it grows. I cut back, I gather, I drag, I feed the machine, I lug away bags of dense waste, and so it goes on, ad infinitum, faster and faster, until, soaked with sweat, blood seeping from the scratches on my arms, and my pulse racing at my temples, I sink to my knees, defeated.

Where are the scenes of Monty Don fighting this unwinnable war? I assume there are squads of television production graduates on work experience beavering away out of sight and sound, probably toiling through the night under arc lights. Please someone commission my gardening show. The truth needs to be told.

- Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist
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## 2023.05.04 - Around the world

- [Donald Trump Former US president described E Jean Carroll rape accusation as ‘ridiculous’, jury hears](#)
- [Donald Trump US judge throws out lawsuit against New York Times](#)
- [Colonisation Indigenous leaders demand apology from king](#)
- [West Bank Israeli raid kills three men accused of killing UK-Israeli woman and daughters](#)



E Jean Carroll leaves federal court in Manhattan on Wednesday. Photograph: David Dee Delgado/Reuters

[\*\*Donald Trump\*\*](#)

## **Trump described E Jean Carroll rape accusation as ‘ridiculous’, jury hears**

Jurors shown tape of deposition taken before case came to court in which Trump dismissed ‘the most ridiculous, disgusting story’

*[Chris McGreal in New York](#)*

Wed 3 May 2023 18.25 EDTFirst published on Wed 3 May 2023 13.57 EDT

Donald Trump has described the accusation he raped the advice columnist E Jean Carroll as “ridiculous” in a deposition played to a New York jury on Wednesday.

The former president also said he could not remember when he was married to his various wives, but could find out. Asked if he had affairs while married, Trump said: “I don’t know.”

Trump has declined to appear in person to testify at the civil trial of Carroll's claim that he raped her in a [New York](#) department store changing room. She is also suing him for defamation after Trump accused Carroll of lying when she went public with her account of the alleged assault in 2019.

But the jury was played part of an hours-long deposition he gave before the case came to court. In it, Trump said he went "very rarely" to Bergdorf Goodman department store, where Carroll claims he raped her in a dressing room. He angrily rejected the allegation he assaulted the advice columnist.

"It's the most ridiculous, disgusting story. It's just made up," he said.

The jury heard only part of the deposition before the judge ended the hearing for the day. The rest will be played on Thursday.

Trump's lawyer, Joe Tacopina, said the defence would not be calling any witnesses.

Earlier, the jury heard from Natasha Stoynoff, a People magazine reporter, who said she was pinned against a wall and forcibly kissed by Trump at his Mar-a-Lago mansion in 2005 when she went to write an article about the first anniversary of his marriage to Melania Trump.

Stoynoff said she tried to push Trump away. "He came toward me again and I tried to shove him again. He was kissing me. He was against me," she said.

Stoynoff said she tried to cry out but didn't. "I didn't say words. I couldn't. I tried," she said.

Trump backed off when his butler walked into the room.

Stoynoff said that Trump spoke to her later and suggested that sex with him would be the "best ever".

"He said: 'You do know we're going to have an affair, don't you?'" Stoynoff said. She said she was "ashamed and humiliated by the attack" and asked her boss to remove her from writing about Trump.

The jury was then played the so-called Access Hollywood tape of Trump boasting about kissing and groping women without their consent. “I’m automatically attracted to beautiful women. I just start kissing them – it’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait,” Trump says on that tape in 2005. “And when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab them by the pussy.”

Earlier in the day, a leading clinical psychologist told the trial that Carroll was “doubled over with stomach pain” as she recalled the alleged rape.

Dr Leslie Lebowitz said Carroll exhibits aspects of post-traumatic stress disorder, including physical pain, without fitting the full clinical diagnosis as a result of the alleged assault in 1996.

“She does have symptoms that fit into the rubric of PTSD,” said Lebowitz.

Lebowitz, who interviewed Carroll for about 20 hours, said the advice columnist experiences intrusive physical symptoms of the alleged attack. These included “squirming in her seat” as she recounted the experience of Trump’s fingers in her vagina.

These symptoms worsened, she said, when Trump ran for the White House and was in the news, but diminished again in time.

The psychologist concluded Carroll has been harmed in three main ways. These include suffering from “painful intrusive memories” for many years and a “diminishment” in how she thinks and feels about herself. But Lebowitz said that perhaps the most prominent effect was Carroll “manifests avoidance syndromes” that have stopped her having a romantic life.

“Following her encounter with Mr Trump she began to shut down in the presence of eligible men,” said Lebowitz. “She’s avoiding anything that reminds her of the threat.”

The psychologist said Carroll described the behavior as like a metal shutter pulled down over a store front.

Carroll testified earlier in the trial that she stopped having sex after the alleged assault at the age of 53.

“If I meet a man who is a possibility, it’s impossible for me to even look at him and smile,” she said.

Lebowitz described this as typical “avoidance behavior”.

Pressed on why Carroll insisted in a book and in public that she was “not a victim”, was “fine”, and that she had “never suffered” as a result of the attack, the psychologist said that the advice columnist was presenting a particular face to the world.

Lebowitz said Carroll “fiercely identified with being strong” and as a person who “marched on”, and that a public admission of the impact on her would have harmed that.

“Being raped meant to her being the victim, being stupid, being dirty,” she said.

“For most of the years she simply blamed herself for the assault. She thought she had done something stupid.”

Last week, Trump’s lawyer pressed Carroll under cross-examination about why she didn’t scream if she was being raped, and why she had offered differing explanations for doing so. Carroll said a number of factors could all have been at play.

“I’m telling you he raped me whether I screamed or not,” she said last week.

Lebowitz told the trial on Wednesday it was not uncommon for victims of sexual assault to stay silent while they were being attacked. She said Carroll’s brain would have been flooded with stress hormones, which can lead to unexpected behavior.

Lebowitz gave the imaginary example of a woman who “doesn’t scream even if they’re being raped in the stands of the public library even if we imagine they would”.

She said stress hormones also have a major impact on what people remember about a traumatic incident.

Under cross-examination, Lebowitz agreed that she had not applied any behavioral tests to assess if Carroll was lying about the alleged attack.

The trial continues.

This article was amended on 4 May 2023. An earlier version mistakenly said that Donald Trump was married to Ivanka, who is his daughter, instead of Melania.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/may/03/e-jean-carroll-trump-rape-trial-jury-new-york>

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Donald Trump plays golf at the Trump Turnberry course in South Ayrshire in Scotland on Wednesday. Photograph: Andrew Milligan/PA

[\*\*Donald Trump\*\*](#)

## **US judge throws out Donald Trump's lawsuit against New York Times**

Lawsuit alleged newspaper sought out niece Mary Trump and persuaded her to join 'insidious plot' to obtain Trump's tax records

*Guardian staff*

Wed 3 May 2023 20.34 EDTFirst published on Wed 3 May 2023 19.48 EDT

A judge in New York has thrown out Donald Trump's 2021 lawsuit accusing New York Times reporters of an "insidious plot" to obtain his tax records.

The former president has also been ordered to pay all attorneys' fees and legal expenses the Times and its reporters had incurred. The lawsuit alleged that the newspaper sought out Trump's niece Mary Trump and persuaded her "to smuggle the records out of her attorney's office".

The Daily Beast [first](#) reported the news. Donald Trump had also made claims against his niece, which have yet to be ruled on.

The Times's 2018 Pulitzer-winning stories relied on information from Mary Trump to cast doubt on the ex-president's claims that he was a self-made millionaire, showing that he inherited hundreds of millions through "[dubious tax schemes](#)". The series also revealed a history of tax avoidance.

Robert Reed, a New York supreme court justice, [said](#) that Trump's claims "fail as a matter of constitutional law", which allows for reporters to engage in legal, ordinary newsgathering. "These actions are at the very core of protected first amendment activity," Reed wrote.

Charlie Stadtlander, a spokesperson for the Times, told the Guardian: "The [New York](#) Times is pleased with the judge's decision today. It is an important precedent reaffirming that the press is protected when it engages in routine newsgathering to obtain information of vital importance to the public."

"We will weigh our client's options and continue to vigorously fight on his behalf," Trump's lawyer Alina Habba said in a statement.

Last year, the former president also [sued CNN](#), claiming defamation and seeking \$475m in damages. In 2020, his re-election campaign also sued [the New York Times](#) and [the Washington Post](#) over opinion pieces linking him to Russian interference in the election. The cases against each newspaper were dismissed.

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Aboriginal athlete Nova Peris, former Australian Labor party senator and Olympian, is among campaigners to ask the King for a formal apology for colonisation. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

[King Charles III](#)

## **Commonwealth Indigenous leaders demand apology from the king for effects of colonisation**

**Exclusive:** Aboriginal Olympian Nova Peris says ‘change begins with listening’ as campaigners from 12 countries ask for ‘process of reparatory justice to commence’

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[Josh Butler](#)

Wed 3 May 2023 19.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 3 May 2023 19.26 EDT

Australians have joined Indigenous leaders and politicians across the Commonwealth to demand [King Charles III](#) make a formal apology for the effects of British colonisation, make reparations by redistributing the wealth of the British crown, and return artefacts and human remains.

Days out from Charles's coronation in London, campaigners for republic and reparations movements in 12 countries have written a letter asking the new monarch to start a process towards "a formal apology and for a process of reparatory justice to commence".

"We know this may be a tough conversation for the royal family, but change begins with listening," said Nova Peris, an Aboriginal athlete, former Australian Labor party senator and Olympian. Fellow Indigenous Australian [Lidia Thorpe](#), who is an independent senator, also signed the letter.

The letter, titled "apology, reparation, and repatriation of artefacts and remains", has been signed by representatives of [Antigua and Barbuda](#), Aotearoa (New Zealand), Australia, the Bahamas, Belize, Canada, Grenada, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

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"We, the undersigned, call on the British Monarch, King Charles III, on the date of his coronation being May 6, 2023, to acknowledge the horrific impacts on and legacy of genocide and colonisation of the Indigenous and enslaved peoples," the letter reads.

The letter notes that Charles told the Commonwealth heads of government meeting in June 2022 that acknowledging wrongs of the past was a "conversation whose time has come". The letter asks that the king "immediately start the conversation about slavery's enduring impact".

Signatories are asking the king for an immediate commitment to discussions about reparations for "the oppression of our peoples, plundering of our

resources, denigration of our culture and to redistribute the wealth that underpins the crown back to the peoples from whom it was stolen”.

Charles is also asked to immediately commit to repatriating human remains in British museums and institutions, and the return of cultural treasures and artefacts.

The letter says the taking of such artefacts came through “hundreds of years of genocide, enslavement, discrimination, massacre, and racial discrimination by the authorities empowered by the protection of the British crown”.

Thorpe again expressed her desire for an Australian head of state.

“This country has a new king,” she said. “The parliament and the prime minister are subjugated to someone we didn’t elect.

“Australia must move towards cutting ties with the crown and becoming a republic, but we have unfinished business to settle before this can happen.”

Thorpe reiterated calls for the federal government to move towards a treaty with [Indigenous Australians](#) as part of the republic conversation, saying: “a republic that hasn’t resolved the injustices of terra nullius continues the violent legacy of colonisation.”

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The Australian Republic Movement has strongly criticised some facets of the coronation, including branding as “absurd” the request for Commonwealth subjects to pledge fealty to Charles. Peris, ARM’s co-chair, called it “an affront to all Australians”, saying in a [statement](#): “To think that any self-respecting nation would bow before a foreign king is astounding.”

“We are calling on [Charles] to also acknowledge the horrific and enduring impacts of the legacy of genocide and colonisation on Indigenous and enslaved peoples,” she said. “We hope this petition begins a process towards justice.”

The leadership of New Zealand’s Te Pāti Māori or Māori party, including members of parliament Debbie Ngarewa-Packer and Rawiri Waititi, called for Indigenous members of the Commonwealth to gain further rights to “self-management, self-determination, and self-governance over all our domains”.

“The British crown deliberately engineered our displacement for many generations to come, but they have not succeeded,” they said. “It is time to dismantle this system so we can rebuild one that works for everybody.”

The letter also asks the royal family to acknowledge the renunciation of the “doctrine of discovery” by [Pope Francis](#) last month, and to adopt the same stance in order to “start the process of consultation and reparations for the First Peoples who suffered the consequences of native genocide in fulfilment of that doctrine in the name of God”.

The doctrine of discovery refers to a disputed feature of international law which aimed to justify colonialism, traced back to decrees issued by the Vatican in the 1400s to European kings to authorise their travel and possession of new lands.

In April the Vatican issued a statement saying that doctrine “is not part of the teaching of the Catholic church”, but that papal bulls issued at that time “did not adequately reflect the equal dignity and rights of Indigenous peoples”.

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Lucy Dee, also known as Leah, and her daughters Rina (c) and Maia died after an attack near Hamra in April. Photograph: PA

[Israel](#)

## **Israeli raid kills three men accused of killing UK-Israeli woman and daughters**

Two alleged Hamas operatives and alleged accomplice shot dead in operation in occupied West Bank

*Agence France-Presse*

Thu 4 May 2023 05.11 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 May 2023 05.37 EDT

Israel said its security forces shot dead three Palestinians blamed for killing a British-Israeli woman and her two daughters last month, in a raid on Thursday in the occupied West Bank.

Two suspects in the killings, members of the militant group Hamas, and a third man accused of helping them were killed in an operation in Nablus by the army, police and the security service Shin Bet, a statement said.

It identified the three dead as the “murderers of Leah, Maia and Rina Dee”, using the Hebrew names of the woman and her two daughters who died after an [attack on 7 April](#) on their vehicle near Hamra, in the Jordan valley.

In a separate statement, the army named the two alleged Hamas operatives as Kassan Katnani and Maed Mitsri, and the alleged accomplice as Ibrahim Hura. It said troops recovered two M-16 rifles and an AK-47 from the apartment where the men were holed up.

An AFP correspondent heard gunfire near the Old City around 7am local time as dozens of Israeli army vehicles moved in from multiple directions.

The Palestinian health ministry confirmed that three people were killed in a morning raid in Nablus's Old City. “Two of the martyrs have completely distorted features due to the intensity of the shooting, which makes it difficult to identify them,” the ministry said.

Hamas described the killing of the three Palestinians as an “assassination” of the “heroes of resistance in the city of Nablus”.

The raid came days after violence flared along the Gaza border after the [death of a Palestinian hunger striker](#) in Israeli custody on Tuesday.

Palestinian militants fired more than 100 rockets from Gaza in response to the death of Khader Adnan, 45, a leading figure in Islamic Jihad in the occupied West Bank.

The latest deadly raid brings to 105 the number of Palestinians killed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict so far this year.

Nineteen Israelis, one Ukrainian and one Italian have been killed over the same period, according to an AFP count based on official sources from the two sides. These figures include combatants as well as civilians, and, on the Israeli side, include three members of the Arab minority.

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# Headlines

- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: Kremlin fears of attacks 'influenced Victory Day parade cancellations'](#)
- [Labour Party will not need to forge coalition after general election, senior MP says](#)
- [Local elections Live council results for England](#)
- [E Jean Carroll Video of Trump confusing accuser with his ex-wife is released](#)

[Ukraine war liveUkraine](#)

# Car bomb kills one and injures pro-Kremlin writer in Russian city – as it happened

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Keir Starmer visits Chatham, Medway, to mark the party taking control of the council. Photograph: Labour Party

[Labour](#)

## **Labour will not need to forge coalition after general election, senior MP says**

Peter Kyle rejects predictions Labour will not win enough seats for outright majority in Commons

- [Local elections 2023: live council results for England](#)

*[Harry Taylor](#)  
[@harrytaylr](#)*

Sat 6 May 2023 19.09 EDTFirst published on Sat 6 May 2023 05.11 EDT

A senior Labour MP has predicted the party will not need to go into coalition after the next general election, despite [results from this week's local elections](#) showing they could be short of an overall majority.

Labour gained 536 seats, based on changes from the number of seats immediately after the previous elections, and took control of another 22 councils as it became the largest party in local government for the first time since 2002.

It took advantage of a routed Conservative party, which lost more than 1,000 seats in its latest slump. Reports suggested the Conservative party HQ had only suspected it would lose 600 seats.

However, [analysis](#) by Sky News's Michael Thrasher has found that if the results were repeated at next year's general election it would put Keir Starmer's party 28 seats away from having a majority in the House of Commons.

Labour makes big gains against Tories in local elections – video report

But the shadow Northern Ireland secretary, Peter Kyle, was bullish, and said the party would not have to strike an agreement to gain power.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, he said: "We are going to win outright. We're not going to need to go into coalition. Every indication is saying that is going to be the case. All the extrapolations people are making from the local elections include a status quo in Scotland; we know the status quo in Scotland is not going to be the result that comes out in a general election.

"Whereas all these parties from the Tories to the SNP and others are clinging to the hope that they can ride on the coattails of the Labour party, it will not be the case. If you look at the current polling, if you look at people's attitudes to the general election, we will win decisively."

The SNP has claimed that in the event of a hung parliament at Westminster, it would "drag Labour to the left". The party's Westminster deputy leader, Mhairi Black, said "a strong team of SNP MPs would put Scotland in the driving seat of a minority UK government", adding that they would "keep Labour honest".

She said Starmer had flip-flopped on Brexit, tuition fees, nationalisation and electoral reform – citing this as evidence he was not trustworthy.

“At the next election, voting SNP is the best way to lock the Tories out of Scotland,” Black said. “A strong team of SNP MPs would put Scotland in the driving seat of a minority UK government – and ensure the power to determine Scotland’s future is transferred to Edinburgh.”

Meanwhile, Scottish Labour’s deputy leader, Jackie Baillie, argued the SNP would not be effective in a hung parliament. “Mhairi Black and the SNP aren’t left wing – they are chancers and the game is up,” she said. “The next election is about getting rid of this morally bankrupt Conservative government, not electing SNP politicians to moan from the sidelines.”

In an interview on Friday in Chatham, where Labour took control of Medway council, Starmer said the party was on course to win the general election, and later repeated his message to Labour staff.

Thrasher told Sky News on Friday that Labour was likely to “become the largest party, but in a hung parliament. [It is] a very good result, but not quite getting over the line.”

Rachel Wolf, who helped write the Conservative party’s manifesto in 2019 when it won an 80-seat majority, said it was a “very, very bad [result] for the government”, which was struggling to overcome the “ruckus” of Liz Truss’s six weeks in Downing Street.

She told the Today programme: “It was good but not great for Labour and what is clear is that people are rejecting the Conservatives at the election rather than jumping for an alternative, but that is often enough at this stage. There is a lot that the government has to do to be competitive again at the general election.”

There are difficulties in assessing how the results from Thursday’s voting could be replicated at a general election, because of a lack of polls in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

While Thrasher gave Labour a seven-point lead, his fellow polling expert [John Curtice gave Labour a lead of nine points](#), which he said would be “just enough” for a slender majority, giving Starmer a similar entry to Downing Street experienced by Harold Wilson more than five decades ago.

This article was amended on 9 May 2023 to provide information about the basis on which the number of seats gained by Labour was calculated.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/may/06/labour-will-not-need-to-forge-coalition-after-general-election-senior-mp-says>

## Local elections

# Local elections 2023: full council results for England

Find out the scale of Conservative losses and the gains made by Labour, the Lib Dems and the Green party

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[About these elections](#)

*[Antonio Voce](#), [Anna Leach](#), [Niels de Hoog](#), [Paul Torpey](#) and [Seán Clarke](#)*  
Tue 9 May 2023 07.55 EDTFirst published on Thu 4 May 2023 17.59 EDT

## Latest declarations

230/230 councils declared

NOC = No overall control

Redcar & Cleveland

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 2 hours ago

West Suffolk

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

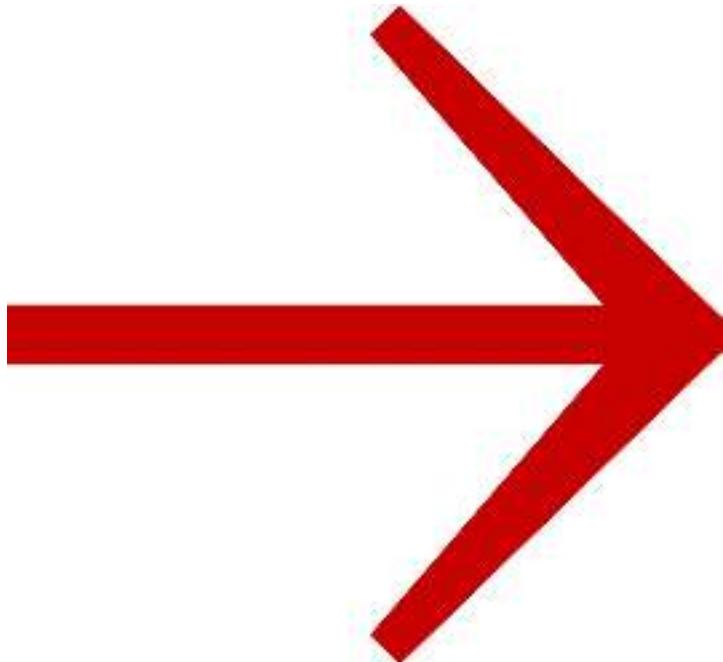
Declared 3 hours ago

Wychavon\*

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 3 hours ago



[Find your council](#)

## Councillor change

Con

-957

Seats won

2296

Lab

+643

Seats won

2675

Lib Dem

+415

Seats won

1628

**Green**

+200

Seats won

481

**Other**

-385

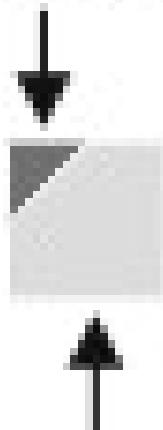
Seats won

1001

# Council control change

NOC = No overall control

## Previous control



## New control

Con

-48

Gain

2

Loss

50

Hold

31

Total

33

Torbay

NOC to Con

Wyre Forest

NOC to Con

Basildon

Con hold  
Blaby  
Con hold  
Braintree  
Con hold  
Breckland  
Con hold  
Broxbourne  
Con hold  
Dartford  
Con hold  
Dudley  
Con hold  
East Cambridgeshire  
Con hold  
Epping Forest  
Con hold  
Fenland  
Con hold  
Fylde  
Con hold  
Harlow  
Con hold  
Havant  
Con hold  
New Forest  
Con hold  
North East Lincolnshire  
Con hold  
North Kesteven  
Con hold  
North Lincolnshire  
Con hold

Redditch  
Con hold

Reigate & Banstead  
Con hold

Rushcliffe  
Con hold

Rushmoor  
Con hold

Sevenoaks  
Con hold

Solihull  
Con hold

South Holland  
Con hold

South Norfolk  
Con hold

South Staffordshire  
Con hold

Test Valley  
Con hold

Thurrock  
Con hold

Walsall  
Con hold

Wychavon  
Con hold

Wyre  
Con hold

Lab

+22

Gain

23  
Loss  
1  
Hold  
48  
Total  
71

Amber Valley

Con to Lab

Blackpool

NOC to Lab

Bracknell Forest

Con to Lab

Brighton & Hove

NOC to Lab

Broxtowe

NOC to Lab

Cheshire West & Chester

NOC to Lab

Dover

Con to Lab

East Staffordshire

Con to Lab

Erewash

Con to Lab

Gravesend

NOC to Lab

High Peak

NOC to Lab

Mansfield

Ind to Lab

Medway

Con to Lab

Middlesbrough

NOC to Lab

North East Derbyshire

NOC to Lab

Plymouth

NOC to Lab

South Derbyshire

NOC to Lab

South Ribble

NOC to Lab

Stoke-on-Trent

NOC to Lab

Swindon

Con to Lab

Thanet

NOC to Lab

West Lancashire

NOC to Lab

York

NOC to Lab

Barnsley

Lab hold

Bassetlaw

Lab hold

Blackburn with Darwen

Lab hold

Bolsover

Lab hold

Bradford

Lab hold

Bury

Lab hold

Calderdale

Lab hold

Cambridge

Lab hold

Chesterfield

Lab hold

Chorley

Lab hold

Coventry

Lab hold

Crawley

Lab hold

Exeter

Lab hold

Gateshead

Lab hold

Gedling

Lab hold

Halton

Lab hold

Ipswich

Lab hold

Kirklees

Lab hold

Knowsley

Lab hold

Leeds

Lab hold

Leicester

Lab hold

Lincoln

Lab hold

Liverpool  
Lab hold

Luton  
Lab hold

Manchester  
Lab hold

Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
Lab hold

North Tyneside  
Lab hold

Norwich  
Lab hold

Nottingham  
Lab hold

Oldham  
Lab hold

Preston  
Lab hold

Reading  
Lab hold

Rochdale  
Lab hold

Rossendale  
Lab hold

Salford  
Lab hold

Sandwell  
Lab hold

Sefton  
Lab hold

South Tyneside  
Lab hold

Southampton

Lab hold  
Stevenage  
Lab hold  
Sunderland  
Lab hold  
Tameside  
Lab hold  
Telford & Wrekin  
Lab hold  
Trafford  
Lab hold  
Wakefield  
Lab hold  
Wigan  
Lab hold  
Wolverhampton  
Lab hold  
Worthing  
Lab hold

**Lib Dem**

+12  
Gain  
12  
Loss  
0  
Hold  
17  
Total  
29  
Chichester  
NOC to Lib Dem

Dacorum

Con to Lib Dem

Guildford

NOC to Lib Dem

Horsham

Con to Lib Dem

Mid Devon

NOC to Lib Dem

South Hams

Con to Lib Dem

South Oxfordshire

NOC to Lib Dem

Stratford-on-Avon

Con to Lib Dem

Surrey Heath

NOC to Lib Dem

Teignbridge

NOC to Lib Dem

West Berkshire

Con to Lib Dem

Windsor & Maidenhead Royal

Con to Lib Dem

Bath & North East Somerset

Lib Dem hold

Chelmsford

Lib Dem hold

Cotswold

Lib Dem hold

Eastbourne

Lib Dem hold

Eastleigh

Lib Dem hold

Hinckley & Bosworth  
Lib Dem hold

Kingston-upon-Hull  
Lib Dem hold

Mole Valley  
Lib Dem hold

North Devon  
Lib Dem hold

North Norfolk  
Lib Dem hold

Oadby & Wigston  
Lib Dem hold

St Albans  
Lib Dem hold

Three Rivers  
Lib Dem hold

Vale of White Horse  
Lib Dem hold

Watford  
Lib Dem hold

Winchester  
Lib Dem hold

Woking  
Lib Dem hold

Green

+1

Gain

1

Loss

0

Hold

0

Total

1

Mid Suffolk

NOC to Green

**NOC/Other**

+13

Gain

42

Loss

29

Hold

54

Total

96

Boston

NOC to Ind

Brentwood

Con to NOC

Broadland

Con to NOC

Bromsgrove

Con to NOC

Cannock Chase

Con to NOC

Central Bedfordshire

Con to NOC

Charnwood

Con to NOC

Cherwell

Con to NOC

East Hampshire

Con to NOC

East Hertfordshire

Con to NOC

East Lindsey

Con to NOC

East Riding of Yorkshire

Con to NOC

East Suffolk

Con to NOC

Forest of Dean

Ind to NOC

Great Yarmouth

Con to NOC

Harborough

Con to NOC

Hertsmere

Con to NOC

King's Lynn & West Norfolk

Con to NOC

Lichfield

Con to NOC

Maidstone

Con to NOC

Maldon

Ind to NOC

Melton

Con to NOC

Mid Sussex

Con to NOC

Newark & Sherwood

Con to NOC

North Warwickshire

Con to NOC

North West Leicestershire

Con to NOC

Pendle  
Con to NOC

Ribble Valley  
Con to NOC

Rugby  
Con to NOC

Runnymede  
Con to NOC

Slough  
Lab to NOC

South Gloucestershire  
Con to NOC

South Kesteven  
Con to NOC

Staffordshire Moorlands  
Con to NOC

Tamworth  
Con to NOC

Tewkesbury  
Con to NOC

Tonbridge & Malling  
Con to NOC

Torridge  
Ind to NOC

Wealden  
Con to NOC

Welwyn Hatfield  
Con to NOC

West Devon  
Con to NOC

West Suffolk

Con to NOC

Ashfield

Ind hold

Castle Point

Ind hold

Epsom & Ewell

R hold

Uttlesford

R hold

Arun

NOC hold

Ashford

NOC hold

Babergh

NOC hold

Basingstoke & Deane

NOC hold

Bedford

NOC hold

Bolton

NOC hold

Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole

NOC hold

Burnley

NOC hold

Canterbury

NOC hold

Cheshire East

NOC hold

Colchester

NOC hold

Darlington

NOC hold

Derby  
NOC hold

Derbyshire Dales  
NOC hold

East Devon  
NOC hold

Elmbridge  
NOC hold

Folkestone & Hythe  
NOC hold

Hart  
NOC hold

Hartlepool  
NOC hold

Herefordshire  
NOC hold

Hyndburn  
NOC hold

Lancaster  
NOC hold

Lewes  
NOC hold

Malvern Hills  
NOC hold

Milton Keynes  
NOC hold

North Hertfordshire  
NOC hold

North Somerset  
NOC hold

Peterborough  
NOC hold

Portsmouth

NOC hold  
Redcar & Cleveland  
NOC hold  
Rochford  
NOC hold  
Rother  
NOC hold  
Rutland  
NOC hold  
Sheffield  
NOC hold  
Southend-on-Sea  
NOC hold  
Spelthorne  
NOC hold  
Stafford  
NOC hold  
Stockport  
NOC hold  
Stockton-on-Tees  
NOC hold  
Swale  
NOC hold  
Tandridge  
NOC hold  
Tendring  
NOC hold  
Tunbridge Wells  
NOC hold  
Warwick  
NOC hold  
Waverley  
NOC hold

West Lindsey

NOC hold

West Oxfordshire

NOC hold

Wirral

NOC hold

Wokingham

NOC hold

Worcester

NOC hold

## Councils of interest

Swindon

**Con to Lab**

Bracknell Forest

**Con to Lab**

Stratford-on-Avon

**Con to Lib Dem**

High Peak

**NOC to Lab**

Middlesbrough

**NOC to Lab**

Mid Suffolk

**NOC to Green**

The losses of Swindon and Bracknell Forest to Labour are indicative of the Conservatives' poor showing in the south of England. Winning Stratford-on-Avon from the Tories was one of several eye-catching victories for the resurgent Lib Dems. Labour has secured coveted victories in High Peak and Middlesbrough, the latter a stronghold for almost 50 years that went into no overall control in 2019. The Green party has taken control of its first ever

council in Mid Suffolk, a victory that can be interpreted in the context of their successful strategy of targeting rural seats.

## Full results

230/230 councils declared

\* councils with ward boundary changes and/or seat number changes



Amber Valley\*

Con to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab	26	+17
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Con	8	-16
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Green	5	+2
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Other	2	-1
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Lib Dem	1	+1
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Reform	0	-6
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Arun

**NOC hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 20 -3

Lib Dem 14 -3

Lab 8 +7

Other 6 -4

Green 6 +3

Ashfield

**Other** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Other 32 +2

Con 2 -1

Lab 1 -1

Ashford

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 19 -4

Lab 11 +5

Other 9 -5

Green 8 +4

Babergh

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Green 10 +6

Other 9 -5

Con 7 -3

Lib Dem 5 +2

Lab 1 0

Barnsley

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 48 +2

Lib Dem 10 +1

Other 2 -2

Con 2 -1

Reform 1 0

Basildon

**Con** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 26 +1

Lab 10 0

Other 6 -1

Basingstoke & Deane

**NOC** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 23 -3

Other 11 0

Lab 10 +1

Lib Dem 9 +2

Green 1 0

Bassetlaw

**Lab** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 38 +3

Con 8 +2

Other 2 -4

Lib Dem 0 -1

Bath & North East Somerset

**Lib Dem** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 41 +5

Other 5 -2

Lab 5 +2

Con 3 -7

Green 3 +2

Vacant 2 0

Bedford\*

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 3 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 14 +2

Lab 14 +3

Lib Dem 13 -1

Green 3 +1

Other 2 +1

Blaby\*

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 19 -4

Lib Dem 9 +3

Lab 6 0

Green 2 +1

Other 0 -3

Blackburn with Darwen

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 39 +2

Con 12 -1

Lib Dem 0 -1

Blackpool\*

NOC to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 28 +8

Con 14 +1

Other 0 -9

Bolsover

**Lab** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 31 +11

Con 3 0

Other 3 -11

Bolton\*

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 26 +7

Con 17 -9

Other 11 +1

Lib Dem 6 +1

Boston

NOC to **Other**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Other 24 +11

Con 5 -10

Lib Dem 1 +1

Lab 0 -2

Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole

**NOC hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 28 +15

Other 20 -2

Con 12 -23

Lab 11 +8

Green 5 +3

UKIP 0 -1

Bracknell Forest\*

**Con to Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 22 +18

Con 10 -27

Lib Dem 7 +6

Green 2 +2

Bradford

**Lab hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 56 +4

Con 16 -4

Green 8 +2

Lib Dem 5 -1

Other 5 -1

Braintree

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 26 -7

Lab 9 +6

Other 7 +4

Green 4 -2

R 3 -1

Breckland

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 30 -7

Lab 12 +5

Other 5 +2

Green 1 -1

Lib Dem 1 +1

Brentwood

Con to **NOC**

third of seats up

Declared 5 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 17 +3

Con 17 -3

Lab 2 0  
Other 1 0

Brighton & Hove\*

**NOC to Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 38 +22

Green 7 -13

Con 6 -5

Other 3 -4

Broadland

**Con to NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 21 -8

Lib Dem 14 +2

Lab 8 +5

Green 4 +2

Other 0 -1

Bromsgrove

**Con to NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 11 -7

Lab 8 +5

Other 7 +1

Lib Dem 5 +2

R 0 -1

Broxbourne

**Con** hold

third of seats up

Declared 5 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 27 0

Lab 3 0

Broxtowe

**NOC** to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 26 +12

Con 10 -9

Lib Dem 5 -2

Other 3 -1

Burnley

**NOC** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 21 +2

Lib Dem 7 -1

Green 7 +1

Con 7 +1

Other 3 -3

Bury

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 31 +3

Con 11 -1

Other 9 -1

Lib Dem 0 -1

Calderdale

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 28 0

Con 15 0

Lib Dem 6 0

Green 2 +1

Other 0 -1

Cambridge

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 27 -2

Lib Dem 10 +1

Green 4 +1

Other 1 0

Cannock Chase

Con to **NOC**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 18 -4

Lab 17 +5

Green 5 +3

Lib Dem 1 -1

Other 0 -3

Canterbury

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 18 +9

Lib Dem 9 +3

Con 8 -10

Green 4 +3

Other 0 -5

Castle Point

**Other** hold

third of seats up

Declared 5 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Other 32 +6

Con 9 -6

Central Bedfordshire\*

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Other 27 +11

Con 20 -19

Lib Dem 10 +7

Lab 5 +4

Green 1 +1

Charnwood\*

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 23 -14

Lab 20 +8

Green 8 +7

Other 1 -1

Chelmsford

**Lib Dem** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 33 +3

Con 21 -1

Other 3 -2

Cherwell

Con to **NOC**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 20 -5  
Lab 12 +3  
Lib Dem 10 +3  
Green 3 +1  
Other 3 -2

Cheshire East

**NOC hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 33 +3  
Lab 31 +6  
Other 11 -7  
R 5 0  
Lib Dem 2 -2

Cheshire West & Chester

**NOC to Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 39 +6  
Con 23 -5  
Other 5 -1  
Green 2 +1  
Lib Dem 1 -1

Chesterfield\*

**Lab hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 28 -1

Lib Dem 12 -5

Other 0 -2

Chichester

**NOC to Lib Dem**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 25 +14

Con 5 -12

Other 4 -1

Green 2 0

Lab 0 -1

Chorley

**Lab hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 36 +5

Con 6 -4

Other 0 -1

Colchester

**NOC hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 19 0

Lib Dem 15 0

Lab 15 0

Green 2 0

Cotswold

**Lib Dem** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 22 +4

Con 9 -5

Green 2 +1

Other 1 0

Coventry

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 35 -1

Con 15 0

Green 2 +1

Other 2 0

Crawley

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 20 +1

Con 16 -1

Dacorum

Con to **Lib Dem**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 28 +9

Con 18 -13

Lab 3 +3

Other 2 +1

Darlington

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 25 +8

Con 14 -8

Green 7 +5

Lib Dem 3 0

Other 1 -5

Dartford

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 29 -2

Lab 11 +4

R 1 0

Green 1 0

Other 0 -2

Derby\*

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 23 +7

Con 15 -3

Reform 6 0

Lib Dem 4 -4

Other 3 0

Derbyshire Dales\*

**NOC hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 12 +5

Con 11 -6

Lab 6 +2

Green 4 +1

Other 1 -7

Dover

Con to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 17 +6

Con 14 -6

Other 1 0

Dudley

**Con hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 44 +1

Lab 27 +1

Other 1 -2

East Cambridgeshire

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 15 -1

Lib Dem 13 +4

Other 0 -3

East Devon

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Other 19 -8

Lib Dem 18 +11

Con 17 -5

Lab 3 +1

Green 2

0

Lib 1 +1

East Hampshire

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 19 -12

Lib Dem 14 +7

Other 7 +3

Green 2 +1

Lab 1 +1

East Hertfordshire\*

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Green 19 +17

Con 16 -23

Lib Dem 10 +4

Lab 5 +3

Other 0 -1

East Lindsey

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 26 -5

Other 21 +4

Lab 6 0

Lib Dem 1 0

Green 1 +1

East Riding of Yorkshire

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 29 -13

Lib Dem 22 +9

Other 9 -1

Lab 4 +4

Yorkshire 3 +1

East Staffordshire\*

Con to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 21 +10

Con 15 -8

Other 1 -3

Lib Dem 0 -1

East Suffolk

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Green 16 +11

Con 15 -24

Lab 12 +5

Lib Dem 11 +8

Other 1 0

Eastbourne

**Lib Dem** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 19 +3

Con 8 0

Other 0 -3

Eastleigh

**Lib Dem** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 35 +1

Other 3 -1

Con 1 0

Elmbridge

**NOC** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 19 +6

R 17 -2

Con 12 -3

Other 0 -1

Epping Forest

**Con** hold  
third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 34 0

R 13 0

Lib Dem 6 +2

Other 3 -2

Green 2 0

Epsom & Ewell\*

**R** hold  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

R 26 -6

Lib Dem 4 +2

Lab 3 0

Con 2 +1

Erewash

Con to **Lab**  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 28 +13

Con 16 -10

Lib Dem 1 0

Other 1 -4

Green 1 +1

Exeter

**Lab** hold  
third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab	25	0
Green	6	+1
Con	4	-1
Lib Dem	3	+1
Other	1	-1

Fenland\*

**Con** hold  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con	35	+9
Other	6	-4
Lib Dem	2	0
Green	0	-1

Folkestone & Hythe

**NOC** hold  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Green	11	+5
Lab	10	+5
Con	5	-5
Lib Dem	2	-1
Other	2	-2
UKIP	0	-2

Forest of Dean

Other to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Green 15 +8

Other 11 -9

Lab 5 +2

Con 4 -2

Lib Dem 3 +1

Fylde\*

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 19 -12

Other 14 -5

Lib Dem 2 +1

Lab 2 +2

Gateshead

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 49 -2

Lib Dem 17 +2

Gedling

**Lab** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 28 0

Con 9 +1

Lib Dem 4 +1

Other 0 -2

Gravesham\*

NOC to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 22 0

Con 17 -4

Other 0 -1

Great Yarmouth

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 19 -2

Lab 18 +4

Other 2 -2

Guildford\*

NOC to **Lib Dem**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 25 +7

Other	10	-9
Con	10	+2
Lab	3	+1
Green	0	-1

Halton

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 5 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab	49	+1
Lib Dem	3	0
Con	2	-1

Harborough

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con	15	-7
Lib Dem	13	+2
Lab	3	+2
Green	3	+3

Harlow

**Con** hold

third of seats up

Declared 5 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con	21	+1
Lab	12	-1

Hart

**NOC hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 11 0

Con 11 0

R 10 0

Other 1 0

Hartlepool

**NOC hold**

third of seats up

Declared 5 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 18 +5

Con 12 -1

Other 6 -4

Havant

**Con hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 30 -5

Lab 4 +2

Lib Dem 2 +2

Green 1 +1

Other 1 0

Herefordshire

**NOC hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses

Con 21 +7

Lib Dem 12 +6

Other 10 -15

Green 9 +2

Lab 1 0

Hertsmere

**Con to NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 16 -13

Lab 14 +7

Lib Dem 9 +6

High Peak

**NOC to Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 29 +8

Con 10 -6

Green 2 0

Other 1 0

Lib Dem 1 -2

Hinckley & Bosworth

**Lib Dem hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 22 +1

Con 10 +1

Lab 2 0

Other 0 -2

Horsham

**Con to Lib Dem**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 28 +15

Con 11 -18

Green 8 +5

Other 1 -2

Hyndburn

**NOC hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 16 +3

Con 16 +1

Green 2 0

Other 1 -4

Ipswich

**Lab hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 33 +1  
Con 10 -1  
Lib Dem 3 0  
Other 2 0

King's Lynn & West Norfolk  
**Con to NOC**  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses  
Con 21 -8  
Other 18 +4  
Lab 11 +2  
Lib Dem 3 +1  
Green 2 +1

Kingston-upon-Hull  
**Lib Dem hold**  
third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses  
Lib Dem 32 +3  
Lab 25 -2  
Other 0 -1

Kirklees  
**Lab hold**  
third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses  
Lab 39 +3  
Con 18 0

Lib Dem 8 0

Green 3 0

Other 1 -3

Knowsley

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 31 -1

Green 7 +2

Other 4 -1

Lib Dem 3 0

Lancaster\*

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 24 +8

Green 21 +6

Lib Dem 7 +3

Con 5 -4

Other 4 -12

Leeds

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 61 +4

Con 18 -3

Other 11 +1

Lib Dem 6 -1

Green 3 -1

Leicester

**Lab** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 31 -6

Con 17 +15

Green 3 +2

Lib Dem 3 +2

Other 0 -13

Lewes

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Green 17 +9

Lib Dem 15 +6

Lab 9 +5

Other 0 -2

Con 0 -18

Lichfield

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 23 -8

Lab 17 +6

Lib Dem 7 +6

Reform 0 -1

Other 0 -3

Lincoln

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 20 -2

Con 9 0

Lib Dem 4 +2

Liverpool\*

**Lab** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 61 +3

Lib Dem 15 +4

Lib 3 -1

Green 3 -1

Other 3 -10

Luton\*

**Lab** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 30 +2

Lib Dem 15 -2

Con 3 +1  
Other 0 -1

Maidstone  
**Con to NOC**  
third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 24 -4  
Lib Dem 12 0  
Other 10 +1  
Lab 6 +1  
Green 3 +2

Maldon  
**Other to NOC**  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Other 14 -2  
Con 10 -4  
Lib Dem 6 +5  
Lab 1 +1

Malvern Hills\*  
**NOC hold**  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Other 14 -2  
Con 7 -5  
Green 7 +2

Lib Dem 3 -1

Lab 0 -1

Manchester

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 88 -3

Lib Dem 4 +2

Green 4 +1

Mansfield\*

Other to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 25 +11

Other 6 -14

Con 5 +3

Medway\*

Con to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 33 +13

Con 22 -11

Other 4 +2

Melton

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses

Con	11	-8
Other	10	+2
Lab	5	+5
Green	1	0
Lib Dem	1	+1

Mid Devon\*  
**NOC to Lib Dem**  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses

Lib Dem	33	+22
Con	5	-12
Green	3	+1
Other	1	-11

Mid Suffolk  
**NOC to Green**  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses

Green	24	+12
Con	6	-10
Lib Dem	4	-1
Other	0	-1

Mid Sussex\*  
**Con to NOC**  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 20 +7

Con 18 -15

Other 5 +1

Green 4 0

Lab 1 +1

Middlesbrough

NOC to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 25 +4

Other 15 -7

Con 4 +1

Lib Dem 2

+2

Milton Keynes

**NOC** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 25 +5

Con 17 -6

Lib Dem 15 +1

Mole Valley\*

**Lib Dem** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 30 +6

Other 6 -1

Con 3 -6

Green 0 -1

New Forest\*

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 26 -17

Lib Dem 14 +1

Other 4 0

Green 3 +3

Lab 1 +1

Newark & Sherwood

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 14 -15

Lab 11 +4

Other 11 +10

Lib Dem 3 +1

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 5 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 48 -2

Lib Dem 23 +2

Other 7 0

North Devon

**Lib Dem** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 22 0

Other 10 0

Con 7 -1

Green 3 +1

North East Derbyshire

NOC to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 28 +10

Con 19 -7

Lib Dem 3 0

Other 2 -4

Green 1 +1

North East Lincolnshire

**Con** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 27 -3

Lab 9 +1

Other 3 +2

Lib Dem 3 0

North Hertfordshire

**NOC** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 19 +2

Lib Dem 15 +2

Con 15 -4

North Kesteven\*

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 25 +2

Other 16 -4

Lab 2 +2

#### North Lincolnshire\*

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 27 -1

Lab 16 +2

Other 0 -1

#### North Norfolk

**Lib Dem** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 25 +1

Con 12 +2

Other 3 -3

#### North Somerset

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 13 0

Other 11 -6

Lab 10 +4

Lib Dem 9 -1

Green 7 +3

North Tyneside

**Lab hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 51 0

Con 7 +1

Other 2 -1

North Warwickshire

**Con to NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 17 -6

Lab 15 +4

Other 3 +2

North West Leicestershire

**Con to NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 17 +10

Con 12 -10

Lib Dem 5 +1

Other 4 0

Green 0 -1

Norwich

**Lab hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 23 -2

Green 13 +2

Lib Dem 3 0

Nottingham

**Lab** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 51 +2

Other 4 0

Con 0 -2

Oadby & Wigston

**Lib Dem** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 19 -3

Con 7 +3

Oldham\*

**Lab** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 32 -3

Con 11 +2

Lib Dem 10 +1

Other 7 0

Pendle

Con to **NOC**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 14 -3

Lab 11 +1

Lib Dem 7 +2

Other 1 0

Peterborough

**NOC** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 30 +2

Lab 14 0

Lib Dem 8 0

Other 5 -1

Green 3 -1

Plymouth

NOC to **Lab**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 31 +7

Con 18 -5

Other 5 -1

Green 2 -1

Vacant 1 0

Portsmouth

**NOC hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 18 +1

Other 9 +3

Con 8 -5

Lab 7 +1

Preston

**Lab hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 31 +2

Con 10 -1

Lib Dem 7 0

Other 0 -1

Reading

**Lab hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 32 +1

Green 7 0

Con 5 -1

Lib Dem 3 0

Other 1 0

Redcar & Cleveland

**NOC hold**

all seats up

Declared 2 hours ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 23 +8

Other 13 -11

Con 12 +6

Lib Dem 11 -3

Redditch

**Con hold**

third of seats up

Declared 5 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 16 -3

Lab 13 +5

Other 0 -1

Green 0 -1

Reigate & Banstead

**Con hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 23 -3

Green 11 +2

R 6 0

Lib Dem 3 0

Lab 1 +1

Other 1 0

Ribble Valley

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 18 -8

Lib Dem 8 -2

Lab 7 +7

Other 5 +1

Green 2 +2

Rochdale

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 46 +3

Con 9 -1

Lib Dem 3 0

Other 2 -2

Rochford

**NOC** hold

third of seats up

Declared 5 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 14 -4

Other 9 -1

Lib Dem 8 +3

R 7 +2

Green 1 0

Rossendale

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 22 +3

Con 9 -2

Other 4 -1

Green 1 0

Rother

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Other 10 -2

Con 10 -6

Lab 8 +6

Lib Dem 7 0

Green 3 +2

Rugby

Con to **NOC**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 21 -2

Lab 12 +2

Lib Dem 9 0

Runnymede

Con to **NOC**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 20 -4

R 6 0

Other 5 +1

Lib Dem 4 +1

Lab 4 +1

Green 2 +1

Rushcliffe\*

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 25 -2

Lab 9 +3

Other 7 +2

Green 2 -1

Lib Dem 1 -2

Rushmoor

**Con** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 23 -5

Lab 14 +5

Lib Dem 2 0

Rutland

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 11 +5

Other 7 -6

Con 6 0

Lab 2 +1

Green 1 0

Salford

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 49 0

Con 8 0

Lib Dem 2 0

Other 1 0

Sandwell

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 60 +2

Con 12 +2

Other 0 -2

Lib Dem 0 -2

Sefton

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses

Lab	51	+5
Lib Dem	8	0
Con	5	0
Other	2	-5

Sevenoaks  
**Con** hold  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses

Con	33	-12
Lib Dem	14	+10
Green	4	+4
Other	3	-1
Lab	0	-1

Sheffield  
**NOC** hold  
third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses

Lab	39	0
Lib Dem	29	0
Green	14	0
Other	1	0
Con	1	0

Slough\*  
Lab to **NOC**  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 21 +16

Lab 18 -17

Lib Dem 3 +3

Other 0 -2

Solihull

**Con** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 29 +2

Green 13 -1

Lib Dem 6 +1

Other 3 -2

South Derbyshire

NOC to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 23 +7

Con 9 -4

Vacant 3 0

Other 1 -3

South Gloucestershire

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 23 -10

Lib Dem 20 +3

Lab 17 +6

Other 1 +1

South Hams

**Con to Lib Dem**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 19 +9

Con 7 -9

Green 3 +1

Other 1 -2

Lab 1 +1

South Holland

**Con hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 19 -4

Other 18 +4

South Kesteven

**Con to NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 24 -12

Other 22 +6

Lib Dem 4 +1

Green 4 +4

Lab 2 +1

South Norfolk

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 24 -8

Lib Dem 11 +1

Lab 9 +8

Other 2 -1

South Oxfordshire

NOC to **Lib Dem**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 21 +8

Green 8 +3

Lab 3 0

R 3 0

Con 1 -9

Other 0 -2

South Ribble

NOC to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 29 +5

Con 16 -5

Lib Dem 5 0

South Staffordshire\*

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 29 -7

Other 5 -3

Lib Dem 4 +4

Green 2 -1

Lab 2 +1

UKIP 0 -1

South Tyneside

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 5 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 38 -3

Green 9 +3

Other 6 0

Con 1 0

Southampton\*

**Lab** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 35 +10

Con 9 -10

Vacant 3 0

Lib Dem 3 +2

Green 1 +1

Southend-on-Sea

**NOC hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 22 +1

Lab 17 +2

Other 7 -2

Lib Dem 4

-2

Green 1 +1

Spelthorne

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 12 -3

Lib Dem 10 +2

Other 7 -3

Lab 7 +4

Green 3 0

St Albans

**Lib Dem** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 48 -1

Con 4 0

Green 2 +1

Vacant 1 0

Other 1 0

Stafford

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 14 -6

Lab 13 +3

Other 7 -2

Green 5 +4

Lib Dem 1 +1

Staffordshire Moorlands

**Con to NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 24 +9

Con 22 -7

Other 8 -3

Lib Dem 1 0

Green 1 +1

Stevenage

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 24 0

Con 9 0

Lib Dem 6 0

Stockport\*

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 30 +2

Lab 24 +2

Other 6 -1

Green 3 +1

Con 0 -4

Stockton-on-Tees\*

**NOC hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 23 +10

Lab 22 -2

Other 8 -7

Vacant 3 0

Lib Dem 0 -1

Stoke-on-Trent\*

**NOC to Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 29 +17

Con 14 -8

Other 1 -9

Stratford-on-Avon\*

**Con to Lib Dem**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 25 +13

Con 12 -7

Green 3 +2

Other 1 -2

Lab 0 -1

Sunderland

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 5 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 45 +3

Lib Dem 15 +1

Con 13 -2

Vacant 1 0

Reform 1 0

Other 0 -2

Surrey Heath

**NOC** to **Lib Dem**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 21 +14

Con 6 -10

Vacant 3 0

Other 3 -3

Lab 2 +1

Green 0 -2

Swale

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 15 +6

Con 12 -3

Other 12 -4

Lib Dem 5 +1

Green 3 +1

Reform 0 -1

Swindon

**Con to Lab**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 33 +10

Con 22 -11

Lib Dem 1 +1

Other 1 0

Tameside\*

**Lab hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 51 +4

Con 6 -2

Other 0 -1

Green 0 -1

Tamworth

**Con to NOC**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 14 -5

Lab 10 +7

Other 6 -1

UKIP 0 -1

Tandridge

**NOC hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Other 14 +1

Lib Dem 11 0

Con 9 -1

R 8 0

Teignbridge

**NOC to Lib Dem**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 26 +4

Other 12 -2

Con 9 -2

Telford & Wrekin\*

**Lab hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 38 +3

Con 8 -5

Lib Dem 6 +2

Other 2 0

Tendring

**NOC hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 19 -2

Other 17 -1

Lab 8 +2

Lib Dem 4 +2

UKIP 0 -1

Test Valley

**Con hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 26 +2

Lib Dem 17 +4

Lib 0 -1

Other 0 -5

Tewkesbury

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 16 +9

Con 9 -14

Other 9 +2

Green 4 +3

Thanet

NOC to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 30 +16

Con 17 -8

Green 5 +1

Other 4 -9

Three Rivers

**Lib Dem** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 22 0

Con 11 0

Lab 3 0

Green 2 +1

Other 1 -1

Thurrock

**Con** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 26 -3

Lab 19 +5

Other 4 -2

Tonbridge & Malling\*

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses

Con	20	-17
Lib Dem	11	+2
Green	8	+4
Lab	3	+2
Other	2	-1

Torbay  
**NOC to Con**  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses

Con	19	+5
Lib Dem	15	+3
Other	2	-8

Torridge  
**Other to NOC**  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago  
Total councillors by party  
Gains/losses

Other	16	-3
Lib Dem	8	+6
Con	6	-4
Green	4	+2
Lab	2	-1

Trafford\*  
**Lab hold**  
all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 41 +1

Con 10 -3

Lib Dem 6 +1

Green 6 +2

Other 0 -1

Tunbridge Wells

**NOC** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 17 +2

Other 12 -1

Con 11 -2

Lab 8 +1

Uttlesford

**R** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

R 22 -1

Con 11 +5

Lib Dem 4 -1

Other 2 0

Green 0 -3

Vale of White Horse

**Lib Dem** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 34 +4

Green 4 +3

Other 0 -1

Con 0 -6

Wakefield

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 49 +4

Con 7 -3

Other 4 -1

Lib Dem 3 0

Walsall

**Con** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 37 0

Lab 21 +1

Other 2 -1

Warwick

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Green 14 +6

Lab	11	+6
Lib Dem	10	+1
Con	6	-10
R	3	0
Other	0	-3

Watford

**Lib Dem** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem	27	0
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Lab	9	0
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Waverley\*

**NOC** hold

all seats up

Declared 3 hours ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem	22	+5
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R	13	-2
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Con	10	-8
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Lab	2	0
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Other	2	-1
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Green	1	-1
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Wealden

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem	13	+7
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Green 11 +7  
Other 10 +3  
Con 9 -19  
Lab 2 +2

Welwyn Hatfield

**Con to NOC**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 22 -4  
Lib Dem 14 +2  
Lab 12 +2

West Berkshire

**Con to Lib Dem**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 29 +13  
Con 11 -13  
Green 2 -1  
Lab 1 +1

West Devon

**Con to NOC**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 11 -5  
Other 10 -1  
Green 5 +3

Vacant 2 0

Lib Dem 2 +2

Lab 1 +1

West Lancashire\*

**NOC to Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 26 +1

Con 15 -4

Vacant 3 0

Other 1 -6

West Lindsey

**NOC hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 18 +5

Con 14 -2

Other 4 -3

West Oxfordshire

**NOC hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 18 +3

Con 17 -3

Lab 10 +1

Green 3 +1

Other 1 -2

West Suffolk

Con to **NOC**

all seats up

Declared 3 hours ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 26 -13

Other 19 -1

Lab 17 +13

Green 1 0

Lib Dem 1 +1

Wigan\*

**Lab** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 64 +3

Other 9 +2

Con 2 -5

Winchester

**Lib Dem** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 30 +2

Con 12 -1

Green 2 +1

Other 1 -2

Windsor & Maidenhead Royal

**Con to Lib Dem**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 22 +12

Other 8 +3

Con 7 -15

R 4 0

**Wirral**

**NOC hold**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 30 +7

Con 17 -6

Green 13 +4

Lib Dem 6 0

Other 0 -5

**Woking**

**Lib Dem hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 20 +4

Con 4 -4

Other 3 0

Lab 3 0

**Wokingham**

**NOC hold**

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lib Dem 26 +3

Con 22 -4

Lab 5 +3

Other 1 -2

Wolverhampton\*

**Lab** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 47 +3

Con 13 -3

Worcester

**NOC** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 13 +1

Green 10 +4

Con 8 -7

Lib Dem 4 +2

Worthing

**Lab** hold

third of seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab 24 +1  
Con 11 -2  
Green 1 +1  
Lib Dem 1 0

Wychavon\*

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 3 hours ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 29 -6  
Lib Dem 7 +1  
Green 6 +3  
Lab 1 +1  
Other 0 -1

Wyre

**Con** hold

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 30 -5  
Lab 15 +8  
Other 3 -3  
Vacant 2 0

Wyre Forest

NOC to **Con**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Con 20 +6

Other	6	-7
Lab	4	+2
Lib Dem	2	-1
Green	1	0

York

NOC to **Lab**

all seats up

Declared 4 days ago

Total councillors by party

Gains/losses

Lab	24	+7
Lib Dem	19	-2
Con	3	+1
Other	1	-3
Green	0	-3

# About the elections

On 4 May, 230 English councils held elections with more than 8,000 seats being contested. Some were for metropolitan boroughs such as Liverpool city council and others for unitary authorities such as Herefordshire or North Somerset. Both structures are single-tier authorities with responsibility for the whole range of council services, including education, social care, rubbish collection and parks.

There were also elections for 152 district councils, lower-tier authorities whose responsibilities are more limited, but include planning, housing and recycling. District councils typically elect a third of their seats each year on a four-yearly cycle, and elect the upper tier council (usually the county council) in the fourth year.

These results come from the PA Media newswire. PA release results for each council when its count is complete, but it is possible that a council's overall result can be known before the final seat is awarded. In addition, PA tracks changes in council seats from just before the election, including any byelections or defections that may have happened. Some results by other media track changes against the last time the seats were up for election, which in this case is usually 2019.

There are also frequent changes in ward boundaries, sometimes accompanied by changes in the number of councillors overall, so it is possible in some cases for all parties to lose seats at the same time.

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Donald Trump confuses E Jean Carroll with ex-wife in 2022 deposition video

[\*\*Donald Trump\*\*](#)

## **Video of Trump confusing E Jean Carroll with ex-wife in deposition is released**

Former president shown pointing to photograph of writer who accuses him of rape and saying ‘That’s my wife’

*[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York*

*[@MartinPengelly](#)*

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Video of [Donald Trump](#)’s deposition in his civil rape trial in New York City was released to the public on Friday.

The footage, from last October, included a previously reported but never publicly seen exchange in which the former president [mistook](#) a picture of his accuser, the writer E Jean Carroll, for a picture of his second wife, Marla Maples.

“That’s Marla, yeah,” Trump said. “That’s my wife.”

His questioner said: “The person you’ve just pointed to is E Jean Carroll.”

Carroll says Trump raped her in a department store in [New York](#) in the mid-1990s. She is suing for battery and for defamation, over comments he made while denying the claim, which she made in a book in 2019.

In one such comment, repeated in his deposition, Trump said Carroll was not his “type”.

On Friday, Renato Mariotti – a former federal prosecutor now a columnist for Politico – pointed to the impact the footage could have in deciding the case.

“Trump claims E Jean Carroll isn’t his type,” Mariotti [said](#), “but he mistook a picture of her for a picture of his ex-wife. You don’t need to be a lawyer to understand why his testimony could [affect] the jury’s verdict.”

In the clip, Trump called Carroll’s claim “the most ridiculous, disgusting story” which he said was “just made up”. An exchange followed about when Trump became aware of a picture showing him with his first wife, Ivana Trump, Carroll and Carroll’s then husband, John Johnson, at a public event in New York.

Shown the picture, Trump said: “I don’t even know who the woman – let’s see, I don’t know who, it’s Marla.”

His questioner asked: “You say Marla’s in this photo?”

Trump said: “That’s Marla, yeah. That’s my wife.”

Asked “which woman are you pointing to”, Trump said: “Here.”

His questioner said: “The person you’ve just pointed to is E Jean Carroll.”

“Oh I see,” Trump said, adding: “Is that Carroll? Because it’s very blurry”.

Trump’s affair with Maples was a tabloid staple in the 1980s, one indelible headline, [engineered by Trump](#), seeing Maples proclaim him the provider of the “Best Sex I’ve Ever Had”.

In his deposition, he was asked if he had seen other women while married to his first wife. He answered: “I don’t know.”

Trump was also shown repeating, “with as much respect as I can”, his contention that Carroll “is not my type. Not my type in any way, shape or form.”

In rally footage shown at his deposition, Trump described Jessica Leeds, who accuses him of sexual assault on a plane in the late 1970s, as “not my first choice, that I can tell you … that would not be my first choice”. This week, Leeds testified for Carroll.

Trump told Carroll’s lawyer she “wouldn’t be a choice of mine either, to be honest with you, I hope you’re not insulted, I would not in any circumstances have any interest in you”. He also called the lawyer, Roberta Kaplan, a “political operative” and a “disgrace”.

Other footage showed Trump discussing the Access Hollywood, hot-mic footage which surfaced in 2016, briefly threatening to derail Trump’s election campaign.

In that tape, Trump said: “I just start kissing them, it’s like a magnet, just kiss, I don’t even wait and when you’re a star they just let you do it. You can do anything. Grab ’em by the pussy. You can do anything.”

In his deposition, he said: “Well historically, that’s true with stars.”

He was asked: “It’s true you can grab them by the pussy?”

He said: “Well, if you look over the last million years, I guess that’s been largely true. Not always, but largely true. Unfortunately or fortunately.”

“You consider yourself a star?”

“I think you can say that, yeah.”

The jury saw the footage this week. Lawyers for Carroll rested on Thursday. For Trump, the lawyer Joe Tacopina said no witnesses would be called and Trump would not testify himself. Trump nonetheless has until 5pm on Sunday to change his mind.

Trump faces other forms of legal jeopardy, including investigations of his election subversion, retention of classified records and business and tax affairs.

In another New York case, he has pleaded not guilty to 34 criminal counts related to a hush money payment to the porn star [Stormy Daniels](#), who claims an affair Trump denies.

Politically, Trump has capitalised on his predicament, alleging persecution by Democrats, enjoying a flood of donations and surging to commanding leads in Republican primary polling.

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‘Putting on the uniform for the first time, dressing in front of the mirror, you watch yourself disappear.’ Photography: Lol Keegan/The Guardian. Props: Propped Up

[Police](#)

# **‘The sexism was so blatant, as if officers felt irreproachable’: my year on the streets with the Met police**

From “talent spotting” women to endless lewd banter, the everyday misogyny I witnessed in my time as a special constable was a sign of a broken force

*Matt Lloyd-Rose*

Sat 6 May 2023 05.00 EDT

Putting on a police uniform for the first time is a peculiar experience. It feels like fancy dress, like a joke taken too far. Boots, trousers, shirt, necktie, kit belt, stab vest, hat – and a face hidden somewhere in the middle of it all, lost among the black, white and blue. The police uniform transforms a stranger into a familiar figure, a person into a personification. As a police officer, you become someone less specific. But what you lose in individuality, you gain in access to other individuals. In uniform you can talk to anyone and anyone can talk to you.

*“Nice to see you, officer. How you doing? All right? ... Quiet, yeah. Too quiet if you ask me.”*

Uniform flattens, makes the wearer two-dimensional. If someone dislikes the police, you can be friendly, but the outfit speaks first and louder.

*“Don’t you have anything better to do than coming round here wasting our time?”*

Putting on the uniform for the first time, dressing in front of the mirror, you watch yourself disappear. Then, out on patrol, you look for yourself in car windows, shop windows, the mirrors in people’s hallways, your head on a police officer’s body.

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When I became a special constable – a volunteer with full police powers – I was attracted not so much by the role as by what police see and experience, their proximity to vulnerable groups at their most vulnerable moments. I am a former careworker and primary schoolteacher, and this was the lens through which I looked at policing. I was interested in how, and how well, our society was set up to tackle entrenched social issues. Social workers felt overloaded. Local services had been cut in a huge government austerity drive, from mental health provision to youth clubs to libraries. In such circumstances, I wondered whose job it was to grapple with our most complex social challenges – homelessness, loneliness, gang violence, poverty, mental illness, domestic violence – and I suspected the police were the people who confronted these issues at their most raw. I was intrigued to see how they responded to them. I knew the police tackled [crime](#) and kept order. I was not sure what they did with the rest of their time.

What was it about this job that was simultaneously so compelling and so unappealing?

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For the volunteer, becoming a special is an opportunity to learn something new. For [the Met](#), it is a way to boost numbers on busy weekend evenings. There were 400 of us at the ceremony after our training, about to be dispatched to London's 32 boroughs. I asked to be placed in Lambeth, where I lived and where I had, until recently, worked as a teacher. Among the other Lambeth specials were a banker, a bus driver, a printer, a civil servant, a supermarket manager, a pastor, an HR director, a stay-at-home parent, a hospital receptionist, a stagehand, a custody officer, an executive PA and a criminology student. In terms of age, ethnicity and gender, it was probably the most diverse group I had ever been part of.

At the start of every shift there was a briefing to give us the latest intelligence on our area. No two were the same, but most were fairly similar. Top five robbers, top five burglars, anyone wanted or missing, vehicles to look out for. Some details would stick in the memory more easily than others. “Suspect last seen doing press-ups topless on the roof of his car”; “Suspect has attached a machete to the wall by his front door”; “Suspect evoked section 61 of the Magna Carta and attempted to headbutt police”.

Every Friday night, we would be put on patrol in Brixton town centre, Clapham High Street or Vauxhall. For the first shifts, though, we simply circled Lambeth in a van – three new specials in the back, two regular officers in the front – getting a flavour of what the borough had to offer. One of the regulars turned around in his seat. “Right, guys, you tell us what you want to stop. We’re looking for slaggy cars, rundown cars, pimped-up cars ... Or normal cars driven in a slaggy way or by slaggy-looking people.” Slag is police slang for criminal; slaggy means rough, dodgy, dubious.

Someone pointed at an old red Ford Focus as it turned sharply down a sidestreet, as though trying to avoid us. We followed the car, pulled it over and got out to talk to the driver. We took down his details, ran a name check on the radio and learned he lived in north London and had previous convictions for drugs. Could he account for his presence in this part of town? He could not. We searched the car, shining torches into the footwells, picking through the wrappers and Rizlas around the gear stick, then searched the man himself. Emptying the pockets of his padded jacket, we found dozens of small paper bundles: drugs, wrapped and ready to sell.

As I discreetly made notes on my colleagues’ sexist banter, I felt a flush of fear. What if someone noticed?

“How do you explain these?” we asked.

“They’re psalms!” the man said. “They’re prayers!”

We dug our thumbnails into the fine grey paper and unrolled a couple. There was nothing inside them and the crumpled paper was covered in fine black print. They were prayers, as he said. Tiny scrunched psalms, rolled up to hand out. We said goodnight and sent the man on his way.

When officers stop a person or vehicle, they radio to check whether they are known to police and whether there is anything we ought to be aware of. The operator consults the [Police](#) National Computer and gives responses in code. Alpha – ailments. Delta – drugs. Echo – escaper. Foxtrot – firearms. India Papa – male/female impersonator. Mike – mental health. Sierra – suicidal. Victor – violent. Whiskey – weapons. Whiskey Mike – wanted/missing.

Codes are also used to describe a person's ethnicity. IC1 – white, north European. IC2 – white, south European. IC3 – black. IC4 – south Asian. IC5 – Chinese, Japanese or other south-east Asian. IC6 – north African or Arab. IC7 – unknown ethnic origin.

One evening we stopped an IC1 male on Norwood Road, radioed in his details and found out he was wanted. The man overheard the call. "Whiskey Mike? I'll have a brandy Coke," he said, before we arrested him.

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We did a sweep along Clapham High Street, looking for an unlicensed hotdog vendor who was notorious in the area, an IC2 male in his 60s who always worked Friday and Saturday nights, frying sausages and onions on a crudely welded sheet-metal cart.

"There he is, the fucker!" our driver shouted. We scanned the pavement and spotted him: a short man with craggy features, tending a steaming silver hotplate. He was wearing black jeans, a black anorak and a black beanie pulled down low so it covered his eyebrows. As we were parking, the hotdog vendor spotted us, dropped his tongs and ducked down a sidestreet, his cart bouncing along in front of him. We followed, brought the van alongside and rolled down a window, driving at his pace. After 20 metres he stopped. "I'm working. Leave me alone!"

"Go home," we said, "or we'll confiscate your cart."

After that, we looped back to the high street and drove slowly up and down it, "talent spotting".

"That one?"

"Fuck off, mate."

"How about that one?"

"Not bad. That is not half bad."

White heels, tight leather skirt. "She'd get fucked."

Sequined top, high-waisted jeans. “I’d do her.”

There were debates about the quality of this arse or that arse, whether a face lived up to an arse, an arse to a face. “If you see a woman from behind, can you tell how fit her face will be, just by looking at her arse?” someone asked.

We paused at a traffic light next to Clapham Common tube and a curly-haired IC1 female tapped at the front passenger window. One of the regulars opened it and asked what she wanted.

“Someone took my purse. It has my residency card. I was on a bus and a black man grabbed it and ran away.”

“He’s long gone now,” the officer said. “The best thing you can do is report it at a police station in the morning.”

He wished her goodnight and wound up the window. “She’d get fucked,” he said as it slid shut.

My face felt hot and I felt my shoulders tense. I looked around the van, trying to gauge my colleagues’ reaction. If they were shocked, they did not show it. The moment passed without comment. What did it mean that words like these were permitted in a police van?



Matt Lloyd-Rose: 'I was new, and anxious, and caught off-guard.'  
Photograph: Yiannis Kourtoglou/The Guardian

It was getting late and we were circling the backstreets when we spotted an IC3 teen peering through the rear window of a white estate car.

"It's hard," a special said. "You see a black guy alone at this time of night and you can't help thinking certain things."

"What kind of things?" replied one of the regulars. "Because that sounds a bit racist."

During the shift I had been discreetly making notes on my lap in the dark. As my colleagues talked and laughed, I continued to write – then felt a flush of fear. What if someone noticed? How would they react if they saw their banter recorded verbatim on an index card? I tucked the cards under my thigh, like a child hiding a note from a teacher.

The next morning, having breakfast in my local cafe, I looked at the sexist banter recorded on the index card and felt confused. The same officer who had challenged a special's racist language had taken us "talent spotting". Why had he upheld one set of standards and not another?

Reading the comments, I was shocked but not surprised. I recognised them from the corridors and changing rooms of adolescence. The tone was identical, as was the giddy mutual encouragement, one lewd remark giving permission for the next. I had said nothing. I told myself this was because I wanted to see what police did, without intervening. But it was also because I was new, and anxious, and caught off-guard.

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We were patrolling Clapham in the van. It was perishingly cold, snowing heavily, and there were few people or cars on the streets. There was a gusty wind and the snowflakes were small and sharp on the face. It was going to be a slow night. There were domestic violence calls coming out, but it was too cold for street crime.

On Clapham Park Road, we spotted a white car driving without headlights, difficult to see amid the snowfall. We pulled it over and two IC1 males got out, brothers in their mid-20s, on their way to collect their sister from Heathrow. “Oh God, I’m so sorry. I didn’t even realise,” one said. We began to fill out a £30 fixed penalty notice for driving without headlights. “Come on, it’s quiet on the roads, it was a mistake.” We worked our way through the long form, writing a whole statement at the roadside, while the white car buried itself. The brothers were not wearing coats and they shivered, stamped and sighed, the snow turning to slush at their feet.

We looped around the residential streets behind the high street, finding them deserted. The whiteness made the streets look simpler and less overloaded. Details disappeared, outlines softened. The only signs of life were the footprints on the pavements and the temporary graffiti on some of the cars: “TWAT”, “CUNT”, giant cartoon penises.

“What are your favourite swearwords?” our driver asked us.

“You know what? I really don’t like all the swearing in the police,” a female special replied. “I can’t stand it when people use the word cunt.”

“But swearing’s an important part of the job. Actually, my current favourite is shit-cunt.”

The swearing was funny. Everyone laughed. But the female special had stated a boundary and our driver had crossed it

We stopped a black car on the street behind a club called Infernos. An IC3 male in his mid-20s jumped out, short, with a puffy gilet and a patchy beard. He smiled as we approached. “Wow, you guys are tall! I want some of what you’ve been eating!” We told him he was driving without lights. “Man! I’m an idiot. I had no idea. I’m such an idiot.” We ran name and car checks, and learned he had previous convictions for GBH and possessing an offensive weapon. “I’m a family man,” he said. “Totally reformed!” We pointed out the dangers of driving without lights. “You’re right. You’re so right. It’s totally up to you, officers. If you want to give me a ticket, I’ll understand.” We warned him and said goodnight. He got back in his car, flicked on the lights and drove away.

I had the realisation when I began policing that, although we have less status and influence than those further along in the legal process, we determine who enters in the first place. By arresting one person and not another, giving a verbal warning for one offence and a ticket for another, we decide what becomes a criminal matter and what does not. Faced with two identical situations, we can turn one into a matter of permanent record and make the other disappear. Sometimes we cannot bring ourselves to give a person a ticket because they are young or old or charming or vulnerable. On other occasions, when we are feeling fastidious, or being watched, or we do not like the attitude of the person in front of us, we stick to the letter of the law, regardless of how minor the offence. We “have, in effect”, wrote the pioneering sociologist of policing Egon Bittner, “a greater degree of discretionary freedom in proceeding against offenders than any other public official”. As such, constables exercise “a power that is certainly not officially assigned to them”.

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The next morning, my road was dusted with snow. I decided to walk down the hill to the cafe instead of taking the bus, then regretted it as my gripless Converse skidded across the pavement. I thought about the previous night’s shift, drifting around Lambeth in a blizzard. I thought about the swearing in the van. It had been funny. Everyone had laughed. But the female special

had stated a boundary and our driver had immediately crossed it. There was an aggression to his response that I had overlooked the night before.

Moments like these gnawed at me throughout my time as a special – it seemed that to join the Met was to consent to a certain kind of sexualised, macho culture. It was in the air and there was no escaping it: the “talent spotting”, the chat about one another’s sex lives, the sexual jokes and banter. Watching a new special trying to object, I saw that this culture was particularly keenly enforced for female officers, whose participation was clearly necessary and exciting for some male officers. And, just as some female officers made a show of their ability to handle physical confrontations, some also made a show of being as willing and able to be as laddish as the lads. The alternative, which I had just witnessed, was to shut down. Either way, female officers were expected to fit themselves to a culture in which casual misogyny was the currency of workplace connection.

Filtering, holding, dealing with all of that, on top of an emotionally and physically draining role – it sounded exhausting, just as being a black or Asian officer at any time in the last 60 years sounded exhausting: going to work every day and deciding whether to prioritise pragmatism, protest or self-protection.



‘Thinking of joining?’ regulars would often ask special constables. ‘Don’t.’  
Photograph: Lol Keegan/The Guardian. Props: Propped Up

I could not believe that this culture – hidden from no one inside the Met – had not been stamped out. Relative to how precisely officers watched their words when it came to race, there was something wild and unstable about the use of sexual and sexist language. It was so blatant, as though officers felt irreproachable. Shit-cunt. She’d get fucked. Even used playfully, there was a violence to this language.

Challenging racist language and attitudes within the Met was not sufficient to stamp out institutional racism, but it did make a difference. It sent a message. It curtailed the flow of toxins. Somehow this logic did not carry over to misogyny. There was clearly no belief that behind-the-scenes banter existed on a spectrum with real-world violence and abuse.

The special who objected to the swearing had said nothing in reply to the driver. Nor did I. Nobody backed her up, and the conversation moved on.

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After six months as a special constable, I had to top up my officer safety and first-aid training. I booked on to a course and reported for a day of fighting and bandaging colleagues in a windowless sports hall. I pressed the buzzer and went inside. The gym’s breeze-block walls were lined with rubber mannequins – frowning, muscular, topless males. We lined up and prepared to attack them.

An instructor blew a whistle and we did circuits of the gym, battering one dummy after another: hitting one in the thigh with the butts of our batons, pounding the arms of the next with our batons extended, chopping another in the neck with the side of our hand. We lined up opposite a partner to work on restraints: thumb locks, wrist locks, elbow locks, shoulder locks.

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We were called into a classroom for a session on how to deal with a stabbing. There were limbless rubber mannequins propped around the walls and we positioned ourselves on the floor next to them. “The average number of wounds inflicted on a person during a stabbing is seven,” the instructor said, “and sometimes the person who’s been stabbed won’t know about all of them. It’s your job to check.” We rolled on gloves and patted down our mannequins, then we bandaged their heads, chests and abdomens.

It looked harmless, like friends messing about, but in any other profession such behaviour would seem grossly inappropriate

While we worked, the instructor regaled us with anecdotes from his years on the beat. “I was on patrol with a female officer – and before you ask, yes, I have seen her naked. We were playing strip poker and she had some very bad luck … Another time, we were chasing a violent male. This was back when female officers wore skirts, and when my partner apprehended the male she toppled backwards and we saw everything.”

I was treating a sucking chest wound on my mannequin’s torso. I held the dressing in place and looked around the room. I was not sure how the instructor’s banter was going down. We were a diverse mix of gender, age, ethnicity. I spotted a few smiles. Other faces were inscrutable. I wondered what gave him the confidence to share these anecdotes with a group of officers he had never met. Had they just popped into his mind, or was this

the patter he always used while teaching first aid? His upbeat delivery implied that we could not possibly object.

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I was posted to the Lambeth Gangs Taskforce for the night. I had wanted to go out with them since I began, but their shifts were popular and hard to get on to. We went hunting, touring popular corners, alleys and play areas, trying to flush the gangs from their hiding places. A boy on a BMX cycled up to our car and our driver rolled down the window.

“All right, Shakir?”

“Why are you lot flooding the area tonight?”

“You hear about the shooting last night? The managers are shitting themselves about it.”

Shakir nodded.

“Do you know what it was about?” our driver asked. “A girl? No, wait, people use knives when it’s a girl.”

Shakir shook his head and cycled away.

We drove into the Tulse Hill estate, parked up and got out to wait for a unit that had arrested a teen with a blade earlier on. They had finished at custody and radioed to ask where we were.

“We’re in the car park at the entrance to the estate.”

“Mate, your radio sounds muffled.”

“Sorry, mate, your mum’s tits are muffling it. How’s that? Any better?”

It was gone midnight and the estate seemed calm. A couple of officers smoked while we waited for something to happen. Someone handed around a packet of Percy Pigs. “We look like a gang, hanging around like this,” one officer said.

“The biggest gang in London!” another replied.

“What would it take to sort out all the gang stuff?” I asked.

“A bomb,” someone replied. “One here, one down in Angell Town and one around Coldharbour Lane. That would sort it.”



‘Looking around, crowds everywhere, people shouting and running, I felt overwhelmed.’ Photograph: Yiannis Kouroglou/The Guardian

A call came out and two of the officers, one male, one female, got back into their unmarked car. The driver turned on the engine, but instead of reversing out of the space he pumped the accelerator with the handbrake on. The car bounced on its suspension, as though they were having sex inside, and everyone laughed.

Another robbery call came out, an IC1 female on her way home in Clapham, and we drove to her address. She was in shock, and each time it seemed she had calmed down she would burst into sobs again. “It’s terrible,” our driver said. “You should be able to walk home without this happening.” In the car afterwards his tone was the same. “It’s not right,” he said, shaking his head.

We wove around the adjacent streets in case we spotted the robber. A domestic violence call came out of the radio and nobody answered.

“I need somebody to take this,” the operator said. More silence, then a response unit called in to claim it.

There were female victims of violence we wanted to help, and others we preferred to ignore. The inconsistency was bewildering and somehow the sex joke in the car park felt related to this picking and choosing: another instance of male officers defining the terms on which they would interact with women. A lone female officer, out with 10 men, was expected to laugh at a gag at her expense. It looked harmless, like friends messing about, but I struggled to imagine an equivalent moment in any other social profession. For teachers, social workers, care workers and health professionals, swapping sexual banter while working would seem grossly inappropriate. What was it about policing that made this feel so everyday? We were doing related work, so why should our approach, our intentions, our standards be different?

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A call came out: the theft of a handbag in a cocktail bar in Brixton market. The suspect was an IC2 female, mid-50s, in white jeans and a red vest. We raced to the scene and spotted a woman who matched the description outside Fish, Wings & Tings, but not the white leather handbag she had been seen stealing on the bar’s CCTV. We arrested and cuffed her at the Coldharbour Lane entrance to the market. “My daughter! Oh my God, that’s my daughter,” the woman said, ducking behind us. “Please don’t let her see me.”

The woman’s name was Martina. The custody van arrived and we helped her into the cage at the back. In the middle of the van, where the arresting officers sit, a sword was rolling around on the floor, a polished steel sabre with a gold hilt. When we got to Brixton custody it did not seem too busy and we went straight into the holding cell nearest to the desk. “Won’t be long,” we said to Martina. But we were. There were clearly some complex cases ahead of us, because we were waiting in the holding cell from half past nine until 11 o’clock. Martina was calm and upbeat to begin with, telling us about her early life in South America, but after three-quarters of an hour her mood dipped. She started to need the toilet. She started to find the cuffs uncomfortable. She wanted to call her family.

“We understand you’re frustrated,” we said, “but these things take as long as they take.”

Institutional racism, misogyny and homophobia 'pervades' Met police, says Dame Louise Casey – video

When our turn came, we walked Martina to the desk, presented her to the custody sergeant and checked in her property. Keys, purse, phone, a toy car, a jobseeker’s card. I glanced around while the custody sergeant filled in the necessary paperwork. “PCs: if you need to wash blood off your handcuffs,” read a sign behind the desk, “please don’t do it in the kitchen sink.” On the other side of the counter we could see the hotdog vendor, a blank expression on his face, in for ignoring his fines and failing to appear at court.

Aside from the female constables and custody officers, Martina was the only woman in the custody suite. That was not unusual. Only about 15% of people arrested are female. “If men behaved like women,” wrote the criminologist Barbara Wootton, “the courts would be idle and the prisons empty.” Martina said again she was eager to let her family know she was OK, but we told her as we had not found the stolen handbag, and she would not tell us where it was, she would not be allowed to phone home until we had searched her flat.

We drove south from Brixton, up the hill, past Olive Morris House and the prison, and on to a quiet residential street. It was 1am and there was no other traffic around. There were speed bumps every few metres and the sergeant accelerated towards them. He hit each bump as fast and hard as he could, and we flew over them, all four wheels leaving the road, the van’s undercarriage shuddering. We spun round a corner and parked outside Martina’s flat.

“Look, what are you all doing charging in here in the middle of the night?”

“Are you Martina’s daughters? She’s been arrested.”

“For fuck’s sake. This is just like her!”

Even in a small flat, there are a lot of places to hide a handbag. We split up and searched the five rooms, in two of which small children were sleeping. We searched the kitchen and living room, then dug through the overflowing wardrobes and toy boxes in the five-year-old's bedroom. The sergeant popped his head in. "Found anything? No? Well, get the fuck out then," he whispered. "We don't want him to wake up and find his room full of coppers." The officer searching Martina's 20-year-old daughter's bedroom leaned into the corridor and rattled a pair of heart-shaped handcuffs at us. "Boys, do you need these?" He disappeared for a moment, then peered out again. "Do you need this?" he said, waving a silver vibrator. "She was pretty fit, wasn't she?" he said, back in the van. "I bet as soon as we left she was straight back in her room, strumming herself." We did not find the stolen handbag. The outrage on her daughters' faces also suggested it had not been dropped off there. We could only assume that Martina had been working with somebody else or had panicked and dumped it in the market.

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The Friday before Christmas: thousands of office parties, the most drunken night of the year. Vauxhall was overrun. On Goding Street, making the most of it, we found the hotdog vendor. "What's your problem?" he said. "You got nothing better to do?" But he scraped the sausages into a box and wheeled the cart away.

This was going to be one of my final shifts. My wife and I were moving to South America with her work. After a year in the Met I had resigned, and in a few weeks' time I would return my uniform and warrant card.

It was going to be a lively evening. Already, at half past eight, the atmosphere was raucous. An IC1 male was urinating in a hedge a few feet from us.

"Mate, are you aware that there's a public urinal less than 100 metres away?"

"Say no more, officers," the man replied with a wink, and ran in the direction we were pointing.

An IC3 male, early 20s, ran up to us shouting, "Listen, listen, three black guys down there took my money. I was trying to buy drugs, I gave them £20

and they just walked off.” We were taking down his details when his friends ran up to pull him away.

“Mate, what are you doing telling them you were buying drugs? Mate, come on!”

“No, no, I want my money back,” he persisted.

Looking around, crowds everywhere, people shouting and running, I felt overwhelmed. It was chaos. I was patrolling with an experienced regular and when she looked at Vauxhall – the clubs, the Pleasure Gardens, the thousands of people streaming in and out of the bus and train stations – she saw patterns invisible to my eyes: troubling behaviour, simmering tensions, people in places you would not expect them.

I observed the way she approached people, pausing for short, friendly interactions with anyone sitting or standing around, from the homeless IC1 males in the park to the laughing crowds of IC3 females gathering before entering the clubs. Interaction by interaction, my colleague gauged the way the evening was shaping up, what was happening where, which issues to anticipate.

Great policing is a mysterious blend of knowledge, skill, manner, judgment, outlook and values that can be difficult to pick apart. I asked the regular about her approach. “I genuinely believe in prevention rather than cure,” she replied. “If you talk to someone early on in the evening, they’re much more likely to get on with you if you pull them out of a club later on. I joined the job 14 years ago and in all that time I’ve never been assaulted. Policing is all about getting on with people, and not enough officers think like that.”

She kept pausing to chat to people, conducting short stops but without them feeling like stops. Over the early part of the evening she must have greeted several hundred people, imprinting our presence on to their minds, affecting their outlook and behaviour in small but significant ways. “Cheers, we’ll be around all evening,” she said at the end of each interaction. She was assertive while still sounding warm and sincere.

Policing can be a route to status and power, to care and service, to action and thrills – or a blend of the three. The role attracts a curious mix of characters, but it demands the same of all of them: police officers need deep, enduring empathy for vulnerability, pain and loss; and, at the same time, they need to embrace their role as guardians of order and a vehicle for coercive force. Police officers need genuine humanity, and to be willing to pin someone to the floor. Add to this the challenge of responding effectively to domestic violence, mental ill health, homelessness and teenage gangs, and cynicism and disillusionment are ever-present risks.

It takes resilience to turn up every day at Brixton police station, optimistic, empathic, with a belief in your ability to make a difference. “Are you thinking of joining the job?” regulars would often ask special constables on patrol with them. The specials usually said yes. “Don’t,” the regulars usually replied.

I asked my partner how she saw her colleagues. “Fifty per cent of officers are good,” she said, “25% are truly excellent and 25% are in this job for all the wrong reasons, and they’re the ones the public remember.”

*Names and identifying details have been changed.*

This is an edited extract from *Into the Night: A Year With the Police* by Matt Lloyd-Rose, published by Picador on 18 May at £16.99. To support the Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

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Composite: Jill Mead and Sophia Evans/The Guardian

[Blind date](#)[Relationships](#)

**Blind date: ‘An overlap of certain “acquaintances” on Instagram did raise**

# a few eyebrows'

Will, 29, an investment banker, meets Reece, 25, a government adviser

Sat 6 May 2023 01.00 EDT

## Will on Reece



### What were you hoping for?

To meet a smart, fun, driven person.

### First impressions?

Really positive. Here was someone with great style who cares about how they look; someone confident who has excellent moustache game.

### What did you talk about?

All the cardinal sins of a first date: politics, exes and comparing mutuals on Instagram (a test for any gay man in London). Reece was super-engaging on everything from sustainability to his love of pretentious theatre.

**Most awkward moment?**

Very few – conversation flowed naturally. And the overlap of certain “acquaintances” on Instagram raised a few eyebrows and laughs.

**Good table manners?**

Excellent, although waiting to mention his dairy intolerance until I was tucking into a chocolate fondant wasn’t great timing.

**Best thing about Reece?**

His confidence and charisma.

**Would you introduce Reece to your friends?**

Absolutely. They’d get on well. He could have a conversation with anyone.

**Describe Reece in three words**

Charming, cheeky, charismatic.

**What do you think Reece made of you?**

I wouldn’t like to presume – hopefully he thought I wasn’t too awful.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

As we were in Soho, we went on for a bottle of wine (or two...) at a queer bar.

**Q&A****Fancy a blind date?**

Show

Blind date is Saturday’s dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com) every Saturday. It’s been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

**What questions will I be asked?**

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of

person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

**Can I choose who I match with?**

No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

**Can I pick the photograph?**

No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

**What personal details will appear?**

Your first name, job and age.

**How should I answer?**

Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

**Will I see the other person's answers?**

No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length, and we may ask you for more details.

**Will you find me The One?**

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

**Can I do it in my home town?**

Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

**How to apply**

Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

**And... ... did you kiss?**

A real lady never kisses on date one.

**If you could change one thing about the evening, what would it be?**

Getting thrown out of the bar we were drinking in (it was closing time).

**Marks out of 10?**

A really lovely evening: 9/10!

**Would you meet again?**

Definitely.



Will and Reece on their date

**Reece on Will**



**What were you hoping for?**

Good conversation and easy on the eye.

**First impressions?**

Tall, handsome, incredibly charming. My gran would love him!

**What did you talk about?**

Will leading his company's [LGBTQ+](#) network. Coming out. Politics. How EastEnders' Christian and Syed were my gay awakening. Failed relationships.

**Most awkward moment?**

The gentleman that Will is stood up to greet me when I arrived. I went in for a hug instead of a handshake: 30 seconds I wish to forget.

**Good table manners?**

Aye, no notes from me.

**Best thing about Will?**

Himself! Great vibes. He seems to be living his most authentic life, and it was a delight to have a courtside seat.

**Would you introduce Will to your friends?**

Only after I'd sat my boys down and made them swear not to embarrass me.

**Describe Will in three words**

South London's finest.

**What do you think Will made of you?**

I think he used the term "been round the block" to describe me.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

We went to a bar and sank two bottles of wine. We were queer men in Soho – it would have been boorish not to.

**And... ... did you kiss?**

The only kiss I had was from the cold window of the number 8 bus I fell asleep against on the way home.

**If you could change one thing about the evening, what would it be?**

Buying that second bottle of wine.

**Marks out of 10?**

8.

**Would you meet again?**

The jury is out, kids! I hope so.

*Will and Reece ate at [Louie](#), London WC2. Fancy a blind date? Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)*

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Attorney Joe Tacopina, a lawyer representing former president Donald Trump, arrives to federal court. Photograph: John Minchillo/AP

[US news](#)

## **‘Why didn’t you scream?’: Trump lawyer takes hostile approach to rape**

# trial

Joe Tacopina's outdated tactics have won freedom for accused killers and rapists, but will they work in E Jean Carroll case?

[Chris McGreal in New York](#)

Sat 6 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 May 2023 03.19 EDT

Donald Trump had good reason to believe he found the man to get him off the hook. Joseph Tacopina, a Brooklyn-born former prosecutor, made his name winning freedom for accused killers, rapists and celebrities.

Twelve years ago, he successfully defended an on-duty police officer charged with escorting a drunk woman to her home and then raping her. He won an acquittal for one of the New York cops accused of the notorious beating and sodomising of a Haitian American, [Abner Louima](#), while [others involved](#) went to prison.

Perhaps most notoriously Tacopina was able to [extract](#) Joran van der Sloot from jail in Aruba where he was accused of murdering a teenage American tourist, Natalee Holloway. Van der Sloot went on to murder another woman in Peru.

As a law student, Tacopina even worked on the team representing the mafia boss John Gotti, although he has since sworn off acting for the mob in part because it extorted protection money from the family's store. Tacopina maintains the link with his roots as the owner and chair of an Italian league football club, [Spal](#). He also has a stake in a top-flight team, [Roma](#), and previously served on its board.

Whether Tacopina has been as effective in defending Trump as some of his other clients will be decided next week by the New York jury hearing the advice columnist E Jean Carroll's civil [claim that the former president raped her](#) in 1996. She is also seeking damages for defamation after the former president called her a liar and claimed her accusation was politically motivated.

But Tacopina's approach has raised more than a few eyebrows in the legal community and left some spectators in court aghast at outdated tactics that look to have bolstered Carroll's case. The judge, Lewis Kaplan, has certainly done little to hide his irritation at Tacopina at times, including over convoluted questions eliciting confusing answers.

The jury may yet hand Tacopina, and Trump, the last laugh. But it remains to be seen if the former public defender and prosecutor has persuaded its six men and three women of the claims he made in his opening statement.

Tacopina said he would not be calling defence witnesses because Carroll's own words would destroy her claim to have been raped in a changing room of New York's high-end Bergdorf Goodman department store 27 years ago. He said he would then show that Carroll is at the heart of a political conspiracy to destroy the reputation of a man who has, arguably, already blitzed it himself.

The first part did not go well when [Carroll gave evidence for three days](#) at the beginning of the trial. The former Elle magazine advice columnist proved to be a formidable witness who turned Tacopina's attempts to portray inconsistencies in her story to her advantage.

Yes, Carroll said, she had offered four different reasons over the years for why she didn't scream while Trump was allegedly attacking her. But her inability to settle on one reason was not evidence that she was lying.

"You can't beat up on me for not screaming," [Carroll pushed back](#).

"One of the reasons women don't come forward is because they're always asked: 'Why didn't you scream?' Some women scream. Some women don't. It keeps women silent."

Besides, she said, if she was going to lie, then the easiest thing would have been to say she did scream.

That single answer rocked Tacopina's case not least because it exposed the pugilistic lawyer's often brutal style in challenging women who allege they have been sexually assaulted. In 2011, [he won acquittal](#) for a police officer

accused of raping a drunk woman by portraying her as grasping for money and mentally unstable. Tacopina claimed her sexual history supported the police officer's claim that she had tried to seduce him after he delivered her to her home.

It's an approach that sits even less well today than it did back then, and is made visible by the line of men at the defence lawyers' table in contrast to the women leading the case for Carroll.

Still, Tacopina pressed on with the strategy. He asked Carroll so many times why she hadn't called the police that the judge eventually told him that was enough and to "move on". By then, Carroll had confidently made the case that she was too "ashamed" of having been assaulted to go running to the police even if that's what she advised women who have been attacked to do in her agony aunt column in Elle.

"I was born in 1943. I'm a member of the silent generation. Women like me were taught to keep our chins up and to not complain," she said. "I would never call the police about something I am ashamed of."

If Carroll's own words had destroyed her case, as Tacopina promised they would, it was not immediately evident.

Perhaps out of desperation, Tacopina then asked Kaplan to declare a mistrial over what he described as the judge's "unfair and prejudicial rulings", the mischaracterising of evidence in Carroll's favour, and permitting evidence from another woman who accused Trump of sexual abuse. The judge rejected the demand without comment.



A court sketch of Joe Tacopina questioning E Jean Carroll before judge Lewis Kaplan. Tacopina asked Kaplan to declare a mistrial, which the judge rejected. Photograph: Jane Rosenberg/Reuters

That left the second part of Tacopina’s strategy as other witnesses gave evidence.

In his opening statement, Trump’s lawyer said Carroll conspired with two of her friends to falsely accuse the former president of rape because they “hate” him for winning the 2016 election. Those two friends, Lisa Birnbach and Carol Martin, have told the court they were the only people Carroll told about the alleged attack when it occurred.

The pair told the jury that the advice columnist then swore them to secrecy and they respected her wishes, never mentioning the alleged rape again, until Carroll went public with her accusations against Trump in 2019.

Tacopina argues that the three of them have cooked up a gigantic lie.

“They schemed to hurt Donald Trump politically,” he said.

Tacopina’s cross-examination of Martin, a retired television anchor, was a key plank of this strategy. By the time it was over, it looked to have defeated its own purpose.

Martin testified that Carroll had told her about the alleged rape during a conversation in the television anchor's kitchen within a day or two of the attack. Tacopina then confronted Martin with a string of emails in which she calls Trump the "enemy" and says he "needs to be put away".

"I hate this man who is ruining the world, putting his stank all over it," she wrote in one message. In another, Martin said she "despised" the former president.

Tacopina's aim was clear – to show that Martin so disliked Trump she was prepared to conspire against him and lie about it in court. There was even an email from September 2017 that skirted close to conspiratorial language.

"This has to stop. As soon as we're both well enuf [sic] to scheme, we must do our patriotic duty again," Martin wrote to Carroll.

The advice columnist replied: "TOTALLY!!! I have something special for you when we meet."

Could this be the smoking gun? Was the "something special" Carroll's plan to falsely accuse Trump of rape?

