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Channel 4

Ministers will push to privatise Channel 4 in TV shake-up

End of an era looms for British broadcasting as government pushes ahead with plans to sell the channel



The headquarters for British television broadcaster Channel 4. Photograph: Jack Taylor/Getty Images

The headquarters for British television broadcaster Channel 4. Photograph: Jack Taylor/Getty Images

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Tue 22 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

Channel 4's four decades as a publicly owned broadcaster could be about to come to an end, with ministers pushing ahead with controversial plans to sell

the channel as part of a shake-up that could transform the landscape of British television.

The culture secretary, [Oliver Dowden](#), confirmed that he would hold a swift consultation on proposed privatisation, in a move that would mark the end of an era in British broadcasting and would radically alter how one of the UK's leading public service television networks operates.

The broadcaster – home to shows such as the Great British Bake Off, It's A Sin and Channel 4 News – is editorially independent but has been owned by the state since it was created by Margaret Thatcher's government in 1982. It operates with a remit to commission distinctive programming and serve diverse audiences across the UK. Unlike other broadcasters it is required to reinvest its profits in new shows, funnelling cash to the independent production companies that make all its programmes.

Dowden said privatisation would ensure Channel 4 kept “its place at the heart of British broadcasting” and allowed it to adapt to audiences drifting away from traditional television channels in favour of streaming services.

However, Channel 4 has also come under repeated attacks from Conservatives who complain that some of its output is biased against the Tories, leading to suspicions that there is a political motivation to the government's move.

Tom Harrington, of the media analysts Enders Analysis, called the proposal to privatise Channel 4 “potentially spiteful”, a move that ignored the role the broadcaster played in British public service broadcasting of nurturing new talent. “It is akin to altering an organ, with very little understanding what effect it will have on the rest of the body.”

He predicted that the government would have to water down Channel 4's legal requirements to invest in certain types of programmes in order to attract a private-sector buyer seeking to make profits. The government has already indicated that it intends to review the broadcaster's remit, although this is set by parliament and ministers will face pushback from opposition MPs.

The announcement came as the government takes an increasingly aggressive approach towards broadcasters, welcoming the new rightwing discussion channel GB News while regularly battling with the BBC over funding and so-called “culture war” issues. This has led to criticism from figures such as Sir David Attenborough, who signed an open letter warning Dowden against dismantling the UK’s public service broadcasting ecosystem – the heavily regulated channels run by the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, S4C, and Channel 5.

The culture secretary has also announced that the government intends to regulate the content of programmes on streaming services, bringing them in line with traditional broadcast television channels. This could force shows on US streaming services to meet UK broadcasting standards on issues such as accuracy and impartiality, which could prove challenging for some popular documentaries.

Dowden has also confirmed his intention to force manufacturers of smart television sets to prominently display services run by traditional British broadcasters on their home screens, a move strongly welcomed by broadcasters.

But it is the decision to alter the remit of Channel 4 that is likely to cause one of the biggest changes to the British television industry in a generation. A swift consultation period could mean draft legislation on privatisation being published by the autumn.

Unlike other leading British broadcasters Channel 4 cannot sell its own shows around the world and instead relies overwhelmingly on domestic advertising for its £934m annual income. The government argues that this model is no longer sustainable for a mid-sized national broadcaster and that privatisation will allow Channel 4 to raise new funds to reach international audiences and invest in new technology.

Speaking from the channel’s soon-to-open regional base in Leeds, its chief executive, Alex Mahon, denied that her channel needed extra cash and insisted it could fulfil its existing remit under its current structure. “As a board we have not been pushing for greater financial liberation.”

Mahon warned that privatising her business could lead to reduced investment in programmes made outside London and dismissed the idea that it would benefit consumers if Channel 4 were bought by a larger private company. “Amazon is buying [the James Bond film studio] MGM because it wants to sell more toilet paper. That’s not what we’re there for.”

Privatising Channel 4 has been a long-term objective of the broadcasting minister, John Whittingdale, who first proposed such a move 25 years ago. However, until now the channel has repeatedly managed to successfully fight repeated proposals to sell it to the private sector, [most recently in 2017](#).

There is still a belief at Channel 4 that the government could struggle to attract a buyer without substantial changes to its remit – which could be politically problematic for ministers. The channel is also emphasising the role it can play in the government’s “levelling-up agenda”, by moving productions from London and the south-east of England to nearer its new regional bases in Leeds, Glasgow and Bristol.

However, there remains a lingering belief that this time the Conservatives are intent on pushing ahead with Channel 4’s privatisation, in part due to political opposition to its output.

As evidence of the channel’s supposed bias Tory MPs and advisers often reference the occasion when Channel 4’s former news chief Dorothy Byrne [publicly called Boris Johnson a liar](#) during an Edinburgh television festival speech in 2019. During the subsequent general election, Tory aides also [briefed](#) that they would target Channel 4 after the broadcaster replaced the prime minister with a melting ice sculpture during a debate on climate change.

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Channel 4

Channel 4 privatisation proposal: ‘This could prove irreversible’

Broadcaster’s place in ‘fair system’ public-broadcasting overhaul is queried by its CEO



Channel 4 headquarters, London. The recent government consultation argues for changes to the broadcaster’s non-profit remit. Photograph: Philip Toscano/PA

Channel 4 headquarters, London. The recent government consultation argues for changes to the broadcaster’s non-profit remit. Photograph: Philip Toscano/PA

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Tue 22 Jun 2021 20.12 EDT

When the government decided to abandon its most recent attempt to privatise Channel 4 the rationale given was that the broadcaster was a “[precious public asset](#)”, a view backed up with the promise that it would “[continue to be owned by the country](#)”.

Four years on and the government’s [new consultation on the future of Channel 4](#) positions a sale of the broadcaster almost as a necessity, it needing a vital cash injection and changes to its non-profit remit to compete against the deep-pocketed global streaming behemoths such as Netflix.

The government argument is that [Channel 4](#), a commercial channel owned by the government, is overly dependent on advertising – which accounted for 91% of the broadcaster’s £934m revenues last year – and far too vulnerable with traditional audiences increasingly shifting to digital services.

New capital, and a change in remit to allow Channel 4 to own the valuable rights to programmes it commissions, such as Come Dine With Me and Undercover Boss, could make the relative minnow formidable on the global stage.

[Channel 4 privatisation – how would it work and who would buy it?](#)

[Read more](#)

But Channel 4 says that its unique model, which has allowed UK independent TV producers to flourish by exploiting rights to their shows internationally, is not broken. Viewers of the broadcaster’s traditional television channels and its catch-up service, All 4, grew by 2% and 26% respectively last year, and by 4% and 40% in the first half of this year. The broadcaster is on track to break £1bn in revenues for the first time this year.

“What’s the analysis to show [that privatisation] makes us stronger?” Alex Mahon, the chief executive of Channel 4, asked as she gave evidence to the Commons culture committee on Tuesday. “We’ve got to be careful of doing anything that might be irreversible.”

The privatisation knives have been sharpened for Channel 4 about half a dozen times since its creation under Margaret Thatcher’s government in 1982. The culture minister, John Whittingdale, who is spearheading the

latest review, just as he did the last one in 2016, first agitated for privatisation in the 1990s.

The move on Channel 4 comes couched as part of a wider review into public service broadcasting that includes proposals to make streaming broadcasters subject to the same regulations as traditional UK broadcasters.

The issue was thrust into the spotlight last year when viewers, outraged at perceived inaccuracies in Netflix's drama The Crown, found that Ofcom, the UK regulator that enforces the broadcasting code, was powerless to investigate.

The “light touch” regime that governs streaming services, the Audio Visual Media Services regulations (AVMS), does not seek to manage harmful and offensive material, accuracy and impartiality in the way Ofcom’s broadcasting code does for UK linear channels. And, in any case, the AVMS rules do not apply to operators with headquarters outside the UK, such Netflix, which has its European base in the Netherlands.

The government’s proposals aim to “level the playing field” by making all streaming services subject to the broadcasting code. That would give the regulator a say on shows such as Netflix's controversial but popular Seaspiracy, which was accused of misrepresentation by its participants.

Another focus is extending the vital “due prominence” legislation that rewards the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 with the top slots on TV programme guides in return for investment in often commercially unattractive, but important, public service content. Traditional broadcasters believe it is commercially imperative the rules that give public broadcasters prominence are extended to smart-TV interfaces, and top billing on streaming and on-demand services such as Sky Q and Netflix.

The culture secretary, Oliver Dowden, has said the overall review aimed to create a “fair and well-functioning system … fit for the 21st century”. The question is what part will Channel 4 play under private, very possibly foreign, ownership.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/jun/22/channel-4-head-warns-over-privatisation-that-could-be-irreversible>

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Channel 4

The great British broadcasting shake-up – all you need to know

Government TV changes include possible sale of Channel 4 and new rules governing streaming



The broadcasting changes could involve the sale of Channel 4. Photograph: Alamy

The broadcasting changes could involve the sale of Channel 4. Photograph: Alamy

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Tue 22 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

The culture secretary [Oliver Dowden](#) has announced major plans to shake up the British broadcasting landscape, including the potential sale of Channel 4

and tightening regulations governing content on streaming services such as Netflix.

What is privatisation?

Privatisation is the transfer of ownership of a government or publicly owned organisation to private companies or individuals. The government is to consult on a potential sale of Channel 4, as part of a review of the ownership and remit of the government-controlled broadcaster. Dowden said the aim of the review is to “help make sure Channel 4 keeps its place at the heart of British broadcasting”, amid increased competition from global streaming giants such as Netflix.

Who owns Channel 4?

Channel 4 was established by Margaret Thatcher’s government in 1982 to provide a culturally challenging alternative to BBC One, BBC Two and ITV. It is publicly owned but commercially funded. Unlike the BBC, which is funded through the £159-a-year licence fee its viewers must pay, Channel 4 has no financial support from the taxpayer.

How does it make money?

More than 90% of Channel 4’s income comes from selling TV advertising in the shows it broadcasts. Last year, Channel 4 made £934m in total revenues, with digital advertising growing to £161m, thanks to a surge in streaming of shows and box sets during the pandemics. The remaining 9% of income comes from operations including 4Studios, which creates digital content for advertisers, and new non-advertising partnership deals. Dowden has said that such a reliance on advertising, particularly traditional TV advertising as audiences turn to streaming services, makes Channel 4 “particularly vulnerable to market fluctuations”.

Is it profitable?

Channel 4’s remit has never been to make a profit – the money it makes is reinvested in commissioning and buying programmes from mostly British TV production companies, helping to support a key national industry. Last year, it made what it refers to as a pretax “surplus” of £74m, the largest in the broadcaster’s 38-year history, thanks to the huge bounce-back in the TV

ad market in the second half of last year and the cutting of £150m from its £660m programming budget as the pandemic interrupted productions.

[Ministers' rationale for privatising Channel 4 looks extremely flimsy](#)

[Read more](#)

Who could buy it?

In 2016, a [report commissioned by Channel 4's board](#) identified BT as the “most likely” UK company to bid for a privatised Channel 4. However, the broadcasting and technology landscape has changed dramatically since then, with BT now looking for a buyer or strategic partner for its own pay-TV business to defray costs as it focuses on full-fibre broadband and 5G mobile rollout. The report identified the most likely buyer overall as the US group Discovery – which is in the process of [merging with WarnerMedia](#), the parent company of CNN, HBO and the Hollywood studio behind Batman and Harry Potter – or Channel 5 owner ViacomCBS. Foreign ownership of a key UK broadcaster may be seen as politically difficult.

What is Channel 4 worth?

While a price tag of £1bn was attached to Channel 4 at the last privatisation push, it is very difficult to provide a current estimate. Unlike other broadcasters such as [ITV](#) and the BBC, Channel 4’s remit means it does not have its own in-house production arm. While it has rights to show big hits like Bake Off and Gogglebox on linear TV and on its streaming services in the UK, the broadcaster does not own the rights to commercialise those shows around the world. The ownership of must-watch, “crown jewel” content has been the driver of the wave of media mergers and takeovers seen in recent years. Any potential buyer would need Channel 4’s model to be allowed to be drastically changed to increase margins and commercial opportunities.

Why is the government looking to tighten regulation of streaming services?

Global players such as [Netflix](#), Amazon Prime and Disney have become staples in many homes across the UK, but they are not regulated to the same degree as traditional linear UK broadcasters such as ITV, the BBC and Sky. This means that while a BBC programme may face an investigation by

regulator Ofcom, complaints about the accuracy of [Netflix](#) shows such as The Crown or documentary Sespiracy have not been investigated.

What else is the government seeking to do to “level the playing field” for UK broadcasters?

The BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and [Channel 5](#) get the best channel slots on traditional linear electronic TV guides, appearing at the top of the channel lists – a reward for being the UK’s public service broadcasters (PSBs). However, the “due prominence” regulations do not apply in an on-demand world, from catch-up services on Sky Q, to the layout of apps and programmes on smart TVs or on services such as Amazon Prime. The government is seeking to extend the rules to ensure PSBs get this same prominence on streaming, on-demand and internet-connected TVs.

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David Attenborough

David Attenborough accuses ministers of ‘short-sighted’ attack on TV networks

Exclusive: TV star backs public service broadcasters, amid speculation over Channel 4 privatisation



Sir David Attenborough signed an open letter stating that the UK’s system of public service television channels is in danger. Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

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Tue 22 Jun 2021 11.50 EDT

Sir [David Attenborough](#) has warned that the government is pursuing “short-sighted political and financial attacks” on the UK’s television networks, as ministers prepare to announce plans to privatise Channel 4.

The wildlife broadcaster has put his name to a campaign saying that ministers risk destroying a network of editorially independent television channels that currently promote “quality, diversity, innovation, respectful debate and trust”.

Attenborough, once polled as the most trusted man in Britain, signed an open letter stating that the UK’s “unique” system of public service television channels – which are heavily regulated but operate with independence from government – is now in danger.

“The very public service principles that have served us so well are under severe threat – not only from the unregulated streaming services and ‘clickbait’ content of big tech companies, but also from government,” says the letter, which has been sent to the culture secretary, [Oliver Dowden](#).

Dowden is expected to unveil plans for Channel 4’s future on Wednesday, amid heavy speculation that he will propose privatising the broadcaster, whose news output has long angered some in the government.

It comes amid an upheaval in the broadcasting sector which has found itself in the middle of a government-backed culture war, with ministers strongly defending the new right-of-centre GB News at the same time as the BBC comes regularly under attack.

Although he is best known for his world-famous nature documentaries, Attenborough also served as a pioneering channel controller of BBC2 and has worked in British broadcasting since the 1950s. He is one of more than 100 prominent individuals to sign the letter warning about the risk of damaging trust in the media by undermining the UK’s public service broadcasters, which include the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, S4C and Channel 5.

They operate with strict conditions, such as requirements to make a certain amount of news and educational programming and having a strong commitment to impartiality.

Ministers have already launched a review of the public service broadcasting sector, which has been financially challenged by the growth of streaming services such as Netflix. However, the campaign group British Broadcasting Challenge has complained that the organisation set up to advise the government – which features two Conservative politicians and the UK boss of Facebook – lacks transparency.

The signatories to the letter, who also include the former MI6 chief Sir John Sawers and the author Sir Salman Rushdie, warn that the government could damage the reputation of a major British asset. They say: “In a post-Brexit, post-Covid world order, the soft power of our public broadcasters is a significant national asset, both politically through the BBC World Service and economically.”

The public statement, organised by [British Broadcasting Challenge](#), also says the BBC’s budget has been dramatically reduced in real terms over the last 10 years. It raises concerns that ministers intend to impose further cuts on the national broadcaster in forthcoming licence fee negotiations.

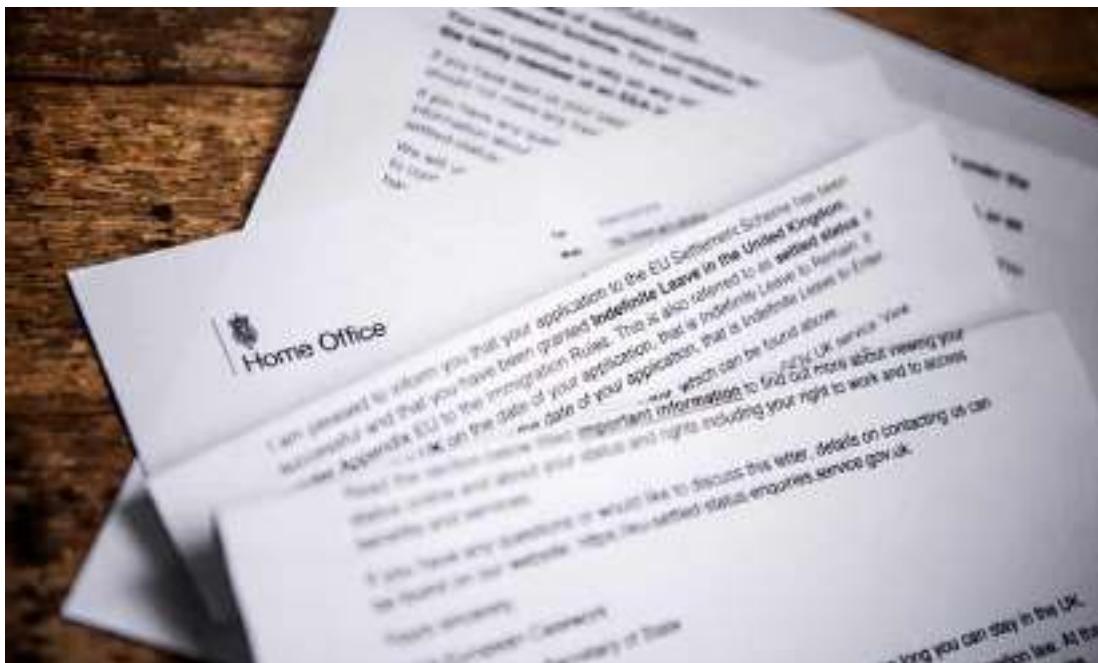
The group is instead calling for a more transparent, politically neutral review of British television: “We believe that this is the moment – in an era of misinformation and the ‘weaponised’ politicisation of news and opinion – to build up our Great British public service broadcasters rather than diminish them; to stop short-sighted political and financial attacks; to provide a vision for the future that allows our PSB system to grow as a trusted, independent network that is worthy of the UK, its citizens and the world.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/jun/22/david-attenborough-accuses-ministers-of-short-sighted-attack-on-tv-networks>

Brexit

EU citizens in UK face 28-day notice if they miss settled status deadline

Tens of thousands to be issued with warnings to submit applications for post-Brexit scheme or risk losing rights



A letter from the Home Office confirming that a person has been granted settled status. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

A letter from the Home Office confirming that a person has been granted settled status. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

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Tue 22 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

Tens of thousands of EU citizens living in the UK will be issued with a formal 28-day notice if they have failed to apply for post-Brexit settled status within a week, the government has warned.

The notices will tell them to submit an application or risk consequences which include losing their rights to healthcare and employment.

With a week to go before the Wednesday 30 June deadline for [the EU settlement scheme](#), the Home Office is redoubling efforts to reach those who do not know about the rule change, including vulnerable groups such as elderly people and children in care.

Immigration minister Kevin Foster said it had ruled out [extending the deadline](#) despite a huge surge in applications, now running at 10,000 to 12,000 a day. “Put simply, extending the deadline is not the solution to reaching those people who have not yet applied, and we would just be in a position further down the line where we would be asked to extend again, creating more uncertainties,” he said.

However, he said EU citizens who had failed to apply by the deadline would not [see their social welfare benefits cut off](#) from 1 July and promised the Home Office would be flexible and lenient.

The [Home Office](#) has had 5.6m settled status applications from EU citizens including some repeats. Officials revealed a backlog of 400,000 which may take until the end of the summer to process.

It has received 1.5m helpline calls and 500,000 requests for help through an online contact form – an indication of the unprecedented scale of the exercise and the challenges many are facing.

To accommodate those who will not have a decision for months, the government will issue a “certificate of application” which all applicants can “rely on as proof to access their right to work or rent”, Foster said. It can also be used to access the NHS. “People will not lose their benefits next week,” Foster told members of a House of Lords committee.

In a briefing to reporters on Tuesday, the Home Office said it would work with individuals to find out their reasons for not applying rather than deport them.

“We’ll set up the support available and we’ll signpost people to make an application, but we do recognise that there may be some people who, after that 28 days, still haven’t been able to make an application, and then I think we would want to work with them to understand why that is the case, and then support them again to make the application,” said an official.

The flexible approach is not expected to be permanent, however, and under immigration rules EU citizens who make late applications will have to provide “reasonable grounds” for not applying. Among those set to be issued with a 28-day notice are EU citizens unable to evidence their right to work, who might be identified by immigration enforcement teams making checks on employers.

The Home Office said the NHS will continue to be available to those who have certificate of application and “urgent treatment” would never be refused.

It warned that employers or landlords do not have to do retrospective checks on their workers and those who reject future workers or tenants on the grounds that they have not yet been granted official post-Brexit status can be sued on discrimination grounds.

The new rules were brought in as a result of the UK’s departure from the EU and are designed to protect those already living in the UK and British citizens already settled in the EU when Brexit came into force on 1 January this year.

The Home Office said it was concerned that British nationals were facing issues in relation to reciprocal residency rights in some EU countries including Bulgaria, Italy and Portugal and had raised this with the EU ambassador on Tuesday.

Part of the government’s policy is driven by the Brexit pledge to “take back control” of the borders and reduce immigration.

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Brexit

Settled status: what EU citizens need to know about 30 June deadline

With a week to go before the cut-off date, here's the latest information about applying for settled status



Many people concerned about their future rights have found it difficult to make contact with the helplines set up by the Home Office. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

Many people concerned about their future rights have found it difficult to make contact with the helplines set up by the Home Office. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

Lisa O'Carroll Brexit correspondent
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Tue 22 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

With just one week to go before the cut-off date for applying for settled status, many EU and European Economic Area citizens are concerned about their future rights and find it difficult to make contact with the helplines set up by the Home Office.

Here is the latest information from a Home Office press briefing [on the EU settlement scheme](#). It says it has been inundated with applications and has had 1.5m calls to its helplines. It has recently changed its messaging to stop callers repeatedly calling and clogging the lines.

Who can apply?

