

# The Guardian

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## 2022.05.15 - Opinion

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[\*\*Opinion\*\*](#)[\*\*Death and dying\*\*](#)

## **In her gracious acceptance of death, Deborah James has given us lessons in how to live**

[Nicci Gerrard](#)

None of us truly knows how we will behave when the inevitable gets ever closer. Facing it squarely might allow us to savour those final moments



Deborah James, a ‘life-affirming contributor to the conversation around how we face death’. Photograph: Heathcliff O’Malley/CAMERA PRESS/Telegraph

Sun 15 May 2022 03.00 EDT

Deborah James has been dying in public for five years. Since her diagnosis of terminal bowel cancer, she has become [famous and beloved](#) as a tireless campaigner, co-host of the award-winning podcast of [You, Me and the Big C](#), author of a book about cancer and a humane and life-affirming contributor to the conversation around how we face death. Now she has said she is at the

end of her life. She is no longer being kept alive in hospital, but has returned to her parents' home to die with her husband, children and siblings around her.

The phrase “end of life” has become a tag in familiar phrases: end-of-life care, end-of-life pathway, end-of-life wishes. The phrase “good death” is bandied about with no context. But at least we are starting as a society to talk about death. The brilliant, intimate, funny, flaying books and articles and programmes and podcasts by people who are dying have immense value, for they allow us to think of our own endings, and how we want to die says something about how we want to live.

After surviving stage 4 breast cancer in 1975, [Susan Sontag](#) wrote sanely and brilliantly about her experience of illness (that “night-side of life”) and argued against the ideological cruelty of thinking about sickness in metaphorical terms – cancer, for instance, as a ruthless secret invasion, something to fight against and to overcome. She urged readers to treat illness instead only as literal, bodily, the luck of the draw.

Yet Sontag was always terrified of dying. When in 2004 she was diagnosed with incurable myelodysplastic syndrome, the idea of her own death was unacceptable, unbearable, irreconcilable. She threw all her money and hope and refusal into radical experimental treatment that was never going to save her and made her last chapter one of suffering and, for people close to her, helpless dismay. She could not say goodbye to those who loved her because it was an unutterable acknowledgement that soon she would be their memory of her. She did not have a “good” end of life.

When the film star [Steve McQueen](#) was diagnosed with aggressive terminal lung cancer, he took himself off to Mexico for alternative therapies and then a fatal operation. His surgeon apparently said that McQueen displayed an immense will to live, but it can be recast as an agonising refusal to acknowledge the truth that everyone else could see. He did not have a good death.

She threw all her money and hope and refusal into radical experimental treatment that was never going to save her

James is only 40, with a young family. She has had all the treatments available ([17 tumours removed](#), lungs deflated, body cut into) and has managed to live with spirit, humour and a heightened sense of life's preciousness. But now she accepts that death is at the door. She wants, she said in [an interview](#) (where she was wearing a long green dress and gold earrings and sipping champagne), to be surrounded by those she loves the most and to hear the "normal buzz of my life as I go". This sounds like a good death and here good has absolutely no moral connotations, nor should it ever have. We talk too often about the dying ones being brave, stoic, serene (or alternatively consumed by terror or denial). None of us knows how we will face death's imperative, and courage or a performative cheer are not the point. I suppose I mean that James is living right up to the moment of dying; the approach of the end has not stopped her from living, but has made being alive even more resonant with meaning and love.

This good death is partly in the hands of doctors and nurses. Unlike before the 20th century, people under medical care can often be rescued from illnesses that earlier would have killed them and when their time does come they no longer need to die in agony. (It is not uncommon for the drugs that remove the pain to end the life.) But such care can mean medicalisation, which can bring a battalion of death-defying procedures to the bedside: drugs and tubes and dissections and tailor-made poisons, a complex apparatus of bespoke tortures to keep the patient alive beyond their time. Death can come to seem like a shame and a failure; holding it off for as long as possible the goal.

It can also be in the hands of the person who is at the end of their life. It is hard but not impossible to say no: no to the last-throw-of-the-dice treatment, to the faint chance of extra time that costs extra suffering, to the hope that is more like despair, to the illusion that death will not happen to us, or not yet, to the peculiarly human belief that illness is a weakness and dying a failure, scandal and disgrace. To say: the party's over.

As thinkers have told us for thousands of years, death gives meaning to existence ("The goal of all life is death," wrote Freud). Animals perish but humans die, because humans know they are mortal, no matter that they might try hard not to know, even when they can hear the scaffolding being built under their window. The knowledge of dying can throw a person into

the present tense, what Dennis Potter, near the end of his life and swigging morphine, called the wondrous “[nowness of everything](#)”, or Clive James in his valedictory poem celebrates as “[a world that shone so brightly at the last](#)”.

Clive James in his valedictory poem celebrates as 'a world that shone so brightly at the last'

Sontag wrote that for those who have neither religious faith nor a sense of death as “natural”, it is “the obscene mystery, the ultimate affront, the thing that cannot be controlled... only be denied”. It’s the word “natural” that pulls me up short here, the arrogance and self-alienation of feeling that humans are somehow outside of nature, outside of their own body, with its inevitable decay and its clock ticking out the days.

When in her last weeks, Sontag talked about not-dying, she was talking about dying. And when James has over the years talked about dying, she has been talking about living: living illuminated by the knowledge of her ending. She has been a bright light, vulnerable, enchanting, poignant and embracing life. Perhaps, by publicly confronting her own mortality, she has enabled us better to take a timid peek at our own before death comes knocking and won’t take no for an answer.

Nicci Gerrard is an *Observer* journalist and a founder of [John's Campaign](#)

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**Opinion****Agriculture**

# The Observer view on reforming the restrictions on GM foods

**Observer editorial**

A revolution is coming within agriculture and the UK needs to be at its head



As well as a need for food safety, the challenge for UK farms is to ensure secure and sustainable supplies. Photograph: Bernard O'Kane/Alamy

Sun 15 May 2022 01.30 EDT

Last week, the government outlined details of its long-overdue legislation for easing restrictions on gene-editing farm animals and plants. Current regulations, inherited from the European Union, effectively block all crop strains and animal breeds created through DNA modification. In an overpopulated, overheated world that desperately needs secure food supplies and to limit emissions of carbon dioxide, such barriers should no longer be allowed to restrict progress. We urgently need solutions and Britain, one of the world's leaders in animal and plant research, must be free to play a key

role in this agricultural revolution. Blanket bans of genetically altered crops and animals can be countenanced no longer.

To that extent, the government has moved in the right direction, although the degree of change it proposes is unsatisfactory. The forthcoming genetic technology (precision breeding) bill, outlined in the [Queen's speech](#) last week, will introduce a regulatory regime for releasing gene-edited crops and animals. Sensibly, these will now be treated in the same way as those produced by conventional means.

However, there is no mention of similar allowances being made for animals created by [genetic modification](#) (GM), a technology with a broader range of applications than [gene-editing](#). The latter uses techniques for altering DNA in a plant or animal without adding new genetic material. In contrast, GM technology operates by introducing an entire new gene to create a new strain or breed. Blight-resistant potatoes and crops that can make omega-3 nutrients have been developed in this way but, as the government's proposals stand, they will not be eligible for release under its proposed new regulatory regime and their introduction will continue to be obstructed.

Such restrictions are unnecessary and will have an unfortunate impact in preventing crops such as the blight-proof potato from helping farmers cut the amount of pesticide that they spray on fields to keep them free from disease. Similarly, blocking the growth of crops that are rich in omega-3 will stop a fresh source of nutrients from coming to the aid of a starving planet.

Unfounded claims over unnatural ‘Frankenfoods’ have led to the vilification of an entire technology

At its heart, this refusal to loosen our GM restrictions reveals misguided government thinking. It continues to block a range of new agricultural products because they have been created using a particular scientific procedure, regardless of the fact that the end result may be safe to grow and eat. This state of affairs originally arose as the outcome of the decades-old controversy that erupted over the creation of the first GM crops. The unfounded claim that these “Frankenfoods” were “unnatural” and a danger

to human health and the environment has led to the vilification of an entire technology.

However, as the [Royal Society](#) has emphasised, agricultural varieties and breeds should be regulated on their intrinsic properties rather than the method used to create them. In other words, the outcome of genetic changes made during a new strain or breed's creation should be judged on safety, welfare and environmental considerations. If they pass, they should proceed to market, regardless of the manner of their creation. Failure to pursue such an approach will hamper the government's goal of "improving the sustainability, resilience and productivity of agricultural systems", which, it claims, will be the major benefits from its new bill. At present, it has outlined legislation that is strong on aspiration but very limited in the kind of detail that shows it fully understands the urgency and scale of the problems we face.

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**OpinionOil and gas companies**

## **The Observer view on the urgent need for a windfall tax on the energy giants**

**Observer editorial**

Even bosses of Britain's oil and gas companies admit they hardly know what to do with record-breaking profits



Part of BP's Eastern Trough oil platform in the North Sea. Photograph: Reuters

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North Sea oilwells should be taxed more heavily and so should the production of natural gas. Energy companies are making [record-breaking profits](#) from the sale of hydrocarbons that lie in the deep water that surrounds Britain and that should shame the industry when the people paying the highest price are the poorest in society.

It should shame them into willingly parting with some of the gains, especially when the price of oil and gas is dictated by global markets that are driven at the moment largely by the conflict in Ukraine. These are not super-

profits that can be attributed to the ingenuity of their staff or foresight of company directors.

It's true that the economic recovery after the worst of Covid-19 was over has played a part, creating a mismatch of supply and demand. But Russian aggression and the west's [necessary sanctions](#) on Moscow have delivered the exceptionally high prices we see today and the longer the conflict in eastern Europe continues, the longer prices will remain high.

Illustrating the industry's role for investors, BP reported last week that its profits in the first three months of the year [more than doubled](#) to \$6.2bn (£5bn). This was the highest quarterly profit since the last time shortages of black gold prompted prices on global markets to rocket after the 2008 financial crash. Shell, the other major oil producer listed on the London stock exchange, also delivered bumper profits. The record-breaking \$9.1bn (£7.3bn) generated in the first three months of the year beat the \$6.3bn in the final quarter of 2021 and \$3.2bn during the first quarter of last year.

BP's chief executive, Bernard Looney, let slip last November, when Brent crude hit \$85 a barrel, that the business was "[a cash machine at these types of prices](#)". His chief financial officer [said](#) in February after Brent crude went above \$105 a barrel: "Certainly, it's possible that we're getting more cash than we know what to do with." Looney, whose pay almost [doubled last year](#) to £4.5m, was asked later what investment projects he would cancel if a windfall tax was imposed on the firm's profits. None, he replied.

BP chief executive Bernard Looney said the business was 'a cash machine at these types of prices'

Proposals for a windfall tax, backed by Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens, have become irresistible because, layer by layer, those attacking the industry have peeled away its lines of defence. Oil industry supporters said a windfall tax would be seen as an attack on all corporations, which would live in fear of a similar move. Yet nobody has suggested a windfall tax on other industries. If anything, major corporations from other sectors want a tax on the oil firms. John Allan, the Tesco chairman, said last week

that a surcharge on oil companies was needed when the country was facing “[real food poverty for the first time in a generation](#)”.

There was a suggestion that a tax on BP and Shell would hit the “widows and orphans” who rely on dividend income. Then it was revealed that UK pension funds own less than 0.2% of [Shell](#) and BP shares. Of the total market value of UK-listed shares, UK pension funds account for just 2.4%. A broader measure of indirect ownership via investment funds adds only [another 6%](#).

Rishi Sunak’s last stand against those calling for a windfall tax is to repeat the threat from the oil majors that it will stifle investment. Looney, backtracking on his earlier comments, said an [f18bn investment plan](#) represented 15% to 20% of the group’s global capital expenditure, up from the 10% to 15% that BP has historically deployed in the UK. Yet relatively small sums are being directed at renewable projects and the company’s bosses cannot unsay their comments last year that the firm is a cash machine and has more money than it knows what to with.

Under [Labour’s proposal](#), firms such as [Harbour Energy](#), the largest oil and gas producer in the North Sea, and London-listed Serica Energy, which is responsible for about 5% of the UK’s gas production, would be caught by a tax that was on course at the time of the budget statement in March to raise around £2bn, but could be as much as £3bn today. BP would contribute about £250m, barely a blip on its financial radar.

Earlier this month, this newspaper argued for a [three-pronged approach](#) to resolving the cost of living crisis. First, economic policy needs to target rising productivity and ensure the spoils are shared evenly with employees through increased wages; second, the real-terms cuts to benefits and tax credits of the past decade must be reversed; and third, the government must implement structural reforms to tackle the high cost of living, most importantly housing. One estimate suggested lower-income households will face a drop in income of [£1,300 this year](#). A £3bn tax would go some way to redressing the balance, but the government should go further.

The business secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, has told his officials that he objects to singling out North Sea firms because there are so many other companies involved in the supply and distribution of oil, gas and electricity making hay. It's a good point. He should identify them and add them to the list of firms due a surcharge tax.

However, Labour's plan has the virtue of simplicity and so it is likely to be the option Sunak eventually agrees to implement. The chancellor has spent recent weeks telling MPs and TV audiences that he is mulling over the idea, but it is understood that only now is he considering the options compiled by his advisers in No 11. He needs to move quickly. Fairness demands it.

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**Observer comment cartoon**

**Boris Johnson**

## **The emperor Johnson's new clothes – cartoon**

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## NotebookAirbnb

# An ethical problem aired for online travellers by Airbnb

Kadish Morris

The travel site is trying a new approach to ease problems of over-tourism



New York City is among those destinations where tourism is said to have inflated property rents for locals. Photograph: Ted Shaffrey/AP

Sat 14 May 2022 16.00 EDT

Airbnb has just announced the biggest change to its site in a decade. The online accommodation marketplace has redesigned its site to move away from the “archaic” ways of booking by encouraging visitors to focus on the type of home they want to stay in rather than the destination. Now, the [homepage](#) features labelled icons connecting you to barns, mansions, treehouses, domes and even islands. It has also introduced “split stays” to make it easier to share your time between two places.

I'm just back from Italy, where I indulged my [Airbnb](#) habit, and I'm hoping this change – in part Airbnb's answer to over-tourism in certain places and to the site's role in inflating the cost of local rents – will be helpful. It has always been a tough pill to swallow that my stays in New York or Paris have in some way contributed to raising rental costs to locals. And yet Airbnb has become so integral to the way that I and many others travel. Frankly, I can't go back to holiday resorts and hotels and so my fingers are crossed. There's only so long I can compromise my ethics to feed my fascination for seeing what other people's houses look like.

## Tome truths



It seems the boost that lockdown gave to adult reading habits is still being felt. Photograph: Kumar Sriskandan/Alamy

As a regular *Observer* books critic, I can power through a book in a few days if need be, but lately I've been struggling to start anything that isn't for work. I can't seem to allow myself to sink into a story without being seduced by a meme or some banter in my WhatsApp group chats.

Like a lot of people, I began reading much more during the pandemic. A quarter of UK adults have kept up with lockdown reading habits even after

the restrictions were eased, [according to a new survey](#), but not me. I'm struggling to stay afloat in an ocean of unread books – yet I can't stop buying them. The ratio of books I'm reading to buying is easily one to five.

Still, I'm trying to not feel too guilty about it. I've come to accept that disciplined reading is a seasonal thing. When I worked at a gallery as an invigilator in my early 20s, I powered through short story collections with a ferocity during my shifts. When I started a book club with friends, feminist texts were my sustenance. I've also gone months without touching a single book.

I'm putting it all down to socialising too much and the fact it's been a stellar few months for celebrity scandals. I know that the fire in me to finish a novel or a memoir will return, if only to smugly share my “favourite books I've read in 2022” list on social media at the end of the year. What's the point in reading if it's not to feel like you're better than everyone else?

## Criminalising fun



Ernest Theophile, one of the Maida Hill domino players summoned to court for being too noisy. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

It was frustrating to read about the [West Indian domino players](#) in Maida Hill market square in London who were summoned to court by Westminster city council and accused of being too noisy. It was heartbreaking to hear the story of Ernest Theophile, a 73-year-old interviewed by the *Guardian*, talking about how important the square is to him and how he and others are being threatened with jail if they are caught “playing loud, amplified music, drinking alcohol and shouting and swearing”.

It’s hard not to see the whole thing as being anti-Black. (Whatever the reason, on Friday, central London county court found the council’s decision [“flawed” and “untenable”](#).) Remember in 2015 when [a group of Black women](#) were kicked off a Napa Valley Wine Train tour after they were said to be laughing too loudly? Different environment, same sentiments.

Personally, I think these gatherings, noise and all, are what community is all about. To criminalise gatherings and laughter and fun is to erode the very culture that makes London London.

Kadish Morris is an Observer columnist

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## OpinionHousing

# We've done it before, others do it now – a national housing plan is not beyond our wit

[Rowan Moore](#)



The powers that created new towns can be used to build homes just where they're needed



‘Although often sneered at, places such as Milton Keynes continue to grow, and receive high satisfaction ratings from their residents.’ Photograph: Allan Baxter/Getty Images

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As tokenistic and implausible policies go, it’s hard to beat the concept of “[street votes](#)”, flagged up in last week’s Queen’s speech in order to “fix the country’s housing problems”, as the Conservative MP Tom Tugendhat put it. The idea is that mini-referendums can be held whereby residents of a given street can, if an “overwhelming” majority agrees, decide to enlarge and extend their properties and develop back alleys or other scraps of land.

This might sound fine in theory, but the detail is vague, probably because there are many devils in it. How do you draw the boundary that says who votes and who doesn’t? What is the definition of “overwhelming”? Who organises and pays for these votes? As the countryside charity CPRE has pointed out, a mini-boom in loft conversions and back extensions is likely to lead to more residential space for those who already have enough, rather than for those in dire need of somewhere decent to live.

The government’s emphasis on this policy, whose benefits will be at best marginal, suggests that it has all but given up on seriously addressing

housing need or achieving the 300,000 new homes a year that it pledged in the 2019 manifesto. Indeed, the housing secretary, Michael Gove, [has hinted](#) that he might be drifting away on this target.

The important question is: what might actually make a difference to the neverendingly intractable problem of housing? A large part of the answer is the one thing that this government has not attempted, because it is ideologically and organisationally inhibited from doing so, which is positive public intervention in the planning and building of homes and communities. (We are talking here, it should be noted, about England only, as the other countries of the union have devolved planning policies).

Such intervention does not mean loosening the bolts on the planning system so as to entice a few more units from private housebuilders, but the creation of plans that identify where new homes might be beneficial, combined with practical support for designs that are environmentally, socially and visually successful. It also means making sites viable through such things as assembling land, providing infrastructure and decontaminating pollution and building the homes of the type and number that people need. The private sector has consistently proved incapable of doing this, as builders have little incentive to lower the value of their products by greatly expanding the supply.

It is not fantastical that modern government, both national and local, could act like this. It happens in other countries. There is a precedent for such intervention in Britain, in the postwar programme of building [new towns](#), which created 32 towns in 20 years, where 2.8 million people now live. Although often sneered at, places such as Milton Keynes continue to grow and receive high satisfaction ratings from their residents. New towns were achieved, what is more, at little or no cost to the exchequer, as they were funded by compulsorily purchasing land and then capturing the increase in value that comes when agricultural or other types of land receive planning permission.

Rather than fund the pensions of lucky landholders, this uplift can help pay for public benefits

At present, the planning system, especially in rural areas, is a lottery: landowners who can get permission see the value of their property multiply many times. Rather than fund the pensions and holiday homes of such lucky landowners, this uplift can help pay for public benefits. The main obstacle to housing growth is the often well-founded mistrust of new development by the people who have to live near it, often known as nimbys. They can see that it brings little benefit to them and blights their view with poorly designed buildings. If the capture of increases in land value meant that there truly was more housing available for their children, or that it paid for schools, at least some of the opposition would fade away.

No one should pretend that any of this is easy. It is fantasy to think that the competing interests of people who already own homes and those desperate for somewhere to live can always be reconciled without hard decisions. On the other hand, much of the machinery for coherent and constructive actions already exists. We have government powers, for such things as compulsory purchase and strategic planning, and an apparatus of local authority planners, albeit one weakened by cuts in funding.

There are means for building publicly funded housing and capturing uplift. Local authorities are indeed building homes and sometimes schools are paid for by development. What is lacking is any kind of coordinated determination to use these means effectively and at sufficient scale. The political will that goes into motorways, high-speed railways and airports is lacking when it comes to housing.

Curiously, the seeming localism of the street votes concept is combined, in the new levelling-up and regeneration bill, with what the Town and Country Planning Association [calls a power grab](#) by central government; changes proposed in the bill will, it says, mean that there will be “no limit” to the secretary of state’s ability to overrule local authorities. In one reading, this could be a prelude to decisive and intelligent action under the benign dictatorship of Gove. More probably, we will get the worst of all worlds: ineffectiveness, uncertainty, poor consultation, the destruction of public trust and cosmetic democracy.

There clearly is housing need in this country, which brings both human misery and economic damage. There is colossal wealth locked up in the

development potential of land. There are legitimate public fears about development. The means exist to use the wealth to address the need while allaying the fears, but there is not much to suggest that this will happen. Tugendhat fears that the Tories will face “electoral oblivion” if they don’t fix the housing problem. They would deserve to do so.

Rowan Moore is the Observer’s architecture correspondent

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## Let's not mock bald men. But do they really feel threatened?

[Stephanie Merritt](#)

An employment tribunal has equated insulting a man's hairline with commenting on the size of a woman's breasts. It's not the same



It's a positive step if men are willing to acknowledge publicly they find insults about their appearance damaging. Photograph: ozgurdonmaz/Getty/iStockphoto

Sun 15 May 2022 02.30 EDT

Last month, when the whole of Twitter was sharing that quartet of Emmanuel Macron photos, a female friend and I were voicing our appreciation of the chest hair aesthetic and cheerfully agreeing that we absolutely would, when a gentleman earnestly interrupted to remind us that it would be considered unacceptable these days for two men to discuss a female politician in such terms.

I didn't like to distress him with the suggestion that there may yet be dark corners of new and old media where men rate the shaggability of women in public life ([ask Angela Rayner](#)), but his reprimand spoke to a broader point: when it comes to objectification, we are currently enjoying a brief window of licence denied to men.

It's still sort of OK for women to make a joke out of commenting on the desirability or otherwise of men's bodies, because the balance of power has been so grotesquely out of whack for so long that a few Boddingtons ads in the 1990s and Fleabag getting off to an Obama speech still barely tip the scales. In part, it's OK precisely because it is framed as a joke; men rarely feel threatened by women commenting on their bodies, even if they don't enjoy it.

There's also the unspoken law that men are not supposed to care what people say about their looks, much less show that their feelings have been hurt by a personal remark. But that might be about to change, after [last week's decision by an employment tribunal](#), which ruled that a male electrician in West Yorkshire who was called a "bald cunt" by his male boss was a victim of sexual harassment.

Leaving aside the fact that "bald cunt" is unavoidably funny, especially when you picture it shouted by one man at another during an argument over a machine cover in the offices of the British Bung Company (which, incidentally, would be a great name for Sunak's Treasury if he's considering a rebrand), let's consider what constitutes sexual harassment. The tribunal judges ruled that the incident was comparable to a previous case of a man remarking on the size of a woman's breasts in the workplace; in both instances, they said, the insult was specific to the victim's sex, therefore: sexual harassment.

What they seem to have glossed over in this comparison is the intent of the person doing the insulting. Ask any woman what sexual harassment feels like and she'll tell you it's about intimidation. It's the fear that a comment on your breasts will escalate to a hand; it's the pointedly belittling reminder that some of your male superiors or co-workers will always see you foremost as

tit and arse. Is a man mocking another man's baldness really in the same league? I'm not persuaded.

Of course, it should go without saying that men can and do experience sexual harassment at work and that it can be much harder for them to come forward. It's also a positive step if men are willing to acknowledge publicly that they find insults about their appearance damaging; boys are conditioned so early to shrug this stuff off as banter. But let's not blur the lines by suggesting that calling someone "bald", however contemptuously, is the same as sexual intimidation. If everything is sexual harassment, then nothing is; that kind of levelling up is just a flattening that doesn't serve anyone.

Stephanie Merritt's latest novel is *While You Sleep*

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[\*\*Names in the newsiPod\*\*](#)

## **Farewell to the iPod, the device that ushered in too much choice**

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)



As Apple's pioneering digital player shuffles into the sunset, has its legacy delivered on its promise?



Apple's late chief executive, Steve Jobs, introduces iPod Nanos in San Francisco, California, in 2006. Photograph: Dino Vournas/Reuters

Sat 14 May 2022 10.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 14 May 2022 16.43 EDT

There are a couple of old iPods in my desk drawer still, tangled up with cables that will definitely come in useful one day. One is a Shuffle that I clipped to my T-shirt during a brief attempt to have a jogging phase. The other is a scuffed, black, fifth-generation [iPod](#). If I charge it for hours, it plays for a few songs before the screen dissolves and if you press the wheel in a way it doesn't like, the screen freezes completely. It is a frozen object in other ways, too, capturing life at a certain time, in playlists called things such as Dip It Low!! and Happy Birthday Matt 7.

Last week, after just over 20 years, [it was announced that the iPod was going to be discontinued](#); when the last remaining iPod Touches have sold out, there will be no more. “[It] redefined how music is discovered, listened to and shared,” said Greg Joswiak, Apple’s senior vice-president of worldwide marketing, wheeled out for the quote to accompany the announcement. Given the [sorry state of the music industry](#) for anyone not at the very top of it, I’m not sure that is something to be proud of entirely, but of course it redefined music. As the iPod’s capacity grew, from 5GB to 160GB, it put vast choice in our pockets and made it portable.

You could settle on almost any of the iPod's innovations and see it as a turning point in how music became something we talked about consuming rather than listening to, but I keep thinking about that element of choice. It is a luxurious position to be in, I know, but two decades later I often feel stifled by choice, not just when it comes to music but with all entertainment. It is easy to throw away time on choosing which TV series to watch on a streaming service, for example, and more often than I would like to admit, I will scroll, fidgety at the possibilities, before not choosing anything at all and going to bed with a book.

It's the same with podcasts, with films and, of course, with music. How can anyone settle when there is so much to choose from, all the time? Choosing has become a pointless activity in its own right.

As is often the way with the death of a device, there has been a [wave of nostalgia for the iPod](#), just as people fondly thought of the passing of the BlackBerry and its tiny, intricate keyboard from the perspective of an era in which we idly tap a screen twice to send a lengthy voice note. I felt it too. I am nostalgic for what might have been the perfect balance of choice: just enough for the possibilities to seem endless, without them actually being so.

## **Ncuti Gatwa: no better man to be the new Doctor Who**



Ncuti Gatwa, Jodie Whittaker's successor in the Tardis. Photograph: Carlo Paloni/REX/Shutterstock for BAFTA

The dust has settled on the announcement that 29-year-old [Ncuti Gatwa](#), of *Sex Education* fame, will take over from Jodie Whittaker as the latest Doctor in *Doctor Who*. (Fan forums are already buzzing with theories about the exact wording of the announcement, which made no reference to Gatwa being the 14th Doctor, as would be numerically correct. There are suggestions that he might be the *new* Doctor, but not the *next* Doctor, which is the sort of twistiness that gives *Doctor Who* a reputation for being confusing.)

The broad consensus is that this is a very good choice and Gatwa certainly has the fizzy energy that the role seems to require; as Eric in *Sex Education*, he has been a revelation. The announcement arrived on social media, just before last Sunday's Baftas. Gatwa and returning boss Russell T Davies shared an image of two hearts and a blue box on Instagram and then the news just sort of appeared.

Considering the fanfare that previous new Doctors have been given for their arrivals (Peter Capaldi got a whole live event on BBC One, Whittaker a trailer at the end of the Wimbledon men's finals), why was this so low key?

## Madonna: still shocking popes after all these years



Madonna on stage in Colombia. Photograph: Fredy Builes/AFP/Getty Images

In March, the *Hollywood Reporter* published story about a gruelling audition process taking place to find the lead for a much-discussed, eagerly awaited [Madonna](#) biopic.

Given the recent successes of films about Elton John, Freddie Mercury and Aretha Franklin, to name just a few, of course there should be one about Madonna, though this being Madonna, she is cowriting and directing it and if the auditions are as hardcore as they sound, it would be unsurprising if she ends up starring as her younger self too. According to the report, the film will climax with her *Blond Ambition* tour, still one of the greatest pop shows of all time.

In 1990, [Pope John Paul II disagreed](#), urging people to boycott “one of the most satanic shows in the history of humanity”, which did somewhat up the ante in terms of career-best reviews. Last week, Madonna [tweeted](#) at Pope Francis, requesting a meeting “to discuss some important matters”. She said she had been excommunicated three times. “It doesn’t seem fair,” added the woman who appeared on stage in Rome on a crucifix in 2006, to the dismay

of [another Pope](#) Benedict XVI. It is hard to verify an excommunication, though there is no doubt that she has riled popes over the years.

Arguing the fairness of excommunication with the current pontiff in the same week as she releases an [NFT triptych](#) of digital art involving nudity and trees and butterflies coming from intimate places makes me think that it's a shame the biopic will end in 1990. The current era would be a masterpiece.

Rebecca Nicholson is an Observer columnist

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

# For the record

This week's corrections

Sun 15 May 2022 01.00 EDT

A comment piece said that “a majority” of Northern Ireland’s people had voted for a republican first minister. Sinn Féin is the biggest party in the Stormont assembly but, as the article went on to make clear, it won the election with 29% of the vote ([For once, Yeats’s words seem right as the results emerge: ‘All changed, changed utterly’](#), 8 May, p47).

As students of Italian will have spotted, the headline for the holiday feature in last week’s magazine ([Vacanze Italiani](#), p41) should have read “Vacanze italiane”, observing the feminine plural.

Other recently amended articles include:

[Car breakdowns: drivers switched between trucks in hours-long ordeals](#)

[‘It’s just intoxicating’: why Gogglebox is up for a Bafta](#)

[The new rules for post-pandemic restaurants](#)

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

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## Observer lettersTeaching

# Letters: how teaching became unrewarded and unrewarding

Overworked and underpaid: no wonder today's teachers – men and women – are feeling disillusioned



‘Weekends and holidays are snaffled by preparation, extra teaching (revision) and accountability.’ Photograph: PA

Sun 15 May 2022 01.00 EDT

It seems ironic that, in a system where the majority of multi-academy trust CEOs are very well-paid males, it should be so difficult to recruit and retain men in classroom roles (“[No place for young men? Male teachers quit as pay levels drop](#)”, News). It’s not just the take-home pay that is the issue, eroded as it has been by pay “pauses” (aka freezes). The ever-widening pay gap is exacerbated by performance-related pay, which regularly delivers bonuses to the top, but much less reliably to the lower echelons. School budgets often can’t run to rewarding hard work and high performance for teachers.

Yet workload remains excessive and rising. Weekends and holidays are snaffled by preparation, extra teaching (revision) and accountability. The ratio of pay to hours worked is more unbalanced than ever. Promotion is less financially rewarding now that the 2022 pay arrangements target higher rises at new teachers and hardly enhance remuneration for more experienced and senior staff.

Teachers in it for the long haul should also keep an eye on their pensions. The independent sector is removing itself from the teachers' pension scheme; how long before academy chains follow suit if the government subsidy is withdrawn?

Teaching has become an under-rewarded, unrewarding stressful profession – and it isn't just men who are disillusioned.

**Yvonne Williams**

Ryde, Isle of Wight

Teacher low pay, for women and men, is a problem created by those Conservatives and academy managers who sneer at classroom teaching as temporary work. Because Conservatives have an eye on the next election, the use of exam results and league table positions in electioneering helps academies turn classroom teaching into arduous, short-term, exam-factory work. This is seriously at variance with the long-term purpose of teaching. The tension it creates is reported daily as the crisis in student mental health and the shortage of teachers.

A coherent solution includes securing well-paid, psychologically literate classroom teachers whose professional knowledge rivals those in countries the UK trails behind in international comparisons.

**Dr Miles Secker**

Heckington, Lincolnshire

## Here be dragons

If Philip Hoare ("Why monsters tap into our fear of the unknown", Focus) wants to continue to fear and wonder at what might lie beneath the surface of seas and waterways, he might like to take a plunge into the Trent and

Mersey canal, as I did a couple of years ago. I saw stuff in there that still gives me nightmares.

**Ian Grieve**

Gordon Bennett, Llangollen canal

## **‘Cancer’ of Murdoch press**

Along with over half a million other Australians, I signed Kevin Rudd’s petition calling for a royal commission into NewsCorp: what he called “a cancer on democracy”. It’s even more necessary now. As a leftwing socialist, I disagree with [Nick Cohen](#) on many things, but full marks to him for calling for sanctions on the Murdoch press for its toadying to Putin.

**Prof John Tully**

Dover, Tasmania, Australia

## **Northern Ireland’s real victor**

The real seismic event in Northern Ireland is not Sinn Féin’s “victory” ([“Seismic Sinn Féin victory fuels debate on future of the union”](#), News). Its share of the vote barely changed and it gained no seats. Rather, it is the surge in support for the non-sectarian Alliance party, which had the largest increase in votes and more than doubled its number of seats. Thus, the debate that should be fuelled is how to change the Good Friday agreement to allow non-sectarian parties a role in how Northern Ireland is run.

**Jon Burden**

London W14

## **The appliance of science**

The latest World Health Organization report has led to a debate about which countries handled the pandemic best ([“Sweden? Japan? UK? Debates over who had a ‘good’ Covid won’t end”](#), Comment). The only real winner here is scientific progress. We’ve seen unprecedented research into vaccines, drug development, wearables, apps, microscopes and more. It doesn’t matter who had a “good” Covid. It’s how we use these scientific advancements that counts.

**Charlie Rapple**  
Oxford

## Corbyn a catastrophe?

No, Andrew Rawnsley, no: Jeremy Corbyn's years were not an "electoral catastrophe" for the Labour party ("[Boris Johnson's Tories exhibit the morbid symptoms of a fin-de-siècle regime](#)", Comment). In 2019, his Labour party's share of the vote was greater than Miliband's in 2015 and Brown's in 2010. The party's loss was rather due to the cynical stitch-up between Johnson and Farage, with the result that the latter's Brexit party took much of the working-class vote in the north of England. Take that out of the equation, and watch Johnson's 80-seat majority vanish like snow in summer.

**Wal Callaby**  
Whatfield, Ipswich

## Our voting system is broken

Your excellent leading article analysing the local election results ("[A poll with one clear truth: it was grim for the Tories](#)") surely missed one even clearer truth: given an increasingly fractured electorate, neither of the two major parties today can form a coherent coalition embracing different priorities without fracturing themselves in the process.

When a "majority" party in Westminster is disdained by an increasing minority of voters nationally, the first-past-the-post system is no longer fit for purpose. This is not democracy. Proportional representation, as used widely in many other countries and successfully in parts of the UK, would both address and resolve the problem. Its time has surely come.

**Philip Bushill-Matthews**  
Leamington Spa, Warwickshire

## Living with partition

Living with partition, imposed by an imperial power as the price for peace, can indeed be compatible with preserving national independence

(“[Surrendering land is not the same as defeat – if a stronger Ukraine emerges from the ruins](#)”, Comment). There is an example of that far closer to home than Georgia or middle Europe. The human cost can be heavy, as Ireland experienced over the last century: civil war, distorted politics and the agonising decades of the Troubles. But the attempt to reverse Ireland’s independence by military force ceased.

It looks as though Ukraine may have to accept partition as the price for peace, and pay the human cost that this will bring – although first it will need to force Russia to accept that way out. But living with partition need not mean that Ukraine would ever have to recognise it as right or as permanent, any more than Ireland has.

**Kevin McGrath**

Harlow, Essex

## Some like it yacht

Catherine Bennett’s piece about rich New Yorkers at play and their apparent indifference to suffering elsewhere (“[What do you get when a lack of taste meets a shedload of cash? Anna Wintour’s ball](#)”, Comment) put me in mind of one of my favourite scenes in Billy Wilder’s *Some Like It Hot*, where Tony Curtis masquerades as a millionaire in order to impress Marilyn Monroe:

Monroe: “You own a yacht? Which one is it? The big one?”

Curtis: “Certainly not. With all the unrest in the world, I don’t think anybody should have a yacht that sleeps more than twelve.”

**John Tavner**

Dedham, Colchester, Essex

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**Opinion****Suella Braverman**

# The attorney general's office was worthy of respect. Suella the stooge disgraces it

[Nick Cohen](#)



Indulging the PM on the Northern Ireland protocol is to hold her own role in contempt



Britain's attorney general Suella Braverman - 'a Brexiter of the true faith' - attends a cabinet meeting. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

Sat 14 May 2022 14.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 14 May 2022 14.18 EDT

Ireland was the scene of a Boris Johnson masterclass in deception. In the 2019 election, he fooled millions into believing his “oven-ready deal” would “Get Brexit Done!” and we need not worry about the warnings of John Major, Tony Blair and Theresa May of the threat to the Northern Ireland settlement. Johnson’s straight lie that his withdrawal agreement would not put a border in the Irish Sea – “over my dead body,” he cried and yet the border is there and Johnson still lives – fooled the supposedly hard-nosed Democratic Unionist party. Finally, he conned the European Union into believing he was a man of his word when he signed a treaty confirming Northern Ireland’s special status that he had no intention of honouring.

At every stage, the attorney general, [Suella Braverman](#), has covered his back. She has disgraced herself, her office, her profession and her country.

The attorney general is one of many peculiarly British constitutional checks on arbitrary power Johnson has blown away. On the one hand, the AG is a politician. On the other, he or she must uphold the rule of law and act independently of government. Johnson realised that no one could stop him

appointing a sycophant who would do as he pleased. Braverman was just the stooge he needed.

“She’s only there because she’s a Brexiter of the true faith,” said one legal figure who, like all my contacts from the intersection between law and government, spoke on condition of anonymity. Johnson “looked for malleable legal figures who would do his bidding and found Suella”, said a second. “I was at a [Brexit](#) meeting she hosted and it was staggering to realise she did not understand any of the problems,” a third added. “I suppose that’s why Johnson likes her.”

Last week, Braverman justified Johnson’s decision to ignore the majority of voters in [Northern Ireland](#) as he tried to regain the trust of the Democratic Unionist party politicians he had so spectacularly cheated by ripping up the international treaty he had so sincerely promised to honour. You did not need to be a lawyer to grasp the speciousness of her special pleading.

Braverman claimed that – “painfully” – it was necessary to cancel the deal because the EU had created “[a trade barrier in the Irish Sea](#)”. But it was Johnson who became prime minister by rejecting May’s plan to keep the whole of the UK close to the EU customs union and [single market](#). Johnson proposed putting a border in the Irish Sea so the rest of the UK could have a hard Brexit. Johnson took the idea to the EU, won a general election on it, had his civil servants draw up a treaty that delivered it and signed it into international law.

Braverman said the EU implementation of the Northern Ireland protocol was “unreasonable and disproportionate”. I defy you to read the protocol and show me where the EU has broken the agreement Johnson wanted. She concluded by displaying a contempt for her audience, and understandably herself, by saying that “trade is being diverted”. Obviously, trade is being diverted. Northern Ireland is in the single market and customs union. Its businesses are [doing well out of it](#). So well, indeed, that businesses in the rest of the UK may want to join them.

Hannah Arendt was not only describing dictatorships when she said: “Totalitarianism in power invariably replaces all first-rate talents, regardless

of their sympathies, with those crackpots and fools whose lack of intelligence and creativity is still the best guarantee of their loyalty.”

Any hierarchical organisation under authoritarian leadership does the same. To understand how Braverman rose to an office that specifically demands the holder displays independent thought, her fanaticism and mediocrity must be balanced.

Johnson chose well in Braverman. If he thought she would take a stand on principle, he wouldn’t have given her the job

In 2020, I [reported](#) on the false account she gave of her life. She ingratiated herself with the readers of the ConservativeHome website by [claiming](#) that, when she started as a barrister in London: “I was the shy Tory in my chambers of ‘right-on’ human rights lawyers. Despite the social stigma, I was inspired by Conservative values of freedom from an interventionist state.”

But the chambers that she joined after leaving Cambridge University were anything but “right on”. She worked at 2-3 Gray’s Inn Square, which was filled with regular barristers fighting disputes about the licensing of pubs and betting shops, not human rights law. One of the supposed “right-on” lefties was a former Tory MP.

The political advantages of posing as a victim of a snotty liberal elite were obvious. But cynical careerism does not explain every move. Vanity can matter as much. Braverman had an ordinary career at the bar, which she tried to make sound grander than it was by claiming to have contributed to authoritative legal textbooks. On inspection they bore [no trace of her name](#).

Her bravado suggests that at some level she may think that a shadowy liberal elite had stymied her rise in the law.

Johnson offered her the chance for vengeance when he made her the country’s foremost law officer. Now she could show all those sneering liberals who believed in airy-fairy concepts such as governments honouring their word abroad and telling the truth to their voters at home who was boss.

“A self-respecting attorney general would have resigned by now,” a former law officer told me. But Johnson chose well when he appointed Braverman. If he thought she would take a stand on principle, he would never have given her the job. Equally, if he doubted for a moment that she was not committed to attacking the EU, judicial review and the Human Rights Act, she would have remained an obscure backbencher.

Her willingness to collude with a breach of international law seems a small matter. Tearing up the agreement with the EU will threaten western unity when we should be standing together against Russia. The EU may respond by starting a trade war, which will thump an economy already suffering from the battering Brexit, inflation and Covid administered.

In Northern Ireland, the British government’s decision to take a nakedly sectarian stance in favour of a hardcore Protestant minority may threaten the fragile peace.

The collapse of our institutions is still worth noticing, however. For all its contradictions, the office of attorney general once demanded respect. Now it is no better than being consigliere for a small-time crook.

Nick Cohen is an Observer columnist

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# Headlines

- [Northern Ireland DUP vows to paralyse Stormont as NI protocol row deepens](#)
- [Brexit UK should not fear EU trade war, says Frost as he backs ripping up protocol](#)
- [Exclusive US congress delegation to fly to London as Northern Ireland protocol concerns grow](#)
- [EU law How the UK may try to override the Northern Ireland Brexit protocol](#)

## Northern Ireland

# DUP condemned for paralysing Stormont as protocol row deepens

‘Stop pandering to the DUP’, prospective first minister Michelle O’Neill to tell Boris Johnson in planned visit on Monday

- [Follow all today’s political developments – live updates](#)

DUP ‘punishing public’ with Northern Ireland politics stalemate, says Michelle O’Neill – video

*Rory Carroll* Ireland correspondent

[@rorycarroll72](#)

Fri 13 May 2022 07.54 EDTFirst published on Fri 13 May 2022 03.52 EDT

Political leaders in Belfast and Dublin have condemned the Democratic Unionist party (DUP) for [paralysing the Stormont assembly](#) and executive in a dramatic escalation of the party’s campaign against the [Northern Ireland protocol](#).

Sinn Féin and other parties in [Northern Ireland](#) described the move as “shameful” and “disgraceful” and said it treated voters with contempt.

The row turned what was supposed to be the inaugural day of the assembly into a farce in which newly elected representatives signed the roll at Stormont – and became eligible to collect salaries – but were left without duties, functions or power.

A DUP abstention prevented the assembly electing a speaker and elicited angry exchanges in the chamber. Alex Maskey, the outgoing speaker, will remain in a caretaker role, as will former ministers.

Michelle O'Neill, Sinn Féin's deputy leader and the region's putative first minister, accused the DUP of denying democracy. She told the chamber she was ready to "take on the leadership of the Northern Ireland executive as a first minister for all". It was believed to be the first time she had publicly used the term Northern Ireland. [Sinn Féin](#) usually refers to the region as "the North".

O'Neill later told reporters Boris Johnson, the prime minister, planned to visit the region on Monday. "I intend to put it to him directly that he needs to stop pandering to the DUP," she said.

The DUP had announced earlier on Friday it would pull the plug on the legislature as well as the executive. Under power-sharing rules the assembly and executive cannot function without the DUP. The decision plunged Northern Ireland into political crisis a week after a historic assembly election in which Sinn Féin overtook the DUP as the biggest party.

### Why has the Northern Ireland protocol paralysed Stormont? – video

It is a message to Downing Street and the EU that the DUP is willing to create a destabilising vacuum in [Northern Ireland](#) to secure changes to the protocol, which puts post-Brexit checks on goods entering the region from Great Britain. Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, the DUP leader, said the prime minister must "outline what he intends to do".

The protocol violated the principle of consent – which requires support from nationalists and unionists – on which rested the Good Friday agreement, said Donaldson. He hinted there would be no swift resolution to the impasse: "I have both patience and resolve in equal measure to see the Irish Sea border removed, and stable as well as sustainable devolution restored."

DUP strategists hope the crisis will embolden Johnson and Liz Truss, the foreign secretary, and strengthen their hand in a [showdown](#) with the European Commission.

The mothballing of Stormont means civil servants and ministers from the outgoing administration, with reduced powers, will run Northern Ireland in

what has been termed a “zombified” state. They cannot make important decisions or launch new initiatives.

During the election the DUP had vowed to block the formation of an executive but not the assembly. “This is disgraceful,” said Colum Eastwood, the Social Democratic and Labour party (SDLP) leader. “The DUP have no mandate for this as they told everyone during the election debates that the assembly would continue.”

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Naomi Long, the leader of the Alliance party, the third-biggest party after Sinn Féin and the DUP, also excoriated the DUP and said its assembly members should not be allowed to claim salaries while Stormont was paralysed. “If the DUP don’t want to do the job, they could not sign in and forfeit their salaries. But they won’t, of course. They’ll just stop every other MLA from doing all of the job they were elected to do.”

Neale Richmond, a Fine Gael member of the Irish parliament in Dublin, said the move would not help anyone in Ireland, north or south of the border. “Constantly saying no is not feasible.”

DUP strategists say the party had to pull the plug on Stormont to exert leverage on Downing Street and Brussels. The boycott may also shore up support among unionists who during the election defected from the DUP to its more radical rival, the Traditional Unionist Voice.

Jamie Bryson, a leader of anti-protocol rallies, congratulated Donaldson. “Well done sir. To put it simply; the cry is No Surrender!” he tweeted.

The boycott will dismay business leaders and unionists who have called for pragmatic solutions to managing the protocol.

On Thursday, the Royal College of Nursing, the British Medical Association Northern Ireland, the Royal College of Surgeons of England, the Royal College of Emergency Medicine and the Royal College of GPs warned that

failure to form an executive would endanger patients' lives. "Our health service is on the verge of collapse," they said in a [joint statement](#).

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## **Brexit**

# **UK should not fear EU trade war, says Frost as he backs ripping up protocol**

Former Brexit minister says UK ‘cannot be defeated’ by Brussels in provocative Telegraph column

- [Follow all today’s political developments – live updates](#)



Frost has become one of the most vocal critics of the Brexit deal since he quit his role in December. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

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

Fri 13 May 2022 05.13 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 11.51 EDT

The former Brexit minister [David Frost](#) has said the UK should not fear a trade war with the EU.

In a provocative newspaper column, he said the UK “cannot be defeated” by Brussels and needed to “make sure it is ready” for the consequences of a unilateral move to scrap parts of the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol.

The foreign secretary, Liz Truss, is expected to announce plans for [legislation next week](#) to disapply some of the protocol in a risky move that could result in sanctions or even the suspension of the trade deal that Lord Frost negotiated in December 2020.

Writing [in the Daily Telegraph](#) about the potential move, Frost said: “We may, of course, face EU retaliation, although it would be disproportionate to the trade involved, only arguably legal and entirely self-defeating. I am not convinced every EU member’s heart would be in it either. Logic may yet prevail. But if it does happen, it will complicate things, but we should not fear it.”

Adding to tensions with Europe, [Jacob Rees-Mogg](#) claimed on Friday the EU “wants to make the UK feel bad about having left the European Union”. But the Brexit opportunities minister told GB News he doubted the EU would retaliate with something as severe as a trade war if the UK were to remove parts of the protocol, saying it would be a “pretty silly” thing to do.

He questioned whether Brussels would even have the support of all member states. “The [European Union](#) would need unanimity and it seems to me that’s a pretty high bar to get,” he told GB News on Friday.

He also argued that the EU would be punishing its own voters by starting a trade war at a time of rising inflation and the cost of living crisis. “Do they really want to make prices even higher for their consumers and their voters? I think that’s an interesting and important question.”

“The EU … may decide it wants an act of self-harm – that is not under our control – but it would be a pretty silly thing to do,” he added.

Truss has argued that she would have no option but to act if the EU did not concede to the UK’s demands to scrap the checks on goods crossing from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. It is a high-stakes move that is testing

relations with EU leaders, but is also timed to exploit the lack of appetite in Europe for a trade war with a former ally at a time when [political focus is on Russia](#) and the expansion of Nato.

In an interview with GB News on Friday, Frost said he hoped the US delegation would see for themselves the issues the protocol was creating when they arrived in the coming days.

“I think it’s good that if a team is coming across here to the UK to see what is happening, then they will see very quickly the problems,” he said. “I do think the administration should be careful in intervening on a question that involves the unity of a country, of a very close ally and friend, and I would hope that they would be.”

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Earlier this week Frost told the US president, Joe Biden, who has invested much of his career in supporting peace in Northern Ireland, to keep out of UK business.

“I get slightly frustrated when we are told by a third party, albeit a very important one in this context, how to manage these issues,” he told a thinktank in the US. “It is our country that faced terrorism, faced the Troubles. I am old enough to remember having to check under my car every morning, as a diplomat, before I went to work. Most people were very affected in one way or another by this.”

His remarks come as a delegation of influential US Congress representatives, including the head of the ways and means committee, Richard Neal, [plan to fly to London](#) amid growing concern in the White House about spiralling tensions over the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol.

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**Brexit**

## **US congress delegation to fly to London as Northern Ireland protocol concerns grow**

Exclusive: Influential representatives likely to underline Biden's commitment to defend Good Friday agreement



Liz Truss has threatened to scrap parts of the Northern Ireland protocol, telling the EU that without 'requisite flexibility' she would have 'no choice but to act' Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

*[Lisa O'Carroll](#), [Jessica Elgot](#) and [Jennifer Rankin](#)*

Thu 12 May 2022 14.26 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 06.56 EDT

A delegation of influential US congress representatives will fly to London within days amid growing concern in the White House about spiralling tensions over the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol, the Guardian can reveal.

With the UK government poised to table legislation next week [which could revoke parts of the protocol](#), arrangements are being made for at least half a dozen representatives from the US Congress to fly to Europe for a series of meetings in Brussels, Dublin, London and Belfast.

The delegation will be headed by the influential chair of the ways and means committee, Richie Neal, which has significant power over future trade deals.

Antony Blinken, the US secretary of state, has previously said the US intends to appoint its own envoy to Northern Ireland.

Neal, whose interest in Northern Ireland stretches over three decades, said earlier this year that a trade deal was “desirable” but that it would not progress if there was “any jeopardy” to the [Good Friday agreement](#).

The delegation is likely to underline President Biden’s commitment to defending the Good Friday agreement and the US’s role as a guarantor. He has repeatedly emphasised how integral the protocol is to maintaining peace and stability.

“The best path forward is a pragmatic one that requires courage, co-operation and leadership,” a White House spokesman said of the UK’s dispute with the EU.

It comes as the former [Brexit](#) minister Lord Frost says Biden, who invested much energy in the peace process, should stay out of Britain’s affairs.

‘It is our country that faced terrorism, faced the Troubles. I am old enough to remember having to check under my car every morning, as a diplomat, before I went to work,’ he told an audience in America.

Boris Johnson is expected to give a speech as soon as Monday on the future of the protocol after exchanges between the foreign secretary, [Liz Truss](#), and the European Commission vice-president, Maroš Šefčovič, which a UK source described as “tetchy”.

In a phone call, Truss said that unless the EU showed the “requisite flexibility” in talks over the trading arrangements she would have “no choice

but to act”.

Boris Johnson says NI governance has collapsed as row over Brexit deal deepens – video

Johnson, who negotiated the protocol as part of the Brexit agreement, firmly backed Truss on Thursday, saying “institutions set up under the Good Friday agreement aren’t functioning” and political governance in Northern Ireland has collapsed.

“The people of Northern Ireland need leadership, they need a regional, a provincial government … they haven’t got that,” Johnson said, after a discussion of the strategy with cabinet ministers.

“That’s a real problem. And the reason they don’t have that is because there’s one community in Northern Ireland that won’t accept the way the protocol works at present – we’ve got to fix that.”

## Quick Guide

### **What is the Northern Ireland protocol?**

Show

Within the UK’s Brexit withdrawal agreement with the EU, the Northern Ireland protocol lays out arrangements that effectively keep Northern Ireland in the single market, drawing a customs border between it and the rest of the UK, with checks on goods passing from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

That means there is no requirement for checks across the UK's land border with Ireland. The 1998 Northern Ireland peace deal requires keeping the land border open and that there be no new infrastructure such as cameras and border posts.

However, both the British government and the European Union recognise that the implementation of this deal has triggered the disruption of supply chains, increased costs and reduced choice for consumers in Northern Ireland.

The rules means that goods such as milk and eggs have to be inspected when they arrive in Northern Ireland from mainland Britain, while some produce, such as chilled meats, cannot be imported at all. This is because the EU does not want to risk them entering the single market over the land border and then being transported on.

## What is article 16?

Article 16 is an emergency brake in the Irish protocol, that allows either side to take unilateral action if the protocol is causing “serious economic, societal or environmental difficulties that are liable to persist”, or diversion of trade. Serious difficulties are not defined, giving both sides leeway for interpretation.

This would launch a process defined in the treaty as “consultations … with a view to finding a commonly acceptable solution”. Article 16 is meant to be a temporary timeout, not an escape hatch.

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

The UK has sent Johnson’s close ally Conor Burns as an envoy on the protocol to speak to senior figures in Washington over the course of the week, including meeting a special Northern Ireland committee of congressmen on Friday.

Both Truss and Burns have argued that negotiations have reached a crunch point because of the impasse at Stormont, where the Democratic Unionist party has said it will not re-enter the Northern Ireland executive while the issues with the protocol remain.

On Thursday, Truss and Šefčovič spoke for the first time since it was revealed the UK was considering tabling draft legislation to unilaterally [override part of the trading arrangements](#).

The standoff between the two is testing wider relations with the EU at a time when “bigger things”, such as [Finland joining Nato](#), are happening, Ireland’s foreign minister, Simon Coveney, said on Thursday.

A UK government source said Truss had argued that the lack of a functioning executive in Northern Ireland was a key security concern that merited the response.

“Liz’s primary concern in all this is upholding the Belfast Good Friday agreement,” they said. “The protocol is the major cause of political instability – disrupting trade and creating a two-tier system where people in Northern Ireland are treated differently to the rest of the UK. So it’s clear and obvious that we need to change the parts that aren’t working.

“If the EU won’t help us do that and show more pragmatism, then we’ll have to take action that solves those problems. That would very much be in disappointment rather than anger.”

David McAllister, a German centre-right MEP who chairs the European parliament’s UK coordination group, said the EU was united against renegotiating the protocol.

“The protocol was signed and ratified by both sides. Nobody here in Brussels is interested in starting these new complicated discussions and political fights,” he said.

Truss said she had told Šefčovič the protocol was “the greatest obstacle” to forming a new Northern Ireland executive after [last week’s elections](#). There are no further plans for the pair to speak.

Šefčovič told her there was “no room to expand the negotiating mandate or introduce new proposals to reduce the overall level of trade friction”, according to a Foreign Office statement. The government called it a matter of “regret” that the EU “would not show the requisite flexibility to help solve those issues … then, as a responsible government, we would have no choice but to act.”

Sefčovič said it remained of “serious concern that the UK government intends to embark on the path of unilateral action”. He said the EU was still waiting for the UK’s response to proposals it made in February. “We have made clear that there is still potential to be explored in our proposals,” he said.

“Unilateral action, effectively disapplying an international agreement such as the protocol, is simply not acceptable.”

This article was amended on 13 May 2022 because an earlier version mistakenly quoted Maroš Šefčovič referring to “trade fiction”; this has been corrected to trade friction.

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## [Brexit](#)

# How the UK may try to override the Northern Ireland Brexit protocol

The foreign secretary has a few legal arguments to consider, says a professor of EU law



The Northern Ireland protocol was a key part of the Brexit agreement.  
Photograph: Jane Barlow/PA

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

*[@lisaocarroll](#)*

Thu 12 May 2022 15.01 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 05.18 EDT

The UK government is threatening to write new laws to allow it to unilaterally override parts of the [Northern Ireland](#) Brexit protocol due to concerns over “peace and stability”.

But what options are open to the UK, given the protocol was part of a legally binding international treaty co-signed with the EU?

Catherine Barnard, a professor of EU law at the University of Cambridge, thinks there are five options to consider.

### **Article 16 of the protocol**

This is the most oft-cited set of clauses allowing for “safeguard measures” which could include a pause of the checks and controls on goods crossing the Irish Sea in the event of “serious economic, societal or environmental difficulties that are liable to persist” or in the event that there is “diversion of trade”.

In a statement earlier this week, the government said 200 retailers had stopped delivering to customers in Northern Ireland.

But while article 16 allows the UK to take “safeguard measures”, this has already effectively been put in place through earlier unilateral action to suspend the checks on many goods.

The section of the protocol also requires the UK to give the EU a month’s notice that it is invoking article 16 and the protective measures must be reviewed with the EU in the joint committee every three months.

As a negotiating tool, this is not strong. But it could score points among unionists and Brexiter backbenchers.

### **Article 4 of Section 7 (a) of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2018**

This gives direct effect to the supremacy of the withdrawal agreement over domestic law. It covers all three elements in the agreement – the Irish border, citizens’ rights and the divorce bill.

To revoke it fully would be tantamount to walking away from the Brexit deal entirely.

Using Section 7 (a) would be very serious because it would mean removing the entire agreement which would remove citizens’ rights too. What the government could be looking at doing is just turning the agreement off in respect to anything to do with the Northern Ireland protocol.

## **Section 8 (c) of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2018**

This enables the UK to implement updates to any EU directives in relation to the Northern Ireland trading arrangements without having to go through an act of parliament.

It results in what is known as “dynamic alignment” of British and EU laws in this limited geographical area of the UK. Revoking the provision would delight the unionists who have complained that the UK’s sovereign right to make its own laws for the entire country has been undermined by the protocol.

## **Section 38 (b) of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020**

This is known as the Bill Cash clause, which recognises that the parliament of [the UK is sovereign](#). While the clause has been frequently referred to in EU scrutiny committee hearings chaired by Cash, a veteran Eurosceptic, it has never been challenged. It is also seen as stating the obvious, and is unlikely to be the core of legal manoeuvres made by the foreign secretary, Liz Truss.

## **Article 62 of the Vienna Convention**

Barnard thinks this is where Truss and the attorney general for England and Wales, Suella Braverman, could be focusing their legal arguments.

The 1969 pact does not allow a country to withdraw from an international treaty on the grounds of “a fundamental change of circumstances which has occurred with regard to those existing at the time of the conclusion of a treaty, and which was not foreseen by the parties, may not be invoked as a ground for terminating or withdrawing from the treaty”.

In any case all parties knew about the divisions in Northern Ireland and the Belfast Good Friday agreement includes mechanisms to respect all parts of the community.

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Article 62 also warns that this “change of circumstances” could not be a reason for walking away from an international treaty if “the existence of those circumstances [which allegedly changed]” were an “essential basis” of the consent of the two sides.

As the protocol was all about protecting peace on the island of Ireland and ensuring no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, this may not be a watertight ground for disapplying the treaty.

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## 2022.05.13 - Spotlight

- 'You're born an egotistical sociopath' The Innocents, the child-horror that leaves audiences shaking
- How well do you know Eurovision? Take our all-singing, all-dancing quiz
- You be the judge Should my partner take the bin out more often?
- 'I told Jackie Chan, your loss, my bro!' How Everything Everywhere gave Michelle Yeoh the role of a lifetime

## Horror films

Interview

# ‘You’re born an egotistical sociopath’: **The Innocents**, the child-horror that leaves audiences shaking

[Cath Clarke](#)

There’s no gore and little violence, so why does Eskil Vogt’s film about children with special powers provoke such strong reactions? He says it’s because the cruelty exhibited is uncomfortably relatable



Playing scary ... Ida (Rakel Lenora Fløttum) and Ben (Sam Ashraf) in *The Innocents*. Photograph: Mer Film

Fri 13 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 05.33 EDT

When people see [The Innocents](#), they tend not to hold back on telling its director what they think. “This is the worst thing I’ve ever been through,” is a frequent reaction. Followed by: “Thank you.”

“You can see they’ve been crying,” says Eskil Vogt. They are frequently shaking, he reports. He shakes his head, smiling, a little bemused. “OK. How do I process that? Weird.”

The Innocents is a candidate for the most disturbing film of the year. A horror-ish arthouse drama about four children who discover they have magical powers, it has been compared to [Let the Right One In](#), Carrie and The Shining. The idea came to Vogt when his children, now 11 and nine, were little. Standing at the school gates watching them play, he noticed they behaved differently with their friends.

“I wanted to make something about that secret world of childhood,” he says over a video call from his home in Oslo. He looks the part of intense European auteur: straight back, shaved head, laser-focus blue eyes. But he is also relaxed company: friendly, with a dry sense of humour. Writing the script, he imagined what would happen if the magic of child’s play became a reality – if kids developed superpowers overnight. Spoiler: it doesn’t end well.



‘I wanted to make something about that secret world of childhood’ ... Eskil Vogt. Photograph: Christian Breidlid

The Innocents begins when nine-year-old Ida (Rakel Lenora Fløttum) moves into an Oslo apartment complex with her parents and her sister, Anna (Alva Brynsmo Ramstad), who is 11 and is on the autism spectrum. In an early scene, we watch Ida slyly pinch Anna hard on the leg while their mother isn't looking. What is so shocking is the expression on Ida's face: not spiteful or mean, merely curious about the pain she is inflicting.

Ida makes two friends on the estate, soulful little Aisha (Mina Yasmin Bremseth Asheim) and a bullied boy called Ben (Sam Ashraf). Things turn dark when these two develop psychic abilities: Aisha can listen to other people's thoughts and Ben can control objects with his mind. That is dark in the conceptual sense, though: daylight is almost perpetual in the Norwegian summer: "In Oslo, the sun doesn't set until 10pm and it only stays down for a few hours. So we didn't have the fear of the dark to play with, which is a really big deal in horror movies. It's such a primal thing."

Vogt hadn't bargained for the level of audience discomfort. There is something about his film that people can't take. "This is a weird thing. I didn't think the film would be that impactful," he says. "I mean, most horror movies show much worse things."

The moment that broke me came when Ida does something unspeakably cruel to her sister (who is nonverbal and can't communicate that she is in pain). There is no gore, just a patch of blood that spreads slowly into a red map across a white sock. Watching on my TV at home in the middle of the day, I had to hit the pause button and walk into the kitchen for a breather. Vogt grins, nodding. He has heard it all before.

He wonders if it is the realism that makes The Innocents so triggering. "Violence in movies tends to go overboard. If I watch someone getting shot, head exploding, I don't feel anything. But if I see a hammer hitting a fingernail, I feel it in my whole body."

"I wanted things on a relatable level. I think that's why some people have fainted at the splinter in the leg, which is a very small thing." Not quite: it is a chunk of wood the size of a KitKat finger lodged in a child's soft thigh.

Vogt is interested in children behaving with a cruelty that would be considered evil in adults. There is a phrase in Norwegian, he says: children are pure angels. “But thinking about your own childhood, or watching your kids, you realise the reality is that of course they’re not angels. I mean, you’re not born with empathy. You’re born an egotistical, narcissistic sociopath. But, luckily, you don’t have the tools to impose your will on the world.”

If I watch someone getting shot, I don’t feel anything. But if I see a hammer hitting a fingernail ...

Audience members who meet Vogt at screenings have been regaling him with anecdotes of childhood. The one that sticks in his mind came from an American reporter, who once caught a group of children walking with a baby towards the edge of a cliff. One of the kids cheerfully explained that they were going to throw the baby off the cliff. “They had some idea, a stupid idea, it would bounce up again.” Vogt grins, eyebrows wrinkling into a wordless what-if. “I don’t know if they would actually have done it.”

What I like about *The Innocents* is that its chief child antagonist, Ben, does some terrible things and yet Vogt generates sympathy for him. “I feel it’s very important to remember that kids are kids.” In Norway, a child of Ben’s age, 10 or so, could not be put on trial: the age of criminal responsibility is 15 (as opposed to 10 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and 12 in Scotland). That is only fair, says Vogt. “Kids can do stupid stuff. They don’t think about consequences. They have impulses; they can’t control emotions.”

*The Innocents* is Vogt’s second film as a director. He is best known as the scriptwriting partner of the director Joachim Trier. They met as teenagers in Oslo and instantly became best friends. They have written five feature films together, most recently [The Worst Person in the World](#), the Oscar-nominated arthouse romcom about a directionless woman in her 20s.

When I ask how two middle-aged men wrote such a sublime script about a young woman, he smiles. If the question annoys him, he doesn’t let it show.

“We get asked that a lot. I think the best answer is that we don’t think about it that way.” Instead, they focus on making complicated characters with contradictions and idiosyncrasies, he says. In fact, middle age is a good place to be as a writer: “Because you still remember what it is to feel young, but you also know that time is limited; you can see the end coming. And it would be boring if writing about middle-aged men was the only thing I could do.”

Inevitably, the phone has already started ringing with interest from Hollywood in remaking *The Innocents*. Vogt is anxious about what might get lost in translation. “I’d be afraid they would make it like a normal movie. Some things would be too dark, or they’d try to make the kids a little bit older and suddenly it’s about puberty or coming of age.”