Martin told the court she thought Carroll was talking about a present, a squirrel the advice columnist gave her grandson.

"Not a live one," she hastened to add, prompting a rare burst of laughter in court.

Still, Tacopina had successfully painted Martin as deeply hostile to Trump in the hope of sowing doubt about her reliability as a witness. The jury heard that Carroll even had a party to celebrate the filing of her lawsuit against the former president.

But Tacopina did not stop when he was ahead.

To Martin's considerable embarrassment, Trump's lawyer began reading messages in which she was critical of Carroll behind her back after the Elle

columnist went public with her accusations against the former president 23 years later.

Martin sent texts to her daughter complaining that Carroll was turning the pursuit of Trump “into a lifestyle” while enjoying the “adulation” it brought. She also said Carroll was “in too deep” when she sued Trump.

Martin had another concern – that Carroll going public had exposed her too, with implications for her safety and members of her family.

“It was difficult because people in my family were concerned about identification,” Martin told the court.

Martin admitted she was “venting frustrations” with Carroll.

But as embarrassing as it might have been for Martin, the text messages sabotaged Tacopina’s attempt to portray the women as conspiring. If Martin was part of the conspiracy to make up a claim of rape, why would she be so critical of publicising it?

Tacopina’s position was further undermined when Carroll’s lawyer, Roberta Kaplan, pushed the point by asking Martin about a text commenting that she had been dragged into this by “a simple chat 25 years ago”.

Was that not evidence that Carroll had indeed told Martin about the alleged attack?

At the beginning of the trial, Tacopina painted Carroll’s story as “an affront to justice”, wildly implausible and short of evidence. He accused her of pursuing the case for money, status and political reasons.

“It all comes down to: do you believe the unbelievable?” he said.

The jury will decide in the coming days.

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An Oxfam shop at Glastonbury. This year the charity has collaborated with Tony's Chocolonely for a chance to win tickets to the festival. Photograph: Sam Baggette/Oxfam

### [Charitable giving](#)

## **From Glastonbury chocolate to refurb computers: how you can help charities in the UK cost of living crisis**

Money is tight as household bills soar but there are still ways to make a difference

[Sandra Haurant](#)

Sat 6 May 2023 04.00 EDT

Giving to charity has become one of the casualties of the cost of living crisis for many people – even though these same financial pressures mean many organisations doing good work are more desperate for donations than ever.

After steadily increasing over the years, charitable donations fell off a cliff last year, totalling £4.3bn in 2022 – down £5bn on the 2021 figure of £9.3bn, [according to a recent report](#).

Millions of people have had to make cuts amid soaring bills but would still like to make a difference with their cash, even if it's only the odd small sum. So what can you do to maximise the amounts you give to the causes you care about, without overstretaching your own finances?

The good news is that there are a number of “frictionless” ways of giving to charity, some of which don’t even involve any extra outlay.

## **The backdrop**

“Charities are facing a double whammy at the moment,” the policy manager at the [Chartered Institute of Fundraising](#), Charlotte Weatherley, says. “Inflation means that demand for services is rising, and on top of that, those services are getting more expensive to run. So the need for donations, whether it’s a one-off or a regular one ... It really has never been more important.”

However, those donations have been falling, according to the [Charities Aid Foundation \(CAF\)](#), 4.9 million people decided not to make a one-off donation last year, while 3.2 million said they had cut or stopped a regular payment to charity. The impact on charities is severe: separate CAF research showed that more than half (53%) of the 1,300 charities surveyed were worried about surviving.

## **Change your buying habits**

“You can often tweak something you’d be buying anyway to make it a charity product,” Weatherley says.

Aside from the obvious high street charity shops, there are web versions such as [Oxfam’s online shop](#), which includes a bookshop with a big range of titles available to order for home delivery, and specialist players such as [Computers 4 Charity](#), which sells refurbished computers.

If you are buying gifts, whether for friends, family or yourself, you could choose something that gives to a charity, too.



Computers 4 Charity sells refurbished computers. Photograph: malerapaso/Getty Images

For example, to satisfy a sweet tooth, the housing and homelessness charity Shelter sells a range of [chocolate bars](#) (some vegan). Meanwhile, Oxfam has collaborated with Tony's Chocolonely to sell a [Glastonbury festival special edition bar](#), with a Willy Wonka-style promotion giving people the chance to win one of five pairs of tickets to next month's event.

Or, for a gift that keeps on giving, try a charity subscription. The [Pause for Mind box](#), for a monthly donation of £7.50, contains activities promoting mindfulness, while supporting the mental health charity Mind.

With [ShelterBox Book Club](#) (not to be confused with the charity Shelter), for a suggested payment of £10 a month, you receive a book every six weeks. Donations, beyond the running cost of £5.66 a month, go towards emergency disaster relief around the world.

## **Every tiny bit helps**

Micro-donations are digital loose change given when rounding up bills at the tills of supermarkets and other retailers, in-store and online. Although they often only amount to a few pence each time, the millions of micro-donations made this year are thought to have raised several million pounds for charities.

Tesco is a big player in this area: it regularly lets users of its self-service tills round up their shop to the nearest £1 to help support one or more charities, which can be an easy, painless way to help a good cause.

One of Tesco's most recent campaigns ran between 20 February and 5 March and raised a total of almost £750,000 for three charities: Cancer Research UK, the British Heart Foundation and Diabetes UK. Another is planned for September, while the retailer's food bank charity partners are likely to benefit from similar campaigns planned for July and August.

Tesco till roundups have also raised millions of pounds for the British Red Cross's Ukraine and Turkey-Syria earthquake appeals.



Tesco regularly lets customers at its self-service tills round up their shop to the nearest £1 to help support charities. Photograph: David Pearson/Alamy

If you can afford to say yes from time to time, there are big benefits for charities. According to the organisation Pennies, if every cardholder gave

35p a week, it could equate to £1bn a year for the UK charity sector.

Every day, the customer micro-donations made in Currys stores raise enough for the Digital Poverty Alliance charity to provide two families in need with a laptop.

Half a day of spare digital change at the restaurant chain Carluccio's is enough for Action Against Hunger to help a parent feed a family of four with nutritious meals for two months.

## Win-win donations

Weatherley says a lot of charities are now running lotteries or draws where you buy a ticket for £1 a week and can win a cash prize.

You typically sign up to buy a ticket on a regular basis, paying perhaps £1 a week or just over £4.30 a month, and different charities offer different prizes. The [RSPB](#) has prizes ranging from £10 to £1,000, while [Battersea Dogs & Cats Home](#) currently has a jackpot prize of £10,000. Meanwhile, [Unity Lottery](#) administers lotteries for a huge range of charities. You can select which cause you donate to on its website, with a chance to win up to £25,000.

## Discounts and donations

If you like to bargain hunt online, you may already use discount codes. These work on an affiliate marketing model, where companies pay a commission to the third-party discount code provider in return for attracting paying customers to its site. However, there are sites such as [Savoo](#) that donate part of that commission to charity, at no extra cost to the shopper.

“It’s a way of donating without the money coming out of your pocket directly,” Stephanos Charalambous, an account manager at Savoo, says.

With his site, you sign up, then select a charity from the scores listed. “If you’re going to buy something from Body Shop or Nike or HelloFresh, or wherever it may be, we will more than likely have some sort of discount code or deal. If you click on our link to that discount, and you go on to

purchase something, then if we were the last place that you clicked on before going to the brand, that makes us the ‘referring partner’. So you will get a discount and we will get a commission, and we will donate half of that commission to the charity you chose when you signed up,” Charalambous says.

## Give as you earn

Payroll giving is a simple and tax-efficient – and also underused – way to donate directly from your salary. Research from CAF shows that 41% of people do not even know if their employer offers the service.

You can set up a charity giving account through organisations such as CAF and Charities Trust

A key benefit is that the money comes from your pre-taxed salary, so it costs less to give more: if you pay tax at the basic rate of 20% and donate £10 a month to a charity or multiple charities, only £8 comes out of your salary (different rates apply in Scotland). “It’s tax-efficient for the donor because it pulls down the amount of taxable income they have,” the managing director for philanthropy services at CAF, Mark Greer, says. It is also open to pensioners if your pension scheme has a payroll giving scheme.

As well as setting up a donation to a chosen charity, you can set up a charity giving account through organisations such as CAF and [Charities](#) Trust. Here, money goes into an account each month. Then, when you see a charity or a campaign that you want to support, you can ask to make a distribution from the account that you have been building up.

Caroline Gaskin, the development manager at the small Oxfordshire charity [Together for Animals](#), says this is a key source of funding. “Payroll giving provides Together for Animals with a vital regular source of income, allowing us to provide lifesaving care for animals desperately in need,” she adds.

## Banking and savings

[Charity Bank](#) is a savings and loans bank with a mission to use money for good, and it offers a range of personal accounts available to consumers including a cash Isa and one- and three-year fixed-rate savings accounts.

“If you put your money in one of our savings accounts, you are going to earn some interest, and while that money is with us, we will be lending it out to currently about 400 charities,” the Charity Bank spokesperson Mark Howland says.

All the bank’s shareholders are charities and social purpose organisations and, as a social enterprise, it works differently to other banks. “Any surplus we make is either reinvested in the business or kept within the social sector. We don’t pay big dividends to shareholders or big bankers’ bonuses. Our common goal among stakeholders is to help enterprises for the benefit of society,” Howland says. Since 2002, Charity Bank has made more than 1,200 loans totalling more than £450m to housing, education, social care, community and other social purpose organisations.



Charity Bank offers a range of personal accounts. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

Admittedly, the savings rates are not top of the best-buy tables. Charity Bank’s 33-day notice account was this week paying 1.67% on balances of

£250 to £24,999, while its 33-day notice cash Isa was paying 1.75%. Its three-year fixed-rate savings account was paying 3.95%.

Meanwhile, some charities have their own credit or debit cards that let supporters donate to charity whenever they spend in the UK or abroad. In March, Dogs Trust [launched a debit card](#) in partnership with the fintech firm Currensea that links to your existing current account.

## If you can, give regularly

You can set up a regular direct debit or standing order (as small as you like).

“Regular income is really what charities need – it helps them to plan and work in a more stable way,” Greer says.



By signing a gift aid declaration you can increase the amount you give to charity. Photograph: Richard Warburton/Alamy

Regular donations also allow charities to use the funds the way they need to. “Fundraising regulations say that if you’ve donated [in response] to a particular campaign, your donation should be used for that cause,” Greer says. “But charities need ‘flexible donations,’ too: donations that are not necessarily tied to one particular campaign or cause and can be used for core

costs. It doesn't really matter if a charity has well-funded campaigns if they literally can't keep the lights on.”

## What else can you do?

### Maximise gift aid

Increase the amount you give to charity by signing a [gift aid](#) declaration. This means the charity can claim an extra 25p for every £1 you give. It will not cost you any extra. So if you give £10, the charity actually receives £12.50. The process is simple but, again, hugely underused. According to CAF, only just over half of donors (54%) said they claimed gift aid when they donated last year. As a result, charities are missing out on hundreds of millions of pounds in unclaimed gift aid.

“All you have to do is make a gift aid declaration to the charity,” Greer says. “Fill out a form – on paper or online – and tick a couple of boxes, give your name and address, and sign it. That’s it. You only have to do it once. It allows them to claim on the donation you’ve made, and your future donations.”

It also works on items you donate to charity shops. The organisation can claim gift aid on the amount they sell the items for, maximising the value of your donations.

### Non-financial gifts

“What charities usually need above all else is money but people volunteering their time and skills can be useful, too,” Greer says. And, of course, says Justin Wylie, the associate director of public engagement at the food bank charity [Trussell Trust](#), “when people are really at the point where they can’t afford to donate financially, they should never feel the pressure to do so”.

Weatherley adds: “If you can’t give money but you do have time, volunteering can be very handy to some charities.”

There are pages of job offers for volunteers with different skillsets, from secretaries to bid writers to communications support and more, at [Reach Volunteering](#).

## Leave a legacy

It is perhaps the ultimate way to give away money you won't miss – and leaving money to a charity in your will is also one of the best ways of securing long-term income for charities, Weatherley says. “It means they know there will be income coming in 10 years, that they can plan ahead.”

You can give a percentage of your estate, a specific cash amount, or an item or asset

There are a number of ways to make legacy donations. You can give a percentage of your estate, a specific cash amount, or an item or asset.

“You can leave a legacy in your will to a specified charity or charities, or you can leave it to CAF and write us a ‘letter of wishes’ detailing which charities you would like us to distribute it to,” Greer says. “Then, if you change your mind, or when charities come and go, you can easily change those charities without having the expense and the hassle of changing your will, which is obviously something people want to minimise.”

[Remember A Charity](#) has a wealth of information on the practical aspects of making legacy gifts.

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## 2023.05.06 - Opinion

- What do young people want on coronation day? More teachers, climate action: start with that
- Barbados won't be toasting Charles's coronation – we're still celebrating being rid of the monarchy
- The local picture is good for Keir Starmer – the national predictions look even better
- Jordan Neely, a vulnerable young man, was killed – and not by his medical history



‘To me, the coronation is emblematic of the UK’s wealth inequality.’ A full overnight dress rehearsal of the coronation ceremony, 3 May. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

[OpinionMonarchy](#)

## **What do young people want on coronation day? More teachers, climate action: start with that**

[Elsie McDowell](#)

King Charles III will be crowned in a taxpayer-funded extravaganza. None of it addresses the challenges in the real world

Elsie McDowell is an A-level student from south London. She was the 2023 winner of the Hugo Young award, 16-18 age category

Sat 6 May 2023 04.00 EDT

The coronation of [King Charles III](#) couldn't come at a worse time for young people. After the chaos caused by Covid, and with teacher's strikes (which I support) ongoing, it is yet another day off school in the crucial run-up to GCSE and A-level exams. Perhaps this is a cynical way to view the first anointing of a British head of state in 70 years, but it's hard to see this as nothing more than an expensive disruption to my day-to-day life.

I wondered if I was alone in thinking this, so I asked around my school. It turns out that I wasn't. As my fellow sixth-former Nilyana put it: "I'm not going to enjoy [the coronation] because I'm taking A-level exams. It's coming at such an inconvenient time."

And this isn't just about educational disruption. New polling from YouGov shows that, overwhelmingly, young people are apathetic about the monarchy: [a staggering 78%](#) of those aged 18-24 are "not interested" in the royal family.

My generation – "Gen Z" – is often praised for its political activism. But I think people give us too much credit: if a political issue cannot be neatly compacted into a hashtag or a concise post to be shared on an Instagram story, it often does not register with many young people. Laurence, 17, echoed this, telling me: "It's a shame more young people aren't vocal in fighting for a republic – just not caring isn't enough."

That's not to say that young people have no thoughts at all about the monarchy. Romesa, 17, felt that it could be difficult for immigrants in the UK to relate to the coronation, especially if they've come from a country that was colonised by Britain – a process from which the monarchy profited so handsomely.

To me, the coronation is emblematic of the UK's wealth inequality. While people across the country are choosing between eating or heating their homes, King Charles III will be crowned in a [multimillion-pound extravaganza](#) of pomp and circumstance, funded by taxpayers. If we are to have a coronation, surely a man with [an estimated private fortune of £1.8bn](#) can pay for it himself?

This spending seems particularly cruel when the government says it “can’t afford” to give nurses a well-deserved pay rise. The £86m that the government pays the royal family every year could pay for thousands of teachers. Due to austerity, real-terms spending per pupil in England decreased by [8.3% between 2009 and 2019](#). Our education and health systems are in crisis, yet the government is funding a state-subsidised party.

Maybe this is unfair. After all, the monarch is supposed to be a unifying figure, and after the tumultuous few years this country has had, is the coronation not a well-needed celebration? Looking back at the coronation of Elizabeth II, we can see a moment of celebration and togetherness for the postwar nation. But it really is difficult to see how any monarch would be able to unify such a divided country today.

So what do young people want instead of an ill-timed, overpriced ceremony for a man who has no claim to influencing British politics other than his familial connections? We want our teachers to be paid fairly and our schools to be properly funded. We want the government to take the climate crisis seriously. We want a government that is not mired by scandal after scandal.

This country needs so much more than a bank holiday.

- Elsie McDowell is an A-level student from south London. She was the [2023 winner](#) of the Hugo Young award, 16-18 age category
  - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*
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The then Prince Charles at the presidential inauguration ceremony in Barbados, 29 November 2021. Photograph: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

[OpinionBarbados](#)

## **Barbados won't be toasting Charles's coronation – we're still celebrating being rid of the monarchy**

[Suleiman Bulbulia](#)



Across the Commonwealth, the contrast with the jubilation of 1953 is stark. Times have changed, but have the royals?

Sat 6 May 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 May 2023 08.50 EDT

When Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in 1953, there were celebrations across the Commonwealth. In [Barbados](#), people were jubilant and the government even issued a postage stamp to commemorate the moment.

Things have changed a great deal since then. Most Commonwealth citizens feel removed from the monarchy and will be going about their [business as usual](#) today. Curiosity will capture some of our attention, but for the average Barbadian man and woman the occasion will pass without much fanfare.

What's changed in the past 70 years? Barbados has come a long way since 1953, achieving independence in 1966 and becoming the world's newest [republic in 2021](#), severing the final strings that bound the island nation to its coloniser of more than 300 years (beyond Charles's role as head of the Commonwealth).

The British monarch is no longer our head of state – and the greater awareness of our colonial past and the harsh brutality inflicted on our forefathers makes a coronation of a king from our former royal family less than appealing. We're far more interested in what this new king may say and do to [correct the injustices](#) of that past.

On 30 November 2021, on the occasion of Barbados's transition to a republic and the formal removal of the Queen as head of state, the then Prince Charles spoke in front of a crowd in National Heroes Square, once known as Trafalgar Square, in Bridgetown, saying: "From the darkest days of our past and the appalling atrocity of slavery, which forever stains our histories, the people of this island forged their path with extraordinary fortitude."

It was an acknowledgment of those [dark days](#), long in coming but welcomed as the beginning of a conversation about the effects of that atrocious period and what can and must be done to truly redress and remedy those injustices. Reparatory justice is high on our agenda and is a difficult conversation that has started in earnest.

Meanwhile, Barbados is moving full steam ahead in firming up its republican status. A commission on constitutional reform was set up in June 2022 to review and reform the Barbados constitution, in use since 1966 and amended a few times in the subsequent years. That reformed constitution will probably remove any remaining vestiges of our colonial past and truly reflect a Barbados of the 21st century, a republic with a Barbadian head of state.

Attention across the Commonwealth has turned to those who still retain the monarch as their head of state – Antigua, the Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, St Kitts, St Lucia and St Vincent – and whether they too may become republics. Jamaica has taken the lead by appointing a constitutional reform committee, and is pushing to [become a republic](#) by 2025.

As the number of Commonwealth republics grows, the organisation will have to work hard to remain relevant. Notwithstanding the indifference by many Barbadians to [this coronation](#), the president of Barbados, Sandra

Mason, will be in attendance in London – signalling that Barbados maintains a friendship with the UK, its monarch and its people.

The thousands of guests in attendance at Westminster Abbey and the audience around the world will witness a solid gold crown made in 1661 being placed on the head of [King Charles III](#), but the king will have more on his head besides this ancient crown. A declining realm, a less respected and less loved monarchy coupled with ongoing revelations of inappropriate behaviour and racism – he has his work cut out.

- Suleiman Bulbulia is a commissioner on Barbados's constitutional reform commission and a former member of the republican status transition advisory committee
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Labour leader Keir Starmer in Chatham, Kent, where Labour took overall control of Medway council for the first time since 1998. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

[Opinion](#)[Local elections 2023](#)

## **The local picture is good for Keir Starmer – the national predictions look even better**

[Peter Kellner](#)

Evidence of a tactical pincer movement to defeat the Tories shows how worried they should be about the general election

Fri 5 May 2023 12.45 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 May 2023 13.03 EDT

Welcome to the cherry orchard. In the past 24 hours, the different parties have been picking their fruit from different trees. [Rishi Sunak](#) points to Tory gains in Sandwell, Bassetlaw and Stockton. Labour proclaims its triumphs in

Swindon, Medway and Stoke. Ed Davey has discovered the national significance of Windsor & Maidenhead.

It was ever thus. Thank goodness. Local election results vary because they are, well, local. Nevertheless, national lessons can be learned from the overall results. And however much they differ in public, the parties will this weekend be drawing similar private conclusions – namely that the results are terrible for the Conservatives, just moderately good for Labour and encouraging for the [Liberal Democrats](#) and Greens.

The prospects of Sunak remaining prime minister after the next election look as bleak as ever. But it remains an open question whether [Keir Starmer](#) will enjoy an overall majority in the next parliament or end up leading a minority government, and having to prepare for a second election within a year to 18 months, as Harold Wilson did after Labour's narrow victories in 1964 and 1974.

As for the Lib Dems, their overall vote share is little changed. But they gained ground in a number of their target areas. They must hope that they can repeat their trick from 1997, when the Tories were last ejected from office. Then targeted campaigning and tactical voting enabled the party to double its tally of MPs despite a slight drop in its overall national vote.

If they are wise, party number-crunchers will be wary of the nationwide numbers of seats gained and lost. Council election battles come in all shapes and sizes. In Plymouth's Dunstone ward, John Stephens gained the seat with 2,210 votes. By contrast, in Cotswold district, Ian Watson needed just 336 votes to unseat the Tories and gain Tetbury Town for the Lib Dems.

In general, Labour's gains are tilted more towards large wards in big towns and cities, while the Lib Dems and Greens enjoy most of their greatest success in the smaller wards of less urban areas. This means they are consequently flattered by the figures for their gains. That said, the [Conservatives](#) suffered in all kinds of areas, so cannot disguise the scale of their defeat.

More useful are the estimates of what the Britain-wide shares for each party would have been, based on the votes cast in areas that held elections. The BBC's estimate puts [Labour](#) on 35%, nine points ahead of the Conservatives, on 26%, and the Lib Dems on 20%. Compared with last year's equivalent local elections, Labour's share is unchanged. This must disappoint Starmer. However, the blow is softened by the four-point drop in Tory support. This allows Labour to point to a nine-point lead, its biggest in such elections for more than 20 years.

Keir Starmer confident of Labour general election win after council gains from Tories – video

Moreover, that understates Labour's real lead. In recent years Labour has tended to do worse, and the Lib Dems better, in local than national elections. As a broad-brush estimate, we can add 5-10 points to Labour's local election lead to obtain a rough sense of the outcome of a snap general election held on Thursday. This puts Labour 14-19 points ahead – which broadly covers the range of recent opinion polls.

These figures would give Labour a clear overall majority. How big would depend on how many seats it can gain from the SNP in Scotland, and the extent of tactical voting in England. These local elections confirm the message from recent parliamentary by-elections: tactical voting is back. Looking at seats at local level – more useful than their national totals – we see a clear picture of a tactical pincer movement to defeat the Conservatives, with Labour defeating the Tories in some areas and the Lib Dems (and sometimes Greens) in other areas.

The numbers are stark. In the first 15 councils that Labour captured, it gained 129 seats, while the Lib Dems gained five and the Conservatives lost 113. In the first seven councils gained by the Lib Dems, the figures were: Lib Dems up 96, Labour up two, Conservatives down 92. All in all, this pattern of gains and losses explains why the Lib Dems are smiling this weekend, even though their national vote share is virtually unchanged.

All that should worry the Tories. A similar pincer movement in the coming general election could be fatal to them. But they can point to one potential crumb of comfort. With a general election probably 18 months away, many

voters are sending a message rather than making a choice. And abstention can be part of the message. On the BBC, John Curtice said that Labour tended to do better where turnout was down. He made this point to challenge predictions that Labour would suffer from voters needing to present voter IDs at polling stations.

But Curtice's figures could have a completely different explanation: lower turnout helping Labour because disgruntled Tories stayed at home. If they return to the fold at the general election, this will eat away at Labour's lead.

- Peter Kellner is a former president of YouGov
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‘There comes a point when all the mental health discourse begins to sound more like an alibi than a priority.’ Photograph: Paul Martinka/AP

[Opinion](#)[New York](#)

## **Jordan Neely, a vulnerable young man, was killed – and not by his medical history**

[Moustafa Bayoumi](#)



Much of the talk has been about Neely's mental health – in large part so we don't have to talk about our larger societal health

Fri 5 May 2023 06.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 May 2023 16.43 EDT

Jordan Neely was choked to death in the middle of the day on a New York City subway car on Monday, and since then people from New York City's leaders to media commentators have put the focus on the 30-year-old Black man's mental health. The New York governor, Kathy Hochul, [stated](#) that "some of the factors" in Neely's death were "people who are homeless in our subways, many of them in the throes of mental health episodes". Mayor Eric Adams [spoke](#) about "serious mental health issues in play here". John Macari, a retired New York police lieutenant and podcaster [told](#) Fox News: "You have people commuting on a train who have to deal with mentally ill people who are a danger to themselves and others."

But Jordan Neely didn't kill himself. He was killed, and not by his medical history. A 24-year-old white ex-marine put him in a chokehold for "some 15 minutes", [according](#) to Juan Alberto Vazquez, a witness at the scene, and the medical examiner has ruled Neely's death a homicide. So instead of focusing on Neely's past, maybe we should be asking what kind of state of mind does it take to strangle a man to death in public.

I don't know anything more about this ex-marine. I don't even know his name, since the authorities have not released it, but I do know that Jordan Neely did not deserve to die. According to news accounts, Neely – who was unhoused and a known Michael Jackson impersonator – boarded a northbound F Train and began screaming about his distress. He was yelling about not having any food, and nothing to drink, and how he was tired and ready to go to jail. He took off his black jacket and threw it on the ground.

As discomfiting as such behavior may be for some folks to witness, there has always been a simple and non-violent [New York](#) City answer to such encounters. Move to another subway car! (The train was stopped, with the doors open.)

Instead, according to news reports, the ex-marine tackled Neely and put him in a chokehold that lasted about six minutes longer than Derek Chauvin's knee was pressed on George Floyd's neck, killing Floyd, in Minneapolis in 2020. He had help from a couple of other men while people were casually milling about and filming as Neely's life came to an end.

What state of mind compels someone to use such deadly violence? Military training? Racist beliefs? Misplaced heroism? As of now, who knows, but whatever it was, it wasn't justified. According to Vazquez, the witness, Neely hadn't physically attacked anyone before he was tackled. And you don't have to view the video – please don't, it's awful to watch – which is gruesome in its ordinariness, to see how Neely is treated not as a human being but as an object to be violently manipulated and controlled. In fact, in our society vulnerable people like Neely are almost always treated like objects to be violently manipulated and controlled.

Vasquez was also quoted as saying: "It's fine that citizens want to jump in and help. But I think as heroes we have to use moderation." But who's asking for heroes in the first place? In a society as militarized and rewarding of violence as ours, there's nothing more dangerous than someone who believes he's a hero. (As Bertolt Brecht memorably put it: "Unhappy is the land that is in need of heroes.")

What state of mind does it take to think that policing will solve all our social ills, only to have the NYPD, funded at \$10.8bn, completely absent from the

daytime death of a man in a busy subway station in the middle of Manhattan? A 2022 investigation by the Guardian and the University of Washington [found](#) that between 2015 and 2020, deaths among people living without housing in 20 urban areas in the United States rose by 77%. Who exactly do the police protect?

Beyond state of mind, we must also think about our state. In what kind of state can this 24-year-old ex-marine be taken in for questioning by the police, only to be released the same day? Had the races of assailant and victim been reversed, does anyone think the situation would be the same? Do you really think we still wouldn't know his name if it sounded like a Muslim name?

In a society as militarized and rewarding of violence as ours, there's nothing more dangerous than someone who believes he's a hero

Based on what he was saying, what Jordan Neely wanted was some food to eat and a place to sleep. What does that say about us? What kind of state do we live in where poverty is not only considered a badge of shame but also a source of fear? What kind of state do we live in where we spend more money hiding unhoused people from our eyes than finding them affordable housing? What kind of state do we live in where talk of mental health concerns is everywhere but so little of it is invested with solutions. There comes a point when all the mental health discourse begins to sound more like an alibi than a priority.

Jordan Neely's killer must be arrested and face justice. Of that there is no doubt, just as there's no doubt that in the near future, we will be bombarded with every mental health episode and every police encounter Neely ever had. Through it all, I expect the focus will return, with deadly repetition, to Neely's mental health. Much of it will be sensationalist and driven by fearmongering, while some it might even consider the ways that endemic poverty, lack of housing, various forms discrimination, social and family trauma are all connected to an individual's mental health. But what will largely go missing is this way we have of talking about an individual's mental health precisely so that we don't have to talk about our larger societal health.

Because if we looked into it honestly, what we'd see is a society enthralled by its own hierarchies and beholden to its traditions of violence. What we'd see is a society in desperate need of healing.

- Moustafa Bayoumi is the author of the award-winning books *How Does It Feel To Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America* and *This Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror*. He is professor of English at Brooklyn College, City University of New York
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Sudanese army soldiers in southern Khartoum on Saturday. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[The ObserverSudan](#)

## **Sudan's warring sides arrive in Saudi Arabia for talks as fighting rages on**

US and Riyadh confirm talks amid reports of more airstrikes and gun battles in Khartoum despite threat of sanctions

*[Jason Burke](#) Africa correspondent*

Sat 6 May 2023 12.41 EDTFirst published on Sat 6 May 2023 00.11 EDT

Sudan's rival factions have arrived in Saudi Arabia for direct talks, after three weeks of [clashes in the capital, Khartoum](#), and the south-western region of Darfur that have killed at least hundreds and wounded many more.

Representatives of the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were in Jeddah on Saturday for “pre-negotiation talks” aimed

at establishing a durable ceasefire that would allow aid to reach millions of desperate civilians trapped by the fighting.

A joint statement by the US and Saudi governments, which have brought the two sides together after a number of fruitless attempts, said: “The kingdom of [Saudi Arabia](#) and the United States urge both parties to take in consideration the interests of the Sudanese nation and its people and actively engage in the talks toward a ceasefire and end to the conflict.”

Forces aligned with Sudan’s de facto leader, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who leads the regular army, are in conflict with the RSF, commanded by his deputy turned rival, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo.

A series of truces have been agreed since the fighting erupted on 15 April, but none have been respected. There was little sign of any calm on Saturday.

In the city of Bahri, across the Nile from Khartoum, warplanes were heard overnight and explosions startled residents. “We don’t leave the house because we’re scared of stray bullets,” said a man who gave his name as Ahmed.

Gun clashes and airstrikes over residential areas were reported in eastern Khartoum on Saturday, while in the centre of the city, witnesses reported continued airstrikes and explosions on Friday, including near the airport.

The Turkish ambassador’s car also came under fire from unknown assailants, a Turkish diplomatic source said. The envoy reached safety at the embassy.

Turkey’s foreign minister said Ankara would move its embassy from Khartoum to Port Sudan after the incident.

The RSF and Sudanese army accused each other of being behind the attack.

In recent days, fighting has raged around the presidential palace, a key strategic site that gained added importance as negotiations were arranged.

Diplomats sought to minimise expectations from the talks on Saturday, saying they were only “a first step” with limited objectives.

The army confirmed late on Friday that it had sent envoys to Saudi Arabia to discuss “details of the truce in the process of being extended” but Burhan’s special envoy, Dafallah Alhaj, said the army would not sit down directly with any delegation sent by the “rebellious” RSF.

The RSF confirmed hours before the talks were due to begin that it would be sending a representative, though it made clear the aim of the discussions was limited to finding a way to allow aid to reach civilians.

Many analysts say neither Burhan nor Dagalo, nor their various regional sponsors and supporters, have any interest in ending the fighting now, because both believe they can defeat the other and so obtain unchallenged control of Sudan’s state and resources.

The US-Saudi statement noted the efforts of other countries and organisations behind this weekend’s talks, including Britain, the United Arab Emirates, the League of Arab States, the African Union and other groups.

The fighting has continued in recent days despite a threat of sanctions from the US president, Joe Biden, against those responsible for “threatening the peace, security and stability of Sudan” and “undermining Sudan’s democratic transition”.

Sudan endured decades of sanctions during the rule of the autocrat Omar al-Bashir, who was ousted in a palace coup in 2019 after mass street protests.

Biden said: “The violence taking place in Sudan is a tragedy – and it is a betrayal of the Sudanese people’s clear demand for civilian government and a transition to democracy. It must end.”

The conflict has killed about 700 people, mostly in Khartoum and the western Darfur region, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.



People who crossed from Sudan at a refugee camp in Renk county, South Sudan. Photograph: Peter Louis/AP

The UN children's agency, Unicef, warned on Friday that "the situation in Sudan has become fatal for a frighteningly large number of children". The agency's spokesperson, James Elder, said it had received reports from a trusted partner – not yet independently verified by the UN – that 190 children were killed and 1,700 wounded during the conflict's first 11 days.

He said the figures had been gathered from health facilities in Khartoum and Darfur since 15 April, meaning that they only cover children who actually made it to facilities in those areas. "The reality is likely to be much worse," Elder said.

Aid workers have struggled to get much-needed supplies to areas hit by violence. According to the International Medical Corps, at least 18 aid workers have been killed amid the fierce urban fighting.

The World Health Organization said on Saturday it had delivered medical aid to Port Sudan, but was awaiting security and access clearances that have prevented several such shipments from reaching Khartoum, where the few hospitals that are functioning are running out of supplies.

Almost 450,000 civilians have fled their homes since the fighting began, including more than 115,000 who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, the International Organisation for Migration said.

The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, said it was preparing for an outflow of 860,000 people, adding that \$445m (£352m) would be needed to support them just until October.

The UN warned that if the fighting continued, it could raise the already large number of Sudanese threatened by hunger and malnutrition by as many as 2.5 million.

“That raises the number to a total of 19 million people in the next three to six months,” said Farhan Haq, a spokesperson for the UN secretary general, António Guterres.

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Mehul Choksi is wanted on fraud and money laundering charges in India.  
Photograph: Hindustan Times/Getty Images

[Antigua and Barbuda](#)

## **Businessman who alleges Indian kidnap plot wins Antiguan court ruling**

Fugitive Mehul Choksi claims UK-based group was part of alleged conspiracy to abduct him in 2021

*Tom Parry and Daniel Boffey*  
Sat 6 May 2023 01.00 EDT

A fugitive Indian-born businessman has won the first round of a court battle to prove that a UK-based group including a younger woman was part of an Indian intelligence service plot to lure him to a Caribbean villa to be kidnapped and extradited to his home country.

The high court of [Antigua and Barbuda](#) has found that Mehul Choksi has an “arguable” case in relation to his civil claim against the country’s attorney general and chief of police over the response to his alleged abduction and illegal rendition to Dominica in May 2021.

A submission from Choksi’s lawyers details an alleged conspiracy in which he is said to have been subjected to “inhuman or degrading treatment” after his alleged kidnapping in Antigua. It is claimed that the elaborate plot to steal him away had been carefully prepared in collusion with the Indian state.

Should it go to trial, the case could open up to scrutiny the world of secret service operations and the alleged role of experienced individuals in the UK.

Choksi, 64, is seeking an admission from the Antiguan police that they failed to properly look into the alleged crime and a declaration that they will now relaunch a “speedy and effective” investigation.

Antigua’s attorney general and police commissioner had sought to have the claim struck out as “vexatious”. But the high court said the defendants had not shown the case to be “unsustainable”. It ordered the defendants to file a defence and awarded Choksi 75% of his costs.

According to the businessman’s affidavit, Choksi, who is wanted on fraud and money laundering charges in India, was invited to a villa near his luxury home in the Antiguan resort of Jolly Harbour in May 2021. A separate police report identified the person who invited Choksi as a 33-year-old woman.

Immediately after arriving, it is alleged, he was surrounded by a group of men who claimed to be police officers and repeatedly punched to his head, arm, chest and leg, leaving him covered in cuts and bruises.

Choksi alleges that a stun gun was discharged into his face and other exposed areas of skin, causing burns, and he was threatened with a kitchen knife.

As the beating continued, he was gagged, forced into a wheelchair and tied to its frame, and a mask was placed over his head, it is claimed.

His assailants are said to have pushed him on to a chartered yacht registered in St Lucia, which then set sail for Dominica, arriving about 15 hours later.

Choksi's lawyers' submission states that he endured violent mistreatment throughout the voyage and was made to listen to a man on a mobile phone who purported to be in charge of the operation to have him deported to India.

He claims in his submission that he was informed that the plot was orchestrated by the Research and Analysis Wing, India's foreign intelligence agency.

Further details appear in a police report dated 25 June 2021 that has been referenced in the court's judgment. In it, the police wrote that a "plethora of real and circumstantial evidence makes it clear that a case of kidnapping with broad collusion among multiple conspirators exist", a point highlighted by the court.

The police report also contains a copy of a flight manifest for a private jet that flew from Antigua to Dominica immediately after the abduction, and names a man travelling on a diplomatic passport, a 68-year-old British citizen from Essex and a 33-year-old Hungarian woman registered on Companies House at an address in London as being involved in the plot. They all deny involvement.

In January, a press release issued on behalf of the Antigua and Barbuda commissioner of police indicated that a warrant had been secured requesting that Interpol issue a red notice against three of those named.

The British barrister Michael Polak, the director of Justice Abroad, which is representing Choksi, said: "The evidence that Mr Choksi was kidnapped from Antigua and tortured during his unlawful rendition to Dominica is clear. It has been a long road to get to this point, and we continue to fight to secure justice for Mr Choksi."

Oliver Laurence, the managing partner of I-OnAsia, which is leading investigations into Choksi's alleged kidnapping on behalf of his family, said a dossier of material gathered over the last year had been handed to the National Crime Agency and the Metropolitan police.

"We have spoken to several key witnesses who have bravely come forward to give us information which has led us to where we are today," he said. "We have examined everything, from flight manifests to hotel documents, which has painted a disturbing picture."

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Eight of the 16 fake electors in Georgia who sought to falsely declare Donald Trump the winner of the 2020 elections have taken immunity deals. Photograph: Erik S Lesser/EPA

[US elections 2020](#)

## Half of Trump's 'fake electors' accept immunity in Georgia investigation

The eight people are now protected from prosecution, limiting the possibility of a conspiracy indictment

*[Hugo Lowell](#) and [Sam Levine](#)*

Fri 5 May 2023 20.31 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 May 2023 12.19 EDT

Half of the 16 so-called fake electors in Georgia who sought to falsely declare [Donald Trump](#) the winner of the 2020 election have accepted immunity deals in the local criminal investigation into the matter, their lawyer said in a court filing on Friday.

The immunity deals to the eight came in April, [according to the filing](#), after the Fulton county district attorney's office called their lawyer and said prosecutors were willing to make the arrangement – about four months after the lawyer asked about the prospect of such deals.

With half of the fake electors now apparently immune from prosecution, the scope of a potential conspiracy indictment ensnaring Trump and the electors – identified as targets in the case – may have narrowed, not least because the immunity deals did not compel any incriminating information in return.

The filing also raised new questions about how prosecutors might handle the fake electors more broadly, after the lawyer for the eight, Kimberly Debrow, effectively accused the district attorney's office of misrepresenting key facts in [an earlier motion](#) seeking to have her disqualified.

The latest twist in the [Georgia](#) election criminal investigation comes as the Fulton county district attorney, Fani Willis, is expected to ask a grand jury starting in mid-July to return charges against Trump and dozens of people involved in efforts to reverse his defeat in the state of Georgia.

Last month, the district attorney's office sought to disqualify Debrow from the case entirely, citing her clients' testimony that they were not told of immunity offers, and citing a conflict of interest after some of her clients implicated another one of her clients in a separate crime.

In the 68-page brief filed on Friday, Debrow vehemently disputed the claims, saying that transcripts and recordings of interviews – submitted to the court for a confidential review – showed that none of her clients told prosecutors that immunity offers were not brought to them in 2022.

The filing also revealed that although eight fake electors received immunity deals, two of the fake electors – whose identities were not disclosed and were until recently her clients – had not. One of them is understood to be Cathy Latham, a local Republican party leader.

A spokesperson for the district attorney's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Debrow claimed in the filing that the transcripts of interviews with her clients showed one of the prosecutors, Nathan Wade, sought to intentionally confuse them by suggesting they were offered immunity last year, though no actual offers had been made before April 2023.

In one instance, Debrow claimed, the prosecutor threatened to “tear up” the immunity deal that was already in force and binding if Debrow did not stop clarifying that the discussions about immunity prior to April were only potential offers.

“Here’s the deal. Here’s the deal. Either [Elector E] is going to get this immunity, and he’s going to answer the questions – and wants to talk – or we’re going to leave. And if we leave, we’re ripping up his immunity agreement,” Wade is said to have told Debrow and her client.

Debrow also claimed she could find no testimony in her clients’ interview transcripts showing them implicating another fake electors in a further crime, noting that the district attorney’s office had refused to say what the alleged crime was, or who had made the allegations.

“All of the electors remain united in their collective innocence and defenses, and none testified or believe that they or any other elector committed any wrongdoing, much less ‘criminal acts’,” the filing said.

Debrow added that even if it were true that some of clients incriminated another of her clients, it would not matter since they could not be prosecuted as a result of the immunity deals.

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Peter Schwartz, circled in red, was sentenced to 14 years in prison for attacking police officers with pepper spray and a chair as he stormed the US Capitol with his wife. Photograph: smittal/AP

### [US Capitol attack](#)

## **Kentucky man gets record-setting 14 year sentence for role in Capitol attack**

Peter Schwartz's prison sentence is the longest so far among hundreds of cases stemming from the January 6 insurrection

*Associated Press*

Fri 5 May 2023 21.33 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 May 2023 15.30 EDT

A Kentucky man with a long criminal record has been sentenced to a record-setting 14 years in prison for attacking police officers with pepper spray and a chair as he stormed the US Capitol with his wife.

Peter Schwartz's prison sentence is the longest so far among hundreds of Capitol riot cases. The judge who sentenced Schwartz on Friday also handed

down the previous longest sentence – 10 years – to a retired New York police department officer who assaulted a police officer outside the Capitol on 6 January.

Prosecutors had recommended a prison sentence of 24 years and 6 months for Schwartz, a welder.

US district Judge Amit Mehta sentenced Schwartz to 14 years and two months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release.

Mehta said Schwartz was a “soldier against democracy” who participated in “the kind of mayhem, chaos that had never been seen in the country’s history.”

“You are not a political prisoner,” the judge told him. “You’re not somebody who is standing up against injustice or fighting against an autocratic regime.”

Schwartz briefly addressed the judge before learning his sentence, saying, “I do sincerely regret the damage that January 6 has caused to so many people and their lives.”

The judge said he didn’t believe Schwartz’s statement, noting his lack of remorse. “You took it upon yourself to try and injure multiple police officers that day,” Mehta said.

Schwartz was armed with a wooden tire knocker when he and his then wife, Shelly Stallings, joined other rioters in overwhelming a line of police officers on the Capitol’s Lower West Terrace, where he threw a folding chair at officers.

“By throwing that chair, Schwartz directly contributed to the fall of the police line that enabled rioters to flood forward and take over the entire terrace,” prosecutor Jocelyn Bond wrote in a court filing.

Schwartz, 49, also armed himself with a police-issued “super soaker” canister of pepper spray and sprayed it at retreating officers. Advancing to a

tunnel entrance, Schwartz coordinated with two other rioters, Markus Maly and Jeffrey Brown, to spray an orange liquid toward officers clashing with the mob.

“While the stream of liquid did not directly hit any officer, its effect was to heighten the danger to the officers in that tunnel,” Bond wrote.

Before leaving, Schwartz joined a “heave ho” push against police in the tunnel.

Stallings pleaded guilty last year to riot-related charges and was sentenced last month to two years of incarceration.

Schwartz was tried with co-defendants Maly and Brown. In December, a jury convicted all three of assault charges and other felony offenses.

Schwartz’s attorneys requested a prison sentence of four years and six months, saying his actions were motivated by a “misunderstanding” about the 2020 presidential election. Donald Trump and his allies spread baseless conspiracy theories that Democrats stole the election from the Republican incumbent.

“There remain many grifters out there who remain free to continue propagating the ‘great lie’ that Trump won the election, Donald Trump being among the most prominent. Mr Schwartz is not one of these individuals; he knows he was wrong,” his defense lawyers wrote.

Prosecutors said Schwartz has bragged about his participation in the riot, shown no remorse and claimed that his prosecution was politically motivated. He referred to the Capitol attack as the “opening of a war” in a Facebook post a day after the riot.

Schwartz has raised more than \$71,000 from an online campaign titled Patriot Pete Political Prisoner in DC. Prosecutors asked Mehta to order Schwartz to pay a fine equaling the amount raised by his campaign, arguing that he shouldn’t profit from participating in the riot.

Schwartz was on probation when he joined the riot and his criminal record includes a “jaw-dropping” 38 prior convictions since 1991, “several of

which involved assaulting or threatening officers or other authority figures”, Bond wrote.

More than 1,000 people have been charged with federal crimes related to January 6. Nearly 500 of them have been sentenced, with over half getting terms of imprisonment.

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A man walks past posters advertising a Covid test centre in Berlin's Kreuzberg district during the pandemic. Photograph: David Gannon/AFP/Getty Images

## Coronavirus

# Covid-19 is no longer a global health emergency, says WHO

Declaration a major step towards end of pandemic that has killed more than 6.9m people

*Andrew Gregory* Health editor

@andrewgregory

Fri 5 May 2023 10.31 EDTFirst published on Fri 5 May 2023 10.02 EDT

The Covid-19 pandemic, which has sickened or killed almost 800 million people over three years, no longer constitutes a global health emergency, the head of the [World Health Organization](#) has said.

The WHO first gave Covid its highest level of alert on [30 January 2020](#), and its panel has continued to apply the label at meetings held every three months.

While the WHO director general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, announced on Friday the UN health agency was downgrading Covid's alert status, he also delivered a stark warning about its persistent threat. The disease still killed someone every three minutes, he said.

"Yesterday, the emergency committee met for the 15th time and recommended to me that I declare an end to the public health emergency of international concern," said Tedros. "I've accepted that advice."

He added: "It's therefore with great hope that I declare Covid-19 over as a global health emergency. However, that does not mean Covid-19 is over as a global health threat. Last week, Covid-19 claimed a life every three minutes – and that's just the deaths we know about."

The global health emergency status helped focus international attention on the Covid threat, as well as bolstering collaboration on vaccines and treatments. Lifting it is a sign of the progress the world has made in these areas, but Covid-19 is here to stay, health officials believe, even if it no longer represents an emergency.

The WHO does not declare the beginning or end of pandemics, although it did start using the term for Covid in March 2020. Tedros said the decision to downgrade the alert status did not mean the danger was over, cautioning that the emergency status could be reinstated if the situation changed.

"The worst thing any country could do now is to use this news as a reason to let down its guard, to dismantle the systems it has built, or to send the message to its people that Covid-19 is nothing to worry about," he said.

Covid has officially claimed more than 6.9 million lives, and affected the health of more than 765 million others, according to the WHO. It said the true figures were likely to be much higher. Covid deaths globally have

plunged by 95% since January, but the disease still killed 16,000 people worldwide last month alone.

Despite the lingering danger, the pandemic has faded from mind in many if not most countries. This week, Tedros said testing and tracing efforts had “declined significantly around the world, making it more difficult to track known variants and detect new ones”.

He has also warned of the ongoing impact of long Covid, which provokes a long line of often severe and debilitating symptoms that can drag on for months or years. The condition is estimated to affect one in 10 people who contract Covid, suggesting hundreds of millions of people could need longer-term care, he has said.

Long Covid was devastating lives and livelihoods and wreaking havoc on health systems and economies, Tedros told the Guardian last year as he urged countries to launch immediate and sustained efforts to tackle the “very serious” crisis.

“While the pandemic has changed dramatically due to the introduction of many lifesaving tools, and there is light at the end of the tunnel, the impact of long Covid for all countries is very serious and needs immediate and sustained action equivalent to its scale,” he said.

He added: “Early in the pandemic, it was important for overwhelmed health systems to focus all of their life saving efforts on Covid-19 patients presenting with acute infection. However, it is critical for governments to invest long-term in their health system and workers and make a plan now for dealing with long Covid.”

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## **Headlines friday 12 may 2023**

- [Live Train drivers' union accuses ministers of intentionally prolonging rail strikes](#)
- [Rail strikes Trains halted as passengers face weekend of disruption](#)
- [Flooding Environment Agency pulls £50m scheme to protect homes in England](#)
- [Live UK 'bottom of G7 growth league table' despite avoiding winter recession](#)
- [UK Economy shrank unexpectedly by 0.3% in March](#)

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

# Tories have ‘completely lost control’ of UK migration numbers, says Starmer – as it happened

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Two trains carrying 170 Eurovision song contest superfans arrive into Liverpool Lime Street train station on Tuesday. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

[Rail strikes](#)

## Rail strikes: trains halted as passengers face weekend of disruption

Aslef and RMT unions deny targeting Eurovision final in Liverpool with stoppages in long-running pay dispute

*Gwyn Topham* Transport correspondent  
[@GwynTopham](#)

Fri 12 May 2023 09.58 EDTFirst published on Fri 12 May 2023 01.00 EDT

Rail services have been brought to a standstill across much of Great Britain after train drivers on Friday began the first of the latest wave of [planned strikes](#) in a long-running pay dispute.

Members of the [drivers' union Aslef started a 24-hour strike](#) across virtually all the big passenger operators in England, stopping some major intercity

and commuter services entirely.

Cross-border services to Wales and Scotland are also affected, although most Scotrail and [Transport](#) for Wales trains are running as the union is only in direct dispute with firms contracted to the Department for Transport in England.

No trains are running on networks including Avanti, Southeastern, Govia Thameslink, Northern, West Midlands, TransPennine Express and CrossCountry.

The drivers' strike will be followed by another on Saturday by train crew who are members of the [RMT](#) union. That strike is expected to severely disrupt many services, although most will run a limited number of trains.

The general secretary of Aslef, Mick Whelan, said: "Talking to members in branches up and down the country, they are determined that strikes will go on as long as they need to. The government could sort this dispute out tomorrow if they made it sensible offer."

Aslef called strikes for this Friday as well as 31 May and 3 June after rejecting a pay offer of 4% a year over two years from the train operators' body, the Rail Delivery Group (RDG). Most drivers' pay was frozen during the pandemic.

The rail minister, Huw Merriman, repeated calls for both rail unions to put existing offers to a full vote. He said: "The leadership have chosen not to put those offers to their members, and I feel if they did, there would be the opportunity for members to decide if they wish to take them."

However, in interviews on Friday morning, Whelan said the government was prolonging the dispute and he had not met anyone since a "token meeting" with Merriman in early January: "We've neither had hide nor hair from the government that are meant to be facilitating and aiding these talks.

"They talk a good game, they don't actually engage; they haven't taken any ownership of this process as far as we're concerned."

Further industrial action in the form of an overtime ban will come into effect next week, which could disrupt many operators that rely on rest-day working, with some such as Chiltern already warning of cancellations.

Aslef is re-balloting members for an extended strike mandate, with results expected in June.

In a similar ballot by the RMT, union members employed by the main 14 train operating companies [voted to continue](#) strikes.

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The RMT's general secretary, Mick Lynch, said: “Throughout this dispute – which has [gone on for over a year](#) – the government has tied the hands of the railway companies and prevented them offering a fair deal.

“We are striking so that the employers and government can see the huge anger among rail workers is very real and they need to recognise that fact, face reality and make improved proposals.”

Aslef and the RMT have been criticised for striking over the weekend of the Eurovision song contest final, when thousands of people are expected to head to Liverpool as the UK hosts the event on behalf of last year's winners, Ukraine.

The prime minister's official spokesperson said he "remained disappointed" and urged unions to call off the strikes, adding: "We know it will impact people's ability to go to Eurovision."

Both unions have denied targeting the event. The RMT said it was the only date available under strike laws after its executive rejected the latest pay offer. Merseyrail, which is contracted by the local authority and not in dispute, is putting on extra trains.

The RDG has urged passengers to check before travel on Friday and Saturday, as well as Sunday morning when some services may be disrupted by the after-effects of strikes. It said it could "only apologise for this unnecessary and damaging disruption".

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‘The actions of the Environment Agency will delay the protection of thousands of homes,’ said a bidder. Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

### Flooding

## **Environment Agency pulls £50m scheme to protect homes in England from flooding**

Businesses that put together bids for flood doors, non-return valves and waterproof floors say they have spent tens of thousands

*Sandra Laville*

Fri 12 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 06.04 EDT

A £50m scheme to protect thousands of homes from flooding by the autumn has been pulled by the [Environment Agency](#).

Businesses that put together bids for the scheme to provide homes in [England](#) with flood defences including flood doors, non-return valves and

waterproof floors, say they have spent tens of thousands preparing their bids.

But on Tuesday the EA said the tender process was being pulled. In an email to companies, the EA said: “Following careful consideration the [Environment Agency](#) has decided to discontinue the current procurement of a new property flood resilience (PFR) framework that was commenced earlier this year.

“We have written directly to the suppliers who have submitted bids to advise them of this decision and the grounds for this decision.”

The EA said they were pulling the scheme because they had not received enough competent tenders to provide value for money. But Simon Crowther, who runs one of the companies that bid for the work, said the EA had made the process so complicated and costly it had put people off bidding.

Crowther, a civil engineer and chartered water and environmental manager, said his company had spent tens of thousands of pounds over the past six weeks preparing its bid. He said the failure of the agency would impact on climate emergency resilience, and leave an increased number of communities exposed to flooding.

“I feel I have to speak out about this. The actions of the Environment Agency will delay the protection of thousands of homes. Flood victims do not have a voice and they will not know that these protections were coming or that they are now being delayed because of the actions of the EA. So I feel I need to raise awareness about this failure.”

Crowther, whose firm bid to carry out surveys of homes in the north-east, the Midlands, London and Kent as part of the scheme, said the timetable provided to the company showed the protections for homes could have been in place by the autumn. “That will now all be delayed,” he said.

Mary Dhonau OBE, who was awarded an OBE for work on reducing flood risk, said the companies bidding for the work were all small businesses who had spent thousands preparing their bids.

She said: “I know all those who tendered were proud with the high standard of the tenders they submitted. The Environment Agency has now discontinued the procurement process and intend to invite tenders for a new procurement shortly.

“The property flood resilience industry is expected to go through the whole process again. I have explained the state of the marketplace. Over the last few days, I’ve talked to quite a few companies. One of them has held a crisis meeting and wonder if it’s worth staying in the PFR industry, another isn’t going to bother again and is changing direction. All of the companies are reeling with shock and disbelief.”

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Cancellation of the process came as areas of the [south-west](#) were hit by [flash flooding](#) after heavy rain this week. In Somerset homes were evacuated and a major incident was declared.

The EA has spent two years preparing for the scheme. In its email to companies the agency said it still intended intention to go ahead with the flood defence project and would be in touch with those interested “as soon as possible”.

The project was pulled by the EA as the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) revealed only a third of local authorities had enough staff to manage flash flood risks.

CIWEM said more than 5m households are reported to be at risk from this form of flooding and surface water management in England was not consistently coordinated, or funded to manage future flood risks.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said: “These claims are patently untrue. Not only is the Environment Agency continuing to work with partners to promote and deliver Property Flood Resilience solutions for many communities, we are also currently developing a new framework for suppliers which we aim to have awarded by the end of this year. As part of that process, we are focused on options to encourage more suppliers to submit bids, to drive competition and maximise value for money for the public.”

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**Business liveBusiness**

# UK ‘bottom of G7 growth league table’; Royal Mail CEO stepping down – as it happened

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Consumers reined in spending in response to squeezed budgets, while the wet weather also dampened demand in March. Photograph: Jordan Pettitt/PA  
[Economic growth \(GDP\)](#)

## **UK's growth last of G7 after economy shrinks by 0.3% in March**

But there was 0.1% growth in first quarter overall thanks to a stronger January, ONS says

- [Analysis: Too early for all clear with rate rise impact yet to be felt](#)
- [Business live: latest updates](#)

*[Phillip Inman](#)  
[@phillipinman](#)*

Fri 12 May 2023 10.46 EDTFirst published on Fri 12 May 2023 02.27 EDT

The UK economy is at the bottom of the G7 growth league behind Germany, France and the US after an unexpected contraction of 0.3% in March.

A strong performance in January meant the economy grew by 0.1% over the first quarter, the [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS) said, but was unable to prevent the UK economy being 0.5% smaller than it was in 2019 before the Covid-19 pandemic.

In contrast, the US economy is 5.3% larger than its pre-Covid size, France's economy is 1.3% larger, and Germany is 0.1% smaller than in Q1 2019.

The slump in March was driven largely by weakness in the retail sector with consumer spending squeezed by the cost of living crisis. The wet weather also dampened demand.

The sluggish start to the year was likely to concern the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, who said the UK remained on course to be a “high-growth economy”.

Analysts said the UK faced a difficult situation going into the summer, with millions of households finding that lower gas prices will be offset by higher income taxes and a rise in mortgage costs after a [12th consecutive interest rate rise](#) by the Bank of England on Thursday.

### [GDP graphic](#)

Suren Thiru, the economics director at the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, said the Bank’s decision to raise interest rates to 4.5% “may soon look like a misstep”.

He added: “The likely squeeze on consumer spending and investment from higher taxes, and the lagged impact of rising interest rates, may mean that our growth prospects are weaker than the Bank of England currently expects.”

Some analysts have predicted the economy will contract in the second quarter of the year, although the Bank said in its latest forecasts that the economy was likely to avoid a downturn in every quarter of 2023.

The central bank, which [increased interest rates to 4.5% on Thursday](#), has forecast that the UK economy will stagnate this year – expecting growth of

0.25% – after tearing up a forecast last year that Britain was on course to suffer one of the longest recessions on record, stretching into 2024.

Bank officials said inflation, which stood at 10.1% in March, will fall steeply over the summer, but only to 5.1% on average in the last three months of the year, still well above its 2% target.

Labour and unions have accused the government of holding back growth with a return to austerity measures before households and businesses have recovered from the shock of the pandemic and rising energy and food prices after the war in Ukraine.

A few months ago, economists feared [the UK could be in recession by now](#). However, the fall in energy prices has helped the economy outperform those gloomy expectations.

Plans by the government to restrict Whitehall spending appear to be having an effect after the ONS said the education, health, public administration and defence sectors all experienced declines in activity.

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Warm weather in February cut the demand for gas and heating oil, causing the energy sector to register no growth over the quarter.

The ONS said that “consumer-facing services” contracted by 0.4% and household spending overall flatlined over the first quarter.

Building firms increased output over the first three months of the year by 0.7% but the ONS said this was driven mainly by an increase in repairs and maintenance work and was offset by a 1.9% drop in new work.

### GDP graphic

The ONS added that strikes played a part in restricting growth over the quarter. It said: “There was anecdotal evidence, reported on monthly business survey returns, to suggest that industrial action in March 2023 had a notable impact on different industries of varying degrees.

“These included the health sector (junior doctors), the civil service, the education sector (teachers and university lecturers) and the rail network. This is further supported by the [Business Insights and Conditions Survey \(BICS\)](#), which stated one in 10 businesses (9%) were directly or indirectly affected by industrial action in March 2023.”

Hunt said: “It’s good news that the economy is growing but to reach the government’s growth priority we need to stay focused on competitive taxes, labour supply and productivity.

“The Bank of England governor confirmed yesterday that the budget has made an important start but we will keep going until the job is done and we have the high wage, high growth economy we need.”

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## 2023.05.12 - Spotlight

- 'Why would we employ people?' Experts on five ways AI will change work
- 'I sat with my lairdly cup of tea' How a derelict Scottish tower was turned into a Landmark Trust retreat
- 'We used to agree on who we trust. Now we don't' James L Brooks on truth, The Simpsons and adapting Judy Blume
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[The future of work](#)[Employment](#)

**‘Why would we employ people?’  
Experts on five ways AI will change**

# work

From farming and education to healthcare and the military, artificial intelligence is poised to make sweeping changes to the workplace. But can it have a positive impact – or are we in for a darker future?

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[Philippa Kelly](#)

Fri 12 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 17.21 EDT

In 1965, the political scientist and Nobel laureate Herbert Simon declared: “Machines will be capable, within 20 years, of doing any work a man can do.” Today, in what is increasingly referred to as the [fourth industrial revolution, the arrival of artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#) in the workplace is igniting similar concerns.

The European parliament’s forthcoming Artificial Intelligence Act is [likely to deem](#) the use of AI across education, law enforcement and worker management to be “high risk”. [Geoffrey Hinton](#), known as the “godfather of AI”, recently resigned from his position at Google, citing [concerns about the technology’s impact on the job market](#). And, in early May, striking members

of the Writers Guild of America promised executives: “[AI will replace you before it replaces us.](#)”

Yet, according to Philip Torr, professor of engineering science at the University of Oxford, the fallibility of AI tools – driven not by emotion, but by data and algorithms – means that the presence of humans in the workplace will remain essential.

“Industrial revolutions in the past have typically led to more employment, not less,” says Torr. “I think that we’ll see the types of jobs changing, but that’s just a natural progression.”

Torr, an award-winning research fellow at the Alan Turing Institute in London, compares the impact of large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT to the advent of the word processor: an extremely useful tool that will fundamentally change the way we work.

He is generally optimistic that humans can coexist productively alongside such technologies – and he is not alone in this view. Many experts in the field believe that, with the right education and legislation, automation could have a positive impact on the workplace.

There are, of course, those who predict a darker future in which workers are appraised by algorithms and replaced by automation. But there is one broad area of consensus: for better or worse, a growing number of industries are likely to be permanently and structurally altered by the march of AI.



## Healthcare

Until now, the use of AI in medicine has centred on MRI scans, X-rays and the identification of tumours, says Torr. Research is also being conducted into dementia diagnosis via smartphone. Apps could track the length of time it takes a user to complete a routine task such as finding a contact, and flag an increase in this time as a possible sign of the syndrome.

Each of these applications could save valuable time for doctors and other medical staff. However, Torr says in the future LLMs will have the biggest impact for patients and practitioners.

He gives the example of arriving at a hospital, answering a set of questions and then being moved to another room, only to be asked the same set of questions. Instead, he explains, answers could be logged via an AI-driven app, which would then pass each patient's information to the relevant staff.

Torr acknowledges, however, that, despite its efficiency, diagnosis by algorithm – or indeed automated surgery, which he also imagines is a likely development – may not prove popular with patients. “You can imagine making some sort of robotic salesman,” he says. “But people would still want to see the real thing.”

Where the technology could be more welcome, however, is among health service central planners. With large, complex organisations to run and targets to meet, they could be helped by AI suggesting plans and schedules to decrease mounting pressures faced by medical services worldwide.



## **Education**

AI is already used in schools, colleges and universities, albeit in limited ways. However, as automation makes its way further into the classroom, Rose Luckin, professor of learner centred design at University College London Knowledge Lab, says the choices we make now will decide its future impact.

“There’s a dystopian version where you hand over far too much to the AI,” she says. “And you end up with an education system that’s much cheaper, where you have a lot of the delivery done by AI systems.”

The more well-off students will still have lots of lovely one-to-one human interactions, alongside some very smartly integrated AI

In this future, teachers assisted in marking and lesson planning by LLMs would be left with more much-needed time to focus on other elements of their work. However, in a bid to cut costs, the “teaching” of lessons could also be delegated to machines, robbing teachers and students of human interaction.

“Of course, that will be for the less well-off students,” Luckin says. “The more well-off students will still have lots of lovely one-to-one human interactions, alongside some very smartly integrated AI.”

Luckin instead advocates a future in which technology eases teachers’ workloads but does not disrupt their pastoral care – or disproportionately affect students in poorer areas. “That human interaction is something to be cherished, not thrown out,” she says.



## Call centres

Known for their high staff turnover, call centres are often stress-filled environments in which staff spend much of their day attempting to calm angry customers. For this reason, explains Peter Mantello, professor of media and cyber-politics at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, the centres

will increasingly become a popular home for [what is known as emotional AI](#).

Using voice-tone recognition, such tools allow staff and managers to gauge the emotional state of their customers and workers. This means that staff can better assist callers, and managers can take better care of staff. Mantello warns, however, that the technology is also a form of surveillance.

“Surveillance is about social control and shaping people’s behaviours,” he says. “And so in the workplace, this idea of being positive, authentic and happy is going to be more and more linked to productivity.”

I think we’re going to see emotion play an even more important part in creating or measuring the idea of a good worker

Mantello’s concerns stem from the possibility that the data AI generates could be misused by those in power, for example by a manager using data showing poor productivity to dismiss a worker they dislike, or making a purely statistical judgment on an individual’s value.

The growth of such technology has implications for those working across other sectors, too. From public relations to bartending, presenting a positive demeanour has long been a part of certain roles, but Mantell says: “I think we’re going to see emotion play an even more important part in creating or measuring the idea of a good worker.”



## Agriculture

According to Robert Sparrow, professor of philosophy at Monash University's Data Futures Institute in Australia, many areas of agriculture will prove resistant to increased automation. While farmers already benefit from the application of AI in climate forecasting and pests and disease modelling, he says that in order for the technology to cause real disruption, there would need to be significant progress in robotics.

"I can get ChatGPT to write better essays than many of my students," he says. "But if you asked a robot to walk into this room and empty the wastepaper basket or make me a cup of coffee, it simply couldn't do that."

This lack of dexterity and inability to cope with unpredictable spaces or tasks, combined with the cost of such technology, makes robots unlikely to replace agricultural workers in the near future, he believes.

However, Sparrow describes agriculture as a technologically progressive industry. Food often travels across the world to reach consumers, and Sparrow describes logistics as an element of farming in which AI has real potential to increase efficiency – although this would not come without risks for human workers.

“All the people currently working to determine which pallets need to go on which truck, to get to which ship, to get to market on time – if they all lost their jobs because of improvements in AI, it’s not at all obvious that they will find jobs elsewhere,” he says.



## Military

Sparrow says military investment in AI is high, and the belief that it will drive the future of warfare is common. However, despite the introduction of semi-autonomous drones, tanks and submarines, the technology is used less than one might imagine.

This, however, is likely to change – particularly for those who serve at sea or in the air. “I’m not alone in thinking that, in the future, human beings won’t be able to survive air combat,” he says. “Flying without a pilot can be lighter, faster, more manoeuvrable and also more expendable.”

Sparrow also believes that commands could eventually be delivered by AI, rather than by senior officers. Although humans would remain involved in decision-making, the possibility of automation bias – the human tendency to defer to machines – raises concerns.

He gives the example of a battalion sent into heavy enemy fire by an AI general – something that he acknowledges human generals might also need to do. “You know those people are going to be killed,” he says, “but that’s harder to stomach if a machine gave the order.”

Autonomous warfare conducted from a distance could also lead to changes in military culture and the way in which working in the sector is perceived. While traits such as courage, mercy and compassion are often attributed to soldiers, Sparrow says that AI-driven fighting would “make it very hard to maintain these illusions”.

Changes in public opinion aside, the positives of removing military personnel from the dangers of direct combat are clear. However, Sparrow still holds serious concerns about a future in which humans play a lesser role than technology in warfare, and believes that automated weapons systems [could one day be capable of drawing humans into war](#).

He is similarly sceptical about the future of AI across all workplaces. “The idea that these tools will leave the core of the job intact is often a marketing pitch,” he says. “If the technology is genuinely better than a person at the role, why would we employ people?”

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‘Straight out of a novel’: the 16th-century Fairburn Tower in the Scottish Highlands. Photograph: Roddy Ritchie/Landmark Trust

[Highlands holidays](#)

**‘I sat with my lairdly cup of tea’: how a derelict Scottish tower was turned into a**

# Landmark Trust retreat

Just three years ago Fairburn Tower, near Inverness, was a roofless wreck. Now it has been restored to its former renaissance glory and is available as a holiday let

Dixe Wills

Fri 12 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 11.02 EDT

“The day will come when the Mackenzies of Fairburn shall lose their entire possessions ... Their castle shall become uninhabited, desolate and forsaken, and a cow shall give birth to a calf in the uppermost chamber of Fairburn Tower.” So prophesied Coinneach Odhar Fiosaiche (also known as the Brahan Seer), Scotland’s own Nostradamus, back in the 17th century.

Located amid farmland a pleasant five-mile stroll from Muir of Ord station in the Scottish Highlands – just half an hour’s drive north-west of Inverness – Fairburn Tower has had a remarkable turnaround in its fortunes. Only three years ago, it was just as the Brahan Seer predicted: a roofless, floorless wreck, the cracks running up its walls threatening to bring the whole edifice crashing down once and for all. That’s when the building conservation charity the Landmark Trust intervened. A phalanx of highly skilled craftspeople set to work, restoring the tower to the time of the Stewarts and the glories of the Scottish renaissance. The walls were repaired; the floors, roof, casement windows and spiral staircase reinstated; and the bartizans (overhanging turrets) reconstructed. Finally, a pink limed-based harl was applied, giving the whole structure the look of a rosy sunset (or, if you prefer, sunrise), as if it had leapt straight out of a Sir Walter Scott novel. Now available as a holiday let for four, it’s occasionally open to the public to visit too – for the first time this Sunday (and it’s free).



Fairburn Tower's cosy sitting room, with a ceiling featuring medieval motifs and script. Photograph: Roddy Ritchie/Landmark Trust

When it was built in 1545, Fairburn was an archetypal four-storey Scottish tower house – readily defensible but with pretensions to comfort. That latter tradition has certainly been adhered to in its renovation. A discreet array of solar panels provides electricity for the central heating. And rather than garderobes emptying on to the outside walls, there's a highly civilised en suite in both bedrooms.

As I climbed the spiral staircase for the first time, I encountered a plain low door on each new storey, as if I'd stumbled on a giant Advent calendar. The first door revealed a kitchen – one rather better equipped than my own. It featured units handmade to fit around the uneven masonry, and uncastle-like luxuries, such as a dishwasher and half a dozen Le Creuset pans. One floor up I entered a cosy sitting room, its walls lined with heavy drapery as was the practice in all the best fortified homes. I was particularly impressed by the ceiling. Covered with medieval motifs and script, it was created by the artist Paul Mowbray using a 16th-century ceiling at Delgatie Castle in Aberdeenshire as his inspiration.



The view from a top-floor bedroom in Fairburn Tower. Photograph: Roddy Ritchie/Landmark Trust

The third floor was taken up with a double bedroom, dominated by a sombre portrait of a gentleman above a substantial fireplace; while the top floor was a twin. I was torn between the two bedrooms. The twin tempted me with its two circular bartizans (turrets), for I'm ashamed to admit that I've never once slept in a bedroom with even a single bartizan. However, the double bed with its dark wood headboard looked too sumptuous to resist. It was also positioned so that in the morning I could swing open the sturdy wooden shutters, sit up against the pillows with my lairdly cup of tea, and gaze through the leaded window towards gently undulating ridges that were mercifully free of marauders and other ill-doers.

I was torn between the two bedrooms. The twin tempted me with its two circular bartizans

Such was not always the case when Murdoch Mackenzie built the tower. Murdoch had been sent to the court of King James V with his brothers and had clearly been a muscular lad because he was described as being “one of the Strongest Men of his Age”. He evidently caught the king’s eye because he was made Groom of the Bedchamber, a prestigious appointment. Years

spent attending to the monarch's most intimate needs turned out to be financially rewarding, since James eventually granted Murdoch various tracts of land on condition that he throw up a fortified dwelling and begin farming around it. Murdoch's loyalty to the crown was thus secured while the king picked up a useful defensive outpost. Everyone's a winner. Or everyone would have been had James not died at the tender age of 30, a few years before Murdoch got around to building his tower.



Fairburn Tower's spiral staircase. Photograph: Roddy Ritchie/Landmark Trust

In common with all Landmark Trust properties, there's no television or wifi at Fairburn. There is, however, a carefully curated library bursting with books on subjects germane to its history, and a fulsome account of the tower written by Landmark's historian, Caroline Stanford. This I delved into, curled up on a big sofa in the snug sitting room. I read of the 30 Swiss mercenaries once garrisoned there (which must have been a tight squeeze), and of Alexander, the 9th laird, who artfully kept himself and Fairburn out of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion by declaring that "a grasier or farmer is all I pretend to". Lamentably, soon after this canny move the tower was abandoned. It was bought and sold several times, becoming ever more derelict until the most recent owners, the Stirlings of Fairburn, contacted the Landmark Trust.

For most of my stay I was content simply to lounge about and soak up the atmosphere of the place, but I did manage to see something of the outside world too. Fortunately, the final Dingwall section of the 6km [Peffery Way](#) had opened the week before. It mostly follows a disused railway line along the Peffery valley, ending at the old Strathpeffer station, now occupied by a cafe and a small but fascinating [Museum of Childhood](#). Even closer to hand are the Falls of Orrin, a 10-minute walk from the tower down through violet-strewn woodland where silver birches mingled their spring lime-green with the vibrant yellow of gorse. The wood also provided me with two firsts for the year – a cuckoo and a speckled wood butterfly.

And in case you're wondering about the cow in the prophesy of Coinneach Odhar Fiosaire, you'll be relieved to learn that in 1851 the birth of a calf in the topmost room of the tower briefly made the ruin at Fairburn something of a tourist attraction.

*[Fairburn Tower](#) (sleeps four) from £424 for four nights. The tower is open to the public on Sunday 14 May; [free entry but book a time slot](#). It will also be part of the [Doors Open Days](#) festival on 2-3 September.*

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James L Brooks ... ‘Empathically, I can share the madness a little.’  
Photograph: Action Press/Shutterstock

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# **‘We used to agree on who we trust. Now we don’t’: James L Brooks on truth, The Simpsons and adapting Judy Blume**

[Andrew Pulver](#)

As the pioneering film-maker finally brings Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret to the screen, he reflects on his glittering career, why Terms of Endearment made him cry and how Broadcast News predicted the future



[@Andrew\\_Pulver](#)

Fri 12 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 13 May 2023 11.55 EDT

James L Brooks is in a ruminative mood. “Mike Nichols had this wonderful thing he used to say when anybody was making a movie: who’s your buddy? By that, he meant that person who watches your back, who you can say anything to, hear anything from. It’s the person who shares the insanity that you have to feel when you’re making a movie, the kind of madness that any film deserves on the part of the director.”

Brooks is trying to describe the role he played on [Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret](#), the new adaptation of the Judy Blume novel, written and

directed by Kelly Fremon Craig, and for which Brooks is credited as a producer. “Empathically, I can share the madness a little,” he says. He’s worked with Craig before, producing her debut feature [The Edge of Seventeen](#) – and was reportedly a key element in persuading Blume to allow Craig to adapt her book for the screen.

It’s true that these days Brooks, now 83, is more a mentor and a guide, and with his astonishing record, who wouldn’t want his input? Brooks’s CV includes era-defining, legacy-creating TV hits [The Mary Tyler Moore Show](#) and [The Simpsons](#), Oscar-winning movies [Terms of Endearment](#) and [As Good as It Gets](#), and the nurturing of early features by up-and-coming talents like Penny Marshall, Cameron Crowe and Wes Anderson (*Big*, *Say Anything* ... and *Bottle Rocket* respectively).



Kathy Bates, Judy Blume, Kelly Fremon Craig, Abby Ryder Fortson and Rachel McAdams on the set of *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*.  
Photograph: Dana Hawley/Lionsgate

Shepherding *Are You There God? ... to the screen* was a case in point. “Judy Blume is a national treasure in the US, she’s so beloved. So the pressure on this film was to do right by Judy.” Blume, for her part, has said that she had resisted all Hollywood approaches of the book for nearly 50

years, until an email from Craig landed in her inbox. “Kelly and I immediately got on a plane and went across the United States to Key West, Florida, to see her. And it worked.”

In fact, Are You There God?’s teen-girl rites-of-passage material is well within Brooks’s ballpark; for an authentic film-industry legend of the 1970s and 80s, his reputation has emerged unscathed from the #MeToo movement; in fact rather enhanced. Looking back, his work is dominated by female protagonists and themes, right back to The Mary Tyler Moore Show, which in a radical act for the early 70s, gave primetime TV space to a career-driven single woman. “It was exquisite timing,” says Brooks, “because it was just at the beginning of the feminist revolution.” [Rhoda](#), its equally popular spin-off, continued the women-in-the-city theme, but Brooks says it wasn’t part of a “conscious mindset”. “I remember saying: let’s just do a show about men.” [Taxi](#), another massive 70s TV hit, was the result.

Hollywood in this era was not a female-friendly environment, to say the least, but when Brooks transitioned to movies in the early 80s, he brought the same ideas with him. Terms of Endearment, which in 1984 won Oscars for best picture, best actress for Shirley MacLaine, best supporting actor for Jack Nicholson, and best director and adapted screenplay for Brooks, was a triumph in its variegated portrayal of a mother-daughter relationship. Its follow-up, [Broadcast News](#), understood the way women – and specifically Holly Hunter’s TV producer – are undermined in the media industry. Later films followed the same route: [Spanglish](#), released in 2004, added the pressures of immigration and class to the mix, as housekeeper Paz Vega fends off her wealthy American employers’ influence over her daughter.



Mary Tyler Moore inside the WJM newsroom in a scene from The Mary Tyler Moore Show. Photograph: Bettmann/Bettmann Archive

His 80s film work now looks like an unrepeatable moment in the sun, very much the kind of ambitious, character-centred, literary-themed work that was decimated by Hollywood's commitment to the tentpole blockbuster. (Though when I suggest that Hollywood wouldn't want to make those kind of films again, Brooks indignantly replies: "I think you absolutely could!") His films were part of new sensibility to emerge from the wreckage of the Hollywood new wave, which had largely foundered by the end of the 70s: impassioned domestic epics such as Ordinary People, Kramer vs Kramer and Terms of Endearment claimed the ground recently occupied by Raging Bull, Being There and – lethally for a certain kind of film-making – Heaven's Gate. Being a known TV name didn't help. "Back then there was an iron wall. I was on the Paramount lot: on one side were the TV people and you did not ever wander over to the movie side, you know?"



Brooks, Shirley MacLaine and Jack Nicholson with their Oscars for Terms of Endearment. Photograph: Bettmann Archive

Brooks talks fondly of Terms of Endearment, as well he might: he did it, he says, because he cried when he read Larry McMurtry's original novel. "I had cried maybe twice in my life before that so I thought: I can't question a biological fact of myself like that." He also had a pivotal encounter with McMurtry: "He had a bookstore in Washington DC, so I went to pay homage to him. He kicked me out and said: 'I wrote the book, you do the movie.' It was a blessing, because it got me out of that feeling of humility and made that I was serving the film instead of the book."

Broadcast News, released in 1987, looks particularly prescient in the era of Tucker Carlson. Brooks looks a little mournful. "The picture was meant to observe a great institution slipping but, you know, I never imagined anything like it is now." Americans, he says, used to trust news anchors like [Edward R. Murrow](#), or [Walter Cronkite](#) implicitly. "There's something about everybody agreeing on who we trust that made everything so good. In retrospect. And now, of course, we don't have that at all."



The Simpsons creator Matt Groening with James L Brooks and Sam Simon.  
Photograph: 20th Century Fox/Everett/Rex

And then there's [The Simpsons](#). Its origins have been exhaustively documented, how Matt Groening came in to pitch animated interstitials for The Tracey Ullman Show (yet another female performer Brooks had shepherded into the TV limelight), and had made up the Simpsons family while he was waiting for the meeting to start. Was that really how it happened? Brooks laughs. "I don't know if he did his first sketch of the characters right then. But he certainly had given them names." Brooks' prior sitcom experience was undoubtedly vital in making the subsequent show a hit ("just depth of character, and the importance of story") but he bats away any idea that the series might have, to put it delicately, outlived its popularity. "No! There's actually a resurgence right now, because it's on Disney+. People are doing binges, you know, and it's reached a new audience. We feel it's sort of a great reawakening of it."

Brooks hasn't released a film of his own since 2011, the Reese Witherspoon/Paul Rudd romcom How Do You Know, which was, to put it mildly, poorly received. ([The Guardian's Peter Bradshaw called it an "ordeal".](#)) While he ponders whether to make another film – [he has a script in hand that he says he "cares about enormously"](#) – before he takes his leave, he has words of comfort for the industry as a whole. "You know, the

franchise movie is king and all that, but I always think the heart beats true, and right now, as we're talking, somebody somewhere is writing a screenplay for all the right reasons. And somehow it will get made. It's tough, but theatrical film still is a great dream."

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret is released in the UK on 19 May.

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Illustration: Joren Joshua/The Guardian

[You be the judge](#)[Life and style](#)

**You be the judge: should my friend stop nicking my seat in my favourite cafe?**

Omar thinks Raoul should ask before using ‘his’ table. Raoul says free chairs are fair game. You decide who should sit this one out

[Find out how to get a disagreement settled or become a You be the judge juror](#)



[Georgina Lawton](#)  
[@georginalawton](#)

Fri 12 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 08.56 EDT

## The prosecution: Omar

*I told Raoul about the cafe, and he repaid me by taking my favourite spot*

My good friend Raoul has just returned from four months travelling in Peru with his girlfriend, which is great because I’ve missed him. But unfortunately, now he is back, we are beefing over our local cafe. Raoul is, I feel, colonising my favourite spot and taking the best seat.

We live on the same road in the sunny European capital where we met two years ago. I’ve hung out a lot with him and his girlfriend, and the three of us would have co-working days at an expensive space in the city centre.

I've had to move to other tables without plugs, all because Raoul has decided my table is now his table

When Raoul went travelling, I decided to cancel my membership there as it was pricey. I found a lovely little cafe round the corner and started working there instead. I love this cafe: it's light, airy, has these really comfy booths in the back, and also nice soft chairs in the main bit. It plays great music and, best of all, the staff let you work there all day. I often buy lunch and stay for five hours a day, but they don't mind if you only buy a coffee and still sit there all day. I'm there three to four times a week working remotely as a copywriter for clients back home in the UK.

When Raoul returned, he told me he needed a new co-working spot as he'd cancelled his old one, too. Like a good pal, I put him on to my cafe. Pretty soon afterwards, I started seeing him there every day. That was fine except he would always go for my seat, right in the corner, tucked away from the action but still in the great lighting. I've come in a few mornings and said, "What's this then?" And he just laughs.

I've had to move to other tables without plugs because Raoul has decided my table is now his table. It's annoying because he gets up earlier than me so I don't think I will ever beat him to my spot. He's told me to pick another table, but I like this one.

I think he should defer to me before I arrive and set up shop at another table. We don't always work at this cafe on the same days, but on the days I do come in, Raoul should move elsewhere. It's irritating because I had to persuade him to come to the cafe, and reassure him that he'd be welcome. And he repays me by stealing my spot. I regret telling him about it now.

## The defence: Raoul

*Omar doesn't own the cafe, or the seat. If he wants it, he should get up earlier*

The best thing about living abroad is that you are always finding cool new places to eat and hang out. When Omar told me about the cafe near our house I was, like, “great” because after travelling I was too broke to renew the membership to my old co-working space and needed a new spot.

Then he started getting annoyed that I was going, which begs the question: why did he tell me about it in the first place? Whenever he comes in and I’m working at his favourite table he gives me the evil eye. I don’t even go over to say hi until he’s had a coffee and settled in, because he looks as if he wants to kill me.

I think he secretly wants me to move before he arrives, but I won’t do that

He calls the table “his seat”. It is nice, admittedly. It’s not next to any other customers, it overlooks the whole cafe and there’s a fantastic selection of plugs to choose from. Then again, it’s a big cafe! There’s enough room for all of us.

There are velvet banquettes in the back but I know Omar doesn’t like to work there as there isn’t any natural lighting. Omar always says he’s “joking” about the seat thing, but I reckon he sort of resents me for sitting where he likes.

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But if he's not there, then the table is a free-for-all. He doesn't own the cafe. Or the table. So both of us can sit where we like.

Omar gets up later than me and doesn't make it into the cafe before midday. I'm there at nine and out by two. When I finish work he often gets up to take the table, so in my mind we sort of share it now and that seems fair.

Omar says I'm disrupting his "workflow" and has even texted my girlfriend, Millie, at 11am to ask where I am. If Millie replies to say I'm at the cafe, he will then text me: "Are you in my seat lol?" I reply: "Yes, I am." I think he secretly wants me to move before he arrives, but I'm not doing that. I recently offered to text him the days that I will be working there so we can take turns at the best table. Omar replied: "No, no it's cool." But I know it's not. He just doesn't want to look precious by making a co-working schedule for a cafe. But I've tried. What more can I do?

## The jury of Guardian readers

### **Should Raoul shove off and find his own seat/cafe?**

Omar not only expects Raoul to behave exactly as he sees fit, he also spurns his obvious solutions. However, Raoul persists in doing something that upsets a friend. Why? If the friendship is worth anything, Raoul should indulge Omar and move off the table at midday or communicate his schedule.

**Mike, 55**

Raoul and Omar's work schedules only overlap by two hours, and not even every day, so this impacts Omar very little. If it's the big deal he makes it out to be, he could either get up earlier or take Raoul up on his work schedule offer.

**Aurelia, 23**

A cafe is a public space, so neither Omar nor Raoul have a right to any table, whether Omar likes that or not. Omar should work on letting go of his attachment to “his spot”. If he wants an optimal co-working space, he could always pay for one.

**Andrew, 33**

Raoul has responded reasonably to Omar’s precious behaviour. Would he inform a stranger that it is “his” seat? It seems petty to jeopardise a friendship when their working days barely overlap. Notwithstanding this is actually a cafe, not a workspace!

**Alyssa, 35**

Omar needs to step back and remember he told Raoul he would be welcome – he is now making it an unwelcome space. This isn’t a co-working space they’re paying for. Omar should either get up early or find another cafe – and don’t tell Raoul about it.

**Roscoe, 31**

## Now you be the judge

In our online poll below, tell us: should Raoul rethink his cafe etiquette?

**The poll will close on Thursday 18 May, 10am BST**

## Last week's result

Last week we asked if Harriet stop eating in bed, because it annoys her partner Hugo.

**93%** of you said yes – Harriet is **guilty**

**7%** of you said no – Harriet is **innocent**

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## 2023.05.12 - Opinion

- NHS waiting lists, inflation, national debt ... one by one, Sunak's pledges are crumbling
- Britain's nimby homeowners: do you really want your children living with you for ever?
- The coronation arrests are just the start. Police can do what they want to us now
- Eurovision represents everything that is nonsensically termed 'woke' – that's what makes it so special



‘Rishi Sunak has all but promised a meaningful fall in NHS waiting list numbers this year.’ Sunak at Croydon University hospital, London, October 2022. Photograph: Leon Neal/AP

[OpinionNHS](#)

## **NHS waiting lists, inflation, national debt ... one by one, Sunak’s pledges are crumbling**

[Polly Toynbee](#)



Despite Tory promises, 7.3 million people are waiting for an operation. Frantic activity in the government's last days can't correct its fatal decisions

Fri 12 May 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 12.39 EDT

The NHS waiting list in England for hospital treatment has just broken its own record, [rising to 7.3 million](#). Just before the data dropped, the Tories issued yet [another murmured apology](#) for missing an NHS waiting time target. A promise to treat all those who had been waiting 18 months for an operation by April had not been met – with about 10,000 in that category still in line, the health secretary, Steve Barclay, admitted. Expect many more of these confessions – this one sneaked out under cover of loudly announced plans to try to improve access to GPs.

What chance of any significant cut before the next general election to the gigantic waiting list? Ask health economists and analysts, and the outlook is grim. “Vanishingly small,” says Anita Charlesworth, the director of research and economic analysis at the [Health](#) Foundation. “Close to zero,” says Nigel Edwards, head of the Nuffield Trust. “I have no doubt they will miss their targets, with more than 10% of the population waiting for treatment.”

Here are the reasons why any deep inroad into the queue looks so improbable. That 7.3 million figure hides many more who have not yet emerged into the system, as fewer people are still coming forward for treatment than pre-Covid. The Institute for Fiscal Studies says it could [grow to 9 million](#) if they all return, some sicker as a result of delaying, afraid to be a burden. That's despite 3% vanishing from the lists each month through no longer needing treatment, going private or dying while they wait.

The government's recovery plan aims by 2024-25 "to increase elective activity by 30%, relative to pre-pandemic levels", which, says the IFS, looks "highly unlikely to be achieved". The prime minister, it points out, has [all but promised](#) a meaningful fall in NHS list numbers this year, but that would require a "truly remarkable increase in how many patients it manages to treat", or for the number joining lists to stay "unexpectedly low" because people don't think they need care, or "because they are unable to access it". The peak has not yet been reached. The former health secretary [Sajid Javid warned](#) that a 13 million-long list was a possibility.

Efforts to reduce the list may become like running up a down escalator. If it starts to shorten, "many more patients will come forward who are hesitating now", says Charlesworth. Accurate predictions are impossible; much depends on next winter's flu severity, continuing Covid, and whether threatened nurse and junior doctor strikes are settled. If nothing is done to remedy the problems in social care, hospital beds will be blocked. The uncertain inflation rate will eat away at budgets. Even good news can add to the problem: the welcome expansion of community diagnostic hubs to get people quicker scans "will find more disease that will need more treatment", says Charlesworth.

Waiting lists are political poison: the government knows it, as did Labour. In power, it spent large sums of money cutting them to virtually nil. These days, with the NHS among top public concerns, cutting the lists is one of Sunak's five "[pledges to deliver peace of mind](#)". If this one looks wobbly, so do all the others: the National Institute of Economic and Social Research warns that Sunak was on track to [miss his target](#) to halve inflation this year. Immigration is rising to [double pre-Brexit numbers](#). Despite the savagery of the illegal migration bill, his pledge to cut small boats looks equally unseaworthy. As for "We will grow the economy, creating better-paid jobs

and opportunity”, even if the UK’s GDP – currently the [lowest of all G7 nations](#) – just about rises, pay will still lag behind prices for all but the top few. Nor does Sunak’s promise of “national debt falling” look likely – or if it is achieved, at what cost to things the public cares more about?

Most people are feeling the effects of the sharpest drop in incomes in living memory, but the headline [NHS](#) waiting number sticks in people’s minds. On local election doorsteps, all parties noted how virtually everyone knew someone – family, friend or colleague – waiting for treatment. That’s no surprise, with a tenth of the population on those lists.

Frantic attempts in this government’s last days can’t correct the fatal decisions it made in budget after budget that gave the lowest NHS increases ever, starting with the 2010 cuts to nurse and doctor training. “Soon” is the promise for a long-delayed NHS workforce plan, rumoured to steal Labour’s pledge to double doctor training places. Labour will up the ante. The government pumps out [expensive social media ads](#) imploring people to stay away from GPs and A&E; but if they do deter patients, people will present with worse ailments later.

Labour will stress what the Tories always avoid: underlying causes of ill-health are not within the NHS, but are in [mouldy housing](#); polluted urban air; children [arriving at school hungry](#); uninsulated, cold homes; and other things to be tackled in social policies Labour has already put forward. But these are long term, so Labour anxiously downplays expectations of any instant cure for an NHS so thoroughly broken by the last 13 years, knowing it will take more than one term to return it to pre-Tory standards.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist



Illustration: Eleanor Shakespeare/The Guardian

[OpinionHouse prices](#)

## **Britain's nimby homeowners: do you really want your children living with you for ever?**

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



The argument for housebuilding may be one voters don't want to hear, but politicians of all stripes should be making it anyway

Fri 12 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 13.56 EDT

Sometimes a crisis best reveals itself in the small things. A pile of laundry, that by now you didn't imagine you would still be doing; the sound of the front door opening in the early hours and adult footsteps creaking up the stairs.

Living with frustrated twentysomething children who should probably have flown the nest long ago, but can't afford to move out, is increasingly the norm for middle-aged parents. The Office for National Statistics [confirmed this week](#) that for the first time the majority of 20- to 24-year-olds in England and Wales are still living under the parental roof, with the number of so-called adult children up 14% in a decade.

Grown adulthood, in the sense of being able to stand on your own two feet, or bringing a date home without having to make awkward introductions to your dad, is taking longer and longer to achieve.

Much as some may secretly enjoy having the kids around a bit longer, there is nothing like coming home in late middle age to a ransacked fridge and a pile of massive trainers in the hall to drive home the fact that home ownership among the under-35s has [virtually halved](#) since the 1980s. It's harder to ignore a housing crisis when its consequences have breakfast with you every morning, yet Britain is failing to build – quite literally – on what should be a source of instinctive sympathy for the young and priced-out.

After years of Tory MPs warning that rural housebuilding was killing support for the Conservative party, last week's [local election drubbing](#) has brought it home to some that not building is killing them too, albeit more slowly. Support for the Tories is at an [extinction-level 15%](#) among under-25s and what were once safe seats in Surrey, Kent or Oxfordshire are turning marginal, thanks partly to an influx of frustrated younger people priced out of London.

But if last week's results are any guide, soon this won't be just a Tory problem. If progressive parties win big in the shires and suburbs next year, they'll inherit all the same doughty signers of petitions who are currently putting the fear of God into their Tory MPs, and whose resistance to whichever local development they've been fighting for years won't magically evaporate just because the prime minister changes. (Or it didn't the last time Labour was in power, holding a string of marginal commuter belt seats around the M25 that have since turned blue.)

While most Britons now accept the case for more housebuilding, when it comes to the crunch they'd still often secretly rather it was in someone else's back yard. Without an imaginative plan to combat nimbyism by making communities feel new building is actively in their personal interests, any new government will struggle to deliver what almost everyone in British politics privately accepts is needed.



‘Communities want to see tighter controls on developers, ensuring that what they favour bears some resemblance to what actually gets built.’  
Photograph: Mark Bourdillon/Alamy

Labour’s proposal to give first-time buyers first dibs on new homes locally and [curb sales to overseas buyers](#) is an appealing start. But what communities often want to see is tighter controls on developers ensuring that what they actually favour – cheap starter homes their own children could buy one day – bears some resemblance to what actually gets built. In rural communities that’s all too often four-bedroom executive homes that can fetch a fat profit and in cities it’s flats being sold off as buy-to-lets. Guarantees that new GP surgeries, school places and bus routes will actually be built alongside new houses, rather than endlessly promised but not delivered, would also help.

A [pilot project](#) led by the energy company Octopus, which offers a whopping discount off energy bills for communities willing to have a windfarm installed next door, meanwhile offers models worth exploring. Bribery is an ugly word. But what if developers could offer to save their new neighbours hard cash by retrofitting existing local houses with the same green tech – solar panels, say, or insulation – they’re planning to install in their new-builds at a hefty discount?

Above all, however, politicians from all parties need to relearn the art of making a powerful argument that voters don't want to hear, about the consequences of their decisions both for their own kids and other people's. Some years ago at a general election hustings here in Oxfordshire, I watched as, one by one, the candidates wriggled and squirmed and generally ducked an angry question about planned housebuilding.

The only one to mount a cheerfully unabashed defence of the concrete mixer arriving on his constituents' doorsteps was the then sitting Tory MP, who asked everyone present to raise their hands if they'd been homeowners by 40. Then he told them bluntly that at this rate their kids wouldn't be able to. (Spoiler alert: he was ultimately reelected.) A Conservative party in decline no longer has the confidence to tackle its voters head-on like this, but a new government in its honeymoon phase does have a short window to get away with telling uncomfortable truths.

Anyone old enough to have done well out of the property market mainly by virtue of being accidentally in the right place at the right time, meanwhile, would do well to reflect on their good fortune and the moral responsibility that comes with it. If not, we can all expect to be staring down those piles of laundry for a very long time to come.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
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Police arrest a Just Stop Oil protester during a demonstration in central London on 3 May. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

[Opinion](#)[Protest](#)

**The coronation arrests are just the start.  
Police can do what they want to us now**

[George Monbiot](#)



Draconian new powers allow the police to shut down every form of effective protest. It's a green light for even greater abuses

Fri 12 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 12.27 EDT

The more unequal a society becomes, the more oppressive its laws must be. This, I think, explains new acts that would not be out of place in a police state. So vague and broad are the powers granted to the police under last year's [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act](#) and this year's [Public Order Act](#) that it is no longer clear where their abuse begins and ends.

At two o'clock on the morning of the coronation, the Metropolitan police, using the [Police](#) Act, arrested three people in Soho for carrying rape alarms. The police claimed they were acting on intelligence that rape alarms might be used to frighten the horses that would later be parading elsewhere.

The people they arrested were [volunteers working for Westminster city council](#) as "Night Stars", helping to stop the sexual harassment of women. They give rape alarms to women who might need them. The [alarms are funded by the Home Office](#). [Night Stars volunteers wear pink tabards](#) emblazoned with the logo of their partner organisation ... the Metropolitan

police. Yet the three volunteers who were arrested were cuffed for three hours and held for 14 before being released on bail.

Why would the police arrest their own partners? What was the “intelligence” on which they were acting? If they were really worried about rape alarms being misused, why did they not simply confiscate them? It looks to me like the old paso doble between police and press. Two weeks before, the Mail on Sunday had run a front-page story headlined [“Extremists’ vile plot to spook King’s horses with rape alarms](#): Fears protesters planning to sabotage Charles’ Coronation could cause ‘serious injuries or even deaths’ … as eco-zealot groups set to join forces to cause chaos”.