Any EU citizen who was living in the UK before 31 December.

What will I get?

Those who have been in the UK for up to five years will get pre-settled status if eligible. Those who have been in the UK for five years or more get settled status.

What if I haven't got an in-date passport or ID or any records of tax or residency?

Those without a passport will have to make a paper application. The paper form is downloadable from the government website. The government says it is getting 10,000 to 12,000 applications a day now and many are complex. It recognises some who have been in the country for years may take time to prove their residency but they will work with them to make a successful application. There are [72 charities who have government funding listed here](#) to help.

Will the 30 June deadline be extended?

The government has said emphatically no. All this would do is postpone the uncertainty for EU citizens.

What if I have not applied on time?

The government will accept late applications for those who have “reasonable grounds”.

What are the reasonable grounds?

The government has issued [a 204 page guidance document](#) for the programme. These include children whose parents did not realise separate applications had to be made for under-18s; children who were in care or who have left local authority care after turning 18 and did not know they were EU citizens or did not know the local authority or a relevant guardian should have made an application for them.

Late applications can also be made by those who lack the physical or mental capacity to apply, including children and adults with dementia.

The Home Office is also expected to show leniency to older people who have lived in the country for decades but have not travelled and do not have an in-date passport or ID card to make the application, which must be on paper, in time.

What happens to my rights if I do not get a Home Office decision by 1 July?

The government is to issue all those who complete applications with a “certificate of application” to ensure the rights are protected while the application is pending.

“Those who submit a valid application by 30 June … will be able to rely on [this document] as proof to access their right to work or rent, when verified by the relevant Home Office checking service,” future borders and immigration minister Kevin Foster told reporters.

What do employers and landlords need to do after 1 July?

The Home Office issued new guidance for both groups last Friday and made it clear that neither is obliged to make retrospective checks on employees or tenants.

Can I travel or get hospital treatment while my application is pending?

Yes. The Home Office has said the certificate of application will cover this.

What do I need to show when I travel?

The certificate of application or the digital code issued to those who have already obtained their status. EU citizens and EEA nationals are also advised to bring the identity document – passport or ID card – that they used on their original application to prevent delay at the border.

What happens when I get a new passport number?

The Home Office asks all EU citizens to update their documents on their website. This is particularly pertinent to those from the continent who are not currently required to have a passport and used an ID to apply for status. EU nationals must use passports rather than ID cards after October to enter the country.

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Scottish independence

Gove rules out ‘foolish’ Scottish independence vote before election

Minister says prime minister’s focus is recovery from pandemic ‘for lifetime of this parliament’



Michael Gove’s comments appear to go further than other ministers who have said this is the wrong time for another referendum. Photograph: Tayfun Salcı/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Michael Gove’s comments appear to go further than other ministers who have said this is the wrong time for another referendum. Photograph: Tayfun Salcı/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

PA Media

Wed 23 Jun 2021 02.20 EDT

Michael Gove has said he “can’t see” Boris Johnson granting a new referendum on [Scottish independence](#) before the next general election.

The Cabinet Office minister – who is responsible for countering the push for independence – said the prime minister’s focus was completely focused on recovery from the pandemic “for the lifetime of this parliament”.

His comments – which are likely to infuriate the SNP – appear to go further than other ministers who have said this is the wrong time for another referendum.

Under the Fixed Term Parliaments Act, the next general election is not due until May 2024 – although Johnson is committed to repealing the act, which could allow him to go to the country before then.

Asked in an interview with the [Daily Telegraph](#) whether there was “any circumstance” in which Johnson would approve a referendum before a May 2024 election, Gove said: “I don’t think so.”

Asked whether his position was that “there will be no referendum before the 2024 election”, he replied: “I can’t see it.”

After pro-independence parties won a majority in the elections to the Scottish parliament in May, Scotland’s first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, said it was “a matter of when, not if” there would be a second referendum.

Gove’s intervention may heighten the chances that the SNP could try to hold a unilateral referendum without the approval of Westminster, which would almost certainly result in a legal battle through the courts.

Gove, however, insisted it was “foolish” to talk about a referendum at a time when the country was still recovering from the coronavirus pandemic.

“The prime minister is completely focused on making sure that, for the lifetime of this parliament, we increase economic opportunity, we provide people with the chance to make more of their lives, take control of their futures. And that’s quite rightly what the prime minister of the United Kingdom’s focus should be,” he said.

“It seems to me to be at best reckless, at worst folly, to try to move the conversation on to constitutional division when people expect us to be working together in order to deal with these challenges.”

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Britney Spears

Britney Spears will directly address Los Angeles court on conservatorship

Singer will offer rare testimony on controversial arrangement that has given Spears's father control over much of her life for 13 years

- [Britney Spears speaks at last: will her day in court upend all we thought we knew?](#)



Britney Spears will address the court to talk about the conservatorship that controls her life and finances. Photograph: Chris Pizzello/Invision

Britney Spears will address the court to talk about the conservatorship that controls her life and finances. Photograph: Chris Pizzello/Invision

Sam Levin in Los Angeles

@SamTLevin

Wed 23 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Britney Spears will directly address a Los Angeles courtroom on Wednesday, offering rare testimony in the case of the controversial conservatorship that has governed the pop star's life for 13 years.

The hearing has drawn interest from fans across the globe, who have for years organized a campaign under the hashtag #FreeBritney to protest the unusual legal arrangement that has stripped the singer of her independence since 2008. The conservatorship has given her father, Jamie Spears, [control over her estate](#), career and other aspects of her personal life.

[Britney Spears speaks at last: will her day in court upset all we thought we knew?](#)

[Read more](#)

The hearing comes one day after the New York Times reported on [confidential documents](#) revealing that Spears has for years strongly objected to the conservatorship and the many powers her father has had over her.

The 39-year-old star almost never participates in the court proceedings, but her lawyer this year [told the judge](#) she wanted to speak out and requested a hearing "on an expedited basis". It is unclear what specific issues she intends to address. The hearing at 1.30pm local time is expected to draw a large crowd of supporters, though Spears is planning to appear remotely.

[Britney Spears opposed father's control of her finances and personal life for years – report](#)

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Conservatorship is a type of [court-appointed guardianship](#) intended for people who can no longer make decisions for themselves, typically older and infirm people. But critics have argued that the process can be exploited and have pointed to Spears's case as an example of such abuse.

Spears's arrangement has faced intense scrutiny in the months since the release of [Framing Britney Spears](#), a New York Times-produced documentary that chronicled the fraught process that led the courts to place the singer under a conservatorship. The film cast a harsh light on the abusive paparazzi and media that aggressively covered Spears's mental health

challenges, and also depicted her father as being largely absent from her life until he took control of her estate amid the singer's struggles.

A lawyer who claimed to have met with Spears in 2008 told the film-makers that she had said at the time she did not want her father as a conservator. The documentary further highlighted the apparent contradictions of her arrangement – that she could be performing sold-out shows and making millions, but also be considered incapable of making basic decisions about her health and finances.

Spears's lawyers, appointed by the court, filed for [Jamie to be removed](#) as a conservator last year, alleging that the singer was “afraid of her father” and claiming she would not perform while he continued to exercise control of her estate. Jamie is a co-conservator of the estate alongside a corporate fiduciary, known as Bessemer Trust.

Her father had previously acted as a personal conservator, giving him authority over her medical and mental health treatment, but a [professional licensed conservator](#) has taken over that job.

The Times report on Tuesday revealed that Spears told a court investigator in 2016 that the conservatorship had “become an oppressive and controlling tool against her” and she had raised concerns that the arrangement gave her father authority over who she dated and befriended, how she designed her kitchen and how much money she was given as a weekly allowance. She also said she was forced to perform while sick with a 104F fever.

#FreeBritney activists, who were featured in the documentary, have pushed for Jamie to be ousted and for the conservatorship to be entirely dissolved.

“I want her to be able to speak freely from her heart, and I’m praying that the judge actually listens,” said Junior Olivas, a #FreeBritney advocate, before the hearing. “The whole world is watching this case, and the time is now for Britney to really let them know what she wants.”

The 33-year-old longtime fan, who appeared in the documentary, has for years rallied outside the courtroom in support of the singer.

“In the beginning, no one paid attention or laughed us off … but finally people are paying attention and actually understanding that something is wrong here.” The revelations this week added fuel to their cause, he said: “She was crying for help but nobody was listening.”

Megan Radford, another #FreeBritney advocate, noted that male celebrities have not faced the same kind of scrutiny and loss of autonomy when they have suffered public breakdowns.

“It’s dangerously stigmatizing to say someone who may or may not have mental health struggles needs to have their rights stripped away from them and reassigned to another human being,” she added. The Times report, she said, made clear that the “justice system has failed Britney … She has been totally robbed of 13 years of her life for no reason.”

Spears appeared to endorse the #FreeBritney movement in a statement from her lawyer last year that said, “Britney welcomes and appreciates the informed support of her many fans.” Her father had dismissed the campaign as a conspiracy theory.

A representative for Jamie’s lawyer declined to comment on the New York Times report on Tuesday. His attorney told reporters in February, “Jamie Spears has diligently and professionally carried out his duties as one of Britney’s conservators, and his love for his daughter and dedication to protecting her is clearly apparent to the court.”

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Wednesday briefing: Coming up next, the fight over Channel 4

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British army

Recruitment of under-18s to British military should end, ministers told

Human rights groups call for bar on junior entry, which accounts for quarter of intake to army



A 2020 graduation parade, attended by Prince Edward (second from left), at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate, which trains young soldiers.
Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

A 2020 graduation parade, attended by Prince Edward (second from left), at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate, which trains young soldiers.
Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

*[Ben Quinn](#)
[@BenQuinn75](#)*

Wed 23 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Ministers have been urged to stop the practice of recruiting children to Britain's military by a coalition of 20 human rights organisation as MPs debate the armed forces bill.

The pressure to end the practice also comes as figures showed that girls aged under 18 in the armed forces made at least 16 formal complaints of sexual assault to military police in the last six years – equivalent to one for every 75 girls in the military.

Recruitment figures this month showed that one in every five new armed forces recruits were under 18. That accounts for one in four in the army, which recruits more soldiers at 16 than at any other age, particularly for infantry roles.

Britain stands in stark contrast to most states worldwide which now only recruit adults to their armed forces, according to a joint letter to the defence secretary, [Ben Wallace](#), from charities, NGOs and the children's commissioners for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The letter, co-ordinated by the Child Rights International Network (CRIN) and signed by groups including [Amnesty International](#) UK and Human Rights Watch (HRW), said: “The army argues that it provides underprivileged teenagers with a route out of unemployment, but since four-fifths of disadvantaged teenagers now continue in school or college from age 16, their enlistment typically brings their full-time education to an early end.

“Those who do enlist at 16 undergo the intense and prolonged stress of military training, which has drawn complaints of ill treatment from recruits and their parents. During this time nearly one in three underage recruits leaves the army or is dismissed. This means that every year several hundred young people, having left education early to join up, find themselves immediately out of a job and out of education.”

Just a small increase in adult recruitment would allow for a transition to all-adult armed forces, according to the organisation, describing this as a “simple step” that would set the same standard in the UK that it has asked of armed forces and groups around the world, and help to bring a global ban on the military use of children into view.

Carol Monaghan, a Scottish National party MP who obtained the figures about complaints of sexual assault, said they were likely to under-represent the reality, as women in the armed forces were less likely to raise service complaints.

She added: “It is high time for the UK Government to follow Nato and European allies in raising the age of armed forces recruitment to 18. Whilst military service can be a fruitful and fulfilling career for many of our service personnel, encouraging 16- and 17-year-olds to enlist can have a detrimental effect on young people’s mental health outcomes, with many struggling to reintegrate into society.”

The armed forces bill 2021, which aims to implement measures such as enshrining the armed forces covenant in law, and to help service personnel and veterans access services, will be considered by MPs on Wednesday.

Among amendments being tabled is one from Labour which aims to ensure that certain serious offences, including child abuse, perpetuated within the armed forces would be dealt with in the civil justice system.

The Ministry of Defence said: “Junior entry offers a range of benefits to the individual, armed forces and society, providing highly valuable vocational training opportunities for those wishing to follow a service career.

“All sexual offences are unacceptable and not tolerated in the armed forces. We have robust, effective and independently verified safeguards in place to ensure that under-18s are cared for properly.”

The MoD pointed out that no one under the age of 18 could join the armed forces without formal parental consent, and that this was checked twice during the application process.

It added that service personnel under the age of 18 were not deployed on hostile operations outside the UK or on any operations where they could be exposed to hostilities. Legally, rules allowed all new recruits, regardless of age, to discharge within their first three to six months of service.

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Domestic violence

Three in four domestic abuse cases end without charge in England and Wales

Data comes to light as part of review into police response to abuse during coronavirus pandemic

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Police forces were largely praised for their proactive approach towards domestic abuse cases. Photograph: David Warren/Alamy

Police forces were largely praised for their proactive approach towards domestic abuse cases. Photograph: David Warren/Alamy

*Jamie Grierson Home affairs correspondent
@JamieGrierson*

Wed 23 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Three in four domestic abuse offences reported to the police are closed without a perpetrator being charged, a watchdog has said, amid fears the figures have worsened during the pandemic.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) said forces were increasingly using two types of "outcome" to close domestic abuse cases: the first being the absence of support from the victim and the second being a lack of evidence despite having the victim's backing to prosecute.

Zoë Billingham, the inspector of constabulary, said she was shocked that the figures, which covered the year to March 2020, were so high and appeared to be worsening.

The data came to light as part of the watchdog's review into the policing response to domestic abuse during the coronavirus pandemic, published on Wednesday, in which forces were largely praised for their proactive approach.

Billingham said: "It is the police's job to build the case for the victim. In many cases it isn't clear that forces are taking all the opportunities to undertake an effective initial investigation or that they desisted from pushing back the decision on to the victim.

"So when was the last time any of us heard of the police asking a burglary victim if they wanted the police to take action? It doesn't happen but it happens repeatedly in crimes of domestic abuse. I am shocked that the crime closure rates are now so high and worsening and still forces still don't have a good understanding of the reason for this."

"In my professional judgement it cannot be right that after domestic abuse crimes have been reported to the police – largely by victims but admittedly on occasion by friends or families or neighbours – but for three-quarters of these crimes to close because of so-called evidential difficulties. We are in a very difficult place in policing – there's no other way of describing it."

[Labour proposes new offences for violence against women and girls](#)

[Read more](#)

Billingham said there were wide variations between police forces in closure rates for domestic abuse incidents. In 10 forces, 80% of domestic abuse allegations were closed because of lack of evidence or lack of support from the victim to prosecute.

She said while the data covered the year to March 2020, there was no data to suggest the situation had improved during the pandemic.

HMICFRS has called on all forces to assess the closure rates for domestic abuse crimes and draw up a plan of action for improving them.

Elsewhere, the inspectorate said it was concerned about the impact of court backlogs on domestic abuse cases, which while not for the police to solve, may increase the likelihood of victims disengaging from the criminal justice process.

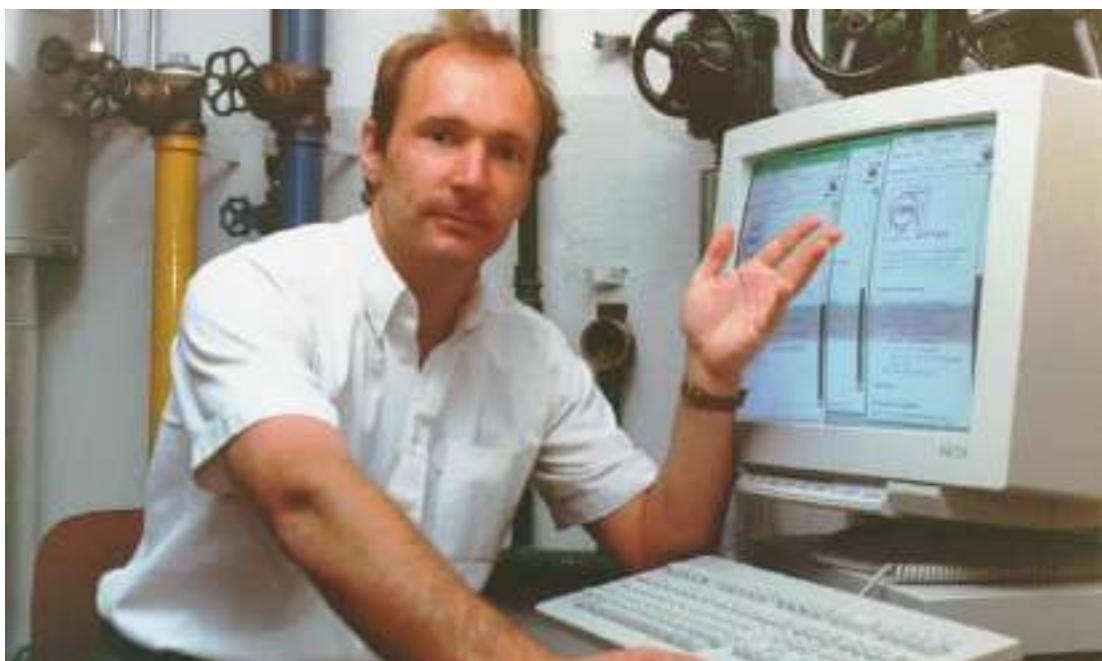
The National [Police](#) Chiefs' Council lead for domestic abuse, the assistant commissioner Louisa Rolfe, said: "The police response to domestic abuse has improved over recent years and that is reflected in our greater recording standards, better training for officers and better risk assessment. That said, we are constantly learning and developing, and will carefully consider the inspectorate's findings and recommendations as we continue to get better."

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[Tim Berners-Lee](#)

Tim Berners-Lee defends auction of NFT representing web's source code

Creator of the world wide web says digital asset is ‘totally aligned with the values of the web’



Tim Berners-Lee: ‘I’m not selling the web – you won’t have to start paying money to follow links.’ Photograph: Sothebys

Tim Berners-Lee: ‘I’m not selling the web – you won’t have to start paying money to follow links.’ Photograph: Sothebys

*[Alex Hern](#) UK technology editor
[@alexhern](#)*

Wed 23 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

Tim Berners-Lee has defended his decision to auction [an NFT](#) (non-fungible token) representing the source code to the web, comparing the sale to an autographed book or a speaking tour.

The creator of the world wide web announced his decision to create and sell the digital asset through Sotheby's auction house last week. In the auction, which begins on Wednesday and will run for one week, collectors will have the chance to bid on a bundle of items, including the 10,000 lines of the source code to the original web browser, a digital poster created by Berners-Lee representing the code, a letter from him, and an animated video showing the code being entered.

"This is totally aligned with the values of the web," Berners-Lee told the Guardian. "The questions I've got, they said: 'Oh, that doesn't sound like the free and open web.' Well, wait a minute, the web is just as free and just as open as it always was. The core codes and protocols on the web are royalty free, just as they always have been. I'm not selling the web – you won't have to start paying money to follow links."



A letter from Tim Berners-Lee, part of his NFT auction at Sotheby's.
Photograph: Sothebys

"I'm not even selling the source code. I'm selling a picture that I made, with a Python programme that I wrote myself, of what the source code would look like if it was stuck on the wall and signed by me.

“If they felt that me selling an NFT of a poster is inappropriate, then what about me selling a book? I do things like that, which involve money, but the free and open web is still free and open. And we do still, every now and again, have to fight to keep it free and open, fight for [net neutrality](#) and so on.”

Sotheby’s has not produced a sales estimate for the NFT, arguing that the token is a unique object unlike anything sold before. Bidding will open at \$1,000 (£716), and the proceeds of the sale will benefit initiatives that Berners-Lee and his wife, Rosemary Leith, support, the auction house said, although the web creator would not be drawn on the specifics of those initiatives.

“I’ve always been interested in the digital world of whether we can use NFTs to get funding back to creative people like musicians and artists,” he said. “From the point of view of selling an artwork, artists need … it’s useful in the digital world to have the equivalent of making an item.”

[Can anyone become an NFT collector? I tried it to find out](#)

[Read more](#)

Although this sale is the first time Berners-Lee has openly embraced the cryptocurrency community, the underlying technology has much that appeals about it, he said. Berners-Lee has settled on similar solutions in his own project, [Solid](#), which aims to decentralise the web. “The blockchain world is pretty separate from the web, except where they connect in different places. But one of the problems with the web’s design is that it uses domain names, which are at core a centralised system.

“Solid and the blockchain both attract people who want sovereign identity, sovereign power as a person. When you get a Solid pod, you can share it with anybody else in the world without asking anybody else, without going through any central authority. And on a blockchain, if you get your name on a blockchain, you can use that as a sovereign identity.” Speaking to the Guardian in 2019, Berners-Lee [called the web’s reliance on the domain name system](#) one of the mistakes he would have fixed if he could go back in time.

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Singapore

'Horrific': Singaporean woman jailed for 30 years after maid tortured and killed

Judge says Gaiyathiri Murugayan was mentally ill but understood what she was doing in abusing Piang Ngaih Don from Myanmar



Police escort Singaporean woman Gaiyathiri Murugayan, who has been sentenced to 30 years in prison for starving, torturing and killing her domestic worker from Myanmar. Photograph: Seah Kwang Peng/SPH/EPA

Police escort Singaporean woman Gaiyathiri Murugayan, who has been sentenced to 30 years in prison for starving, torturing and killing her domestic worker from Myanmar. Photograph: Seah Kwang Peng/SPH/EPA

Reuters

Tue 22 Jun 2021 21.06 EDT

Singapore's high court has sentenced a woman to 30 years in prison for killing her Burmese maid after more than a year of abuse that included starving, torture and beatings.

Singaporean Gaiyathiri Murugayan pleaded guilty in February to culpable homicide among 28 charges related to her abuse of Piang Ngailh Don, who was 24 and subjected to 14 months of beating that culminated in her death in 2016.

Judge See Kee Oon said that though Murugayan, 40, suffered significant psychiatric problems, the offences she committed were abhorrent and done with purpose.

[Singapore's cramped migrant worker dorms hide Covid-19 surge risk](#)

[Read more](#)

“The extremely aggravated and horrific circumstances of the offences are crucial considerations that tip the scales towards retribution and deterrence,” the judge said in sentencing, according to a transcript provided by the court.