Still, he wouldn’t say no. “I made my movie exactly the way I wanted to make it, with total freedom. So if some people want to pay a lot of money to do a remake, that’s just free money for me.”

**The Innocents** is in cinemas from 20 May

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/may/13/youre-born-an-egotistical-sociopath-the-innocents-the-child-horror-that-leaves-audiences-shaking>.

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## How well do you know Eurovision? Take our all-singing, all-dancing quiz



Ukraine's Verka Serduchka performs at the 2007 contest in Helsinki.  
Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

Geopolitical alliances at the ready! This year's song contest is on Saturday night. Here are 26 questions to test your nous on the biggest night in Europe,

from the sublime to the ridiculous



[Martin Belam](#)

Fri 13 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 05.44 EDT

On Saturday evening, 25 countries will compete for the right to be crowned the winner of the [Eurovision](#) song contest. Before then, you can test your Eurovision knowledge with our quiz. Will you be in tune with the history of the event, or will you end up off-key with the dreaded *nul points*? Let us know how you get on in the comments.

## The 2022 Guardian Eurovision quiz spectacular

1. We will start with some easy ones. What is the maximum score that a song can be given by a single jury?



Dix points

Douze points

Quatorze points

Quinze points

2. Italy is hosting the contest this year – in which city?



Milan

Rome

Naples

Turin

3.What was the name of the Italian band (pictured) who won the 2021 contest?



Hooverphonic

Måneskin

Blind Channel

Go\_A

4.In which city did they win?



Amsterdam

Rotterdam

Utrecht

The Hague

5.James Newman represented the UK last year. How many points did he score?



Nul points

Sept points

Douze points

Vingt-et-un points

6. It isn't this superfan, but who is representing the UK this year?



Andy Abraham

Michael Rice

Engelbert Humperdinck

Sam Ryder

7. The "big five" qualify automatically for the final because they deliver large TV audiences and a big chunk of cash to the Eurovision coffers. Which countries are they?

Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Spain and the UK

Italy, France, Germany, Poland and the UK

Italy, France, Germany, Spain and the UK

Italy, France, Germany, Sweden and the UK

8. Finland's entry this year comes from a cult goth-rock band whose song In the Shadows was an international hit in 2003. Who are they?



Phillip Boa and the Voodooclub

Clan of Xymox

The Rasmus

Einstürzende Neubauten

9. Which of these countries has never won the Eurovision song contest?

Turkey

Portugal

Latvia

Poland

10. In 1982, the UK tried to emulate the success of Bucks Fizz (pictured on either side of Terry Wogan) the previous year with the song One Step Further by a singing duo (centre, in white). What were they called?



Monro

Fonda

Bardo

Kinda

11. Fans are used to voting for their favourite Eurovision entry by phone, SMS or app. But in which year was televoting first used for the final?



1977

1987

1997

2007

12. The UK scored nul points for the first time in 2003, but with which act and song?

Scooch with Flying the Flag (for You)

Daz Sampson with Teenage Life

James Fox with Hold on to Our Love

Jemini with Cry Baby

13. Which city has hosted the Eurovision song contest the most times?

Dublin

London

Luxembourg

Stockholm

14. Ukraine's entry, by Kalush Orchestra, is sure to get an emotional reception. But when did Ukraine first participate?



1991

1997

2003

2007

15. What will happen for the first time at this year's Eurovision?



It will be broadcast in the US

It will be broadcast in 4K UHD

It will be hosted by Italy

San Marino will compete

16. In which year did Terry Wogan commentate for the BBC on his last Eurovision?



2004

2008

2011

2015

17. Since Eurovision began, how many countries have competed?



- 32
- 42
- 52
- 62

18. One country has competed in the contest only once. Which one?

- Morocco
- Lebanon
- Tunisia
- Libya

19. Ireland's Johnny Logan has been involved with three winning Eurovision songs as a performer or a writer. But to which of these Irish winning entries did he not contribute?



In Your Eyes  
Hold Me Now  
Why Me?  
What's Another Year

20. What was special about the presentation of Azerbaijan's 2017 entry, sung by Dihaj (pictured)?



It featured someone doing live sand sculptures  
It featured a piano that burst into flames

It featured a man standing on a ladder wearing a horse's head  
It featured a singing turkey puppet

21. Which Cliff Richard song came second in 1968?



Power to All Our Friends  
Congratulations  
The Day I Met Marie  
Summer Holiday

22. True or false: the Soviet Union competed for the first time in 1987, as part of glasnost, Mikhail Gorbachev's openness policy?



True

False

23.What is the time limit for a Eurovision entry?



Two minutes 45 seconds

Three minutes

Three minutes 15 seconds

Three minutes 30 seconds

24. When Eurovision started, all the entries had to be accompanied by a live orchestra. When was this rule dropped?



1984

1989

1994

1999

25. In 1969, because no one had considered what might happen if the scores were tied, there were four winners. Among them was Lulu. What was her song?



Boom Bang-a-Bang

Ding-a-dong

La, la, la

Jaja Ding Dong

26. And finally: among this year's entries, what do Norway's Subwoolfer say you need to give to the wolf to stop it eating their grandma?



An apple

A bone

A banana  
A peach

- If you think there has been an egregious error in one of the questions or answers, please feel free to email [martin.belam@theguardian.com](mailto:martin.belam@theguardian.com), but remember: the quizmaster's word is final – and you don't want him to turn up at your house with his Now That's What I Call Eurovision album collection
- 

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## You be the judge: should my partner take the bin out more often?



Illustration: Joren Joshua/The Guardian

One is grossed out by the smell; the other refuses to put it out until it's full. Both have their say – and you decide who's talking rubbish

[Find out how to get a disagreement settled or be a You be the Judge juror](#)

*Interviews by [Georgina Lawton](#)  
[@georginalawton](#)*

Fri 13 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 20.47 EDT

## **The prosecution: Chioma**

*Our bin gets really smelly a few days into the week, but Abi refuses to empty it until it's full*

My partner, Abi, refuses to take our bin out before Sundays. She'll say, "No, we use only one bin bag a week, and we must wait until it's full before it goes outside". This habit really grinds my gears for a few reasons.

First, the bin starts to smell really quickly. Even though we have a large bin with a lid, the stench of rotting garbage starts emanating from it halfway through the week. Who wants to deal with that? Second, the stinginess. Abi believes she's being economical by waiting until the bin is full, but what is she really saving? Five, 10p a bag? I'm more than happy to give her the money for it if it means we don't have to deal with the smell of the rubbish. For me it's a no-brainer.

Recently things got really smelly after we disposed of a lot of food waste and plastic containers that had had chicken breasts in them. I said, "I'm taking the bins out." Abi tried to stop me. Her defence was, "The bin is barely full. You're being wasteful."

*She's been raised to save every penny and never waste anything. But I'm more about personal happiness*

But the smell was grossing me out. The bin is in the corner of the kitchen and I hate cooking when there is rotting rubbish right near me. Every time we opened it to put some more rubbish in, it would stink out the whole room. I argued that she was making us suffer for no reason. In the end, I took the old one outside, but she kept saying it was unnecessary. But in my

mind you don't have to wait until the bin is overflowing. If it smells, take it out.

Abi is stingy about a lot of things. She never wants to throw away food and always insists on saving bits of leftover dinner, which we never eat. She also hates throwing out books and games she hasn't touched in years. I think it's how she was raised: to save every penny and never waste anything. But I'm more about personal happiness. If something is causing you stress, throw it out!

There's no doubt in my mind that I'm correct. If there is a putrid scent coming from the rubbish bin in your home, empty it. Abi needs to realise you can't put a price on happiness – and foul smells make me very unhappy.

## The defence: Abi

*It's a total waste of money to use more than one bin bag a week, especially as the smell isn't that bad*

The bins are a point of contention in our relationship. We got together three years ago and moved in with each other a year later. That's when I began to notice that Chioma is a lot more wasteful than me. She will chuck milk out if it's one day past the sell-by date. She doesn't ever want to freeze leftovers. And with the kitchen bin, she's determined to change it whenever there's a slight smell.

Any little inconvenience and it's, "Oh, we have to change the bin again." But in my opinion, there's always going to be a bit of an odour when you keep rubbish inside the house. It's normal. Chioma will be getting bin bags out several times a day, even when there's no smell. I actually think she's just scared of a possible odour, so she prematurely takes the bins out before there's even a chance of it festering. I tell her, "You're being a bit over the top. There's not even anything in that bin," but she just ignores me.

If the smell is bad, we only ever have to endure it while we are in the kitchen

We recycle cardboard and cans, but we don't have a food waste bin so a lot of our leftovers go into the main bin. That probably adds to Chioma's anxiety, but I never think it's that bad. Also, our living room and dining area are separate, so if the smell is bad, we only ever have to endure it while we are in the kitchen. Our bin also has a sturdy lid. Chioma exaggerates when she says that it stinks every day.

I've been raised to be a bit more conscientious about money. Chioma says I'm too frugal but I think it's ridiculous to be going through multiple plastic bags a week when we could just use one. I've pretty much refused to take the kitchen bin out unless it is at capacity and it is a Sunday.

Of course, I would make an exception if there was a really terrible smell, but that never happens. When Chioma complains about the bins, I remind her that the price of 50 black bin liners is £2.50 and rising. The cost of living is hitting us all hard. I don't think I'm in the wrong here at all.

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## The jury of Guardian readers

### **Should Abi empty the kitchen bin more often?**

While there's nothing wrong with waiting for a bin to be full before putting it out, food waste does smell. Some people are more sensitive to bad smells than others, and it seems Abi isn't taking Chioma's feelings into consideration.

**Eira, 52**

Abi is hinting at a compromise – a separate food waste bin that can be disposed of every three or four days would eliminate smells. No need to throw refuse away every day, but as you prepare meals in the kitchen, the smells in that room shouldn't put you off from entering it either.

**Tristan, 33**

Abi is guilty: no one likes smelly rubbish in the kitchen. However, wasting food isn't good and Chioma should be on board with Abi's efforts in this area. A smaller bin/smaller bin bags might be a solution to both their needs.

**Jo, 56**

Not only does the stench permeate furnishings and fabrics, it attracts flies and rodents, too. Abi needs to be more aware of Chioma's sensitivity to smells, and commit to emptying the bins daily to have a pleasant-smelling home. How about buying a food recycling bin of their own?

**Chantal, 45**

It's hard to judge when the evidence seems to differ (is it several times a day, or once a week?) but I'm leaning towards the prosecution here. Smells, foul odours or the chance of festering all seem worth the 5p it costs to change the bag. Sorry Abi, you're guilty!

**Ali, 33**

## You be the judge

So now you can be the judge. In our online poll below, tell us: should Abi take out the bin more often?

We'll share the results on next week's You be the judge.

**The poll will close 19 May 9am BST**

## Last week's result

We asked if Chris should soak the dishes before washing up, because his current method annoy his partner Penny.

90% of you said no – Chris is innocent  
10% of you said yes – Chris is guilty

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## Movies

Interview

# **'I told Jackie Chan, your loss, my bro!': how Everything Everywhere gave Michelle Yeoh the role of a lifetime**

Steve Rose

The action superstar shines in a new multiverse comedy. She talks about her high-risk, low-budget Hong Kong days, why you can be a superhero in your 60s – and whether she could kick James Bond's butt



Michelle Yeoh: 'The guys seem to still be superheroes in their 60s and 70s. Why does a woman not get that opportunity?' Photograph: Celeste Sloman/New York Times/Redux/eyevine

@steverose7

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It was the butt-plug fight sequence that finally broke her, says Michelle Yeoh. Best not to spoil the surprise any further, but her new comedy, [Everything Everywhere All at Once](#), throws the veteran actor into a multitude of absurd and unorthodox situations: downing a whole bottle of orangeade then copiously throwing up; having hotdogs instead of fingers; spanking the co-director, Daniel Scheinert, in an S&M get-up. And she loved every minute of it. “I was doing things that I never dreamed of doing!” Yeoh enthuses over a video call from Los Angeles. “But it was never too much.” Until, that is, it came to shooting the kung fu fight with two half-naked male assailants and some dauntingly large sex toys. “When we were doing the butt-plug fight sequences, I was just on the ground, laughing my head off, going like: ‘Oh my God! Would I have ever thought that one day I would be doing this kind of martial arts?’”

Everything Everywhere All at Once is the role of a lifetime for Yeoh. Several lifetimes, in fact. Directed by the duo known as the Daniels ([Scheinert and Daniel Kwan](#)), it is a movie as expansive, ambitious and all over the place as its title suggests, zipping across alternate universes, crammed with bizarre action, surreal comedy and manic family drama, but also tackling concerns existential and philosophical. It is a film that can barely contain its over-ripe imagination – think a cross between The Matrix, [Michel Gondry](#) and [Stephen Chow](#), with homages to everything from 2001: A Space Odyssey, to In the Mood for Love, to Ratatouille thrown in.

But the maximalism seems to have struck a chord with our age of accelerated incident, digital overload and black holes of despair. Already, it has become the stuff of cult word-of-mouth and repeat viewings. One critic wrote: “It’s a movie that I saw twice just to make sure I hadn’t completely hallucinated it [the first time around](#), and one that I will soon be seeing a third time for the same reason.”

Yeoh plays Evelyn Wang, a dowdy, put-upon Chinese-American laundromat-owner, struggling with her tax returns, struggling with her marriage, struggling to bond with her lesbian daughter (Stephanie Hsu). But then her husband (Ke Huy Quan), or a version of him, informs Evelyn she is the key to saving the world – not because she is “the one”, but because she is the most failed version of herself in the multiverse: “You’re your worst

you.” Somehow, this enables her to access the skills of all her other selves, from opera-singing to martial arts to weapons-grade placard-spinning. This isn’t the half of it. It is one of those films that takes as long to explain as it does to watch, but it brings its labyrinthine madness to a satisfying conclusion.

Watch the trailer.

Shooting the story out of sequence, Yeoh had her work cut out simply understanding where and who she was from one day to the next. “Every day, I would go in and say: ‘I have no clue what’s going on today,’” she laughs. There are several moments in the movie when Yeoh is pictured in closeup, screaming, as her character flips through dozens of alternate versions of herself. Essentially, Yeoh explains, it involved standing in front of the camera screaming “Aaaaaah!” in different costumes. “The Daniels would say: ‘That’s the perfect expression. Do that confused look!’” she says. “And I’m like: ‘This is my natural reaction.’ It didn’t need any acting chops for that.”

The role fits Yeoh like a glove, though. In her one life, she has acquired many of the skills Evelyn accesses from her other selves. There is the kung fu and action heroism, of course. This is a woman who once stunt-jumped a motorcycle on to the top of a moving train, for real. She is fluent in English, Cantonese and Mandarin. She has played everything from a Bond girl (*Tomorrow Never Dies*) to a political heroine (Aung San Suu Kyi in *The Lady*), a dragon matriarch (in the hit romcom *Crazy Rich Asians*) to a Star Trek captain (in *Star Trek: Discovery*). Besides that, she has been a ballet dancer, a beauty queen, even a dutiful wife (although that didn’t last long).

Yeoh is surely the greatest female action star in cinema history. Even though she is still doing action movies in her 60th year, leading roles such as this don’t often come along for women, she says. “You get to that stage in your life and your career where you feel: ‘I’m being sort of overlooked here,’ because you are now relegated to these kinds of [minor] roles. The guys seem to be doing it. They’re still like superheroes in their 60s and 70s. Why does a woman not get the opportunity to be that?”



(From left) Stephanie Hsu, Michelle Yeoh and Ke Huy Quan in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. Photograph: Allyson Riggs/AP

The Daniels readily admit that if Yeoh had turned down the part, they would have had to start from scratch. They also admit, however, that their original idea was to make the husband the protagonist and to cast [Jackie Chan](#), with Yeoh playing his wife. When Chan was unavailable, “something clicked”, the Daniels say, and they realised the story would work much better with the wife as the lead.

Chan and Yeoh are old friends; in fact, he was Yeoh’s first co-star, in a 1984 commercial for a Hong Kong watch brand. There has always been a competitive element to their relationship, it seems. “Jackie actually texted me,” she says. “And he says: ‘Wow, I hear amazing things about your movie. Did you know that the boys came to see me in China?’ And I said: ‘Yes, your loss, my bro!’”

Born to a well-off Malaysian family, Yeoh came to London to study ballet in her teens, until a back injury closed that career option. She was planning on opening a ballet school in Malaysia, but then won Miss Malaysia 1983, at 20, and decided to try her luck in the Hong Kong film industry. Initially, she was cast as a token pretty girl, but she quickly figured, with her dancer’s training, that she could do action just like the men. Soon, she was leading

action movies such as 1985's [Yes, Madam!](#), in which she and Cynthia Rothrock dispatch hordes of male hoodlums, smashing most of them through panes of glass.

Just as her career was going places, Yeoh unexpectedly retired from acting after marrying her producer, Dickson Poon, in 1987. They divorced five years later, after which she threw herself back into it, literally. She partnered with Chan in his hit action comedy Police Story 3: Supercop, which is where she did the motorcycle jump on to the train (she didn't know how to ride a motorcycle, she says). She also leapt off the top of a truck on to the bonnet of a car driving behind, but slid off and fell into the road. She could have died, but she got up and did the stunt again straight away – and got the shot. Apparently, Chan felt upstaged by Yeoh's intrepidity, so he devised an even riskier helicopter stunt for himself.



With Jackie Chan in Police Story 3: Supercop. Photograph: Everett Collection/Alamy

Health and safety was not exactly to the fore in those days. "If you jumped off something, you were lucky if you had mattresses and some cardboard boxes [to break your fall]. And then all the wire work was done on wires that were thin enough that you couldn't see with the naked eye, because we didn't have CGI; we couldn't erase them after." These wires were known to

snap on occasion. “I don’t miss the danger or the risk of it,” she says. “But it gave us such an incredible way of creativity.”

Yeoh was part of a wave of Hong Kong talent that reinvigorated Hollywood action cinema in the 1990s, along with the likes of Chan, Jet Li, Chow Yun-fat and the directors Tsui Hark, Corey Yuen and John Woo. Not to mention the fight choreographer [Yuen Woo-ping](#), who had a hand in The Matrix movies (Yeoh turned down a role in the sequels), Quentin Tarantino’s Kill Bill and Ang Lee’s crossover hit Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, in which Yeoh combined action dynamics with dramatic restraint to powerful effect.

Yeoh’s own Hollywood crossover came via a different route: James Bond. “I was there at the right place at the right time,” she says. Yeoh was a different kind of Bond girl in Tomorrow Never Dies: the Chinese agent who is immune to Bond’s seduction techniques and more than a match for him in the combat stakes. (The acting ones, too, you might say.) Again, Yeoh did all her own stunts and stole the show. Some critics suggested she would make a better Bond than Pierce Brosnan. Clearly, she could have kicked his butt, right?

“We had to find a balance,” she says. “Because, at the end of the day, I am a guest in the James Bond world. You can’t just come in and take over everything. But for them to have a character who was equally as important as James Bond – it’s respect as well. I love the fact that he would step back and go like: ‘I’ll watch you fight,’ you know? It’s kind of pretty cool to have a woman with those kind of abilities.”

She could have kicked his butt though, couldn’t she?

She laughs. “I would never do that! I love the way you think, though.”



With Zhang Ziyi in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Photograph: Cinetext Collection/Sportsphoto/Allstar

Making *Everything Everywhere All at Once* took Yeoh back to her Hong Kong days, she says. Marvel has hundreds of millions of dollars to render its multiverse stories, but this movie had a fraction of that (an estimated \$25m) and just eight weeks' shooting time. Fortunately, the Daniels, who came out of music video production, are well accustomed to stretching budgets and finding ingenious workarounds.

In addition, they created a collaborative, communal atmosphere on set. Every day began with silly warmup exercises for the whole cast and crew. It felt more like summer camp than a movie set, she says. "That's the magic of moviemaking, because it's coming from here [she points to her head] and from here [she points to her heart]. It's not like: 'Oh, we'll just sit back and let the CGI people take over,' because we didn't have the luxury of that. But we had the passion."

In a teasing bit of self-reflexivity, one of Yeoh's character's alternate selves in *Everything Everywhere* is a famous movie star. To establish this persona, the film craftily incorporates real-life news footage of Yeoh attending red-carpet premieres in glamorous couture (as she has just done at the Met Gala,

days before we speak). If Evelyn is the worst version of herself, as the film has it, surely, by implication, Yeoh is living her best life?

It is not that simple, Yeoh says. The movie-star version of Evelyn in the film is successful, but miserable. She never married or had a daughter. “When Evelyn comes back [from that persona], the first thing she looks for is: ‘Where’s my daughter?’ And she doesn’t have a husband. She doesn’t have these kinds of love, right? That’s when she realises her choice has always been her family, and she will not give up on that.”

There is a correspondence with reality here. “I always wanted children, but unfortunately, physically, I’m not able to,” Yeoh says. This is one of the many forks in the road that led to this version of Michelle Yeoh, she acknowledges. “Would my life be different if I had? I don’t sit back and think about that. I am grateful for what I have … I have amazing friends. I have six godchildren, so I’m surrounded by children. And I have the best husband – I would call him my husband – because we have great respect for what we do and our lives and careers are so different.” This is Jean Todt, a former head of Ferrari and now a UN special envoy on road safety. They have been together for nearly 20 years, but are not married. “I’ve lived out of a suitcase for the last three decades. This is the life that I chose and I’m happy doing what I’m doing. I have so much to be grateful for, so I don’t sit and wonder: what if something else happened?”

This is not the final chapter in Yeoh’s career by any means. Coming up are James Cameron’s Avatar sequels (of course, she can’t reveal anything about them); a Witcher spin-off; the fantasy movie The School for Good and Evil; and an adaptation of the graphic novel American Born Chinese. But Yeoh recognises this is a rare moment in her career, the kind of opportunity most actors dream of, even if she didn’t quite imagine it would involve hotdog fingers and butt-plug fights. “I’ve been in the business now for thirtysomething years, right?” she says. “And it feels like I needed all that experience to be able to come to this point and say: ‘All right, I’m going to show you what I made of.’”

Everything Everywhere All at Once is in cinemas from 13 May

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## 2022.05.13 - Opinion

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# We need optimism – but Disneyfied climate predictions are just dangerous

[George Monbiot](#)



Techno-utopianism is popular precisely because it doesn't challenge the status quo, and lets polluters off the hook

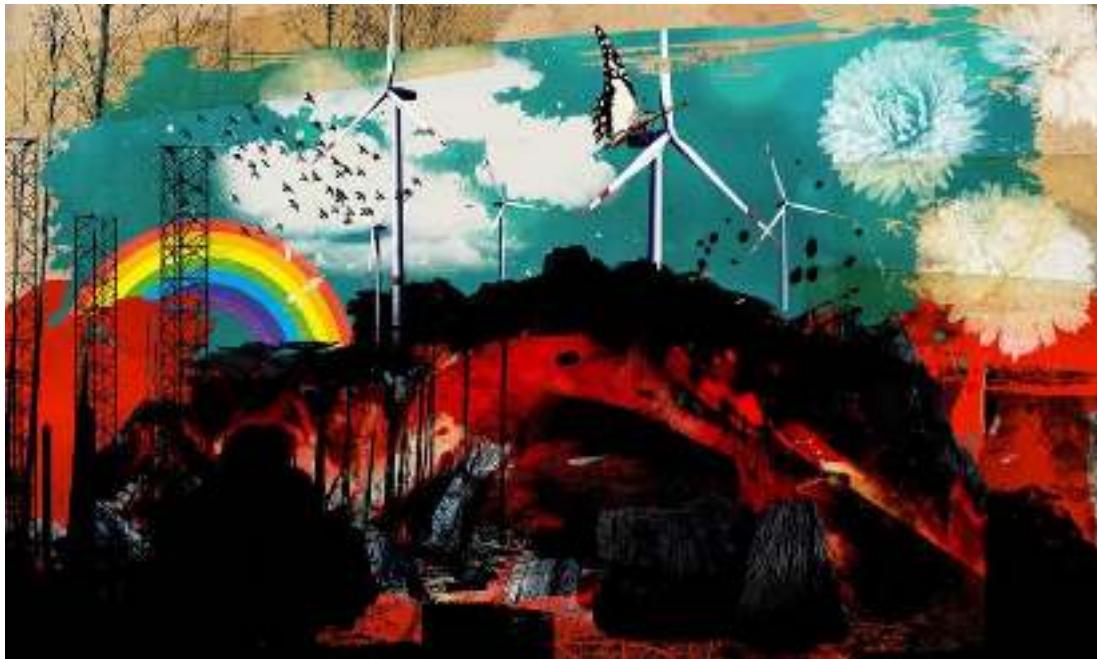


Illustration: Eleanor Shakespeare/The Guardian

Fri 13 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 23.29 EDT

In seeking to prevent environmental breakdown, what counts above all is not the new things we do, but the old things we stop doing. Renewable power, for instance, is useful in preventing climate chaos only to the extent that it displaces fossil fuels. Unfortunately, new technologies do not always lead automatically to the destruction of old ones.

In the UK, for example, building new offshore wind power [has been cheaper](#) than building new gas plants since 2017. But the wholesale disinvestment from fossil fuels you might have expected is yet to happen. Since the UN climate summit last November, the government has [commissioned](#) one new oil and gas field, and reportedly plans to license [six more](#). It has overridden the Welsh government to [insist on the extension](#) of the Aberpergwm coalmine. Similar permissions have been granted in most rich nations, even before Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Why? Politics. Fossil fuel companies need spend just a fraction of their income on lobbying – funding politicians and their parties, buying the services of thinktanks and public relations agencies, using advertising to greenwash their credentials – to impede the energy transition and defend

their investments. Fossil fuels will become stranded assets only when governments insist that they be left in the ground. Yet, somehow, a major strand of thinking in rich nations continues to ignore this obvious truth.

The latest example is the economist Oded Galor's much-praised new book, The Journey of Humanity. Galor argues that the driving forces of human development override setbacks such as wars, pandemics and depressions to deliver ever-increasing prosperity and welfare. They will, he believes, continue to propel a "relentless march of humanity" towards an "even more bountiful future".

While the book makes some interesting points, you might have imagined that climate and ecological breakdown, as they present the greatest threat to the optimism that he professes, would be covered in depth. But while he acknowledges their importance, his treatment is remarkably brief, even glib. The only source he cites in support of his main contention on the issue is Bill Gates, whose techno-utopianism and political naivety are notorious among environmentalists.

Instead of detailed analysis, I found handwaving and magical thinking. Galor claims, without providing the necessary evidence, that "the power of innovation accompanied by fertility decline" may allow us to avoid a difficult choice between economic growth and environmental protection. He asserts that a decline in fertility will buy us the time we need to develop unspecified "revolutionary technologies" that will one day rescue us from the climate crisis. So, rather than encouraging countries to adopt "clean energy technologies and environmental regulations", we should instead help them further to reduce fertility.

Just a few problems. While the decline in population growth rates is real enough, it comes far too late to deliver the salvation that Galor anticipates. The most optimistic of current projections, which assumes the deployment of all the measures Galor recommends, sees global population peaking in 2064, then declining to a little higher than today's level by 2100. But already, as the current devastating heatwave in India and Pakistan suggests, the conditions required to sustain human life in some parts of the world are at grave risk, while some Earth systems could be approaching their tipping points. If they pass these critical thresholds, and this triggers a cascade of

[change](#), the living planet could flip into a state that is largely uninhabitable. There's likely to be [no return](#) from this on any human timescale. The long arc of human history for which Galor claims to have developed a "unified theory" is a mere instant of Earth systems' time.

He also fails to establish a connection between fertility rates and fossil fuel use. There are plenty of countries whose low fertility rates are accompanied by very high fossil fuel consumption: Canada, for instance, has a [fertility rate](#) of just 1.5 children for every woman of childbearing age, Russia 1.6, and the US, Australia, China and the UK 1.7. We already possess the technologies required to avoid catastrophe. What's missing is the political will to deploy them at sufficient speed, and to shutter the legacy industries with which they compete.

A few days before his book was published in the UK, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [warned](#) that irrational optimism and a misperception of risk greatly exacerbate our exposure to disaster. The timing was coincidental, but it stands as a direct riposte to his claims. Groundless optimism could be seen as one of the "cultural traits" that, Galor says, help determine the journey of humanity. It leads us not to his "even more bountiful future", but to a different place altogether.

His is the latest in a line of books by professional optimists – Gates, [Steven Pinker](#), [Matt Ridley](#) – who have failed to grasp the nature of either Earth systems or the political economy that bears upon them. These men are not climate deniers; they are politics deniers. They appear to believe that the transformations necessary to prevent systemic collapse can happen without political pressure or political change. Understandably, the media loves them. Nothing fundamental needs to change, we can sit and wait for technological and demographic shifts and everything will work out in the end. A simple story with a happy ending, telling power what it wants to hear, this is the Disney version of environmental science.

If we leave these issues to "the market" and other supposedly automatic processes, we can see what will happen. This week, the Guardian is publishing the results of its [carbon bomb](#) research. New oil and gas projects, if not stopped, will push global temperatures beyond the limits to which

governments claim to have committed us, and are likely to drive Earth systems past their tipping points.

In other words, only a radical break from business as usual will prevent planetary disaster. This requires the mass mobilisation of citizens to demand that their governments stop these projects and keep fossil fuels in the ground. How do we know such protests work? Because if they didn't, our government would not be planning to ban them. Politics, which means seeking to change the decisions made in our name, is all that stand between us and catastrophe. This is why I see the politics deniers as more dangerous now than the climate deniers.

We need optimism, and there could be some grounds for it, but it must be rooted in political and environmental reality. Fairytales are a threat to life on Earth.

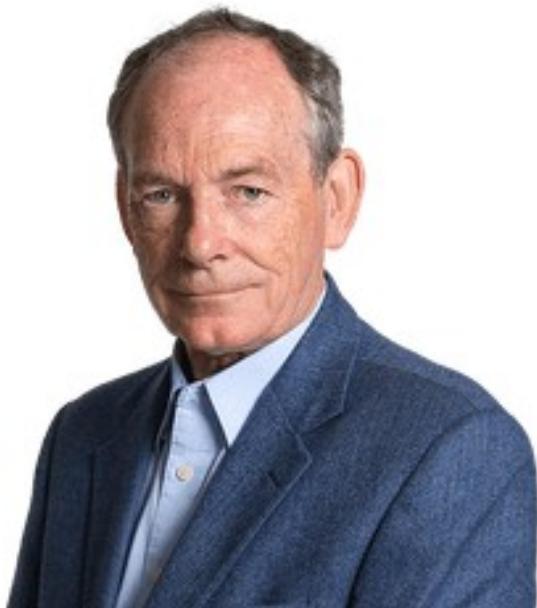
- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
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**OpinionHousing**

# **Michael Gove is right about one thing: building more homes won't solve anything**

[Simon Jenkins](#)



The UK has enough housing to go around – the problem is that the market is inefficient



A new housing estate nearing completion in Salisbury, Wiltshire, in 2012.  
Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

Fri 13 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 05.27 EDT

Boris Johnson's [Queen's speech](#) was largely empty of substance. So thank goodness for the housing and planning secretary, Michael Gove. In his contribution he never spoke truer words, at least if anyone understood them. He has dismissed housing targets as "Procrustean ... arbitrary ... perfect arithmetic".

In plain terms, what Gove meant was that Johnson's mantra of "[build, build, build](#)" (a parroting of his chief party donors, the construction lobby) was senseless. The build-or-be-damned policies of David Cameron and George Osborne had funnelled jobs, people and money into the south-east of England, spawning characterless housing estates from Hampshire to East Anglia. This had enraged Tory voters in villages and small towns, because it sucked the life out of existing communities, crushing high streets and closing local pubs. The response at last week's local elections was clear: stop the policy.

The British housing sector is not "in crisis". Sectors such as social housing are in trouble and need far more help. But property prices have been rising

fast, up 11% from last year. They have risen in all rich countries, driven largely by decades of low interest rates.

Gove is right to protest at the fatuous government statistic that Britain “needs” 300,000 houses a year, broken down to individual counties and cities. There is no Leninist requirement of a roof, bedroom and sitting room for each Briton, allocated by the state from birth to death. Whitehall’s centralism can be plain barmy. A housing market responds to changing patterns of migration and demand. Most people would like a different, preferably a better, house. Whether they can realise that preference depends on myriad factors, chiefly price.

British housing – overwhelmingly in houses rather than the European preference for flats – is desperately inefficient. As the geographer Danny Dorling has noted, a third of British bedrooms are empty on any given night and even London has a bedroom surplus. Britons have 2.5 rooms each. As for new building, it has virtually no impact on price, since some 90% of house sales are of existing properties. Countries that build extravagantly, such as the US and Australia, have house prices soaring faster than Britain.

As Dorling has pointed out, social and demographic differences hold the key to housing supply. The gap between London and the rest of the United Kingdom yawns wider than anywhere in Europe. First-time buyers in Westminster pay an average of £906,000 for a property, while in North Ayrshire they pay £102,000. Yet it is London not Scotland that holds a magnetic hold on young people. Despite the high prices, it still has the youngest population – its median age, of 35, is six years younger than Scotland – and the youngest workforce in Britain. A London street or tube concourse teems with youthful faces. Their living conditions may be cramped, but the Dick Whittington effect is as strong as ever.

If Gove really wants to bring down house prices, he should increase market flexibility. The most absurd tax in Britain is stamp duty, a tax on house transfer. Sales soared when the duty was suspended early in the pandemic, and have now slumped. Britons are reckless users of property. Stamp duty penalises downsizing and rewards housing waste. It is mad. The abolition of the tax would free up existing property, allowing retired people to swap

places with young families. Higher council tax or a mansion tax would make more sense.

The biggest challenge for Gove is the other half of his brief. It lies in what he sees as the true nature of “levelling up”. Every prime minister since Margaret Thatcher has wanted to bless the north – or its voters – rather as the Victorians wanted to help the poor. Yet they all pumped infrastructure and housing subsidy into London, ever widening the gulf. Johnson often says levelling up does not mean “levelling down”. But he continues to tip vanity public spending into London, its railways, airports, bridges, sewers and even, it seems, the buildings of parliament. The reality is that if the north really is to be more attractive as a place to live and work than the south-east, then the south-east must be made less so.

This means putting a stop to first-time house-buyer subsidies for Londoners, which anyway just increase prices. For those on lower incomes, house prices would drop over time. It means, as previously mentioned, giving rich councils powers to set higher council tax bands to sting their wealthier residents, motivating them to downsize. It means making London less attractive to foreign property ownership and enforcing the subletting of vacant properties. The stark residential emptiness of the West End is so brazen it must explain the Tories’ loss of Westminster council this month.

Levelling up should mean not building over ever wider expanses of the south-east’s countryside to welcome northern migrants. It should mean increasing – and publicising – the competing attractions of the north’s countryside. What has appealed to London’s creativity has been the vitality of its Victorian market hubs and restored commercial architecture. The north has these in plenty and should exploit them. It should fight to keep its young skills, perhaps waiving student debts if graduates stay working five years in the north.

House prices are not a random variable. They reflect where people prefer to live. Britain’s poorer regions need policies to help them retain their talent, creativity and prosperity. This will be hard, but success will come when their house prices too can be “in crisis”.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist
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## OpinionPoverty

# This is what the cost of living crisis means for those with a terminal diagnosis

[Helen Barnard](#)

The government's refusal to raise benefits is forcing those facing the final days of their lives to choose between food and warmth



Illustration: Bill Bragg

Thu 12 May 2022 11.27 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 08.41 EDT

“I’ve had to heat up rice and put it in a pillowcase to keep patients warm.” These are the shocking words of Beth Namara, an end-of-life nurse.

And here’s Victor, who has terminal cancer and lost his job during the pandemic. “I haven’t got enough money, really, to live. I often borrow from

loan sharks, for which you can borrow £20, pay back £40 – that sort of thing. I've had days where I've got no food in my cupboard.”

[New research](#) by Loughborough University, commissioned by the charity Marie Curie, throws fresh light on one of the least discussed impacts of rising poverty: the unnecessary pain and hardship it creates for people experiencing terminal illness.

Every year, more than 90,000 people experience poverty in the UK in the last year of their life. We also know that those reaching the end of their lives are far more likely to be trapped in poverty than those who are not, especially if they are of working age. The health impacts of grinding hardship increase the likelihood that people become ill and die early. But becoming ill or disabled also pulls people into poverty through the loss of work and higher costs such as specialist equipment, dietary supplements or heating. It is a vicious circle.

Every year, terminal care nurses go into homes and provide care and comfort for thousands of people with terminal illnesses. They see first-hand how poverty exacerbates the symptoms of illness, weakens the immune system and heightens the risk of more infections and a faster, more painful death.

What's more, they see families suffering stress, pain and guilt because they are unable to keep their loved ones warm and comfortable in their final days. Many people on low incomes are trapped in homes that are cold, damp and mouldy – miserable for anyone, but especially dangerous for someone who has advanced cancer or chronic kidney disease. On average, [energy bills double](#) after a terminal diagnosis, due to the need for warmer environments. [Four in 10](#) Marie Curie nurses say fuel poverty made their patients' physical and mental health worse.

[Food Foundation research](#) shows that the number of adults in “food insecurity” jumped from 4.7m in January to 7.3m in April this year. Record numbers are turning to food banks and seeking debt advice from charities such as Citizens Advice. The Bank of England predicts inflation will [reach 10%](#) this year. Energy bills could rise by [another £900](#) this autumn.

When we focus on those on benefits needing end-of-life care, the picture becomes starker: six in 10 people with a terminal diagnosis rely on benefits. These are manifestly failing to protect them from rising prices. After years of cuts and freezes, the government's steadfast refusal to raise benefits to cover anything close to the actual cost of living effectively amounts to a £500 cut, according to estimates.

We must urgently provide more immediate help through the benefits system for those in this situation. But we also need to plan for the future – an ageing society and more people living with multiple health conditions. Demographic change is colliding with economic trends – low pay, insecure work, unaffordable housing – to trap more people in poverty. This is undermining our national resilience in the face of the global forces that are driving up prices.

We need to get people into more secure, better-paid jobs that will protect them from poverty, enable them to build up savings to help when illness strikes and reduce pressure on social security spending and public services.

We also have to grasp the housing nettle. Among pensioners, those still renting into old age are more than twice as likely to live in poverty than those who own their properties. Today's new research finds a similar pattern – people ending their lives in private or social rented homes are much more likely to be doing so in poverty. Unless we change course millions of people are set to end their lives with few savings, little pension, paying high rent and living in a cold home that they can't afford to heat or repair.

The pandemic revived our awareness of how important it is to end your life well, and for your loved ones to be able to care for you as you do. It's simply wrong that poverty forces so many people to end their lives in unnecessary pain and hardship. That's why Marie Curie has launched a petition calling for urgent government action to help people dying in poverty.

- Helen Barnard is associate director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and research and policy director at Pro Bono Economics
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## OpinionFrance

# The left has finally got its act together – in France. Watch out, Macron and Le Pen

[Cole Stangler](#)

A new alliance led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon's party will fight June's legislative elections – and threatens the established order



Jean-Luc Mélenchon at the launch of a new leftwing alliance in Aubervilliers, near Paris, France, 7 May 2022. Photograph: Christophe Petit-Tesson/EPA

Fri 13 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 12.40 EDT

Few thought the day would ever come, but an earthquake is about to shake up French politics. Ahead of next month's legislative elections, France's famously fractious leftwing parties have [decided to join forces](#), with Europe Ecology-the Greens (EELV), the Socialist party (PS) and the French

Communist party (PCF) coalescing around [Jean-Luc Mélenchon](#)'s left populist La France Insoumise (LFI) and uniting around a common set of candidates.

In France's semi-presidential system, the legislative elections often go overlooked, but they play a decisive role in determining how much of the president's agenda can actually be enacted. Without a majority in the national assembly, the president is forced to share power with a rival prime minister and cabinet – a situation [known as “cohabitation”](#). It's happened three times before, but not since 2002, when legislative elections were moved to take place just after the presidential election.

And yet, cohabitation is a real possibility in today's highly volatile landscape, with [polls suggesting](#) the new unity coalition – the Nouvelle union populaire écologiste et sociale (Nupes) – on track to win a [significant share](#) of seats. Even if it does fall short of obtaining an outright majority and forming a government of its own, a newly empowered left bloc in parliament could pose headaches for the president, Emmanuel Macron, as he embarks on his second term in the Elysée.

Reaching a deal wasn't easy and tensions remain, but the unity pact has been fuelled by a mix of shared ideological commitments, a heavy dose of self-interest and a certain willingness to compromise. Before the presidential elections, each of the coalition members was gunning for a prime spot in the legislatives. But then came [Mélenchon's strong performance](#) in the first round of the presidentials, nearly beating Marine Le Pen to enter the final round. Any lingering doubts over the French left's centre of gravity were laid to rest.

While La France Insoumise won 22% of the first-round vote, candidates for the Greens, Communists and Socialists each earned less than 5% – lacklustre results that couldn't be papered over and that also had the effect of depriving them of generous public subsidies. Voters had spoken and they preferred Mélenchon's line: massive state spending to tackle the climate crisis; wealth redistribution and worker protections; an unapologetic response to rising racism and xenophobia; a willingness to bypass European Union rules if they prevent such policies from being carried out.

Shortly after the second round, La [France](#) Insoumise extended an invitation to negotiate on the basis of this programme – and the offer was taken up. While Mélenchon’s party remained in the driver’s seat, it also proved willing to make concessions: it will supply a majority of the coalition’s candidates, but the other three parties have been allotted shares of favourable legislative districts, setting them up to win at least 15 seats each and form parliamentary groups of their own.

Intra-party statements also bear the language of compromise. To assuage the Europhiles of the [Greens](#) and [Socialists](#), LFI has emphasised its firm attachment to the European Union and the eurozone; while the two parties have stressed they’re prepared to sidestep certain EU rules – particularly those that constrain public spending.

Frictions persist. Some of the Socialist old guard is enraged over the deal, including the former president François Hollande, [who views it](#) as a betrayal of his legacy. A few Socialists [expected to run](#) don’t yet have the formal blessing of the coalition or may not even want it. The [Communists have sparred](#) with La France Insoumise over a particular seat in the suburbs of Lyon. Critics have rightfully [pointed out](#) the lack of candidates who resemble the working-class and immigrant voters who nearly put Mélenchon in the run-off round last month. Still, the accord looks set to last at least through June’s elections.

While polls show a [vast majority](#) of self-identified leftwing voters support the deal, it has also sparked a predictably over-the-top backlash from pundits and political rivals. [Le Pen has warned](#) it will lead to prison abolitionist, “pro-burkini” anarchists wreaking havoc in the National Assembly, while Macron and his allies [have painted the coalition](#) as an opportunistic cabal led by “far-left” puppet masters who are unfit to govern.

Much of the Nupes programme is, in fact, fairly modest – raising the minimum wage, lowering the retirement age and investing in public services are far from revolutionary proposals – but this is beside the point.

What’s probably more upsetting to the president and his far-right rivals is the political clarification under way. The emergence of a powerful electoral bloc centred on La France Insoumise – a coalition committed to wealth

redistribution and the defence of ethnic and religious minorities – would betray a myth that has served both Macron and Le Pen in recent years. It would shatter the illusion that their political camps are the only two options on offer (“[progressives](#)” versus “nationalists” or “populists” in Macron-speak; or “[patriots](#)” versus “globalists” in the language of the far right).

It has long been apparent that a giant chunk of the French electorate – millions of young people, a swath of the working-class and a sizeable share of middle-class progressives – doesn’t fit within the narrow confines of this debate. Now these voters finally have a coalition that is serious about representing them and taking power.

- Cole Stangler is a journalist based in Paris
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## 2022.05.13 - Around the world

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- [The Hunters UN unit that tracked down Rwanda's worst killers](#)

[Cuba](#)

## Cuba explosion: last body recovered from Havana hotel ruin, taking toll to 45

Rescuers believe no more victims in debris of the Saratoga after blast that also badly damaged Cuba's most important Baptist church



Rescue workers in front of the Hotel Saratoga in Havana which was wrecked by a blast on 6 May. Photograph: Ramón Espinosa/AP

*Guardian staff and agencies*  
Thu 12 May 2022 23.02 EDT

Cuban rescue workers have recovered the body of the 45th and last person believed missing after an explosion blew the sides off a luxury hotel in historic Havana.

The blast on 6 May at the five-star Hotel Saratoga – a block from the city’s famous Capitol building, in a renovated area of Havana popular with tourists – left more than 100 people trapped, killed or injured. Fifteen remain hospitalised.

Officials say [a gas leak caused the explosion](#).



Rescue workers at Hotel Saratoga in Havana. Photograph: Yander Zamora/EPA

Luis Carlos Guzman, chief of Cuba’s firefighting corps, told reporters at the site of the blast that the woman whose body had been recovered, believed to be a waitress at the hotel, was “as of now, the last missing person”.

The hotel was in the process of being renovated after a two-year closure due to the pandemic, and had been due to open this week.

Most of those killed or injured were Cuban staff or passersby, including a Spanish tourist and a pregnant woman. Several children from a nearby school were injured and four were killed.



Recovery work at the hotel. Photograph: Yander Zamora/EPA

Shortly after the recovery of what was believed to be the last body, the Cuban president, Miguel Diaz-Canel, declared a period of national mourning.

For days, rescue workers have sifted through piles of debris at the base of the hotel's neo-classical style building, which is more than a century old.

Experts have begun to consider the fate of the 19th-century former warehouse that was converted into a hotel early in the last century.

Roberto Enriquez, a spokesman for the military-owned Gaviota tourism company that operates the Saratoga, said experts' initial estimates were that 80% of the hotel was damaged by Friday's explosion, which hurled tonnes of concrete chunks into busy streets and seriously harmed neighbouring structures.



Rescue crew rest in Havana. Photograph: Yamil Lage/AFP/Getty Images

He said that when rescue efforts finished, authorities would look more deeply into what to do with the ruin.

Also badly damaged was Cuba's most important Baptist church, which is next door to the Saratoga. The explosion shook the church and shattered the 19th-century dome. Concrete plunged from walls, and wood and glass showered down from the windows. Parts of the upper floors collapsed at the building, which houses not only Calvary Baptist Church but a seminary and the denomination's headquarters for western Cuba.

The famous, elegant building now known as the Teatro Martí was just a few years old when, in 1887, Baptists began holding services across the street on a corner in Old Havana that had once held a circus. Cuba was still a Spanish colony and its Capitol building – modelled on the US Capitol – would not be built nearby for a few decades yet.

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## US news

# US secretly issued subpoena to access Guardian reporter's phone records

Newspaper decries 'egregious' move by DoJ to obtain details of Stephanie Kirchgaessner as part of investigation into media leaks



The Department of Justice building in Washington. The Guardian condemned 'an egregious example of infringement on press freedom by the DoJ'. Photograph: Stefani Reynolds/AFP/Getty

*[Ed Pilkington](#) in New York*

*@edpilkington*

Thu 12 May 2022 17.01 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 00.31 EDT

The US justice department secretly issued a subpoena to gain access to details of the phone account of a Guardian reporter as part of an aggressive leak investigation into media stories about an official inquiry into the Trump administration's child separation policy at the southern border.

Leak investigators issued the subpoena to obtain the phone number of Stephanie Kirchgaessner, the Guardian's investigations correspondent in Washington. The move was carried out without notifying the newspaper or its reporter, as part of an attempt to ferret out the source of media articles about a review into family separation conducted by the Department of Justice's inspector general, Michael Horowitz.

It is highly unusual for US government officials to obtain a journalist's phone details in this way, especially when no national security or classified information is involved. The move was all the more surprising in that it came from the DoJ's inspector general's office – the watchdog responsible for ethical oversight and whistleblower protections.

Katharine Viner, the Guardian's editor-in-chief, decried the action as "an egregious example of infringement on press freedom and public interest journalism by the US Department of Justice".

She added: "We will be asking the DoJ urgently for an explanation for why and how this could have occurred, and for an apology. We will also be seeking assurances that our reporter's details will be erased from DoJ systems and will not be used for any further infringements of press freedom."

The leak inquiry was conducted on behalf of the DoJ by the inspector general's office of an outside government department, housing and urban development (Hud). Its investigation focused on allegations that an employee within the DoJ's inspector general's office had leaked sensitive information to three news outlets – the Guardian, the New York Times and NBC News.

The Guardian was the only one of the three outlets to have a subpoena issued relating to its reporter's phone account.

We will be asking the DoJ urgently for an explanation for why and how this could have occurred, and for an apology

*Katharine Viner*

The Guardian published two sensitive reports by Kirchgaessner within the timeframe of the DoJ review into child separation covered by the leak inquiry. On 23 July 2020 [she revealed](#) that the DoJ's former deputy attorney general Rod Rosenstein had personally advised that migrant parents should be prosecuted, no matter how young the children accompanying them.

On 2 September 2020, [Kirchgaessner reported](#) that a senior justice department official nominated by Trump to be a federal judge had participated in the removal of a Texas prosecutor who had sounded the alarm over child separation.

On Thursday, the investigative reporter Jason Leopold released a redacted version of the [Hud leak inquiry report](#) obtained under freedom of information laws. It revealed that leak investigators had reviewed evidence of 127 phone calls totalling about six hours in length with “phone numbers identified as belonging to reporter Stephanie Kirchgaessner of the Guardian”, and an additional 126 phone calls about six hours and 20 minutes “with a phone number identified as belonging to the Guardian generally”.

The leak report also discloses that the DoJ issued an “administrative subpoena” to a telecommunications company for “subscriber information to confirm that a specific telephone number belonged to the Guardian”. It said that “basic subscriber information” had been obtained involving “names, addresses, and length of service only” and “not the contents of communications”.

Child separation was effected in 2018 under the Trump administration. Known officially as “zero tolerance”, the policy ordered federal prosecutors to act against undocumented immigrants entering the US unlawfully even when minors were present – a reversal of previous practice which had spared families from criminal proceedings in order to avoid children being separated from their parents.

The policy led to more than 3,000 children being separated from their parent or guardian, and to widespread chaos in which the location of many children became unknown. The much-delayed [DoJ inspector general's report](#) into the practice was finally published after two years, in January 2021.

Earlier this week [Politico reported](#) that an employee of the DoJ inspector general's office had "abruptly resigned" after coming under scrutiny from the leak investigation.

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[France](#)

## French mayor reignites burkini row with pool rule proposal

Grenoble mayor wants swimmers to dress ‘how they like’, including topless or in full-body suits



Rules on swimwear are strict at most French public pools. Photograph: Sam Tarling/Getty Images

*[Angelique Chrisafis](#) in Paris*

*[@achrisafis](#)*

Fri 13 May 2022 05.05 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 11.31 EDT

The [burkini](#), or full-body swimsuit, is once again at the centre of a political row in France as Grenoble’s town council prepares to debate loosening rules on swimwear at open-air pools.

Rules on swimwear are strict at most French public pools, with men, for example, having to wear tight-fitting racing trunks and not longer board-

shorts. Currently, in Grenoble municipal pools, UV-protective tops are banned, except short-sleeved tops for children under 10, or for adults who present a medical note from their doctor.

Éric Piolle, the high-profile Green mayor of Grenoble, which sits at the foot of the French Alps, has tabled a motion for Monday's town council meeting to discuss his proposal to allow people to dress “how they like” at outdoor pools. The new rules would allow women as well as men to swim topless and all swimmers to wear full-body swimsuits – whether for sun-protection or religious beliefs.

The rightwing head of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, Laurent Wauquiez, has threatened to pull all regional funding to the city if the rules are loosened.

“Mr Piolle intends to authorise the burkini in municipal pools. I’m warning him: if he does, the region will cut all funding to the city of Grenoble,” Wauquiez tweeted. “Not a *centime*” of regional money “will finance your submission to Islamism”, he added.

M.Piolle projette d'autoriser le burkini dans les piscines municipales.  
Je mets le maire en garde : dans ce cas, la Région coupera toute subvention à la ville de Grenoble. Pas un centime des Auvergnats-Rhônalpins ne financera votre soumission à l'islamisme.  
<https://t.co/zrSQaC7OC1>

— Laurent Wauquiez (@laurentwauquiez) [May 2, 2022](#)

An open letter, signed by Jean-Pierre Barbier, the rightwing head of the *département* council, and his party’s elected officials, said: “The burkini aims, quite simply, to impose Islamist standards at the heart of swimming and public leisure.”

Other elected officials signed an open letter opposing full-body swimsuits, which they said represented “the oppression and inferiority of women”. Christophe Ferrari, the leftwing former Socialist party head of the Grenoble-

Alpes region, opposed the plans and said Piolle was on an “incomprehensible” one-man “crusade”.

The row has been seized on in the run-up to parliamentary elections next month, where the centrist grouping of the newly re-elected president, [Emmanuel Macron](#), is hoping to win a majority but is facing a challenge from [an alliance of leftwing parties](#), led by the radical left’s Jean-Luc Mélenchon and including Greens and Socialists. On the far right, Marine Le Pen’s National Rally party is also aiming to increase its seats.

Le Pen used the burkini row to attack the broad leftwing parliamentary alliance, saying this week that the group included “defenders of burkinis in pools”.

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It is not the first time full-body swimwear has caused a political row just before a key election. In the summer of 2016, in the run-up to the 2017 presidential election, about 30 French coastal resorts [banned the burkini from beaches](#), after an initiative by the rightwing mayor of Cannes. The country’s highest administrative court [ruled](#) that the anti-burkini decrees were “a serious and manifestly illegal attack on fundamental freedoms”, including the right to move around in public and the freedom of conscience.

In Grenoble, Piolle said the new pool rules were not solely about burkinis and that the burkini was a “non-issue”. He said the row showed that the quality of French public political debate was on a downward spiral. “Stop stigmatising and discriminating against Muslims in our country,” he said in an interview on [France 2 TV](#).

He said the loosening of pool rules was about lifting “discriminatory” restrictions in the name of health and equality. “Stop transforming women into sexual objects by saying what they should wear,” he said.

En écoutant de CNews jusqu'au Printemps Républicain, je serais apparemment "islamo-gauchiste" et "wokiste".

Les mots inventés par l'extrême droite empoisonnent le débat public. Je suis universaliste, je me bats contre l'antisémitisme, le racisme et toutes les discriminations. [pic.twitter.com/JcTphGBPu4](https://pic.twitter.com/JcTphGBPu4)

— Éric Piolle (@EricPiolle) [May 10, 2022](#)

The row has refocused attention on secularism in [France](#), where the republic is built on a strict separation of church and state, intended to foster equality for all private beliefs. This requires the state to be neutral in terms of religion and allows everyone the freedom to practise their faith as long as there is no threat to public order.

Piolle said burkinis in pools had nothing to do with French secularism. State officials in France are not allowed to wear ostentatious religious symbols at work, to protect state neutrality, but Piolle said users of public services, such as swimmers, were simply members of the public who were free to dress as they pleased. In a video posted on Twitter, Piolle said: “We want a public service that is accessible to everyone.”

The proposed new swimwear rules will be debated at a Grenoble council meeting on 16 May.

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**Rwanda**

## Twenty-year search for Rwanda genocide suspect ends in Zimbabwe grave

Exclusive: inside the manhunt for Protais Mpiranya, accused of Rwandan mass killings and the world's most wanted war crimes fugitive

- [The Hunters: the small UN unit that tracked down Rwanda's worst killers](#)



A composite picture of Protais Mpiranya who had been on the run for more than two decades. Photograph: MICT/AFP/Getty

*[Julian Borger](#) World affairs editor*

Thu 12 May 2022 09.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 12 May 2022 17.09 EDT

The 20-year manhunt for one of the world's most brutal killers has come to a decisive end in an overgrown cemetery outside Harare.

The body of Protais Mpiranya, the former commander of the Rwandan presidential guard indicted for genocide, lay buried under a stone slab bearing a false name, which UN investigators tracked down and identified with the help of a critical lead found on a confiscated computer: the hand-drawn design for Mpiranya's tombstone.

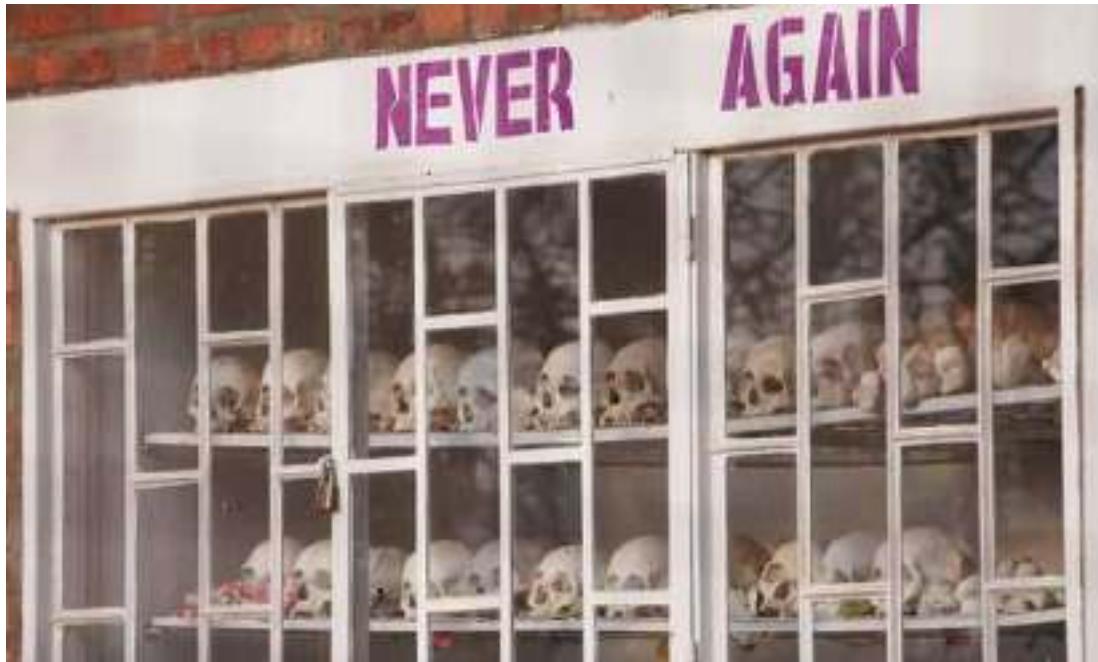
His body was exhumed last month at the request of UN investigators, and Mpiranya's identity was confirmed by DNA analysis on Tuesday.

Serge Brammertz, the UN prosecutor who led the hunt, said he was the last of the major fugitives and finding his body "provides the solace of knowing that he cannot cause further harm".

The man charged with overseeing the slaughter of thousands of Rwandans, and abetting the murder of many more, died in Harare in October 2006 of a heart attack brought on by tuberculosis, at the age of 50.

But his death, like much of his life, had been swathed in secrecy by his family and supporters. Mpiranya had been living in Zimbabwe under an assumed identity for four years, despite its government's insistence that he was not in the country.

The investigation that followed his trail all the way to the grave in Granville cemetery on the southern edge of Harare found he had arrived on a Zimbabwean military plane and had been in frequent contact during his stay with Zimbabwean officials in the then president Robert Mugabe's regime who were well aware of his identity as a valued ally in the second Congo war of 1998-2003.



Skulls of victims form the centrepiece of the memorial to more than 11,000 Tutsi men, women and children who sought refuge in the Catholic church of Kibuye, Rwanda, only to be murdered by Hutu extremists during the genocide of April and May 1994. Photograph: Andy hall/The Observer

“That the Zimbabweans, at least elements of the authorities, knew he was in Harare is obvious,” said a senior official involved in the investigation. “He was even seen meeting with Zimbabwean officials. Of course he was trying to hide his identity from the public, but the entire reason he went to [Zimbabwe](#) is because of his relationships there.”

The Guardian has asked the Zimbabwean government for comment.

As a fugitive, Mpiranya had outlasted the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, established in 1994 to bring the genocidaires to justice after the genocide that killed up to 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. It had indicted him on eight counts, including genocide and crimes against humanity, but was unable to find him to make him stand trial.

After the tribunal closed in 2015, a “residual mechanism” was set up to wrap up old cases, and part of that mechanism was a small tracking team under Brammertz’s command as chief prosecutor.

At 7am on 7 February, members of the team arrived at the cemetery, where the graves were invisible beneath head-high grass. It took two and a half hours to find what they were looking for: a black headstone in memory of a Sambao Ndume whose date of birth matched Mpiranya's, 30 May 1956.

A team member recalled the discovery of the grave: "There was that moment when my colleague called out: 'Found it!' And we all just stood there looking at it. It was exactly as we thought it would be," he said. "All that hard work, the ups and the downs, it had led to this moment."

The French inscription on the tombstone read: "Here rests forever one who loved his fatherland, his people and his family, more than his own life." Below that, a crude depiction of a warrior with bow and arrow was carved with the message: "Dad RIP".



The grave where Protais Mpiranya was found buried in Granville cemetery, outside Harare, under the false name, Sambao Ndume.

The path that had led the trackers to the grave was long, convoluted and dotted with dead ends. There were supposedly eyewitness reports from across [Africa](#) from people claiming to have seen him, and until late last year the investigators believed he was probably still alive, hiding out in Zimbabwe with his fellow combatants from the Congo war.

By May 2020, Mpiranya was the last major fugitive among the 93 accused indicted by the ICTR, and the most wanted war crimes suspect in the world.

As head of the Rwandan presidential guard in 1994, according to his indictment, he had given his men a kill list of prominent Tutsis and orders to kill their families too. He armed and trained [the notorious Interahamwe Hutu militia](#), responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths.

And with the signal for the bloodletting to begin, the shooting down of the plane carrying the country's president, Juvénal Habyarimana, on 5 April 1994, he sent his men to set up roadblocks at which Tutsis were massacred.

Soldiers from the presidential guard [murdered the prime minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana](#), a moderate Hutu, and mutilated her body. The 10 lightly armed Belgian soldiers who had been sent to protect her were shot and hacked to death with machetes.

After the fall of the Hutu regime in July 1994, Mpiranya fled across Africa, spending four years in Cameroon until it became inhospitable for genocidaire fugitives. He moved on to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), fighting with Hutu forces and Zimbabwean troops on behalf of the country's president Laurent Kabil, against the Rwandan army, in what became known as the second Congo war.

Zimbabwean officers saw the former commander as a cut above most of the Congolese troops they were fighting alongside .

“He developed a lot of relationships with these guys during the war,” a senior official in the prosecutor’s office said. “They respected him. He was a good commander, a professional, someone who listened, asked questions and took decisions. He was very security conscious. So he impressed the Zimbabweans when others they were working with did not.”

So when Mpiranya was first indicted in September 2002, his friends and admirers in Zimbabwe helped spirit him across borders. According to witnesses, he flew from Mbudi-Mayi in central DRC to Harare on a Zimbabwean military plane.

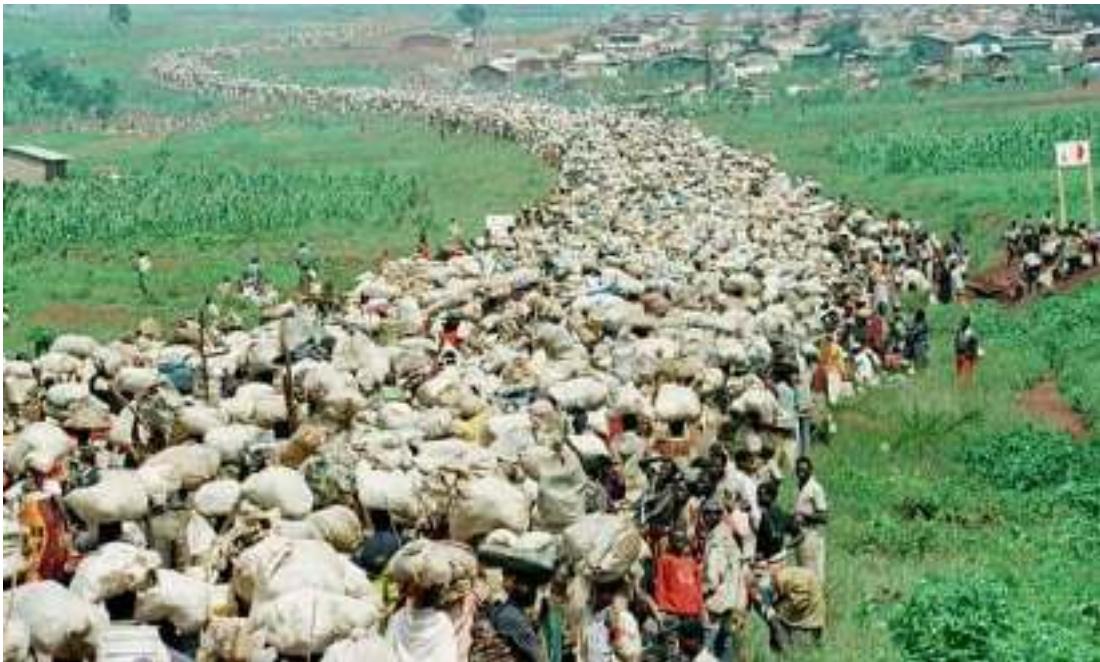
Mpiranya brought a small entourage of Hutu commanders with him and, using a fake identity, set up a small transport business with two large vans, bought most likely with proceeds from Congolese diamonds.

He was better at giving orders than doing business. The venture floundered, and over the four years in Zimbabwe, Mpiranya's standard of living crumbled. Starting off in a substantial villa in the first year, the family had to downgrade to an apartment in the same area and then another in a more down-at-heel neighbourhood.

They stopped hiring conductors for the buses and a family member had to do the work themselves. Then both buses were in accidents and there was no money to repair them. Much of the rest of his assets were wiped out by Zimbabwean high inflation in those years.

When Mpiranya fell sick with tuberculosis, he had no money left to pay for his medical care and his wife in the UK had to take on more work to send funds. Filling in the forms for hospital admission, he used a new identity, Sambao Ndume, the name he would be buried under.