The Mail produced precisely zero evidence that environmental or republican activists were planning such a thing. But if the police wanted to find people carrying these devices, they knew where to go. The arrests were used by the Mail as a [vindication of its story](#). Though Westminster council had explained to the newspaper that those arrested were its volunteers, the Mail described them as “militant activists … arrested over a plot to throw rape alarms at horses during King Charles’s Coronation”.

'Your king... if you like it or not': the coronation divides - video

Were it not for the patient work of the [journalist Mic Wright](#), that’s how the story would have stood. Police and press are two tails of the same beast. The head of media at the Metropolitan police is [a former crime reporter at the Daily Mail](#).

The new laws were also [used pre-emptively](#) to arrest campaigners from Republic and Just Stop Oil, and a [journalist filming them](#), to thwart their vile plot to wear dangerous T-shirts and hold seditious placards. For good measure, [Animal Rising said](#) the police had rounded up some of its activists at a training session miles away from the coronation. Safer to arrest everyone who might dissent.

These laws have been introduced just as public trust in the police has collapsed. [Louise Casey’s report](#), released in March, found the Metropolitan police to be institutionally racist, misogynistic and homophobic. Yet the

police have now been granted discretionary powers so broad that they can shut down any protest, on the vaguest suspicion that it might prove to be “disruptive”. It’s a green light for even greater abuses.

The Police Act 2022 was bad enough, redefining “serious disruption” so widely that it could be applied to almost any situation, greatly increasing the penalties for acts of peaceful protest and creating a new and remarkably vague offence of [“intentionally or recklessly causing public nuisance”](#), with a penalty of up to 12 months in prison. [Half the people arrested](#) at or around the coronation were detained on this charge. But the Public Order Act 2023 is much worse.

The new offences it creates have been designed to allow the police to shut down every form of effective protest. If you chain yourself to the railings or attach yourself to anything or anyone else you [could be jailed for 51 weeks](#). If you carry equipment that the police claim could be used for such a purpose, you could also be breaking the law: at the coronation, protesters were [arrested for the possession of string](#) and [luggage straps](#).

The act imposes blanket bans on [protests against new roads](#), fracking or any other [oil and gas works](#). If, as the anti-roads protester [Swampy](#) famously did, you [dig a tunnel](#) – or even [enter one](#) – you can be imprisoned for three years.

The act greatly expands the police power of [suspicionless stop and search](#), which has been used to such [discriminatory effect against black people](#). Anyone can now be searched if a police inspector or any other senior officer “reasonably believes” protests might happen somewhere in the area, or that someone somewhere might be carrying a “prohibited object”. If you resist a search, you can be imprisoned for 51 weeks.

The act introduces [“serious disruption prevention orders”](#), whose purpose seems to be to take out what the police call [“aggravated activists”](#): experienced campaigners and organisers, without whom coherent protests don’t happen. The orders impose sweeping restrictions on these people, preventing them from attending or encouraging protests, confining them to particular places, forcing them to report to police stations, prohibiting them from associating with others. They can extend, if the police and courts so choose, effectively to house arrest. They blur the line between civil

standards of proof and criminal punishment: an order can be applied on a mere “balance of probabilities”, but if you breach its terms you can be imprisoned for 51 weeks. The order can last for two years, then be renewed for a further two.

The orders are among several forms of pre-emptive control and punishment permitted by the act. It necessitates a great widening of police surveillance, to identify people deemed likely to commit one of the new crimes. It has been introduced while the [undercover policing inquiry](#), which continues to reveal appalling abuses by police spying on peaceful campaigners [continues](#). They can do what they want to us now.

These are the state-of-emergency laws you would expect in the aftermath of a coup. But there is no public order emergency, just an emergency of another kind, that the protesters targeted by this legislation are trying to stop: the collapse of Earth systems. We are being compelled by law to accept the destruction of the living world.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
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‘Eurovision’s charm has always been that it simultaneously manages to be silly and knowing.’ Finland’s Kaarija performs during the semi-finals.  
Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

[OpinionEurovision](#)

**Eurovision represents everything that is nonsensically termed ‘woke’ – that’s what makes it so special**

[Frances Ryan](#)



The high-camp contest, hosted this year by the UK on Ukraine's behalf, is diverse, unifying, tolerant – all things we need more of

Fri 12 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 10.46 EDT

This week will be remembered for one of the most important events in a generation for the UK: a multimillion-pound spectacle of pageantry in which dignitaries from around the world gather in celebration before one figure is ultimately crowned. I know, I can't believe [Eurovision](#) is here either.

Europe – and also Australia for reasons no one really understands – now has all eyes on Liverpool as the UK hosts the song contest for the first time since thin eyebrows were on trend. Of course, we are not in this position due to any real merit, but rather just an [accident of circumstance](#) – so again, much like the coronation. The Russian invasion means last year's winner, Ukraine, is sadly unable to safely host and so the UK – who came second with the artist Sam Ryder – has stepped up to do the honours instead.

For anyone who thought this country had [peaked in elaborately camp outfits](#), this week's Eurovision semi-finals are certainly meeting the challenge. Tuesday's semi-final alone contained a diamanté saxophone, Buck's Fizz

queueing for a red phone box, and an Irish turkey. The presenters – Hannah Waddingham, Alesha Dixon and the Ukrainian singer Julia Sanina – have the iconic energy of your aunts who just found the key to the drinks cabinet. Waddingham spoke French to the camera with the joy of a woman who had just discovered language. At one point, Dixon rapped the history of Eurovision. As the commentator Scott Mills put it: “That was unexpected.” The details of the grand final remain under state secret but based on the [pre-publicity](#), we can expect Jürgen Klopp, two-thirds of Atomic Kitten and the Brookside sign.

Saturday will notably be the first time in decades that a country will host the contest on behalf of another nation. Organisers will carefully showcase Ukrainian and scouse culture side by side. While the British government targets “small boats”, the contest is unapologetically pro-migrant – 3,000 tickets [have been made available](#) for Ukrainians who have found refuge in the UK. The former Ukrainian Eurovision winner Ruslana will [perform](#) a special pre-recorded performance from Kyiv for the half-time show. In the run-up to the night, a [virtual dance event](#) was held in Liverpool and Kyiv. That the rave had to be held at 5pm Ukraine time because of the ongoing military curfew is an aching reminder of the reality behind the music.



‘They have the iconic energy of your aunts who just found the key to the drinks cabinet’. The Eurovision semi-final presenters (left to right): Alesha

Dixon, Julia Sanina and Hannah Waddingham. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

Still, the worst people you can think of refuse to be moved. At a warm-up concert in Liverpool this week, some partygoers [reported](#) hearing homophobic and xenophobic slurs as non-Eurovision fans were thought to have infiltrated the event. Elsewhere, GB News has taken the boldly patriotic move of \*checks notes\* rallying *against* the UK's entry, Mae Muller, on the grounds she is a "foul mouthed Britain-hating fanatic".

Muller's crimes apparently include previously supporting Jeremy Corbyn and criticising the government for failing to provide free school meals. It is amazing how quickly the people so concerned about "snowflakes" can wet themselves because a woman singing a song holds differing opinions to them. For the professionally miserable, Eurovision represents everything that is now nonsensically termed "woke": diverse, unifying, tolerant. In an era future historians will surely be terming the Bin Fire, I can't help but think we could do with more of that, not less.

Eurovision's charm has always been that it simultaneously manages to be silly and knowing, channelling what is essentially a continent's peace initiative through the high-camp medium of a [yellow wolf-head named Keith](#). That blend of the ludicrous and meaningful feels especially important this year. Tuesday's semi-final half-time act, in which the Ukrainian singer Alyosha (who has fled to the UK with her husband left behind in the war) sang as graphics depicted the separation of refugee families, was genuinely moving. People who have seen their homes destroyed are standing up and showing the world they live on. That's the power of Eurovision. Grenades blasts through the debris. Hate rears its head. But the music plays, the crowd sings, and we hope for something better, if only for one night.

- Frances Ryan is a Guardian columnist
- This article was corrected on 12 May 2023 to correct an error: this is not the first time that one country has hosted Eurovision on behalf of another

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Title 42: confusion at the US-Mexico border as migrant restrictions lift – video

[US news](#)

## **Strict new rules come into force at US-Mexico border as Title 42 immigration ban expires**

Secretary of homeland security warns ‘the border is not open’ after thousands of migrants had crossed onto US soil, hoping to be processed before midnight

*Marisol Chávez in Ciudad Juarez and agencies*

Fri 12 May 2023 00.18 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 09.55 EDT

The US has ended Covid-19 border restrictions that blocked many migrants at the border with Mexico, immediately replacing the so-called Title 42 restrictions with sweeping new asylum rules meant to deter illegal crossings.

Secretary of homeland security Alejandro N. Mayorkas said on Thursday evening that 24,000 border patrol agents and officers had been sent to the border to enforce US laws, adding “the border is not open”.

“Starting tonight, people who arrive at the border without using a lawful pathway will be presumed ineligible for asylum. We are ready to humanely process and remove people without a legal basis to remain in the US.

In the hours before the new regulations went into effect, thousands of migrants waded through rivers, climbed walls and scrambled up embankments on to US soil, hoping to be processed before midnight.

In Matamoros, Mexico, groups crossed the Rio Grande River in chin-high water. Some carried tiny babies and bags of belongings above their heads to

make it into Brownsville, Texas.

In El Paso hundreds of migrants camped out on downtown streets trying to figure out where to go next after crossing the border from Juarez, Mexico.

The first moments of the end of Title 42 in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, were met with silence.

It was almost as if nothing had changed for the 500 migrants hoping turn themselves in to US authorities outside Door 42, a gate along the border barrier in El Paso, Texas.

The group had been waiting since late afternoon, surrounded by Texas National Guard and Border Patrol agents, and entrapped by barbed wire.

Throughout the afternoon and into the night, small groups were slowly allowed into the country, while the rest stood by.

The hot afternoon grew colder as soon as the sun set. With no belongings, many struggled to keep warm. Their only option: dust-filled blankets, jackets, and sweaters that migration authorities provided from a dumpster.

The sudden policy shift threatened to put a historic strain on the nation's beleaguered immigration system.



Migrants cross the Rio Grande River as they try to get to the US Photograph: Alfredo Estrella/AFP/Getty Images

US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has in recent days been holding up to 28,000 migrants at its facilities, far beyond its stated capacity and in what appeared to be a record, two federal officials requesting anonymity and the Border Patrol's union told Reuters.

Donald Trump, an anti-immigration hardliner, implemented the Title 42 public health rule in 2020 when the pandemic hit, but it was continued and even expanded by Joe Biden, despite campaign promises of a fairer and more humane system at the border. The policy has faced court battles and criticism from left and right.

The order authorised border officials to immediately remove migrants, including people seeking asylum, overriding their normal rights. The Biden administration announced in January it was ending the declared national emergencies linked to the coronavirus spelling the end of using Title 42 to deal with immigration.

As of midnight Friday, migrants will be allowed to request refuge again when they approach official border ports of entry – but the Biden administration plans to speed up initial interviews by agents to decide who

has a case to take to court, prompting immigrant advocates to complain that a rushed process will be unfair.

The new rule presumes most migrants are ineligible for asylum if they passed through other nations without first seeking protection elsewhere, or if they failed to use legal pathways for US entry, which Biden has expanded.

Immigration advocates represented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a legal challenge against the new regulations on Thursday, minutes before they took effect.

The groups said the Biden regulation “dramatically curtails the availability of asylum in the United States” and mirrored similar Trump-era policies blocked in court.



Migrants walk through razor wire surrounding a makeshift migrant camp after crossing the border from Mexico Photograph: John Moore/Getty Images

The busiest border detention facilities are in the Rio Grande Valley and El Paso in Texas and two areas in Arizona, according to border patrol union president Brandon Judd.

This week, the number of people caught crossing illegally topped 10,000 a day. Due to the high volume of arrivals, agents on Wednesday began releasing some migrants without a notice to appear in immigration court where they can make an asylum claim, telling them to report to an immigration office later, Judd added.

On Thursday night, a federal judge in Florida blocked such releases, saying they were similar to a policy previously prohibited in March due to a failure to follow proper regulatory procedures. CBP did not respond to a request for comment.

There are fears of fresh chaos and confusion and misery for migrants at the mercy of complex policies – on paper or in the various ways they are implemented on the ground.

Earlier this week, Mayorkas said the new rules would mean tougher consequences for migrants crossing illegally, who could be deported and barred from the US for five years if they do not qualify for asylum.

He warned migrants: “Don’t risk your life and your life savings ... do not listen to the [human] smugglers’ lies – you will be returned ... we are a nation of immigrants but we are also a nation of laws.”

Republicans fault Biden and have made immigration a big topic in recent elections, with right-wingers continuing to use Trump’s language as president and talk of migrants as “an invasion”.

Biden administration officials have escalated attacks on Republicans, saying they failed to fix immigration laws or provide adequate border funds, while refusing to pass legislation giving more orderly routes to eligibility for US citizenship.

“I asked the Congress for a lot more money for the border patrol,” Biden told reporters on Wednesday. “They didn’t do it.”

The Republican-controlled House of Representatives was aiming to pass a hardline bill on Thursday that would further toughen border security and restrict access to asylum, but it has little chance in the Senate.

## *With Reuters*

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Syrian refugees warm themselves over a fire in a shelter in Gaziantep, southern Turkey, in February. Photograph: Khalil Hamra/AP

[Turkey](#)

## Syrians in Turkey facing uncertain future whether Erdogan stays or goes

Deportation fears as rival sides compete to see who can pledge to crack down harder on immigration

*Ruth Michaelson and Husam Hezaber*

Fri 12 May 2023 00.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 11.35 EDT

Reclining in a leather chair framed by shelves of colourful shampoo bottles, washing powder and jars of deep golden honey, Rakkan Talib surveys the small business he has made his own. The 26-year-old supervises a procession of giggling schoolchildren arriving to buy bread, as they eye the packets of bubblegum on the counter next to his stack of leather-bound ledgers.

Talib arrived in the southern Turkish city of Gaziantep in 2014 after fleeing Islamic State's advance on his home town of Deir ez-Zor, determined to transform his fortunes after abandoning his dream of becoming a doctor. He succeeded, working his way up until he bought his corner shop outright two years ago.

"I lost my education, and my future. I lost everything to come here and live in safety and dignity. Now they're talking about restoring relations with Bashar al-Assad and deporting us to Syria," he said, flicking a cigarette with one hand and letting onyx prayer beads slide between his fingers with the other. "These election results will be fateful for me, and for all Syrians in [Turkey](#)."

An estimated 4 million Syrians live in Turkey and their relationship to their adopted home deepened over the past decade despite an increasingly hostile climate. [When polled](#), at least 80% of Turks say they want Syrians to return. This sentiment has found an increasing home across the political spectrum in Turkey, amid a rise in openly anti-immigrant xenophobic parties and where a broad coalition [trying to unseat the Turkish president](#), Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has attacked him from the right on immigration.



A Syrian child looks on from inside a tent used as a shelter in Gaziantep.  
Photograph: Khalil Hamra/AP

The result has been a tug-of-war between Erdoğan's governing coalition and the nominally social democratic opposition Republican People's party (CHP) over the fate of Turkey's Syrian community. Both parties are openly competing to see who can promise to crack down harder on immigration and swiftly restore relations with Assad. When Turkey heads to the polls on Sunday the Syrian community is poised to endure loss no matter who wins.

Despite promising to usher in a new era of justice and democracy, [the opposition's presidential candidate, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu](#), has been particularly vocal about his desire to deport Syrian refugees, spelling out his plans at every rally. "We will send all Syrians back to their country within two years at the latest," he said.

Anti-refugee sentiment runs high within the CHP despite the party touting its social democratic credentials, and one local branch invited the media to watch as Syrians from their district boarded buses bound for Turkey's southern border. Kılıçdaroğlu's deputy, Onursal Adıgüzel, said: "From our point of view, we are not saying in a racist way that we're going to send people back. With the right policy and with healthy communication with Syria, we want to reconstruct the region again and send Syrians back step by step."

Erdoğan has responded to the CHP's electioneering by pressing to swiftly restore relations with Damascus. Turkey's defence minister and intelligence chief have repeatedly met their Syrian counterparts, the highest-level meetings in more than a decade. The Syrian foreign minister, Faisal Mekdad, [told reporters](#) Ankara would have to pull back its troops from northern Syria for a full rapprochement between the two leaders to be possible.

Still the possibility of a full reconciliation with the Syrian leadership has been enough for Erdoğan to claim that Syrians based in Turkey are safe to return. [Twin earthquakes in February](#) that killed almost 60,000 across southern Turkey and northern Syria and destroyed homes and infrastructure

in a strip of land under Turkish control have done little to dissuade Erdogan, who has boasted of Turkish-built tower blocks in Idlib being ready for returnees.

The bleak towers were visible on an Idlib hillside but are reportedly largely empty or populated with Syrians who never left for Turkey, according to local people.



The Turkish-built tower blocks in Idlib. Photograph: Alessio Mamo/The Guardian

In the year before the election, the Turkish government stepped up what it calls a programme of “voluntary returns” to Syria, although Syrians and rights groups both denied that most returnees participated by choice. Human Rights Watch [reported](#) that returnees were often arrested, forced to sign deportation forms, assaulted and in some cases forced to cross the border back into Syria at gunpoint.

Syrians who have been part of Turkey’s “voluntary return” programme spoke of cruel treatment, despite some who opted to leave after the earthquake. [Returnees risk detention, torture, enforced disappearance](#) and poverty, while others in the Syrian community in Gaziantep described how their friends who returned had disappeared on arrival.

“At first I was pressured to accept deportation after I’d resisted numerous times, knowing full well it meant leaving my family behind in Turkey,” said Khaled al-Homsi, a journalist who was arrested at a checkpoint in Turkey earlier this year, forced to sign deportation papers and later deported to Tal Abyad in northern Syria.

“I lived in Turkey for almost seven years, and after I lost everything in Syria the first time, now I see myself losing everything I built in Turkey over the past few years, and having to start from scratch again.”

He added: “The election means absolutely nothing to me and I don’t care who wins. We all know that refugees are a political football that the current government uses to placate the opposition, or the opposition is using to satisfy the wider Turkish public.”

Talib laughed at the idea that it was safe for him and his family to return to Syria, and no one among the Syrian community in Gaziantep said they would leave Turkey willingly.

“Going back to live under Assad is impossible. Voluntary return will only be possible once Assad is gone,” he said. “If they deport me to Aleppo, what do I do there, exactly? My home is Deir ez-Zor. But if they deport me to Aleppo, I will start again, from the bottom.”

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A young man protests near the Israel-Gaza border east of the Jabalia refugee camp earlier this year. Photograph: AFP/Getty

[Israel](#)

## **Israel treats Palestinian territories like colonies, says UN rapporteur**

Francesca Albanese says Israel is maintaining occupation to get as much land as possible for Jewish people

*[Patrick Wintour](#) Diplomatic editor*

Fri 12 May 2023 06.27 EDTFirst published on Fri 12 May 2023 04.58 EDT

Israel treats the [Palestinian territories](#) as its colonies, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied territories has said on her first visit to London since her appointment last year.

Francesca Albanese, an Italian lawyer and human rights academic, has faced calls to resign by Israeli government ministers, such as Amichai Chikli, who

accused her of “spewing hatred and antisemitism”, and Zionist groups have described her as biased.

Albanese’s supporters have, in turn, called on the senior UN officials who appointed her last year to do more to defend her. She has described the attacks as “intimidation, no more, no less” but says they will be as effective as “dogs barking at aeroplanes”.



Francesca Albanese said the responsibility on the UK is higher considering it was a colonial power in Palestine. Photograph: Sipa US/Alamy

Setting out her view of the Palestinian question, Albanese said: “For me, apartheid is a symptom and a consequence of the territorial ambitions Israel has for the land of what remains of an encircled Palestine … The cause is the colonies. Israel is a colonial power maintaining the occupation in order to get as much land as possible for Jewish-only people. And this is what leads to the numerous violations of international law.”

Albanese added: “If states are really committed to the two-state solutions, as the UK seems to be, rhetorically in my view, like all other western states, they should make sure that Israel’s conduct is aligned with the possibility of having a Palestinian state, which means sovereignty from a political,

economic, cultural point of view. The right to self-determination should be the starting point.

“Member states need to stop commenting on violations here or there, or escalation of violence, since violence in the occupied Palestinian territory is cyclical, it is not something that accidentally explodes. There is only one way to fix it, and that is to make sure that Israel complies with international law.”

Albanese is due to visit the Palestinian embassy in London to commemorate the Nakba (Arabic for catastrophe, referring to the violent displacement of Palestinians from 1947-1949). She will also meet MPs and Jewish progressive groups and will consult academics. The UN is marking Nakba formally this year for the first time in its history.

Albanese has been accused by some Israeli groups of equating the Nakba with the Holocaust – a charge she denied. “In as much as the Holocaust has been a defining moment in the collective life of the Jewish people, so is the Nakba, for the Palestinian people,” she said. “So I’ve not said that they are the same, simply because they are not. Why would we compare two tragedies?”

### Why the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is so complicated – video explainer

She also denied ever saying Israel had no right to self-defence. “Israel has the right to defend itself, its citizens, territory, no matter the fact that it has not defined its borders, but it cannot justify the occupation in the name of self-defence, or the horror it imposes on the Palestinians in the name of self-defence,” she said.

Her first report on the right of Palestinian self-determination has been submitted to the UN general assembly. It is being followed with a report to the human rights council on the deprivation of liberty through what she describes as the “systemic arrest of Palestinians on security and public order grounds”.

Albanese said “a tragic characteristic” of western engagement in the Middle East was its failure to uphold law without double standards, particularly the UK, which was a colonial power in Palestine.

“The responsibility on the UK is higher considering the historical legacy of the UK in the area,” she said. “The UK doesn’t seem to be active on this agenda, such as compliance with international law. It is about time there is a paradigm change towards the question of Palestine.”

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Bappanadu Sri Durgaparameshwari temple, Karnataka, India. Muslims were banned from its 23-day festival this year, devastating vendors who rely on the festival circuit to sell their wares. Photograph: Shaikh Azizur Rahman/The Guardian

[India](#)

## Trouble at the temple: ban on Muslims a sign of India's new intolerance

Different faiths were once able to celebrate together in Karnataka. Now Hindu vigilante groups are targeting those who don't share their beliefs

*Hannah Ellis-Petersen and Shaikh Azizur Rahman in Mangalore*

Fri 12 May 2023 00.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 00.49 EDT

For 800 years, Bappanadu Sri Durgaparameshwari temple had stood as a symbol of India's cohesive religious past. It is said that the Hindu temple, which sits on the bank of the Shambhavi River in India's southern state of Karnataka, was built by a Muslim merchant, Bappa Beary, after a goddess

came to him in a dream. The land to build the temple was donated by a local Jain ruler.

Over the centuries, its unique origins were regularly honoured and the annual festivals, celebrations and buffalo races that took place at Bappanadu temple were attended by Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jains alike.

“There was always this harmony,” said Dugganna Sawantha, a member of the temple committee and direct descendent of the Jain king who donated the temple land. “But last year, that’s when the troubles began.”



Dugganna Sawantha, the hereditary trustee of the Bappanadu Sri Durgaparameshwari temple, at his house in Mulki, Karnataka. He is the direct descendant of the Jain king who donated the land to build the temple. Photograph: Shaikh Azizur Rahman/The Guardian

Days before the annual 23-day festival was due to begin last April, Sawantha was approached by Bajrang Dal, a rightwing Hindu vigilante group that is active across the state, often targeting Muslims. It issued him a warning: no Muslims were to be allowed to set up stalls at the festival or take part in celebrations.

[Karnataka locator](#)

Bappanadu was not the only temple identified. Bajrang Dal members began to hang banners up in nearby towns and the city of Mangalore reading “no permission for those who are against the constitution and those who kill cattle”. Then, Karnataka’s chief minister, Basavaraj Bommai, from the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata party (BJP), issued a statement supporting the ban.

The ban then spread to other nearby temples, as BJP government officials began enforcing it. For the hundreds of Muslims who relied on selling their wares on the temple festival circuit, it was devastating. Umar, 52, who sells cosmetics, used to make about £1,500 a year from his stall – but now he barely makes £50.

“We are desperate, our traditional business is dying and I’m not making enough to survive,” he said.

While most states in India’s south have been largely unaffected by the Hindu nationalist politics that now dominate north and west India, Karnataka has long been the exception; though communal divisions have not taken root across the whole state, they are highly prevalent along the 200-mile-long coastal belt. The BJP has had political influence in the state since the 1980s.

Since 2014, the BJP has ruled India’s central government, led by [Narendra Modi](#), the prime minister. But it was in 2018 that the party returned to power in Karnataka, beckoning in the most rightwing government in the state’s history. This week, as the state goes to the polls, the party is seeking re-election.

Under the BJP, a de facto ban was imposed on the wearing of the hijab in government schools, colleges and in exams, an “anti-conversion” law was passed in response to the unproven [“love jihad” conspiracy theory](#) that Muslim men are luring Hindu women for marriage in order to convert them to Islam and school textbooks were rewritten to remove references to Islamic leaders. Economic boycotts of Muslims were endorsed by ministers and a bill banning halal meat was also proposed.

The government has also been accused by activists and political opponents of giving groups such as Bajrang Dal a free rein to carry out vigilante acts of

violence, including [lynchings of Muslims](#) – often in collusion with police. Last month [a Muslim cattle trader](#) in Karnataka's Ramanagara district was murdered by a group allegedly led by a local Bajrang Dal activist.

As part of its manifesto in the state election, the opposition Congress party pledged to ban Bajrang Dal, casting it as a terrorist organisation. In response, Bajrang Dal, which claims to have a presence in 2,000 villages across the state, has come out fighting for the BJP in the election.



Sharan Pumpwell, the Karnataka state secretary of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, outside his office in Mangalore, Karnataka. Photograph: Shaikh Azizur Rahman/The Guardian

Sharan Pumpwell, the state secretary for the Vishwa Hindu Parishad militant organisation, of which Bajrang Dal is the youth wing, said: "I personally gave a call to Bajrang Dal members across Karnataka to come out on the streets and conduct door-to-door campaigns against the Congress party. We have to make the BJP victorious to protect cows and protect our volunteers. The BJP has withdrawn many cases that had been filed against our people."

Pumpwell denied any allegations of illegal activity. "We only work in the interest of our religion and our country," he said.

The BJP is fighting for re-election in Karnataka with policies on its manifesto that many fear are further attempts to marginalise the Muslim population, who make up about 13% of the state. Weeks before the polls, the state government scrapped a 4% reservation allocated to the state's economically deprived Muslims, who are among the poorest community in the state.

In the city of Udupi, meanwhile, tensions over the wearing of the hijab began in December 2021, when a government college issued a ban on Muslim girls wearing headscarves, declaring it against the school's uniform policy.

Muslim students protested and the issue was taken up by the BJP and rightwing religious groups. One local BJP representative said girls who wanted to wear the hijab in schools should "go to Pakistan", while the state chief, Nalin Kumar Kateel, said the "talibanisation of classrooms" would not be allowed. In February 2022, a government order declared that restriction on the hijab was not in violation of the freedom of religion, which was then upheld by the Karnataka high court.

Though the order was not an outright ban, it was widely interpreted as such by many institutions in the state. Many Muslim girls found themselves prevented from entering classrooms or from taking exams if they did not remove their headscarves and some had teachers or police try to forcibly remove their headscarves at school gates. According to a submission made to the supreme court, which has taken up the matter, 17,000 girls did not sit their exams after the order, and thousands are thought to have dropped out of education altogether.

One 24-year-old law student was in the final semester of her law degree when the court made its ruling. "I never thought it would ever affect our college, there was always a secular and friendly atmosphere," she said, requesting anonymity for fear of harassment. "But after the court passed the order, our college summoned all 40 girls who wear a hijab to the auditorium and asked us to make a choice if we wanted to continue attending classes."

Like many others, she refused to remove her hijab and was banned from attending classes, missing out on the final lessons of her degree.

Another student, who also requested anonymity, dropped out of her law degree altogether and accused the government of depriving Muslim girls of their right to education. “The hijab is an important part of who I am, it’s a choice I make. I shouldn’t be forced to remove it,” she said.

Tejasvi Surya, a popular BJP MP from the state, denied the policy discriminated against Muslims even though no other religion has been affected by the new rules. “The BJP stand was not anti hijab, it was pro-uniform in a school institution,” he said.

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‘Absolutely gargantuan’: astrophysicist explains largest cosmic explosion ever witnessed – video

**Black holes**

## Astronomers capture largest cosmic explosion ever witnessed

Fireball ‘100 times the size of the solar system’ thought to have been caused by gas being sucked into supermassive black hole

*Hannah Devlin Science correspondent*

*@hannahdev*

Thu 11 May 2023 19.01 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 17.00 EDT

It started as an unremarkable flicker in the night sky. But closer observations revealed that astronomers had captured the largest cosmic explosion ever witnessed, an event thought to have been triggered by a giant cloud of gas being gobbled up by a supermassive black hole.

The flare-up, traced to 8bn light years away, is more than 10 times brighter than any known supernova and has so far lasted more than three years, making it the most energetic explosion on record.

“It went unnoticed for a year as it gradually got brighter,” said Dr Philip Wiseman, an astronomer at Southampton University who led the observations. It was only when follow-up observations revealed how distant it was that astronomers appreciated the event’s almost unimaginable scale.

“We’ve estimated it’s a fireball 100 times the size of the solar system with a brightness about 2tn times the sun’s,” Wiseman said. “In three years, this event has released about 100 times as much energy as the sun will in its 10bn-year lifetime.”

Scientists believe that the explosion, known as AT2021lwx, is the result of a vast cloud of gas, possibly thousands of times larger than our sun, plunging into the inescapable mouth of a supermassive black hole. The cloud of gas may have originated from the large dusty “doughnut” that typically surrounds black holes – although it is not clear what may have knocked it off course from its orbit and down the cosmic sinkhole.

AT2021lwx is not the brightest phenomenon ever witnessed. A brighter gamma-ray burst, known as [GRB 221009A](#), was spotted last year, but this event lasted only minutes. By contrast, the new event is still going strong, meaning the overall energy release is far greater.

The explosion was first detected in 2020 by the Zwicky Transient Facility in California, which surveys the night sky for sudden increases in brightness that could signal cosmic events such as supernovae or passing asteroids and comets. The event initially did not stand out, but when follow-up observations allowed its distance to be calculated, astronomers realised they had captured an incredibly rare event.

“When I told our team the numbers they were all just so shocked,” Wiseman said. “Once we understood how extremely bright it was, we had to come up with a way to explain it.”

It was outside the plausible range for a supernova (exploding star) and so astronomers turned to the other common scenario that cause bright flashes in the night sky – a so-called tidal disruption event. These events typically involve a star straying too close to a black hole and being shredded, with part being swallowed and the rest being stretched out in a swirling disc.

But simulations suggested a star up to 15 times the mass of the sun would have been required to account for AT2021lwx. “Encountering such a huge star is very rare, so we think a much larger cloud of gas is more likely,” Wiseman said.

Supermassive blackholes are typically surrounded by a vast halo of gas and dust, and the authors speculate that some of this material may have been disrupted, possibly by a collision of galaxies, and sent inwards. As the

material spiralled towards the black hole's event horizon (its spherical outer boundary), it would have given off vast amounts of heat and light, illuminating a portion of the doughnut and heating it to 12-13,000C.

The findings are published in [Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society](#).

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## Headlines saturday 13 may 2023

- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: Russian retreat in Bakhmut 'highlights shortage of credible combat units'](#)
- [Conservatives Priti Patel to blame local election losses on Tory leadership](#)
- [Conservatives Voters in Surrey defiant after backing Lib Dems in local elections, poll shows](#)
- [Eurovision Ukraine aims for repeat victory in most political Eurovision in years](#)
- [Did this pop banger just trigger an armed coup? The wild revolutionary politics of Eurovision](#)

**Ukraine war liveUkraine**

## Two Russian jets and two helicopters reportedly shot down – as it happened

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Priti Patel is expected to attack MPs who removed Boris Johnson from No 10 in her speech. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

[Priti Patel](#)

## **Priti Patel to blame local election losses on Tory leadership in speech**

Witham MP expected to attack ‘those in power’ for sidelining party’s grassroots at conference of pro-Boris Johnson group

[Tom Ambrose](#)

Sat 13 May 2023 04.29 EDT Last modified on Sat 13 May 2023 04.48 EDT

Priti Patel will attack the Conservative party leadership, blaming heavy local election losses on “those in power and control”, in a speech on Saturday.

The former home secretary is expected to accuse the Tory leadership of having “done a better job at damaging our party” over the past year than Keir Starmer’s Labour party or leftwing campaign groups.

She is due to speak at the inaugural conference of a group promising to restore grassroots control to the Conservatives, the pro-Boris Johnson Conservative Democratic Organisation (CDO).

The event, which will also feature speeches from Johnson allies Jacob Rees-Mogg and Nadine Dorries, [takes place in Bournemouth](#) throughout Saturday.

In extracts of Patel's speech, seen by [BBC News](#), she is also expected to say that "errors and mistakes made by a minority in Westminster have cost [the] party dearly".

The MP for Witham returned to the Tory backbenches when she resigned in September last year after Liz Truss's election as party leader.

She is expected to tell the CDO conference that if Conservative leaders spent more time with the grassroots of the party, "they would be more in touch with the people and with our values".

"And perhaps if they did that, last week we would not have seen 1,000 of our friends and colleagues lose their seats in the local elections and dozens of councils fall out of Conservative control," the former cabinet minister will add.

"Never again should the grassroots of our party be sidelined, neglected and ignored."

Patel is also expected to point the finger at MPs who removed Johnson from No 10, claiming they "took down a vote-winning political giant".

The CDO insists it is not a Johnson revivalist group, and that its only purpose is to make the party more accountable to the rank and file.

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While Johnson is reported to have signed bottles of wine for a charity auction, he will not attend, despite the organisers' promise of "very special guests".

Although the CDO's numbers remain relatively small, Conservative central office is sufficiently wary enough to be sending Paul Holmes, the Eastleigh MP and a party vice-chair, to represent it at the conference.

Senior Tory insiders, already concerned at what they see as a party within a party, were especially alarmed when it emerged in March that the former Ukip donor Arron Banks had held discussions with Peter Cruddas, a banker and Conservative peer, about the CDO's work.

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Members of the Surrey focus group say the Conservative party needs some time in opposition to sort itself out. Photograph: Paul Marriott/Shutterstock

[Conservatives](#)

## **Tory voters in Surrey defiant after backing Lib Dems in local elections, poll shows**

Focus group of blue wall residents believes Sunak is ‘out of his depth’ and that Britain needs change now

*Aletha Adu*

[@alethaadu](#)

Sat 13 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 13 May 2023 01.48 EDT

Blue wall Conservative voters in Surrey are far from impressed with the government’s obsession with culture wars, and remain unrepentant for tactically backing the Liberal Democrats at last week’s [local elections](#).

The prime minister still looks “out of his depth”, uninspiring and unable to set out a straightforward vision six months in the job, according to a panel of Surrey residents who backed the [Conservatives](#) at the 2019 election. They believe “the country needs change now”, and the Tories need some time in opposition to sort themselves out.

The focus group, convened by UK More in Common for the Guardian, appeared to want to vote for the Conservatives again, but thought the party had “made fools of themselves despite having so many chances” to restart.

Voters also questioned why Sunak was leading a government that seemed far too focused on the “war on wokeness” when people were desperate to find money to buy a carton of milk or a box of eggs. “Of course they should make sure that prejudice isn’t tolerated, but to pick it up as a cause at this precise moment is not good timing. Let’s fix the economy and make sure people are warm in their houses.”

### Labour makes big gains against Tories in local elections – video report

While Sunak has not publicly used divisive language on issues such as grooming gangs, immigration or trans rights, he has never criticised the rhetoric that his colleagues have used on such matters. And his apparent inability to personally shape his government trickles into his stance on the economy and immigration, according to these blue wall voters.

“Rishi has had the perfect opportunity to show some backbone since he came into No 10,” according Michael, 35, a car salesman. “He managed to make a great career for himself as a banker at Goldman Sachs and other successful companies … but when you look at him, he’s just timid, like a child in the background encouraging his cabinet to avoid doing daily interviews … He had the perfect opportunity to discredit Liz Truss’s plans [from the backbenches], but he remained silent.”

Although Sunak has made it his mission to “stop the boats”, 54-year-old Angela fears he is “brushing tackling the issue [of Channel crossings] under the carpet. Pretty much like everything else.”

Steve, 67, who is retired, agrees with the principle of the Conservatives' stance on tackling "political correctness gone wrong" but believes the party has taken it too far. Asked if Sunak has what it takes to lead the Conservatives to victory at the next election, he said: "I don't get any sort of great vision from him for the future, really. He's just more of the same."



Boris Johnson and the then chancellor Rishi Sunak in October 2022.  
Photograph: Leon Neal/PA

"More of the same" to these Surrey voters essentially equates Sunak's cabinet to Boris Johnson and his government of "mistrust and lies". Sunak's attempts to distance himself from the actions of his former boss have failed in the eyes of these blue wall voters who believe that "at least Boris's theories were in the right direction". When asked about Sunak's leadership skills, all they could do was highlight Johnson's ability to inspire and captivate the public.

Alex, 24, a software engineer, said: "Sunak's not exempt from all of the ongoing and the mismanagement that had happened [during Johnson's leadership] ... but at least Boris was overt and open. You could get a sense of who he was. Rishi is so covert. I haven't seen much of him and I don't know what his real straightforward agenda is."

Alicia, 60, strongly believes the public do not mind if some Conservative MPs have had more privileged backgrounds than much of the public, but they want someone who is visible. “I’m surprised he didn’t come out with a stronger personality – perhaps we were just expecting a bit more. Boris made so much noise, but so do two-year-olds when they want something.” After the Tories’ local election disaster last week, Johnson’s allies said no one should rule out a comeback for the former prime minister.

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Reflecting on their anti-Tory votes at the locals, some hoped it sent a message to the Tories and urged them to “stop being wishy-washy and actually do something to earn it back”, Michael said. Suzie, 58, added: “The protest votes could be a big wake-up call. But there have been so many mistakes made over the last few years.”



‘Keir and Rishi are quite alike,’ said one disappointed Surrey resident.  
Photograph: Getty

What about Keir Starmer? Steve said: “Unfortunately, he’ll probably be the next prime minister, unless Andy Burnham steps down as mayor of Manchester and is reselected as an MP.” Nick, a financial analyst, added: “Keir and Rishi are quite alike … He’ll end up being the prime minister, but I don’t know for how long.”

Luke Tryl, the director of More in Common, said: “These voters in the Tory heartland of Surrey should have been core Conservative supporters, but in their own words, the ‘horse had bolted’, and after years of instability, they thought the Conservatives needed a period in opposition.

“While they thought Sunak was improvement on his predecessors, they hadn’t yet heard a vision from him, and worried whether he was strong enough to sort out the problems the country was facing, especially as it seemed that he was still being overshadowed by Boris.

“There was a warning too for Conservatives championing a ‘war on woke’ at the upcoming National Conservatism Conference, with participants telling us they wanted debates about woke issues to be at the very bottom of the government’s to-do list.”

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Let 3 of Croatia perform during the first Eurovision semi-final on Tuesday.  
Photograph: Martin Meissner/AP

[Eurovision 2023](#)

## **Ukraine aims for repeat victory in most political Eurovision in years**

Four-hour broadcast will feature taunts at Putin and a singalong of a Liverpool anthem

*[Josh Halliday](#)*

Sat 13 May 2023 02.00 EDT

There will be rockets, soldiers and moustachioed men in their underpants lampooning Vladimir Putin as a “crocodile psychopath” – and that’s just the Croatian act.

One of the most stridently political [Eurovision](#) grand finals in years takes place in Liverpool on Saturday night against a backdrop of a war in Ukraine

that shows little sign of ending.

The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy's request [to make a live address](#) during the four-hour broadcast was denied as organisers were concerned it risked politicising the contest. There will be little subtlety, however, in the 67th edition of this ritually outre event.

It will open with a haunting performance by last year's winners, Ukraine's Kalush Orchestra, singing their wartime hit Stefania against a looming backdrop of a pained-looking matriarch.

The spectacle will be beamed live to a global television audience of more than 160 million people from the M&S Bank Arena on the banks of the Mersey.

The UK is hosting the contest for the first time in 25 years on behalf of Ukraine, with [Liverpool](#) cast as "bittersweet caretakers of displaced guests of honour" in Thursday's semi-final.

One of the most political songs is by Croatia's surrealist punk rockers Let 3, about the "crocodile psychopath" Putin and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The band, who appear on stage in soldier outfits and cartoon moustaches before stripping off to their underwear and unveiling huge rockets, have been likened online to what would result "if Super Mario, Sonic the Hedgehog and Boy George had a baby".

Switzerland's performance features falling missiles and the lyrics: "I don't wanna be a soldier, soldier. I don't wanna have to play with real blood."

Each act will be introduced with "postcard" videos featuring landmarks in Ukraine and Britain alongside the 35 other competing nations, a nod to this year's slogan "united by music" and a showcase for a country under siege.

There will be tears, too. The co-host Hannah Waddingham, the Ted Lasso star, appeared emotional during a rendition of You'll Never Walk Alone in rehearsals on Friday. The song, which has become a Liverpool football club anthem, will be performed by Duncan Laurence of the Netherlands during

the voting rounds and there will be live footage of Ukrainians singing along in Kyiv.

Ukraine is aiming to become the first country since Ireland in 1994 to win in two consecutive years. The electro duo Tvorchi, whose rehearsals at home were interrupted by air raid sirens, will hope to win the solidarity vote with their bass-driven stomper Heart of Steel, which warns of the threat of nuclear armageddon.

The pair, who walked the Eurovision turquoise carpet this week in blazers engraved with the names and weights of babies who had been born prematurely due to the war, are [raising money](#) to buy neonatal incubators for their country.

Jeffrey Kenny, the vocalist, said they would consider auctioning the famous microphone-shaped trophy if they won on Saturday, after Kalush Orchestra sold last year's award to raise \$900,000 (£713,000) for the Ukrainian army. "If we win, it's OK – we'll sell the trophy. We'll sell our outfits, it doesn't matter," he said.

Tvorchi never expected to be chosen to represent their country – they had bought train tickets home from Kyiv on the day of the selection. Their home city, Ternopil in western Ukraine, was reportedly shelled by Russian forces this week.

"The results don't really matter in this case," Kenny said. "The number one thing is to win the war because that's the only way we can host."

Anyone who expects Ukraine to coast to victory should think again, however. Sweden is the runaway favourite with a shimmering return for Loreen, who won the 2012 contest with the anthemic Euphoria.

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Finland's Käärijä, who posed for selfies this week with fans outside his own mobile sauna in Liverpool's Albert Dock, is incredibly popular and his Cha Cha Cha is one of this year's biggest earworms, with a performance to match.

The UK's Mae Muller, who was not yet born when Britain last hosted Eurovision, is tipped to finish in the top 10 with I Wrote a Song, which after last year's runner-up spot would be the country's second highest placing since 2009.

Adrian Bradley, a Eurovision expert, said the standard of performance of this year's contestants was a notch above previous years, helped by a "really impressive" BBC production. It was also one of the most political Eurovisions in years, he said, despite the organisers' attempts to be studiously neutral.

"It's very much: this is what is happening to Ukrainians – the air raid sirens, the song [Ordinary World](#) and how that was presented [in the first semi-final], right down to the colours of the Ukrainian flag draped around the whole performance," he said.

"I think the show's producers are pushing it absolutely as far as they can go and doing a good job of making the point."

Paul Bradley, an avid fan who previously worked for Eurovision, said the BBC and the European Broadcasting Union, which owns the contest, had not shied away from the war despite the rules about the nonpolitical nature of the contest.

“Politics comes into the World Cup, it comes into the Olympic Games, and Eurovision too – but overall it’s still a fun show,” he said. “I think that’s the main thing is that it’s joyous. The pandemic has shown us we need escapism, and Eurovision offers that in abundance.”

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Phoenix night ... Eurovision 2014 winner Conchita Wurst. Photograph: Rolf Klatt/Rex

[Eurovision 2023](#)

**Did this pop banger just trigger an armed coup? The wild revolutionary**

# politics of Eurovision

It's not just about the baking grannies and rapping astronauts ... the world's favourite song contest has also got real clout, getting gay marriage legalised and bringing down fascist regimes

*Alexi Duggins*

Sat 13 May 2023 05.00 EDT

At 10.55pm on 24 April 1974, Portuguese radio played their entry to that year's Eurovision song contest – and soldiers took to the streets. The tune by Paulo de Carvalho was the pre-agreed signal to start an armed coup, and for rifle-toting military to rise up against a fascist dictatorship. Citizens flocked to join in and there was so little resistance that flowers were placed in unfired gun barrels (it became known as the [Carnation Revolution](#)). It started Portugal's transformation into a democracy and is surely the only revolution triggered by a crooner with a very [large collar](#).

If you focus entirely on the performances, Eurovision is a bit daft. OK, very daft. According to the results, in 2018 the continent's finest piece of music featured a woman [squawking like a chicken](#) and in 2006 nothing said "credible winner" like [five pogoing orcs singing](#) about the "a-rock-aplyse". There are [rapping astronauts](#), competitors who perform [as half-animal/half-fruit](#) and [multitasking grannies](#) baking bread to Euro-rave.

But [Eurovision](#) is also a deeply serious political affair. Time and again, countries (including brutal dictatorships) have used it as an astonishingly effective form of political power – and reinvented themselves in the eyes of the world.

"Even from the very first contest you see politics being played out," says Dean Vuletic, who created the world's first university course on Eurovision. "In 1956, the first West German entry was sung by a Jewish Holocaust survivor – a clear attempt to distance themselves from their Nazi past. On day one it's being used by a country to change their identity on the international stage."

Ever since, Eurovision has been intrinsically intertwined with international diplomacy. In 1964, Portugal and Spain's participation – despite being dictatorships – saw protests break out mid-contest, with a banner-toting activist having to be dragged off the stage. In 1969, General Franco's attempt to use his country's hosting of Eurovision to (in Vuletic's words) "whitewash his regime" saw him recruit surrealist art megastar Salvador Dalí to design the publicity materials (ie a [bizarre poster](#) with mutant planet-sized lips and a squadron of terrifying, armless monsters). After Turkey invaded Cyprus, Greece hit back via Eurovision, using their 1976 entry to make claims about napalm and mass graves – leading Turkey to boycott the contest. And Portugal's entry didn't just set the nation on the road to democracy – it allowed several African countries to become independent, after the Portuguese military withdrew from its overseas territories.



The Carnation Revolution in Portugal, which was sparked by the country's Eurovision song contest entry. Photograph: Dpa Picture Alliance/Alamy

Sometimes, however, Eurovision has been caught up in a clampdown on freedom of expression. In 2009, the Azerbaijani government [interrogated 43 people](#) who were found to have voted for bitter rival Armenia – claiming it was a matter of "national security". It's just one part of a long Eurovision-based war between the two countries, who have an ongoing territorial dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Eurovision has ramped up tensions between the countries. In 2016, the Armenian entrant caused uproar when she waved the Nagorno-Karabakh flag, prompting the European Broadcast Union (EBU) which runs Eurovision to [sanction the Armenian broadcaster](#) for enflaming “the tense situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region”. In 2009, an image of a monument near Nagorno-Karabakh’s capital city was edited out of the intro to the Armenian performance after Azerbaijan claimed it was an Azerbaijani landmark. The Armenian voting delegation snuck it on to TV by sticking it to the back of their [presenter’s clipboard](#).

Azerbaijan’s Eurovision history is also part of a wider trend – allowing increased freedoms. When it hosted the contest in 2012, despite having an atrocious record of human rights abuses and a government known for suppressing critics, hundreds of citizens were allowed to march through Baku, calling for democracy and freedom of speech. In 2005, when Ukraine hosted, it [temporarily loosened](#) entry restrictions for EU citizens – and ended up permanently leaving its borders more open. Conchita Wurst’s 2014 entry provoked [homophobic protests](#) from conservative Russian politicians and sparked furious petitions in Belarus, Armenia and Russia demanding she be [edited out](#) of the broadcast – yet she won the contest. Her victory may have caused more furore from homophobic [Russian MPs](#), but it also led to the Austrian chancellor announcing his desire to [legalise gay marriage](#).

Wurst’s win did, however, highlight one unfortunate part of the contest: vote-rigging. “A lot of the juries didn’t give Conchita the same number of votes as their public,” says Vuletic. “These jurors did not want to be associated with LGBTQ+ issues, as they feared what the professional consequences could be.” Last year, six national panels’ votes were rejected by the EBU due to “irregularities”, leading to a [major rule change](#) to reduce the juries’ influence. According to Jordan “those juries see each other all the time, so it would be very easy for them to do deals. It’s very tricky to prove, but there are certainly some strange patterns, and it’s always the same repeat offenders.”

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For all of this, since 2000 Eurovision has supposedly been a non-political contest due to a rule banning explicit political references. It hasn't exactly worked, given that the 2016 Ukrainian winner was about [Russia's deportation](#) of the Crimean Tatar population in the second world war – resulting in a spiralling battle between the two nations that eventually led [Ukraine to forbid Russia's singer](#) from entering the country. It's also hard not to suspect that at least some of Europe voted for Ukraine to win last year as an expression of solidarity after Putin's invasion.

But that's not necessarily a bad thing. After all, one of the things that makes Eurovision so captivating is the politics. "It has the power to bring Europe together to express support for a certain issue – be it the rights of sexual minorities or showing solidarity with Ukraine," says Vuletic. "That's why Eurovision is much more powerful than other events."

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- 'The joke's on us Simon Schama on the broken relationship between humans and nature'
- 'What would I look like with a Brazilian butt lift?' Louis Theroux, Sharon Horgan and other stars on their recent TV highlights
- Ronnie O'Sullivan 'I could have been the ultimate player. When I was 14, I was perfect'
- 'I was a bad child actor. Extremely bad' Emma Cline on the follow up to her hit novel The Girls

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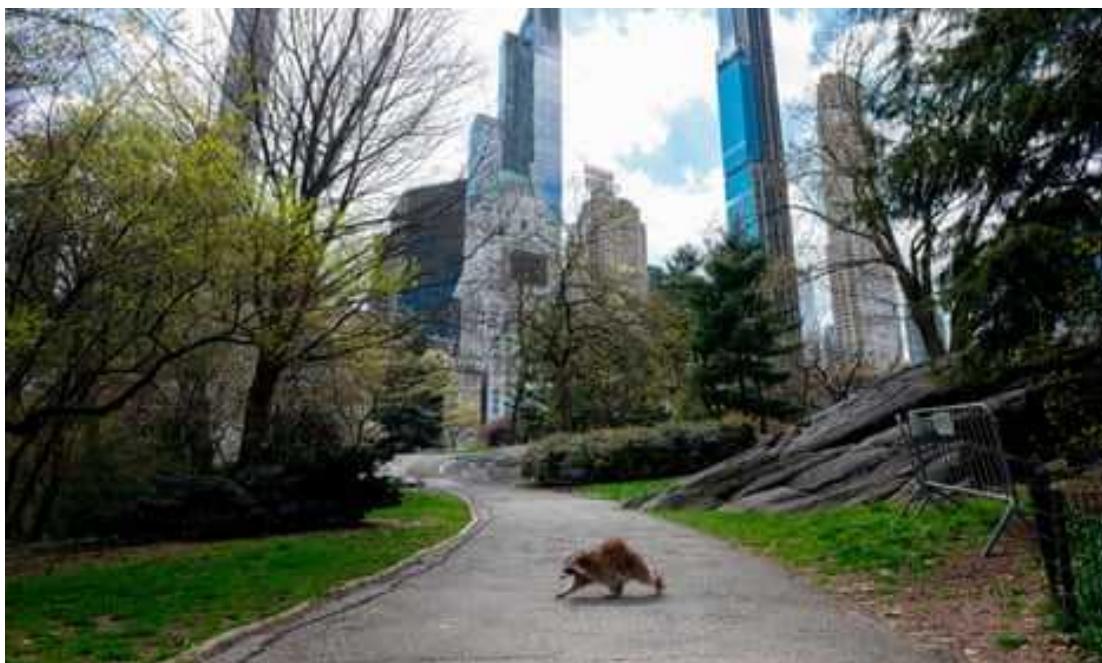
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A racoon walks in an almost deserted Central Park, New York, April 2020.  
Photograph: Johannes Eisele/AFP/Getty Images

[Epidemics](#)

## **Simon Schama on the broken relationship between humans and**

# nature: ‘The joke’s on us. Things are amiss’

More than ever, the relationship between our two worlds has been disrupted, says the historian. If we don’t mend our ways, will we face even deadlier threats than Covid, Sars and Mpox?

[Simon Schama](#)

Sat 13 May 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 13 May 2023 13.31 EDT

In March 2021, the 13th month of the Covid confinement, the [peepers](#), in their vast multitudes, sang out again. Down in the swampy wetlands below our house in Hudson Valley, New York, millions of *Pseudacris crucifer* (“cross-bearing false locusts” but actually minute frogs) puffed up their air sacs and warbled for a mate. That’s spring for you. The peepers are so tiny – an inch or so long – that you’ll never see one, no matter how carefully you creep up on them. Their blown-out song bags are nearly as big as the rest of them; it’s all they are: innocently inflated peeps of expectation.

They are not alone. In recent years, the soprano peepers have been accompanied by a bass rhythm section – wood frogs, *Lithobates sylvaticus*, a tattoo of deep quacking, punctuated by raspy burps. They and the peepers survive bitter winters by means of antifreeze cryoprotectants stored within their bodies. When ice crystals begin to form on their skins, their livers flood the bloodstream with glucose, sending vital organs like the heart, its beating paused, into a dormant but protected state. Seventy per cent of the frogs’ body water can then freeze without compromising the organs that will magically reawaken in the spring.

To help matters, wood frogs can recycle urea through their urine. So if you were to come across a wood frog in deep winter, or expose a tiny peeper beneath the leaf litter, their sparkling, gelid rigidity would lead you to assume they were dead. A twist from your fingers could snap a leg. So don’t do that, for as the Hudson Valley light goes pearly and the afternoons stretch out, the superficial body ice of the frogs melts away and, along with that decrystallising resurrection, wild singing begins: at first a mere teatime

tuning up by scattered vocalists, but by sunset building into a massive chorus, an entire Albert Hall-ful of peepers. There is always mating business to be getting on with and only a month or so to get it done. Quick, quack, peep. The teeming amphibians ecstatically multiplied, even as much of humanity sank into another engulfing wave of infection.

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It's a commonplace (but no less true for being so) that the empty desolation of cities, the grim, still, silence of locked-down streets and squares, was offset by the irrepressible burgeoning of nature. We saw it – the budding and blossoming, the buzzing and butterfly-fluttering on our walks in parks and on heaths, in our gardens and on windowsills. While we hunkered and cowered, and ordered home delivery, flora rioted; fauna trespassed. Parliaments of legislators were reduced to socially distanced barking from the hollow shell of their chambers, while parliaments of birds flocked and chattered. We tweeted with our fingers; they tweeted with their lungs. Those with the sweetest song showed off, none more liquidly around here, in Hudson Valley, than the [Carolina wren](#) nesting under our barbecue.

The more we retreated into digitally numbed companionship, the more brazenly the company of animals advanced towards us. Morning roadkill was evidence of nocturnal roaming and rambling by hitherto seldom-seen critters. On the path leading to a local arts centre, weasels and milk snakes lay side by side, cartoonishly flattened, as if mutually KO'd in a small-hours brawl. At the entrance to our local woodland trail, a sign advised walkers not to make nice with the black bears. Everything, except us, seemed to be emboldened. Reporting on record fox sightings in her London neighbourhood, a friend chuckled, "It's laughing at us, nature is." So it was: the low chuckle of gallows humour.

The crashing of barriers between wild and domestic spaces has an ominous side. Displacement is a symptom of ecosystems under stress

But the joke's on us. Things are amiss. Species are out of place, or incautiously testing human presumptions about where their place actually lies, and what its boundaries might be. Lockdowns or not, migrants, two-legged and four, are on the move to wherever subsistence beckons.

In north Wales, mountain goats from the Great Orme munching potted petunias off Llandudno windowsills supplied much-needed online entertainment. But the crashing of barriers between wild and domestic spaces has an ominous side. Displacement is a symptom of ecosystems under stress. The capybara roaming through the upscale gardens of houses in Nordelta on the outskirts of Buenos Aires would not be there had not the suburb been built by draining extensive areas of the Luján River delta, robbing the metre-long rodents of their natural habitat. The relentless growth of Mumbai – a million new residents a year – has pushed its eastern and western suburbs into areas normally reserved for leopards, specifically the 100 sq km of the Sanjay Gandhi wildlife sanctuary. Deprived of prey, the big cats have strayed beyond the preserve. At least 50 of them have taken up residence within the city, sustaining themselves from the enormous population of feral dogs, occasionally sampling an amuse-bouche of a dachshund or a Siamese cat.



Goats take over deserted streets in Llandudno, north Wales. Photograph: Andrew Stuart/PA



Capybaras in the upscale area of Nordelta, Buenos Aires, 2021. Photograph: Agustín Marcarian/Reuters

The causes and consequences of this ecological disruption are complicated. On the one hand, it's not good for the leopards to become Mumbai street creatures; on the other, they are doing the bloated metropolis a favour by culling the feral dog packs, which often include rabid animals. But then again, there would not be so many of those wild dogs were it not for the introduction, a decade ago, of diclofenac, an anti-inflammatory drug commonly used for livestock in the 1990s, which ended up driving the third player in this urban drama – white-rumped vultures – to near extinction as a result of scavenging drugged cattle. A south Asian vulture population of [40 million in the 1980s now numbers around 19,000 40 years later](#). This is more than a catastrophic species loss, bad enough though that is. The dramatic depletion of vultures has unpicked the ecological threads that have tied human and animal culture together in India for centuries. The reverent freedom given to sacred cows by Hinduism, so that they might wander the streets until their bodies lie down in peaceful death, depended on the working assumption that carcasses would be cleaned by scavenging vulture flocks. Without the vultures, decomposing cattle have attracted rats and feral dogs, whose numbers have increased exponentially as the birds have disappeared. A collateral result is the steeply rising incidence of rabid attacks on humans, many of them fatal.



Monkeys in Lopburi, Thailand last year. Photograph: Lauren DeCicca/The Guardian

Mutuality between humans and animals has been dangerously disrupted. Temple monkeys, long conditioned to exist symbiotically with humans, and largely dependent on pilgrims and tourists for their food, turned combative as a result of the abrupt withdrawal of their customary diet. The Thai temple city of Lopburi has seen gangs of macaques, in their thousands, engage in violent street battles over scraps of discarded food, while residents barricaded themselves in their houses against the rampaging primates. There is good reason for their fear. Macaques are reservoir carriers of herpes B – McHV1 – often lethal for humans.

Disruption-born contagions are happening in domestic as well as exotic places. A serious malady generated by ecological displacement arrived almost 50 years ago and parked itself on the vegetation of the American dream: the suburban lawn. During my first year in New York state in 1994, it found me, and was no fun at all: three months of piercing headaches, spells of dizziness, and sharp, arthritic muscle pain, before an antibiotic got the better of it. The infecting agent of Lyme disease (named after Old Lyme, Connecticut, where it was first diagnosed and analysed) is a corkscrew-shaped spirochaete found in white-footed mice and sometimes in other small mammals like chipmunks. Not only do those mice survive the excavation

and shredding of the woodland habitat for house construction, they positively thrive on the alteration, overwintering in the suburban estates that have displaced their native habitat.

The rodents function as reservoirs for the dormant but immanent spirochaete. Enter black-legged ticks, needing blood meals at each change in their life cycle, from larva to nymph to adult. A feed on the mice absorbs the spirochaete, which is then transferred to white-tailed deer, upon which the ticks lodge in huge numbers, especially on the ears and around the nose. The deer have themselves multiplied abundantly on the borderland between old forests and the herbicide-saturated, brilliantly lurid carpet lawns of “colonial” McMansions. Suburbanites are accustomed to watching white-tailed deer emerge from their woodland cover to graze their shrubs or settle on lawn pasture. During the pandemic, fear of urban contagiousness led to departures from cities by those who could afford to do so. But clearcutting for suburban construction to meet the quickened demand has brought new residents ever closer to those ubiquitous reservoirs of disease – white-footed mice. Even as house-dwellers awaited their next delivery of online-ordered groceries, black-legged ticks hung on the blades of those hyperfertilised lawns, primed for their next blood meal.

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This shrinking of distance between wild and human habitats has also encouraged the long-distance traffic in wild animals. In 2005, it was estimated that each year of the previous decade had seen the live trafficking of [40,000 primates, 640,000 reptiles, 4 million birds and 350 million fish](#), numbers that have almost certainly increased in the years since. In 2017, China’s National Key Research and Development Programme estimated the [value of wildlife trades for medical sales and food consumption at 520bn yuan](#) (£60bn). Pangolins – scaly anteaters found in both sub-Saharan Africa and south-east Asia – are, since the enforcement of restrictions against ivory, the most commonly trafficked mammals of all. Malayan pangolins are served in high-end restaurants in south-east Asia, especially in Vietnam, where they are both the most popular wild delicacy on the menu and, at £120 for 450g, the most expensive. Assuming you have remembered to order your pangolin three hours in advance, the manager of the Thiêν Vuong Tuu (Alcohol of the Gods) restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City will personally

bring the live animal to your table and slit its throat to assure you of the unimpeachable freshness of the upcoming dish.



Dead pangolins seized by authorities in Indonesia. Photograph: Gatha Ginting/AFP/Getty Images

Unlike sources of ivory, pangolins are pathetically easy to catch. Their scaly covering may pose a challenge for animal predators, but when they are shaken from a tree or a bushy hideaway, the perfectly curled-up ball into which they form themselves is a pangolin harvester's perfect convenience. Into the bag go the scaly balls and into the truck goes the bagful. Tens of thousands of these animals are caught this way every year, most of them merely for the scales, which, when ground finely, are advertised as promoting lactation, helping to heal sores and rashes, banishing headaches and curing anorexia, infertility and pretty much anything else that might ail you. The fact that the scales are entirely keratin, and thus ingesting them is no more medical help than eating chewed fingernails, has no effect on the size and success of the pangolin market, which asks £2,400 for a kilogram of scales plucked from the roasted animals.

The melting of glaciers on the Tibet-Qinghai border into a vast saline lake has revealed viruses dated to 15,000 years ago

An ironic consequence of the rise in demand for animal-sourced remedies is that they have ended up contributing to the ailments they are thought to cure. In the spring of 2020, a group of Chinese scientists [published analyses of coronavirus-infected pangolins](#) confiscated from smugglers in 2017 and 2018 by customs officials at Guangdong. The receptor-binding domain of the virus was 97% identical with that of Sars-CoV-2. Though this is not enough to clinch the case for pangolins being the intermediary host for the virus between a reservoir mammal like a bat and the end destination in humans, it adds to the growing evidence that the waves of terrifying diseases coming at the world faster and faster are almost always zoonotic. They are the direct result of what we have done to our planetary habitat. Climate change has added to the witches' brew, since the flooding that comes with extreme weather events has created more breeding pools for disease-carrying mosquitoes, which, thanks to global warming, now also have an extended season in which to multiply. The massively extended disease ranges of West Nile virus and Zika virus are the result. In a disconcertingly gothic footnote that Mary Shelley would have appreciated, the melting of glaciers on the Tibet-Qinghai border into a vast saline lake has revealed [viruses dated to 15,000 years ago](#) and said to be unlike any yet known to contemporary science.

The years since 1980 have seen outbreaks of new infections at a rate of one every eight months in hot zones from Brazil to central Africa to south-east Asia, most of them viral. They include the catastrophes of [HIV](#) and [Ebola](#), as well as [Sars](#) and [H5N1 bird flu](#). The routinisation of long-distance trade in animals has speeded up the pace of these contagions. H5N1 originated in two mountain eagles illegally transported to Belgium from Thailand; chytridiomycosis, the fungal disease that [made 90 species of amphibians extinct](#), was spread by the international traffic in African clawed frogs.

Sickness in animals has, inevitably, made its way into the human population transporting, marketing and consuming them. [Mpox](#) (formerly known as monkeypox), first identified in 1958 in macaques, has reservoirs in striped mice, giant pouched rats, African rope squirrels and brush-tailed porcupines. A first American outbreak in 2003 has been traced to some of those exotic animals being housed with prairie dogs for the wild pet trade. The jump of the disease from animal to human populations in Africa is itself a cascade of all the disruptions – demographic, social and environmental – that have

stirred new contagions from dormancy. For 40 years, no human cases of Mpox were recorded. But between 1970 and 2018 the population of Nigeria almost quadrupled from nearly 56 million to 195 million. The demographic explosion drove the conversion of rainforest to farmland and conurbations, along with the migration of reservoir species of animals into cities. A series of floods generated by climate change accelerated this migration, and, ironically, the termination of smallpox vaccination programmes due to the announced declaration of the extinction of the disease in 1980 weakened immunity to the closely related Mpox virus. From two African zones – west Africa and the chronically war-ravaged Democratic Republic of the Congo – the international trade in wildlife exported the disease to the US and beyond.

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The Sars epidemic of 2003-04, only barely contained, has been traced back to the meat of masked palm civets, shredded and combined with chrysanthemum petals and minced snake to make the high-priced delicacy “dragon-tiger-phoenix soup”, served in upmarket restaurants in south China. The virus jumped, not to civet-eaters, but to others in the supply chain leading to the dish: breeders of captive civets held in filthy cages in Guangdong, transporters, slaughterers and cooks. It gets worse (or better) for an opportunistic virus. In Thailand, captive populations of masked palm

civets are fed exclusively on coffee bean “cherries” which, as they travel through the gastro-intestinal tract, have the acidity extracted from them by the action of digestion-aiding enzymes. The neat piles of coffee cherries packed in civet excreta will then end up as your speciality java of the day, expensively priced on the market. Imagine how many opportunities there might be for a virus to make the jump from an infected animal to a civet-shit gatherer slaving on minimum wage. Venti latte, anyone?

There are 1.6m potential zoonotic viruses in the world with just 1% of them currently identified

Although a [letter to Nature Medicine](#) in March 2020 from Kristian Andersen and four microbiologist colleagues argued, on the basis of genomic analysis, that “it is improbable that Sars-CoV-2 emerged from the laboratory manipulation of a related Sars-CoV-like coronavirus” and that it was more likely to have come from an animal reservoir – like *Rhinolophus affinis*, the intermediate horseshoe bat – there is, at the time of writing, no definitive verdict on the virus’s aetiology. Live mammals known to be susceptible to Sars, such as hog badgers, foxes and (especially) raccoon dogs sold for both fur and meat, were stored and sold in quantities at the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, and the first known infected person was a vendor there. In March 2023, raw genetic data taken from swabs around the [stacked cages of raccoon dogs](#) showed that an animal did indeed carry the Sars-CoV-2 virus, although whether it contracted the infection independently in the wild or was infected by a human remains as yet unproven. In January 2023, 155 microbiologists joined a commentary by the editor of the Journal of Virology, Felicia Goodrum, asking, optimistically, for a less politicised “[rational discourse](#)” on the subject, stating that “at this time and based on the available data, there is no compelling evidence” supporting either “an accident” or “nefarious actors” at the Wuhan Institute of Virology. That still remains the case, since data supporting the US Department of Energy’s “low confidence” opinion, [made public in February 2023](#), that a lab leak was the likely origin of the virus, remains classified.

Unfortunately, there may never be a definitive explanation of the origin of Sars-CoV-2, but there is no doubt that the closeness between human and wild animal populations has enabled “reverse zoonosis”: viral leaps from

humans to non-humans, and then back again. It is thought by some epidemiologists that this is the route that the Omicron variant of Covid-19 took, mutation taking place in infected rats which then transmitted an adapted virus back to humans. On 23 February 2023, Cambodian health authorities [reported the death of an 11-year-old girl](#) in Prey Veng province from H5N1, the virus responsible for the current pandemic of influenza in wild and domestic bird populations. The virus had already made the jump from avians to mammals including Peruvian seals and Spanish mink. At the time of writing, although the Cambodian girl's father also tested positive for H5N1 infection, there is as yet no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission. But the likely epidemiological implication of this news from Cambodia has already made the World Health Organization (the WHO) state that the report is "worrying". Wildlife, intensively fed and bred livestock, and humans to all intents and purposes, now constitute a common planetary reservoir of perpetually evolving and mutating micro-organisms, some of them baleful. The [Global Virome Project](#), established, as its name suggests, to coordinate worldwide research, estimates that there are 1.6m potential zoonotic viruses in the world with just 1% of them currently identified and analysed.

All this is happening at ever briefer intervals. Demography remakes geography, transforming – right now, and not for the better – the future of life on Earth.

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By the end of 2021, up to [18 million people had died](#), worldwide, from Covid-19 infection, according to some estimates. You would suppose that in the face of a pandemic – an outbreak that by definition is global – together with a recognition of shared vulnerability, governments and politicians might have set aside the usual mutual suspicions and, under the aegis of the WHO, agreed on common approaches to containment, vaccination and control. Needless to say, nothing remotely like that has happened. If anything, the reverse has been the case: responses to the pandemic sharply diverged, even within entities like the European Union, ostensibly committed to common policies. Decisions taken by individual US states on vaccination requirements and mask mandates thwarted federal guidelines, deepening the already bitter cultural divisions between "red" and "blue" America. [Ron DeSantis](#), the Republican governor of Florida, cast himself as

the voice of Regular Folks' mistrust of expert opinion handed down from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: the people's anti-Fauci.

To some extent, the raising of walls, psychological and institutional, is understandable. The instinctive reaction to contagion breaking out somewhere distant is to erect barriers against its importation. For a while, geographically isolated countries like New Zealand benefited from the possibility of self-sealing. But two years' experience of the pandemic, in particular the unpredictable incidence of recurring outbreaks and viral mutations, has made the locking off of discrete zones of exclusion all but impossible. The need for an alternative, transnational approach to containment, mitigation and protection, coordinated by the WHO, has never been more urgent. The geographically uneven and glaringly unequal supply and delivery of vaccines and therapeutic drugs has only underlined this need. Because mutations arise most easily in thinly vaccinated populations, the comment of Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO director general, that "until everyone is vaccinated no one will be safe" ought to have been an epidemiological truism.



Donald Trump announcing the end of US cooperation with the World Health Organization, May 2020. Photograph: Yuri Gripas/EPA

This was not, however, the attitude of the then US president. At the end of May 2020, during the most desperate early days of the pandemic, Donald Trump announced that the US would [be withdrawing from the WHO](#). His major justification was to complain that the organisation had become a pawn of the Chinese government and had, in effect, been an accomplice of Beijing's efforts to disguise the origin of the Covid outbreak. In Trump's view, this meant that China and the WHO, working as collaborators, had knowingly unleashed the contagion on the world with the unpardonable consequence (if not actual intention) of damaging his re-election prospects. They had had the audacity to launch the embarrassment virus with millions of fatalities as collateral damage. Whether or not Covid-19 was the result of a lab leak at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, it is undeniable that China did initially play down the magnitude of the outbreak in Wuhan. The WIV was not at all transparent in making documentation of its experiments with genetically manipulated viruses available, yet the WHO was prepared to take on trust Chinese statements, such as they were, about the origin and spread of the disease. It was, however, far from alone in this incuriousness. In the early stages of the outbreak, there was no more ardent cheerleader for Xi Jinping and his government's Covid measures than Trump himself. "China has been working very hard to contain the coronavirus," he said in January 2020, and a month later, "[I think China's handled it \[Covid\] really well.](#)"

Once, however, Trump concluded that China had weaponised its own epidemiological dishonesty and incompetence expressly to make him look bad, his mentions of the virus invariably came with a tag of culpability, as in "[the China virus](#)" or more facetiously "[the kung flu](#)". There is a history to attaching misleading nicknames to pandemics, the better to characterise them as an alien plague falling upon a vulnerable homeland. Although the first documented cases of the horrific influenza outbreak of 1918 occurred in a military establishment in Kansas, the pandemic became known as "[the Spanish flu](#)", principally as a result of that country's willingness (unlike belligerents in Europe) to report candidly on the severity and extent of the contagion. In no time at all, discussion about the origin and transmission routes of Covid had likewise collapsed into the usual mire of military metaphors, so that its progress became an "invasion" against which "defences" had to be manned, battles fought, conquests pursued, to a decisive "victory". Politically, it was all too easy for populist leaders, like

Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, infuriated by their impotence in the face of a microbial "enemy", to emerge from an initial state of denial into a nationalist blame game; somehow, some other force, some other nation, was responsible for their country's predicament.

Before long, any possibility of a clear and honest understanding of the common worldwide conditions that allowed such disasters to happen, not least the biological consequences of environmental degradation, became swallowed up by this default vocabulary of competitive nationalism. Astonishingly, Boris Johnson's UK government was so intent on applying its new norms of Brexit isolation that it withdrew from the common European pandemic early warning information pool. Later, it made the claim that Brexit had allowed it to have the earliest and most successful vaccination programme, passing over the inconvenient fact that, as of July 2022, Britain nonetheless had the highest case and mortality rate of any state in western Europe.



Angela Merkel and the World Health Organization's Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus cut the ribbon at the opening of the WHO Hub For Pandemic And Epidemic Intelligence, 2021 Photograph: Michael Sohn/AFP/Getty Images

Mercifully, it has not all been a zero-sum game. In late March 2021, 25 world leaders, including Emmanuel Macron, Johnson, Mario Draghi, Angela Merkel, Cyril Ramaphosa, Volodymyr Zelenskiy and the head of the European Council, Charles Michel, as well as the prime ministers of South Korea, Fiji, Thailand, Chile, Senegal and Tunisia – but, depressingly, missing the leaders of the US, Japan, Russia and China – issued a statement explicitly acknowledging the chain linking human and non-human lives and destinies. Invoking the multilateralist idealism of the years following the second world war that sought a reconnected world through the United Nations and agencies like the WHO, they proposed a legally binding international treaty to deal with future pandemics. Such a treaty would embody “an approach that connects the health of humans, animals and our planet”.

On 1 September 2021, Merkel and Ghebreyesus opened the [WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence](#) in Berlin. In a gesture more appropriate for a country fair or the launch of an ocean liner, they cut a ribbon in two places. The ribbon was striped red and white as if simultaneously alerting visitors to peril and bidding them enter anyway. The hub’s mission brief says that it is meant to provide global data linkage and the sharing of advanced analytical tools and predictive models, the better to be armed against future outbreaks. “No single institution or nation can do this alone,” Ghebreyesus declared. “That’s why we have coined the term ‘collaborative intelligence’.” But there is already data-gathering at the [WHO Academy in Lyon](#) and preparations for the storage of infectious material at a secure bio-bank in – where else? – Switzerland. None of this, however, overcomes the immense disparity of resources, for both research and clinical trials, between richer countries and the regions of the world from which new infectious diseases often arise.

This moment in world history is no less fraught for being so depressingly familiar: the immemorial conflict between “is” and “ought”; between short-term power plays and long-term security; between the habits of immediate gratification and the prospering of future generations; between the cult of individualism and the urgencies of common interest; between the drum beat of national tribalism and the bugle call of global peril; between native instinct and hard-earned knowledge. If it is a happy answer you want to the question as to which will prevail, it is probably best not to ask a historian.

For history's findings are more often than not tragic, and its boneyard littered with the remains of high-minded internationalist projects. The appeals of idealists fill whole-page declarations in earnest broadsheets and win funds from far-sighted philanthropic foundations. But the plans and the planners are demonised by the tribunes of gut instinct as suspiciously alien, hatched by cosmopolitan elites: the work of foreign bodies.

This is an edited extract from Foreign Bodies by Simon Schama (Simon & Schuster, £30). To support the Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

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# ‘I thought, what would I look like with a Brazilian butt lift?’: Louis Theroux, Sharon Horgan and other stars on their recent TV highlights

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Ronnie O'Sullivan: 'My greatest achievement? Staying on the straight and narrow.' Photograph: Ken McKay/ITV/Shutterstock

[The Q&ARonnie O'Sullivan](#)

## **Ronnie O'Sullivan: 'I could have been the ultimate player. When I was 14, I was perfect'**

The snooker player on hating his nose, being accused of kidnapping and learning bad habits

[Rosanna Greenstreet](#)

Sat 13 May 2023 04.30 EDT Last modified on Sat 13 May 2023 13.26 EDT

Raised in Essex, O'Sullivan, 47, won his first UK Championship at the age of 17. He is regarded as the greatest snooker player of all time, having won seven world, seven Masters and seven UK titles. He is currently the world No 1. He published his first autobiography, *Ronnie*, in 2003; his latest,

Unbreakable, has just been released. He lives in Essex with actor Laila Rouass and has three children.

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

I've got no patience.

**What is the trait you most deplore in others?**

That they think they know it all.

**What is your most treasured possession?**

My snooker cue.

**Describe yourself in three words:**

Stubborn, driven and disciplined.

**What would your superpower be?**

To make people happy.

**What makes you unhappy?**

Feeling rushed.

**What do you most dislike about your appearance?**

My nose – it's big.

**If you could bring something extinct back to life, what would you choose?**

Muhammad Ali.

**Who would play you in the film of your life?**

Jack O'Connell wants to play me. He's a snooker fan.

**Who is your celebrity crush?**

Monica Bellucci.

**Would you choose fame or anonymity?**

Anonymity.

**To whom would you most like to say sorry and why?**

Frank Adamson, my first coach, for not spending more time with him in his later years. I feel bad about that.

**What or who is the greatest love of your life?**

My dog Osho, a bichon frise.

**What does love feel like?**

It makes you feel like you want to live.

**What is the worst job you've ever done?**

Doing the audiobook of the first book. It was hard. I couldn't do that again.

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**If you could edit your past, what would you change?**

I would go back to when I was 14 and keep to my own style of playing snooker. I was perfect, but I didn't think I was, so I started playing like everybody else and created bad habits. With a little more time, I could have been the ultimate player. I look at my career and I probably got 75% out of it instead of 100%.

**What single thing would improve the quality of your life?**

More time.

**What is your greatest achievement?**

Staying on the straight and narrow. I know I am an addict – I've got an addictive personality – but as long as it's not affecting my life or people around me then I think it's OK.

**What has been your closest brush with the law?**

I got falsely accused of a kidnapping when I was 17 or 18. It was scary: they took me and my mate in separately, strip-searched me, took my car away for forensics, put me in a white paper suit. I was like: “What’s going on here?”

**Would you rather have more sex, money or fame?**

Money.

**How would you like to be remembered?**

As someone that loved what they did, embraced it wholeheartedly and never quit.

**What is the most important lesson life has taught you?**

Perspective. I used to zoom in and it would be all catastrophic, now I zoom out and get a bit of perspective.

**What happens when we die?**

I'd love to think there was a better ending, but we rot and disappear.

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Didion-esque aura ... Cline at home in Los Angeles. Photograph: Michelle Groskopf/The Guardian

[Fiction](#)

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## **'I was a bad child actor. Extremely bad': Emma Cline on the follow up to her hit novel *The Girls***

[Emma Brockes](#)

The novelist talks about the power of being an outsider, growing up in a family of seven siblings – and exploring the Hamptons in her first novel since her Manson-inspired bestseller



[@emmabrockes](#)

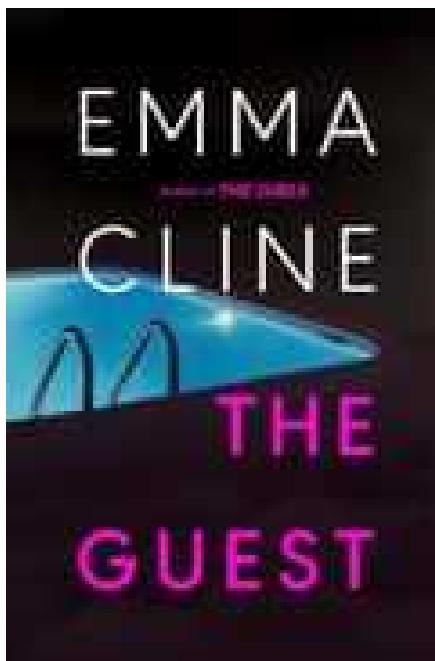
Sat 13 May 2023 04.00 EDT

Emma Cline is a writer who seemed to hit her stride straight out of the gate. Her bestselling 2016 debut [The Girls](#), which told the story of a Manson family-type cult, was praised for its canny structure, moving seamlessly between time frames, and for the sheer density of imagery, although what was most striking about the novel was how assured it was.

In person, Cline is more hesitant. We are in Brooklyn today, in the flat of a friend she is staying with while visiting from LA. The 34-year-old is Californian by birth and upbringing, and it is tempting to read in her a sort of wispy Didion-esque aura one associates with that part of the world. She appears watchful, her voice tremulous with good humour, and she is a leaver of pauses, some more agonised than others, while seeking out the right meaning. Writing her new novel *The Guest* was, she says, partly a reaction against *The Girls* – a deliberate flexing of other muscles – and partly a way of “giving myself the challenge of can I write a novel-length work that has some of the tension I like in a short story”.

Appearing seven years after *The Girls*, *The Guest* is a contemporary tale that unfolds over the course of seven days. Its protagonist, Alex, has almost no

backstory. The action is limited to a few square miles of Long Island. There are no deaths, or explosions, or external dramas of any great magnitude, just an intense engagement with the narrow field of vision before her, as Alex moves through an increasingly stressful and impossible week. The tension never wavers. It is weirdly compelling and often very funny. The story follows Alex as she leaves the city, bridges burned, debts trailing, in pursuit of a wealthy older man she is dating to his second home in the Hamptons. This is rich material for Cline, who trains a chilly eye on the preposterous affluence and exclusivity of that part of the world. We never leave Alex's head and through her passive, affectless gaze find ourselves in an environment in which she is almost invisible; a young woman and former sex worker, a grifter of sorts, who believes herself to be in a "real" relationship with a man about whom the reader may come to different conclusions.



The inquiries of the novel weren't always apparent to Cline at the time of writing, but are "things that I only notice in retrospect. With Alex it is this question of: is there a weird power in being an object? What is that power? What are the limits of that power? And what does it mean to have that invisibility, so that people will do and say things in front of you that they wouldn't say and do if they thought you were a full-fledged human being?"

Some of Alex's deadpan observations are so on the money they made me wince to imagine on whom Cline might have based them. One night, Alex is taken by the man to the house of a rich friend of his, where the hostess, Helen, is regarded by the much younger woman with frank derision. Helen has invested in an app, which if she were to be believed, writes Cline, "was perfecting a technology that diagnosed illness from a breathalyzer you plugged into your phone". Helen says certain phrases with emphasis: "SDKs. Daily granularity. Someone must have just taught her what these terms meant. 'Our art needs more technology and our technology needs more art,' Helen bleated, looking into the middle distance." On the wall, there are framed sketches, as Alex thinks, "probably the leftovers of someone important. People like Helen loved to display the artefacts of creativity as if that implicated her in the process."

Cline spent time in the Hamptons during the decade she lived in New York after finishing graduate school at Columbia University. What struck her most about it was its deceptive mildness; that part of the world, at a glance, looks like England and many of the towns have English names. Certainly compared with where Cline came from, a part of northern California where, she says, "the beaches are rocky and the waters are shark-infested and it's more of an aggressive encounter with the elements". By contrast, Long Island's "micro-community" can appear almost "surreal" in its placidity. "But then [underneath there are] all the ways in which it is mediated by money. It's so obviously not a place for outsiders. And there are all these overt and less overt ways that they make that clear. That combination struck me as very strange and engaging. I wondered what it would look like to be in this setting when you weren't supposed to be."



‘I was a bad child actor. Extremely bad’ ... Emma Cline. Photograph: Michelle Groskopf/The Guardian

In *The Girls*, which Cline wrote over a period of years when she lived in an unheated shed in the Brooklyn garden of a friend (more on that in a moment), the protagonist, Evie, is a 14-year-old experimenting with what happens when you let yourself drift; from your family, your community, yourself. Cline’s eye for an arresting image is never more acute than when she’s describing young women, in this case followers of a cult leader, who move around “with their air of biblical poverty”, simultaneously powerless and unnerving. In public, writes Cline, these women appear as “sleek and thoughtless as sharks breaching the water”.

Drift – the idea of coming in and out of focus – interests Cline. With Evie, this particular dynamic ends up placing her on the periphery of a notorious murder. In the case of Alex in *The Guest*, it gets her evicted from the tiny, precarious ice floe of safety she had been, for a second, enjoying. Cline exposes the peaceful civility that characterises the wealthy spaces of the Hamptons as a sham, “the appearance of calm demanding an endless campaign of violent intervention”.

At one point in a group setting, Alex strategically makes herself small and invisible, and Cline writes, “she was used to this, the politeness of

pretending that things that were happening were not, in fact, happening” – a particularly female form of self-erasure. “I had this image of a woman out in the ocean and people were waiting for her on shore. And once she got to shore she would have to face some horrible thing. And the feeling of just being, like, can’t I stay out here for ever? Knowing you have to go in but not wanting to go in. That emotional atmosphere is what I was looking for. But of course you don’t want a lecture about female agency or who has power and who doesn’t. This stuff naturally ripples out of a character, but not in a conscious way for me.”

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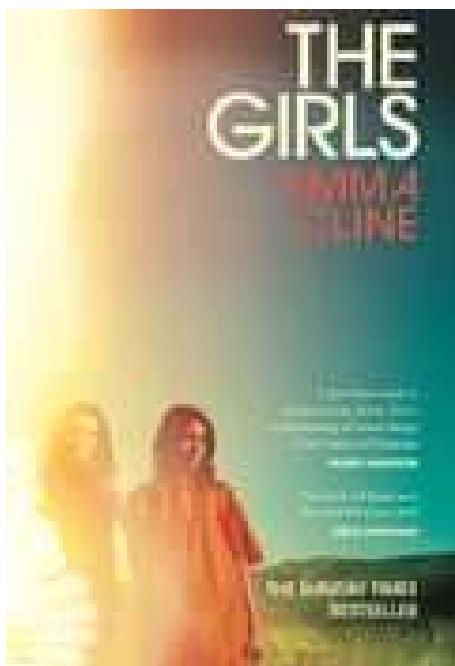
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You don’t want a lecture about female agency or who has power – it has to come out of the character

Cline’s sensitivity to space, power and group dynamics all draw from her family background. She grew up in Sonoma, northern California, where her parents were winemakers, the second oldest of seven children – five of them girls – all born within 10 years of each other. Even now, it occasionally startles her how many of them there are. “Sometimes when I’m out to dinner with friends I’m like, OK, this plus four more people would be my family.” She laughs. To have that many siblings takes up an awful lot of one’s hard drive. As Cline says: “The psychic weight of a human being is huge. And

seven of them?!” But those relationships are nourishing and “have been so sweet to me, especially as an adult”. Her next youngest sister, Hilary, is her first reader and she dedicated *The Guest* to her.

As a young person growing up in a family that large, finding a singular identity was paramount and as a child, Cline wanted to be an actor. She took herself off to auditions and booked a few jobs. (She had a small role as the young Billie Jean King in a 2001 TV movie called *When Billie Met Bobby*, in which Holly Hunter played the adult tennis legend.) Now she smiles and looks pained. “I was a really bad child actor. Extremely bad.” Did she know she was bad at the time? “I could tell based on the reactions of the adults that sometimes I was bad, and sometimes I was less bad, but I couldn’t tell the difference. So it was this baffling and stressful experience.” But it was the first indication, says Cline, that she was “drawn to artificiality; that you could make a world off to the side of the real world” in a way that was related to writing. “I think the impulse is similar. Like, what does it mean to be a human, why do humans act the way they do, what does it mean if they’re saying *this* but their face is saying *this*? ”



After studying for a degree in art at Middlebury College in Vermont and receiving an MFA from Columbia she started writing *The Girls*. Cline had already had some success at that point; a short story she wrote in college,

Marion, had won the Paris Review's prestigious Plimpton prize and publishers were circling. When *The Girls* eventually sold at auction as part of a three-book deal, it went for a seven-figure sum. (The screen rights, which are now with Hulu, were at one stage owned by Scott Rudin and there is a script in existence written by Todd Field, writer and director of the recent Oscar-nominated movie *Tar*. "He wrote a bananas and great script for it; so cool," says Cline, who has no idea where the project lies in development.)

She came up with the idea for *The Girls*, which tells a loose version of the Sharon Tate murder, as a kind of "container" for a lot of thoughts she wanted to explore "about California, and girlhood", among other things. While writing it, she lived in a shed in her friend's garden. It was unheated, there was a toilet but no shower, and it got so cold in the winter that "the olive oil got slushy. Oh and I remember the many months of silverfish." She laughs. "What was so great about it was that I could see everything I owned all at once. It was a winnowing down to the totally essential. I didn't have internet. I would listen to the radio. I wrote a lot of letters. I miss the shed!"

A novel is so long haul, you have to psych yourself up for it – you have to trick yourself into writing, ease into it

Cline has since moved back to California and now lives alone in LA. In between writing *The Girls* and *The Guest*, she published a book of short stories called *Daddy* inspired by the post-Weinstein downfall of an entire cohort of men, with particular focus on their self-justifications.

In 2017 she had to deal with the messy and upsetting business of an ex-boyfriend, Chaz Reetz-Laiolo, suing her for copyright infringement, claiming sections of *The Girls* drew from a screenplay of his that she had accessed on their shared computer. A judge dismissed the suit, and Cline characterised the relationship as "abusive" and the lawsuit as a "total assault".(Reetz-Laiolo denied any allegations of physical abuse.)

The legal action wasted a lot of her time, energy and focus. For years, *The Guest* was a work-in-progress, only without a great deal of progress – a project she repeatedly picked up and put down again. She had been inspired

in part by *The Swimmer*, a short story by John Cheever in which an apparently conventional tale of a man at a suburban pool party takes a sudden surreal plunge towards something much more terrifying. “And there’s no explanation,” says Cline. “There’s just this horrible hurtling sense that you have landed in a nightmare and your life is gone. In what way did you waste it? That story is so harrowing to me.”

Cline calls the long gestation period of *The Guest* normal for the way she writes novels, a process of bumping up against the initial idea countless times. “A novel is so long haul, you have to psych yourself up for it. You have to trick yourself into writing a novel, ease into it.” In the early stages, she says, a lot of the thinking happens “in the corner of my eye. OK, the novel’s there, but I’m not going to freak myself out too much by going to work on it. I’ll write a little bit; keep loose notes. Allow myself to sneak up on it a little.”

Meanwhile, it’s important to participate in the world. “You just have to live! You have to be a human being!” There is almost no such thing as procrastination, says Cline; everything is useful, even reading the Daily Mail. She bursts out laughing. “As a record of our culture’s deepest fears and deepest obsessions, it’s actually a totally fascinating document. I find it really moving in a way.”

### Moving?

“Or I can get a lot out of reading about this horrific thing that is happening and then the next article is six foods to eat if you never want to get cancer and die! Or these are the rules we have about who’s a winner and who’s a loser. I just find humans so interesting.”

She carries into her reading the same curiosity she brings to her writing, plus something else, a distancing technique that allows for all sorts of possibilities in the face of injury. “I’m not interested in colluding over a character’s head about how we’re so much better than they are,” she says. Passing judgment in that way isn’t helpful. She is merely observing; collecting data; sharing her findings. There is, of course, “a place for moral judgment in society”. Cline smiles. “But fiction writers are not my preferred enforcers.”

*The Guest* by Emma Cline is published by Vintage (£18.99). To support the Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

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‘Our research found that creating openness and visibility in parks, clear escape routes and better lighting made women feel safer.’ Photograph: urbazon/Getty Images

[Opinion Parks and green spaces](#)

## **By our own design: this is how we can make Britain’s parks safe for women**

[Tracy Brabin](#)



Women and girls often feel at risk in public spaces by both day and night – and we know best how to change that

- Tracy Brabin is the mayor of West Yorkshire

Sat 13 May 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 13 May 2023 06.25 EDT

There's no denying that there has been a spotlight on violence against women and girls over the past year. Finally, our safety feels like a political priority. But if we are going to truly change the lives of women and girls across the country, we need a reset on the way we think about solutions to some of our most deep-rooted problems.

We know that women don't feel as safe as men in public places. As young girls grow, too often, their worlds contract. Whether at work, on a night out or walking through a park – for too long, women and girls have been forced to change their behaviours.

This week, alongside the University of Leeds, we set out [\*\*bold plans\*\*](#) to make parks safer for women and girls. Women in Britain are three times more

likely than men to feel unsafe in a park during the day, according to [our research](#). This only gets worse at night. And three-quarters of the girls we spoke to said they felt unsafe in parks. More than 50% of women felt unsafe. This can't be right.

Giving women more of a role in designing our parks has the potential to turn the tide, and make their safety a priority rather than an afterthought. When you consider that parks are largely designed by men, it's not surprising that women's safety can often be overlooked. Men [don't routinely](#) look over their shoulder when walking home at night or carry their keys in their hand for protection.

But with a change in approach, our green spaces can become welcoming and safe places for everyone to enjoy. Our research found that creating openness and visibility in parks, clear escape routes and better lighting made women feel safer, along with a visible presence of park staff. We also identified a need to encourage a range of diverse, women-led activities that create a sense of belonging in our parks. With more people in the park, women and girls feel safer. And it's really important that the surrounding areas and routes into parks don't have hidden or enclosed entrances.

For me, the safety of women and girls in public places is personal. When I was at university, a stranger tried to rape me in the street. I tried to fight back, but he was stronger. And if it wasn't for the swift actions of a neighbour, I know this terrifying ordeal would have ended differently.

Thankfully, the police caught the perpetrator, and he spent time behind bars. I was one of the lucky ones. But what happened that night has never left me – it changed my whole outlook on life. I went from being a confident and vivacious 20-year-old young woman to someone who lived in fear. But as time passed, I also began to feel energised by a desire to prevent it happening to others. As the country's first and [only woman metro mayor](#), I believe every woman and girl, no matter where they are, should feel safe.

Researchers at the university heard from more than 100 women and girls about their lived experiences. They told us how unsafe they felt in parks due to being harassed or assaulted. Their stories were compelling and, if we want

women and girls to reap the vast benefits of parks, we must hear them and change our approach, from the design to the maintenance of our public spaces. I urge other local leaders to follow suit and adopt the recommendations in our report [Safer Parks](#).

In West Yorkshire, we've already made a start on putting this into practice. We've installed exercise equipment, renovated disused buildings and channelled thousands of pounds into community activities, such as women-only yoga and boxercise classes, so that communities can use spaces without fear.

However, we know that issues of women's safety are widespread across the whole of society, not just in parks but on our streets, and on transport across our towns and cities. By listening to women and girls from all walks of life, we're improving our towns and cities and making them safer. We know that the problems are complex, but in West Yorkshire, we're up for the challenge.

- Tracy Brabin is the mayor of West Yorkshire
- Information and support for anyone affected by rape or sexual abuse issues is available from the following organisations. In the UK, Rape Crisis offers support on 0808 500 2222 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](http://ibiblio.org/rcip/internl)
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#). Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*

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Kemi Badenoch at Conservative party conference in Birmingham, October 2022. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

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

## **Who better to sing old Brexit tunes than the Tories' overhyped new act? Step forward, Kemi Badenoch**

[Marina Hyde](#)



As the bonfire of EU laws turned into another damp squib, a desperate party was pushing the business secretary as its voice of reason

Fri 12 May 2023 10.06 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 13.57 EDT

Seven years after the country voted to leave the EU, the daily arguments over what precisely that meant and how precisely to do it still have the freshness of a vegetable rotting in a Great British field for want of any Great Brit to pick it. Brexit is a journey, not a destination – like a late-night trip on [TransPennine Express](#), or “life” on Instagram.

Incredibly, the Conservative party has now found yet another way to divide itself over the issue. Yes, even its splits have splits. Brexiteers themselves have now subdivided into diehards and compromisers. Expect both those categories to subdivide again soon, as we hurtle inexorably towards the logical end of the [Brexit](#) process: hundreds of individual politicians screaming into hundreds of individual TV cameras that only they can fix it.

One of these will be the last face you see before you die. I don’t mean in the traditional sense you often see that trope deployed: implying you’ll be cowering at the homicidal hand of the maniac in question. I just mean that

many years from now, at the natural end of your life, shivering in some tarpaulin-tented outpost of the care home system that all this sort of stuff prevented politicians from ever fixing, one or other of them will be on the telly as you rattle out your last breath then get exported to a far-flung emerging-market country for cremation, as part of the exciting new trade deal worth 0.000003% to UK GDP that was signed by Sixtus Rees-Mogg in the wake of the second water wars. Or as Theresa May put it, a full three imploded prime ministerships ago: “[Brexit means Brexit](#), and we ARE going to make a success of it.”

Anyway, the latest form the forever war has achieved is a row between the Conservative government, which has U-turned on repealing every single piece of retained EU law, and various hardliners from its own party who think they should stick to the original plan. Compromisers are epitomised by trade secretary [Kemi Badenoch](#). I don’t need to fill you in on Kemi. For much of the past year, she has been the latest amusingly overhyped act being pushed as the next big thing by the Conservative A&R department. Every time she takes the stage it feels like some middle-aged guy in an ill-advised deep V is going to try to stick a coke spoon up your nose while rasping in your ear that she’s “the real deal”. But look, as the trademarked Most Effective Minister in Government, Michael Gove’s presumably worth listening to.