“She was cognisant of her actions and purposeful in her conduct. She did not lack capacity to comprehend what she was doing.”

Murugayan’s lawyer, Joseph Chen, said a family member of his client had asked him to file an appeal seeking a shorter prison term of 15 to 16 years so she could still spend time with her children upon her release.

“People with psychiatric disorder look at things differently, they cannot pull themselves out of the situation,” he said. “To the family member, the 30 years sentence is as bad as life imprisonment.”

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Animals farmedFarming

Poo overload: Northern Ireland could be forced to export a third of its animal waste

Country looks to export excess manure from intensive pig and poultry farms to combat rising pollution and emissions



Animal waste is being deposited over the Irish border as far as Wexford, more than 150 miles south. Photograph: Farlap/Alamy

Animal waste is being deposited over the Irish border as far as Wexford, more than 150 miles south. Photograph: Farlap/Alamy

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[Tommy Greene](#)

Wed 23 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

A surge in pig and poultry farming in [Northern Ireland](#) has built a multimillion-pound industry, feeding British consumers chicken and pork. But it is creating a climate and pollution headache for politicians.

After a decade of growth, the country has a [poultry population](#) of 25 million and pig production has risen to [almost 1.5 million](#), with most of the meat [exported](#) to Great Britain.

The figures show Northern Ireland has no shortage of ingredients for sausages in the midst of [a bitter row](#) between the EU and the UK over a looming ban on chilled meats traded from Great Britain into the region.

But the country is struggling to dispose of its animal waste sustainably – and may need to export more than a third of it. Rising phosphate and nitrate levels are also threatening the country's waterways and pushing the UK over international ammonia [limits](#).

Advisory bodies have [told politicians](#) that as much as 35% of animal waste may need to be exported to improve water and soil quality in the region, and that “agricultural activities remain a significant and increasing pressure on water quality” in Northern Ireland.

[The planet's prodigious poo problem](#)

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Only one lake out of 21 in Northern Ireland is [considered](#) of good status under the EU’s water framework directive, legislation intended to improve river water quality.

The devolved administration’s first [climate bill](#) moved to its second reading last month, setting a 2045 net zero carbon target for Northern Ireland. Farming groups claim the target [could wipe out half](#) of the country’s livestock farmers if it was enforced.

A quarter of Northern Ireland’s poultry litter [is exported](#), but there are no figures on the full extent of animal waste exports.

Slurry and concentrated solid manure produced by intensive pig and poultry operations is being deposited over the Irish border as far as Wexford, more than 150 miles south. Part of the remainder is shipped to incinerators in Great Britain, including sites at Norfolk and Fife. Material transported to the Irish Republic is largely used as fertiliser or goes to anaerobic digester plants for biofuel.

Cross-border pollution from Northern Ireland’s excess waste disposal has triggered legal action, with cases being prepared by Friends of the Earth and Ireland’s national trust body, [An Taisce](#), which owns land straddling the frontier between Monaghan and Tyrone.

The Green party [says](#) 98% of special areas of conservation in Northern Ireland exceed [critical loads](#) of nitrogen, with some by up to 300% or more.

James Orr, Friends of the Earth Northern [Ireland](#) director, says transboundary pollution is the result of years of regulatory inaction either side of the border. He argues that intensive farming practices have led to:

“Air pollution, chronic water pollution and also habitat degradation through the ripping out of natural and semi-natural habitats for intensification.”

“We’re a centre for agribusiness in Northern Ireland, which means we’re now saturated with excrement,” says Orr. “And not just ourselves, but our neighbours, too, are paying the price.”

The growth in intensive pig and poultry farming in the country continues, with planning decisions awaited on mega units set to house tens of thousands of pigs and chickens in [Newtownabbey](#), Fermanagh and Limavady – poised to be some of the UK’s largest intensive livestock farms.



Only one lake out of 21 in Northern Ireland is considered of good status under EU legislation intended to improve river water quality. Photograph: Minchen Liang/Alamy Stock Photo

The number of intensive poultry farms (with 40,000 or more birds) granted planning permission in Northern Ireland rose from 141 in 2011 to 245 in 2017, according to figures [obtained under](#) the Freedom of Information Act by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

During this period, Moy Park, Northern Ireland’s largest company and Europe’s biggest poultry processor, [encouraged](#) the construction of hundreds

of new poultry houses at Northern Irish farms.

Poultry numbers in Northern Ireland increased by 27% between 2012 and 2020 to almost 25 million. Between 2006 and 2020, the slaughter of home-produced pigs more than doubled in the region – from 717,172 to 1,444,150 – while its breeding herd grew by 31% between 2006 and 2019.

Meanwhile, between 2011 and 2018, Northern Ireland's pigmeat export sales almost doubled – from £54.8m to £106.2m – as total agri-food exports rose by 77%.

About 80% of the region's meat is exported, with Great Britain its biggest market by some way, accounting for almost two-thirds of agri-food product exports in 2015.

Mark Sutton, an environmental physicist at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, says that, while recognising agriculture represents a large part of the Northern Irish economy, there is a pressing need to meet targets on nitrogen emissions, of which ammonia is one compound – with much of the UK's climate focus ahead of Cop26 centring on carbon emissions.

Citing damage to nitrogen-sensitive sphagnum moss and peat bogs – which act as carbon sinks – caused by the waste surplus, Sutton argues that measures as straightforward as using newer slurry-spreading machinery and more efficient storage of manure fertiliser could help reduce Northern Ireland's emissions significantly. “We estimate that something like 80% of [all] the nitrogen inputs that are going into agriculture get wasted.

“If we want to meet our net zero targets, we need to take action on nitrogen,” he says. “One of the problems is how fragmented its by-products are – you have ammonia, nitrates in the water and nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas hundreds of times as potent as CO₂, coming out of the soils.”

[Rise of the vegan vegetable: the farmers who shun animal manure | Patrick Barkham](#)

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Fermanagh and Omagh district councillor Chris McCaffrey says farmers were trying to diversify by “copying this industrial model, which brings massive environmental and public health risks, as well as risks for animal welfare.

“We have very low topsoil here in Fermanagh – only a couple of centimetres. So it’s not very long before ammonia and other pollutants get into the water table.”

An application for a new 1,000-pig unit in his ward, on the edge of the Derrylin townland, [was rejected](#) last year following widespread community opposition.

Northern Ireland’s Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Daera) says it has “developed an ammonia strategy, which will be published for consultation soon. This strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to ammonia reduction and the protection and restoration of habitats.”

“Daera has already taken action to address ammonia in Northern Ireland, including funding a wide-ranging ammonia research programme, publishing a code of good agricultural practice for the reduction of ammonia emissions and supporting farmers financially to invest in ammonia reduction technologies such as low emissions slurry spreading equipment, which reduces the ammonia and water quality impacts of slurry spreading through schemes such as the farm business improvement scheme.”

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2021.06.23 - Coronavirus

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[Scotland](#)

Scotland to remove all major Covid restrictions on 9 August

Nicola Sturgeon also said move to level 0 will happen on 19 July, with limits on gatherings eased

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0

Scotland's restrictions not being lifted as weekly cases rise by 40% – video

[Libby Brooks](#) Scotland correspondent

Tue 22 Jun 2021 12.36 EDT

Scotland should see the removal of all major legal coronavirus restrictions on 9 August, [Nicola Sturgeon](#) has said, as she confirmed that the move to level 0 of her government's five-tier system of Covid controls would be delayed until 19 July, the same date as measures are to be lifted in England.

This pause would allow more time for people to be vaccinated, the first minister said, with the daily case rate in [Scotland](#) 40% higher than it was last week as the Delta variant surges across the country.

Sturgeon told MSPs on Tuesday “normal life is much closer”, as the Scottish government faced criticism over the lack of scrutiny of Covid announcements it affords the Holyrood parliament.

The Scottish government has always been clear that level 0 is not the end point of restrictions – limits on indoor household gatherings will remain, for example – and today Sturgeon set out a further stage for the country to move “beyond zero” in early August.

The eventual move to level 0 will see the limits for household gatherings indoors increase, and up to 200 people able to attend weddings and funerals. The general indoor physical distancing requirement should be reduced from 2 metres to 1 metre, and the outdoor requirement to physically distance should be lifted altogether.

Sturgeon said she hoped it would be possible to end “major remaining legal restrictions”, including social distancing indoors, from 9 August, by which time all over-40s should have had their second vaccine for at least two weeks and signalling a “return to almost complete normality in our day-to-day lives”.

However, she warned that some measures, such as the use of face coverings in schools, shops and on public transport and regular hand-washing, would be required “at least for a period”, and said that her government would not advise an immediate return to office-working from that date.

Her statement came after the presiding officer, Alison Johnstone, issued a rebuke to ministers for not announcing the Manchester and Salford travel ban in parliament last Thursday, instead using a written question to make it public. This went unnoticed until Sturgeon’s televised announcement on Friday, which the Greater Manchester mayor, Andy Burnham, later described as “[totally disproportionate](#)”, criticising ministers for failing to give his officials advance notice.

Johnstone queried whether this was an “appropriate” way of announcing such restrictions, stating: “All significant and substantive announcements should be made to this parliament wherever that is possible.”

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Coronavirus

Northern English cities faced ‘avalanche’ of debt during Covid – study

Richer neighbourhoods in southern England saved £12 for every £1 saved by those in poorer areas



St Samson’s Square in York city centre. Residents were likely to have boosted savings. Photograph: Ian Dagnall/Alamy

St Samson’s Square in York city centre. Residents were likely to have boosted savings. Photograph: Ian Dagnall/Alamy

[Patrick Butler](#)

Tue 22 Jun 2021 20.11 EDT

Britain’s contrasting economic fortunes during Covid are highlighted by a study that shows the [£150bn of savings](#) accrued over the pandemic are

overwhelmingly concentrated in the affluent south of England, while large parts of the north and the Midlands faced an “avalanche” of personal debt.

Affluent people in richer southern England neighbourhoods were typically able to save £12 for every £1 saved by people in poorer neighbourhoods in mostly northern cities and towns, who spent proportionately more of their income on essentials such as food and energy, said the Centre for Cities thinktank.

Cities such as Exeter, York and Aldershot were the biggest financial beneficiaries of lockdown, with residents in at least three-quarters of neighbourhoods likely to have boosted savings. This contrasted with [Hull](#), Bradford and Blackburn, where people in around half of neighbourhoods were likely to have racked up debts.

The Centre for Cities warned of a “north-south” economic divide opening up more widely when the government’s Covid support package is phased out in the autumn, with some parts of the country potentially benefiting from the “champagne bottle effect” of Covid savings and others facing increased levels of problem debt.

It called on the government to unveil a package of support for people facing financial hardship as a result of Covid-19, including a specialist debt relief scheme for people who have run up pandemic-related problem debt, and retention of the £20 uplift to universal credit.

[Hull](#)

“The pandemic has left this country more divided than ever. While people in mostly prosperous southern cities and towns have accumulated £150bn of savings, many less affluent people in the north and Midlands will face an avalanche of debt as government support ends later this year,” said Centre for Cities’ chief executive, Andrew Carter.

He added: “The government is withdrawing financial support far too quickly for people in places that have been hit hard by the pandemic. Not only will this set its levelling up agenda back significantly, it also risks levelling down many previously affluent parts of southern England such as Crawley.

Exeter

Spending on non-essential services such as travel, restaurants and entertainment in Great Britain dipped dramatically during the lockdowns of the past 16 months as a result of work from home guidance and restrictions on shop opening, enabling the accumulation nationally of a £150bn savings cash pile.

But this “dividend” is unevenly distributed, said the study. While residents in places such as Oxford, Cambridge and Reading were able to spend, on average, 15% less than pre-pandemic, those living in places such as Hull, Sunderland, Dundee and Middlesbrough saw spending (and savings) levels barely changed.

The study says people living in poorer neighbourhoods faced a double whammy – not only were they less likely to be able to cut spending over lockdown but were more likely to have lost income as a result of moving on to universal credit or furlough – heightening the risk that they accumulate debt.

In Liverpool, for example, where there are high concentrations of deprivation, nearly half of neighbourhoods, were likely to have run up higher debts as a result of the pandemic, while less than a third of neighbourhoods were estimated to have been in a position to save.

By contrast, in mainly affluent Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire, around 40% of neighbourhoods were estimated to have been saving during the pandemic while fewer than a fifth of neighbourhoods are likely to have seen a rise in debt.

The risk was that town and cities in deprived areas would lose out because there they had fewer savings to inject into the local economy, the study said: “Fewer jobs will therefore be created in these places as a result of the bounce back, further exacerbating their pre-existing and [pandemic debt](#) challenges.”

Pockets of the south-east whose fortunes were tightly bound to those of the international travel industry were also struggling, notably – Crawley, Luton

and Slough – where both rich and poor neighbourhoods had seen their financial situation deteriorate over the past year.

Centre for Cities called for an extension of the coronavirus job retention scheme in sectors such as the aviation industry that will continue to be affected by the pandemic in the autumn.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/22/northern-english-cities-faced-avalanche-of-debt-during-covid-study>.

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Coronavirus

Covid vaccine map: how are countries around the world doing?

More than 2bn Covid-19 vaccine doses have been administered worldwide. Find out which countries are vaccinating the most

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

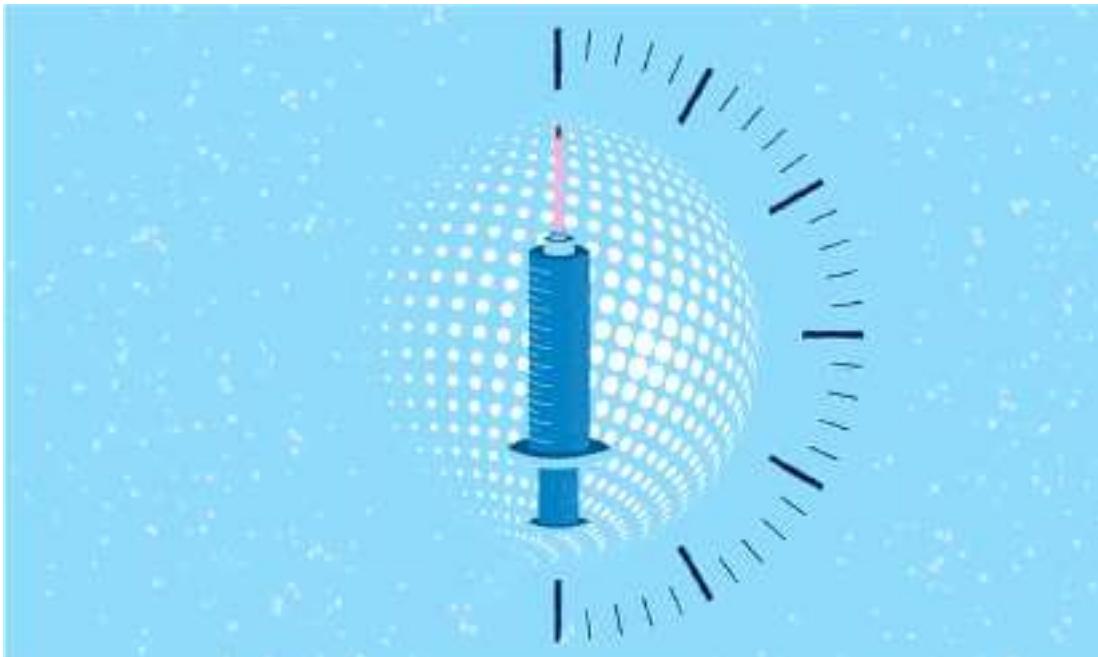


Illustration: Miles Probyn/The Guardian

Illustration: Miles Probyn/The Guardian

[Pablo Gutiérrez](#), [Seán Clarke](#) and [Ashley Kirk](#)

Tue 22 Jun 2021 09.07 EDT

Since the first Pfizer vaccine against Covid-19 was injected into the arm of a British woman in December 2020, hundreds of millions of vaccine doses

have been administered worldwide.

Dozens of countries now have advanced vaccination campaigns as they rush to protect their people and get their economies back up and running. Many are in a position where the most vulnerable people are fully vaccinated, raising hopes that the pandemic's worst effects may be over.

At the same time, many developing countries are struggling to buy adequate supplies and are suffering from new waves of the pandemic.

Is the world rolling out the vaccine fast enough?

Throughout the first quarter of 2021, a number of countries began to ramp up their vaccination programmes.

Those with the most advanced vaccination campaigns – such as Israel, the US and the UK – have started to see the benefits, with falling death rates as their populations build immunity.

Other countries in Europe have also expanded their vaccine coverage, but many developing countries have been unable to procure supplies at the same pace.

Vaccine rates by country

In the table below, you can find out the number of vaccine doses per 100 people in each country to date.

About this data

This data in this page are the latest available figures from [Our World in Data](#). Differences in data collection and publishing schedules between countries may lead to temporary inconsistencies.

Vaccinations mean the number of doses that have been administered to date. As most approved vaccinations required two doses, a rate of 100 doses per 100 people does not mean full vaccination coverage.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/22/covid-vaccine-map-how-are-countries-around-the-world-doing>.

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Coronavirus

Tokyo Olympics organisers ban alcohol sales after public outcry

Games officials faced accusations the event was getting preferential treatment while other Tokyo businesses still faced alcohol restrictions

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



The organisers of the Tokyo Olympics have been forced to abandon plans to allow the sale of alcohol at venues after public outcry. Photograph: Keizo Mori/UPI/Rex/Shutterstock

The organisers of the Tokyo Olympics have been forced to abandon plans to allow the sale of alcohol at venues after public outcry. Photograph: Keizo Mori/UPI/Rex/Shutterstock

Justin McCurry in Tokyo

Wed 23 Jun 2021 00.20 EDT

The organisers of the [Tokyo Olympics](#) have been forced to abandon plans to allow the sale of alcohol at venues after public outcry.

The president of the Tokyo 2020 organising committee, Seiko Hashimoto, said on Wednesday that the decision had been made to ensure the Games were “safe and secure” during the [coronavirus](#) pandemic.

Earlier this week, media reports said organisers were poised to allow Japanese sports fans to drink alcohol inside venues following pressure from Asahi Breweries, an Olympic [sponsor](#). Hashimoto said Asahi had accepted the ban.

[Uganda Olympic athlete arriving in Tokyo tests positive for coronavirus](#)
[Read more](#)

Earlier, she had said the sale of alcoholic drinks was “being considered”, but acknowledged there were concerns that alcohol consumption could make spectators more likely to shout and ignore social distancing rules.

Critics pointed out that residents of Tokyo, where a full state of emergency was [lifted](#) at the weekend, still face restrictions on alcohol consumption.

Under new measures that went into effect on Monday, Tokyoites can now drink alone or with one other person for up to 90 minutes between 11am and 7pm at bars and restaurants.

The sense that the Games were being given preferential treatment while people and businesses were still [struggling](#) amid Covid restrictions appears to have influenced the organisers’ about-turn on alcohol sales.

“Are the Olympics an exception, after having placed a burden of anti-infection measures on restaurant operators for so long?” Haruo Ozaki, the head of the Tokyo Medical Association, said on Tuesday, according to the Kyodo news agency.

The organising committee said on Wednesday that spectators would also be prevented from taking their own alcohol to venues.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Tokyo 2020 organisers have drawn widespread criticism after deciding that a limited number of Japanese spectators will be permitted to watch events this summer. Attendances will be capped at 50% of a venue's capacity, or a maximum of 10,000 spectators.

The decision came despite warnings from the government's most senior health adviser, Shigeru Omi, that the best way to prevent a new outbreak of the virus would be to ban spectators altogether.

Organisers decided earlier this year not to allow overseas sports fans to attend the Games.

The Mainichi Shimbun called the decision on domestic spectators "totally irresponsible", and said that sports contests would also be watched by a large number of people connected to the IOC and Games sponsors.

The newspaper said in an editorial: "This decision openly rejects the views of experts on how to prevent coronavirus infections from spreading, and risks making a mockery of the notion of safety."

Hashimoto defended the move on fans, saying their presence would enhance the Games. "Of course, I understand that holding the event without spectators would lower the risk, but there is evidence that there have been no clusters at other events and tournaments," she said.

While ticket holders will not have to offer proof of vaccination or a negative Covid-19 test, those with a temperature of 37.5C or higher, or who believe they are displaying symptoms, will be denied entry, according to new measures announced on Wednesday.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/23/tokyo-olympics-organisers-alcohol-sales-ban-japan>

[Festivals](#)

UK festivals organisers need urgent help, say MPs

Public accounts committee highlights confusion within government over how post-Covid arts fund will affect sector



The Black Deer Festival in 2018. This year's event has been cancelled.
Photograph: Jason Richardson/Alamy

The Black Deer Festival in 2018. This year's event has been cancelled.
Photograph: Jason Richardson/Alamy

[Rajeev Syal](#)

Wed 23 Jun 2021 01.01 EDT

Dozens of festivals are facing “devastating consequences to their survival” this summer amid confusion within government over how a £1.57bn post-Covid arts fund will affect the sector, parliament’s spending watchdog has found.

The influential public accounts committee has called on the government to offer urgent support to outdoor events organisers in a report released on Wednesday.

The cross-party committee has revealed that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has not modelled the cost of underwriting festival insurance, despite demands for an immediate intervention.

The disclosure comes amid growing calls from across parliament and the music industry for the government to consider providing insurance for festivals against the risk of cancellation. The musician and Womad organiser Peter Gabriel last week urged ministers to intervene because commercial insurers “have run a mile”.

A string of events this summer have been cancelled in the wake of Boris Johnson’s decision last week to delay lifting Covid-19 restrictions until 19 July.

Meg Hillier, the committee’s chair, said the festival sector and those who work in it were in need of urgent government help.

“The pandemic has exposed just how poorly departments across government understand the sectors that they oversee. DCMS was clear that it ‘would not save every organisation’ but we are concerned about the impact of Covid-19 on those organisations vital to the culture sector – sound engineers, lighting and technical support.

“The government must urgently consider support other than cash, such as insurance indemnity or parts of the sector risk a second summer of forced inactivity with all the devastating consequences to their survival,” she said.

Oliver Dowden, the culture secretary, announced the £1.57bn culture recovery fund (CRF) 11 months ago with the objective of rescuing up to three-quarters of arts, culture and heritage institutions and organisations at risk of financial ruin because of Covid-19.