The UN investigators believe his family and friends covered up the death so as not to dent morale among the Hutu forces in DRC – and so as not to expose themselves to scrutiny. The tracking team found several had secured safe haven in the UK and EU with bogus asylum claims.



Tens of thousands of Rwandan refugees, forced by the Tanzanian authorities to return to their country despite fears they will be killed upon their return, file back towards the Rwandan border on a road in Tanzania. Photograph: Jean-Marc Bouju/AP

The tribunal tracking team spent the time chasing wispy leads around Africa, provided by informants either seeking to cover up Mpiranya's death, or looking to make money, or both. "The family and his associates deliberately concealed for the last two decades his presence in Harare and his death," Brammertz told the Guardian. "The investigative file was filled with information that he was quite active, with businesses and associates in several countries. My predecessors, and perhaps even myself at the beginning, focused more on those leads."

Over the past few years, the tracking team went back over the entire investigation, reviewing the databases, interviewing and re-interviewing witnesses, stripping out tips and speculation, and the investigators' own possible bias, back to the last fact in Mpiranya's life they knew for sure: he was in the DRC in 2002. They reconstructed every known detail of his life, his mindset and connections.

The breakthrough came last September with the seizure of a computer and other material in a raid in a European country (which the Guardian is not

allowed to identify).



Pictures of murdered people donated by survivors of the 1994 genocide are installed on a wall inside the Gisozi memorial in Kigali, Rwanda.  
Photograph: Radu Sigheti/Reuters

Combing through a mass of data, they came across emails with veiled references to “the one who has a passed” and the “old man”. Then they cross-checked with the travel of some of Mpiranya’s relatives, from visa stamps sent by partner governments, and found them converging on Zimbabwe in October 2006.

Sifting through hundreds of digital pictures, they found photos of a funeral including those of the body laid out for the mourners. It looked like Mpiranya and was dressed in a suit that the investigators later found in the grave.

Finally, they found the photo of a hand-drawn picture of a gravestone, sent by a close relative, and realised it was a commission for the stone carvers of Harare. If they could find a stone like that, they could find the body.

After years of stalling the search, the Zimbabwean authorities agreed to allow the body of the man calling himself Sambao Ndume to be dug up. On

27 April, the trackers, a UN pathologist, and three Zimbabwean detectives gathered at the grave as the sun rose.

About 20 riot police had been sent along as well, torpedoing any hopes that it could be done quietly. The conspicuous police presence drew a small crowd of curious local residents.

The gravediggers worked their way down to the coffin with spades, and then the pathologist took over, climbing down into the grave to take a careful sample, without disturbing the rest of the body, with a deference Mpiranya had not accorded to his multitude of victims.

Prosecutors are still looking for five more indictees, and Brammertz believes the discovery of Mpiranya's body will increase the pressure on the governments of other countries, where the last ageing fugitives are thought to be hiding. But Mpiranya was the last of the main figures of the Rwandan genocide to be accounted for, although he had succeeded in avoiding a trial.

"Of course the goal is to arrest fugitives," Brammertz said. "But we need to account for them, one way or the other. First, because as they say themselves, survivors and victims want a final answer.

"And second, to say this person is dead means they can't cause further harm, and they aren't living this nice life as a fugitive somewhere while the victims try to rebuild their lives.

"And, of course, for the UN and our mandate," he added, "we have to demonstrate our determination and that we go all the way."

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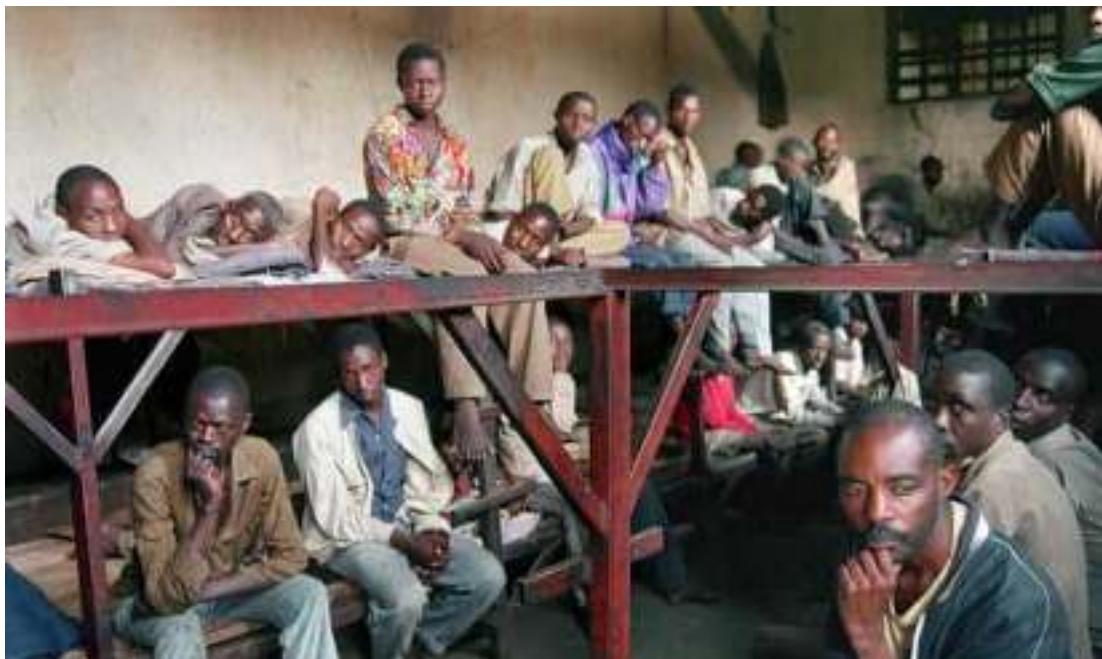
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## [Rwanda](#)

# The Hunters: the small UN unit that tracked down Rwanda's worst killers

The work of highly effective tracking teams offer model to follow in future efforts to prosecute war criminals

- [Twenty-year search for Rwanda genocide suspect ends in Zimbabwe grave](#)



Inmates accused of war crimes sit in a prison in Kibungo, Rwanda in 1994. UN tracking teams played an essential role in finding most of 93 accused war criminals indicted for genocide. Photograph: Javier Bauluz/AP

*[Julian Borger](#) World affairs editor*

Thu 12 May 2022 09.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 12 May 2022 17.09 EDT

Protais Mpiranya was pursued to his grave by a small but relentless posse of seven UN investigators and analysts known as the tracking team.

The unit has played an essential role in finding all but a handful of the 93 accused war criminals indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). A similar tracking team worked for the parallel Yugoslav tribunal (ICTY), and by 2011 had helped bring to justice, or otherwise account for, all 161 of those charged with war crimes from the Balkan wars.

Few UN operations can boast such striking success rates with such few resources, and the team's advocates argue the methods and lessons learned by the two ad hoc tribunals, and the “residual mechanism” that followed them, should not be allowed to go to waste if there is to be any hope of delivering international justice for war crimes in the future. The International Criminal Court, at present, has no comparable unit.

When the Yugoslav and Rwandan tribunals were established in 1993 and 1994 respectively, there was no model for how to hunt war criminals. In the Nuremberg tribunal, the defendants had almost all been caught by the allies occupying Germany, so there was little need for trackers.

That did not apply in the Yugoslav and Rwandan cases.

“One thing is absolutely clear, that we didn’t fully appreciate when this started in the 90s: you should really assume that every person indicted is going to be a fugitive,” said Kevin Hughes, the chief of staff in the mechanism’s prosecutor’s office and co-leader of the tracking team. “These guys are not just waiting around to be arrested.”

The tribunals’ first tracking teams were led by veterans of military and police intelligence, with experience of handling informants and conducting surveillance.

That worked for the low-hanging fruit among the fugitives, the careless and unlucky. But as others sought haven from sympathetic governments – many Hutu genocidaires initially flocked to Cameroon for example – it became

clear that diplomatic skills would be required, to cajole and pressure those governments into cooperation.

The tracking teams also brought in analysts able to find patterns in the huge amount of data generated by the investigations, and to dig deeper into the worlds in which the fugitives lived.

By the time the Rwanda tribunal was wound up at the end of 2015 and its last cases were handed over to the residual mechanism, just eight of the 93 indictees were still at large. But among them were some of the most important figures behind the genocide, and the pursuit showed signs of flagging.

Serge Brammertz was brought over from the ICTY to be the chief prosecutor under the mechanism, with responsibility for Rwanda. The Belgian lawyer, who had overseen the capture of Bosnian Serb leaders [Radovan Karadžić](#) and [Ratko Mladić](#), brought some of the ICTY team with him and a fresh approach.

They found the investigations were drowning in a sea of data and leads generated by more than 80 paid sources, who had sent the trackers chasing their tails around the world. Under Brammertz, the payments were stopped and the number of informants shrunk to 10.

Then the trackers went back to the case files, stripping out dubious tips from questionable informants, and interviewed or re-interviewed witnesses, looking for ways to establish more detailed profiles of the wanted men.

“You have to be able to investigate the whole narrative of your fugitive and the whole arc of your fugitives. We needed to understand his complete story. We need to understand his family and his associates,” said Ewan Brown, a former British army officer and the tracking team’s other co-leader, who has also investigated war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and Darfur. “To do that effectively we need creative thinkers exploiting creative sources.”

Over the past two years, the team has steadily crossed the last major fugitives off its list. [Felicien Kabuga](#), a Hutu businessman whose radio

stations had stoked hatred of Tutsis and who imported half a million machetes on the eve of the genocide, was caught in Paris on 15 May 2020. The remains of former defence minister [Augustin Bizimana](#) were identified in Congo-Brazzaville on 22 May 2020.

After that Mpiranya was their most wanted man, the last of the big fish. Five more junior fugitives remain, but Brammertz's team is confident of more breakthroughs in the near future.

The main lesson from the 20-year manhunt for Mpiranya, the trackers say, is to start laying the ground for the hunt as soon as you start investigating the crime.

“An investigative approach from the very beginning is what we really recommend now as being the way forward,” Hughes said.

“Some of these things could have probably been closed earlier, because you would have already been asking questions in 1994.”

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# Headlines

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- [Retail UK delays ban on supermarket junk food deals and pre-watershed ads](#)
- [Housing Older renters forced to cut back on spending](#)
- [Saving cash UK energy bills are soaring – but there are easy ways to cut costs](#)

## Cost of living crisis

# ‘Golden era’ of cheap food over as two in five Britons buy less to eat

ONS survey reveals worsening effects of cost of living crisis, with food prices forecast to have risen by 9% in April



The price of basic pasta has risen by 45%, with tinned tomatoes and eggs up by 13%. A pint of milk has risen in price by nearly 20%. Photograph: Paul Marriott/REX/Shutterstock

*[Zoe Wood](#), [Sarah Butler](#) and [Kalyeena Makortoff](#)*

Fri 13 May 2022 14.04 EDT Last modified on Sat 14 May 2022 00.13 EDT

Households have been warned that the UK’s “golden era” of cheap food is over, as official figures published on Friday pointed to the toll of the [cost of living crisis](#), with two in five people buying less food to get by.

The former Sainsbury’s boss [Justin King](#) said shoppers now faced hard choices over how to spend their money as the financial shock, caused by the

war in Ukraine, pushes up prices on supermarket shelves.

“We have been perhaps through a golden era,” said King , a senior figure in the retail industry who also sits on the board of Marks & Spencer. This would now have to change, he added, with people forced to rethink priorities in their family budgets.

“I suspect what we will see is a higher proportion, across the piece, spent on food for the longer term.”

### Graph: food price inflation

His concerns were echoed by senior figures across the retail and farming industries, as households prepare to weather a surge in inflation.

Economists believe official statistics next Wednesday will show that overall prices increased 9% in April, while the Bank of England is forecasting the rate will pass 10% later this year, the highest since 1982.

The head of the British Retail Consortium (BRC), which represents all the major supermarkets, agreed that “consumers are in for a difficult time”. Global food prices are at a record high, propelled by growing energy and transport costs, as well as an extremely tight labour market, its chief executive Helen Dickinson said.

Fierce competition among supermarkets has so far limited price rises on essential products, but Dickinson said pressures in the food industry “do not look to be easing anytime soon”.

### Bar chart: reasons for increase in cost of living

The cost of living crisis is already forcing people to make big changes. Two in five adults are buying less food when they go shopping, according to the latest public opinions and social trends [survey](#) published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on Friday. The figure is double the reading at the start of 2022.

Nine out of 10 of the adults polled told the ONS their outgoings were higher this month than last. When they were first asked, back in November, just 62% of adults said this was the case. The three big worries were food and energy bills, and the price at the pumps.

People were cutting back spending on non-essentials, trying to use less power and heating, and avoiding unnecessary trips in their cars. They had also started shopping around more to find the cheapest prices. Two in five did not think they would be able to save any money in the next 12 months.

Runaway prices were forcing people to make some “really horrible financial decisions”, said Sarah Coles, a senior personal finance analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown. The number of people having to spend less on food was “alarming”, she added. “It’s no wonder that a third of us are so anxious.”

### Poll: 88% say cost of living has increased over past month

Coles said the ONS survey showed “alarm bells ringing over food”. “The proportion buying less is growing, and while this will include some people who are giving up expensive treats or cutting down on waste, there’s a real risk that some are having to go hungry.”

Research for the Guardian by price analysts Assosia last month showed big jumps in the cost of everyday foods, with the price of basic pasta up 45%, tinned tomatoes and eggs up by 13%, and dog food up by more than 40% in the past year. Official data points to a near-20% rise in the price of a pint of milk.

Food producers, from pig farmers to cucumber growers, have been warning for months that a surge in the cost of energy and basic commodities, such as wheat and cooking oil, was pushing up their costs and they would have to be passed on.

Last week, the National Pig Association said four out of five producers would go out of business within a year unless their finances improved, with farmers losing in excess of £50 a pig. Hundreds of egg producers are also facing collapse as rising fuel and energy costs were exacerbated by the additional cost of keeping hens indoors during a bird flu outbreak.

Minette Batters, the NFU president, said egg, chicken and pork producers were among those operating at a loss due to soaring farm costs. The price of energy, fuel, feed and packaging were all “spiralling upwards”, she said. “For all of these input costs, whether it’s packaging or feed, we’re seeing rising inflation. It is costing more, a lot more, to produce the food than it can be sold for.

“The question is how we receive fair returns for everybody and make sure that the consumer can still afford to buy,” she added. “The danger is, if you put all of these costs on to the consumer, are they going to be able to afford to buy it?”

King told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme that supermarkets could not be expected to absorb the extra costs entirely or protect consumers from rising prices, despite having announced higher earnings. Last month, Tesco and Sainsbury’s reported a doubling in their annual [pre-tax profits](#) to £2bn and [£730m respectively](#).

“The headline profit numbers are of course large in the context of any household budget,” King said. “But the margins in supermarkets are around 3%. So even if supermarkets made no profits at all, they wouldn’t really be able to make a huge dent in the cost inflation that is coming through the system.”

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The war in Ukraine has added to problems that were already building up in the food industry due to upheaval caused by the pandemic and Brexit as well as crop issues linked to the climate crisis. The recent [heatwave in India](#) and dry spells in parts of the US, for example, both of which are large grain producers, have contributed to surging wheat prices around the globe, alongside the squeeze on exports and reduced production in Ukraine.

Richard Griffiths, head of the British Poultry Council, which represents producers behind 85% of the chicken sold in the UK, said he couldn’t see “an easy way for food prices to come down again”.

“We have seen cost of production increases that mean we are expecting to see food inflation at 15%,” he said. “It’s not just energy prices rises, it is increases in feed costs and labour, the effects of Brexit on trade. If it is was one of those it may be manageable and recoverable, but as it is all of them, it makes life increasingly difficult.”

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## Food & drink industry

# UK delays ban on supermarket junk food deals and pre-watershed ads

PM accused of ‘playing politics’ with children’s health after measures postponed due to cost of living crisis



The ban on ‘Bogof’ promotions was due to come into force from October but has been postponed as households struggle with the cost of living.  
Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

[Mark Sweeney](#)

[@marksweney](#)

Fri 13 May 2022 12.35 EDT Last modified on Sat 14 May 2022 00.12 EDT

The government is to delay a [ban](#) on “buy one get one free” deals on junk food and a pre-9pm watershed for TV advertising, as Boris Johnson puts the cost of living crisis before a promise to tackle the UK’s growing obesity problem.

The prime minister is understood to have decided to delay the implementation of the policies by at least a year – and potentially scrap them altogether – after chairing a ministerial meeting seeking ideas to help alleviate the cost of living crisis on Wednesday.

The decision to postpone the new measures, which were designed to be some of the toughest marketing restrictions in the world, immediately drew criticism from health campaigners.

Jamie Oliver, a longtime campaigner for healthy eating, said that Johnson needed to show “real leadership” and stop making excuses for not forging ahead with the national anti-obesity strategy.

“This is a wasted opportunity and it starts to erode the whole obesity strategy,” he said. “Policies like restricting junk food advertising to kids are crucial for levelling up and popular with the public.

“Parents and kids don’t want to hear any more excuses from the government. I really hope the prime minister proves me wrong and shows real leadership to give young people a healthier and fairer future.”

The ban on “Bogof” promotions was due to come into force from October, but as households struggle to cope with soaring energy bills and with inflation at a 40-year high, scrapping cheap offers is now seen as a risky political move.

According to multiple sources the government will still push ahead with a ban on junk food promotions in certain high-profile store locations, such as at aisle ends, checkouts and entrances, as well as prominent positions in supermarket apps and websites.

Last month, Kellogg’s, the owner of cereals such as Coco Pops and Special K, launched legal action against the government over the rules would prevent the brand from promoting some of its products prominently on shelves.

The government is also delaying the implementation of a ban on TV adverts for foods high in fat, salt and sugar before 9pm, which was due to come into

force from January. It is also thought that the delay will extend to plans to ban junk food advertising online.

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The timeline for introducing the ban on TV and online adverts was already under pressure as the government has not yet launched a consultation on how the ban would work, such as penalties for breaking it. It is understood there was already a mechanism built into the plans to potentially delay the start of the ban.

Boris Johnson is said to have been convinced by ministers that the bans would be extremely costly to the food and advertising industries at a time when the economy is under intense pressure, according to the Times, which first reported the government's plans to delay.

More than £600m is spent by brands on food advertising online and on TV annually. The ban on TV adverts for foods high in fat, salt and sugar before 9pm could have cost broadcasters, such as ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and Sky, more than £200m a year in revenue.

“Obesity is spiking and millions of families can't afford to put proper food on the table,” said Barbara Crowther of the Children's Food Campaign. “Multi-buy offers make people spend more on junk, and less on healthy food. This delay threatens the UK target to halve childhood obesity by 2030. Boris is playing politics with our children's health.”

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## Renting property

# Older UK renters forced to cut back on spending as living costs soar

Exclusive: Many tenants aged over 65 are already struggling, Independent Age research finds



A quarter of renters over 65 say they would not be able to afford a £10-a-month increase in their living costs. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

*[Hilary Osborne](#)*

Fri 13 May 2022 19.01 EDT

Almost two-thirds of tenants over 65 have cut back on their general spending as a result of the cost of living crisis, and campaigners are warning that older people who do not own their homes are particularly vulnerable to rising bills.

Research shared with Guardian Money by the charity Independent Age puts the spotlight on the struggles of older tenants who are battling to keep up with rising household costs.

Its survey found that 62% of renters over 65 were having to cut back on their general spending, and that they were more likely to be doing so than their contemporaries who were homeowners.

A quarter said they would not be able to afford a £10-a-month increase in their living costs, while 71% said they would not be able to cover a £50 rise. More than half said they felt anxious about their finances.

The state pension [increased by 3.1%](#) last month – well below the 7% inflation rate [recorded in March](#). Energy bills went up at the same time and with a further increase likely in October, economists have predicted inflation could go above 10% [before the end of the year](#).

“Older private renters are particularly vulnerable to soaring inflation – particularly where rents have been rising, too,” says Dan Wilson Craw, the deputy director of the campaigning group Generation Rent.

“Unlike homeowners, who are likely to have paid off their mortgage, they still have housing costs. If landlords want to raise the rent to reflect the wider market, there is little current tenants can do. For retirees on fixed incomes, this cuts their disposable income or forces them to move.”

Independent Age’s survey of 2,000 adults in England over 65, of whom 391 were renting, found 57% of tenants were cutting back on heating, 42% said they had reduced how much food and drink they were buying and 29% were buying less vehicle fuel.

Aside from those most essential purchases, 46% said they had cut back on clothing and footwear purchases, and 39% had reduced their social activities.

Separate figures from Shelter show that between the financial years of 2020-21 and 2021-22 there was a 20% increase in the number of over-65s

contacting its helpline who were at risk of homelessness.

Francisca, 64, and her husband, Colin, 70, say their rent has risen by more than 7% this year. They are struggling to cover it and the other bills they face, despite making cutbacks. “When we go to the supermarket we are buying the cheapest of the cheap,” she says. “We are taking fewer baths, fewer showers, we turn the lights off, even on cold days we turn the heating off.”

Although the couple chose to rent because, says Francisca, “we are not sure what the future holds”, she says it has left them vulnerable. They have lived in poor housing in the past while paying a high rent, were evicted through a section 21 “no-fault eviction” by one previous landlord, and have also had problems with letting agencies. This has made them very nervous about what happens when their contract ends next March.

Their age has financial implications. “At our stage of life we have a pot of money and if we live a long life we have to stretch it over that time,” she says. “We can’t go to work nine to five or get new careers, so we rely on freelancing.”

Morgan Vine, the Independent Age head of policy, says older renters are “left in increasingly precarious financial situations” and need help and protection from the government.

“Our research found that older renters are one of the most at risk groups of dropping into poverty past state pension age and are more likely to experience long-term poverty,” she says.

“Day to day, we also know older renters are at increased risk of living in poor-quality homes, and face higher costs and greater financial insecurity than other groups as a result.”

Vine says older renters have shared concerns with the charity about high rents and that their landlord could sell up at any time. “With the cost of living crisis squeezing people’s budgets from every angle, these worries are only going to get worse,” she says.

Renters make up the minority of households in England with a head aged 65 or over, according to the latest official figures. The latest data shows there are 5.5 million owner-occupiers in this age range, and 5.1 million own their home outright, which means no monthly mortgage costs. There are only 382,000 households in the private sector headed by an older person, and 1 million in the social rented sector.

Housing associations were allowed to put up rents by 4.1% in April, and many tenants who rent from them have seen increases. In the private rented sector it is not easy to see what is happening to existing tenancies but newly advertised contracts are typically costing more than a year ago.

Polly Neate, the chief executive of Shelter, says older tenants are likely to be on low incomes, which would mean pressure from rising costs.

“With bills skyrocketing and private rents the highest on record, it’s no wonder our emergency helpline is picking up the phone to older renters who instead of preparing for retirement are facing homelessness. No one should be forced to choose between eating or paying the rent,” she says.

Wilson Craw says: “The state pension has risen by less than inflation but it’s worse for private renters relying on housing benefit, which has been frozen since 2020. If these people are paying higher rents, that money could be coming out of the rest of their income. And that’s before we even think about rising energy prices.

“We need a freeze on rents and another suspension of evictions to protect tenants during this crisis.”

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## Energy bills

# UK energy bills are soaring – but there are easy ways to cut costs

Spring is the perfect time to upgrade your home. Here are jobs you can do yourself and save cash



Insulating your loft can save a significant amount of household heat loss.

Photograph: Ashley Cooper/Getty Images

*[Matthew Jenkin](#)*

Sat 14 May 2022 05.00 EDT

Energy bills rose in April, and this week there have been more warnings of what could be on the cards later in the year: on Monday the head of [Scottish Power said the price cap could go up by £1,000](#), to just under £3,000 a year.

For any household, that represents a huge sum and many are looking at measures that will cut their costs. Research by the Mortgage Advice Bureau

found that one in six households intend to get new windows (double or triple glazing), one in seven will be getting more energy efficient fittings and 11% intend to install solar panels.

These energy saving fixes are expensive. But there are plenty of small improvements that can be made to homes that will cut your heating bills.

Spring is the perfect time to repair and upgrade your home. Warmer weather means sealants will dry quicker, and there are longer days in which to complete tasks.

Here's a guide to some of the most popular [DIY](#) measures and improvements that can be easily – and safely – made without expert assistance.

## Foil behind radiators

Radiator reflector foil reduces heat loss by reflecting warmth back into the room. While you can use ordinary kitchen foil, a 1.2 metre roll of radiator reflector foil is only [£1.49 from Toolstation](#), as part of the store's clearance sale.

It's very easy to install, too. You just need to measure the distance between the radiator brackets, cut your foil down to fit between them and then slide it into place – making sure that the reflective side faces outwards. You can hold it in place using PVA glue or double-sided sticky tape.



Radiator reflector foil reduces heat loss by reflecting it back into a room.  
Photograph: Chimney Sheep

Another consideration is the type of paint used on the radiator. Daniel Nezhad, a director of the retailer [UK Radiators](#), says painting your radiator can affect its heat output. He says: “The main relationship between painting your radiator and its efficiency is to do with the type of radiator paint rather than the colour. It has been shown that a radiator coated with metallic paint [will emit less heat](#), under otherwise identical conditions, than a similar radiator coated with non-metallic paint.”

## Bleed radiators

Another way to increase the energy efficiency of radiators is to bleed them. This means releasing air trapped inside them, which results in the heat not being distributed as evenly as usual.

It’s a quick and simple job. Start by turning your heating on to locate the radiators in your home that need bleeding – these will be the ones that are not heating up properly (the top half will feel colder) or are making gurgling sounds.



Is there air trapped inside your radiators? Photograph: Panther Media GmbH/Alamy

Next, turn the heating off again and wait for all radiators to cool down completely. You will then need to lay down some old towels underneath the radiators that you'll be bleeding and maybe a container to catch any water.

Find the bleed valve – it's usually at the top at one end – and use a radiator valve key to loosen it slightly to allow the built-up air to escape. Valve keys are widely available at hardware stores for as little as 79p (Screwfix). Once the hissing has stopped, you can tighten the valve back up, clean up any mess and turn your heating back on.

## Seal windows and doors

Windows and doors are responsible [for about 25% of heat loss](#) in the home but draught-proofing them could save you [about £45 a year](#), according to the Energy Saving Trust.



About 25% of heat loss in homes is through windows and doors.  
Photograph: BanksPhotos/Getty Images

While the problem may be obvious – rattly windows and letterboxes or feeling a breeze on your skin – identifying slight draughts needs more careful investigation.

If it's a still day, and you own a wireless hairdryer or a standard one and a long extension lead, one easy method is to go outside and blow on the window and door frames – you will need a helper inside to feel for any air movement.

Alternatively, buy a smoke pen – it should cost about £20. Pick a day when there is a good breeze but not a gale, and heat the house to its usual temperature. Then light the pen and wander around the house – if there is a draught, the smoke will blow away from it.



An Arctic Hayes smoke pen, available from Amazon. Photograph: Arctic Hayes

To fix the problem, buy foam, metal or plastic draught strips, or brush seals for sash windows, cut them to size and attach around opening casements. Use a thicker option for doors.

There are two main types – self-sticking and nail-on. The former is the quickest and least labour-intensive but may not last as long; but in either case, it's an easy and effective way to plug a draught and retain household heat.

The cost depends on the length and brand but you can buy nine metres of weatherstripping for as little as £2.75 on Amazon or pay £6.99 for seven metres of extra thick strips from Screwfix, with more savings made if you buy in bulk.

## Block the chimney

Chimneys can also be a source of draughts and heat loss. The Energy Saving Trust estimates that installing a chimney draught excluder can save you £65 a year.

Flues can be plugged easily with a chimney balloon that is inflated to fit the size of the hole. You can buy one from Amazon for £18.99.

A slightly cheaper option is a draught excluder, such as a wool one by Chimney Sheep for £17.50.



A Chimney Sheep 12in chimney draught excluder. Photograph: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Chimney-Sheep-chimney-draught-excluder/dp/B009ECTZWY>

For both the balloon and the draught excluder, you'll need to measure the flue first to find the correct-sized product to fit your chimney. They can easily be removed if you decide you want to use your fireplace.

## **Put up thermal curtains**

Curtains are an easy win for reducing draughts and retaining heat in your home. Depending on size, heavy-duty thermal-lined curtains can be bought online for as little as £14.99 from Curtains Direct 2 U. While Argos sells thermal door curtains for only £15.

Alternatively, you can buy thermal lining for existing curtains – it is currently available for £3.49 a metre on Amazon. Attaching the lining is

admittedly a bit fiddly. There are two main methods: either iron on fusible header tape to the top of the curtains, then attach hooks to the tape and hang the lining from that, or sew the lining directly on to the material. When stitching lining on, you'll need to take into account the specific design features of the curtain. For instance, if it's a curtain with eyelets, make sure the lining doesn't cover them.

For heavier curtains, make sure your pole is strong and secure enough to handle the extra weight. Make sure it doesn't hang over the radiator as this will stop the heat from circulating properly in the room.

## Lagging pipes

Insulating (or lagging) pipes helps keep the heat in and prevents damage during cold winter months.

There are several different types of material used for lagging – from rubber to mineral fibre – but the most popular is polyethylene foam. That's mainly because of how affordable and easy it is to install. It's basically a tube with a slit running down one side and can be easily slipped over the outside of a pipe. This type of pipe lagging is incredibly cheap. It's currently on sale at Wickes, where one metre costs only 86p.



Lagging pipes will help to keep the heat in but will also prevent damage during cold winters. Photograph: Justin Kase zsixz/Alamy

The downside is that if the pipes aren't easily accessible it could require lifting floorboards or damaging walls to get to them. Fortunately, there are plenty of pipes that can be lagged without taking drastic measures.

If you have a hot water tank, pay attention to the pipes running to and from it, as well as any leading to the boiler. Central heating pipes running to radiators should also be lagged if possible, as well as hot water pipes under sinks and behind bath panels.

## **Fill gaps between floorboards**

Cold air naturally circulates below ground floor floorboards, so ideally you should insulate underneath them to reduce loss of heat. Doing so doesn't come cheap, though, setting you back between £1,300 and £2,700 depending on the [type of insulation, the flooring and the size of the room](#). It also requires lifting up the floorboards.

An easier DIY option is to fill the small gaps between the boards using a silicone-based filler, decorators' caulk or other specialist sealant.

Because floorboards expand, contract and even move slightly with age and use, make sure any filler you buy is flexible. It comes in a variety of colours to match your flooring and a tube of No Nonsense sealant, suitable for timber and laminate, costs £4.99 from Screwfix.

Spring and summer are the best times of year to undertake this work. During the cold winter months, central heating dries the air and causes the floorboards to shrink, leading to those unsightly gaps. However, filling it then means the material used is often squeezed out when the floorboards expand during warm, sultry weather. It's best to fill floors when the humidity in the home is higher.

## **Insulate your loft**

According to Which?, a properly insulated loft can help save up to £315 a year on energy bills. It is possible to install it yourself, so long as your loft is easy to access, does not have damp problems and is not a flat roof.

Rolls of mineral wool insulation can be bought easily from DIY stores. Wickes, for example, sells a roll for £22.50. There are also more eco-friendly options on the market – from sheep's wool to recycled insulation. The latter comes in cheaper, too, at only £17 a roll from B&Q.

Remember to always wear a mask, goggles and gloves when handling the material

Start by laying the insulation between the joists – the horizontal beams that make up the floor of the loft. Simply roll it out, being careful not to compress it and cause it to lose efficiency. For detailed instructions and advice on how to install it safely, there are plenty of tutorials available on [YouTube](#) or hardware store websites such as those of [Wickes](#) or [Homebase](#).

The government-endorsed Simple Energy Advice website advises adding a second layer at right angles to cover the joists, bringing the insulation up to the recommended depth of 270mm. Remember to always wear a mask, goggles and gloves when handling the material.

Some energy suppliers offer free loft insulation to eligible households under the official energy company obligation scheme designed to help reduce carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty.

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## 2022.05.14 - Spotlight

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## Shift your vibe! 60 quick ways to make yourself slightly happier



Photograph: Kellie French/The Guardian. Shirt: [Kitri](#)

Things feeling a bit stale? These small tweaks to your routine will turn things around, boost your mood and could even make you a better person ...

Sat 14 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 14 May 2022 14.28 EDT

## **1 Go on that second date**

(Remember, people are often nervous on their first.)

## **2 Borrow a dog**

It will force you to get outside, says [\*Rhik Samadder\*](#). ‘If you want the joy of a pet without the expense and commitment, mooch with someone else’s pooch. Try [BorrowMyDoggy](#), or a more informal arrangement. There’s a trend for house- and pet-sitting – which is how I come to be in charge of my friend Chris’s labrador, Mumbles. Taking a dog for a walk is instant serotonin. You play with the dog, plus you’re plugged into a community of dog people. Everyone talks to me. I feel like a California mayor, or a minor celebrity. Only when we return home do I recognise I’m flush with fresh air and social interaction, and have more energy. ‘Who’s a good boy?’ I say, ruffling the golden head, before realising it’s me. I feel good.’’

## **3 Get a wifi extender**

Then work from your garden/balcony all summer long. Invert screen colours to make it easier to see in the sun.

## **4 Forget reality TV and try watching surreality TV**

Start with [Old Enough](#) on Netflix (a Japanese hidden camera show in which toddlers run errands); [The Great Big Tiny Design Challenge](#) on Channel 4 (Grand Designs but with doll’s houses); and [Is it Cake?](#) on Netflix (bakers make cakes that don’t look like cakes). Real people + weird concepts = utterly distracting entertainment.

## **5 Eat more salad**

[This chopper](#) will make that more likely.

## **6 Go to an art gallery and stare at a picture for ages**

Here’s Guardian art critic [Jonathan Jones](#) on how to do it. “Think of looking at a painting as physical exercise – gym for the eyes. You’ll get more out of paintings the more you move around them. Stand back, then really close, look from the left, then right. Dance around. Above all, give it time. Views from different angles add up to slow absorption that will open the door to a life-affirming experience that can take you out of the ordinary, into the happy.”

## **7 Start a recipe club**

Like a book club but for food – challenge yourself to try one new dish each week, and share it (with any tweaks) on email. Start with Meera Sodha's [dal](#). Cheap, delicious, freezes well, plus is meat free.

## **8 Listen to country music for a week**

It might save your life: in a University of Maryland Medical Center [study](#), participants who listened to [country music](#) found their blood vessels dilated, increasing blood flow and leading to better cardiovascular health.

## **9 Tune in to the Japanese concept of micro-seasons**

We're between *Mimizu izuru* ("Worms surface") and *Takenoko shōzu* ("Bamboo shoots sprout"). [There are 72!](#)

## **10 Learn to do a great front crawl**

Not many of us can. Here are four tips from Peigh Asante and Nathaniel Cole, co-founders of [Swim Dem Crew](#).

"Putting your face in the water and keeping the water at your hairline helps you stay on the surface.

"Use aids such as floats and buoys. Floats will help you practise your arm and leg movements, and breathing, while keeping you safe. Buoys allow you to focus on your arms for better technique.

"Kick from your hips. Think about making long, smooth kicks in the water rather than bending your knees too much and splashing lots of water.

"Cup your hands over your ears – this is the shape to keep your hands in as you use your arms when swimming front crawl. That way, you push plenty of water away."

## **11 Discover secrets about your immediate surroundings**

With [Wikipedia Around](#) (insert the address and it'll tell you all about the area). Don't forget to turn off your location when you're done.

## **12 Get some proper bin shoes**

AKA garden/backdoor shoes that you aren't embarrassed to be seen in by

the postie. Also for: hanging laundry, watering plants, feeding the birds and barbecues. You can't go wrong with a pair of [Birkenstock Bostons](#).

### 13 Paint your nails in rainbow colours

With each a different shade, looking at them will instantly cheer you up.



Paint your nails ... and borrow a dog. Photograph: Kellie French/The Guardian. Shirt: [Maje](#)

### 14 Wear one colour head to toe

It will make you see your wardrobe in a new light, says [Jess Cartner-Morley](#). “Any idiot can face a crisis,’ Anton Chekhov said. ‘It’s the day-to-day living that wears you out.’ Cheerful clothes can be your armour against a day-to-day that threatens to grind you down. So forget about looking cool. Ditch the black. Bye-bye, Coco Chanel. See ya later, Jack Kerouac. Now is no time for the sociopathic elegance of inky skirt suits or the brutalist chic of a black T-shirt and faded jeans. Embrace colour. Think pink today, be true blue tomorrow. Mellow out in yellow to bring the sunshine in. Make the world a little jollier, one pair of red socks at a time.”

### 15 Try to join in a game with strangers

Whether they’re playing catch, football or Frisbee, on the beach or in the park, the worst that can happen is they say no. The best? You join a new

community, however temporary. It's worth carrying a tennis ball or football around just in case you need to start the game.

## **16 Put up a bird feeder**

Here's how to get birds to come, says [the RSPB](#)'s *Anna Feeney*. "Finches, tits and sparrows love sunflower hearts; the latter will also enjoy a mesh feeder with peanuts. Many birds like fat balls, though robins, blackbirds and dunnocks prefer a ground feeder tray (avoid this if there are cats in your area). Place hanging feeders and bird tables high, and a couple of metres away from thick cover so birds can retreat from aerial predators such as sparrowhawks. Avoid anything with salt, cooked food, loose peanuts and dry, hard foods or bread in spring and summer (chicks can choke on them). Clean your feeder with a mild disinfectant and hot water once a week."

## **17 End your working day properly**

Do something, anything, when you clock off – a walk; a swim; a free online yoga class. Especially when WFH.

## **18 Rewatch [Our Friends in the North](#)**

That's for Gen Xers; for Gen Yers, try [My So-Called Life](#). Gen Zers should watch both and learn something.

## **19 Do a DIY, cheapo face steam and/or hair mask**

Give it a go once every few weeks, says beauty and lifestyle journalist [Lisa Niven-Phillips](#). "Boost skin glow by mixing oats or coffee grounds with water or milk; gently buff into face, then rinse with warm water. As for your hair, shampoo twice, apply a mask to towel-dried locks, cover with a shower cap (the heat generated by your head will increase the mask's penetration), then take a hot bath for even more heat. Rinse with cold water to seal hair cuticles."

## **20 Pick some flowers and foliage**

Head to your garden (or a consenting neighbour's), pick, then arrange beautifully, says [Alys Fowler](#). "A simple jar of the soft, brilliant green of new growth is uplifting and needs little else to adorn it. There are plenty of grasses in flower now and you'll be surprised how elevated they look once placed in a pretty vase. A single arching branch of foliage can make a statement, or think of the vase like a clock: looking from above, place beech

leaves, say, at 12, 3, 6 and 9 o'clock, lime leaves in between, then add the next thing. Knock the symmetry off with the odd stem placed here or there. If foraging, remember to pick sparingly from a number of plants. With woody stems, bash the bottom to help water uptake.”

## **21 Head to the water**

Barge, kayak, pedalo, it doesn't matter – just enjoy the change of pace and perspective.

## **22 Do something to celebrate the Queen's platinum jubilee**

Even if you're a republican, it's an excuse to let your hair down after the constrictions of the past two years and to feel part of something bigger. If monarchy-hater [Polly Toynbee](#) can, anyone can. “As a devout republican, my ideal jubilee party would be on a boat with Johnny Rotten, reprising the Sex Pistols' trip down the Thames in the 1977 jubilee, blasting out God Save the Queen and Anarchy in the UK in front of parliament until the police came along. Neither Johnny nor the boat is available, so I will celebrate the long life of Elizabeth the Last with friends and family instead. Never mind the bollocks, just enjoy.”

## **23 Get a bath pillow**

You're never too young for [a comfy soak](#).

## **24 Learn a new, achievable skill on YouTube**

It could change your life, says [Tim Jonze](#). “If nobody had invented YouTube in 2005, the world would look completely different: not least because I wouldn't have a clue how to clean out the inside of my Kamado barbecue. These days you don't need to worry about not knowing stuff. Just type your personal failings into YouTube and there'll be a big, beardy American come along to explain that, hey, you simply fire up charcoal to about 4,000 degrees, then brush all the charred gunk off when it's cooled down. From simple life hacks such as destalking thyme (pull it through a colander) to longer-term projects such as teaching your child to ride a bike (thanks, Chris Hoy), YouTube is here to enrich your life. Right now, I'm learning how to draw [Bluey](#), and in six minutes I'll be able to do just that. It's a kind of magic, really. So, fix that leaky tap, discover the joys of rollerblading ... or dare to dream bigger. Maybe there's a new career awaiting me as a kids' TV cartoonist. If not, I'll scrub your barbecue out for 20 quid.”

Sign up to our Inside Saturday newsletter for an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the making of the magazine's biggest features, as well as a curated list of our weekly highlights.

## 25 Read a vibe-shifting new book

The Guardian's deputy literary editor [Justine Jordan](#) recommends these five.

[Bless the Daughter Raised By a Voice in Her Head](#) by Warsan Shire (Chatto & Windus, £12.99): poetry is a sure-fire way to change your mental landscape and this long-awaited collection from the Somali-British poet/Beyoncé collaborator combines poems about war and migration with celebrations of joy.

[Great Circle](#) by Maggie Shipstead (Doubleday, £8.99): shortlisted for the Booker and now the Women's prize, this is the story of an early female aviator and the Hollywood star who investigates the mystery of her disappearance. A gloriously immersive historical epic.

[The Expectation Expect: How Your Mindset Can Transform Your Life](#) by David Robson (Canongate, £18.99): a revelatory pop science book on the idea that it's not so much what happens to us as what we expect to happen that determines our health and wellbeing.

[Here Goes Nothing](#) by Steve Toltz (Sceptre, £18.99): Australian Toltz is the king of pitch-black comedy and personal catastrophe. Partially narrated from the afterlife, his new novel grapples with big existential questions but is also stuffed with zingers. If there's no cure for being alive, laughter is still the best medicine.

[Super-Infinite: The Transformations of John Donne](#) by [Katherine Rundell](#) (Faber, £16.99): a book to spark curiosity and make history feel fresh. Rundell's enthusiasm rises off the page as she introduces the metaphysical poet and preacher, a man whose revolutionary mindshifts in articulating sex, death and eternity were produced against a backdrop of plague and persecution.

## 26 Invent a cocktail

Here's ours: lemon juice, vodka, ice, sugar and crushed verbena leaves.



Invent a cocktail ... and wear one colour head to toe. Photograph: Kellie French/The Guardian. Dress: [River Island](#). Tights: [Calzedonia](#). Heels: [Manolo Blahnik](#)

## 27 Draw something every day

Make a quick sketch of one interesting, funny, uplifting, memorable thing that happened. Keep in a notebook to build a visual diary, instantly carving out a moment's breathing space and lifting your spirits; zero talent required.

## 28 Change your lighting

It will shift the mood of a room, says Habitat lighting designer *Tom Sullivan*. “Switch off bright overhead lights in favour of side lamps that emit a softer, more soothing glow. A rule of thumb is: three light sources per room, with a mix of floor and table lights, alongside task lighting for activities. If you do want overhead lights, soften with rattan or bamboo shades and use ‘warm white’ LED filament bulbs.”

## 29 Grind your coffee beans

[James Hoffmann](#), a former world barista champion and author of [The World Atlas of Coffee](#), explains why. “Coffee goes stale quickly – you can notice a big difference between fresh ground and coffee that has been ground for a day or two. The other benefit is you can tailor the size of the grinds to how

you are brewing. Burr grinders are the best, as they allow you to control the size of the grounds.”

### **30 Keep a commonplace book**

Use it to jot down quotes, lines or jokes you like. For private consumption or Twitter.

### **31 Get some ‘peel and stick’ wallpaper**

Great if you’re renting and can’t make permanent changes; if you tend to change your mind; or if you’re rubbish at DIY. [Chasing Paper](#) and [Marimekko](#) do especially cheery ones.

### **32 Switch to silicone-free shampoo**

Ideally, [in soap bar form](#) to save on packaging. Your hair will be thicker, and you’ll barely need to wash it.

### **33 Burn incense**

Scents are subjective, but the least cloying are [palo santo](#), [sandalwood](#) and [frankincense](#).

### **34 Try roller-skating or skateboarding**

Wear kneepads.



Get your skates on. Photograph: Kellie French/The Guardian. Model: Sheldon French. No gastropods were harmed in the making of this image

### **35 Surprise someone with something small but nice**

Think a takeaway (picked up, ideally) or a home-cooked meal, rather than a puppy.

### **36 Follow @Fesshole on Twitter**

Odd how [others' confessions](#) make you feel better about your own behaviour.

### **37 Listen to music in the bathroom**

[Shower speakers](#) are wonderful things! [Samuel Gibbs](#) recommends some for any budget.

[JBL Go 3](#) Big sound in a tiny Bluetooth package with a loop to hang it from; £29.99.

[Ultimate Ears Wonderboom 2](#) Booming Bluetooth speaker with 13-hour battery, which floats if you drop it in the bath; £89.99.

[Sonos Roam](#) Top-class, hard-to-beat sound, Bluetooth or wifi; £159.

### **38 Get an analogue alarm clock**

Not only is this a good way to keep your phone in another room, but it's harder to read a clock face than a digital one at 3am, meaning insomniacs won't (hopefully). Ditto get a wristwatch.

### **39 Improve your short-term memory by building a memory palace**

Take your next shopping list. [Pick a place you know well](#) (a room, office, short walk), then plan a route around it. Decide what you want to memorise (say, garlic and crumpets), then place a mental image of each thing in a particular spot. Visualise the room again, really thinking about the items in situ, and head to the shops. You'll be staggered at how much you remember.

### **40 Take a microbreak**

Just one night (two tops) somewhere random, out-of-season, for no reason. We recommend [Northumberland](#) or [Naples](#).

## **41 Watch [monster wave videos](#) on YouTube**

With a cup of tea, when it's raining. Trust us!

## **42 Sign up to be a telephone befriender**

Try [Age UK](#)'s service.

## **43 Don't be greedy**

Greed, says Guardian advice columnist [Annalisa Barbieri](#), is competition in material form. "It's about wanting more, often as a result of needing to feel safe or superior to others: accumulation as protection. At its heart is vulnerability. And unless you address the root cause, nothing is ever going to be enough. (Look at Elon Musk.) Think about why you want something and what need you think will be fulfilled by having it – will it fill that need? Having 'stuff' feels exciting to begin with, but then we habitualise possessions; experiences actually get more golden as time passes. Being generous takes confidence, and it shouldn't be about leaving yourself with very little. It shouldn't hurt. So get a round in."

## **44 Try false eyelashes**

They've come a long way from Gaga and cabaret. Honestly, try a weirdly natural-looking pair by [Lashify](#) for a day: we promise you'll look more awake.

## **45 Get some proper matching pyjamas**

[Tekla](#)'s cost just over £100, [Arket](#)'s about £75 , but both are organic, wash well and are chic enough to wear to the shops.



Get matching pyjamas ... and go outside early. Photograph: Kellie French/The Guardian. Pyjamas: [Paul Smith](#)

#### **46 Go outside every day before 9am**

Morning light, says *Russell Foster*, director of the Sleep and Circadian Neuroscience Institute at Oxford University, kickstarts two important components of health. “For most of us, it acts to synchronise our biological clock, or circadian rhythms, and the sleep/wake cycle, to the 24-hour rotation of the Earth. This harmonisation allows the delivery of the right materials, to the correct organs, at the optimum concentration, at the right time of day. Without this daily reset, our health slides into mush. But flicking the bedside lamp on is not enough! The clock needs bright light. So fling back the curtains and sit by the window for at least 30 minutes. Better still, go outside for that 30-minute ‘photon shower’. Bright morning light also drives an increase in alertness and mood. In winter, use a light box that can deliver an intensity of 1,000–2,000 lux.”

#### **47 Change the default typeface on your email**

We recently went from sans serif to Georgia; it was like starting a new job.

#### **48 Rent a few nice pieces of fashion**

Rather than panic-buying your first holiday wardrobe in two years, try Hurr,

MyWardrobe, Essentiel Antwerp and Rotaro.

#### **49 Buy a single share in something non-evil**

Then enjoy watching it go up and down. Let's call it green-vesting! [Rupert Jones](#), the Guardian's deputy money editor, has some suggestions.

**Ørsted** The world's biggest developer of offshore windfarms, this Danish firm was recently named one of Time magazine's [100 most influential companies](#).

**Enphase Energy** A California-based supplier of solar and battery systems which in April reported record revenues.

**SSE** A leading generator of renewable electricity, including wind and hydro power, and a FTSE 100 company.

#### **50 Make a playlist for a friend with different music tastes from yours**

Then ask them to make one in return.

#### **51 Find one practical way to make a difference**

Since October, [Sirin Kale](#) has been meeting people doing just that for Saturday magazine's [Guardian Angel](#) column, and this what she's learned. "Few people set out to be a community champion: instead they find something they're passionate – even angry – about and try to change it. They're appalled by litter on their street, or feel lonely and want to reach out to others who feel the same, or have a skill they'd like to share. They start tentatively making changes: they organise a litter pick, a coffee morning or a workshop. One event turns into many. Friends are made. People begin to know them for their community efforts. But, really, they just noticed something small and decided to do something about it. That's how it starts for them, and that's how it could start for you."

#### **52 Posh up your toast**

Add olive oil, a rub of garlic and a few tomatoes; or butter, cinnamon and brown sugar; or butter, salt and pepper.

#### **53 Literally count your blessings**

Sounds a cliche, but writing them down can help you focus on the good

things in your life, in the midst of bleak times.

#### **54 If you wear glasses, attach a chain**

A bright resin or acetate one, like [this from Etsy](#)) could improve your life.

#### **55 ‘Double’ the size of your garden with a mirror**

Make sure it’s one birds won’t fly into, for instance with a trellis on.

#### **56 Plant one (manageable) thing and tend to it**

Indoors, we recommend [aloe](#), [peace lilies](#) or [spider plants](#). For outdoors, tomato and strawberry plants are especially cheering.



Plant one thing ... and try false eyelashes. All photographs: Kellie French/The Guardian, assisted by Bruce Horak. Styling: Peter Bevan. Props assistant: Giorgia Bortali. Studio: Queensrolla Studios. Makeup, hair and nails: Sarah Cherry using Lancôme and Kérastase. Models: Parmjeet Dhillon and Moses Norville from Bame Agency, and Ziggy the dog. Retouching: Shoemakers Elves

#### **57 Beanbags are back**

And are a great idea if you’re low on space but not on friends and parties. Also called [slouchbags](#). Try something grownup in [cord](#) or [pleather](#).

## **58 Arrange your socks like the late Richard Rogers**

Think separate cells making [colourful order](#) of chaos.

## **59 Stock up on your spices**

[Thomasina Miers](#) picks six favourites.

*Star anise* Add a petal to braised beans, and whole stars to poached fruits and jams.

*Cinnamon* Whole or ground, it gives gently aromatic body and sweetness to Middle Eastern rice dishes and Mexican braises, and extra flavour to chocolate cakes, muffins and porridge.

*Cumin seeds* Add earthiness to Indian and Mexican dishes, and roasted vegetables.

*Coriander seeds* Bring citrussy notes to marinades and pickles.

*Nutmeg* Both comforting and sophisticated, and great in souffles, braised greens, custard tarts and patés.

*Dried chilli* Adds spiky accents to sauces, salsas and braises.

## **60 Film an entire party on your phone**

Then transfer it to your computer with a USB, so it's there for ever.

*Compiled by the Saturday Guardian team*

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## Blind date: ‘She quickly asked me to stop talking about Star Trek’



Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

Yev, 32, marketing manager, meets Ellis, 32, software developer

Sat 14 May 2022 01.00 EDT

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## **Yev on Ellis**



### **What were you hoping for?**

A fun evening, a nice dinner and a good story to have in the end.

### **First impressions?**

A bit nervous but sweet. He said that he chose the table by the bar instead of the one by the window in case it got colder later, which I thought was very considerate of him.

### **What did you talk about?**

Russia/Ukraine. Wine. Our jobs. Hummus. How Star Trek is apparently the best pre-bed watch. Favourite podcasts. The highs and lows of living on a boat.

### **Any awkward moments?**

Only when saying goodbye on the tube.

### **Good table manners?**

Definitely. We shared most of the dishes. Ellis was in charge of halving the portions – 10 out of 10 for knife skills.

**Best thing about Ellis?**

It was very easy to talk to him.

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

Sure.

**Describe Ellis in three words**

Friendly, interesting, cute.

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

Absolutely no idea! He laughed at my jokes, so it seemed like he was enjoying the evening.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

No.

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

No.

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

I would stick to one type of wine – it was amazing wine, though.

**Marks out of 10?**

7. It was a lovely evening but with no romantic vibes.

**Would you meet again?**

As friends, for sure. I always wanted a friend who lives on a boat!

**Q&A**

**Want to be in 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.

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## **Ellis on Yev**



### **What were you hoping for?**

Food, laughter and any free therapy, medical or tax advice that I could get.

### **First impressions?**

Stylish – although I was three drinks down at this point.

### **What did you talk about?**

What didn't we talk about? Her job at a dating app. My ideas for a dating app. Her belief that it should be illegal to overtake someone in a swimming pool. My belief that everyone should be made to watch Star Trek.

### **Any awkward moments?**

She quickly asked me to stop talking about Star Trek.

### **Good table manners?**

We were sitting at the bar sharing tiny plates; it was a complete free-for-all.

### **Best thing about Yev?**

She effortlessly made great conversation in her third language.

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

I wouldn't inflict that on her.

**Describe Yev in three words**

Not a Trekkie.

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

She seemed generally concerned.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

Only the Victoria line – we were both quite full by this point.

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

On the Victoria line?

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

I should have had lunch.

**Marks out of 10?**

7.5.

**Would you meet again?**

I'm not pointing fingers, but we didn't swap numbers.

*Yev and Ellis ate at [INO Gastrobar](#), London W1. Fancy a blind date? Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)*

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## Meal of a lifetime: what to eat at every age



Eat your age. Illustration: Lalalimola/The Guardian

From training toddlers to socialising septuagenarians – here are the ideal ingredients to eat healthily at every stage of life



[Coco Khan](#)

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‘Nutrition is one of the hardest sciences to do well,’ says Graham Lawton, a science writer whose first book, *This Book Could Save Your Life*, aimed to debunk a number of contemporary health fads. ‘Humans are terrible research subjects,’ he says. ‘Recording what they actually eat is virtually impossible, they either forget or they lie.’ And, he says, ‘everybody’s different. Everyone has a different gut microbiome and metabolism.’

While Lawton is clear that it’s almost impossible to pull out any kind of generalisation, there is some consensus over the sorts of food we might want to prioritise at various life stages. Generally speaking, ultra-processed foods are always best avoided regardless of age, due to the high sugar, salt and artificial trans fats that characterise them (also called ‘partially hydrogenated oils’; artificial trans fats can be found in hard margarine, fast food and commercially produced baked goods, and have been so closely linked to heart disease that they have been banned in Denmark, Switzerland, Austria and certain US states). As for everything else? ‘It’s about moderate doses,’ says Lawton. Here’s what to eat by age.

## 0-two years old

### **What to eat:** *leafy greens, eggs and full-fat dairy*

The NHS recommends that parents start weaning their children at around six months old. “This is because there’s not enough iron in breast milk, so mum and the baby can become anaemic,” explains Sophie Medlin, dietitian and London Chair of the British Dietetic Association. Eggs are a powerful choice even at this age, though the NHS says eggs without the Red Lion label are not suitable to be eaten raw (for example in homemade mayonnaise). and “adding iron-rich vegetables to meals such as spinach and broccoli, which are easy to puree, is great,” says Medlin.

Rachel Ward is a GP in Oxfordshire. She recommends parents use full-fat milk, full-fat yoghurts and full-fat cheese for the under twos, “because of their fast growth rate. They are using up a lot of energy and they’ll need it,” she says. Ward stresses the importance of introducing children to a variety of food at the earliest opportunity. “We know the first time they try fruit and vegetables, they won’t like them, but it is important that you keep going because that’s the building blocks of a broad and balanced diet.”

## Two years old to teens

### **What to eat:** *seeds, tofu and semi-skimmed milk*

“This period is really rapid for bone growth,” says Medlin. “So it’s about making sure they eat lots of calcium-rich food. Dairy is optimal.” By now, Ward suggests they’re switched to semi-skimmed milk and lower fat dairy options – for example, creme fraiche over cream – as part of forming healthy habits. “Iron also remains important, so keep pushing a range of vegetables,” she says. For calcium-rich plant-based alternatives, “seeds and tofu are excellent,” says Medlin, with sunflower, chia, poppy and sesame being some of the most powerful.

## Teens and young adults

### **What to eat: pulses, lean meats, dried fruits, and flavours from around the world (ideally cooked as a family)**

“The diet should be balanced and nutrient rich,” says Ward. “Fruit and veg, lean meat, and pulses. Parents should also try to build up an array of foods using new flavours and ingredients from different countries.” For maximum impact, make cooking a team effort. “Encourage the kids to take ownership of their diet so they have a good repertoire of recipes,” she says. “It’s not going to be long before they have left home and you want them to have the skills to eat healthily.” Once again, iron is important, especially for girls experiencing the onset of menstruation: eggs, spinach and dried fruits are good sources. What about teenage skin? “That’s hormonal, there’s not a lot you can do about that through diet,” says Medlin.

## **20s**

### **What to eat: foods rich in B vitamins**

“At this phase in your life, health is on your side, and you can feel a little bit invincible,” reflects Ward. “But it’s still important to look at what you’re putting into your body, and understanding it has consequences. Something we see in this age group is alcohol excess, which can be detrimental if people get into the habit of drinking without food.” Medlin says the lifestyle changes in our 20s – some of them being alcohol, caffeine and stress – are a “perfect storm” for B12 deficiencies, especially as plant-based diets take off. “Foods rich in B vitamins are animal products like meat, fish, dairy and eggs. But if you’re vegan, you can use nutritional yeast to add extra B12 to your diet, and focus on those green leafy vegetables.”

## **30s**

### **What to eat: whole grains**

The likes of pearl barley, oats and brown rice have a number of benefits for people in their 30s. Firstly, around this age, fertility may be on the agenda, so women trying to conceive could benefit from dialling up their

consumption of folate to reduce the risk of neural tube defects like spina bifida. Good sources of folate include dark leafy greens and whole grains.

Men could also benefit from keeping an eye on their B vitamins – again, whole grains are a good source, and they also promote feeling fuller for longer, which can help maintain a healthy weight. “A lot of people get to their 30s and suddenly their bowels don’t like certain foods, so gut health becomes more important. For that, you’d want to be focusing on high-fibre food,” says Medlin. And what’s a good source of fibre? Whole grains.

## 40s

### **What to eat:** *occasionally, nothing*

“As we move into ageing processes, we need antioxidants to protect our skin and body,” says Medlin. Antioxidants work by neutralising unstable atoms in the body called free radicals. Free radicals cause cell damage and occur in the body through ageing and environment (for example, due to pollution and stress). You can find antioxidants in brightly coloured fruit and veg so it’s important to eat them, not take them in a pill or applied in a cream. “They don’t work unless eaten, for reasons that aren’t well understood,” says Lawton. “One theory is that they work by hormesis.” This is a biological process where a small amount of something harmful has beneficial effects. “So the antioxidant plants are mildly poisonous in order to keep insects off, and our body reacts to this insult by ramping up its protective mechanisms.”

If eating to slow ageing is your aim, Lawton only has one recommendation:s fasting. “There’s something called autophagy: if you deprive your body of nutrients for an extended period of time, your body has to find alternative sources of energy. So it finds loads of gubbins in your cells – bits of protein, old organelles, the cellular damage – and it burns them. It’s like cleaning out loads of old crap from inside you.” Fasting is associated with better metabolic health, and in animal experiments “has been tried on every conceivable animal from insects through to macaques, extending their lifespans by up to 50%”.

## 50s

### **What to eat: more olive oil, less butter**

“In our 50s we want to be focusing on weight management, as well as diabetes and heart disease prevention,” says Medlin. “So it might be the time to start switching saturated fat for unsaturated fats.” But what does this mean? There are different types of fat in the food we eat, and saturated fats are the ones linked to high cholesterol. Many animal foods are high in saturated fats – butter, meat, cheese. “A good rule of thumb is that saturated fats tend to come from animals and are solid at room temperature,” says Lawton, “while unsaturated fats tend to derive from plants, and are liquid at room temperature.” Olive oil is a common unsaturated vegetable fat.

“There’s not been a lot of clarity on saturated fats,” reflects Lawton. “They were demonised based on less than rigorous research on the Mediterranean diet. That research was done in Greece at a time when people were fasting for religious reasons, so they were eating mostly fish and vegetables and olive oil. But they usually eat quite a lot of lamb, which is high in saturated fat. More recently, there’s been a saturated fats renaissance, particularly with butter.” But according to Lawton the bottom line is: “saturated fats are a perfectly healthy and essential part of a balanced diet, but we eat too many of them. And if you do eat too many of them, they are linked with obesity and heart disease.”

## **60s**

### **What to eat: plenty of protein**

Protein is the food group du jour, promising muscle gain to exercise enthusiasts and weight loss to dieters who are drawn to its ability to make people feel fuller for longer (and therefore consume fewer calories). “However, there are lots of major nuances to this,” warns Lawton, noting that in general the under-65s “eat too much protein in the west anyway”. But he says, protein could be beneficial for the over-65s in the battle against sarcopenia, which is muscle wastage.

## **70s onwards**

## **What to eat: a fully balanced plate of food, with someone else**

“Around this age, we tend to see people’s eating habits change. Appetite tends to decrease, especially when people retire and may be less active,” says Ward. “So if you are not eating as much, you need to be conscious that meals include all your nutrients.” Ward says that it’s not uncommon for older people to lack motivation to cook, especially if they’re on their own or have mobility issues. “I would highly recommend batch cooking when you’re up to it,” she says. “Or to use eating as an opportunity to socialise. Spending time with other people and eating together is great for many aspects of health.”

## **Life’s essentials: what to eat at any age**

### **Lots of fruits and vegetables**

There has been a debate over whether five-a-day is truly enough to meet all our nutritional needs, but given most [British adults only eat four portions](#) and children only three, five seems like a worthy goal. Fruit and veg are nimble agents of nutrition, with many straddling essential groups – chickpeas are protein and vegetable, sweet potato is a carb and one of your five a day – so eating plenty of them is key. The trick is mixing it up, and giving your body a variety. A popular rule of thumb is to “eat the rainbow”. (However, there’s [no evidence](#) that eating a balance of colours leads to a balance in nutritional content.)

### **Omega-3**

“All children have the potential to be academic,” notes Medlin. “So make sure they’re getting plenty of omega-3, whether that is from oily fish or a supplement.” [Research suggests](#) that fish oil could have a role in brain and eye development, and even in school performance, though consistent conclusions are lacking. There’s also been a number of studies that suggest eating fish could reduce inflammation and help with joint pain in our later years – though it’s once again inconclusive. Nonetheless, fish as a choice of protein is solid. The NHS recommends two portions a week. White-fleshed fish is among the leanest proteins and oily fish is high in omega-3 which can also help to keep your heart healthy.

## **Calcium**

We know that calcium is crucial for growing children but we also need a good amount from 30 onwards. “After 30, each day that we don’t get enough calcium in our diet, our body leaches it from our bones,” says Medlin. “By the time we get to 60, quite a lot of the calcium from our bones will have gone.” Moreover, Ward says menopausal women should be mindful about calcium intake to prevent osteoporosis. [NHS Scotland](#) recommends two to three servings of dairy a day, so one glass of milk, a matchbox size piece of cheese and a yoghurt. For plant-based alternatives, trusty spinach and other leafy greens can help.

This article was amended on 14 May 2022 to remove a reference to liver consumption in relation to fertility because of conflicting advice about its effects.

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## The secret to saving your relationship: eight lessons from a couples therapist



‘If a couple never argues, it’s because things have been parked,’ says therapist Susanna Abse. Photograph: William Elliot/William Elliot / Gallery Stock

Over three decades, Susanna Abse has worked with every kind of couple. She shares what she's learned on how to stay the distance – and why fighting is good



[Zoe Williams](#)

[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Sat 14 May 2022 04.00 EDT

Susanna Abse is the marriage counsellor's marriage counsellor – 30 years in practice giving her peerless insights into the challenges couples face without making any dent in her curiosity and originality. This serene, witty 65-year-old is exacting but non-judgmental; I imagine you'd feel able to say absolutely anything in front of her, unless it was bullshit. You would trust her with your marriage, but you'd want to take your A-game.

Abse can't begin to estimate how many couples she's seen since her first in 1986, but puts it at tens of thousands of hours. She has worked with every kind of couple, from the ones who "bang their heads together and shout and stand up and walk out" (she calls these "doll's house" couples in her book – people who break things without any sense of consequence), to the ones who think there's never been anything wrong, and can't understand why they've suddenly got issues.

She typically sees a couple weekly or biweekly. Her work is instinctive: a couple will continue to meet with her for as long as it takes. “I absolutely never know whether a couple will separate or not,” she says.

Post-Covid, there has been a rise in the number of couples seeking therapy, but it’s perhaps not as dramatic as you might expect. If the field is booming, it’s because millennials, and couples even [younger, are seeking help](#) earlier in their relationship – at a point when older generations would have just called it quits. The rise probably isn’t hurt by the popularity of shows such as the BBC’s [Couples Therapy](#), which sheds a light on this usually hidden process.



Anxiety builds around sex, and with it the ability to communicate.  
Photograph: William Elliot/William Elliot / Gallery Stock

When she started practising, “there used to be a rule that you never asked a question, as a psychoanalytic practitioner”, she says. “Now, most therapists are much more interactive and will ask questions directly about what the problem is.” Abse’s approach is distinctive in that “I never can see a person without asking about all the people who’ve been around them, or not around them. They are always in the context of a relationship with other people, or a missing relationship with somebody.”