Sunak had promised to repeal about 4,000 EU laws in a leadership [campaign video](#), complete with a big shredder and soundtracked by Beethoven’s Ode to Joy. This promise was unpromised this week by Badenoch, first via the [pages of the Daily Telegraph](#), then subsequently at the dispatch box, where she revealed a mere 600 laws would go. People on all sides were incensed by various aspects of this, so Badenoch declared she was “very pleased to be taking the pragmatic middle ground”. And, like me, you will be very pleased at the notion of having to take a lesson in pragmatism from actual Kemi Badenoch. Seriously, though, I do feel as though I should be more personally drawn to Kemi – she’s terminally sarcastic and seems to think her job is to write newspaper columns.

But her about-face has incensed some of her colleagues, notably [Jacob Rees-Mogg](#), whose calico underthings are in quite the twist. How is Rees-Mogg still a feature of public life? In any just world, he would by now be

understudying some of the furniture in an am-dram production of The Mousetrap; instead, he was on hand [to tell the BBC](#) of Sunak: “He has broken his word. This is very serious in my view.” Mm.

It was Jacob, of course, who was accused of (and denied) misleading the late Queen over what turned out to be the unlawful prorogation of parliament. Far be it from any of us to preempt the history books, but that’s probably a worse whopper than a tweeted campaign video for the leadership election Sunak lost. We should also remember that when he was made Brexit opportunities minister, Jacob was immediately reduced to [asking Sun readers](#) how to do his job, requesting that they sent in ideas of EU laws we could scrap. The benefits of this “initiative” never materialised, though Rees-Mogg did at one point last year cite the fact he had headed off a 2% rise in the cost of fish fingers. (Thanks to our G7-beating inflation rate, alas, fish fingers are currently retailing for [at least 15% more](#) than they were back then.)

Next to line up against Badenoch was fellow ERG all-star Mark Francois, another name none of us should ever have had to learn unless he was our MP, but who – owing to the interminable Brexit saga – has now clocked up more TV hours than Phillip Schofield (and may even outlast him). Badenoch shot back that the ERG are “[all talk](#)” – a disparagement that hovers dangerously close to describing them as “all mouth and no trousers”. I was reminded the other day that insanity became so normalised during the Brexit wars that in 2019 Mark had a staring match with the novelist Will Self on a lunchtime [BBC politics show](#), apparently prompted by a green room argument about the size of Mark’s penis.

In other signs of rude political health, this weekend sees hundreds of Tory activists [head to Bournemouth](#) for a conference organised by the Conservative Democratic Organisation. This is a sort of Continuity Boris campaign, spearheaded by the likes of serial wingnut and ex-MEP David Campbell Bannerman, and the former disgraced Tory treasurer and [Tory megadonor Lord Cruddas](#). Cruddas is one of the stupidest people ever to wear ermine – even counting the baroque genetic disasters of the 18th and 19th centuries – yet persists in the delusion that he’s a power player. He is not alone among the fractious warlords of the Tory party. Having lost more

than 1,000 seats to progressive parties in last week's local elections, all kinds of geniuses have alighted on the only logical answer: move rightwards.

Meanwhile, Brexit still has to get done, or redone, or undone some more. The grim irony is that nothing could have made the British people more "left behind" than the Brexit process itself – almost seven long years of doing barely anything else (bar weathering a deadly global plague), while other countries got on with having a life, a growth plan and the first clue about where they realistically fitted into the complex geopolitics of the modern world. None of these was the path our politicians chose. I guess you reap what you sow – unless, that is, you leave even that to rot in the ground.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist
  - This June, Marina Hyde will join fellow columnists at three Guardian Live events in [Leeds](#), [Brighton](#) and [London](#). Readers can join these events in-person and the London event will be livestreamed
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‘One woman standing up, speaking the truth glimmers the brave in each of us.’ Photograph: Edna Leshowitz/Zuma Press Wire/Shutterstock

[Opinion](#)[Donald Trump](#)

## **Trump’s rape trial was triggering. But Carroll’s victory offered a glimmer of hope**

[V \(formerly Eve Ensler\)](#)



The ex-president gaslights and diminishes his victims, and was given a platform by CNN. We can ensure he isn't elected again

Sat 13 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 13 May 2023 02.48 EDT

Since the beginning of the trial between E Jean Carroll and [Donald Trump](#), I have been seriously triggered. I am not alone. I am hearing from women all across America and the world. Sleepless nights, unbearable anxiety, shortness of breath, unexplained rage, depression. Survivors have a kind of collective nervous system, a central body where our stories and trauma live in a timeless and interwoven continuum. When one of us goes on public trial, it is all of us on trial, our histories charged, our past memories made frighteningly present. We are what I would call “sister-triggered”.

Triggers are cues that signal potential threats around us. As survivors, we are constantly on alert as we swim in these volatile misogynist waters, knowing a wave can come any minute to swallow us whole, or at the very least remind us that although we may have one-off victories we are still swimming in their rigged and violent sea. And this is particularly true each time a sister survivor bravely goes on trial, willingly stands up and publicly tells the truth, sheds her anonymity for the greater good, faces an onslaught of hate, and inevitably has her privacy, being and body reinvaded.

E Jean Carroll's case against Donald Trump was a true victory, led by a brave, graceful, brilliant survivor of integrity and eloquence, tirelessly fought for by dedicated advocates and lawyers. Before we had time to celebrate, the triggers began.

Trump's lawyer, Joe Tacopina, proudly bragging that it was a rape trial case and the jury rejected it. Trump was not branded as a rapist. Triggered because even now in 2023 we still have to settle for sexual abuse or battery or whatever names have been devised by patriarchal institutions to make what is soul-destroying seem not so bad or at the least, not what it is. Donald Trump stuck his fingers and penis inside E Jean Carroll against her will and both are rape.

Corey Rayburn Yung, a law professor, says: "the word *rape* carries extra connotations in our culture, and the jurors might have been gun-shy about applying it regardless of the specific standard there. So there's a lot of stigma in many directions around the word rape and perhaps this jury, pragmatically recognizing that, agreed that Trump's responsible, agreed on the dollar amount, but they didn't want to force the issue on the word rape."

Triggered by all the ways we obfuscate and muddle and distance and normalize what really happens to women's bodies when they are grabbed, invaded, penetrated or defiled. And how this makes survivors feel unspeakable insanity, sorrow and rage.

Triggered that laws created by men have never served women or sexual abuse, have never reckoned with or been determined by the nature of rape and what it does to a woman's mind and memory, or the language she speaks in describing it. See *Prima Facie* now playing on Broadway.

Triggered that CNN didn't think a minute about what it would mean to E Jean Carroll or the millions of survivors to see a predator given such a platform the day after we finally had a rare victory, and then be forced to watch as Trump instigated his audience to mock and belittle E Jean Carroll the day after he was charged with defamation. Perhaps CNN is not aware that one out of three women in the world have experienced what E Jean Carroll has experienced and this was insulting, irresponsible and outrageous.

Triggered that a predator was offered a platform to address millions of people when his accuser who won her trial against him only had a small courtroom to plead her case.

Triggered that Trump, just like so many powerful rapists and predators, continues to gaslight his victims, refuses to admit or seemingly understand what sexual abuse and rape is or what it does to its victims.

Triggered that the audience at CNN was laughing with Trump as he made fun of E Jean Carroll which triggered memories of men and women [cheering and laughing with Trump](#) as he mocked Christine Blasey Ford in the Kavanaugh hearings. Which triggered more rage thinking that our supreme court includes justices accused of sexual abuse and those appointed by one.

Triggered that afterwards at the CNN town hall with Republican voters in New Hampshire, when Gary Tuchman asked a voter, Karen Olson, how she felt about Trump being found liable for sexual abuse by a jury of his peers. She said: “I didn’t really care ... All of these situations where people are coming out 20, 30 years later, I don’t listen to it.” This must have triggered thousands of women who weren’t believed by their own mothers, or teachers or employers.

Triggered because the lack of accountability, the platforming of a known self-admitted and now charged predator, white supremacist, treasonous, twice-impeached president was more important for ratings and money than protecting women, Black people and democracy which triggered a deja vu of being back in 2016 when the media essentially gave Donald Trump an estimated \$5bn in free media (more than any other Republican or Democratic candidate combined) which was what inevitably gave him the presidency.

I recently was exposed to a new term, “glimmering”, which was coined by Deb Dana, a licensed clinical social worker who specializes in complex trauma. “‘Glimmers’ refers to small moments when our biology is in a place of connection or regulation, which cues our nervous system to feel safe or calm.” Glimmers are the opposite of triggers.

One woman standing up, speaking the truth glimmers the brave in each of us. She opens the space for another world where women might do more than dream of being safe and free.

Glimmering happens when you call rape rape. When you speak the language that matches the crime. It happens when you put rapists on trial and not their victims, when you silence predators and exile them rather than giving them mega-media platforms.

Our greatest glimmering will be making sure we never elect a charged predator to be our president again.

Let the glimmering begin.

- V (formerly Eve Ensler) is a playwright and author, most recently, of *Reckoning* (Bloomsbury)
- Information and support for anyone affected by rape or sexual abuse issues is available from the following organisations. In the US, Rainn offers support on 800-656-4673. In the UK, Rape Crisis offers support on 0808 500 2222. 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)

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‘A second-term Trump would set about finishing what he started, breaking any institution that might stand in his way.’ Photograph: Joseph Prezioso/AFP/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Donald Trump](#)

**There is a clear and present danger of a new Trump presidency. Democrats must act now to prevent it**

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



Being found liable for sexual abuse hasn't weakened the Republican's grip on his party, while the polls are getting bleaker for Biden

Fri 12 May 2023 12.17 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 12.46 EDT

We may come to remember this period as the interlude: the inter-Trump years. After the sigh of relief heard around the world [when Donald Trump was defeated](#) in November 2020, a grim realisation should be dawning: the threat of a Trump return to the White House is growing.

His first task is to [win the Republican party's presidential nomination](#), but that hurdle is shrinking daily. Trump's grip on his party remains firm, with none of his putative rivals coming close. Of course, the first round of primary voting is months away and much could change, but the shape of the race is already clear – and Trump is dominant. Witness the reaction to an event that would once have been terminal for any politician: this week's civil court [verdict](#) that he had sexually abused the magazine writer E Jean Carroll in a New York department store in the 1990s, and then defamed her by branding her a liar.

That “[makes me want to vote for him twice](#)”, said Senator Tommy Tuberville of Alabama of the jury’s decision, articulating the view held by many millions of Republicans that this judgment – and any other legal finding against the former president – proves only that the elites are out to get him.

There was a similar Republican response in March when [Trump was indicted](#), also in New York, over hush money paid to the former porn star Stormy Daniels. That saw his approval numbers among Republicans – the self-proclaimed party of family values – [go up](#). For the believers, the indictment merely vindicated Trump’s claim that he is the martyred victim of a liberal deep state. The pattern is clear: what should kill him only makes him stronger.

It means Democrats and those who wish to see Trump finished need to let go of the hope that the courts will dispatch him once and for all. There are multiple other cases pending, perhaps the most serious relating to his [pressure on election officials](#) in Georgia to “find” the votes that would overturn Joe Biden’s victory in that state. But on the current evidence, a slew of guilty verdicts would barely dent his standing with his own party. As Trump intuited back in 2016, he [could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue](#) and Republicans would still vote for him.

It helps that his most obvious challenger, the Florida governor, Ron DeSantis, is growing smaller in the spotlight. He is tetchy and struggles to connect: this week [tape surfaced of advisers](#) urging him before a TV debate to write the word “likable” at the top of his notes – just as a reminder. DeSantis’s failure to go after Trump directly makes him look like a coward. Above all, DeSantis is pursuing a flawed strategy. He is offering Trumpism without Trump. The trouble is, too many Republican primary voters like Trump, while DeSantis’s brand of Trumpism is a hard sell to the wider electorate who will vote in November 2024.

Plenty of Democrats concede that Trump is likely to win his party’s nomination. Indeed, many *want* him to win, so sure are they that he will lose to Biden in a rematch of 2020. And he may. But that contest will be far too close for comfort, at least in the electoral college that decides the outcome.

In 2020, just [44,000 votes in three states](#) stood between a Biden victory and an electoral college tie. Now the polls look much worse for him.

This week a [Washington Post/ABC survey](#) not only showed the president six points behind Trump, it also found 63% of Americans believe Biden, who would be 86 at the end of a second term, lacks the mental sharpness to serve effectively, up from 43% in 2020. Put simply, it was a photo finish last time and Trump's prospects are better now than then.

What would a Trump restoration entail? He himself has promised "[retribution](#)", and those who served under him warn that a returned Trump would be less chaotic, more focused, than he was first time around. His appearance at a [CNN town hall event](#) this week provided several clues. On policy, Ukraine should get ready to be abandoned, while the world should brace for a US prepared to default on its debts. Americans will once again be deluged with a torrent of lies, delivered so fast that by the time you've challenged one, there will have been four more. (That is one reason why the CNN broadcast was horribly misconceived: it failed to learn a key lesson of 2016, when the US media made itself a tool of misinformation.)

Trump also called Carroll a "whack job" and dismissed the sexual abuse verdict because it had been delivered in a liberal state under a judge appointed by Bill Clinton. This too has become a pattern, casting the justice system as merely another theatre in the partisan culture wars. Not content with destroying Republicans' faith in electoral democracy in order to divert attention from the fact he lost an election, Trump is now doing the same to his followers' trust in the law, this time to distract from the fact that he is a sexual predator.

A second-term Trump would set about finishing what he started, breaking any institution that might stand in his way, whether that be the ballot box or the courts. As Senator Mitt Romney, a rare Republican voice of dissent, put it after the CNN show: "You see what you're going to get, which is a presidency untethered to the truth and untethered to the constitutional order."

None of this is certain, but all of it is possible. Democrats need to snap out of the complacency brought by victory in 2020 and work as if they are in a

race against the devil and lagging behind – because they are. They need to address the Biden age issue fast: several party veterans urge the president to get out more, recommending the kind of closeup encounters with the public at which he thrives. They need to sell their achievements, not least a [strong record on jobs](#). And they have to sound the alarm every day, warning of the danger Trump poses. Because it is clear and it is present.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist
  - Join Jonathan Freedland and Marina Hyde for a Guardian Live event in London on Thursday 1 June. Book in-person or livestream tickets [here](#)
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- [New Hampshire Governor ‘embarrassed’ by crowd behaviour at Trump town hall](#)
- [US Actor Jamie Foxx out of hospital and ‘recuperating’, says daughter](#)
- [Proud Boys and Oath Keepers What is their future with top leaders jailed?](#)
- [Australia Surfer missing and believed dead after shark attack](#)
- [New York Man charged with manslaughter over subway chokehold death of Jordan Neely](#)



Chris Sununu: ‘When you’re talking about a serious issue like that, and laughter and mocking and all that, it’s completely embarrassing.’  
Photograph: Phelan M Ebenhack/AP

[New Hampshire](#)

## **New Hampshire governor ‘embarrassed’ by crowd’s behavior at Trump town hall**

Chris Sununu said the audience’s conduct ‘doesn’t shine a positive light’ on the state, which will hold the first Republican primary

*[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York*

*[@MartinPengelly](#)*

Fri 12 May 2023 17.48 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 18.47 EDT

The governor of New Hampshire, Chris Sununu, said it was “embarrassing” that Republican voters from his state laughed and applauded when Donald Trump mocked [E Jean Carroll](#) during a [CNN town hall](#) this week.

Sununu may yet have to court such voters in a presidential run of his own.

Nonetheless, the governor said, the town hall audience's behavior "doesn't shine a positive light on New Hampshire".

In New York on Tuesday, a jury in a civil case found Trump liable for sexual battery and defamation regarding a 1996 assault in a New York department store changing room which Carroll described in a book in 2019. The former president was ordered to pay about \$5m in damages.

Regardless, at Wednesday's [CNN event](#) in Manchester, New Hampshire, Trump [said](#) he had "no idea who the hell" Carroll was and called her a "whack job".

He also said he "had a picture taken years ago with her and her husband, nice guy, John Johnson. He was a newscaster, very nice man. She called him an ape, happens to be African American. Called him an ape – the judge wouldn't allow us to put that in. Her dog or her cat was named Vagina, the judge wouldn't allow to put that in."

Audience members [laughed](#).

Trump continued: "What kind of a woman meets somebody, brings him up and within minutes you're playing hanky-panky in a dressing room, OK? I don't know if she was married then or not. John Johnson, I feel sorry for you, John Johnson."

A lawyer for Carroll has [said](#) she was considering suing again.

Sununu, a relative moderate in a party dominated by Trump and the far right, has said he will decide on a presidential run by June.

He was speaking to Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary turned MSNBC host, in an interview to be broadcast in full on Sunday.

"As the camera pans through that audience, I knew pretty much everybody," the governor said. "They're all Trump supporters. So the audience was absolutely filled with Trump supporters. So I wasn't surprised to hear the support.

“But when you’re talking about a serious issue like that, and laughter and mocking and all that, it’s completely embarrassing, without a doubt, and it doesn’t shine a positive light on New Hampshire.”

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The audience for the CNN event was always meant to be Republican but Sununu said “almost all” who attended voted for Trump in 2016, 2020 or both.

“I believe every single one of them have voted for Trump at some point,” he said. “So I don’t know … how [CNN] determined that and set that up but obviously it was a room full of Trump supporters. So no one should have been surprised to hear the support.

“But again, on that issue, I would call it embarrassing.”

If Sununu does enter the Republican primary he will be an outside bet in a race [dominated](#) by Trump despite his unprecedented legal jeopardy.

New Hampshire will hold the first Republican primary. Polling there follows the national pattern in putting Trump more than 20 points ahead of Ron DeSantis, the Florida governor who has not yet declared a run.

According to the RealClearPolitics [polling average](#), Sununu generally places third in his own state, at around 11 points, more than 36 behind Trump.

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Corinne Foxx and Jamie Foxx in 2022. Photograph: Mario Anzuoni/Reuters

[Jamie Foxx](#)

## **Jamie Foxx released from hospital and ‘recuperating’, says daughter**

Corinne Foxx shares update after criticising media for running ‘wild’ with rumours actor was taking a turn for the worse

[Benjamin Lee](#)

Fri 12 May 2023 15.18 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 15.46 EDT

Jamie Foxx is out of hospital after an unknown “medical complication”.

The Oscar-winning actor and singer’s daughter Corinne Foxx shared an update on Instagram after unsubstantiated reports that the 55-year-old’s condition had worsened.

“Sad to see how the media runs wild,” the 29-year-old actor wrote in a story. “My Dad has been out of the hospital for weeks, recuperating. In fact, he

was playing pickleball yesterday! Thanks for everyone's prayers and support."

The star of 47 Meters Down: Uncaged and Dad Stop Embarrassing Me! also added that an "exciting work announcement" was on the way.

Foxx, who won the best actor Oscar for music biopic Ray, was initially taken to hospital while filming the Netflix comedy Back in Action in April. His daughter shared that he had "experienced a medical complication" but was in good hands. "Luckily due to quick action and great care he is already on his way to recovery," she wrote. "We know how beloved he is and appreciate your prayers. The family asks for privacy during this time."

Foxx's hosting gig on the gameshow Beat Shazam was later taken over by Nick Cannon. On 3 May, he expressed his gratitude to Cannon on Instagram while also sharing a brief update. "Appreciate all the love!!!" he wrote. "Feeling blessed."

Recent reports alleged that the star's family were "preparing for the worst" but were without concrete support. Earlier this week, Corinne Foxx shared an undated commercial of the two promoting a laptop.

After he was hospitalised, Back in Action continued filming with stand-ins and body doubles for Foxx, and has reportedly wrapped. The film is directed by Seth Gordon, who worked with Foxx on the 2011 comedy Horrible Bosses, and co-stars Cameron Diaz in her first screen role in nearly a decade.

The star of Collateral and White House Down will also next be seen alongside John Boyega in the sci-fi comedy They Cloned Tyrone.

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Rioters during the Capitol attack on 6 January 2021 in Washington.  
Photograph: Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP

[US Capitol attack](#)

**Proud Boys and Oath Keepers: what is  
their future with top leaders jailed?**

Stewart Rhodes and Enrique Tarrio were convicted – but experts worry what role the groups may or not play in the future path of violent extremism

*MacKenzie Ryan*

Sat 13 May 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 13 May 2023 05.49 EDT

The recent convictions of the Oath Keepers leader Stewart Rhodes and Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrio has raised questions about the future of both extremist groups and what role they may or not play in the future path of violent extremism in the US.

Researchers who monitor American far-right organizations said the Oath Keepers have in effect been decimated, with only a handful of chapters remaining, while the Proud Boys are ramping up efforts to protest at LGBTQ events and taking cues from larger national conservative conversations about hostility to transgender rights.

“The impact of criminal litigation, really any litigation, legal accountability has been quite different [for both groups],” said Rachel Carroll Rivas, deputy director of research and analysis for the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). “So I don’t know that the solution for all groups engaged in violence and conspiracy are going to have the same outcome from the same accountability measure.”

Carroll Rivas said since the arrests of Rhodes and other Oath Keepers’ members, it only took about five months for the group to go from nearly 100 chapters to just a handful remaining active. “I can tell you I don’t see as many Oath Keeper bumper stickers around,” she reported.

The Oath Keepers, Carroll Rivas explained, were structured with their leader, Stewart Rhodes, assuming all the primary roles. Carroll Rivas describes Rhodes’s conviction and potential 25-year prison sentence as cutting off the “head of the dragon” and undermining the group’s strategy of recruiting law enforcement, military veterans, and public officials.



Stewart Rhodes, founder of the Oath Keepers, center, speaks during a rally outside the White House in Washington on 25 June 2017. Photograph: Susan Walsh/AP

They were “quasi-following some of the rules” with a legal structure and non-profit status, Carroll Rivas said, and their strategy focused on a purposeful recruitment of “people who are respected members of society” in a greater attempt to wield power. Oath Keeper members joined something they didn’t necessarily believe would participate in unacceptable activities, let alone anything criminal, she explained.

“When something happens like January 6, when things get out of hand, it pushes the everyday membership away from the organization itself, not from its beliefs, but it definitely pushed them away from the Oath Keepers’ name.”

Experts are most worried about the splintering of the far right when it comes to people who then act alone or in small groups unaffiliated to anyone else: a phenomenon that is extremely hard for law enforcement to track and infiltrate.

There’s a “steady drumbeat” of people not trusting the government, engaging in conspiracy theories and grievances, and encouraging people to

arm themselves, Siegel said, and a world of people online that share that view. That means there are alternatives to the Oath Keepers for people still wanting to be engaged in far-right activities.

“Will those people look elsewhere for more extreme, like-minded groups or will they lay low? It remains to be seen,” said Warren Siegel, vice-president of the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism.

Today, extremists “can choose their own adventure”, pulling bits of ideology from white supremacy and anti-government groups. As a result, Siegel said: “There is a lot more opportunity to create strains of anti-government theory that will animate people into action and it’s much harder to track.”

Worryingly, researchers are finding it difficult to know when a potential extremist is moving from rhetoric to action. “When the language of extremism is so similar to general public discussion, it’s more difficult to know where the next attack is coming from,” Siegel said.

But the Proud Boys, unlike the Oath Keepers, have not splintered.



The former Proud Boys chairman, Enrique Tarrio. Photograph: Noah Berger/AP

In the wake of Tarrio's conviction, the Proud Boys are ramping up their activity, and trying to disrupt LGBTQ+ events, such as [protesting at drag queen story hours](#). The Proud Boys, which have many local chapters throughout the country and decentralized leadership, have realized they don't need to travel thousands of miles and can "shift the social norm in their backyard", said Siegel.

He added: "They glom on to a contentious public issue in order to try to attract people." Siegel argued that the Proud Boys were doubling down in their attempts to target the LGBTQ+ events because of the "the baseless narrative that LGBTQ community are grooming children".

Unlike the Oath Keepers, which had a specific anti-government ideology, Siegel explained the Proud Boys were taking strains from different ideologies, such as the rise of Christian nationalism and opposition to what they view as the radical left.

The Proud Boys are also not the only extremist group that is targeting the LGBTQ+ community, Siegel said. White supremacists with a history of violence are engaging in it almost weekly. Siegel called it a "toxic combination" of groups with a history of violence and hateful ideology, saying it was the "challenge of our time" to mitigate that threat.

Researchers expressed concerns about Proud Boys' actions in the aftermath of January 6 and Tarrio's conviction because of their long record of engaging in violence.

"Part of their ethos, part of the attraction to others is that they are shamelessly militant," said Siegel. Violent extremes and grievances against the government are here to stay, he explained, saying the question is how the US can minimize their impact. "Accountability is part of that despite how it's spun," he argued.

America is "not the healthiest democracy right now", Siegel explained. "How do you win hearts and minds in this country? There is no fairytale ending to an insurrection."

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Police and emergency services are searching for a 46-year-old man who was bitten by a shark at a beach on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia on Saturday morning. Photograph: Posnov/Getty Images

[South Australia](#)

## **Man, 46, missing and believed dead after shark attack in South Australia**

The search for the surfer continues after paramedics were called to Walkers Rock Beach near Elliston on Saturday morning

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*[Mostafa Rachwani](#)  
[@Rachwani91](#)*

Sat 13 May 2023 00.27 EDTFirst published on Fri 12 May 2023 23.05 EDT

A man is missing and believed to have died after being bitten by a shark on the west coast of the Eyre Peninsula in [South Australia](#).

South Australia Police have confirmed that a 46-year old man was surfing when he was attacked by a shark, and is now missing.

Paramedics were called to a beach near Elliston shortly after 10am on Saturday to assist a man following reports there had been a shark attack.

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The incident was reportedly witnessed by multiple surfers at Walkers Rock Beach, which is near Elliston.

South Australia Police were leading the search for the man on Saturday, with local community members assisting, while the SA State Emergency Services sent a sea rescue boat from Port Lincoln.

Police, SES and local members of the community remain engaged in a search to locate him.

There are no reports of anyone else being injured in the attack.

The incident occurred near a reef break which is popular with surfers and divers.

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Elliston is around 650km from Adelaide and has a history of shark attacks. A 17-year-old surfer was killed by a shark at Black Point, near Elliston in 2000.

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Daniel Penny leaves court in handcuffs after being charged – video

[Jordan Neely](#)

## **Man charged with manslaughter over subway chokehold death of Jordan Neely in New York**

Daniel Penny, a former marine who surrendered to police in New York, could face up to 15 years in prison if found guilty

*[Lauren Aratani](#) in New York*

Fri 12 May 2023 15.59 EDTFirst published on Fri 12 May 2023 12.30 EDT

The man who killed [Jordan Neely](#) after putting him in a chokehold while on a subway in New York City has been charged with second-degree manslaughter, the Manhattan district attorney's office said on Friday.

Daniel Penny, 24, could face up to 15 years in prison if found guilty under the charge. Penny [surrendered](#) himself to New York police on Friday morning.

He appeared in criminal court in Manhattan to answer the charge, did not enter a plea, and was released on a \$100,000 bond.

Penny's attorney, Thomas Kenniff, told [ABC News](#) his client "has been fully cooperative" with authorities after Neely's death. "We fully expect Danny will be exonerated of all charges," a statement from Penny's legal team added.

Penny killed Neely on 1 May after putting him in a deadly chokehold. Neely, who was homeless, had been shouting at passengers that he was hungry and thirsty, and that he did not care if he went to jail. In a clip that went viral on social media, Penny can be seen keeping Neely in a chokehold, while other passengers assist in restraining him.

Neely was transferred unconscious to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The city medical examiner later ruled his death a [homicide](#), having died from having his neck compressed during the chokehold.

Penny, who is white and a former US marine, was initially detained and questioned by police immediately after the incident but was released without charges.

Jordan Neely: crowds protest in New York after death of man on subway train – video

The video sparked [widespread protest](#) around [racial injustice](#) and the failures of the city's treatment of those that need social services. Neely, who was Black, had long suffered a series of mental illnesses and was [known to homeless advocates](#) in the city, reportedly being on a city roster of the “top 50” homeless individuals most in need of help.

Neely, once a talented Michael Jackson [impersonator](#), had suffered PTSD and severe depression after his mother was murdered by his stepfather in 2007, when Neely was 14. He also had autism and developed schizophrenia, relatives said. He suffered a series of mental health crises and faced multiple arrests while living on the streets.

On 5 May, four days after the killing, lawyers for Penny released a [statement](#) on his behalf that said Neely had a history of violent behavior and called for the city to address mental health crises. Neely’s family responded with their own press release on 8 May that [called](#) Penny’s statement “a character assassination and a clear example of why he believed he was entitled to take Jordan’s life”.

At a news conference on Friday, Neely’s family attorney Donte Mills told reporters that Penny “acted with indifference”, according to ABC.

“And we can’t let that stand,” Mills added. “For everybody saying, ‘I’ve been on the train and I’ve been afraid before and I can’t tell you what I would’ve done in that situation,’ I’m gonna tell you – ask how you can help. Please, don’t attack. Don’t choke, don’t kill, don’t take someone’s life.”

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- [Falklands war UK ministers urged to unseal files on attack that killed 56](#)
- [NHS Treatment algorithms ‘not taking transgender patients into account’](#)

**Ukraine war liveUkraine**

# **Wagner head says forces to leave Bakhmut next week – as it happened**

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Deborah Doyle, left, with fellow representatives Lobby Akinnola, Hannah Brady, Fran Hall, Jo Goodman and Charlie Williams from Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice at the Covid Memorial Wall. Photograph: Chris J Ratcliffe/Getty Images

[Covid-19 investigations](#)[Social care](#)

## Ministers missed chances to prepare social care for a pandemic, review finds

Two-year study by Nuffield Trust and LSE says successive governments failed to make social care a priority

*Robert Booth* Social affairs correspondent

Fri 5 May 2023 01.00 EDT

Distress and heartbreak for millions could have been avoided if the government had not missed opportunities to prepare social care for a pandemic, according to a big investigation into how the [first wave of Covid hit care homes](#).

A review of events in spring 2020, when almost 20,000 care home residents died with Covid in England and Wales, found it was the result of “letting one of our most important public services languish in constant crisis for years”.

A two-year study by the Nuffield Trust health thinktank and the London School of Economics found successive governments failed to respond to risks already exposed by cross-government pandemic planning exercises, didn’t have enough civil servants working on social care, and failed to appreciate the sector’s fragility when sending patients into ill-prepared care homes.

The study is the latest [independent assessment](#) to undermine the claim by the former health secretary, Matt Hancock, to have thrown “a protective ring around social care”. It comes before the Covid-19 public inquiry’s investigation into the care sector, the timing of which has yet to be announced.

One social care representative told the study about a meeting hosted by the then prime minister Boris Johnson and Hancock in February 2020 at which “[we] … could not get air time for social care’s issues” unless it was about the NHS’s requirements.

Natasha Curry, deputy director of policy at the Nuffield Trust, said: “Those early months exposed … weaknesses within social care that impacted the shape, speed and effectiveness of the response. Many of these difficult challenges could have been eased had warnings been heeded. Governments of all hues have failed to make social care and those who need it a priority.”

The Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice group said the report showed “our loved ones might still be with us if care homes had been properly prepared for and protected during the pandemic”.

The study found:

- The government excluded social care from pandemic-planning exercises such as [Exercise Alice](#) and after problems were identified by

Exercise Cygnus, which did include the sector, action was not taken.

- Social care leaders felt invisible at the start of the pandemic because there had been no dedicated director general for social care in government since 2016.
- No adult social care representatives sat on the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) and people leading the UK pandemic response lacked “deep understanding” of social care.

“Had the sector had the tools it needed then some of the confusion and delays that led to so much distress and heartbreak that millions of people faced could have been avoided,” said Curry. “Despite the pain endured during the pandemic, we now have the ominous sight of reforms being yet again delayed.”

The analysis was part-funded by the UK government, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research. No officials at the Department of Health and Social Care agreed to be interviewed.

“The social care sector was underresourced for years and … my mum, who had worked her whole life, needed help but was left with a system woefully unprepared to protect her,” said Deborah Doyle, a spokesperson for the Covid bereaved families group whose mother, Sylvia Griffiths, died in a care home in April 2020. “We cannot allow horrific scenes like this to happen again, and we don’t have time to wait.”

Adelina Comas-Herrera, an academic at the LSE and a report co-author, said: “The evidence suggests that some countries were able to cope better than others. We are seeing how countries such as Ireland, Finland and Spain are using lessons from the pandemic to reform their care systems. Our research shows that social care in England needs a system-wide reform.”

The care minister, Helen Whately said: “During the pandemic we supported social care with £2.9bn in specific Covid funding, sent out more than 230m Covid tests to care homes and prioritised social care for Covid vaccinations. We are committed to learning lessons from the pandemic and are investing up to £7.5bn over the next two years to put social care on a stronger

financial footing, help reduce waiting lists and alleviate workforce pressures.”

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Police gather around town in Serbia after second mass killing in days – video

[Serbia](#)

## **Serbia to be ‘disarmed’ after second mass shooting in days, president says**

Aleksandar Vučić pledged to seize registered and illegal arms after 17 people were shot dead in just 48 hours

*[Daniel Boffey](#) Chief reporter and [Graham Russell](#)*

Fri 5 May 2023 04.37 EDTFirst published on Thu 4 May 2023 21.16 EDT

Serbia will be “disarmed”, its president, Aleksandar Vučić, has pledged in an address to the nation, after eight people were killed and 14 wounded in a second mass shooting in the Balkans country in as many days.

Thursday night’s drive-by assault by a 21-year-old with an automatic weapon had followed the death of nine people at the hands of a 13-year-old who opened fire in a school in downtown Belgrade on Wednesday.

Vučić described the 48 hours of bloodshed as an “attack on our entire country” as he announced that registered and illegal arms would be seized in what he said would amount to “an almost complete disarming of Serbia”.

Mass shootings are rare in Serbia but there is a high level of gun ownership. There are more than 760,000 registered firearms in the country of roughly 6.8 million people and many more are held unofficially. A large number of weapons entered the black market after the wars in the Balkans that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia.

On Friday morning, a man identified only by his initials, UB, was arrested near the city of Kragujevac, 141km south of the capital Belgrade, over the shootings on Thursday night.

He had been found at the home of a relative after hijacking a taxi. The driver had subsequently tipped off authorities, Vučić said. The alleged gunman was in possession of four grenades, a Kalashnikov and a large amount of ammunition.

Vučić said the gunman had been wearing a T-shirt with neo-Nazi symbols as he fired randomly. The president vowed that the suspect would be convicted and “will never again see the light of the day”.

The man had seemingly fled 90km to the city of Kragujevac after opening fire with an automatic weapon from a moving vehicle in multiple locations near the town of Mladenovac late on Thursday.

The shootings had reportedly begun when he opened fire at a schoolyard in the village of Dubona, killing a police officer, with whom he had reportedly argued, and his sister. He had then moved on to the nearby villages of Malo Orašje and Šepšin.

“We heard gunshots in the evening, but I thought it was fireworks, children fooling around,” Zvonko Mladenovic, a Dubona resident whose granddaughter had been injured, told AFP. “It did not even occur to me that something like this could happen. She was visiting her grandfather. This was where the kids were hanging out and ... she was shot in the head. First those kids in Belgrade, and now this. This is a disaster.”

All those admitted to hospital were born after 2000, the Serbian broadcaster RTS reported. Two people aged 21 and 23 have had surgery and remain in a critical condition.

## [Map](#)

On Wednesday, a [13-year-old boy shot dead eight fellow pupils](#) and a security guard in a Belgrade primary school, an attack that shocked the Balkan country.

Police named Wednesday’s shooter as Kosta Kecmanović and said he had been a pupil at the school since 2019. They said he had used two of his

father's guns in the shooting and may have been plotting the attack for a month.

The head of Belgrade police, Veselin Milić, said the teenager also had two petrol bombs and "made a list of kids he planned to kill and their classes". Milić identified the dead pupils as seven girls and a boy born between 2009 and 2011.

Kecmanović is too young to face criminal charges and will be placed in a psychiatric institution. His parents have been arrested.

The high public prosecutor's office said in a statement on Friday that the child's father, identified as Vladimir K, had denied responsibility at an initial hearing.

"The suspect denied committing the crime and presented his defence in detail," the statement said.

The prosecution said it would ask the judge handling preliminary proceedings to remand the man in custody "to prevent influence on witnesses, a repeat of the offence and because of public anxiety".

It said the father was suspected of training his son to handle weapons by taking him to target practice "despite the fact that the child is 13 years old and that such an activity was ... inappropriate for his age".

The prosecutor added that Vladimir K was suspected of failing to adequately secure the two pistols used in the school shooting.

The shooting in Vladislav Ribnikar primary school also left seven people hospitalised – six children and a teacher. One girl who was shot in the head remained in a life-threatening condition, and a boy was in a serious condition with spinal injuries, doctors said on Thursday morning.

On Thursday, thousands lined up to lay flowers, light candles and leave toys outside the school to commemorate the victims of Wednesday's attack.

Tributes included flowers, teddy bears and footballs. A grey and pink toy elephant was placed by the school fence along with messages of grief, and a

girl's ballet shoes hung from the fence.

The most recent mass shooting in Serbia before this week had been in 2013, when a war veteran killed 13 people in the central village of Velika Ivanča.

Serbia's interior ministry has been tasked with drafting changes to the weapon law to tighten up conditions for possession of pistols and handguns.

The measure is aimed at reducing ownership by 90%. An amnesty is also planned within a month, in which anyone who illegally possess such weapons – and explosive devices – will be able to hand them in without consequences. Jail terms for the illegal production, possession, carrying of and trade in weapons will also be increased.

*Additional reporting by Agence France-Presse and Associated Press*

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Survivors from HMS Sir Galahad being hauled ashore by colleagues at Bluff Cove, East Falkland, after the ship was hit by an Argentinian air attack.  
Photograph: Martin Cleaver/PA

[Military](#)

## **UK ministers urged to unseal files on Falklands attack that killed 56**

Calls follow release of account by captain who said he strongly warned against ‘folly’ of attempted landing in June 1982

*[Daniel Boffey](#) Chief reporter*

Fri 5 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 May 2023 10.48 EDT

The release of a witness account detailing the “folly” of an operation in which 56 service personnel died on ships off the Falkland islands – the deadliest day for the British military since 1945 – has prompted fresh calls for the government to unseal all files relating to the tragedy.

Attacks by Argentinian Skyhawk planes against the landing ships Sir Tristram and Sir Galahad killed dozens of service personnel on 8 June 1982 and left more than 150 injured, including [Simon Weston](#), the Welsh guard whose disfigured face became a defining image of the conflict.

An official board of inquiry, held in private, found in September 1982 that the tragedy in the freezing waters between Bluff Cove and Fitzroy, west of the capital, Stanley, was not due to “error” but could be put down to the “ordinary chances of war”. Some in the military and elsewhere later blamed the Welsh guards who were on the ships for not disembarking quickly enough.

A trove of witnesses statements and summaries put before the inquiry were not made public at the time, nor since, as the government said they had been given in confidence. The documents are due to remain sealed until 2065 despite efforts since by MPs on behalf of the survivors to find out more.

One key statement has now been disclosed after a freedom of information request by Crispin Black, a retired colonel who was among the survivors of the attacks on Sir Galahad and who has since written a book about the events of the day, *Too Thin for a Shroud*.

In the released account, given 10 days after the attack, Capt Robin Green, who commanded Sir Tristram, recounts in a six-page statement how he had strongly warned against the “folly” of the attempted landing of men via his ship and Sir Galahad.

Green, who died in 2009 aged 74, recalled in his statement how he had raised concerns two days before the ill-fated operation about the lack of protection being afforded to the two landing vessels against potential attacks from the Argentinian air force.

He further described the operation as “hastily mounted without sufficient thought or planning”.

Green wrote: “I was not too happy about the operation and felt that it was ill-advised to send an LSL [landing ship logistics class ship] round

unescoeted, and to remain there without protection for at least one day if not two seemed to me to be folly ... The whole operation struck me as being hastily mounted without sufficient thought or planning.”

He claimed in his statement that he did not receive the extra air raid ammunition requested before the operation. “I also said I wanted 20 more Blowpipe AA missiles and these were promised but never arrived,” he said. Green recounted how the weather that day was “fine and clear and we were fully exposed for enemy air attack”.

Black, who was 22 at the time of the disaster, said the newly released statement offered a compelling reason to open up all the sealed statements relating to the events leading up to 8 June in order to clear the name of the Welsh guards.

He said: “I think the document does a number of things. Probably most shockingly it gives the captain of Sir Tristram’s view of the plan that he was being asked to carry out: it was a folly and ill-advised.

“He also makes clear there was no air defence and he obviously feels very aggrieved about that. The other thing that it makes absolutely clear is that his order changes a number of times. I think you begin to get an idea of the kind of – how should we say? – planning shortcomings behind the whole of this. It’s not surprising that things start to go wrong.”

There were 14 annexes of evidence to the 1983 board of inquiry, of which 12 have been made available fully or in redacted form. “Two files remain closed – they are annexe E9 ‘first battalion Welsh guards’ and annexe E10 ‘offload of Sir Galahad,’” Black said. “It is a bit like Hamlet without the prince. I think ultimately people just want to know what was going on.”

Chris Bryant, the Labour MP who has been campaigning on behalf of his constituents for transparency, said the ministry of defence should make public all the documents relating to the 8 June 1982.

He said: “It is infuriating that the government continues to hide behind spurious arguments. The families concerned really want to know the truth – and it’s time they were given it.”

A government spokesman said the ministry of defence stood by the 1982 inquiry findings.

He said: “The loss of RFA Sir Galahad due to enemy action was a tragedy. The sacrifice made by those onboard will not be forgotten, and we remain grateful to all the armed forces personnel and civilians who bravely served in the Falklands conflict.

“A Board of Inquiry was convened in 1982 to investigate the loss of RFA Sir Galahad. Under government legislation (the Freedom of Information Act) we reserved the right to withhold documents as appropriate. We remain confident in the board’s findings and recommendations.”

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Medics said trans patients were being put at risk by uncertainty over how to assess them on gender-based metrics such as body weight and kidney function. Photograph: Alamy

[Transgender](#)

## NHS treatment algorithms ‘not taking transgender patients into account’

Medics say trans people being put at risk by lack of evidence on how to assess them by gender-based metrics

*Nicola Davis* Science correspondent  
[@NicolaKSDavis](#)

Fri 5 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 May 2023 11.10 EDT

A host of algorithms used by medics to assess disease risk and help make decisions on treatment are failing to take transgender patients into account, doctors have said.

Many metrics and thresholds in medicine, including ideal body weight, alcohol clearance rates, kidney function and risk of cardiovascular disease vary by gender.

A team of UK doctors and medical students have issued a warning over a lack of evidence as to whether trans patients should be considered for these gender-based scores according to their gender assigned at birth or the gender they have transitioned to – or whether alternative scores are required.

They say the situation could be putting trans patients at risk of situations ranging from receiving the wrong dose of a medication to being denied dialysis for kidney problems.

In an effort to tackle the issue, the team have launched a research initiative called Trans Gap Project.

Dr Michael Niman, a junior NHS doctor and chair of the project, said: “Currently, daily medical decisions involving gender-based scores have limited to no research for the trans community. This means that trans patients are often forgotten about or not considered in the medical world, leading to a significant gap in their access to appropriate medical care.”

Niman said there could be a glibness by the medical community towards trans people in relation to gender-based medical scores. “Common responses I get from clinicians are ‘oh, I hadn’t thought about that,’ ‘does it make a difference?’ [or] ‘there’s not that many [trans people] anyway’,” he said.

However, the team say the ramifications of inappropriate gender-based medical scores can be serious, and the issue is a concern for all trans patients, not just those on hormone replacement therapy.

“The use of inappropriate scores has real-world implications and can result in trans patients being denied access to necessary medical care, being underdosed for antibiotics [or] incorrectly anticoagulated,” said Niman.

The decision to offer statins to a trans patient with a family history of high cholesterol could depend on the gender a clinician uses when scoring the patient for their cardiovascular disease risk, the group say. The choice of

gender for scores relating to kidney function could affect whether a trans patient is offered dialysis.

“When scores that haven’t considered trans people are used, patient autonomy is impaired for trans and gender-diverse patients, as they can’t make true informed decisions on their care – which is one of the bioethic pillars,” Niman said.

In some cases, there could be safety concerns. “Clinicians are currently faced with uncertainty regarding the best clinical practice to address these scenarios, owing to a lack of evidence-based guidance,” Niman said. “It is vital clinicians take a vested interest in the research of gender-based scores for the trans community due to the importance of safe practice considerations within the NHS.”

In the first stage of the project, which is almost complete, the team have carried out a series of reviews to examine the current evidence base for six different gender-based medical scores.

Niman said the next stage would involve carrying out surveys of trans people to explore their interactions with the healthcare system. In the final stage, the team hope to take blood samples to unpick how to best apply or adapt medical scoring systems for trans patients.

Members of the trans community who wish to take part in the survey can complete a form on the project’s [website](#).

Dorian Wolfe, a third-year medical student and social media lead for the project, said the healthcare system was failing trans people from the roots up.

“As a patient, much like the majority of the trans community, I have experienced first-hand the transphobia and mistreatment that occurs when healthcare professionals aren’t educated on trans health and inclusion,” he said.

Wolfe said the Trans Gap Project had the potential to change things for the better. “Making healthcare a safer, better-informed, more inclusive space for

“my community is my main motivation for being involved in this project,” he said. “I don’t want healthcare professionals to just be aware of trans issues, I want them to be able to advocate for their trans patients.”

This article was amended on 5 May 2023 to correctly refer to “medics” in the subheading and caption, rather than “GPs” as an earlier version said.

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## 2023.05.05 - Spotlight

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‘And wait until the bit where we rip our skirts off!’ ... Lordi, the new face of Eurovision. Photograph: Eero Kokko

[Eurovision 2023](#)

**Hard rock hallelujah! How metal found an unlikely home at Eurovision**

Long synonymous with cheesy pop and earnest ballads, the song contest is also now home to bombastic metal. Past rockers and 2023 contestants explain why they're actually a perfect fit

### Matt Mills

Fri 5 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 May 2023 05.46 EDT

Mention Eurovision and most people will instantly think of Abba's Waterloo, or the sight of Céline Dion singing [Ne Partez Pas Sans Moi](#) in her widest-shouldered blazer. The contest is notorious for thrusting the cheesiest, most bombastic pop it can find into 180 million people's living rooms every May, and most of the artists playing 2023's edition in Liverpool on 13 May will cleave to one of two formulas: Europop bangers, or earnest ballads delivered with beseeching, outstretched arms.

Yet since the turn of the century, Eurovision's love for singalong anthems and OTT theatre has unintentionally made it perfect for a genre that positions itself as pop's polar opposite: heavy metal. The genre has employed larger-than-life drama ever since Iron Maiden started taking a 10ft-tall zombie on tour; even the most satanic black metal heretics often take to the stage in facepaint. And so nearly every [Eurovision](#) throws up a ferocious metal curveball, the most famous being the orc-cosplaying Lordi who won for Finland in 2006 with Hard Rock Hallelujah. Other memorable performances include those by Icelandic electro-goth BDSM troupe Hatari in 2019, bare-chested Finns Teräsbetoni in 2008, and Eldrine, an Evanescence-esque Georgian band in 2011.

This year, there are not one but two hard-rocking entries: Australia's Voyager and Germany's Lord of the Lost. Danny Estrin, frontman of synth-metal band Voyager, grew up in the small German town of Buchholz in der Nordheide and, although his family left for Perth when he was 11, his band have brought him back to Europe with their song Promise.

As a child, Estrin was obsessed with Eurovision; he owned a vinyl compilation of all the winning songs. "Millions of people watch it in Germany, and it had a significant impact on the way I write music," he says. "The central element of Eurovision, certainly in the 70s and 80s, was

melody. It was all about that beautiful, catchy hook. The emphasis I place on melody in Voyager definitely stems from that.”

Lord of the Lost are industrial glam-metal, entering with the song Blood & Glitter. “Eurovision is the perfect stage for us,” says lead singer Chris Harms. “We are a very visual band.”

Listen to Blood & Glitter and Lord of the Lost will seem like underdogs: it contains stampeding drum beats, hulking riffs and snarling vocals. Watch the music video, though, and the band become frontrunners. Against a red backdrop, the androgynous Harms is regal in his red-and-gold attire. Voyager’s Promise brings similar levels of pomp by casting chugging guitars against dance-rock synths and the band’s gleaming white outfits.

Hard rock took a long time to land at Eurovision. While rock’n’roller Freddy Quinn represented Germany at the inaugural event in 1956 with the high-energy So Geht das Jede Nacht, it wasn’t until 2005 that Wig Wam became the first metal band to play, earning ninth place for Norway.

The following year, masked monsters Lordi took the prize. “Among all the Barbie and Ken doll lookalikes there, we were real; we were the least plastic!” says the band’s founder, vocalist and costume designer, Mr Lordi, who adds that Finland’s love of metal propelled his band into the contest. “On an average day in 2001, on any radio station in Finland, you could hear a Metallica song and the next one would be Madonna.”

The rest of the work was done by the catchiness of Hard Rock Hallelujah and the band’s startling makeup. “When we were on our way to rehearsal [in full costume] and somebody was giving an interview to a big TV station, the cameras would start to turn,” Mr Lordi remembers. “There were some delegations saying: ‘Finland needs to let everybody know when they’re coming to the venue, because otherwise they’ll steal the spotlight from everybody else.’”

Among all the Barbie and Ken doll lookalikes at Eurovision, we were real; we were the least plastic

*Mr Lordi*

In 2007, Andorra sent punks Anonymous, the Czech Republic fielded hard rockers Kabát and Iceland was represented by metal singer Eiríkur Hauksson. However, none made the final. Turkish rap-metal band Manga, on the other hand, earned second place in 2010 amid an inferno of pyrotechnics. Then, in 2021, Italian glam band [Måneskin](#) won the contest with the strutting Zitti e Buoni, while Finland's Blind Channel finished sixth with their nu-metal stomper, Dark Side. Finland's much-fancied 2023 entry Käärijä performs a noisy bit of hard dance, and they sent another heavy act to Eurovision in 2022: veteran goths the Rasmus.

It was 19 years since the band's international hit In the Shadows and they hadn't had a charting single anywhere since 2009 – plus founding guitarist Pauli Rantasalmi had recently left. "We were in a bad place," says vocalist Lauri Ylönen. "We broke up, basically, so it was nice to have a mission together and something to conquer. It welded us together as a new group."

The Rasmus's Eurovision entry, Jezebel, marked their renaissance. To write the song, the band collaborated with composer-for-the-stars Desmond Child, and Jezebel reached No 4 on the Finnish singles chart. That success sadly didn't translate to Eurovision domination, as the band finished 21st, but Ylönen says Jezebel is still "a hit in our setlist".

"You could tell that the audiences got bigger [following Eurovision]," the singer says, "but I also believe Jezebel is a great hard rock song."



For those about to royal ... Lord of the Lost meet the king. Photograph: Chris Jackson/Getty Images

Lord of the Lost haven't even played yet and are already enjoying a similar commercial bump. Not only will the band support Iron Maiden this summer, they also recently performed for King Charles at a showcase of German music held at the British consulate in Hamburg. ("He has this aura," Harms says. "He approaches you and you suddenly feel calm. It's a great gift he has.")

Eurovision is the biggest stage that heavy metal bands will ever play, as the genre's bombast, melody, pyro and – in the case of Promise and Blood & Glitter's roaring bridges – brutality gets condensed into three minutes.

"It's pretty weird being in lifestyle magazines at the moment," says Voyager's Estrin. "I had to do an article the other day called What I Know About Women, which didn't even mention music or Eurovision. I'm milking it: I'm never gonna have the opportunity to do this stuff again, so why not have fun with it?"

*The 2023 Eurovision Song Contest will be held from 9 to 13 May at Liverpool Arena. Lordi's new album, *Screem Writers Guild*, is out now through Atomic Fire. The Rasmus' new album, *Rise*, is out now through*

*Playground. Voyager's new album Fearless in Love is expected to be released later this year by Season of Mist. Lord of the Lost support Iron Maiden on their UK tour in June and July.*

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Diane Keaton ... 'It's always better when you don't see me.' Photograph:  
Jesse Stone/Headpress

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# ‘God, life is so strange’: Diane Keaton on dogs, doors, wine and why she’s ‘really fancy’

Catherine Shoard

The Oscar-winning actor is back for the Book Club sequel. But what she really wants to talk about is big cars, her love for Woody Allen – and her unexpected passion



@catherineshoard

Fri 5 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 06.39 EDT

Even before her dog almost dies, my call with [Diane Keaton](#) is chaotic. There’s a delay on the line. Conversation stops and starts like a milk float. I’d emailed questions but she hasn’t read them. She wants to talk about doors. Every answer comes stacked with caveats. It’s fun and stressful – and smart. She wants to escape her own interview.

Now 77, Hollywood’s most self-effacing star doesn’t do video calls. Neither does her character in the Book Club films, the latest of which starts with her

struggling to speak via her laptop to best friends played by [Jane Fonda](#), Mary Steenburgen and Candice Bergen.

“It’s always better when you don’t see me,” she says, “or see them, because it becomes so strange, you know? I guess I mean: it’s not that bad or anything, but it’s a little odd.” We both talk, stop, talk over each other again, a car crash of chatter. Yes, phone is so much better, I say, and if there’s any nicer sound than Diane Keaton laughing at your joke, I’d like to hear it.

A pause. “I think a little goes plenty,” she says. “I mean, don’t do much more.” Not for the last time, I’m not exactly sure what she meant.

Anyway, in Book Club: The Next Chapter, a sequel to the 2018 hit, Keaton once again plays Diane, a woman in her 70s, bumbling, eccentric, fond of men’s tailoring and wide-brimmed hats. “We stole a bunch of ideas from her life,” says director Bill Holderman, who co-wrote with his wife, Erin Simms, who speak to me over Zoom a few days later. Keaton did suggest they change her character’s name, says Simms. “Something like ‘Leslie’. But it was already the second day of shooting.”



With Andy García in Book Club: The Next Chapter. Photograph: Fabio Zayed/Universal

In the first film, the widowed Diane hooks up with [Andy García](#). In the sequel, the four friends go to Italy for Fonda's bachelorette party. Cue big dinners, long montages (frocks, shops, naked statues), endless double entendre and a remarkably large part for Holby City's Hugh Quarshie. And booze. So much booze.

I was impressed by the drinking, I say; is it accurate? “Oh yeah,” says Keaton gamely. “About six in the morning I’ll have a Lillet, or a chardonnay.” It’s now 11am; how many bottles down is she? “Oh God, maybe 25?”

In fact, Keaton has put her name to a [white](#) and a [red](#), but both are designed to be drunk over a tumbler of ice – not the serving suggestion of the really hardened wino. Still, she’s keen to run with the fiction: “Maybe then I’ll get a different kind of part. ‘I hear Diane Keaton is a heavy drinker and you can really push her around. It makes it much easier if she just shuts up and drinks.’ Ridiculous!”

The first Book Club made eight times its budget by serving undercatered over-60s who loved Sex and the City. Its story saw all four women variously shaken by reading Fifty Shades of Grey; this time round, their homework is The Alchemist. It’s less integral to the plot. There’s some stuff about fatalism. “Not something I ramble on about,” says Keaton, “because it’s all part of it, of what we all deal with.” A gnomic pause. “And then, sometimes, it’s kind of great.”

What about her character’s big speech about hanging on to youthful hopes? “I’m sort of addicted to getting in my car and driving through the streets of LA,” she says – again, a bit tangentially. “Which most people don’t do any more. And then getting out and photographing these stores and buildings that have been just decimated. They’re no longer there!”

Why are they so haunting? “Because life is haunting! You have an idea in your mind of what it is, or what it should be, or what it could be. But it’s not that at all! It’s just things going up and down!”

I’m struggling slightly to picture it. Los Angeles is not, after all, a pedestrian city, unless you’re on your uppers. Anybody on the pavement stands out –

Diane Keaton especially. Do people ever ask what she's doing? "No, because they don't care. For the most part, they're just in a hurry and they're not looking."

Has she ever snuck inside one of the buildings? "Oh, I can't. My God, I'd be thrown in jail because they're locked up! You want me to go to jail? That'd be better for you. You can use this: 'I was talking to Diane Keaton but then I heard she got thrown in jail cause she tried get inside old stores.' Yeah! I bet."

Actually, Keaton is quite the architecture expert. She's made more money flipping houses for clients (who include Madonna) than she has making movies. You can tell a lot about a society through its urban planning, she says.: "I think they're more present in Italy. They're more there with you. It's just so different from things here. It's not as driven." During the shoot, she saw a lot of doors and posted photos of them to Instagram.

"Oh, my God. Oh, I love doors. Uh-huh. In fact, I'm looking at them right now." She likes to imagine the exits and entrances, "the people who lived there or what they sold or why is it empty? It makes you think about all the aspects that more or less all of us go through. Like: oh, I did that movie, but the other one was not working out very well, but then, y'know, something snuck in.

"It's just so interesting that we're alive, that we're here, and that most of us who are lucky have cars, which take you all over the place. I love my car."

What type does she have?

"Well, I have a [Mercedes] G-wagon. I'm a bitch. I'm fancy. I'm really fancy. It's a black car. Yeah. It's pretty good though. I like it."

Does she go fast? "No. What I like to do is look, so I can get in trouble with that, when I'm not watching the road, I remember Mom used to tell me: 'Diane, don't do that. God, be careful. Look ahead. Don't start looking around when you're driving.' Yeah."



Keaton, with (from left) Jane Fonda, Candice Bergen and Mary Steenburgen in Book Club: The Next Chapter. Photograph: Riccardo Ghilardi/AP

In case it's not yet clear, speaking to Keaton is like listening to outtakes from [Annie Hall](#) delivered by carrier pigeon. She's a singular actor in so many ways – her aversion to cosmetic surgery, for instance, and hair dye, and anything more revealing than a roll-neck, makes for a dramatic contrast with some of her Book Club co-stars. But most disarming today is how indistinguishable she seems from her screen self.

"I think the amount of overlap in the Venn diagram of Diane as a person and Diane as an actor," says Holderman, "is unique. How she exists in the world, how she's wired. She is relentlessly in the moment, as a person and as an actor."

One morning, they visited the Sistine Chapel together. "To watch her observe the world is to understand who Diane Keaton is," he says. "She is genuinely fascinated. She has all of that texture in her soul." Even somewhere more mundane, she'd still be hopping up to examine light fittings. "A lot of people who have that artistic sensibility, as they get older, become self-aware." Somehow, he says, she hasn't.

Keaton is generally described as self-deprecating. That sort of underplays it. “Maybe she’d kill me for saying this,” says Holderman, carefully. “She knows she’s a movie star, but I don’t think she *knows* she’s a movie star. She’s just so in the moment of her experience and existence that to reflect on the larger … There’s just no time or space for it.”

Keaton was born in an LA suburb in 1946, the first of four children for Dorothy and Jack Hall. Her father was an estate agent, her mother won the regional title in the Mrs America competition for accomplished housewives. Seeing her crowned on stage prompted a mix of pride and jealousy in Keaton, who was eight at the time.

Dorothy was also a prolific – and frustrated – photographer, collagist, potter and diarist (85 volumes). Both of Keaton’s [memoirs](#), as well as her [essay collection](#), are as much about her mother as, say, starring in some of the most significant films ever made, dating A-listers and winning an Oscar.

“She was everything to me,” says Keaton of Dorothy today. “She was wonderful. She was my example for what you can do with life. She was the heart of everything that was best.” In 1993, Dorothy was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s; it feels significant it was only after this, in 1996, that Keaton adopted a daughter, Dexter (named after Cary Grant’s character in *The Philadelphia Story*), followed, four years later, by a son, Duke. Late single motherhood changed her profoundly, she has said, juggled with caring for Dorothy until her death in 2008, and her brother [Randy](#), who died in 2021, after years of mental health problems.

Her books are love letters to that family, as well as ex-boyfriends, including Al Pacino, who she wanted to marry, and Warren Beatty, who she wanted to be. The common thread is the difficulty of navigating a relationship with someone when you or they, or both of you, are also loved by the public.

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Today, Keaton lives with Reggie, a shaggy-haired rescue retriever and the headline act on her Instagram. She pads about in the background as we talk; Keaton enables an introduction. Is their bond easier because it's free from jealousy? No, says Keaton: Reggie prefers the housekeeper. "She is besotted. When she's there, I get less, right, Reggie? Reggie is just a spoiled brat and she treats me wrong, don't you, Reggie? No, she's great. I love dogs. And I love animals. Do you have a dog? No? Maybe I could get you one."

Can't she just fire her rival? "Oh yeah. I'd like to get rid of her. No, of course not! She's great. I need her. It's fine. Don't feel sorry for me. I love it. It's all interesting. It's never dull, ever, life."

Keaton's breakthrough, it's worth remembering, came five years before *Annie Hall*: as Michael Corleone's girlfriend, then wife, Kay, in [The Godfather](#) (1972). It's a composed and still performance, all slow-clocked horror, in what is definitely not a comedy. Keaton is a great actor, wholly adept at playing women who are unquirky— even unpalatable. The promiscuous cruiser in [Looking for Mr Goodbar](#), the racked wife in [Shoot the Moon](#). An acid TV host in [Morning Glory](#), an evil nun in [The Young Pope](#). Even her reporters, in [Reds](#) and, particularly, [Manhattan](#), were pretty prickly.



With Al Pacino in The Godfather Pt II. Photograph: Photo 12/Alamy

But she's hobbled by her own persona: indelible and, to many – including directors such as Nancy Meyers – irresistible. The man who first flagged her charms was, of course, Woody Allen, who cast her in the 1971 Broadway run of Play it Again, Sam. They fell in love, split amicably and along the way made eight movies, their last that lovely free-wheeling reunion, 1992's [Manhattan Murder Mystery](#), which saw Keaton taking on a role written for Mia Farrow – who [still wanted to play it](#), despite [accusing](#) Allen of child molestation a few days before.

Keaton has been loyal to Allen since the resurfacing of those allegations, which he denies and that two investigations have dismissed. "I love Woody," [said](#) Keaton in 2014, "and I believe my friend." In his 2020 memoir, Allen described Keaton as his "north star"; the person whose opinion matters the most.

How did that make her feel? "Oh, my God," she says, "do you know how much I owe everything to him? He was so amazing. It always was really special to be with Woody. He was great. He was everything, and he remains [so] to me. He gave me everything. He really did. Woody made it loose. That helped me enormously."



Keaton with Woody Allen in *Annie Hall*. Photograph: Bettmann Archive

Keaton trained in New York under Sanford Meisner, who advocated abandoning everything but spontaneity – a propitious fit for Keaton, who was kind of like that already. “She’s completely forward-facing,” says Holderman. “You don’t get false notes. She just gives in to the moment and the other actor, 100%.” Small wonder she’s popular with such performers; generous attention is flattering. She even dishes it out to journalists – I’ve never been complimented so lavishly by anyone in such a short space of time.

“Diane is sublime,” emails García, “because you can go in any direction at any given moment from take to take. I love working with her.” She says almost exactly the same thing of him. “It’s such a great experience to have had these kind of people come and go in my life and learn something, or not. Instead of being consumed by: oh gee, am I gonna, oh come on. I don’t ... You know? On and on. Endlessly boring.”

Given how many manic pixie dream girls she’s inadvertently spawned, Keaton gives surprisingly short shrift to emotional self-indulgence. Her 2011 memoir revealed four years of bulimia in the early 70s for which, she wrote firmly, she had no one to blame but herself. Her new film, too, champions hardy resilience in the face of, say, having your luggage nicked or heart disease.



Jack Nicholson, Keaton and Warren Beatty in *Reds*. Photograph: Ronald Grant

“What can I say except that it’s a horrible shame,” she says of victim culture today. “But we all have situations that are difficult at times. You gotta get over it! I swear to God: what did you put in your mouth?”

Confusing noises come down the line. “Oh, my gosh! She’s a moron! Like me!” A kerfuffle. Keaton comes back breathless. “You know what it was? I’m gonna tell you right now. It was a darn rock! Reggie was eating a rock. My dog! A big rock! I love her. She’s OK. I got it right outta her mouth.” A gasp of relief.

Keaton has a lot on her plate: choking dogs, photographs, wine, a [recently released range of 50 textiles](#), some [modelling for clothes brand J Crew](#). Right now, she’s making a new movie in North Carolina with Kathy Bates; earlier this year she was shooting at a retirement home in Walton-on-Thames with Patricia Hodge and Lulu. Why work so much?

“I’ll tell you, it gives me an opportunity to get to know more people in a different realm. And you have to worry about things like: ‘How do you wear this?’”

“It keeps her going,” agrees Simms. “She doesn’t settle in. And the energy she brings – you can’t describe it, but you feel it when she’s gone.” Holderman nods and tells me about filming Keaton and García’s first date scene.

“We shot that in basically a tinderbox,” he says. “It was, like, 140 degrees and the crew was done. Diane didn’t even break a sweat. And she was in a turtleneck.” His wife nods at him, still aghast. “Diane is on a different plane,” she says. “She had an extra dose.”

It’s hard to disagree. At some point during our conversation, midway through some other thought, she suddenly says: “So you’ll just keep thinking of me walking the streets, right? You’ll be thinking I’m that weird woman. And no one ever notices anything because they’re not really engaged. I mean, that tells you so much … God, life is so strange. And that’s why I really am fascinated by these places, because they’re abandoned, but they were something very important. Anyway, we shouldn’t talk about that, because people are gonna go: ‘What is she talking about? Get rid of her!’” She laughs. In the background, I think I hear licking.

Book Club: The Next Chapter is released on 12 May.

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Photograph: Sarah Jane Taylor/Shutterstock

[Readers' travel tips](#)[United Kingdom holidays](#)

## 'Chips to die for': readers' favourite UK seaside towns

The cries of gulls serenade our tipsters as they promenade past funfairs, stripy beach huts and ice-cream shops from Cornwall to Aberdeen. **Scroll down for the winning tip and to send in your own**

[\*Guardian readers\*](#)

Fri 5 May 2023 02.00 EDT

### Kingsand, Cornwall

Rame peninsula. Tiny beach, endless sea. There's a seafront pub right there in Kingsand, the [Devonport](#), just up the steps, serving delicious food – or you can just sit outside and look at the sunset. We went to Kingsand for our very first holiday together, my then-lover and I. I booked at short notice –

the guesthouse we stayed in has since been put up for sale. We played guitar on the beach and got roped into a sea shanty singalong with the locals. We went back about 10 years later – same beach, same gorgeous yellow house on the beach, same pub. Children were playing on the beach who wouldn't have been born yet when we had last come. It was special.

**Ewa Szypula**

## Felixstowe, Suffolk



Landguard nature reserve, Felixstowe. Photograph: Angela Chalmers/Alamy

Felixstowe hits that sweet spot of being prosperous without being pretentious. Five miles of sand and shingle stretch south to north, from the nature reserve, fortress and museum at Landguard with views over the Stour and Orwell estuaries to the hamlet of Felixstowe Ferry. The seafront gardens north of the pier are worth a traipse, and by Mannings amusements there's not only a fine fish and chip shop but also the Beach Street food and crafts market. There are also historic beach huts, gentle cliffs and the blue-flag south beach to enjoy. Try the Spa Pavilion for shows, and drinks overlooking the sea.

**Ian**

Profile

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## **Swanage, Dorset**

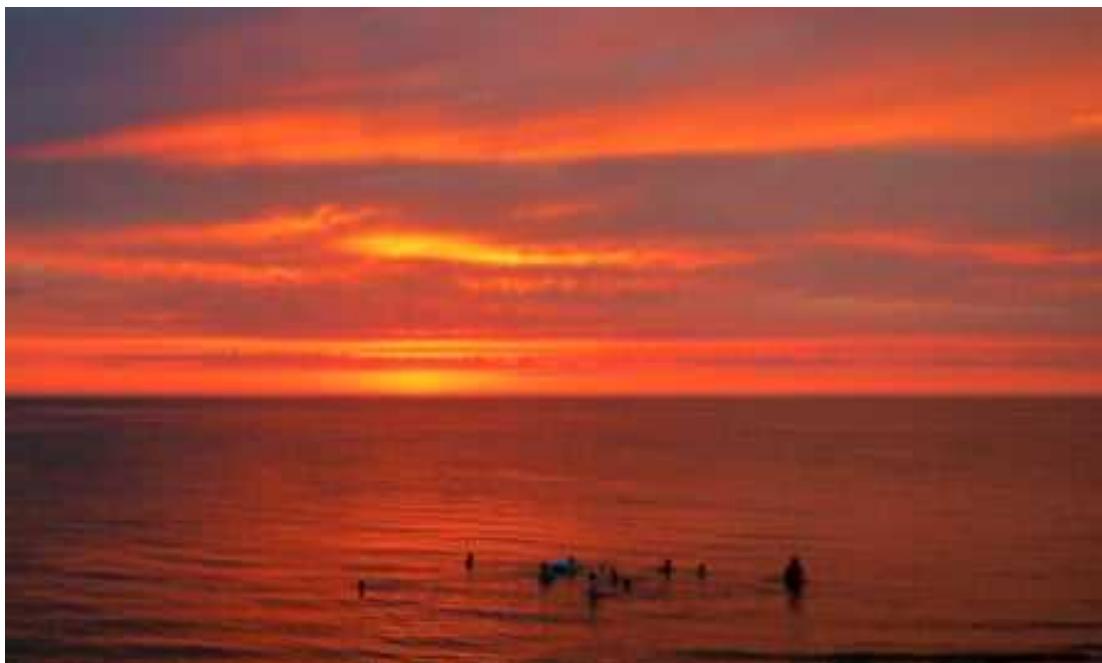


Photograph: Ceri Breeze/Alamy

Revel in jolly, traditional British seaside fare in Swanage: an ice-cream on the sandy blue flag beach, arcades as you stroll along the waterfront and a tea under the watchful eye of seagulls. At the end of the town climb up the Downs to join the coastal path; wonderful views of Durlston Bay await. Top off your stay in style with a meal at [Shell Bay restaurant](#) in Studland. Soaking up the beach vibe, we went all out with the crab, fries and bubbly while basking in a glorious sunset. Hard to believe that this haven is only a few hours from London.

**Paul**

## Hunstanton, Norfolk



Hunstanton is one of very few east coast towns that faces west. Photograph: Paul Marriott/Alamy

Facing west, Hunstanton could be the only town on the east coast with great sunset views. All those beautiful sunsets after days of doing what comes naturally at the seaside: beaches, safe bathing, funfair, amusements, fish and chips to die for. Then there are the cafes, independent shops, promenade kiosks, concerts and the entertainment on the Green overlooking the sea, where there is a statue of artist Henry Styleman Le Strange, who developed the town in the mid-19th century. The town's theatre has a full range of family entertainment throughout the year. Hunstanton is a proper old-

fashioned seaside resort with plenty for everyone to enjoy.

**John Richardson**

## Tynemouth, Tyne and Wear



‘One of the most beautiful stretches of beach in the north-east.’ Photograph: travellinglight/Alamy

Maybe I’m biased because I’m local, but Tynemouth has one of the most beautiful stretches of beach in the north-east. About 20 minutes from Newcastle city centre, it’s a perfect little seaside escape to enjoy with friends and family. Front Street, the main hub of Tynemouth, has a great mix of gastro pubs, fish and chip shops, coffee shops and small, independent businesses. If you get to do just one thing, walk from [Tynemouth Priory](#), make a lunch stop at [Riley’s Fish Shack](#) on King Edward’s Bay for some local seafood then head to [Long Sands](#) beach.

**Abbey Ramsey**

## Stonehaven, near Aberdeen



A view of Dunnottar Castle and Aberdeenshire coast. Photograph: Makasana Photo/Alamy

While it's a seaside town with a choice of two beaches – the main beach or the locals' secret, [Skatie Shore](#) – the real gem is the harbour. Eat at the [Seafood Bothy](#), a vintage horsebox selling freshly caught lobster, or the [Marine Hotel](#), where you can sample craft beers from the proprietor's [Six°North brewery](#). Visit at night, when the lights are twinkling off the still water, or in the early morning for dawn paddleboarding, followed by a hike up the cliffs behind the harbour to [Dunnottar Castle](#).

**Veronica**

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## **Littlehampton, West Sussex**



Littlehampton's main beach in August. Photograph: Alamy

This is definitely not the best seaside town in Britain, but it does have a great climate, cheerful atmosphere, good beach, funfair, and excellent fresh seafood that can be bought at several places along the pretty, pedestrianised approach to the coast by the bank of the Arun. Across the Arun there is a nature reserve and a quiet beach offering lovely walks for miles west.

**Matthew**

## **Porthcawl, Bridgend**



Coney Beach in Porthcawl. Photograph: Colin Burdett/Alamy

Porthcawl between Cardiff and Swansea has a beautiful golden sandy beach. The tide goes really far out leaving lots of rock pools to search in as well as little pools of water which are great for little ones to play in safely. There is a lovely walk into town along the seafront, where you'll find a funfair. One fee covers all the rides, and just outside the entrance is an amazing ice-cream stand with a fabulous array of flavours; we always order two scoops each because, well it's a must! We visit every other summer as its just glorious and afterwards we always feel like we've been abroad.

**Kerry Gilham**

## New Brighton, Wirral



The view to Liverpool. Photograph: Paul Warburton/Alamy

New Brighton, on the Wirral, flies under the radar but is a brilliant seaside town close to Liverpool and Manchester and easily accessible by train. Head to vibrant Victoria Road, [recently revived by a local resident](#), for on-street dining, fantastic pubs and eclectic street art. Don't miss the breakfast "bin lids" at [Becky's Breakys](#) – proper soul food sandwiches with a proper scouse welcome. Follow it up with a stroll down the promenade and an ice-cream at local favourite [Cafe Creme](#).

Alice

## Winning tip: Eyemouth, Scottish Borders



St Abbs Lighthouse near Eyemouth. Photograph: Owen Humphreys/PA

This charming fishing village boasts stunning coastal scenery, fresh seafood and plenty of outdoor activities. Head to the working harbour, where you can watch the local fishers bring in their daily catch and feed the resident seals that gather in the area. Here you'll also find [Joe's Catch](#) seafood hut, where you can enjoy freshly caught fish, crab or lobster. For some adventure, take a canoe or paddleboard out into the bay or lace up your boots and head north on the Berwickshire coastal path. The trail will lead you to [St Abb's Head](#) with its thousands of guillemots, razorbills, and kittiwakes.

**Paul Campbell**



*Please use the comments to share your UK seaside tips*

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Mohammed, 35, from North Darfur, is now in Tunisia. 'I feel that my friends and relatives in Sudan will have to save themselves to find a safe place to live,' he says. Photograph: Alessio Mamo

## Refugees

# 'Not safe for us': Sudanese in north Africa warn fleeing relatives of danger

People who sought route to Europe before fighting erupted in Khartoum speak of police brutality, torture and homelessness

*Lorenzo Tondo and Marta Bellingreri in Tunis*

Fri 5 May 2023 00.30 EDT

Ever since fighting erupted in his home town of Nyala, the state capital of South Darfur in Sudan, in mid-April, Khaled's mobile phone has not stopped ringing. Family members, friends and acquaintances want to know how to reach north [Africa](#) and which country is best for departing for Europe.

The 17-year-old, currently living in the Tunisian capital, Tunis, wishes he could tell them that the journey is simple and that countries like [Tunisia](#) and Libya are welcoming and safe.

However, the reality could not be more different. Khaled, tortured in Libya, expelled by Morocco, kicked by Algerian border guards, beaten by the Tunisian police and today homeless on the streets of Tunis, knows this very well.

“They ask if they can come to Libya or Tunisia and how to get here,” Khaled said. “I say, ‘No, don’t come. Here there’s just suffering for you. Tunisia or Libya are not safe countries.’ But they are desperate.”

Khaled said the people he had spoken to were particularly afraid of the Rapid Support Forces, the paramilitary group that grew out of the Janjaweed militia responsible for genocide in the war in Darfur that broke out in 2003.

According to the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR), more than [800,000 people may flee Sudan](#) as a result of the fighting that erupted between the army and the RSF last month.

“There are about 334,000 people already displaced in [Sudan](#) and over 100,000 have already left the country,” said Matthew Saltmarsh, the head of news and media at UNHCR. “Given the speed at which events are moving, numbers of new refugee arrivals are expected to increase further.”



Refugees outside the UN's International Organisation for Migration offices in Tunis, after they were forced to move from their encampment in front of the UNHCR building last month. Photograph: Alessio Mamo

Mohammed, 35, comes from Kutum, a town in North Darfur state. Like Khaled, he is also now living in Tunisia.

“It’s not going to be easy,” he said. “I feel that my friends and relatives in Sudan will have to save themselves to find a safe place to live.”

The UN has urged Sudan’s neighbours to keep their borders open, but they are mostly ill-equipped, so not everyone can offer a long-term stay.

Egypt remains the main destination at the moment, with more than 40,000 Sudanese crossing the border. However, Cairo appears either unprepared or unwilling to accommodate thousands of desperate people, and Sudanese people have spent days in the open air waiting to enter.

“There are no easy escape routes right now,” said Michelle D’Arcy, the Sudan country director for the Norwegian People’s Aid organisation. “The route they might choose depends on their location, connection and privilege as it is costing more and more to leave the country every day.”

Aid workers said the refugees' priority at the moment is saving their lives, but in the near future, thousands of them could be forced to attempt the dangerous journey to Europe. In the absence of humanitarian corridors, the fastest path is the one that passes through north Africa.

Libya, which shares a 237-mile (382km) border with Sudan, was until recently the main departure point for people trying to reach Italy by boat. The country is in the hands of gangs and arms traffickers, and the risk of ending up in prison or tortured is high.

Khaled, who arrived in Libya in 2019 at the age of 14, made three failed attempts to reach Europe from there.

"I left Sudan alone when I was just boy, because my parents could not sustain me and my five sisters," he said. "I was the only one who could emigrate and try to send money to my family. I spent almost three and a half years in Libya, in the east of the country, in Ajdabiya and then Tripoli."



Khaled, 17, inside his tent, which he shares with a friend. 'After my experience, as a black and Sudanese refugee, I don't believe any state will treat us well,' he says. Photograph: Alessio Mamo

The first time Khaled tried to cross the Mediterranean on a small boat was in 2019, from Zuwaara, but 50 metres from the shore, the Libyan coastguard

intercepted his vessel. He tried again in February 2021, but the Libyan authorities pulled him back and dozens of people who had left with him drowned.

“I tried to reach Europe by sea from Zawiya for the last time in January 2022,” he said. “But that time we were stopped even before boarding the boat.”

As a result, Khaled was transferred to a Libyan prison where he says he was tortured for 36 days.

“There were 400 of us in that prison … If we didn’t have money, we would never have left,” he says.

In October 2022, Khaled tried to reach Spain through Morocco and Algeria, but border guards in both countries had sealed off the crossing into their territories, deploying hundreds of police officers ready to use violence.

“They beat me as soon as I got close to the border. For an entire day we were between them at the borders. Eventually, me and other asylum seekers spent many days walking until we entered Tunisia.”

The Guardian met Khaled and dozens of other Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers from sub-Saharan Africa in a makeshift tarpaulin tent outside the offices of the UN migration agency in Tunis. They have been living there without water or electricity, with the sole assistance of aid groups, for at least two months.

Since February, when the Tunisian president, Kais Saied, made a racist speech in which he claimed that irregular migration from other parts of Africa was part of an international plot to change Tunisia’s character, black immigrants in Tunisia have been living in increasing danger. Soon after the speech, many were evicted from their homes, and entire neighbourhoods were raided.



A demonstration against Kais Saied's speech in February and the violence that ensued. Photograph: Alessio Mamo

"I get calls from friends and relatives," said Mohammed. "When they ask if they can join me in Tunisia, I tell them it's not safe for us here."

Following Saied's speech, Khaled, who had found work on a horse farm, was fired and forced to live on the streets. In April, he was arrested during a protest outside the UNHCR building in Tunis.

"They took me to the police centre of Buhayra together with nine other people and tortured us with electric cables," Khaled said. "The Tunisian police told us, 'Why don't you cross the sea and go to Italy?'"

Tunisia has replaced Libya as the main point of departure for refugees in north Africa, with 20,000 people having attempted the crossing so far this year. However, more departures also mean more deaths, to the point that authorities in Tunisia are considering [building new cemeteries](#), as the country runs out of space to bury the dozens of bodies washing up every day on its shores.

"Sudanese refugees should not have to even consider the perilous channels to reach Europe," said D'Arcy. "European countries should be thinking how

they can provide legal channels of asylum, welcoming them with the same generosity they offered to Ukrainian refugees.”

Khaled is no longer afraid to risk his life. Having survived a four-year ordeal, he has nothing left to lose.

“After my experience, as a black and Sudanese refugee, I don’t believe any state will treat us well,” he said. “It’s been like this for me up to now. It will be the same for all the Sudanese who pass through here after me.”

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## 2023.05.05 - Opinion

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‘A birth partner serves many functions – they ask for water, pain relief, examinations where you can’t.’ Photograph: Lionel Wotton/Alamy

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## **No woman should have to give birth alone. Pregnant asylum seekers need our support**

[Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett](#)



Stories of women supporting one another in the community are heartening, but more volunteer birth partners are needed

Fri 5 May 2023 05.11 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 May 2023 05.57 EDT

It feels trite to say that pregnancy and birth can be the most vulnerable experiences in a woman's life, and yet there is a need to say it, still, because so much of that physical experience feels untranslatable. There was certainly a moment while I was giving birth when I felt acutely that my future sanity was in jeopardy. What saved me was my husband, my birth partner.

The role of the birth partner has increased in importance in recent decades; we are far removed from the days when our grandfathers were told to stay outside the birthing room because of the old belief that men would faint. Women [being forced to give birth alone](#) during the pandemic has rightly been a source of outrage, and yet this is the situation facing some single women every day. This is especially true of migrant women, who lack the support network so many of us are lucky to have. Yet I have rarely heard anyone express concern about the lonely births that asylum seekers often endure.

A birth partner serves many functions – they ask for water, pain relief, examinations when you can't. They seek clarification from medical professionals about what is happening. They stroke your back and absorb your fears and your fury. Migrant women are especially vulnerable and disadvantaged, because they do not know the healthcare system, may not speak the language, and often have no family support. Many will have a history of trauma, compounded by negotiating what is an increasingly hostile environment. To give birth alone in this context is a daunting prospect indeed.

It is in response to this set of circumstances that Amma Birth Companions, a Glasgow charity, was founded. The project trains volunteers to support women who would otherwise give birth alone. Since it was founded in 2019, it has supported almost 300 women, most of whom are in the [asylum process and at least a third](#) of whom are survivors of trafficking. Language, cultural barriers and poverty are factors in their lack of access to services, and they need help navigating the system. Pregnancy and childbirth can interact with pre-existing mental health conditions such as PTSD to cause perinatal mental health problems, so such support is vital.

The project is flourishing, and has now expanded beyond its original remit, offering postnatal support, antenatal education and advocacy. It's an inspiring example of women supporting women in the community, recognising that it is inhumane for any woman to give birth alone. When it comes to childbirth, this is what solidarity looks like.

There is no one type of volunteer: there are mothers, grandmothers, students and those who don't want to have children. Once a pregnant woman has been matched with one of their pool of 60 volunteers, ideally one who speaks the same language, that volunteer might visit her at home two or three times during the third trimester, assisting with planning for the birth, packing a hospital bag, signposting to other services, and providing antenatal education, as well as crucial emotional and moral support.

Then, from 37 weeks, the birth companion is on call to attend the birth. To know there is someone waiting, only a phone call away, to be your advocate must be a weight off any expectant mother's mind, but especially so in a

strange, often hostile country. We all need someone to hold our hand at times like these.

Comfort was one of the first women to be supported by Amma when she delivered her son Simon by planned caesarean section three years ago. At the time, she had serious mental health problems and support had fallen away due to the pandemic. “Just to have somebody there was good, as I was really worried about how it was just me. It was really scary. They stayed by me, stood by me, spoke to the midwife and the doctor on my behalf. They were more like family,” she told me.

She hadn’t intended to breastfeed but with support she decided to do it and ended up loving the experience, breastfeeding Simon for 18 months. It goes to show how the work of birthing partners can help to shape a mother and child’s lives. Comfort was so moved by the support she received she is now an active volunteer and a member of the board, advocating for other women.

Amma is not the only organisation offering birth companionship – they exist elsewhere, from Project Mama in Bristol to London’s Happy Baby Community. If the illegal migration bill passes (it heads to the House of Lords next week), pressure on these organisations is likely to increase as they try to fill the gaps in support provision. Women fleeing persecution who arrive in the UK via “irregular” means will be prevented from claiming asylum and detained indefinitely, with no exemption for those who are pregnant, removing the vital protection introduced in 2016 by the [72-hour time limit](#) on the detention of pregnant women.

This will only increase the barriers these women face, from not accessing services for fear of deportation to the life-threatening implications of being placed in detention. In the House of Lords, Ruth Lister is planning to table an amendment to the bill to preserve the 72-hour detention time limit for pregnant women. Hopefully, it will pass, but many more women still need support and companionship during pregnancy and childbirth. To choose to give that, as Comfort and her fellow volunteers are doing, is a powerful gift indeed.

## What’s working

I have been reading the work of another Scottish-based woman this week, midwife Leah Hazard. Her book Womb: The Inside Story of Where We All Began is humane, intelligent but accessible, and full of fascinating insights. I am realising just how little we are taught about the female body.

## What's not

Now that many of my friends with babies are returning to full-time work, the bairn and I find ourselves increasingly without company. There must be other freelance, part-time women with one-year-olds out there at a loose end in the daytime, but I haven't found them yet and am slightly missing the camaraderie of maternity leave.

- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett is a Guardian columnist and author
  - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*
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‘Our last strike, back in 2007, caused more than \$3bn of economic damage in Los Angeles alone. As of this writing, the entertainment conglomerates have seen a more-than-\$10bn drop in shareholder value just in the first few days of our walkout.’ Photograph: Frederic J Brown/AFP/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[US news](#)

## Hollywood thinks it can divide and conquer the writers’ strike. It won’t work

James Schamus

Conglomerates want to turn us into gig workers or replace us with AI scabs. Writers across the world are uniting to fight back

Fri 5 May 2023 05.06 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 May 2023 15.32 EDT

I and 12,000 of my fellow Writers Guild of America colleagues went on strike this week against the conglomerates that make and control much of the “content” consumed by global audiences. Late night comedy-variety

shows have gone dark; untold numbers of productions have been disrupted and are in the process of shutting down; studio gates and corporate offices are being besieged by thousands of picketers.

Our last strike, back in 2007, caused more than \$3bn of economic damage in Los Angeles alone. This strike could be even more costly.

We didn't want this strike. It's already causing genuine suffering to many of our union members, and to many support staff and other workers whose livelihoods are being immediately affected. But that suffering is nothing compared with the pain and degradation that the conglomerates have openly proclaimed they plan to inflict on us. Our collective action is the only thing that can stop them.

As a member of the Guild negotiating committee, I've had a front-row seat the past couple of months to the conglomerates' tactics and strategies. They haven't been subtle about their intentions. We've heard industry leaders (some of whom just this past month announced annual salaries of \$50m and more) tell us that they can weather a strike because they have plenty of international programming produced far outside the Guild's jurisdiction. The globalization of our industry, which in many positive ways has de-centered Hollywood's parochial dominance (think of the success of shows such as *Squid Game*) is now being used as a cudgel against workers, a tactic familiar to industrial and service workers who have seen their jobs "offshored".

But an unintended – at least for the conglomerates – side-effect of this globalization has been a remarkable increase in international solidarity. The International Affiliation of Writers Guilds, which started in 1986 as a loose grouping of unions from English-speaking countries, now represents guilds whose 50,000 members span the globe, from India to Spain to South Africa. And they are sending a powerful message to their members – or, rather, their members are sending a powerful message through them: don't write on Guild-covered projects, don't be a scab.

Along with the unprecedented solidarity writers are getting from sister unions here in the US and Canada – already many Teamsters are parking their trucks, taking the keys, and refusing to cross picket lines – that

message is resonating loudly. If the conglomerates thought they could replace us with cheaper, non-union writers from distant shores, they've got another think coming.

Of course, our bosses are also dreaming of replacing us another way: with generative AI software. One of the most startling moments in our negotiations came when the conglomerates flat-out refused to even counter our proposals about AI, instead offering an “annual meeting to discuss advancements in technology”. I don’t think even an AI chatbot could have come up with a more absurd response.

The fact is that AI is here and it’s going to transform our lives and work in unimaginable ways. I, like many of my fellow writers, am both nervous and excited about the prospect of how AI as a tool will be used in our storytelling, and I don’t think of it as a kind of binary on/off switch that will simply shut off our jobs and replace us.

But that just makes the conglomerates’ position even more insidious. Because while we don’t know how AI will function as a writer, we already know how our bosses intend to use it as managers; part of their jobs, after all, is to make sure the power of capital can use every tool at its disposal to disempower workers as they transform what used to be jobs into endless, frantic scrambles for gigs.

To understand the future – and by that I mean the present, immediate future – that the conglomerates are preparing for the people who imagine and create the shows and movies you watch, let me sketch out for you the kind of push notifications our bosses will, if they get their way, soon be receiving every morning. They’ll go like this:

*Hi. Your writer, James (4.92 stars) is arriving now at the virtual TV writers' room. He will wait for five minutes before his day rate will begin to apply, though feel free to dismiss him at any time without cause.*

*Using his WriteOnSight™ software (the license for which he has paid for himself) he will this morning occupy himself with filling in dialogue and making copy edits on the studio's AI-generated outline for next week's episode of the hit series Sand Point Dad, the new action-drama starring*

*Kevin Sorbo as himself, part of the expanding Real Moms of Liberty cinematic TV universe. After one hour, his WriteOnSight™ virtual executive mentor will provide him, as well as, of course, the studio executives in charge of the show who are monitoring his progress on their dashboards, with his first Let'sShootIt!™ rating, which will indicate the probability that his work will be used by the studio.*

*A rating of over 75% will award him the first of his much-sought-after Golden Quill™ tokens, 10 of which will give him a 5% premium on his daily rate, though only pro-rated to those hours consecutively worked at high probability, with the understanding that Golden Quill™ tokens cannot be carried over from one episode to another.*

Or some such. You get the idea. The bosses won't immediately be replacing us all with AI, but they have every intention to use it to place us deeper and deeper in indentured servitude, under the guise of liberating us, as they have ride-share drivers, into a state of eternal, job-seeking, "free" agency. We're seeing the logical unfolding of a process by which all of us already, as consumers of hyper-financialized dataveillance entertainment "content", are served up our amusements by algorithmically conditioned streaming feeds. Now, in a mirror image of that consumptive process, that very "content" will be produced under similar conditions of dataveillance and data extraction.

Who trains ChatGPT and other AI engines? Workers in Africa, many of whom make less than \$2 a day

It's easy to see this simply as a story of machines taking over human agency and control. But that is also more than a bit of a feint. Because all of these new technologies, no matter how opaque and automated they are and appear, sit atop a mountain of often hidden and unacknowledged human labor – labor that is overwhelmingly immiserated and exploited.

Take ChatGPT, for example. Like all generative AI, it only "knows" or can act upon what is available to it digitally; unless it is trained otherwise, a great deal of what it will probably encounter on the internet comes from the vast sea of bile and hate that algorithmically goosed "engagement" with fury-inducing monetizable distractions provokes in us.

Who trains ChatGPT and other AI engines to avoid all that? [Workers in Africa](#), many of whom make less than \$2 a day. They digitally handle the worst that online humanity has to offer as they train our magical AI engines to ignore it. It's traumatizing and difficult work, as well as, perhaps, a losing battle. And it is work – like the work writers do when they co-create new forms of empathy and imagination – that only humans can do.

Which is why I am prouder than ever of my fellow Writers Guild members for taking the risk to go out on strike – but even, perhaps, more excited to hail the creation, just this week, of the world's newest union, the African Content Moderators Union, founded in Nairobi, with 150 founding members. The risks those workers are taking in forming their union are extraordinary, but so is the inspiration they bring.

Our strike, and their struggle, are joined together, and that struggle is not a battle between humans and machines, but rather a battle between humanity and capital. This round, I'm betting on humanity.

- James Schamus is a writer, producer, director, and professor of film at Columbia University, and the former CEO of Focus Features, which he co-founded
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Kathy Bates, left, and Abby Ryder Fortson in a scene from the new film adaptation of Judy Blume's 'most beloved novel', *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. Photograph: Dana Hawley/AP

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## Being a teenage girl is only getting harder. Thank God they still have Judy Blume

[Leila Latif](#)



Blume's groundbreaking books shepherded me and millions of others through the trials of adolescence – and they're still as relevant as ever

Fri 5 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 May 2023 11.48 EDT

It is a truth universally acknowledged that being a teenage girl sucks. Struggling with a changing body, navigating the schoolyard hierarchies, feeling disconnected from your parents, being sexualised in ways you are both ready and not ready for – like most of my peers, I went through the wringer between the ages of 12 and 18.

When I look at my six-year-old daughter now, I worry about what she'll have to face in the hormone trenches – but I'm comforted that, like me, she'll have [Judy Blume](#).

From the crippling insecurities of being 10 in *Otherwise Known as Sheila The Great* to virginity loss in *Forever ...*, Blume's novels shepherded me through adolescence like a beloved family member. I grew up in Sudan and then Brighton in the 90s and 00s, but never questioned the fact that these stories, set in the US of the 70s and 80s, were written for me – gifts from Blume to guide me through my specific struggles. Watching the new

[documentary about Blume](#) and the upcoming film adaptation of [Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret](#), I felt almost betrayed as I saw that my intimate parasocial relationship with her was shared by so many other people. But slowly, hearing from friend after friend that “I do not know how I would have coped with being 13 without her”, I began to see her work as something even more special: a spiderweb of support that bonded every reader of the more than 90m books she has sold.

The [wall-to-wall](#) interviews, tributes, and other coverage of the new film and documentary are a testament to her ongoing relevance, and to the fact that teenage girls need her more than ever. [Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret](#) is probably Blume’s most beloved novel, finally adapted for the screen nearly 50 years after the book’s publication and directed by The Edge Of Seventeen’s Kelly Fremon Craig. With mixed Jewish and Christian heritage, Margaret Simon has to contend with spiritual confusion, a move to the suburbs, and her teacher mother becoming a housewife; all while desperately wanting her breasts to develop and her period to start.



‘Blume chipped away at taboos that still persist, and showed young women’s inner turmoil and sexuality outside the male gaze.’ Judy Blume at the Time Magazine 100 gala in April 2023. Photograph: Andrew Kelly/Reuters

It's so easy to be ashamed of those feelings as a teenager, and to believe that making yourself small and hiding your problems is the only way to cope. Reading them brought to life in a story and treated as worthy, commendable even, is revolutionary. The film also brings to life the struggles of Margaret's mother, who has become my surrogate as an approaching-middle-age woman on the perpetual cusp of burnout. I saw my past and present on the screen and the enduring struggles of womanhood.

Blume's 1973 book *Deenie* became one of the most frequently challenged books in the American library system because the protagonist masturbates. It is a deeply empathetic look at embracing your perceived flaws and growing into autonomy. As well as assuring young women like me that you don't just have to be who your parents tell you you are, it normalised and gently reassured readers that budding interest in sex wasn't inherently shameful. It still does.

Most controversially of all, there was [1975's \*Forever...\*](#) in which 18-year-old Katherine falls in love for the first time and has sex with her boyfriend, Michael. I read that book at 14 and remember being confused that it doesn't end with a Disney happily-ever-after. Katherine and Michael don't ride off into the sunset, nor is she punished for enjoying touching and being touched by Michael. Instead, Katherine decides she is not ready for a long-term commitment, flirts with a tennis instructor named Theo and eventually resolves to be single. Having been so used to stories where landing a man is seen as the ultimate goal, it blew the patriarchal dust out of the crevices of my teenage mind.

Blume chipped away at taboos that still persist, and showed young women's inner turmoil and sexuality outside the male gaze. And for all that society has somewhat progressed past the Reagan-era puritanism that sought to censor her, and Blume has gone from controversial figure to a bona fide international treasure, the themes in *Are You There God? Its Me, Margaret* still resonate. The existential dread she goes through, the bond with her grandmother, the thrill of first kisses, budding breasts and blood-stained knickers. There's still shame and silence around the deepest fears and desires of being a young woman. In some ways, social media has only enhanced the

pressure to perform the correct sort of coming-of-age, and every dorky misstep has the potential to exist for ever on the internet.

Seeing those struggles on the page means you are not alone – someone out there gets it. Being a teenage girl may still suck, but it would suck a lot more if it weren't for Judy Blume.

- Leila Latif is a freelance writer and critic
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'Universities should be expanding, but not for reasons of income alone': students at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. Photograph: Imagedoc/Alamy

[OpinionEducation](#)

## **Keir Starmer is right to U-turn on tuition fees. The funds will be better spent elsewhere**

[Polly Toynbee](#)



Nursery education is in crisis, schools and FE colleges neglected. Only by funding these properly will Labour improve standards

Thu 4 May 2023 12.01 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 May 2023 14.38 EDT

There's been a lot less hoo-ha about [Labour's retreat](#) on abolishing tuition fees than some expected. Large numbers, even among students themselves, think paying for their own degrees is fair: [YouGov yesterday](#) found 50% of them pro-fees with only 30% wanting the public to pay through general taxation.