In a 20-page report examining the distribution of the fund, the committee said the DCMS officials needed a better understanding of the fund’s “impact

on freelancers, commercial organisations, supply-chain businesses and festivals”.

Highlighting the lack of non-financial support offered to festivals, the report said: “Festivals are making difficult decisions about whether to risk their survival by going ahead this summer, but the department has not modelled the cost of underwriting festival indemnity insurance.”

The report comes after a festival pilot was held at the weekend to help measure the impact of testing and vaccines on Covid-19 transmission at an outdoor event.

The Download festival saw metal fans who had tested negative for Covid-19 gathering in Leicestershire without needing to wear face coverings or socially distance. The capacity was significantly reduced from its normal attendance of 111,000 to about 10,000.

Latitude, which is run by Festival Republic, the company behind the Download pilot, announced on Friday it would be going ahead between 22 July and 25 July in Suffolk.

However, Lake District event Kendal Calling has cancelled its 2021 edition, due to take place from 29 July to 31 August with headliners including Stereophonics and Dizzee Rascal, citing a lack of guidance from the government.

Other festivals planned for June and July were cancelled or postponed after Johnson’s announcement last week.

The Black Deer festival in Kent, which was due to be headlined by Van Morrison at the end of June, the Noisily festival in Leicestershire, and the Kubix festival in Sunderland were also dropped.

A Conservative former minister told the Commons on Tuesday of his “fear” that data on large test events has not been published because “it would have demonstrated that we could have safely opened on 21 June”.

Mark Harper, who chairs the lockdown-sceptic Covid Recovery Group, said he suspects the numbers from the Events Research Programme are

“fantastically positive” after test events held at sporting, music and other venues have not caused any Covid-19 outbreaks and he is “a little confused” as to why the numbers have not been released.

“When the government doesn’t publish something it’s normally because it’s bad news and it’s trying to hide it away.

“I’ve got a very strong suspicion this set of data is fantastically positive. It must be ready for publication, because it must have been prepared for last week when step 4 was due to be announced so it must be ready to go,” he said.

Labour also raised concerns on the whereabouts of the data, which has been gathered at events including the FA Cup final, and asked if there was a “secret”.

“Why won’t the government tell the public, tell the industry and tell us what the results are, because all of those who have spent time and money organising and hosting test events – and those relying on this programme – would like to see the results,” said the shadow culture minister, Jo Stevens.

The culture minister Nigel Huddleston dismissed their concerns. “Some of the conspiracy theories around this, I’m afraid, I wouldn’t buy into.

“We have said already (...) that if there were major concerns we would have made sure that information was in the public arena that would have been the responsible thing to do,” he said.

A DCMS spokesperson said the government would consider calls for insurance policy changes which could be needed once restrictions are lifted. “More help is on the way following a £300m boost to the culture recovery fund at the budget and we continue to explore what further support, including issues around securing insurance, may be required when the culture sector is able to reopen,” she said.

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Coronavirus

Children ‘not expected to quarantine’ if amber-list rules are relaxed

Children and double-jabbed adults will not have to isolate under proposals, say sources

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



People arriving at Heathrow airport. Photograph: Guy Bell/Rex/Shutterstock

People arriving at Heathrow airport. Photograph: Guy Bell/Rex/Shutterstock

[Heather Stewart](#) and [Jessica Elgot](#)

Tue 22 Jun 2021 15.47 EDT

Children will not be expected to isolate if new rules are introduced that could spare double-jabbed travellers quarantine when they return from

amber-list countries, government sources say.

Ministers are expected to discuss the plans at a meeting of the cabinet's Covid-O committee, likely to be held on Thursday, where they will hear the latest scientific advice about when vaccination rates will be high enough to consider loosening quarantine requirements.

If agreed, the plan could be announced on that day. It could come into force in late July, but government sources said August was more likely – potentially opening up the possibility that families could visit relatives in amber list countries during the school summer break.

Vaccination has not yet been extended to under-18s. One Whitehall source said they would “certainly expect” children to be exempt from the new regime – they would not need to be double-jabbed to avoid quarantine – to avoid the sense that families were being discriminated against.

Matt Hancock confirmed that ministers are considering how to scrap the requirement for people to isolate for 10 days on return from a country on the amber list. The health secretary added he was “in favour of moving forward in this area”.

However, both Hancock and Boris Johnson have stressed that UK holidaymakers should generally plan to stay in the UK this summer in a bid to protect the vaccination programme against new variants.

On Monday, it was reported that one in 200 people travelling from amber list countries were testing positive for the virus, with no positive cases being brought in from people arriving from 151 of the 167 countries on the amber list.

Johnson said earlier this week it would be a “difficult year for travel ... There will be hassle, there will be delays, I am afraid, because the priority has got to be to keep the country safe and stop the virus coming back in.”

Changes to the red, green and amber lists are also expected to be announced on Thursday, and to come into force early next week – though few additions

to the green list are anticipated, with Number 10 determined to avoid any further delay to the final stage of the reopening roadmap.

Travel industry experts have said low cases rates in some destinations should mean that travel could recommence to Malta, Poland, Finland, Grenada and Barbados in relative safety.

There are currently 11 countries on the green list where travellers do not have to quarantine in the UK on return but none are viable holiday destinations, either requiring Britons to quarantine on arrival in the country, like Australia or Singapore, or places inaccessible by conventional flight routes, such as the Falkland Islands or South Georgia.

Last week Jersey said all of England was red from 29 June, because of increasing cases of the Delta variant, though there are exemptions for those who are fully vaccinated or are under the age of 18.

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European Union

Moving on: why the EU is not missing Britain that much

On the 5th anniversary of Brexit, commentators reflect on the EU's success at rallying together after Britain's exit



In 2019 an anti-Brexit protest march in London calls for another referendum on Britain's EU membership. Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP

In 2019 an anti-Brexit protest march in London calls for another referendum on Britain's EU membership. Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP



Jennifer Rankin in Brussels

Wed 23 Jun 2021 00.15 EDT

On the night of 23 June 2016 a storm broke over Brussels. Rain poured, thunder rolled and lightning flashed over the headquarters of the European Union's institutions.

Then in the small hours came a political thunderbolt almost no one had forecast: the UK had voted to leave the union. Five years on, the Brexit tempest has subsided – in Brussels, if not in London.

“Not only did the EU survive the storm, but it also moved on,” said Georg Riekeles, of the European Policy Centre thinktank, and formerly an adviser to the EU’s Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier.

Referring to the agenda of Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders and other leaders of far-right anti-EU parties, Riekeles said that ahead of the Brexit vote “there was very clearly a populist, disintegrationist drive, ‘let’s break it up’”.

“Now,” said Bernd Lange, a German social democrat MEP, “even the rightwing populists aren’t discussing leaving the European Union, the *Frexit* [threat of French exit] is gone. They are saying we need to change the European Union.”

The EU is still hobbled by deep splits, whether over helping refugees or fixing flaws in the currency union. Many officials see the deepest threat emanating from Hungary and Poland, where powerful ruling parties are weakening independent courts and media, widely seen as an internal “exit” from the rule of law at the heart of Europe.

Hungary’s prime minister, Viktor Orbán, provoked fresh outrage this week when he proposed allowing national parliaments to suspend the EU legislative process and called for the term “ever closer union” to be deleted from the union treaty.

Against this backdrop Brexit helped the EU rediscover its *raison d'être*, said Riekeles. “The EU as a whole … even the capitals of countries that on topics like rule of law are outliers or [very difficult members of the family](#), showed the capacity to rally together around an existential issue.”

Smaller EU member states were impressed by how the [EU has stood behind Ireland](#) in the disputes with the UK over the Irish border, which had raised concern about the peace process, he said. “Small member states told us what is happening in Ireland shows us that when one country has an existential issue that that is an existential issue for all.”

Other divisions did not ricochet into Brexit talks. Instead, the process forced the 27 member states to pay more attention to each other, said Nathalie Loiseau, an MEP, who was France’s Europe minister.

Loiseau added: “It created more common culture of what it means to have a single market, to have a level playing field, and this will play a role in the future in our relations with the rest of the world.”

During the negotiations, even seasoned diplomats admitted the Brexit process had taught them new things about the EU single market and customs union. The deepened appreciation of the EU’s building blocks was forged not only by Brexit, but the election of a US president that same year who wanted to tear up the multilateral system and who [declared the EU a foe](#).

“Defending the internal market I think translates into a more proactive and more assertive European Union in other economic areas,” said Rem

Korteweg, a senior research fellow at the Clingendael institute, in the Netherlands.

That has continued even after Donald Trump was replaced by a friendlier US presidential figure, Joe Biden. EU leaders ignored concerns of the incoming Biden administration when they signed a trade deal with China last December, [although the pact looks unlikely to come into force](#).

The EU seeks a less confrontational approach to Beijing, in contrast to the US. “The EU is very assertive and even self confident in saying look we have our own story to tell in saying how global trade should develop,” Korteweg said.

While many mourned the British departure, Brexit made it easier for the EU to make progress on long-stalled policies. Soon after the Brexit vote the EU activated [common defence plans](#) that had lain on the drawing board for years.

Although Loiseau said she thought the British would have been putting the brakes on these plans, she said she missed the UK. “We miss this world vision, which the UK obviously had,” she said. The past tense expressed scepticism about the UK’s “global Britain” aspirations, a view Boris Johnson’s government would contest.

The coronavirus pandemic also led to an economic step once thought politically impossible: [joint borrowing from financial markets](#) to fund an €800bn recovery fund. For some, the EU recovery fund underscored the power of France and Germany, the two governments that forged the plan and then put it to the rest.

“It was always an unspoken truth that [Germany](#) and France were *primus inter pares*, the primary players, but I think Brexit has accentuated that,” said Korteweg. “It raises questions particularly for the northern European member states that tended to gravitate towards London on particular issues.” In response the Dutch government had sought to work more closely with France. “What we see the Dutch doing is actually bandwagoning, saying OK, if you can’t beat them join them.”

In the parallel universe where Remain won a narrow victory in 2016, it is hard to imagine any British prime minister being able to sell shared debt without strong political headwinds. “Would [the EU recovery fund] have happened the way it did. Probably not,” Koretweg said. “I think there would have been tremendous pushback in London and probably so strong that it would either have been watered down or not have happened at all.”

Given the British role as leader of the EU’s awkward squad, obtaining opt-outs and raising red flags, some things are easier without the UK. “There are different states of sorrow,” said Riekeles. “We miss the British, but probably less than we thought.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/23/moving-on-why-the-eu-is-not-missing-britain-that-much>

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Brexit

Interview

Brexit has weakened and isolated the UK, says EU vaccine chief

Jon Henley

Thierry Breton, who is also single market commissioner, believes downsides of leaving bloc are exposed by pandemic



Thierry Breton: ‘If the UK was still in the EU, it would have benefited from perhaps £45bn of collective EU money’. Photograph: Tony Da Silva/EPA

Thierry Breton: ‘If the UK was still in the EU, it would have benefited from perhaps £45bn of collective EU money’. Photograph: Tony Da Silva/EPA



[@jonhenley](#)

Wed 23 Jun 2021 00.00 EDT

Brexit has proved an “aberration that has weakened and isolated the UK”, the EU’s single market commissioner, Thierry Breton, has said, with any concrete benefits for Britain “hard to see” and multiple downsides cruelly exposed by the pandemic.

Breton, a former French finance minister in charge of the bloc’s Covid vaccination programme, [now outpacing Britain’s](#), said that five years after the referendum, Brexit’s promised outcomes were “far from reality”.

Brexit was “supposed to ‘take back control’ and protect UK citizens, to offer the country more economic and commercial room for manoeuvre, and to boost Britain’s global standing,” he said. “What we see is pretty much the opposite.”

British calls for more “pragmatism” on the implementation of the withdrawal agreement – particularly the Northern Ireland protocol – were odd, he said: “Pragmatism was for the negotiations. Now the deal has to be applied, in full, just as agreed. I’m sure the British made sure they could implement it before they signed it.”

On the economy, Breton said, Brexit's reality was "tragically different" from the promise. UK GDP fell 9.9% last year against 5% in Germany, 8.3% in France and 8.9% in Italy, and, while Britain's economy should rebound this year, "uncertainty around Brexit will clearly impact business and investor confidence long term".

Moreover, Britain was excluded from the EU recovery plan: "If the UK was still in the EU, it would have benefited from perhaps £45bn of collective EU money ... It's hard to see how one country on its own can fare better than many, together."

The trade deals Britain has struck so far have been mainly "rollovers of what Britain already had as an EU member, transferring the same terms and conditions", he said, while the first all-new deal – with Australia – looked like adding 0.02% to the UK's GDP after 15 years.

"Not that that's surprising, since UK imports and exports with Australia are worth £14bn," Breton said. "With the EU, they're worth £660bn." Meanwhile, the one deal that mattered most to UK trade – with the EU – is "in danger, because Boris Johnson cannot honour his engagements on Northern Ireland".

Trade in goods between the UK and the EU had seen a "spectacular decline" greater than that in Britain's trade with the rest of the world, Breton said, according to OECD data. "There were other factors, but these are clearly structural issues linked to Britain leaving the EU, not teething problems," he said. "British business has said Brexit is now its biggest import/export challenge."

Taking back control was not faring much better. Emigration from the UK of both skilled and unskilled workers had "increased hugely" over the course of 2020, with both Brexit and the government's "chaotic" handling of the coronavirus contributing.

Staff shortages in many sectors, including low-paid jobs in catering, logistics and healthcare, were now becoming "increasingly evident", with the number of vacant posts rising fast as leisure and retail outlets reopened after lockdown.

“And to that we should add the reputational problems fuelled by the far from commendable way the UK has treated some EU citizens [at the border],” Breton said. “Even the government has acknowledged the excesses of certain local authorities.”

Britain did get its inoculation campaign off to a good start, he conceded, “though that had nothing to do with Brexit”, but had since been “unable to boost production, and is dependent on the EU for over half its supply – and all its mRNA shots.”

The UK remains ahead on fully vaccinated people, but the EU is fast catching up, with several members including France and Italy now administering more doses than Britain on a seven-day average and Germany soon set to overtake the UK in total number with at least one dose.

Geopolitically, Britain looked “more and more isolated”. The EU would not “abandon our British partners, of course. But they have made their choice. My job is to defend the single market. That means helping make sure the agreements that have been negotiated and signed are respected – fully.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/23/brexit-has-weakened-and-isolated-the-uk-says-eu-vaccine-chief>

Britney Spears

Britney Spears speaks at last: will her day in court upend all we thought we knew?



Hard-won happiness ... Britney performs in Las Vegas. Photograph: Mario Anzuoni/Reuters

Hard-won happiness ... Britney performs in Las Vegas. Photograph: Mario Anzuoni/Reuters

The singer will today make a bid to take back control of her life. After a glut of speculative documentaries and conspiracy theories, her own voice can finally be heard

Grace Medford

Wed 23 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Britney Spears never used to be an enigma. In the early years of her career, she did interviews for print, TV and radio. She held press conferences and

endured day-long junkets. She shot behind the scenes videos, documentaries, TV specials. Britney was candid and trusting. “I’m from the south,” [she told the Observer in 2001](#), “so I’m a very open person and I’ve had to teach myself not to open up to too many people.”

These days however, if Britney interviews are granted, they are conducted under such strict terms that few publications have bothered. Even the radio and TV appearances when she has a record to sell are strictly surface level. Her music gives few clues to her state of mind. Her last four albums offer up sexy party tunes that don’t reflect the artist’s lived reality: now 39, by her own account she doesn’t drink, keeps a small circle of friends, only went out clubbing twice in the four years she spent in residence in Las Vegas, and prior to meeting current boyfriend Sam Asghari in 2016, was “over” dating.

[Britney Spears will directly address Los Angeles court on conservatorship](#)
[Read more](#)

So now, others speak on Britney’s behalf. In recent months, a glut of documentaries have either aired or gone into production with the aim of revealing “the truth” about the conservatorship she has lived under for 12 years, which gives her father, Jamie Spears, control of her estate and affairs, and Britney few more rights than a child. These all appear to have been completed without Britney’s involvement or consent and she has condemned them in Instagram posts, [saying](#) of the [New York Times’ Framing Britney Spears](#): “I’ve always been so judged ... insulted... and embarrassed by the media ... and I still am till this day ... I didn’t watch the documentary but from what I did see of it I was embarrassed by the light they put me in ... I cried for two weeks and well ... I still cry sometimes !!!!”



Mobbed ... photographers surround Britney's car as she arrives at court in 2007. Photograph: Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images

With opportunities to hear from Britney so scarce, it is little wonder then that her conservatorship hearing on 23 June, at which she is expected to address the Los Angeles court in person for the first time in three years in order to affirm her lawyer's suggestion that she wants her father removed from the arrangement, has become such an anticipated fixture in the Britney calendar – it is so rare to hear the star speak, and know beyond doubt that it is her.

I'm in a transition, she said last week, and I'm enjoying myself. That's it

As well as doing no interviews, Britney hasn't worked since cancelling her Vegas residency in January 2019, and in March last year she [shared a meme](#) vowing: "We will feed each other, re-distribute [sic] wealth, strike", which some took to mean that the star herself had downed tools in protest at her lack of agency. Last week, she [posted a short video on Instagram](#) in which she said that she had "no idea" whether she would ever perform again, adding by way of explanation: "I'm having fun right now. I'm in a transition in my life and I'm enjoying myself, so that's it."

Britney's happiness has been hard-won. Having rocketed to global fame aged 17, in 2007 she suffered [an agonisingly public mental health crisis](#) that led to her father taking over her affairs. In November 2008, just 10 months after she had been essentially sectioned, MTV aired a documentary, [For the Record](#), in which Britney addressed the crisis. Over 60 minutes, she paints a portrait of herself as a lonely young woman, unsure who to rely on and struggling to cope. The conservatorship – at that time, still temporary – is spoken of in the abstract. Britney refers to the “groundhog day” feel to her life now that she is under such strict control, how there’s no excitement any more. She tells us she’s sad, and she cries. But she also displays a steely resilience, rejecting pity, and resolutely staying positive. The film is the last time the public heard from Britney in any substantive way. As time passed and her conservatorship was upgraded from temporary to permanent, she has withdrawn – or been kept away – from the media.

[Britney Spears opposed father’s control of her finances and personal life for years – report](#)

[Read more](#)

Britney’s Instagram account is now the only direct communication she has with the public. The content she posts – freeform dance videos, the same selfie multiple times, constant references to a mysterious project called “RED” – have led some fans to speculate that her “team” are editing her content in order to make her seem odd, though they are in fact pretty consistent with the Britney we know – someone who has been through some tough times and is committed to her own happiness: “Why highlight the most negative and traumatizing times in my life from forever ago ????” she asked in [a 3 May post](#) in which she discussed the BBC’s The Battle for Britney documentary.



Off-script ... comments she made during the recording of the Jonathan Ross show were not broadcast. Photograph: Brian J Ritchie/Hot Sauce/Rex/Shutterstock

The letters she wrote on her website between 2004 and 2007 were discernibly in the same voice, spelling out her desire for stability, for family, to experiment with all different types of art. "I just want the same things in life that you want ... and that is to be happy," she said in a post dated 28 May 2007. Some fans don't believe in the authenticity of Britney's Instagram because she doesn't speak out about her legal issues – but maybe she simply doesn't want to.

Britney did go off-script once – at a taping for an appearance on The Jonathan Ross Show in 2016 when promoting her album Glory. Although the conversation was edited out of the broadcast, I was in the audience. In a response to a question from Ross about why it had taken so long for Britney to have creative control over her music, she said: "I've been under this conservatorship for three years and I felt like a lot of decisions were made for me, so I wanted this to be my baby and I've been really strategic about it." "For three years" was an odd detail given that she had been living with the conservatorship for almost a decade. It was perhaps a reference to a 2013 amendment filed by Jamie Spears and lawyer Andrew Wallet that gave them more power to change the way Britney's money is invested because of

“changing market conditions”. This was the first time their powers were extended – in subsequent years, further petitions were filed and granted that gave them increasing authority over Britney’s business dealings. Later in 2013, Britney announced her first Las Vegas residency supported by an album – Britney Jean – which was touted as her “most personal album yet”, but turned out to be anything but.



Never spoken publicly ... father Jamie Spears. Photograph: Nick Ut/AP

In September 2020, Britney’s lawyer, Samuel Ingham, told the court she was “vehemently opposed to this effort by her father to keep her legal struggle hidden away in the closet as a family secret”. She also welcomed the “informed support” of her fans, a statement seen widely as an endorsement of the [Free Britney movement](#) which campaigns for her release from the conservatorship, but which reads more closely as an expression of Britney’s desire to present the world with truth rather than speculation. There has since been greater transparency in proceedings, and more information has been made available to the general public. The BBC’s The Battle for Britney revealed a [document on which her father had ticked a box saying that the singer was suffering from dementia](#) at the time the conservatorship was enforced.

She posts that she is taking time to enjoy the little things, like dancing, trying on clothes and recreating a sandwich

Jamie Spears has never spoken publicly about the conservatorship but, in response to Framing [Britney Spears](#), his attorney Vivian Thoreen told Good Morning America that he is a “fiercely loving, dedicated and loyal father who rescued his daughter from a life-threatening situation”, and that at the time of her breakdown she was being exploited – financially and otherwise – leading him to take control. “I understand that every story needs a villain,” Thoreen added, pointing out that father and daughter had spent a fortnight with other family members in Louisiana at the beginning of lockdown. “The people have it so wrong here.”

Perhaps the truth will be revealed on 23 June. Britney’s attendance in court is rare – she last appeared in 2019, accompanied by her mother Lynne, for a status hearing on her conservatorship. Fans from the Free Britney movement picketed the courthouse in support. That hearing was closed to the public at Britney’s request; she wished to keep information such as her medical records, information pertaining to her two teenage sons, and her business secrets private, a reminder that this is not an online mystery to be solved by armchair observers, but a real person’s life.

“People can take everything away from you, but they can never take away your truth,” Britney stated at the top of her cover of Bobby Brown’s My Prerogative, released in 2004. Who knows whether she feels the same way after 12 years of being silenced, misinterpreted or ignored. But if her posts on Instagram are to be believed, her legal issues aside, she may never have been happier.