In the 1990s, the work of the celebrated American psychologist John Gottman was fashionable in marriage circles: published in 1983, the “four horsemen” theory was that you could predict which couples would fall apart from four red flags: criticism, defensiveness, contempt and stonewalling. That’s fallen out of fashion, too, and Abse says “Lots of couples will be contemptuous at moments, or stonewall at moments. It’s a defence, isn’t it? Or a retaliation. My job is to trace it back to its origins, when it started between the couple, and then further back – what the meaning of it is for them as individuals in relation to their own childhood experience.”

Abse doesn’t do rules. So let’s just call this list eight essential truths for a happy relationship.

Be aware that having children will change your relationship in a way that you can’t prevent

## **It's good to fight**

Usually, if a couple never argues, it’s because “things have been parked”, says Abse. “Once you open things up, actually there is quite a lot of feeling there, and upset – there’s just been smoothing over and covering up.” Broadly speaking, it militates against intimacy, if you won’t show yourself to one another. In Abse’s book, *Tell Me the Truth About Love*, she describes a “babes in the wood” couple, two people who have so strenuously avoided all conflict with each other that they turn their anger outwards and are in constant combat with neighbours, family, friends. Alternatively, avoidant couples can find that their children become the “repository for trouble. The couple are very joined and reasonable and nice. And then they’ve a child who’s beating people up, doing drugs, acting out. All the difficulty between them has got projected on to the child.”

## **Stop blaming**

“I often make the joke: ‘I’ve listened carefully to all the submissions and I pronounce ...’” says Abse. “To say, look, the two of you feel that this is a courtroom, and you’re giving me evidence. There’s a vulnerability there,

that I'll judge them; that one has done something heinous and is in the doghouse, and the other's in the clear. It's not like that at all. You've cooked this up together."

One example of where people are looking for adjudication is closeness. "One person wants to get closer, and the other person finds ways to distance," she says, and they might think a therapist can tell them who's in the right. But there's no right or wrong because they've created this situation together. Usually, there's a system there, what family therapy used to call a distance regulation system. There's an unconscious collusion to maintain the distance between them, even if only one person's complaining about it."

## **Use 'I feel ... ' rather than 'You always ... '**

This is the old saw about marital conflict, that you should use "I" words rather than accusations. It's worth examining why the accusation is easier: you make yourself very vulnerable when you describe your own feelings, particularly if they're fearful or sad. "This is probably not just between couples, this is a disease of humans," says Abse, "that we're so worried about our vulnerability that we're aggressive in order to cover it up. Sometimes it's not safe to show people how fragile you are." It's better to show your hand: "If you feel anxious about talking to somebody, don't just tell them the thing, tell them you're worried about telling them the thing. Signal that it's difficult for you."

## **Don't have children (well, do if you must)**

One message that comes across in so many – maybe all – relationship difficulties is that what drew the couple together in the first place was not a shared love of hiking or a similar education, but mirroring dynamics in their childhood that they're hoping to recreate, or overcome, or both, or maybe they don't know which.

"Those expectations that you're going to meet a loving, parental figure that you longed for in your childhood – couples can do that for one another, but this becomes impossible when you throw children into the equation.

Because then there's a real infant there, and there isn't a lot left over for mothering and parenting each other. It becomes a conflict of needs."

Relationship satisfaction typically crashes after children. However, "lots of couples do grow and mature and deepen their intimacy via having children". So maybe the rule is, do it or don't, just be aware that it will change your relationship in a way that you can't prevent, and nor can you get ahead of how that change will make you feel.

## **Have sex (or don't, but at least notice when you stop)**

"There are a lot of nonsexual couples," Abse says, deploying the non-prescriptive tone that is her trademark. "Obviously that's possible. But if you're in your 20s, 30s, 40s and probably up to your mid-50s, and there's absolutely no sex, there's a risk that it is going to lead to the end of the relationship. People want the release, they want the intimacy, it's an important part of life."

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If your sex life flags, don't just assume it'll pick back up; anxiety builds around it, and with it the ability to communicate. "You see the couples who've not had sex for 25 years, who come and say 'Can you help us?', when they're in their early 60s. Probably not.

## **Threats of leaving are a bad idea**

"They really are corrosive," Abse says. "They fundamentally undermine a sense of security, and you need that in order to be able to have difference and conflict and resolution."

## **Don't label each other**

When I was young, I used to find it funny that everyone thought their mum had histrionic personality disorder and their dad was on the spectrum. Now, everyone thinks their spouse has borderline personality disorder or ADHD.

“I understand it with children – you have to label them in order to get resources. But I don’t think it’s helpful at all with adults,” says Abse. “I have some patients who’ve got autistic features, but so what? You still have to figure it out. Diagnosing adults with ADHD is bonkers. Just call it anxiety.”

## Be brave

“So often, couples come and think, ‘We’re in couples therapy. It’s all over’. They want it to be nice, they want you to be nice, they want them to be nice. They want to feel safe – quite understandably. It’s a scary thing.” And the looming fear, of course, is that the endpoint is separation. But the process of seriously examining any relationship is “so often about psychic separation, because they’re caught up in a dynamic in which they’ve got very confused. They’re projecting on to each other, they’re confused about who’s who. It always involves separation in terms of looking at somebody again. It’s just a question of whether it’s a real separation.” It takes courage.

Abse’s book is dedicated to her husband of 40 years. It reads: “To Paul, my fellow truth-seeker.” It’s true, she says, “that is what’s going on. He thinks he’s got the truth, and I know I have.”

*[Tell Me the Truth About Love: 13 Tales from the Therapist’s Couch](#)* by Susanna Abse is published by Ebury (£16.99). The Guardian masterclass, *[Falling and staying in love: an interactive workshop with Susanna Abse](#)*, takes place on 15 June, 6.30pm

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## 2022.05.14 - Opinion

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## Who should be prime minister? Anyone but Boris Johnson

[Max Hastings](#)

It doesn't matter that the alternatives are all flawed. The UK's global reputation rests on Johnson being replaced



'In the harsh economic times ahead, Boris Johnson's inability even to simulate compassion will intensify the government's unpopularity.' The prime minister arrives in Stockholm, 11 May 2022. Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

Sat 14 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 14 May 2022 07.18 EDT

An elderly shires Tory enthused last month: "Boris is the man for the hour! He has delivered Brexit, vaccinations, and now arms for Ukraine. He gets things done!" Having myself only voted Conservative once since 1992, in 2010, I found it tough to embrace this proposition.

Yet it is useful to be reminded how many Tory foot soldiers still root for Johnson, even passionately so. Instead of the morally debased figure that many of us recognise, they see simply a prime minister whom they still believe can keep out [Labour](#), the only outcome about which they care a toot.

Moreover, they can cause people such as me, long-term residents of the soggy centre, significant embarrassment by demanding whether we sincerely, honestly believe that [Keir Starmer](#) or Ed Davey is more fit than Johnson to govern Britain.

The damp persuasion cast our votes for Labour or the Liberal Democrats at last week's local elections to protest against the shocking inadequacy of those in charge. Yet Tory friends are on to a good thing when they urge that it is not enough merely to lay into the present government. We must declare whom we wish instead.

Conservatives spotlight the poverty of thinking on the left, conspicuous even among its media columnists. Starmer has earned some modest revival of respect by [promising to resign](#) if fined over Beergate. Yet this weak vessel remains in danger of being remembered by posterity as the man who refused [to define a woman](#) comprehensibly, and has yet to produce a memorable new policy.

Meanwhile the Lib Dems' Davey is an acceptable backbench MP, but cannot fill big boots. Once again, if we centrists strive for honesty, we should admit doubt that either man would have made a better fist of managing the pandemic or of making policy towards Ukraine than has the current prime minister.

Our dilemmas get worse when we contemplate the prospects for Johnson being replaced by another Conservative. Rishi Sunak remains the most impressive alternative, but it seems unlikely that he can overcome the deserved embarrassment over [his wife's tax status](#), overlaid upon his party's residual racial prejudice. A northern Tory said to me recently: "Given a choice of two leadership candidates, our local constituency members will never vote for a person of colour." This is shameful, but his judgment may be correct.

The winner of a leadership contest could well be either Ben Wallace or Liz Truss. Both have diminished themselves almost to vanishing point by their wild rhetoric on Ukraine. They [talk of its war aims](#) like football supporters baying from the away stands, rather than as respectively our defence and foreign secretaries.

Wallace's remarks this week, [likening Vladimir Putin to Adolf Hitler](#), reminds us of the unfailing truth that only the most contemptible politicians compare themselves to Churchill, or their enemies to the Nazis. The defence secretary, by his choice of language, debased the discourse to Putin's own level. Britain is doing the right things by Ukraine, but we should never forget that it is not our people who are fighting and dying.

Moreover say what we like about Johnson, he is not a stupid man. Neither Wallace nor Truss seems likely to offer more competent governance, nor to embark upon an adult dialogue with the rest of the world such as Britain has lacked for years, especially with Europe and about Ireland.

Jeremy Hunt is by far the best qualified alternative leader, which is why Johnson has never admitted the former health secretary to his cabinet of grotesques. Hunt lacks stardust, but would govern sensibly and tell as much of the truth as any politician can. In less febrile times, these should represent decisive claims on the top job. Unfortunately, however, a Conservative party in bondage to its own right wing is unlikely to defer to Hunt's virtues.

And so, back to Johnson. Thanks to Starmer's equivocations about his own foolish beer during lockdown, the prime minister may survive even publication of the [Sue Gray report](#) on the Downing Street party culture – a much more serious issue than anything allegedly done by the opposition, because the principal instruments of the government repeatedly broke the law that they themselves made.

In the eyes of [Conservatives](#), there is still a pragmatic case for retaining Johnson. Yet if the future of Britain and public faith in our politicians are to count for anything, the alternative principled case for removing him must be recognised as imperative.

Should he remain prime minister until the general election, a message would go forth to the world and, more importantly, to his prospective successors: that it is no longer cause for disgrace and resignation to have been exposed as a serial liar both in the House of Commons and out of it; that the bar for any man or woman who seeks to govern Britain has been lowered to a moral level that even the basest candidate could surmount.

I have suggested that those of Johnson's Conservative rivals who seem most likely to succeed him are less intelligent people than himself, and no more possessed of new ideas for Britain. Yet if he retains his office, what prospect is there of our country regaining the respect in the eyes of the world that it has assuredly lost, and which cannot be regained merely by a repugnant Tory scramble over the corpses and rubble of Ukraine?

In the harsh economic times ahead, Johnson's inability even to simulate compassion will intensify the government's unpopularity. An essential quality for any man or woman who aspires to lead Britain through the worst cost of living crisis in modern times will be that they should be seen to be a caring human being. Our body politic must be given an opportunity to do better, however great the uncertainty about what would follow change in Downing Street.

For the Tories to flinch from removing Johnson is to invite their devastation at the next general election. Starmer may not be impressive, but by 2024 popular rage against the Tory government could well trump all. For the millions who mill in the middle ground, searching for hope, this can only be discovered in change. The only moral answer to the question "Who else is there?" is: "Anyone but Johnson."

- Max Hastings is a former editor of the Daily Telegraph and the Evening Standard

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[Opinion](#)[Climate crisis](#)

# ‘Fun in the sun’ photos are a dangerous distraction from the reality of climate breakdown

Saffron O'Neill

Think of the images that defined our understanding of war or protest. Similar ones can tell the truth about this disaster



Sunbathers in Margate, Kent, in May 2021. Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP/Getty/Guardian Imaging

Sat 14 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 14 May 2022 11.54 EDT

Open a British newspaper as a heatwave looms and you’ll likely see headlines about the unprecedented nature of the upcoming heat, the cost to lives and livelihoods, and even deaths caused by the extreme heat. But accompanying the same story you’ll also likely see images of people having fun in the sun – kids splashing in city fountains, crowded beaches, blue seas,

azure skies and holiday happiness.

How the media communicates about climate breakdown reflects and shapes how societies engage with the issue. Behind every picture that makes it into the news is a person mirroring and perpetuating how society thinks about climate breakdown. Images are a key part of any media communication: they are often vivid and colourful, drawing readers in and helping them to remember a story.

They also shape news production: compelling visuals help stories rise up the media agenda. Think about the image of the man blocking a line of tanks in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, a young girl fleeing her village after being burned by napalm in the Vietnam war, smoke billowing from the twin towers. These images become part of our collective psyche – through them we remember the power of protest, the horror of war, and the moments everything changed. Images of the climate crisis can hold the same power, something the *Guardian* recognised in its sector-leading 2019 [editorial decision](#) to rethink the images accompanying climate stories.

Our new research, led by the University of Exeter, highlights a distinct problem with how the European media visually represents news of extreme heat. We examined media coverage from the UK, the Netherlands, France and Germany during the summer of 2019. Importantly, we only included news stories that mentioned both the keywords “heatwave” and “climate change”, reasoning that if we were to see responsible and accurate reporting of heatwave risks, it would be in coverage that at least alluded to the [increasing risk of heatwaves](#) becoming longer, more frequent and more intense under climate breakdown.

We found two distinct themes in visual coverage. The first used images of “fun in the sun” that depicted heatwaves as something enjoyable. In all four countries, the majority of these images showed people having a good time in or by water. This was particularly prominent in the UK, perhaps saying something about how British culture narrates the experience of very hot weather in our historically mild climate.

The second theme we found was “the idea of heat”, depicted through red and orange colours, which are (in western cultures) commonly associated with heat or danger. People were largely absent from this visual discourse in photos such as generic stock photographs of thermometers against a blindingly hot sun. When people were pictured, they were depersonalised by silhouetting them against the sun so their faces were not visible.

Across all four countries, there was a mismatch between the text of the articles and the accompanying visuals. While the headlines and image captions proclaimed news of unprecedented heat, vulnerable people and even deaths, the photos featured were those “fun in the sun” holiday snaps.

This is problematic in two ways. First, by displacing concerns of vulnerability, it marginalises the experiences of those vulnerable to heatwaves: older people, young children and babies, people with pre-existing health conditions, and people living in poor-quality housing are all more at risk from extreme heat.

Second, there is a difference between northern Europeans looking forward to a “normal” period of sunny, settled, summer weather (I know – I wish for this after a long and often drearily rainy Devon winter) and articles which may, to a [greater](#) or lesser extent, appear to be welcoming the prospect of a much hotter, climate-changed future. Whether extreme heat events are visualised through photos of people on beaches or are excluding people completely, we are missing an opportunity to imagine a more resilient future.

News media can picture heatwave visuals differently, though. The Dutch outlet *Algemeen Dagblad* produced visual stories of the reality of living with extreme heat. When they pictured a young family, they weren’t queueing for an ice-cream on a benign sunny day, but at home in front of a fan, looking visibly uncomfortable.

Other pictures depicted the solutions many have called for, in images of an air-conditioned community space opened up to local, older residents to help them cope with the heat; and in a grey, concrete city thoroughfare given new life through an urban greening project, reducing the [urban heat island effect](#).

The recent coverage of the Indian subcontinent heatwave showed compelling visual portrayals of everyday life during a heatwave: struggling outdoor labourers, buckling roads, people seeking shade and water. All these images show that “fun in the sun” is not an inevitable way to illustrate extreme heat.

We want to be clear that this isn’t a call to the media to redact all images of people enjoying the beach on a hot day, but an overabundance of these types of images (especially attached to a news story about heatwave risks) tells only a limited part of the story.

Not everyone is having fun during heatwaves superpowered by climate breakdown – for vulnerable people they can be deadly. Fortunately, there are signs of progress as editors, journalists, suppliers of stock and editorial photography, and society more widely, start to think critically about the images used to visually represent extreme heat. News media and social scientists can work together to tell the full story of extreme weather.

- Saffron O’Neill is an associate professor in geography at the University of Exeter
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[Opinion](#)[Newspapers](#)

## Like a phone dropped in the North Sea, Vardy v Rooney is full of absolute gold

[Marina Hyde](#)



The lost mobile that could have explained it all, the jaw-dropping quotes, the battle of the outfits ... the only ones benefiting from this libel case are the rubberneckers



Fri 13 May 2022 08.59 EDT Last modified on Sat 14 May 2022 02.47 EDT

There are battles. There are libel battles. And then there is ... Wagnarok. Yesterday afternoon, several hours into her cross-examination in the high court, Rebekah Vardy returned from an emotional break in proceedings to observe from the witness box: "It's been a very long few days." Yeah, well. [Chat shit get banged.](#)

It was Rebekah's husband, Jamie Vardy, who first uttered that deathless adage, back in 2011 when he was playing non-league football, though weirdly he wasn't actually making a heavily ironic comment on Britain's libel laws. Spool forward to the present day, though, and we have to ask: which shit-chatter is getting banged in the high court? Is it defendant Coleen Rooney, against whom Rebekah chose – actually chose! – to bring this action, with Vardy's pretrial legal costs alone [estimated at £1m](#)? Or is the shit-chatter in fact the sender of messages including "[I] would love to leak those stories", and "I want paying for this"? Or, to put it much more iconically, is the shit-chatter ... Rebekah Vardy's account?

Whatever happens during both Coleen's cross-examination and the final judgment, the sheer volume of Vardy's dirty laundry that has been aired this week suggests the gavel has already come down in the court of public

opinion. I have yet to see a non-sarcastic #TeamVardy hashtag out there in the wild. This trial is now by far the worst thing Rebekah has ever bought (including the yellow latex dress for the 2018 TV Choice Awards).

Admittedly, proceedings have added several hilarious entries to the annals of quotable quotes. [The court heard](#) how Vardy declared in 2019: “Arguing with Coleen is like arguing with a pigeon. You can tell it that you are right and it is wrong, but it’s still going to shit in your hair.” So at one end of London’s Strand we have Nelson’s Column in Trafalgar Square, and at the other end we have Rebekah Vardy in the high court. Both are covered in pigeon shit: who wore it better?

Speaking of outfits, Coleen turned out for day two of the trial in a £32.99 Zara dress, arguably nailing the “mum-of-four-who-literally-hasn’t-got-time-for-this-bollocks” look. Rebekah, meanwhile, was in something vastly more expensive, having seemingly fallen for a stylist spiel along the lines of, “I’m thinking Jackie O, with top notes of Amal Clooney.” It must be said that Rebekah has not been fantastically advised by a number of people around her in recent times, from anyone who failed to discourage her from issuing proceedings, to the agent and close friend who somehow dropped the phone she had been ordered to retain [into the North Sea](#) during a boating excursion.

You know, the North Sea. Classic Wag holiday destination. This detail – merely one aspect of the Vardy team’s [full-spectrum data loss](#) – yielded another quote of the trial, with Rooney’s barrister, David Sherborne, observing deliberately obscurely that the phone “is now in Davy Jones’s locker”. Rebekah to the judge: “I’m sorry, I don’t know who Davy Jones is.” Oof. That horrendous-whitey moment when you think some guy called Davy Jones has somehow recovered the handset and cached it. Fortunately, perhaps, the phone remains somewhere beneath the waves, and is easily the most valuable North Sea resource since Brent crude.

So where did it all go wrong? If she leaked those stories, Rebekah’s key social miscalculation was to fail to realise that ever since Coleen was thrust into the limelight as an innocent schoolgirl – and promptly derided as Queen of the Chavs, and voted Britain’s Worst-Dressed Woman of 2004 by some snooty tabloid – she has always prized loyalty above almost anything else.

And, as you might expect from a proud Liverpool girl, she is not particularly crazy about the Sun. Anyone who cares to read the things Coleen has said down the decades would be left in absolutely no doubt as to her intense loyalty to family and friends, most of whom she goes back to childhood with. She likes fashion, yes – but she likes her mates and her family immeasurably more (total mensch, if we’re honest).

All this is the background to her now-legendary detective investigation – an attempt to prove that Vardy had betrayed a code that profoundly mattered. And there WAS a sisterly code among the Wags, back in the peak era of the 2006 World Cup. Contrary to the way a lot of the papers portrayed it, there wasn’t catfighting and one-upmanship among the wives and girlfriends of the England team back in [those era-defining Baden-Baden days](#). As Coleen noted furiously soon after: “It makes a better story to say there were divisions in the camp.”

The Wags were monstered back then, of course, in another preposterous outbreak of tabloid snootiness. And the unwitting irony inherent in much of their monstering of Rebekah this week is that she is exactly what the papers want: the sort of person who might flog them unpleasant stories. If only there were literally decades of evidence that that would turn out to be a devil’s bargain.

As for the lessons to be drawn from this epic rubberneckers’ ball … if memory serves, I’ve written before about the wisdom or otherwise of talking to the press. Forgive the disloyalty to my profession, but my cast-iron advice to any friend who asks is always: don’t. The experience is utterly asymmetric. It will be an infinitely bigger deal to you than it will be to them, and more often than not turns out in unfortunate ways you didn’t predict.

What I haven’t said is that this advice was really inspired by some once given to me by a very good lawyer and very good friend. And that advice was: never litigate. Never, never litigate, unless it is absolutely unavoidable. Unless we’re talking about some serious crime, which is obviously different, then just don’t go to court. Do anything to avoid it. It is totally consuming, and it weighs on you in a way it never could for all the lawyers making money off it (and off you). In the months and even years you wait for your case to be heard, it’ll be the first thing you think about when you wake up,

and the last thing on your mind when you go to bed at night. In 99 out of 100 instances, the best advice is to leave it, and get on with living your life.

Anyway, I merely pass it on. As [Rebekah Vardy](#) is perhaps now discovering, more than two and a half years after Coleen's fabled Instagram post, very few things in this life are more horrifyingly overrated than "having your day in court".

Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

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[\*\*OpinionNorthern Ireland\*\*](#)

## **Johnson blames today's Brexit woes on Brussels – that's a load of old bull**

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



The prime minister claims trouble in Northern Ireland is the EU's fault. There's an impolite word for that



Parliament Buildings, the seat of the Northern Ireland assembly, in Belfast, Northern Ireland, May 2022. Photograph: Paul Faith/AFP/Getty Images

Fri 13 May 2022 12.31 EDT Last modified on Sat 14 May 2022 05.04 EDT

It's taken a while, but I've finally spotted one of those "Brexit opportunities" cited in the job title of the cabinet minister Jacob Rees-Mogg. Thanks to the UK's departure from the [European Union](#), the British government has gifted us with an apparently bottomless supply of industrial-strength bullshit.

I use the term in the sense distilled by the eminent philosopher Harry G Frankfurt, whose bestselling treatise, [On Bullshit](#), defined it as speech intended to persuade without regard for truth. While your basic liar cares about the truth enough to hide it, the pedlar of bullshit is unbothered whether their words are true or false, so long as the listener is persuaded. Insouciance towards the facts is the essential trait. The Brexit project was always rich in bullshit – the £350m on the side of the bus could have come straight from Frankfurt's essay – so it's hardly a surprise that this government of Brexiters has become a world-beating producer of the stuff.

Its latest batch relates to the Northern Ireland protocol, which the government says is "[fundamentally undermining](#)" the Good Friday agreement that brought peace to the province after three decades of

murderous war. The Democratic Unionist party, which campaigned hard for leave in 2016 – even as Northern Ireland voted to remain by 56% to 44% – so despises the protocol, it refuses to take up its place in Belfast’s devolved institutions until it’s gone. The Northern Ireland minister Conor Burns waves before the cameras a thick ream of documents showing the sheer volume of paperwork the protocol demands simply to move goods between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Who, the unsuspecting viewer wonders, could be responsible for such a heinous measure? Which authority, either wicked or stupid, imposed on Boris Johnson and his government a protocol that is making business impossible, thwarting self-rule in Northern Ireland and jeopardising peace?

The answer, of course, is Boris Johnson and his government. As he and his ministers know, none of this was forced on them by “a foreign power”, as Rees-Mogg puts it. On the contrary, the protocol was devised, praised and then passed into law by Johnson, his ministers and his MPs. They want to blame the Europeans, pretending it’s beastly Brussels that is so heedless of Northern Ireland and its exceptionally delicate position – but this is entirely on them.

They’re hoping most of us will have forgotten how this situation arose; and it’s quite true that Britons do have an ignoble tendency towards forgetfulness when it comes to Ireland. But it’s not that long ago. Once the Conservative party was bent on a hard Brexit that took the UK out of both the customs union and single market, that meant there would have to be a border marking those bodies’ outer frontier.

Most could see that that border could not be on the island of Ireland, separating the Republic from the north, without reopening the wounds of the Troubles. That left only one option: Northern Ireland would retain some of the old European arrangements, and the border would run down the Irish Sea. But that would distinguish Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK, striking directly at unionism’s defining creed: that Northern Ireland and Britain are one.

No British prime minister would do such a thing, said Theresa May. “Under no circumstances,” agreed Johnson in July 2019. But a few months later, he

broke that promise. He did it so he could get a deal with the EU, claim it was “oven ready” and win a general election on that basis. Which he duly did.

Even at the time, the government’s own [official documents](#) showed how this new bargain would entail the very border checks that Johnson now describes as unacceptable. One senior mandarin had patiently spelled it all out to the prime minister, in detail. But he couldn’t have cared less, that official tells me. All that mattered was being able to say a deal had been done. Johnson thought he would deal with the consequences later. After all, it was only Northern Ireland. And so here we are.

Ah, but the problem is not the protocol itself, say ministers. It’s all about the way Brussels is *implementing* it. That doesn’t wash: any border down the Irish Sea, however softly handled or lightly enforced, would offend that defining article of unionist faith. But let’s say light-touch implementation would help and was all the UK government wanted. If that were true, then London would be engaged in the slow, patient work of diplomacy and talks, “grinding through the technicalities”, as one former negotiator puts it. But it has not been doing that. Instead of welcoming moves from the other side, it has preferred grandstanding, threatening to blow the whole thing up. Now it says it will “[disapply](#)” the protocol altogether, refusing to honour what it agreed.

That would, as May has argued, destroy Britain’s international reputation at a stroke: the UK would be a rogue state, its signature worthless. It would also prompt EU retaliation, triggering a trade war that would cost UK businesses dear, just as the country is in the grip of a cost-of-living crisis.

From the start, this issue has involved magical thinking: remember the mythical “alternative arrangements” that would somehow make the border vanish into thin air? Six years after the referendum, the Brexit bullshit keeps coming. Today alone, [Rees-Mogg suggested](#) one of the benefits of Brexit was the ability to tackle the shortage of HGV drivers – when it was Brexit that made that shortage [so much worse](#). He said “The economic benefits of Brexit are … coming through the whole time,” when the dogs on the street know [Brexit has hit UK trade hard](#), as putting up barriers between us and our biggest, nearest market was always going to. Rees-Mogg was touring the broadcast studios to announce a new drive to [cut 90,000 civil service jobs](#) –

apparently hoping we'd forget that not long ago the government was telling us it needed to [hire 50,000 more people](#) to process, you guessed it, Brexit paperwork.

Back when we were in the EU, it was butter mountains and wine lakes we had to contend with. Now that we're on the outside, we face a far uglier blot on the national landscape: a vast and growing heap of bullshit. And it stinks.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist
  - He will join a Guardian Live online event on 21 June to discuss the life of Rudolf Vrba, a young man who escaped Auschwitz and helped save over 200,000 lives. Book tickets [here](#)
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## 2022.05.14 - Around the world

- [North Korea Kim Jong-un declares Covid outbreak a ‘great disaster’](#)
- [New Zealand Prime minister Jacinda Ardern tests positive for Covid-19](#)
- [India At least 27 dead after fire rips through Delhi office block](#)
- [Abortion Demonstrators across the US protest expected reversal of Roe v Wade](#)

## North Korea

# North Korea: Kim Jong-un declares Covid outbreak a ‘great disaster’

Pyongyang reports 21 more deaths as it scrambles to slow spread of the virus across unvaccinated population



A worker disinfects a general store in Pyongyang. North Korea is grappling with its first Covid outbreak. Photograph: Jon Chol Jin/AP

*Staff and agencies*

Fri 13 May 2022 21.12 EDTFirst published on Fri 13 May 2022 20.22 EDT

North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, has declared the country’s first Covid-19 outbreak a “great disaster” as it reported 21 more deaths.

State media said 174,440 people were newly found with fever symptoms on Friday alone as the country scrambles to slow the spread of Covid-19 across its unvaccinated population.

North Korea said on Saturday that a total of 27 people have died and 524,440 fell ill amid a rapid spread of fever since late April. It said 280,810 people remain in quarantine.

State media did not specifically say how many of the fever cases and deaths were confirmed as Covid-19 cases.

During a meeting on anti-virus strategies on Saturday, Kim described the outbreak as a historically “huge disruption” and called for unity between the government and people to stabilise the outbreak as quickly as possible.

The meeting discussed “promptly distributing emergency drugs” and introducing “scientific treatment tactics and treatment methods for different patients, including those with special constitutions”, KCNA reported.

Kim said he had “faith that we can overcome this malicious infectious disease within the shortest period possible,” the report added.

The country imposed [nationwide lockdowns on Thursday](#) after confirming its first Covid-19 infections since the start of the pandemic.

Kim said they would be following the Chinese model of virus prevention.

“We should take lessons from the experiences and fruitful achievements in preventing virus of the China’s Communist party and its people,” he said.

State media said tests of virus samples collected Sunday from an unspecified number of people with fevers in the country’s capital, Pyongyang, confirmed they were infected with the Omicron variant. The country has so far officially confirmed one death as linked to an Omicron infection.

Experts say a failure to control the spread of Covid could have devastating consequences in North Korea, considering the country’s poor healthcare system and that its 26 million people are largely unvaccinated.

North Korea has so far shunned offers of Covid vaccines from China and Russia, and via the World Health Organization’s Covax scheme, apparently because administering the jabs would require outside monitoring.

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said the regime's public acknowledgment of coronavirus cases meant "the public health situation must be serious".

*With Reuters, Associated Press and Agence France-Presse*

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[The Observer](#)[New Zealand](#)

# New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Ardern tests positive for Covid-19

The PM must isolate for a week and will miss a milestone week for her government as it launches its budget and emissions reduction plan



New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Ardern has tested positive for Covid-19. Photograph: Fiona Goodall/Getty Images

*Guardian staff*

Fri 13 May 2022 19.25 EDT Last modified on Sat 14 May 2022 14.18 EDT

The New Zealand prime minister, [Jacinda Ardern](#), has tested positive for Covid-19 and will have to isolate for another week in what she called a “very Kiwi experience”.

Days after announcing the relaxation of the [country’s tight border controls](#), Ardern developed symptoms on Friday evening and returned a positive test

before another positive result from a rapid antigen test on Saturday morning, her office said in a statement. Her symptoms are said to be moderate.

Her partner, Clarke Gayford, [tested positive last Sunday](#) and Ardern has been in quarantine since then.

She will have to isolate until the morning of Saturday 21 May and will not be in parliament in the coming week when her government has two set-piece events in the emissions reduction plan on Monday and the budget on Thursday.

Ardern will carry out some duties remotely but her deputy, Grant Robertson, will take the regular post-cabinet press conference on Monday.

“This is a milestone week for the government and I’m gutted I can’t be there for it,” Ardern said.

“Our emissions reduction plan sets the path to achieve our carbon zero goal and the budget addresses the long-term future and security of New Zealand’s health system.

“But as I said earlier in the week, isolating with Covid-19 is a very Kiwi experience this year and my family is no different.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/new-zealand-prime-minister-jacinda-ardern-tests-positive-for-covid-19>

[\*\*The ObserverIndia\*\*](#)

## **India: 27 people killed after fire rips through Delhi office block**

Dozens injured as official says building had no fire exit and most died ‘due to asphyxiation’

India: building fire in Delhi kills at least 27 people – video

*Agencies*

Sat 14 May 2022 02.42 EDTFirst published on Fri 13 May 2022 22.26 EDT

At least 27 people have died and dozens more were injured in a huge fire in a commercial building in India’s capital, [Delhi](#).

The large fire broke out at the four-storey building near a railway station in the western suburb of Mundka in the late afternoon on Friday, but its cause was not immediately clear.

On Saturday, police said they had arrested two owners of the company. The police registered a case of culpable homicide not amounting to murder and a criminal conspiracy that is punishable with life imprisonment or 10 years in jail.

Television footage showed smoke billowing out of the windows of the building, with firefighters helping those trapped in the upper floors to escape as hundreds watched. More than 30 fire trucks were at the scene, along with ambulances.

“Twenty-seven charred bodies were recovered from the building and almost two dozen injured are undergoing treatment,” said Satpal Bharadwaj, who was in charge of operations for the Delhi fire service at the scene.

The fire broke out in the first floor of the building that houses the office of a surveillance camera manufacturing company, police said.

The building had no clearance from the fire department and it was not equipped with fire safety equipment like extinguishers, said Atul Garg, the director of the Delhi fire service.

I happened to pass by the fire that took place near Mundka metro station, Delhi. Was heartbroken to see this. Can only imagine the people who suffered because of it. Sending prayers ☺ [#delhifire](#) [#Mundka](#) [pic.twitter.com/8O8apeHK0y](https://pic.twitter.com/8O8apeHK0y)

— Varsha Nambiyaaaaar (@VarNambiar) [May 13, 2022](#)

Bharadwaj said there were about 70 people in the building when the blaze erupted.

“There was no fire exit and most of the people died due to asphyxiation,” Bharadwaj said, adding that more would be known after autopsies could be conducted.

The deputy chief fire officer, Sunil Choudhary, said the number of injured stood at “more than 25 people”. Choudhary added that some had jumped from the burning building.

Broadcaster NDTV, meanwhile, reported that more than 40 people had sustained burns and were hospitalised.



People look on from the street at the charred remains of the Delhi office building. Photograph: Reuters

Amit Mahajan, whose cousin and nephew were missing after the fire, said they had been at the building to “train workers”.

“I have visited all the nearby hospitals but there is no trace of them. We are not sure about their safety or whereabouts,” he said.

Fires are common in [India](#) due to poor building practices, overcrowding and a lack of adherence to safety regulations.

The Indian capital of 20 million people is currently suffering through a heatwave, with temperatures of up to 46C recorded in some places.

The prime minister, Narendra Modi, offered condolences on Twitter.

“Extremely saddened by the loss of lives due to a tragic fire in Delhi. My thoughts are with the bereaved families. I wish the injured a speedy recovery,” Modi said.

The Delhi chief minister, Arvind Kejriwal, tweeted: “Shocked and pained to know abt this tragic incident. I am constantly in touch [with] officers. Our

brave firemen are trying their best to control the fire and save lives.”

*With Agence France-Presse, Associated Press and Reuters*

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/14/india-27-people-killed-after-fires-ripped-through-delhi-office-block>

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## [Protest](#)

# Demonstrators across the US protest expected reversal of Roe v Wade

Bans Off Our Bodies marches follow the Senate's failure to pass legislation protecting the right to an abortion



Protesters outside the house of Samuel Alito in Alexandria, Virginia, Monday. Photograph: Kent Nishimura/EPA

*Guardian staff*

Sat 14 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 14 May 2022 02.02 EDT

With the US supreme court apparently poised to overturn the 1973 landmark decision which made abortion legal, hundreds of thousands of people across America are planning to take to the streets to protest the looming decision.

A coalition of groups such as [Planned Parenthood](#), [UltraViolet](#), [MoveOn](#) and the [Women's March](#) are organizing Saturday's demonstrations, whose

rallying cry is “Bans Off Our Bodies”. More than 370 protests are planned, including in Washington DC, New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

The demonstrations come after the leak on 2 May of a draft opinion showing five conservatives on the nine-justice supreme court had voted to reverse their predecessors’ ruling in [Roe v Wade](#) nearly 50 years ago.

Unless the provisional ruling is changed substantially before becoming final, abortion would be outlawed essentially immediately in more than half of US states. People in those 26 states hostile to abortion would be forced to either travel hundreds of miles to a clinic in a state where terminating a pregnancy is legal or seek to self-administer an abortion through medication from grassroots or illicit groups.

While conservatives have celebrated the leak ruling, liberals have objected vociferously, gathering outside the supreme court building in Washington DC as well as the homes of some of the conservative justices to signal their displeasure.

Those rallies – generally peaceful – have been relatively small, while Saturday’s planned events will almost certainly be compared to the 2017 Women’s March the day after Donald Trump was inaugurated as president, which drew an estimated 3 million to 4 million participants across the US.

The “Bans Off Our Bodies” gatherings will take place three days after Democrats in the US Senate on Wednesday made a largely symbolic effort to advance legislation that would codify the right to an abortion into federal law. All 50 Republicans and one conservative-aligned Democrat – West Virginia’s Joe Manchin – voted against the measure, leaving it well short of the 60 votes necessary for it to advance.

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## Headlines tuesday 10 may 2022

- [Live Queen's speech: Prince Charles to set out government's plans at state opening of parliament](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: planning failures causing Russian military struggles, says UK](#)
- [Brexit Liz Truss 'preparing to scrap parts of Northern Ireland protocol'](#)
- [South Korea Claims of shamans and curses as president shuns official residence](#)
- [Keir Starmer PM should not have to copy any Labour resignation, says minister](#)

[Skip to key events](#)

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

## Queen's speech proposals show Johnson 'bereft of ideas or purpose', says Starmer – as it happened

This live blog is now closed. You can read our latest stories on the Queen's speech below:

- [Proposals show Boris Johnson is out of ideas, says Labour](#)
- [Queen's speech: what was in it and what it means](#)
- [Queen's speech won't help workers, but good for bad bosses, say unions](#)
- [Irish PM urges Johnson to avoid 'unilateral action' over NI protocol](#)
- [Green groups' anger over public order bill](#)
- [Analysis: Queen 'very much in charge' despite Charles's speech](#)
- [Tesco chairman calls for windfall tax on energy companies](#)

Updated 5d ago

*Andrew Sparrow*

Tue 10 May 2022 13.40 EDTFirst published on Tue 10 May 2022 03.54 EDT



Boris Johnson speaking in the House of Commons after the Queen's speech  
Photograph: Reuters

[Andrew Sparrow](#)

Tue 10 May 2022 13.40 EDTFirst published on Tue 10 May 2022 03.54 EDT

## Key events

- [5d agoAfternoon summary](#)
- [5d agoTheresa May says it would be mistake for government to legislate to ditch parts of Northern Ireland protocol](#)
- [5d agoTreasury quashes suggestion from PM that announcement coming shortly about help for people with cost of living](#)
- [5d agoJohnson says he and chancellor to say more about help for people with cost of living 'in the days to come'](#)
- [5d agoStarmer says UK needs 'government of the moment'](#)
- [5d agoStarmer says Queen's speech shows government is 'bereft of ideas'](#)
- [5d agoMPs debate Queen's speech](#)

Show key events only

## Live feed

Show key events only

From 5d ago

10.14

### **Starmer says Queen's speech shows government is 'bereft of ideas'**

Starmer says Britain can do more than just “get [Brexit](#) done”.

But the country needs more than what this government is offering.

He says the Queen’s speech was “thin” and “bereft of ideas or purpose, without a guiding principle, or a roadmap for delivery”.

He says he would like to think the worst is over.

But the country is “staring down the barrel of something we haven’t seen in decades - a stagflation crisis [rising inflation and rising unemployment].”

The government should be introducing a windfall tax, he says.

*UPDATE:* Starmer said:

As we emerge from the pandemic, find a new place in the world outside the European Union and transition to a carbon neutral economy, our country faces great challenges.

But, at the same time, great opportunities are within our reach.

We can rebuild stronger, learning where our society and our services need more resilience.

We can do more than just get Brexit done, we can ensure Britain is in the best position to thrive outside of the European Union.

And we can lead the world in zero carbon industries, generating high skill, high wage jobs across our country.

But for that to happen we need a government of the moment with ideas that meet the aspirations of the British public.

This thin address, bereft of ideas or purpose, without a guiding principle or a roadmap for delivery, shows just how far this government is from that.

Too out of touch to meet the challenges of the moment.

Too tired to grasp the opportunities of the future.

Their time has passed.

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Updated at 12.19 EDT

[5d ago](#)[13.04](#)

## Afternoon summary

- [Keir Starmer said Boris Johnson's government was “bereft of ideas or purpose” after a Queen’s speech that included bills to overhaul the planning system and rewrite human rights law, but few new measures to tackle the cost of living crisis.](#)
- The Treasury has quashed a suggestion from Johnson that a significant government announcement about extra help for people with the cost of living is due imminently. (See [4.05pm](#).)

Boris Johnson bereft of ideas or purpose, says Keir Starmer after Queen's speech – video

- **The European Union has said renegotiation of the Northern Ireland protocol is “not an option”.** In [a statement](#) issued this afternoon **Maroš Šefčovič**, the vice-president of the European Commission, said:

The protocol, as a cornerstone of the withdrawal agreement, is an international agreement. Its renegotiation is not an option. The European Union is united in this position.

Šefčovič said the EU was open to negotiating with the UK on how the protocol was implemented, but, for these talks to succeed, that would require “the UK government to show the same level of determination and creativity [as the EU]”. He also said that if the UK were to take “unilateral action” – ie, to abandon parts of the protocol – this would make the situation more difficult. He said:

Only joint solutions will work. Unilateral action by the UK would only make our work on possible solutions more difficult.

Earlier **Johnson** refused to give his Irish counterpart, **Micheál Martin**, an assurance that the UK will not unilaterally abandon the protocol. (See [11.20am](#).) In fact, the Queen’s speech contained a strong hint that legislation that would allow the protocol to be ditched is being prepared behind the scenes. (See [12.11am](#).) In the Commons a few minutes ago **Sir Jeffrey Donaldson**, the DUP leader, said he intended to stay as an MP, instead of leaving parliament to take up his seat in the Northern Ireland assembly (he was elected last week), until the protocol issue is resolved.

- [\*\*Rishi Sunak has moved to weaken regulation of financial services brought in after the 2008 crash amid fears he is aiming to make London into a post-Brexit “Singapore-on-Thames” pushed by Tory donors.\*\*](#)

- [Environmental campaign groups have hit out at the “draconian” protest crackdown bill announced in the Queen’s speech.](#)
- [Ports and unions have cast doubt on the viability of legislation announced in the Queen’s Speech to ensure P&O Ferries and other ferry operators pay seafarers the minimum wage.](#)
- [The government’s proposed ban on conversion practices intended to change people’s sexuality will in fact only fully cover under-18s, Downing Street has confirmed, saying it had to “strike the right balance” on outlawing the much-condemned practice.](#)
- [Detectives investigating Keir Starmer’s alleged breach of lockdown rules are considering interviewing the Labour leader face to face, with his Beergate agony likely to last at least a month before a decision on a fine is made.](#)



The Prince of Wales reading the Queen's speech at the state opening of parliament. Photograph: Ben Stansall/PA

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Updated at 13.40 EDT

[5d ago](#) [12.17](#)

**Sadiq Khan**, the Labour mayor of London, has joined Theresa May, the Conservative former prime minister (see [4.36pm](#)), in welcoming the inclusion of the renters reform bill in the Queen's speech. It will abolish so-called "no fault" section 21 evictions. Khan's office said:

The mayor welcomes the government's decision to finally introduce long-promised legislation to ban section 21 'no fault' evictions. This commitment is testament to the dogged work of tenants and campaigners who have been waiting three long years for ministers to honour their previous promises.

However, the government should have used the Queen's speech to address the eye-watering costs of renting by giving the mayor powers to introduce a two-year rent freeze in London, as a first step towards delivering rent controls that would make renting more affordable.

**Shelter** welcomed this bill and the social housing regulation bill, which will increase the powers of the regulator of social housing. Polly Neate, the charity's chief executive, said:

Today's Queen's Speech shows the government has listened to the voices of renters, who have been fighting for a long time to be heard. For years private renters have said they need more security, so they don't have to live in constant fear of a no-fault eviction. And for years social renters have tirelessly campaigned to be taken seriously when they say something is wrong. It's been five years since the fire at Grenfell Tower, and we're now one step further on the road to justice.

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Updated at 12.29 EDT

[5d ago](#)[12.10](#)

These are from **Jayne Ozanne**, founder of the Ban Conversion Therapy coalition, on the watered-down plans for a bill banning conversion practices in the Queen's speech. (See [2.06pm](#).)

My response to [#QueensSpeech](#) statement & associated notes:

"Whilst I'm naturally relieved to see that the government are still committed to banning "conversion therapy", it is of great concern that they are creating so many loopholes and leaving so many people unprotected." 1/3 [pic.twitter.com/2i6KiNmPCm](https://pic.twitter.com/2i6KiNmPCm)

— Jayne Ozanne  (@JayneOzanne) [May 10, 2022](#)

"..The government's own research shows that trans people are twice as likely to be offered "conversion therapy" and it is an utter disgrace that they have purposefully omitted them from the ban. The government's duty is to protect the most vulnerable from abuse..." 2/3

— Jayne Ozanne  (@JayneOzanne) [May 10, 2022](#)

...not to side with the abusers. By creating a loophole of consent, the government continues to ignore the advice of legal experts and survivors like myself, who know that this will continue to put many lives at risk." 3/3

— Jayne Ozanne  (@JayneOzanne) [May 10, 2022](#)

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[5d ago](#)[12.01](#)



Fiona Harvey

Green campaigners were dismayed at the lack of action on insulation in the Queen's speech, which they said was a way to bring down energy bills quickly for hard-hit households, and by the abandonment of animal welfare measures.

Juliet Phillips, of the **E3G** thinktank, praised the government's move to a new "market mechanism" that would encourage the take-up of heat pumps. She said:

Clean, efficient electric heat pumps have a critical role to play in helping UK families get off expensive fossil gas. The proposed low-carbon mandate on heating appliance manufacturers could spur innovation and investment in UK heat pump manufacturing.

This could bring new green jobs to the UK, she added.

But **Greenpeace**'s head of politics, Rebecca Newsom, was more scathing, accusing the government of giving up on the cost of living crisis. She said:

With this Queen's Speech Boris Johnson is throwing in the towel on some of the biggest challenges our country faces and pandering instead to the whims of his backbenchers. There's not a single extra penny of support for households struggling with energy bills and no serious plan to fix our heat-wasting homes and get the country off fossil gas.

Katie White, executive director of advocacy and campaigns at WWF, said:

*To level up the UK while levelling down energy bills, we cannot afford for the environment to be an afterthought, but today the UK government has failed to set out the transformative changes that are needed to address the food and fuel crises, build long-term resilience, deliver on net zero and restore nature.*

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Updated at 12.33 EDT

[5d ago](#)11.53

This is from **Pat McFadden**, the shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, on the Treasury briefing saying there are no plans for an imminent announcement about helping people with the cost of living, as Boris Johnson implied. (See [4.05pm](#)). McFadden said:

Families need a government with a plan for the cost of living crisis and a plan for economic growth. Instead, we've got a government devoid of ideas, and a chancellor and prime minister who can't even agree on the emergency budget the country sorely needs.

Every day this government chooses not to act, working people suffer, and we get one step further into an economic trap with low growth, low wages, and high taxes.

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[5d ago](#)[11.47](#)

**Ed Davey**, the Lib Dem leader, is speaking in the debate now. He says the Lib Dems want an emergency cut in VAT.

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[5d ago](#)[11.45](#)

**Theresa May says it would be mistake for government to legislate to ditch parts of Northern Ireland protocol**

On [Northern Ireland](#), **May** says there was no reference in the Queen's speech to a Northern Ireland protocol bill.

She says a bill of the kind the government is said to be considering, giving it the power to ditch parts of the protocol (see [12.11pm](#)), would not be a good idea. She goes on:

I think the government needs to consider not just the immediate issues, but also the wider sense of what such a move would say about the United Kingdom and its willingness to abide by treaties which it has signed.

**Sir Jeffrey Donaldson**, the DUP leader, says the Northern [Ireland](#) protocol has to be dealt with.

**May** says she put forward a [Brexit](#) plan that would have avoided new checks at the Northern Ireland/Great Britain border. But the DUP opposed that plan, she says.

She also says she is disappointed there is no employment bill in the Queen's speech. That would have allowed the government to legislate to allow waiters and waitresses to keep their tips.

And she says she is disappointed the government is not legislating to set up [an independent public advocate](#) - something the Tories promised in their 2017 manifesto.

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Updated at 11.56 EDT

[5d ago](#)[11.36](#)

After backbench speeches from Sir Peter Bottomley and Meg Hillier, **Theresa May** the former prime minister is speaking now.

She says she is glad the government now seems to be addressing the problem of no-fault evictions. She says her government wanted to address this.

But she says she is concerned by reports that Michael Gove, the levelling up secretary, favours letting people in a street vote to decide whether a housing application in their street should be allowed. She says she can see that plan backfiring.

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Updated at 11.49 EDT

[5d ago](#)[11.10](#)

**Lewis Goodall** from Newsnight says the claim from Boris Johnson that his Rwanda asylum plan is just a rehash of a New Labour proposal (see [3.39pm](#)) is highly misleading.

Boris Johnson repeats the claim that the Rwanda plan was originally an idea of the Blair government. This isn't quite right- the ideas were different. The Blair Home Office explored the idea of a processing centre in Tanzania. The idea was to process... <https://t.co/eK7ua93OCE>

— Lewis Goodall (@lewis\_goodall) [May 10, 2022](#)

...asylum applications closer to their country of origin. If their applications were accepted they would then come to the UK. There were lots of applications from Somalia at the time and the idea was primarily to deal with these applications. If failed, they'd be turned back...

— Lewis Goodall (@lewis\_goodall) [May 10, 2022](#)

...Likewise if some applications failed in Britain, they'd have been sent to the Tanzanian camp. This then was much more limited than the current government's scheme which would include sending people who theoretically would gain asylum in the UK...

— Lewis Goodall (@lewis\_goodall) [May 10, 2022](#)

...to Rwanda, to live, ie Britain discharging some of its refugee obligations to Rwanda. The Johnson government's plan is not just for processing.

Blair at the time made clear it was quite a modest proposal, only £4m on offer. Even that threatened to find itself bogged...

— Lewis Goodall (@lewis\_goodall) [May 10, 2022](#)

...down in legal action and it never went anywhere.

— Lewis Goodall (@lewis\_goodall) [May 10, 2022](#)

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[5d ago](#)[11.05](#)

## Treasury quashes suggestion from PM that announcement coming shortly about help for people with cost of living

This is from my colleague **Heather Stewart**, confirming that when Boris Johnson said in his speech that the government would be saying more about helping people with the cost of living in the days to come (see [3.32pm](#)), he almost certainly meant months not days.

Treasury clear they won't be taking action until we know where the energy cap will land in the autumn.

That's likely to be August: seems like a stretch to describe three months' time as "the days to come"!

— Heather Stewart (@GuardianHeather) [May 10, 2022](#)

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Updated at 11.52 EDT

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[Skip to key events](#)  
[Ukraine crisis live](#)[Ukraine](#)

# The number of civilians killed in Ukraine since the beginning of the war is ‘thousands higher’ than official figures, UN says – as it happened

This blog has now closed. You can find our [latest coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war in our new live blog](#)

Updated 4d ago

*Samantha Lock (now); Maanvi Singh, Joanna Walters, Léonie Chao-Fong and Martin Belam (earlier)*

Wed 11 May 2022 00.38 EDTFirst published on Tue 10 May 2022 01.36 EDT



A shopping mall destroyed by Russian rocket strikes in Odesa. Photograph: Ukrinform/REX/Shutterstock

*Samantha Lock (now); Maanvi Singh, Joanna Walters, Léonie Chao-Fong and Martin Belam (earlier)*

Wed 11 May 2022 00.38 EDTFirst published on Tue 10 May 2022 01.36 EDT

## Key events

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- [5d ago Summary](#)

Show key events only

## Live feed

Show key events only

From 4d ago

[17.35](#)

## Ukrainian forces retake villages in Kharkiv, Zelenskiy says

In his address, Zelenskiy also emphasized news that Ukrainian forces have retaken villages in the Kharkiv region, which could signal a new phase in the war. He also cautioned against expecting “certain victories”.

He said:

*The Armed Forces of our state provided us all with good news from the Kharkiv region. The occupiers are gradually being pushed away from Kharkiv.*

*I am grateful to all our defenders who are holding the line and demonstrating truly superhuman strength to drive out the army of invaders. Once the second most powerful army in the world.*

*But I also want to urge all our people, and especially those in the rear, not to spread excessive emotions. We shouldn't create an atmosphere of specific moral pressure, when certain victories are expected weekly and even daily.*

*The Armed Forces of Ukraine are doing everything to liberate our land and our people. To liberate all our cities - Kherson, Melitopol, Berdyansk, Mariupol and all others.*

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Updated at 23.30 EDT

4d ago00.38

Thank you for following our live coverage of the war in [Ukraine](#).

This blog has now closed. You can find our latest coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war in our new live blog in the link below.

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4d ago23.48

Here are some of the latest images to come across our newswires today out of [Ukraine](#).



A Ukrainian military medic sits in his room at a frontline field hospital near Popasna, Luhansk region, eastern Ukraine. Photograph: Roman Pilipey/EPA



A building destroyed in the city of Mariupol. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images



A car drives by destroyed houses in Sloboda-Kukharyvska, Ukraine.  
Photograph: Alexey Furman/Getty Images



A soldier enters in the hole of building recently bombed to inspect the damage in Malinovka, a village east of Zaporizhia. Photograph: Rick Mave/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

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4d ago **23.15**

## US House approves more than \$40bn more aid for Ukraine

The US House of Representatives has approved more than \$40bn in aid for [Ukraine](#).

The House passed the Ukraine spending bill by 368 to 57 on Tuesday evening, with every ‘no’ vote coming from Republicans, according to a Reuters report. The measure now heads to the Senate, which is expected to act quickly.

President [Joe Biden](#) had asked Congress to approve an additional \$33bn in aid for Ukraine two weeks ago, but lawmakers decided to increase the military and humanitarian funding.

“This bill will protect democracy, limit Russian aggression, and strengthen our own national security, while, most importantly, supporting Ukraine,” Democratic Representative Rosa DeLauro, who chairs the House Appropriations Committee, said.

Some Republicans opposed the bill, criticising Democrats for moving too quickly to send too many US taxpayer dollars abroad. Biden’s fellow Democrats narrowly control Congress, but the bill will need Republican votes to get through the Senate.

The package includes \$6bn for security assistance, including training, equipment, weapons and support; \$8.7bn to replenish stocks of US equipment sent to Ukraine, and \$3.9bn for European Command operations.

In addition, the legislation authorises a further \$11bn in Presidential Drawdown Authority, which allows the president to authorise the transfer of articles and services from US stocks without congressional approval in response to an emergency. Biden had asked for \$5bn.

It also authorizes \$4bn in Foreign Military Financing to provide support for Ukraine and other countries affected by the crisis.

The United States has so far rushed more than \$3.5bn worth of armaments to Ukraine since Russia invaded, including howitzers, anti-aircraft Stinger systems, anti-tank Javelin missiles, ammunition and recently-disclosed ‘Ghost’ drones.

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[4d ago](#)[23.05](#)

## Interim summary

- Ukrainian forces have retaken villages in the Kharkiv region, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said in his nightly address. The settlements of Cherkaski Tyshky, Ruski Tyshki, Borshchova and Slobozhanske were reportedly retaken from Russian forces in a recovery that could signal a new phase in the war, Zelenskiy added while cautioning against expecting “certain victories”.
- Ukraine’s vital Black Sea port of Odesa came under repeated missile attack, including from some hypersonic missiles. One person was killed and five were wounded [after seven Russian missiles hit a shopping centre and depot](#) on Monday, the military said.
- Belarus will deploy special operations troops in three areas near its southern border with Ukraine in response to a “growing threat” by the US and its allies, the armed forces said. The Belarusian president, Alexander Lukashenko, [said Moscow had agreed to help Minsk](#)

produce missiles to beef up its military capabilities and warned Belarus could “inflict unacceptable damage on the enemy”.

- **The number of civilians killed in Ukraine since the beginning of the war is “thousands higher” than official figures, the head of the UN’s human rights monitoring mission in the country said.** The official UN civilian death toll in Ukraine stands at 3,381, as well as 3,680 injured.
- **At least 100 civilians remain in Azovstal steelworks under heavy Russian fire in the southern Ukrainian city of Mariupol, an aide to the city’s mayor has said.** Russian forces have not reduced the intensity of their attacks on the plant, where civilians and the city’s last Ukrainian defenders are holed up, Petro Andryushchenko said. Ukraine’s Azov Regiment made a plea to the international community for help, saying its soldiers were trapped in “completely unsanitary conditions, with open wounds” and “without the necessary medication and even food”.
- **The UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, will visit Finland and Sweden on Wednesday, as the two Nordic countries consider whether to apply for Nato membership in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.** Downing Street said Johnson would have discussions on “broader security issues” during his visit to Finland followed by Sweden.
- **Ukrainian officials said they found the bodies of 44 civilians in the rubble of a building in the north-east of the country that was destroyed weeks ago.** The bodies were found in a five-storey building that collapsed in March in Izium, about 120km (75 miles) from the city of Kharkiv.

- US lawmakers in the House of Representatives approved more than \$40 billion more aid for [Ukraine](#) on Tuesday. The legislation is set to go the US Senate where it is expected to pass.
- Vladimir Putin will “turn to more drastic means” to achieve his objectives in Ukraine, [potentially triggering his resort to using a nuclear weapon](#), the US director of national intelligence has said. Avril Haines told the Senate armed services committee that the Russian president was “[preparing for prolonged conflict](#)” in Ukraine and that his strategic goals have “probably not changed”.
- The UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly on Tuesday for the Czech Republic to replace Russia on the world organisation’s leading human rights body following its suspension over allegations of horrific rights violations by Russian soldiers in [Ukraine](#).
- Ukraine has said it will suspend the flow of gas through a transit point which it says delivers almost a third of the fuel piped from Russia to Europe through [Ukraine](#), blaming Moscow for the move and saying it would move the flows elsewhere. GTSOU, which operates Ukraine’s gas system, said it would stop shipments via the Sokhranivka route from Wednesday, declaring “force majeure”, a clause invoked when a business is hit by something beyond its control, Reuters reports. Russia’s Gazprom said this would be “technologically impossible”.
- Four Russian regional governors reportedly resigned on Tuesday as the country braces for the impact of economic sanctions. The heads of the Tomsk, Saratov, Kirov and Mari El regions announced their

immediate departures from office, while the head of Ryazan region said he would not run for another term.

- **Ukraine has been voted through to the grand final in the Eurovision Song Contest.** At the end of their semi-final performance, the folk-rap group thanked viewers for supporting Ukraine amid the Russian invasion.
- **The number of Ukrainians who have fled their country since Russia's invasion on 24 February is approaching 6 million, according to the United Nations.**
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Updated at 23.08 EDT

4d ago**22.47**

**The UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly Tuesday for the Czech Republic to replace Russia on the world organisation's leading human rights body** following its suspension over allegations of horrific rights violations by Russian soldiers in [Ukraine](#).

In Tuesday's secret ballot vote, 180 of the General Assembly's 193 members deposited ballots. The result was 157 countries in favour of the Czech Republic and 23 abstentions, the Associated Press reports.

The assembly approved a US-initiated resolution on 7 April to suspend [Russia](#) from the Human Rights Council by a vote of 93-24 with 58 abstentions.

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[4d ago](#)[22.25](#)

## **44 civilian bodies found under rubble in Izyum, mayor says**

**Rescuers say they have found the bodies of 44 civilians under the rubble of a destroyed building in the eastern Ukrainian town of Izyum, now under Russian control.**

“The bodies of 44 civilians were found in Izyum under the rubble of a five-storey building which was destroyed by the occupiers in early March,” Oleg Synegubov, governor of the eastern Kharkiv region, said in an update via the Telegram messaging app.

Although fighting continues in the area, local media quoted him as saying residents had made the discovery while clearing the rubble from an area “where there is no shelling”, according to a report from Agence France-Presse.

Synegubov did not say who had removed the bodies nor how they had managed to do so.

Separately, the regional prosecutor’s office said it had opened an investigation into “the violation of the laws and customs of war” following the discovery, saying that 14 of the bodies had already been identified.

“According to the investigation, the Russian military systematically shelled Izyum between March 7-10. As a result, public infrastructure and residential buildings were destroyed,” it said on Telegram.

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[4d ago](#)[22.09](#)

## **Ukraine has been voted through to the grand final in the Eurovision Song Contest.**

At the end of their semi-final performance, the folk-rap group thanked everyone for supporting their country amid the Russian invasion.

The group had been unable to meet and rehearse regularly and were only able to get together about six weeks before Tuesday night's performance.

Radio 1 DJ Scott Mills, who was commentating for the BBC coverage of the semi-final, said: "Frontman Oleg joked that he doesn't think the lack of rehearsal time will affect their performance because they're very attractive men."

The Ukrainian act is the favourite to win.

The competition's producers previously announced Russia will no longer participate in this year's contest following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



Kalush Orchestra from Ukraine perform the song 'Stefania' during the first semi final of the 66th annual Eurovision Song Contest. Photograph: Alessandro Di Marco/EPA



The Ukrainian act Kalush Orchestra is the favourite to win. Photograph: Jussi Nukari/REX/Shutterstock



At the end of their semi-final performance, the folk-rap group thanked everyone for supporting their country amid the Russian invasion. Photograph: Alessandro Di Marco/EPA



Kalush Orchestra from Ukraine has been voted through to the grand final in the Eurovision Song Contest. Photograph: Yara Nardi/Reuters

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[4d ago](#)[21.25](#)

## Soldiers inside Azovstal in photos

As Russian troops continue their assault of the Azovstal steel works in Mariupol, a photo-journalist has revealed the extent of the suffering and life for those wounded who remain inside.

In a series of harrowing images, a photographer with the press office of the Azov Special Forces Regiment of the Ukrainian National Guard has unveiled the horror of the dimly-lit, makeshift ‘hospitals’ inside the plant where soldiers receive treatment, many for lost limbs.



An injured Ukrainian service member sits at a field hospital inside a bunker of the Azovstal Iron and Steel Works in Mariupol, Ukraine. Photograph: Azov Regiment Press Service/Reuters



A man makes a peace sign at the camera. Photograph: Azov Regiment Press Service/Reuters



An injured Ukrainian service member sits with his arm in a sling inside the Azovstal plant. Photograph: Azov Regiment Press Service/Reuters



An injured Ukrainian service member sits in the dimly-lit, makeshift hospital. Photograph: Azov Regiment Press Service/Reuters



A soldier with wounds inflicted on his face seen in bandages. Photograph: Azov Regiment Press Service/Reuters



Two men who each lost a leg from Russian assaults use crutches to stand. Photograph: Azov Regiment Press Service/Reuters



An injured Ukrainian service member receives medical assistance in a field hospital inside a bunker of the Azovstal plant. Photograph: Azov Regiment Press Service/Reuters



A man in a sling stares at the camera as Russian troops continue their assault of the Azovstal steel works in Mariupol. Photograph: Azov Regiment Press Service/Reuters

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4d ago20.52

A Ukrainian soldier inside the besieged **Azovstal steelworks in Mariupol** has spoken of the **harrowing conditions from inside the plant**, revealing the remaining defenders are “taking heavy casualties” as the Russians continue their assault.

Lieutenant Illya Samoilenko, a member of the Azov Regiment, told Sky News that the count of injured and fallen soldiers is “very high” and the servicemen deserve proper care.

Nobody has been expecting for us to hold against the Russians for so long but still we are fighting.

We’re taking heavy casualties, we’re taking losses.”

Ukrainian officials believe around 100 civilians remain at the site, but Samoilenko said that, as far as he knows, they were all evacuated.

He added that those at the site have “extremely limited resources,” and they believe that “every day may be our last”.

“The result of this might be... [being captured] by the enemy, which means death for us,” he added.

“Our life means nothing, but our fight means everything.”

Lieutenant Illya Samoilenko is still trapped in the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol and tells Sky News that “we’re taking heavy casualties” and “every day may be our last”.

Latest: <https://t.co/ZeprhNWkgn>

□ Sky 501, Virgin 602, Freeview 233 and YouTube  
[pic.twitter.com/mNfImNBkBz](https://pic.twitter.com/mNfImNBkBz)

— Sky News (@SkyNews) [May 10, 2022](#)

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[4d ago](#) [19.59](#)

**Ukrainian soldiers have shown the squalid conditions in which they are currently living while trapped and wounded holed up under the Azovstal steel works plant in besieged Mariupol.**

A series of photos were [published](#) on the Azov Regiment's Telegram channel early this morning, alongside a plea to the international community for help.

Увесь цивілізований світ має бачити умови, в яких перебувають поранені, скалічені захисники Маріуполя і діяти!

В повній антисанітарії, з відкритими ранами, перев'язаними не стерильними залишками бинтів, без необхідних медикаментів і навіть харчування.

 [pic.twitter.com/vmbOLjNJhy](https://pic.twitter.com/vmbOLjNJhy)

— АЗОВ (@Polk\_Azov) [May 10, 2022](#)

The whole civilised world must see the conditions in which the wounded, crippled defenders of Mariupol are and act!

In completely unsanitary conditions, with open wounds bandaged with non-sterile remnants of bandages, without the necessary medication and even food.

We call on the UN and the Red Cross to show their humanity and reaffirm the basic principles on which you were created by rescuing wounded people who are no longer combatants.

The servicemen you see in the photo and hundreds more at the Azovstal plant defended Ukraine and the entire civilised world with serious

injuries at the cost of their own health. Are Ukraine and the world community now unable to protect and take care of them?"

The regiment pleaded for the “immediate evacuation of wounded servicemen to Ukrainian-controlled territories” where they could be assisted and provided with proper care.