Turkeys voting for Christmas? One higher education expert suggests to me, "Students tend to be progressive," and there is nothing very progressive in these hard times about spending billions on those already destined to be higher earners.

This U-turn has long been signalled, as Keir Starmer and others kept refusing to repeat the pledge he once made to abide by the Jeremy Corbyn manifesto on fees. But it was not intended to be announced days before the local elections, with irritation in the shadow cabinet and especially in the education team at whoever briefed the Times before they had finalised what

system would replace it. [Starmer said](#), in his rather lacklustre Today programme interview on Tuesday, that the system is unfair and needs reforming. They will announce an alternative before long.

Those who object to him reneging on an early pledge warn of the fate of [Nick Clegg](#). But that's precisely what he wants to avoid: Clegg never thought he'd be in power so he made a promise he knew was wildly extravagant and untargeted. Labour does better to be straight about any impossible pledges before, not after a general election.

Is it wicked to over-promise to party members in order to get selected? It seems they all have to do it: consider Sunak pledging vast EU deregulation he now resiles from, swearing eternal animosity to all things European then settling with them, and his pledge to [cut the basic rate](#) of income tax from 20p to 16p. But even then, the Conservative membership chose Liz Truss, not him, and that didn't work out so well. Party members (less than 1% of the population) are by nature more extreme than the voters parties need to win, often wanting the impossible. Few think Labour would be where it is now under Rebecca Long-Bailey, who [came second](#) to Starmer in the 2020 leadership election.

But if it was her, or anyone else cleaving to the Corbyn manifesto, they would be promising to spend a fortune on abolishing fees, some £13bn and £15bn with maintenance grants restored, according to Nick Hillman, head of the Higher Education Policy Institute. If you were given that sort of cash to spend on our bare bones education system, what would you do? First, look at what drags us down the international tables and the reason the country lacks vital skills. It's not our very successful university education. It's the long tail of failure among the 40% who don't get good enough GCSEs needed for most good training or jobs: [just 60%](#) get the grade 5 and above by which schools are judged in league tables.



‘Starmer said that the system is unfair and needs reforming.’ Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

Although more go to university and more take A levels than in the past, you would challenge why so many fail: some 10% of school-leavers stay stubbornly Neet (not in employment, education or training), a barren time that scars their earning ability for the rest of their lives. The overarching reason is Britain’s high rate of inequality compared with similar countries: more equal countries, regardless of national wealth, do best in their overall results. But even within that dismal context, an education budget can channel its resources to lift the chances of children almost born to fail.

You would want to spend any penny of extra education funds on where it makes a difference to most lives and to the future economy. That’s early years, from birth to five, where destinies are fixed that rarely change thereafter, where Labour’s Sure Start was brilliantly targeted, but demolished and vandalised post-2010.

For every year in school the gap widens accord to social class. Half of the pupils failing at GCSE had already fallen well behind at the age of five. Every penny spent at the youngest age yields far more change in social trajectory than ever again. The rest is remedial. Yet nursery education is

stricken, nurseries closing, many with only low-qualified staff not the skilled teachers who make the difference.

Next, you would use any extra for education on FE colleges, those gardens of second and third chances for students failed at school but picked up with myriad courses to set them on their way. They were rebuilt and revalued under Labour, but neglected and downgraded ever since, their teachers paid even less than school teachers.

What else? You would look at the deserts in many hard-pressed schools, as headteachers struggling to provide the bare minimum mourn the loss of all the things that enrich school life and leave everlasting memories – music, dance, drama, sports, arts and school trips, all vanishing.

Looking grimly at all that, Labour should plainly not spend billions abolishing student fees to benefit the lucky students who already made it over the bar. However, there are still serious issues about university funding to address. Institutions hire staff on insecure contracts and in order to subsidise the education of domestic students universities have become reliant on recruiting higher fee paying foreign students and expanding the range of courses on offer.

Universities should be expanding, but not for reasons of income alone. The UK needs as many highly skilled workers as possible. One reason the Tories want to cap numbers is their fear of graduates: as today's elections will confirm, wherever there are more graduates there are fewer Conservative voters. Researching this Tory-scaring phenomenon, the rightwing thinktank, Policy Exchange, found an even more alarming fact: school students at 16 and 17 studying for A-levels and university are already strongly anti-conservative. Trying to cap university numbers will not prevent the threatened demographic death of conservatism.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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A young Fulani bride sits veiled during a wedding ceremony in Dembel Jumpora, Guinea-Bissau. Photograph: Ami Vitale/Alamy

### [Women's rights and gender equality](#)

## **Child marriage in decline – but will take 300 years to eliminate**

UN children's agency welcomes drop in number of underage brides, but warns 12 million girls still getting married each year

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Fri 5 May 2023 01.30 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 May 2023 01.55 EDT

The number of child marriages is declining worldwide, but at too slow a pace for any hope of eliminating the practice this century, Unicef, [the UN children's agency, has said.](#)

In a new report, Unicef tentatively welcomed the reduction but warned that it was nowhere close to meeting its sustainable development goal of ridding the world of the practice by 2030.

“The good news is that child marriage has been declining all over the world,” said Claudia Cappa, the lead author of the report. “In the last 10 years, the percentage of [child marriages has dropped from 23% to 19%](#) [of all marriages]. However, this isn’t fast enough to achieve the goal of eliminating child marriage by 2030, with more than 12 million girls under 18 still getting married every year. So, if things don’t change, we’ll need around 300 more years to eliminate child marriage completely.”

The UN estimates that 640 million girls and women who are alive today married before they were 18, and that 12 million girls become new child brides each year.

“Child marriage has different causes in different places, but there are often commonalities linked to poverty and limited opportunities for girls,” said Cappa. “Gender inequality, stereotypes, weak laws and the fear of pregnancy outside of marriage also contribute.”

The report warned that the climate crisis could leave families with few options but to marry off their children. “Health crises, conflict and natural disasters increase the risk to girls as they interrupt their education and add financial stress to households,” said Cappa. “Some families in these difficult situations falsely view [marriage] as a way to protect their girls financially, socially and physically. While we can’t always predict these crises, we can look back to understand how they might affect girls.

Declining rates of child marriage in south Asia, home to 45% of the world’s underage brides, underpinned the overall trend. India in particular is making progress in reducing child marriage. But in sub-Saharan [Africa](#), one in three girls are marrying before the age of 18. Child marriage rates are highest in west and central Africa, home to seven out of the 10 countries with the highest prevalence globally.

“Despite some progress over 25 years, it only benefited the wealthiest, as child marriage increased among the poorest,” said Cappa. “[Sub-Saharan Africa] also faces a particular challenge: in addition to conflict, climate shocks and Covid, it’s seeing its population grow faster than anywhere else in the world, outpacing its progress to end child marriage.”

Child marriage and having sex too young causes myriad health problems and carries increased risks of death during childbirth and serious complications in pregnancy.

“But we know progress is possible in Africa, and the report lists Rwanda and Ethiopia as examples. Ending child marriage is possible with income and economic interventions,” said Cappa.

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An artist's depiction of E Jean Carroll watching as Carol Martin testifies in court about the aftermath of an alleged rape by Donald Trump. Photograph: Jane Rosenberg/Reuters

[US news](#)

## **'I believed it then and I believe it today': last witness testifies in Trump civil rape trial**

Carol Martin corroborates E Jean Carroll's account of aftermath of alleged rape, and judge keeps door open to Trump appearance

*[Chris McGreal in New York](#)*

Thu 4 May 2023 18.19 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 May 2023 03.19 EDT

The last witness in E Jean Carroll's civil lawsuit accusing [Donald Trump](#) of rape and defamation gave evidence on Thursday, ending the evidentiary stage of the trial which is expected to go to the jury in New York early next week.

After both sides rested their cases, the judge, Lewis Kaplan, kept the door open to a late appearance in court by the former US president when he set a deadline of 5pm [New York](#) time on Sunday for Trump to submit a request to reopen the hearing. The judge did not say if he would grant it.

Earlier on Thursday, Trump said during a visit to Ireland that he was “going to go back” to confront Carroll in court. However, his lawyer, Joe Tacopina, told the judge that the former president had waived his right to testify and was not expected to appear.

On Wednesday the defense team said its only other witness, a technical expert, was too sick to testify.

That meant the jury of three women and six men has only heard testimony from Carroll’s witnesses and Trump’s legal team has been limited to trying to discredit it.

Among the final witnesses was Ashlee Humphreys, a social media expert, who said that if the jurors find in favor of Carroll she would be entitled to up to \$2.7m for reputational damage alone after Trump accused her of lying when she alleged that he raped her in a Bergdorf Goodman department store dressing room in 1996.

Humphreys said that Trump’s vitriolic denials in social media posts reached millions of people.

Last week, Carroll testified that Trump “shattered” her reputation by denying the alleged assault occurred. She said she had expected him to say they had a consensual encounter, not deny it altogether.

“It hit me and it laid me low because I lost my reputation. Nobody looked at me the same. It was gone. Even people who knew me looked at me with pity in their eyes, and the people who had no opinion now thought I was a liar and hated me,” she said.

Humphrey’s assessment for damages does not include punitive damages or for the more serious charge of sexual battery which could be expected to be significantly higher than those for defamation.

On the final day of testimony, the jury also heard from one of Carroll's close friends, Carol Martin, who said that the advice columnist visited her within two days of Trump's alleged attack. She described Carroll as "clearly agitated, anxious".

Martin said she advised Carroll to keep quiet about the alleged assault.

"I just volunteered that she shouldn't do anything because it was Donald Trump and he had a lot of attorneys and he would just bury her," she said.

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Martin said she "kept the covenant" not to talk about what Carroll had told her for many years until the advice columnist went public with her accusations against Trump in 2019.

Asked what she made of Carroll's claim that Trump attacked her, Martin said: "I believed it then and I believe it today."

Tacopina told the jury in his opening remarks early last week that he would show that Carroll and her friends conspired to falsely accuse Trump because they "hate" him for winning the 2016 election.

"They schemed to hurt Donald Trump politically," he said.

Tacopina said Carroll did not report the assault at the time because it never occurred.

Both sides are scheduled to deliver final arguments to the jury on Monday.

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Jordan Neely, pictured here in 2009, was a talented Michael Jackson impersonator. Photograph: New York Daily News/TNS

[Jordan Neely](#)

## **Jordan Neely: man killed by rider's chokehold was talented dancer**

Neely, 30, whose subway death was ruled a homicide by New York's medical examiner, remembered as kind and loving

*Gloria Oladipo in New York  
@gaoladipo*

Fri 5 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 May 2023 12.31 EDT

Jordan Neely had a fan club.

The 30-year-old Michael Jackson impersonator had amassed a following within New York City and beyond, with thousands online admiring the young man's aptitude for dance and [creating a Facebook group](#) to share his performances.

But on 1 May, Neely was [choked to death](#) on a subway car as he complained about being homeless, hungry, and thirsty. He was confronted by a man, reportedly a US marine veteran, who placed Neely in a chokehold for several minutes.

The man, 24, had not been named by authorities by Thursday evening and no charges had been filed. The Manhattan district attorney's office is investigating. Neely's death was classified by the city's medical examiner on Wednesday [as homicide](#).

Jordan Neely: crowds protest in New York after death of man on subway train – video

Meanwhile, many were remembering Neely as kind and talented, despite others' attempts to portray him as dangerous and violent.

Jony Espinal, 33, was a neighbor who first met a young Neely in 2012 when the two lived in the upper Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights.

Espinal said he would see Neely dressed in his Michael Jackson outfit and described him as calm and quiet.

Espinal said he and Neely talked about video games during one 30-minute conversation, their shared love of anime, and Neely's busking.

"He was just a normal, nerdy kid," he said.

Espinal expressed his frustrations at those accusing Neely of being violent, knowing nothing about the beloved dancer.

"They're portraying him as somebody that he's not," said Espinal, referring to negative slants on Neely by some media outlets. "He didn't deserve what happened to him and he really didn't deserve the way everybody is portraying him."

Others similarly remembered Neely as kind.

Larry Malcolm Smith, Jr, who had first gotten to know Neely a decade ago while the two lived in foster care, [told Gothamist](#) that Neely would sometimes share money he made dancing to help other kids buy food or get a haircut.

“This was a good guy,” said Smith. “He would be in the [New York](#) City train station using his God-gifted ability and talent.”

Family members of Neely have said that the 30-year-old struggled with mental health issues after he suffered his mother was murdered when he was 14.

“My sister Christie was murdered in 07, and after that, he has never been the same,” said Neely’s aunt, Carolyn Neely, 40, to the New York Post.

In 2007, Christie Neely, 36, [was strangled by a partner](#) in the family’s New Jersey home. Her remains were later discovered in a suitcase thrown off a highway in the Bronx borough. Neely later testified during the trial of his mother’s killer.

Since then, Carolyn told the Post that Neely’s family had trouble accessing mental health resources for her nephew.

In an [online fundraiser](#) organized by Carolyn to offset funeral expenses, she mentioned that despite Neely’s struggles, he remained firm in his love of dance.

“I love my nephew Jordan Neely, he was a very talented black man who loves to dance. Performance was his thing,” wrote Carolyn.

Advocates who worked with Neely also described him positively, and said he was simply a person in acute need.

“He was a nice person, not aggressive or violent. Everyone who knew him knows that. He’d accept anything you had – many of the homeless down here are sober. They’re needing food or shelter or clothing, not strung out and shooting up dope,” said Minister Ray Tarvin [to the Guardian](#) during a protest for Neely on Wednesday in the subway.

Christopher Joyner, a case manager with the Bronx-based non-profit organization The Bridge, told Gothamist he spoke to Neely on several occasions during outreach work meant to get unhoused people into city shelters.

“He was a decent guy,” said Joyner. “Definitely a guy I looked forward to working more with.”

Espinal became emotional while discussing Neely’s impact in the community and on him personally: “I think he [represented] happiness in spite of all the bad things happening in your life.

“I just want everybody to know that he wasn’t a bad kid and that he needs justice.”

- This article was amended on 5 May 2023 to correct the date of Neely’s death.
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Ilias Kasidiaris, former Golden Dawn MP and founder of Hellenes, speaks during the trial of Golden Dawn leaders in 2020. He is serving 13 years in prison. Photograph: Petros Giannakouris/AP

[Greece](#)

## **Greek supreme court upholds ban on far-right party ‘to protect democracy’**

Extremist Hellenes party dubbed successor of now defunct Golden Dawn, whose neo-Nazi leaders are serving jail terms

*[Helena Smith](#) in Athens*

Thu 4 May 2023 14.35 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 May 2023 17.49 EDT

A decision to disqualify a far-right group from participating in Greece’s forthcoming general election was taken in the interests of safeguarding democracy, the country’s supreme court has said.

The nation’s highest legal body said the extremist Hellenes party was clearly “the successor” of the now defunct [Golden Dawn](#), whose neo-Nazi leaders

are serving jail terms for crimes ranging from murder to assault.

“The aim of the accused, Ilias Kasidiaris, was to reappear once again on the political scene,” the justices wrote in a 400-page explication of the ruling, extracts of which were published on Thursday. “He founded the new party as the successor and continuation of … the criminal organisation Golden Dawn with himself [appointed] as the real leader.”

Nine out of 10 supreme court judges agreed to ban Hellenes, essentially upholding legal amendments voted through the Greek parliament earlier this year. MPs who backed blocking the far-right force from fielding candidates in the 21 May poll did so citing its leader’s criminal conviction.

Explaining the court’s decision, the justices singled out Kasidiaris’s predilection for violence and embrace of “racist and intolerant ideas”, arguing his policies not only “do not respect democracy” but were aimed, ultimately, at dismantling the democratic state and institutions of rule of law.

The 42-year-old Holocaust denier, a senior Golden Dawn MP who formed the Hellenes before being jailed in October 2020 for his role in the former party, has regularly used [social media](#) to address supporters from prison and wasted no time announcing his next move after the court ruling.

In statements posted on Twitter he vowed to take the case to the European court of human rights, saying the judgment had denied hundreds of thousands of Greek citizens their democratic right.

“Today, the first independent evidence was released proving that the supreme court’s unconstitutional decision was premeditated, politically dictated and written long before the court was in session,” said Kasidiaris who was sentenced to 13-and-a-half years in prison. “The struggle of the Hellenes for the homeland and democracy will go all the way to the end.”

The election, held under a system of proportional representation, is unlikely to result in any party winning outright, with a second ballot likely on 2 July.

In a polarised atmosphere following the centre-right government’s handling of a deadly [train crash](#) in February, it is smaller, anti-systemic parties that are

picking up support in the polls, with Hellenes projected to garner as much as 4.5% – enough to have crossed the 3% threshold into parliament.

“The [far-right](#) in this country has not disappeared because Golden Dawn’s leaders were convicted and imprisoned,” said Prof Vasiliki Georgiadou, a specialist in far-right militancy at Panteion University. “Nor will it disappear.”

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The administration of the prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, welcomed “the historic decision”.

But in a country where the communist KKE party was outlawed for decades on the heels of bloody civil war, the move – the first since 1974 when democracy was restored with the collapse of military rule – is not without controversy.

Many on the left believe the ban will only strengthen the extremists. Critics have been quick to recall the rebound of Golden Dawn when the party polled at 9.3% in European elections barely a year after its key people were [arrested](#) following the brutal murder of an anti-fascist Greek rapper in 2013.

“The Hellenes are not in the tradition of the populist radical right. They openly want to bring down the system,” Georgiadou added. “Everyone knew Kasidiaris wanted the party to run in these elections. The ban could have been handled better and decided long before the electoral campaign began.”

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Fighting intensifies in Khartoum prompting evacuations from Sudan – video  
[Sudan](#)

## Fighting intensifies in Sudan's capital as US warns of new sanctions

Clashes continue around presidential palace in Khartoum despite international calls to end hostilities

*[Zeinab Mohammed Salih](#) in Khartoum and [Jason Burke](#)*

Thu 4 May 2023 13.53 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 May 2023 18.17 EDT

Fighting in [Sudan](#) has intensified as warring factions seek to secure strategic locations, as pressure grows from international powers to end hostilities and allow humanitarian assistance to reach millions of desperate civilians.

Fierce battles on Thursday between the Sudanese army and its paramilitary opponents, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), reminded residents in Khartoum, the capital, of the fierce combat that marked the first days of the war almost three weeks ago.

The clashes were particularly intense around the presidential palace at the centre of Khartoum, whose possession grants its occupants an appearance of legitimacy as rulers of Sudan. The sprawling complex is now badly damaged and reported to be largely held by the RSF.

The continuing failure of combatants in Khartoum and elsewhere across Sudan to respect successive ceasefires prompted the US president, Joe Biden, on Thursday to threaten new sanctions against those responsible for “threatening the peace, security, and stability of Sudan; undermining Sudan’s democratic transition; using violence against civilians; or committing serious human rights abuses”.

“The violence taking place in Sudan is a tragedy – and it is a betrayal of the Sudanese people’s clear demand for civilian government and a transition to democracy. It must end,” Biden said.

Analysts and campaigners said the move was long overdue.

More than 550 people have been killed in 20 days of violence, according to ministry of health statistics, but the true total is likely to be much higher as many deaths go uncounted. Thousands have been wounded. At least 334,000 people have been displaced inside Sudan and tens of thousands more to Egypt, Chad, South Sudan, Central African Republic and Ethiopia, according to UN agencies.

The fighting has pitted forces loyal to Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the de facto military leader of Sudan, against those of the RSF’s commander, Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, who is also known as Hemedti. Both men now appear convinced they can win the current conflict and so gain unchallenged control over Sudan’s crumbling state and valuable resources.

Why violence has broken out in Sudan – video explainer

Anette Hoffmann, a research fellow with the Clingendael Institute, The Hague, said the intensity of recent battles was determined by a “political agenda … linked to the push for negotiations”.

“I don’t see it likely for them to stop fighting unless one suffers really huge losses and can’t find the resources anywhere to replenish their forces,” Hoffmann told the Guardian.

In Khartoum, residents sought shelter from bombardments and airstrikes for the 20th day. “Since yesterday evening, and this morning, there are … the sounds of clashes,” said Al-Sadiq Ahmed, a 49-year-old engineer in the capital.

“We’ve got into a state of permanent terror because the battles are around the centres of residential neighbourhoods. We don’t know when this nightmare and the fear will end.”

Experts say a humanitarian catastrophe is imminent, with aid agencies facing massive challenges in reaching the needy.

“Our staff are extremely busy trying to coordinate between the various actors in order to facilitate humanitarian aid. But today in Khartoum, the absence of minimum security conditions prevents humanitarian workers from reaching vulnerable people. There have been reports of direct threats and attacks against humanitarian personnel including the Sudanese Red Crescent,” said Alyona Synenko, regional spokesperson for Africa at the International Committee of the Red Cross.

“International humanitarian law is very clear on this: humanitarian organisations, its personnel and all resources and objects used for humanitarian operations must be respected and protected.”

A statement posted by Sudan’s main maternity hospital said it had been overrun by the RSF and accused the force of stealing money. The RSF did not respond to a request for comment on the charge.

Nabil Abdallah, the army’s spokesperson, accused the RSF of breaking the current ceasefire. “There was an announced ceasefire but they broke it by attacking our forces .... but now the situation is calm and there is no danger on the situation,” Abdallah told the Guardian.

Earlier this week, Dagalo and Burhan agreed to send representatives for negotiations, potentially in Saudi Arabia. Such talks would initially focus on establishing a “stable and reliable” ceasefire, UN officials said, though warned against false hopes.

Dagalo said the paramilitary has named its representatives to the talks but that trust-building measures had to be in place first. “A settlement should come after other matters: first, a ceasefire and building the trust,” he told Asharq, a Saudi-based TV station.

An envoy of Sudan’s military leader said on Wednesday that the army “accepted the Saudi-American initiative for truce talks, not mediation to end the fighting” but ruled out face-to-face discussions with the RSF.

Even indirect talks, if they take place, would be significant progress since fighting erupted on 15 April.

The US and Saudi Arabia have led the international push to get the generals to stop fighting, then engage in deeper negotiations to resolve the crisis. The effort has been complicated by conflicting agendas of regional powers, and the involvement of dozens of smaller actors seeking to exploit the chaos.

One possibility raised by the UN was to establish a monitoring mechanism that includes Sudanese and foreign observers. Talks on a sustained ceasefire could take place in either Saudi Arabia or South Sudan, which is favoured by regional powers and the African Union, officials said, though they pointed out that in either case combatants would need safe passage through the other's territory.

"That is very difficult in a situation where there is a lack of trust," said Volker Perthes, the UN secretary general's representative in Sudan.

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## Headlines monday 1 may 2023

- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: five children among at least 34 injured after Pavlohrad attack](#)
- [Ukraine Ammunition depot reportedly hit in wave of Russian missile attacks](#)
- [NHS Striking nurses would return to work for emergencies, says RCN head](#)
- [Live Health secretary Steve Barclay told ‘not to be disrespectful’ to striking NHS nurses](#)

[Ukraine war liveUkraine](#)

## Russia-Ukraine war as it happened: explosion derails Russian train; at least 34 injured after Pavlohrad attack

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Ukrainian homes destroyed in Russian strike on Pavlohrad – video

[Ukraine](#)

## **Ukraine ammunition depot reportedly hit in wave of Russian missile attacks**

Ukraine intercepts 15 out of 18 missiles as Moscow launches strikes apparently designed to hamper Kyiv's plans for a counteroffensive

- [Russia-Ukraine war: latest news updates](#)

*Peter Beaumont in Mykolaiv, Emma Graham-Harrison in Kyiv, and Pjotr Sauer*

Mon 1 May 2023 10.45 EDTFirst published on Mon 1 May 2023 02.07 EDT

Russian missile strikes have injured 34 civilians and apparently damaged railway infrastructure and an ammunition depot in south-eastern [Ukraine](#), hours before an explosion inside Russia derailed a freight train.

The attacks on both sides of the border on Monday apparently aimed to disrupt military logistics before a significant Ukrainian counteroffensive against occupying Russian troops, expected to start shortly in the south or the east.

The Russian strike in the Ukrainian city of Pavlohrad was part of the second wave of missile attacks in just three days; on Friday, [23 people were killed](#) when a missile hit an apartment block in central Uman city, and a woman and her daughter died in Dnipro.

With Kyiv's allies saying that equipment and newly trained troops promised for the next Ukrainian campaign are in place, Moscow has revived its winter tactics of attempting to orchestrate bombing campaigns far behind Ukrainian frontlines.

It launched 18 cruise missiles in the early hours of Monday morning, although 15 were intercepted by air defences, including the ones aimed at Kyiv. Support from western allies has helped Ukraine improve protection for its cities and the main military sites.

At Pavlohrad, video posted on social media showed a missile strike had caused a significant blaze and secondary detonations.

In Pavlograd, despite hitting civilians again, something else was hit as well. Looks like ammunition is detonating.  
[pic.twitter.com/Mj3qW7Y8dq](https://pic.twitter.com/Mj3qW7Y8dq)

— NOËL ☺☺ ☺ (@NOELreports) [April 30, 2023](#)

Among the buildings damaged or destroyed were an industrial zone, 19 apartment buildings and 25 homes, according to Mykola Lukashuk, the head of the Dnipro regional council. Two women were seriously injured.

Russian officials and the Tass state news agency claimed Moscow had hit an ammunition depot and railway infrastructure, hampering military preparations.

“The objectives of the strike were achieved,” the defence ministry said in a statement. “The work of enterprises making ammunition, weapons and military equipment for Ukrainian troops has been disrupted.”

Ukrainian sources said one location hit was a plant that produced solid fuel for Soviet-era rocket motors and had a number of expired solid fuel motors awaiting decommissioning, although that claim could not be immediately verified.

The size of the fire in Pavlohrad suggests Russia may have hit an important arms depot, and the incident comes after Ukraine’s recent attack on an oil storage facility in Sevastopol, Crimea.

“Around 2.30am, the Russian invaders attacked Ukraine from strategic aviation planes,” said a post on the Telegram channel of Valerii Zaluzhnyi,

the commander in chief of Ukraine's armed forces.

Air defence systems were called into action to shield the Kyiv region from Russian missiles, officials said. Ukrainian media reported blasts in the Dnipropetrovsk and Sumy regions.

Senior Ukrainian officials have suggested in recent days that the counteroffensive may be imminent. It will be a critical test of whether Russia can be dislodged from land it seized in 2014 and last year – nearly one-fifth of Ukrainian territory.

“If in a global sense, in a high-percentage mode, we are ready,” Ukraine’s defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, said during a press conference in Kyiv on Friday. “Then the question [about when to launch] is for the general staff, for the command. As soon as there is God’s will, the weather, and the decision of the commanders – we will do it.”

On Monday an explosion in the Russian region of Bryansk, which borders Ukraine, derailed a freight train, the local governor said in a social media post.

“An unidentified explosive device went off, as a result of which a locomotive of a freight train derailed,” Alexander Bogomaz said on Telegram, adding that there were no casualties reported.

Local authorities said the train was transporting fuel and building materials. Images shared on social media showed several tank carriages laying on their side and smoke rising into the air.

It was not immediately clear who was responsible for the attack, which happened less than 40 miles from the border with Ukraine.

There has been an increase in rail incidents in Russia in the 14 months since Vladimir Putin ordered the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The authorities in Russia have arrested at least 66 Russians on suspicion of railway sabotage since last autumn, according to the independent Russian website Mediazona.

Separately, the governor of Russia’s Leningrad region near St Petersburg said a power line had been blown up overnight and an explosive device

found near a second line.

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Pat Cullen, the general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said Barclay had ‘lost any respect nursing staff had for him and this government’. Photograph: Lucy North/PA

[Nursing](#)

## **Striking nurses ‘not going away’, says RCN, as other unions meet over pay offer**

Pat Cullen urges health secretary not to disrespect nurses and to do the ‘decent thing for the NHS’

*[Andrew Gregory](#) and [Sammy Gecsoyler](#)*

Tue 2 May 2023 01.49 EDTFirst published on Mon 1 May 2023 05.24 EDT

Steve Barclay has “lost the public” and striking nurses “are not going to go away”, the head of the [Royal College of Nursing](#), Pat Cullen, has warned.

Her comments came after Barclay, the health secretary, described the industrial action by nurses as “premature” and “disrespectful” to other trade

unions who are set to meet to discuss the government's pay offer on Tuesday.

Through the [NHS](#) Staff Council, the unions will consider the offer of a 5% pay increase for 2023/24 along with a one-off payment worth between £1,655 and £3,789 for the current financial year for nurses in England.

Cullen, the general secretary of the RCN, urged the health secretary "not to be disrespectful" to nurses amid their "biggest strike yet" over the bank holiday.

Cullen also confirmed nurses will be re-balloted this month for further industrial action later in the year, meaning the [pay dispute](#) could continue until Christmas.

"It will end when our government will do the decent thing for nurses, does the decent thing for the people of England and actually does the decent thing for the NHS," said Cullen. "What our members are saying to the secretary of state of this government is we are not going to go away."

Thousands of nurses walked out at 8pm on Sunday in what was described by the RCN as the "biggest strike yet" because it included nursing staff from emergency departments, intensive care and cancer care for the first time.

The 28-hour action, which will end just before midnight on Monday, comes after a high court judge ruled it would be [unlawful for it to continue into Tuesday as originally planned](#).

Speaking outside University College hospital in London on Monday, Cullen said Barclay should "spend less time writing papers for the royal court of justice to take our nursing staff to court and get round a table and start to do the decent thing for them".

She added: "Steve Barclay may have won the legal argument that day last Thursday but what he did was he lost the public and certainly lost any respect that our nursing staff had for him and this government."

One NHS trust on Monday reported that its intensive care unit had had its capacity “significantly” reduced as it was not able to secure enough nurse staffing levels during the strike action.

Nick Hulme, chief executive of East Suffolk and North Essex NHS foundation trust, told BBC Radio 4’s World at One programme: “We got an exemption from the RCN [Royal College of Nursing] so we were allowed to ask … the nurses to come in to cover that area – not to the staffing levels we would normally have, but to safe staffing levels.

“Unfortunately, nurses decided, as is entirely within their right – they are not obliged to turn up even if we ask the RCN – and unfortunately we weren’t able to get sufficient nurses to cover the intensive care areas, so we had to reduce the capacity significantly and transfer patients out.”

Last month, RCN members rejected the government’s offer of a 5% pay rise this year and a cash payment for last year. The union’s leadership had recommended its members accept the offer.

Earlier on Monday, speaking about the offer and the decision by RCN members to reject it, Cullen told Good Morning Britain: “There were some elements of the pay offer that were attractive to our ruling council, for example around safe nurse staffing policy work that’s required in order for us to be able to move to a place where we have safe nurse staffing legislation in place.

“Another element that was attractive to put to our members was around a separate pay structure for nursing that recognises that they are a critical profession, and their expertise.

“Those elements were put to our members. Our council made the decision that it wasn’t for them to hold that money back from our nursing staff who are really struggling.

“There’s no credibility issues here, our nursing staff have spoken up loud and clear.”

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**NHS**

## **Health secretary Steve Barclay told ‘not to be disrespectful’ to striking NHS nurses – as it happened**

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‘People say sometimes that I’m too determined’ ... Duwayne Brooks.  
Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

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# **‘I know what injustice is’: Duwayne Brooks on losing Stephen Lawrence – and fighting to be London’s Tory mayor**

[Steve Rose](#)

Thirty years after the racist murder of his friend, Brooks wants to run the city whose police failed him and so many others – as a Conservative. What makes him think he can do better than Sadiq Khan?



[@steverose7](#)

Mon 1 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 May 2023 04.52 EDT

Saturday 22 April was the 30th anniversary of the day [Stephen Lawrence](#) was murdered by racist youths while waiting for a bus in south-east London. Lawrence’s family along with public figures including Keir Starmer and Sadiq Khan attended a memorial service in central London, but not his friend Duwayne Brooks, who was with him when he was attacked. “I was refereeing,” he says matter-of-factly. Like he does every weekend, for his south London football league.

Not that Brooks believes the occasion shouldn't be remembered. "In my opinion it's got to be marked every year," he says. "It's not just the Lawrence family that suffered because of what happened to their son – there are families across Britain who have suffered similar in terms of their children being taken so young."

Nor could Brooks himself ever forget. "I remember Stephen all the time," he says. "In things that we do, discussions that we have. It's never really out of the press." But, he says: "I've managed to come out the other side."

When we meet at the Royal Festival Hall cafe, on London's South Bank, Brooks is keener to talk about the future than the past. On the same day as Lawrence's memorial, he announced that he was planning on running for mayor of [London](#) in next year's election, as the Conservative candidate. Dressed in a suit and tie, he is energised and passionate, and eager to discuss his plans, even if, over the course of the next two hours, we find plenty to disagree about.

The timing is grimly apt. London policing is back in the spotlight as a result of the [Casey review](#), whose findings on the Met's recent failings are depressingly similar to those of the 1999 [Macpherson report](#), published in the aftermath of Lawrence's death, which famously judged that the Met was "institutionally racist".



Brooks and Neville Lawrence, Stephen's father, attending a public inquiry on the use of undercover police in England and Wales in 2015. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images

Although Brooks had been a victim of the attack, and a witness, the police treated him almost as a suspect in Lawrence's murder. At the scene of the crime, they seemed convinced that the two boys must have done something to provoke the incident. They accused Brooks of stealing a Coke and breaking a window at the police station when he came in for questioning that night (both untrue). He received no support whatsoever. For years after the attack, Brooks suffered from undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Macpherson report also concluded that Brooks "was stereotyped as a young black man ... whose condition and status simply did not need further examination or understanding. We believe that Mr Brooks' colour and such stereotyping played their part in the collective failure of those involved to treat him properly and according to his needs."

In such traumatic situations, people often self-medicate with drink or drugs, but Brooks could not be that person, he says. "I had to be the model citizen, right? Because if I fall into that trap, and make a real bad decision on a particular day, and commit some kind of crime, then it always comes back to

Stephen. ‘Best friend of Stephen convicted of armed robbery’ or something like that. And then it drags his name down … If I fail, Stephen fails.”

But the Macpherson report was just the beginning of Brooks’s ordeal. After its release, he was targeted by the Met in what can only be described as a vendetta. He was arrested multiple times on spurious charges, accused of stealing his own car, even remanded in custody on a false charge of attempted rape (which was later dropped). “That was the beginning of the hardest fight of my life,” he says.

He was living two separate lives, he explains: “The Stephen Lawrence life was going to ID parades, speaking about the incident, doing what I could for the family, battling the police – everything involved in the investigation and trying to get justice. It was having too much impact on the Duwayne Brooks life: what’s going to happen to me? What am I going to do? What am I going to achieve? So I had to push that to one side and focus on the Duwayne Brooks life.”

Brooks, 48, didn’t decide to go into politics, he says – he fell into it. In about 2002, when he was working as a photocopier engineer (which is still his day job), he was asked by Brian Paddick, then borough police commander for Lambeth, to attend a police complaints authority meeting with Brixton residents. It concerned Derek Bennett, a young Black man whom the police shot and killed, believing he had a gun – which turned out to be a novelty cigarette lighter. “And Brian comes over, introduces himself to me, and says: ‘The commissioner’s talking shit [referring to the police’s justifications for the shooting].’ From that day, him and I have been friends, because that told me he saw me in a different light to everybody else.”

When Paddick ran for mayor as a Liberal Democrat in 2008, Brooks joined his team. Paddick told him he had a voice, and should be involved in politics himself. At the time Brooks had no particular party affiliation, he says. When he phoned a Labour councillor’s office, in his home borough of Lewisham, “they told me to fuck off: ‘No one wants to talk to you.’”

Literally? “Yeah, yeah. Literally!” His reputation preceded him, he suspects.

The Lib Dems invited him to a meeting, where he felt like ‘a Coco Pop in a bowl of Rice Krispies’

No one from the Conservative office got back to him. But the Lib Dems gave him the time of day, and invited him to a meeting, where he felt like “a Coco Pop in a bowl of Rice Krispies”. In 2009 he was elected as a Lib Dem councillor for Lewisham. The same year he became the party’s lead member for community safety on the Local Government Association – the national body for local authorities. “It was wonderful,” he says. “I went all over England and Wales giving speeches on all types of subjects, from metal theft to violence against women to Prevent [the government’s counter-terrorism programme]. I learned so much – in terms of what I believe, my views and my values, how things should be, the kind of help that we should be giving people.”

So how come he left the Lib Dems and became a Conservative? “I am entirely grateful for the Lib Dems’ support, their guidance, encouragement and everything they’ve done for me. But our values are a bit different: I’m about hand-ups, not handouts.” Brooks was always a “small-c conservative”, he says. “I think most of us are, especially from the Caribbean. We want our children to have the best education. We respect authority, respect the law, we believe in family, family values, tradition – all of that stuff is just normal.”

He peppers our discussion with initiatives he would enact as mayor: reading groups for schoolchildren, a debating competition across schools, compulsory first aid training, social media communications, plans to fix problems of crime, racism, education. Not to mention making sweeping changes to the Met.

But isn’t the Conservative government responsible for creating these problems? “Well, we’re only talking about London, and the mayor is responsible for London.”

So the mayor is more to blame for London’s problems than the Conservative party?

“Yes, 100%. Because if you’re going to blame the Conservative party, which you have a right to do, why are you the mayor?” He has no personal animosity towards Sadiq Khan, he adds. “I can definitely say: ‘Bro, your achievements are fantastic, but your policies just haven’t worked.’ We live in a London where trust and confidence in the Met has never been so low, housing conditions have never been so poor and crime on the street has never been so high.”



Brooks demonstrating against police racism in 2000. Photograph: Steve Eason/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Understandably, policing is high on Brooks’s agenda. In 2000, he [told the Guardian](#): “We hear all those things – the Met is changing, the Met is doing this and that, but the Met is not changing. The Met will stay the same. They will never change, because the government does not want them to change.”

Louise Casey’s review of the Met’s culture and standards, published in March, suggests he was correct. It was carried out after the rape and murder of [Sarah Everard](#) by a serving police officer, among other outrages, and it found the Met to be institutionally racist, sexist and homophobic, internally and in its policing. In particular, Casey reported that the Met “underprotects and overpolices Black Londoners”.

Brooks has another quote from the Casey review that he reads out from a sheaf of printed notes: “‘The Met have in the past avoided scrutiny, holding Mopac [the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime] at arm’s length, and not sharing information and data.’ That’s the mayor! Basically, she’s saying Mopac has failed to monitor the police effectively. Hence why we have this decline.” He holds Khan responsible for the appointment of former Met commissioner Cressida Dick, but does not mention former Conservative home secretary Amber Rudd, who also played a part in the appointment. Nor does he mention Khan’s role in removing Dick, in February 2022.

There is plenty more we discuss and disagree about in terms of Conservative policies, on education, health, cuts to social services, policing, the Windrush scandal, or the fact that Khan’s predecessor – a certain Boris Johnson – did even less to fix the Met. Brooks accepts some of my arguments as “valid points” and pushes back on others, combatively but cordially, enjoying the exchange.

Does Brooks have reservations about aligning himself with broader Conservative policies?

The way the home secretary is speaking, I would never use that language. There’s no ‘invasion’, there’s no ‘swarm’

“No. What I don’t like, I will openly say I don’t like. The Conservative party is a broad church of people with all different views. There’s policies that I agree with and some maybe I don’t agree with.” Unprompted, he brings up home secretary Suella Braverman’s scheme to deport some asylum seekers to Rwanda. “In principle, I support the policy,” he says. “The way the home secretary is speaking about it, I would never use that language. There’s no ‘invasion’, there’s no ‘swarm’. To use those words devalues the person as an individual, and I know how that feels. Because after the murder, it was always ‘the witness’, ‘the witness’. I’m a person, I have a beating heart, I have feelings.” It was also the kind of language that was used against his parents, he says. “Politics doesn’t come before people.”

Perhaps Brooks’s conservative values make sense in the context of his own history of self-reliance, which began before Lawrence’s murder. He was

brought up by a single mother, of Jamaican descent, who became pregnant with him when she was 18. His father was married to another woman at the time, but was present in his childhood. He has a half-sister 10 years younger than him. There was not much money, he says. Aged 16, Brooks left his mother's home and moved into a hostel.

"I got fed up of washing dishes," he says bluntly.

Surely there was more to it than that?

"Nope. I got fed up of washing dishes." His mother had a rule that he did all the washing-up, even if he hadn't made the mess. The way he tells it, one day he decided he'd had enough and just left. "When I look back, it's one of the greatest decisions that I made in life. Living in hostels, you have to gain certain skills: how you speak to people, how to build relationships, because everyone's different. You had to be able to manage your money. You had to fill out forms, you had to be able to read effectively."



Prince William gives Brooks his OBE at Buckingham Palace. Photograph: PA Images/Alamy

He didn't drop out of school or turn to crime or anything like that, he says. He had a desire to learn and to succeed. He started an engineering course. Lawrence would visit him in his hostel regularly – to escape from his

disciplinarian parents, Brooks claims. They'd been playing video games there together on the night of the attack, and lost track of the time. Rushing to get Stephen home, the two 18-year-olds took a quicker bus route via Eltham, despite knowing it was a racist area. Had they not done so, Lawrence might still be alive. And Brooks would not be sitting here proposing that London should elect him its next mayor.

"It's all led up to the position I'm in now," he says. "I know what injustice is. Rather than being political, I'm going to be specific about the changes I want to make. And people can look and say: 'Well, this is the life that he's had, because it's public, there's nothing hidden. And I am just hoping that that gives people the trust and confidence that enables me to become the candidate."

It sounds like he's in campaigning mode already, I tell him. "No, I'm in Duwayne Brooks mode. There's no campaigning mode. This is how I always speak. People say sometimes that I'm too determined. And I always have to remind them, this is London. They call America the land of opportunity, so what have we got here in London? Do we not have the same?"

As well as determination and optimism, Brooks seems possessed of a remarkable fearlessness – from leaving home to standing up to everything the police threw at him to putting himself in the political firing line. Where does that come from? "It comes from experience," he replies. "Because when shitty things happen to you, you don't want them to happen to anyone else."

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‘We learned from the ground upwards’ ... Diane and David Rowsell.  
Photograph: Gary Calton/The Observer

[A new start after 60](#)[Society](#)

**A new start after 60: we planned a quiet retirement – but ended up fighting food**

# poverty

Diane and David Rowsell were looking forward to spending more time with the grandchildren. Then they discovered how many of their neighbours in York were going hungry



[Emma Beddington](#)

Mon 1 May 2023 02.00 EDT

“We fell into it,” says Diane Rowsell, 63, of the [community food support project](#) that she and husband David, 64, started in 2020. “It wasn’t like we sat at home thinking: ‘What can we do with our lives now?’”

Pre-retirement they were busy: David’s job as a headteacher allowed them to live in the Czech Republic and the US, where Diane, a physiotherapist by training, also worked teaching music; they travelled extensively and adventurously in their free time. Back home in [York](#), they were looking forward to more travel, plus time on their allotment and with their grandchildren. “Just that era of life – busy doing not much!” says Diane. But it doesn’t sound that quiet when she explains that the couple bought a camper van, David was working as a leadership coach, she was taking art

classes, and both were volunteering – Diane gardening and David chairing the local school board of governors.

It was this that set them on their completely new course. In October 2020, when the House of Commons [voted against extending free school meals into the holidays](#), David started strategising with the school headteacher: “I said: ‘What are we going to do about this?’” At the last minute, the local council stepped in to fund free holiday meals but a seed had been planted, leaving David and Diane pondering the wider issue of local food poverty. “It was evident there was a need for food support within the area,” says Diane. That came as a shock, she says: York’s South Bank area is affluent with large Victorian houses selling for vast sums, as well as bustling independent shops and cafes, but it lies next to one of the most deprived parts of the city.

David contacted a group of local residents who had expressed an interest – parents and shopkeepers, plus two acquaintances who had worked with the UK food bank charity the [Trussell Trust](#) – inviting them to join the couple on a Zoom call to discuss food poverty during the Covid crisis and beyond. “We decided, everybody together, that we could do something,” Diane says.

The school offered premises, and a local food bank promised a delivery to get them started; the group recruited volunteers and the project took shape. They chose the name, The Collective Sharehouse, rather than “food bank”, to reflect the fact that the project would meet not only the need for local food support, but also the pressing desire many expressed to do something meaningful at a time of crisis. “It’s like an exchange, rather than a bank,” says David.

The Collective Sharehouse opened just six weeks after that first call in December 2020. “We had seven people,” says David, but by the following week, they had 40 clients, and it built steadily. Now they support 100-plus families three times a week, and have gone from having 12 volunteers to about 40. The Sharehouse has also expanded its ambitions, working with local services to offer support on everything from IT to addiction, debt and benefits advice. There have been art projects, literacy support, a warm clothing donation pop-up and cookery classes. They have also ensured that people with experience of food poverty are involved in management – three

out of 10 of the central management team are former or current clients. The local community has stepped up to support them in an extraordinary way with donations of food, time and money. “It never fails to amaze me – the generosity, the time, the effort ...” says Diane.

It is complex, challenging work and some sessions, and clients’ stories, are desperately difficult. “None of us are specialists,” Diane says. “We learned from the ground upwards.” Welcoming a client for the first time is often one of the hardest moments. “Having to sit with somebody new and let it unfold – it’s very raw.” The Sharehouse has regulars, but other people fall off the radar, leaving Diane to wonder what has happened. “There are lots of people who pop into my head – I wonder where they are now; what they’re doing. It can be emotional.”

Does it take over their lives? More so for Diane, who still does most of the day-to-day, hands-on management (David is still coaching). She’s an all-or-nothing person, she says, and the Sharehouse is always in the back of her mind: what connections she could make; what opportunities there might be to do more. Although it’s challenging, “I’ve never not wanted to go and do it. I like making things happen and seeing things happen that benefit people – I love organising things!” she says. She’s assisted by an “amazing” team, who support each other emotionally as well as practically. Learning to delegate, she says, is a work in progress but the project has already taught her important lessons. “I’ve struggled with the acceptance of what getting older brings, but it’s OK not to be perfect or to need others to help.” Volunteering has enhanced her life and she’s passionate about what it can offer individuals and their communities: “It makes a massive, real difference. I would never have thought it would be possible to achieve what we have achieved.”

The couple complement each other: Diane likes to focus on details, while David prefers the big picture; he’s good at helping her tease out solutions, Diane says, when she comes home with a Sharehouse puzzle or problem. He’s also focusing on the project’s “exit strategy” and long-term ambition to no longer be needed. “If you were to say to us: ‘Where will you be in two years’ time?’ I have absolutely no idea. Sadly, we might still be here.” In the meantime, the Sharehouse serves as a reminder of how effective collective action and community can be. For anyone wanting to volunteer, or do

something similar, Diane's advice is: "Be led by what inspires you, don't be frightened and don't overthink it."

"And don't vote Tory," adds David.

- [Tell us: has your life taken a new direction after the age of 60?](#)
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A bust of King Charles III made entirely from Celebrations chocolates took four weeks to create and weighs over 23kg. Photograph: Joe Pepler/PinPep

[King Charles coronation](#)

## **King Charles chocolate bust and tomato ‘Kingchup’: the quirkier coronation merchandise**

Alongside the commemorative plates and mugs are some more unusual offerings, from royal ‘pawtraits’ to carriage rides



[Sarah Marsh](#)

[@sloumarsh](#)

Mon 1 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 May 2023 05.15 EDT

The coronation is rapidly approaching, and with it comes a multitude of companies selling an array of commemorative merchandise to consumers. But alongside what you might expect (a commemorative plate or King Charles mug) are some rather unusual offerings, as some businesses and their PR teams seem to be doing anything possible to mark the day. We've done a roundup of the most unexpected coronation merchandise out there, as well as the simply awkward and bizarre.



A bottle of Heinz 'Kingchup' will cost £2.50 and feature a limited edition label with a crown and bunting on it. Photograph: Heinz

## **Heinz tomato 'Kingchup'**

Commemorative ketchup anyone? That's a question no one expected to be asking but yet we are. Heinz has produced a special version of red sauce to mark 6 May. The bottle includes a limited-edition label with a crown and bunting on it plus a brand-new name. The bottles will be exclusively sold on their website for £2.50 from this week. Daniella Rattray, brand manager at Heinz Tomato Ketchup said: "We hope Heinz Ketchup fans enjoy our celebratory designs and that they add an extra bit of fun to the bank holiday weekend however you might be celebrating."



Shoppers have taken to the Argos website in search for its £36.99 lifesize cardboard cutouts of Charles in a ceremonial sash. Photograph: Argos

## **Argos lifesize cutout of the king**

Want a little more of a statement piece? Well, Argos has got you covered. They have released a King Charles cardboard cutout that stands at 1.7 metres and costs £36.99. The retailer said searches for the cutout on their website have been up by 369% over the last few weeks, beating other popular cutouts including the likes of Frozen and Toy Story. The most popular one is a Regal King Charles, featuring Charles in a ceremonial sash. But ardent royalists can also get Charles in his signature Royal Blue Suit, and a duo act of King Charles and Queen Camilla.

## **ManyPets want dogs to roam free**

Keen to be in on the “coronation action”, but without selling anything, pet insurance firm ManyPets has instead launched a petition for dogs to be able to roam free in all public places over the royal weekend. The campaign page explains that once upon a time, during the reign of King Charles II in the early 1600s, it was decreed that his favourite dogs – King Charles Spaniels – should be allowed to roam freely anywhere. It notes that although the rule is no longer an act of parliament, it has never been repealed, and ManyPets

wants it back. Oke Eleazu, the insurance company's UK chief executive, said: "What better time to reinstate this law than the year we crown [King Charles III](#)? We are a nation of dog lovers and our research shows if we had it our way, we would take our dogs out with us no matter where we go."

## Celebrations edible bust

To help promote their commemorative chocolates, the confectionery brand Celebrations has gone the extra mile creating a bust of King Charles made entirely of chocolate. The model was created by a team of sculptors, led by master chocolatier Jennifer Lindsey-Clarke. It has been moulded using hundreds of Celebrations chocolates. The bust took four weeks to create and weighs over 23kg – the equivalent of 2,875 individual Celebrations chocolates. Over 17 litres of chocolates were melted down into a liquid before being injected into a bespoke mould.



Uber's horse-drawn 'coronation carriage' will be bookable between 1pm and 4pm on the bank holiday weekend in Dulwich Park. Photograph: Kieran Cleeves/PA

## Uber's coronation carriage

Uber is no longer just about cars and joining the new ranks of their portfolio of travel methods, which includes Uber boats, is a horse-drawn carriage. What the company has called its “coronation carriage” will be open between 1pm and 4pm on the coronation bank holiday weekend at Dulwich Park. A trip on the carriage is bookable via the app. Each of the four white horses pulling the carriage will be dressed up in “their finest coronation wear”, a press release about the launch reveals.

## Hug's dog dish

A lot of companies this year are keen to make sure that dogs don't miss out on the celebration. Hug – the UK's first premium ready meals dogs – is among them. They have created a limited-edition coronation chicken dish for dogs made with British chicken and outdoor-reared pork. It also has dried apricots. Those managing the PR for the launch said they wanted to make sure dogs did not feel any FOMO (fear of missing out) on the day.



Lily's Kitchen's royal 'pawtrait' is made up of popular dog breeds playing the roles of senior royals. Photograph: Ursula Aitchison

## Lily's kitchen's dog 'pawtrait'

With all this dog-related merchandise it is easy to wonder whether the cats may be getting FOMO. Nonetheless, canines have been gathered for a royal picture. As you could expect this is a press release made up almost entirely of dog puns and it explains the “pawronation pack” is made up of the cavalier King Charles spaniel (of course), an Afghan hound, and a bichon frise. Lily’s has also put together a coronation chicken recipe on sale for the day.

## Tree House's coronation breakfast

Tree House London, owned by hotel group Cairn, has introduced a royal breakfast in bed for the month of May, which includes King Charles's favourite: cheesy baked eggs and toasted sourdough soldiers. Guests can enjoy it with a side of British bacon and a welcome basket of locally farmed fruits. Obviously it will also come with a very traditional pot of English breakfast tea served with runny honey and milk.

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Prince Charles, now King Charless III and the fifth King of Australia since Federation, during a visit to Perth in 2005. Photograph: Ian Waldie/EPA

[King Charles III](#)

## **Why the king's coronation will be a muted affair in Australia**

As Charles III is crowned in London, only one state – Western Australia – is considering a public holiday and republicanism is back in vogue



[Ben Doherty](#)

[@bendohertycorro](#)

Sun 30 Apr 2023 23.09 EDTFirst published on Sun 30 Apr 2023 23.00 EDT

For the coronation of [King Charles III](#), Australians can buy a T-shirt commemorating the event.

“[Democracy Not Monarchy](#),” reads one of the offerings from the Australian Republican Movement. “One of Us. For Us. By Us.” says another.

“[Keep the Crown](#)” proclaims a shirt backing the status quo from the Australian Monarchist League.

As the death of his mother did, the coronation of King Charles has reanimated debate in Australia about its future governance, and the possibility the country might jettison the British royal family to become a republic.

Australia’s new high commissioner to the UK, Stephen Smith, has said an Australian republic is only a matter of time.

“My personal view is it’s inevitable,” Smith told [the Times](#) this month.

“But how that’s progressed is entirely a matter for the Australian government of the day.”

Craig Foster, a former international footballer now head of the Australian Republican Movement – with something approaching a Gary Lineker-esque profile in Australia – has said he found it galling to watch an Australian prime minister sign a proclamation last year promising “faith and obedience” to the new king.



The then Prince Charles poses in front of a wedge-tailed eagle during a visit to the Alice Springs Desert Park, Wednesday 2 March 2005. Photograph: Rick Rycroft/AP

“It was just so ridiculous to have our elected leader pledging loyalty to someone who we don’t know, we don’t like and we don’t particularly respect,” he told an Australian interviewer.

King Charles’s coronation will take place on Saturday night Australian time: the pomp and pageantry will be restrained.

Over the coronation weekend, significant national buildings and monuments will be illuminated in royal purple. On the Sunday, a 21-gun salute will be fired from the forecourt of parliament house.

Two Australians will play official roles in Charles's coronation at Westminster Abbey.

[Simon Abney-Hastings](#) is the 15th Earl of Loudon, an ancient Scottish title, and is a distant relative of the new king.

Abney-Hastings lives, usually quietly, in the small Victorian (state, not era) town of Wangaratta, and has been invited to be the bearer of [the great golden spurs](#), an element of the ceremony instigated for the coronation of Richard the Lionheart in 1189.

And Sam Kerr, Chelsea striker and captain of the Australia football team, will carry the Australian flag: one of 15 flag-bearers representing the realms of the crown.

The Australian government will be represented at the coronation ceremony in London by the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, alongside the king's representative in Australia, the governor general, David Hurley, and the governors of Australia's states.

Australia will be further represented by, in the words of the prime minister, a group of its "outstanding citizens", including musician Nick Cave (also a product of Wangaratta), and comedian Adam Hills.

Forty members of Australia's Federation Guard – the ceremonial unit of Australia's armed forces – will be part of the 4,000-strong procession leading the king back to Buckingham Palace after the Westminster Abbey coronation.

Australia will also play another – albeit minor – supporting role.

In a break from tradition, King Charles and Camilla, the Queen Consort, will proceed to the coronation in the Australian-made diamond jubilee State Coach, built in 2012, rather than the older, more uncomfortable Gold State Coach (which will return them to the palace).

But for those antipodean subjects of King Charles – he became King of Australia automatically at the moment of his mother's death – there appears

likely to be little fanfare.

No national public holiday has been declared for the Monday, and only one state, Western Australia, has said it will “consider” giving its royal subjects the day off.

Urging a national commemorative day, the Australian Monarchist League said a public holiday on 8 May would “no doubt be well received”.

“The public holiday would be an opportunity for Australians to both celebrate the beginning of a new era, but also an opportunity to relax and spend time with family and friends,” spokesperson Alessandro Rosini said.

The League also condemned as “neo-communism in action” the Australian government’s decision to exclude the new sovereign from the next \$5 note. Queen Elizabeth II has featured on the note’s obverse since 1992. A new note will eschew King Charles III, instead featuring a design that “honours the culture and history of the First Australians”.

Albanese’s Labor government, not yet a year old, has appointed an assistant minister for the republic, and is forecasting a referendum on the question of an Australian republic if it wins a second term of government (prioritising, for its first term, an indigenous “Voice” to parliament).



The future king during his year at Timbertop School in Geelong, Australia, 1966. Photograph: News Ltd/Newspix/Rex Features

But the Queen's death, and her son's instantaneous, unconsulted accession as King of Australia just four months after the new government was elected, has brought forward public debate over what sort of nation this is, and wants to be.

Part of the equivocation is around Charles himself, whom, [polls have consistently shown](#), engenders less affection in Australian hearts than his mother did.

A survey run by the ABC in May 2022 found a slim [majority of Australians – 53% – did not support](#) Charles becoming king. An [Ipsos poll](#) run in the months after the Queen's death found a narrow majority – 54% – of Australians supported cutting formal ties with the British monarchy. A stronger majority – nearly six in 10 – wanted a referendum on the Republic question.

But Australia, his new dominion, does carry some sentiment for the king. He spent a semester of his schooling at Geelong Grammar's Timbertop campus, in the rugged foothills of Victoria's alps.

At one point he was even said to be [enthusiastic about being appointed Australia's governor general](#), an idea unpopular with both the Australian population and his mother.

Soon to be anointed the fifth king of Australia since federation, the question being asked about Charles III: might he be the last?

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The then Prince Charles greeting members of the public in Southend on 1 March 2022. Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

[King Charles III](#)

## **King Charles: 71 facts about his long road to the throne**

Everything you need to know about man who became heir to British throne 71 years ago

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Archie Bland

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- 1.** Charles was born at Buckingham Palace on 14 November 1948 at 9.14pm, by caesarean section, after a 30-hour labour. His birth was the first of a senior member of the royal family not to be attended by a senior politician – to ensure that the newborn was a genuine descendant of the monarch – since the 17th century.
- 2.** Philip was not present, and at one point, went to play squash. He is said to have declared that his son looked like a plum pudding.



Prince Charles is held up by his father, Prince Philip, in 1949. Photograph: PA

3. At his christening, Charles was doused with water from the River Jordan. In 2021, when Charles visited the supposed site of Jesus's baptism on the banks of the river, he was given vials of the water for use in future royal christenings.
4. When Charles was one, the Queen and Prince Philip [spent Christmas in Malta](#), where Philip was stationed with the Royal Navy. Charles stayed with his grandparents at Sandringham; his parents missed his first steps and his first teeth.
5. Charles's first word was said to be "nana", addressed to his nanny, Mabel Anderson.
6. Seventy-one years ago, when his grandfather died and his mother became queen, Charles became heir apparent at the age of three. He held that title for 70 years – longer than anyone else.
7. As male heir, Charles began receiving the equivalent of £209,000 from his estate. Since then, he and the Queen received payments equivalent to more than £1bn from the duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall, which run portfolios of land across England, [a recent Guardian investigation found](#).

**8.** When Winston Churchill met him shortly before his fourth birthday, he observed: “He is young to think so much.” Catherine Peebles, Charles’s governess, said that he was “hypersensitive, lonely, excessively shy and given to quiet pursuits like reading and painting”.

**9.** After a six-month separation from the Queen and Philip on a royal tour in 1954, Charles and his younger sister Anne were greeted by their parents with handshakes.

**10.** Charles said in 1969 that as a child he first “thought of being the proverbial engine driver or something. Then I wanted to grow up to be a sailor … and, of course, a soldier … When I started shooting, I thought how marvellous it would be to be a big-game hunter. I went from one thing to the other until I realised I was rather stuck”. He added: “It’s something that dawns on you with the most ghastly, inexorable sense. I didn’t suddenly wake up in my pram one day and say; ‘Yippee,’ you know.”



Prince Charles in the summer of 1956. Photograph: PA

**11.** Charles was the first future monarch to be sent to school rather than being educated by private tutors. He was dispatched to Cheam school to board at the age of eight, where a British Pathé newsreel said “his rank will

count for little in the rough and tumble democracy of playground and dormitory”.

**12.** He was said to have little aptitude for sport, but in his last year captained the football team, which scored four goals in the season, and conceded 82. The school newspaper said that “Prince Charles seldom drove himself as hard as his ability and position demanded”.

**13.** Charles was then sent to Gordonstoun school, where, at age 14, a trip on the “school yacht” to the Isle of Lewis led to him and a group of other boys taking refuge from tourists in a bar. He was seen ordering a cherry brandy by a tabloid journalist. His personal security officer was fired by the Metropolitan police as a result.

**14.** At Gordonstoun, Charles was ostracised by his fellow pupils, who made “slurping” noises at anyone who was friendly to him. He wrote in a letter home: “It’s such hell here, especially at night ... The people in my dormitory are foul. They throw slippers all night or hit me with pillows or rush across the room and hit me as hard as they can, then beetle back again.” He reportedly later referred to the school as “a prison sentence” and “Colditz in kilts”.



Charles as Macbeth. Photograph: PA

**15.** Prince Philip laughed out loud watching his 17-year-old son play Macbeth (above) in the school play, later telling a tearful Charles that he “sounded like the Goons”. Charles also played the cello, and although he said he was “hopeless”, he gave recitals at local aristocrats’ homes.

**16.** Despite his unpopularity he was made head boy, and given his own room in the apartment of the art master.

**17.** In 1967, despite mediocre A-level results of a B in history and a C in French, he was given a place at Cambridge without sitting the exam. He was driven to the university in a bright red Mini. He lived in unusually nice rooms for a first year student; they were decorated by the Queen’s tapestry maker.

**18.** Time magazine reported that at a university ball in 1968, he “unbent sufficiently, as one observer put it, ‘to seem intent on kissing an attractive blonde named Cindy, even in the fast dances’.” That was Cindy Buxton, the daughter of a birdwatching companion of his father’s. Charles also attended a pottery class at night, and played for the university polo team.

**19.** He became the first heir to the throne to be awarded a university degree – a 2:2 in history. “This boy has come out with flying colours,” the master of Trinity College, Lord Butler, said. “We think it was rather remarkable that he could get a good degree, considering all his other duties.”

**20.** When he met Camilla Shand in the summer of 1971, she is said to have introduced herself by saying: “My great-grandmother was the mistress of your great-grandfather – so how about it?”



Prince Charles arrives at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1967. Photograph: Mirrorpix/Getty Images

**21.** In The Palace Papers, Tina Brown writes that Camilla was said to have urged the sexually “diffident” Charles to “pretend I’m a rocking horse”.

**22.** They fell in love, but were separated when Charles joined the Royal Navy. Some attributed their separation to his great-uncle Lord Mountbatten’s advice that only a virgin could marry the future king: he wrote that “it is disturbing for women to have experiences if they have to remain on a pedestal after marriage”. He also said: “I believe in a case like yours that a man should sow his wild oats before settling down.”

**23.** In 1974, an Observer journalist said to Charles: “The Queen is still a youthful monarch. It looks as though you will have to spend many years as Prince of Wales,” and asked: “Should monarchs reign until death? Is there a case for retirement?” Charles replied: “No, I certainly don’t think monarchs should retire and be pensioned off ... The nature of being a monarch is different. There’s plenty I can do.”

**24.** In the same interview, Charles said that he hoped to encourage greater tolerance of diversity, saying: “The more people understand about the background of the immigrants who come to this country, the less

apprehensive they would be about them. To get on neighbourly terms with people of other races and countries, you've got to get more familiar with them. Know how they live, eat, work, what makes them laugh. And their history."

**25.** Charles has written the forewords to at least 31 books. The first was [a compilation of Goon Show scripts](#) by Spike Milligan, published in 1974. He later [became patron of the Goon Show Preservation Society](#).

**26.** In 1975, when being installed as Great Master of the Order of the Bath, he [sported a moustache](#) that made him look exactly like Terry Thomas.

**27.** Charles had been advised by Mountbatten that "for a wife he should choose a suitable and sweet-Charactered girl before she meets anyone else she might fall for". In 1977, when he was 29, he met the 16-year-old Diana Spencer.

**28.** [Tina Brown writes](#) that in 1980, Charles and Camilla kissed at length in front of her husband, Andrew Parker Bowles, himself a serial adulterer, at a polo ball hosted by meat fortune heir Lord Vestey. Andrew said: "HRH is very fond of my wife, and she appears to be very fond of him."



The then Lady Diana Spencer and Camilla Parker-Bowles at Ludlow Races in 1980. Photograph: Express Newspapers/Getty Images

**29.** In the same year, Charles published a children's book, The Old Man of Lochnagar. At one point, the old man meets the "king of the Gorms", who has a "peculiar rubber mat" fastened to his bottom to "prevent him slipping off his throne all the time".

**30.** Under pressure to marry, Charles proposed to Diana in February 1981, just before she went on a trip to Australia: "I thought: 'Well I'll ask her then so that she'll have a chance of thinking it over,'" he said. Asked if they were in love in a broadcast interview, Charles said: "Whatever 'in love' means."

**31.** Diana later said they had met 13 times when Charles proposed. In the Guardian, John Ezard and Alan Rusbridger reported that Harold Brooks-Baker, managing editor of Debretts, said that Diana "descends five times from Charles II. Four times on the wrong side of the blanket and one on the right side. He had a large number of bastards".

**32.** In an eight-page supplement the day before the wedding in July 1981, the Guardian published pictures of 14 of his alleged ex-girlfriends.

**33.** Their wedding at St Paul's Cathedral was attended by 3,500 people, with 600,000 spectators lining the route of Diana's procession, and an estimated television audience of 28 million in the UK and 750 million around the world. Diana's dress had a 25-ft (7.6-metre) train made of ivory taffeta and antique lace. There were 23 official wedding cakes; a slice of one was preserved and sold for £1,850 in 2021. The royal biographer Hugo Vickers wrote in a diary entry on the day: "The Royal Wedding is no more romantic than a picnic amid the wasps."



Charles and Diana head to the palace after their wedding. Photograph: PA

**34.** When Prince William was born in 1982, a Buckingham Palace spokesperson said he “cried lustily”. [The Guardian reported](#) that when Charles was told a crowd outside the hospital had chanted “Nice one Charlie, let’s have another one,” he laughed and replied: “Bloody hell, give us a chance.”

**35.** When Charles was made president of the British Medical Association in 1982, he [made a speech setting out his belief in alternative medicine](#), and criticising “the deeply ingrained suspicion and outright hostility which can exist towards anything unorthodox or unconventional”. A four-page supplement in the Evening Standard promoting unproven cures for cancer appeared in his name a few days later.

**36.** Charles’s belief in unproven treatments was attributed to the man he was said to view as his spiritual mentor, Laurens van der Post, who was later disgraced [by the revelation that he had fathered a child with a 14-year-old girl](#) when he was 46. Van der Post persuaded Charles to record his descriptions of his dreams, which were then subjected to Jungian analysis.

**37.** For the six weeks before the birth of Prince Harry in 1984, [Diana later said](#) she and Charles “were very, very close to each other … the closest

we've ever, ever been and ever will be. Then suddenly as Harry was born it just went bang, our marriage, the whole thing went down the drain".

**38.** According to Charles's biographer Sally Bedell Smith, Charles and Camilla's affair resumed in 1986. Diana [told her biographer](#) Andrew Morton that she confronted Camilla in 1989. She claimed Camilla said: "All the men in the world fall in love with you, and you've got two beautiful children, what more do you want?" She said she replied: "I want my husband."

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**39.** After encouragement from Sir Laurens van der Post, the South African writer, Charles talked to his plants. [He said in 1986 that](#) "they respond, I find" and that his fruits and vegetables were "a damned sight bigger because I instructed them to be".

**40.** In the same year, Charles travelled to the Kalahari desert with Van der Post, where he felt he saw "[a vision of earthly eternity](#)" in a herd of zebras. He then travelled to the Outer Hebrides and spent three days living in a modest cottage, where he planted potatoes and helped mend fences to learn more about crofting. The Sun [covered the visit with the headline](#): "A LOON AGAIN: HERMIT CHARLES PLANTS SPUDS ON REMOTE ISLE."



Charles and Diana in 1991. Photograph: Anonymous/AP

**41.** Andrew Morton's book, published in 1992, revealed excruciating details of the breakdown of Charles and Diana's marriage. They separated formally later that year. In 1993, a recording of a conversation between Charles and Camilla, in which he said he would like to be reincarnated as her tampon, caused a sensation. An Italian newspaper [referred to Charles as "Il Tampaccino"](#) when reporting the story.

**42.** In 1993, Charles took the lead in planning a new development, Poundbury, on Duchy of Cornwall land, according to the principles of architecture and urban planning he advocated. In 2016 the Guardian's architecture critic Oliver Wainwright [wrote that](#) while it had long been mocked as a "feudal Disneyland", "strip away the fancy dress and you find a plan that far exceeds the sophistication achieved by any modern housebuilder".

**43.** In a biography written by Jonathan Dimbleby with Charles's blessing, [Dimbleby wrote](#): "Prince Charles is far more aware of the prospective burdens of kingship than its pleasures." Charles told him: "The difficulty is most of the time not feeling that one is worthy of it, inevitably."

**44.** Charles admitted to the affair with Camilla [in a 1994 interview with Dimbleby](#). He said he had been faithful “until [his marriage] became irretrievably broken down”.

**45.** A book by Tom Bower said that Charles, a keen watercolourist, tried to swap one of his paintings for a work by Lucian Freud in 1994. “I don’t want one of your rotten paintings,” [Freud is said to have replied](#).

**46.** After Diana’s explosive interview with Martin Bashir in 1995, the Queen [sent letters to Charles and Diana advising them to divorce](#). Last year, after new revelations cast doubt over how Bashir had secured the interview and amid briefing that Charles was angry that clips from the broadcast were still shown, [the BBC promised never to air it again](#).

**47.** When Charles and Diana finally divorced the next year, they [agreed a settlement](#) which saw her receive a lump sum of £17m – equivalent to £41m today – as well as £400,000 a year. They signed non-disclosure agreements prohibiting any discussion of the divorce or their marriage.

**48.** A poll [published by the Guardian in 1995](#) found that 49% of British people expected to see the end of the monarchy in their own lifetimes.

**49.** Charles owned a 1987 Aston Martin V8 Vantage Volante, which he was given by the emir of Bahrain on a state visit. It was customised to include a leather-trimmed sugar-lump jar for Charles’s polo ponies in its glove box. Charles sold the car in 1995 and gave the £110,000 proceeds to the Prince’s Trust. The Guardian [recently estimated](#) that his current luxury car fleet is worth about £6.3m.

**50.** In his recent memoir Spare, Prince Harry remembered that when he was growing up, his father [would perform headstands in his bedroom each morning](#) in an attempt to relieve neck and back pain caused by years of playing polo. Clad only in his boxer shorts, Charles would yell “No! Don’t open! Please God don’t open!” if anyone approached the door to his room.

**51.** After Diana’s Paris car crash in 1997, Charles broke the news to Harry in his bedroom. He called him his “dear son” and put his hand on his knee but did not hug him, Harry [said in his memoir](#).

**52.** Harry also said that Charles kept a teddy bear which he had had since he was at Gordonstoun which had “broken arms and dangly threads”. [Harry wrote](#) that the bear “expressed eloquently, better than Pa ever could, the essential loneliness of his childhood”.

**53.** In 2002, after the death of the queen mother, Charles flew to Greece to stay at a monastery on Mount Athos for three days. [He travelled with a butler and 43 pieces of luggage](#).

**54.** In 2004, Charles was reported to have said: “Nobody knows what utter hell it is to be the Prince of Wales.”

**55.** He [once gave Ozzy Osbourne](#), a recovering alcoholic, a bottle of scotch as a get-well-soon present after Osbourne fractured his collarbone.

**56.** Harry said in Spare that Charles’s preferred personal scent was Eau Sauvage, which he would “slather” on “his cheeks, his neck, his shirt”. He said it was “flowery, with a hint of something harsh, like pepper or gunpowder”.



Prince Charles and Camilla. Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

**57.** Charles and Camilla’s wedding in 2005 clashed with the Grand National, which was therefore delayed by 25 minutes. Shortly after the ceremony, the

Queen stepped into a sideroom at Windsor Castle to watch the race. She also left the reception to watch it again. Her wedding present for the couple was a broodmare.

**58.** Since his mother died, Charles has made £2.3m from selling her horses at auction.

**59.** Honours given to Charles during his lifetime include Sash of Special Category of the Order of the Aztec Eagle in Mexico, Grand Cordon of the Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum in Japan, Grand Commander of the Order of the Lion in Malawi, and Knight of the Order of the Elephant in Denmark. He also received a special award for the promotion of gardening from the Garden Media Guild in 2011.

**60.** In 2015, after a 10-year legal battle, [the Guardian published](#) some of the “black spider letters” – named for his handwriting – Charles sent to ministers. Among many other suggestions, he wrote to then-environment minister Elliot Morley in 2004 saying that he hoped “illegal fishing of the Patagonian toothfish will be high up on your list of priorities because until that trade is stopped, there is little hope for the poor old albatross”.

**61.** The law was subsequently changed to provide an absolute exemption for the monarch and all heirs to the throne from freedom of information requests.

**62.** A Sunday Times report last year revealed that in 2015 Charles [was given €3m cash in a suitcase and Fortnum & Mason carrier bags](#) by the former prime minister of Qatar. The money was then deposited into the accounts of the Prince of Wales’s Charitable Fund.

**63.** Tom Bower’s biography [claimed that](#) Charles made five outfit changes a day, and travelled with his own orthopaedic bed and toilet seat as well as a supply of Kleenex Premium Comfort loo paper. Clarence House made no comment.

**64.** In 2019, Josh O’Connor took on the part of Prince Charles in The Crown. [He said that](#) to perfect the voice, he said “ears” instead of “yes” and

spoke through his teeth. [He also said that](#) he drew on Charles's habit of checking his cufflinks and pocket square every time he gets out of a car.

**65.** Charles's personal fortune [has been estimated by the Guardian at about £1.8bn](#). He receives around £86m a year in public funding, and is technically due another £250m under the terms of a 2011 funding settlement, but has signalled he does not want the extra money. After the death of the Queen, he [paid no inheritance tax](#) on her fortune.

**66.** Paul Powlesland, a barrister who was threatened with arrest for holding up a blank piece of paper in Parliament Square in protest at coverage of the Queen's death which he viewed as "over the top and mawkish", [also hopes to protest at the coronation](#). Patrick Thelwell, a student who threw five eggs at the new king (but missed), and said that people around him said "Kill him, kick him to death", was found guilty of threatening behaviour and banned from carrying eggs.



King Charles arrives at Westminster Abbey for his mother's funeral.  
Photograph: Marco Bertorello/AFP/Getty Images

**67.** A wreath of flowers, leaves and herbs, some from Charles's own gardens at Highgrove and Clarence House, rested on his mother's casket at her funeral with a note that read: "With loving and devoted memory, Charles R."

**68.** New research shared with the Guardian [and published last week](#) revealed that Charles's direct ancestors bought and exploited enslaved people on tobacco plantations in Virginia in the 17th century. Earlier this month, in response to the Guardian's reporting, Charles [signalled for the first time](#) his support for research into the links between the British monarchy and the transatlantic slave trade.

**69.** Only three in 10 Britons [think the monarchy is “very important” today](#) – the lowest proportion on record. But [a recent YouGov poll](#) found that 58% of the public preferred the monarchy to an elected head of state.

**70.** Plans for the coronation have been under way for years under the codename “Operation Golden Orb”. No budget has been revealed, but it has been estimated that it will cost between £50m and £100m. It [has also been reported](#) that Charles wants it to be “in line with his vision for a smaller, more modern monarchy”, with 2,000 guests against the 8,000 that attended the Queen’s coronation and a shorter service. That event cost £912,000 in 1953 – £20.5m today.

**71.** Charles will leave the ceremony wearing the Imperial State Crown for the first time. It is 12 inches tall, and [decorated with 3,165 diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, and pearls](#). The centrepiece is the Cullinan II diamond. When craftsmen first attempted to cut it, [the first blow broke the knife](#).

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## 2023.05.01 - Opinion

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Illustration: Matt Kenyon

[OpinionCancer](#)

## **It's hard to talk about cancer, but being open about my mastectomy has given me strength**

[Hilary Osborne](#)



I have explained what has happened to me, on my own terms, and people have responded in kind

Mon 1 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 May 2023 10.45 EDT

I've had a double mastectomy. I don't find it straightforward to spell or to pronounce, but it's the term I find easiest to use when I tell people what has happened to me. I just can't put it in plain English, and say exactly what the surgeons did. This may change, but it seems too painful to me, and I worry about the people listening.

Generally, since [I was diagnosed](#) with breast cancer last summer I have tried to avoid couching things in terms that may be unclear. Years of writing articles on complicated financial products and schemes in my roles on the Guardian's Money and Investigations desks have conditioned me to avoid jargon. I like to get to the point and use language that is accessible, rather than words that exclude people, and in the main I have taken this approach to my illness.

I have told my family, friends and strangers about the cancer and broken down the medical terms when needed (often with the help of the internet).

I've relayed details of the chemo and the side-effects in most of the gory detail. When you are constantly being asked by nurses you've only just met to describe your bowel movements, you get less squeamish about some of these things.

I have avoided euphemisms, even when some of those involved in my care have reached for them. At the beginning, two doctors used the word sinister. They clearly meant cancer – what other sinister thing could be manifesting itself as a lump in my breast? I didn't feel better because they *didn't* say they were checking for cancer.

The other consultants and nurses I've seen have thankfully talked in plain English about what is happening and how they plan to treat it. They explained the surgery in simple terms, not just using the word mastectomy. Many of the websites I've turned to for information do the same.

I can talk in detail about the reconstruction and implants I had at the same time as the mastectomy – I'll even show you a photo of the drains that collected fluid to prevent swelling. But when it comes to the first bit of the operation, I'd rather struggle to spell it than spell it out. Using the word mastectomy allows people to avoid thinking about what it really means – including me. People can understand I've had surgery without confronting what has been done and where. Anything else feels too visceral to me.

And people have responded in kind. No one has asked me for details. A couple of people have looked a bit uncertain about what I have been saying, but they were not close family or friends so I didn't offer an explanation. My son has heard me used the word and not asked what I mean; if and when he does I will tell him, but for the moment he knows that I went to hospital and had an operation and have been recovering.

In the main I have found it helpful to tell people that I'm ill and what is wrong. Some of this is probably vanity – I don't want people to think I'm tweeting my Wordle score because I've missed that there's some actual news, or that I really believed a hat went with this outfit, or that I walk that slowly up the stairs.

Some of it, though, is knowing that every time I talk about it I get something back. People reciprocate with information, either their own health problems or things they know about breast cancer. I've had recommendations of services, I've been buoyed up by other people's stories of getting through it, and found camaraderie with people who are going through it too right now.

They also reciprocate with kindness and lovely messages asking how I am. These bring a downside – I don't like to deliver only bad news, so even at my lowest I've felt that I should provide some light with the shade – which can be exhausting. "Hi! Thanks for your text. My life has completely changed, I'm being pumped full of drugs that mean I feel dreadful and don't recognise myself and I haven't left the sofa for a couple of days – but the football's on and I haven't had to shave my legs since July!"

Sharing information has been made easier by the fact that the outlook has been reasonably good from the start. It is, of course, much easier to talk about tests that have come back all clear and chemotherapy that has been shrinking the tumour.

And I haven't always wanted to tell everyone or to talk about it. I didn't talk about it widely until I'd had enough tests to answer their questions about the extent of it. I didn't mention it to my neighbours for ages because I liked to have a space where I could talk about the weather and the cat, as in normal times. I didn't tell my grandma because I didn't want to worry her. And when she died last summer, I went to her funeral and pretended I was OK to those I hadn't told. It was a celebration of her life and I wanted to talk about her, so answered questions about work as though I was still going into the office every day, and swerved questions about our holiday plans.

Telling people you have cancer is a bit like telling people you are pregnant. You don't always know what people's own experience has been, and so their reactions can be surprising. There is no guidance as to the best way to do it: is it OK to WhatsApp someone? Is it bad if it's one of the first things you say when you turn up to drop off your child? (This did make one of my friends cry, so maybe it is.) Is it weird to tell the postie? Or less weird than answering the door at midday in your PJs and a woolly hat and not having a reason?

For all of these reasons I can see why people sometimes choose to keep their illness to themselves. And for some, privacy is important, or there may be issues with telling family or colleagues. But in the main, telling people about my cancer has given me strength. It has helped me process and make sense of what has been happening. I would recommend it, but on – and in – your own terms.

- Hilary Osborne is the Guardian's money and consumer editor
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‘Richard Sharp is a public figure of national interest. But he is also Jewish, and antisemitism remains a live and at times lethal problem.’ Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Antisemitism](#)

## **Richard Sharp is a public figure and fair game for satire. The use of antisemitic tropes is not**

[Dave Rich](#)



The Guardian was right to remove and delete the cartoon published on Saturday, but with all that is known about anti-Jewish symbols and images, this should not be happening

Mon 1 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 May 2023 13.25 EDT

Other than his closest friends, it is unlikely that anybody would complain if a Guardian cartoonist drew Boris Johnson as a gorilla. All's fair in political satire, cartoonists are expected to be scurrilous, and the former prime minister is fair game. But if that same cartoonist drew a black politician in simian form, it would be obviously racist.

This is the principle to hold in mind when decoding Martin Rowson's cartoon of outgoing BBC chair [Richard Sharp](#), who is Jewish, in Saturday's Guardian. Centuries of anti-Jewish caricaturists (and to be clear, I do not accuse Rowson or the Guardian of falling into this category) have generated an extensive library of visual tropes to convey their hatred of, and disgust for, Jews. This is partly because antisemites face a challenge: how do you incite hatred against a group of people who are not always readily identifiable? Not every Jew wears religious clothing or "looks Jewish" to every beholder.

Rather than drawing a yellow star on each Jewish target, Nazi-style, artists down the ages have instead given their subjects stereotypically “Jewish” features. The outsized nose and lips, grotesque features and sinister grin have been part of antisemitic imagery for centuries, a way of portraying Jews as repulsive and sinister. You can find them in medieval woodcuts of the fictitious allegation that Jews crucified Christian children and drained their blood (the ritual murder or “blood libel” charge), in Victorian cartoons in Punch and in the Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer*.

All of which makes it unfathomable that anyone would be so unfamiliar with this anti-Jewish visual lexicon that they would draw and publish a cartoon that depicted Sharp, or any other Jew in public life, in this way: but here we are. All the component parts were there: the large nose, the lips, the Fagin-like sneer, and, of course, what appears to be money. It’s a racialised depiction of a Jew, and incidentally is another reminder, if Diane Abbott is still wondering, that antisemitism can indeed be a form of racism.

Sharp is a public figure of national interest and should not be exempt from scrutiny and satire. But he is also Jewish, and antisemitism remains a live and at times lethal problem. There is a responsibility on newspapers and cartoonists to ensure that they do not feed this by deploying antisemitic motifs in their critiques of Jews in the public eye.

[Rowson says](#) that Sharp’s Jewishness was not in his mind, but in a way that is beside the point. For centuries our world has taught us that this is how to imagine wealthy, powerful Jews, especially those accused of wrongdoing. The fact that his pen veered, however unthinkingly, towards these antisemitic motifs shows how easily, and unthinkingly, they can rise to the surface.

Then there are the contents of the box that Sharp is carrying. Rowson calls this “the standard accessory of the just sacked” (although that begs the question why it is a Goldman Sachs box and not a [BBC](#) one, when he has just lost his job at the latter). The most eye-catching thing in the box is a big pink squid, which seems puzzling until you remember that in 2009 Matt Taibbi, writing in Rolling Stone, famously described Goldman Sachs as “a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money”.

This metaphor was, and remains, antisemitic. Goldman Sachs was founded by Jewish families and has a Jewish-sounding name. Antisemitic conspiracy peddlers regularly describe the fantastical Jewish power network they believe exists as a squid or octopus, its tentacles reaching into every part of society. In the antisemitic imagination, Jewish power is never about muscular strength or straightforward authority, but is more insidious and manipulative. This is why anti-Jewish zoomorphism tends towards snakes, spiders and, yes, squids, rather than, say, predators like sharks or lions. There is nothing honourable, in this way of thinking, about how Jews acquire and deploy money and power.

The specific invocation of a “vampire squid” connects with the blood libel allegation. Even Dracula himself, a mysterious figure of unexplained wealth who drinks blood and hates crosses, implicitly draws on this anti-Jewish tradition. Put all this together and Taibbi’s description of Goldman Sachs ticked numerous antisemitic boxes.

Nevertheless, it stuck and has been used by newspapers (including the Guardian) ever since. The fact it resonated so strongly tells us something about how easily antisemitic ideas exist, relatively unrecognised and unchallenged, in our world. The image of a huge, greedy, Jewish bank as a vampire squid works so well because it falls neatly into the groove of anti-Jewish thinking that has been present in our world for so long. It makes sense to people because it feels so familiar.

The swift withdrawal of the cartoon and [apology by both Rowson](#) and the Guardian are welcome, but really, this should not still be happening. The Labour party went through years of pain because too many people within its ranks, and in its leadership, either could not recognise antisemitic ideas or actively indulged them. One of the lowest points in that saga was Jeremy Corbyn’s apparent inability to recognise the antisemitism in a mural of bankers in which the Jewish figures were painted with – you guessed it – big noses.

The Labour party has worked hard to educate itself, but it seems that there are still those in broader progressive politics who have learning left to do.

- Dr Dave Rich is author of Everyday Hate: How antisemitism is built into our world and how you can change it
  - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*
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A screen showing a news report seen through the windows of the BBC in central London, after Richard Sharp announced he was quitting as chairman.  
Photograph: Jordan Pettitt/PA

[OpinionRichard Sharp](#)

## To those who rejoice at Richard Sharp's fall at the BBC – be careful what you wish for

[Jane Martinson](#)



The past Tory donor was clearly conflicted by his dealings with Boris Johnson, but he believed in the BBC. The next chair might not

Sun 30 Apr 2023 12.04 EDT Last modified on Sun 30 Apr 2023 13.28 EDT

In the aftermath of Richard Sharp's resignation as chair of the BBC and Boris Johnson's humiliation as the man who caused the defenestration of yet another who got too close, there is a warning to be voiced: be careful what you wish for.

Sharp was obviously and hopelessly conflicted by his failure to declare a connection to an £800,000 loan guarantee for Johnson during his interview for the prime post.

In announcing his departure, Sharp decided that this “inadvertent” error with its “potential perceived conflict of interest” (as opposed to an actual conflict, presumably) could prove a “distraction from the corporation’s good work” if he carried on.

And that somewhat disdainful [statement](#) said everything we need to know about what he really thought of the rigour of a process in which he,

perceived by many – including himself – to be the best man for the job, ended up resigning. It says he knew best then and still does now.

Many at the [BBC](#) wonder why, if he really cared so much about the scandal proving a “distraction,” Sharp waited so many reputation-zapping months to announce his departure: months during which the political independence of the BBC management both at home and abroad was undermined.

The affair speaks volumes about a public appointments process and governance structure; both are unfit for purpose. Low morale within the corporation has focused not just on the political appointments system, which has long bedevilled the BBC, but a governance system introduced after 2016 in which the broadcaster is both governed and managed by a combined unitary board.

The decision by the board to describe Sharp as a “[person of integrity](#)” in the immediate aftermath of his resignation prompted some mockery among staffers.

But board members also called him “a real advocate for the BBC”, and there is some truth there. By several accounts, he was an enthusiastic chair, not only taking delight in going behind the scenes on television shows but using his connections within the corridors of power to champion the BBC and support its aims.

And after him, what next? Gallows humour lists all the conservative types currently considered rather underemployed. Nadine Dorries? Dominic Cummings? Maybe even Robbie Gibb, who might not let Emily Maitlis’s accusation that he was an “[active agent of the Conservative party](#)” deter him from moving up from board member to the big chair. Post-Sharp, things could be so much better, or so much worse.

But whatever happens, the system that appoints a successor must change. The [investigation by Adam Heppinstall](#) KC found that Johnson had effectively made it known that Sharp was the only man for the job, at least after his first choice, the former Telegraph editor and columnist and

rightwinger Charles Moore, ruled himself out. This whiff of chumocracy meant that few people of any merit even bothered to apply.

By standing down early, Sharp allows his old financial controller and close colleague [Rishi Sunak](#) to appoint the next chair for a full four-year term, leaving them in situ no matter the result of the next election. The government is expected to appoint Sharp's successor this summer, less than the time it took Heppinstall to investigate the rule breach.

There is opportunity here: there would be no shortage of applications to join a truly open public appointments commission full of cross-party experts. The details would need to be discussed but there should be no one person with overall control, in order to avoid the situation where the existing commissioner for public appointments, William Shawcross, had to [recuse himself](#) from examining this particular appointment because he knew Sharp too well to be considered truly impartial.

Sharp's resignation statement may have been disdainful, but he did genuinely believe what he also said in his [exit statement](#), that the BBC is an “incredible, dynamic and world-beating creative force, unmatched anywhere”.

It is a force that must remain above politics of left or right if it is to survive – and it needs a leader who truly thinks the same

- Jane Martinson is a Guardian columnist
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*



Former deputy prime minister Dominic Raab leaves 10 Downing Street, London, 18 April 2023. Photograph: Jordan Pettitt/PA

[Opinion](#)[Civil service](#)

## **Take it from me: there is no civil service ‘activist’ plot – just Tory ministers who must learn to behave**

[The civil servant](#)

There is unease about what happens next. We’re not perfect, but politicians will do anything but address their own shortcomings

Mon 1 May 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 May 2023 12.43 EDT

So, exactly who is making the UK apparently ungovernable? Is it bullying, psychotic ministers intent on stoking the culture wars until Gary Lineker, the BBC, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and every other woke-sucking, electorate-hating public institution is consumed by its righteous flames?

Or is it, more specifically, us “[over-unionised](#)”, “activist” civil servants – who, despite being a “[very small minority](#)” of milquetoast snowflakes, are still somehow capable of orchestrating the ruthless defenestration of Dominic Raab, [Steve Barclay](#) and any other poor minister who dares to actually get something – anything – done?

Or is it you, dear reader, the “[Guardian-reading, tofu-eating wokerati](#)” with your declinist, gloomster schadenfreude, bringing the country to its knees?

It’s not you, darling, it’s me. At least, that’s what assorted Raab-fluffers – including [Jacob Rees-Mogg](#), Conservative peer Lord Marland (who told the BBC there was “almost a conspiracy by the civil service”) and the Emperor Palpatine of civil service reform, Francis Maude (more on him in a bit) – are desperately trying to get the public to believe.

The very [carefully choreographed](#) narrative from these notable truth-tellers ([brilliantly debunked](#) recently by Simon McDonald, who himself worked under Raab and quickly dismissed the conspiracy theorists) is that the civil service “blob” is hellbent on a campaign to frustrate and undermine government policy.

Yet this absurd, toxic take on how the civil service works somehow manages to overlook the vaccine rollout, the cost of living support package and the response to the Ukraine crisis as recent examples, according to the [Institute for Government’s 2022 report](#), of civil servants “working under clear ministerial direction … with a focus on action and making change happen”.

“Activist” civil servants? The truth is, we’re not that organised. But even if we had the hilariously short-sighted aim of “bringing down” the government, we don’t have the means or the platform to do any such thing. The idea of a hidden civil service agenda is an archetypal “deep state” trope that for years has been cultivated and amplified by the rightwing media to serve as mood music for this government’s war against the very concept of checks and balances against its power.

Ministers are now carpet-bombing the media with the next chapter of this story. It goes something like this: now that lazy, incompetent civil servants

have hounded Raab from office, ministers face a struggle to get them to do any work.

Oliver Dowden, Raab's replacement as deputy prime minister, warns against the civil service [lowering standards](#). Civil servants even have "lower expectations of work", [according to David Davis](#). "We would have found it quite difficult to win both world wars" with attitudes like these, Lord Lilley [sniffed](#).

Government ministers – with Tory backbenchers screaming for civil service blood – have ample incentive to ignore the idea that dealing more effectively with bullying and harassment [might be an answer](#). Instead, having created the problem, they are manufacturing the solution: the actual politicisation of the civil service.

And so back to Lord Maude, who, having tried several times since 2010 to reform the civil service, now has [radical plans](#) to let ministers appoint their own civil servants. He is probably the only Tory clever, experienced and motivated enough to have another run at it before the next general election. "It is perfectly possible to preserve impartiality while allowing ministers more say in appointments ... Without material adjustment, there will be more cases like Raab's when frustrations boil over ... We also need to be more robust and less mealy mouthed about 'politicisation'", [he says](#).

To most civil servants, this sounds more like a naked threat than a serious effort to overhaul the machinery of government. Why? Because it does nothing to fix the problem of ministerial bullying. As Hannah White, director of the Institute for Government, [points out](#), the government response to the Raab case seems more likely to deter officials from speaking out: "nothing has been done to reduce the risk of future problems," she says.

And there's baggage here: from [lambasting civil servants](#) for working from home, to [ridiculing](#) diversity training courses, the underlying motive for repeated attacks on civil servants in recent years seems to point towards encouraging the abandonment of impartiality, particularly where that can help hide the impact of government policies on the poor, the disabled, the young and other demographics less likely to vote Tory.

And don't we already have cadres of special advisers to help grease the wheels between ministers and the civil service? It's a system that works reasonably well. Replacing senior civil servants with political appointees would be an utter shitshow, because the main criterion for their appointment wouldn't be talent or experience, but political loyalty.

We must tackle wicked, long-term problems such as climate change, health and social care reform and worsening social mobility. If, every time there's a general election, one civil service leaves to be replaced by a new one, that extra churn and disruption to institutional memory would only make meaningful change even harder.

Nobody's saying the UK civil service is perfect. And it's possible, as Maude suggests, that other civil service models can work. But they seem to work only in countries where the "good chap" theory of government – in which "the letter of the rules is less important than the system being run by players who understand their spirit" – doesn't keep getting tested to destruction and beyond.

Don't take my word for it. Lord McDonald worked more closely with Dominic Raab than anyone else, as the top civil servant at the Foreign Office, and he couldn't have been clearer: "There is no civil service activism." The only thing that really counts is how ministers now decide to behave.

The author works for the UK civil service

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## 2023.05.01 - Around the world

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- [Exclusive AI tool can accurately identify cancer](#)
- [Kanye West Adidas shareholders launch class action lawsuit over Yeezy brand](#)
- [US gun control New York buyback program takes thousands of firearms off the street](#)



Researchers analysed the concentrations of six air pollutants from monitoring stations closest to hospitals in 322 Chinese cities. Photograph: VCG/Getty Images

### Air pollution

## Air pollution spikes linked to irregular heartbeats, study finds

Study of 200,000 Chinese hospital admissions finds acute exposure to air pollution raises risk of heart arrhythmias

*Hannah Devlin* Science correspondent  
[@hannahdev](https://twitter.com/hannahdev)

Mon 1 May 2023 00.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 May 2023 14.15 EDT

Spikes in air pollution increase the risk of cardiac arrhythmias, a large study has found.

The research, based on nearly 200,000 hospital admissions in [China](#), found a significant increase in risk of arrhythmias in the first few hours after an

increase in air pollution levels. Heart arrhythmias can increase the risk of heart disease and sudden cardiac death.

“We found that acute exposure to ambient air pollution was associated with increased risk of symptomatic arrhythmia,” said Dr Renjie Chen of Fudan University in Shanghai. “The risks occurred during the first several hours after exposure and could persist for 24 hours.”

A study last year reported a link between [fine particulate air pollution and cardiac arrhythmias](#) in otherwise healthy teenagers, and confirmed that this translates to a meaningful health risk. The study also suggested that the exposure risk from six pollutants was roughly linear without an obvious safe threshold.

The study included 190,115 patients admitted to hospital in 322 Chinese cities, who were suffering from sudden onset arrythmia, including atrial fibrillation, atrial flutter, premature beats and supraventricular tachycardia. [Air pollution](#) in China is well above the World Health Organization’s guidelines for air quality, and the researchers analysed the concentrations of six air pollutants from monitoring stations closest to the reporting hospitals.

Of these, nitrogen dioxide ( $\text{NO}_2$ ) had the strongest association with all four types of arrythmia. The exact impact of air pollution is not clear, but there is some evidence that it causes oxidative stress and inflammation, which can affect the heart’s electrical activity.

“Although the exact mechanisms are not yet fully understood, the association between air pollution and acute onset of arrhythmia that we observed is biologically plausible,” the authors wrote.