She posts that she is taking time to enjoy the little things, like dancing, trying on clothes, recreating a sandwich she remembers fondly and generally having a normal life. There may just not be much more to Britney Spears than this, and she’s not overly concerned with whether you like it or not. “Hi my name is Britney Spears … nice to meet you,” she captioned a 30 April image of a small child sticking her middle finger up. “One of my strongest gifts is that I’m pretty straightforward.”

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Non-fungible tokens (NFTs)

NFTs and me: meet the people trying to sell their memes for millions



A frame from Chris Torres' Nyan Cat gif. Photograph: Chris Torres

A frame from Chris Torres' Nyan Cat gif. Photograph: Chris Torres

Once, people who owned viral photos made little money from them. Now, the ‘original’ can potentially sell for an enormous sum. But are buyers savvy investors – or unwitting dupes?



Sirin Kale

Wed 23 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

The photographer Jeff McCurry's [favourite Harambe memes](#) are the ones where the dead gorilla is in heaven, Photoshopped alongside Diana, Princess of Wales, Tupac and Muhammad Ali. "It's like: *wow*," says McCurry. "What greater spot can you be placed in? Harambe's at the top of the hill, waiting to meet you there."

McCurry took the photograph of the 17-year-old western lowland gorilla that went on to become a meme. In it, Harambe kneels, projecting a fearsome aura of strength, nobility and calm. A former volunteer photographer at Cincinnati zoo, McCurry was there on 28 May 2016, the fateful day a three-year-old boy climbed into the gorilla's enclosure, forcing zookeepers to shoot Harambe dead. "It didn't seem real at first," says McCurry, who was a regular visitor to the zoo. "When any of your friends die, it's hard to process. I was in shock."

After Harambe's death, McCurry, who now lives in north Kentucky, was stunned to see his photograph go viral. It was used on T-shirts, pillows, mugs, wall art. "I didn't mind the meme people," he says. "I wasn't bothered

about them. But when professional publications used the photo without my permission, that was disappointing. It shocked me how much they did it.”

Although McCurry owned the copyright to the image, there wasn’t a huge amount he could do, other than email individual corporations, threatening to sue unless they stopped stealing his work. McCurry made money from Harambe’s image, but nowhere near as much as he felt he deserved, given how widely it was used.



McCurry’s image of Harambe. Photograph: Jeff McCurry

Then non-fungible tokens (NFTs; sometimes pronounced as “niftys”) came along. These are unique digital assets that are stored on a blockchain, a decentralised ledger of transactions, the same technology used to buy and sell cryptocurrencies. NFTs can be used to record ownership of just about anything: digital art, music, films, games and pornography. Once the files are uploaded and verified by a third party, they acquire a rarefied status, in much the same way as a hard-to-find stamp or unique piece of couture. The rock band Kings of Leon have generated more than £1.4m in NFT sales of their music this year alone.

Since early 2021, wealthy collectors have started buying slices of early internet history: the original versions of the rudimentary viral videos and

memes from the early days of the internet. Collectors want to “own” the original digital file from which all the memes subsequently sprang: in McCurry’s case, the unedited, uncropped picture of Harambe, direct from his memory card.

In the minds of these collectors, NFTs of these memes and viral videos are akin to cave art, painted across the walls of the web by the flickering firelight of a dial-up modem: the viral video Charlie Bit My Finger sold (the actual bidding was done in the ethereum currency) for the equivalent of £538,000 in May; the meme Disaster Girl sold for £350,000 in April, and the meme Overly Attached Girlfriend sold for £289,000, also in April. Unbelievably, in June an NFT of “Doge”, the image of a shiba inu dog long held to be one of the internet’s most popular memes, sold for £2.8m on the auction site Zora.

Like many other meme creators, McCurry has seen this emerging trend, and he wants a taste. On the day we speak, it is the fifth anniversary of Harambe’s death. This afternoon, the original file of Harambe’s photo will be listed for auction; this evening, McCurry will attend a candlelit vigil for the fallen gorilla outside the zoo. While he is there, McCurry will be anxiously contemplating a future in which Harambe, from beyond the grave, has the power to change his life beyond recognition.

“Who cares how disappointing it was for five years,” says McCurry, voice pregnant with hope. “I may just win the lottery.”

Images have been misappropriated for as long as we have had the technology to reproduce media at scale. The scurrilous cartoonists of revolutionary France depicted Marie Antoinette in [pornographic poses](#), while, in 1989, the artist Shepard Fairey [used an image](#) of André the Giant in his Obey Giant street-art campaign, to the displeasure of the [wrestler’s family](#). But the internet has supercharged the process by which people can appropriate each other’s creative property, whether it’s music (through the now defunct filesharing platform Napster) or movies. Women in public life tend to suffer the most as a result of this abuse, be it through [sexually explicit deep fakes](#) or [nude photo leaks](#), such as in 2014’s Fappening. Last

year, the model Emily Ratajkowski [wrote a heartfelt essay](#) about her attempt to block an unauthorised book of her photographs from going on sale.

Every time they plunge into digital waters, internet users accept the risk that they may go viral; their images may be used without their consent; strangers may mock them, take what they say in bad faith or even make them the villain of the day on Twitter. Nobody ever sets out to become a meme. It's something that happens to you, an external force entirely out of your control, like falling in love, or winning the lottery.

"It was rough," says the illustrator Chris Torres, 35, from Dallas, of the early years after his meme went viral. "I didn't know how to handle things. I had to sit back and watch as people stole my art and used it without asking." First posted online by Torres in April 2011, Nyan Cat – a pixelated gif of a cat with the body of a cherry pop tart – quickly went viral, becoming the subject of video games ("Nyan Cat: Lost in Space") and a [music video](#), set to the tune of Nyanyanyanyanyanya! by the Japanese artist daniwellP.

But nobody wanted to pay Torres to use his image. "It has been pretty much a constant for me that my ownership of Nyan Cat has been brought into question," he says. In 2013, Torres sued Warner Bros for using Nyan Cat [without permission](#) (the dispute was "[amicably resolved](#)" the same year). He has played a game of whack-a-mole ever since, going after commercial entities that use his copyrighted image without permission. "When something is on the internet, people assume it is something that can be taken for commercial use, without attribution," he says.

Happily for Torres, he is managed by Ben Lashes, 42, a former indie musician from southern California who represents creators of other memes including [Disaster Girl](#) and McCurry. "I've been deep in the meme world since 2009 ... I've always wanted to represent what I see as the best memes in the world," Lashes tells me. "Like the Avengers of the meme world."

Growing up, Lashes was fascinated by the intersection between entertainment and commerce. "I would go to Disneyland and study the map," says Lashes, "and think about how the merchandising worked. Or I'd read books about how Star Wars was made and the toy deals happened."

I never gave my permission for this to happen in the first place

Zoë Roth, AKA Disaster Girl

Lashes became a meme manager by accident. His father was friends with Charlie Schmidt, the creator of [Keyboard Cat](#), one of the earliest viral videos. “Charlie called me up in 2009 and said: ‘I’ve made this video, everyone is stealing it and no one wants to pay anything for it.’ I replied: ‘This is the future of intellectual property. The next Mickey Mouse is going to come out of the internet.’” Schmidt became Lashes’ first client.

For years, Lashes’ main priority was arranging brand partnerships and helping his clients protect their intellectual property. But in January, Torres expressed an interest in selling Nyan Cat as an NFT, and they decided to give it a shot. The punt paid off, handsomely: in February, an NFT of the original Nyan Cat animation sold for £416,000, kickstarting the wave of meme sales that is still going on to this day.

“When Nyan Cat the NFT was sold, I got messages from so many other meme creators,” says Torres. “They all had the same story. They created something and put it out there not knowing what would happen. The internet took over and they lost control … these people were looking to me for help in getting a little bit of control.” Now, Torres puts them in touch with his manager.

NFT meme sales can sometimes compensate creators for the harm occasioned by going viral without their consent. “Sometimes it can be a little confusing to grasp that: *hey, this is my actual thing*, because the whole world has it and is doing what they want with it,” says Lashes. “I’ve heard from my clients that being able to establish ownership over it has been empowering.”

It certainly feels that way to Zoë Roth. In 2007, Roth’s father took a picture of her, then four, smirking roguishly in front of a burning building (the fire was a controlled blaze with firefighters allowing local kids to take turns hosing it down). Roth subsequently became Disaster Girl, one of the internet’s earliest memes. It was overlaid with captions that read: “Old McDonald had a farm … HAD”, and “There was a spider … it’s gone now”.



Zoë Roth in the photo that immortalised her as Disaster Girl. Photograph: David Roth

Roth, who is now 21 and lives in North Carolina, explains what it feels like to go viral as a child. “It’s kind of like there’s this meme, this picture of you that will always be living this life on the internet. Any time anyone looks up your name, that is what is going to show up,” she says. “So it feels as if you’re always being reduced to something. It’s kind of frustrating because I’m a dynamic person who has a lot of other things going on. One picture can never define someone fully for their life.”

Because Roth knew that she couldn’t control Disaster Girl, she tried not to let it bother her. “I knew that, even if I did feel frustrated, it would still be out there, doing its own thing.” The worst thing was when people she disagreed with used it. “Donald Trump’s son used it once,” says Roth, “and I was like: *urgh, that’s gross.*”

In April, Roth sold Disaster Girl for £341,000. She plans to use the money to clear her student debts. The NFT sale feels like a form of redress. “It was nice to have some sort of control over what was happening to it, for once. It was a once-in-a-lifetime feeling. Maybe agency is the right word. I finally had some say in what happened with it.”

Roth pauses. “You know, I never gave my permission for this to happen in the first place.”

The people operating within the meme economy space tend to speak with the grandiose confidence of the visionary savant – or the self-deluded fool.

“One thing I would just share with you,” says Kayvon Tehranian, the CEO of Foundation, the platform on which most NFTs are sold, “is that Nyan Cat was worth almost a million dollars when it was auctioned. But I can tell you right now, if you auctioned it again, it would be worth more than that.” Foundation provides the infrastructure for listing an NFT: minting it (ie, uploading it to the ethereum blockchain) and verifying its provenance – it’s a bit like eBay, but for NFTs. In exchange, Foundation takes a 15% commission.

Tehranian sees the market for NFT memes as being no different from the established art market. “Can you call the Mona Lisa a meme?” he says. “I would argue: yes. It’s a piece of art that everyone knows; it becomes a cultural reference point. The Mona Lisa is worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Why is someone who creates something of perhaps more cultural impact not able to receive that level of compensation?”

In other words, Leonardo da Vinci walked so that Nyan Cat could fly. I can’t tell whether I’m listening to a multilevel marketing scheme or the next Steve Jobs. Either way, I’m intrigued. “I think it’s beautiful that the people who create culture don’t have to resort to silly sponsorships,” Tehranian says, “or printing T-shirts.”

I think they are decent investments ... some of the most collectible assets will be the things that our culture values

Harry Jones, NFT collector

There is a Samsung Frame TV in Harry Jones’s New York apartment displaying a slideshow of [the memes](#) he has bought, including Bad Luck Brian, Success Kid, Ermahgerd Girl and Tips Fedora. The 21-year-old cryptocurrency developer and investor, originally from Worthing, West Sussex, estimates that he’s spent about £70,000 on these NFT memes. “It’s

about rewarding meme creators,” Jones says. “These are culturally significant things, for my generation at least ... and the people who provided these cool, culturally significant things years ago got no money for it.”

After the sale of Bad Luck Brian, a celebrated meme of a dweeby college student in a sweater-vest, Brian (real name Kyle Craven) and Jones became friends. “Bad Luck Brian is a legend,” says Jones. “He’s one of the original memes ... I could never imagine that I would be friends with all these famous memes.”

In addition to compensating creators, Jones believes that his meme NFT collection will appreciate in value. “I honestly think they are decent investments ... as we get older, some of the most collectible assets will be the things that our culture values,” he says. “And that is memes.”

So sincere is Jones in his belief that memes will one day be as valuable as gold bullion or diamond mines, he is funding a project called Dank Bank, which will be the world’s first stock exchange for memes. “The idea is to fractionalise all these memes,” he says, “and turn them into tiny, tradable pieces.”

Leaving aside the question of whether we should be applying free-market capitalism to memes – the only truly good thing on the internet – what becomes apparent from talking to Jones is that, as with any other collectors’ market, there’s a degree of brinkmanship and bravado at work. “As with most things collectible,” says Jones, “it’s just about the bragging rights.”

When a major piece such as the Harambe NFT goes on the market, the bidding can get ferocious. “There’s a lot of bruised ego in these bidding wars,” Jones says. “Like the 3F Music guy.” Jones is referring to the enigmatic Emirati music producer who bought Disaster Girl for £341,000. “This guy *refuses* to lose auctions. If you end up in an auction with him, you know it will go to half a million dollars.”

Jones is prepared for the possibility that he has spent tens of thousands of pounds on a junk investment. “If the memes become worthless,” he says, “I won’t be financially ruined by it. I’ll be annoyed. But you can’t go into

anything this ridiculously weird and speculative without being prepared for it to be a zero.”

Then again, maybe Jones really is on to something. “Three weeks after I bought Bad Luck Brian,” he says, “I was getting messages from well-known venture capitalists asking: ‘Hey, are you selling?’”

Is Jones a savvy investor or an unwitting dupe? Even the experts don’t seem to know. What’s clear is that, buoyed up by the incredible rise of cryptocurrencies – bitcoin is up 230% since October 2020 – a new breed of tech entrepreneurs, newly rich through crypto speculation, are entering the art market for the first time and buying up NFTs.



MetaKovan, The buyer of Everydays: The First 5000 Days, with his £48m artwork. Photograph: Roslan Rahman/AFP/Getty Images

“The art world has been trying to crack the problem of how to get tech people to invest in art for a long time,” says the art critic Ben Davis, author of [9.5 Theses on Art and Class](#). “It hasn’t happened because one reason rich people collect art is social capital or because they’ve earned money in unsavoury ways and want respect. But tech people don’t need that. They’re treated like artists themselves.”

In March, though, a work by the digital artist Beeple, real name Mike Winkelmann, sold at Christie's for £48m, the third-highest price ever achieved by a living artist. Everydays: The First 5000 Days was a composite of the digital pictures Beeple has been posting online every single day since May 2007. "It's madness," says Davis. "I don't think I've ever seen anything like it. An entire new category of art appeared with new names and new stars in a matter of months." Auction houses, such as Sotheby's and Christie's, have blockbuster NFT sales coming up.

Sotheby's Max Moore led the digital artist Pak, who specialises in abstract spherical and cuboid shapes, to an [£11m NFT sale](#) in April this year. "It's a movement in and of itself," says Moore of NFT art, "such as conceptual art or cubism. It's a reflection in response to the changing times." But even Moore acknowledges that the £48m fetched by Beeple is indicative of an overheated market. "It's been like a tech startup for the first four months," says Moore, "but I think now we'll see it converted into a more organic, traditional market, that grows at a much healthier pace."

"The word bubble is bandied around too easily," says Prof John Turner of Queen's University Belfast, author of [Boom and Bust: A Global History of Financial Bubbles](#). "We don't know if we've had a bubble until it bursts. Prices keep going up. But it's only when they collapse that we can truly say." Turner traces a parallel between technology-fuelled bubbles of the past, including the dotcom bubble of the 1990s, and the 1929 Wall Street crash (which was driven in part by investment in electrification technology). In the 1890s, the invention of the bicycle led to the formation of hundreds of new companies, which traded on the stock exchange before collapsing in the early 20th century. "Bitcoin is of that ilk," says Turner. "The new technology is the blockchain."

What is important and interesting about memes from a critical perspective is that they don't belong to anybody

Art critic Ben Davis

These bubbles all burst in the same way. "Amateur investors come into the market for the first time," says Turner. "They add momentum to prices ... then one trade goes wrong and the amateurs are spooked, and flood out of

the market.” Although collectibles do not form bubbles in the same way – like couture or stamps, their value isn’t predictable, being subject to the whims of wealthy collectors – Turner believes that the cryptocurrency market *is* a bubble, and one on the verge of imminent collapse. “Prices around the world are going to come down,” he says, explaining that governments can intervene to block cryptocurrency exchanges: “China has [already done](#) that,” he says.

If cryptocurrency crashes, speculators will no longer have piles of money to splurge on the blockchain, buying viral NFTs. But for now, curators have cartoon dollar signs in their eyes. Moore is even open to the idea of Sotheby’s one day auctioning memes. “Individuals value buying a piece of history,” he says. “It comes back to human nature and the desire to own.” He points to individuals who don’t own any physical assets, but are “exclusively engaged in building their own profiles in the metaverse”, or the virtual shared space. “Ownership of something that is a part of pop culture is quite appealing for them.”

Despite these high-profile supporters, already the backlash has begun. “The NFT market is incomprehensibly absurd and wasteful,” the long-running music and entertainment publication Paste magazine [recently declared](#). Anil Dash, who co-created NFTs along with the artist Kevin McCoy at a New York City conference in May 2014, recently disavowed his creation in an essay for the Atlantic. “Our dream of empowering artists hasn’t yet come true, but it has yielded a lot of commercially exploitable hype,” [Dash wrote](#).

This backlash is largely driven by growing awareness of the ruinous environmental impact of bitcoin, usually mined by banks of computers [powered by fossil fuels](#). Detractors point out that at least you can do practical things with cryptocurrency, even if only buying drugs. But melting the ice caps to mint a gif of a flying cat on the blockchain? That’s harder to justify. At least there are some NFT exchanges that offset carbon emissions.

NFTs have been positioned as a solution to copyright theft. Instead of prising great chunks out of the meme Parthenon, collectors can own internet antiquities ethically. “There’s no connection inherent between an NFT and a copyrighted work or person’s image,” says Prof Rebecca Tushnet, an expert

in intellectual property at Harvard. She argues that existing laws already do a decent job of protecting people's intellectual property. "There's never been more licensed use of photography," she says, and the reason artists and photographers are paid poorly is not because people are stealing their work: "It's because prices are being driven down by lots of competition."

NFT purchasers don't really own anything at all, other than a URL and some bragging rights. Creators almost always reserve their copyright, meaning that the NFT cannot be licensed for commercial use. "They are purchasing a certificate," Tushnet says.

While Tushnet thinks that existing copyright laws are perfectly adequate when it comes to protecting meme creators, Tehranian argues that, in practice, individuals can fall through the cracks. "Copyright is not global," he says. "The internet is global. It's not jurisdictional. This is something much larger. We have artists in Ghana, Thailand, Australia. All share the same blockchain. In the future, if there's a dispute about the origin of something, we'll reference the blockchain – and we'll see copyright and royalty systems built on top of that."

Unlike Beeple, the majority of artists do not get rich from NFTs. According to [research published on Medium](#) by the Canadian artist Kimberly Parker, most artworks go for less than \$100. Even the big-name meme NFTs aren't guaranteed to do well. Some sell for six figures; others for small change.

In 2009, David Devore Sr took his seven-year-old son, David Jr, to the dentist for a tooth extraction. He recorded his son on the drive home, tripping on anesthesia, asking existential questions about the meaning of life. Devore Sr uploaded the footage on to Facebook; within days, it entered the pantheon of early viral videos. In May, the NFT of David After Dentist sold for £8,142. Three weeks later, Charlie Bit My Finger sold for £538,000.

"We were happy with the sale," says David Sr, unconvincingly. "It sounds like we are being ungrateful. But we were surprised by how low it went compared with the others." It is easy to understand his frustration. Both videos feature winsome children being adorable in low-resolution footage – how to explain the enormous price differential?

“I think we’ve narrowed it down to two things,” says Devore Sr. He points to fluctuations in the cryptocurrency used for NFT purchases: “It didn’t help that ethereum was at an all-time high that week. Also, there are very few people who are interested in buying these types of items – maybe fewer than 20 people. Maybe they were busy. It could come down to timing.”



Charlie Bit My Finger, which sold for the ethereum equivalent of £538,000.
Photograph: YouTube

The disparity between Charlie Bit My Finger and David After Dentist goes to the heart of what makes NFTs an impossible-to-predict asset. There is no internal logic behind why some viral NFTs do well and others fail. It’s pure speculation. The NFT has no inherent value beyond the whim of what a millionaire will pay for it on any given day. Whoever loses the game of musical chairs is left holding something worthless.

Over the following days, I keep an eye on Harambe’s auction page. It doesn’t seem to be going well. Five days after the listing went live, the reserve price of £10,145 has not been met.

I check back in with a bewildered McCurry. He’s trying to stay upbeat. “The way I’m choosing to look at it,” he says, “is that everyone’s sitting at the start line, going: *you first!*”

To a certain extent, it's hard to have much sympathy for McCurry: he is trying to monetise a photograph of a captive, dead gorilla, and seems to be failing. But McCurry doesn't see the sale as distasteful. "Harambe was my friend," he says. "If anyone would know if this was inappropriate, it would be me. I think Harambe would say, 'Go for it. I don't think you're disrespecting me at all.'"

Already it looks like the overheated NFT market may be collapsing. Prices are closely linked to the performance of cryptocurrencies, and since China cracked down on bitcoin in May, investors are skittish. McCurry is sanguine about the possibility that Harambe might not sell. "I'm hoping for the best," he tells me. "But if the worst happens, I'll still have Harambe."

There is one big problem at the heart of meme NFTs. Whatever their advocates argue, in themselves they have no inherent value, being fundamentally non-monetisable at their core. The meme only assumes cultural capital through mass transmission, and mass transmission only takes place when the meme is free to share. You'd never pay to send a meme, any more than you'd pay to tell a joke, or send a nude. The meme is a gift from one person to another, spontaneously, voluntarily, without any expectation of financial reward. Memes belong to everybody and nobody. You can't apply the principles of free-market capitalism to a meme because, by its very nature, a meme is not an asset class but a living organism.

"What is important and interesting about memes from a critical perspective is that they don't belong to anybody," says art critic Davis. "They are distributed among people, but it's what thousands of people did with it – that's the meme. And when you take a meme and treat it like a conventional art object by saying: 'Here is the unique thing, you own it,' it creates confusion about what is valuable about the meme. It's not the image itself that is valuable. The image was just a container for a huge number of jokes."