• Ми закликаємо ООН та Червоний Хрест показати свою гуманність та підтвердити основні засади, на яких вас створено, врятувавши поранених людей, що вже не є комбатантами.  
Військовослужбовці, яких ви бачите на фото, - з тяжкими пораненнями ціною власного здоров'я захищали Україну  
[pic.twitter.com/0zgP8LV40a](https://pic.twitter.com/0zgP8LV40a)

— АЗОВ (@Polk\_Azov) [May 10, 2022](#)

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[4d ago](#) [19.22](#)

Returning to the decisive issue of gas, **Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov visited gas-producing ally Algeria for talks on Tuesday** as [Europe](#) scrambles to secure alternative energy supplies.

Algeria is a major gas supplier to Europe, providing 11% of its imports, compared with 47% from [Russia](#), according to figures cited by the Associated Press.

Italy, Spain and other European Union member countries have looked to Algeria as they seek to cut their dependence on Russian oil and gas.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey [#Lavrov](#) holds talks with Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad [@Lamamra\\_dz](#) [#RussiaAlgeria](#) [#RussiaAfrica](#)  
[pic.twitter.com/jUb0o8anMS](https://pic.twitter.com/jUb0o8anMS)

— MFA Russia (@mfa\_russia) [May 10, 2022](#)

However, Algeria has repeatedly stressed that it lacks the capacity to meet such demand in the short-term.

“We very much appreciate Algeria’s considered, objective and balanced position on the Ukrainian question,” Lavrov told journalists after meeting his counterpart Ramtane Lamamra and President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

Asked about Algeria’s gas deliveries, Lavrov said that Russia, Algeria and other gas exporters “believe we should respect deals that have already been reached”.

Lavrov added that the two sides had discussed “bolstering military and technical cooperation”.

Fruitful meeting today with my colleague Minister Sergey Lavrov, within the framework of the regular political consultations, focused on our joint efforts to further bilateral & multilateral cooperation as 2022 and 2023 mark the 60th anniversary of their diplomatic relations.  
[pic.twitter.com/BsZ6FT0eId](https://pic.twitter.com/BsZ6FT0eId)

— Ramtane Lamamra | رمطان لعمامرة (@Lamamra\_dz) [May 10, 2022](#)

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[4d ago](#) [18.58](#)

**Footage from the chaos inflicted on Odesa after one person was killed and five injured when seven missiles hit a shopping centre and a depot in Odesa has emerged showing burning buildings and rescue workers sorting through debris.**

Air raid sirens sounded as the missiles interrupted a meeting between Charles Michel, president of the European Council, and the Ukrainian prime

minister, Denys Shmyhal, forcing them into a bomb shelter on Monday.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has urged the international community to take immediate steps to end a Russian blockade of his country's ports in order to allow wheat shipments and prevent a global food crisis.

Watch the footage below.

Buildings burn after seven Russian missiles hit Ukrainian port city – video

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[4d ago](#)[18.42](#)

**Ukraine has said it will suspend the flow of gas through a transit point which it says delivers almost a third of the fuel piped from Russia to Europe through Ukraine, blaming Moscow for the move and saying it would move the flows elsewhere.**

Ukraine has remained a major transit route for Russian gas to [Europe](#) even throughout Russia's war in Ukraine.

GTSOU, which operates Ukraine's gas system, said it would stop shipments via the Sokhranivka route from Wednesday, declaring "force majeure", a clause invoked when a business is hit by something beyond its control, Reuters reports.

But Gazprom, which has a monopoly on Russian gas exports by pipeline, said it was "technologically impossible" to shift all volumes to the Sudzha interconnection point further west, as GTSOU proposed.

GTSOU CEO Sergiy Makogon told Reuters that Russian occupying forces had started taking gas transiting through Ukraine and sending it to two Russia-backed separatist regions in the country's east. He did not cite evidence.

The company said it could not operate at the Novopskov gas compressor station due to “the interference of the occupying forces in technical processes”, adding it could temporarily shift the affected flow to the Sudzha physical interconnection point located in territory controlled by Ukraine.

Ukraine’s suspension of Russian natural gas flows through the Sokhranivka route should not have an impact on the domestic Ukrainian market, state energy firm Naftogaz head Yuriy Vitrenko told Reuters.

The state gas company in Moldova, a small nation on Ukraine’s western border, said it had not received any notice from GTSOU or Gazprom that supplies would be interrupted.

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## Northern Ireland

# Liz Truss ‘preparing to scrap parts of Northern Ireland protocol’

Foreign secretary reported to have asked officials to prepare draft that would put UK in breach of its treaty obligations



Such a move is expected to provoke legal retaliation by the EU were it to go ahead – including the bloc potentially imposing new tariffs. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

*[Jessica Elgot](#) and [Lisa O'Carroll](#)*

Tue 10 May 2022 09.13 EDTFirst published on Tue 10 May 2022 03.23 EDT

Liz Truss is reportedly preparing draft legislation that would unilaterally scrap key parts of the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol, removing the need for checks on goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

No bill was announced in the [Queen's speech on Tuesday](#) but the foreign secretary is reported to have asked officials to prepare the draft, which would put the UK in breach of its treaty obligations.

As well as scrapping checks, the draft legislation would also take away powers of the European court of justice and remove all requirement for Northern Irish businesses to follow EU regulations.

A government source confirmed Truss intended to move unilaterally to prepare to change parts of the protocol but denied the UK government had given up on negotiation. Truss is understood to have formed the view that the UK cannot wait for negotiations to conclude before preparing to act unilaterally, given the [election results in Northern Ireland](#) over the weekend.

Senior UK sources emphasised that stability in Northern Ireland was at stake with the glacial pace of talks and while the EU has made clear that its mandate is not set to change.

Some cabinet ministers, including the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, and the levelling up secretary, Michael Gove, were said to be uneasy about the high stakes involved in Truss's strategy and the possibility of a trade war with the EU as the UK stands on the brink of a potential recession.

Cabinet sources suggested Truss's manoeuvres were part of “leadership feather-fluttering” – hinting they were designed to put her at odds with Sunak in the minds of Conservative backbenchers. Sources close to Gove and Sunak denied they were trying to block Truss's plans.

The draft bill was initially understood to be intended to grant ministers the power in principle to override the treaty – but not necessarily to be used in practice. However, [the Times](#) reported on Tuesday that the bill would go further than expected and scrap parts of the protocol.

Such a move is expected to provoke legal retaliation by the EU were it to go ahead – including the bloc potentially imposing new tariffs.

Truss will argue that the election results in Northern Ireland give the negotiations a fresh sense of urgency because the Democratic Unionist party has said it will boycott any participation in a new government at Stormont until the issue is resolved.

Sinn Féin, which [won the most seats at Stormont](#) for the first time, said Northern Ireland was becoming “collateral damage” in the dispute.

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Boris Johnson spoke to Ireland’s taoiseach, Micheál Martin, on Tuesday morning. No 10 said he underlined the grave situation in Northern Ireland and reiterated warnings about the protocol.

“Despite repeated efforts by the UK government over many months to fix the protocol, including those sections related to the movement of goods and governance, the European Commission had not taken the steps necessary to help address the economic and political disruption on the ground,” No 10 said of the call.

“The prime minister reiterated that the UK government would take action to protect peace and political stability in Northern Ireland if solutions could not be found.”

A UK government spokesperson said: “Our focus has been, and will continue to be, preserving peace and stability in Northern Ireland. No decisions have yet been taken on the way forward. However, the situation is now very serious.

“We have always been clear that action will be taken to protect the Belfast [Good Friday] agreement if solutions cannot be found to fix the protocol.”

The Irish deputy prime minister, Leo Varadkar, who reached agreement with Johnson on the protocol in October 2019, suggested the UK was using threats to gain leverage in negotiations.

However, he warned the UK could not simply “resile” from the international treaty by unilaterally tearing up the protocol.

“If that is their approach, then we have a real problem here,” he told RTÉ. “It’s one thing to engage in a bit of sabre rattling ... but if they were to actually go down that route, it will be very serious.”

Labour’s Jenny Chapman, a shadow minister, said the action “risks a trade war during a cost of living crisis”.

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## [South Korea](#)

# Claims of shamans and curses as South Korea's president shuns official residence

Yoon Suk-yeol said the Blue House was ‘a symbol of imperial power’ but critics have highlighted costs and safety concerns



The public visit the Blue House in Seoul after the new president, Yoon Suk-yeol, said he would not use it as his official residence. Photograph: Raphael Rashid

*[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo and [Raphael Rashid](#) in Seoul*

Tue 10 May 2022 03.29 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 05.46 EDT

For decades, [South Korea](#)’s presidents have begun their terms in office by acquainting themselves with the vast premises of the Blue House.

But on Tuesday, [Yoon Suk-yeol](#) became the first leader in the country's modern history to shun the presidential residence, heading instead to a new office inside a former defence ministry building in central Seoul.

Yoon, who has styled himself as the “people’s president”, caused consternation when he said he had no intention of following his predecessors into the Blue House, so named because of the colour of its roof.

He said the building, located at the foot of a mountain on a site once used by the Japanese during their 1910-45 colonial rule of the Korean peninsula, was a “symbol of imperial power” that would be opened to the public as a sign of his commitment to a more open and democratic presidency.

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Successive South Korean presidents have lived and worked there since the country became a republic in 1948.

The gesture has not been well received, however. His predecessor, Moon Jae-in, criticised the move as hasty and a potential security threat, while even some of his conservative supporters questioned the decision – estimated to have cost \$40m – at a time when Yoon should be focusing on the economy and North Korea.



The South Korean president, Yoon Suk-yeol, with his wife, Kim Kun-hee, arrive at his inauguration ceremony in Seoul on 10 May. Photograph: YONHAP/EPA

Yoon, 61, has been forced to deny that he and his wife had decided to live elsewhere on the advice of [shamanistic healers](#), whose shady role in South Korean politics became an issue during the election campaign.

Yoon said the theory had been cooked up by his political opponents to discredit him. “The Democratic party seems to be more interested in shamans than I am,” he told reporters after his election victory on 9 March, adding that he had considered several locations for his new office and residence.

He had come under scrutiny over claims that spiritual advisers introduced by his wife, Kim Kun-hee, had exerted influence over his campaign. Kim, 49, had told a YouTube channel that she was a “spiritual person” who preferred meaningful discussions with gurus to visiting nightclubs, according to the Yonhap news agency. Yoon also denied that he had frequented an anal acupuncturist.

There was speculation that Yoon was determined to avoid the Blue House “curse” that had befallen several of his predecessors, including the dictator

Park Chung-hee, who was assassinated in the building's grounds in 1979, and his daughter, Park Geun-hye, who was [impeached](#) and imprisoned for corruption in 2017.



Public visitors to the Blue House on Tuesday. Photograph: Raphael Rashid

As Yoon was being sworn in on Tuesday, members of the public who had drawn lots to visit the Blue House were divided over his decision.

“It feels surreal,” Hwang Jin-woo, who works for a construction company, told the Guardian outside the building, whose grounds will be turned into a public park.

“Since I was young, this place has been a symbol of power. Until yesterday, it was a symbol of power, but now the public can access it. I was born a few decades ago, at a time when I couldn’t even take a glimpse at this place. But suddenly it’s been given to the citizens, so it’s a little overwhelming.”

Lee Jin-ok, who was visiting from Suwon, near Seoul, agreed. “I think it’s really great that it has returned to the arms of the people,” she said. “It has a lot of cultural value and I have always thought that the Blue House is one of the most beautiful buildings in Korea. I hope people will come here and enjoy themselves while learning about the history of Korea and its past presidents.”

But Kim Moon-soo, an office worker, said he was not sure if the millions of dollars used to set up Yoon's new office had been money well spent.

"I think it was a bit of an act to show that he is keeping his promise from day one," Kim said. "At the same time, I hope he keeps his other promises and takes good care of the country during these challenging times."

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**Keir Starmer**

## **PM should not have to copy any Starmer resignation, says minister**

Policing minister Kit Malthouse says Labour leader has to ‘set his own standards’

- [Today's politics news – live updates](#)



Boris Johnson (right) has already received a fixed-penalty notice over a lockdown event. Keir Starmer has said he will resign if he is issued with an FPN. Photograph: Getty Images

*Jamie Grierson*

*@JamieGrierson*

Tue 10 May 2022 11.18 EDTFirst published on Tue 10 May 2022 04.18 EDT

The policing minister, [Kit Malthouse](#), has said if Keir Starmer were to resign over an alleged breach of lockdown rules it does not automatically mean the prime minister should do the same.

In a statement on Monday, the [Labour leader said he would do the “right thing”](#) if he was issued with a fixed-penalty notice in relation to a gathering in Labour offices in Durham in April last year.

The move has been viewed as a huge gamble, with Starmer placing his future in the hands of Durham police after it was announced last week officers would reopen an investigation into the event at which he drank beer and ate a takeaway curry.

However, [Labour](#) sources have said they are confident they can prove it was a work event and that those present were taking a break to eat while working late on preparations for the Hartlepool byelection.

The Guardian revealed [Labour has compiled time-stamped logs](#) of WhatsApp chats, documents and video edits – which it will provide to Durham police for their investigation.

Asked on LBC if Johnson should follow suit if the Labour leader was issued with a penalty and does resign, Malthouse, a longtime ally of [Boris Johnson](#), said: “Not necessarily, no.”

He told LBC: “Obviously in any situation where, you know, the rules were moving around, there were misunderstandings or mistakes were made, and apologies are made and they are accepted, then people of all walks of life should be able to keep their jobs. But [Keir Starmer](#) has to speak for himself and set his own standards.”

Johnson’s spokesperson later echoed this view, saying the prime minister did not see the need to follow Starmer’s example over resignation if found to have breached Covid laws. “The prime minister’s position hasn’t changed,” he said. “Obviously, he came to the house and took responsibility and offered a full, unreserved apology for the mistakes made.”

The spokesperson added: “I’m not going to get drawn into what other individuals should do.”

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Starmer’s critics have suggested he is attempting to [put pressure on Durham police](#) as the force would not want to be seen as in effect ending his tenure as Labour leader.

Malthouse told Sky News the police force would meet “high standards” regardless of any alleged pressure. “Durham police will operate professionally to the high standards we expect of them irrespective of what the external goings-on are around this case,” he said. “We need to leave them the space and time to do their job.”



Kit Malthouse: ‘We need to leave [Durham police] the space and time to do their job.’ Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/REX/Shutterstock

Ken Macdonald – a former director of public prosecutions like Starmer – has said the suggestion Durham police would be pressured in their investigation was “wide of the mark”.

The crossbench peer told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "My experience of working with the police in very sensitive cases under full glare of public and press interest was that, very quickly, you find your focus taking over and, in a sense, a sort of bloody-mindedness creeps in: 'This is my case and I'll decide it, thank you very much, without any help from you.'"

In his statement on Monday, Starmer said repeatedly no rules had been broken as he sought to contrast his actions with those of Johnson, who has refused to quit after being issued with a fixed-penalty notice by the Metropolitan police over a gathering in No 10 in June 2020 to mark his 56th birthday.

But having called for Johnson to go for breaking the law, many at Westminster believe Starmer will have no choice but to fall on his sword if found to have done so himself.

Labour's deputy leader, Angela Rayner, who was also present at the Durham event, has said she too will stand down if she is issued with a penalty notice.

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## 2022.05.10 - Spotlight

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- Sexy vegetables, banana-eating wolves and Meghan Markle's hair Who to watch at Eurovision 2022
- Hannah Waddingham's year in TV 'No one expected Ted Lasso to seep into people's hearts as much as it has'
- Who needs recipes? Why it's time to trust your senses and cook intuitively

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[Warpaint](#)

Interview

## **Warpaint: ‘This isn’t a Quentin Tarantino movie – it’s an album a band made’**

Rachel Brodsky



Turning over a new leaf .... Warpaint. Photograph: Magda Wosinska/The Guardian

The LA art-rockers have been taking stock, fuelling talk of a split. But the enforced break has brought a fresh perspective and ‘a little more warmth’, the quartet say

Tue 10 May 2022 03.00 EDT

Warpaint would like to clear something up: they are not – nor were they ever – on the verge of breaking up. “I don’t remember this,” bassist Jenny Lee Lindberg laughs when the subject comes up. “I don’t remember having those conversations be public.”

“It’s, like, in our bio!” guitarist and vocalist Theresa Wayman chimes in.

““Oh, you guys are about ready to break up,”” Lindberg says in a slightly mocking voice.

“Yeah … no,” says drummer Stella Mozgawa, shaking her head.

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Yes, the Los Angeles art-rock collective, which also includes singer and guitarist Emily Kokal, are still very much a unit. You would never know they had spent much time apart at all, based on the way they finish each other’s sentences and rib each other like sisters. At one point, they spend an entire minute debating when Kokal found out she was pregnant.

“You found out in 2019,” insists Mozgawa, as they all try to piece together a timeline. “You were at my house. You weren’t pregnant in 2018. You would have been pregnant for a year and a half.” Then, just as quickly, Mozgawa becomes distracted: “Look at that amazing bird that just landed in the park!”



A clean break ... (from left) Warpaint's Stella Mozgawa, Jenny Lee Lindberg, Theresa Wayman and Emily Kokal. Photograph: Magda Wosinska/The Guardian

It is early-ish on a Sunday morning, and the entire band are gathered at a picnic table in Elysian Park, a sprawling grassy knoll in LA's Echo Park neighbourhood. Behind us is an Elmo-themed birthday party, with red and white balloons strung up to form a cheery rainbow-shaped archway. "My daughter is really into Elmo," smiles Kokal, who lives nearby, and later points out her partner, producer j.franxis, walking on a nearby footpath with their daughter Frances in a stroller. Also with us is Wayman's teenage son, Sirius, whom she jokingly introduces as Warpaint's bassist. Clearly, Warpaint are and have always been a family affair.

Formed in 2004, Warpaint released their critically acclaimed debut LP, *The Fool*, in 2010 and shared stages with everyone from the xx and TV on the Radio to Panda Bear and Arctic Monkeys. Across two more albums – 2014's *Warpaint* and 2016's *Heads Up* – the band cemented their reputation for moody dreampop that could just as easily sprawl into improvised psychedelia or atmospheric post-rock. It's, well, a whole vibe. "Manifest vibe," Wayman agrees, and suddenly everyone's chanting, "Manifest vibe! Manifest vibe!"

“Write it down,” Wayman instructs.

Perhaps the breakup narrative set in because Warpaint, who are nearing their 20th anniversary as a band, have spent the past couple of years scattered across different hemispheres, partly due to the pandemic and partly due to natural life events. After releasing Heads Up, which took them on tour with Harry Styles, MGMT and Depeche Mode, the quartet embarked on a series of individual projects. Lindberg worked on solo material (her second album arrives later this year); Mozgawa collaborated on albums with Courtney Barnett, Cate Le Bon, Sharon Van Etten and Phantogram; Kokal had a baby and worked with Grammy-nominated composer Suzanne Ciani; and Wayman has been scoring films and released her first solo album, LoveLaws, in 2018.

Now, Warpaint are readying their fourth album, Radiate Like This. The media buzz centres on the fact that this is their first album in six years, but the band are quick to point out that the album has been in the works since 2018. It began to take form when they recorded Melting, a slow-burning ballad that, in pure Warpaint fashion, builds a soundscape both soothing and dissonant. From there, the group wrote music for the [Motherhacker](#) podcast, and some of those ideas made their way on to the new album. By this point, they were tired. But they kept encouraging each other.

“I think everybody took turns,” Lindberg says. “If someone said: ‘I can’t do this any more,’ we’d rally and be like: ‘Yes, you can. You can do it.’ It’s been like that for some years. We take turns with everything.”



The front lineup ... Warpaint on stage in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2017.  
Photograph: Paul R Giunta/WireImage

When Covid arrived in early 2020, the timeline, as it did for most artists, got pushed back. Mozgawa, who was in Reykjavík recording with Le Bon at the time, immediately left for Australia. “I couldn’t come back to my house in Joshua Tree [California] because I don’t have a green card,” she says. “Friends and family were calling me from Australia saying they’re about to close the borders. I was like: ‘This is insane.’” Meanwhile, Kokal had given birth only days before. Lindberg had moved to Salt Lake City for what was meant to be a short break. “I didn’t realise how badly I needed to slow down,” she says. “I was hiking every day. It felt like a long, extended vacation.”

“For 10 years, we’ve been doing this thing together. And we’re either on tour or making albums. It was really nice to slow down and hear my own thoughts again. If and when this all starts back up again, what can we learn to make it an even better, more successful experience?”

With their producer in London, Warpaint took their time putting the finishing touches on *Radiate Like This* remotely – or, as Wayman puts it, “on different moon cycles”. The result is a finely tuned collection of songs that spring from a well of optimism. “‘Positivity’ sounds like such a trite

word,” Kokal says. “But I personally wanted to sing about [feeling] a little more liberated. Through the darkness. It’s almost like an incantation or a spell. I want to bring something that feels good, energetically, to share and sing and have people singing with you.”

Although Warpaint are generally not interested in assigning meaning to their music (“It’s not a Quentin Tarantino film – it’s an album that a band made,” says Mozgawa), Radiate Like This does mark a noticeable shift in tone, especially compared with previous singles such as Undertow and Love Is to Die, sonically tense affairs about unscrupulous lovers. The new album sounds lighter, with looser, airier melodies. Nowhere is this more evident than on the kaleidoscopic, cooing single, Stevie, which the band have previously described as being purely about love.

“I was listening to a lot of soul music and Stevie Wonder at the time,” says Kokal. “Stevie’s a girl in love.” Likewise, the raunchy, winking Send Nudes is more musically delicate than previous efforts, mirroring the comfort and ease of Kokal’s nine-year relationship.

While they have no plans to separate, there is no question that Warpaint are in a new place, personally and professionally, and Radiate Like This is an elegant snapshot of their collective evolution.

“I think it’s where we are as individuals,” concedes Kokal. “There’s growth. Maybe we’ve toiled a lot of the darker ground for a long time. And just evolving, growing, being pregnant while I was writing. I had a little bit more warmth that I wanted to sing and express.”

*Radiate Like This* is out now.

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## **Sexy vegetables, banana-eating wolves and Meghan Markle's hair: who to watch at Eurovision 2022**



A lupine meet-cute, before the wolf turns nasty: Norway's Subwoolfer posing in Turin ahead of Eurovision 2022. Photograph: Yara Nardi/Reuters

As the first semi-final is unleashed in Turin, we run down this year's most noteworthy bangers, ethereal folk chants and protest songs about health insurance

*[Angelica Frey](#)*

Tue 10 May 2022 05.43 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 07.15 EDT

## **Serbia – [Konstrakta: In Corpore Sano](#)**

“What is the secret of Meghan Markle’s hair?” is the opening line of this sepulchral and Kraftwerkian entry by Konstrakta. She then goes on to talk about the importance of hydration, about how under-eye circles can signal liver distress, and also marvels about the autonomous nervous system. “The artist is supposed to be healthy,” is the conclusion she reaches when the first refrain starts, which then evolves into a gospel-like exclamation: “God grant us health!” It turns out that rather than having a tabloid-worthy interest in Meghan’s beauty regime, Konstrakta’s song is actually a satirical swipe at the venal world of health insurance and the cult of beauty.

## **Latvia – [Citi Zēni: Eat Your Salad](#)**

This ode to recycling, zero-waste initiatives and sustainable vegetarianism is, in true [Eurovision](#) fashion, offset by extreme lecherousness and sexual metaphors that an 11-year-old will find absolutely delightful: “I’m a beast instead of a killer / forget the hotdogs ‘cause my sausage is just bigger.” Melodies alternate between show tunes (complete with brass) and something vaguely akin to rapping – which is to say, given this is Eurovision, very vaguely akin indeed. Unfortunately, the fun police have said that Citi Zēni need to censor the final word of what is the most startling opening line in Eurovision history: “Instead of meat, I eat veggies and pussy.” The Turin stage direction and set design, then, could determine whether this song will rise like a camp masterpiece or be condemned to infamy – we hope there’s a cat involved.

## **Ukraine – [Kalush Orchestra: Stefania](#)**

Lyrics such as “the fields are blooming but her hair is grey”, and “I’ll always find my way home, even if all roads are destroyed”, mean that [Ukraine’s entry](#) has huge resonance as the war rages. Even if Eurovision bars outright political statements, this song has the subtle gravitas of another recent Ukrainian entry, Jamala’s 2016 song 1944, which detailed the massacre of Crimean Tatars – and is a far cry from cheesy peace-themed songs such as Germany’s Ein Bisschen Frieden (A Bit of Freedom, a winner by a huge margin in 1982) and Italy’s Insieme: 1992 (Together: 1992, confusingly winning in 1990). Ever since listening to Romania’s yodelling-enhanced pop-rock in 2017, I have had a soft spot for genre crossover, and Kalush Orchestra combine rap, folk, a thumping bass line and the use of flute, all dressed in folk garb but with a tongue-in-cheek twist: spot that hot pink, hand-knitted fisherman’s hat.

## **Norway – Subwoolfer: Give That Wolf a Banana**

In 2003, DJ Bobo gave us an earworm of utmost nonsense: “What can make you move, chihuahua!” Almost 20 years later, Norwegian band Subwoolfer urge us in a similar fashion: “Before that wolf eats my grandma / give that wolf a banana!” They lay out their Red Riding Hood redux with a lupine meet-cute (“Not sure you have a name, so I will call you Keith”) before the wolf turns nasty and needs warding off with some tropical fruit. The Eurodance backing is sleek, and huge props to the costume department for the full-body leotards and wolf heads.

## **Italy – Mahmood & Blanco: Brividi**

Italy loves a good ballad duet: where else can you so freely revel in vocal prowess, pathos and overacting? In 1989, Eurovision had a taste of it with virtuoso duo Fausto Leali and Anna Oxa singing about how each wanted to physically tie the other up to avoid having their love contaminated by the outside world; now, X Factor and Sanremo veteran Mahmood and erstwhile SoundCloud rapper Blanco update the trite “love duet” formula by singing about how, in relationships, even the best intentions lead to stumbling and falling. Strong lyrics aside, they maintain enough vocal and emotional restraint to avoid veering into parody.



Viral sensation ... Achille Lauro. Photograph: Yara Nardi/Reuters

## San Marino – [Achille Lauro: Stripper](#)

Achille Lauro was a rapper with fondness for Matrix-like getups before becoming an unlikely muse for Gucci's Alessandro Michele at the end of 2019. Right before the pandemic hit, he became a viral sensation when, during Italy's Sanremo festival, he wore a plethora of glam-rock outfits (thanks to stylist Nicolò Cerioni) and toyed with a 1970s version of androgyny. In 2022, he remains far more interesting from a visual point of view than a musical one – but that's exactly what Eurovision needs to drown out too many anthems with too many virtuoso warblers.

## Iceland – [Systur: Með Hækkandi Sól](#)

Sigga, Beta & Elín are a sisterly trio with an established reputation in their country's indie-pop and indie-folk scenes. The lyrics express the elation at the sense of renewal brought by the rising sun in a dark winter night, a prelude to spring – and while “it's always darkest before the dawn” is a trite and meteorologically inaccurate trope, it's quite nice in this corny context. The voices sound almost mystical and the melody is soothing. Indeed, it is so ethereal and twee that there's actually something sinister, in a [Midsommar](#) way, about it, sparing this entry from being a snoozefest lullaby.

## **Armenia – [Rosa Linn: Snap](#)**

This song, on the Mumfords/Lumineers axis of log-cabin strumalongs, is the musical equivalent of eating too many marshmallows from a campfire. Judging by rehearsals, Rosa Linn is staging her song in a bedroom with an all-white bed, comforter, armchair, plus walls decked in white Post-it notes, and indeed, it is about the whitest song imaginable.

## **Moldova – [Zdob și Zdub & Advahov Brothers: Trenulețul](#)**

Fiddle, accordion and oompah make Moldova's foot-thumping entry the ultimate crowd pleaser. I am a firm believer in the importance of some distinctly folk tunes in any Eurovision lineup, and Eurovision veterans Zdob și Zdub (sixth place in 2005, 12th place in 2011) deliver the goods by singing about a *trenulețul* – a little train that goes from Chișinău to Bucharest. The lyrics are surprisingly wholesome, as they talk about the similarities and friendship between Moldova and Romania: “Both in this land and in that land we dance the *hora*, it’s a bliss!”

## **Bulgaria – [Intelligent Music Project: Intention](#)**

Pure 80s dad rock with echoes of Meat Loaf and hints of Blondie's One Way or Another. People might call it outdated and out of place; it could be one of this year's most hated entries. Yet leather-clad rocking and pyro is an eternal part of Eurovision, and of course [Måneskin](#) won the contest last year with this approach, admittedly with a great deal more pomp and sexuality.

## **Estonia – [Stefan: Hope](#)**

Avicii meets Ennio Morricone (those whistles!) in this seemingly upbeat country romp, with a soulful verse and anthemic chorus – they preach the importance of standing tall, not losing one's pride and holding on to the promise of the future – sung by Stefan in a versatile baritone. He is no Johnny Cash, but he manages to sing it in an entirely convincing manner.

Offering a tribute to spaghetti westerns at a Eurovision hosted in Italy feels apt, and Eurovision's Reddit nerds are calling this the dark horse of the year.



Prone to grandiose statements ... Amanda Georgiadi Tenfjord. Photograph: Yara Nardi/Reuters

## Greece – Amanda Georgiadi Tenfjord: Die Together

Dressed like Kate Bush in *Wuthering Heights*, and bearing an uncanny resemblance to Lorde, Norwegian-Greek singer Amanda Georgiadi Tenfjord delivers an electro-tinged, Imogen-Heap-flavored ballad dealing with the aftermath of a relationship. As refined as the arrangement and the melody might be, the same cannot be said for the lyrics, which are prone to grandiose statements: "If we die together now, we will always have each other." The bridge has a change of pace with a refined acoustic crescendo – but it too loses its mystique, with Tenfjord begging her former lover to "take my heart, rip it out / bring it to the other side". Cynicism aside, this song does have great karaoke potential.

## Austria – LUM!X: Halo (ft Pia Maria)

A [Hi-NRG banger](#) we did not know we wanted, but that, amid that overabundance of ballads this year, we sorely need. Mixing Eurodisco and bubblegum pop at a breakneck pace that harks towards hardstyle, it is endearingly 90s-nostalgic – and thus fighting a much less desirable class of throwback, namely the 00s Snow Patrol-type ballads that once appeared on Grey's Anatomy with dreary inevitability. This song will actually stand out and, despite lyrics that border on the nonsensical, it's already a fan favourite, though said fans also worry about whether the live version will stand up to its studio original.

## **Sweden – [Cornelia Jakobs: Hold Me Closer](#)**

Historically, Sweden has been a dominating force in Eurovision, and Cornelia Jakobs is expected to do very well: she is currently bookies' third favourite after Ukraine and – yes, believe it – the UK. Hold Me Closer combines gritty vocals (think Taylor Swift at her saddest) with relatable lyrics and airtight production, somewhat reminiscent of the swells of Lady Gaga's Shallow. Overall, it is a neat assembly-line number that I think is too anodyne to make a lasting impression, especially when up against the aforementioned championing of oral sex, health insurance etc.

## **United Kingdom – [Sam Ryder: Space Man](#)**

While the average millennial in lockdown was trying to master the art of sourdough, pick up a new language or half-ass a Joe Wicks workout, veteran session player Sam Ryder earned 12m TikTok followers by posting viral covers where his piercing vocal register caught the attention of Justin Bieber and others. His song, Space Man, has big astronaut boots to fill, filching celestial vibes from Elton John's Rocket Man, the Beatles' Across the Universe and REM's Man on the Moon – but his strident chorus notes really hit you between the eyes. Will having a social-media-friendly entry help break a long streak of failure? It's hard to say how much anti-Brexit sentiment has scuppered the UK and how much it's because of a series of terrible songs – but Space Man is the best for many years.

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**Turn us on: a Bafta TV special****Television & radio**

Interview

## **Hannah Waddingham's year in TV: 'No one expected Ted Lasso to seep into people's hearts as much as it has'**

**Hannah J Davies**

The actor and singer on winning an Emmy, being mistaken for Emma Thompson, and why Sharon Stone is the sexy older sister she wishes she had



Hannah Waddingham wears co-ord, [the-sleeper.com](http://the-sleeper.com). Heels, [jimmychoo.com](http://jimmychoo.com). Hoops, [shaunleane.com](http://shaunleane.com) Styling: Melanie Wilkinson. Set design: Olivia Giles. Makeup: Cher Webb, using makeup provided by official beauty partner Lancôme. Hair: Dionne Smith. Lighting assistants: Luke Fullalove and Zelie Lockhart. Digital technician: Jess Segal. Runner: Jordan. Photograph: The Guardian



[@hannahjdavies](#)

Tue 10 May 2022 05.00 EDT

*Inspired by her opera singer mother, Hannah Waddingham, 47, began her acting career in the West End and on Broadway, and has been nominated for three Olivier awards. She has appeared in Game of Thrones and Sex Education, and since 2020 has had a lead role in the Apple TV+ series [Ted Lasso](#) as Rebecca Welton.*

**We saw you on TV in 2021 in Ted Lasso, for which you won an Emmy – congratulations!**

Thank you – it's not something I ever thought I'd achieve. No one expected the show to seep its way into people's hearts as much as it has, but it's been magical. I never hide from the fact that I'm in my mid-40s, and 6ft 2 in heels, and parts where you are able to be vulnerable and silly and heartbreakingly real ... I don't know whether a role like this will ever come along for me again.



Hannah Waddingham in Ted Lasso. Photograph: for SAG Awards/REX/Shutterstock

**What would you be doing if you weren't doing your job?**

I would probably be an interpreter. I've been plagued by fabulous Italians all my life, and I speak the language because of my other half.

**Have you ever been mistaken for anybody else?**

I've had Emma Thompson in the past, but I think that's probably more our personality type than anything. We're both a little bit silly.

**What makes you happy?**

My baby girl. I waited a long time for her. I was busy doing theatre work, and I felt like I was about to miss the boat. By the time I got round to things, my fertility was questionable. I always wanted one little girlie, and she is everything I dreamed of. I mean, a naughty little sausage sometimes, but she's seven.

**The TV show you can't wait to come back?**

Succession. I sometimes struggle watching TV as an actor because you're watching it technically, and noticing what's good and bad. But with that show, I can just enjoy it because they are all so brilliant.

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**What do you eat in front of the TV?**

I'm a massive crisp-aholic – old-school, supermarket own-brand ones that take the roof off your mouth. I have to really limit myself.

**Who is the most famous person in your phone contacts?**

Sharon Stone. She's an epic human being – like, the most ridiculously beautiful, sexy older sister you wish you had. What's nice about all the "famouses", as I call them, is I feel like if you are quite a down-to-earth person, the ones that gravitate towards you are too.

Ted Lasso is available on Apple TV+. For more information about the Virgin Media Bafta TV Awards, visit [bafta.org](https://www.bafta.org)

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## **Who needs recipes? Why it's time to trust your senses and cook intuitively**



A pinch of this or a dash of that: freestyling can help turn cooking into a lifelong habit. Composite: Guardian Design; fotograzia; urfinguss; iStockphoto; stockcam; Getty Images

Could off-the-cuff cooking help you be more relaxed and confident in the kitchen? Here are some tips for making dishes you love from what you have to hand



[Elle Hunt](#)

Tue 10 May 2022 05.00 EDT

Whenever Katerina Pavlakis had friends over for dinner, it was not just the food that her guests would comment on. It was also the fact that she seemed so unflustered – “that I was cooking up all these things, and I wasn’t even stressed,” she says. Only then did Pavlakis realise that not everyone shared her experience in the kitchen – that, in fact, even people who enjoyed cooking and were good at it could find it a source of frustration.

That made Pavlakis curious: what made cooking so effortless for her, and so frustrating for others? After talking to friends and customers in the shop she runs with her husband in north Wales, she worked out where many were going wrong: they were trying – and struggling – to follow recipes. There, she could relate.

“I do love recipe books, and I have loads of them,” says Pavlakis. “But I cannot follow a recipe for the life of me.”

Pavlakis' approach has always been to improvise: adding a pinch of this or a dash of that, sometimes only figuring out what meal she is making once it is already under way. But as random as it may seem, "there is a method", she says.

In the online courses she runs as [the Intuitive Cook](#), Pavlakis teaches people how to gain confidence and skills in the kitchen by throwing out rules, recipes and even ingredients lists.

It may seem counterintuitive, especially for beginners. But this more off-the-cuff approach to cooking has recently been gaining traction. The New York Times last year [published a cookbook](#) of "no-recipe recipes", designed for those without the patience or inclination to follow detailed directions. The celebrity chef [David Chang](#), founder of the Momofuku chain, espoused a similar philosophy in his book Cooking at Home, subtitled: "How I learned to stop worrying about recipes (and love my microwave)".

To Pavlakis, it suggests fatigue with the overcomplication of cooking, and the pressure on everyone to produce restaurant-quality meals. Mainstream media portrays cooking as a "kind of aspirational hobby", she says – leaving people feeling intimidated and overwhelmed by the number of sources on what and how to eat. Recipes that assume that everyone owns a mandoline slicer, or keeps preserved lemons in the fridge, can make people feel that they have failed before they have even got started.

More to the point, Pavlakis says, even following a recipe to perfection does not necessarily build confidence or skills. It is a little like the difference between following Google Maps' directions, and actually knowing your way around. Taking an "intuitive" approach to cooking, informed by what you have to hand and what you like to eat, can help to minimise food waste and turn cooking into a lifelong habit – not a source of stress, or only for special occasions. And, Pavlakis adds, it is not as high-risk as you might think.

Here are few tips to get you started, from Pavlakis and other intuitive types.



Intuition ... Katerina Pavlakis gets inventive in the kitchen. Photograph: Eleri Griffiths

## Throw out the fear

People often cling to recipes out of fear of making something inedible, says Pavlakis – “you really have to try very hard”. She hears more complaints of meals being bland than ruined. The biggest challenge in learning to cook intuitively is getting over that insecurity, she says, “and daring to do what you want”. Try a small tweak in your next meal, then a bigger one. “Nine times out of 10,” she says, “it will probably turn out pretty good.”

## Work with what you have ...

Pavlakis suggests being led by the contents of your fridge, and reverse-engineering a meal from there. That way you won’t end up with half-used ingredients or odds and ends that will get thrown away. Thinking in terms of “flavour worlds” – herbs, spices and ingredients that we might consider “typically French”, say, or “typically Thai” – can steer you towards a particular dish or complementary pairing. Add oregano to tomatoes and you’re likely Italy-bound; turmeric or cumin might suggest an Indian curry. “It really does give you a completely different experience,” says Pavlakis. Even leftovers can often be repurposed into something entirely new.

## Simplify steps, not ingredients



Build flavours with herbs and vary cooking times. Photograph: Alex Walker/Getty Images

Many recipes follow a similar process, Pavlakis says. “If you step back and start looking for the patterns, you can see which step fits where – then it becomes easier to change them, swap them or leave them out.”

She tends to follow a three-step method of base (onion, garlic, other “aromatic” vegetables and spices, cooked in some kind of fat), body (fresh produce and protein, often liquid) and top (herbs and flavourings). With tweaks to cooking time, temperature and amounts, this can lead to a hot pot or sauté, stew or soup, sauce or stir-fry. Even a traybake combines the base and body step.

Likewise, in building flavour, you could think in terms of background, foreground and accents, with each layer complementing or contrasting the one before it. “If you’ve got those basic blocks, that’s when you can start playing,” Pavlakis says.

## Awaken your senses

Many of us have become [detached](#) from our sensory experience of food. Pavlakis suggests a straightforward experiment: split a jar of passata or tin of tomatoes between ramekins, then add to each in turn a little salt, a lot of salt, olive oil, sugar, chilli flakes, balsamic vinegar, spices or herbs. (Keep one plain, as the “control”.) Mix, taste and assess your response – you may be surprised by the difference even small amounts make. “It’s so effective because we don’t usually pay that much attention,” says Pavlakis.

## **Substitute as you need, and as you like**

Chris Mandle, who writes the no-recipe [Scraps newsletter](#) on Substack, suggests swapping shallots for onions if that’s all you have, or green olives for black if you like one but not the other. “What’s the worst-case scenario? Chuck it in and try.”

Some swaps might not be neat – kale can be too thick and fibrous to stand in for spinach, for example – but there is often more room for flexibility than you might think, says Mandle. “If you don’t have dark chocolate for your chilli con carne, Worcestershire sauce will work, or cocoa powder, or even the last dreg of coffee from your mug.”

It might not taste exactly as the recipe developer intended – but that doesn’t mean bad. “Chances are, when you cook a recipe twice with the exact same ingredients, it’ll taste a bit different anyway,” says Mandle.

## **Know the non-negotiables**



Much of baking is working with ratios. Photograph: Marina Kuttig/Getty Images

Baking is often spoken of as more technical than cooking, a science compared with an art. But even so, there is often room for adapting for taste.

“A creme fraiche lemon cake can very easily become a ricotta grapefruit cake, or a buckwheat maple syrup biscuit could be made wholemeal and honey,” says the pastry chef Nicola Lamb, author of the recipe development newsletter [Kitchen Projects](#). Likewise, sugar can often be reduced (by up to 25%), and yoghurt or creme fraiche added without consequence – “as long as the cake mix still looks like cake mix”.

Much of baking is working with ratios, as with the Victoria sponge – “the classic non-recipe recipe,” says Lamb. “Equal parts everything – flour, butter, sugar, eggs – gives you a pretty perfect sponge, with a bit of technique.”

But, Lamb adds, precision is important: “I would never dream of baking without a scale.”

## Work with the elements

Both Pavlakis and Mandle swear by Samin Nosrat's book (and Netflix show) [Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat](#). Mandle says it showed him how to work with those elements – “and not let them boss you around”.



Elemental ... Samin Nosrat. Photograph: Barry J Holmes/The Observer

For example, in need of salt, he used up half a tin of sardines by flaking them into a pasta sauce in place of anchovies. “It was so good! Once you know *why* you’re adding acid into a dish – like salad dressing, or a cabbage slaw – it’s much easier to swap out the champagne vinegar you don’t own for freshly juiced lemons instead.”

The addition of acid, sweetness or fat can also help with rebalancing a dish that seems in danger of going south.

## Taste and adjust



Spice up dal with chilli. Photograph: Andrei Kravtsov/Getty Images/iStockphoto

If the taste of onion or garlic is too biting, maybe it needs to sweat further in the pan. Or if a stew or dal tastes flat, try bringing it into focus with chilli, salt or a squeeze of lemon or lime. Be intentional in tasting before and after, says Pavlakis. “If you can’t detect any difference, be bolder.”

If an addition does backfire, think of it as a chance to learn about your particular tastes – not those of a recipe developer, who is often required to play it safe.

## Test your intuition

Nosrat says “cooking is all about using your senses” – especially common sense. “If you feel that some combination of ingredients would be disgusting, then it probably is,” says Pavlakis. “Your intuition is telling you something there – the same way as when you leaf through a cookbook, one recipe catches your attention, while five others don’t.”

Be curious about what sounds delicious to you, and how you might repurpose those elements – then try it out. You can only hone your intuition through trial and error, says Pavlakis – not by reading about cooking, or

watching other people. But the benefits may be felt beyond the kitchen. “There’s a lot of talk about getting out of your comfort zone, trying something new, learning to take risks – this is an extremely safe way to practise that as a life skill.”

*Sign up to the Intuitive Cook’s courses at [theintuitivecook.co.uk](https://theintuitivecook.co.uk), Chris Mandle’s Scraps newsletter at [scrapsfood.substack.com](https://scrapsfood.substack.com) and Nicola Lamb’s Kitchen Projects at [kitchenprojects.substack.com](https://kitchenprojects.substack.com)*

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## 2022.05.10 - Opinion

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## OpinionLabour

# **Labour may think it's moving on, but working-class voters aren't following**

[Julian Coman](#)

If the party wants to reach Brexit-voting post-industrial areas, it needs to listen to those outside its cultural comfort zone



‘Labour needs to do more than ‘move on’ from 2016 and its aftermath, as Keir Starmer has understandably but mistakenly sought to do.’ Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

Tue 10 May 2022 05.29 EDTFirst published on Tue 10 May 2022 03.00 EDT

On a filthy night three days before Christmas in 1978, I was sitting on a rather ancient coach travelling across the Pennines towards Lancashire, along with about 50 other football supporters. The Bradford branch of the Manchester United supporters club catered largely for a collection of brickies and other manual workers – and that evening we were all on our

way to watch a dismal 0-3 defeat at Bolton. As torrential rain poured down on the M62, the bloke sitting immediately in front suddenly turned and, with a hint of menace, said to my brother and me: “You’re not really the same as us are you?”

It may have been the drink talking after some seasonal revelry during the day, but his analysis was on the money. The sons of an academic and a teacher, Paul and I read different papers, watched different stuff on TV and spoke in a different way. But as aspiring young lefties in the late 1970s, we imagined, or hoped, that this divergence in terms of social class would be redeemed and erased by politics: after all, it was only 10 years after 1968, when radical students and workers attempted to dream a revolutionary alliance into being. So it was mortifying to my teenage self to realise that, even in the context of supporting the same football team, there might be an underlying suspicion towards the middle-class interlopers on the bus.

This uncomfortable moment was a minor lesson in the tricky social dynamics of class and status. Almost half a century later, the future of progressive politics in Britain may depend on a similar kind of learning process writ large. The usual caveats (low turnout, protest voting, local factors) apply to any analysis of [last week's council elections](#). But in England, the broad picture appears to confirm a changing political landscape that, while it potentially poses deep problems for the Conservative party, also confronts Labour with [challenging truths](#). To [quote](#) the Oxford University election analysts Michael Thrasher and Colin Rallings: “The urban south is becoming more Labour as the north hangs on to its post-Brexit attachment to the Tories … but there is evidence too of a new demographic cleavage. Areas where more than a third of the population are university graduates swung sharply to Labour, those where graduates are thinner on the ground moved almost as much the other way.”

Two demographics, two economies and, increasingly, two sensibilities. On one side, liberal-minded, Labour-voting urban professionals and young graduates clustered disproportionately in the cities; on the other, elements of the post-industrial working class (some of it retired) who mourn the loss of something that has disappeared in towns that are steadily getting older.

If it cannot do much better among this second group, Labour will not win a majority in the next election. Even the success of a progressive alliance with the Lib Dems and the Greens depends on Labour doing its job in the “red wall”. But despite [notable successes](#), such as its victories in Cumberland and Kirklees, the hoped-for revival in the north and Midlands stuttered and stalled last week to an extent that allowed Boris Johnson to brazen out an [otherwise terrible night](#).

Viewed through a purely economic lens, some of the results might appear inexplicable. Polls indicate that a majority of the public views the government’s response to the cost of living crisis as woefully inadequate. But in one of the most deprived wards [in Walsall](#) – where [one in five households](#) are fuel poor – there was a 35% swing to the Conservatives. While red wall type areas will suffer disproportionately in the hard times to come, it would therefore seem unwise for Labour to rely on attacking the government to solve the problem of its soured relations with the traditional working class. Instead, perhaps the left should widen the horizon of its analysis to address the kind of question that my fellow United fan put to me on the coach to Bolton. Why do substantial numbers of former Labour voters sense a cultural gulf between themselves and what they think the party now represents? Why do they feel Labour is “not the same” as them any more?

Last year, the UK in a Changing Europe thinktank published [an important paper](#) co-written by the sociologist and social mobility expert John Goldthorpe. Entitled Meritocracy and Populism, a section of it summarises two main findings from red wall focus groups convened by Deborah Mattinson (now Labour’s director of strategy). The first was that these (predominantly leave) voters felt that good jobs and opportunities for younger people were no longer available in their communities. A sense of grievance at this was compounded by the perception that, as old industries had faded away, the world now belonged to new generations of degree-holders who, bluntly, looked down on them. Politically, write Goldthorpe and his co-author, Erzsébet Bukodi, such views “translated into a deep disillusionment with the Labour party. This was seen as now dominated by graduate, metropolitan elites – whether Blairite or Corbynite – obsessed with political correctness and more concerned with telling the people they were supposed to represent that they were ‘wrong’ than with trying to understand

the conditions under which they were living.” Depending on how things play out, Keir Starmer’s current woes over ”Beergate” – feeding a narrative of elite hypocrisy – could prove particularly damaging in this regard.

This alienated perspective, which is almost certainly shared by large numbers of lost Labour voters, may be an unfair caricature. But if Labour is to bridge generational and educational divides in an era of culture wars, it should admit that there is a kernel of truth here. The mass expansion of higher education has helped Britain become a far better place when it comes to addressing, for example, race and gender inequality. But the widespread characterisation of Brexit as a purely xenophobic, reactionary project demonstrated that highly educated liberals are also capable of myopic intolerance. To reconstitute a relationship with leave-voting constituencies, Labour needs to do more than “move on” from 2016 and its aftermath, as Starmer has understandably but mistakenly sought to do. It needs to re-engage with why so much of its working-class support voted the way it did.

A starting point for that exercise might be the seminal essay [Culture is Ordinary](#), written by Raymond Williams in 1958. In it, Williams describes the postwar blue collar environment in which he grew up as defined by commitment to “neighbourhood, mutual obligation and common betterment”. Mattinson’s leave voters were evidently preoccupied by the perceived loss of this sense of solid community, and clearly ill at ease in an age of more freewheeling individualism. These are not in themselves reactionary sentiments; in fact they belong to a venerable Labour tradition that includes RH Tawney and William Morris. But in the context of Brexit, they were far too easily dismissed and misrepresented, and the scars from that are still there. If they are to be healed in the places where Labour so badly needs to reconnect, the modern left needs to travel outside its cultural comfort zone with an open mind, listen properly to the messages it receives, and admit that it can learn from the red wall as well as lecture it.

- Julian Coman is a Guardian associate editor

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## OpinionCelebrity

# Coleen Rooney v Rebekah Vardy is like a period drama with balayage and Botox

[Emma Garland](#)

The ‘Wagatha Christie’ affair gives us a window into the lives of the rich, and what we see is that they’re just like us



‘This trial is arguably so explosive because of the appetite the British press has for criticising women it sees as having ‘climbed’ their way into wealth.’ Coleen Rooney at the premiere of the Rooney documentary, 9 February 2022. Photograph: Anthony Devlin/Getty Images

Tue 10 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 06.59 EDT

In the UK, we don’t like our celebrities to be mythical. This is a land where Alison Hammond and Adele reign supreme. We like public figures who seem, not down to earth exactly, but familiar; people you can picture eating

dinner on their laps in front of Coronation Street with a glass of Blossom Hill. We enjoy the delusion that the only difference between us and someone on TV is a lottery win. This is why the battle between [Coleen Rooney and Rebekah Vardy](#) has gripped our attention for two and a half years and counting.

A tale of two Wags, Rooney v Vardy is the perfect storm of everyday pettiness and high-profile drama. On both sides are women who married into the public eye – through the former England player Wayne Rooney and Leicester City’s Jamie Vardy, respectively. Much like reality TV stars, the Wags’ relationship to the British tabloids is as symbiotic as it is stressful. Stories about anything from a new haircut to taking [placenta pills](#) fill the pages of the red tops. The content keeps their names relevant but also open to constant public scrutiny.

Throughout the 2010s, Rooney was a common presence in the Sun newspaper, where her private information as well as that of friends and family kept appearing unexpectedly. While some Wags trailed information of their lives to the press to increase their profiles, these stories were unwanted by Rooney. There was, it seems, someone in her close circle of friends leaking the stories to the press. So, in an act of digital sleuthing that has since led her to be dubbed “Wagatha Christie”, Rooney started posting fake personal news to Instagram Stories and blocked all but one person from seeing them.

The stories ranged from believable to clickbait: she was making a return to TV; she was left devastated after Storm Lorenzo flooded the basement of her £20m family home; she was travelling to Mexico to look into gender selection treatment. All of them found their way into the paper. On 9 October 2019, Rooney [posted her findings](#) on Twitter, announcing that “it’s ..... Rebekah Vardy’s account”. She dropped this bombshell while Vardy, who is now suing for defamation, was heavily pregnant and on holiday.

Almost three years later, the libel trial will begin at the high court in London today and is scheduled to last for six days. The news around it is already frenzied, with legal fees [reaching millions](#), fears of [“shredded” reputations](#), and vows [never to speak](#) to each other again. Beyond that, there are shock

revelations and elements of intrigue that Agatha Christie herself would have been proud to write. The trial hasn't even started and already Vardy has made allegations in court papers, [pointing the finger](#) at her press agent, Caroline Watt, while mystery circulates about a phone that "[regrettably](#)" fell into the North Sea along with the WhatsApp messages that may have contained pivotal evidence for Rooney's case.

This trial is arguably so explosive because of the appetite the British press has for criticising women it sees as having "climbed" their way into wealth. Vardy grew up in a troubled home, and by the age of 15 she was homeless. Rooney, whose mum was a cleaner and dad a boxing coach, came from a working-class background. Both were catapulted to fame and money through their marriages, and have been treated as undeserving recipients with headlines such as "Rebekah Vardy to splash out on a new pair of boobs with I'm A Celebrity fee" and "Coleen and Wayne Rooney hit the beach in Mykonos for ANOTHER holiday just days after returning from Barbados".

But the public don't seem to share this disdain and there seems to be an enormous amount of goodwill towards both Rooney and Vardy for providing us with so much entertainment. When news articles contain the phrase "mansion in Lincolnshire" and a text that says "Stupid cow deserves everything she gets!", it's impossible not to be drawn in as if it's an episode of [Footballers' Wives](#) writ large. There's something quintessentially English, almost old fashioned, about this feud. It's like a period drama with balayage and Botox.

Ultimately, this whole affair gives us a window into the lives of the rich, and what we see is that they're just like us. This is not a high-end courtroom drama; it's turbocharged comment section warfare. And, against this recognisable backdrop of online drama and broken friendships, there is the knowledge that, if you had £3m to escalate a personal beef to the highest possible court, you could find yourself on the stand too.

- Emma Garland is a writer who specialises in culture and music

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## OpinionJulian Assange

# Priti Patel, hear this loud and clear: Julian Assange must not be handed over to the US

[Duncan Campbell](#)

A decision from the home secretary is imminent. Extradition would set a disastrous precedent



A Julian Assange supporter outside Westminster magistrates' court where an extradition order was made on 20 April. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Tue 10 May 2022 05.46 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 06.56 EDT

Priti Patel now has to make one of the most important decisions of her career: will she bow to heavy pressure from the United States and send a vulnerable man who has been convicted of no crime to face an indeterminate number of years in an American jail where he may experience intimidation

and isolation? Her decision is imminent and all other legal avenues have been explored.

This was the scenario 10 years ago in the case of [Gary McKinnon](#), the computer hacker who, working out of his north London bedroom, trawled through the computer systems of Nasa and the US defence department in search of information about UFOs and left behind some mildly rude messages about the systems' sloppy security. The home secretary was Theresa May, [who halted](#) extradition proceedings at the last minute.

Now [Julian Assange](#), the WikiLeaks founder and also a vulnerable man – who has been in Belmarsh high-security prison for three years without being convicted of any crime – is facing extradition, with the issue due to be decided this month. Once again, the home secretary has an opportunity to demonstrate, as May did, that respect for justice and humanity are much finer and more enduring qualities than appeasement.

It is worth recalling the words of party leaders in support of McKinnon after Labour home secretaries – to their great shame – declined to intervene in the years after his initial arrest in 2002. Nick Clegg, then leading the Liberal Democrats in opposition, [said that McKinnon](#) “has been hung out to dry by a British government desperate to appease its American counterparts”. David Cameron, before he became prime minister, [had said](#): “McKinnon is a vulnerable young man and I see no compassion in sending him thousands of miles away from his home and loved ones to face trial.”

The current case is different in that, while McKinnon remained at liberty, Assange has been held in custody alongside murderers and terrorists after the seven years he spent in the Ecuadorian embassy, seeking political asylum. He should have been given bail long ago to be with his wife, Stella Moris, whom [he married](#) in prison in March, and their two young children; he could simply be electronically tagged and monitored. It is also different in that he faces charges under the Espionage Act which carries a potential [sentence of 175 years](#). And yes, the US criminal justice system does actually impose such medieval sentences.

Last year, at the Summit for Democracy, [Joe Biden pledged](#) to support a free press: “It’s the bedrock of democracy. It’s how the public stay informed and how governments are held accountable. Around the world, press freedom is under threat.” As it happens, it is 50 years since [Daniel Ellsberg](#) was being [prosecuted](#) under a similar law to the ones Assange faces for releasing the [Pentagon Papers](#) which exposed the lies and hypocrisies of the Vietnam war. He is one of Assange’s staunchest supporters. This week he told me that “this extradition would mean that journalists, anywhere in the world, could be extradited to the US for exposing information classified in the US”. He argues that it would also set a precedent that any reporter could be extradited to other countries for exposing information classified in those countries.

Assange also has the backing of all organisations that battle on behalf of freedom of expression, from Amnesty International to Reporters Without Borders. As Julia Hall of Amnesty International [puts it](#): “Demanding that states like the UK extradite people for publishing classified information that is in the public interest sets a dangerous precedent and must be rejected.”

In March, the justice secretary, Dominic Raab, told the Daily Mail of plans for [a new bill of rights](#): “We’ve got to be able to strengthen free speech, the liberty that guards all of our other freedoms, and stop it being whittled away surreptitiously, sometimes without us really being conscious of it.” How empty those words will be if Assange is extradited.

It was, after all, thanks to WikiLeaks and Assange that the world saw the [secret video](#) of a US aircrew falsely claiming to have encountered a firefight in Baghdad and then laughing after their airstrike killed a dozen people, including two Iraqi journalists. Should our ability to see that footage be “whittled away surreptitiously”?

Another Assange advocate is Janis Sharp, McKinnon’s mother, who fought so gallantly on his behalf – a battle now being made into a film. “Ten years’ loss of liberty is surely more than long enough for an extremely ill, autistic man, a whistleblower who shared information of a war crime that he felt was in the public interest to know,” she told me. “Seeing my own son Gary McKinnon suicidal and in permanent mental torment through the terror of proposed extradition, leaves me in no doubt that much-needed compassion must be brought to bear in this very lengthy tragic case.”

Patel has an important choice, but it is not difficult. [Extradition](#) should be resisted. Assange should be released and allowed to resume a normal life. Anyone who seriously values freedom of expression should support his fight.

- Duncan Campbell is a former Guardian crime correspondent and Los Angeles correspondent
  - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)*
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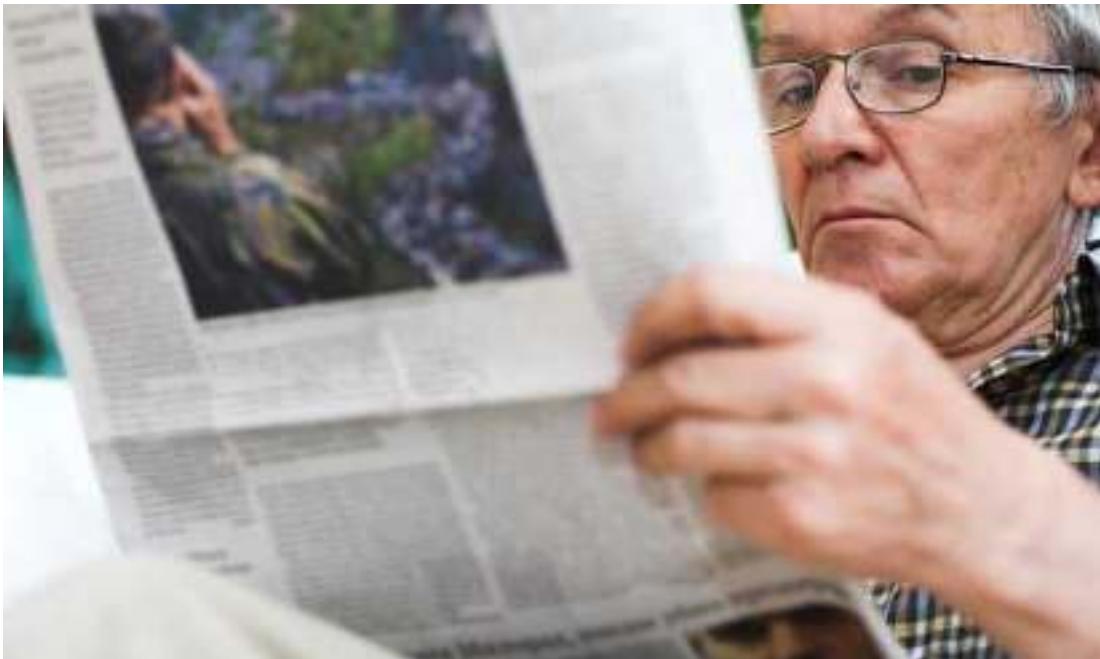
**OpinionPolitics**

# **Who's really obsessed with sex, superfoods and 'snowflakes'? It's not the public**

[Zoe Williams](#)



From the Daily Mail to the Express, the rightwing press has gone bananas. And it hates Britain



‘They use their own distortions and excesses to prove how distorted and excessive we’ve all become.’ Photograph: drxy/Getty Images/iStockphoto (Posed by a model)

Tue 10 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 06.58 EDT

Over the weekend, the columnist Matthew Parris described how Britain has become, if not ungovernable, at the very least a depressingly awful populace to imagine yourself governing. “A nation that has become obese, uncompetitive, underskilled, stay-at-home, health-obsessed, celebrity-obsessed, rights-obsessed, blame-obsessed, sex-obsessed, woke-obsessed, house-price-obsessed,” he wrote. There was more on the same theme. I shouldn’t really quote it in full, otherwise I would come over as Parris-obsessed, and then where would I be? Totally ungovernable.

The problem is, I don’t think I’ve ever met anyone like this. OK, maybe some of us could lose a few pounds. Certainly, a lot of us believe in universal human rights, but I don’t know that you’d call it “obsession”, nor that you could lump it in with a sex obsession, and while we’re here, I don’t even know what a blame obsession is.

Yet, even while I’ve never observed it in the wild, this thumbnail – let’s, for brevity, call it the worst society on earth – is ringing a bell. I’ve definitely

seen it around – on the pages of the Daily Mail, the Sun and the Express. The fulminating is ceaseless: women “flaunt their curves”, but “sexist slurs” are what other people do; “wokies” and “snowflakes” have capsized education and only know how to complain; renters scavenge off decent people by not being able to buy their own home, because they have spent all their money on coffee then call their landlords because they can’t change a lightbulb; immigrants have 12 children, then selfishly demand that *all* of them get to go to school. These newspapers burrow around, looking for the most egregious examples of “rights-obsession” Facebook has to offer, and when they can’t find anything, grab a video of the heartwarming moment a puppy sees a mirror for the very first time.

The rightwing press has gone not-that-quietly bananas, and we’re all supposed to pretend not to notice. To complain about bias is seen as special pleading. Certain sections of the media have always been openly partisan; only boring people thump on about it. Likewise, to point out the more alarming flirtations with the far right – maybe a columnist wondering about “the Muslim problem” or a political editor pitting the people against the judiciary – would be very old hat. Sweetie, if you think that’s bad, you should have lived through the good old days, when the leader pages openly supported Hitler!

But, underneath this same old story, something has changed. The agenda remains the same – the rightwing press supports the right, it’s hardly a mystery – but the standards are different. Consistency has been jettisoned. One day’s headline will be: “As the Left howls for resignations over Met’s £50 Covid fines … Don’t they know there’s a war on?”, and the next seven days will be Keir Starmer drinking a beer. One day, they run a tawdry and sexist smear of Angela Rayner, the next they are asking: “Why is Westminster so tawdry and sexist?”

I originally thought the relationship with this part of the print media was like going out with an addict: they might not mean to be hurtful, but they fog you with their own confusion, can’t follow through, can’t keep their story straight. In fact, it’s more like going out with Mr Benn. Which time zone will he be sporting his charming bowler hat in today? Will he have any recollection of where he was yesterday or how it relates to now? Will he have the values of the 1950s (women! Does ambition give you breast

cancer?), or the 1890s (bow down before your royal overlords – how much they spent on a legal defence against sexual abuse allegations is none of your concern)?

Allied to the inconsistency is maddening projection: they can't remember what happened 24 hours ago, so neither can you. They're obsessed with "woke", therefore you are. They're constantly questing after superfoods, therefore you're health-obsessed. They create a public in their own image, and then viscerally hate it. They use their own distortions and excesses to prove how distorted and excessive we've all become.

And some kind of back-to-front notion of stoicism requires us not to mention it. See something embarrassing, avert your eyes. Look, over there, a cat in a funny place!

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)*

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## 2022.05.10 - Around the world

- ['No end in sight' Shanghai residents chafe at harsh Covid measures](#)
- [Little Amal Giant puppet to meet Ukrainian refugee children in Poland](#)
- [Live Business: Tesco chairman calls for energy windfall tax; Markets on edge after 'everything rout'](#)
- [Facebook Former moderator in Kenya sues over working conditions](#)
- [Tesla Firm halts most production in Shanghai over supply problems](#)

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## ‘No end in sight’: Shanghai residents chafe at harsh Covid measures



China's reluctance to budge on its strict zero-Covid policy is causing problems in Shanghai Photograph: Héctor Retamal/AFP/Getty Images

Tensions rise again as lockdowns grind on and the city's population tire of strict zero-Covid policy

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)

*Vincent Ni* China affairs correspondent

Mon 9 May 2022 21.21 EDT Last modified on Wed 11 May 2022 00.09 EDT

Tensions between Shanghai residents and China's Covid enforcers are on the rise again, amid a new push to end infections outside quarantine zones to meet President Xi Jinping's demand for achieving "dynamic zero-Covid".

Videos shared on China's social media platforms showed suspected Covid-positive patients forcibly quarantined in central facilities. In some neighbourhoods a single positive case could lead to residents in the entire apartment building be sent for quarantine.

Censors have been taking down many of these videos, but determined residents have continued to post them. Past speeches by top officials and legal scholars have resurfaced in which they speak of the importance of the rule of law. These speeches have been shared and reposted on social media to express disapproval of government policy.