A previous study found that on high pollution days in England [hundreds more people](#) are rushed into hospital for emergency care after suffering cardiac arrests, strokes and asthma attacks. In 2020, the British Heart Foundation estimated [more than 160,000 people](#) could die in the coming decade from strokes and heart attacks linked to air pollution. And the health impacts extend beyond heart disease, with research showing that particulate

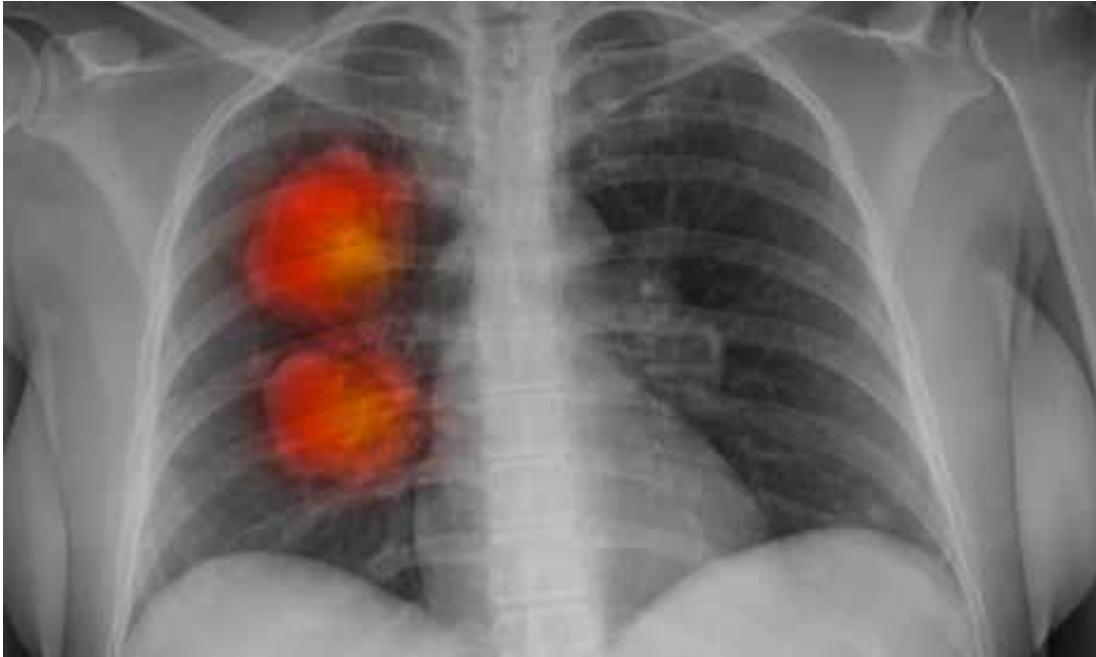
air pollution is driving up rates of lung cancer, by [awakening dormant mutations](#) that trigger the growth of tumours.

The authors said the findings, published in the [Canadian Medical Association Journal](#), highlight the need to protect at-risk people during heavy air pollution and to reduce overall exposure.

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Lung cancer is the biggest worldwide cause of cancer death, and accounts for 21% of cancer deaths in the UK. Photograph: Cultura Creative/Alamy  
[Cancer](#)

## New artificial intelligence tool can accurately identify cancer

Exclusive: algorithm performs more efficiently and effectively than current methods, according to a study

*[Andrew Gregory](#)*, Health editor  
[@andrewgregory](#)

Sun 30 Apr 2023 11.00 EDT Last modified on Sun 30 Apr 2023 17.43 EDT

Doctors, scientists and researchers have built an artificial intelligence model that can accurately identify cancer in a development they say could speed up diagnosis of the disease and fast-track patients to treatment.

Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide. It results in about 10 million deaths annually, or nearly one in six deaths, according to the World [Health](#)

Organization. In many cases, however, the disease can be cured if detected early and treated swiftly.

The AI tool designed by experts at the Royal Marsden NHS foundation trust, the Institute of [Cancer](#) Research, London, and Imperial College London can identify whether abnormal growths found on CT scans are cancerous.

The algorithm performs more efficiently and effectively than current methods, according to a study. The findings have been published in the Lancet's eBioMedicine journal.

"In the future, we hope it will improve early detection and potentially make cancer treatment more successful by highlighting high-risk patients and fast-tracking them to earlier intervention," said Dr Benjamin Hunter, a clinical oncology registrar at the Royal Marsden and a clinical research fellow at Imperial.

The team used CT scans of about 500 patients with large lung nodules to develop an AI algorithm using radiomics. The technique can extract vital information from medical images not easily spotted by the human eye.

The AI model was then tested to determine if it could accurately identify cancerous nodules.

The study used a measure called area under the curve (AUC) to see how effective the model was at predicting cancer. An AUC of 1 indicates a perfect model, while 0.5 would be expected if the model was randomly guessing.

The results showed the AI model could identify each nodule's risk of cancer with an AUC of 0.87. The performance improved on the Brock score, a test currently used in clinic, which scored 0.67. The model also performed comparably with the Herder score – another test – which had an AUC of 0.83.

"According to these initial results, our model appears to identify cancerous large lung nodules accurately," Hunter said. "Next, we plan to test the

technology on patients with large lung nodules in clinic to see if it can accurately predict their risk of lung cancer.”

The AI model may also help doctors make quicker decisions about patients with abnormal growths that are currently deemed medium-risk.

When combined with Herder, the AI model was able to identify high-risk patients in this group. It would have suggested early intervention for 18 out of 22 (82%) of the nodules that went on to be confirmed as cancerous, [according to the study](#).

The team stressed that the Libra study – backed by the Royal Marsden Cancer Charity, the National Institute for Health and Care Research, RM Partners and Cancer Research UK – was still at an early stage. More testing will be required before the model can be introduced in healthcare systems.

But its potential benefits were clear, they said. Researchers hope the AI tool will eventually be able to speed up the detection of cancer by helping to fast-track patients to treatment, and by streamlining the analysis of CT scans.

“Through this work, we hope to push boundaries to speed up the detection of the disease using innovative technologies such as AI,” said the Libra study’s chief investigator, Dr Richard Lee.

The consultant physician in respiratory medicine at the Royal Marsden and team leader at the Institute of Cancer Research said lung cancer was a good example of why new initiatives to speed up detection were urgently needed.

Lung cancer is the biggest worldwide cause of cancer mortality, and accounts for a fifth (21%) of cancer deaths in the UK. [Those diagnosed early can be treated much more effectively](#), but recent data shows more than 60% of lung cancers in England are diagnosed at either stage three or four.

“People diagnosed with lung cancer at the earliest stage are much more likely to survive for five years, when compared with those whose cancer is caught late,” said Lee.

“This means it is a priority we find ways to speed up the detection of the disease, and this study – which is the first to develop a radiomics model

specifically focused on large lung nodules – could one day support clinicians in identifying high-risk patients.”

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Kanye West, also known as Ye, pictured on the runway at the Kanye West Yeezy Adidas show as part of New York fashion week in 2015. Photograph: Leandro Justen/BFANYC.com/REX/Shutterstock

[Kanye West](#)

## **Adidas shareholders launch class action lawsuit over Kanye West brand Yeezy**

Investors claim sportswear giant failed to minimise their exposure to risk after the rapper and designer's antisemitic comments led to a sharp decline in the share price

*[Sian Cain](#)*

*[@siancain](#)*

Sun 30 Apr 2023 23.11 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 May 2023 14.30 EDT

Adidas shareholders have filed a class action lawsuit against the sportswear brand, claiming it knew about Kanye West's problematic behaviour years before it ended their partnership over his antisemitic comments.

The shareholders also allege that Adidas failed to mitigate their financial losses or take precautionary measures to minimise their exposure, after the designer and rapper's erratic behaviour and offensive comments saw him and his Yeezy brand dropped by Adidas, which [resulted in a sharp decline in the company's stock](#).

"We outright reject these unfounded claims," Adidas said in a statement responding to the lawsuit, adding that the company "will take all necessary measures to vigorously defend ourselves against them".

West, who is known as Ye, is not party to the lawsuit, which was filed in the US.

Under the Yeezy brand, Ye designed sportswear and sneakers that were hugely successful for Adidas.

But the sportswear giant ended its collaboration with Ye last October after he [praised Adolf Hitler](#) and the Nazis in an interview on Infowars, a show hosted by the rightwing conspiracy theorist Alex Jones; dressed models at Paris Fashion Week in clothing with the slogan "White Lives Matter", which the Anti-Defamation League classifies as a white supremacist phrase; and made antisemitic remarks which saw his Instagram and Twitter accounts suspended.

Adidas has revealed that [it could lose up to €1.2bn \(US\\$1.3bn\) on unsold Yeezy products](#) if it decides not to sell them and warned it could report its first loss in three decades.

When the company ended its relationship with Ye in October, it said: "Adidas does not tolerate antisemitism and any other sort of hate speech."

"Ye's recent comments and actions have been unacceptable, hateful and dangerous, and they violate the company's values of diversity and inclusion, mutual respect and fairness."

But the lawsuit alleges that Adidas knew about Ye's behaviour before then, alleging that it was discussed by former chief executive Kasper Rorsted as

well as other senior executives.

When Ye said in a 2018 interview that [slavery “sounds like a choice”](#), Rorsted said that, “There clearly are some comments we don’t support. Kanye has been and is a very important part of our strategy and has been a fantastic creator”.

In the aftermath of that comment, the lawsuit claims that Adidas “ignored the risks of oversupply of Yeezy branded shoes in the event that the partnership were to suddenly end, and in particular, if demand for the shoes were to fall due to any controversy surrounding West.”

The class action lawsuit covers anyone who bought Adidas stock between 3 May 2018 — the day West made the remark about slavery — until 2023.

After Adidas ended the partnership last October, the [Wall Street Journal published details](#) of an alleged 2018 meeting during which employees raised their concerns about Ye’s behaviour to senior executives, who allegedly advised staff on how to avoid interacting with him as well as the possibility that the brand would cut ties with him.

Adidas has since launched an independent investigation into reports that Ye created a “toxic environment” at the company, after staff wrote an open letter claiming that Ye showed them explicit images of himself and his ex-wife Kim Kardashian, shouted at female workers, and made “sexually disturbing references when providing design feedback”. In the letter, staff claimed bosses were aware of Ye’s “problematic behaviour” but “turned their moral compass off”.

In response to those allegations, Adidas said it took them “very seriously”. Ye did not respond to requests for comment.

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Ninety firearms were turned in during a three-hour period in Brooklyn.  
Photograph: Yuki Iwamura/AFP/Getty Images

[New York](#)

## **New York gun buyback program takes thousands of firearms off the street**

Participants who turned in guns were given up to \$500 for each firearm at nine program locations throughout the state

*[Maya Yang](#) in New York*

Mon 1 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 May 2023 09.21 EDT

Thousands of guns were surrendered across [New York](#) on Saturday in exchange for gift cards as part of the state's gun buyback program.

According to the New York attorney general, Letitia James, whose office organized the event, more than 3,000 guns including various assault-style

rifles and “ghost guns” were given up in what she hailed as a “landmark event”.

Individuals who surrendered assault-style rifles and “[ghost guns](#)”, which are guns built from firearm parts sold unassembled, were given \$500 gift cards, ABC News [reported](#). Participants who turned in handguns also received \$500 for the first weapon and an additional \$150 for each additional handgun surrendered.

In total, nine buyback locations were set up across the state, including two in New York City. At one of the buyback locations in Brooklyn, officials reported that they received 90 guns in just three hours, with the Brooklyn district attorney, Eric Gonzalez, being “especially pleased” by the amount of smaller guns that were surrendered, ABC 7 [reported](#).

“There’s a lot of firepower on this table,” Gonzalez said as he attended the buyback program at the All Saints church in Brooklyn on Saturday. “And each and every one of these guns is a potential life saved, and a non-fatal shooting avoided,” he added.

Meanwhile in Syracuse, 751 firearms were relinquished by residents. The vast surrender came just days after the Syracuse mayor, Ben Walsh, attributed the rising number of guns to the city’s increase in the rate of violent crime.

“There are too many damn guns in this country. They’re everywhere. And we have too many states that are abdicating their responsibility to ensure that guns are being sold safely,” Walsh [said](#) at a press conference, ABC News reported.

“And our federal government is abdicating their responsibility to ensure that guns are being handled safely,” he said, adding that Syracuse officials have so far removed 76 guns from the community this year compared with 55 guns that were removed at the same time last year. Of the guns seized, 90% hailed from out of state, said Walsh.

James [echoed](#) similar sentiments, saying: “Gun violence has caused so many avoidable tragedies and robbed us of so many innocent New Yorkers ...

Every gun that we removed out of Syracuse homes and off the streets is a potential tragedy averted and another step in protecting communities throughout New York state.”

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In New York City, the police department has established a Cash for Guns [program](#) in which the NYPD would offer \$200 to anyone who surrenders a gun. Individuals who choose to surrender their guns do not have to identify themselves nor will they be asked any questions by officials.

New York's firearm buyback program comes as 13,839 individuals died from gun violence in the country this year as of 30 April, [according to](#) the Gun Violence Archive. Suicide accounted for 7,920 of those deaths, while 5,919 people died from homicide, murder or unintentional shootings.

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## Headlines tuesday 9 may 2023

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John Allan has been chair of Tesco for eight years. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

[Tesco](#)

## **Tesco chair accused of inappropriate behaviour by four women**

Exclusive: John Allan, a prominent business leader and former CBI president, denies all but one of the allegations

*[Anna Isaac](#)  
[@Annaisaac](#)*

Tue 9 May 2023 13.48 EDTFirst published on Tue 9 May 2023 03.00 EDT

One of the UK's most prominent business leaders, the [Tesco](#) chair John Allan, faces claims of inappropriate and unprofessional behaviour from four women, the Guardian can reveal.

Allan allegedly touched the bottom of a senior member of Tesco staff in June 2022, at the company's annual general meeting (AGM). It is also

claimed that he touched the bottom of a member of staff at the business lobbying group the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), at its annual dinner in May 2019, when he was the organisation's president.

Sources allege that Allan, 74, made inappropriate remarks on those occasions as well as separate, similar comments to two other female members of CBI staff in November 2019 and in 2021 respectively. Some of the women said they were offended by the alleged actions and considered his behaviour to be sexual harassment.

### [Contact Guardian Business](#)

Allan has denied all but one of the allegations – making a comment about a CBI staffer's appearance that she found to be offensive in 2019. A spokesperson for Allan said the other claims were “simply untrue”.

Tesco said: “John Allan’s conduct has never been the subject of a complaint during his tenure as chair of Tesco.” The company urged anyone with concerns or information to contact a confidential phone line.

The allegations about Allan emerged during the Guardian’s investigation into the CBI, the UK’s foremost business lobbying group. Allan was president of the organisation between 2018 and 2020 and then vice-president until October 2021. He has been chair of the UK’s biggest supermarket since 2015.

It comes after pleas from women’s rights and trade union groups [not to drop new draft legislation](#) aimed at tackling sexual harassment in the workplace. The proposed bill would create a legal duty for employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and also protect staff from third-party harassment by clients and customers.

Wera Hobhouse, a Liberal Democrat MP, said on Twitter that the fresh allegations illustrated a wider problem of “pervasive” harassment in workplaces. “We cannot let victims down any longer. This is why my worker protection bill, which has cross-party support, must be passed into law,” Hobhouse said.

The CBI has promised to conduct a “root and branch” review of its culture. It has not offered a specific response on allegations related to Allan.



Boris Johnson with John Allan in 2019, when he was CBI president.  
Photograph: James Veysey/rex/Shutterstock

The claims raise questions over whether someone in his role can uphold the standards of corporate governance his positions require, according to some of the women. Allan is one of the most senior men in UK business, appearing regularly on the airwaves to speak for industry, and has been on the boards of some of Britain’s biggest companies.

The chair of a company’s board is expected to demonstrate the highest possible standards of behaviour and professional conduct, but their position can make it difficult to ensure proper scrutiny of their own conduct.

One woman who shared an allegation about Allan said: “Leading a company or challenging its leadership means you have to hold up standards across all areas of governance, including sexual harassment. He fell short of what the role is meant to mean.”

Another said: “It might seem a small thing to some people, but I felt humiliated and undermined by his actions.”

The identity of the four women is known to the Guardian.

The details of the allegations are:

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- One woman alleges that Allan grabbed her bottom at the CBI annual dinner in May 2019. Allan denies that this occurred. A second source claims they saw the incident at the Brewery in London on 21 May 2019.
- Sources told the Guardian that another woman complained to a manager after Allan commented on her appearance while at the CBI's November conference in 2019. Allan apologised for the remark after discussion with the group's then director general, Carolyn Fairbairn. Allan accepts he told the woman that a dress "suited her figure", but said it was a "misjudged way of seeking to cheer someone up". Fairbairn has previously said of her time at the CBI that "any allegations of inappropriate conduct made to me were taken incredibly seriously and swiftly addressed".
- A third woman claims that Allan made comments about her bottom and that her dress was making it hard for him to concentrate on anything

else in 2021, while she worked for the CBI. A second source claims to have overheard the exchange. Allan said he “did not recall” this incident and has no diary entries that show he attended any CBI events in person in 2021.

- It is claimed that Allan touched the bottom of a senior woman who works at Tesco on the day of the company’s 17 June 2022 annual general meeting at Welwyn Garden City in Hertfordshire.

In response to the claims, a spokesperson for Allan said: “Mr Allan was mortified after making the comment in 2019 and he immediately apologised. The person concerned agreed the matter was closed and no further action was taken. Regarding the other claims, they are simply untrue.

“Even so, Mr Allan requested that Tesco and Fox Williams – who were instructed by the CBI to conduct an investigation following various allegations – investigate them. Fox Williams decided not to, and Tesco are not aware of and have not received any complaints about Mr Allan’s conduct either at the 2022 AGM or over the eight years that he has been chair of Tesco.”



Tesco said Allan’s conduct had never been the subject of a complaint during his tenure as chair. Photograph: Molly Darlington/Reuters

Allan has been chair of one of the UK's leading housebuilders, Barratt Developments, since 2014, in addition to his role as chair of Tesco's board. He has also been a non-executive director at some of Britain's biggest businesses, including Royal Mail and National Grid.

A Tesco spokesperson said: "In relation to John Allan's conduct at Tesco's 2022 AGM, Tesco has received no complaints or concerns formally or informally, including through our confidential Protector Line service."

They added: "At Tesco, we are committed to ensuring all colleagues are respected and feel safe at work. Tesco's people policies apply to all colleagues, and all concerns or complaints raised about conduct are always taken very seriously and investigated thoroughly. This is a serious allegation, and if anyone has any concerns or information, we would ask them to share those with us through any of our reporting channels, including through our confidential Protector Line, so we can investigate."

The Guardian first reported claims [last month](#) that the former CBI board member made an inappropriate remark about a colleague's dress in 2019 and that he touched the bottom of a different woman at the organisation.

The CBI has been embroiled in turmoil since the Guardian published those claims as part of a wider story about the culture at the CBI. The lobbying group hired the law firm Fox Williams to investigate its handling of those claims. It has since suspended its programme of dinners and meetings, and its engagement with the government and businesses is on hold, amid an exodus of companies, ranging from John Lewis to NatWest.

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# **US and UK tell Russia to stop using hunger as leverage in Ukraine conflict – as it happened**

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Graham Smith is arrested before the coronation. Photograph: Daniel Boffey/The Guardian

### [King Charles coronation](#)

## **Labour says ‘something has gone wrong’ over arrest of coronation protesters**

Lisa Nandy suggests mistakes must have been made in arrest of six anti-monarchy protesters

*[Jamie Grierson](#)*

*[@JamieGrierson](#)*

Tue 9 May 2023 08.29 EDTFirst published on Tue 9 May 2023 04.02 EDT

Mistakes must have been made in the arrests of six anti-monarchy protesters before the king's coronation, the Labour frontbencher Lisa Nandy has suggested, after the [Metropolitan police](#) said no action would be taken against them.

Nandy said “something has gone wrong” amid growing pressure on the government as well as police to account for the arrests.

The UK’s biggest [police force expressed “regret”](#) late on Monday that the six demonstrators from the Republic campaign group were arrested before the coronation on Saturday.

Speaking for the first time about the policing of the coronation, Rishi Sunak defended the new anti-protest laws used against the Republic campaigners, while avoiding the question about whether the response had been proportionate.

Graham Smith, the head of the group, said it was considering legal action and demanded an inquiry into the conduct of officers, after revealing a chief inspector and two other officers from the Met apologised to him at his home in Reading on Monday.

Head of UK's leading anti-monarchy movement among several arrested at coronation protest – video

Sunak and a Home Office official insisted “the police are operationally independent of government”, but as the Home Office pushed through controversial new powers for police in the Public Order Act days before the coronation, pressure is likely to mount.

“Of course people have the right to protest freely but peacefully, but it is also right that people have the ability to go about their day-to-day lives without facing serious disruption,” Sunak said in a brief TV interview during a visit to a doctors’ surgery in Southampton.

“What the government has done is give the police the powers that they need to tackle instances of serious disruption to people’s lives. I think that is the right thing to do and the police will make decisions on when they use those powers.”

Sunak was asked specifically about the arrest of Republic members, who were held on suspicion of possessing items which could be used for a “locking on” protest, which turned out to be luggage straps. The offence

falls under the new public order act, which gained royal assent days before the coronation.

Asked if these arrests worried him, Sunak said police were “rightly, operationally independent of government”, adding: “They make the decisions on the ground in the way they see fit.

“It wouldn’t be right for me to interfere with their operational decisions but it is right for the government to give the police the powers to tackle serious disruption.

SNP MP calls for inquiry into coronation arrests – video

Nandy told BBC Breakfast: “Clearly, something has gone wrong in this case.

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“Peaceful protest is an important part of British democracy. The Met accepted that and I think the mayor of [London](#) is right to ask for a review to determine what exactly went wrong in this case.

“Whatever it was, this was a very complex policing operation. It largely went off without a hitch and I think the police deserve credit for that. But

where there are incidents like this, we have to take them seriously and I think that it's right that we learn the lessons and take steps to rectify that."

'Your king... if you like it or not': the coronation divides - video

On the use of powers under the Public Order Act, she said: "It's not clear in this case whether the problem is with the legislation, or whether the problem is more operational and a matter for the police."

Scotland Yard released a statement on Monday night stating that it believed items found alongside a large number of placards – thought to be luggage straps – could be used as "lock-on devices".

"The investigation team have now fully examined the items seized and reviewed the full circumstances of the arrest," the statement added. "Those arrested stated the items would be used to secure their placards, and the investigation has been unable to prove intent to use them to lock on and disrupt the event.

"This evening all six have had their bail cancelled and no further action will be taken. We regret that those six people arrested were unable to join the wider group of protesters in Trafalgar Square and elsewhere on the procession route."

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# Sadiq Khan tells Met to conduct review of coronation policing and explain why Republic activists detained for so long – as it happened

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Boris Johnson, then UK prime minister, ‘went in hard’ when confronting the monarch, who was then Prince of Wales, according to Guto Harri. Photograph: PA Images/Alamy

[King Charles III](#)

## **King ‘left squirming’ in Rwanda row with Johnson, claims former PM’s aide**

Former No 10 press chief Guto Harri says Johnson ‘squared up’ to Charles over reports royal called deportation plan ‘appalling’

- [UK politics live – latest updates](#)

[Nadeem Badshah](#) and agency

Tue 9 May 2023 05.32 EDTFirst published on Mon 8 May 2023 18.56 EDT

King Charles was left “squirming” after [Boris Johnson](#) confronted him over reported criticisms of the government’s plans to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, the former prime minister’s aide has claimed.

According to Guto Harri, who was No 10's director of communications at the time, Johnson "squared up" to the then Prince of Wales at a Commonwealth summit in the east African country in June 2022 after reports that the royal had described the plan to deport people travelling across the Channel to Rwanda as "appalling".

In an interview on LBC, Harri said the clash centred on reports of the future king's opinions [leaked to the media](#), which Charles's press team had not denied.

"The impression I got is that Prince Charles at the time was squirming, trying to deny he'd said this," Harri said.

"If you are the prince, or you're the prime minister, you've got an army of people who can go out there and ring newspaper editors and say, 'This is not true, take it down,' and they will if it's not true."

"So the fact that the story was allowed to stand and could not be denied meant that he had actually described government policy as appalling."

Writing in [the Daily Mail](#), Harri said Johnson told him he "went in quite hard" against Charles.

Johnson disputed his longstanding ally's account as "inaccurate", with a source saying he "deplores" any commentary on conversations with royals.

Harri added that the former Conservative leader also warned Charles against making a speech expressing regret over slavery amid concerns it could result in demands for financial reparations. Charles went ahead with the speech.

At the time, Johnson described his discussion with the Prince of Wales as a "good old chinwag" that "covered a lot of ground".

Harri, a former BBC journalist who joined the No 10 press team in February 2022 and left in September, wrote: "What actually happened was less amicable. 'I went in quite hard,' he told me at the time, essentially squaring up to the prince and confronting him about what he – as unelected royalty – had said about the actions of a democratically elected government.

“Prince Charles was busted. He had obviously expressed some criticism, and though he tried to play it down, Boris pointed out the obvious, [saying]: ‘If you didn’t say it, we both know your people could ring the newspapers and kill the story. The fact they haven’t done that says it all.’”

Johnson attended the king’s coronation on Saturday with his wife, Carrie, along with other former prime ministers including John Major, David Cameron and Liz Truss.

Harri, who has detailed his time in Downing Street for a new podcast series for Global Player, claimed Charles and Johnson had a fractious relationship that stemmed from the latter being accused of being late for a meeting with the prince while he was mayor of London.

Harri also claimed Johnson referred to Sue Gray, the senior civil servant responsible for conducting an inquiry into Partygate allegations, as “Psycho”.

“There was a sense that she lacked perspective,” he claimed.

Gray is still [waiting to hear how long she will have to wait](#) before being allowed to take up a new role as chief of staff to Keir Starmer. The Advisory Committee on Business Appointments, the Whitehall body that vets the external appointments of former ministers and officials, is expected to make a decision within weeks on how long her enforced “gardening leave” will be.

A source close to Johnson said: “Boris Johnson does not recognise this account and it is inaccurate. It does not accurately reflect any conversation. We would never comment on these matters and Mr Johnson deplores any attempt to do so.”

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## 2023.05.09 - Spotlight

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- [Unicorns, smoothies and Edgar Allan Poe 14 songs to listen out for at Eurovision 2023](#)
- ['They found the tax regime appealing' Global super-rich head to Italy for tax breaks and dolce vita](#)

# On the trail of the Dark Avenger: the most dangerous virus writer in the world

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'I pray I'll be an inspiration': Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce among Laureus award winners – video

[Athletics](#)

[Interview](#)

## **Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce: 'A parent at sports day tried to psych me out'**

[Sean Ingle](#) in Paris

Jamaica's 'gentle assassin' on the real story behind the school race that went viral, her belief that she can go faster still at 36 and why female athletes shouldn't be afraid to be publicly strong and fierce



[@seaningle](#)

Tue 9 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 10.57 EDT

In the city where she expects to ironclad her legacy at the Olympics next year, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce is reliving the [moment she went viral on the school run](#). You may have seen the clip of the greatest female sprinter in history, baseball cap back to front, thrashing a field of fellow mums on her

son's sports day in Jamaica recently. But, as Fraser-Pryce reveals for the first time, there was more to it than meets the eye. It boiled down to pride after a fall – as well as an audacious challenge from another parent.

"Two weeks beforehand she started sending me photos of her working out in the gym. And then she told me she was coming for me!" says Fraser-Pryce, her smile lighting up a gunmetal grey day in Paris. "I was like, 'You can't be serious girl!'". But the friend, whose daughter is in her five-year-old son's Zyon's class, insisted she wouldn't be backing down. "And when we got to sports day, she even started giving me the eyes, trying to psych me out."

Yet while she had her track spikes in her car, Fraser-Pryce didn't bite until her son fell in one event and came third in the obstacle race, and her husband could only finish fourth in the dad's sprint. At that point she decided enough was enough, and she had to uphold the family honour.

"Imagine leaving with a bronze medal and a fourth place," she says, laughing with delight. "It wouldn't have looked good. So I just had to show up. I had to preserve my name." She took things seriously enough to warm up. And then, to the accompaniment of cheering kids, delivered another exhibition of speed to win by half the length of the grass track, with her friend back in second.

'So I just had to show up. I had to preserve my name'

We have become used to such breathless displays ever since the Jamaican burst on to the scene by winning the Olympic 100m title in 2008, a day after Usain Bolt catapulted into the sporting stratosphere. It might have taken Fraser-Pryce a bit longer to reach the same impossible heights, but she is certainly there now having won 22 Olympic and world medals, including [another 100m gold at last year's world championships](#), across her 15-year career.

Yet at an age, and stage, when most athletes are winding down, Fraser-Pryce remains carnivorous for more success. That was clear when the Guardian spoke to her just before she collected the prestigious Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year award in Paris, beating a field that included the

swimmer Katie Ledecky, tennis star Iga Swiatek, and 400m hurdles world record-holder Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone. “I believe the best is yet to come,” she says. “It’s so strange to say that at 36, but what drives me is that every part of my being believes I can run faster. I genuinely believe that in my soul.”

But there is more to it than wanting more glory at this year’s world championships in Budapest and the Paris Olympics. Fraser-Pryce also wants to be sure there is no ounce of potential left when she finally calls it a day at the end of 2024. “I still think that I am at the door of something amazing, and if I still feel good and training is going really well, why should I stop?” she asks. “A lot of people say, finish on a high. That’s good. But I only want to finish when I cross the line knowing I have given it everything. Then it will be time to quit.”

It is hard to argue with someone who only won more world sprint titles than anyone else, but in 2022 also ran the 100m in under 10.7 seconds seven times – three more than any woman in history in a calendar year.

In her bid to fight off Father Time, Fraser-Pryce has undoubtedly been helped by the new wave of super spikes. However she prefers to focus more on her switch to a new coach, Reynaldo Walcott, in 2021 and a willingness to continue to hone and refine her technique, leading to better acceleration mechanics. “Every year that I go to practice, I am almost like a sponge,” she explains. “I am always willing to learn and try something else. You can’t stay the same. You have to evolve.”



Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce shows off her World Sportswoman of the Year prize at the Laureus Sports Awards ceremony in Paris. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

That evolution has taken place off the track too. After Zyon's birth in 2017 by caesarean section, Fraser-Pryce feared she would never get her core strength back, let alone return to her best. Instead she has got stronger, physically and mentally. With it has also come a freeness and willingness to speak her mind.

"The message I definitely want to get across to female athletes is there is nothing wrong with being strong," she says. "There is nothing wrong with being competitive, fierce, and wanting to win. And there is certainly nothing wrong about saying it as well. That is something that has changed. In the past I had a fear attached to speaking out about the things I wanted to accomplish.

"Because as women we are told, 'Oh just be cute, and just run and look nice and whatever'. But now I am comfortable in my skin, with who I am, and the gift God has given me. And I am making sure that I express that in a genuine and authentic way."

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Fraser-Pryce is not someone who talks trash about her rivals, and is widely liked across the circuit. Yet on the track she is killer. “In the nicest way,” she says, laughing. “I am like a gentle assassin. I don’t need to say a lot of things to compete because the drive I have is deep inside. That fire I have to excel comes from years of being at a place where I never thought I belonged.”

Fraser-Pryce’s warmth comes across again as she expresses her shock at the [death of American athlete Tori Bowie](#) last week, as well the admiration she had for the former 100m world champion. “Tori was one of those athletes that always had a good energy,” she says. “She was always vibrant. I remember seeing her in 2019 and she was like, ‘Where’s the Jamaican food, what’s going on?’ She was just always so engaging, and her smile lit up the room.”

When Fraser-Pryce heard the news of the 32-year-old’s passing at training last week she couldn’t believe it. “My teammates were talking about it, and I said are you sure? They had seen it on the internet but they weren’t sure if it was fake news. I only hope that her family is finding solace in her memories, her accomplishments and what she was able to do.”

For now, though, Fraser-Pryce’s focus is on her first proper race of the season in Kenya, where she will take on the talented American Sha’Carri Richardson, who hasn’t been shy at proclaiming her own talents. It is a

challenge Fraser-Pryce is clearly looking forward to. “I’m blessed to have been running for a long time, and to have faced athletes who bring out the very best in you,” she says. “That is the beauty of track and field. It is making sure that at every given moment you are ready.”

That, everyone surely knows by now, is a sentiment that Fraser-Pryce upholds wherever she is racing. Whether it is in front of 90,000 people in an Olympic Stadium – or her son’s school in Jamaica.

*Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce was speaking ahead of the Laureus World Sports Awards. Find out more at [www.laureus.com](http://www.laureus.com)*

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Croatia's Let 3, Sweden's Loreen, and Finland's Käärijä.

## Music

# **Unicorns, smoothies and Edgar Allan Poe: 14 songs to listen out for at Eurovision 2023**

With folk-horror priestesses and punk dictators riding lawnmowers, this year's competition has the usual oddities amid proponents of perfect pop



[Ben Beaumont-Thomas](#)

[@ben\\_bt](#)

Tue 9 May 2023 04.50 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 05.32 EDT

## Sweden

### Loreen – Tattoo

With a fringe so powerful it made Claudia Winkleman's look meek and retiring, [Loreen won the Eurovision song contest in 2012 with Euphoria](#), which has a good claim to be the competition's greatest song of all time. Tectonic plates have collided with greater dynamic subtlety but Loreen's beseeching vocal was electric, even moving and her crab dance became the stuff of legend.

Now she is back to try to become the first woman to win twice, and the bookies think she has it sewn up already. The fringe is a little more feathered – didn't her stylists know the story of Samson? – and Tattoo is maybe 10% less formidable than Euphoria, but still: Loreen's voice remains sensational, going from breathy mids to adrenaline-pumping highs and she has the superhuman stage presence of a Gaga or Beyoncé. A true pop star and a noticeable cut above the rest.

## **Finland**

### **Käärijä – Cha Cha Cha**

Loreen is a very tough act to beat, but if anyone can do it, it's Käärijä: he has the hard stare and bowl cut of a Berlin sex club bouncer and his song is by some mark the best this year. An unhinged mashup of trance, anarcho-punk and glam metal about how spiritually fulfilling it is to get extremely drunk, it bludgeons you with two minutes of pure cartoon violence before dropping a chorus of completely wondrous pop perfection. The arena crowd – especially those from north-west England, the spiritual home of hard dance – will absolutely lose their minds to this.

## **Ukraine**

### **Tvorchi – Heart of Steel**

The cheers will also be deafening when Tvorchi begin: this contest rightfully belongs in Ukraine after Kalush Orchestra won last year. That win was secured thanks to voter solidarity – which could very easily happen again – but in a normal year Kalush Orchestra's stirring, showboating folk-pop banger Stefania could easily have triumphed anyway, and it continued a brilliant run for Ukraine since they arrived in 2003: qualifying for the final every year, they've netted 11 Top 10 placings including three wins and two runner-up spots. With a funkily bumping Flume-esque beat, Heart of Steel was inspired by the siege of the Azovstal steel works and while the duo can't be too didactic thanks to Eurovision's rules on political expression, the song's themes of stubborn resolve and self-definition ("Sometimes you just gotta know / When to stick your middle finger up in the air") are as clear as day.

## **Austria**

### **Teya & Salena – Who the Hell is Edgar?**

These are the opening lines of Who the Hell is Edgar?:

There's a ghost in my body

And he is a lyricist

It is Edgar Allan Poe

And I think he can't resist

You have my attention, Teya & Salena. Pray continue. Ah, your song is about being possessed by the spirit of Edgar Allan Poe who compels you to write gothic pop lyrics and carries you to a major label recording contract? And your incredibly catchy chorus goes “Poe, Poe, Edgar Allan, Edgar Allan Poe”? Douzeiest douze points ever.

## Poland

### Blanka – Solo

Here's some Euro-tropical ska that's about as authentically Caribbean as a tax exile in the Cayman Islands, but it's cheerful enough. Blanka will also win the “dad hovering awkwardly in the living room doorway” vote, while other regulation hotties include Cyprus stud Andrew Lambrou whose song is a bit Unimaginative Dragons; Italy's Marco Mengoni who you sense is telling you something very passionate about the light in your eyes; and Israel's Noa Kirel who does an impressively athletic dance routine that's like Flashdance in high heels, but her song's real attraction is the entirely sincere claim in the chorus: “I got the power of a unicorn.”

## Croatia

### Let 3 – Mama ŠČ

Whether it's dancing grannies for Russia or unicycling gnomes for Moldova, Eurovision needs moments that make you feel as though your mid-contest Chocolate Orange has been laced with psilocybin. Croatia bring that vibe this year with a punk group who dress up as lipstick-smeared totalitarian dictators, with one of them driving a sit-on lawnmower. Mama ŠČ has the simple catchiness of a nursery rhyme, but it houses one of the political

allegories that occasionally flies under the radar of the ostensibly apolitical Eurovision: the tractor in the lyrics is symbolic of how Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko – who once gave Putin a tractor as a birthday present – aided Russia in their war on Ukraine. Rather more prosaic anti-war messaging comes from Switzerland’s Remo Forrer and his dull-but-sturdy Watergun (“I don’t wanna be a soldier, soldier / I don’t wanna have to play with real blood”).

## Armenia

### Brunette – Future Lover

The guiltiest pleasure of Eurovision for British people is laughing at the English-language lyrics of rival nations. It’s not big, it’s not clever and it’s probably a symptom of our utterly pathetic post-imperial smugness. But still, Future Lover rhymes “likes me enough to kiss my face” with “cute little things, like drink smoothies at near cafes”. The lyrics actually end up being much better than the generically uplifting poetry that’s often at Eurovision – Brunette soon delivers a fraught high-speed rap as her anxiety to find love consumes her.

## Denmark

### Reiley – Breaking My Heart

Eurovision can sometimes feel like it’s playing catchup to the big UK-US pop trends of a couple of years before, but Reiley is one of the entrants who feels as if they actually come from 2023. His song brazenly rips off both I’m So Tired by Lauv and Troye Sivan and the vocal effects of Francis and the Lights – but his lovely falsetto makes it an effective heist, and his androgynous beauty will have tweens frantically mashing the voting app.

## Moldova

### Pasha Parfeni – Soarele și Luna

With an antler-wearing priestess, a masked flute-playing dwarf and ethereal twins doing backing vocals while gazing into mirrors, Moldova get a full

house for A24 folk-horror bingo with this superb pounding track. Clearly influenced by the last two Ukrainian entries, which have mixed folk elements with techno and hip-hop respectively, the pagan-robed Pasha Parfeni sings in Romanian “the sun and the moon will hold our wedding crown” before a hoe-down and blood sacrifice (latter implied). Parfeni is a Eurovision lifer who represented Moldova in 2012, co-wrote and played piano for their 2013 entry, and has put himself forward four other times but his mum presumably told the organisers to let someone else have a go.

## Norway

### Alessandra – Queen of Kings

Another folkloric be-robed anthem here – trend alert! – with Alessandra telling a Game of Thrones-type tale of an all-conquering queen rampaging across the “north and southern seas” and leaving a trail of Nordic symbols and girlboss signifiers in her wake: “A firestone, forged in flames / Wildest card, run the game”. The grog-chugging heartiness of a sea shanty done with the drum programming of an Ibiza tech-house producer, Queen of Kings will whip up a storm in the arena, and alongside Loreen’s Tattoo has already become a multimillion-streaming hit.

## Serbia

### Luke Black – Samo Mi Se Spava

The 31 acts outside the Big Five countries who automatically make the final thanks to their financial support – France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK – will have to make it through semi-finals on Tuesday and Thursday. Luke Black may struggle given that his song is more of a dramatic reading than a show of melodic vocal prowess, but it’s more interesting than most: a Nine Inch Nails-style cyberpunk track about nihilism and apathy in the face of a collapsing planet. The staging is great – Black rants “war, violence, rage, virus” in Serbian as he disassembles zombie-replicant backing dancers – and his camply evil giggles, groans and stares are the stuff of memes.

## Spain

## **Blanca Paloma: Eaea**

As one of the Big Five, Spain can afford to experiment (a tactic that the UK incidentally never opts for) and deliver a bold and engaging entry this year. The influence of Spanish superstar Rosalía is obvious in how this song updates flamenco with analogue-techno effects percolating far off in the mix, and in the keening, near-ululated delivery of Paloma, who has this year's most interesting vocal timbre. There's no real tune per se, but the song wraps around you like a fluttering bolt of cloth. Eurovision eagerly tells us her songwriting is "based on the idea of a rite or ceremony that connects us with what is pre-rational and instinctive; through experimentation and experience, Blanca seeks to explore the parts of our soul that go beyond words. As a child, Blanca raised a duck in her bathtub." OK, thanks for that.

## **Germany**

### **Lord of the Lost – Blood & Glitter**

Australia's Voyager do have a very entertaining guitar v keytar solo-off in their song Promise, but of the heavy rock entries this year Lord of the Lost have the edge. Imagine Nick Cave or Future Islands auditioning for a Broadway musical about Kiss and you're sort of there with the lead singer, while the "pyow! Pyow!" synth noises are brilliantly stupid.

## **United Kingdom**

### **Mae Muller – I Wrote a Song**

The UK was very much the Millwall FC of Eurovision in that everyone hated us and we didn't care, until last year, when Sam Ryder's stratospherically uplifting Space Man carried us to second place. Turns out we just needed a good song, and we have another one this year – though not quite in the same league. The clever-clever metatextuality of I Wrote a Song is offset by the most traditionally Europop backing of the year, and a canny wordless chorus; Muller does the best "strutting around with the girlies acting like you don't care about your breakup when you actually sort of do" since Dua Lipa in New Rules. Alongside Loreen and Noa Kirel, it's proper

pop, and as she's closing the show, Muller will hopefully surf a decent wave of votes.

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The Spanish Steps in Rome. Flats at the nearby Palazzo Raggi have been bought by people willing to pay an annual €100,000 in exchange for being exempt from income generated overseas. Photograph: Raul Moreno/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

### [The super-rich](#)

## **Global super-rich head to Italy for tax breaks and dolce vita**

Growing numbers are lured by a flat-tax like the UK's non-dom status, creating a boom for estate agents and luxury brands

*[Angela Giuffrida in Rome](#)*

Tue 9 May 2023 04.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 11 May 2023 06.53 EDT

The vast rooms of Palazzo Raggi, an 18th-century architectural jewel a stone's throw away from Rome's Spanish Steps, were once lived in by an illustrious noble family and a host of cardinals and other historic characters hailing from Italian aristocracy.

Now the six-storey building, which stood derelict for years, is being revived as it prepares to welcome a new class of inhabitants: the foreign billionaires who are turning their backs on the likes of Switzerland, Dubai or the Cayman Islands and moving to [Italy](#) to taste the *dolce vita* and, moreover, the financial benefits of a tantalising tax regime.

Italy rolled out the little-known incentive, which applies to the super-rich of all nationalities, in 2017. In exchange for paying an annual fee of €100,000 (£87,000), those who take up residency in the country are entirely exempt from paying tax on income generated overseas. The initiative also extends to family members for a yearly payment of €25,000 per person.

The measure, which was intended to boost big spending in Italy, whether it be on property or luxury brands, enticed 98 people in its first year before jumping to 549 by 2020 and more than doubling to 1,339 in 2021.

Their arrival has revitalised the market for luxury homes – buyers rarely put down less than €10m – and spurred the redevelopment of long-neglected historic landmarks in city centres.

Nineteen of the 29 opulent apartments under development in the swish Palazzo Raggi have been snapped up since going on sale less than a year ago, and several have been bought by those exploiting the flat-tax.

“We have never sold so quickly in Rome,” said Diletta Giorgolo, head of residential property at Italy Sotheby’s International Realty. “People want a slice of an 18th-century house, but with an interior that has been completely modernised.”

Giorgolo has had a busy few years. The influx of the super-rich began in earnest in 2019 and was partly driven by people in the UK with non-domicile status – a regime similar to Italy’s whereby they are exempt from paying tax on income or capital gains earned overseas – fleeing as a result of looming Brexit. Then came the coronavirus pandemic, an experience that left many reconsidering their lifestyle choices.

Giorgolo has sold a property on the island of Capri to a French couple who transformed it into a boutique hotel; a €20m mansion in Venice to a Chinese buyer; and a mansion worth €10m in Laglio, the Lake Como town where George Clooney has a home, to a couple from Switzerland.

More recent flat-tax clients include a Dutch couple who bought a home in Rome for more than €10m and another who paid €11m for a place in Milan.

“Some of them bought properties that had just come on to the market, others bought properties that needed renovation,” said Giorgolo. “Some rented top properties during their first year in Italy before buying. It has definitely been one of the best things to have happened for the top-level real estate market.”

Marco Cerrato, a tax lawyer and partner at Maisto e Associati in Milan, has handled the financial affairs of several new billionaire residents in Italy.

He said foreign nationals who once had non-domicile status in the UK had been leading the way. “Brexit is one aspect, as the UK, especially London, started to feel less hospitable,” he said. “But a big factor is the fear that a possible win for the Labour party in the next election could lead to such tax incentives being abolished.”

Among the contingent of super-rich are those who have switched residency from Switzerland, which also has a favourable tax regime, as they are attracted by Italy’s cheaper living costs, beauty and warmer climate. Others have come from Asia or South America.

They are investment bankers, asset managers, entrepreneurs, people who work in technology, or those who have income generated through dividends or trusts.

“At the beginning, the flat-tax regime was especially targeted at those who had passive income,” said Cerrato. “But then came those who were actively working – they do have to pay tax on income produced in Italy – but still found the regime appealing.”

Italy’s tax authority brought in €108m from the initiative in 2021 while luxury brands are investing more in areas where the super-rich take up

residence, which is mainly in Rome, Milan, Florence and Venice and areas of Tuscany, Lombardy and Liguria, but also in the south including Sicily.

Noto, an area of Sicily south of Catania, has been attracting a lot of wealthy buyers, said Giorgolo.

“Catania has very good flight connections, so that has helped to develop interest,” she said. “So unless they need to be in a city, people are focusing on beautiful places like Sicily. But generally, interest all over Italy has been exponential.”

The showroom for the properties being sold at Palazzo Raggi attracts a steady number of prospective customers throughout the day. With the building earmarked for completion towards the end of 2024, they are only privy to sales brochures and promotional videos showing terraces with fantastic views over Rome, as well as visuals chronicling the restoration works at various stages.

Vincenzo Lupattelli, a sales manager at Sotheby’s, is unable to reveal any details about his clients. But he said their demands are low-key. “Palazzo Raggi is about class,” he said. “There is nothing glam like jacuzzis and saunas. They won’t be bringing a flashy car either as there is no garage. They are people who want to feel the history but in a modern setting, and to enjoy walking around Rome. They won’t have to deal with noisy neighbours either as an acoustic expert is working on making all the apartments sound-proof.”

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## 2023.05.09 - Opinion

- There is a way to oust the Tories, and stop them ever rising again. Why won't we do it?
- Can you pull your weight in a pub quiz? Congratulations – you're welcome in the UK!
- They call it ‘projection’ but it’s a grand deception. And it’s Sunak’s only hope of staying in power
- Football fans, the national anthem and a battle for who controls the public space



‘Why won’t Keir Starmer and Labour’s old guard … go with the flow of last week’s results?’ The Labour leader telephones voters on polling day, 4 May 2023. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

[Opinion](#)[Electoral reform](#)

**There is a way to oust the Tories, and stop them ever rising again. Why won’t we do it?**

[Neal Lawson](#)



Now the dust has settled on the local elections, count the rightwing votes and then the progressive ones, and see why PR is more vital than ever

Tue 9 May 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 08.14 EDT

Amid the political sound and fury still reverberating after the seismic [local elections](#) in England, there is a quieter but determined noise emanating from the counties and shires. It is the sound of a new politics, based not on hubris or party tribalism but a belief that, in these complex, fast-moving times, only cross-party cooperation can win power and use it effectively.

In Hertsmere and Bracknell, in Lewes and Waverley, across the London commuter belt in Surrey, Kent, Hertfordshire, Sussex and more, progressive party activists refused to be beaten by an electoral system that is stacked against them.

Their success was driven by two simple facts. First, on the regressive side of the ballot paper there was only one place to put your X, on the progressive side, at least three. Tired of splitting the vote and letting the right through on a minority share of the vote, activists have been working under the radar to focus where they can win. This deep tactical campaigning then aligns with

unprecedented levels of [tactical voting](#), and the results for the Tories were devastatingly bad.

Second, the alarming but common knowledge that we live in a perma-crisis world of economic, geopolitical, technological and climate chaos. We need an enduring and transformative new progressive consensus, like [that of 1945](#), but, unlike that postwar settlement, it's not going to come from a single-party source but a multiparty alliance.

What brings this obvious electoral and governing politics together is, of course, [proportional representation](#) (PR). The offer to change our voting system galvanises the latent progressive majority in our county and ensures the Tories can never govern again without a majority of the country backing them. It offers the possibility of a long-term and stable coalition to take on the rebuilding of the NHS, along with thousands of new affordable homes and the race to net zero.

And yet this new politics of cooperation is happening despite party leaders, not because of them. Sadly, Labour is the biggest block with its leadership repeatedly claiming [PR won't be in its manifesto](#) while rejecting cooperation.

This could be electoral suicide. All the senior polling pundits predict Labour will struggle to win a majority at the next general election. With the local results suggesting a national-equivalent lead of [just seven percentage points](#), everything points to a hung parliament. To put this in perspective, Ed Miliband did better and went on to lose in 2015, and in 1996 New Labour was [14 points ahead](#) of the Tories.

Last week brought a stark reminder of the absurdity of Labour not backing PR. In the [Bedford mayoral election](#), the progressive vote was more than 30,000, the Tory vote just 16,000. But the Tories won by 145 votes. Progressives continue to divide, and the right continues to conquer.

Labour has a choice. A future under our current first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting system means the people with real influence are a few swing voters in a few swing seats, powerful media barons who set the news agenda and wealthy donors who shape the policy offer in their interests.

The alternative is to appeal to the country's latent progressive majority that goes back decades. Last Thursday, this progressive vote amounted to over 60%, while the Tories scored [just 29%](#). To mobilise it means recognising that difference and diversity, within a broadly common value set, is a strength not a weakness and that the best future is negotiated not imposed. Critically it allows us to win elections by speaking to the interests of the centre and left, not the right.

But why won't [Keir Starmer](#) and Labour's old guard take this seemingly obvious route to win, and go with the flow of last week's results?

Tory HQ and its press attack dogs will try to undermine it, precisely because they fear a traffic-light pincer movement. But if a hung parliament seems most likely, then it's best to prepare for it.

However, Labour's nervous hierarchy seems willing to do anything to maintain its monopoly of opposition and the disproportionate power it gives it. There can be no new parties under FPTP because the entry barriers are too high. Remember, it takes just [50,000 votes per Labour MP](#) but for the Greens that's 865,000. It is a democratic obscenity designed to ensure other politicians and voters desperate to deal with the climate crisis, protect civil liberties or eradicate poverty have nowhere else to go.

Labour strategists will be gambling that the Green and Lib Dem vote share can be squeezed. But these aren't the deferential days of the last century, people will find and vote for what they see as better alternatives.

During the leadership election, [Starmer said](#): "We've got to address the fact that millions of people vote in safe seats and they feel their vote doesn't count." He was right then. He can't be allowed to be wrong now.

The stakes could not be higher: the sulphurous whiff of rightwing authoritarianism is already stifling. We need cooperative politics as an act of self-interest and hope.

- Neal Lawson is director of the cross-party campaign organisation Compass
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How much does the average Brit know about the Picts? Photograph: David Gowans/Alamy

[Opinion](#)[Immigration and asylum](#)

**Can you pull your weight in a pub quiz?  
Congratulations – you're welcome in the  
UK!**

[Zoe Williams](#)



After 20 years in Britain, my Bolivian friend has finally passed her citizenship test. Did she have to learn quite so much trivia?

Tue 9 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 09.40 EDT

Just before the new king appeared on the balcony, I got some wonderful news: my Bolivian friend had passed her UK citizenship test. The fifth time was a charm. We've been revising for this since 2018, during which time I have learned, forgotten and learned again what [the Picts](#) were up to and when, what a traditional Northern Irish dish is and which view was voted by Britons in 2007 as the nation's most beautiful. OK, it appears that I've forgotten that last one all over again, but it doesn't matter, because my friend is now legit.

By about two years in, I was finding everything about this test offensive. It required a huge amount of quite diffuse knowledge that would probably never reside in the same person, whether they were born in Britain or not: some of us can name Olympians, some of us can name signature titles in the canon of David Lean and some of us know whether or not the UK government has ever used its power to suspend the Northern Ireland assembly, but the only people who know all these things are quiz teams.

That is, apparently, what Great British Values boil down to: could you, or could you not, pull your weight in a pub quiz?

Some questions were obviously editorialising, there to determine whether the citizen was sufficiently paranoid about terrorism. “True or false,” one asked, “members of a terrorist group will dress alike?” The answer they wanted was “false”, but it really depends on the group, I’d say – good luck getting into the Baader Meinhof without a black polo neck.

There were a bunch of questions about the responsibilities of a British citizen whose answers were frankly debatable: are you supposed to avoid shopping on a Sunday, keep your dog on a lead at all times, grow your own vegetables or look after yourself and your family? OK, fine, you could probably do it by a process of elimination, but try to imagine you’re Bolivian, you’ve lived in the UK for 20 years, you’ve seen plenty of British-born people look after neither themselves nor their families, and you don’t own a dog. What are you supposed to make of that? Anyway, she passed, and she’s now a citizen of a country too foggy on its own constitution to know that it doesn’t have citizens, but subjects. Well done her, though. I couldn’t be more pleased.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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‘Last week’s local election results suggest the public’s patience may be fading with Rishi Sunak’s Tories.’ Sunak at the coronation Big Lunch in Downing Street on Sunday. Photograph: WIktor Szymanowicz/NurPhoto/Shutterstock

[OpinionConservatives](#)

## **They call it ‘projection’ but it’s a grand deception. And it’s Sunak’s only hope of staying in power**

[Samuel Earle](#)



For decades, the Tories have perfected the psychological trick of displacing their own negative traits and failures on to their enemies

Tue 9 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 04.47 EDT

The Tories and their entourage, buoyed by four general election wins in a row but looking ever more nervously towards the next one, have found a new way to dodge blame for Britain's ailing state: pretending they're not in power.

“Why is the left in the driving seat of government after 13 years of Tory rule,” the journalist Charles Moore [asked](#) in the Daily Telegraph last month. A recent cover essay of the Spectator struck a [similar note](#), claiming a “new woke elite” is now “destined to rule over an increasingly divided and embittered society”. Pieces in the Sun, Mail and the Times raised the same alarm. The diagnosis is clear: don’t be fooled by the Conservatives’ long residence in No 10 – a cabal of middle-class liberals, out of step with the public and covertly led by Gary Lineker, is really ruling Britain.

It’s hard not to feel like we’ve been here before. Wasn’t the Tories’ triumph over the European Union supposed to free Britain from the grip of unelected

elites, once and for all? Alas, no sooner did the Conservatives slay one set of out-of-touch rulers than another one arose in their place – the bureaucrats in Brussels have morphed seamlessly into a new progressive aristocracy, comprising everyone from [civil servants](#) to [junior doctors](#) to the [judiciary](#), opposing the Conservatives' singular right to rule over Britain unopposed. Yet again, the Conservatives are the ones who represent “real” Britain, while their opponents are anti-democratic and unpatriotic, deploying all kinds of nefarious means to obstruct the people’s will.

Psychologists have a word for this phenomenon: projection – the process by which someone displaces their own negative traits or insecurities on to someone else. The Conservatives have long excelled in using projection as a political weapon. While it is their party that defends the interests of bosses, property owners and those with inherited wealth, they claim Labour is driven by elite self-interest. While they happily take donations from oligarchs, it’s the left that is under the sway of foreign powers. The Tories love nothing more than to reign over Westminster and Fleet Street while raging against what Margaret Thatcher called [the enemy within](#).

Such narratives have been pushed by the party and its supporters ever since the Labour party came into existence. “The British Labour party, as it impudently calls itself, is not British at all,” the Mail declared in November 1923, as its proprietor impudently cosied up to Benito Mussolini on the continent. And they have been endlessly useful. Not only does the persistence of an “enemy within” or “new elite” exonerate the Tories’ failures in government – implying that actually existing Conservatism has never been tried and so justifying the seizure of more power – but it also implausibly places the wealthy Tory elite and the proverbial “man on the street” on the same side, jointly opposed to this undemocratic foe.



According to the right, ‘a cabal of middle-class liberals, out of step with the public and covertly led by Gary Lineker, is really ruling Britain’.

Photograph: BBC

Ever since the dawn of Britain’s democracy, Conservatives have had to find extravagant ways to make this outlandish positioning convincing. For a long time, empire and monarchy gave them the unifying cause they craved. With the globe beneath Britain’s paw, even those at the bottom of the hierarchy at home could be encouraged to look down on all others abroad: to be born English, the [famous saying went](#), was to have won first prize in the lottery of life, whether you were a butler or a baron.

But after the second world war and the dissolution of empire, the Tories needed a new way to distort and disguise Britain’s divides. They found it at Britain’s borders. “It is possible that Tory attitudes on immigration will strike a working-class response and replace the old-style imperialism,” the influential Conservative MP John Biffen wrote in 1965. Enoch Powell delivered his “[rivers of blood](#)” speech three years later. They never looked back.

In Powell’s reconfiguration of post-imperial Britain, the world was no longer beneath Britain’s paw but instead queueing at the gates, desperate to be let in. This narrative, advanced by his disciple Thatcher and sustained by every

Tory leader since, has proved similarly empowering, and even more useful: it offers the [Conservatives](#) not only a way of appealing across classes, but an alibi for the miserable state of the country’s public services and economy. If Britain is no longer great, it is because it is too generous, spreading its greatness so thinly that the nation’s “native” citizens suffer for it. Any leftwing or liberal defence of immigration can be held up as proof of treachery: whose side are they on?

But despite their patriotic odes to the British people, the Conservatives remain a fundamentally elitist and anti-democratic force. They are wedded to an unrepresentative political system that allows the party to frame fine-margin victories – often involving the votes of little more than a quarter of the electorate – as towering majorities. Just as austerity deliberately eroded local democracy, curtailing the power of opposition-led councils to improve people’s lives, the Tories’ latest move to push through voter ID under a [fictitious threat](#) of voter fraud – a measure that is likely to disfranchise millions of people, most of them less well-off – represents yet another move to disempower the public. It is a naked articulation of the Conservatives’ method: muzzle Britain in the name of protecting it, shoring up their own power.

The result is confounding: a ruling class that refuses to take any responsibility for ruling, an elite that enriches its chums while calling their opponents self-serving, a vandal that imagines itself the victim. As long ago as 1871, the novelist Anthony Trollope saw this duplicity as a feature of the Conservative mind. “They feel among themselves that everything that is being done is bad – even though that everything is done by their own party,” he wrote in the novel *The Eustace Diamonds*. “To have been always in the right and yet always on the losing side … A huge, living, daily increasing grievance that does one no palpable harm, is the happiest possession that a man can have.”

More than 150 years later, Trollope’s words have an eerie resonance. Conservatives feel that everything that is being done is bad, even though almost all of it is done by them. They lament the state of the nation even as they lead it. Last week’s local election results suggest the public’s patience may be fading. But while the Tories may mourn Britain’s decline, so long as

they remain in power, they seem happy in their unhappiness, confident that there will always be someone else to blame, someone else to suffer the consequences.

- Samuel Earle is the author of Tory Nation: How One Party Took Over
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Liverpool fans boo God Save the King on coronation day – video

[SportblogSoccer](#)

## **Football fans, the national anthem and a battle for who controls the public space**

[Jonathan Liew](#)



Why would the Premier League ‘strongly suggest’ clubs mark the coronation? It’s all part of the eternal struggle for power

Tue 9 May 2023 02.51 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 09.52 EDT

“We’ve fought wars,” pleads Peter Shilton, his voice breaking with emotion. “People have died to protect our national anthem. Every country has its national anthem, and they’re very proud of it. And, you know, we’re one of the top ones. It’s sad that a small minority feel they have to do this.”

Alas, I was abroad over the weekend and thus missed out on most of the piping hot coronation discourse that many of you will have enjoyed. As it

happened I was in Germany: in many ways the royal family's spiritual home, even if – in Shilton's reading of history – it did launch an unsuccessful attempt to invade the national anthem in 1939.

But I did watch [Liverpool v Brentford](#), an undistinguished encounter enlivened immeasurably by the scenes that preceded it. As God Save the King piped over the Anfield sound system, met with a predictable [concerto of scouse disdain](#), the Liverpool players arrayed around the centre circle found themselves trapped between two equal and opposing forms of awkwardness.

Different players reacted differently. Mo Salah, game face on, staring flintily into the middle distance, utterly unmoved. Fabinho: just baffled. Andy Robertson: gaze fixed firmly downwards, as if trying to laser-burn a hole in the turf through which he could mercifully plummet. Trent Alexander-Arnold trying, John Redwood-style, to mouth the anthem without singing it.



A Liverpool fan holds up a sign while the national anthem is booed at Anfield. Photograph: Mike Egerton/PA

Why do [Liverpool](#) fans boo the anthem? Well, to borrow the words of Louis Armstrong when asked to provide a definition of jazz: “Man, if you gotta ask, you’ll never know.” All football fans have their nemeses. For Liverpool,

it's the British establishment and its associated pageantry. For Manchester City, it's Uefa and the Champions League theme tune. For England, it's anything that isn't England. You might spot a certain double standard in the fans who sanctify their own national anthem while reserving the right to boo the other 208. But – as Shilton so eloquently puts it – we're one of the top ones.

Shilton was speaking to Jacob Rees-Mogg on GB News, and lest anyone accuse the former England goalkeeper of simply being an unthinking servant to ceremony, be assured that his views on public gestures at football matches are in fact heavily nuanced. Only nine months ago, for example, Shilton was on the same channel explaining to Nigel Farage why he wasn't in favour of taking the knee to protest against racial inequality, on the grounds that "I don't think there's a massive problem with race" and "the game's full of black players".

Of course, to anyone with even a passing familiarity with fan culture, the fact that Liverpool fans booed the anthem is neither surprising nor – really – all that interesting. But there is a wider issue at stake here, at a time when the sporting arena is increasingly being used as a theatre for protest, in an age when the very right to express oneself in public is being questioned, often suppressed. Who owns these spaces, and who gets to speak in them? And – more importantly – who gets to police what is spoken?

For all the contemporary distaste, there has in fact long been a rich tradition of anti-establishment protest in British sport, from the suffragettes to the anti-apartheid movement. In many ways the efforts of [Animal Rising](#) at the Grand National and [Just Stop Oil](#) at the world snooker championship are simply the inheritors of a sacred principle: that these places belong to us all. That in any pluralistic society there must be space for prevailing ideas to be challenged as well as upheld.

Just Stop Oil protesters invade World Snooker Championship arena – video

In which context it is worth asking which is the more principled act: fans booing a national anthem, or a governing body attempting to enforce one? Before the weekend the [Premier League](#) contacted its clubs to "strongly suggest" they commemorated the royal moment in some way. Like, why? It

is barely relevant to point out here that the republican segment of the British public stands at 25% and rising. That number could be 100% or 1% and the principle would remain unchanged: celebrating a monarch is an overtly ideological act. There are of course people who will argue with an entirely straight face that the state itself is actually entirely apolitical, and can we all just eat some cake and stand respectfully in agreement?

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But none of this is really about tradition or respect or even national unity, a concept that for some reason is never applied to striking nurses. It is a struggle for power, and has always been such: an eternal tug-of-war between those who control the public space and those who occupy it, those who own its deeds and those who own its soul. Protest banners against absentee owners are proscribed or hauled down. Ordinary people with inoffensive placards are hurled into the back of police vans for having the temerity to make a point.

As for the Premier League, an organisation that never met a billionaire royal it didn't love, there is a sinister branding at work here: a form of influence masquerading as supplication. Bring your colour and noise. Bring your passion and fervour. Bring all the things that make excellent television product. Apart from the bit when you will be asked to stand and sing a hymn to a man you've never met.

And of course, the Premier League is entitled to pursue its interests in whatever way it deems fit. We must support the right of privileged executives to hoard the majority of the sport's wealth while locking the rest of us out. It's just regrettable – to coin a phrase – that a small minority feel they have to spoil things for everyone.

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## 2023.05.09 - Around the world

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- [Gun control US on track to set record in 2023 for mass killings after series of shootings](#)
- [Texas mall shooting Family and friends identify victims as investigation continues](#)
- [Victims Grade-school sisters and young engineer killed](#)



People look at a memorial to those killed at the Allen Premium Outlets mall.  
Photograph: Joe Raedle/Getty Images

[Texas](#)

## **‘Gun-loving’ ex-US army officer calls for gun control after witnessing Texas mall shooting**

Steven Spainhouer described rushing to the shopping center after his son called and trying to help a girl who ‘had no face’

*[Ramon Antonio Vargas](#)*

Tue 9 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 02.00 EDT

As an ex-police and US army officer, Steven Spainhouer is comfortable around firearms and goes so far as to describe himself as a “gun lover”.

But Spainhouer is now passionately arguing in favor of meaningful gun control after witnessing a rifle-wielding man murder [several people](#) before

being shot to death by police outside a suburban Dallas shopping mall Saturday.

“We need some action in our legislatures at the federal and state level for better gun control,” he said in an interview with [MSNBC](#) a day after the mass killing outside Premium Outlets in Allen, Texas. “And I’m saying that as someone who loves guns.”

Spainhouer described rushing to the shopping center after his son called him saying he had heard gunfire. He arrived before emergency responders and performed CPR on some of those who had been felled by bullets.

In a separate interview with CBS, Spainhouer recounted the horrors he saw first-hand.

“The first girl I walked up to was crouched down covering her head in the bushes,” he told [CBS](#). “So I felt for a pulse, pulled her head to the side and she had no face.”

Investigators determined 33-year-old Mauricio Garcia had shot eight people to death and wounded seven others outside the mall in [Allen](#). A police officer who had gone to the mall on an unrelated call fatally shot the attacker, and a law enforcement official later told the Associated Press that Garcia had expressed an interest in white supremacist beliefs before carrying out the mass murder.

As of Monday morning, there had been more than 200 mass shootings and 20 mass killings so far this year, according to [the Gun Violence Archive](#).

That online resource defines a mass shooting as one in which four or more victims are either killed or wounded and a mass killing as one in which four or more victims are slain. The pace at which the US was on for the year as of Monday amounted to more than one mass killing weekly, much higher than it has been in recent years.

Spainhouer on MSNBC alluded to [the condolences](#) which Texas’s leading Republican politicians offered to the families of the slain. The messages echoed previous ones that came after a racist shooting at an El Paso Walmart

left 23 dead in August 2019 and a separate gun attack at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, last year killed 19 students and two teachers.

Despite those mass killings in [Texas](#) as well as others across the US, Congress has been unable to substantially restrict access to high-powered guns. Meanwhile, the Republican-controlled state enacted a law which allowed Texas residents to legally carry guns without a license or training. A federal judge last year struck down one of the state's few firearms restrictions, which barred people younger than 21 from carrying a gun.

And rather than impose limits on guns, which [polling shows](#) Americans generally favor, Texas's state legislature is [considering](#) a bill that would require children in grade school to be given access to battlefield-style tourniquets and to be trained on how to use them to stop bleeding in case a mass shooter targets them.

The state's Republican governor, Greg Abbott, went on Fox News on Sunday and [insisted](#) that the dearth of adequate mental health services was the true culprit for deadly mass violence both in his state and elsewhere.

Abbott's remarks ran contrary to [evidence](#) that fewer than 5% of violent cases have mental health links. And Spainhouer bristled at the notion that anything other than actual gun control policies would curb the pace of mass killings in the US.

"When you get hit with an automatic weapon fire at close range, there is no opportunity for survival," Spainhouer said to MSNBC. "I don't know what the gunman's problem was, but it wasn't mental health that killed these people. It was an automatic rifle with bullets."

He added: "I'm a gun lover. I have guns. But these [high-powered rifles] have got to get off the streets, or this is going to keep happening. We've got to stop that at some point."

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Police tape at a crime scene after a shooting at the Spanish Town shops in Half Moon Bay, California, on 24 January 2023. Photograph: Samantha Laurey/AFP/Getty Images

[US gun control](#)

## **US on track to set record in 2023 for mass killings after series of shootings**

Country is seeing an average of more than one mass killing weekly – amid little political prospect of meaningful gun control

*[Erum Salam](#)*

Tue 9 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 11.40 EDT

After a series of shootings and other attacks, 2023 is on track to be the worst in recent history for mass killings in the US.

Mass killings are defined as incidents in which four or more people are killed, not including the shooter or other type of perpetrator. According to

data from the Gun Violence Archive, the US is on pace for 60 mass killings this year. There were 31 in 2019, 21 in 2020, 28 in 2021 and 36 in 2022.

The US is seeing on average more than one mass killing weekly.

As of 7 May 2023, there had been 202 mass shootings – defined by the archive as involving at least four people killed or injured by firearms, excluding the shooter – since the beginning of the year.

The incidents have spanned the country, from Chicago to Mississippi and Tennessee to [Texas](#). They have occurred at shopping malls, schools and parties and in countless neighborhoods.

They have also sparked a bout of soul-searching in a country where scores of millions of guns are in public hands and there is little political prospect of meaningful gun control of the type common in many other countries.

### [Chart of US mass killings by year](#)

Yet another mass shooting took place in Allen, Texas, on Saturday, leaving eight dead. The gunman was also killed. The shooter opened fire at a shopping mall, spraying bullets before being killed by a police officer.

On Sunday, Texas saw a mass killing: a driver [plowed](#) his truck into a crowd at a bus stop near a shelter serving migrants in the southern city of Brownsville, killing eight.

Mass shootings have attracted the most attention in the US and overseas. No other industrialised country outside war and conflict zones experiences such habitual gun violence in civic life.

In Texas, gun laws were repeatedly loosened after mass shootings. It has had 41 mass shootings so far in 2023. It has not even been one year since 19 children and two teachers were killed in a shooting at Robb elementary school in Uvalde, the deadliest shooting in the state and the third-deadliest school shooting in the US.

At more than 1m, Texas is also the state with the [most registered guns](#).

State lawmakers voiced their outrage at the latest tragedy.

A Democratic state senator, Roland Gutierrez, said: “Texas lawmakers need to have the political courage to get something done about gun violence. It is sad that this has become our everyday reality. Thanks to the Republican regime that has led Texas for the last 30 years, gun laws are looser than ever.”

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Sheila Jackson Lee represents Texas’s 18th district, which largely covers Houston, in Congress. She said: “I’m just so tired and hurt and devastated by the continuing mass shootings in this state and in this nation … Eight innocent people are dead – dead by gunfire. Guns again.

“Of course, I offer my prayers and concerns for those families who are struggling with the loss of their loved ones. But I also ask the question: ‘When are we going to confront the real cause?’ And that is a proliferation of guns, guns, guns.”

Joe Biden has said [Republicans](#) should back his calls for more gun control measures.

After the shooting last year in Uvalde, Biden oversaw a bipartisan gun control bill that enacted some modest proposals. But as the waves of shootings have intensified, he has pleaded with Congress to enact tougher measures such as banning assault weapons. There has been little sign of that plea being taken up.

That pattern repeated itself after the Allen shooting.

“Such an attack is too shocking to be so familiar,” Biden said on Sunday.

“Once again I ask Congress to send me a bill banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Enacting universal background checks. Requiring safe storage. Ending immunity for gun manufacturers. I will sign it immediately. We need nothing less to keep our streets safe.”

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People look at a memorial to those killed at the Allen Premium Outlets mall after the mass shooting. Photograph: Joe Raedle/Getty Images

[Texas](#)

## **Texas mall shooting: family and friends identify victims as investigation goes on**

Police chief Brian Harvey declined to answer questions Sunday evening after a gunman killed eight people at a shopping mall

*Guardian staff and agencies*

Mon 8 May 2023 21.21 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 09.21 EDT

The victims of a mass shooting have been named as law enforcement officials in Allen, [Texas](#), are still trying to piece together the events of the Saturday afternoon attack at a suburban shopping mall in which a gunman killed eight people and injured seven others, before being killed himself by police.

Brian Harvey, the Allen police chief, declined to answer questions on Sunday evening, saying of the investigation, “we actually don’t have a lot”.

Authorities have yet to provide details about the exact series of events and publicly release the identities of the victims, but families, friends and organizations have released some information. Those killed include an engineer from India, a security guard, a Korean American family and two young children.

Cox elementary school students Daniela and Sofia Mendoza, grades four and two, were among those slain on Saturday at Allen Premium Outlets, according to officials in the Wylie independent school district. They were remembered as “the kindest, most thoughtful students with smiles that could light up any room”, Principal Krista Wilson said in a letter to parents.

Andria Gaither, assistant manager at the mall’s Tommy Hilfiger, said she was devastated to learn that one of the dead was Christian LaCour, a 20-year-old security guard who previously worked at the clothing store and often stopped in to chat.

Just a few nights earlier, she had called LaCour when a customer wanted in after hours. He came and asked the man to leave and then offered a security escort to her and two teenage employees.

“He wanted us to feel safe,” Gaither said.

“I’m just in shock,” she added. “He was very young, very sweet, came in all the time to visit with us.”

Also killed at the outdoor shopping center were three members of a Korean American family: a couple and one of their sons, who was three years old. Another son was wounded and was still hospitalized, said Myoung-Joon Kim, head of mission at the Consulate of the Republic of Korea in Dallas. The parents were identified by the Texas department of public safety as Kyu Song Cho, 37, and Cindy Cho, 35.

Also killed was Aishwarya Thatikonda, 26, who was from India, held a graduate degree in construction management and worked as a civil engineer

at a the Dallas-area firm Perfect General Contractors.

She was “always prepared to give her very best”, company founder Srinivas Chaluvadi said via email.

He said her parents live in Hyderabad, India, where her father is a judge.

“She came to the United States with a dream to make a career, build a family, own a home and live forever in Dallas,” Chaluvadi said.

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DPS has identified the eighth victim as Elio Cumana-Rivas, 32.

Medical City Healthcare said on Monday it was treating six patients at three of its hospitals: three were in critical condition, two were in fair condition and one was in good condition at a children’s hospital. Police said a seventh wounded person was taken to a different hospital.

Police have identified the gunman in the shooting as Mauricio Garcia, a 33-year-old whose activity on a Russian social networking site reveals a fascination with white supremacy and mass shootings, which he described as sport. Photos he posted showed large Nazi tattoos on his arm and torso,

including a swastika and the SS lightning bolt logo of Hitler's paramilitary forces.

Garcia had been discharged from the army in 2008 because of mental health issues and apparently was working as a security guard, according to neighbors and an army official. The attack in Allen ended when police shot and killed Garcia.

Amid protests on Monday at the Texas capitol for stricter gun control, two Republicans sided with Democrats to advance a bill that would raise the age to buy semiautomatic rifles from 18 to 21, though the measure has little or no chance of actually becoming law.

The shooting was the latest attack to contribute to the unprecedented pace of mass killings this year in the US. Just over a week before, five people were fatally shot in Cleveland, Texas, after a neighbor asked a man to stop firing his weapon while a baby slept, authorities said.

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People gather for a prayer vigil on Sunday in Allen, Texas. Photograph: LM Otero/AP

[Texas](#)

## **Texas mall shooting victims include grade-school sisters and young engineer**

Korean American family and security guard also among those killed in Saturday attack near Dallas

*[Lauren Aratani](#)*

Mon 8 May 2023 15.56 EDT Last modified on Mon 8 May 2023 17.12 EDT

Details are emerging about those who were killed in a mass shooting at a shopping center in Allen, [Texas](#), near Dallas, on Saturday afternoon. Nine people were killed, including the gunman, and at least seven others were injured.

Authorities have yet to provide details about the exact series of events and publicly release the identities of the victims, but families, friends and

organizations have released some information. Those killed include an engineer from India, a security guard, a Korean American family and two young children. Here is what we know so far:

### **Christian LaCour, 20**

Christian LaCour's grandmother, Sandra Montgomery, wrote in a public [Facebook post](#) that her grandson, a security guard at the mall, was killed in the shooting.

"He was such a beautiful soul, 20-year-old with goals for his future," she wrote. "I was so proud of him and so glad I got to see him two weeks ago."

Montgomery said the family "are very close and I know this is almost unbearable" for them.

### **Aishwarya Thatikonda, 27**

Aishwarya Thatikonda, from Hyderabad, India, moved to the United States five years ago to study engineering. She worked for a Dallas company as a project engineer.

Volunteers with the Telugu Association of North America, or Tana, rushed to get information from officials about Thatikonda when she was reported missing after Saturday's shooting. Officials eventually confirmed to the non-profit that Thatikonda was among the victims.

Thatikonda was with a man, who was injured in the shooting and is being treated at a nearby hospital.

"The families are thousands and thousands of miles away," Ashok Kolla, a volunteer with Tana, told the [Guardian](#).

### **Three members of a Korean American family**

The Korean consulate told the Dallas Morning News that a Korean American couple, Cho Kyu Song, 37, and Kang Shin Young, 35, were killed

along with their young child, James, three. Their first child, William, six, was injured in the shooting.

“The Korean consulate joins the people of Dallas-Forth Worth area to express our deepest condolences for the victims and their families,” Myoung-Joon Kim, head of the Korean consulate in Dallas, told the Dallas Morning News. “We pray for the victims and their family members for their healing and recovery.”

A [GoFundMe page](#) for the family has been set up for the family.

## Two elementary school students

Wylie school district in Dallas sent a note to parents and students saying that two students, Daniela Mendoza, who was in fourth grade, and Sofia Mendoza, who was in second grade, were victims in the shooting, according to [CBS News Texas](#).

Krista Wilson, principal of Cox elementary, where the two sisters attended school, said in a note to parents: “Words cannot express the sadness we feel as we grieve the loss of our students. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Mendoza family, the families of the victims and all those affected by this senseless tragedy.”

An email from the Wylie school district superintendent, David Vinson, said that their mother, Ilda Mendoza, is in critical condition, according to the [Dallas Morning News](#).

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## **Headlines monday 8 may 2023**

- [King Charles coronation Arrests of protesters were 'premeditated', says Republic chief](#)
- [Big Help Out Millions of Britons invited to volunteer](#)
- [Sydney Opera House Royal drama after refusal to light up sails](#)



Graham Smith, head of Republic, at a previous anti-monarchy protest in March. Photograph: May James/Reuters

### [King Charles coronation](#)

## **Met police ‘regret’ arrest of anti-monarchy protesters at coronation**

Head of Republic campaign group calls for inquiry into officers’ conduct after those arrested later released without charge

*[Kevin Rawlinson](#) and [Nadeem Badshah](#)*

Mon 8 May 2023 17.01 EDTFirst published on Mon 8 May 2023 05.57 EDT

The [Metropolitan police](#) have defended the arrest of anti-monarchy protesters during the coronation despite announcing that no charges will be brought against them.

The force said it expressed “regret” that six demonstrators from the Republic campaign group were arrested on Saturday.

Graham Smith, the head of the group, said it was considering legal action and demanded an inquiry into the conduct of officers.

Scotland Yard released a statement on Monday night stating that it believed items found alongside a large number of placards could be used as “lock-on devices”.

“The investigation team have now fully examined the items seized and reviewed the full circumstances of the arrest,” the statement added. “Those arrested stated the items would be used to secure their placards, and the investigation has been unable to prove intent to use them to lock on and disrupt the event.

“This evening all six have had their bail cancelled and no further action will be taken. We regret that those six people arrested were unable to join the wider group of protesters in Trafalgar Square and elsewhere on the procession route.”

Smith said a chief inspector and two other officers from the Met apologised to him at his home in Reading on Monday evening.

The activist told the PA news agency: “I had three officers at my door personally apologising and handing the straps [for the placards] back to me. They were a chief inspector and two other officers from the Met. They seemed rather embarrassed, to be honest.



Graham Smith being arrested at the coronation of King Charles on 6 May.  
Photograph: Daniel Boffey/The Guardian

"I said, 'For the record, I won't accept the apology. We have a lot of questions to answer and we will be taking action.'"

Smith wrote on Twitter: "This has been a disgraceful episode and we will be speaking to lawyers about taking legal action. I also expect a full inquiry into why they repeatedly lied to us and who authorised the arrests."

Earlier on Monday, Smith said the arrests were a premeditated attempt to "disrupt and diminish" the republican demonstration and that the police's decision to break up the planned protest before it began trampled over their rights. He added the group had been in conversation with Scotland Yard for months before the event.

It came as City Hall politicians joined the [London](#) mayor, Sadiq Khan, in seeking answers from Scotland Yard over the detention of Republic protesters and volunteers working for the local council to keep people safe.

'Your king... if you like it or not': the coronation divides - video

Smith told BBC Radio 4's Today programme on Monday morning: "We have had four months of close conversation with the Metropolitan police, in

which we have explained to them exactly what we're going to do, where we're going to be. We told them how many placards we had, what they would say, that we would have flags, that we would have amplification equipment.

“The amplification equipment was then seized and my colleagues were told they'd be arrested if they used megaphones. The whole thing was a deliberate attempt to disrupt and diminish our protest.”

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Asked if he thought his arrest before the event was premeditated, Smith said: “Absolutely. I have no doubt about that at all.”

He said his organisation had engaged with the police throughout the planning of its demonstration, and that officers had said until the day before that they had no concerns.

The Met said it arrested 64 people on Saturday, including members of Westminster city council's women's safety campaign Night Stars, who hand out rape alarms and other items. [Police](#) claimed intelligence had indicated that people were planning to use rape alarms to disrupt the coronation procession.

Scotland Yard faces scrutiny over its handling of the event, with the Green politician Caroline Russell, who chairs the London assembly's police and crime committee, calling it "really worrying".

Head of UK's leading anti-monarchy movement among several arrested at coronation protest – video

She told Today: "It felt like, for someone who was trying to protest and trying to do it by the book, it was very difficult to understand what the rules were."

Rishi Sunak backed the police on Monday, saying: "The police are operationally independent of government – they will make these decisions based on what they think is best.

"Actually, I'm grateful to the police and everyone who played a part in ensuring that this weekend has gone so well, so successfully and so safely. That was an extraordinary effort by so many people and I'm grateful to them for all their hard work."

The mayor of London said on Sunday: "Some of the arrests made by police as part of the coronation event raise questions and, while investigations are ongoing, I've sought urgent clarity from Met leaders on the action taken."

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The Venerable Ajahn Amaro, the archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Julie Siddiqi serve food as they join other faith leaders in taking part in the Big Help Out in London. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

### Volunteering

## **Millions of Britons invited to volunteer for coronation's Big Help Out**

Volunteering drive on bank holiday Monday billed as lasting legacy of the crowning of Charles III

*Guardian staff and agency*

Mon 8 May 2023 03.15 EDT Last modified on Mon 8 May 2023 07.00 EDT

King Charles III has invited millions of Britons to support causes in their local community on bank holiday Monday as the coronation festivities conclude with the Big Help Out.

The volunteering drive has been billed as a lasting legacy of the crowning of Charles, with tens of thousands registered to attend events nationwide.

The king and queen will not be making any public appearances but other royals will be taking part. The Prince and Princess of Wales will be at a Scout hut in Berkshire, while Princess Anne is at an event in Gloucestershire.

It comes after Sunday night's coronation concert, in which Prince William paid tribute to his father on stage.

"Pa, we are all so proud of you," he said in reference to Charles's 50 years of service as the Prince of Wales.

William added: "As my grandmother said when she was crowned, coronations are a declaration of our hopes for the future. And I know she's up there, fondly keeping an eye on us. She would be a proud mother."

The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester will be visiting the Coptic Orthodox church in London where young volunteers will be hosting a coronation street party. The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh will take part in a puppy class at the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association training centre in Reading.

Senior politicians are also taking part. The prime minister, Rishi Sunak, and his wife are helping at a lunch club, the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, is manning the phones at an NHS volunteer responders' programme and the Scottish first minister, Humza Yousaf, is visiting a community larder.

The Big Help Out day is organised by the Together Coalition and partners including the Scouts, the Royal Voluntary Service and faith groups from across the UK.

It will highlight the positive impact volunteering has on communities and encourage people to become volunteers to create a lasting legacy.

On Monday evening from 7.30pm, the BBC TV soap EastEnders will hold a coronation-themed street party in Albert Square hosted by the residents of Walford.

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The public have been encouraged to take up hundreds of thousands of volunteering roles on the extra bank holiday with more than 1,500 charities involved. An app has been created to allow people to search for volunteering opportunities, ranging from helping elderly people to working with environmental charities and supporting animal welfare.

A Buckingham Palace spokesperson said: “While wholly supportive of the Big Help Out initiatives taking place right across Britain on Monday 7 May, [the King and Queen] will not be attending any events in-person. These will instead be attended by other members of the royal family.”

Queen Camilla is patron of the Royal Voluntary Service charity and has been patron of the Big Lunch initiative since 2013.

The extra bank holiday, which will take place across the UK, caps off a long weekend of celebrations.

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The government of New South Wales has said it costs up to \$100,000 to light up sails of the Sydney Opera House, as it defends scrapping plans to do so for the coronation. Photograph: Jaimi Joy/Reuters

[Sydney Opera House](#)

## **Royal drama at Sydney Opera House after refusal to light up sails for king's coronation**

Government argues the financial burden would have been significant if the projection had gone ahead

[Jordyn Beazley](#)

Mon 8 May 2023 02.59 EDT Last modified on Mon 8 May 2023 05.54 EDT

A decision to scrap plans to light the sails of the [Sydney Opera House](#) in honour of the coronation of King Charles has been defended by the premier of the state of New South Wales, Chris Minns.

The famous sails of the Opera House are often lit for major events in Australia, including for a tribute to Queen Elizabeth II after she died and a [controversial projection promoting a horse race](#).

But Saturday's coronation did not make the cut, with the recently elected Labor government in the state reversing its predecessor's decision to do so.



An image of Queen Elizabeth II is projected on to the sails of the Sydney Opera House on 9 September 2022, after her death. Photograph: James D Morgan/Getty Images

Citing a cost of between \$80,000 and \$100,000, Minns, [whose party defeated the conservative Coalition government in a state election in March](#), argued the financial burden on taxpayers would have been significant and said the sails were being lit too often.

“It was lit up for everything from solemn occasions to … a football team that was touring,” he told [Sydney](#) radio station 2GB on Monday.

“Of course I respect the new king but I’m mindful of where and when we spend taxpayers’ money.

“I’d like to keep it for Australia and Australians, and for moments of sacrifice and heroism for the country – or when there’s an important international event in Sydney.”

Since coming into power the government has already rejected a number of requests to light up the Opera House from various organisations and for religious events, in a bid to be more selective.

Protesters shine torches on Sydney Opera House to disrupt horse racing ad – video

The sails were lit on 23 days in 2012, but that ballooned to more than 70 days last year to showcase various events in the country.

The Australian Monarchist League condemned the decision not to light the sails for the king.

“Had the premier contacted the Australian Monarchist League, our members would readily have contributed towards the funding for this purpose on this important occasion,” the statement said.

“From now on, should taxpayer funds ever be used to light up buildings, it will prove that this decision was based on Mr Minn’s [sic] republican sympathies and not on cost,” it said.



The sails of the Sydney Opera House were illuminated by a projection of artwork by Kamilaroi woman and artist Rhonda Sampson on 25 January 2023. Photograph: Wendell Teodoro/Getty Images

The sails are lit annually to [mark Sydney's month long festival of art and technology](#), Vivid Sydney, featuring artists work such as John Olsen.

In 2020 the sails were [lit to mark the 20th anniversary of athlete Cathy Freeman](#) winning gold at the Sydney Olympics in the women's 400m race.

In 2018, the state's racing body controversially received approval to project an advertisement for a horse race, drawing the ire of many Australians. [Hundreds of demonstrators shone torches on the sails](#) in protest against the commercialisation of the world heritage-listed structure.

A Sydney Opera House spokesperson said work was being done on an “updated sails lighting policy, including greater clarity about the type and frequency of projections permitted”.

“Over the past 10 years, there has been a substantial increase in the number of requests to illuminate the sails, including from community groups, charities, organisations, foreign embassies/consulates and the NSW government,” the spokesperson said.

“As a place that belongs to all Australians, the opera house takes seriously its responsibility to protect the cultural heritage significance of the World Heritage-listed building while meeting community and artistic expectations.

“The opera house does not charge a fee for these projections, it is only required to turn off its floodlights. The costs incurred are for third-party service providers.”

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## 2023.05.08 - Spotlight

- Life with face blindness Sometimes I don't recognise my own family
- 'Part of you dies as well' The toll of caring for loved ones with dementia
- Chin Chin The wine that's become a must-have for middle England
- The wild side of north-east England The best pubs, walks and hidden beaches

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Drawing a blank ... it's possible that those areas of the brain responsible for face recognition become affected with long Covid. Composite: Getty images

[Health & wellbeing](#)

## **‘Sometimes I don’t recognise my own family’: life with face blindness**

Can long Covid make it harder to identify acquaintances, friends, even close relatives? Scientists are investigating a possible link



[Emine Saner](#)

[@eminesaner](#)

Mon 8 May 2023 05.00 EDT

The other day a man waved at Stanley Chow, and went over to him. “I said: ‘Have we met before?’ Which is kind of the last thing you want to say.” It happens a lot – he finds it hard to remember new people’s faces. “Anyone I’ve spoken to once or twice I do forget quite instantly,” he says. “If I meet someone new, I’ll make a point of following them on Instagram or Facebook so their face becomes ingrained in my memory somehow.”

Around six months ago, a friend phoned Chow to complain he had “blanked” a mutual friend, but the 48-year-old illustrator just hadn’t recognised him. “That unsettled me for a few weeks.” Now, he says, “I always make an excuse, like: ‘Since Covid I can’t remember faces as well as I could.’” He’s not plucking that idea out of thin air. He says he has always had a small degree of face blindness – where people have difficulty recognising or remembering faces – but he believes the Covid infection he got in early 2021 made it worse.

Face blindness, or prosopagnosia, has been raised as a possible symptom of long Covid. Last month, researchers at Dartmouth College in the US published a case study on Annie (a pseudonym), who had developed prosopagnosia since having Covid, to the extent she couldn't recognise members of her own family. The study is extremely limited – Annie is just one person, and she wasn't given an MRI scan to rule out other causes of prosopagnosia, such as stroke (Covid itself raises the risk of stroke).



Stanley Chow finds it hard to remember new people's faces. Photograph: Rebecca Lupton/The Guardian

The researchers are still at an early stage. However, there is another person who has claimed they have post-Covid prosopagnosia they want to work with, says Marie-Luise Kieseler, a doctoral student and lead author of the study, and two others who have been in touch. "We heard from another man who is not experiencing face blindness, but face distortions," she says.

Based on responses to a survey she did, "we do think there are lots of people who have some sort of visual problems after contracting Covid-19. Some people have reported colour vision changes. We've heard from people who have trouble with navigation, recognising streets that are supposed to be familiar to them and losing their way when travelling." One woman told Kieseler she has had a lot of visual distortions, including seeing shadows as

trenches. More people with long Covid reported problems keeping track of characters in TV shows than people who had recovered from the virus, she says.

We do think there are lots of people who have some sort of visual problems after contracting Covid-19

Prosopagnosia is a rare condition, and most of the cases are acquired through some sort of brain injury or diseases such as encephalitis or Alzheimer's, but some people are born with it. Haaris Qureshi, an IT and data technician, has had it – alongside dyspraxia, which affects motor skills and coordination – for as long as he can remember. "I've always struggled in social situations to be sure if I know someone." It's annoying, rather than debilitating, he says, but he does sometimes go out of his way to avoid people, rather than risk blanking them.

If he has known or worked with someone for a while, he will remember them. "But even then, with someone I know very well, if I see them in the context I'm not expecting them, I won't recognise them." When we speak, Qureshi, 28, is on a work training course and is meeting new people; he remembered one of his workshop partners by the colour of the tracksuit they were wearing, but they were wearing a different-coloured one the next day and he couldn't pick them out. "These are the things I'm having to navigate," he says.

If it's someone Qureshi expects to deal with for a short period of time, such as at a conference, he looks for things such as jewellery or hairstyle – things that probably won't change. "I have to expend mental effort memorising aspects," he says. "Over longer periods of time, it's more difficult." Now he knows what face blindness is, he will tell people he has it, and if they have arranged to meet, he will ask them to approach him.

For some people with prosopagnosia, it may be a perception issue. "Because they're seeing faces a little bit differently to everybody else, it doesn't allow them to pick up on the visual cues that the rest of us use to distinguish between different people," says John Towler, lecturer in psychology at Swansea University. They can have problems processing the whole face at a

single glance, and will focus on a particular detail to remember people by – the eyebrows, or a mole or piercing for instance.



‘I’ve always struggled in social situations to be sure if I know someone’ ...  
Haaris Qureshi. Photograph: Christoper Owens/The Guardian

For other people with the condition, it may be more of a memory problem. “Obviously, if the perception is poor, then memory is going to be poor and the two things often correlate with each other,” says Towler. “But for some people, it’s primarily one or the other.”

Towler hasn’t been aware of more people reporting face blindness after Covid, though he’s open to the idea that it could be a symptom. “We know about the brain fog and the attentional problems associated with Covid. I think for some people, those areas of the brain that are responsible for face recognition become affected.”

Sarah O’Connell, 38, developed some face blindness with her myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), also known as chronic fatigue syndrome, which was triggered by norovirus 10 years ago. “I noticed after a couple of years that it had become a bit of an issue,” says the former business analyst. “It was mostly with people I had only met a few times. At the school gate,

people would say, ‘Hi, Sarah’ and I would be looking at them blankly. It took more exposure to someone’s face for me to remember it.”

She got Covid in summer 2021, then again in spring last year. “Since my second Covid infection, all my cognitive impairment issues got worse – memory issues, word-finding, losing my train of thought halfway through a sentence – and face blindness,” says O’Connell.

She recognises family and close friends, “but it can be quite embarrassing when people know you, and you have no recollection as to who they might be”. She gets around it, she says, with “just a generic ‘hello’. I play along, and hope I don’t get caught out.”



Sarah O’Connell, who has face blindness, with children Hayley and Jake

Although it’s too early to say whether prosopagnosia will become a recognised effect of Covid, Kieseler’s research, which was widely reported, has raised the profile of the condition, which many have welcomed. Angela Draper, a retired teacher, first read about prosopagnosia in an education journal when she was in her 50s. “I realised that described me. I was so relieved – almost tearful.”

The journal mentioned university research that needed participants, and Draper volunteered; when she was tested, she found out she had significant

prosopagnosia. She realised that her father had also had it. “Both I and my father thought my mother was brilliant at recognising people and then I realised she was normal and we were the ones that were way out.”

On occasion, this has even meant not recognising herself. In a photo taken at her brother’s wedding, where she and the other bridesmaid were in identical dresses and their hair styled the same way, she says, “I can’t tell which is her and which is me.” Draper didn’t recognise her best friend, someone she had known for 15 years, because the friend was wearing a hat and a new coat. “If it’s friends or family who I’m not expecting to see, I don’t recognise them until they speak, or by the way they walk. And clothes.”

It’s a bit difficult if somebody has their hair restyled or changes the colour

Teaching in a school was difficult, with children whose voices sounded similar, and who all wore identical uniform. She has learned to remember people’s wardrobes. “It’s a bit difficult if somebody has their hair restyled or changes the colour, or if they get new glasses. I try and memorise as much as I can about a person that isn’t changeable so I don’t get caught out. I play in orchestras and it’s easy because everyone sits in the same place and when they’re holding their instrument, you know who they are, so you get lots of clues like that. But if you’re at something like a party then it’s much harder.”

She has developed strategies, such as standing behind someone she thinks she might know and saying their name – if they turn around, she was right, if not, nobody is offended. “I just smile at people benignly [when walking past] because I might know them, or I might not.” When she is first talking to someone she may have met before, “you wait for more clues,” she says. Sometimes they turn out to be a total stranger.

Some people with prosopagnosia can find it extremely isolating, and can become socially anxious and avoidant, but while Draper is single and happily lives alone, she has a busy social life. She is upfront about the condition when she first meets someone. “I’ll say: ‘I’m sorry if I don’t recognise you next time we meet, but I can’t remember faces.’” Often the other person will say they’re terrible with names too, which Draper finds

frustrating – she's good with names, it's faces that don't stick. "It is amazing to people who aren't prosopagnosic that it can be like that."

*For more information about prosopagnosia visit [faceblind.org.uk](https://faceblind.org.uk)*

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Dave Shepherd at home in Devon: ‘Alzheimer’s is a horrible disease. It’s continuous; you watch your loved one slowly getting worse and worse.’  
Photograph: Jim Wileman/The Guardian

**Dementia**

# **'Part of you dies as well': the toll of caring for loved ones with dementia**

A new drug could slow the pace of Alzheimer's. Three people with experience of the disease explain their story and their hopes



[Amelia Hill](#)

[@byameliahill](#)

Mon 8 May 2023 04.28 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 06.25 EDT

Dementia does not only affect elderly people. There are more than 55 million people living with the condition worldwide. Every year, nearly 10 million more develop this neurodegenerative disease.

But almost every one of those with dementia has someone who loves them: someone whose own life will crumble as they are forced to watch their loved one succumb. Someone whose own life will be slowly erased as the condition wipes out a lifetime of shared memories from the brain of their partner, parent or friend, destroying their ability to experience emotions and changing their personalities.

The announcement, then, that a [new drug, donanemab, can slow the pace of Alzheimer's by about a third](#) is a cause for celebration.