This is not to say that memes are not worth studying or preserving. "These are important forms of culture," says Davis. "They are images that shape people's lives." He would welcome the opening of a museum of memes. "There could be exhibits that show you how the meme affected culture in different ways," Davis says, "and the way the image flowed through a

community. But an NFT doesn't do that. It does the opposite. It points you back to this unique, original thing."

Owning an NFT of your favourite meme is a lot like owning a slice of land on the moon, or a star in the Milky Way. It does not mean anything, but is just kind of neat, particularly if you have cryptocurrency to burn. Thankfully for McCurry, the NFT bandwagon is accepting new passengers, at least for now. On 3 June, a week after the auction went live, Harambe sold for £57,000.

"This is just nuts," McCurry tells me with a delighted chuckle when I call to congratulate him. He is planning to move to Hawaii. "I'm going to clear my things here and buy a nice condo there," he says. "I'm set!"

After we hang up, I reflect that, even if these NFT memes feel like a scam, as grafts go, they are pretty innocuous. Investors get their bragging rights, Tehranian gets his cut, McCurry his condo, and Harambe, up there in heaven, knows exactly what he's worth. McCurry thinks his old friend would be delighted.

"Harambe would be thrilled," McCurry says. "He would be so happy. He wanted me to succeed."

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[First Dog on the Moon](#)[Great Barrier Reef](#)

Who does Unesco think they are? Listing the Great Barrier Reef as ‘in danger’! After all we have done for it!

[First Dog on the Moon](#)



We are not angry, we are disappointed. And angry

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Wed 23 Jun 2021 02.26 EDT

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Environment

App maps shady spots to guide Barcelona walkers along cooler routes

Cool Walks aims to help pedestrians avoid dangerous heat and find public drinking fountains



Cool Walks is a routing tool for pedestrians that was first developed at a data visualisation contest. Photograph: Cool Walks

Cool Walks is a routing tool for pedestrians that was first developed at a data visualisation contest. Photograph: Cool Walks

[Rhi Storer](#)

Wed 23 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

A new app promises to help [Barcelona](#) residents find the shadiest route between two places to avoid extreme heat.

[Cool Walks](#), a routing tool for pedestrians first developed at a [data visualisation contest](#), aims to show users a variety of walking routes to take for their intended destinations.

Users can choose the most direct route, a shady route that may take a little longer, or they can set the app to “vampire mode”, which avoids direct sunlight at all costs. Users can also use the app to find drinking fountains, or places to shelter from the sun.

The app [uses a tool called Lidar](#) to create high-resolution models of ground elevation, accurate to within 10cm. This information is combined with data on the sun’s path to work out where is in shade at any given time of day.

Barcelona is looking to use green spaces and trees as part of its efforts to mitigate the effects of global heating. The city’s [20-year tree masterplan](#) aims to increase the proportion of land covered by trees from 25% to 30%.

Albert Carbonell, lead analyst at the geographic information systems department at urban planning agency Barcelona Regional and one of the developers of the app, said: “I don’t know many cities that deal with pedestrian routing. It’s nice for a public agency to work with data that the city gave to us, to demonstrate that it’s feasible to come up with technological solutions to climate change.”

Although the tool only maps one neighbourhood of Barcelona, it is hoped the research will provide information on how the city can adapt to extreme heat to protect its citizens and economy.

Marc Montlleo, director of environmental projects at Barcelona Regional, said the vampire mode was created from taking “the most extreme form of the data algorithm”.

He said: “We wanted to generate different options so you could pick faster or cooler routes and we calculated three different algorithms. The vampire mode was made from our team who had a lot of beer the night before. It was for a bit of fun to totally avoid sunlight.”

Heatwaves kill more people than any other climate risk. According to C40, a climate leadership group made up of 97 cities around the world, extreme heat events in cities can cause mortality increases of up to 14%, as well as lower workforce productivity and damage infrastructure such as roads and rail lines.

Jon Burke, a former councillor for Hackney in London, who was responsible for a massive expansion of tree planting in the borough, said: “I think we should view this particular kind of app as an interim measure to reduce the impacts of extreme heat … while cities rapidly invest in urban canopy cover and broader green infrastructure.

“The scientific literature on urban forestry is clear: in order to begin reducing temperatures during extreme heat events, we need to be aiming for 40% canopy cover on street as a minimum, and combine this with additional green infrastructure interventions and the systematic removal of heat-trapping concrete, tarmac, and other hard surfaces.

“Leaders also need to think about how to deploy green infrastructure in ways that reduces peak grid electricity demand for cooling, and in highly strategic ways [...] Healthcare services will also need to increasingly prepare for excess summer, rather than winter, admissions and deaths.

“Trees and broader green infrastructure is the most advanced technology known for mitigating the impact of our densifying and rapidly heating cities. City leaders should make that their priority in the first instance.”

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Seascape: the state of our oceansOceans

Cloud spraying and hurricane slaying: how ocean geoengineering became the frontier of the climate crisis

Around the world, dozens of ingenious projects are trying to ‘trick’ the ocean into absorbing more CO₂. But critics warn of unforeseen consequences



Methane bubbles frozen in a lake in China. The release of the gas as Arctic ice melts could cause 1C of global warming ‘instantly’ but geoengineering could neutralise this using an iron salt. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Methane bubbles frozen in a lake in China. The release of the gas as Arctic ice melts could cause 1C of global warming ‘instantly’ but geoengineering could neutralise this using an iron salt. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

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[Amy Fleming](#)

Wed 23 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Tom Green has a plan to tackle climate change. The British biologist and director of the charity Project Vesta wants to turn a trillion tonnes of CO₂ into rock, and sink it to the bottom of the sea.

Green admits the idea is “audacious”. It would involve locking away atmospheric carbon by dropping pea-coloured sand into the ocean. The sand is made of ground olivine – an abundant volcanic rock, known to jewellers as peridot – and, if [Green’s calculations](#) are correct, depositing it offshore on 2% of the world’s coastlines would capture 100% of total global annual carbon emissions.

The plan relies on a natural process called weathering. “Weathering has been working on the planet for billions of years,” says Green, a graduate of Harvard Business School who runs Project Vesta from San Francisco. “When rain falls on volcanic rocks, they dissolve a little in the water, causing a chemical reaction that uses carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The carbon ends up in the ocean, where it’s used by marine-calcifying organisms like corals and shell-making animals, whose skeletons and shells sink to the bottom of the ocean as sediment and eventually become limestone.”



Volcanic olivine, which Project Vesta is trialling as a way to capture carbon absorbed in oceans. Photograph: Courtesy: Project Vesta

Olivine weathers easily, and allowing ocean currents to churn it up, says Green, “will make it dissolve much more quickly, to happen on a human-

relevant timescale". It is not a rare mineral: there are beaches in the Galapagos islands and in Hawaii that are green with olivine-rich sand.

The idea of using the sea to absorb excess carbon is not far-fetched, says Green. Ocean water can hold 150 times more CO₂ than air, per unit of volume. "The ocean has already taken up about 30% of the excess carbon dioxide that we've emitted as a society," he says. He and his colleagues are gearing up to test their process in two similar Caribbean coves, one acting as an untouched "control" in the experiment.

There remain many unknowns. Would such an intervention work? Who gets to decide if it should go ahead? Could there be side-effects? It is complex chemistry, and the natural process of weathering would be accelerated to an unnatural pace. Our understanding of the workings of the ocean is a mere drop in the proverbial. But with our race to mend the planet having taken on Sisyphean overtones, there is still hope that the vast, churning seas can be our lifeline.

Increasing carbon capture naturally on land – by planting trees, for example – will not remove enough CO₂ to halt global heating. Peter Wadhams, head of the Polar Ocean Physics Group at Cambridge University and author of *A Farewell to Ice*, says: "If you want to get rid of the industrial emissions from Europe, you'd have to turn Europe into one big primeval forest. It works, but it's not good enough alone."

The problem is so large that we cannot be focused on the idea of perfection, because perfection is the enemy of good

Gaurav Sant, UCLA

There are many ingenious ideas being discussed. Coastlines could be rewilded with underwater forests of kelp or seagrass, surface water cooled by generating air bubbles to whoosh cold water up from the deep, and marine clouds sprayed with seawater to reflect more heat from the sun.

As the UK prepares to host the UN Climate Change Conference (Cop26) in November, dozens of these projects are being trialled. Most rely on the ocean's many natural balance-restoring processes: enhancing them to help

slow cooling, to lock away carbon, to protect Arctic ice or even to reduce the threat of hurricanes.

Nobody knows if these concepts will work, or what consequences there could be. They all qualify as geoengineering – a dirty word for some environmentalists. Human intervention in the natural world has often gone awry: cane toads unleashed in Australia in the 1930s to protect sugar crops continue to decimate native fauna. And there is always the prospect of high carbon-emitting industries viewing such solutions as an excuse to dodge their emission-cutting commitments and maintain business as usual.

Gaurav Sant, director of the UCLA Institute for Carbon Management, says there is no longer time to waste debating. “What else could happen? The short answer is we don’t know, and I don’t think anybody else does either. We’re simply going to have to do this and find out.



Prof Gaurav Sant, at UCLA, has helped to develop technology that can extract carbon dioxide from the sea, enabling the water to absorb more. Photograph: UCLA

“The problem at hand is so large that we cannot be focused on the idea of perfection, because perfection is the enemy of good.”

Sant is referring to [another concept](#), which he is helping to develop just a few hundred miles down the coast from Green, where UCLA engineers have developed a machine that mimics how seashells form. Called a flow reactor, the machine sucks seawater in, and an electrical charge makes it alkaline, which triggers the CO₂ to react with the seawater's magnesium and calcium, producing limestone and magnesite (like forming shells). The water then flows out and, depleted of its captured CO₂, is ready to take up more. A byproduct of this process – hydrogen – can be extracted for fuel.

It's a similar concept to weathering olivine in the ocean, and Sant's plan is for initial small studies before a gradual scaling up. The team aims to remove between 10 and 20 gigatonnes of CO₂ from the atmosphere, starting in 2050.

Sant says it will be a huge challenge to build a system large enough – and then to build thousands more. "Anyone saying 'we're going to do this in five years', is greatly underestimating the challenge," he says. "We're talking about an enormous enterprise, the size and scale of which humanity has not seen before."

The sheer scale of geoengineering needed to tackle the climate crisis means that even well-known ideas are floundering. The notion of boosting phytoplankton blooms, tiny floating plants that absorb CO₂ when they photosynthesise, and can be helped along by nutrients, such as iron, was much mooted.

But Jean-Pierre Gattuso, research director at the Laboratoire d'Océanographie de Villefranche in Paris, says the latest research suggests the idea is not viable. "Ocean fertilisation experiments were performed at sea demonstrating that iron addition can trigger a phytoplankton bloom," he says. "However, the amount of CO₂ permanently sequestered appears to be small, because most of the organic matter produced is respired back to CO₂ before it has a chance to be stored in the deep ocean. An unintended consequence may also be the creation of low-oxygen areas of water."



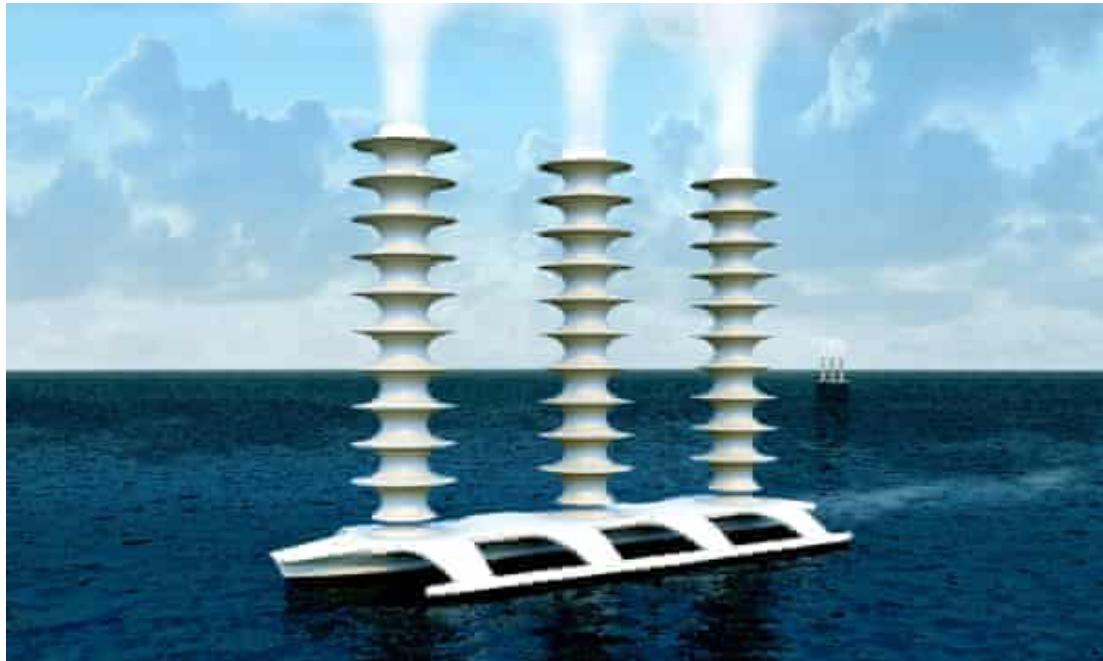
A Nasa image of the southern Atlantic Ocean showing phytoplankton blooms (in green and light blue). The tiny plants can sequester CO2. Photograph: Nasa/Zuma/Rex

Another setback has arisen in the attempt to neutralise methane as it escapes from beneath melting Arctic ice. Methane bubble plumes are increasingly being seen in the Arctic, and Wadhams is frustrated that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has not yet accepted his theory that, as the ice melts, we could face a [catastrophic escape of methane](#) that has been stored for 20,000 years. Estimates, he says, range from 50 to 700 gigatonnes, which could “cause maybe a degree [centigrade] of warming, more or less instantly”, bringing forward by 15–35 years the average date at which the global mean temperature rise exceeds 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

The best geoengineering prevention for that relies, again, on the ocean. “If you blow a fine powder, or aerosol, of an iron salt called ferric chloride over the sea surface in the place where methane is bubbling out, it reacts with the methane, producing ferric hydroxide, which dissolves in the water,” he says.

Frustratingly for the theory’s backers, a test voyage this year by the University of Copenhagen found no evidence that it could work efficiently enough to remove the required amounts of the gas.

Wadhams is part of a group seeking other solutions, but the salt-blowing idea is the only “shot in the locker” at the moment, he says. “The results, while disappointing, show that something is happening – it’s just not as efficient as everyone hoped. To use a sad phrase, ‘further research is necessary’.”



A conceptual Flettner ship, which would spray seawater into the air to make clouds reflect more sunlight. Illustration: J MacNeill

Like many geoengineering ideas, a potential preventive measure that could cool Arctic waters, and thereby help to keep the methane sealed in the ice comes mired in fear and politics. “Marine cloud-brightening” is spraying a fine mist of seawater into clouds so that the salt makes them brighter, and more reflective of the sun’s heat.

It is already [being trialled](#) as part of an Australian government-funded research programme to limit damage to the Great Barrier Reef, and Wadhams believes it could be used on a mass scale. However, he thinks the most urgent need is to deploy it “on a more restricted scale, around the edges of the Arctic” where the methane escape risks are highest.

Vessels with tall masts would spray the seawater, in a system being developed by Stephen Salter, emeritus professor of engineering design at

Edinburgh University. Wadhams says it's "the one major method of reducing global warming and saving us from methane attack ... But there's a lack of understanding of it, lack of vision and of course, lack of money. It will cost a few tens of millions to get this thing going."

With Britain hosting Cop26 in November, he says: "We can't look inert. The easiest thing to latch on to would be marine cloud-brightening. It would work and achieve a great deal."

The easiest thing to latch on to would be marine cloud-brightening. It would work and achieve a great deal

Peter Wadhams, Cambridge University

But even as Wadhams believes the process will be harmless, Ray Pierrehumbert, professor of physics at Oxford University, sees red flags.

"A lot of weather patterns like monsoons depend on the difference in heating between the continents and the oceans," he says. "If you do something to cool down the North Atlantic, let's say to preserve the sea ice or Greenland glaciers, that shifts precipitation in the tropics. Every part of the atmosphere is connected, so if you don't balance your warming and cooling very carefully, then you get all sorts of changes in the climate system, some of which are difficult to predict."

A graver risk, he says, is viewing technology such as this as a way to avoid reducing emissions. "Once you emit CO₂, its warming effect will continue for thousands of years. Whereas marine cloud-brightening relies on particles that fall out of the atmosphere after, maybe, seven days. So you have to renew them every week. And if you come to rely on it for something like keeping the Great Barrier Reef from dying, you have to continue doing it for ever. But all sorts of things could happen to force you to stop – wars, whatever – and if you do stop, then you get this extremely rapid, catastrophic warming."



A bubble curtain of compressed air released to prevent Norway's Holandsfjord freezing over. Olav Hollingsaeter is looking at whether the concept can be used as a 'hurricane slayer'. Photograph: Courtesy: OceanTherm

Attempts to hack the weather are controversial. A [method of solar radiation management](#), supported by Bill Gates, which would involve sending particles into the stratosphere to reflect sunlight, was described as [a billionaire trying to blot out the sun](#). And cloud-seeding rarely appears without the accompanying phrase "playing god". But that isn't deterring the people behind another new ocean geoengineering project to tackle hurricanes by cooling the surface water where they form.

In 2017, with his brother Bjorn, Olav Hollingsaeter, a former Norwegian navy submariner, started OceanTherm to repurpose established technology to reduce storm intensity. During Norwegian winters, OceanTherm uses "bubble curtains" to release compressed air into deep water. These push warmer water to the surface, which stops harbours freezing over. Deploying bubble curtains in warmer waters shoots colder deep water upwards, cooling the surface.

[Green growth: the save-the-mangrove scheme reaping rewards for women in Kenya](#)

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Hollingsaeter is in talks with decision-makers in areas affected by hurricanes around the Gulf of Mexico, but his quest is complicated by legal and ethical concerns. A similar “hurricane slayer” project by Alan Blumberg, the oceanographer behind an attempt to cool surface water by pumping colder water up, [told the Washington Post](#) in 2019 that his research stalled over fears it might change the landfall of a storm, or increase its flooding impact.

Hollingsaeter claims his design improves on Blumberg’s . “When you’re pumping colder water to the surface, the cold water is much heavier and will sink. But the bubble curtain mixes the water temperatures all the way up, so there’s a thick layer of cooler water.”

He admits that nobody knows if cooling surface water could change a storm’s trajectory or power but argues that the potential benefits make it worth further research.

Rewilding coastlines is perhaps an easier climate crisis mitigation plan to get behind. There are three types of “blue carbon” coastal ecosystems that store carbon in sediment or soil: mangroves, salt marshes and seagrasses. Together, they absorb more carbon than land forests, and the carbon escapes only if the ecosystems are destroyed.

Unfortunately, this is what has happened to half of the world’s mangroves and many salt marshes, as coastlines are cleared of natural landscapes. In the UK alone, more than 90% of seagrass meadows have been lost to coastal development, anchor damage and algae-feeding pollution.

It’s a very careful, robust, rigorous scientific process

Tom Green, Project Vesta

There are efforts to restore these habitats, as well as to encourage the growth of kelp, which absorbs an estimated 600m tonnes of CO₂ a year globally. Restoration is a local issue: in the UK, [Project Seagrass](#) is laying rope and seed to create new sea meadows and the [Wallasea Island Wild Coast initiative](#) in Essex is building up salt marshes using clay, chalk and gravel

dug out by the Crossrail tunnelling in London. In Kenya, where mangrove wood is used for charcoal, shipbuilding and carpentry, conservation organisations are working together on [long-term mangrove restoration](#) projects.

Yet Gattuso believes that, while blue-carbon ecosystems need to be conserved and restored anyway, their potential effects on climate is limited. Meanwhile, the other ocean-based measures that do not involve rewilding “are either at concept stage or risky”, he says.

“I wish that countries would put less emphasis on these approaches and return to the well-known, safe and most effective approach, which is to decrease sources of greenhouse gases,” he adds. “This is where the urgency is.”



Sunlight streaming through a kelp forest off California's Anacapa Island. Globally, kelp forests absorb some 600m tonnes of CO₂ a year. Photograph: Douglas Klug/Getty

Green knows Project Vesta is going to face a lot of similar objections. He is aware that it is not just politicians and environmentalists who need convincing, but communities living along the coasts where he wants to dump the rock. They must be engaged with “to explain what we’re doing,

address any concerns and involve them in the decision-making process”, he says, claiming his plan is to start small, test, monitor and build up only if satisfied – and only then in stages. “It’s a very careful, robust, rigorous scientific process.”

[The rice of the sea: how a tiny grain could change the way humanity eats](#)

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The benefits, he argues, could be huge. Weathering could potentially be a cheap method of carbon removal and he claims CO₂ removal gains would be 20 times more than emitted in the olivine’s mining and transport. Furthermore, unlike land-based carbon-capture ideas, weathering locks carbon away irreversibly, rather than in underground reservoirs that risk leakage. The bonus effect, he says, is that weathering renders the carbon “like baking soda, which de-acidifies the ocean”.

Project Vesta started with funds from philanthropy and grants, but Green expects the sale of carbon credits can pay for scaling up. “Most countries will be unable to meet their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to emissions reductions, and will need to offset them with carbon credits,” says Green.

Critics fear that rather being the way to achieve net-zero carbon, it will be a licence to keep burning fuel. “Sometimes people say to me, ‘doesn’t this create a moral hazard?’” says Green. “‘Will that not remove the incentive for people to cut emissions?’ And the answer is very clear: we need both.”

He believes that, ultimately, the carbon market will “sort it out. If companies have to be net zero, and emissions of carbon are priced into everything, a company can decide whether it’s more efficient to, say, retool my fleet to be electric, or keep my gas-powered fleet and pay for negative emissions credits.”

Wadhams feels similarly pragmatic about the moral niceties of ocean geoengineering to save the climate. “The main word to use in relation to methane escaping from the Arctic is: ‘Help!’” he says. For him, the overarching sense is that we are reaching the denouement of the action movie, and only have the final act left in which to save the planet.

“This is all very hard,” says UCLA’s Sant. “But action is the need of the hour.”