Last week, Xi reiterated that his government had no intention of turning away from the controversial zero-Covid commitment, in a major speech to the country's senior cadres. He urged officials to "unswervingly adhere to the general policy of dynamic zero-Covid" and warned against any criticism or doubting of the policy.

## **'There is no why'**

Over the weekend, residents in at least four of Shanghai's 16 districts reported receiving notices that told them they would no longer be able to receive food deliveries or leave their homes, prompting numerous complaints on social media.

"The virus itself is no longer scary, but the way the government enforced the policy has become the most frightening thing," said one Shanghai resident,

who wished to remain anonymous. “We had thought the lockdown could be eased this month, but now there’s no end in sight again.”

In the past few days, a number of videos shared on social media showed that health officials – also called Dàbái, or “Big Whites” due to their white hazmat suits – entered residents’ homes and sprayed disinfectants everywhere. This practice outraged many residents, who questioned the legality. Others asked whether such a measure had any scientific basis.



A resident looks out through a gap in the barrier at a residential area during lockdown in Shanghai. Photograph: Aly Song/Reuters

[In one viral video](#), hazmat-suited enforcement officers ordered residents to be quarantined after a neighbour tested positive. “It’s not that you can do whatever you want – unless you’re in America. This is China,” one of the officers is heard saying. “Stop asking me why, there is no why. We have to adhere to national guidelines.” The Guardian does not know the identities of the residents and whether they were eventually taken away.

Not all Shanghai residents were compliant. In a separate video, a local resident addressed government health workers to abide by China’s law. The middle-aged man, clad in a red protective suit with a face mask and a face

shield, pointed out that there was always a limit to the power government officials are entitled to, and citizens' rights should not be abused.

"Let me tell you," the man said, "you can only use your power with the authorisation of law ... You have to tell me which items in our country's law allowed you to carry out your public power today? ... Therefore, you cannot enforce hard isolation [upon us]."

It is not the first time that the government's enforcement of zero-Covid has led to tensions in Shanghai, home to 25 million people and a key financial hub in Asia. In April, residents in Pudong – the eastern part of the city – scuffled with hazmat-suited police who were forcing them to surrender their homes to become coronavirus quarantine facilities.

## **'Legal disaster'**

Worried about Covid-prevention excesses, legal scholars have voiced their concerns. On Sunday, a long appeal letter urging the government to abide by China's constitution was widely shared on social media. Censors took down the article multiple times but many determined residents continued to post it.

The lead author of the letter, Prof Tong Zhiwei at Shanghai's East China University of Political Science and Law, said the restrictions and the way the authorities enforced them could lead to "some kind of legal disaster".

"Pandemic prevention needs to be balanced with ensuring people's rights and freedoms," Tong wrote. "Local governments and officials need to stick to the constitution and laws, and cannot destroy the rule of law for convenience."

Guobin Yang, a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of the book [The Wuhan Lockdown](#), said: "Like what we've seen in Wuhan in 2020 when the virus first emerged, citizens are protesting against the government's blunt enforcement of lockdowns. Shanghai has taken this dynamic to a new level, but we still don't know how the government will respond in the end."

Shanghai is in its sixth week of lockdown. Case numbers have been decreasing, according to local health officials. On Monday, Shanghai reported 322 locally transmitted Covid cases, 3,625 local asymptomatic infections, and 11 deaths for the previous 24 hours. It was a continued drop in new cases for the 10th straight day.

It is not just Shanghai that has been under some form of restrictions. In Beijing, where daily case numbers are far below Shanghai's at this point in its outbreak, the government has asked residents to work from home. Dozens of bus routes and almost 15% of the Chinese capital's sprawling subway system have been suspended.

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## Refugees

# Giant puppet Little Amal to meet Ukrainian refugee children in Poland

Model of 10-year-old Syrian girl that has become symbol of compassion will visit border town of Przemyśl

- [Russia-Ukraine war: latest updates](#)



Little Amal outside the Ukrainian embassy in London in March.  
Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

*[Harriet Sherwood](#) Arts and culture correspondent  
[@harrietsherwood](#)*

Tue 10 May 2022 05.56 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 06.45 EDT

After last year's [5,000-mile journey](#) across Europe to draw attention to the plight of refugees, Little Amal, a giant puppet of a 10-year-old Syrian girl, has travelled to Poland to meet children who have fled the war in Ukraine.

Amal became an international symbol of displacement and loss – but also of compassion and generosity – when, with a team of puppeteers and support workers, she walked from Gaziantep near the Turkish-Syrian border to Manchester between July and October.

This week the 3.5-metre puppet will visit the Polish cities of Lublin and Kraków to meet Ukrainian refugee children and families who have left their homes since Russia launched its military offensive on 20 February.

Amir Nizar Zuabi, the artistic director of The Walk, Amal's trans-European journey, said: “At a time of unprecedented global change, Amal's journeys transcend borders, politics and language to tell a new story of shared humanity – and to ensure the world doesn't forget the millions of displaced children, each with their own potential to enhance the communities in which, as we hope, they will find refuge.”

The Polish trip, which includes visiting Przemyśl, a town close to the border with [Ukraine](#), is at the invitation of the mayors of Lublin and Kraków and the Ukrainian embassy in Poland. Amal and her crew have taken with them aid and supplies aimed at the needs of young children.

Aleksander Sola, the vice-president of the Folkowisko Foundation, which is supporting the trip, said: “We hope that Amal will draw the world's attention to the refugee crisis that Europe has not seen since the end of world war two. Amal symbolises the millions of refugees who have been forced to leave their homes.”

Amal, whose name means hope in Arabic, was created by Handspring, the company that made the [equine puppets in War Horse](#). Three puppeteers are needed to operate Amal.

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# Tesco chairman calls for energy windfall tax; Markets rebound after ‘everything rout’ – as it happened

Rolling coverage of the latest economic and financial news

- [Closing post](#)
- [Tesco chair backs windfall tax](#)
- [John Allan: Food poverty is rising](#)
- [Markets on edge after ‘everything rout’](#)
- [Cost of living crisis slows UK consumer spending but holiday bookings take off](#)

Updated 5d ago

[Graeme Wearden](#)

Tue 10 May 2022 10.28 EDTFirst published on Tue 10 May 2022 02.44 EDT



An oil platform in the North Sea. Photograph: Andy Buchanan/AFP/Getty Images

*Graeme Wearden*

Tue 10 May 2022 10.28 EDTFirst published on Tue 10 May 2022 02.44 EDT

## Key events

- [5d ago Closing post](#)
- [5d ago Bundesbank boss urges ECB to raise rates in July](#)
- [5d ago Wall Street opens higher](#)
- [5d ago Electric car battery shortage looms in 2025, warns Stellantis boss](#)
- [5d ago Peloton shares slide after earnings miss](#)
- [5d ago Full story: Tesco chairman backs energy windfall tax to fight living costs crisis](#)
- [5d ago Tesco chairman: We're seeing real food poverty](#)

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## Live feed

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From 5d ago

03.41

## Tesco chairman calls for energy windfall tax

**The chairman of Tesco has called for a windfall tax on energy producers to help struggling families in the cost of living crisis.**

John Allan told Radio 4's Today Programme that he hopes [today's Queen's Speech](#) will include support for people in need, including help with the jump in energy prices.

And he throws his personal support behind a windfall tax on energy producers, which many groups including the Labour Party have been pushing for.

Allan says:

I think there's an overwhelming case for a windfall tax on profits from those energy producers, fed back to those most in need of help with energy prices.

I think that would be the single biggest thing that could be done.

*Q: The argument against that is that it might deter companies from investing in sources of energy [as the government has argued].*

Allan, who is expressing a personal view rather than a Tesco view, brushes this aside:

I think they are expecting it, and I doubt they would actually be much phased by it. And it should be short-term only.

[Last week, [BP's CEO Bernard Looney undermined Boris Johnson's argument against a windfall tax](#), saying it would go ahead with investment in Britain even if a levy were imposed]

Chairman of Tesco John Allan tells BBC R4 there's an "overwhelming case" for a windfall tax, "fed back to those most in need of help" with energy prices.

Allan says his personal view is energy companies "are expecting it and I doubt they would actually be much phased by it".

— Ashley Cowburn (@ashcowburn) [May 10, 2022](#)

Allan also explains that he visited a Tesco store over the weekend, and heard people telling checkout staff to stop scanning products when the bill reached a certain amount, such as £40.

That's a sign of just how stretched some families are, he adds.

A lot of people are feeling something of a pinch, and lots of people are actually feeling extremely stretched.

Tesco chairman John Allan on [@BBCr4today](#) calling for a windfall tax on energy firms to ease cost-of-living crisis...

— Hannah Uttley (@huttleymedia) [May 10, 2022](#)

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Updated at 03.42 EDT

[5d ago](#) [10.28](#)

## Closing post

Time for a recap.

**The chairman of Britain's largest supermarket group has urged the government to implement a windfall tax on energy giants, to help fund**

**more support for struggling families.**

In a notable intervention, Tesco chairman John Allan said there was an “overwhelming case” for a windfall tax on the earnings of energy firms, who have benefitted from the surge in oil and gas prices.

Allan also warned that the UK is now seeing “We are seeing real food poverty for the first time in a generation”.

Allan’s comments came as British Gas said it hiring more people to deal with a rise in the number of distressed customers who are struggling to cope with soaring energy bills.

But its owner, [Centrica](#), also predicted annual profits this year will hit the top end of expectations.

The UK’s soaring cost of living and last month’s record increase in household energy bills have slammed the brakes on consumer spending, retail sector figures show.

Stock markets have rebounded from their worst session in almost two years yesterday.

In London, the **FTSE 100** index has recovered almost half of Monday’s losses, up 70 points at 7208 points, while Wall Street has also rebounded.

Tuesdays apparently auspicious days for the S&P 500. Bespoke Investment Group: 'On average, SPY has gained 0.52% on the trading day after 3%+ drops. Tuesdays have seen by far the biggest upside response with an average gain of 1.86%. Fortunately for bulls, today is Tuesday.'

— Naomi Rovnick 歐蜜 (@naomi\_rovnick) [May 10, 2022](#)

It follows a heavy tumble on Monday, in which stocks, bonds, industrial and precious metals, oil and crypto currencies had all fallen.

Elswhere....

[Germany's central bank boss has called for eurozone interest rates to rise in July, warning of the growing risk that policymakers act too late.](#)

[Heathrow has lifted its forecast for passenger growth this year by 16% after a rise in holidaymakers over Easter.](#) The airport now expects 53 million passengers this year, up from 45.5m, following an increase in passengers in April due to “outbound leisure travellers and Brits cashing in airline travel vouchers”.

Shares in **Peloton** have dropped 12% in early trading to around \$12.36, after [the home exercise equipment firm reported a larger loss than expected.](#)

The chief executive of **Stellantis**, one of the world’s biggest carmakers, has warned battery shortages could affect the industry as soon as 2025 as the transition towards electric vehicles accelerates.

The warning comes as UK secondhand electric car sales more than double, as demand surges.

Tesla has halted most of its production at its Shanghai plant because of problems securing parts for its electric vehicles.

Big high street pharmacy chains including Boots and Superdrug have run out of some hay fever medicines, with the manufacturer, [GlaxoSmithKline](#), blaming temporary supply issues.

And Sanjeev Gupta’s GFG Alliance faces a fight against insolvency for some of its key companies after [Credit Suisse](#) withdrew from a long negotiation over debts.

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5d ago **10.22**

## Bundesbank boss urges ECB to raise rates in July

**Germany's central bank boss has called for eurozone interest rates to rise in July.**

Joachim Nagel said in a speech there was a growing risk that policymakers act too late, as consumers and businesses' inflation expectations rise.

Nagel fears that central bankers could be forced into "strong and abrupt" increases in borrowing costs, as occurred in the US under Paul Volcker.

### As Nagel put it:

As central banks consider how to bring inflation back down to target, it is worth recalling the conditions under which the last, most prominent disinflation episode – the Volcker disinflation at the end of the 1970s – played out. Over the course of this policy, nominal interest rates in the US rose above 20%.

Of course, at that time the situation was different in many respects. Debt ratios were much lower than they are today, for both public and private debt. Inflation had already been higher in the 1960s and early 1970s. And arguably, before this episode, the Fed may have been less independent and less focused on inflation than it is today.

There is one lesson I would draw from this: Delaying a monetary policy turnaround is a risky strategy. The more inflationary pressures spread, the greater the need for a very strong and abrupt interest rate hike.

Bundesbank President [#JoachimNagel](#) on [#monetarypolicy](#) in the [#euroarea](#) at the International Economic Symposium co-hosted by

Bundesbank and [@business\\_econ](#) [#inflation](#) [#interestrates](#) [#ECB](#)  
<https://t.co/cu3nNuZHDz> pic.twitter.com/QNg5Hln93k

— Deutsche Bundesbank (@bundesbank) [May 10, 2022](#)

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[5d ago](#)[09.53](#)

**Citigroup is overhauling the leadership of one of the teams linked to the ‘flash crash’ that sent European stock markets at the start of last week, three sources have told Reuters.**

European markets briefly plunged on the morning of Monday 2nd May, in a short tumble that saw Sweden’s benchmark **OMX 30** fall by nearly 8%.

Citi confirmed that one of its traders had made an error when inputting a transaction, and that the mistake was quickly corrected [the UK market was closed for the Bank Holiday break].

This post was amended on 11 May 2022 to remove a section from a Reuters report relating to Ali Omari leaving his position as EMEA Head of Delta One Forwards and Sectors at Citigroup. Reuters reported in an [update](#) to that story later on 10 May that Omari “left the US bank in a decision unrelated to the [flash crash] event”. Omari told Reuters he was not at work for three weeks prior to the May 2 event, and only returned to the office the next day to tender his resignation before taking up another opportunity.

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Updated at 08.55 EDT

[5d ago](#)[09.38](#)

## Wall Street opens higher



A Wall Street street sign near the New York Stock Exchange. Photograph: John Angelillo/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

**It looks like Turnaround Tuesday on Wall Street, as investors move back into stocks after Monday's losses.**

The **S&P 500** index of US stocks has gained 56 points, or 1.4%, in early trading to 4047 points, after hitting a 13-month low yesterday.

Tech stocks are having a strong start, with the **Nasdaq Composite** up 1.8%.

But the worries about slowing growth, China's lockdown, the Ukraine war and inflation haven't all gone away, as **Craig Erlam**, senior market analyst at **OANDA**, writes:

We're seeing a small recovery in stock markets on Tuesday, as investors dust themselves off following the rout at the start of the week.

There's clearly a huge amount of worry about a recession in the markets at the minute as central banks continue to aggressively tighten against the backdrop of a slowing economy and a cost-of-living crisis.

There's a lot of pressure on household budgets and it's only going to intensify as the year progresses which will take its toll.

The Bank of England alluded to that last week, with a recession now expected later this year as energy prices surge once more. While the Fed and others may still be more optimistic about their prospects, with a soft landing still the base case in the US, many are sceptical it can be achieved.

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[5d ago](#)[09.30](#)

## Electric car battery shortage looms in 2025, warns Stellantis boss



Jasper Jolly

The chief executive of [Stellantis](#), one of the world's biggest carmakers, has warned battery shortages could affect the industry as soon as 2025 as the transition towards electric vehicles accelerates.

Carlos Tavares, the Stellantis chief executive, said that current plans for battery production may not address the demand from carmakers as they ramp up electric car sales in the coming years, even with significant new investments in European “gigafactory” battery plants and suppliers already at scale in China, South Korea and Japan.

Warning that battery components could be the next bottleneck facing the industry, Tavaress said:

“I can anticipate that we will have around 2025, 2026, a short supply of batteries, and if there is no short supply of batteries then there will be a significant dependence of the western world vis-a-vis Asia,”

Speaking on Tuesday at a car industry conference run by the Financial Times, the boss of Stellantis (whose brands include Peugeot, Vauxhall, Fiat, Chrysler and Jeep) explained:

“That’s something that we can easily anticipate.

“The speed at which everybody is building manufacturing capacity for batteries is possibly on the edge to be able to support the fast-changing markets in which we are operating.”

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[5d ago](#)[09.24](#)

Wall Street's still on track for a rebound....

US      Opening      Calls:[#DOW](#)      32587      +1.05%[#SPX](#)      4051  
+1.47%[#NASDAQ](#)      12488      +2.40%[#RUSSELL](#)      1787      +1.50%[#FANG](#)  
5085 +2.90%[#IGOpeningCall](#)

— IGSquawk (@IGSquawk) [May 10, 2022](#)

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[5d ago09.07](#)

Back on Peloton's struggles, CEO Barry McCarthy has told shareholders that the firm is “thinly capitalised” for a business of its scale -- and has lined up loans from JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs.

McCarthy wrote:

We finished the quarter with \$879 million in unrestricted cash and cash equivalents, which leaves us thinly capitalized for a business of our scale.

Earlier this week we took steps to strengthen our balance sheet by signing a binding commitment letter with JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs to borrow \$750 million in 5-year term debt.

Peloton is also struggling with a stock of unsold equipment, McCarthy added:

The balance sheet challenge has been managing inventory. We have too much for the current run rate of the business, and that inventory has consumed an enormous amount of cash, more than we expected.

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[5d ago08.44](#)

**A US central bank policymaker has pledged that the Federal Reserve can bring inflation down while maintaining a strong economy this year.**

New York Fed President John Williams told an economic conference in Germany that “While the task is difficult, it is not insurmountable”.

We have the tools to return balance to the economy and restore price stability, and we are committed to using them.

Williams explains that the Fed's actions (higher interest rates and unwinding its stimulus) will cool the demand side of the equation, while supply problems should ease.

[Bloomberg has more details:](#)

The New York Fed chief outlined a scenario in which higher interest rates would help bring the inflation rate down to “nearly 4%” before declining to “about 2.5%” in 2023 and returning close to the Fed’s 2% target in 2024.

Meanwhile, the US job market and economy should “continue to show strength and resilience,” with growth of “around 2%” this year and “the unemployment rate to remain around its current low level” of 3.6%, he said.

□□ \*[#FED](#) WILLIAMS SEES U.S. GDP GROWTH AT ABOUT 2% IN 2022 - BBG

\*WILLIAMS SEES Y/Y PCE INF AT NEARLY 4% IN '22, '23 ABOUT 2.5%

\*WILLIAMS SEES INFLATION EASING CLOSER TO 2% FED GOAL IN 2024

\*WILLIAMS: [#FOMC](#) TO MOVE ‘EXPEDITIOUSLY’ TO NORMALIZE RATES

— Christophe Barraud□□ (@C\_Barraud) [May 10, 2022](#)

Summary of [#Fed](#) Governor Williams on economy's prospects indicate the need to understand that a soft/softish landing is like baking a cake, you need to break some eggs.

— Kate's Dad (@KASDad) [May 10, 2022](#)

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[5d ago08.19](#)

**An abrupt halt of Russian gas exports could see economies in emerging Europe, central Asia and north Africa slide back to pre-pandemic GDP levels, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) warned today.**

Many countries in the EBRD's region of operation, which covers some 40 economies stretching from Mongolia to Slovenia and Tunisia, depend on Russian gas and a sudden ceasing of supplies would lower output per capita by 2.3% this year and 2% in 2023, according to the lender's latest report.

“Europe is discussing to stop purchases of hydrocarbons from Russia,” chief economist Beata Javorcik told Reuters.

“There is also the possibility that Russia would stop supplying its gas.”

The **EBRD** predicts that Ukraine’s GDP will contract 30% in 2022, worse than the 20% annual decline it estimated [at the end of March \[the World Bank forecast a 45% plunge last month\]](#).

Russia’s economy is expected to shrink 10% and stagnate in 2023.

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[5d ago08.14](#)



Julia Kollewe

**Back in the UK, high street pharmacy chains including Boots and Superdrug have run out of some hay fever medicines, with the manufacturer, [GlaxoSmithKline](#), blaming temporary supply issues.**

Piriton and Piriteze tablets, made by GSK, are out of stock at [Boots](#) and other chains because there is an industry-wide shortage of the active ingredient, chlorphenamine maleate, which is also used to treat eczema and food allergies.

The products are expected to be back on shelves within the next few weeks, according to the industry.

GSK said its Piriteze allergy syrup, which is given to children, was not affected by the problems. [More here.](#)

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[5d ago](#)[08.14](#)

It sounds like people want to work from home but not exercise there. Peloton shares fall 29% after company posts huge loss.  
<https://t.co/RcTevgoC4m> #fitness #healthclubs

— Joe Connolly (@JoeConnollybiz) [May 10, 2022](#)

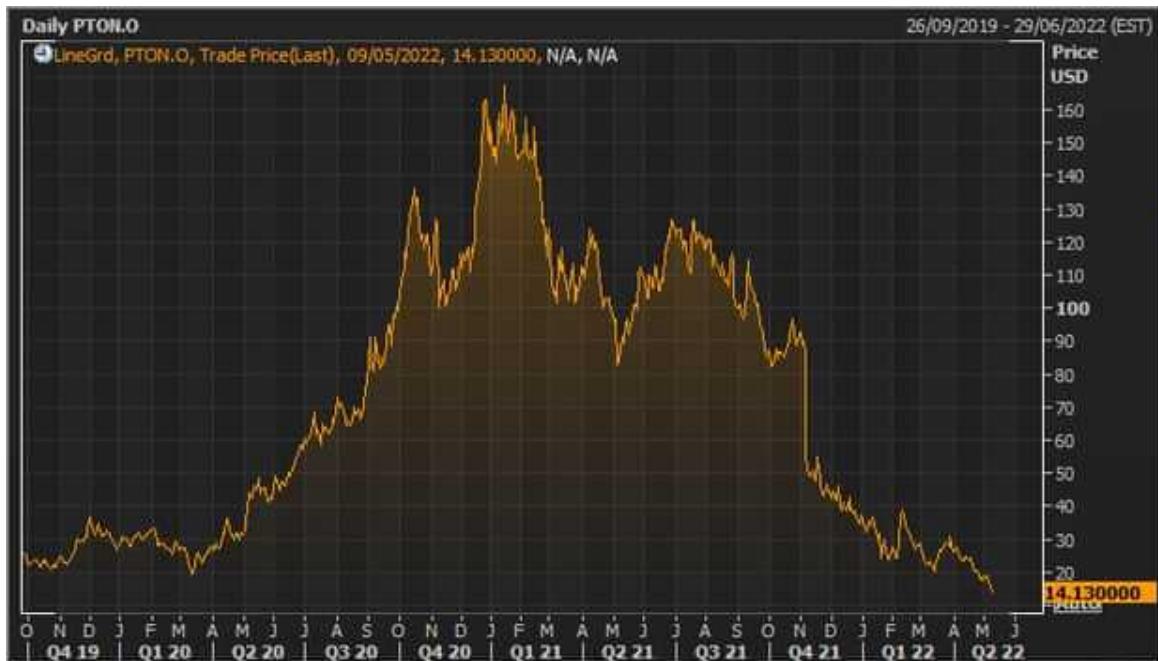
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[5d ago](#) [07.57](#)

**Peloton's share price is a drastic example of the rise and fall of the 'pandemic winners'**

Having floated at \$29 per share in 2019, Peloton soared during the lockdowns to hit \$171 by February 2021.

That valued the home exercise kit maker at \$50bn, as demand for its web-enabled connected bicycles was boosted by the closure of gyms.



Peloton's share graph Photograph: Refinitiv

But as vaccine rollouts led to lockdown restrictions, shares sank - and are now just \$10 each in pre-market trading, [after today's earnings miss](#).

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**Facebook**

# Ex-Facebook moderator in Kenya sues over working conditions

Petition alleges local workers subjected to irregular pay and inadequate mental health support



Mercy Mutemi, a lawyer representing a former Facebook content moderator, addresses a news conference outside court in Nairobi. Photograph: Baz Ratner/Reuters

*Reuters in Nairobi*

Tue 10 May 2022 05.02 EDT Last modified on Wed 11 May 2022 00.09 EDT

A former [Facebook](#) moderator has filed a lawsuit against its owner, Meta Platforms, alleging poor working conditions for contracted content moderators violate the Kenyan constitution.

The petition, also filed against Meta's local outsourcing company Sama, alleges that workers moderating Facebook posts in [Kenya](#) have been subjected to unreasonable working conditions including irregular pay,

inadequate mental health support, union-busting, and violations of their privacy and dignity.

The lawsuit, filed by one person on behalf of a group, seeks financial compensation, an order that outsourced moderators get the same health care and pay scale as Meta employees, that unionisation rights be protected, and an independent human rights audit of the office.

A Meta spokesperson told Reuters: “We take our responsibility to the people who review content for Meta seriously and require our partners to provide industry-leading pay, benefits and support. We also encourage content reviewers to raise issues when they become aware of them and regularly conduct independent audits to ensure our partners are meeting the high standards we expect.”

Sama declined to comment before seeing the lawsuit but has previously rejected claims that its employees were paid unfairly, that the recruitment process was opaque, or that its mental health benefits were inadequate.

The lawsuit’s specific requests for action are more granular and wide-ranging than those sought in previous cases and could reverberate beyond Kenya.

“This could have ripple effects. Facebook is going to have to reveal a lot about how they run their moderation operation,” said Odanga Madung, a fellow at the Mozilla Foundation, a US-based global nonprofit dedicated to internet rights.

Globally, thousands of moderators review social media posts that could depict violence, nudity, racism or other offensive content. Many work for third-party contractors rather than tech companies.

Meta has already faced scrutiny over content moderators’ working conditions. Last year, a California judge [approved an \\$85m settlement](#) between Facebook and more than 10,000 content moderators who had accused the company of failing to protect them from psychological injuries resulting from their exposure to graphic and violent imagery.

Facebook did not admit wrongdoing in the California case but agreed to take measures to provide its content moderators, who are employed by third-party vendors, with safer work environments.

The Kenyan lawsuit was filed on behalf of Daniel Motaung, who was recruited in 2019 from South [Africa](#) to work for Sama in Nairobi. Motaung says he was not given details about the nature of the work reviewing Facebook posts before his arrival.

The first video Motaung remembers moderating was of a beheading. He says his pay and mental health support were inadequate to cope with the disturbing content.

“I have been diagnosed with severe PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder),” Motaung told Reuters. “I am living … a horror movie.”

Motaung’s lawyers said that Meta and Sama created a dangerous and degrading environment where workers were not given the same protections as employees in other countries. “If in Dublin people can’t look at harmful content for two hours, that should be the rule everywhere,” Motaung’s lawyer Mercy Mutemi said. “If they need to have a psychologist on call, that should apply everywhere.”

Shortly after joining Sama, Motaung tried to form a union to advocate for the company’s roughly 200 workers in Nairobi.

He was fired soon after, which he and his lawyers say was because of the unionisation attempt. Union rights are enshrined in the Kenyan constitution. Sama has not commented on this allegation.

Motaung’s experience was first revealed in an [investigation published by Time magazine](#) in February.

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## [Tesla](#)

# **Tesla halts most production in Shanghai over supply problems**

Electric car plant has also been affected by intensifying Covid lockdowns in China



Tesla's Shanghai plant, also known as the Gigafactory 3, produces Model 3 and Model Y cars. Photograph: Aly Song/Reuters

*Reuters*

Tue 10 May 2022 03.16 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 10.03 EDT

Tesla has halted most of its production at its Shanghai plant because of problems securing parts for its electric vehicles, according to an internal memo seen by Reuters, the latest in a series of difficulties for the factory.

The plant plans to manufacture fewer than 200 vehicles on Tuesday, according to the memo, far fewer than the roughly 1,200 units it has been

building each day since shortly after it reopened on 19 April after a 22-day closure.

Two sources familiar with the matter had earlier said supply problems had forced the factory to halt production on Monday. Shanghai is in its sixth week of an intensifying Covid-19 lockdown that has tested the ability of manufacturers to operate amid hard restrictions on the movement of people and materials.

Tesla had planned as late as last week to increase output to pre-lockdown levels by next week. It was not immediately clear when the current supply issues would be resolved, said the sources, who asked not to be identified because the production plans are private. Tesla did not immediately respond to a query for comment.

China Passenger Car Association is scheduled to release April sales for Tesla, China's second-largest EV maker behind BYD, on Tuesday. Another automotive association said last week it estimated overall sales in [China](#) dropped 48% in April as zero-Covid lockdowns shut factories, limited traffic to showrooms and put the brakes on spending.

Aptiv, Tesla's main supplier of wire harnesses, stopped shipping from a Shanghai plant that supplies Tesla and General Motors after Covid-19 infections were found among its workers, two people familiar with the matter told Reuters.

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Tesla's Shanghai plant, also known as the Gigafactory 3, produces the Model 3 sedan and Model Y crossover for the China market and for export. [Tesla partially resumed production at the Shanghai plant](#) on 19 April after a 22-day closure caused by the city's Covid-19 lockdown.

Tesla had been aiming to increase output at its Shanghai plant to 2,600 cars a day from 16 May, Reuters reported previously.

Shanghai authorities have tightened a city-wide lockdown imposed more than a month ago on the commercial hub with a population of 25 million, a move that could extend curbs on movement through the month.

News of the production issues came on same day Tesla announced the recall of 130,000 vehicles in the US over an overheating issue that may cause the center touchscreen display to malfunction.

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# Headlines

- Cost of living crisis More than 2m adults in UK cannot afford to eat every day, survey finds
- 'Harsh and dangerous' London fire chiefs warn against fires in homes to save on heating bills
- 'Nowhere near enough' Scottish Power boss urges Sunak to take swift action on energy bills crisis
- 'At the library I can keep warm' Norfolk residents battling fuel poverty

## Food poverty

# More than 2m adults in UK cannot afford to eat every day, survey finds

One in seven adults estimated to be food-insecure, up 57% from January, owing to rising cost of living



Food banks say people are requesting food that does not need to be cooked or stored in a fridge or freezer. Photograph: Peter Summers/Getty Images

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

Sun 8 May 2022 19.01 EDT Last modified on Thu 12 May 2022 05.39 EDT

More than 2 million adults in the UK have gone without food for a whole day over the past month because they cannot afford to eat, according to a survey revealing the “catastrophic” impact of the [cost of living crisis](#).

The latest survey of the nation’s food intake shows a 57% jump in the proportion of households cutting back on food or skipping meals over the

first three months of this year, with one in seven adults (7.3 million) estimated to be food-insecure, up from 4.7 million in January.

The shadow work and pensions secretary, Jonathan Ashworth, described the findings as devastating, saying they exposed how families were being left in desperate hardship. “Boris Johnson is responsible for this crisis and has no solutions to fix it,” he said.

The survey came as one of Britain’s biggest energy suppliers called for urgent government action to help households cope with an anticipated £1,000 rise in bills this winter. The London fire brigade, meanwhile, was forced to issue an urgent safety warning against improvising fires at home, after a man set fire to his house by burning timber in his living room to keep warm.

### [graphic embed \(updated version 19.53\)](#)

The research by the Food Foundation thinktank found millions more people – including 2.6 million children – report they now have smaller meals than usual, regularly skip meals altogether or do not eat when they are hungry, as food insecurity returns to levels last seen at the start of the first national lockdown.

However, while many reported missing out on meals or eating irregularly during the first months of the pandemic because of food scarcity caused by panic buying and supply problems, the latest increase is put down to rising costs and poverty.

Food banks are reporting that energy costs are so prohibitive for some people they request that charity food parcels that contain no food that has to be cooked using a cooker or that needs to be stored in a fridge or freezer.

The rapid deterioration in food security reflects [soaring energy, food and petrol prices](#) coupled with below-inflation benefit rises. The Food Foundation said it was so shocked by its initial findings that it reran the survey on a wider basis, only to get the same results.

It predicted food insecurity figures were likely to get worse over the next few months as inflation continues to rise and the full impact of April's national insurance rise hits family budgets along with the lifting of the energy price cap.

Anna Taylor, the foundation's executive director, said: "The extremely rapid rise in food insecurity since January points to a catastrophic situation for families. Food insecurity puts families under extreme mental stress and forces people to survive on the cheapest calories, which lead to health problems."

Prof Sir Michael Marmot, a public health expert at University College London, said: "If one household in seven is food insecure, society is failing in a fundamental way. These figures on food insecurity are all the more chilling because the problem is soluble, but far from being solved it is getting worse."

There is little expectation that ministers will raise benefits or expand free school meals anytime soon, despite rising public concern over the cost of living. Last week, George Eustice, the environment, food and rural affairs secretary, urged consumers to switch to value brands to save on grocery spending in response to rising food prices.

"Bless him [Eustice], he's actually aware there are cheaper brand foods in the world. The poor man, who has lived such a sheltered life he thought 10p off a tin of beans would solve the problem," said Kathleen Kerridge, an office manager and food activist from Portsmouth.

On the food poverty frontline, charities are warning that demand for food is rising as budgets get tighter. Ellen-Scarlett Ryan, of Bassetlaw food bank in Worksop, said it supplied 24 households with food parcels on the day after Easter last month, way ahead of its previous record of 16.

Many of these clients had never before used food banks and were struggling with their newfound reliance on charity to feed their families, Ryan said. "We are finding people in floods of tears. They are so scared, they are at their wits' end. It is such a difficult and emotional time."

Households were making the food go further, she said, putting smaller portions on the table and bulking out dishes with lentils and rice. A growing number were asking for food that did not require cooking with the gas on, as they could not afford to put cash in the meter.

### Made in Liverpool: This land is our land – video

On Monday Keith Anderson, the chief executive of Scottish Power, said a fresh support package would be vital before a further dramatic increase in the cost of gas and electricity bills due in October.

A government spokesperson said: “We recognise the pressures on the cost of living and we are doing what we can to help, including spending £22bn across the next financial year to support people with energy bills and cut fuel duty.

“For the hardest hit, we’re putting an average of £1,000 more per year into the pockets of working families on universal credit, have also boosted the minimum wage by more than £1,000 a year for full-time workers and our household support fund is there to help with the cost of everyday essentials.”

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## Firefighters

# London fire chiefs warn against fires in homes to save on heating bills

Warning issued over improvised open fires after house set ablaze by man burning timber to keep warm



Photo issued by the London fire brigade shows damage to a house in New Malden, south-west London, caused by an open fire. Photograph: London fire brigade/PA

*[Helen Pidd](#)*

Sun 8 May 2022 19.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 9 May 2022 00.08 EDT

People should not try to reduce their energy bills by improvising open fires at home, fire chiefs have warned, after a man in south-west [London](#) set fire to his property by burning timber in his living room to keep warm.

The man was trying to avoid putting on the central heating in his home, fire investigators said.

Fuel poverty campaigners said the incident – one of at least 100 involving open fires, log burners and heaters in the capital in the last few months – laid bare “the harsh and dangerous reality of the cost-of-living crisis”.

Issuing an urgent safety warning, the London fire brigade (LFB) said the cause of the blaze on 26 April had been determined as “involving an open fire being used instead of gas central heating.”

It is understood to have also been caused by combustible items too close to an open fire. The London ambulance service said it treated three people at the property in New Malden, with one man being taken to hospital as a priority.

The LFB said there had been more than 100 fires involving open fires, log burners and heaters in the past few months.

It fears the rise in energy bills could result in a surge of fires as people resort to alternative means to heat their homes throughout the colder spells of the year.

Charlie Pugsley, assistant commissioner for fire safety, said: “We know this is a difficult time and people are thinking about ways to reduce their energy bills, but we’re really concerned that they may be putting lives at risk by doing so.

“If you do have a log burner or an open fire, follow our advice carefully. Almost 30% of fires involving log burners, heaters and traditional open fires are caused by items being placed too close to a heat source. Always use a fire guard and keep anything that could catch alight well away, such as logs and kindling which could be ignited by radiating heat.”

Adam Scorer, the chief executive of the fuel poverty charity National Energy Action, described the incident as a “harsh and dangerous reality of the cost-of-living crisis”.

“One in four UK households are now in fuel poverty, which means millions are facing impossible choices because of their high energy bills,” he said. “Some are choosing between heating and eating, others are self

disconnecting completely and some are even starting open fires. These aren't coping strategies. It's people who feel they have no safe choice to make."

A government spokesperson said: "We recognise the pressures people are facing with the cost of living, which is why we have set out a £22bn package of support, including rebates and energy bill reductions."

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## Cost of living crisis

# Scottish Power boss urges Sunak to take swift action on energy bills crisis

Keith Anderson says fresh support package is vital before households hit by further increases in October



Ofgem is due to announce how much its energy price cap is due to go up in August, before the new limit takes effect from October for households in Great Britain. Photograph: Joe Giddens/PA

*[Alex Lawson](#) Energy correspondent*

Sun 8 May 2022 19.01 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 06.09 EDT

The boss of one of Britain's biggest energy suppliers has warned [Rishi Sunak](#) that further government help with the cost of living crisis must be announced as soon as possible to avoid an autumn emergency for struggling families.

Keith Anderson, the chief executive of [Scottish Power](#), said a fresh support package would be vital before a further dramatic increase in the cost of gas and electricity bills due in October, as Russia's war in Ukraine drives up energy costs to eye-watering levels.

The government energy regulator, Ofgem, is due to announce how much its consumer energy price cap is due to go up in August, before the new limit takes effect from October for households in Great Britain. Scottish Power forecasts the price cap could reach as high as £2,900, putting further pressure on families after last month's record increase from £1,277 to £1,971.

Warning that the government's existing plan to deal with the increase in energy costs exacerbated by Vladimir Putin's war fell significantly short of requirements, Anderson said immediate action was necessary to help the industry make preparations and to support families.

"You need to be in a position to name a solution in July if there's going to be time to devise a method of implementing it in time for October. It will be monumentally complicated. The key thing here is urgency and speed," he said.

Critics have accused Sunak of failing to act as Britain threatens to tip into recession amid rampant inflation fuelled by soaring energy bills, high petrol prices and the rising cost of the weekly shop.

Sunak announced plans in February to give 28 million households a £200 upfront discount on their bills in October, which is then to be repaid over five years. However, Anderson said progress in devising how to implement the scheme had been slow and the initiative came "nowhere near" offering enough help for struggling households.

"Our view is clearly now this £200 is not going to be anywhere near enough," he said.

The intervention comes as fears grow of an economic slump triggered by soaring living costs. Analysts from the EY Item Club said Britain's economy

faced the “serious risk” of falling into recession later this year because consumers suffering a sharp rise in their bills would cut back on other forms of spending.



Keith Anderson, the chief executive of Scottish Power. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

Martin Beck, the chief economic adviser to the forecasting group, said: “There is a significant risk that consumers, faced with a sustained squeeze on their finances, may cut spending in response. And while the rising cost of living will affect almost all households, some are more vulnerable than others.”

The Bank of England said on Thursday that the [risks of a recession were growing](#), and that inflation could peak above 10% later this year because of the expected further increase in gas and electricity bills.

Scottish Power has proposed that the government underwrites a “deficit fund” that could allow energy suppliers to cut £1,000 off bills for low-income households. The money would be paid down over a decade by adding £40 a year to all household energy bills. It is hoped that bills would come down over time as wholesale market prices fall back towards historic norms.

Anderson said he had presented his plans to MPs but so far not gained traction.

“If you wait until October to help people, you end up having to rush through a very blunt solution that probably doesn’t tackle the problem,” he said.

Martin Young, a senior energy analyst at Investec, said: “If nothing is done, people’s energy bills will more than double on last year in October. If the government doesn’t intervene and people have to choose between heating or eating there will be consequences for the health service. It makes sense to get on the front foot and act now.”

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Anderson said the government would need to identify consumers who could be helped with their bills. Those who currently receive universal credit or the warm home discount could be targeted but a far larger cohort of households are expected to be pushed into fuel poverty by rising bills if nothing is done to help with the cost.

A government spokesperson said: “We recognise the pressures people are facing with the cost of living, which is why we have set out a £22bn package of support, including rebates and energy bill reductions. We also urge energy companies to support their customers as we manage the impact of high global gas prices.

“We are also supporting vulnerable households through initiatives such as the £500m household support fund and the warm home discount, with the energy price cap continuing to insulate millions of families from high global gas prices.”

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## Fuel poverty

# ‘I come to the library to keep warm’: Norfolk residents battling fuel poverty

Downham Market library is a lifeline for older and vulnerable people needing somewhere warm to pass time without spending money



Library user Andrew Murkin in Downham Market in Norfolk. Photograph: Si Barber/The Guardian

*[Emily Dugan](#)*

*[@emilydugan](#)*

Sun 8 May 2022 11.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 9 May 2022 00.08 EDT

Every weekday Andrew Murkin comes to Downham Market library for books, wifi and – most importantly – warmth.

Murkin, who is 63 and receives disability benefits, lives in a bungalow in the [Norfolk](#) town and as his energy bills rose this winter he decided to heat only one room for two hours a day.

“In the winter I come to the library to keep warm,” he said. “I like to get up early. But sitting at home is miserable in the cold.”

At weekends, when his local library is mostly closed, he has few options. “In winter I just sit at home with my coat on and a duvet on,” he said. “I’ve been wearing two T-shirts, two jumpers and a coat inside. A lot of my friends do the same.”

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The plight of [Elsie](#), a 77-year-old who ate one meal a day and travelled on buses to stay warm, became emblematic of the cost of living crisis after Boris Johnson was confronted with her story in a Good Morning Britain interview. Her case has highlighted the challenges faced by older people unable to meet the cost of rising bills.

In Downham Market, near King’s Lynn, the library is a lifeline for older and vulnerable people looking for somewhere warm to pass time without spending money.

The south of the town has the ward with the highest proportion of pensioners in England and Wales, with 57% over-65. Many of them rely on the library.

Murkin is the first person to arrive at its Just a Cuppa session on Friday morning, a weekly event offering free tea and biscuits.

He used to work as a welder before problems with his diabetes and mobility two years ago made that too difficult. “It’s hard getting by on the money you get on benefits,” he said.

He has moved his bed into the living room so that he only needs to heat one room. “I go to bed a lot earlier than I used to just to keep warm,” he said.



Items such as clothing, soap and sanitary products are being given away to visitors at the town's library to help them cut down on bills. Photograph: Si Barber/The Guardian

This winter the library introduced free Keep Warm and Go bags packed with everything someone may need who was struggling to keep the cold away, including gloves, thermals, a scarf, blanket and a hat.

Fran Valentine, the library's manager, said it had proved popular. "We've had a lot of people coming in and picking them up," she said.

When Joan Mulholland, 89, found out last month her energy bills were due to increase again, she panicked. "I rang up the company and said: 'I'm not going to be able to afford £200 a month.'"

She gets by on a state pension and is worried it will not be enough this winter. "I'm thinking of stopping my TV licence off to pay for the heating," she said. "My weekly food bill has gone up by about £2 a week and I've cut back as much as I can."

Her late husband, Adrian, used to manufacture electrical parts and was also on a state pension. Since he died of cancer three years ago she has found it harder to meet the costs of running the bungalow they shared in the south of the town.

“It’s very difficult because I live on my own. I have to watch things like not putting too much water in the kettle. Lighting the oven for one meal works out very expensive when there’s only one of you, so I’m going to move to salads and not cook too much.”



Joan Mulholland: ‘I’ve cut back as much as I can.’ Photograph: Si Barber/The Guardian

She tries to heat the house as little as possible to save up for the coming winter. “Getting older you feel the cold much more and it’s very hard sometimes to sit there and think: ‘Well, I can’t turn on the heating.’”

Alex Coates, who runs the town’s food bank, says demand has soared since March as the cost of petrol, food and energy increased.

“It’s not just people on benefits, it’s two-parent families who are both working and they are struggling to decide whether to feed their children, put fuel in their car or heat their homes. That’s the dilemma a lot of families are facing,” she said.

Most of the people coming to them are parents with children and she worries that pensioners are suffering in silence.



Downham Market in Norfolk. The south ward of the town has the highest proportion of people over 65 in the country. Photograph: Si Barber/The Guardian

“That age group is very proud. We only really find out about them if they’ve been referred to us by a doctor or adult social services,” she said.

They are planning to bulk-buy hot-water bottles to give out before next winter, “so when people boil the kettle for their tea they can put the water that’s left in them to keep warm”.

Jill, 69, a former nursery worker, is the second to arrive at the library for tea. She has few savings and is reliant on her pension. She has cut right back to make the costs add up.

“I only have the heating and hot water on for an hour in the morning and then I get out in the garden and dig,” she said. “I go to bed early with an electric blanket. If I didn’t have that it would be terrible.”

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## 2022.05.09 - Spotlight

- [Medical cannabis Inside one of the first licensed labs in Britain](#)
- ['My pain levels completely dropped' How medical marijuana changed my life](#)
- ['I'd carry the misery around with me all day' Sissy Spacek on acting, grief and her sci-fi debut at 72](#)
- [Lorraine Kelly's year in TV It's a Sin was my actual life, except we were in Glasgow, not London](#)

## [Cannabis](#)

# Inside one of the first licensed medical cannabis labs in Britain

Under tightly controlled conditions, Celadon Pharmaceuticals' site will initially focus on chronic pain treatments

- ['My pain levels have dropped': how medical marijuana changed my life](#)



A Celadon agronomist checks a leaf in one of the grow rooms where the cannabis plants are cultivated. Photograph: Fabio De Paola/The Guardian



[Julia Kollewe](#)

Mon 9 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 9 May 2022 02.07 EDT

A sweet smell wafts through the air, as two men weave through the small room tightly packed with cannabis plants, growing high above their shoulders in a flush of intoxicating flora. This isn't yet another illegal weed factory but one of the first licensed medicinal marijuana labs in Britain.

Wielding a quantum sensor, microscope and leaf barometer to check in on the 180 plants growing up to 1.5 metres tall out of waist-height hydroponic planters, the two men are agronomists – experts in the science of crop production – at the West Midlands plant owned by Celadon Pharmaceuticals.

They want to ensure optimal light, oxygen, water and nutrient levels, and harvest the flowers after about nine weeks, from which cannabinoids are extracted and put into vials.

The cannabis grown for medicinal purposes is under tightly controlled conditions that ensure consistency and high quality across batches at a secret location by a startup created in 2018, the year Sajid Javid, the then UK home secretary, [authorised its use](#).

## Celadon uses an indoor lab rather than greenhouses

Celadon is one of the few firms that grow medical cannabis in the UK but, unlike others, uses an indoor lab rather than greenhouses. This means it can produce five to six harvests each year and a much higher yield, it says, although an indoor lab is more expensive to run.

The company is following in the footsteps of [GW Pharmaceuticals, a trailblazer](#) that developed the first cannabis-based medicine to be licensed in the UK in 2010, Sativex for multiple sclerosis, which costs about £2,000 a year. However, [NHS prescribing of the mouth spray remains very limited](#) and varies across the country.

Javid's decision to legalise medical cannabis in 2018 came after a long-running campaign waged by the parents of [children diagnosed with severe epilepsy](#), who reported that cannabis oil helped with their condition. However, medical cannabis can only be prescribed by specialist doctors, patients often pay for it themselves, and it cannot be imported until a prescription has been issued, on a named-patient basis.

James Short, the 54-year-old founder and chief executive of Celadon, was sceptical at first. "In early 2018, my son approached me and asked me did I want to invest in the medical cannabis sector? I said it's not for me," he says. "When the government legalised it, he came back to me and I said: 'Let's look at it.' I spoke to many patients who have used medicinal cannabis, especially for chronic pain, and it was those patients that persuaded me that it wasn't snake oil – it really worked and had changed their lives."



The Celadon Pharmaceuticals founder, James Short, was not initially interested in investing in the medical cannabis sector. Photograph: Fabio De Paola/The Guardian

Robin Davison, a biotech analyst at Equity Development, says: “A lot of people do find they are getting pain relief for long-term pain like back pain [from medical cannabis], and they want to avoid using opioids.” Other promising areas include anxiety, particularly in Alzheimer’s patients, which the rival pharmaceutical firm MGC is studying.

Celadon is believed to be one of the first pharmaceutical companies in the UK to receive a home office licence to grow high tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) medicinal cannabis, and will initially focus on chronic pain treatments. It is working with partners to investigate the potential of cannabinoids in other areas, including autism and diabetes.

The cannabis plant has hundreds of different natural compounds, or cannabinoids. The two best known are THC, which on the wrong levels can cause a “high” but relieves pain, and CBD, which is anti-inflammatory and moderates the psychoactive nature of THC.

The company grew some cannabis test batches to gain approval from the UK medical regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory

Agency, and is working on ramping up production. At full capacity, it could grow 10 to 15 tonnes a year and supply up to 50,000 patients, generating £90m in annual revenues. Short has ambitions to open more sites.



Building work at the Celadon Pharmaceuticals site. Photograph: Fabio De Paola/The Guardian

Big pharma has so far stayed away from a rapidly growing market that could be lucrative to the smaller players. The industry group Prohibition Partners estimates that about €354m worth of unlicensed medical cannabis will be sold in Europe this year, and projects this will grow to €2.3bn (£2bn) by 2026. Other analysts reckon these forecasts are too high but say growth will still be impressive.

Celadon has taken a majority stake in the private London pain clinic LVL Health, which is testing medical cannabis in 100 patients with non-cancer chronic pain in a feasibility study, before a wider trial of up to 5,000 people, the only such UK trial that has conditional regulatory approval. They are given an inhaler that uses ground cannabis flower in a cartridge which is a smart device that is connected to an app to control dosage.

Short, from Preston, is a former property developer who later switched to generating energy from waste, and then started investing in data companies.

He had bought a £30m one-storey datacentre that now serves as the site of Celadon's 100,000 sq ft medical cannabis lab, guarded by high security.



A Celadon agronomist checks the strength of the artificial light with a quantum sensor in a grow room where the cannabis plants are cultivated.

Photograph: Fabio De Paola/The Guardian

The Department of Health estimates that 8 million people in the UK suffer from a form of chronic pain, of whom 3 million may be eligible for cannabinoid medicines where other treatments have failed. An estimated 1.4 million people are buying cannabis products on the black market to self-medicate.

While the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes dates back thousands of years, the UK has lagged behind other countries such as Canada and Germany, and there have been [calls on the government](#) to allow GPs to prescribe medical cannabis.

Short's greatest frustration is the lack of reimbursement, and he says this is shortsighted. "I speak to patients on a regular basis who can't work and are in terrible pain each day, that don't want to be on opioids. Some are having to pay hundreds of pounds each month for medicinal cannabis. It really does work."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/09/inside-one-of-the-first-licensed-medical-cannabis-labs-in-britain>

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## Cannabis

# ‘My pain levels have completely dropped’: how medical marijuana changed my life

Andrea Wright, diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis and fibromyalgia, is now having a proper night’s sleep

- [Inside one of the first licensed medical cannabis labs in Britain](#)



Andrea Wright, from Bristol, was taking up to 40 tablets a day for constant pain before she joined the study. Photograph: Andrea Wright

[Julia Kollewe](#)

Mon 9 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 9 May 2022 02.08 EDT

Andrea Wright, 39, from Bristol, was diagnosed in 2013 with psoriatic arthritis and fibromyalgia, a long-term condition that causes pain all over the body. She was in such severe constant pain, and unable to sleep for more

than two continuous hours a night, that she was retired on ill health from her job at National Grid “at the grand old age of 33”.

She says: “I had to stop work because the pain was too much. It’s been very depressing; I really enjoyed my job. I tried so many different therapies and managed to get my arthritis under control but for fibromyalgia, there isn’t anything, no magical pill.”

She was taking up to 40 tablets a day, including 14 prescriptions such as opiate painkillers, as well as sleeping pills and laxatives to relieve the constipation caused by the painkillers.

Wright would never consider smoking cannabis recreationally but started inhaling medicinal cannabis as part of a study run by the private London pain clinic LVL Health in January. “To begin with I was completely knocked out but you do get used to it. Straight away my sleep was a million times better. I probably hadn’t had a proper night’s sleep since 2012. I stopped taking any sleeping pills. My pain levels have completely dropped as well.”

Her next step is to start weaning herself off the opiate painkillers. She will always have to take some medication but is now working as an operations manager for Flowaime, a Cadent (previously National Grid) contractor. “I’m able to work longer hours and go into the office. I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing now if it wasn’t for medical cannabis. It’s been life-changing.”

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Interview

## **‘I’d carry the misery around with me all day’: Sissy Spacek on acting, grief and her sci-fi debut at 72**

[Simon Hattenstone](#)



Sissy Spacek ... 'I am intense. Everything is extremely important.'  
Photograph: Rebecca Cabage/Invision/AP

The star of Carrie, Badlands and Coal Miner's Daughter talks about losing her brother, working with Hollywood's greats and infuriating Harvey Weinstein



Mon 9 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 06.11 EDT

'Hey *there!* How are *you!*'' hollers Sissy Spacek, as if she has just come across an old friend in the shopping mall. We've never met; I'm half an hour late for our video meeting and in a cold sweat. She is totally chilled and chuckles kindly at my incompetence.

Spacek has been one of my favourite actors for half a century. From the off, she starred in a series of fabulous films made by great directors: as 15-year-old Holly, who goes on a killing spree with her boyfriend in Terrence Malick's brilliant debut Badlands; as the manipulative identity thief Pinky Rose in Robert Altman's 3 Women; as blood-soaked Carrie in Brian De Palma's classic adaptation of the Stephen King novel; as the country singer [Loretta Lynn](#) in Michael Apted's Coal Miner's Daughter.

Spacek, 72, is a one-off. However creepy the characters she played in the early days, she endowed them with an otherwordly innocence. Carrie may be more famous for its ghoulishness, but the luminous purity she brings to the part is what makes it so memorable. Spacek plays Carrie with an almost religious sense of rapture. When her classmate Tommy reads a poem he pretends to have written, Carrie declares with dreamy awe that it is “beautiful”. In so many of her films, Spacek’s characters marvel at the beauty of life.

We see it again in her new Amazon series *Night Sky*, where her character spends night after night staring at the stars in wonderment. The series’ premise could not be more preposterous. A secret chamber in the back yard gives Irene York (Spacek) and her husband, Franklin (JK Simmons), access to a deserted planet. What makes it so compelling is the acting – Spacek is kindly and fragile, while Simmons is cantankerous but loving as a couple trying to come to terms with the suicide of their son many years previously.

“That was an interesting experiment,” Spacek says. “I’d never done sci-fi and that frightened me because I thought: ‘What do I have in my life that gives me anything to understand what she’s experiencing with that thing in the back yard?’” So what did you draw on? “Well, I don’t know.” She giggles, perplexed. “The thing that drew me to it was that wonderful relationship with her husband. That’s the thing that grounds it. You don’t often come across roles like that. So I thought: OK, well, I’ll figure out the sci-fi part later.” Spacek still speaks with a Texas twang – “my” is “mah”, “I” is “ah”. It’s a lovely, buoyant voice that ramps up her already turbocharged enthusiasm.



Spacek as Holly in *Badlands*. Photograph: Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy

Spacek has always looked for common ground with her characters. Once she finds it, she buries herself in them. It's not quite method acting, but it doesn't make for the most relaxed of working lives. When she played a suicidal daughter in 1986's *'night, Mother*, she felt she had to be in despair to do justice to the part. She found it draining, she says, not least because of her naturally sunny disposition. "If I was in a film that called for a very intense emotional scene in the afternoon, I'd get to the set and be in that mood all morning. I'd carry that misery around with me all day. When I worked with Jack Lemmon – what a great man! – he said to me: 'You know, you should ease up on yourself. It's either going to happen or it's not, so don't give everything over to the misery before you're even there. You'll wear yourself out.' That was some of the best advice I ever got." She looks up to the heavens. "So thank you, Jack Lemmon."

And you became less intense? She laughs. "I pretty much stayed as intense as ever. I *am* intense. Everything is to me *extremely* important. Every beat." She stops to think. Actually, she says, over time, she did begin to heed Lemmon's advice, because she realised working that way was unsustainable. "I would hear his voice. I trust myself more now not to have to hang on to whatever emotion."

Spacek has a tendency to belittle her achievements. She says she worked like that in the first place because she attended Lee Strasberg's Theatre and Film Institute for only a few months and dismisses herself as a "one-trick pony". While she learned about "sense memory" exercises, she didn't have time to master other techniques. "I'm certainly not the best actor in the world, or the most inventive, or the most schooled, but we all just work out our own little process – what works for us. I tell young actors to trust themselves, because acting is just how to unlock what's inside of you." Night Sky is not the first time she has played somebody who has lost a child. In Todd Field's [In the Bedroom](#), she played the mother of a young man killed by his lover's ex-husband. As always, she drew on lived experience to make the part as real possible. In this case, it was an experience that defined her life. At the age of 17, her 18-year-old brother, Robbie, died of leukaemia. She adored Robbie and losing him was shattering. But somehow she managed to turn it into a positive. In the past, she has said that his death became the inspiration for her career.

I ask her what she meant by that. "Well, I was very young and already I had a deep well of experience to use, as I use all things that have happened to me in my life." She says the pain she felt when Robbie died was so intense that it has never left her. "I can always depend on it. So it's like I didn't lose him. It's like he shared my career. It's been like rocket fuel. It made me braver." Because you had already experienced the worst life can throw at you, so there was nothing to be frightened of? "Yes, that's exactly it. You wonder why the world doesn't stop and it's very sobering. You don't just get grief; it's like cold water in your face. You want to say to the world: don't you know what just happened?"

"The loss of my brother was so fresh and so recent when I began to work that it was all there. The irony is that it's still there. It's been just a great ..." She exhales loudly, struggling for an appropriate word. "A great gift," she says, eventually. So you reclaimed him through your work? "Exactly. He's very alive in my heart and in my mind. So that's been a real special thing."



With Levon Helm in Coal Miner's Daughter, for which Spacek won an Oscar. Photograph: Universal/Allstar

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Mary Elizabeth Spacek was born on Christmas Day 1949 in Quitman, Texas. Her family were well established – her paternal grandfather was the mayor of Granger, Texas, her father a county agricultural agent and her mother a typist at the county courthouse. Her two older brothers called her Sissy and that is how it stayed.

Spacek's childhood was idyllic. She fished with her brothers, rode a horse called Buck, went barefoot throughout the summer, watched matinees at the local picture house and performed in talent contests from the age of six. It all came to an end when Robbie, an outstanding athlete, became ill. At 17, she spent the summer with her cousin, the actor Rip Torn, and his wife, Geraldine Paige, in New York to “get out from under” the unfolding family tragedy. Spacek had planned to go to the University of Texas, but Robbie’s death changed everything. After finishing high school, she returned to New York in the hope of becoming a great folk singer.

It didn't quite work out. In 1968, under the nom de plume Rainbo, she recorded a hilarious single called [John You Went Too Far This Time](#), declaring her love for John Lennon while berating him for posing nude with Yoko on the Two Virgins album sleeve. She also sang with a group called

Moose and the Pelicans, who released a [likable version of She's a Rebel](#). When she was dropped by her record label, she turned to acting. Within a few months of starting at Lee Strasberg, she had been cast by Malick in Badlands, where she met her husband, Jack Fisk, the film's production designer.



As Carrie in Brian De Palma's 1976 film Carrie. Photograph: Cinetext Bildarchiv/United Artists/Allstar

With [Badlands](#), she says, she discovered just what was possible in movies. "It was when I realised film can be art. And I was working with people – Terrence Malick, Jack Fisk, Martin Sheen [who played her boyfriend, Kit] – who had such *passion*. Their passion for their work ignited something in me. I had all that experience growing up, good and painful and joyous, and now I had a place to put it." Spacek looked so different from most Hollywood starlets – red-haired, ferociously freckled, short, slight and childlike. She seemed feral one minute, serenely beautiful the next. Badlands taught her how little you had to do or say in films to make an impression. Often she expressed more with those huge blue eyes than with her words.

She lights up when she talks about Badlands. But, to be fair, she lights up when she talks about so many of her movies. In Coal Miner's Daughter, she got to sing Lynn's songs and won a gold disc for the soundtrack. "When we

decided to go with Michael Apted, someone said to me: ‘Why did you decide to go with an Englishman?’ Well, he grew up in a coal-mining community and he didn’t bring any of the country cliches that are so prevalent. And gosh, what a *great artist*. You know, it’s all about the director.”

Despite winning the best actress Oscar for Coal Miner’s Daughter, it was Carrie that made her most famous. Even now, she says, teenagers show her their Carrie tattoos. “Who knew that Carrie would be around like 100 years later? Every year a new generation of young people see it.” As much as anything, Carrie is about the pain of adolescence. “So many kids feel tortured when they’re in middle school and high school. Bullied and misunderstood. Stephen King hit a nerve with that. It’s a universal story.”

Although 26-year-old Spacek was playing a schoolgirl in Carrie, she had already been working for eight years. Did she feel much older than the characters she played? Yes and no, she says. “I had maturity because of what I had lived through already, but I’ve always been connected to the inner child. I just am.” I can still see that inner child today, I say. She beams. “You think so? As a person, I do. I’m excited about people, I’m excited about work, I’m excited about children. I’m pretty passionate. I don’t feel lukewarm about things. I’m either all in or not at all.”

Incredibly, Spacek was nominated for five Oscars between 1977 and 1986. “I went from one film to another, working with great directors. It was a wonderful time. The artists ruled in the 70s. We were making low-budget films that the studios didn’t care about, so they’d leave us to our own devices.”

She says she was lucky in another way. Because she worked with friends, and often with her husband, she was protected from abusive movie moguls. I ask what it was like to work with Harvey Weinstein in 1990 on The Long Walk Home, a film about the Montgomery bus boycott. “I was already an established actor, so I was protected in that way from him. Also, I had been warned by someone I was close to, who said be careful, and so I was. He did some things that I thought were very unsavoury, but they weren’t sexual.”

What kind of unsavoury things? “I found a project and became attached to it and I brought it to Harvey. Then, when somebody else won the Academy Award, he pulled that from me and he wanted someone else to do it. I wrote him a letter, because I was so shocked that he would lower himself to that. I had already had teeth made for the character. The prosthetics lowered my gumline. It was a real person I was going to play.” I ask what the film was. “I’d rather not say. It never got made.” Did Weinstein reply to the letter? “No. Rather than respond to me, he just dropped the project. I didn’t want him to do that – I just wanted him to acknowledge that he’d been a real turd. He could never look at me after that at any event we were at.”



Sissy Spacek and Jack Fisk in New York, 1970s. Photograph: Art Zelin/Getty Images

Spacek and Fisk loved their early days in Hollywood; she says they still have a foothold there. But after a while, they realised they were getting caught up in the unreality of La-La land. “We used to laugh, because whatever happened in the world we’d think: wow, that would make a good film. For me, it’s important to live a real life. An actor once told me, early on, don’t be one of those people that walks down the street and people go: ‘Oh, there’s an actor!’ You want to be a person, you want to have experiences that you can use in your work.”

So they withdrew to an 85-hectare farm in Virginia, where they raised their two daughters, bred horses and embraced the real world. “It was all about kids and animals and I wanted my children to grow up and have some freedom and not have everybody say: ‘Oh, those are Sissy Spacek’s kids.’ I wanted them to be able to grow up and make mistakes and have experiences, so it’s been great for all of us. My older daughter, Schuyler, is a great singer and my younger daughter, Madison, is a visual artist. I really sound like a mom now, don’t I? Our daughters are doomed to the art life, I’m afraid.”

Back in Virginia, they now have only one horse left. They recently turned the farm into an art space, with the barns transformed into painting and recording studios. Although Spacek is video-calling from New York today, she and Fisk still live on the farm. She believes her life away from Hollywood and her relationship with Fisk are responsible for her success. “He understands what my motivations are and I understand his, and we always give each other the space to do what we love.” It’s time to go, but she has not quite finished saluting the legendary directors with whom she has worked. “Have I mentioned Robert Altman yet?” she asks. “Oh, my *God!* Robert Altman! I learned so much from him. I’d say: ‘Bob, Bob, no I didn’t do that right,’ and he’d say: ‘Once you do it, it becomes reality, so there is no right or wrong.’ I learned something different from every director.”

Then there is a shoutout for David Lynch and *The Straight Story*, about an elderly man’s journey across Iowa and Wisconsin on a lawn mower. “I *loved* working with David Lynch,” she roars. “I love that film, too!” I roar back with equal fervour. Her passion is infectious. “I used the same teeth I made for the Weinstein film,” she says. “It was a great experience – and I got to use those teeth!”

She suddenly goes quiet. “I’m having regrets about talking about Harvey, because he has got his own cross to bear and I feel I don’t need to add to it,” she says. “So if you can make that as kind as you can, I would appreciate it.”

As we wind up, I ask if she is surprised to still be acting today. “I am, but I tell young people: ‘Set goals, plan ahead how you see your career and your life.’ I loved those old 1940s movies where women like Barbara Stanwyck had these powerhouse roles. I thought: I want to be like those actors and I want to be acting when I’m older. I knew I couldn’t do everything, so I

picked my roles carefully, because I didn't want to burn myself out. I wanted to be able to survive for the long haul." Her face breaks out into a radiant smile. "And here I am in my eighth decade, still doing it."

*Night Sky* is on Amazon Prime Video from 20 May

This article was amended on 9 May 2022 to correct the caption to the picture of Sissy Spacek and Jack Fisk; an earlier version had mistakenly said it was taken "circa 1960". The detail that Rip Torn is Spacek's cousin was also added. It was further amended on 10 May 2022 to refer to her daughter Madison as a visual artist (rather than a singer) and to clarify that when Spacek spoke of having "lowered my gumline" for a role, this was done using prosthetic teeth.