But the drug will not help everyone: Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia but it only contributes to between 60% and 70% of cases.

Research also suggests patients need to be at an early stage for the highly expensive treatment to be most effective – and diagnosis takes an average of three years in the UK. Those taking the drug must also be willing to risk potentially serious side-effects.

Three people with first-hand experience of Alzheimer's tell what a cruel and pitiless disease it is and how many human tragedies would be prevented if it eventually became a manageable, even a curable, condition.



Dave and Catriona Shepherd, pictured in 2018. Photograph: Jim Wileman/The Guardian

## **Dave Shepherd, Devon**

These drugs have come eight years too late for my wife, Catriona. She was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's in 2014 when she was just 58. She's in a home now, unable to look after herself or even speak coherently.

These new drugs are still wonderful. I've come to terms with what's happened to my wife, but to think that it might be possible to stop other people going through what we endured makes me very happy – especially as those other people could be my children or my friends. Or me.

Alzheimer's is a horrible disease. It's continuous; you watch your loved one slowly getting worse and worse. One of the most awful things is the beginning, when you don't know that there's anything wrong. I still carry enormous guilt that I got angry and frustrated when Catriona forgot things, kept asking the same questions or had a blank doing something she'd done thousands of times before. I just thought she wasn't concentrating and snapped at her. She was already struggling and my reactions must have made things even scarier for her.

Everything changes when your partner has Alzheimer's. Eventually you become a full-time carer – and that really does mean 24 hours a day. It's exhausting but there's no choice. Catriona wasn't safe to leave for a moment: we couldn't risk her going into the kitchen or walking up the stairs on her own because she'd lost her sense of balance.

By that point, you can't go out because they can't go out. My world became as small as hers – just our four walls. When lockdown happened, a part of me almost welcomed it because no one else was able to go out either and I didn't feel like such an outsider.

The care home she's in is wonderful, but in one more year I'll have run through our savings. I have to hope that the council will continue to pay for her to stay in the same place.

While these drugs sound incredible, unless the process of getting a diagnosis is sped up, people won't get their full benefit. Getting a diagnosis for Alzheimer's can take a dreadfully long time: it took me six months to persuade Catriona to go to the hospital for a diagnosis – and then they turned us away, telling us there was nothing wrong.

It took me another six months to persuade Catriona to agree to go to another expert, who finally diagnosed her. If the drugs had been around then, that

would have been a year that her brain was being damaged that we couldn't have got back, no matter how good the drugs were.

## Fernando Marrero, Wandsworth

I have a really strong family link to Alzheimer's – most of my elderly uncles and aunties passed away because of it and I can see my mum coming down with it now too.

These are all educated, intellectual people: one of my uncles spoke three languages. One of them, after he was diagnosed, was terrified. He told me: "I'm scared that I'm not going to be able to recognise anyone." I could see how much he was suffering in his eyes and he was right: the next week when I went to see him, he was already beginning to not recognise people.

It's because I've seen it close that I'm so terrified of getting it myself. The fear looms over my entire life. It is incredibly stressful.



Fernando Marrero. Photograph: Tomás Correa/The Guardian

Pretty much everything I do is designed to reduce the chance of me developing the disease. I live in such a highly structured way that my friends laugh at me. But living like this helps me to not forget things because when I

do, it's just too upsetting and worrying. On the rare occasions when I forget where I've put my keys, for example, I'm devastated.

The doctor tells me not to be paranoid but I'm obsessed about keeping my body and my brain active. Even when I'm tired and not enjoying it, I'll be writing, reading, doing crosswords or sudoku. I speak two languages, exercise, and whenever I eat anything, I make sure it's something that will be good for my brain.

I subscribe to medical journals and talk to people in my family who are doctors, to see if they can give me any new advice. It's exhausting to be like this. Sometimes I get to the end of the day and I'm completely drained.

If I could take these new pills and have all this stress and worry removed from my life, it would be amazing. I would be so happy. It would mean I could stop forcing myself to do all this stuff and just do the things I enjoy.

I know it's not that simple as taking a single pill yet and I know that at the moment, side-effects can be a problem. But the pharmaceutical industry really needs to find a permanent solution because we have to end this ferocious illness.

Having witnessed it first-hand, I can say with certainty that it is the cruellest disease of them all. Watching loved ones' cognitive senses diminishing day by day is appalling, not only for them – because, at the beginning, they realise that something is not quite right – but also for everyone who loves them.

## **Jackie Fildes, Chelmsford, founder and chair of otherhalves.org.uk**

My husband, John, died of Alzheimer's three years ago, the day after lockdown ended. He was diagnosed in 2010 – it took us three years to get a diagnosis – and he went into a home for the last 15 months because he started to get aggressive and I could no longer cope.

Loving someone who has Alzheimer's is torture. The first thing that happens is that they lose any sense of empathy. For me, looking into the eyes of the

man I'd shared 50 years with and seeing that he had no empathy for me any more at all was devastating.

The next thing is that your partner of decades forgets your shared history. When that happens, that part of you dies as well. It means that you're no longer properly known by anyone any more. That's a very lonely place to be.



Jackie Fildes whose late husband had Alzheimer's. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

John had always been an active man and when he got Alzheimer's, this became very difficult because he was always trying to escape. I had to put locks on our doors and install fences around the house – even then, he would try to climb over them. He once escaped and walked 10 miles to the next town.

Inside the house, he would follow me around constantly and was always doing something: he would pick up a pair of kitchen scissors and cut a tea towel up into small squares. He would carefully wrap cutlery up and hide it somewhere nonsensical. I was forever finding rotting food stashed in strange places. It made me want to scream.

I had to keep one step ahead of him all the time to try to keep him safe. It was exhausting – my brain was constantly whirling, trying to work out how he could conceivably hurt himself and trying to prevent it.

I had to put a lock on the kitchen door because he wasn't safe in there: he once put the remote control over the gas flame and tried to scrape the covering off. But keeping him safe meant our home became more and more like a prison, with me trapped inside it too.

I have gone through every emotion from absolute depression and in a hole, to absolute rage and fury.

When I read up about this pill, my reaction was that the hopes of those who care for people with Alzheimer's needed to be managed. We're so desperate to stop the nightmare of what's happening to our loved ones that we're incredibly vulnerable. Giving false hope to people who are completely desperate for hope means they are going to be utterly devastated if it turns out that the pill won't help their situation.

The truth is that there are more than 100 different forms of dementia. Out of the 850,000 people with dementia in the UK, about 500,000 have Alzheimer's. Only some of those can be treated with this pill – and there are risks. That leaves a lot of people no better off.

This pill is exciting and a step forward but you have to be very careful playing with the hopes of people like I was, so desperate for things to be different that we'll cling on to anything that might conceivably help.

*For those experiencing issues around Alzheimer's, the [Alzheimer's Society](#) can help.*

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Chin Chin rose in popularity during the pandemic, when people were forced to socialise outdoors. Photograph: Dimensions/Getty Images

## Wine

# **Chin Chin: the wine that's become a must-have for middle England**

Well made, relatively affordable and instantly recognisable, the Portuguese *vinho verde* is a go-to summer tipple

[Larry Ryan](#)

Mon 8 May 2023 03.00 EDT

The clinking of recycling bins being set out on the roadside has become a familiar sound this year as the country works its way through its seemingly endless series of summer bank holidays.

But whether you were toasting historic events this weekend, or simply drinking to get through it, chances are, someone at your party turned up with

a bottle of the wine that has become the must-have tipple for middle England – Chin Chin *vinho verde*.

Marked with a label showing a cartoonish red beast in shorts and high socks wielding some glasses, Chin Chin has become the wine of now, the Casillero del Diablo of Gen Z, relatively affordable, instantly recognisable – and Instagram-friendly. It helps too that it's not widely available. Fewer than 100,000 bottles are sold each year, so it doesn't feature on major supermarket shelves, making it a classic scarcity-value success story.



Chin Chin's distinctive label has played a part in its success. Photograph: Miguel Machado/Chin Chin

It's also ... green. Translated from the Portuguese wine style known as *vinho verde*, this shouldn't be taken literally: the wine is youthful, hence green, rather than its actual colour. It comes from Vinho Verde, one of Portugal's designated wine regions – the green is also said to reference the verdant vegetation in the north-west of the country along the Atlantic coast. The taste itself is light, fresh and dry, with the slightest hint of fizz.

Though available on some British shelves, *vinho verde* had been eclipsed by other European wines. Then, during the pandemic, as people began to socialise outdoors, came the rise of Chin Chin. Made with minimal

intervention or chemicals, it was developed by the people from the London restaurant Noble Rot, in collaboration with the [Quinta do Ermízio](#) vineyard and winery – all capped off with a playful label designed by Spanish artist Jose Mendez. Chin Chin struck a chord, becoming a go-to summer bottle, a [cult classic](#).

“We were looking for the holy grail – a cheap, delicious house white wine that we could put our name to,” says Dan Keeling, co-founder of Noble Rot. “We’d be lying if we said that we weren’t a little surprised by quite how much it captured so many drinkers’ imaginations, but it’s a well-made versatile classic that suits so many situations, so why not?”

It has also become something of a meme. The moment the sun comes out, you can’t move in certain trend-conscious urban areas for a tartan rug, a tin of Perello olives, some inexplicably flavoured Torres crisps and the accompanying bottle of Chin Chin. According to [Real Housewives of Clapton](#), an Instagram account charting the latest tastes and absurdities of east London and beyond, its success is largely about branding – and even the cost of living crisis.



Chin Chin wine's grape harvest. Photograph: Chin Chin

“It’s kind of like a common reference point for a nice wine,” the person behind the account tells the Guardian – they ask to remain anonymous. “The marketing of it is obviously pretty good. But I think also, it led from during lockdown. People were more willing to spend, I think, on slightly more luxurious items that they could enjoy in their home. Because they weren’t spending a tenner on a glass of wine in the pub but spending £12 on a bottle, is kind of a nice thing to do on a Friday night. So I think it was, like, right place, right time.”

Despite its success in the UK, if you mention Chin Chin in Portugal, you’ll be met with a blank look. You can’t actually buy Chin Chin there.

It might not be that way for long. Antonio Monteiro, whose family owns the vineyard, recently got a call from a Portuguese businessman planning a new restaurant in Lisbon, whose wife had tasted Chin Chin in London and demanded that they stock it.

Monteiro thinks its success is down to more than just a fancy label. “You have a project with different components,” he says. “Because only one is not enough. So a good wine is not enough. A good label is not enough. A good marketing policy is not enough. So you have to merge everything together.”

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Thornwick Bay on the East Yorkshire coast. Photograph: Sarah Banks/Gumboots & Wellingtons

[England holidays](#)

**The wild side of north-east England: the best pubs, walks and hidden beaches**

The author of a new guide to Northumberland, the North York Moors and Pennines shares her favourite places to visit and things to do

*Sarah Banks*

Mon 8 May 2023 03.00 EDT

## Best walks with views

### **Simonside Hills, Northumberland**



Photograph: Sarah Banks

This justifiably popular summit has panoramic views of the Cheviots and the Northumberland coastline. The land is steeped in legend and the Simonside Duergars, malevolent fairies of folklore, are said to reside in the wild, windswept hills. The area's spiritual importance to bronze age people is evident by the number of burial cairns on the slopes and crags. From [Simonside Forestry Commission](#) car park, follow the track through woodlands to a clearing before Simonside, now it's a steep ascent to the summit at about 430m. Follow the ridge to explore the peak of Old Stell Crag, which stands on an ancient stone barrow, then it's three miles on to Dove Crag for some fun bouldering. Another mile on, seek out Thompson's

Rock, a huge stone with a mysterious hole that is said to align with the midsummer sunset. Just beyond it is Lordenshaw's rock art, great slabs peppered with patterns dating to the bronze age. With more than 100 cup-and-ring-marked rocks, it's possibly the largest concentration of rock art in the UK. Return via forest to the car park.

### **Garrigill to Ashgill Force, north Pennines**



Ashgill Force waterfall. Photograph: Sarah Banks

For me, some of the finest waterfalls in England are found in the north Pennines, and there is a pleasant three-mile circular ramble from Garrigill along the River South Tyne that takes in one of the most dramatic: Ashgill Force. From Garrigill (there's layby parking south of the village), take the road south and after a few hundred metres a footpath on the left leads across Windshaw Bridge to the South Tyne Trail. Follow the river upstream for one mile, passing small waterfalls and plunge pools, until you reach the spectacular curtain waterfall, which you can walk behind, by way of a rocky shelf, when not in flood. It's in a beautiful deep gorge with pools for a paddle and a dip as dragonflies skitter across the water. Many smaller waterfalls are downstream with deeper pools. Return along the footpath through fields to Windshaw Bridge with views across the valley along the way.

## Ravenscar to Robin Hood's Bay, North Yorkshire



Cinder Track, Ravenscar. Photograph: Sarah Banks

There's roadside parking along Raven Hall Road in Ravenscar (11 miles from Whitby) and the Cleveland Way is clearly signposted. Follow signs through woodland and to the coastal path for a walk with sweeping clifftop views towards the pan-tiled rooftops of Robin Hood's Bay (about 3.5 miles away). The route passes the ruins of a once-thriving alum works industry. Depending on tide times, there is an option to drop down to the beach at Boggle Hole (with its excellent [YHA, and Quarterdeck cafe](#)) and walk along the sands to Robin Hood's Bay. Alternatively, continue on the coastal path. Return the same way or along the Cinder Track, the old Whitby to Scarborough rail line.

## Best hidden beaches and coves

### Rumbling Kern, Northumberland



Rumbling Kern. Photograph: Sarah Banks

This concealed sandy cove has fascinating geological features and is also a coasteering spot with leaps and jumps from vertical sandstone walls – as well as there being stacks and caves to swim through. It's reached by following a track along the coast from Seahouses Farm, from where it's a five-minute walk to the sea.

### **Hawthorn Hive, County Durham**



Hawthorn Hive Beach. Photograph: Sarah Banks

Hawthorn Hive is a remote sand and shingle bay at the end of a steep-sided coastal dene that is reached by paths through the ancient woodland of [Hawthorn Dene](#) and species-rich calcareous grassland. The meadows are awash with colour in July and August. It's a 30-minute walk if you park in Hawthorn, with steps down to the beach beyond a railway track.

### **Thornwick Bay, East Yorkshire**



Thornwick Bay. Photograph: Sarah Banks

There's clifftop parking above Thornwick Bay with views over the shingle and pebble cove beneath. The chalk cliffs hide smugglers' caves that are best explored by kayak or paddleboard. At low tide, walk round to Little Thornwick Bay and discover a natural amphitheatre and "rapids" to swim through and plenty of rock pools. [Thornwick Bay cafe](#) (open spring to autumn) serves drinks, meals and snacks.

## Best remote pubs

[The Star Inn, Harbottle, Northumberland](#)



The Star Inn, Harbottle. Photograph: Sarah Banks

This stylish and relaxed-feeling country pub serves Italian-inspired food, including pizzas from its courtyard kitchen. It dates back more than 200 years and was used by drovers crossing the England-Scotland border. It is near the ruins of Harbottle Castle in Coquetdale, on the edge of the moors of the Northumberland national park. It's a great place to refuel after a hike to the [Drake Stone and Harbottle Lake](#). It also serves as the village shop.

### **Birch Hall Inn, Beck Hole, North Yorkshire**



Birch Hall Inn, Beck Hole. Photograph: Sarah Banks

The Birch Hall Inn is a small pub with two bars, hand-pulled cask beer and a sweet shop in the hamlet of Beck Hole, which is at the base of a steep hill in the wooded valley of the Murk Esk, in the [North York Moors national park](#). Butties and pies are served alongside its fabled beer cake. It is also the base for Beck Hole's 19th-century Quoits Club.

**Crown & Anchor, Kilnsea, east Yorkshire**



Crown and Anchor, Kilnsea. Photograph: Sarah Banks

Yorkshire's most easterly pub is at the tip of the windswept Holderness. Its picture windows actually face west over the Humber estuary and Spurn, which is why it has such great sunset views. Good food and real ales.

## Best camping and glamping sites

[Langley Dam Glamping](#), near Hexham, Northumberland



Langley Dam Glamping. Photograph: Peter Atkinson Photography

Six longboat-style cabins are beside the Langley Dam reservoir and have superb views across the water and moors beyond. It's a short drive from Hadrian's Wall and within walking distance of [Allen Banks and Staward Gorge](#). Cabins sleeping four from £100 a night

### **[Kielder Campsite, Northumberland](#)**



Kielder Campsite, Northumberland. Photograph: Sarah Banks

Tucked away in Kielder Forest, there's no mobile signal and limited wifi at this site with a choice of pitches for tents and caravans or campers, along with four pods (up to three adults), and two family pods. It's in a dark sky park, so is perfect for stargazing. The Kielder Observatory is nearby, too. Also on the doorstep is the 12-mile [Kielder Forest Drive](#), a scenic journey on unsealed forest road between Kielder Castle and Blakehopeburnhaugh. Decent pub grub can be had at the [Angler's Arms](#).

*Pitches from £12. Pods £45 a night, family pod £70 a night*

### **Gumboots and Wellingtons, near Pickering, North Yorkshire**



Gumboots and Wellingtons.

Choose from a shepherd's hut or a Skandi-inspired garden den at this rustic retreat in a valley close to Ellerburn, on the edge of Dalby Forest in the North York Moors national park. The welcome basket of breakfast supplies includes granola, locally pressed apple juice with toast and jam. There are riverside walks and forest bathing to savour, and evenings can be spent beneath star-studded dark skies.

*Shepherd's hut and cabin, sleeping two, from £117 a night*

*Wild Guide North East England by Sarah Banks is published by Wild Things Publishing (£18.99). Guardian reader can receive 25% off and free p&p using the code Guardian23 at [wildthingspublishing.com](http://wildthingspublishing.com)*

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‘And their goal never was to solve climate change or make our governments more responsible or our daily lives more leisurely.’ Illustration: LiliGraphie/Alamy

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## **AI machines aren’t ‘hallucinating’. But their makers are**

[Naomi Klein](#)



Tech CEOs want us to believe that generative AI will benefit humanity. They are kidding themselves

Mon 8 May 2023 04.02 EDT Last modified on Fri 12 May 2023 09.05 EDT

Inside the many debates swirling around the rapid rollout of so-called artificial intelligence, there is a relatively obscure skirmish focused on the choice of the word “hallucinate”.

This is the term that architects and boosters of generative AI have settled on to characterize responses served up by chatbots that are wholly manufactured, or flat-out wrong. Like, for instance, when you ask a bot for a definition of something that doesn’t exist and it, rather convincingly, gives you [one](#), complete with made-up footnotes. “No one in the field has yet solved the hallucination problems,” Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Google and Alphabet, [told](#) an interviewer recently.

That’s true – but why call the errors “hallucinations” at all? Why not algorithmic junk? Or glitches? Well, hallucination refers to the mysterious capacity of the human brain to perceive phenomena that are not present, at least not in conventional, materialist terms. By appropriating a word

commonly used in psychology, psychedelics and various forms of mysticism, AI's boosters, while acknowledging the fallibility of their machines, are simultaneously feeding the sector's most cherished mythology: that by building these large language models, and training them on everything that we humans have written, said and represented visually, they are in the process of birthing an animate intelligence on the cusp of sparking an evolutionary leap for our species. How else could bots like Bing and Bard be tripping out there in the ether?

Warped hallucinations are indeed afoot in the world of AI, however – but it's not the bots that are having them; it's the tech CEOs who unleashed them, along with a phalanx of their fans, who are in the grips of wild hallucinations, both individually and collectively. Here I am defining hallucination not in the mystical or psychedelic sense, mind-altered states that can indeed assist in accessing profound, previously unperceived truths. No. These folks are just tripping: seeing, or at least claiming to see, evidence that is not there at all, even conjuring entire worlds that will put their products to use for our universal elevation and education.

Generative AI will end poverty, they tell us. It will cure all disease. It will solve climate change. It will make our jobs more meaningful and exciting. It will unleash lives of leisure and contemplation, helping us reclaim the humanity we have lost to late capitalist mechanization. It will end loneliness. It will make our governments rational and responsive. These, I fear, are the real AI hallucinations and we have all been hearing them on a loop ever since Chat GPT launched at the end of last year.

There is a world in which generative AI, as a powerful predictive research tool and a performer of tedious tasks, could indeed be marshalled to [benefit](#) humanity, other species and our shared home. But for that to happen, these technologies would need to be deployed inside a vastly different economic and social order than our own, one that had as its purpose the meeting of human needs and the protection of the planetary systems that support all life.

And as those of us who are not currently tripping well understand, our current system is nothing like that. Rather, it is built to maximize the extraction of wealth and profit – from both humans and the natural world – a reality that has brought us to what we might think of it as capitalism's

techno-necro stage. In that reality of hyper-concentrated power and wealth, AI – far from living up to all those utopian hallucinations – is much more likely to become a fearsome tool of further dispossession and despoilation.

I'll dig into why that is so. But first, it's helpful to think about the *purpose* the utopian hallucinations about AI are serving. What work are these benevolent stories doing in the culture as we encounter these strange new tools? Here is one hypothesis: they are the powerful and enticing cover stories for what may turn out to be the largest and most consequential theft in human history. Because what we are witnessing is the wealthiest companies in history (Microsoft, Apple, Google, Meta, Amazon ...) unilaterally seizing the sum total of human knowledge that exists in digital, scrapable form and walling it off inside proprietary products, many of which will take direct aim at the humans whose lifetime of labor trained the machines without giving permission or consent.

This should not be legal. In the case of copyrighted material that we now know trained the models (including this newspaper), various lawsuits have been filed that will argue this was clearly illegal. Why, for instance, should a for-profit company be permitted to feed the paintings, drawings and photographs of living artists into a program like Stable Diffusion or Dall-E 2 so it can then be used to generate doppelganger versions of those very artists' work, with the benefits flowing to everyone but the artists themselves?

The painter and illustrator Molly Crabapple is helping lead a movement of artists challenging this theft. “AI art generators are trained on enormous datasets, containing millions upon millions of copyrighted images, harvested without their creator’s knowledge, let alone compensation or consent. This is effectively the greatest art heist in history. Perpetrated by respectable-seeming corporate entities backed by Silicon Valley venture capital. It’s daylight robbery,” a new open letter she co-drafted states.

The trick, of course, is that Silicon Valley routinely calls theft “disruption” – and too often gets away with it. We know this move: charge ahead into lawless territory; claim the old rules don’t apply to your new tech; scream that regulation will only help China – all while you get your facts solidly on the ground. By the time we all get over the novelty of these new toys and

start taking stock of the social, political and economic wreckage, the tech is already so ubiquitous that the [courts](#) and policymakers throw up their hands.

We saw it with Google's book and art scanning. With Musk's space colonization. With Uber's assault on the taxi industry. With Airbnb's attack on the rental market. With Facebook's promiscuity with our data. Don't ask for permission, the disruptors like to say, ask for forgiveness. (And lubricate the asks with generous campaign contributions.)

In *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, [Shoshana Zuboff](#) meticulously details how Google's Street View maps steamrolled over privacy norms by sending its camera-bedecked cars out to photograph our public roadways and the exteriors of our homes. By the time the lawsuits defending privacy rights rolled around, Street View was already so ubiquitous on our devices (and so cool, and so convenient ...) that few courts outside [Germany](#) were willing to intervene.

Now the same thing that happened to the exterior of our homes is happening to our words, our images, our songs, our entire digital lives. All are currently being seized and used to train the machines to simulate thinking and creativity. These companies must know they are engaged in theft, or at least that a [strong case](#) can be made that they are. They are just hoping that the old playbook works one more time – that the scale of the heist is already so large and unfolding with such [speed](#) that courts and policymakers will once again throw up their hands in the face of the supposed inevitability of it all.

It's also why their hallucinations about all the wonderful things that AI will do for humanity are so important. Because those lofty claims disguise this mass theft as a gift – at the same time as they help rationalize AI's undeniable perils.

By now, most of us have heard about the [survey](#) that asked AI researchers and developers to estimate the probability that advanced AI systems will cause “human extinction or similarly permanent and severe disempowerment of the human species”. Chillingly, the median response was that there was a 10% chance.

How does one rationalize going to work and pushing out tools that carry such existential risks? Often, the reason given is that these systems also carry huge potential upsides – except that these upsides are, for the most part, hallucinatory. Let's dig into a few of the wilder ones.

## Hallucination #1: AI will solve the climate crisis

Almost invariably topping the lists of AI upsides is the claim that these systems will somehow solve the climate crisis. We have heard this from everyone from the [World Economic Forum](#) to the [Council on Foreign Relations](#) to [Boston Consulting Group](#), which explains that AI “can be used to support all stakeholders in taking a more informed and data-driven approach to combating carbon emissions and building a greener society. It can also be employed to reweight global climate efforts toward the most at-risk regions.” The former Google CEO Eric Schmidt summed up the case when he [told](#) the Atlantic that AI’s risks were worth taking, because “If you think about the biggest problems in the world, they are all really hard – climate change, human organizations, and so forth. And so, I always want people to be smarter.”

According to this logic, the failure to “solve” big problems like climate change is due to a deficit of smarts. Never mind that smart people, heavy with PhDs and Nobel prizes, have been telling our governments for decades what needs to happen to get out of this mess: slash our emissions, leave carbon in the ground, tackle the overconsumption of the rich and the underconsumption of the poor because no energy source is free of ecological costs.

The reason this very smart counsel has been ignored is not due to a reading comprehension problem, or because we somehow need machines to do our thinking for us. It’s because doing what the climate crisis demands of us would strand [trillions of dollars](#) of fossil fuel assets, while challenging the consumption-based growth model at the heart of our interconnected economies. The climate crisis is not, in fact, a mystery or a riddle we haven’t yet solved due to insufficiently robust data sets. We know what it would take, but it’s not a quick fix – it’s a paradigm shift. Waiting for machines to spit out a more palatable and/or profitable answer is not a cure for this crisis, it’s one more symptom of it.

Clear away the hallucinations and it looks far more likely that AI will be brought to market in ways that actively deepen the climate crisis. First, the giant servers that make instant essays and artworks from chatbots possible are an enormous and growing [source](#) of carbon emissions. Second, as companies like Coca-Cola start making [huge investments](#) to use generative AI to sell more products, it's becoming all too clear that this new tech will be used in the same ways as the last generation of digital tools: that what begins with lofty promises about spreading freedom and democracy ends up micro targeting ads at us so that we buy more useless, carbon-spewing stuff.

And there is a third factor, this one a little harder to pin down. The more our media channels are flooded with deep fakes and clones of various kinds, the more we have the feeling of sinking into informational quicksand. Geoffrey Hinton, often referred to as “the godfather of AI” because the neural net he developed more than a decade ago forms the building blocks of today’s large language models, understands this well. He just quit a senior role at Google so that he could speak freely about the risks of the technology he helped create, including, as he [told](#) the New York Times, the risk that people will “not be able to know what is true anymore”.

This is highly relevant to the claim that AI will help battle the climate crisis. Because when we are mistrustful of everything we read and see in our increasingly uncanny media environment, we become even less equipped to solve pressing collective problems. The crisis of trust predates ChatGPT, of course, but there is no question that a proliferation of deep fakes will be accompanied by an exponential increase in already thriving conspiracy cultures. So what difference will it make if AI comes up with technological and scientific breakthroughs? If the fabric of shared reality is unravelling in our hands, we will find ourselves unable to respond with any coherence at all.

## Hallucination #2: AI will deliver wise governance

This hallucination summons a near future in which politicians and bureaucrats, drawing on the vast aggregated intelligence of AI systems, are able “to see patterns of need and develop evidence-based programs” that have greater benefits to their constituents . That claim comes from a [paper](#) published by the Boston Consulting Group’s foundation, but it is being

echoed inside many thinktanks and management consultancies. And it's telling that these particular companies – the firms hired by governments and other corporations to identify costs savings, often by firing large numbers of workers – have been quickest to jump on the AI bandwagon. PwC (formerly PricewaterhouseCoopers) just [announced](#) a \$1bn investment, and Bain & Company as well as Deloitte are reportedly enthusiastic about using these tools to make their clients more "efficient".

As with the climate claims, it is necessary to ask: is the reason politicians impose cruel and ineffective policies that they suffer from a lack of evidence? An inability to "see patterns," as the BCG paper suggests? Do they not understand the human costs of [starving](#) public healthcare amid pandemics, or of failing to invest in non-market housing when tents fill our urban parks, or of approving new fossil fuel infrastructure while temperatures soar? Do they need AI to make them "smarter", to use Schmidt's term – or are they precisely smart enough to know who is going to underwrite their next campaign, or, if they stray, bankroll their rivals?

It would be awfully nice if AI really could sever the link between corporate money and reckless policy making – but that link has everything to do with why companies like Google and Microsoft have been allowed to release their chatbots to the public despite the avalanche of warnings and known risks. Schmidt and others have been on a years-long lobbying campaign [telling](#) both parties in Washington that if they aren't free to barrel ahead with generative AI, unburdened by serious regulation, then western powers will be left in the dust by China. Last year, the top tech companies [spent](#) a record \$70m to lobby Washington – more than the oil and gas sector – and that sum, Bloomberg News notes, is on top of the millions spent "on their wide array of trade groups, non-profits and thinktanks".

And yet despite their intimate knowledge of precisely how money shapes policy in our national capitals, when you listen to Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI – maker of ChatGPT – talk about the best-case scenarios for his products, all of this seems to be forgotten. Instead, he seems to be hallucinating a world entirely unlike our own, one in which politicians and industry make decisions based on the best data and would never put countless lives at risk for profit and geopolitical advantage. Which brings us to another hallucination.

## **Hallucination #3: tech giants can be trusted not to break the world**

Asked if he is worried about the frantic gold rush ChatGPT has already unleashed, Altman said he is, but added sanguinely: “Hopefully it will all work out.” Of his fellow tech CEOs – the ones competing to rush out their rival chatbots – he said: “I think the better angels are going to win out.”

Better angels? At Google? I’m pretty sure the company fired most of those because they were publishing critical papers about AI, or calling the company out on racism and sexual harassment in the workplace. More “better angels” have quit in alarm, most recently Hinton. That’s because, contrary to the hallucinations of the people profiting most from AI, Google does not make decisions based on what’s best for the world – it makes decisions based on what’s best for Alphabet’s shareholders, who do not want to miss the latest bubble, not when Microsoft, Meta and Apple are already all in.

## **Hallucination #4: AI will liberate us from drudgery**

If Silicon Valley’s benevolent hallucinations seem plausible to many, there is a simple reason for that. Generative AI is currently in what we might think of as its faux-socialism stage. This is part of a now familiar Silicon Valley playbook. First, create an attractive product (a search engine, a mapping tool, a social network, a video platform, a ride share ...); give it away for free or almost free for a few years, with no discernible viable business model (“Play around with the bots,” they tell us, “see what fun things you can create!”); make lots of lofty claims about how you are only doing it because you want to create a “town square” or an “information commons” or “connect the people”, all while spreading freedom and democracy (and not being “evil”). Then watch as people get hooked using these free tools and your competitors declare bankruptcy. Once the field is clear, introduce the targeted ads, the constant surveillance, the police and military contracts, the black-box data sales and the escalating subscription fees.

Many lives and sectors have been decimated by earlier iterations of this playbook, from taxi drivers to rental markets to local newspapers. With the AI revolution, these kinds of losses could look like rounding errors, with teachers, coders, visual artists, journalists, translators, musicians, care workers and so many others facing the prospect of having their incomes replaced by glitchy code.

Don't worry, the AI enthusiasts hallucinate – it will be wonderful. Who likes work anyway? Generative AI won't be the end of employment, we are told, only "[boring work](#)" – with chatbots helpfully doing all the soul-destroying, repetitive tasks and humans merely supervising them. Altman, for his part, [sees](#) a future where work "can be a broader concept, not something you have to do to be able to eat, but something you do as a creative expression and a way to find fulfillment and happiness".

That's an exciting vision of a more beautiful, leisurely life, one many leftists share (including Karl Marx's son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, who wrote a [manifesto](#) titled The Right To Be Lazy). But we leftists also know that if earning money is to no longer be life's driving imperative, then there must be other ways to meet our creaturely needs for shelter and sustenance. A world without crappy jobs means that rent has to be free, and healthcare has to be free, and every person has to have inalienable economic rights. And then suddenly we aren't talking about AI at all – we're talking about socialism.

Because we do not live in the Star Trek-inspired rational, humanist world that Altman seems to be hallucinating. We live under capitalism, and under that system, the effects of flooding the market with technologies that can plausibly perform the economic tasks of countless working people is not that those people are suddenly free to become philosophers and artists. It means that those people will find themselves staring into the abyss – with actual artists among the first to fall.

That is the message of Crabapple's open letter, which calls on "artists, publishers, journalists, editors and journalism union leaders to take a pledge for human values against the use of generative-AI images" and "commit to supporting editorial art made by people, not server farms". The letter, now [signed](#) by hundreds of artists, journalists and others, states that all but the

most elite artists find their work “at risk of extinction”. And according to Hinton, the “godfather of AI”, there is no reason to believe that the threat won’t spread. The chatbots take “away the drudge work” but “it might take away more than that”.

Crabapple and her co-authors write: “Generative AI art is vampirical, feasting on past generations of artwork even as it sucks the lifeblood from living artists.” But there are ways to resist: we can refuse to use these products and organize to demand that our employers and governments reject them as well. A [letter](#) from prominent scholars of AI ethics, including Timnit Gebru who was fired by Google in 2020 for challenging workplace discrimination, lays out some of the regulatory tools that governments can introduce immediately – including full transparency about what data sets are being used to train the models. The authors write: “Not only should it always be clear when we are encountering synthetic media, but organizations building these systems should also be required to document and disclose the training data and model architectures .... We should be building machines that work for us, instead of ‘adapting’ society to be machine readable and writable.”

Though tech companies would like us to believe that it is already too late to roll back this human-replacing, mass-mimicry product there are highly relevant legal and regulatory precedents that can be enforced. For instance, the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) [forced](#) Cambridge Analytica, as well as Everalbum, the owner of a photo app, to destroy entire algorithms found to have been trained on illegitimately appropriated data and scraped photos. In its early days, the Biden administration made many bold claims about regulating big tech, including cracking down on the theft of personal data to build proprietary algorithms. With a presidential election fast approaching, now would be a good time to make good on those promises – and avert the next set of mass layoffs before they happen.

A world of deep fakes, mimicry loops and worsening inequality is not an inevitability. It’s a set of policy choices. We can regulate the current form of vampiric chatbots out of existence – and begin to build the world in which AI’s most exciting promises would be more than Silicon Valley hallucinations.

Because we trained the machines. All of us. But we never gave our consent. They fed on humanity's collective ingenuity, inspiration and revelations (along with our more venal traits). These models are enclosure and appropriation machines, devouring and privatizing our individual lives as well as our collective intellectual and artistic inheritances. And their goal never was to solve climate change or make our governments more responsible or our daily lives more leisurely. It was always to profit off mass immiseration, which, under capitalism, is the glaring and logical consequence of replacing human functions with bots.

Is all of this overly dramatic? A stuffy and reflexive resistance to exciting innovation? Why expect the worse? Altman reassures us: "Nobody wants to destroy the world." Perhaps not. But as the ever-worsening climate and extinction crises show us every day, plenty of powerful people and institutions seem to be just fine knowing that they are helping to destroy the stability of the world's life-support systems, so long as they can keep making record profits that they believe will protect them and their families from the worst effects. Altman, like many creatures of Silicon Valley, is himself a prepper: back in 2016, he boasted: "I have guns, gold, potassium iodide, antibiotics, batteries, water, gas masks from the Israeli Defense Force and a big patch of land in Big Sur I can fly to."

I'm pretty sure those facts say a lot more about what Altman actually believes about the future he is helping unleash than whatever flowery hallucinations he is choosing to share in press interviews.

- Naomi Klein is a Guardian US columnist and contributing writer. She is the bestselling author of No Logo and The Shock Doctrine and Professor of Climate Justice and Co-director of the Centre for Climate Justice at the University of British Columbia



Would it be wise to add an emu into the mix? Photograph: Alyson Burrell/GuardianWitness

[OpinionSpring](#)

## **'Let's get an emu,' I told my husband. But where would we put it?**

[Emma Beddington](#)



Our home is already full of brawling tortoises and delinquent chickens. Not to mention our poor, heavily medicated whippet

Mon 8 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 8 May 2023 03.10 EDT

It's a magical time of year on social media, all cherry blossom and wisteria. My Instagram account – 50% animals and 50% adverts for bad trousers – is a serotonin-saturated riot of frolicking baby goats, [sproinging lambs](#) and fluffy chicks. Scrolling as I neck antihistamines, I'm high on spring and becoming inter-species broody.

"Let's get an emu!" I say expansively to my husband, a man who is always willing to entertain a grand plan. Last year, he measured our garden before regretfully concluding we couldn't accommodate a capybara after I found out they can be legally kept in the UK.

He didn't need to pour logistical cold water on this latest suggestion, because our existing menagerie did it for us with their problematic behaviours. The tortoises are out of hibernation and treating the greenhouse – their mid-season accommodation – like an airport pub, brawling, breaking stuff, staggering around and capsizing as they try to escape, then lying stuck

on their backs, little limbs pedalling feebly. Barely rewarmed, the worst, sex-pest tortoise has already started his campaign of bitey, rutting terror, requiring his detention in solitary confinement in the house, where he spends his days ramming his shell repetitively into any hard surface he can find.



Oscar has an unerring ability to detect and spit out medicine. Photograph: Alex Telfer/The Observer

The hens have gone rogue, too. One is laying eggs on the sloped top of a 6ft wall, which goes as well as you'd imagine. Another has started absenting herself, catlike, overnight, causing intense consternation, slinking home in the morning to be fed. With all the self-preservation instincts of a panda, how long will she survive? Two more have been in a prolonged hormonal fog for months, holed up in the nestbox, trying to hatch imaginary eggs.

Then there's the poor old dog, near-toothless, confused, staggering towards his 15th birthday, a furry, urine-scented memento mori. All his senses are failing, except whichever makes him bark us awake at five every morning and an unerring ability to detect and spit out his numerous medications, however well wrapped in ham they are. Would it be wise to add anything else to the mix? Absolutely not. Will that stop me? TBC.

Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

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Anne Hathaway in *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement*. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

### [Why I quitFiction](#)

## **Why I quit the softball team – and wrote Star Wars fan fiction and princess novels instead**

[Meg Cabot](#)

Was my coach right that I had ‘no hustle’? It was time to come clean about my real passions – whether those around me liked it or not

- Meg Cabot is the author of over 90 books for adults and children, including the *Princess Diaries*

Mon 8 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 9 May 2023 07.40 EDT

Cabot's got no hustle." I was 10 years old when I overheard the coach of my girls' softball team utter these words. I could see Coach standing in the bright sunlight of the ball field, but she couldn't see me – I was huddled deep in the cool shade of the dugout, where I admittedly spent most of my time during practice and games. She had no idea I was listening to every word she said.

"I'd play Cabot more," Coach complained to our assistant coach, who was standing beside her with a clipboard. "But she just won't *hustle*."

The conversation moved on to who, out of my fellow players, Coach was going to substitute for me, and I leaned back into the dugout, shocked by what I'd heard. *Me*, no hustle? How could anyone think that?

It's true I didn't really like softball. Oh, I loved the part where you went up to bat to hit the ball. That was fun. But the rest of the game – where you had to stand out in the field hoping no balls would fly your way because then you might have to catch them – was less thrilling to me. Worse, I was terrible at it, to the detriment of the team. Mostly I just stared at the treetops past the field, thinking of whatever story I was writing at the moment. This is how I was often hit in the head with balls, and ended up sitting in the dugout.

But did this indicate a lack of hustle? This seemed harsh, even to my 10-year-old, probably concussed brain.

True, the only reason I stayed on the team was because my best friend was on it, and I liked hanging out with her on the bus. Then there was my professor father who'd gone to college on a basketball scholarship, and was very proud that I'd finally expressed an interest in anything other than reading or writing.

I'd been writing stories for as long as I could remember. I had already written pages and pages of Star Wars fan fiction – not online, of course, because back then online didn't exist. No, I'd *handwritten* them, for fun, along with dozens of short stories and even novels, one of which I was

particularly proud of, about the princess of a foreign land who needed the help of a handsome, lonely knight to save her throne.

I knew better than to tell anyone, especially Coach, that I wanted to be a published writer when I grew up, though. For one thing, living in a college town, nearly every adult I knew was a published writer. They were all very serious and depressed. I'd watched them struggling over their work, taking years to produce a single textbook that would end up being bought by no one except their own students.

This was not the kind of career I meant when I thought about being a writer.

And for another, no sane parent is going to support their child's dream of making up stories for a living. Even Shakespeare's parents had to have told him at some point that being a playwright wasn't a very realistic career goal. Mine let me know at an early age that while my stories about princesses were cute, I needed to be prepared to support myself some other way, with a "backup career".

That's why, in addition to softball, my mom enrolled me in typing class. At the very least, she said, I could be someone's secretary when I grew up. And since I was learning to type my books about princesses at 50 words per minute, instead of handwriting them, I wasn't complaining.

So while I couldn't say my commitment to sports was ever very strong, for Coach to say I didn't have any hustle? I was flabbergasted. I had more hustle than any other 10-year-old I knew!

It took me until the end of the bus ride home after that game (which of course we lost) for me to realise that Coach may actually have been on to something. I spent the long, dusty ride cheerfully filling my teammates in on the latest chapter of Princess and the Lonely Knight, soothing them after our terrible loss, and giving them something to look forward to: not our next game (which we would surely lose), but the next chapter.

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They weren't alone in their anticipation. I couldn't wait to get home to write it!

That's when it hit me: Coach was right. I *didn't* have hustle. Not for softball, anyway. I had all the hustle in the world for things I actually cared about, like writing and typing and my friends. But sports? Not so much.

So I realised I had no choice. I broke the news to my dad (and later, to Coach and my best friend) the next day: I was quitting softball. My heart wasn't in it.

And because my heart wasn't in it, I was only hurting the team – and myself – by spending time doing an activity I didn't enjoy, when I could be doing what really mattered: hustling at what I loved.

- Meg Cabot is the author of more than 90 books for adults and children, including The Princess Diaries. The Quarantine Princess Diaries is out now, with 10% of her English-language royalties going to support Vow for Girls, which campaigns against child marriage

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Illustration: Nathalie Lees/The Guardian

[Opinion](#)[King Charles coronation](#)

## **The coronation pulled a screen across a desperate, polarised nation – just as intended**

[Nesrine Malik](#)



Those who opposed it must be portrayed as radical, or the whole rotten system it represents might come crashing down

Mon 8 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 13 May 2023 21.29 EDT

The biggest illusion – and utility – of royal events such as the coronation is that we are somehow a part of them. We are, of course, in a way; we need to be for the institution of monarchy to have any meaning at all. But not as equals. We have the worst of both worlds: the royal family gives us nothing, and we in turn legitimise it, give it meaning and audience and pay, through [subsidies](#) and [tax exemptions](#), for its ability to wow us. The monarchy does provide a service, but not to us. It is to an entire system of political decline and economic inequality that cannot withstand closer scrutiny, and so it must be embellished and cloaked in ceremony.

And it was ever thus. The historian David Cannadine, in an essay on the “invented traditions” of royal ceremonies, wrote: “in a period of change, conflict or crisis”, unchanging ritual “might be deliberately unaltered so as to give an impression of continuity, community and comfort, despite overwhelming contextual evidence to the contrary.” That evidence to the contrary cannot be more overwhelming than reports that money for [food banks](#) has been diverted to pay for coronation events. What those funds

bought was a coronation, much like the screens assembled to hide King Charles as he derobed, that for a moment erected an ornate cover that hid the nation's hunger.

And my God, doesn't it feel good? For a few moments to think of the country as the place of sacred ointments and special spoons, grand cathedrals and epically wealthy, exquisitely dressed people. In that moment we can see our own country in their image: a country that is sober, benign and loaded. A place of filial connection and a galvanising national identity. Who can begrudge people, as a cost of living crisis rages, a few hours of harmless escapism? It's not only stomachs that need feeding, morale does too.

The problem isn't the escapism, but why escapism is necessary. People flock to these diversions because, in a way, we are forced to. In subtle and explicit ways, consent is manufactured and dissent is stigmatised. Even more so under Charles, who doesn't enjoy the sort of affection his mother did, there has been a need to sell the celebrations. Schools have recruited students to the cause of coronation celebration in such a dizzying variety of ways that an absolute monarchy would be impressed. For the first time in history, the nation had been invited to pledge "true allegiance to Your Majesty, and to your heirs and successors according to law. So help me God."



Police arrest a man who appeared to be calling for a petition to make the monarch elected rather than hereditary. The Mall, London, 6 May.  
Photograph: Guy Bell/Shutterstock

Some of this is just event hysteria, of course, like an England World Cup final, if we ever see that again in our lifetimes. A swirl of corporate marketing and a media grateful for some rolling coverage that requires the sort of banal, cliche-ridden commentary that will not exercise a single brain cell. It's not so much a documenting of history as it is a gratefulness for material. During the ceremony, there were a few moving moments of familial plot – the rest is content.

Nevertheless, combine that mass observance, cynical or not, with the more earnest, menacing demands for submission, and it becomes clear that we must celebrate the monarchy because we have no other choice. The Metropolitan police enacted draconian new public order laws and [arrested protesters](#) before they had raised a single placard. The home secretary, Suella Braverman, [described those laws](#) as targeting “those who seek to attack our ways of life”.

And so frippery and force combine to make a political position – support for the monarchy – seem like the natural, sacred default. Much like the ceremony itself, which depicts kings and queens as ordained by God and not

the people, the purpose of branding these political positions as “traditions” and “ways of life” is to stop us contemplating another way of life. We can seek comfort and shelter in the shade of our betters, but never answers about why our betters are so much better off. The monarchy is a law of nature, like death, taxes, landlords, structural inequality and food banks. And royal ceremony is a way to draw our eyes away from the fact that, increasingly, there is no sense of what the country is good at apart from this sort of invented ritual.

There is even less sense of what binds us together as countrymen and women, and there are virtually no causes for which we are so encouraged to queue and wait and march to support each other: for decent living standards and healthcare, or humane immigration and climate change policies. Patriotism is only allowed to flow upstream.

And again, it was ever thus. Commenting on the success of the golden jubilee in 1887, the [archbishop of Canterbury](#) said, “days afterwards, everyone feels that the socialist movement has had a check”.

The status and solidarity that people derive from royal ceremonies is one that is absent elsewhere, both in practice and in vision. In practice, our economy is [barely dodging recession](#), our government is at the end of a traumatic extended season of malpractice, dishonesty and corruption, and what we are most proficient at globally is our ability to launder and park the assets of the global rich. “[Butler to the world](#)” doesn’t have as much of a ring to it as “God save the King”. In vision, our politics is devoid of any language that calls on us to make communal connections with each other, the sort that we fetishised in queues to pay homage to the departed queen. Instead, the right asks us to focus on the threat of small boats and minorities, while Labour offers us stronger law enforcement, focuses on individual aspirations of home ownership and prosperity and [asks us to be](#) “realistic about what is possible”.

Republicanism is threatening not because the monarchy is loved, but because its removal must be part of a wider movement that challenges these notions about “what is possible”. Last week, [David Lammy wrote](#) that Saturday was “a tea party for a country that sorely needs it, a pause to

celebrate a civic version of British identity that is an alternative to the destructive ethnic nationalism promoted by the far right.” I agree with the first part. But it is bizarre to not pause and think for a second, why are feudalism and ethnic nationalism the only two options we have to celebrate British identity?

The answer is that there can only be one alternative to these two: one in which we question deliberate political decisions not to redistribute wealth more equally, in which our allegiances are to each other, in which there is a real modern appraisal of the country as a place that isn’t a glorious continuum of empire and global dominance, but where political and economic models are failing. This is a national project that no one who matters has any interest in, which is why any stirrings of it must be portrayed as radical and beyond the pale – assaults on a natural order. And so we can only look up and fawn, or look down, and fear.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*

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## 2023.05.08 - Around the world

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India: at least 22 dead after tourist boat overturns in Kerala state – video

[India](#)

## At least 22 dead after tourist boat overturns in India's Kerala state

Vessel capsized because it was overcrowded, authorities say, with most of the victims children on school holidays

*Guardian staff and agencies*

Mon 8 May 2023 02.02 EDTFirst published on Sun 7 May 2023 18.37 EDT

At least 22 people drowned after a double-decker tourist boat capsized in India's southern state of Kerala, police have said.

The boat overturned off the coastal town of Tanur because it was overcrowded, said Abdul Nazar, Malappuram district's junior superintendent of police.

Most of the victims were children on school holidays, Kerala's minister for fisheries and harbour development said. V Abdurahiman told reporters the death toll was likely to rise as the boat was stuck in muddy waters and was being pulled out to rescue those trapped inside.

Dozens of people searched over Sunday night for survivors in and around the stricken vessel, which was partially submerged. Some used ropes to stabilise it while others were in the water, looking inside the boat's windows.

"We have recovered 22 bodies, including 15 females and seven males," an officer from Tanur police station said. "There are around six people in the hospital. Rescue operations are on."

Reports of the number of people aboard the boat at the time of the accident ranged from more than 30 to about 40.

Local publication Onmanorama reported that 11 people from one family, including three children, had died.

Four people had been taken to hospital in a critical condition, the PTI news agency quoted Abdurahiman as saying earlier.



Rescuers search the river after the boat capsized. Photograph: PP Afthab/AP

Survivors told local media that many of the passengers were not wearing life jackets.

Monday has been declared a day of official mourning, PTI reported, quoting a government statement.

The incident in the Malappuram district took place about 7pm local time on Sunday and a team from the national disaster response force was at the site, a Kerala disaster authority spokesperson said.

India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, said in a tweet he was "pained by the loss of lives" and announced compensation for the victims' families.

Boating accidents are common in India, where many vessels are overcrowded and have inadequate safety equipment.

In September 2020, 12 people drowned when a sightseeing boat capsized on the swollen Godavari River in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. In May 2018, 30 people died when a boat capsized in the same region.

*With Reuters, Agence France-Presse and Associated Press*

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Iran's foreign minister, Amir-Abdollahian (left), holds hands with his Saudi Arabian and Chinese counterparts Prince Faisal bin Farhan and Qin Gang in Beijing. Photograph: Ding Lin/AP

[Middle East and north Africa](#)

[Analysis](#)

## **Saudi-Iranian detente is fragile but potential for the Middle East is huge**

[Patrick Wintour](#) Diplomatic editor

Should rapprochement solidify it could augur well for Yemen, Lebanon and Syria – and spell disaster for Israel

Mon 8 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 8 May 2023 16.41 EDT

Tehran's embassy in Riyadh has reopened for the first time since 2016, the Iranian foreign ministry quietly confirmed in April, in the latest of a series of gestures showing that the two Middle East powers are determined to dial down a rivalry that has disfigured the region for 40 years.

All kinds of signs, trivial and large, suggest the rapprochement is genuine: civilian flights between the two countries are to resume; an Iranian won an \$800,000 Saudi Qur'an-reading competition; Iranian steel is making its way to Saudi markets; officials from the two countries were seen embracing after the Saudi navy rescued 60 Iranians trapped in Sudan; and Ibrahim Raisi is expected to announce a visit to Riyadh soon, the first by an Iranian president since 2007.

The reconciliation, nominally driven by the oddest of odd couples – Saudi Arabia's 37-year-old crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, and Iran's 83-year-old supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei – was formally announced in China on 10 March when the two sides set out a two-month plan to normalise diplomatic and economic relations after eight years of tension.

Relations had [broken off in 2016](#) after protesters stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran over the execution of a dissident Saudi Shia cleric. But in reality the two sides, which represent different cultures and wings of Islam – have been locked in proxy battles to control the regionsince the 1979 Iranian revolution.



Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/AFP/Getty Images

The question now is whether these winds of change could spread through the Middle East, unlocking conflicts in Yemen, [Lebanon](#), Iraq, Syria and even Israel, all of which have been aggravated or even sustained by the Saudi-Iranian rivalry.

One London-based diplomat counselled caution. “This is not a love story. It’s a mutually convenient timeout,” they said.

Cinzia Bianco, a research fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said the deal was genuine but very fragile. “There are a few critical points, such as a potential new Republican president in the US, or an Israeli attack in Iran ... Both sides are still looking at potential insurance policies.”

One Arab diplomat in London likened the process to the construction of a ground floor on which other countries could build, suggesting that the ramifications for the region could eventually be momentous. A deal could confirm Washington’s declining influence in the Middle East, weaken Israel, restore Syria’s president, Bashar al-Assad, to the Arab fold, provide Saudi Arabia with a new long-term carbon market in China and start to end Iran’s economic isolation, he said.

But Ayham Kamel, the head of Middle East research for the Eurasia Group, predicted a slow process even with China acting as a guarantor. “You don’t shift from competition to significant cooperation overnight. I suspect Iran-Gulf relations are going to be taken out of an era of confrontation to a more natural one where there are disagreements, there’s competition and there’s cooperation.”



Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Photograph: Zuma Press/Shutterstock

He portrayed the detente as part of a broader realignment in the Middle East. “Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries want global partnerships with the US as the key but not only pillar,” he said. “Their preference remains to have a much closer relationship with Washington, but they are not willing to cut relations with other powers such as China.”

Riyadh has not felt secure in its relationship with Washington for at least a decade. Once US dependence on Saudi oil ended, the former’s role as provider of the latter’s security was inevitably questioned and their paths slowly diverged. Riyadh saw Barack Obama’s support for the Arab spring as misguided, and it tried to block his efforts to negotiate a nuclear deal with Iran in 2015.

Under Donald Trump, Riyadh got exactly the US policy it had been advocating, including maximum pressure on Iran, only to discover the policy was not to its liking. The fact that Iranian-made missiles temporarily shut down half of Saudi Arabia’s oil production in September 2019 was a shocking display of Saudi exposure. It was even more shocking when Trump did not come to Riyadh’s defence. Similarly, the United Arab Emirates felt

deeply offended by the west's perceived indifference when [four vessels were attacked in the Gulf of Oman](#) in May 2019.

Joe Biden's promise in 2019 to [make Saudi Arabia a “pariah”](#) hardly suggested the Democrats would provide salvation.

So Prince Mohammed wanted to get himself out of the line of fire, fearing Saudi Arabia would be Tehran's bullseye in the event of an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear sites. He wanted to follow the UAE – the ultimate hedgers – towards a less exposed place and to focus on developing the Saudi economy.

Farea Al-Muslimi, a Middle East fellow at Chatham House, said: “Saudi is done with that image as the world ATM. They are no longer a world cash cow.”

The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran may have aggravated many pre-existing conflicts in the region, but it did not create them – and rapprochement will not bring them to an end.

Bianco said: “All of these conflicts are self-generated but they also have a regional dimension which feeds the domestic element, and that makes them more convoluted, more complex, more bloody.”

One potential chance for progress is in [Yemen](#), the poorest country in the Arab world, where Iran has armed the Houthi rebels fighting a Saudi-led coalition but now seems to be supportive of peace efforts.



A man embraces a Houthi prisoner exchanged in a deal with Yemen's internationally recognised government in April. Photograph: Mohammed Huwais/AFP/Getty Images

Muslimi said: "The Houthis may also be exhausted after nine years of civil war. The Saudis for their part know the smallest Houthi rocket from Yemen can cost an extra \$500m in insurance."

But the rivalry between the Houthi movement, the internationally recognised government and southern separatist forces has its roots in Yemen itself. "Iranian control over the Houthis is not complete, so an Iranian promise to do what it can is just that," said Dina Esfandiary, a Middle East analyst at the International Crisis Group.

As a quid pro quo for Iranian help in Yemen, Saudi Arabia appears prepared to normalise relations with Syria's Assad. He has been treated as a pariah for 12 years, but on Sunday his country was [readmitted to the Arab League](#). Riyadh contends that normalisation may lead to a strengthening of Syrian institutions, and offers the most realistic way to regain influence and control cross-border drug networks.

But again there are obstacles. Qatar, Washington's key partner in the Gulf, wants Assad to make political concessions, something he has shown no

previous inclination to do.

It is also unclear what normalisation would mean for the large populations in areas outside Syrian government control. Assad wants Turkey to leave northern Syria, and to stop sponsoring militants in Idlib province, but Ankara is not willing to leave without assurances about the Syrian Kurds on its borders. The US is determined that the Kurds should establish a share of Syrian oil and gas resources along the lines of the federal model in Iraq.

A third country likely to benefit from an end to Saudi-Iranian rivalry would be Lebanon. It has not had a president since the end of Michel Aoun's term in October. The role must by law be occupied by a Maronite Christian. Saudi and Iranian-backed factions have not been able to agree on a replacement despite successive round of voting.

The powerful Iran-backed Hezbollah group and the Amal Movement party led by speaker of Lebanon's parliament, Nabih Berri, which together form Lebanon's Shia base, maintain their support for Suleiman Franjeh, a close friend of Assad, but Saudi Arabia refuses to back him.

For the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, all this potentially spells disaster. He thought the Abraham accords engineered by the Trump administration would normalise relations with Saudi Arabia, but instead Riyadh is normalising relations with Israel's enemies – Iran, Syria and even Hamas.

Senior Hamas officials visited Saudi Arabia for the first time since 2015, and Riyadh's recent move to become a “dialogue partner” of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, in which Iran has observer status, can only add to Israel's anxiety.

Reprising an old tune, Netanyahu recently told CNBC: “Those who partner with Iran partner with misery. Look at Lebanon, look at Yemen, look at Syria, look at Iraq. Ninety-five per cent of the problems in the Middle East emanate from Iran.”

Two years ago, Saudi Arabia might have agreed with that assessment, but it seems to have decided that cooperation, not Israel's brand of confrontation,

is the path ahead.

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Antony Blinken has received a letter from the family of one of two Saudi teens who are at risk of execution. Photograph: Patrick Semansky/AP

[Saudi Arabia](#)

## **Saudi family urges US to intervene in teens' possible death sentence**

Abdullah al-Derazi and Youssef al-Manasif have appealed to secretary of state Antony Blinken as their cases are being reviewed

*[Stephanie Kirchgaessner](#) in Washington  
[@skirchy](#)*

Mon 8 May 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 8 May 2023 16.10 EDT

Two Saudis who were arrested and allegedly tortured for crimes they were accused of committing as minors are facing an imminent threat of execution, in what human rights experts say is a sign of the kingdom's violation of its own promise to end death penalty cases against child defendants.

In a letter to the US secretary of state, [Antony Blinken](#), a family member of one defendant, Abdullah al-Derazi, describes how Abdullah was swept off the street and disappeared for three months in August 2014 for protest crimes he is alleged to have committed when he was 17 years old.

“[Saudi Arabia](#)’s government is deaf to our cries but it will listen to you,” the letter said. “You can help bring our sweet and sensitive boy home and prevent him being taken from us forever.”

In their appeal, the family urged Blinken to intervene on Abdullah’s behalf, saying the young man from the Qatif region of [Saudi Arabia](#) had been rounded up by authorities and imprisoned in order to “scare people to stop them from protesting”.

The other case concerns Youssef al-Manasif, who according to a new report by Reprieve – which is representing both men – was accused of crimes including attending funerals between the ages of 15 and 17 that were deemed to be “protests” by Saudi authorities. Reprieve claims Youssef was tortured and coerced into signing a false confession, was denied legal representation.

Both cases are currently being reviewed by Saudi Arabia’s supreme court. If their sentences are upheld, both would be at risk of execution, which could happen imminently and without notice, Reprieve said.

Saudi Arabia issued a royal decree to abolish the [death penalty for children](#) in 2020, stating unequivocally that individuals would not be sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were minors. But the kingdom has since then upheld the death penalty in a number of cases involving minor defendants.

The cases have reinforced criticism not only of the Saudi government, but of the US president, Joe Biden, who has fallen short of imposing any restrictions or consequences on the Saudi government.

In Washington, two US senators – including a key Democratic ally of the administration – have introduced a resolution that would force the White

House to release a report on Saudi's human rights violations, along with a detailed explanation of what steps the US government is taking to address the violations. The report would have to include specific information about Saudi Arabia's conduct in the war in Yemen. If passed, the resolution would also force the administration to provide the Congress with an assessment of the necessity of continued US security assistance to the kingdom.

Senator Chris Murphy – a Connecticut Democrat who introduced the measure along with Republican Mike Lee – said he was disappointed that the administration had “not made good” on its promise to significantly reform the nature of its partnership with Saudi Arabia.

“I think the world notices when we talk a big game on human rights but we don’t often follow through. I think that the Gulf is getting a message that it can continue with its campaign of unprecedented political repression, business as usual, with very few changes with the relationship with the United States,” Murphy told the Guardian.

He added that his critique of US policy towards Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt, among others, was that the government’s “asks” are too small.

“I don’t think we should be satisfied by just releasing one or two Americans [prisoners] or the Egyptians releasing three or four Americans. I don’t think it suits us to be so deeply wedded to countries that are engaged in these broad dizzying campaigns of political repression.”

If passed, the resolution allows Congress to recommend changes to US-Saudi cooperation, with only a 50-vote requirement to pass such changes. Asked for an example on what kind of changes could be imposed, Murphy cited the possibility of new statutory limits on military aid tied to human rights conditions.

The US-Saudi relationship appeared to have reached a crossroads in October 2022, when Biden said the Saudis would face “consequences” for having sided with Russia and cut oil production over the objections of the White House just weeks before US midterm elections.

But despite the threat, the administration took no action.

Asked about why more had not been done to address Saudi abuses, Murphy, who is a senior member of the foreign relations committee, said: “This town is bathed in Gulf money. The sacredness of the US relationship with Saudi Arabia is baked into the DNA of Washington. You are seen as heretical if you suggest the US can get along OK in the world without a deep enduring partnership with the Saudis. I think we have to wake up that it’s not 1979 any more.”

It is not clear when the resolution will be brought for a vote but is backed by human rights experts and dissidents.

Maya Foa, Reprieve’s US director, said: “Biden had not only promised to make Saudi Arabia a ‘pariah’ state, but also to hold it accountable. His fist-bump with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman symbolised the craven abandonment of those goals. Perhaps Senate action will help him to honour his promise.”

The state department said in a statement to the Guardian: “We reaffirm our longstanding opposition to the use of the death penalty when imposed following trials that do not guarantee fair treatment, as punishment for actions taken as a minor, or for crimes that do not meet the ‘most serious crimes’ threshold for capital punishment, as recognized under international law.”

The department also said it continued to regularly raise concerns with Saudi officials about specific cases and the need for broader legal and policy reforms.

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Police officers near the shooting site of Allen Premium Outlets in Allen, a suburb of Dallas, Texas, after a shooting that left nine dead, including the gunman. Photograph: Xinhua/Shutterstock

[Texas](#)

## **Texas mall shooting: gunman expressed interest in neo-Nazi views – report**

Federal agents reportedly examining social media history of alleged shooter Mauricio Garcia

*[Victoria Bekiempis](#) and agencies*

Sun 7 May 2023 20.41 EDTFirst published on Sun 7 May 2023 15.23 EDT

US federal officials are looking into whether the gunman who killed eight people at a Dallas-area mall expressed an interest in white supremacist ideology, as they work to try to discern a motive for the attack, a law enforcement official has told the Associated Press.

The official cautioned that the investigation was in its early stages.

[NBC News](#) and CNN have publicly identified the alleged shooter as Mauricio Garcia. Federal agents have been reviewing social media accounts they believe he used and posts that expressed interest in white supremacist and neo-Nazi views, said the official, who could not discuss details of the investigation publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Garcia also had a patch on his chest when he was killed by police that read “RWDS”, an acronym for the phrase “Right Wing Death Squad”, which is popular among rightwing extremists and white supremacy groups, the official said.

CNN reported that there was an AR-15-style assault weapon found near Garcia’s body as well as another weapon. He had taken firearms proficiency training, in relation to his work as a “commissioned” security guard, [CNN said](#).

The network said Garcia was approved to work as a security guard for four years beginning in April 2016, and had worked for three different companies.

Medical City Healthcare, which was providing treatment to several of the wounded, said the patients at their facilities ranged from ages five to 61, [according to the New York Times](#).

The gunman opened fire at Allen Premium Outlets on Saturday afternoon before being killed by a police officer who happened to be there in connection with an unrelated call. The police chief, Brian E Harvey, did disclose that the shooter acted alone, the Times reported.

NBC News [reported](#) that authorities found Garcia had interacted with white supremacist content online, posted such material himself.

Federal law enforcement officers were seen at a Dallas home thought to be linked to Garcia, examining his electronic devices and several social media accounts associated with him, according to NBC News. Sources also told ABC News that authorities recovered the rifle used in the shooting as well as more guns in the attacker’s car.

Police radio transmissions cited by ABC News provide more insight into the chronology of the shooting. “We got shots fired at the Allen Mall,” the officer who went to the mall for an unrelated issue told a police dispatcher over the radio. “We got people running. I need everybody I got.”

Shortly thereafter, the officer said: “I got him down.” One witness told ABC News that she heard police arrive at the mall about five to 10 minutes after gunfire erupted. While officials have released few details, local politicians have provided plenty of on-record commentary, much of which has spurred criticism over the lack of meaningful gun control in the US.

Store employees and shoppers recalled chaos and terror as bullets rang out. Rama Bataineh, 20, was on her lunch break from Coach when the gunman started shooting, [she told NBC News](#).

Unable to get into her car, Bataineh telephoned her manager, who let her into a back door. “I went inside and all the customers, all the employees, everyone was in the back sitting on the floor,” she told NBC News. “Everyone was terrified.”

Police brought the group outside when the gunfire stopped. “I saw a body – there was a guy in front of me,” Bataineh told the network. “I didn’t sleep all night. I’d wake up and throw up.”

Texas Republican US senator Ted Cruz’s comment on Saturday that he and his wife were “praying for the families of the victims” [spurred outcry](#) as many insist he should push for substantial gun safety reform.

Shannon Watts, who founded the gun safety group Moms Demand Action, [commented on Twitter](#) in response to Cruz: “YOU helped arm him with guns, ammo and tactical gear. He did exactly what you knew he’d do. Spare us your prayers and talk of justice for a gunman who is ... dead”.

Saturday’s murders in Allen marked at least the 21st mass murder in the US so far this year, keeping the country on record pace, according to the [Gun Violence Archive](#). The archive defines a mass murder as one in which four or more victims are slain.

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People in Hanoi protect themselves from the sun during a previous heatwave in April 2019. Photograph: Luong Thai Linh/EPA

[Vietnam](#)

## **Vietnam records highest ever temperature of 44.1C**

Report comes after neighbouring countries also register unprecedented highs during April heatwave

*Agence France-Presse in Hanoi*

Sun 7 May 2023 13.37 EDT Last modified on Sun 7 May 2023 16.22 EDT

Vietnam has reported a record-high temperature of 44.1C (111.38F), as weather experts and authorities told the population to remain indoors during the hottest parts of the day.

Scientists have said global warming is aggravating adverse weather. Neighbouring countries registered record temperatures [during a heatwave in Asia in April](#).

Vietnam's record was measured indoors at Hoi Xuan station in northern Thanh Hoa province on Saturday, the National Centre for Hydro Meteorological Forecasting said, breaking the 2019 record of 43.4C.

Nguyen Thi Lan, a farmer, said temperatures in the central city of Danang had forced workers to start their days earlier than ever. "We have had to finish before 10am to avoid the heat," she said.

Vietnam's weather varies from north to south, but the country as a whole is now entering its hottest summer months.

"This is a worrying record in the context of climate change and global warming," Nguyen Ngoc Huy, a climate change expert, said from the capital, Hanoi. "I believe this record will be repeated many times. It confirms that extreme climate models are being proven to be true."

Danang officials have asked Vietnam's industry and electricity ministries to "cooperate to effectively deal with the heat, possible drought and lack of water," according to state media.

Officials have also told the city's water supply company to ensure there are adequate supplies of water for domestic use.

On Saturday, Hanoi city centre was almost empty at midday as many people remained indoors to avoid the sun..

The Thai meteorological department reported a record-equalling 44.6C in western Tak province in April, while Myanmar media said a town in the country's east reported 43.8C, the highest in a decade.

Both countries usually endure a hot period before the rainy season, but the intensity of the heat has exceeded previous records.

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Further west, Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, recorded its highest temperature since the 1960s.

Indian weather authorities said parts of the country were experiencing temperatures roughly [three to four degrees above normal](#).

A report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said recently that “every increment of global warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards”.

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## **Headlines thursday 11 may 2023**

- [TransPennine Express State to take control of northern rail network after ongoing poor service](#)
- [Plaid Cymru MP defends efforts to keep leader Adam Price after damning review](#)
- [Adam Price Plaid Cymru leader steps down after party review](#)
- [Mortgages 1.5m UK homeowners on variable rate face new borrowing rise](#)
- [Live Bank of England expected to raise UK interest rates to highest level since 2008 today](#)



TransPennine Express is owned by FirstGroup, which also owns Avanti West Coast and Great Western Railway. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA  
[Rail industry](#)

## State to take control of TransPennine Express after continued poor service

Northern rail network to be run by state-owned operator of last resort when contract expires on 28 May

*Gwyn Topham* Transport correspondent  
[@GwynTopham](#)

Thu 11 May 2023 06.37 EDTFirst published on Thu 11 May 2023 02.33 EDT

TransPennine Express is to be run by the state after ministers announced that the [failing rail company](#) would not have its contract renewed.

The transport secretary, Mark Harper, said the northern rail network would be run by the state-owned operator of last resort after passengers

experienced disruption, cancellations and a significant decline in the extent and reliability of the service.

The contract for TransPennine (TPE), which is owned by FirstGroup and runs trains across the north of England and into southern Scotland, will expire on 28 May. Passengers and politicians across the north had called for change, with [jobs and lives blighted by trains that failed to run](#).

Almost one in four passenger journeys across Britain will now be on state-operated trains, including in Wales and Scotland, with the Department for Transport's operator of last resort already running LNER, Northern and Southeastern services.

Harper said the move would not fix the TPE service overnight and blamed the train drivers' union Aslef for some of the issues.

"In my time as transport secretary, I have been clear that passenger experience must always come first," he said. "This is not a silver bullet and will not instantaneously fix a number of challenges being faced, including Aslef's actions which are preventing TransPennine Express from being able to run a full service – once again highlighting why it's so important that the railways move to a seven-day working week."

The DfT said it had taken steps to improve services, with the operator having launched a recovery plan in February. Despite slight improvements, the DfT said that to achieve the "performance levels passengers" deserved and that the northern economy needed, both the contract and the underlying relationships "must be reset".

However, the department said some of the problems were out of TPE's control – particularly a backlog of recruitment and training of drivers, and the dispute over rest-day working.

Mick Whelan, the general secretary of Aslef, welcomed the decision not to renew the TPE contract but hit out at the transport secretary for his comments. Whelan said: "The company ... has got exactly what it deserves today. Mark Harper – who is not a stupid man – knows full well that the

fault lies not with this trade union, but at the door of the company and its desperately poor managers.”

Ministers have been keen to retain the involvement of FirstGroup, a British company that owns four big train operating companies including Avanti West Coast and Great Western Railway and is considered a lynchpin of the privatised railway system in the UK. The DfT said the decision to bring TPE under operator of last resort was a temporary move and the government intended for it to return to the private sector.

Labour has said it would take rail operations under state control as contracts expired if it were in government. The shadow transport secretary, Louise Haigh, said TPE had “comprehensively failed the north”, adding: “Ministers have finally accepted they can no longer defend the indefensible.

“But this endless cycle of shambolic private operators failing passengers shows the Conservatives’ rail system is fundamentally broken.”

Mayors across northern England had [long demanded the move](#) and claimed victory. The West Yorkshire mayor, Tracy Brabin, said: “It is absolutely right that this is the end of the line … We’ve been urging government to act for almost a year, as delays and cancellations have damaged our economy and subjected commuters in the north to sheer misery.

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“We hope this allows an opportunity to reset relationships with staff, who have borne the brunt of operator failings, and look forward to hearing how the new operator intends to improve services.”

The decision went to the wire, with ministers agonising over their options. It was delayed until after the local elections, with the state of rail services in the north contributing to disappointing poll results for the Conservatives.

TPE’s sister service Avanti has been given two six-month extensions, with a warning to improve when its contract expired in autumn 2022. However, there had not been sufficient signs of recovery at TPE, which was also warned by the rail regulator over concealing the extent of cancellations in official figures.

FirstGroup’s chief executive, Graham Sutherland, said: “FirstGroup is a leading UK rail operator with a strong and diversified portfolio. Today’s decision does not alter our belief in the important role of private rail operators in the delivery of vital, environmentally friendly transport for customers and communities across the UK.”

Harper said the move would provide an opportunity to reset relationships between the operator, staff, unions and passengers. The DfT will review services across the north, with Harper asking mayors to engage in that process.

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Liz Saville Roberts, who leads the party's Westminster group, said 'effective leadership is always a matter of balancing conflicting demands'.  
Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

[Plaid Cymru](#)

## **Plaid Cymru MP defends efforts to keep leader Adam Price after damning review**

Liz Saville Roberts denies party tried to put own interests before need to 'detoxify' internal culture

- [What is happening in Plaid Cymru?](#)
- [UK politics live – latest updates](#)

*[Steven Morris](#)*

*[@stevenmorris20](#)*

Thu 11 May 2023 05.17 EDTFirst published on Thu 11 May 2023 03.15 EDT

A senior [Plaid Cymru](#) figure has defended attempts by some in the party's hierarchy to keep Adam Price in place as leader despite a damning review into the culture of the party, arguing that they did so because they believed stability was needed to bring about change.

Price [announced his resignation](#) as leader late on Wednesday – a week after a review said his party had failed to “detoxify” its culture and found evidence of misogyny, harassment and bullying.

Llyr Gruffydd was nominated unanimously as acting leader by the Plaid's Senedd group. The nomination, announced on Thursday, is subject to ratification by the Plaid Cymru national council on Saturday.

Gruffydd, a member for north [Wales](#), said: “I would like to thank Adam on behalf of the Plaid Cymru Senedd group for his vision, commitment and dedication over the last four years.

“Our focus is now on moving forward together to deliver on behalf of the people of Wales, and to foster a better culture within the party. I hope members will entrust me with the responsibility of leading that work until we elect a new leader.”

Earlier, Liz Saville Roberts, who leads Plaid's Westminster group, denied the party had tried to put its own interests before the need to tackle the crisis.

“Effective leadership is always a matter of balancing conflicting demands,” she said, adding that to bring about a change of culture it was thought that “stability” was needed and Price should remain.

But, she told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: “Adam had many discussions with the Senedd group last week and he came to the conclusion that it was better for him to stand down.”

Saville Roberts said Price had been “a gamechanger” in the politics of Wales. “The narrative has changed in Wales,” she said, claiming that his legacy was greater equality – such as moves to bring in universal free school meals for primary children.

“The other major shift is that independence is now part of the political vernacular in Wales. We talk about independence. It’s there, it’s part of the Welsh scene, very much because of Adam’s contribution.”

For months, Plaid Cymru has been dogged by claims of a toxic culture in the party.

The review, which was led by the former Plaid Senedd member Nerys Evans, [found that victims felt there was little point in reporting unacceptable behaviour](#) by elected members because it had been tolerated for so long.

The report went on to decry a lack of leadership, which it said meant the problems had worsened over the past few years, and made 82 recommendations needed to “detoxify” the party’s culture.

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Saville Roberts told the Guardian the discussion around Price had become a distraction. “During the week it became clear Adam did not have the confidence of some in the Senedd group. The narrative around that became a distraction from what we need to concentrate on.”

Asked if the next Plaid leader should be a woman, she said: “We’ve gone through such a harrowing time. We need to take a step back and see how the

individuals with different skills among the Senedd group can do what is best for the party. We have to make sure women's voices are not closed out, women's voices are enshrined.”

She said she was proud to be a member of a party prepared to commission what was likely to be a highly critical report – and to publish the key findings and recommendations. “This really does matter to us. We want to be held accountable because we want to move forward. At times we have been too comfortable in thinking everyone shared the same values and we didn’t need to enforce them rigorously.”

Among the figures being touted as the next possible leader are Rhun ap Iorwerth, the member for Ynys Môn, and Delyth Jewell, who represents South Wales East.

Price, 54, had led the Welsh nationalist party since he ousted Leanne Wood in 2018. In a letter to Marc Jones, the chair of Plaid Cymru, Price said he would be formally tendering his resignation next week “once interim arrangements have been agreed and the employment terms of the Senedd group staff employed in my name have been guaranteed”.

Price said he no longer had the “united support” of his colleagues. He said he wanted to step down as a result of the report’s findings, but was initially persuaded not to quit.

Plaid Cymru is the third largest party in the Senedd, with 12 members, and it has three MPs in Westminster.

The pro-independence party is in a cooperation agreement with the Welsh Labour government. A new leader is expected to be in place for the summer.

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Adam Price. Plaid had especially let women down and had ‘failed to implement a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment’, said Nerys Evans, who led the review. Photograph: Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

[Plaid Cymru](#)

## **Plaid Cymru leader Adam Price steps down after damning report**

Review said party had failed to ‘detoxify’ its culture and found evidence of misogyny and bullying

[What is happening in Plaid Cymru?](#)

[Aletha Adu and Nadeem Badshah](#)

Wed 10 May 2023 18.21 EDTFirst published on Wed 10 May 2023 08.39 EDT

Adam Price, the leader of [Plaid Cymru](#), has announced he is resigning after a damning review said his party had failed to “detoxify” its culture and found evidence of misogyny, harassment and bullying.

Plaid Cymru's national executive committee has approved a motion to allow the party's Senedd group to invite nominations for the position of interim leader at its meeting on Thursday morning, subject to ratification by the party's national council on Saturday.

A new leader is expected to be in place for the summer.

Price, 54, had led the Welsh nationalist party since 2018. In a letter to Marc Jones, the chair of Plaid Cymru, Price said he would be formally tendering his resignation next week "once interim arrangements have been agreed and the employment terms of the Senedd group staff employed in my name have been guaranteed".

Jones said: "On behalf of Plaid Cymru I want to thank Adam for his drive and vision over the past four and a half years.

"Adam's personal commitment to making [Wales](#) a fairer nation is a lasting legacy of which he and Plaid Cymru can be proud."

Jones added: "As we begin the process of electing a new leader our unwavering focus will be on implementing the recommendations of Project Pawb [the report] in order to foster a new culture within the party, making it a safe and inclusive member-led movement for all."

Nerys Evans, the MS who led the review that was published last week, said Plaid had let women down especially and it had "failed to implement a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment".

Her report said that inherent power imbalances within the party "coupled with inaction over many years from those with positions of power to challenge bad behaviour, has made a bad situation even worse".

Evidence from an anonymous staff survey and elected members "highlight cases of sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination", the report said, claiming: "These are not isolated cases."

Last week, Price said all 82 of the report's recommendation would be taken onboard but refused to resign. He had apologised in response to the report and said it must do better to foster a culture that was "safe, inclusive and respectful to all".

Reports earlier on Wednesday from the news website [Nation.Cymru](#) claimed Price had already agreed to quit as leader before a crunch meeting of Plaid's national executive committee later in the day. Nation.Cymru also said Price wanted to step down immediately but that others in the party were seeking an orderly handover.

On Tuesday, Plaid members of the Senedd held talks on the damning report, which criticised the party's leadership for failing to change its culture. It remained unclear what conclusions, if any, were drawn.

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A row of houses in London, with the City on the horizon. A poll of City analysts found there was a 96% chance the central bank would increase its base rate by 0.25 percentage points. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

## Mortgages

# **1.5m UK homeowners on variable rate mortgages face new borrowing rise**

Poll of City analysts shows unanimous expectation of Bank of England raising interest rates to 4.5%

*Phillip Inman*  
*@phillipinman*

Thu 11 May 2023 00.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 11 May 2023 06.11 EDT

Almost 1.5 million homeowners with variable rate mortgages face higher borrowing costs with the [Bank of England](#) expected to push up interest rates on Thursday to 4.5%.

City analysts polled by Refinitiv were unanimous in forecasting the central bank would increase its base rate by 0.25 percentage points when policymakers meet to tackle Britain's stubbornly high inflation rate.

Another 1.5 million households with fixed-rate mortgages will see their annual bills spiral by an average £3,000 when they refinance their loans this year, after the average two-year fixed rate jumped from below 2% to 4.75% over the past 18 months.

The near certainty of a [12th consecutive increase](#) follows a series of speeches by central bank policymakers arguing in favour of higher borrowing costs to bring down the highest rates of inflation in 40 years to more sustainable levels.

“It is very difficult to see the Bank of England doing anything else,” said George Buckley, chief UK economist at Nomura. “According to the markets, there is only a 4% chance of them holding rates where they are.”

In March, [the consumer prices index \(CPI\) dipped only slightly to 10.1%](#), down from 10.4% in February – higher than the 7% inflation rate in the 20-member euro currency bloc and 4.9% in the US.

While the BoE’s monetary policy committee (MPC) has forecast a drop in inflation to below 1% in two years based on the current level of interest rates, it has argued that progress is too slow.

In a recent speech, chief economist Huw Pill urged British households to restrain pay demands and businesses from hiking prices, saying they “need to accept” they are poorer.

Pill said a game of “pass the parcel” was taking place in the economy – as households and companies try to pass on their higher costs.

Most analysts believe inflation will tumble by the end of the year to below 5%, dragged lower by falling food and energy prices. These same forecasts show inflation sliding during 2024 to below the central bank’s 2% target.

However, a growing number of economists have argued that core inflation, which strips out volatile elements such as energy and food, has remained “sticky” and could spur the BoE to continue pushing interest rates higher this summer.

[Goldman Sachs has warned](#) a more sustained level of core inflation could force the BoE to push its base rate as high as 5% during the summer.

Buckley said a split on the nine-strong MPC was likely, repeating last month’s vote when Silvana Tenreyro and Swati Dhingra, both on secondment from the London School of [Economics](#), voted against a rise, saying higher borrowing costs would prompt a bigger slowdown than expected, plunging the UK into a recession and bringing forward the point at which rate cuts would be required.

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The rest of the committee, including the governor, Andrew Bailey, is expected to back the increase to 4.5%.

Samuel Tombs, chief UK economist at the consultancy Pantheon Macroeconomics, said the BoE will “hint” that it does not expect to raise rates again.

“But we doubt that the [monetary policy] committee will have the conviction required to make a bold, market-moving statement that this tightening cycle is over, given the extent to which the macro data have surprised its expectations to the upside in recent months,” he said.

The positive economic data includes business surveys that have proved more optimistic than expected and high levels of employment. Average wages, though well below the level of inflation, have remained higher than the Bank of England would want.

Figures on Friday are likely to show the economy avoided contracting in the first quarter of the year, adding to the conviction among MPC members that the economy has proved more resistant to dampening effects of higher interest rates than expected.

Sanjay Raja, chief UK economist at Deutsche Bank, said the outlook was not so rosy. “Despite some recession clouds parting this year, the UK is not out of the woods yet. Tighter monetary policy continues to feed through slowly but surely,” he said.

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**Business live****Business**

# Bank of England lifts inflation and growth forecasts as it raises interest rates to 4.5% – business live

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## 2023.05.11 - Spotlight

- [Love, pop and energy! Is this the perfect formula for a Eurovision winner?](#)
- ['One-dimensional' I took anger management classes. Here's what they get wrong about the world](#)
- [Beyoncé Renaissance World Tour review – a dizzying three-hour spectacular](#)
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My my ... Abba at Eurovision 1974, which they won with Waterloo.  
Photograph: Olle Lindeborg/AFP/Getty Images

[Eurovision](#)

## Love, pop and energy! Is this the perfect formula for a Eurovision winner?

Having crunched data from all 1,371 Eurovision finalists since it began in 1956, we've worked out the type of song and artist with the best chance of scoring douze points

*[Carmen Aguilar García](#), [Pamela Duncan](#), [Michael Goodier](#) and [Lucy Swan](#)*  
Thu 11 May 2023 05.17 EDT Last modified on Thu 11 May 2023 05.39 EDT

Grab a miniature flag, slap on a grin and prepare yourself for pre-written, faltering gags from the hosts falling on the deaf ears of a rambunctious audience ... yes, [Eurovision](#) is upon us.

Whether you're allured by the kitsch – or watch it under duress – at least one song each year will spark the thought: "Even I could write something better

than this!"

Well, dear Eurovision lovers/sceptics, we are here to help guide you through the process. We have analysed all 1,371 Eurovision finalists over almost seven decades, poring over the ingredients of the winning, second- and third-place entries, for genres, gender, groupings and mood, to come up with the perfect Eurovision song recipe.

Here are the results from the Guardian jury (dramatic pause):

## Make it pop!

Delve into the Eurovision archives and you will find a plethora of genres, many of them distinct to the country they represent: take the *copla* songs entered by Spain in 1965 and 1982; Norway's traditional *joik* chorus, used in 1980, or the Celtic sounds behind Ireland's 2007 song.

Before the 1970s, 85% of the entries which placed first, second or third in the competition were not pop songs (meaning the song had two or more other genres which were more prominent). Indeed, big-band swing-style sounds, and French chanson, were the dominant species until the early 1970s, when pop and rock began their stellar rise in the competition, according to data provided by Cyanite, a company that uses AI to analyse and classify music.

Now, pop is virtually the only pathway to the confetti-strewn podium. Our analysis shows that just five non-pop songs have placed within the top three since 2000.

### Graphic

Finland won with Lordi's memorable heavy metal entry in 2006 while, in stark contrast, Salvador Sobral's jazz waltz topped the competition for Portugal in 2017. Italy took top billing in 2021 with Måneskin's rock performance, 10 years after the Italian Raphael Gualazzi finished second with a jazz entry. Russia placed third in 2019 with Sergey Lazarev's psychedelic rock.

## Minor miracle?

There is a good chance that, if you're of a certain Eurovision vintage, you associate the competition with high-energy, up-tempo songs, and with good reason: four out of five songs in the top three places over the life of the competition had high or medium energy, those tending towards "stomping" or "bouncy" rhythm, rather than lower-energy songs with a more "flowing" pace.

Meanwhile, two-thirds of entries are written in more cheerful major keys, but this is changing. Songs in minor keys are on the up and have taken a prominent place since 2000, with two-thirds of the entries securing a top-three spot now sung in a minor scale.

## It's time for your solo

Yes, the past two winners – Ukraine's Kalush Orchestra and Italy's Måneskin – were bands. And yes, Abba are indisputably the most identifiable Eurovision winner of all time (sorry Lordi). But according to the data, if you want to win the competition in the modern era, you are more likely to do so as a solo artist.

It wasn't always so. In its very early incarnation, the song contest was dominated by solo singers punctuated by the odd duet, averaging at less than one band per year – but by 1971 a quarter of the entries were bands, jumping to half of competitors a year later, according to the Eurovision database [Six on Stage](#).

## Graphic

When Abba won the competition in 1974 with Waterloo, only the second band ever to do so after [Grethe & Jørgen Ingmann for Denmark in 1963](#), it was the start of a golden era for groups, who gathered two in five of the Eurovision gongs in the 1970s and 80s, including two UK entries: Save Your Kisses for Me by Brotherhood of Man in 1976 and Making Your Mind Up by Bucks Fizz in 1981.

But solo artists have made their voice heard again in the past two decades, taking the top three positions in more than two-thirds of the competitions held since 1990.

Solo female artists dominate the song contest. More than 42% of finalist performances since 1956 are solo women, compared to 30% solo male performers, although the number of men performing solo or in bands has increased since the 1990s.

The higher participation of solo female artists might explain why they have got more of the top positions. Since 1957, almost half of the top-three spots have been taken by female solo artists, followed by groups (28%, both mixed or single gender) and male solo artists (23%).

While women dominate on the stage, men have a higher presence in the Eurovision's famous green room: more than four out of five of the composers/lyricists are men. And while there has been an improvement in women's representation in recent decades – before 1980, only 5% of composers and lyricists were women – they still make up only 20%.

## **You've lost that loving feeling**

There are no prizes for guessing that the most-used lyric (other than so-called stop words like the, a, me, you etc) is “love” followed by – and the Eurovision haters will hate this one – “la la”.

But if this level of cheese is making your stomach turn, there is good news for aspiring Eurovision lyricists. The inclusion of “love” fell from a whopping 80% of songs in the 1950s to less than half of entries since 2000.

There has been a corresponding change in mood: the sentimental, nostalgic and romantic songs of the earlier decades have given way to feelgood music in the 1970s and 1980s. Come the 1990s, the Eurovision stage has seen a host of songs designed to evoke power, confidence and strength in their listeners, such as the UK's own Sam Ryder who came second with Space Man in 2022; Måneskin's Zitti e Buoni, the 2021 winner in 2021 or the 2018 winner Netta Barzilai.

## Graphic

English language songs have taken a very prominent role in the Eurovision contest since the rule of singing in an entry's national language, introduced in 1977, was removed in 1999.

Three quarters of entries featured (at least some) English lyrics since the millennium. English has been another common factor in the podium, with more than eight in 10 of the top three songs being delivered in English.

## **So, what is the ultimate Eurovision song?**

Time for the Guardian delegation to award our douze points. So, our aspiring songwriters – we've whittled down almost 1,400 entries to bring you the song that we think you might best model yours on. And with its English lyrics, pop genre, energetic tempo, solo female performer, both major *and* minor chords, and its lyrics about both love *and* supernatural power, the winner is ... (very long pause) ... the 2012 Swedish entry and contest winner, [\*\*Euphoria by Loreen!\*\*](#) Who, incidentally, is the favourite to win this year, too. Enjoy!

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# I took anger management classes. Here's what they get wrong about the world

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Beyoncé performs during the opening night of the Renaissance World Tour on 10 May at Friends Arena in Stockholm, Sweden. Photograph: Kevin Mazur/Getty Images for Parkwood

[Beyoncé](#)

[Review](#)

# Beyoncé: Renaissance World Tour review – a dizzying three-hour spectacular

**Friends Arena, Stockholm**

Queen Bey's first solo headline tour in seven years is a lavish leap forward for live entertainment, dripping with sci-fi disco decadence, sex and Black pride

*[Malcolm Jack](#)*

Thu 11 May 2023 00.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 11 May 2023 14.13 EDT

Even without Taylor Swift's Ticketmaster-melting Eras Tour nipping at her heels, it wouldn't do for a star as compulsively ambitious as [Beyoncé](#) to merely protect her status as the greatest pop show on Earth. Not when her first solo headline tour since 2016 could instead push 21st-century live entertainment another lavish leap forward.

Titled after the Texan's disco glitter bomb post-pandemic party [album of the same name](#), Renaissance is a monster blockbuster concert experience on a different plane. Fifty-seven stadium dates globally, starting in Stockholm, are projected to gross as much as £1.9bn (\$2.4bn) by the time the tour ends in New Orleans late September. Dripping with sci-fi disco decadence, sex, body positivity and feminine Black pride, the near three-hour spectacular plays out in front, behind and, at times, inside a football-pitch-wide high-definition video screen designed to assault the senses at dizzying scale.

The BeyHive, as Beyoncé's fans collectively style themselves, are buzzing pre-show as they flood into the venue from around the world for their first chance proper to see their queen live since 2018's On the Run II co-headliner with Mr B, Jay-Z. Dressed head to toe in official tour merch, including a cap and hoodie both emblazoned with the word "THIQUE", Mykwain Gainey has been to 20 Beyoncé shows over the past two decades and has spent nearly £2,000 to fly here from New York. "To see her

transcend, and become what she has become, especially as a Black woman, is exciting,” he enthuses.



Beyoncé in Stockholm on Wednesday. With many of the show's 36 songs abridged, the tempo was relentless. Photograph: Kevin Mazur/Getty Images for Parkwood

Brazilian Yhes Bezerra wears a spangly cowboy hat like the one sported by Beyoncé in the tour poster, except theirs is homemade; sticking on the thousands of tiny mirror panels took nine hours. They were determined to come to the opening night to avoid social media spoilers about what to expect. “I want everything to be a surprise,” Bezerra smiles.

Beyoncé appears first in a video cut scene, laid out luxuriously across the giant screen semi-naked in dimensions big enough to be visible from space. And yet, once she emerges in the flesh – all sequins, shoulder pads and that megawatt smile, drinking in the crowd’s screams – she begins disarmingly with a slew of her rawest soul songs. By the second, *Flaws and All*, she already appears to be fighting back tears, whether of release or gratitude or both. It’s an opening that seems designed to strip away artifice, if only to provide some sharp contrast for the heavily technologically augmented spectacle about to follow.

Harking back to early house and techno and the ecstatic utopia of the dancefloor, a segment dedicated to the Renaissance album ensues with Beyoncé done up something akin to the *Maschinenmensch* in *Metropolis*. She grinds with a dozen backing dancers to the jittery reggaeton of her boss bitch mission statement *I'm That Girl*, then dances with some actual robots (a pair of mechanical arms) during *Cosy*. Were all that not semi-hallucinogenic enough, *Alien Superstar* interpolates narcissistic anthem *I'm Too Sexy* by 90s dance-pop twosome Right Said Fred.



Beyoncé rewired dance music past in a show of stunning ambition and stamina. Photograph: Kevin Mazur/Getty Images for Parkwood

With many of the setlist's whopping 36 songs abridged, the tempo is relentless. Blink and you'll miss dancers popping out of the stage like champagne corks, or Beyoncé's powerhouse band getting wheeled into occasional view on a tall stepped riser (shades of *Beychella*), such as during Chic-style feelgood funk workout *Cuff It*. “Y'all having a good time, Stockholm?” our host inquires, wiping an imperceptible bead of sweat from her brow. “Me too.”

Black Parade finds Beyoncé cruising the stage atop what looks like a kind of lunar rover. Somewhat comically, it exits up the gusset of a pair of massive splayed legs. Later she sings *Plastic Off the Sofa* stretched out in a

clamshell. Come Crazy in Love, the show finally gets the enormous disco ball it seems to have long craved, dangled from the rafters for only a bit longer than the time it takes for the crew to get it up there and back down.

Bass-quaking, envelope-pushing Black power anthem Formation is a powerful political statement in any setting. Performed in a kind of virtual cathedral, horny southern rap and gospel cocktail Church Girl (sample lyric: “drop it like a thottie, drop it like a thottie”) might just be intended to provoke. But by Beyoncé’s own standards, it’s hard not to read Renaissance as a show much lighter on overt socio-political messaging than it is sheer, unfettered, mildly chaotic indulgence. And who could blame her?

In a final, unsubtle, retro-futuristic fanfare, Bey summons Bianca Jagger’s iconic Studio 54 moment by gliding through the air on a glitter-encrusted white horse while Summer Renaissance – which samples Donna Summer’s I Feel Love – blares. The disco history references may or may not be landing with the mostly young BeyHive, but that’s not really the point. By rewiring dance music past in a sensory overload of truly stunning ambition and stamina, Beyoncé is writing some history of her own.

- *The Renaissance World Tour continues until 27 September; see <https://tour.beyonce.com/> for dates*
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Trump's false claims on election lies and pro-choice Democrats in CNN town hall – video

[The US politics sketchUS news](#)

## **Toe-curlingly bad television: Trump's torturous town hall backfires on CNN**

Truth didn't stand a chance as the former president talked too fast to be factchecked and too shamelessly to be interrupted



[David Smith in Washington  
@smithinamerica](#)

Thu 11 May 2023 00.48 EDT Last modified on Thu 11 May 2023 16.24 EDT

The nausea came gradually, then suddenly, and with disconcerting familiarity. We had been flung back in time to the political hellscape of 2016. Only the second time around, it was somehow worse.

Donald Trump, the former US president [appearing on CNN](#) for the first time since that fateful election year, [lied and lied and lied](#). He was a leviathan of

lying, a juggernaut of junk, an ocean liner of mendacity that left little boats of truth spinning and overturning in its wake.

Trump called a Black police officer a “thug”. He made racist comments about Chinatown in Washington. He described host Kaitlan Collins as a “nasty person”. He made fun of a woman he sexually abused as a “whack job”. He refused to say whether he wants Russia or Ukraine to win the war.

Given the 45th president’s inability to change, it was the definition of shocking but not surprising. What may have come as a rude awakening to the pundit class is that many in the audience in Manchester, New Hampshire, were lapping it up and cheering him on. Some gave Trump a standing ovation as he walked in. Some clapped and hollered at his responses. Some laughed or put their hands to their mouths, visibly thrilled by his “Can he really say that?” taboo-busting.

Anyone taken aback by these reactions has not been paying attention to Trump rallies, where being outlandish and outrageous and cruel is the point. Although CNN’s decision to devote more than an hour of prime time to Trump backfired horribly, it did perform the service of forcing the American public to look at itself in the mirror.

The vocal support for Trump made this feel like a home fixture. The CNN political commentator Van Jones likened Collins to a white-suited matador against Trump’s bull in familiar blue suit, white shirt and red tie. It was less town hall than a debate, Trump versus Collins, lies versus truth. Truth didn’t stand a chance. Trump, 76, was like a child with crumbs around his mouth repeatedly telling a parent (Collins, 31) that he didn’t take the last cookie.