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They might have got more Brexit sense out of Frosty the Snowman

[John Crace](#)



The UK's chief negotiator with the EU did his best to prove why he isn't really up to the job



Lord Frost began to unravel in front of the Commons foreign affairs select committee when asked about the Northern Ireland protocol. Photograph: House of Commons/PA

Lord Frost began to unravel in front of the Commons foreign affairs select committee when asked about the Northern Ireland protocol. Photograph: House of Commons/PA

Tue 22 Jun 2021 14.17 EDT

You win some, you lose some. We're still nowhere near finding out if the government has a coherent plan for tackling social care – only late on Monday the prime minister cancelled a meeting with Rishi Sunak and Matt Hancock due to take place on Tuesday afternoon to discuss the issue. So we can probably assume not. But we are a little better informed as to why the negotiations with the EU over the Northern Ireland protocol have started to unravel badly. And that's because every time he speaks, the UK's lead [Brexit](#) negotiator, David Frost, doesn't seem to be quite as bright as he would like us all to believe.

Tuesday's appearance before the foreign affairs select committee was a case in point. Having established his credentials as being rather more important than a minister for [Europe](#), Lord Frost then did his best to prove why he wasn't really up to the job. He got off to a bad start by saying that the

decision not to fully accredit the EU ambassador to the UK had been “over-interpreted” and that petty point scoring had been the last thing on the government’s mind. For some reason, the EU had seen it differently and taken offence.

But it was when Labour’s Graham Stringer asked about the Northern Ireland protocol that Frost began to unravel. It had been obvious from the start the UK had only been pretending to apply EU law in Northern Ireland as a matter of political convenience and what the EU had done was to deliberately misinterpret this as if we were signing an international treaty in good faith. We had imagined that the EU would look on the protocol as mere window dressing and would take a pragmatic view of us ignoring the rules.

It should have been obvious we had not intention of sticking to the letter of the law, Frost continued. Not least because Boris Johnson was the UK prime minister and if there was one thing on which you could rely with Boris was that he never kept his promises and would seek to bend the regulations. So Frost and his negotiating team had been totally taken aback to discover that the EU were treating Johnson as a man of his word and were expecting the UK to keep to the terms of the protocol. It was all a bit bumpy right now, Frost conceded, but no one could possibly have imagined that events would pan out as they had.

The committee chair, Tom Tugendhat, no fan of either Boris or Brexit, took the increasingly unremarkable Frost up on this. This wasn’t quite true, he said, before going on to list just some of the many millions of people who had predicted the precise turn of events. There was the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium and Gavin Barwell, Theresa May’s former head of staff, for a start. After all, the whole reason the Maybot had never negotiated a similar Brexit deal to the protocol was precisely because she could see that it would undermine the sovereignty of the United Kingdom.

“I didn’t mean that no one had predicted this,” Frost said, back-pedalling rather. What he had meant was that he and Boris had failed to predict it. They had needed a deal to get Brexit over the line and the Northern Ireland protocol had looked the best bet as something that both sides could comfortably ignore. He could only repeat how astonished he was that the EU

had been so intransigent in their refusal to finesse the rules to the UK's advantage.

By now it was dawning on the committee that they might have got more sense out of Frosty the Snowman. What part of his nearly 30 years working in the Foreign Office had led him to believe the EU was a nimble, fast-moving organisation that would improvise its international treaties with third party countries? And how could he have imagined it would be easy to hoodwink a leviathan that had been founded on a “take it or leave it” rule of law?

Frost now began to ad-lib, seemingly oblivious to the hopeless impression he was making. He doubled down on Brexiters having been given no warning over the complexities of Northern Ireland before suggesting that the UK had done the EU a favour by giving them a new challenge to deal with. One the 27 countries had always secretly longed for. He also maintained that life would be a great deal easier if the EU stopped making threats. He seemed to have forgotten the UK has been making threats against the EU for decades now.

Tory Andrew Rosindell – he appeared horizontal either because his Zoom camera was malfunctioning or he had given up the will to live – summed things up by observing there was no way the Northern Ireland protocol could be considered a “cracking” deal as Dominic Raab had once said. Frost was left inchoate, babbling “yeah but, no but, yeah but, no”. Something would have to give. And given the UK was constitutionally unable to keep its word it was up to the EU to take pity on us and be pragmatic. If only by granting us a sausage extension. The rest could look after itself. Or not.

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WeatherwatchEnvironment

Weatherwatch: shining a light on the history of sunscreen

The first sunblock, an oily mixture developed by the US military, had a sun protection factor of just two



Modern sunscreen contains ingredients that can absorb and reflect UV light.
Photograph: Joe Raedle/Getty Images

Modern sunscreen contains ingredients that can absorb and reflect UV light.
Photograph: Joe Raedle/Getty Images

[David Hambling](#)

Wed 23 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Weather forecasts now include a warning about ultraviolet levels and everyone knows they should apply sunscreen. However, this type of protection is a recent innovation.

Sunscreen was first used on a large scale during the second world war, when the US military experimented with substances to prevent sunburn. “Red Vet Pet” – short for red veterinary petrolatum – was included in life-raft survival kits for downed airmen. This is a form of petroleum jelly, previously used to treat cuts and burns. It was found to block ultraviolet light, but was oily and unpleasant to apply.

After the war, Benjamin Green, a pharmacist formerly of the US air force, mixed Red Vet Pet with coconut oil and cocoa butter to create a more pleasing texture. His market was leisure rather than survival, helping people to acquire a fashionable tan without getting burnt. Green sold his creation under the name Coppertone, and it became one of the first commercially successful sunscreens.

Since then, decades of research have produced increasingly effective protection. Sunscreen still contains organic substances to absorb UV, but may also include something to reflect it, such as fine particles of zinc oxide. Red Vet Pet had a sun protection factor (SPF) of two, meaning it doubled the time you could remain safely in the sun; modern sunscreens go up to SPF 100.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/jun/23/weatherwatch-shining-a-light-on-the-history-of-sunscreen>

2021.06.23 - Opinion

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- People are quitting their jobs in record numbers. Companies should take note – and treat them better
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[**Opinion**](#)[**Second homes**](#)

Second homes are a gross injustice, yet the UK government encourages them

[**George Monbiot**](#)



The underlying reason for Britain's housing crisis is not lack of supply. It's because greed has been allowed to displace need



Hope Cove in Devon, where 75% of properties are either second homes or holiday lets. Photograph: Dan Mullan/Getty Images

Hope Cove in Devon, where 75% of properties are either second homes or holiday lets. Photograph: Dan Mullan/Getty Images

Wed 23 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

How big would our housing crisis be if it were not for second homes? It's a question almost no one in public life wants to ask, let alone answer. But it becomes more urgent every day.

By a second home, I don't mean one continuously rented to another household. I mean a property used either as a personal holiday home or as a place to stay while working away from your main home: in other words, a luxury that deprives other people of a necessity.

Before the pandemic, government figures show, [772,000](#) households in England had second homes. Of these, [495,000](#) were in the UK. The actual number of second homes is higher, as some households have more than one; my rough estimate is a little over 550,000. Since then Covid, Brexit and the growing realisation that you can monetise your extravagance by putting your second home on Airbnb when you're not using it have triggered a gold rush.

Far from seeking to restrain this frenzy, the government has lavished subsidies and tax breaks on second-home owners. If you rent yours out as a “furnished holiday let” for part of the year (it should be “available” for 140 days but needs to be let for only 70), you no longer have to pay council tax, but can register instead as a [business ratepayer](#). Then you apply for 100% small business rates relief, cancelling the entire bill. So while every other kind of housing is taxed, second homes, if you play it right, are tax-free.

Under the restart grant scheme, hospitality and leisure businesses registered for business rates are entitled to a gift of up to [£18,000](#). This comes on top of the closed business lockdown payment, of up to £9,000, the small business grant fund, of £10,000, and the retail, hospitality and leisure grant: a further £10,000. The stamp duty holiday also applies to buying a second home, saving up to [£15,000](#). Every sinew of the state is strained to reward and cosset those who deprive other people of a home.

All this has further fuelled a massive spending spree. On the coast, and in scenic areas inland, local people report that buying a home has become [impossible](#). Rural prices over the past year have risen by an astonishing 14%: [twice the rate of homes in cities](#).

The result is community death. A survey in Devon this month found villages in which between [two-thirds and 95%](#) of properties are second homes. In one village in Pembrokeshire, there are [three remaining residents](#). In Cornwall last month, there were more than [10,000](#) properties listed on Airbnb for holidaymakers, but just 62 offered on Rightmove for rent to permanent residents. In the Newquay area alone, more than 500 people are reckoned to be homeless. While tourists surf, residents sofa-surf.

Homelessness and housing demand caused in one place can manifest in another. If people can’t find a home where they want to live, they have no choice but to move, and they might end up on the housing list in a less attractive borough. Displaced demand can ripple through the entire housing sector, as people bump each other along the chain.

The environmental implications are also massive. If you own two homes, another home has to be built to accommodate the household you’ve displaced. In other words, you’ve doubled your housing footprint.

Prosperous people in the shires, rightly [objecting](#) to Boris Johnson's proposal to rip down the planning laws, might ask themselves whether they have helped cause the problem he falsely claims to be solving.

So how much of the housing crisis is caused by second homes? Well, it depends which crisis you mean. Let's start with its most extreme manifestation: homelessness. On one estimate, there are [288,000](#) households in England that are homeless or in imminent danger of becoming so. So on this measure, we discover something truly obscene: there are roughly twice as many second homes as homeless households.

Of course, this is by no means the whole story. There are [1.6 million](#) households on the social housing waiting list. The level of unmet need could rise even further, now that the Covid eviction ban has [been lifted](#).

But just as homelessness is the extreme and visible symptom of a much bigger problem, so are second homes. Though we need to build far more social homes, the underlying reason for high house prices is not the lack of supply. The number of dwellings in the UK has been growing faster than the number of households, and there are now [more bedrooms per person than ever before](#). The problem is the grossly unequal distribution of space. Houses are unaffordable because of the purchasing power of landlords and speculators, and their use as investments. Government figures show that even if 300,000 new homes are built every year for 20 years, house prices will be only [6% lower](#) in real terms than they would otherwise have been.

What we need, in all cases, is effective politics. We might decide, as a nation, that holiday lets are important enough to make other people homeless, or to trigger demand for new housing elsewhere. We do, after all, need holidays, and coastal and scenic communities want income from tourists. But good policy doesn't happen by itself. As we proposed in the [Land for the Many report](#), local authorities should be able to decide how many of the homes in a village or town should be permanent residences, and how many should be holiday lets. Any second home, existing or envisaged, would need planning permission for change of use.

In Wales, local authorities are able to charge double the rate of council tax for second homes. But, though this power is contained in [Westminster](#)

legislation, it doesn't apply to the rest of the UK. Even so, it's of limited use, now that second homeowners have discovered that they can register as businesses, pay nothing at all, and be rewarded for it. We need a progressive property tax, based on value and payable by owners, not tenants. And second homes should be taxed at a much higher rate.

So why isn't this urgent issue on the political agenda? Well, partly because almost everyone prominent in public life – including many MPs, editors and senior journalists - seems to own a second home. This is how we end up with a cruel, divided nation, in which wealth causes poverty and greed displaces need. It's not enough to revolt against Johnson's attack on the planning laws. We also need to fight a gross injustice.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
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OpinionBusiness

People are quitting their jobs in record numbers. Companies should take note – and treat them better

[Arwa Mahdawi](#)



Labour shortages are causing widespread disarray. Perhaps employers might consider something radical: paying people more and exploiting them less



Traders in New York ... some well-paid workers are leaving their jobs because the pandemic has changed their priorities, or they are burned out. (Posed by models.) Photograph: Tetra Images/Getty Images/Tetra images RF

Traders in New York ... some well-paid workers are leaving their jobs because the pandemic has changed their priorities, or they are burned out. (Posed by models.) Photograph: Tetra Images/Getty Images/Tetra images RF

Wed 23 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

Got an advanced degree? Twenty years of experience in your field? The ability to drop everything to respond to work emails? Great! Then you meet the qualifications for an entry-level job paying miserable wages. But you'll need to have a gazillion interviews and write a [thank-you letter](#) after each one to have any chance of getting it, of course.

That's an (only slightly exaggerated) reflection of what the job market has looked like for a long time. Wages have been [stagnant for decades](#). Companies have been demanding more, and offering less: the power has been very much in employers' hands. Now, in the US at least, the power balance may be shifting; people are quitting their jobs in record numbers. Almost 4 million Americans [quit their jobs in April](#): the highest numbers since government record-keeping for labour turnover began in December 2000. Meanwhile, in the UK, a lot of people are seriously thinking about

quitting – one study found 38% of employees are looking to [change roles in the next year](#).

Reasons for quitting vary. Some well-paid workers are leaving their jobs because the pandemic has [changed their priorities](#) or because they are burned out. Other workers are quitting because government benefits introduced during the pandemic mean they are not forced to risk their health at a precarious job paying peanuts in order to survive. Whatever the motivation, the result is the same: the labour shortage is causing widespread disarray. [American Airlines just cancelled hundreds of flights](#), partly because of labour shortages among some of their vendors. Restaurants on both sides of the Atlantic are struggling to find enough workers to reopen.

I am not an economist, but it seems to me that one way companies can end the labour shortage is by paying people more and treating them better. A few forward-thinking employers are trying this [unusual strategy](#). For the most part, however, companies seem to be demanding that the government bail them out by creating conditions that give them their pool of desperate and easy-to-exploit workers back. The US's [largest lobbying group](#), for example, is trying to pressure the government to end unemployment benefits.

In a world that fetishises productivity, quitting has traditionally been given a bad rap. But the pandemic has made it very clear that our current model of work isn't working, and that your job doesn't define who you are. Lobbying groups might be able to force people to return to work, but they will have a harder time changing how people think about it.

Arwa Mahdawi is a Guardian columnist.

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OpinionBrexit

Leavers had high hopes for Brexit. They have not been delivered

[Anand Menon](#) and [Paula Surridge](#)

Five years on from the referendum, few voters have seen the benefits of leaving the EU. What if they become impatient?



‘Many leave voters expressed ‘giddy optimism’ about the post-Brexit landscape.’ Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

‘Many leave voters expressed ‘giddy optimism’ about the post-Brexit landscape.’ Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

Tue 22 Jun 2021 13.41 EDT

Doesn’t time fly? Five years ago we were going to the ballot box to cast our votes in the [EU referendum](#). Now we are approaching 18 months since the UK ceased to be a member state. The [transition period](#) ended six months

ago, yet, as the latest Ipsos Mori survey indicates, most of the British public still don't think Brexit is over.

Overall, more than two in five think there are still “many important issues to finalise” and “lots more negotiations” to come, with a further one in four saying there are still “some important areas left to decide”. Even among leave voters, only one in five think the future relationship is “mostly decided and will hardly change”. They have a point. The full implications of the decision to leave the [European Union](#) have yet to be felt.

Much remains to be resolved, including the Northern Ireland protocol. But the implications of Brexit go far beyond UK-EU relations. Partly, of course, it is still playing its way through our politics: the [Hartlepool](#) and [Chesham and Amersham](#) by-elections illustrated the enduring impact of the divide the referendum revealed in our society.

Brexit was sold partly as an uprising against the entrenched elite. Although leaving the EU was also portrayed as an opportunity for Britain to do things differently, whether that be trade deals or domestic regulation.

We're already starting to get a sense that those new powers may also bring unpopular choices, as seen with the [trade deal with Australia](#). Should we, for example, sacrifice small farm holdings for the sake of 0.02% of GDP?

What, then, of domestic regulation? Freedom from Brussels bureaucracy was the ultimate objective of most of the early Tory Eurosceptics – those “bastards” who made John Major's life miserable and who opposed the EU for decades. With Brexit done, however, there is far less talk of ambitious regulatory reform. One reason is the nature of the new Conservative coalition – combining those traditional Tory voters (who might want to roll back the state and reduce regulation) with new, northern supporters (who may well not).

The coincidence of lockdowns and travel restrictions with the early impact of Brexit has meant that few people have felt a direct impact of leaving [Europe](#), for good or ill. Half of the public overall say that Brexit has made no difference to their daily life, rising to more than seven in 10 leave voters.

And three-quarters of leave voters do not know anyone affected, positively or negatively.

Yet, while this may come as some reassurance to the government, the figures also hint at some potential grounds for concern. For one thing, many remain voters say they *have* felt an impact. More than 40% claim to know people whose jobs or businesses have been affected (perhaps reflecting different types of employment networks), and more than half think Brexit has made their daily life worse.

We cannot know for sure why the voters of Chesham and Amersham swung so decisively behind the Liberal Democrats, or whether the result might be repeated in a general election, but the government is surely alert to the potential threat posed by disgruntled Conservative remain voters who no longer have to wrestle with their fear of putting Jeremy Corbyn into Downing Street.

Perhaps more importantly, the argument that Brexit has been relatively painless might not resonate with leave voters for long. Focus groups we conducted with “[comfortable leavers](#)” underlined this group’s high expectations. Many expected the departure from the EU to be a “change trigger” that prompted government to address issues ranging from infrastructure, health and police to rejuvenating British manufacturing. And such aspirations were not limited to this particular group of leaver: [Deborah Mattinson](#) refers, in her book on the so-called red wall, to the “giddy optimism” of many leave voters about the post-Brexit landscape.

Five years on, then, and it is still not clear that the government can – or even knows how to – deliver to those voters who backed Brexit. And the competing visions of those who did so make this task more difficult still.

Certainly, for some, the very fact of having left is enough. The UK is no longer – for the most part – bound by rules that it does not set itself. Yet there is still the substance. For many voters, “control” was not an end in itself but a means to more substantive objectives.

For now, it seems that the impacts are not being widely felt by the British public. The wider crisis of the last 18 months – tens of thousands of deaths,

an ever-growing health crisis, chaos in the school system, cancelled holidays and lockdowns – may have changed what people think is possible. But the Conservative majority is built on high expectations for positive change and, as we look to finally emerge from the pandemic over the next 12 months, it remains to be seen whether the government is able to convince its supporters that Brexit has delivered.

- Anand Menon is director and Paula Surridge is deputy director of UK in a Changing Europe
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[OpinionEuro 2020](#)

Letting in the Uefa variant could be Boris Johnson's next own goal

[Marina Hyde](#)



If 2,500 of the ‘football family’ get a free pass into England, the double standards of our self-isolation rules will be laid bare



England’s Mason Mount and Scotland’s Billy Gilmour during their Euro 2020 match last week. Photograph: Mike Egerton/PA

England’s Mason Mount and Scotland’s Billy Gilmour during their Euro 2020 match last week. Photograph: Mike Egerton/PA

Tue 22 Jun 2021 08.21 EDT

How encouraging to see [Uefa](#) masterminding a return of jeopardy to the Euros. Not in the football, you understand – putting four third-place teams through simply further deflates the group stages of an already format-compromised 24-team tournament. But threatening last week to take the final away from Wembley and move it to Hungary unless 2,500 of their dignitaries can swerve quarantine – well, this is the stuff of which perilous thrills are made.

Not that a Budapest final wouldn’t offer something fresh: large numbers of openly racist and homophobic fans who are finally under investigation by Uefa for their conduct thus far during the tournament. The governing body has sensationally abandoned its high-level probe into German captain Manuel Neuer’s decision to wear a rainbow armband, and seems to be

belatedly taking a look at “[potential discriminatory incidents](#)” at Hungary games against both Portugal and France . Honestly, you don’t get into football policing for that, do you? Sad when public eyebrow-raising means you get pulled off the equivalent of an unpaid parking ticket and required instead to waste your time on something far bigger – but I guess that’s life in the governing body’s crack investigations unit.

Anyway, back to the horse-trading over arrangements for the semi-finals and final. What are we to make of this morning’s [news](#) that Uefa is suddenly more positive about not having to move the final from London to a place where its gravy train can travel freely? I am vaguely paraphrasing its statement – in the governing body’s own words, it is “working closely” with the government and the FA, and there are “no plans to change the venue”. The optimistic among us would hope Uefa might come to understand that trying to blag 2,500 members of the “football family” through under the [elite sport exemption](#) was a bit of a stretch – unless the sport in question was expensing five-course dinners and sex workers.

[Mason Mount and Ben Chilwell out of England’s game against Czech Republic](#)

[Read more](#)

But the realists among us – ie everyone with any experience of football governance and current UK governance – will be thinking that something rather less palatable is in the offing. Is hosting the final worth further compromising the idea that we’re all somehow in this together, or is the waiving of Covid rules for a bunch of largely parasitic liggers regarded as a price worth paying by Boris Johnson’s government?

It’s certainly something to bear in mind as the home nations ponder the somewhat idiosyncratic consequences we’re seeing to a positive Covid test for Scotland’s Billy Gilmour. As things stand, Gilmour will obviously self-isolate for the next 10 days, but after that things become less immediately comprehensible. Two [England](#) players, Gilmour’s Chelsea teammates Mason Mount and Ben Chilwell, must also isolate until next week – but no Scotland players are required to.

Frankly it felt quite surprising to learn that any England players had got near Billy Gilmour on Friday – but more understandable once it was explained that the contact occurred in the tunnel after the game. Even so, the idea that no Scotland players came into close enough contact with Gilmour, anywhere from the dressing room to the team base is – in strictly epidemiological terminology – a complete piss-take. Do look at the pictures of Scotland manager Steve Clarke holding Gilmour’s sweating cheeks in the course of [embracing him](#). I mean, it’s not often you see the hands, face, space hat-trick in a single instant.

None of which is to call for more players to be shunted into isolation and out of the tournament. (I’m not even convinced many people truly want super-fit athletes who are already in bubbles to isolate unless they’ve actually got the virus.) But the trouble with this, and with any concessions over quarantine arrangements for Uefa dignitaries, is that it’s all a highly visible illustration of the unfairness and disingenuity that now characterise much of the government’s approach to opening up. Or rather, opening up for some but not others.

According to Boris Johnson, his government wishes to make “sensible accommodations” for Uefa. But where are the “sensible accommodations” for people forced to isolate on no pay for happening to sit at a separate table in an outdoor beer garden near someone who tested positive? Where are the “sensible accommodations” for double-vaccinated people who wish to travel to Malta, which is miles ahead of us on vaccinations and would surely be on the green list, were the green list not a stage-managed fiction?