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**Turn us on: a Bafta TV special****Television & radio**

Interview

## **Lorraine Kelly's year in TV: 'It's a Sin was my actual life, except we were in Glasgow, not London'**

**Hannah J Davies**

The presenter on loving the Russell T Davies drama, interviewing George Clooney over Zoom, and why Naked Attraction turns her off



Lorraine Kelly wears dress, [ghost.co.uk](http://ghost.co.uk). Heels, [jimmychoo.com](http://jimmychoo.com). Jewellery, her own. Styling: Hope Lawrie. Set design: Olivia Giles. Makeup: Cher Webb, using makeup provided by official beauty partner Lancôme. Hair: Dionne Smith. Lighting assistants: Luke Fullalove, Zelie Lockhart. Digital technician: Jess Segal. Runner: Jordan. Photograph: Hollie Fernando/The Guardian



[@hannahjdavies](#)

Mon 9 May 2022 05.00 EDT

*Born in Glasgow, Lorraine Kelly has worked in journalism since she turned down a university place to join the East Kilbride News at the age of 17. The 62-year-old became Scotland correspondent for TV-am in 1984, and joined GMTV when it launched in 1993. Since 2010, she has presented Lorraine on ITV.*

**What was the best thing you did on screen last year?**

To be honest, just keeping going and still being able to do my job through the pandemic. Covid got very close to us with what happened with Kate [Garraway and her husband, Derek Draper, who was hospitalised for more than a year], and a lot of our crew have been affected in some way, so we had to be very careful. Video calls have definitely made interviewees more accessible, though – I did lots of big, big stars on Zoom from their houses. I'd be in my house in my slippers, and there's George Clooney, or Pierce Brosnan in his house in Hawaii. It made it feel more human – you could be like: "Oh, I have that book too!" I also made a documentary, Return to Dunblane, which was something I really wanted to do. What the families did there to change the law was a remarkable achievement – they made something positive out of something unimaginably horrific. I think the fact

that I did hard news for years and I was a correspondent was the best training. If you can report on something like Dunblane or Lockerbie, you can do anything.



Interviewing musician Gary Numan on Lorraine. Photograph: Ken McKay/ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

**Who would play you in the TV show of your life?**

The drag queen Lawrence Chaney.

**Have you ever been mistaken for anybody else?**

No, but I will be toddling around with my husband in the supermarket, and people will come up and start chatting to us. He'll just stand here, and then they'll go, and he'll say: "How do we know them?" And I'm like: "We don't!"

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**What show had you gripped during the last year?**

It's a Sin. That was my life, except we were in Glasgow not London, and my best friend, Joyce, was like the wee lassie Jill. That drama did such a lot of good – it really made people think. I think what trans people are going

through now is like what gay people were going through when I was growing up.

### **Your TV guilty pleasure**

Below Deck. My daughter introduced me to it – it's utterly vacuous and completely wonderful.

### **What makes you reach for the remote (to turn the TV off)?**

Naked Attraction. I don't understand that at all. The only time I saw it was when I did Celebrity Gogglebox and they showed a clip – I couldn't believe my eyes. What made me laugh was that at the end they had a credit for the wardrobe lady!

Lorraine airs weekdays at 9am on ITV. For more information about the Virgin Media Bafta TV Awards, visit [bafta.org](https://www.bafta.org)

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## 2022.05.09 - Opinion

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- [Putin may have high ratings – but Russians are terrified too](#)

[Novaya Gazeta's Victory Day Vladimir Putin](#)

## **For Vladimir Putin, the sinister cult of victory is all that is left**

[Kirill Martynov](#)

Today, on Russia's Victory Day, reimagined by Vladimir Putin as a showcase for his regime, the Guardian and other European outlets are publishing articles by the newspaper Novaya Gazeta, which has suspended publication in Russia because of censorship over the Ukraine war



A giant 'Order of the Victory' installed for Victory Day in central Moscow.  
Photograph: Natalia Kolesnikova/AFP/Getty Images

Mon 9 May 2022 05.32 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 03.39 EDT

Vladimir Putin was born seven years after the end of the second world war, and raised on the Brezhnev-era myth of the great victory. A man of no great education, he loved to quote Soviet films and old stories. The history books portrayed the "great patriotic war" as a magical fable in which the hero – the Russian people – vanquishes a monster, to the envy of the whole world. In

this myth there was no room for many of the actual facts of war, such as the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact, the war with Finland, the occupation of the Baltics. The myth ignores the deportation of millions of Poles. It glosses over the Rzhev campaign of the winter of 1942-43, in which the Soviet army sustained terrible losses, preferring to dwell on the storied victories of Moscow and Stalingrad.

The myth, celebrated today on Russia's Victory Day, has become the essential narrative underpinning Putin's plan to rule [Russia](#) eternally.

There came a point when Putin resolved to stay in power indefinitely. Elections would come and go, and he would lie that they would be his last, that he had no intention of changing Russia's 1993-era constitution, which provides for a maximum of two consecutive terms. His first strategy for eternal rule was to allow citizens to become wealthy, as the country became richer than it had ever been in the second half of the 2000s. But when growth stopped, with much of the wealth captured in a few hands, he had to turn to propaganda. He began to invoke a sense of "traditional values" to augment the notion of his paramount importance to Russia – the indispensable leader who was the only defence for Russians against westernisation and dissolution in the sea of European peoples.

And Putin came to believe his own propaganda – that he now had a special historic mission to create a Greater Russia. Not quite a new USSR, because no one was about to rebuild Communism, or invent some new ideology or recolonise Central Asia so as to secure nice cheap labour for the Russian economy. Greater Russia fancied itself as the world's third big power (along with the US and China). And if the rival US had the EU as its satellite then Greater Russia would need its own sphere of influence. Putin's "traditional values" essentially boiled down to homophobia and the cult of military victory. It quickly became clear that persecuting gay people didn't really amount to a durable strategy for the eternal rule of a strong leader. The cult of victory was all that was left.

The picture slowly took shape. The operetta of Russian militarism grew out of TV propaganda, where numerous "experts" began to speak of how we were the strongest in the world, no one could order us around, our rockets

could circle the world several times and destroy anyone we wanted. It was ridiculous, but Putin's speeches slowly began to sound more and more like those of the late neofascist Vladimir Zhirinovsky. He spoke less and less about dull things like economic development, but really lit up when talking about new "unparalleled" types of weapons. "We can do it again," became the main slogan of Putin's Russia, a clear reference to the fact that Russians defeated Nazism in the second world war, and believe they can do it again.

Putin has won four presidential elections, but a fifth is looming in 2024. Covid took a heavy toll in Russia and the economy has slumped, so Putin's options are few. In his mind, his best way to hold on to power is a repeat of the great victory. A symbolic march-past on 9 May would not be enough; they'd need to fill the image with blood.

And so they tried to "do it again", orchestrating Europe's biggest tragedy since 1945. The war is the world's first to have been directly invented by TV. It also feels like the moment when the Soviet Union truly fell apart, because Russia, as heir to that empire, cannot come through this crisis with all those Soviet myths about victory still intact. We shouldn't be surprised that most Russians have bought into this and are indifferent to the military crimes being committed in Ukraine. It's not just that they don't get the full picture because of the obliteration of journalism and social media. It's that if you stop believing the propaganda, then you no longer can believe in a Russia of traditional values, a victory-day hero nation. All that is left is a wild person wandering through the ruins of a militarised kleptocracy, carrying a nuclear suitcase in his hand. And who wants to believe in that?

Who are we, and how did we let this happen? It's scary to answer this question. Russians will hold on to their myths until the very last. In the meantime, they have their military parade, their victory day swoon, the opiate of the masses.

- Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)

- Kirill Martynov is editor-in-chief of Novaya Gazeta Europe
  - Today on Russia's Victory Day, the Guardian and other European news organisations are publishing articles by the independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta
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## OpinionRefugees

# Why we confronted Priti Patel about her inhumane ‘Rwanda plan’ at a Tory dinner

[Holly Hudson](#)

The government has a responsibility to help people seeking refuge, not detain them 4,000 miles away

- Holly Hudson is an organiser with Green New Deal Rising

Activists disrupt Priti Patel speech to protest against Rwanda refugee plan – video

Mon 9 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 14.43 EDT

On Friday night, I and several others went undercover to a crowded dinner party held by the Bassetlaw Conservatives Association and challenged the home secretary, Priti Patel, on her inhumane “[Rwanda plan](#)” to process refugees offshore. The newspapers called us a “mob”, but I know that we were simply standing up for what is right.

A lot had led up to this moment. We at Green New Deal Rising, who are based all over the UK, had been thinking for days about how to get our message across. We bought tickets to the event, knowing that if we had been outside we might not have been able to speak directly to Patel. On the way there I felt nervous, but determined. As we travelled there together we shared our stories of why we cared and why we were willing to take action despite the personal risk. This helped us remain focused and positive, even through our nerves. Dressing the part helped, too, and we spent time restyling our slightly “youthful” haircuts into something that wouldn’t ring alarm bells.

Once we were inside we took our places, spread out across a number of different tables in various groups. After Patel began to speak, our first challenger stood up and addressed her directly. “Priti Patel, your racist policies are killing people. Your plans to send people seeking asylum to Rwanda are inhumane and are going to ruin people’s lives.” Then it was my turn. By this point the crowd were booing and shouting at us, and security were trying to pull us away. But we stayed the course, standing one by one to peacefully protest and explain why we were there and what we were standing up for.

I’ve been asked whether I was afraid at this moment. It was definitely scary, but I also remember that, just before I stood up, I imagined the faces of people I have worked with who are migrants and refugees. These are the people at the real sharp end of these racist policies, and the least that we can do is passionately and repeatedly stand up to those in power who seek to persecute and scapegoat them just for seeking safety.

You may be thinking: if we’re climate activists why are we getting involved in refugee legislation? It’s all connected. For one, the climate crisis will force many people to move. And many of the crises in the global south are the direct result of centuries of colonial exploitation by wealthy countries such as the UK. We believe it is the responsibility of our government to provide safety for people facing these situations. The “Rwanda plan” and the [nationality and borders bill](#) must continue to be challenged and scrutinised in parliament and in public. How we treat people seeking refuge and how we treat the most vulnerable people in the global community says a lot about Britain. Why wouldn’t we want to live in a country that supports people to rebuild their lives and to live free from persecution and violence?

And let’s be clear, Patel’s Rwanda plans are violent, possibly illegal, and inhumane. They have been condemned across society and will further harm those seeking safety. These are people who are escaping terrifying situations as they bear the brunt of the multiple crises of war, poverty and the climate catastrophe. The abuses that can accompany the offshoring of refugees, such as has happened in Australia’s centre in Nauru, are [widely documented](#). Sending people by force 4,000 miles away, to remain there for indefinite amounts of time is dangerous and cruel. By denying vulnerable people their

right to safe asylum in the UK, and by following a model that, in Australia, led to an epidemic of self-harm and even suicide in processing centres, we as a nation are abandoning our legal and moral obligations.

As the dust settles on our action, I know that we did the right thing. No matter what the repercussions, history shows that if enough of us stand up and say, “No more”, we can make a difference. Already we’ve seen councillors and archbishops, teachers and people seeking asylum themselves condemn this government’s plans. The movement for compassion and hospitality is growing. It is these principles that will win out – not this government’s heartlessness.

- Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [observer.letters@observer.co.uk](mailto:observer.letters@observer.co.uk)
- Holly Hudson is an organiser with [Green New Deal Rising](#)

This article was amended on 10 May 2022 to remove an incorrect reference to refugees being “detained” in Rwanda.

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[Republic of Parenthood](#)[Breastfeeding](#)

## **Turns out breastfeeding really does hurt – why does no one tell you?**

[Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett](#)



I get that they don't want to put us off, but there are many reasons people might have to stop. Guilt trips and secrecy don't help



‘When it starts to go well, it’s lovely, and if your baby isn’t premature and you don’t have to deal with tongue tie, undersupply, oversupply, mastitis or blocked ducts it might be a very simple, very peaceful, happy process.’

Photograph: Michelle Gibson/Getty Images

Mon 9 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 00.22 EDT

I never thought breastfeeding would be hard. When I thought about it at all, my mind conjured beatific scenes suffused with a sort of religious glow. There I was, genteelly offering the child a nipple in the manner of a renaissance Madonna, which the child accepted politely and cherubically. What a pretty picture we made.

Well, those preconceptions were – excuse my language – complete horseshit. These days I envisage more of a triptych: the infant Jesus spluttering at the breast, face purple with hangry fury; the infant Jesus possetting milk down Mary’s front; the infant Jesus and the nappy explosion.

A few weeks ago, I wrote about the negativity surrounding parenthood, and how people love to [bombard pregnant women](#) with it. The only exception I’d make to this is breastfeeding. Breastfeeding has incredible PR. You’re told constantly how amazing it is for you and the baby. It’s the best way to nourish and bond with your child, who will become a genius as a result! It’s

so convenient! You'll lose so much weight! Most importantly, it's hugely beneficial to the baby's health!

No one says: it hurts. At least not beforehand. Once you tell other mothers it hurts they say, grimly, "yep". It makes sense that it would hurt, because having a small creature attacking your nipples every 40 minutes would hurt, wouldn't it? It's OK though, because, you're told, they'll "toughen up". Tough nipples: just what I always wanted.

Meanwhile, if you tell professionals that it hurts they will tell you that you're doing it wrong, which makes it feel worse. (Maybe you are doing it wrong – historically, you'd be surrounded by experienced female relatives who would help position you and the baby correctly.) Perhaps you already feel like enough of a failure, because desperately wanting to feed your child with your body and not being able to taps into something quite fundamental, really. Something that may have the potential to make you depressed.

The UK has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world, with just [24% of women](#) exclusively breastfeeding at six weeks in England and 1% at six months, which is recommended by the WHO. Eight out of ten women stopped before they wanted to. Furthermore, while breastfeeding is linked to lower rates of postnatal depression, a large-scale survey also found that women who wanted to breastfeed but did not (or could not) were over twice as likely to become depressed as mothers who had not planned to, and who did not, breastfeed.

I'm not surprised. The culture of guilt – much of which manifests in subtle, almost diffuse atmospheric pressure, though social media obnoxiousness also plays a role – makes me want to smash things, but I'm too tired. [Breastfeeding](#), I read, is the equivalent of walking seven miles a day. Another thing they don't tell you is that you might not ever get more than three hours' sleep, none of it deep. And you'll realise how profoundly uncomfortable your sofa is.

I can see why they don't want to put women off, what with the enormous public health benefits of breastfeeding, for babies especially. Besides, many women have a fine old time of it. They are "EBF" – exclusively

breastfeeding – a phrase I’ve started to imagine accompanied by jazz hands. Some post photographs of all the milk they are expressing and freezing – look! So much milk! Their proud tallies: 14 months! 18 months! 36 months! And they should be proud. It’s work. I find myself thinking about the wet nurses throughout history who would take in extra infants to feed as well as their own. The labour involved would have been intensely physically and emotionally draining. I also sympathise a bit more with the women who chose to outsource it than I perhaps once did.

Saying all this, when it starts to go well, it’s lovely, and if your baby isn’t premature and you don’t have to deal with tongue tie, undersupply, oversupply, mastitis or blocked ducts it might be a very simple, very peaceful, happy process. I’ve been mostly very lucky with the support I’ve received with the challenges of feeding a preterm baby, but others have not been so fortunate. There is something wrong with a culture wherein the mother’s sanity can be sidelined to the extent that – as one parent and psychologist [described](#) – the only professional who might tell a woman that it’s OK to give her baby formula is part of a perinatal mental health team. Promotion of breastfeeding, important though it is, should never come at the expense of a mother’s mental health. To [quote](#) one expert: “Breastmilk does not care for, nurture and bond with the baby. A mother does.”

Meanwhile, my friend who has had a double mastectomy is irritated that there’s a law prohibiting the discounting of infant formula. She also, having observed the culture of guilt, says she feels glad the decision how to feed her baby was taken out of her hands. Think on that statement for a moment.

As it is, my own “breastfeeding journey” (another phrase I hate) has involved a rail replacement bus. I’m grateful for the existence of formula for keeping my baby alive when I couldn’t, and for helping my baby grow to a healthy size while I established breastfeeding. I’m not about to become a shill for big formula, who have behaved despicably in all kinds of ways, but nor will I self-flagellate. Or I’ll try not to, at least not all the time.

As for advice from all the self-appointed freelance paediatricians, I can do without it. A good lactation consultant, though, is worth her weight in gold. Turns out, with the right support, it can get better – as it has for us. It’s a

shame that so many British women lack that support after years of government cuts.

There are a multitude of reasons why a woman might stop breastfeeding, including a lack of support, needing to work, pathetic paternity leave provision (having a partner who can feed the mother while she feeds the baby is a luxury few have), the stigmatising of public feeding, or mental health concerns. Guilt-tripping parents who are struggling or hiding the challenges of breastfeeding from them will not solve, and may even worsen, the problem.

**What's working:** I'm not sure the artist Keith Haring ever envisaged his work becoming part of a baby range, but Etta Loves have reproduced it on sensory strips and my baby, who can currently only see in monochrome, is fascinated and mesmerised by them. It's his first experience of art and has made me tempted to go on a tour of all the black and white works that can be found in galleries – Brigitte Riley, Malevich, etc. Though I'd have to hold him very close to the canvases.

**What isn't:** A TikTok video of a baby being swaddled, its cries immediately silenced, went viral this week. Sadly, it hasn't worked for us, only serving to enrage the child further.

- Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)
- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett is a Guardian columnist

## Novaya Gazeta's Victory DayRussia

# Putin may have high ratings – but Russians are terrified too

[Alexei Levinson](#)

Today, on Russia's Victory Day, reimagined by Vladimir Putin as a showcase for his regime, the Guardian and other European outlets are publishing articles by the newspaper Novaya Gazeta, which has suspended publication in Russia because of censorship over the Ukraine war



Vladimir Putin and Russia's defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, in Red Square after 2020's Victory Day military parade. Photograph: Yekaterina Shtukina/AP

Mon 9 May 2022 05.32 EDT Last modified on Mon 9 May 2022 09.30 EDT

A month after Putin's "special operation" in Ukraine began, the Levada Centre, a non-governmental polling organisation, carried out [a survey](#) to gauge public attitudes towards the conflict. The results were awaited with

some trepidation. Some thought they would show public dissatisfaction with the leadership and that the president's ratings would fall. Others demurred.

There were precedents. After Russia's short war with Georgia in 2008, Vladimir Putin's approval rating shot up to 88%. In 2014, after the annexation of Crimea, the same thing happened: the proportion of people who said they approved of his leadership once again rose to the same figure.

In both instances, negative global reaction merely served to strengthen the Russian belief that they were right. Sanctions did little damage.

This time, it's different. Military action is proving to be neither quick nor bloodless. Everyone understands that, even those who only listen to the voices coming out of their TVs. This time, there is a broad, anxious expectation of lean times, of economic blockade.

There is a school of thought that hails from Soviet times that the refrigerator is more powerful than the TV. Could that be right this time?

So far, the signs are mixed. Just as in 2014, there has been a rise in the approval rating of the operation and its commander in chief. Once again, Putin is polling at above 80%, 12 points higher than in February. The government and prime minister are also polling well. Even the state Duma, which normally languishes in negative territory, is basking in positive ratings.

But it's not all positive news for Russia's political class: an absolute majority, 55%, expects an improvement in political life over the coming months. They cannot be disappointed. This will have to be created – if not in real life then in the virtual world.

And for those who look at the 80%-plus ratings and declare that the TV has finally triumphed over the refrigerator, we must say no. Everything is a little more nuanced.

In the survey, we asked Russians the question: what kind of emotions does the military operation in [Ukraine](#) evoke in you? Just 2% could not answer,

while 8% said they had no particular feeling at all about it. The other respondents chose from a multitude of words to describe their feelings.

These words broadly fell into four categories – either positive or negative, and either political or apolitical. So the positive political emotion could be described as national pride; the negative political emotions were more like anger and shame; the positive apolitical words covered emotions such as joy and excitement; the negative apolitical emotions were fear, anxiety, horror and shock.

If we look broadly at the percentage of positive versus negative emotions, it is neck and neck – 51% versus 49%. But within these numbers lie interesting breakdowns: the positive emotions mostly comprise people expressing national pride (40%). Only a few (11%) expressed positive apolitical emotions like joy and satisfaction.

Among negative feelings, the split was roughly reversed. Just 10% felt negative political emotions like anger, disgust and shame about the Ukraine assault. A full 39% reported emotions of worry, fear, shock.

From these numbers, you have to conclude that the support the Russian public has for the army and its leadership coexists alongside a great anxiety.

When you look at generational breakdowns, moreover, it's clear that these events are being perceived differently by young and old people. Negative feelings predominate in those under 35. Only 33% feel national pride, while 37% feel anxious and fearful.

Those over 65, on the other hand, are far more positive, with a 90% approval rating for Putin and few expressions of fear or anxiety.

Young and old also differed dramatically in their assessment of what motivated the anti-war protests that we saw in the weeks after 24 February. Older people tended to favour the explanation that people were paid to protest. Younger people were more likely to put the protests down to genuine outrage over events.

- Alexei Levinson is a sociologist and senior researcher at the Levada Center, Russia's leading polling organisation
  - Today on Russia's Victory Day, the Guardian and other European news organisations are publishing articles by the independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta
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## 2022.05.09 - Around the world

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- [Kelly Meafua Samoan rugby player dies after jumping from bridge in France celebrating win](#)
- [Sri Lanka Ruling party supporters storm protest site in Colombo](#)
- [Roe v Wade Canada and Mexico prepare to accept Americans seeking abortions](#)
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## [Philippines](#)

# Philippines election: Ferdinand Marcos Jr closes in on victory

Known as Bongbong, son of the late dictator holds significant lead over nearest rival in unofficial count



Ferdinand Marcos Jr speaks to supporters during his last campaign rally before the election. Photograph: Ezra Acayan/Getty Images

*[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) in Manila*

Mon 9 May 2022 09.57 EDTFirst published on Sun 8 May 2022 19.20 EDT

Ferdinand Marcos Jr appears on track to become the next president of the [Philippines](#), as initial vote counts showed a significant lead for the son and namesake of the late dictator who ruled the country for more than 20 years.

A partial and unofficial count based on 61.05% of the election returns showed Marcos Jr in the lead with 20m votes on Monday evening. His nearest rival, the vice-president and former human rights lawyer Leni

Robredo, was on 9.5m votes, according to data released by the commission on elections. It is not clear which areas of the country have been counted, and if these are Marcos strongholds.

Opinion surveys in the run-up to the vote suggest Marcos Jr, known as Bongbong, will win the election, despite his family's history of human rights abuses and corruption. The Marcoses plundered as much as \$10bn from the state, while thousands of his opponents were arrested, tortured and killed.

His biggest threat is Robredo, the current vice-president, who has campaigned promising good and competent governance. Robredo, who worked as a human rights lawyer before entering politics, has been a staunch critic of the outgoing president, Rodrigo Duterte, criticising his bloody "war on drugs", his Covid response and warning against populist leaders.

People began lining up to vote before polling centres opened at 6am on Monday morning, while others waited more than four hours in the heat. The vote follows three months of fierce campaigning, in which 2 million Robredo volunteers launched an unprecedented door-to-door campaign to try to win over voters and counter an onslaught of online disinformation that has sought to portray the rule of Marcos as a golden era.

Social media has been inundated with false stories about the Marcos regime, claiming it was a prosperous and peaceful time, and seeking to brush aside the atrocities and corruption.

"This is not just an election to determine our future. It's an election that will determine the correct version of our past," said Aries Arugay, a visiting fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, who is based in Manila. "If Marcos Jr wins, they will literally wipe out that version, that collective memory."



City councillor Vladimir Cayabas wearing traditional dress shows his inked finger after casting his vote in Baguio city. Photograph: Jj Landinin/AFP/Getty Images

Outside Santa Ana elementary school, in a residential area of Manila, people sheltered from the heat under umbrellas as they made their way to vote. Delia Ong, 71, a part-time real estate broker, said she was backing Robredo. “She is really gifted, talented, she is bright. She is not just famous for the name; she is self made,” said Ong. Robredo had been proactive in helping poorer communities, she said, citing her reputation for visiting deprived areas and helping victims of natural disasters.

Marcos Jr was “no brains, but has money”, she added.

Marcos Jr’s candidacy has polarised opinion. Some reject outright that the family plundered money, despite courts at home and abroad ruling they possessed ill-gotten wealth.

Raquel Deguzaman, 59, who works as a photocopier, said she supported Marcos Jr and did not believe the family was corrupt. “[Marcos Sr] was able to help the Philippines. He’s really good,” she said, adding that he had built infrastructure, including hospitals.



Crowds wait to vote at a polling station in the Tondo district of Manila.  
Photograph: Aaron Favila/AP

It is not likely that martial law, which was imposed by Marcos Sr in 1972, would happen again, but if it did, it would help stop crime, she said. “There’s no discipline, just pure robbery, holdups,” said Deguzaman.

Arugay said the vote was a referendum on Duterte’s “strongman rule, populist, authoritarian kind of leadership”, adding: “You can really say that Marcos Jr somehow typifies that – or even typifies a worst version of it.”

Duterte has not endorsed a presidential candidate. However his daughter, Sara, who is vying for the vice-presidency, is running in tandem with Marcos, creating a formidable partnership of two of the country’s most powerful political families. While Marcos traditionally has support in the north, the Dutertes are popular in Mindanao and parts of the Visayas.

Marcos Jr, whose slogan is “together we shall rise again”, has campaigned with a message of unity and rekindling a former greatness. He has not apologised for his family’s political history.

Opinion surveys suggest Marcos Jr is far ahead of his opponents. One recent poll found he was the preferred candidate of 56% of respondents. Robredo, behind him, is favoured by 23%.

Robredo's campaign has gathered momentum in the run-up to the election, with large crowds attending her rallies and young voters volunteering to go door to door to win support for her campaign.

Many people turning out to vote were doing so for the first time, said Ivan Mirasol, 28, a data analyst, who was voting with his father in Santa Ana. "Because we want the change that we have been really yearning for several years already."

"Number one, she has a good track record. Number two, she doesn't have any taint of corruption," added Mirasol.

Others are not convinced. Mar Escandor, 61, who was also on his way to vote, said he was done with the Marcoses, but did not support Robredo. "I don't like female presidents. Very weak," he said.

Escandor was backing Isko Moreno, who grew up in and is now mayor of Manila. Moreno, a former actor, is popular in Manila but trailing in the polls along with the boxing star Manny Pacquiao and Panfilo Lacson, a 73-year-old former national police chief.

Polls officially closed at 7pm local time (1200 BST), but voters within 30 metres of precincts will still be allowed to cast their ballot, election officials said. About 67 million people are eligible to vote.

The winner will take office on 30 June and lead for a single, six-year term.

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## [Sport](#)

# Samoan rugby player Kelly Meafua dies after jumping from bridge in France

Meafua's club Montauban is in shock after the player died after jumping into the river Tarn



Samoan back row forward Kelly Meafua (centre) died on 6 May, 2022, after jumping from a bridge into the river Tarn. Photograph: Marty Melville/AFP/Getty Images

### [Guardian sport](#)

Sun 8 May 2022 22.51 EDT Last modified on Sun 8 May 2022 23.41 EDT

A rugby club has been left in shock after Samoan back row forward Kelly Meafua died after jumping from a bridge into the river Tarn hours after playing in a French second division match.

Meafua's club Montauban confirmed the 32-year-old had not survived the incident in the early hours of Saturday morning despite the efforts of a

teammate.

The teammate, named as prop Christopher Vaotoa in French media reports, jumped into the water but was unable to save Meafua.

Vaotoa was taken to hospital with hypothermia and was discharged in good health on Saturday.

The pair had reportedly been out celebrating Montauban's 48-40 win over Narbonne just hours earlier in the team's final home Pro D2 game of the season at Stade Sapiac.

Montauban said the club was in shock following Meafua's death.

"The entire club is shocked and everyone is thinking of his wife, his children, his teammates and more generally everyone who loves the club," a club statement read.

"Kelly was a player who was well liked by everybody. His joy for life was infectious and radiant. Today we have lost a player, a friend and a brother."

Born in Samoa, Meafua moved to [New Zealand](#) when he was a teenager but did not start playing rugby until he was 20.

After stints with Otahuhu, Auckland Under-21s and Auckland Sevens, he moved to Sydney where he played for West Harbour in the Shute Shield and the Greater Sydney Rams.

He was also a member of the NSW Waratahs extended training squad in 2014 before leaving for France to play for Narbonne in 2015. He had a spell with Beziers before moving to Montauban last year.

This season he played 24 Pro D2 matches and scored eight tries for Montauban.

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## [Sri Lanka](#)

# Sri Lanka's PM resigns after weeks of protests over economic crisis

Police are imposing nationwide curfew following violence at protest site in Colombo



Demonstrators and government supporters clash outside in Colombo on Monday. Photograph: Ishara S Kodikara/AFP/Getty Images

*[Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#) in Delhi*

Mon 9 May 2022 09.57 EDTFirst published on Mon 9 May 2022 05.51 EDT

Sri Lanka's prime minister, Mahinda Rajapaksa, has resigned after [months of protests](#) over the country's deepening economic crisis, as once-peaceful protests turned violent and at least five people were killed in clashes.

Turmoil began to engulf the country on Monday following violence at a major protest site in Colombo, where pro-government supporters attacked peaceful demonstrators and police responded with teargas and water cannon.

The violence quickly spread across the country. Houses and vehicles of several pro-Rajapaksa politicians and the residence of Mahinda Rajapaksa were set on fire. A nationwide curfew was imposed but five were killed and almost 200 injured.

In one incident just outside of Colombo, a politician from the ruling party opened fire on anti-government protesters blocking his car, killing a 27-year-old, and then later took his own life. According to police, another ruling party politician opened fire on protesters in the southern town of Weeraketiya, killing two and wounding five.

Mahinda Rajapaksa had been asked to resign by his brother, the president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, at a special meeting on Friday, in an attempt to appease demonstrators who have been taking to the streets in their thousands since March.

Protesters have been calling for both members of Sri Lanka's powerful Rajapaksa political dynasty to be removed from office [for mishandling the economy](#) and plunging the country into the worst financial crisis since independence.

Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was president for a decade between 2005 and 2015, had reportedly been resistant to stepping down, but on Monday submitted his letter of resignation to the president.

“Multiple stakeholders have indicated the best solution to the present crisis is the formation of an interim all-party government. Therefore, I have tendered my resignation so the next steps can be taken in accordance with the Constitution,” he wrote.



Mahinda Rajapaksa (left) and his brother Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Photograph: Eranga Jayawardena/AP

The resignation is the latest concession made by the Rajapaksas in the face of protracted anger and protests. The president recently agreed to repeal an amendment to the constitution which had concentrated power in his hands and handed power back to the parliament. Other members of the Rajapaksa family who had previously held seats in the cabinet have also stepped down, with the president the only remaining member of the political family still in power.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, known widely as Gota, has repeatedly said he will not resign as president, despite the clarion call of the protests being “Gota go home”.

The resignation of Mahinda Rajapaksa means the government will be dissolved. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who remains as the executive, is expected to invite members of all political parties to form a cross-party cabinet, described as a “unity government”, in an effort to implement some political stability amid the widespread anti-government unrest.

The Rajapaksas have largely controlled Sri Lankan politics for two decades, but the economic crisis has rattled their grip on power in the face of mass

unrest from those who had previously been supporters of their brand of chauvinist nationalist politics, which pandered to the country's Sinhalese Buddhist majority.

Sri Lanka's foreign reserves have dropped so low that the country cannot afford to import basic essentials, leading to shortages of fuel, food and medicines. People have been forced to endure daily power cuts of up to 10 hours, fuelling mass protests across the country since March.



Police officers carry an injured man during a clash between government supporters and demonstrators in Colombo. Photograph: Ishara S Kodikara/AFP/Getty Images

Over the weekend, the president declared a state of emergency in the country, the second in recent weeks, in a bid to regain control over the streets.

However, Monday marked a violent shift in the demonstrations when hundreds of pro-government supporters gathered outside the prime minister's residence in Colombo and urged Mahinda Rajapaksa not to resign. The group, some armed with sticks and wooden bars, then launched an attack on an anti-government protest camp nearby, with police reportedly looking on as the clashes began.

Police deployed teargas and water cannon, and around 180 were taken to hospital with injuries. Army and paramilitary troops were deployed to the site and a curfew was declared in the area.

The incident was a catalyst for violence which spread first through the city and then across the country, as the homes and cars of several lawmakers, including Mahinda Rajapaksa's residence in the city of Kurunegala were set on fire.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa tweeted: "Strongly condemn the violent acts taking place by those inciting & participating, irrespective of political allegiances. Violence won't solve the current problems." However, many were quick to point out that the attacks had been prompted by Rajapaksa supporters.

The US ambassador to Sri Lanka condemned "the violence against peaceful protesters today, and [called] on the government to conduct a full investigation, including the arrest and prosecution of anyone who incited violence".

The economic situation in Sri Lanka remains dire, with the country virtually bankrupt. It has already defaulted on its billions in foreign loans and is in discussions with the International Monetary Fund for an emergency loan and financial assistance to get the country back on its feet.

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## Roe v Wade

# Canada and Mexico prepare to accept Americans seeking abortions

If the US supreme court does vote to overthrow Roe v Wade, many Americans in need of surgical abortions could be forced to travel to Canada or Mexico



Pro-choice demonstrators protest in front of the US supreme court on 5 May.  
Photograph: Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images

*Hilary Beaumont*

Mon 9 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 10 May 2022 00.09 EDT

Carolyn Egan has seen people cross the Canada-US border for abortions – going north to south.

In the years before Canada's supreme court legalised abortion in 1988, it was common for Canadians who needed abortions to travel to the US. “We had a network of people who could make referrals and help them get there

[to the US]. If it's necessary, that probably would happen again – but the other way," said Egan, spokesperson for the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada.

If, as a leaked draft decision indicates, the US supreme court votes to overturn [Roe v Wade](#), many Americans in need of surgical abortion could be forced to travel not just across state lines but, once again, across international borders – both along the northern border to Canada and the southern one to Mexico.

On Tuesday, Canada's minister of families, Karina Gould, reaffirmed that Americans can access abortion services in Canada. "If they, people, come here and need access, certainly, you know, that's a service that would be provided," she told [CBC News](#).

An estimated [26 states](#) are likely to ban abortion if Roe v Wade is overturned, according to the Guttmacher Institute, an American sexual and reproductive health rights research organization. That includes Michigan, which sits across the water from southern Ontario, where there are plenty of abortion clinics. "If a state like Michigan banned abortion, certainly there would be interest in coming across the border," Egan said.

Michigan has a [1931 ban](#) that could automatically kick in when Roe v Wade ends. Michigan residents could also travel to Illinois or Pennsylvania, as those states are unlikely to outlaw the procedure, according to Guttmacher data, and many Americans would be expected to travel internally between states.

Those travelling internationally won't find it free – people without immigration status in Canada are charged about C\$500 (US\$388) for a surgical abortion, Egan said – but Americans do not need a health card to access clinics in Canada. Wait times vary, from one to two weeks in Ontario to [several weeks or months](#) in the Atlantic provinces.

Crossing the border will probably only be possible for those who can afford to do. Abortion advocates in the US have underscored that after Roe v Wade falls it will be wealthier white women who have the means – including

travelling – to access abortion, while people on lower incomes and those who face socioeconomic barriers including African American, Latino and Indigenous women and transgender people may struggle more.

“You have to have the financial resources” to travel between states or internationally, Meghan Doherty, director of global policy and advocacy at Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, said. “There will be a limited number of people who will be able to do that.” She added that not everyone has dependable childcare, the ability to take time off work or a valid passport.

The cheapest option early in pregnancy will probably continue to be abortion pills, obtainable either through the mail or via telehealth services.

But after working for more than 10 years at clinics in Ireland while abortion was illegal, Doherty says she has no doubt that people will cross borders. “Over 5,000 women a year travelled to the UK, so we know that abortion restrictions don’t stop women from accessing abortion – it just places more burden on them.”

South of the US border, Mexican advocates are preparing for an increase in Americans visiting to access abortion services. In 2021, Mexico’s supreme court ruled it was unconstitutional to criminalise abortion, although access still varies by state.

The advocacy group Las Libres is part of a network that helps people on both sides of the border access abortion pills. Vero Cruz, advocacy coordinator with Las Libres, said Americans can technically obtain surgical abortions in public clinics in certain Mexican states for free, though she doesn’t know of anyone who has done so yet. Cruz said surgical abortions were available in Sinaloa, Coahuila and Baja California, but only up to 12 weeks of pregnancy.

“The women who are crossing into Mexico are coming to Monterrey, Tijuana and other cities to have abortions using medication,” she said. The abortion pills are free, too. “It’s completely free, it costs nothing.” She said both private and public clinics in border cities in Mexico were planning for

an American influx; both Tijuana and Coahuila recently set up services, she said.

Egan said Americans in Canada will be warmly received, too. “For a cabinet minister to say that Americans would be welcome here, gives the sense that the government is considering the possibility, and making it clear they would not be interfering in that.”

Many Canadians are upset about the looming end of Roe v Wade, she said. “There’s tremendous upset, distress and anger that Americans would be in the situation of having to face this kind of thing. So my sense is people will do everything they can to make access easier.”

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## [Abortion](#)

# How GOP lawmakers are prepping to ban abortion as soon as legally possible

The supreme court's draft opinion overturning Roe v Wade gave lawmakers a head start to impose new regulations on clinics and medication



Republican state lawmakers are taking steps to assure that abortion restrictions will go into effect as soon as a decision is made. Photograph: Rogelio V Solis/AP

*Shefali Luthra for The 19th*  
Mon 9 May 2022 05.10 EDT

*This story was originally published by [The 19th](#).*

Following Monday night's leak of a supreme court draft opinion that would overrule [Roe v Wade](#), the 1973 case that guaranteed the right to an abortion,

Republican state lawmakers are working to make sure they are ready to limit access as soon as is legally permissible.

The language of the court's decision will probably change at least somewhat when it is ultimately issued by the end of June. But its central, top-line declaration – a 5-4 majority issuing a clear, unequivocal overturning of Roe – is widely expected to remain.

Here is what Republican state lawmakers across the country are doing in the lead-up to the decision to assure that abortion restrictions will swiftly go into effect.

## Looking to courts

Most state legislatures have already ended their law-making sessions, or are past the point in the year where they can introduce new bills. So in many Republican-led states, lawmakers are getting ready to enforce laws that have already been passed and were then blocked by state and federal judges who had cited Roe v Wade's federal protections. Without those protections, the rulings could be revisited.

A law imposing new regulations on abortion clinics in Kentucky, medication abortion restrictions in Montana, and six-week abortion bans in states like Georgia, Ohio and South Carolina – these are some of the restrictions that have been blocked by courts.

A decision overturning Roe could open up those laws to be newly enforced. But first, each state's attorney general would have to formally ask courts to undo their decisions blocking them.

Some officials are already doing just that. On Tuesday, the day after the supreme court's draft decision leaked, [Ohio's Governor Mike DeWine](#), a Republican up for re-election this year, said he had directed the state's attorney general to get their six-week abortion ban reinstated if Roe is overturned.

A spokesperson for South Carolina's governor did not respond to a request for comment. Andrew Isenhour, a spokesperson for Georgia's Governor Brian Kemp, another Republican, would not directly answer whether Kemp will seek to reinstate that state's six-week ban.

But, he told The 19th, Kemp "has been been and remains focused on defending Georgia's strong pro-life legislation against legal challenges".

"Trigger laws" would ban abortion once Roe is overturned but usually require some kind of state action – certification from the governor, the attorney general or an independent legislative council asserting that Roe has, in fact, been struck down – before they can take effect.

The leak has given state officials a head start to prepare briefing materials and court documents that allow them to swiftly implement the bans. So far, 13 states have already passed trigger bans that could take effect after Roe is overturned.

## A push for new bills

Because most state legislatures are no longer in session – and since many have already passed so many kinds of abortion bans – only a few states are looking at passing new abortion restrictions.

In Ohio, where the legislature meets year-round, lawmakers are weighing their own state trigger ban, which DeWine indicated he would sign.

And on Wednesday, a legislative committee in [Louisiana voted favorably](#) on a bill that previews where the abortion fight could go next: House Bill 813 would reclassify abortion as homicide and, unlike most other abortion bans, extend criminal penalties to the pregnant person.



Many states have already passed many types of abortion bans and others are looking at new restrictions. Photograph: Rogelio V Solis/AP

The bill's backers acknowledge it is probably unconstitutional under the current Roe v Wade guidance. But without Roe, things could look very different.

Historically, anti-abortion lawmakers have been hesitant to pass laws punishing pregnant people, focusing instead on healthcare professionals who perform abortions. It's unclear if other states will follow Louisiana's lead, said Mary Ziegler, an abortion law researcher and professor.

"On the one hand these are states that have reasons to not punish women and pregnant people, but I think the pressure is going to increase. And once somebody else is first it may be easier for other states to follow," Ziegler said. "I imagine there's going to be a real debate."

## Special sessions

Governors can also call in special legislative sessions this summer to pass new anti-abortion laws. So far, no governors have publicly committed to doing so.

In Indiana, the state's Republican lawmakers – who control both branches of the statehouse – [have publicly urged](#) the governor to call a special session if Roe is overturned.

The state does not yet have a trigger law, and currently allows abortions up until 20 weeks of pregnancy. But Indiana's lawmakers have a strong record of opposing abortion rights. Per the [Guttmacher Institute](#), which tracks abortion policy, the state has passed 55 new restrictions on the procedure in the past decade, and is expected to heavily limit or ban access once Roe is overturned.

Lawmakers [in Nebraska](#) are also warning of a possible special session once Roe is overturned. Efforts to pass a trigger law failed this past year, though the governor – who has not yet committed to calling back state legislators – said he supports such an abortion ban.

In Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis has already planned to call the legislature back into session, but with a mandate to focus on property insurance policy. Since Monday night, though, local abortion opponents have been calling on DeSantis to add an abortion ban to the legislature's to-do list.

Florida passed a 15-week abortion ban earlier this year, but efforts to enact a six-week ban never took off. DeSantis, who is widely believed to be planning a presidential run in 2024, has been noncommittal on whether he will pursue tighter abortion bans. And total abortion bans are less popular in Florida than in other Republican-led states, Ziegler noted.

But even if not this summer, Glenn said, Florida could emerge as a priority state for abortion opponents in the coming years, along with states such as Montana, Iowa and Kansas, which have recently embraced more abortion restrictions but are not prepared to ban access once Roe is overturned. In both Iowa and Kansas, the state supreme courts have held that their constitutions protect abortion rights, but abortion opponents in both states are trying to pass amendments that would remove those protections.

“There will be those states in the middle,” she said. “And like we saw here in Florida this year, there will be much more of an opportunity for the legislative process and people in the state to weigh in.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/09/republican-lawmakers-abortion-ban-roe-v-wade-trigger-laws>

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- [Brexit Liz Truss to hold talks with EU amid threats to overhaul NI protocol](#)
- [Explained Why has row over NI protocol resurfaced?](#)

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## Boris Johnson urged to be ‘honest’ about NI protocol issues being caused by Brexit deal he chose – as it happened

Maroš Šefčovič says UK must admit that EU cannot solve all problems caused by type of Brexit negotiated by prime minister. This live blog is now closed – [please follow this live blog for updates on the Russian war in Ukraine](#)

- [Truss warns EU she may have ‘no choice’ but to alter NI protocol](#)
- [EU urges UK to show ‘honesty’ about the NI protocol](#)
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- [Levelling up has largely failed since 2019, analysis suggests](#)
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Updated 3d ago

[Andrew Sparrow](#) and [Rachel Hall](#)

Thu 12 May 2022 12.50 EDTFirst published on Thu 12 May 2022 04.08 EDT

Boris Johnson says NI governance has collapsed as row over Brexit deal deepens – video

[Andrew Sparrow](#) and [Rachel Hall](#)

Thu 12 May 2022 12.50 EDTFirst published on Thu 12 May 2022 04.08 EDT

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## Live feed

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From 3d ago

[10.51](#)

**EU urges UK to show 'honesty' about the NI protocol and how its problems caused by type of Brexit PM chose**



Jennifer Rankin

The EU's top official in charge of post-Brexit relations, **Maroš Sefčovič**, said that honesty was needed from the UK over the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol, as he accused the government of failing to engage with EU proposals to make the agreement work.

Speaking to British and European parliamentarians in Brussels, Sefčovič struck a more strident note than an earlier statement on Thursday about a phone call with the UK foreign secretary, [Liz Truss](#). He said:

*Honesty about what the UK signed up to is needed.*

*Honesty about the fact that the EU cannot solve all the problems created by Brexit and the type of Brexit that the UK government chose. That is the reason for which the position of the EU has been consistent. We will not renegotiate the protocol.*

In recent days, tensions have soared over the Northern [Ireland](#) protocol, the Brexit agreement that keeps the region in the EU single market, customs union and under the jurisdiction of the European court of justice.

Boris Johnson signed the agreement with the EU in 2019, but his government has since sought to renegotiate the deal, leading to proposals

from the European Commission to lighten customs checks last October.

Sefčovič said the EU proposed “an ambitious calendar” in February to accelerate these talks, but that there had “been no engagement at all on these issues from the UK the last couple of months”.

Discussions on the Northern Ireland protocol slowed down before the Stormont assembly elections on 5 May.

Responding to Sefčovič, the Cabinet Office minister, **Michael Ellis**, said the government had no intention of scrapping the Northern Ireland protocol, but that the UK did require “significant changes”, which he said were necessary to protect the Belfast/Good Friday agreement and Northern Ireland’s place in the UK internal market.

In a statement bound to raise hackles in Brussels, Ellis repeated Truss’s claim that the Commission’s proposed changes to the protocol “would take us backwards”. He criticised the “narrow mandate” Sefčovič had been given by the EU’s 27 member states, saying: “The EU have confirmed that they will never change their mandate and because of that the situation is now very serious.”

Ellis also accused the EU of politicising the UK’s membership of the Horizon research programme. While Kosovo and Israel had associated themselves with the €95.5 bn (£81.3bn) EU research programme, the UK remained outside. He said:

*And this is purely political. The EU has drawn links to the Northern Ireland protocol, an entirely separate issue.”*

The exchanges made for a testy start for the inaugural meeting of the ‘EU-UK parliamentary partnership assembly”, a group of MPs, Lords and MEPs that will hold regular meetings to boost cooperation.

Ahead of the meeting, **Nathalie Loiseau**, a French centrist MEP and former Europe minister, who is co-chairing the group, warned the UK against reneging on the protocol. She said:

*Now is not the time to create divisions to create artificial crises. These divisions and crises would be welcomed by those in third countries who are hostile to our values and our democracies.”*

The British co-chair, Conservative MP **Sir Oliver Heald** said there was a “particular situation in Northern Ireland” and “both sides needed to go that “extra, extra mile”.

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Updated at 11.09 EDT

[3d ago](#) [12.45](#)

## Afternoon summary

- [Liz Truss, the foreign secretary, has reiterated her threat to scrap parts of the Northern Ireland Brexit protocol, telling the EU's Brexit negotiator it was a matter of “internal peace and security”.](#)
- [The government has declined a Commons instruction to release information about the decision to make Evgeny Lebedev a peer, saying this would undermine the confidentiality of those nominated and could degenerate into “political point-scoring”.](#)
- [More than 100 fixed-penalty notices have now been handed out for breaches of lockdown rules in Downing Street and Whitehall, the Metropolitan police have announced.](#)

- Rishi Sunak has said he is “pragmatic” about the idea of introducing a windfall tax on energy companies, insisting “no options are off the table”, in the latest hint that the government may be preparing fresh measures to tackle the cost of living crisis.
- The chair of the UK Covid-19 public inquiry has urged the prime minister to significantly widen its scope to better examine the pandemic’s unequal impact on minority ethnic people, on children and on mental health.
- The UK has become “the jurisdiction of choice for dirty money”, harming its national reputation and democratic institutions, a cross-party group of MPs have said as they urged a new government focus on money laundering and corruption.



Boris Johnson and international trade secretary, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, talking with local business leaders after a cabinet meeting at a pottery in Stoke-on-Trent. Photograph: Reuters

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Updated at 12.50 EDT

[3d ago](#) [12.38](#)

## Cabinet Office minister Michael Ellis rebuked by intelligence and security committee over Lebedev statement

Parliament's intelligence and security committee (ISC), which is chaired by the Tory MP Julian Lewis, has issued a statement criticising the government in relation to the release – or non-release, to be more accurate – of information relating to Evgeny Lebedev's peerage. (See [5pm.](#))

It says Michael Ellis, the Cabinet Office minister, disclosed classified information when he told parliament in [a written ministerial statement](#) that the ISC had asked for information about Lebedev's peerage. The committee says:

The committee is surprised by the statement by the minister for the Cabinet Office today which links the classified provision of information to the committee with the entirely separate parliamentary process of the government's response to the resolution of the House of Commons. So far as the ISC is concerned, at this stage our request for information should have remained a private – and classified – matter of oversight.

The committee also says that the information it requested about Lebedev arrived late – and that it has not yet determined whether it is sufficient.

The information requested was not provided to us by the 28 April deadline mandated by the committee (so as to align with the parliamentary deadline). It was received only yesterday and the committee is therefore not yet in a position to determine whether the information provided is sufficient, whether the response meets the

statutory provisions which govern the intelligence community's obligations to the committee, and whether the committee will have further questions arising.

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Updated at 12.46 EDT

[3d ago](#)[12.00](#)

## No 10 accused of 'cover-up' after it largely ignores Commons vote for release of confidential minutes about Lebedev peerage



Andrew Sparrow

Boris Johnson has been accused of a “cover-up” after the government largely ignored a Commons vote ordering it to release material relating to the decision to award a peerage to the Evening Standard owner and Russian oligarch [Evgeny Lebedev](#).

The motion was [passed in March](#) following claims that the security services raised concerns about giving a peerage to Lebedev, whose father, Alexander, was a KGB officer who subsequently became a billionaire, but that his peerage was approved after Johnson demanded a reassessment. Johnson and Lebedev are friends.

In March Labour tabled a “humble address” – [a Commons motion](#) compelling the government to release confidential papers – calling for the release of information given to the House of Lords appointments commission about the Lebedev nomination. The motion also said minutes of any meetings about the appointment should be published, with information only redacted “for the purposes of national security”.

After some Tories indicated that they would not support an attempt to block the Labour motion, Johnson told his MPs to abstain, and the motion was passed unopposed.

Today the government responded to the motion by publishing a handful of anodyne documents relating to the appointment, mostly already in the public domain, alongside a lengthy statement explaining why it was ignoring the spirit of what parliament was demanding.

In the [written ministerial statement](#), **Michael Ellis**, the Cabinet Office minister, said the government was holding material back because it was taking into account “the need to protect national security, to maintain integrity in the system for the awarding of honours and dignities by the Crown, the vetting of nominees for probity and the data protection rights of individuals”.

He said that although the government was committed to transparency, in some cases “a competing public interest in favour of non-disclosure of certain information” was more important.

He said the government was disclosing more information about this case in confidence to parliament’s intelligence and security committee.

And he defended the Lebedev appointment:

Lord Lebedev is a man of good standing. His public and personal works are reflected in the citation deposited in the house today as part of the humble address. No complaint has been made about his personal conduct. He has been vocal in his criticism of the Putin regime. Indeed, it was the leader of the opposition who personally congratulated him on his appointment as a peer.

As PA Media reports, the documents that were released were: the blank form Lord Lebedev was required to fill in by the [House of Lords](#) appointments commission, the public citation announcing his appointment, a list of the other peerages awarded at the same time, and a letter congratulating him on the news. My colleague Peter Walker has posted the latter on Twitter.

The actual document is a masterpiece of opacity. One highlight is the official email congratulating Lebedev on becoming a peer, with any details redacted. [pic.twitter.com/gh3kgAd4F1](https://pic.twitter.com/gh3kgAd4F1)

— Peter Walker (@peterwalker99) [May 12, 2022](#)

In response, **Angela Rayner**, Labour's deputy leader, said:

This looks like a cover-up and smells like a cover-up because it is a cover-up. If the prime minister is claiming he was not involved in forcing through the award of a peerage to an individual of concern to our intelligence services, he should come clean and publish the documents as parliament instructed.

The government has not provided a single piece of information in these heavily redacted documents, failing to comply with a direct instruction from parliament. The government is once again seeking to hide in the shadows from the sunlight of scrutiny. We will take steps to rectify this contempt of parliament.

The public have a right to know the truth about Boris Johnson's interference in the appointment of his friend Lord Lebedev, the son and business partner of an ex-KGB agent, to a seat in the heart of our parliament. It is time to get to the bottom of this whole murky business.

Downing Street defended the decision to withhold so much information about the appointment. A No 10 spokesperson said:

It's our responsibility to protect the integrity of the vetting process, which is voluntarily entered into on a confidential basis. We are committed to transparency but the disclosure we've made reflects the need to maintain the integrity of the system.

Lord Bew, chair of the House of Lords appointments commission, [told a Commons committee last month](#) that the Lebedev appointment was originally paused after advice from M15, but that it eventually went through, and that no pressure was applied by No 10.

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Updated at 12.25 EDT

[3d ago](#)[11.04](#)



Libby Brooks

**Nicola Sturgeon** will personally chair a roundtable summit to discuss buffer zones and any other other matters to ensure safe access to abortion services

in Scotland, she announced at FMQs this lunchtime, in response to continued calls for a meeting from the Labour MSP Monica Lennon and campaigners, who have been drawing attention to an escalation in protests at clinics across the country.

The Scottish government faced criticism for not acting faster on its manifesto pledge to support local councils to protect women and healthcare providers from harassment, and Sturgeon has previously said that progress was being stalled because any law would have to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights.

She also underlined there were no plans to review abortion time limits.

The statement came after the women's health minister, **Maree Todd**, confirmed this morning that the temporary permission for at-home early medical abortion care, which was introduced at the start of the pandemic, would be made permanent, securing women's ability to access early abortion medication via post following a tele-medical consultation with a doctor or nurse.



Nicola Sturgeon at first minister's questions. Photograph: Ken Jack/Getty Images

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Updated at 11.48 EDT

[3d ago](#)[11.00](#)



Boris Johnson chairing a regional cabinet meeting at Middleport Pottery in Stoke on Trent. Photograph: Oli Scarff/PA

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Updated at 11.48 EDT

[3d ago](#)[10.51](#)

**EU urges UK to show 'honesty' about the NI protocol and how its problems caused by type of Brexit PM chose**



Jennifer Rankin

The EU's top official in charge of post-Brexit relations, **Maroš Sefčovič**, said that honesty was needed from the UK over the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol, as he accused the government of failing to engage with EU proposals to make the agreement work.

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Updated at 11.09 EDT

[3d ago](#)[10.26](#)

**Boris Johnson** has tweeted that he is “proud that over 100,000 visas” have been issued to Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion.

The UK has a long history of providing refuge for those in need.

I'm proud that over 100,000 visas have now been issued through our schemes to Ukrainians forced to flee their homes, helping them find safety here in the UK. <https://t.co/HVs7Tr9W19>

— Boris Johnson (@BorisJohnson) [May 12, 2022](#)

The Home Office has been widely criticised for its slow implementation of the scheme, which has resulted in delays that have left refugees stuck in Ukraine awaiting visas.

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[3d ago](#)[10.21](#)



Peter Walker

The UK has become “the jurisdiction of choice for dirty money”, harming both its national reputation and democratic institutions, according to a cross-party group of MPs who are calling for a new government focus on money laundering and corruption, the Guardian’s political correspondent Peter Walker writes.

An economic crime manifesto calls for measures including major transparency reforms for company records, a crackdown on tax avoidance in UK overseas territories, and more resources for enforcement.

Other ideas include making it an offence to fail to prevent crimes such as money laundering or targeting bankers, and a dedicated office for economic whistleblowers.

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[3d ago](#) [10.03](#)

# **Boris Johnson says neither he nor Carrie Johnson have received new fines**

**Boris Johnson** is being grilled by broadcasters during his visit to **Stoke-on-Trent**.

Here are the main points:

- Johnson confirmed that neither he nor his wife, Carrie Johnson, received another fine as part of the Partygate police investigation.
  - He wouldn't comment on further measures to ease the cost of living crisis, but said short term measures included council tax cuts and a national insurance cut for 70% of people worth £330.
  - He said the institutions of democracy and political governance of Northern Ireland have “collapsed” because one community won’t accept the way the protocol works at present – “we’ve got to fix that”, he said.
  - He refused to be drawn into questions on whether his previous statements could be true about not knowing rules were broken in Downing Street given the Met police fines, as well as whether Labour leader Keir Starmer had acted honourably by saying he would resign if he were issued a fine.
  - He talked about the need to tackle the cost of living crisis, energy bills and supply chain issues.
  - Asked what his response was to allegations in the New York Times that the Conservative party took money from a donor with links to Russia, the prime minister said: “All our donations are registered in the normal way. To give donations to a political party in this country, you’ve got to be from the UK.”
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Updated at 10.19 EDT

[3d ago](#)[09.38](#)

The DUP leader, Jeffrey Donaldson, says he is expecting “movement” on the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol “fairly soon”.

Speaking to media at the Balmoral show in County Antrim, he said:

*I haven't been given clear timelines yet but given the statement that the foreign secretary has made, it is evident that the likelihood of agreement between the UK and the EU in the short term is remote and so I think it is incumbent now upon the government to act and do so quickly.*

*“It's actions I want to see and not just words, so we'll be watching and listening very carefully to what the government has to say, but in the end we will judge by what is done as much as what is said.”*

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Updated at 10.10 EDT

[3d ago](#)[09.35](#)



Heather Stewart

Here's the full report on the windfall tax from Guardian's political correspondent, Heather Stewart:

Rishi Sunak has said he is "pragmatic" about the idea of introducing a windfall tax on energy companies, insisting "no options are off the table", in the latest hint that the government is preparing fresh measures to tackle the cost of living crisis.

Labour has been calling for a [windfall tax](#) on the oil giants, which have benefited from rocketing global prices, with the shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, suggesting the proceeds be used to cut domestic energy bills.

Both Sunak and the prime minister, [Boris Johnson](#), had previously suggested such a tax would disincentivise investment in the North Sea.

They appear to be warming to the idea, however, amid intense pressure to do more to help hard-pressed households deal with surging inflation. It is understood that Treasury officials are working up possible options.

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Updated at 10.13 EDT

[3d ago](#)[09.13](#)

More from former Tory minister **David Gauke** on the cost of living crisis, including his prediction that the government will end up taxing the profits of oil and gas companies.

He told BBC Radio 4's World at One programme:

*It's not ideal. I don't think it's an easy or straightforward answer.*

*"I can understand why the Treasury is reluctant to go down this route when we do want to encourage investment, particularly in the energy*

*sector, as we move away from relying on hydrocarbons.*

*“I suspect, in the end, the political case for it, the way in which one can raise really quite substantial sums of money, and if you can try to deliver this in a way that makes it clear that the government is not going to come back again and again, then it might not have that much of a behavioural impact.*

*“You know, I think increasingly it seems the oil companies are kind of reconciled to the fact that they’re going to get hit with this at some point or other.*

*“So, it’s not ideal, but I suspect in the end that they will turn to those oil and gas companies and pick up an element of what are exceptional profits.”*

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Updated at 10.16 EDT

[3d ago](#)[09.08](#)

## Boris Johnson and Simon Case not among those issued further FPNs

Here's a bit more detail from PA on the news that **Boris Johnson** was not among those to be fined in the latest tranche of penalties issued by the [Metropolitan police](#) over Partygate.

PA reports:

*Johnson's official spokesman confirmed following the Met's update that neither the PM nor cabinet secretary Simon Case were among those fined in the latest tranche.*

*“With regards to the cabinet secretary and the prime minister, I don’t have any update ... the position [is] we will update you if that were to change,” he said.*

*Pressed on whether it was his understanding that the PM and Case were not among those hit with the most recent set of penalties, the spokesman said: “That’s correct, yeah.”*

*He added: “You’ll know that the prime minister has on a number of occasions apologised and made clear that there were things we simply did not get right, and that he is sorry for how this matter has been handled.*

*“Obviously that remains the case. And like I say, he will have more to say at the conclusion ... and when the Sue Gray report is published.”*

*The prime minister said he was “sure we’ll have plenty to say about that when the thing’s finished” when asked about the extent of law-breaking in Downing Street as he arrived for a cabinet meeting in Staffordshire on Thursday.*

*Ministers dodged questions on whether they still had faith in the PM when asked about the latest development at the same event.*

*Johnson is alleged to have been at six of the 12 events being examined by the force, meaning he could be fined again.*

*Asked in an interview broadcast on Thursday if he too should resign in the event the Labour leader steps down, Johnson told LBC: “What matters to me and the thing that gets me out of bed in the morning is not stuff that, I think, is, however fascinating [it] is to people, I don’t think is material to the cost of living.”*

*The Culture secretary, Nadine Dorries, and education secretary, Nadhim Zahawi, also said they still had faith in their leader when asked about the fines as they attended the Staffordshire meeting.*

The excerpt has been edited for length.

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Updated at 10.17 EDT

[3d ago](#)**09.00**

**Downing Street** has said that neither **Boris Johnson** nor the **chancellor, Rishi Sunak**, believed a windfall tax was the “right approach” to address the cost of living crisis, but that it was important to keep all options on the table.

The prime minister’s official spokesman said:

*We do keep options on the table – rightly so.*

*But, as the prime minister has set out, as the chancellor has said, we do not think this is the right approach.*

*We want these companies that are making profits to make further investments. But we are simply not cutting off options given the circumstances that we find.*

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Updated at 09.14 EDT

[3d ago](#)**08.55**

**Senior Tory MPs** have criticised ministers for their response to the **cost of living crisis**, arguing that they must ensure it is “first and foremost” in their policy priorities and that they should “tame inflation”.

PA reports:

Former cabinet ministers **Liam Fox** and **Maria Miller** led calls for the government to focus on such issues in the short term to enable it to realise its longer-term ambitions.

**Fox**, the Conservative MP for North Somerset, said the government's first duty was to protect citizens from threats, adding:

*There are other threats that I believe we have a right to be protected from: the debasement of our currency, the erosion of our earnings and the devaluation of our savings.*

*"believe it is fundamentally wrong for governments to engage in structural profligacy, spending excess across the economic cycle and passing ever-larger amounts of debt on to the next generation, and I believe that it is the duty of central banks to safeguard the value of our money and our savings.*

Fox called for the Treasury Committee to launch an “investigation into why the Bank of England so comprehensively underestimated the inflationary threat”.

**Miller**, the Conservative MP for Basingstoke, told day three of the Queen’s speech debate:

*One of the levers the [government] can pull in their response to the challenges we face is around inflation, and it's very much in the government's gift to be able to make those changes to bring inflation more under control.*

*The cost of living problems that we're struggling with at the moment need to come first and foremost into the eyes of every minister, regardless of their department.*

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Updated at 10.45 EDT

3d ago **08.50**

**Prime minister Boris Johnson** said his focus would be on continuing strong employment rates and creating more high-wage, high-skilled jobs to

help the UK recover from inflationary pressures and the pandemic's economic aftershocks.

At a cabinet meeting held at a pottery in Staffordshire this afternoon, he said:

*People said that we would have unemployment running up to 12% to 14% – it's back down to 3.8% – and that is the single most important thing that we need to be focussing on, a strong jobs-led recovery.*

*We're going to make sure we use all our ingenuity, all our compassion, everything we need to do to help people through the difficult aftershocks of Covid, and the inflationary pressures that we're seeing, particularly on the costs of energy.*

*What the Queen's speech will also do is give us the legislative firepower to deliver on tackling the underlying issues – the things that are driving up prices, particularly for energy, for people's transport, for the education people need.*

*That is why I think the Queen's speech is so important – infrastructure, education, technology – those are the things that we need to focus on – particularly cutting the cost of energy.*

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Updated at 09.12 EDT

[3d ago](#)[08.42](#)

The former chief secretary to the Treasury, **David Gauke**, has urged the government to boost benefits to help those worst affected by the cost of living crisis.

Speaking to Edward Stourton on BBC Radio 4's World at One, he said:

*What we are seeing is a really significant squeeze on living standards and we are seeing a sluggish economy – and that has got to be a worry.*

*Clearly the pressure is on the government to deal with this.*

*They can't do everything – they can't protect people completely from higher levels of inflation – but what they can do and should do is focus on those who are most vulnerable – those who are most likely to be affected – and I think that's the weakness in the government's response here.*

*You've got to use the benefits system. If you want to help the poorest, I can see a case for cutting taxes, but it won't be well directed at those who need the support most.*

*The government has already announced quite a lot – a big increase in the national insurance contributions threshold – and that's probably the best way of using the tax system to help low earners. But that still leaves quite a lot of people who have not got the support that they might have done.*

Gauke was also asked about the row with the EU over the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol. He said:

*I don't think we can shy away from the fact that the economic consequences of Brexit are being felt and that has contributed to some of the inflationary pressures and of course we could make things much worse if we end up with a trade war with the European Union.*

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Updated at 09.09 EDT

[3d ago](#)[08.40](#)

**Labour** has just issued its response to Partygate fines.

**Angela Rayner MP**, Labour's deputy leader, said:

*Boris Johnson's Downing Street has now reached a century of fixed penalty notices for their partying.*

*They have racked up the dubious distinction of receiving more fines on the prime minister's watch than any other location.*

*Boris Johnson made the rules, and then broke them at record-breaking scale. Britain deserves better.*

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Updated at 09.09 EDT

[3d ago](#)[08.38](#)



Rachel Hall

The **SNP** has responded to the 50 extra Partygate fines.

The SNP's Westminster deputy leader, **Kirsten Oswald** MP, said:

*The sheer scale of law-breaking is staggering. With more than a 100 fines now issued by the Met Police over lockdown-breaking parties,*

*Downing Street may well be one of the biggest law-breaking venues in the UK.*

*It's beyond any doubt that while people made difficult sacrifices and followed the rules to look out for each other, Boris Johnson and his Tory colleagues believed the rules they set didn't apply to them as they laughed and partied away.*

*People are being hammered by a Tory-made cost of living crisis and the reality is that the prime minister and his chancellor are too consumed by scandals to get on with the day job.*

*Boris Johnson should have resigned a long time ago over the law-breaking parties – it is beyond shameful that he continues to desperately cling on.*

Rachel Hall here taking over the live blog – do send over anything we've missed, or other tips, thoughts and ideas to [rachel.hall@theguardian.com](mailto:rachel.hall@theguardian.com).