The pair began perched on white chairs on a shiny stage floor that had a big CNN logo against a backdrop of blue and red. Two CNN mugs were perched on small tables beside them. Trump dived straight into his “big lie” that the 2020 election was stolen. Collins corrected:

“It was not a rigged election. It was not a stolen election. You and your supporters lost more than 60 court cases on the election. It’s been nearly two

and a half years. Can you publicly acknowledge that you did lose the 2020 election?"

### Fact-checking Donald Trump's CNN town hall – video report

Trump barged on with bogus conspiracy theories, talking too fast to be fact-checked and too shamelessly to be interrupted. He gave a long-winded and false defence of his actions on 6 January 2021, earning laughter from the audience with a reference to "Crazy" Nancy Pelosi.

Asked why it took him three hours to respond to the riot, Trump pulled out pages of notes to more cheering and clapping. Collins: "Over 140 officers were injured that day." Trump: "And a person named Ashli Babbitt was killed. You know what? She was killed, and she shouldn't have been killed. And that thug that killed her, there was no reason to shoot her at blank range ... And he went on television to brag about the fact that he killed her." Collins: "That officer was not bragging about the fact that he killed her."



E Jean Carroll leaves Manhattan federal court with attorney after closing arguments of rape-defamation case against Donald Trump. Photograph: Edna Leshowitz/Zuma Press Wire/Shutterstock

Trump said he is inclined to pardon "many" of the January 6 rioters. Again, applause from the audience. The base loves him for the precise reasons that

others despise him. Stuart Stevens, author of *It Was All a Lie: How The Republican Party Became Donald Trump*, tweeted: “Democracies end when autocrats master the use of the freedoms of democracy to kill democracy.”

Collins turned to Tuesday’s verdict, by which a New York jury found that [Trump sexually abused magazine writer E Jean Carroll](#) in the 1990s and then defamed her by branding her a liar. They awarded her about \$5m in compensatory and punitive damages.

Even seasoned Trump watchers were disgusted by what came next. Trump said of Carroll: “I have no idea who she is. I had a picture taken years ago with her and her husband, nice guy John Johnson. He was a newscaster, very nice man. She called him an ape, happens to be African American. Called him an ape – the judge wouldn’t allow us to put that in. Her dog or her cat was named Vagina, the judge wouldn’t allow to put that in.”

Collins held her own at some moments but was overwhelmed by the geyser of deceit and missed follow-ups at others

Asked if the case will deter women from voting for him, Trump gave a sneering and meandering version of Carroll’s account of being assaulted by him in the 1990s. “What kind of a woman meets somebody and brings them up and within minutes, you’re playing hanky-panky in a dressing room, OK? I don’t know if she was married then or not. John Johnson, I feel sorry for you, John Johnson.”

It was toe-curling, not-knowing-where-to-look bad television reminiscent of Trump appearing with women who accused Bill Clinton of rape and unwanted sexual advances before he debated Hillary.

As the torture continued, Collins could have been forgiven for thinking her bosses have got it in for her: first a morning show with Don Lemon, now a dark night of the soul with Caligula. She held her own at some moments but was overwhelmed by the geyser of deceit and missed follow-ups at others. At one point she objected: “The election was not rigged, Mr President. You can’t keep saying that all night long.” He might have replied: just watch me.

One of the side-effects of all the shock and horror around Trump is that sometimes he gets off the hook on policy. Asked five times, he refused to say whether he would sign a federal abortion ban if re-elected, merely arguing that leaders of the anti-abortion movement are “in a very good negotiating position right now” because of the supreme court overturning Roe v Wade.

When Collins asked if he wants Ukraine to win its war against Russia, he replied: “I don’t think in terms of winning and losing. I think in terms of getting it settled so we stop killing all these people.” When asked if the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, was a war criminal, he demurred and insisted: “That’s something to be discussed at a later date.”

Chris Christie, a former New Jersey governor who ran for president in 2016, tweeted: “Donald Trump says he would end the war in Ukraine in 24 hours tonight on CNN. Despite how ridiculous that is to say, I suspect he would try to do it by turning Ukraine over to Putin and Russia. #Putin’sPuppet.”

If this had indeed been a debate, Trump’s camp claimed victory. It was a warning to potential 2024 Republican primary candidates who may have to face him on the debate stage: how do you take on a motormouth entirely unencumbered by factual reality?

When the ordeal was over, the ghosts of 2016 were everywhere and the grim expressions in the CNN studio said it all. Host Jake Tapper admitted: “We don’t have enough time to fact-check every lie he told.”

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## 2023.05.11 - Opinion

- Labour and Lib Dems can win big by calling out the Brexit mess
- Choose a nice outfit and hold a sword steady: is that what it takes to succeed in politics now?
- Are you hoping for a progressive alliance to oust the Tories? Don't hold your breath
- Can we keep my nautical prints? When couples move in together, they face a tough test



‘Far from having nothing to do with leaving the EU, the current cost of living crisis has an awful lot to do with Brexit.’ Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

[OpinionBrexit](#)

## **Labour and Lib Dems can win big by calling out the Brexit mess**

[Alastair Campbell](#)



We must never stop speaking up on the damage it is doing to Britain's economy, society, culture and standing in the world

Thu 11 May 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 11 May 2023 13.07 EDT

Nelson Mandela said: "[It always seems impossible until it's done.](#)" It's one of many political quotes that I have on my office wall. Sadly, the Brexiters had it on their walls too. They showed how change once thought unthinkable can become the status quo. With the populist virus still rife in the Tory party, with Labour insisting it will "[make Brexit work](#)" and the Lib Dems also largely silent on it, it would appear to be the settled will of our politics that the Brexit decision cannot be revisited.

But if converting the country to a bad [Brexit](#) was possible, so is restoring it to good sense. People by and large accepted the result. They gave the government the chance to show it could work. However, bit by bit, despite the welter of gaslighting propaganda, more and more have learned through direct experience that Brexit is damaging lives and livelihoods.

There are the frustrating inconveniences – such as when it took me 40 minutes at a French post office to complete all the paperwork needed to send

a gift to our daughter in Scotland. But there are also the ones that are causing, and will continue to exert, enormous economic damage. When Mark Carney, a former Bank of England governor, [pointed out](#) how the UK economy fell from being 90% the size of Germany's economy in 2016 to 70% in 2022, Tories immediately condemned him as a bitter remoaner and blamed Covid and the war in Ukraine, dodging the obvious fact that Germany, and all other countries, were also hit by those events.

We must never stop calling out the damage Brexit is doing to our economy, society, culture and standing in the world. We must continue to point out that Brexit was a decision made by one generation, in response to a campaign led by a now utterly discredited prime minister, Boris Johnson. The younger generations whose future has in so many ways been spoiled, and indeed stolen, have every right to fight to have the decision revisited. So yes, press for the public inquiry. One day it will come. And yes, press to get back to some kind of sane relationship. Change comes to those who fight for it.

Labour did pretty well in the [local elections](#) last week. So did the Lib Dems. Both could do even better, in my view, if they undertake in their manifestos to say something like this: "We accept the result of the referendum. But the Brexit as delivered, far from working, is daily damaging the real interests and needs of the people of this country, in ways large and small, and as a matter of urgency its workings must be reviewed and where necessary, new arrangements negotiated and put in place." The Tories will accuse them of wanting to take us back in – but they will say that whatever Labour says.



‘Brexit was a decision made by one generation, in response to a campaign led by a now utterly discredited prime minister, Boris Johnson.’ Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

Despite the Tories’ best efforts to hide from reality, there are votes to be gained by exposing the real bills of their bungled Brexit. Far from having nothing to do with leaving the EU, the current cost of living crisis has an awful lot to do with Brexit. The media collectively appear to have decided that the prime minister, Rishi Sunak, is a technocratic problem-solver; a numbers man who understands the economy. Yet his [first big call](#) in politics was to make the case that Brexit would deliver a high-growth, dynamic economy. He got it wrong and was an essential part of an economically catastrophic decision.

Keir Starmer, by contrast, knows there is much to do to mitigate the worst damage being done by Brexit without reopening the whole argument now. I understand his reasons for not going further, but believe he can and should do so, not for reasons of ideology but hard-headed, patriotic common sense. If the country is being damaged, we have to repair the damage and put something better in the place of the things doing the damage.



‘Keir Starmer knows there is much more to do to mitigate the worst damage being done by Brexit.’ Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

To fight the next fight, if and when it comes, we need to look and learn with humility from our failure in the last one. Looked at purely through the objective, strategy and tactic frame I apply to any campaign – clear objective, clear strategy, adaptable and innovative tactics – the [People’s Vote](#) campaign had a lot going for it. The objective was clear: a second referendum on the final Brexit deal. We had a clear strategy: persuading the public to pressure and persuade MPs that a second referendum was the way to resolve the mess. And we were pretty good on the tactics, too.

Ultimately, the whole thing fell down in the formal leadership within the campaign, and in the erratic leadership of the politicians outside it. The Liberal Democrats, arguably the most anti-Brexit party, became seized by an absurd conviction that they were on the verge of electoral triumph, so fell into the trap the Tories were laying for a “get Brexit done” early election. The Scottish Nationalists, who had more realistic prospects of doing well in a general election, fell even more willingly into the trap. Labour had no option but to go along with it, and a parliament in which momentum towards a second referendum was growing, voted to end itself and give Johnson the gift he wanted.

In any case, by then, the campaign had largely imploded. Chairman [Roland Rudd](#), with the support of a board largely divorced from it, [sacked the people](#) actually running things, who were not just effective, but also a major reason for the motivation of the young team. Rudd denied access to the data, locked key staff out, destroyed morale and drained the energy that had been achieving so much.

Added to that, we became part of the problem we were trying to solve. The referendum had been a deeply polarising event. And while polarisation may have yielded us a support base of millions, it also hardened the opposition of the leavers and Tories whose support we needed.

We have to learn the lessons from our mistakes if and when the next fight comes. What is clear is that the Tories have learned nothing from their mistakes, gigantic though they have been. I cannot pretend that sorting out the Brexit mess, let alone rejoining the EU, will happen soon, or that it will be easy, but as a country we have a choice – accept our decline or fight to get our future back. Reality is catching up on Brexit fast. As it does, be inspired by another Mandela quote on my wall: “A winner is a dreamer who never gives up.”

- Alastair Campbell was official spokesman and director of communications and strategy in Tony Blair’s government. His latest book, *But What Can I Do? Why Politics Has Gone So Wrong, and How You Can Help Fix It*, is out now
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‘Odds on her becoming the next leader of the Conservatives were slashed’  
... Mordaunt at the coronation. Photograph: Reuters

[Opinion](#)[Penny Mordaunt](#)

**Choose a nice outfit and hold a sword steady: is that what it takes to succeed in politics now?**

[Adrian Chiles](#)



Penny Mordaunt did a magnificent job at the coronation but that's no reason to make her leader of the Conservative party

Thu 11 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 11 May 2023 05.25 EDT

Let's be honest, the coronation wasn't everyone's cup of tea. But on one matter there was consensus: [Penny Mordaunt was simply magnificent](#). Praise came from the left of politics as well as the right, from the young and the old, from fashionistas and arbiters of good taste everywhere. Even before the newly crowned king and queen had reboarded their carriage, acclaim for the lord president of the privy council was frenzied, feeding off itself. Odds on her becoming the next leader of the Conservatives were slashed; learned articles were penned marking this as the moment we knew she was destined for greatness.

Now, if you search her name on Google, the first offering is "Penny Mordaunt sword". Appropriately enough, given there's a blade involved, there has been proper cut-through. She has carved a swathe through the whole wide world. Even my Croatian teacher, speaking from Zagreb, asked me about it. She says it's a *sociološki fenomen*. She is right. Theses beg to be written.

It is to take nothing away from Ms Mordaunt – the opposite, in fact – when I ask, what is this madness? Is this what marks you out as a leader now? If so, let's be clear: the bar is low. Choose a nice outfit and hold a sword steady for nearly an hour: is that what it takes these days to capture the imagination, to win respect? When the next Tory leader is chosen, let's dispense with the voting and instead just line up the contenders at the hustings, give them all a sword to hold, and see whose weapon is last to wobble.

Never mind her naval service or her work on parliamentary committees or anything else she has done of substance – all anyone's going to remember is her sword-holding. And possibly her appearance on that high-diving reality show, to be fair. But them's the breaks, as someone once said. Honestly, I've not been so cynical about politics since 1978, when my mum told me the only socialist she would have anything to do with was David Owen, the handsome devil.

- Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist
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Illustration: Ben Jennings/The Guardian

[OpinionLabour](#)

## **Are you hoping for a progressive alliance to oust the Tories? Don't hold your breath**

[Martin Kettle](#)



Parties cooperated in the local elections, but that was then: come the general election, Labour's self-interest will out

Thu 11 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 11 May 2023 04.38 EDT

It is less than a week since the [local elections](#) confirmed that party politics in England are changing in big ways. The weekend coronation then blew the election results off the front pages. But, with the king back in his palace and the bunting now stored away, it is important to re-engage with the inquest. A new electoral map of England emerged out of last week's voting. The map matters. It is important to grasp what it means for British politics – but also to grasp what it doesn't mean.

What it mainly means is that Labour is on course for a general election victory. [Keir Starmer](#) is right to make this claim. Projections from 4 May give the party a share of the poll lead of seven or nine points over the Conservatives. It's a strange political system that sees this as disappointing. But with Prof John Curtice and his colleagues arguing that Labour will need a lead of 12 points to form a majority government, that's how it is. It is a sign of how high the opposition's expectations were raised by the Tory debacles of 2022 that there is suddenly now such nervousness.

The words that matter in what Starmer is saying, though, are “on course”. [Labour](#) is not there yet, because the general election is not now. There are as many as 20 months to go – in theory until January 2025. A lot can happen, even if the election is more likely to be 12 months away, in May 2024. That could include Labour being knocked off course. But it will also, when the time is right, require the clear statement that has long been promised of Labour’s priorities in government.

Something pretty remarkable would now have to happen for the Conservatives to stay in power after the next election. There are few signs of that. With few potential partner parties, the Tories will need an outright win. According to the Oxford political scientist Stephen Fisher, the Conservatives need a [10-point swing](#) between now and the election. That’s bigger than any postwar Tory government has achieved in its final months, including Margaret Thatcher’s after the Falklands war.

On the opposition side, last week’s results have brought a renewed focus on a possible hung parliament. The spoils were shared between Labour, the [Liberal Democrats](#) and the Greens. But it is important to grasp that a hung parliament is not inevitable, even on last week’s numbers and voting patterns. Conservative shares fell more sharply where they were defending seats – which, if repeated, is ominous for many of the party’s 2019 contingent of MPs. Scotland and Wales, where there were no elections last week, could also help to fuel a Labour overall victory.

The results both embodied and made a case for [opposition party cooperation](#). More than twice as many people voted for the three main opposition parties as voted for the Conservatives. Sometimes, in such circumstances, the opposition parties cancel one another out, allowing Conservatives to win through. There were examples of this, as in the [Bedford mayoral election](#). In many more cases, however, opposition voters focused on their best placed contender, sometimes with spectacular results.

Although part of this was achieved by tactical voting, cooperation takes many forms. Each of the opposition parties agreed not to fight hard in every seat, allowing resources to be concentrated; and in some cases, they agreed not to stand at all. In [Mid Suffolk](#), for example, the Greens won control of

their first district council in England, with 24 of the 34 seats at stake. But they were partly able to achieve this because Labour stood in only eight seats, and the Lib Dems in only 13. This left voters who wanted to vote against the Tories with less choice. Similar things happened in South Oxfordshire and East Hertfordshire.

The main spur to all this is the good relations that exist at the top of the main opposition parties about the national need to replace the Conservatives. Keir Starmer and [Ed Davey](#) have worked quietly but efficiently together for many months. But don't assume this will happen in the general election. There, each party will field candidates in all seats, as usual. But there will also be a limited yet tacit distribution of opposition target seats, broadly in favour of Labour in northern England and of the Lib Dems in the south.

Neither party wants a formal electoral pact, and there will not be one, except just possibly in some local contests. The aim instead is to repeat the pincer movement that proved so successful for both parties in 1997, when Labour won former Tory bastions including Hastings, Hove and Wimbledon, and the Lib Dems turned true-blue places such as Lewes, Southport and Twickenham orange.

Even for this level of cooperation to succeed, however, requires the buy-in of party activists and the voters. Neither of these can be taken for granted, and certainly not in a uniform way. Talk of a progressive consensus, for which the local elections provided fresh evidence, needs to be put in the context of the opposition parties' long history of mutual tribalism.

Traditional Labour activists possess no more warmth towards the Liberal Democrats than the other way around. Labour, in particular, remains overwhelmingly a majoritarian party, happy to see the Tories beaten in seats that are unwinnable by Labour but deeply averse, not merely because of the excuse of the 2010-15 Tory-Lib Dem coalition, to working with the Lib Dems in government.

One day, perhaps, all this will change, probably a decade or two after it would have been most needed. That will not be in 2024. If Starmer becomes prime minister next year, a century after the first Labour government, he is

likely to follow the example of both Ramsay MacDonald and Harold Wilson by forming a minority government, not attempting to create a coalition.

Davey would love a commitment to electoral reform as the price of supporting Labour in a hung parliament. But unless Starmer has given Davey a hint that this could happen, which seems unlikely, it is more probable that he would challenge the Lib Dems to bring down a minority Labour government. In one sense, that's understandable. Having won a famous victory over the Tories, just as Tony Blair did in 1997, why should Starmer choose to use Labour government time to change the electoral system? It would be a hard sell to voters who want economic and social measures to be the priority.

I am fairly certain that Starmer knows Britain would be better off with electoral reform. He surely sees that the reformed multiparty politics that would follow from it would also provide the best bulwark for the human rights that have been so central to his legal career. He would be right to think this. But he is a political leader now, and Labour's deeply traditional sense of its own self-interest is pulling him in a different direction.

Martin Kettle is a Guardian columnist

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Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal in When Harry Met Sally, which features a scene about the décor dilemmas couples can face. Photograph: Columbia Pictures/Allstar

[Opinion](#)[Interiors](#)

## **Can we keep my nautical prints? When couples move in together, they face a tough test**

[Paul Daley](#)



Compromise is a wonderful thing, but undergraduate chic is not for everyone

Wed 10 May 2023 22.16 EDTLast modified on Wed 10 May 2023 22.38 EDT

One of the next generation had just bought a house. She was moving in soon. So was her partner, who had his own place.

“Have you got a lot of stuff?” someone asked him.

Silence. Awkward glances.

“Yes, my place is furnished.”

“What are you going to *do* with it all?”

Others at the table – niece, son, son-in-law, nephew, daughters – looked furtively at one another. Some seemed bemused. Two shook their heads in more of a “nooooo” than a “yes” way.

Cut, here, to the famous [wagon wheel coffee table scene](#) in [When Harry Met Sally](#) starring Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan. (Fans of the film rightly insist this scene comes second to Ryan's fabulous [fake orgasm](#), which may be the best scene she's ever performed.)

Harry and Sally's friends, Jess and Marie, are about to cohabit. Jess's wagon wheel coffee table is in the centre of the room.

Jess: "I like it, it works. It says 'home' to me."

Marie: "All right, all right. We'll let Harry and Sally be the judge. What do you think?"

Harry: "It's nice."

Jess: "Case closed."

Marie: "Of course he likes it, he's a guy. Sally?" [Sally shakes her head.]

Jess: "What's so awful about it?"

Marie: "It's so awful there's no way even to begin to explain what's so awful about it."

Jess: "Honey, I don't object to any of your things."

Mare: "If we had an extra room you could put all of your things in it, including your bar stools."

The wagon wheel coffee table goes (I've been seeking one ever since that movie).

What Jess needed was a shed for his bar stools, coffee table – and everything else. I know. I was fortunate that there was a shed for my things when I moved into my partner's established house 30 years ago.

Domestic décor preferences among couples are not, I think, necessarily gendered (even though they clearly are in the movie). I know of same-sex

couples who have had similar tensions when one moves into the other's place, and times when a man hasn't compromised sufficiently to accommodate a female partner's tastes and belongings.

Compromise is a wonderful thing, of course. But by the time you hit 30, if you've been single for a while and fortunate enough to have your own established sanctuary (I'm aware this sounds ridiculously nostalgic, given the housing crisis), then accommodating the other's stuff can really try a new relationship.

That said, when I think about what I brought to the "shared" abode back then, there was nothing of great aesthetic worth. Many books, which we still have. Prints (mostly nautical; I don't know why). And furniture perhaps best described as *undergraduate chic*. Except, that is, for a Thai teak coffee table and a church pew.

This was an advance on the belongings of one of my better mates. When he moved in with the woman he would marry in his mid-30s, his furniture comprised milk crates (seats), bricks and four-by-twos (shelves), a sofa salvaged from hard rubbish and a futon "upon which many had lain". Go directly to the tip.

My church pew survives. The coffee table (my wagon wheel equivalent) was water-damaged in the shed. For years I kept it in a remote part of a later jointly established house, only surrendering it to Gumtree when moving.

Other stuff – on both sides – became culled (note passive tense) on the journey too.

"Whatever happened to my Australia II doona cover?" I inquired recently.

A good drop sheet when the bathroom was painted, apparently.

Paul Daley is a Guardian Australia columnist

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## 2023.05.11 - Around the world

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- [Disney+ Streaming site loses 4m subscribers amid exodus in Indian market](#)
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- [Shireen Abu Akleh Friends and family call for justice on anniversary of killing](#)



Hong Kong pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai leaves the High Court.  
Photograph: Vincent Yu/AP

[Hong Kong](#)

## **Hong Kong passes law to limit work of foreign lawyers amid ongoing Jimmy Lai case**

Amended legislation gives chief executive power to veto any foreign lawyer working on cases brought under national security law

*[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei and [Verna Yu](#)*

Thu 11 May 2023 17.41 EDTFirst published on Thu 11 May 2023 01.26 EDT

Hong Kong has passed a law that allows authorities to ban foreign lawyers from working on national security cases, completing a months-long effort to block a UK practitioner from defending the media mogul and activist Jimmy Lai.

The amendment, which was passed unanimously by the Legislative Council on Thursday, gives the chief executive the power to veto any foreign lawyer from working on cases brought under the 2020 National Security Law (NSL).

Lai, the founder of now defunct Apple Daily newspaper and a [high profile pro-democracy figure](#), was first arrested in August 2020. He has since been charged with foreign collusion under the sweeping NSL, after calling for sanctions against Hong Kong and China over their crackdown on the pro-democracy movement. If convicted he could face life in prison. Apple Daily shut down after its assets were frozen by the police in 2021.

Lai had sought to engage UK lawyer Tim Owen in defending the charges. The government challenged Owen's appointment in court, but lost an appeal in November when the city's highest court ruled Owen could represent Lai. The chief executive, John Lee, then asked Beijing to intervene, and make an "interpretation" of the national security law to clarify its stance on foreign lawyers.

In the interim, Lai's trial was [postponed](#) from November, when the immigration department withheld Owen's application for a visa extension to stay in Hong Kong, and again in December when that application was denied and Owen was forced to leave.

Soon afterwards, Beijing declared that courts needed approval from the chief executive to allow foreign lawyers on national security cases. Wednesday's amendment enshrines that interpretation in Hong Kong law, and adds to mounting concern over the independence of Hong Kong's once vaunted judiciary. Previous changes have given the chief executive the power to appoint judges to oversee national security trials, which are not guaranteed to be heard in front of a jury.

Lai's trial is set to begin in late September, by which time he will have spent almost 1,000 days in jail. He was initially held on remand, but is now serving successive terms for convictions related to the 2019 protests and business fraud, all charges his supporters say are politically motivated.

In Washington, the US government's congressional-executive commission on [China](#) held a hearing on Thursday, examining the erosion of the rule of law in Hong Kong. At the hearing, exiled Hong Kong activists drew attention to the mass political imprisonment in the city since the national security law passed three years ago.

"Mass political imprisonment affects virtually every sector of Hong Kong society, every community, every neighbourhood," said Brian Kern, an activist formerly based in Hong Kong. "Almost everyone in Hong Kong knows someone imprisoned for political reasons."

Since the start of the mass anti-government protests in June 2019, there have been 10,615 political arrests in Hong Kong, said Kern, researcher of the US-based Hong Kong Democracy Council's [report](#) on political prisoners. He noted that there were 1,014 political prisoners in the city as of May last year, but that figure has jumped by nearly 50% to 1,457 within a year.

"The only countries incarcerating political prisoners at rates faster than Hong Kong's over the past three years are Myanmar and Belarus," he said.

"How high does the number have to get for the world to actively hold the Chinese Communist party accountable?" asked Anna Kwok, executive director of Hong Kong Democracy Council.

Lai's son, Sebastian, pointed out that his 75-year-old father may never get out of jail as he is likely to receive a lengthy sentence. "My father is in prison because he spoke truth to power for decades," he said. "He is still ... refusing to be silenced, even though he has lost everything and he may die in prison."

On Wednesday, he [accused the UK government of "weakness"](#) for not speaking out about his father with the same strength as the US. Both father and son are British citizens.

"It's very sad to see a democratic government being afraid – or asking permission, even – to speak on behalf of one of its citizens that is in prison for freedom of speech," said the younger Lai. "It's just ridiculous."

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Guardians of the Galaxy 3, the latest film in Disney's Marvel repertoire.  
Photograph: Lifestyle pictures/Alamy

[Disney+](#)

## Disney+ loses 4m subscribers amid exodus in Indian market

Lost cricket rights prompts outflow but streaming service almost halves losses while theme parks boom

*[Julia Kollewe](#)*

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Disney, known for Pixar, Star Wars and Marvel films, said its flagship streaming service lost 4 million subscribers in the first three months of the year.

Subscribers to Disney+ services, home to movies such as Toy Story, Monsters, Thor and Black Panther, fell to nearly 158 million from January to March, the second quarter of customer losses after a net loss of 2.4 million

in the previous three months. Analysts had expected [Disney+](#) to add more than 1 million customers in the quarter. The shares fell nearly 5% in after-hours trading.

Most of the lost subscribers came from Disney+ Hotstar in India after the company lost streaming rights to Indian Premier League cricket matches. Disney also lost 300,000 customers in the US and Canada, after raising subscription prices in December.

The number of UK households subscribing to Disney+ has steadily increased in recent years, climbing to 6.1 million customers in the first quarter, while the industry leader Netflix has nearly 15 million subscribers in the UK, according to the media research firm Ampere Analysis. Disney+ costs £7.99 a month in the UK, or a yearly fee of £79.90.

All major streaming services have been losing customers as the pandemic boom fades and the cost of living crisis hits. British households stopped paying for almost 170,000 streaming services at the start of the year in [a post-Christmas “subscription cull”](#), according to the research firm Kantar.

At the same time, Disney's streaming business reported a better financial performance. It reduced its operating losses to \$659m (£523m), from \$1.1bn a year earlier, after price increases and reduced spending on marketing.

Disney's theme parks fared better, as higher visitor numbers in Shanghai, Paris and Hong Kong lifted operating income at the division by 23% year on year to \$2.2bn. Operating income at its traditional television business fell 35% to \$1.8bn.

The company intends to launch a new app later this year that will combine the family-friendly Disney+ and the Hulu general entertainment service.

The chief executive of Walt Disney, Bob Iger, said the app would streamline the viewing experience for subscribers and offer more opportunities for advertisers. An ad-support option will also be added to Disney+ in Europe by the end of the year.

Iger, who came out of retirement in November to return as chief executive for two years, told analysts: “We’ve only just begun to scratch the surface of what we can do with advertising on Disney+.”

He announced a large cost-cutting drive in February to save \$5.5bn, partly through 7,000 job cuts. The firm now expects to achieve even bigger savings.

Disney and others have invested billions of dollars into streaming services in recent years to compete with Netflix, which has 232.5 million subscribers.

Iger recently suggested that Disney needed to get “better at curating” franchise content such as Star Wars and Marvel because it was “extraordinarily expensive”.

The news came after thousands of Hollywood screenwriters in the Writers Guild of America staged their first strike in 15 years last week. They are demanding better pay and working conditions, as the streaming boom has affected the traditional television and film industry. The strike forced Disney to pause productions for Marvel’s Blade and the Star Wars series Andor.

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Ukrainians arrive at Lviv train station after fleeing from eastern areas. Some 5.9 million people are thought to have been displaced by Russia's invasion.  
Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty

[Global development](#)

## **Conflict and climate disasters combine to create record rise in displaced people**

War in Ukraine and Pakistan's 'monsoon on steroids' among events driving surge on 'scale never seen before' as 71m people displaced

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[Lizzy Davies](#)

Thu 11 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 11 May 2023 01.39 EDT

The number of people around the world who were forced to flee their homes leapt by a fifth last year, as a “perfect storm” of Russia’s assault on [Ukraine](#) and climate disasters brought displacement on an unprecedented scale.

By the end of 2022 the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) – those forced from their homes but remaining within their country of residence – reached 71 million, according to figures published by the Norwegian Refugee Council’s Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre ([IDMC](#)), up from [59.1 million in 2021](#).

The number of movements made by people, often repeatedly, as they went in search of safety and shelter was also unprecedented, with the figure of 60.9m marking an increase of 60% on the previous year.

[bar chart showing 10 countries with highest number of displaced people](#)

Ten countries with the highest number of internally displaced people

About 17m of those movements were triggered by the [war in Ukraine](#), where an estimated 5.9 million people are thought to have fled their homes, many

having to move repeatedly in an effort to find resources or a place to stay, or just a refuge from fighting. The report warns that, due to the difficulty in obtaining reliable data from areas occupied by military forces, even those numbers “should be considered conservative”.

The [“monsoon on steroids”](#) that hit Pakistan last summer was also a leading driver of displacement, with the [flooding that devastated](#) much of the country triggering more than 8m movements.

“Conflict and disasters combined last year to aggravate people’s pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, triggering displacement on a scale never seen before,” said Jan Egeland, secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

“The war in Ukraine also fuelled a [global food security crisis](#) that hit the internally displaced hardest. This perfect storm has undermined years of progress made in reducing global hunger and malnutrition.”

The report, released on Thursday, does not include the early months of 2023 but indicates a dramatic rise in displacement after the [latest outbreak of fighting](#) in Sudan. The civil war between forces allied to two rival Sudanese generals has already triggered more than double the number of internal displacements in three weeks than in all of last year, it said.

Many IDPs face protracted displacement due to conflicts that drag on for years without ever being resolved. Almost three-quarters of the global IDP population live in just 10 countries, all of which are experiencing a certain level of conflict, be it the raging open warfare of [Sudan](#) or Ukraine, or the more sporadic violence of Nigeria or Somalia.

Many of those countries also face extreme levels of food insecurity, a problem made worse by the conflict in Ukraine, a leading grain exporter.

Alexandra Bilak, IDMC’s director, said: “Today’s displacement crises are growing in scale, complexity and scope, and factors like food insecurity, climate change, and escalating and protracted conflicts are adding new layers to this phenomenon.

“Greater resources and further research are essential to help understand and better respond to IDPs’ needs,” she said.

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Shifting sands ... heavy machinery at work 'enhancing' the beach at Barcelona, Spain. Photograph: agefotostock/Alamy

[Global development](#)

## **Barcelona's beaches could vanish as authorities abandon 'enhancement'**

Along Spain's east coast, storms and rising sea levels are eating away at the coastline – but the old solutions are now out of fashion

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[About this content](#)

[Stephen Burgen](#) in *Barcelona*

Thu 11 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 11 May 2023 01.39 EDT

For the 1992 Olympic Games, [Barcelona rediscovered the sea. It beefed up its beachfront](#) using thousands of tons of sand, and the area is now packed with tourists and lined with beach bars. Barcelona's beach may be partly artificial, but it's big business.

The way things are going, however, soon there won't be any beach at all. Across Catalonia, rising sea levels and winter storms are eating away at the coastline. Up to now, what is washed away in winter has been replenished in spring with sand dredged from within the breakwaters or from estuaries and ports. However, the practice of "enhancing" beaches in this way is now widely seen as futile and environmentally damaging. Without it, little by little, the city's beaches could revert to the gravelly strips they were only 30 years ago.



Port Vell harbour, Barcelona, with one of the city's beaches in the distance.  
Photograph: Eloi\_Omella/Getty Images/iStockphoto

The culprit is erosion. Of the 700,000 cubic metres of sand sent by the Spanish government to the coast of Barcelona province in 2010, 70% has since disappeared. Barcelona's nine city beaches have been losing about 30,000 cubic metres of sand a year, according to the municipal water authority's Patricia Giménez, who is responsible for beaches in the greater Barcelona area.

The erosion is accelerating as a result of the climate crisis. Bogatell beach, at the north end of the city, has shrunk from 36,000 cubic metres in 2010 to 15,000 cubic metres today. Overall, Catalonia's beaches have lost 25% of their sand since 2015.

Giménez says photographic evidence suggests there were no beaches at all until the first breakwater was installed near the port in the mid-18th century, creating the beaches of Barceloneta and Sant Sebastià. Then came the 1992 Games, with the new “enhanced” beach helping transform [Barcelona](#) into a tourist capital.



Barceloneta and Sant Sebastiá beaches were created in the 18th century.  
Photograph: guss.95/Shutterstock

The city has now established a group of experts to study the future of the beaches. Giménez says: “It’s important to bear in mind that beaches not only serve to protect the coast, but have a social value for the people of Barcelona, who use them to swim, for sport, meditation or what have you.

“The group concluded that, until we find an optimum solution, we need more sand to give us time to develop other solutions.”

The city is still waiting for the Spanish government to agree to pay for a further tranche of sand. But with the tourist season already in full swing, it’s unlikely that there will be any change before the autumn.

The Catalan government opposes dumping any more sand, which it describes as a waste of money. Mireia Boya, the regional government’s head of climate action, instead proposes measures that work with nature, such as dune recovery.

“The natural dynamic will lead to the loss of sand in many places,” says Boya. “Sea levels will rise and we will have narrower beaches. Some smaller beaches will acquire more sand and others will disappear.”

When [Storm Gloria hit Spain's east coast](#) in January 2020, 157,100 cubic metres of sand was lost, of which less than half has been recovered. Since then, central government has spent €5.3m (£4.7m) shoring up Catalonia's coastal defences, but the money was largely spent on breakwaters and sea walls, not sand.



Replenishing the disappearing sand on Barcelona's beaches. Photograph: agefotostock/Alamy

“This situation has come about because the beaches are largely artificial, through the urbanisation of the Catalan coastline, which is the most developed in [Spain](#), rising sea levels and the destruction of sand dunes,” says Marta Martín-Borregón, a Greenpeace spokesperson on oceans.

“In addition, ports and breakwaters affect the currents, which no longer bring sediments to the beaches, which is what they would do naturally.”

A [report by the Barcelona metropolitan area authority \(AMB\)](#) says that the expansion of the marina at El Masnou on the Maresme has blocked the flow of between 50,000 and 100,000 cubic metres of sediment a year, contributing to the erosion of the beach at Montgat, eight miles north of Barcelona, which has shrunk by about 80%.

Meanwhile, about 60 miles south in Altafulla, in the province of Tarragona, they have tried without success to create sand dunes as a means of conservation.



Altafulla beach, Tarragona province, where efforts to create sand dunes didn't work. Photograph: Sergi Reboreda/Alamy

"To create dunes you need more sand and there is only one part of the beach where we can do it and it hasn't worked out," said Marisa Méndez-Vigo, Altafulla's deputy mayor.

In the absence of government support, the council has set aside €50,000 to buy sand, but Méndez-Vigo says that, at €8 to €10 a cubic metre, this is little more than a stopgap.

The AMB estimates that the beaches of greater Barcelona generate a tourist income of about €60m. The city has many other charms but for small coastal towns such as Altafulla, the beach is their main attraction and without it they will go into rapid decline.

"Altafulla survives on tourism and second homes owned by people who want to be near the beach," says Méndez-Vigo. "Without a beach, the economy will be hard hit and a lot of jobs will disappear."

“We’re all aware that replenishing the beaches with sand isn’t a long-term solution, not even for tourism. We need to find ways to retain the natural increase in sand that we see in January so that it doesn’t disappear in the first storm. But until we have these lasting and environmentally sound solutions, we will need more sand.”

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Shireen Abu Akleh reporting for Al Jazeera in Jerusalem. Photograph: Al Jazeera/EPA

[Shireen Abu Akleh](#)

## **Shireen Abu Akleh: friends and family call for justice on anniversary of killing**

Israeli forces admit ‘high possibility’ Al Jazeera reporter was shot by sniper at West Bank refugee camp

*[Bethan McKernan](#) in Ramallah*  
Thu 11 May 2023 00.00 EDT

Family members, friends and colleagues of Palestinian-American journalist [Shireen Abu Akleh](#), who was almost certainly fatally shot by an Israeli sniper, have renewed calls for justice on the first anniversary of her killing, during a week of memorials and events celebrating her life.

Abu Akleh, a household name in the Arab world who worked for Qatar-based Al Jazeera, was shot in the head in the slumlike refugee camp on the outskirts of the occupied West Bank city of Jenin on 11 May last year while covering an Israel Defence Forces (IDF) raid. International outrage at the reporter's death was fuelled by scenes of [violence at her funeral in Jerusalem](#), when Israeli police attacked pallbearers, almost causing them to drop the coffin.

The IDF eventually admitted there was a "high possibility" Abu Akleh was killed by a soldier, but maintains the shooting was accidental and a criminal investigation is not warranted.

In the year since, international efforts at accountability have moved painfully slowly. But at a concert honouring the Jerusalemite in Ramallah earlier this week, hundreds of people gathered to remember a remarkable trailblazer and her legacy.

"Years of seeing justice not being served for Palestinians tells me we shouldn't expect much [from officials]. But if we focus on whatever silver lining there is, I'd never seen anything like the turnout at her funeral ... It showed how loved and respected she was," said Dalia Hatuqa, Abu Akleh's friend and former colleague.

"Shireen has inspired a whole generation of young women and men who admire her and her work and want to follow in her footsteps."

Tributes from Abu Akleh's family and colleagues at Tuesday's concert spoke of her dedication to showing the world the harsh realities of Israeli occupation, as well as moments of happiness and resilience. A Jerusalem girls' choir, and young women from the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, performed several pieces composed in her memory.

A raft of universities have announced awards and scholarships in Abu Akleh's name, a street in Ramallah has been renamed after her, and her name will also live on in the form of a media museum scheduled to open in the city in 2025.

For Palestinians, and much of the rest of the world, it is clear who bears responsibility for Abu Akleh's death. Several journalistic investigations as well as a UN probe have concluded that Israeli forces killed the well-known journalist. Some findings suggest the small group of journalists she was with were deliberately targeted, even though they were wearing helmets and protective vests clearly marked "Press".

While the Biden administration has largely embraced Israel's version of events, and resisted launching an independent investigation into the killing of a US citizen, pressure from Congress forced it to agree to an FBI inquiry last November, which for now appears to be the most promising avenue for justice – although Israel has said it will not cooperate. Abu Akleh's family and Al Jazeera have also referred the case to the international criminal court (ICC) in The Hague, but proceedings typically take years, and Israel is not a member.

Abu Akleh is far from the only Palestinian journalist killed in recent years whose death has gone unpunished. A new report from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), released this week to coincide with the anniversary of Abu Akleh's death, found that Israel has never charged or found any soldier accountable for the killings of at least 20 journalists, 18 of whom were Palestinian, since 2001.

"Israeli officials discount evidence and witness claims, often appearing to clear soldiers for the killings while inquiries are still in progress ... When probes do take place, the Israeli military often takes months or years to investigate killings and families of the mostly Palestinian journalists have little recourse inside Israel to pursue justice," the report said.

In the year that has passed since the reporter's death, violence in the region has risen substantially. Tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have soared over the past year: more than 116 Palestinians and at least 19 Israelis and foreigners have been killed in 2023 so far, leading to fears of a return to full-scale fighting.

About half of this year's Palestinian death toll are civilians, according to media tallies. But according to army data analysed by Yesh Din, an Israeli

human rights organisation, the IDF has near-total impunity from prosecution in cases in which Palestinians and their property were harmed by soldiers.

Between 2017 and 2021, only 21.4% of complaints led to an investigation – and of the 248 investigations, just 11 resulted in an indictment, making the rate 0.87%.

The IDF says it opens initial operational investigations in all cases in the West Bank in which a Palestinian is killed, unless the death occurred in a combat environment. Based on those findings, the military advocate decides whether a criminal investigation is merited.

“I thought when they killed Shireen, if they can kill her, then they can kill any of us,” said Amira, a 20-year-old student at the Ramallah concert. “But we need to continue resisting and we need to have hope.”

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- [BP Profits labelled ‘heinous’ as calls grow for tougher windfall tax](#)
- [North Sea Labour calls for energy firms to pay more tax on £60m-a-day profits](#)
- [Artificial intelligence ‘Godfather of AI’ Geoffrey Hinton quits Google and warns over dangers of misinformation](#)
- [Live Keir Starmer says ‘vast majority’ of Labour leadership pledges still stand as he backs away from abolishing tuition fees](#)



BP has been in the crosshairs of green campaigners after it scaled back its climate goals earlier this year. Photograph: Arnd Wiegmann/Reuters

[BP](#)

## **BP's profits labelled 'heinous' as calls grow for tougher windfall tax**

Oil and gas company beats analysts' forecasts, with profits reaching \$5bn in first three months of year

- [Labour calls for firms to pay more tax on £60m-a-day profits](#)
- [Analysis: does UK need to drill for more North Sea oil and gas?](#)

[Alex Lawson](#)

Tue 2 May 2023 07.51 EDTFirst published on Tue 2 May 2023 02.21 EDT

Bumper profits at [BP](#) have been labelled "heinous" and sparked renewed calls for a tougher windfall tax, after the oil and gas giant recorded one of its best ever starts to the year while Britons struggled to pay high energy bills.

The energy company said its underlying profits reached \$5bn (£4bn) in the first three months of the year, outstripping analysts' forecasts of \$4.3bn.

It represents the second-best results for the first quarter it has notched up since 2012, when it made \$4.7bn, behind last year's \$6.2bn.

BP said its results had been boosted by reduced refining costs, an "exceptional" result in its gas trading arm and a "very strong oil trading result". Volatility in the energy markets has [increased revenues in the trading divisions of oil companies](#).

The company said it would reward investors, buying back \$1.75bn of its own shares, a slowdown on the \$2.75bn bought during the previous quarter. Shares fell by 5% on Tuesday morning, making it one of the top fallers on the FTSE 100.

The results will return attention to the debate over whether oil and gas firms should face a harsher windfall tax on their profits.

### [BP profits graphic](#)

Paul Nowak, the TUC general secretary, said oil and gas companies were treating the British public "like cash machines".

He said: "These eye-watering profits are an insult to working families as millions struggle with sky-high bills. The government has left billions on the table by refusing to impose a proper windfall tax on the likes of BP. And even now ministers are refusing to take action to fix our broken energy market and stop this obscene price gouging."

"We could have lower household bills and an energy system that served the public, if government taxed excessive profits, introduced a social tariff and created public ownership of new clean power."

Global Justice Now, the campaign group, said: "Today's heinous profits from BP are another kick in the teeth to the millions of people who can't afford to heat their homes."

Labour on Monday night called for the energy profits levy, introduced last year, to be made tougher in order to [fund a freeze on council tax for cash-strapped households](#).

Oil and gas prices have fallen back since last summer, when commodity prices rose sharply after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Concerns over the health of the global economy have weighed on oil prices, while gas prices have eased after a mild winter meant demand in Europe was not as high as feared.

However, gas prices remain well ahead of where they were before the onset of the energy crisis in 2021, meaning consumer gas and electricity bills are expected to remain higher than historic averages for at least the remainder of the year.

The commodity price boom has fed through to oil and gas companies' profits, and led the government to introduce a windfall tax on North Sea operators.

On Tuesday, BP said it had incurred \$3.4bn of taxes worldwide during the quarter. That encompassed \$650m on its UK North Sea business, including about \$300m because of the windfall tax. In 2022, BP paid \$2.2bn on its North Sea business, including \$700m in windfall taxes.

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BP has also been in the crosshairs of green campaigners, after it [scaled back climate goals](#) earlier this year. [Last week](#), climate protesters disrupted BP's annual general meeting, where the oil company faced a backlash from some shareholders over the weaker climate commitments. Some protesters were forcibly removed.

Labour has said the UK windfall tax should be expanded to capture profits made from refining oil and selling fuel, and a tax break on fossil fuel extraction should be scrapped.

The shadow energy secretary, Ed Miliband, said: "The Tory windfall tax is still full of get-out clauses with billions being bunged at oil and gas companies in special subsidies not available in any other part of the energy sector."

Murray Auchincloss, the BP finance chief, said: "We know how difficult a time it is. We get it." He said the company would focus on making investments, including in low carbon energy, paying taxes and dividends.

On the calls for a strengthened windfall tax, he said: "Taxes are for government, not us. We are not going to speculate."

Auchincloss said that its gas trading arm had performed well, signing contracts for delivery in 2024 and betting that gas prices would fall sharply in early 2023. "The traders made the right call," he said.

The US oil companies ExxonMobil and rival Chevron last week [posted](#) booming profits, and Britain's Shell will report on its first-quarter trading on Thursday. The increase in profits has helped companies recover from the impact of Covid lockdowns, which sent demand for fuel plunging.

BP said it made \$3.6bn in investments during the quarter. It has [faced criticism](#) over the balance between spending on oil and gas and low carbon energy.

The company highlighted its investments in oil and gas in India and the Gulf of Mexico, as well as low-carbon hydrogen and carbon capture and storage projects in the north-east of England.

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A BP oil platform in the North Sea. BP more than doubled its annual profits last year. Photograph: Reuters

### [Energy industry](#)

## **Labour calls for energy firms to pay more tax on £60m-a-day profits**

Party wants greater taxation on North Sea profits to fund freeze on council tax for cash-strapped UK households

- [Bumper BP profits reignite debate over tougher windfall tax](#)
- [Analysis: does UK need to drill for more North Sea oil and gas?](#)

[Mark Sweeney](#)

[@marksweeney](#)

Mon 1 May 2023 17.30 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 May 2023 02.35 EDT

Energy companies are making £60m in profits a day from operations in the North Sea and should be paying more in tax to fund a freeze on council tax

for cash-strapped households, according to [Labour](#).

Labour's call comes before the latest financial updates from [Shell](#) and BP this week. The energy companies are expected to report more bumper profits to the London market due to the spike in prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

UK-headquartered [Shell made \\$40bn \(£32bn\) in profits last year](#), one of the largest in British corporate history and the best performance in its 115-year history, while [BP more than doubled annual profits](#) to \$28bn.

Other energy companies including Centrica, the owner of British Gas, [also posted record profits last year](#).

Labour estimates that the largest energy companies have already booked £7bn in profits so far this year – the equivalent of about £60m a day – from North Sea operations.

Ed Miliband, the shadow climate change and net zero secretary, said: “While families face the crunch from soaring bills, these new figures confirm yet again that the Conservatives are refusing to do the fair and right thing and bring in a proper windfall tax on oil and gas giants to help freeze council tax this year.

“That’s the choice Labour would make ahead of these local elections, because we are on the side of working people.”

Prime minister Rishi Sunak originally [introduced a 25% energy profits levy](#), more commonly known as a “windfall tax”, which was meant to run until the end of 2025 when he was chancellor. In January, the windfall tax was increased to 35% and will run until March 2028.

Harbour Energy, the North Sea’s biggest producer, has claimed that the tax [“all but wiped out”](#) its profits last year. Oil and gas firms operating in the North Sea also pay 30% corporation tax on their profits and a supplementary 10% rate on top of that. Other firms currently pay corporation tax at 25%.

Labour has criticised the windfall tax scheme because it applies to profits made from extracting UK oil and gas but not from other activities, such as refining oil and selling petrol and diesel on forecourts. It also lets firms claim tax savings worth 91p of every £1 invested in fossil fuel extraction in the UK.

Labour said the tax relief should be scrapped to implement a “proper” windfall tax.

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Shell initially said it did not expect to pay any windfall tax for 2022 as its North Sea investments meant it was not considered to have made any UK profits.

However, the company subsequently announced that [it would pay \\$134m \(£108m\)](#) for 2022, and expected to pay more than \$500m (£400m) for 2023. BP said it would pay \$700m (£583m) in windfall tax for 2022.

Europe, which uses a different method to tax windfalls under its “solidarity contribution” scheme, raised the larger sum of \$520m in EU payments last year.

The government says that tax receipts from companies operating in the North Sea will be £11bn in 2022-2023. [Jeremy Hunt](#), the chancellor, has said that the windfall tax will raise £40bn over six years.

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Dr Geoffrey Hinton, the ‘godfather of AI’, has left Google. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

[Google](#)

## ‘Godfather of AI’ Geoffrey Hinton quits Google and warns over dangers of misinformation

The neural network pioneer says dangers of chatbots were ‘quite scary’ and warns they could be exploited by ‘bad actors’

*[Josh Taylor](#) and [Alex Hern](#)*

Tue 2 May 2023 07.23 EDTFirst published on Tue 2 May 2023 00.25 EDT

The man often touted as the godfather of AI has quit [Google](#), citing concerns over the flood of misinformation, the possibility for AI to upend the job market, and the “existential risk” posed by the creation of a true digital intelligence.

Dr Geoffrey Hinton, who with two of his students at the University of Toronto built a neural net in 2012, quit Google this week, as first reported by the [New York Times](#).

Hinton, 75, said he quit to speak freely about the dangers of AI, and in part regrets his contribution to the field. He was brought on by Google [a decade ago](#) to help develop the company's AI technology, and the approach he pioneered led the way for current systems such as ChatGPT.

He told the New York Times that until last year he believed Google had been a “proper steward” of the technology, but that changed once Microsoft started incorporating a chatbot into its Bing search engine, and the company began becoming concerned about the risk to its search business.

Some of the dangers of AI chatbots were “quite scary”, [he told the BBC](#), warning they could become more intelligent than humans and could be exploited by “bad actors”. “It’s able to produce lots of text automatically so you can get lots of very effective spambots. It will allow authoritarian leaders to manipulate their electorates, things like that.”

But, he added, he was also concerned about the “existential risk of what happens when these things get more intelligent than us.

“I’ve come to the conclusion that the kind of intelligence we’re developing is very different from the intelligence we have,” he said. “So it’s as if you had 10,000 people and whenever one person learned something, everybody automatically knew it. And that’s how these chatbots can know so much more than any one person.”

He is not alone in the [upper echelons of AI research](#) in fearing that the technology could pose serious harm to humanity. Last month, Elon Musk said he had [fallen out with the Google co-founder Larry Page](#) because Page was “not taking AI safety seriously enough”. Musk told Fox News that Page wanted “digital superintelligence, basically a digital god, if you will, as soon as possible”.

Valérie Pisano, the chief executive of Mila – the Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute – said the slapdash approach to safety in AI systems would not be tolerated in any other field. “The technology is put out there, and as the system interacts with humankind, its developers wait to see what happens and make adjustments based on that. We would never, as a collective, accept this kind of mindset in any other industrial field. There’s something about tech and social media where we’re like: ‘Yeah, sure, we’ll figure it out later,’” she said.

Hinton’s concern in the short term is something that has already become a reality – people will not be able to discern what is true any more with AI-generated photos, videos and text flooding the internet.

The recent upgrades to image generators such as Midjourney mean people can now produce photo-realistic images – one such image of Pope Francis in a Balenciaga puffer coat [went viral in March](#).

Hinton was also concerned that AI will eventually replace jobs like paralegals, personal assistants and other “drudge work”, and potentially more in the future.

Google’s chief scientist, Jeff Dean, said in a statement that Google appreciated Hinton’s contributions to the company over the past decade.

“I’ve deeply enjoyed our many conversations over the years. I’ll miss him, and I wish him well!

“As one of the first companies to publish AI Principles, we remain committed to a responsible approach to AI. We’re continually learning to understand emerging risks while also innovating boldly.” Toby Walsh, the chief scientist at the University of New South Wales AI Institute, said people should be questioning any online media they see now.

“When it comes to any digital data you see – audio or video – you have to entertain the idea that someone has spoofed it.”

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**Politics live with Andrew Sparrow**  
**Politics**

# Sue Gray declined to make representations to inquiry into her role with Labour, Dowden says – as it happened

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## 2023.05.02 - Spotlight

- [Met Gala 2023 red carpet Celebrating Karl Lagerfeld – in pictures](#)
- [Karl Lagerfeld at the Met review Veneration meets reappraisal](#)
- [Serena Williams Tennis star announces pregnancy on red carpet](#)
- [As it happened Pearls, pregnancy reveals and a giant cat](#)

# Met Gala 2023 red carpet: celebrating Karl Lagerfeld – in pictures

US actor Jeremy Pope pays tribute to the late Karl Lagerfeld at the 2023 Met Gala. Photograph: Kevin Mazur/MG23/Getty Images for the Met Museum/Vogue

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Karl Lagerfeld: A Line of Beauty covers the designer's spectacular 65-year career. Photograph: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

[Art and design](#)

[Review](#)

## **Karl Lagerfeld at the Met review: veneration meets reappraisal**

A Line of Beauty walks difficult line between celebrating designer and addressing recent debates

- [Met Gala 2023 – live updates](#)



[Hannah Marriott](#)

[@maid\\_marriott](#)

Mon 1 May 2023 17.27 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 May 2023 07.42 EDT

Deep in the bowels of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's new [Karl Lagerfeld](#) exhibition is a small circular room housing an installation of 81 iPhones.

Each screen flashes with footage of Lagerfeld in 2011, giggling and stamping his foot at the peak of his powdered-wig pomp, and a series of “Karlisms” – including his famous declaration that sweatpants are “a sign of defeat”. There are also lesser-known phrases, such as: “I always say what I think, and sometimes even what I don’t think”, a remark that feels pertinent to debates that have swirled in the run-up to the show about whether the New York institution was wise to celebrate the designer in the first place.



The Satirical Line at the Met's Karl Lagerfeld exhibition. Photograph: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Karl Lagerfeld: A Line of Beauty, which opens on Friday, walks a difficult line. Its entire purpose is to venerate the designer, [who died in 2019 at the age of 85](#) after a spectacular 65-year career, whose legacy has recently been reappraised owing to much-documented fatphobic and Islamaphobic comments he made in the early 2000s.

The exhibition tackles this by largely focusing on Lagerfeld's work, and particularly his aptitude for sketching. It opens with a huge video wall displaying a close crop of his fingerless-gloved hand-sketching gowns. Next to that is a recreation of his desk – an incredible mess of art books, sketch pads, sketches and sharpie pens, complete with a glass of red wine – an installation which speaks of a creative genius overflowing with ideas.

There are sketches displayed next to many of the 200 outfits on show, which are grouped by theme, taking in his time at Fendi, from 1965 to 1990, Chloé, where he worked in the 1970s and again in the 1990s, and Chanel (1982 to 2019), as well as the eponymous label he launched in 1984. These rooms, said curator Andrew Bolton, tackle Lagerfeld's “duality” by examining contradictory themes such as “feminine/masculine” “romantic/military”

“historical/futuristic” “canonical/countercultural”. In this way, Bolton said he tried to address the controversy about Lagerfeld “subliminally – through the clothes. Because I think that we all have dualities, things we’re not proud of in our lives. When you walk through the show, I want to show those contradictions more indirectly.”



The Military Line at Karl Lagerfeld: A Line of Beauty. Photograph: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

In a set designed by architect Tadao Ando, the gowns are presented at contrasting levels in each sleek room, with displays including a bouclé suit paired with a monochrome robot headset – illustrating Lagerfeld’s modernisation of the house of Chanel – and dozens of incredibly intricate wedding gowns, with trompe l’oeil flowers. There are also witty, surrealist pieces including a 1980s silk crepe dress from his eponymous line embroidered with huge gold candlesticks.

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The Romantic Line at the exhibition. Photograph: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The final room tackles Lagerfeld the man, displaying what the show argues was his “greatest deception” – his self-presentation – via his famous fan, sunglasses, and fingerless gloves displayed in Perspex boxes like relics. It is not until the end of the show that you see the man himself, which was intentional, said Bolton, who believes Lagerfeld’s design work is more intimate than his persona. “I wanted the rawness of Karl, before you get to ‘the puppet’ or ‘dolly’ that he called himself.”

“He said things that were very funny, things that were very poignant but also things that were very offensive and obviously we don’t condone them so I didn’t want to put any of those in. But I do want to get people to get an

indication of his wit,” said Bolton of the iPads. The show, he adds, “is very much about his work more than him – but I don’t believe you can separate the man from the designer”.

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Serena Williams has announced her pregnancy with Alexis Ohanian at the 2023 Met Gala celebrating ‘Karl Lagerfeld: A Line Of Beauty’ in New York. Photograph: Mike Coppola/Getty Images

[Serena Williams](#)

## **Serena Williams announces pregnancy on Met Gala red carpet**

- Retired tennis star says she is expecting baby number two
- Roger Federer and Andy Roddick also in attendance
- [Met gala: Red carpet fashion, celebrity arrivals and Lagerfeld](#)

*Reuters*

Mon 1 May 2023 21.32 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 May 2023 07.42 EDT

Serena Williams has confirmed she is pregnant with baby number two, telling reporters at the star-studded Met Gala in New York that there were “three of us” on the red carpet, where she arrived with husband Alexis Ohanian.

The 23-times major winner announced last year that she was “evolving away from tennis”, writing in a Vogue magazine article that she wanted to grow her family after welcoming daughter Olympia in 2017.

“Was so excited when Anna Wintour invited the three of us to the [Met Gala](#),” Williams said in a TikTok post on Monday evening.

Williams, a long-time friend of Anna Wintour, the Vogue editor-in-chief and Met Gala co-chair, is a frequent attendee of the annual event to benefit the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Costume Institute and on Monday donned a form-fitting black gown with a white skirt.

The theme of this year’s gala was “Karl Lagerfeld: A Line of Beauty”, in honour of the late Chanel designer.

Footage from the red carpet showed Ohanian, an entrepreneur and the co-founder of Reddit, gently resting his hand on the midsection of the 41-year-old Williams.

Serena Williams and Alexis Ohanian reveal they are expecting their second child together. [#MetGala pic.twitter.com/0F8TNgaBla](#)

— Entertainment Tonight (@etnow) [May 2, 2023](#)

The announcement made a return to competitive tennis appear highly unlikely for Williams, one of the most decorated athletes ever to pick up a racket.

Fellow tennis great Roger Federer, in a black tuxedo and dark tortoiseshell sunglasses, and former US Open champion Andy Roddick, in a similar black dinner suit but paired with formal slippers, were among a handful of high-profile athletes in attendance.

American basketball star Brittney Griner, who is back in the US after being detained for nearly 10 months in a Russian penal colony, and China’s twice Olympic champion freestyle skier Eileen Gu were also at the event.

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## Met Gala 2023

# 2023 Met Gala: pearls, pregnancy reveals and a giant cat celebrate Karl Lagerfeld – as it happened

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## 2023.05.02 - Opinion

- [Gove and Hunt, beware: true-blue Surrey is ready to turf out the Tories – and you’re next](#)
- [Charles is the king of apathy, not our hearts – he risks it all by asking for more](#)
- [Putin claims he’s cancelling public celebrations over safety fears. The truth is more humiliating](#)
- [The best way to improve your relationship? Bond over your bad behaviour](#)



Michael Gove, the secretary of state for levelling up, housing and communities, is MP for Surrey Heath. Photograph: Vickie Flores/EPA

[Opinion](#)[Local elections](#)

## **Gove and Hunt, beware: true-blue Surrey is ready to turf out the Tories – and you're next**

[Polly Toynbee](#)



An avalanche is coming. The voters I met are abandoning the Conservatives over lying, cheating and Brexit

Tue 2 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 May 2023 09.27 EDT

“Were you still awake for Raab? Or Hunt? Or Gove?” On the morning after next year’s election we may be asking each other that, remembering the magic early-hours moment in 1997 when [Michael Portillo](#) lost his seat in Enfield Southgate, north London, symbolising the earthquake that brought down the Tories after 18 long years. Imagine the shock of Tory A-listers’ seats tumbling in the forever Tory fiefdoms of Surrey.

I had never imagined it, so what I discovered while canvassing with the Liberal Democrats last weekend in Michael Gove’s Surrey Heath constituency was terra incognita to me. Before, there was no point in following the fortunes of forlorn opposition [candidates](#) trying to knock down impenetrable home-county blue walls. There is now.

On Surrey Heath borough [council](#) – Tory since the dawn of time – Lib Dems already hold 10 council seats to the Tories’ 18 after the last elections in 2019 (plus four independents, two Green and one Labour). They may gain control,

after taking over next-door [Woking](#) last year (Woking, awoke!). It seems like a sign of change when the majority of Tory councillors in Surrey Heath are not standing again, including the council's leader. "Running for the hills," gloats a Lib Dem councillor. Local results don't necessarily translate to general elections; angry voters can use locals as a free hit at the government of the day, before returning to old loyalties for Westminster. But listening to an unexpected array of outraged voters switching away from the Tories, it was hard to think many would be returning next year or any time soon.

This is Lightwater, a ward so blue no Lib Dems even bothered standing here in 2019. In a row of luxury executive homes bedecked with columns, just as you would expect, a polite elderly man says he's very happy with the Tories, has a good private pension and private health insurance, owns rental properties and would never vote any differently. What you wouldn't expect across the way is the younger man who says: "Like the rest of the country, I'm really tired of the Tories." He moved here but couldn't get his children in to a local school, "but going private costs me an arm and a leg". Esso has built a [pipeline](#) and damaged trees behind his house, "but Michael Gove did nothing".

Nearby, in more modest homes, an avalanche of voters tip away from the Tories. "It's time to shake them up," says one woman. "I'd never, never be Labour, but Liberal Democrats, OK." She's just one who raises [potholes](#), for which they say Surrey is famous: on that very day two cars were stuck in a single pothole, and had still not been winched out. Someone jokes: "Britain used to drive on the left, but now it drives on what's left." Next door a middle-aged man says: "We're the squeezed middle, on £30,000, renting this house. No, we're not getting by." As with one house after another, the Boris Johnson/Liz Truss mayhem is still raw. "We're sick of the lying and cheating and lining their own pockets," he says as his wife adds, "You feel they're laughing at you now."

Down the road a critical care nurse from Frimley Park hospital, where the [roof](#) is precarious, is shocked by the food bank set up for nurses. In his garden a few doors down, a man calls Gove "not a nice man", which is a common sentiment, and why Lib Dem leaflets here always refer to "Michael Gove's Conservatives".

But here was the dream Lib Dem door-knock: a young couple with a small boy, ex-Tory voters who had voted Brexit and were now full of indignant regret, had a lot to say and out it all poured. “We were turkeys voting for Christmas,” said the father, shaking his head in disbelief. His company supplies many others struggling with Brexit fallout: “They can’t sell into the EU, takes too long, too expensive.” Why did they vote Brexit? “I wish we hadn’t,” says his wife. “I just thought, ‘We’re British, we don’t want to be pushed around.’ We had no idea how well we did out of it. Oven-ready? Boris had nothing. He just lied and lied, even to the Queen. We won’t forgive Tories.”

The Lib Dems hadn’t knocked these streets before, and there’s nothing psephologically significant about a random canvass. Vox pops can be chosen to suit, but out of the first 15 conversations, only three would vote Tory: in Lightwater, of all places, this felt seismic. The cost of living, the NHS and renegotiating Truss-inflated mortgages were all mentioned, but above all sheer disgust with the Tories was everywhere. Immigration didn’t get a mention, so as the political scientist John Curtice suggests to me, it may not be the Tories’ hoped-for salvation, as they head for the wilds of Suella Braverman/Jacob Rees-Mogg Conservative extremity.

“They need to persuade people that Conservatives can restore a reputation for economic competence,” Curtice says, yet Surrey Heath council has been criticised for its “disastrous” decision to spend millions on a [shopping centre](#) the value of which plummeted by 50% in four years. People talk about the length of NHS waiting lists. [Sewage](#) has also been a shocker, the Lib Dems revealing that filth has been [gushing into rivers](#) such as the nearby Bourne, a campaign that has been picked up by the rightwing press.

Labour needs the Lib Dems to tear the heart out of the Tory heartlands. As one longtime Labour voter says, in Lightwater he will vote Lib Dem tactically “because it’s necessary”, and so it is. Curtice tells me: “The last time I saw tactical voting on this scale was before the 1997 election when voters just wanted to get the [Conservatives](#) out.” And they did. It needs no secret pacts, just each party reserving all energy for its own winnables.

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Besides, if Labour voters can forget the Lib Dems' coalition shame, some may welcome the influence of their stronger Brexit resistance and support for proportional representation. Labour HQ wants them to do well in a general election – without going so far as holding the balance of power. If they did, would they use their leverage more effectively this time by refusing to vote through a Labour budget without a referendum on PR, with a binding Labour commitment to back reform to the hilt? Nick Clegg's fatal error was allowing David Cameron to throw his party's mighty campaigning weight against it. Since then, [public opinion](#) has swung behind electoral reform. If Labour fails to win outright, the Lib Dems will say its choice will be between a PR referendum and a far more reckless one on Scottish independence to win SNP backing.

Ed Davey has wisely abandoned "[equidistance](#)" between the other main parties, as Paddy Ashdown did before 1997, encouraging tactical voting. There will be no Tory/ Lib Dem coalition and the chance of an outright Tory victory looks remote. But watch them try to win back Tory switchers by warning: "Vote Lib Dem, get Labour".

In the meantime, wait for the votes in these local elections to be closely dissected for general election impact: the few overnight results will be misleading. But as the tea leaves take time to settle, watch the Tory teapot cracking apart.

# Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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‘So far, the public mood has been mostly one of polite apathy.’ Souvenirs for the coronation on sale in Windsor. Photograph: Maja Smiejkowska/Reuters

[Opinion](#)[King Charles coronation](#)

## **Charles is the king of apathy, not our hearts – he risks it all by asking for more**

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



Most of us don't care about the coronation, and attempts to whip up our support have already backfired

Tue 2 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 May 2023 12.06 EDT

It was the call to swear an oath of allegiance to the king that did it.

Until then it had been possible just to let all the coronation chatter about spinach quiches and gold sticks-in-waiting and who is wearing which tiara drift painlessly over your head if you weren't entirely gripped, as polling suggests most of us aren't. (A sizeable 64% of Britons care either not at all or not very much about the coronation, according to the pollsters at [YouGov](#).) But with the idea of encouraging viewers watching the ceremony at home to let out a cry of loyal devotion to the king, in unison with the abbey crowd, something audibly cracked. A public act of homage? How positively feudal.

The palace was quick to stress that this was very much an invitation, not a requirement, ironically designed to modernise things by involving the public instead of getting peers to swear the oath on their behalf. (Though it would be even more modern surely to scrap the oath altogether, acknowledging that

monarchs now must earn our loyalty rather than demand it.) But the irritated response shows what a tightrope they're walking.

Years of thought and care have rightly gone into making this ceremony more inclusive, with its female bishops and multi-faith representatives and [forswearing of the Koh-i-noor](#) diamond associated with colonial plunder.

What seems to have been overlooked in the anxiety to get all that right, however, is that while this may literally be the crowning event in King Charles's life, it's not that big a deal to most people, and trying too hard to whip up emotion round it risks triggering an irritated backlash instead.

So far, the public mood has been mostly one of polite apathy. Some will be camping out to secure prime flag-waving territory on the Mall and some actively protesting (around [one in five](#) Britons wants an elected head of state). But most of the country loiters in between, accepting the monarchy's continued existence with varying degrees of enthusiasm or resignation while generally being preoccupied with other things entirely. While last year 38% of Britons still felt the royal family was "very important" to the country, the National Centre for Social Research finds that figure has now fallen to [29%](#), its lowest point since records began, 40 years ago.



'Coronation day itself won't be a flop, if only because the nation badly needs an excuse to party.' A souvenir shop in Windsor. Photograph: Maja

Smiejkowska/Reuters

Coronation day itself won't be a flop, if only because the nation badly needs an excuse to party. If the rain holds off there will be plenty of cake and bunting and turning on the telly to see if they've hidden Prince Harry behind a pillar. Big national events have their own gravitational pull, which is why the World Cup sucks in people who never normally watch football, and YouGov found 46% of respondents were still likely to watch or take part in the thing they apparently don't care about. But getting cheerfully plastered on a bank holiday weekend doth not in itself a profound relationship to the monarchy make.

Royal births, marriages and funerals can be opportunities to connect with the public because they're reminders of shared humanity (as are scandals, splits and family estrangements). The Queen's death was a genuinely profound moment for the nation, particularly perhaps after a period of Covid-19-era funerals when so many families couldn't grieve their own losses collectively.

But there's no relatable, real-life equivalent of a coronation. This ceremony is about the institution of monarchy, stripped of its human softening edges: it formalises what is essentially a fait accompli, a handover of power that happened at the moment of the previous monarch's death and is now being ratified before the people and before God. As such, it's traditionally a moment both of celebration and of jeopardy, like the moment in a wedding when the vicar asks if anyone in the congregation objects.

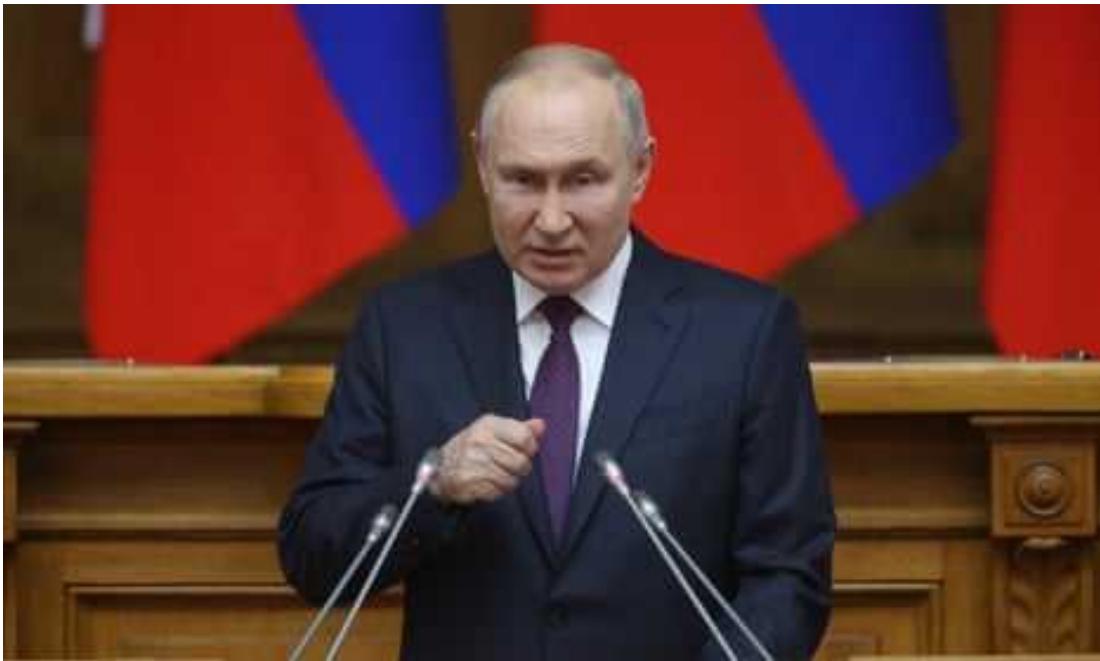
Oaths of allegiance may feel like a tame historical hangover from the days when brand new monarchs feared some rebellious duke raising an army against them. But actively prompting the nation to consider how loyal it feels to the monarchy isn't entirely without risks, even now. We're trained to regard royalty as a spectacle, something that pulls in tourists and occasionally sends up fireworks but can generally be safely forgotten. But coronations are a reminder of its deeper constitutional significance, a comforting thought for royalists but to others a provocative reminder of the king's right to rule over them.

I'm not personally a republican (too worried about who we'd get as president instead). But I find the public "shushing" of those who are, in the context of a coronation, uncomfortable. The Queen's death, republicans were told, wasn't the right time to discuss this; not while people are grieving. But if a coronation isn't the right time either, when is? It doubtless wasn't the palace's intent in promoting the oath to silence dissent – MPs, soldiers and new British citizens already swear similar forms of allegiance – but they should have realised that's how it would sound to some.

The less obvious risk here for the monarchy, however, is of stirring a pot better left alone. Taking public acquiescence for granted, in this case, may well be safer than challenging people to express it out loud, only for some to realise with a start how odd that sounds in 2023. We are citizens now, not serfs. While the fuss over the oath will doubtless be forgotten soon enough, a wise king would take this as a warning not to push his luck.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
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‘At the same time that public protest is being pre-emptively suppressed, dissent and conflict continues to grow in military circles.’ Photograph: Getty  
[OpinionRussia](#)

## **Putin claims he’s cancelling public celebrations over safety fears. The truth is more humiliating**

[Samantha de Bendern](#)



With even nationalist pro-war bloggers criticising Putin's actions in Ukraine, his desperation and paranoia are growing

Tue 2 May 2023 05.04 EDT Last modified on Wed 3 May 2023 04.36 EDT

May is traditionally a month for public celebration in Russia, with massive public processions on 1 May for Labour Day and military parades on 9 May for Victory Day, a holiday commemorating the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. Not so in 2023. Russia's biggest trade union cancelled its traditional Labour Day demonstrations because of the "heightened risk of terrorist activity", while regions near the Ukrainian border called off Victory Day parades so as to "not provoke" the Ukrainian army.

The Russian government has warned people across the country to stay away from military installations on Victory Day, while the hugely popular Immortal Regiment, an event during which ordinary citizens all over Russia march with portraits of relatives who died in the second world war, has been moved online.

Allegedly the "terrorist" threat comes from Ukraine – Russian media reported on 24 April that a downed Ukrainian drone was found 30km (20

miles) from Moscow – but it seems difficult to accept that Russia’s air defences cannot guarantee the safety of Moscow’s skies during the country’s biggest patriotic celebration of the year, particularly at a time when Putin has been stoking Russian nationalist feelings to garner support for his war in Ukraine.

A Ukrainian drone attack on Red Square during the Victory Day military parade would be humiliating for Putin, but it seems more likely that he’s worried about the potential humiliation of thousands of civilians marching with the portraits of sons and husbands fallen in Ukraine. While official [Russian figures](#) have pointed to fewer than 6,000 military casualties in Ukraine, Ukraine claims approximately [150,000 Russian military personnel have been killed](#). Even conservative western estimates hover around the [60,000 mark](#) – more than triple the 15,000 Soviet troops killed in the 10-year Afghan war.

Labour Day parades come with their own risk. In spite of the cancellation of official events, on 1 May a few small sporadic gatherings took place in cities all over Russia, to which some people turned up with anti-war banners. In St Petersburg [a man was arrested](#) for carrying a board with the traditional May Day slogan of “Peace, Work, May”, with an added Z symbol with a red mark across it. In Ekaterinburg a woman was reportedly detained with a banner inscribed with another traditional May Day slogan, “Peace to the World.”

The banning of public events during the May holidays is less likely to be out of concern for citizens’ safety, and more to do with Putin’s paranoid obsession with shutting down any channel for criticism of his war, even if open support for [Ukraine](#) is tiny and the threat of a popular uprising very remote.

At the same time that public protest is being pre-emptively suppressed, dissent and conflict continues to grow in military circles. In a [90-minute interview](#) with a military blogger on 29 April, Yevgeny Prigozhin, the de facto leader of the Wagner private military company, bemoaned the catastrophic state of the Russian army, and said that “the time has come when we have to stop lying to the population of the Russian Federation saying that everything is OK”. He sarcastically called the war in Ukraine “the so-called special military operation”, in a veiled criticism of Putin’s ban

on [the use of the word war](#) to describe events in Ukraine. Prigozhin also criticised the defence ministry for withholding ammunition and threatened to withdraw his men from the Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, which Russia has been trying to take for nine months.

Conflicts are not only surfacing between Russia's private armies and the defence ministry, but among private armies themselves. On 25 April, soldiers from Gazprom's private army, Potok, sent a [video](#) to Putin complaining that they had been transferred to a different private army (Redut) and then threatened by soldiers of the Wagner group, who said they would shoot them if they retreated from their positions. In early April, mobilised soldiers from the regular army in the Luhansk region (in Russian-occupied Ukraine) disappeared, after telling relatives that they had been [sold to the Wagner group](#) by their commander. When Prigozhin denounces the catastrophic state of the Russian army, he knows what he is talking about.

Russian nationalist pro-war military bloggers also criticise Putin. The most well-known of these is Igor Girkin (AKA Strelkov), who openly condemns Putin's lack of resolve to use Russia's full military might in Ukraine, and wages a simultaneous battle of words – for now – with Prigozhin. On 2 April, when another notorious military blogger, [Vladlen Tatarsky](#), was assassinated in a bomb attack in a St Petersburg cafe formerly owned by Prigozhin, the Russian government blamed Ukrainian "terrorists". Prigozhin stated that the attack was probably caused by infighting among what he calls Russian radicals.

Putin has not reacted publicly to any of the military bloggers or private armies – all armed and violent men – who criticise the way the war is being fought. But walking around with a cardboard sign calling for peace can lead to temporary arrest, and being an anti-war intellectual carries the risk of a 25-year prison sentence.

Russia is not on the verge of a popular revolution, but Putin still feels threatened enough by public anti-war protests to crack down at the first sign of peaceful civil dissent. This betrays a fundamental fear of showing any weakness that his armed critics could exploit. The main message here is clear: if you want to be safe in today's [Russia](#), carry a gun. Better still, create

a private army. This will increase your chances of survival the day the strongman falls.

This article was amended on 2 and 3 May 2023. Due to a translation error, an earlier version said that a woman was reportedly detained with a banner inscribed with a traditional May Day slogan, “Peace to Peace”. This should have said “Peace to the World”. The man arrested in St Petersburg was not 76 but taken to police station No 76.

Samantha de Bendern is an associate fellow in the Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House and a political commentator on LCI television in France

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In sickness and in health ... a report shows that couples who are united in unhealthy habits are happier. Photograph: Westend61/Getty Images (posed by models)

[Opinion](#)[Relationships](#)

## **The best way to improve your relationship? Bond over your bad behaviour**

[Zoe Williams](#)



Yes, you could go for a run together, but it will only bring out self-righteousness and impatience. Loafing and comfort eating will unite you in imperfect harmony

Tue 2 May 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 May 2023 09.55 EDT

In further Dispatches from Universities Proving Things You Already Knew, academics in Zurich have shown that couples who do unhealthy things together – smoking, loafing and eating junk food – have higher relationship satisfaction than those who share improving activities, such as going for a run.

If you're in a relationship as old as or older than the pandemic, you have probably run the gamut of shared activities, from [Yoga with Adriene](#) to smoking. Perhaps you think any problems you encountered at the healthy end are specific to your partner, and if you had had a different spouse to go running with, for instance, they might have been a little bit less annoying.

This is wrong, unfortunately. Exercise brings out the worst in people: the self-righteousness, the vanity, the illusion of self-sufficiency, all the qualities that make all of us impossible to live with. [I had a fitness column](#) for ages

and I wrote once about my anxiety that cardio was making me more rightwing, filling me with Ayn Randian delusions of my own prowess. That was years ago and I still get complaints about it now, from people who can't even get to the meat of their complaint – that I am stupid – without first describing how disciplined they are in their fitness regimes and how good it makes them look and feel. "QED," I always reply. "You sound absolutely horrible." Putting two people in that frame of mind in the same house is like dropping two angry rats into a cage by their tails.

Negative behaviours, meanwhile, unearth softer qualities, the human beneath the carapace – self-effacement and humility, maybe a little light self-parody. Comfort food is a particular win-win pursuit, since you experience the comfort of the food, then a layer of additional comfort that you are as weak as each other. If you have an outlier bad habit – imagine, for instance, that you both vape constantly – you are united in the face of social disapprobation. People call us Attack of the Vapers. "Look at the pair of you, with your dummies," they say. This is insanely bonding. We've almost fused at the roots like two mighty oaks.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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A ward at a hospital in El Fasher in Sudan's North Darfur region as fighting continues. Photograph: Ali Shukur/Médecins sans Frontières (MSF)/AFP/Getty Images

[Sudan](#)

## **Medics in Sudan warn of crisis as health system near collapse**

Critical shortages of basic goods including water, and bodies piling in streets creating 'environmental catastrophe'

*[Zeinab Mohammed Salih](#) in Khartoum and [Ruth Michaelson](#)*

Mon 1 May 2023 13.23 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 May 2023 07.01 EDT

Sudanese medics have described seeing piles of bodies in the streets of the capital, Khartoum, people drinking polluted water, and doctors working under bombardments as the battle between the country's two warring generals continues despite a threadbare ceasefire.

Intense explosions and shelling were audible in Omdurman, Khartoum's twin city across the Nile, on Monday and there were reports of further explosions and clashes in the Bahri and Kafouri districts of Khartoum North. In the south of Khartoum, residents reported that the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) fired anti-aircraft missiles in response to bombardments by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF).

Critical shortages of basic goods including water, food and fuel began to take hold amid rising violence, which has so far killed more than 500 people.

Sudan's doctors' union described "an environmental catastrophe" as the number of corpses piled in the streets mounted. With water supplies disrupted across parts of Khartoum, particularly in Bahri, cases of severe disease have risen as desperate people have sought to relieve their thirst by drinking directly from the Nile.

Fighting continued to rage as the UN's special representative for Sudan, Volker Perthes, said the SAF and the RSF were willing to send parties for talks, possibly in Saudi Arabia. Perthes said the talks would begin with a focus on full enforcement of a ceasefire, as multiple temporary truces have seen little enforcement since the two sides began battling across the streets of the capital more than two weeks ago.

Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as [Hemedti](#), who heads the RSF, [told the BBC](#) days ago that he would agree to talks only after a full ceasefire had been implemented. The RSF has made no public announcement of its willingness to join negotiations.

More than 800,000 people could flee into neighbouring countries, the UN's refugee agency has warned. "UNHCR, with governments and partners, is preparing for the possibility that over 800,000 people may flee the fighting in Sudan for neighbouring countries," the agency's chief, Filippo Grandi, said in a tweet. "We hope it doesn't come to that, but if violence doesn't stop we will see more people forced to flee Sudan seeking safety."

As civilians across the Sudanese capital became increasingly isolated and vital supplies ran low, doctors and aid organisations said the country's healthcare system was on the verge of collapse. Many essential services and evacuations have moved to the town of Port Sudan, 500 miles away on the Red Sea coast, which became the country's temporary administrative capital as it sheltered thousands who had fled fighting that has overtaken Khartoum, Omdurman and parts of Darfur.



The aftermath of an aerial bombardment in Khartoum North on Monday.  
Photograph: Mohamed Nureldin Abdallah/Reuters

"The scale and speed of what is unfolding is unprecedented in Sudan," said Stéphane Dujarric, a spokesperson for the UN secretary general.

The World Health Organization (WHO), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Sudanese doctors said the healthcare system could collapse, with many hospitals close to the frontlines unable to fully function or having shut down completely.

Just 16% of hospitals in the Sudanese capital, the centre of the fighting, were functioning at full capacity, according to the WHO, with most closed after direct attacks during the fighting.

Dr Houida El-Hassan said she had gathered with colleagues to reopen a facility in Khartoum on the third day of the fighting, now operating on a skeleton staff bereft of anaesthesiologists. “We just took the risk and went out to do this job. People are dying every day, and they need our help,” she said. “We haven’t left the hospital since then. We are extremely tired, exhausted, we don’t know if we can continue like this.”

The hospital initially reopened only for emergencies, treating bullet wounds and injuries from shrapnel, but began to receive people giving birth, and cases of kidney failure and diabetes. “Sometimes I say I’d prefer to die from a rocket strike rather than failing to help a patient who dies due to lack of access to medicines,” said El-Hassan.

Her facility has also treated rising numbers of stab wounds. “Looting and robbery became a major problem, so we get a lot of those cases,” she said. “Sadly we lose two to four people a day where we simply cannot save their lives.”

She added: “You can’t walk two minutes without being robbed, it has become impossible in this area and we don’t have fuel to fill up our cars. The good thing is the people who live close to the hospital allow us to stay with them.”

Share your experience

### **How have you been affected?**

If you have been caught up in or have been otherwise affected by the clashes that have erupted in Sudan, you can tell us about it in the form below.

Please share your story if you are 18 or over, anonymously if you wish. For more information please see our [terms of service](#) and [privacy policy](#).

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Citizens across the capital described how relatives had died in their homes due to being unable to access basic medical care. A 33-year-old woman died of dengue fever last week when her family were unable to locate a functioning hospital in Omdurman. One facility in the area reopened and then closed after it was shelled, killing one person and injuring 11 others.

Sudan's doctors' union highlighted how medical staff were struggling to work under bombardments, adding that the health system's capacity to deal with the crisis and respond to mass casualties was "deteriorating by the hour".

Sixteen hospitals had been subjected to bombardments and shelling, they said, while a national laboratory and 19 hospitals had been forcibly evacuated by military forces, some to use for their operations. Six ambulances were attacked while trying to carry patients. A video purportedly of a paediatric surgery ward of a key hospital in central Khartoum, which could not be immediately verified, showed gaping holes in the roof directly above hospital beds covered in debris and holes from shrapnel dotted the walls.

The medical union said 70% of hospitals "in and around the areas used as battlegrounds are out of service," while others were operating at a limited capacity and only able to provide the most basic first aid due to the lack of supplies. "These hospitals are currently threatened with a complete shutdown, due to lack of supplies, shortage of health staff and lack of water and electricity," it said.



The streets of Khartoum as clashes continue. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

The ICRC said its first airlift of vital medical supplies landed in Port Sudan on Sunday but it warned of difficulties in transporting aid to hospitals on the frontlines in the capital. “The healthcare system is on the verge of collapse as many hospitals and other health facilities closed their doors, they simply can’t function any more,” said Alyona Synenko, an [Africa](#) spokesperson for the ICRC.

“Healthcare personnel can’t reach their place of work, some fled due to the lack of water, electricity and medical supplies. There are serious grounds to worry at the moment that unless urgent help arrives, the entire system may collapse, and the consequences of that would be catastrophic: we’re talking about thousands of wounded people, the population needs basic healthcare.”

She said the situation was critical in Khartoum as well as in the Darfur region, where a major teaching hospital in West Darfur was forced to close due to ongoing fighting and looting. “It’s what we feared and are now witnessing in Khartoum. Hospitals are functioning without water and electricity there, fuel prices are skyrocketing and so there are acute shortages of fuel which means issues with generators and water pumps. Without fuel

to run those things, how can you provide healthcare or clean running water?" Synenko said.

Martin Griffiths, the UN undersecretary for humanitarian affairs, warned of an impending crisis. "Two weeks since clashes erupted in Khartoum and around Sudan, the humanitarian situation is reaching breaking point," he said. The UN has reported increasing attacks and looting at its offices across Sudan, as well as attacks on aid workers.

Dr Ahmed Abbas, who previously worked at the main hospital in Omdurman before he was evacuated to the UK, said the facility was now functioning at its minimum capacity. "When we asked the ministry for help, they refused, and even ordered to shut down some hospitals," he said.

Abbas previously lived in Khartoum North, an area that has endured heavy bombardments by the SAF. "It became impossible for me to stay in Khartoum North, I had to leave the country," he said.

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British nationals wait to board an RAF aircraft, during the evacuation to Cyprus, at Wadi Seidna airbase in Sudan. Photograph: Uk Mod/Reuters

[Sudan](#)

[Analysis](#)

## Europe warily eyes security implications of a protracted conflict in Sudan

[Dan Sabbagh](#) Defence and security correspondent

Long dispute creates unwanted uncertainties as increased migration and outside actors enter the conflict

Tue 2 May 2023 00.15 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 May 2023 12.17 EDT

Fears remain that [Sudan](#) – riven by fighting between the Sudanese army and its paramilitary rival, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) – could plunge into a protracted crisis, prompting a humanitarian disaster with broad geopolitical implications.

A string of failed or divided states already exist on Europe's peripheries, a crescent of instability that stretches from the African Sahel, Libya, through to Yemen, Syria, and north into Ukraine, three countries where extended wars have been raging.

After the disaster of Iraq and the chaotic Joe Biden-led retreat from Afghanistan, the days of significant direct western interventions are over, although arms are being supplied in volume to Ukraine. In Sudan, the US has been notably reluctant to deploy its military even to rescue an estimated 16,000 of its civilians.

Washington's efforts have been largely diplomatic, although its principal security concern has been to avoid a repeat of the 2012 Benghazi disaster, where US diplomatic buildings were attacked and the ambassador killed, by rescuing its embassy staff from Khartoum last weekend.

Elsewhere, France and Britain retreated from Mali last November, where they had been trying to stabilise the country and prevent the spread of Islamist extremism, complaining that the west African country's government had chosen instead to align itself with Russia's mercenary and natural resource-hungry Wagner Group.

Many Sudanese people have already begun fleeing the fighting, with vast queues at border points with Egypt, an estimated 20,000 people entering Chad; while the UN's refugee agency, the UNCHR, reporting at least 40,000 fleeing the capital, Khartoum, the scene of some of the fiercest fighting between government and paramilitary forces.

"Sudan has a sizeable population of 45 million," said Ahmed Soliman, a senior research fellow at the Chatham House thinktank, "so the potential for people leaving in larger numbers if there is a protracted conflict has to be considered. Most of the migration will be internal and to neighbouring countries."

Inevitably, however, people will also try to go further into Europe as happened in Syria and Ukraine. People have long fled the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region, where paramilitaries have been accused of waging a genocide

against local people – but a new feature of the outbreak of fighting has been to bring conflict to Khartoum.

### Map of conflict events in Sudan

In the UK, however, the policy response was already, in the government's proposed illegal migration bill, to criminalise people making small boats and other irregular crossings to the UK. Yet [Home Office figures](#) for the year to September 2022 already show that people from Sudan represented the 8th largest country for asylum claims to the UK – and that 84% of them were granted.

This week, Suella Braverman, the home secretary, said the UK had no plans to introduce any safe route for Sudanese people to enter the country, in contrast to Ukraine and Afghanistan, where Britain sought to extend some help to people fleeing as fighting broke out.

“The government’s plans seems to criminalise individuals,” fleeing from Sudan said Maddy Crowther, an executive director of NGO Waging Peace.

It is also unclear whether it will be possible for Britain to completely export any migration problems to continental Europe, when Germany and France already receive triple and double the asylum applications of the UK.

It is a long time since Osama bin Laden was based in Sudan (he spent five formative years in the country before being expelled 1996). Islamism in the government has been mostly in retreat since the fall of dictator Omar al-Bashir in 2019 and the RSF paramilitaries have sought to portray themselves as anti-Islamist.

Experts believe there is little immediate prospect of an extended crisis creating an opportunity for terror groups to strengthen, but a long conflict creates unwanted uncertainties. “If this conflict continues, then we risk a whole generation becoming traumatised. That can lead to radicalisation,” said May Darwich, an associate professor at Birmingham University.

A more likely negative scenario is a Yemen or Syria-style situation, where an initial conflict deteriorates into increasingly protracted fighting, and a

range of international powers pick sides and seek to exploit the country's weakness. Antony Blinken, the US secretary of state, said he had "deep concern" about Russia's Wagner group becoming embroiled in the conflict.

For now the situation remains ambiguous, amid reports that Wagner has offered the RSF rebels weapons, but Hemedti has turned the mercenaries down. Wagner, through a subsidiary, is already involved in goldmining in the county, the EU said in February as it levied sanctions on subsidiaries of the group.

"What you have seen in the past in the region, is that as the US has gradually disengaged that other actors have sought to enter the space," Darwich said.

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Palestinian Khader Adnan has died in an Israel custody prison after an 87-day hunger strike. Photograph: Majdi Mohammed/AP

[Palestinian territories](#)

## **Palestinian Khader Adnan dies in Israel jail after 87-day hunger strike**

Adnan, who was affiliated with the Palestinian militant Islamic Jihad group, was found unconscious in his cell early on Tuesday

*[Bethan McKernan](#) in Jerusalem*

Tue 2 May 2023 05.50 EDTFirst published on Tue 2 May 2023 00.30 EDT

Militants in the blockaded Gaza Strip have launched rockets at [Israel](#) in response to the death after a hunger strike of a well-known political figure affiliated with Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Khader Adnan, a 44-year-old father of nine from near the occupied West Bank city of Jenin, was found unconscious in his cell in the early hours of Tuesday after an 87-day-long hunger strike during which he refused medical

treatment, the Israeli prison authority said. He was transferred from the maximum-security detention facility in the central Israeli city of Ramle to a local hospital, where he was declared dead.

In a statement, Islamic Jihad said: “Our fight is continuing and the enemy will realise once again that its crimes will not pass without a response.” Shortly after news of the hunger striker’s death broke, three rockets and a mortar shell were fired towards southern Israel from Gaza, the Israeli military said. The projectiles triggered air raid sirens in Israeli communities near the frontier with Gaza, but fell in open areas.

Several Palestinian factions in Gaza and the West Bank have declared a general strike. The Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported that Israeli prisons were on high alert in case of riots.

Adnan, who reportedly became involved with the political wing of Islamic Jihad as a student, had been detained by Israel 12 times, spent about eight years in total in jail and undertook five hunger strikes since 2004, according to the Palestinian Prisoners Association.



A protester holds a picture of Khader Adnan. Photograph: Nasser Ishtayeh/SOPA Images/Shutterstock

In 2015, he went on hunger strike for 55 days to protest against his arrest under “[administrative detention](#)”, in which suspects are held without charge or trial on secret evidence for renewable six-month periods on the grounds they pose a security threat. The measure, which is also practised by the Palestinian Authority, has been roundly criticised by human rights groups.

Adnan was arrested again on 5 February after being indicted for incitement and membership of a terrorist organisation, and began the hunger strike a few days later.

Dr Lina Qadem-Hassan, the chair of Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI), visited Adnan on 23 April, after which the organisation issued an urgent call for the prisoner to be transferred to hospital for monitoring and emergency intervention. An Israeli court recently rejected two PHRI petitions demanding Adnan be transferred to a hospital, and that his family be permitted to visit him.

“His cognitive function was good enough to talk to me but he was very weak, losing consciousness regularly. He was clearly dying,” she said. “He said he wanted to live. It doesn’t matter what medical colleagues thought about him or that he refused help, their job is to save lives. The guidelines for dealing with hunger strikers are clear: he should have been taken to hospital after day 45.”

There have been several high-profile cases of prolonged hunger strikes by Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails in recent years, usually in protest at administrative detention. Although deaths are rare, many hunger strikers have suffered severe medical problems as a result.

Israel is holding more than 1,000 Palestinian detainees in administrative detention – the highest number in 20 years – according to the Israeli human rights group, HaMoked.



Nick Kyrgios helped officers track his Tesla after police allege it was stolen from his mother at gunpoint in Canberra, Australia. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

[Nick Kyrgios](#)

## **Nick Kyrgios's Tesla allegedly stolen from mother at gunpoint – tennis star uses app to track car for police**

Officers chase bright green vehicle after gunman raided the sportsman's family home in Canberra, Australia, court documents say

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*[Christopher Knaus](#)  
[@knausc](#)*

Tue 2 May 2023 03.12 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 May 2023 04.23 EDT

Tennis star [Nick Kyrgios](#) helped police by using a phone app to remotely track his Tesla after it was stolen from his mother at gunpoint on Monday morning.

[Kyrgios](#) was inside his family's Canberra home about 8.30am when a masked man wearing all black knocked on the front door, describing himself as "Chris".

His mother answered the door to find a long-barrel firearm pointed at her, according to court documents first reported by the [Canberra Times](#) and the [Australian Broadcasting Corporation](#).

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The man allegedly demanded she hand over the keys to Kyrgios's green [Tesla](#), which was parked on the driveway outside.

After handing the armed man the keys, Kyrgios's mother was allegedly marched outside at gunpoint. The man demanded she show him how to operate the Tesla, police say.

"She was escorted outside toward the Tesla at gun point, and observed the defendant get into the driver seat of the car," police allege in court documents. "She felt at this time that she had an opportunity while the firearm was not pointed at her to run back inside and screamed for help from the other occupants of the house."

Kyrgios and his manager, Daniel Horsfall, called triple-0 for help.

The tennis player then used his Tesla smartphone app to monitor the car's movements, giving information about its whereabouts to police. He also limited the car to a speed of 80km/h.

This allowed police to find it about 16 minutes later. They allege they approached the Tesla on a suburban street, with their firearms drawn, but say the man sped off.

They pursued the Tesla through Canberra's inner north, at times crossing on to the wrong side of the road and reaching a speed of 90km/h in a 50km/h speed zone during the chase.

They ended the chase in a school zone, deeming it too dangerous.

Kyrgios continued to monitor the Tesla's movements during the pursuit.

The app showed the car coming to a stop in Ainslie, an inner-north suburb. Officers cordoned off the street and a specialist tactical response team pulled in front of the car as the driver tried to leave, blocking his escape.

The alleged offender resisted arrest and was Tasered, police say. He was taken to hospital and then a police station, where he was charged with aggravated robbery, driving a vehicle without consent, failing to stop for police, driving while suspended and resisting a public official.

Kyrgios's mother told police that she feared the man was going to return to the house and "blow a hole in the door".

The man appeared in the Australian Capital Territory magistrates court on Tuesday. The Canberra Times and ABC reported that he had been denied bail by the magistrate Glenn Theakston and would return to court later this month.

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