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Updated at 10.43 EDT

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**Conservatives**

## **Partygate: PM accused of presiding over ‘record’ 100 Covid fines**

Met police announce number of fixed-penalty notices for Covid breaches in Whitehall has doubled



During a visit to Stoke-on-Trent, Boris Johnson continued to refuse to comment on the latest fixed-penalty notices. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

*[Heather Stewart](#), [Peter Walker](#) and [Vikram Dodd](#)*

Thu 12 May 2022 13.33 EDTFirst published on Thu 12 May 2022 05.21 EDT

Boris Johnson has been accused of presiding over Covid lockdown breaches on a “record-breaking scale” after the [Metropolitan police](#) said it had issued 100 fixed-penalty notices as part of its Partygate investigation.

The force previously said it had issued more than 50 fines, a figure updated on Thursday to more than 100. This was the first public information since updates on the investigation's progress were paused ahead of last week's local elections.

Johnson confirmed neither he nor his wife, Carrie, were among those issued with new fines, while Downing Street said this was also the situation for Simon Case, the cabinet secretary. The Met statement said the investigation "remains live", indicating more penalties may come.

In a pooled television clip from a visit to Birmingham on Thursday, the prime minister maintained his refusal to discuss the issue until the conclusion of the police inquiry and the release of a parallel civil service report into illicit parties.

"As soon as I have any more to say about that, you will be amongst the very first to know," Johnson said when asked about the fine, repeating the answer when asked why he had not resigned after being fined earlier in the investigation, given Keir Starmer's pledge to do this if he is punished for breaching Covid rules. Asked if he or his wife had received new fines, he said: "No."

Operation Hillman, the codename for the investigation, is looking at 12 separate events in Downing Street and Whitehall during 2020 and 2021. The Met's leadership believed in February it would be completed within weeks, but there is still no sign of an imminent end.

Some of the new penalties are understood to have been issued for a party inside Downing Street on 18 December 2020, which Johnson did not attend, but which [No 10 aides were later filmed joking about](#).

Footage was leaked in December 2021 of a rehearsal a year earlier for proposed televised Downing Street briefings, during which officials talked about an apparent Christmas party a few days before.

Johnson's then-director of communications, Allegra Stratton, was shown laughing as she struggled to answer questions from a colleague, acting as a

journalist, about whether a party occurred. “It wasn’t a party, it was cheese and wine,” one aide joked. Stratton resigned after the video was made public.

### ‘No social distancing’: Downing Street staff joke about Christmas party in leaked footage – video

One former Whitehall insider suggested “20-30 people” attended the cheese and wine party.

Some of those who have received fines have become increasingly exasperated at the fact the prime minister has escaped almost unscathed.

One former official suggested junior colleagues would have felt “actively marked down” had they declined to attend events organised by “the most senior officials in No 10” – such as the “bring your own booze” gathering to which Johnson’s principal private secretary, Martin Reynolds, sent invitations.

“Martin’s job was to check with the Covid taskforce to see if things were within the rules,” the former official said. “If he’s inviting you to come, you’re going to assume that it’s Covid compliant.”

Last month, it was confirmed that Johnson had [received a fixed-penalty notice](#), for a birthday party in June 2020. His wife and the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, were penalised for the same event.

Angela Rayner, Labour’s deputy leader, said the new fines meant Downing Street had “racked up the dubious distinction of receiving more fines on the prime minister’s watch than any other location”.

She added: “Boris Johnson made the rules, and then broke them at record-breaking scale.”

Johnson has told friends he believes he will not receive further penalties, and said publicly last week he [had not yet been sent a questionnaire from the Met about the leaving party](#) for his aide Lee Cain, at which he is believed to have poured drinks, and which is one of the 12 events being investigated.

Several sources have suggested a separate party was held on the same night, hosted by Carrie Johnson upstairs in the No 10 flat, at which Abba was played loudly. Johnson is expected to argue that while he was present at that gathering, it was only to interview a possible candidate for a job.

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Many Conservative MPs are awaiting the publication of [the full civil service report, put together by the senior official Sue Gray](#), before deciding whether to move against the prime minister.

So far, the Cabinet Office has only published a pared down version of her findings, after she paused her work while the Met investigation took place.

Durham police said last week they would investigate claims the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, broke lockdown rules by eating a takeaway curry at a campaign event last year.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/12/partygate-met-says-over-100-fines-issued-lockdown-breaches-downing-street>

## Brexit

# Liz Truss warns EU she may have ‘no choice’ but to alter NI protocol

Foreign secretary repeats threat to scrap parts of Brexit deal, saying it is a matter of ‘peace and security’



The attorney general for England and Wales said the EU was undermining the Good Friday agreement by creating a trade barrier in the Irish Sea.  
Photograph: Peter Morrison/PA

*[Lisa O'Carroll](#), [Jennifer Rankin](#) and [Julian Borger](#)*

Thu 12 May 2022 08.21 EDTFirst published on Thu 12 May 2022 03.51 EDT

The UK foreign secretary has reiterated her threat to scrap parts of the [Northern Ireland](#) Brexit protocol, telling the EU’s Brexit negotiator it was a matter of “internal peace and security”.

Liz Truss warned Maroš Šefčovič in a phone call that unless the EU showed the “requisite flexibility” in talks over the trading arrangements she would have “no choice but to act”.

It was the first time the pair had spoken since it was revealed the UK was considering tabling draft legislation to [override part of the special Brexit trading arrangements](#) for Northern Ireland.

The standoff between the two is testing wider relations with the EU at a time when “bigger things” such as [Finland joining Nato](#) are happening, Ireland’s foreign minister, Simon Coveney, said on Thursday.

David McAllister, a German centre-right MEP who chairs the European parliament’s UK coordination group, said the EU was united against renegotiating the protocol.

“The protocol was signed and ratified by both sides. Nobody here in Brussels is interested in starting these new complicated discussions and political fights,” he said.

Truss said she had told Šefčovič the protocol was “the greatest obstacle” to forming a new Northern Ireland executive following [last week’s elections](#).

Šefčovič told her there was “no room to expand the negotiating mandate or introduce new proposals to reduce the overall level of trade friction”, according to a Foreign Office statement.

“The foreign secretary noted this with regret and said the situation in Northern Ireland is a matter of internal peace and security for the United Kingdom, and if the EU would not show the requisite flexibility to help solve those issues, then as a responsible government we would have no choice but to act,” it added.

In a statement after the call, Sefčovič said it remained of “serious concern that the UK government intends to embark on the path of unilateral action”.

Referring to [a set of ideas to cut customs checks](#) issued last October, he said the EU had proposed “a series of wide-ranking and impactful solutions” that

would “substantially improve” the way the protocol was implemented.

He also said the EU was still waiting for the UK’s response to proposals it made in February. “We have made clear that there is still potential to be explored in our proposals,” he said.

“Unilateral action, effectively disapplying an international agreement such as the protocol, is simply not acceptable,” he said, warning it would undermine trust and compromise “our ultimate objective”, the protection of the Good Friday agreement.

Coveney has said the threats to introduce legislation to unilaterally disapply parts of the [Brexit](#) agreement were counterproductive as such a move would be met with legal action.

But he also told RTÉ it was right that the UK wanted to ensure there were no checks on goods that remain in Northern Ireland, suggesting there was a landing zone if the UK withdrew its threats.

The attorney general for England and Wales, [Suella Braverman](#), was said to have approved the scrapping of large parts of the Northern Ireland Brexit deal, according to reports.

The move came as a leading US congressman, Brendan Boyle, described the government’s plans to move away from a treaty it signed two years ago as a “very frustrating” and “counterproductive” pattern that was causing concern in Washington.

The Washington ad hoc committee to protect the Good Friday agreement described the UK’s plans as “neither strategic or wise” and said it would not have the support of Joe Biden.

We look forward to meeting [@ConorBurnsUK](#) this Friday. Tearing up the Protocol, which is boosting the NI economy, & starting a trade war with the larger EU in order to protect the GFA is neither strategic or wise & won’t sell [@POTUS](#). Fully implementing GFA much more promising

— Ad Hoc Committee to Protect GFA (@HocGfa) [May 11, 2022](#)

Braverman has advised that legislation to override the Northern Ireland protocol would be legal because the EU's implementation of it was "disproportionate and unreasonable", the Times has reported.

In evidence to her findings, Braverman said the EU was undermining the Good Friday agreement by creating a trade barrier in the Irish Sea and fuelling civil unrest, the newspaper said.

The threats by the UK government to introduce a law to disapply parts of the protocol which, if implemented in full, would mean physical and customs checks on food and some other goods, were already causing a rift within the Tory party and with EU leaders.

Senior MPs warned there were a number of ministers prepared to resign if faced with passing the bill into law. Sources close to Truss have stressed that no final decision had been made and that any potential legislation was intended to run in parallel with further talks.

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Boyle said the UK should listen to the majority of people in Northern Ireland who, he said, did not vote for the protocol to be abandoned.

"Ever since almost the moment that Boris Johnson and David Frost negotiated the Northern Ireland protocol and signed it, it seems as if every other month or so, they're threatening to rip it up and unilaterally walk away, so it is a very frustrating cycle that we've had to deal with over the last several years, completely counterproductive, and not in accordance with the expressed wishes of the majority of Northern Ireland.

"Literally two days ago, the people of Northern Ireland elected pro-protocol parties and candidates by a margin of 60% to 40%, right? So I think we should actually listen to the overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland," he said.

This article was amended on 13 May 2022 because an earlier version mistakenly quoted Maroš Šefčovič referring to "trade fiction"; this has been

corrected to trade friction.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/12/attorney-general-approves-scraping-of-ni-protocol-reports-liz-truss-brexit>

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## [Brexit](#)

# Brexit: why has row over Northern Ireland protocol resurfaced?

UK has threatened laws to disapply parts of deal as negotiations with EU on food checks are due to restart



A lorry at Belfast harbour. Photograph: Brian Lawless/PA

*Lisa O'Carroll* Brexit correspondent  
[@lisaocarroll](https://twitter.com/lisaocarroll)

Wed 11 May 2022 05.28 EDT Last modified on Thu 12 May 2022 00.12 EDT

The UK is set for another bust-up with the EU over Brexit, testing the patience of European leaders trying to maintain a united front against Vladimir Putin.

**What is the UK threatening, why now and what are the consequences?**

The issue is the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol, signed by Boris Johnson in January 2020.

It is now threatening to derail the new Stormont power-sharing government after the Democratic Unionist party refused to appoint new ministers until the checks on the Irish Sea border on goods coming into Northern Ireland from Great Britain were scrapped.

## **What has happened now?**

The UK foreign secretary, Liz Truss, issued a strongly worded and lengthy broadside against the EU late on Tuesday night criticising proposals it made last October to relax checks on goods crossing from Great Britain into Northern Ireland.

She said the proposals “would worsen the current trading arrangements and lead to everyday items disappearing from shelves” and lead to “other unacceptable burdens on business”.

And she warned that the UK “will not shy away from taking action to stabilise the situation in Northern Ireland if solutions cannot be found”.

Full Liz Truss statement below - it's long. "I'll not shy away from taking action to stabilise the situation in Northern Ireland if solutions cannot be found." [pic.twitter.com/YmTYqJN8EY](https://pic.twitter.com/YmTYqJN8EY)

— Lisa O'Carroll (@lisaocarroll) [May 11, 2022](#)

She said Lincolnshire sausages and other chilled meats would need a veterinary certificate to enter Northern Ireland, sending a parcel to Northern Ireland would require more than 50 fields of information for customs declarations and there “would be powers to search people’s bags for food, like ham sandwiches, on departure from the ferry to Northern Ireland”.

She also said pet owners would need to pay £280 for certificates and jabs for their dogs or cats “just to go on holiday in the UK”.

And finally that VAT reliefs such as the recent energy saver could not be applied in Northern Ireland, “despite posing no risk to the EU single market”.

### **Haven't we heard all this before?**

Yes, most of it. Recall the row over the Great British banger?

### **So why now?**

Negotiations with the EU over the protocol are about to restart – or implode – if the UK goes ahead with a [threat to table new laws](#), possibly as early as Tuesday next week, to disapply some of the protocol.

### **Anything new?**

Yes. Truss also protested that composite foods such as “Thai green curry ready meals, New Zealand lamb and Brazilian pork” could disappear from the shelves if the protocol was applied in full.

### **Why is that interesting?**

Remember the row about chlorinated chicken coming into the UK from the US? The Thai green curry example raises the same issue for the EU and goes to the heart of the protocol checks. They were agreed to ensure that third country goods – whether it was unregulated meat from South America or the US or counterfeit goods from China – could not slip into Ireland or the single market via Northern Ireland.

### **What does the EU say?**

Last October the EU offered to scrap 80% of Northern Ireland food checks and 50% of customs checks in four discussion papers it called [“far-reaching”](#) and a [“new model” for the protocol](#).

It also repeatedly offered a deal to eliminate food checks if the UK agreed to maintain equivalent food standards as the EU. This was rejected in the overall trade deal as it could have raised a barrier in trade deals with the US and other countries with different food standards. But the EU offered the UK

a bespoke deal for Northern Ireland that would have resulted in physical checks on food scrapped under an equivalence deal which would be reviewed in the event of a US trade deal.

## **How did the UK react?**

The then [Brexit](#) secretary, Lord Frost, claimed the “far-reaching” proposals were nothing of the sort – arguing the 50% reduction in customs checks was merely a reduction in 50% of the number of boxes vendors had to check when sending goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

He also demanded the role of the European court of justice as the arbiter in any potential disputes was changed.

And he repeated a threat to take unilateral action to achieve his goals.

## **Now what – will the UK walk away?**

Talks, stalled because of both the Ukraine war and the Northern Ireland assembly election, will resume.

But expect relations to get worse before they get better.

The UK is expected to unveil legislation next week to disapply some of the protocol.

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## **What will the EU do if the UK walks away from the protocol?**

The EU Brexit chief Maroš Šefčovič, issued a blunt statement on Tuesday warning the protocol was a “cornerstone” of the wider withdrawal agreement and [“its renegotiation is not an option”](#). If the UK does go for the nuclear option and disapply the protocol completely, the EU has promised swift and decisive action.

These could range from limited sanctions on emblematic British goods such as Scottish salmon and whisky or suspension of the entire trade and

cooperation deal.

The UK knows the EU has no appetite for a row given the situation in Ukraine but the legal ground work for a trade war was undertaken last November when Frost threatened to walk away.

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## 2022.05.12 - Spotlight

- Forgetting Hiroshima Is nuclear war no longer unthinkable?
- 'I was sure they would fall in love!' The dos and don'ts of amateur matchmaking
- 'I was totally smitten' Readers share their memories of the iPod
- Clare Balding's year in TV My wife and I tried to eat at the table during the pandemic, but we're back on the sofa

# Forgetting the apocalypse: why our nuclear fears faded – and why that's dangerous

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## Life and style

# ‘I was sure they would fall in love!’ The dos and don’ts of amateur matchmaking

There’s nothing as satisfying as setting up your friends for a successful date – or as crushing as when it goes wrong. Here’s how to improve everyone’s chances



‘At the most basic level, it’s saying “I am open to being introduced.”’  
Composite: Guardian Design; Flashpop/Getty Images (Posed by models)



[Elle Hunt](#)

Thu 12 May 2022 05.00 EDT

Sarah, 45, describes herself as a “total Cupid” – “always single, and always connecting my single friends”. When we speak, she has just set up an old friend with a new one she met through yoga. “They hit it off straight away,” she says. She is waiting for a positive outcome from another pair too: “I haven’t given up on them yet.”

A generation ago, the Sarahs of this world were in heavy demand: your extended network was the first place you’d look for love. For a while, it seemed that technology had made them redundant: a [2019 Stanford University study](#) showed the proportion of couples who had met through friends had plummeted, displaced by online dating. But, as the Tinder era enters its second decade, many single people are once again yearning for a more personal romantic approach. This could be why nearly 70% of respondents to a [2020 Pew Research Center survey](#) said their dating lives were not going well.

“It’s become easy to meet, but harder to connect,” says Lakshmi Rengarajan, a New York-based workplace consultant at WeWork and elsewhere, who has been pairing people up for over a decade. Her goal has always been to

“make dating more human”, she says. But the pandemic presented her with her biggest challenge yet. “All of a sudden, everybody had no choice but to use the apps.” In response, Rengarajan started the podcast [Paired by the People](#), which is dedicated to reviving the art of the setup. In each episode, Rengarajan interviews a couple whose meeting was engineered by friends, or sets up strangers herself, with a view to showing listeners how they might go about it.

As confident as they might be about making connections elsewhere in life, says Rengarajan, many people feel unsure about how to facilitate or request a date, worrying it could be intrusive to offer or desperate to ask. “I think they have a very antiquated notion of what a setup looks like,” she says.

So, if you are single and want to be set up, how should you go about it? First, Rengarajan says, be clear about it with your friends – but only tell them the absolute deal-breakers for your potential partner such as sexuality or politics. “At the most basic level, it’s saying: ‘I am open to being introduced.’” Providing them with a laundry list of desired characteristics piles on too much pressure – and goes against the setup’s spirit of serendipity. “The language is important: don’t use words like ‘perfect’ or ‘match’ – even ‘good for me’ has a lot of judgment,” Rengarajan says.

The perfect phrasing, she suggests, is “someone you think I would get along with”. “Give them permission to go with their gut, and tell them that if it doesn’t work out, it’s not a big deal.”

You’re less likely to discard this person immediately – you’re going to at least let them finish their latte

### *Lakshmi Rengarajan*

By putting them at ease, says Rengarajan, you lower the stakes for yourself, too. Dating apps can make us so particular and quick to judge, she says, but if a friend has put in the effort of choosing someone for you, you are less likely to dismiss them out of hand. “People have a very low tolerance for awkward conversations. With a setup, I think your tolerance is slightly higher: ‘I’m not going to discard this person immediately – I’m going to at least let them finish their latte.’”

If you are finding someone a date, be thoughtful, but don't overthink it. "Don't ask yourself if they could get married, or even if they could spend eight hours together," says Rengarajan. "Just imagine: would they get along?"

Rather than explicitly setting up her housemate and colleague, Imogen "deliberately and repeatedly" engineered for them to meet at social events. "I was sure they would fall in love: they're both into philosophy and the same Korean restaurant in east London." When they eventually went on a date, "I was so excited that my scheming and string-pulling had worked," says Imogen, 32. But her housemate called it off abruptly, hurting her colleague's feelings – "and now she doesn't want to come round to my house any more", says Imogen. "I sort of wish I'd left it well enough alone."

But Imogen doesn't think that a more considered setup would have had a happier ending – it might have made her feel even more guilty, she says. "I think that's something you have to be ready for if you do an explicit set-up.



'A nudge was all they needed – that first drink turned into a three-day date.'

Photograph: Westend61/Getty Images (Posed by models)

Rengarajan's response to such disasters is sanguine. "What I always say to people is, your friends have sent you to bad restaurants, bad parties or bad

vacation spots, and you didn't punish them for that. I think good friendships can survive this."

The introduction itself is crucial, Rengarajan says. Many people give recommendations, such as: "She's a great friend," which are too general to be telling. Sharing an entire relationship history, on the other hand, might extinguish a potential romance prematurely.

Instead, Rengarajan swears by offering a telling anecdote. "I can tell you 'Bob is a great guy,' or I can tell you 'Bob is such a good friend, he helped me move into my fourth-floor walk-up apartment in New York in the summer.'"

Such stories prime the pair to see each other as rounded individuals, rather than just another date, she says. "It's unbelievable how it changes the trajectory – they even start to look different to you."

I'm not looking for Mr Perfect, I'm looking for Mr November

*Jenny Tolan*

Bonnie, 36, encouraged her housemate to go on a date with her friend, and they are now married with two children. "I joke that the reason I suggested they invite each other for a drink was that they both have great taste in balsamic vinegar, and that Polly would be able to hold her own when Tom inevitably launched into a long conversation about international relations," she says.

"In truth, they were simply both a couple of the smartest, most well-put-together and funniest people I knew – I just had a feeling." And that feeling was reciprocated: "A nudge was all they needed – that first drink turned into a three-day date," says Bonnie.

After making the introduction, you could check in to see whether your friends have made plans to meet (and give a gentle push if not: inbox overwhelm is real, says Rengarajan), or suggest a venue or activity. But the rest is down to them, for better or worse. "I don't think you should feel entitled to an update," she says.

It is natural to feel some trepidation about bringing friends together, Rengarajan says, but the worst-case scenario could be no more than slight awkwardness. “You will survive running into an ex, or having to rearrange your dinner party.”

In fact, involving more people in your search for love can make it feel fun. On one episode of Paired by the People, Rengarajan interviewed a woman who roped her friends into finding her 12 dates for her “date of the month club”. “I’m not looking for Mr Perfect, I’m looking for Mr November,” Jenny Tolan told them in her explanatory email. Her friends responded with enthusiasm – and Tolan ended up marrying Mr July.

For anyone burnt out by dating, Rengarajan says, this approach can be refreshing. “People think it’s this big production, and it’s not. You can have fun with it.

“We do know how to do this,” she adds. Our instincts might be rusty – “but I don’t think they’re gone”.

Sarah, for one, is confident that her latest introduction will eventually pay off. “I think it’s a match made in heaven … I wish a friend would do it for me.”

*Case studies’ names and some identifying details have been changed*

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/may/12/dos-and-do-nots-of-amateur-matchmaking>.

## iPod

# ‘I was totally smitten’: readers share their memories of the iPod

Apple has discontinued the music player that transformed a generation’s listening habits after its launch in 2001



The iPod meant people could carry all their music in their pocket for the first time. Composite: Getty

[Guardian readers](#) and [Alfie Packham](#)

Thu 12 May 2022 05.40 EDT Last modified on Thu 12 May 2022 06.11 EDT

**‘I still use my 2007 iPod Classic’**



Andy Clarke

When the incredible but short-lived [iPod](#) Mini was released in 2004, it wasn't available in the UK at first. I had to ask friends in Florida to bring one over for my son's 12th birthday. He loved showing his friends this device that looked like it belonged in the future.

Our family has had plenty of [iPods](#) over the years; an early iPod with a click wheel, a mini, three Nanos, two Shuffles, and a Classic. My wife still takes her 2007 "fat iPod nano" on holiday as she doesn't like taking her iPhone to the pool. As a music player, an iPod has none of the potential distractions of a phone. No emails, no messages, and no notifications. It's a shame there will be no more iPods as there's still a place for a distraction-free music player.

My 2007 black iPhone Classic is still permanently attached to the hi-fi in my car. It's a 160Gb model and contains my entire music collection – ripped from CDs – as it was a few years ago. The battery doesn't last, but that doesn't matter as it's constantly connected to USB power in my car. **Andy Clarke, software designer, Wales, UK**

**'A museum might want it one day'**



Elizabeth's iPod.

I bought my first iPod in 2004 in Singapore. It was a 40GB iPod and came with so many accessories – a docking port charger, headphones, a protective carry case, you name it. I had all my music digitised and on my iPod – it was so easy back then. The wheel on the original iPods used to drive me a bit crazy as it was sensitive to the slightest touch; you'd try to move forwards on a playlist and you'd skip too many songs, so you'd try to go back but would go too far the other way.

I still have my first iPod, and it still worked the last time I tried it. The biggest problem I have is finding a charger as [Apple](#) have changed them so many times. Sadly, I got rid of my docking port – more fool me. But I won't get rid of the iPod as it works and a museum might want it one day. I still use my iPod Shuffle – it's so much easier at the gym than a phone. I use my phone everywhere else, but I've found quite a lot of what I listen to is not available on Spotify. I'm sorry to see the iPod go simply because I can't afford what Apple charge for an iPhone with memory large enough to get all of my music and playlists on to. **Elizabeth Dennett, 58, New Zealand**

**'This was my format'**

The iPod arrived in that teenage sweet spot where music is everything. In the same way people venerate vinyl now, this was my format. I'd load up on CDs at Selectadisc in Nottingham, rip them to iTunes, shelve them and mooch off into college or town with the latest stuff blasting out. It's the device on which I formed memories with Radiohead, Wilco, REM, Bloc Party, Blur, Interpol, Franz Ferdinand, Beck, Gorillaz and loads of other bands that now seem really ancient.

Shuffle was there for the quick five-minute blast between lessons or work shifts where you just needed to fill your brain with music, but I was almost always a snob about listening to albums from back to front. And always dreamed of someone picking up my iPod and commenting on how great my music taste was and asking me to marry them.

Times change and it's a miracle to have essentially every song streamable in my pocket, with wireless headphones. But I'm also an old git now with responsibilities – and I miss the iPod days. Nothing will quite touch that feeling of powering around town filling my brain with endless new music on a distraction-free, dedicated, insanely cool, easy-to-use piece of overpriced tech that wasn't also a portal to social media hell. **Matt, 33, reporter, Nottingham, UK**

**‘I’m surprisingly heavy-hearted about it’**



Alexander Lerche's iPod.

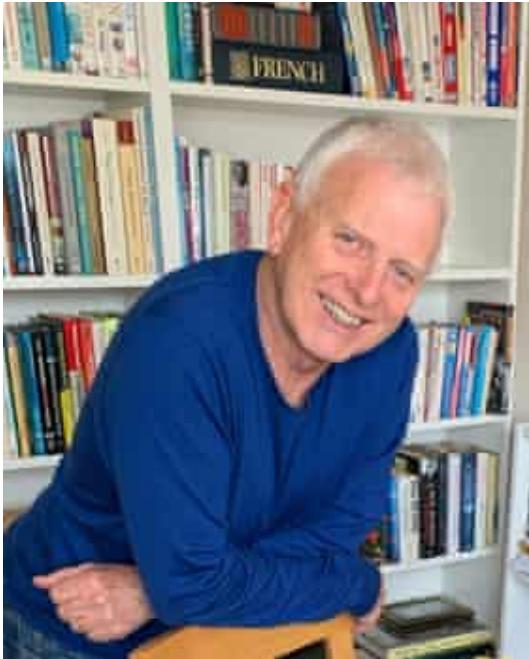
In the second week of January 2005 my father took me to John Lewis in Reading for the sole purpose of trying to find the elusive fourth generation 40 GB model. It had sold out everywhere before Christmas and I was desperate to finally get my first ever iPod. I'd been using a CD Walkman for years, but the iPod was tiny (for the time), sleek, intuitive to use, and looked like one of those futuristic devices from a 50s sci-fi comic. It went everywhere with me – carrying songs ripped from all my parents' CDs; Queen, Erik Satie, Bob Dylan, Weezer, the Rocky soundtrack, and eventually thousands of other tracks ripped from friends' computers using a rather cheeky piece of free software called MyTunes Redux.



Alexander Lerche

The following year, it got crushed in a bike accident, but I woke up in hospital with it still playing next to me, screen cracked and the body split down the seam – my first taste of heartbreak. Seventeen years later, I still can't bring myself to throw the old 40GB away, so I use it to store camera memory cards in the cable drawer. I'm surprisingly heavy-hearted about it, and probably feel very similar to how people felt when the original Game Boy was discontinued in 2003, which marked the end of an era for iconic gaming devices. When the news broke about Apple dropping it, I admit, I went straight to the site and ordered a new Touch to keep in the cable drawer as back-up for when my ageing iPod Video finally calls it a day. I'm just not ready to switch systems. **Alexander Lerche, 34, photojournalist, Doha, Qatar**

**'I remember the thrill of opening the box'**



Nigel Wilson.

I first saw an iPod in a client's office in 2002. I was totally smitten. My wife bought me my first iPod (20GB) for Christmas that year. It took me an entire weekend to upload all my CDs into iTunes to transfer to the iPod. Having lugged about cases of LPs as a teenager, I couldn't believe I had all my music in my pocket, available to play at will.

I remember the thrill of opening the box – beautiful, smooth cardboard with the strap line “Designed in California”. And then the gorgeous white iPod, which felt so good in the palm of my hand. I also remember paying a small fortune to have a car kit installed so I could play anything from my music collection while driving.

When I first took my iPod to the beach, I enclosed it in a waterproof, shockproof case – I was paranoid about not damaging it in any way. The iPod was a real breakthrough, and thanks to technology I can now listen to anything at anytime via my iPhone or MacBook. I no longer use mine now – the battery can't be charged. But I will always keep my original iPod. **Nigel Wilson, 66, yoga teacher, Kent, UK**

**‘When I hear Eminem, the memories of the Shuffle come back’**

My dad went to the States in 2004 and came back with a third generation iPod for my brother and I was outraged. He wasn't ever kind enough to lend it to me, but instead I would steal his spare set of headphones and just put the plug end into my pocket so I would look cool going to school. I had a friend around that same time and she had an iPod Shuffle which she was kind enough to lend, and I recall her love for Eminem. Even to this day, when I hear Eminem the memories of that Shuffle come back.

When I eventually got my own third gen in 2006 I started to really find my own music taste for the first time. I used to spend hours uploading music from CDs and making sure every song had all the info perfectly recorded so I could handpick each one and put it cleanly into its appropriate playlist. I made lifelong friends in those early days as we swapped music and bonded over certain songs or artists. I still have all the music I ever loaded on to it on a special hard drive at home. My first album was Aladdin, the soundtrack. **Susie Krieble, 30, project manager, Tokyo, Japan**

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## Turn us on: a Bafta TV special**Television & radio**

Interview

# **Clare Balding's year in TV: 'My wife and I tried to eat at the table during the pandemic, but we're back on the sofa'**

Hannah J Davies

The broadcaster on loving Ted Lasso, watching The Chase on +1, and presenting the BBC's Tokyo Olympics coverage from Salford



Clare Balding wears suit, meandem.com. Shirt and jewellery, Clare's own. Styling: Peter Bevan. Set design: Olivia Giles. Makeup: Cher Webb, using makeup provided by official beauty partner Lancôme. Hair: Dionne Smith. Lighting assistants: Luke Fullalove and Zelie Lockhart. Digital technician: Jess Segal. Runner: Jordan. Photograph: Hollie Fernando/The Guardian



[@hannahjdavies](#)

Thu 12 May 2022 05.00 EDT

*Clare Balding, 51, joined the BBC as a trainee in 1994, and has since led the coverage of sporting events including the Olympics and Paralympics, Royal Ascot and the Commonwealth Games. She is also the president of the Rugby Football League.*

**In 2021, you present the BBC's coverage of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics ... from Salford. How was that?**

The tech team did a terrific job; with Bethany Firth, the swimmer who won gold for Team GB at the Paralympics, we had her mum on the line just as her hand touched the wall, which was brilliant. The other benefit of being here is that you know what's catching on and what people are responding to, which you don't always know when you're in another time zone. Of course, the big difference since the last Olympic cycle is that athletes have more confidence in their own voice, whether that's [Simone Biles](#) or [Emily Campbell](#), the weightlifter who wanted to use her platform to talk about body image. They have become much more vocal, and they represent more than just sport.



Clare Balding: 'What I'm doing is finding a hook, and a way of making people care about sports and sportspeople.' Photograph: Lewis Storey/Getty Images

**What would you be doing if you weren't a presenter?**

I nearly went into advertising, which I don't think is dissimilar to my job now. What I'm doing is finding a hook, and a way of making people care about sports and sportspeople.

**What show had you gripped during the last year?**

The Morning Show. I bloody loved it. Jennifer Aniston's never been better, and I love Reese Witherspoon. And Ted Lasso. Men's football is such a traditional, dry world ... I love the idea of transporting someone in with fresh ideas and a belief in teamwork.

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**Your TV guilty pleasure**

The Chase. Quite often we'll watch it on +1. I haven't quite gotten to the stage of recording it on series link, but that would be a logical step.

## **What do you eat in front of the TV?**

My wife, the broadcaster Alice Arnold, and I aren't very good cooks, but during the pandemic we started getting recipe boxes delivered, where you can make your own meals, and we made a rule to always eat at the table. We're back on the sofa now, but it definitely needs to be "fork food" – nothing that needs a knife.

## **Who is the most famous person in your phone contacts?**

Dawn French. And I might have Helen Mirren's number. I always try to make a new friend at the Baftas.

For more information about the Virgin Media Bafta TV Awards, visit [bafta.org](https://www.bafta.org)

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## 2022.05.12 - Opinion

- Hate mail and death threats: how the right wrecked one man's life for its culture war
- Ignore the pomp: thanks to Boris Johnson, Britain has never been less united
- For decades the MoD denied my mystery illness. At last I feel I know the truth
- How should a Marshall plan for Ukraine work?

[\*\*Opinion\*\*](#)[\*\*Newspapers\*\*](#)

# Hate mail and death threats: how the right wrecked one man's life for its culture war

[Aditya Chakrabortty](#)



Matthew Katzman was forced out of the UK after he was accused of ‘canceling the Queen’. For pundits and politicians, it was all just lucrative fun



Illustration by Tomekah George

Thu 12 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 06.18 EDT

He only knew it was serious when the hate mail began. Up until then, neither Matthew Katzman nor his friends thought what they'd done was that big a deal. But now he was getting abuse in his inbox, over WhatsApp, on social media. Every few minutes, a fresh load landed.

“BIG NOSED UGLY FUCK GO KILL YOURSELF”

“Wouldn’t be stupid enough to stay in the country.”

“Twitter needs to do its stuff and locate where he is hiding.”

Even as he walked home, his phone was humming with threats. And he was scared.

It was the early days of last June. Without his knowledge and against his will, Matthew had been conscripted into that very modern British phenomenon: a culture war. The day that was ending in public hate had begun with a deluge of press. From the Times and the Telegraph to the Sun and the Mail, the papers claimed the American student had “[cancelled the](#)

Queen", whipping up a woke mob at Oxford's Magdalen College to ban her picture from their common room. They slapped his name on the front pages, while decorating their inside spreads with personal photos scraped from his social media. Then the government took the baton. Then-education secretary Gavin Williamson slammed the move as "simply absurd", while Jacob Rees-Mogg singled out Katzman in the Commons as "a pimply adolescent". Even the prime minister joined in.

Never mind that the American was no adolescent, but 25. Forget that Williamson had responded to the Salisbury poisonings of 2018 by telling the Russian state to "go away and shut up", which really was absurd. So well-timed were these interventions, a cynic might believe they had been precision-targeted to keep the story running.

And what a story it was. As culture conflagrations go, this one had it all: an ancient university, bolshie twentysomethings denouncing the monarchy, the implication that British history was anything but a glorious pageant. No wonder some of the highest-paid names in British journalism lined up to give a computing student 3,000 miles from home their best kicking. From Rod Liddle to Jenni Murray, all agreed that if this Yank didn't like it he should go back where he came from. This was a theme the unpaid hate-mailers kept harping on: "Your toxic identity and victim politics aren't wanted here."

Piers Morgan begged Joe Biden to "drop the whiny insolent brat somewhere over the Atlantic". Dan Wootton thundered: "Would this rabble-rouser disrespect his own country like this?" The Mail's resident thinker also didn't care for Katzman's PhD in "complexity theory", which is actually a branch of maths, but never mind. For the record, Wootton hails from New Zealand, where he did media studies and politics. And Morgan often drones on about how much he values free speech and others' opinions.

For the pundits and the politicians it was all good lucrative fun. Except the story was largely manufactured, and the consequences for Katzman have been devastating. Apart from a brief interview with the Daily Telegraph at the start of the storm and a statement normally buried right at the bottom of news reports, the student at its very eye has not been heard from at all – until he agreed to speak to me. His account of the events of last summer demands

to be read by anyone who cares about this country's media and political culture. And it has a nasty resonance in the week in which the main opposition party was blindsided by accusations over, of all things, a takeaway curry.

For a start, it was not a [portrait](#) of the Queen, but a cheap print of a photo that had only been tacked up a few years earlier. Nor did Magdalen ban all royal pictures – the college still has plenty on display. This was pointed out at the time but often conveniently ignored. Katzman wasn't even, to quote [the Times](#) "behind the removal". Most of the main points of the story had been stretched to breaking point.

Slight and quietly spoken, Katzman doesn't fit the Mail's notion of a "student show-off". He enjoys strategy board games and has a puppy called Rusty. And up until his notoriety, he had been president of the postgraduates' middle common room (MCR), dealing with student kitchens and their bins. Before last June's meeting, he was presented with a motion from an MCR subcommittee asking for the removal of the picture of the Queen. Katzman redrafted the motion, playing down its accusation of colonialism. Instead, he wrote that those associations made some students uncomfortable. His name was appended as a formality, yet at a sparsely attended meeting, he neither spoke for the motion nor supported it. Seventeen students voted, only two opposed. The rest of the evening was spent discussing, among other things, garden furniture and a leaving gift for a college librarian.

There was no rendition of the Marseillaise, no blood-curdling cries for the guillotine. In the name of making people feel welcome in their own common room, a fairly small print was removed from a modestly sized room inside a building that is off-limits to the public. No harm was done to anyone.

But the event itself did not matter. All that counted was the story told about it.

Through all of 2018, according to [research published this week](#) by King's College London, the expression "cancel culture" appeared in just six newspaper articles in the UK. By last year, the term featured in 3,670 pieces. For news organisations that rely on web traffic for their revenues, it has

become a vital phrase: a way of catching fitful attention and generating clicks that attract advertising. The Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday account for nearly one in four of all uses. Students at that meeting didn't think they were cancelling anyone – because they weren't. But the professionals in the press and government weren't going to spurn a gift.

When he saw those front pages, Katzman's first reaction was disbelief. "This must be the most trivial news story that has ever been written." But then he saw the pictures and read the details about his family. He began to get very anxious. He had been turned into that week's target for the right's two-minute hate. This young man who doesn't identify as woke or radical, and for whom marching means playing a trumpet in a band – he would be the focus of national bile.

Sure enough, hate mail began pouring in. Much of it was abusive, some was directly racist. "Jewish bolshevik. Communist cunt." Worried over his physical safety, Magdalen moved him and his girlfriend into one of their rooms, from which they didn't emerge for five days. Five days in which Katzman barely slept or ate, but just kept worrying. Not long after he returned to his family and friends in the US.

He came back to Oxford that autumn, but couldn't stay. The place brought back memories of his hounding and strangers would treat him as either a celebrity or a monster. He lives in the US now and does his PhD there. He didn't cancel the Queen, but the British right cancelled him.

It is often said that the challenge for progressive politicians and activists in this country is to play the media game. To eat that bacon sandwich more elegantly, or ditch that donkey jacket. To sound reasonable and put on a shirt and tie. But the moral of Katzman's tale is that one can be blameless – and if the right want to find blame, they will. A computing whiz-kid at a top university – how much better does it get? A top student looking after others amid the trauma of lockdown. None of it counts in your favour, if the press don't favour you.

Katzman still thinks about what happened most days, and it fills him with rage. The dishonesty with which the press and ministers presented him; their indifference in finding out what actually happened. All that hot air about

English fair play counted for nothing and all those venerable institutions failed him.

“The journalists and politicians who trashed me were doing it for their own ends: to get a headline or to get paid,” he says. “Well, congratulations! Because they all won. They didn’t care about what it did to me.”

Aditya Chakrabortty is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#)[Queen's speech](#)

## **Ignore the pomp: thanks to Boris Johnson, Britain has never been less united**

[Martin Kettle](#)



The full uniformed flummery of the state opening of parliament belies the fragile state of the nation



‘Prince Charles is depicted as favouring a slimmed down monarchy.’  
Photograph: EyePress News/Rex/Shutterstock

Thu 12 May 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 12 May 2022 13.06 EDT

You had only to [watch a few minutes](#) of the state opening of parliament to know that, in Britain, an old order is passing. Most comment has focused, naturally enough, on the enforced absence of the Queen, and on Prince Charles deputising for her. But the process of change we are witnessing is not just about individuals, it’s about our governance too. It’s about our politics – and it’s even about the nation itself.

The rituals and robes of a state opening appear familiar. But they are an invented tradition from the imperial age, like the building in which they take place. What we saw on Tuesday [dates from 1852](#), during the reign of Queen Victoria, who only intermittently opened parliament herself. Most of the current uniformed flummery was created for Edward VII in 1902.

It is important to understand this, because it is a reminder that things do not always have to be this way. It can be tempting to slip into the trap of thinking that Britain’s institutions constitute a settled order. In fact, they are always being changed. If they are not, they find themselves at risk. That is a

point that Britain has reached many times in the past, including [1689](#), [1707](#), [1832](#) and [1918](#), and which it has reached once again in the 2020s.

In the monarchy's case, it is often said that [Prince Charles](#) gets this. He is depicted as favouring a slimmed down monarchy. But it is not clear how far he is prepared to go in other respects. Does he intend, as king, to open parliament in full dress admiral's costume, as he did on Tuesday? Does he still hope to be an activist monarch, as he sees it, or an interfering one, as critics are likely to do? Is he prepared for Commonwealth countries to replace him as head of state? These things will recast Britain's views of the monarchy too.

But these questions are also part of a larger evolution in the way Britain sees itself. Last week's local elections were understandably seen as a test for Boris Johnson. By that entirely valid yardstick, his Conservatives not only took a pasting but caught a vivid glimpse of worse electoral pastings likely soon to come. Yet the [government programme](#) read out this week does little to change that. It reflects a party that cannot agree what it stands for, does not know where its priorities lie and thus has no answer to the increasingly pressing questions about this country's identity and the way that should be reflected in its institutions.

As a result, the UK seems merely to be testing itself, if not to destruction, then certainly to something close to dissolution. This is happening on a daily basis in Scotland, where [the SNP](#) tries endlessly to manoeuvre itself into a referendum winning position, and sometimes in Wales too. But it is especially sharply evident in Northern Ireland, where the idea of the United Kingdom has always faced its most severe challenges over the past century.

Sinn Féin's [success last Thursday](#) in the Northern Ireland assembly elections was more than a symbolic victory. It was a real one, in political and demographic terms. It is not likely to lead any time soon to one Ireland. But it has reset the old balances. Today, unionism feels, looks and, above all, is in a new and weaker place in Northern Ireland. It needs to take stock and rethink.

Yet at just this delicate moment, the Johnson government appears determined to unleash a wheel of fire rolling through Irish and European politics. By ripping up its [own Brexit agreement](#) with the EU, the UK does not just antagonise most Irish opinion, the White House and the EU – none of which are great moves during a European war – it also tears up a bit more of its own credibility as a trustworthy signatory of all international trade deals, treaties and conventions.

In addition, it throws a phoney lifeline to the most uncompromising strains of unionism just when the DUP's strategic failure has been dramatically exposed at the ballot box. Instead of using its influence to influence the DUP "[to attract rather than antagonise](#)", as the former Ulster Unionist party official Alex Kane urged this week, the Johnson government is instead giving the DUP a free pass to adopt an intransigent and absolutist stance.

The approach will not work on any level, not even in rallying support in the Tory party. It certainly will not win fresh support in Ireland, north or south, except within the DUP. Fintan O'Toole this week called it "[a mutually fatal death grip](#)". Down the line, it is also likely to strengthen support for Scotland to break away from the union.

One-nation Conservatism has never seemed more remote than it does today. However, the same is also true of other shared ideas of Britain. We still call ourselves the United Kingdom. But the local elections again exposed a nation state whose union is weakening, whose rival visions are sharper than ever and whose kingdom is even uncertain.

David Miliband put it well in a speech last weekend, when he said that a modern idea of Britain remains trapped between "the obsolete and the utopian". This is a country, Miliband argued, that is badly in need of a new national project of reform. That case will only strengthen as the pressures on the union and the constitution mount up. Yet we are still led, to our shared loss, by a prime minister whose only project is himself.

- Martin Kettle is a Guardian columnist
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## OpinionBritish army

# For decades the MoD denied my mystery illness. At last I feel I know the truth

[Kevin Muldoon](#)

Veterans like me have been waiting to know the source of our Gulf war syndrome. New research may finally give us answers



Prime minister John Major speaks to soldiers from the 3rd battalion of the Desert Rats during the 1991 Gulf war. Photograph: David Giles/PA

Thu 12 May 2022 05.09 EDT Last modified on Fri 13 May 2022 03.42 EDT

I was very fit and healthy when I was deployed for the Gulf war. I ran to work every morning and led the military fitness training. I was also into motocross and used to play rugby. Now, after 30 years of suffering from “Gulf war syndrome”, I still struggle to breathe and just a month ago I had to have an injection in my spine to block the pain from my damaged nerves.

For decades since the Gulf war, thousands of veterans have suffered from mystery illnesses. Part of that suffering has been not knowing the cause of that illness and not knowing what was really happening to my body.

Now US scientists, partly funded by the American government, say what caused thousands of soldiers like me to fall sick was the [nerve agent sarin](#), released into the air when Iraqi chemical weapons stocks were bombed.

I worked primarily as a tank transporter in the Gulf, driving ahead on a motorbike to find safe routes through the desert. Soldiers in the tanks were probably safe inside, but I only had a cloth over my mouth to prevent me swallowing bugs or sand, and so was heavily exposed to chemicals in the air.

On returning from the war I received treatment for PTSD. But the doctors noticed that something was wrong: my body as well as my mind was affected. My joints became incredibly sore, I struggled to breathe and started to suffer from chronic fatigue. This, of course, exacerbated my PTSD.

I am not alone in suffering these symptoms. I'm one of a relatively small number receiving a war pension for my service in the Gulf, but I know there are likely far more struggling. (Research by the Royal British Legion suggests that although 1,300 people in the UK receive a war pension for service in the Gulf, [33,000 veterans have Gulf war syndrome](#).)

My doctors guessed this right. They wrote off the idea that I had been exposed to depleted uranium deposits, and suspected exposure to chemical weaponry instead. In the US, the government has long recognised the existence of Gulf war syndrome. However, despite all the evidence, Britain's Ministry of Defence denied that Gulf war syndrome even existed until 2005. In 2010, it was [refusing the majority of claims](#) for war pensions from veterans suffering from the condition. Most veterans with symptoms do not receive a war pension for service in the Gulf to this day.

This matters to me because the time I served in the Gulf and what happened to me there had a huge effect on my life and does to this day. I still suffer from PTSD, and the physical pain makes it worse. My family life has fallen apart. The support that I have had in recent years has been from charities and

doctors, who have gone out of their way to help me. But I feel ignored by the government. Even now I face a lack of clarity over my pension.

We can't turn back the clock, but now that we have strong reason to believe these debilitating illnesses are caused by exposure to sarin gas, I want the MoD to say sorry for ignoring what doctors and veterans were telling them. The suicide rate among Gulf war veterans is high and the parents of veterans who took their own lives as well as the thousands of us who continue to suffer from exposure to sarin deserve confirmation of what we are now being told. But most of all we deserve an apology.

- Kevin Muldoon is a Gulf war veteran

*As told to Oliver Haynes*

*[Help for Heroes](#) supports veterans such as Kevin and those still serving, along with their families, with physical, psychological, financial and welfare support for as long as they need it*

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## How should a Marshall plan for Ukraine work?

[Barry Eichengreen](#)

The west should help rebuild after the Russian invasion – and it can learn lessons from the 1940s

- [Russia-Ukraine war: latest updates](#)



It is impossible to put a number on the cost of reconstruction in Ukraine.  
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Thu 12 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 12 May 2022 02.02 EDT

Talking up a Marshall plan for Ukraine is a [popular sport](#) nowadays. The game starts by [tossing out a figure](#) for the cost of reconstructing Ukraine from the ravages of the Russian invasion – \$250bn (£203m) or \$500bn or

\$1tn, depending on assumptions about how much is destroyed, the cost of caring for refugees, and so forth. The overall cost of the postwar Marshall plan is then compared with US GDP in 1948, when the program started. This typically leads to the conclusion that the cost of Ukrainian reconstruction relative to the size of the donor countries will be in the same ballpark as the Marshall plan.

These kinds of comparisons are not, in fact, the best use of Marshall plan history. It is impossible to put a number on the cost of reconstruction as long as there remains uncertainty about the duration of the war and how much territory will be controlled by Ukraine's legitimate government. Just because the US was prepared to provide postwar Europe with nearly 5% of its 1948 GDP, spread over four years, tells us nothing about whether this is the right level of support for [Ukraine](#).

Other aspects of this history are more relevant to Ukraine's situation. It is revealing, for example, that Marshall plan disbursals began even while there was still some fighting in Europe. Although the Greek civil war continued through the summer of 1949, Greece [received Marshall aid in 1948](#). In fact, Greece received \$300m already in 1947 under the auspices of the American Mission for Aid to Greece, whose structure provided the template for the Marshall plan.

Similarly, aid to Ukraine can start now, though it should be used with discretion. Repairing bridges that are simply destroyed again by Russia would serve no purpose.

It is also important to recall that Marshall plan funds were more than [90% grants](#) and just 10% loans. Today there are calls for the western powers to [guarantee new Ukrainian government bonds](#). This would bring the government's borrowing costs down to single digits and provide funds for reconstruction. But it would leave Ukraine even more heavily indebted, when it already faces the challenge of [restructuring its legacy debt](#). Guarantees for additional Ukrainian borrowing would merely be a way for western governments to cheap out on reconstruction aid.

Moreover, the US created an independent agency to administer the Marshall plan. Freed from the bureaucracies of the US State and Treasury Departments, the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) could ramp up quickly. It was able to tap private-sector expertise, starting with its head, Paul Hoffman, the president of Studebaker. It avoided entanglements with the UN, where the Soviet Union's membership would have caused problems.

Aid for Ukraine should similarly be administered by an autonomous agency accountable to donor governments. While it can consult and, ideally, coordinate with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, it should preserve its independence, given Russian membership in both organisations.

The Marshall plan's architects recognised the need for ownership on the part of aid recipients, while proceeding on the basis of "trust but verify." European governments submitted detailed [plans](#) for spending down US funds. These were the bases for painstaking negotiations with the ECA before moneys were disbursed. In countries like Greece, where there were concerns about corruption, the ECA had hundreds of agents embedded in the relevant ministries. Administrative [reforms](#) were a focus and precondition for Marshall plan aid.

Ukrainians will be understandably sensitive about foreign interference in their reconstruction. But foreign oversight is the price of foreign aid, particularly on the scale that Ukraine will require. The government in Kyiv can provide reassurance by enhancing the transparency of its spending, for example by expanding its online public procurement portal [ProZorro](#).

The Marshall plan prioritised rebuilding export capacity. It recognised the invigorating effects of international competition and the political benefits of European integration. Ukraine almost certainly faces a long road to the nirvana of EU membership. But the journey can be expedited if western aid is structured to align Ukrainian institutions and policies with those of the EU.

Finally, the Marshall plan allowed Europe to leapfrog a generation technologically. Europe was decades behind the US in adopting the "[high-speed throughput](#)" manufacturing methods on which the golden age of

postwar economic growth was based. Rather than simply reconstructing European industry along prewar lines, an effort was made to transfer state-of-the-art American manufacturing technology. European officials, plant managers and trade unionists traveled to the US as part of Marshall plan-funded productivity missions to learn about these techniques and returned with new knowledge, yielding [tangible benefits for productivity growth](#).

Ukraine now similarly has an opportunity to leapfrog a generation of technologies – to green its energy system, modernise its transportation and communications infrastructure and update urban planning. These are first and foremost tasks for the Ukrainians. But the west can and should help.

*Barry Eichengreen is professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley, and a former senior policy adviser at the IMF.*

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## Sri Lanka

# Sri Lanka president to name new PM as unrest simmers amid economic crisis

Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned this week after his supporters attacked anti-government protesters and ran riot in Colombo, unleashing days of violence



Sri Lankan military officers on patrol during a curfew in Colombo. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was set to name a new prime minister on Thursday in a bid to restore stability after days of unrest. Photograph: Krishan Kariyawasam/Pacific Press/REX/Shutterstock

*Agence France-Presse*

Thu 12 May 2022 01.41 EDT

Beleaguered president Gotabaya Rajapaksa was set to name a new prime minister on Thursday to try to steer [Sri Lanka](#) out of its dire economic crisis after days of violence, officials said.

Respected five-time former premier Ranil Wickremesinghe was the frontrunner to head a “unity government” with cross-party support in the 225-member parliament and replace Rajapaksa’s elder brother Mahinda who [stepped down on Monday](#).

“A swearing-in is likely today unless there is a last-minute hiccup,” a senior official close to the president told AFP.

In a televised address to the nation on Wednesday night, Rajapaksa stopped short of yielding to weeks of nationwide protests calling for him to resign.

The country of 22 million people is in its worst economic crisis since independence with severe shortages of food, fuel and medicines and long power cuts.

But in a bid to win over the opposition who wanted Rajapaksa to quit, the 72-year-old pledged to give up most of his executive powers and set up a new cabinet this week.

“I will name a prime minister who will command a majority in parliament and the confidence of the people,” Rajapaksa said in the televised speech. Rajapaksa said he will also take steps to abolish the country’s powerful executive presidential system.

Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned as prime minister after his supporters attacked anti-government supporters and ran riot in Colombo.

This [unleashed several days of violence](#) that killed at least nine people and injured more than 200, with dozens of Rajapaksa loyalist homes set on fire.

Security forces patrolling in armoured personnel carriers with orders to shoot on sight anyone engaged in looting or violence have since cracked down on public disorder.

A curfew was lifted Thursday morning only to be reimposed after a six-hour break allowing people to stock up on essentials.

The main opposition SJB party was initially invited to lead a new government, but its leader Sajith Premadasa insisted that the president first step down.

However, about a dozen MPs from the SJB pledged support to Wickremesinghe, 73, who has been prime minister five times since 1993 and is seen as a pro-West free-market reformist.

Wickremesinghe is the only legislator from his United National Party (UNP) which was routed at the August 2020 election that gave Rajapaksa a two-thirds majority.

With the economic crisis, the Rajapaksa government began to unravel with mass defections to the opposition, but since April no group in the 225-member assembly enjoys an absolute majority.

Sri Lanka is in talks with the International Monetary Fund and others about a bailout package after a shortage of foreign currency forced it to default on its foreign debts last month.

The island nation's central bank chief warned Wednesday that the economy will "collapse" unless a new government was urgently appointed.

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**Jamal Khashoggi**

## **Greg Norman says ‘we all make mistakes’ when asked about Khashoggi killing**

Australian golf champion makes remarks about journalist’s murder at Saudi-backed league event



The Australian golf champion Greg Norman said the Saudi government wanted ‘to move forward’. Photograph: Paul Childs/Action Images/Reuters

*Guardian staff with agencies*

Thu 12 May 2022 04.23 EDTFirst published on Thu 12 May 2022 04.22 EDT

The golf champion Greg Norman has attempted to dismiss questions over the [murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi](#) at a Saudi consulate as a “mistake,” adding the Saudi government “wants to move forward”.

Norman was speaking at a promotional event in the UK for a [Saudi-backed golf tournament](#), the LIV Golf Invitational Series. The 67-year-old is chief executive of LIV Golf Investments, funded primarily by the Saudi sovereign wealth fund.

The \$225m (£184m) competition, designed to rival other big golf series, has attracted controversy over Saudi Arabia's human rights record, including the murder and dismemberment of Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018.

Last year US intelligence agencies concluded that the Saudi crown prince, [Mohammed bin Salman, had approved his murder](#).

"This whole thing about Saudi Arabia and Khashoggi and human rights; talk about it, but also talk about the good that the country is doing in changing its culture," Norman said. "Look, we've all made mistakes and you just want to learn by those mistakes and how you can correct them going forward."

The Australian golfer said he had not met Mohammed Bin Salman "but, at the same time, I do read that the Saudi government has made their statements and comments about it and they want to move forward".

When asked how he felt when he heard about the execution of 81 men in Saudi Arabia in March, Norman said: "I got a lot of messages but quite honestly I look forward. I don't look back. I don't look into the politics of things. I'm not going to get into the quagmire of whatever else happens in someone else's world. I heard about it and just kept moving on," he said.

Khashoggi had gone to the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on 2 October 2018 to collect documents required for him to marry his Turkish fiancee, Hatice Cengiz.

The killing was caught on listening devices planted by Turkish intelligence. The dissident was strangled by security aides and then dismembered by a forensic scientist who worked for Saudi intelligence. His body was then transferred in pieces to the nearby Saudi consul general's residence, where it

is thought to have been burned in an outdoor oven. No remains have ever been found.

This article was amended on 12 May 2022 to correctly refer to Jamal Khashoggi's body being taken to the Saudi consul general's residence, not the Turkish consul general's residence as an earlier version said.

*PA and Reuters contributed to this report*

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## Global development

# Hunger crisis grips Horn of Africa – but 80% of Britons unaware, poll shows

UK government urged to act as worst drought in 40 years threatens region while aid efforts and global attention remain focused on Ukraine war



Women and children at the nutrition unit of the Kelafo health centre, Ethiopia, April 2022. Levels of child malnutrition are increasing, aggravated by the effects of drought. Photograph: Eduardo Soteras/AFP/Getty Images

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[Lizzy Davies](#)

Thu 12 May 2022 02.30 EDT Last modified on Thu 12 May 2022 02.31 EDT

The UK government has been urged to give the hunger crisis gripping the Horn of [Africa](#) “proper attention”, as new polling showed just two in 10 people in Britain are aware that the worst drought in 40 years is even taking place, let alone threatening famine.

As the war in Ukraine rages, the combined effect of three failed rainy seasons has pushed parts of Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia to the brink, killing livestock, forcing people to leave their homes and increasing levels of child malnutrition. The Russian invasion has exacerbated the situation, pushing up the price of staples [such as wheat](#) and sunflower oil, as well as fuel.

However, according to polling commissioned by Christian [Aid](#), while 91% of the British public is aware of Vladimir Putin’s war, only 23% know about the worsening humanitarian crisis in east Africa.

Patrick Watt, CEO of [Christian Aid](#), said the findings were “deeply concerning”.

“Across the Horn of Africa, up to 20 million people are facing hunger. Droughts have become increasingly severe and frequent, and so this is not a surprise. However, the war in Ukraine has turned a bad situation into a dire crisis. With rocketing food and energy costs around the globe, we are seeing people in [Ethiopia](#), Kenya and Somalia facing a crisis like no other,” said Watt.

“While we cannot thank the public enough for their response to humanitarian needs in [Ukraine](#), the fact that so few people in Britain are aware of the crisis in the Horn of Africa is deeply concerning.”

For months, international NGOs and UN agencies have been warning that, while welcome and necessary, the unprecedented outpouring of funding and compassion for Ukraine is diverting attention from some of the world’s other humanitarian crises.

In Somalia, about [6 million people](#), 40% of the population, are suffering extreme levels of hunger, and the World Food Programme warned last month there was “a very real risk of famine” if the drought continued and assistance wasn’t received.

In Kenya, the number of people in need of food assistance has risen more than fourfold in less than two years, WFP said. In southern and south-eastern Ethiopia an estimated 7.2 million people [wake up hungry](#) every day, it added.

With the G7 foreign ministers meeting in Germany this week, a coalition of aid charities is urging the UK government to act to prevent famine, keep food affordable and commit to reversing its cuts to international aid.

“We must sound the alarm and give hope to people in need in the region. The cost of living crisis is global and demands urgent action from the government and the development sector,” Watt said.

More than 2,100 people were interviewed by the polling company Savanta for the survey.

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## North Korea

# North Korea admits to Covid outbreak for first time and declares ‘severe national emergency’

Omicron infections create ‘biggest emergency incident in the country’, according to state media, as Kim Jong-un chairs response meeting

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Kim Jong-un held a meeting of the Workers' Party of Korea to organize the government's response to an outbreak of Covid-19 Photograph: KCNA/EPA

*[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo*

Wed 11 May 2022 22.35 EDTFirst published on Wed 11 May 2022 20.49 EDT

North Korea has declared a “severe national emergency” after confirming its first outbreak of Covid-19, prompting its leader, Kim Jong-un, to vow to

quickly eliminate the virus.

State media reported on Thursday that a sub-variant of the highly transmissible Omicron virus, known as BA.2, had been detected in the capital, Pyongyang.

“There has been the biggest emergency incident in the country, with a hole in our emergency quarantine front, that has been kept safely over the past two years and three months since February 2020,” the official KCNA news agency said.

The report said people in Pyongyang had contracted the Omicron variant, without providing details on case numbers or possible sources of infection.

North Korea had claimed it had not recorded a single case of Covid-19 since it closed its borders at the start of the pandemic more than two years ago.

The discovery of the Omicron variant presents a potentially serious risk to North Korea, which has not vaccinated any of its 25 million people, according to experts, and its poorly resourced healthcare system would also struggle to cope with a major outbreak.

The country so far has shunned vaccines offered by the UN-backed Covax distribution programme, possibly because administering the jabs would require international monitoring.



A health official sprays disinfectant as part of preventative measures against Covid-19, in the Daesong Department Store in Pyongyang) Photograph: Kim Won Jin/AFP/Getty Images

The Seoul-based NK News reported that areas of Pyongyang had been in lockdown for two days. “Multiple sources have also heard reports of panic buying due to uncertainty of when the lockdown might end,” it said, citing sources in the city.

The KCNA report said samples taken from patients in Pyongyang who had developed fevers were “consistent with” the Omicron variant.

The discovery prompted Kim to call a crisis meeting of the Workers’ party politburo, where officials said they would implement “maximum” emergency measures.

They reportedly include tighter border controls and lockdown measures, with Kim telling citizens “to completely block the spread of the malicious virus by thoroughly blocking their areas in all cities and counties across the country”.

All business and production activities will be organised so each work unit is “isolated” to prevent the spread of disease, KCNA said.

Kim told the meeting that “the goal was to eliminate the root within the shortest period of time”, it added.

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said the regime’s public acknowledgment of coronavirus cases meant “the public health situation must be serious”.

“This does not mean North Korea is suddenly going to be open to humanitarian assistance and take a more conciliatory line toward Washington and Seoul,” he said.

Easley said the presence of the virus could affect any plans the leadership has for missile or nuclear tests.

“The Kim regime’s domestic audience may be less interested in nuclear or missile tests when the urgent threat involves coronavirus rather than a foreign military,” he said. “The Kim regime would be well advised to swallow its pride and quickly seek donations of vaccines and therapeutics.”

North Korea closed its borders to nearly all trade and visitors at the start of the pandemic, inflicting more pain on an economy already damaged by decades of mismanagement and international sanctions over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

It tentatively reopened railroad freight traffic with China in January, but Chinese authorities halted trade last month after a Covid-19 outbreak in Dandong, a city close to the border with North Korea.

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# Half of Covid-hospitalised still symptomatic two years on, study finds

Research on Wuhan patients reveals effects of long Covid, with 11% still not having returned to work



Two years after initially falling ill, the patients from the hospital study were in worse health than the general population. Photograph: Ng Han Guan/AP

*[Andrew Gregory](#) Health editor*

*[@andrewgregory](#)*

Wed 11 May 2022 18.30 EDT Last modified on Thu 12 May 2022 05.27 EDT

More than half of people hospitalised with Covid-19 still have at least one symptom two years after they were first infected, according to the longest follow-up study of its kind.

While physical and mental health generally improve over time, the analysis suggests that coronavirus patients discharged from hospital still tend to experience poorer health and quality of life than the general population. The research was published in [the Lancet Respiratory Medicine](#).

“Our findings indicate that for a certain proportion of hospitalised Covid-19 survivors, while they may have cleared the initial infection, more than two years is needed to recover fully,” said the lead author, Prof Bin Cao, of the China-Japan Friendship hospital in [China](#).

Until now, the long-term health effects of Covid-19 have remained largely unknown, as the longest follow-up studies to date have spanned about a year. The absence of pre-Covid-19 health status data and comparisons with the general population in most studies also made it difficult to determine how well patients with Covid-19 have recovered.

For the new study, researchers sought to analyse the long-term health outcomes of hospitalised Covid-19 survivors, as well as specific health impacts of long Covid. They evaluated the health of 1,192 participants with acute Covid-19 treated at Jin Yin-tan Hospital in Wuhan, China, between 7 January and 29 May 2020, at six months, 12 months and two years. The average age was 57 at discharge.

Assessments involved a six-minute walking test, laboratory tests, and questionnaires on symptoms, mental health, health-related quality of life, whether they had returned to work and healthcare use after discharge. Health outcomes at two years were determined using an age, sex and comorbidities-matched control group of people in the general population with no history of Covid-19 infection.

Six months after initially falling ill, 68% of the patients reported at least one long Covid symptom. Two years after infection, more than half – 55% – still reported symptoms. Fatigue or muscle weakness were those most often reported. Regardless of the severity of their initial illness, two years later, one in 10 patients – 11% – had not returned to work.

Two years after initially falling ill, the patients were in poorer health than the general population, with 31% reporting fatigue or muscle weakness and 31% reporting sleep difficulties. The proportion of non-Covid-19 participants reporting these symptoms was 5% and 14% respectively. The Covid-19 patients were also more likely to report a number of other symptoms including joint pain, palpitations, dizziness and headaches. In quality of life questionnaires, Covid-19 survivors also more often reported pain or discomfort and anxiety or depression than non-Covid-19 participants.

The authors acknowledged limitations to their study. Being a single-centre study from early in the pandemic, the findings may not directly extend to the long-term health outcomes of patients infected with subsequent variants, the Lancet Respiratory Medicine said. Like most Covid-19 follow-up studies, there is also the potential for information bias when analysing self-reported health outcomes.

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“Ongoing follow-up of Covid-19 survivors, particularly those with symptoms of long Covid, is essential to understand the longer course of the illness, as is further exploration of the benefits of rehabilitation programmes for recovery,” said Cao. “There is a clear need to provide continued support to a significant proportion of people who’ve had Covid-19, and to understand how vaccines, emerging treatments and variants affect long-term health outcomes.”

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