With Covid set to cause disruptions deep into winter, the government should be looking to keep people onside – and the appearance of fairness is key. Otherwise, increasing numbers of people will decide that the most sensible accommodation they can make with government advice is to ignore it. It’s only a game to them, after all.

Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

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Guardian Opinion cartoon

Social mobility

Ben Jennings on Tory MPs ‘fuelling culture war’ with education report – cartoon

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/picture/2021/jun/22/ben-jennings-on-tory-mps-fuelling-culture-war-with-education-report-cartoon>

[Nils Pratley on financeChannel 4](#)

Ministers' rationale for privatising Channel 4 looks extremely flimsy

[Nils Pratley](#)



The government's stale plans for the broadcaster should be rejected in favour of cherishing it as a risk-taker



Channel 4 claims its regional remit would be undermined by privatisation.
Photograph: Channel 4/PA

Channel 4 claims its regional remit would be undermined by privatisation.
Photograph: Channel 4/PA

Tue 22 Jun 2021 14.22 EDT

What's the subplot with the government's latest flirtation with the [idea of privatising Channel 4](#)? There was a clue, possibly, in the view expressed this week by Tory MP Andrew Griffith, who has clout in these matters since he was a long-serving finance director of Sky.

In a column in the Telegraph, Griffith complained about how parochial UK competition regulators have stymied growth in the sector, missed the rise of on-demand streaming and failed to understand that UK-based TV players need scale to compete with the Americans. Specifically on [Channel 4](#), he said: "Its next, and most enduring, contribution to the UK media landscape may be to keep some of its distinctive remit but as part of adding useful scale to another UK-based operator."

Which UK-based operator does he have in mind? Presumably not Sky since his old employer is now owned by Comcast of the US. Definitely not the BBC, obviously. That, more or less, leaves ITV.

[Channel 4 privatisation – how would it work and who would buy it?](#)

[Read more](#)

The idea of an ITV-Channel 4 merger has been touted many times in the past, and competition has usually been seen as the main obstacle. If promoting UK global success in TV were now to be deemed more important than sustaining domestic rivalry, then, yes, the game might be on. But there are at least two further problems.

First, would ITV want to own Channel 4? The answer would surely depend partly on what ITV would be expected to pay. At £1bn, a price-tag that has been mentioned in the past, ITV's shareholders would probably throw a fit. Channel 4, remember, doesn't own most of its intellectual property and doesn't have a production house since its remit is to work with independent producers.

That last point applies to the second problem, the one usually advanced by management. What would one lose by housing Channel 4 within a bigger owner? Alex Mahon, chief executive, mentioned regional hubs in Leeds, Glasgow, and Bristol, which could be jeopardised, but the wider argument is about Channel 4's role within the UK television "ecosystem".

It's a fluffy jargon word that Channel 4 executives could do themselves a favour by dropping. They would make their point more effectively to commercially minded ministers by comparing themselves to an early-stage venture capital fund that takes risks that others cannot. Viewed that way, there's a strong argument that Channel 4 is more than pulling its weight in the national interest. The danger in loss of independence is irrelevance and dullness.

Yes, Channel 4 is an oddity in being a state-owned but commercially funded operation. But there is no current financial crisis and no immediate problem to solve. One senses the government is determined to privatise – but the logic looks flimsy.

UK boardroom resistance to private equity grows

See, it is possible to say no to a private equity bidder – and then keep saying no. The board of Senior, the aerospace engineer that supplies parts to [Airbus](#) and Boeing, on Tuesday rejected a fifth offer from US suitor Lone Star.

The display of resistance from the boardroom is impressive, especially as Senior's share price was a smidgeon over 100p at the start of the saga and the bidding moved in stages from 150p to 200p. Since Lone Star's latest approach was billed as “final”, one assumes the final rejection is the end of the saga. [Private equity](#) rarely does hostile bids.

Parallels with Morrisons' position are imprecise, obviously. The aerospace industry was clobbered by the pandemic and is now in recovery mode, so Lone Star was obviously being opportunistic in its timing. That's harder to say about Clayton, Dubilier & Rice's approach: supermarkets' share prices were stodgy even before Covid.

But, assuming CD&R returns with a better offer than its first miserable effort, Andrew Higginson, Morrisons' chairman, should still take note. A board is meant to form a long-term view of real value and then, if necessary, defend it. Given that Morrisons has been in business for 120 years, the long-term really is meant to be a while.

Bitcoin – the speculation continues

As bitcoin briefly [fell below \\$30,000](#) on Tuesday, versus a peak of \$65,000 in April, one could hear a chorus of would-be crypto experts warbling about “support levels”.

Come on, in the grand sweep of financial markets, cryptocurrencies have been around for about five minutes, so citing previous examples of when prices have stopped falling is pointless. [Bitcoin](#) is speculation on stilts. Anything could happen.

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[Syria](#)

Assad forces' shelling in Syria causes 5,000 civilians to flee

At least 31 people killed since start of June amid government attacks on Idlib area



Funeral of a White Helmets member, reported killed after a missile attack on the group's centre in Qastoun, 19 June 2021. Photograph: Omar Haj Kadour/AFP/Getty Images

Funeral of a White Helmets member, reported killed after a missile attack on the group's centre in Qastoun, 19 June 2021. Photograph: Omar Haj Kadour/AFP/Getty Images

[Bethan McKernan](#) Middle East correspondent

Wed 23 Jun 2021 00.00 EDT

About 5,000 civilians in the north-west of [Syria](#) have been forced to flee their homes after more government shelling targeting the contested area, a

local aid agency said.

At least 31 people have died since the beginning of June, victims of [Bashar al-Assad](#)'s forces hitting civilian buildings in southern Idlib province. The buildings included a hospital, displacement camp school, and a White Helmets headquarters. The number of dead includes three children and a civil defence worker who was killed in an attack on the town of Qastoun on Saturday.

“We were getting ready to start our morning shift when our centre was targeted with three highly explosive missiles. I joined the White Helmets [a civil defence paramedic group] in 2014, and throughout those years I’ve never witnessed such destructive missiles. Our colleague Dahham al-Hussein was killed, and five of our volunteers were injured, including Dahham’s brother Ahmad,” said Samer Nassar, head of the group’s Qastoun centre. “The centre was completely destroyed and we lost a lot of equipment that we use to save lives and pull people from under rubble.”

The violence over the last three weeks is the latest in violation of a ceasefire deal brokered by Turkey and Russia in March 2020, saving the area from a [brutal regime offensive](#) that forced one million people to flee.

“People are worried enough to have to leave their homes again … they are afraid of advancing forces on the ground as well, who will seize their villages,” said Rima Hallabi, a 21-year-old student. “There is no place to go. Idlib cannot handle massive numbers of people fleeing again.”

Idlib and the surrounding countryside is mostly ruled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, an Islamist group which seized control from other opposition factions in 2019.

After 10 years of war the area remains [the last pocket of Syria outside the regime's control](#). It is home to about 3.5 million people, around three-quarters of whom fled there to escape fighting in other parts of the country. Living conditions are dire, and have worsened since last year’s collapse of the Syrian currency, which sent food prices soaring. About 75% of the population is now dependent on aid to meet basic needs, according to UN agencies.

The new fighting has been focused on the villages of Ihsim and Barah, on the southern edge of Idlib, where dozens of artillery shells fired by Syrian government forces over the weekend killed at least nine people. According to Taher al-Omar, an opposition activist, the dead included a local HTS commander.

In return, insurgents shelled the government-held village of Joreen, killing a child, the state news agency Sana reported.

Salem Abdan, Idlib's health director, said: "June has brought many attacks on civilian homes and buildings, putting a lot of pressure on our hospitals, which are already struggling. The increase in attacks now, combined with the [UN security council vote on cross-border aid] approaching, poses a threat that the health and relief sector could collapse completely."

On 10 July the UN is due to vote to renew the [authorisation of aid delivery](#) to north-west Syria through the Turkish border.

[At least 18 die as hospital hit in shelling of Syrian city](#)

[Read more](#)

Closing the last direct aid corridor would put millions of already vulnerable people in Idlib at further risk, but [Russia](#) has repeatedly threatened to use its veto power to shut down all UN cross-border aid to rebel areas, saying it must instead be coordinated through its Syrian government allies.

"The world must stand with us, and aid across the Turkish border must continue," Abdan added. "If [Damascus] is already bombing us now, why would they allow the entry of any medicine or aid?"

Over the weekend two separate artillery attacks attributed to the Syrian affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK) killed at least 18 people in the north-west town of Afrin after hitting a residential neighbourhood and hospital.

Afrin was held by Kurdish forces until it was seized by the Turkish army and Turkish-backed Syrian fighters early in 2018. The Syrian Democratic

Forces (SDF), the US-backed umbrella of mainly Kurdish forces fighting in Syria, said Kurdish groups were not responsible for the attacks.

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[**The fight to vote**](#)**US news**

Democrats seek way ahead after voting rights bill hits Senate roadblock

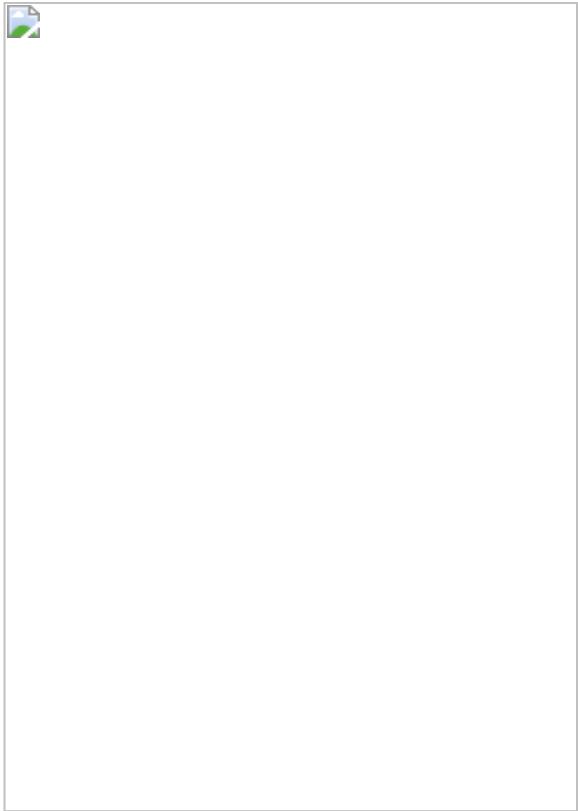


An activist holds a flyer questioning Senator Joe Manchin on Capitol Hill on Tuesday. Photograph: Allison Bailey/Rex/Shutterstock

An activist holds a flyer questioning Senator Joe Manchin on Capitol Hill on Tuesday. Photograph: Allison Bailey/Rex/Shutterstock

The White House warned democracy was ‘in peril’ but while key Democrats stay committed to the filibuster, progress looks difficult

The fight to vote is supported by



[About this content](#)

[Sam Levine](#)

Wed 23 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

After nearly six months of watching [Republicans](#) relentlessly make it harder to vote in the US, Democrats suffered a major blow on Tuesday after GOP senators used a legislative maneuver to halt a sweeping voting rights and ethics bill.

The vote doesn't kill the bill, but it marks one of the most significant setbacks for [Democrats](#) in Joe Biden's presidency so far. [Democrats](#)

heralded the legislation as their No 1 priority, even knowing they were unlikely to get any Republican votes for it. The bill would amount to the most significant expansion of the right to vote in a generation, requiring early voting and automatic and same-day registration, while prohibiting excessive manipulation of electoral district boundaries, a process often called gerrymandering.

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It wasn't an unexpected result. Democrats control only 50 seats in the Senate and a procedural rule, [the filibuster](#), blocks most legislation from proceeding to a full debate on the floor unless it has 60 votes. A handful of Democratic senators, most notably [Joe Manchin of West Virginia](#) and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, support keeping the filibuster in place, saying it helps ensure the minority party has a say. But while the rule remains, Democrats have virtually no chance of passing sweeping voting rights legislation.

Democratic senators are now in a quagmire amid escalating concerns that Democrats, who control both Congress and the White House, might not be able to use their power to stop what many experts see as [openly anti-democratic](#) efforts by Republicans across the country to make it harder to vote after an election in which there was record turnout, including surges among [Black, Asian American and Hispanic voters](#).

Republicans have used partisan majorities in statehouses across the US to pass these measures, even as they have accused Democrats of acting with partisan intent to pass voting reforms.



Senator Raphael Warnock: ‘Voting rights are preservative of all other rights.’
Photograph: Joshua Roberts/Reuters

Raphael Warnock, a Democratic senator from Georgia, harshly criticized Republican colleagues for refusing to even allow a vote on the bill on the Senate floor.

“Surely, some of my Republican friends believe – at the very least – that in this chamber, we should be able to debate about voting rights,” he said. “Voting rights are preservative of all other rights. And what could be more hypocritical and cynical than invoking minority rights in the Senate as a pretext for preventing debate about how to preserve minority rights in the society?”

Tuesday’s vote on whether to allow debate on the bill was widely seen as a maneuver to pressure Republicans into taking a public stance on the bill and to pressure moderate Democrats, including Manchin and Sinema, to take a position.

In a statement a few hours before the vote, the White House offered a blunt assessment of the attack on voting rights across the United States. “Democracy is in peril,” it said, urging senators to support the bill.

“This kicks off the next phase of the fight,” said Tiffany Muller, the president of End Citizens United and Let America Vote, a group running a \$30m campaign in support of the bill. “If I had a nickel for every time someone wrote ‘this bill was dead’, I would have enough to fund the entire campaign. People have been counting this bill and these efforts out for the entire year, and not really seeing what was happening across the country.”

[Landmark voting rights bill defeated in Senate despite Democratic unity](#)
[Read more](#)

Nsé Ufot, CEO of the New Georgia Project, a Georgia-based group that has worked for years to mobilize voters in the state, called on the White House to increase its efforts to pressure senators who opposed the bill.

“Where is the fight?” she said. “I understand that the upper house, the upper chamber, there’s a focus on collegiality … [but] collegiality at the expense of actually getting stuff done, collegiality at the expense of preserving Americans’ ability to participate in our elections, seems misguided.”

It’s not clear what the path forward might look like. Last week, Manchin released [a compromise](#) that maintained some of the most important provisions in the bill – including making election day a federal holiday, requiring two weeks of early voting, allowing automatic registration at motor vehicle offices, and mandating that states give voters seven days’ notice of a polling place change. However, the proposal does include a voter ID requirement, allowing for more aggressive voter purging, and does not require states to create independent redistricting commissions, which reformers see as a gold standard in curbing excessive gerrymandering.

Manchin wound up voting with Democrats on Tuesday to move to advance the bill, an encouraging sign to bill supporters that further highlights Republican obstructionism.

“These reasonable changes have moved the bill forward and to a place worthy of debate on the Senate floor,” Manchin said in a statement. “Unfortunately, my Republican colleagues refused to allow debate of this legislation despite the reasonable changes made to focus this bill on the core issues facing our democracy.”



The Senate minority leader, Mitch McConnell, ensured that the procedural vote on the For the People Act received no Republican support. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Republicans appear unlikely to come around on Manchin's compromise bill. And while Barack Obama [endorsed](#) the compromise on Monday, more than 20 civil rights groups, including the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Black Voters Matter, said the proposal was inadequate.

"Senator Manchin's compromise fails to adequately address the more than 400 voter suppression measures that are being introduced across the country," they wrote in a [joint statement](#). "Most damaging is its neglect of protections for formerly incarcerated and justice impacted voters; voters with disabilities; Black and all multi-marginalized voters. There has been no indication from Senator Manchin's reported conversations with conservatives that he has been able to secure Republican support for any of the core elements of [the legislation] which is disappointing to the many activists who are pushing for passage of the bill."

It's also not clear how Democrats plan to get around the filibuster. Manchin has been steadfast in his commitment to the rule, though privately he has left the door open to lowering the threshold of votes needed to overcome a filibuster. Sinema, another staunch supporter of the filibuster, also authored

an [op-ed](#) in the Washington Post on Monday evening saying she was committed to keeping the procedure in place.

Muller pointed to the Senate's August recess as a deadline to pass a bill, when many states are set to begin drawing electoral districts for the next decade. Republicans control the redistricting process in many states and without the anti-gerrymandering provisions of the bill in place, lawmakers would be free to manipulate districts to give them a significant advantage in elections.

"We are literally seeing this very direct undermining of our democracy. And if that goes unchecked, I am very concerned about the future of our democracy," she said.

Nearly 500 state lawmakers [wrote to Senate leadership](#) on Tuesday begging them to pass the sweeping bill.

"We have attempted again and again to work with our Republican colleagues to set policies that safely and securely expanded voting access – but they simply refuse to act in good faith," they wrote. "We are out of options. We need your help."

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US voting rights

Landmark voting rights bill defeated in Senate despite Democratic unity

- For the People Act fails to overcome filibuster
- Biden under pressure to advocate for presidential priority
- [US politics – live coverage](#)



Chuck Schumer, second from left, speaks accompanied by Raphael Warnock, Jeff Merkley and Amy Klobuchar before the vote. Photograph: Alex Brandon/AP

Chuck Schumer, second from left, speaks accompanied by Raphael Warnock, Jeff Merkley and Amy Klobuchar before the vote. Photograph: Alex Brandon/AP

*David Smith in Washington
@smithinamerica*

Tue 22 Jun 2021 19.17 EDT

Joe Biden suffered a significant setback on Tuesday as one of his top priorities, a set of reforms to [protect voting rights](#) and shore up American democracy, was defeated in Congress.

[Trump has ‘zero desire’ to be speaker of House, spokesman says](#)
[Read more](#)

With Vice-president Kamala Harris presiding, a Senate procedural vote on whether to start debate on sweeping election legislation ended as expected in a 50-50 stalemate along party lines. Sixty votes had been required to overcome Republicans' use of a procedural tool known as the filibuster, in effect killing the bill.

“Every single Senate Republican just voted against starting debate – starting debate! – on legislation to protect Americans’ voting rights,” [Chuck Schumer](#), the Democratic majority leader, said angrily.

“Once again, the Senate Republican minority has launched a partisan blockade of a pressing issue here in the United States Senate. An issue no less fundamental than the right to vote.”

The near 900-page the For the People Act had represented a significant overhaul of voting and election law that the White House has described as a “cause” for Biden.



Joe Biden regards the near 900-page overhaul of voting and election law a ‘cause’, according to the White House, but some suggest he has not done enough to rally support. Photograph: Shawn Thew/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

It was seen as a crucial counterweight to hundreds of voting bills introduced by Republican-controlled states, many of which include measures that would make it harder for Black people, young people and poor people to vote. Fourteen states had enacted 22 of these laws by mid-May, according to the Brennan Center for Justice.

Former president Barack Obama warned supporters on a call this week: “We can’t wait until the next election because if we have the same kinds of shenanigans that brought about [the insurrection on] 6 January, if we have that for a couple more election cycles, we’re going to have real problems in terms of our democracy long-term.”

Biden has also spoken passionately about the need to defend democracy but despite his penchant for bipartisanship he has been unable to move the needle.

Progressives have accused him of failing to use his bully pulpit to champion the sweeping legislation. Ezra Levin, co-executive director of the grassroots

movement Indivisible, tweeted: “OK I have reached my WTF moment with Biden on this. Is saving democracy a priority for this administration or not?”

Levin, a former congressional aide, drew a contrast with Barack Obama, who organised a debate with Republicans about his signature healthcare law, and Bill Clinton, who gave 18 speeches to promote a North American free trade agreement.

Because of one man’s lie, Republicans are now doing the dastardly act of taking away voting from millions of Americans

Chuck Schumer

He added: “Democracy is under threat. Fascism is rising. Time is running out. It’s time for the president to get off the sidelines and into the game, or we’re all going to lose.”

The White House defended Biden’s efforts. Jen Psaki, the press secretary, told reporters that “it will be a fight of his presidency long past today” and “he will continue to use the bully pulpit but also every lever in government to continue to advocate for moving forward”.

Democrats’ goals include expanding early voting in elections for president and Congress, making it easier to vote by mail – used by record numbers during the coronavirus pandemic – and improving the transparency of certain campaign contributions. They are also aiming to remove party bias from the once-a-decade drawing of congressional districts.

Democrats also accuse Republicans of seeking to reduce polling hours and locations and drop boxes, and tightening voter ID laws, as a direct response to Donald Trump’s lie that the 2020 election was stolen by voter fraud.

Harris, who is leading the White House’s voting rights push, told reporters after the Senate vote: “It is clear, certainly for the American people, that when we’re talking about the right to vote, it is not a Republican concern or a Democratic concern, it is an American concern.



Kamala Harris speaks to members of the media after presiding over the vote.
Photograph: Alex Wong/Getty Images

“This is about the American people’s right to vote unfettered. It is about their access to the right to vote in a meaningful way because nobody is debating, I don’t believe, whether all Americans have the right to vote. The issue here is, is there actual access to the voting process or is that being impeded?”

She reiterated her and Biden’s support for the For the People Act and the less far-reaching John Lewis Voting Rights Act, adding: “The fight is not over.”

In remarks on the Senate floor earlier on Tuesday, Schumer likened Trump to “a petulant child”. He said: “Because of one man’s lie, Republicans are now doing the dastardly act of taking away voting from millions of Americans … making it much harder for them to vote, and many, many, many will not.

“From Georgia to Montana, from Florida to Iowa, Republican state legislatures are conducting the most coordinated voter suppression effort in 80 years.”

These state houses are making it easier to own a gun than to vote, Schumer said.

“Republican legislatures are making it harder to vote early, harder to vote by mail, harder to vote after work. They’re making it a crime to give food or water to voters waiting in long lines. They’re trying to make it harder for Black churchgoers to vote on Sunday.

“And they’re actually making it easier for unelected judges and partisan election boards to overturn the results of an election, opening the door for some demagogue, a Trumpian-type demagogue, maybe he himself, to try and subvert our elections in the very same way that Trump tried to do in 2020.”



Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia, a conservative Democrat, has so far declined to say if he will support the procedural motion in support of the For the People Act. Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

Republicans argued that the For the People Act would infringe on states' rights and that state measures are needed to stop fraud, even though there is no evidence of widespread problems. Mitch McConnell, the Republican minority leader, dismissed the bill as a “partisan power grab” in his own speech on the Senate floor.

Although the outcome of Tuesday's vote had been a foregone conclusion, Democrats were relieved that they could present a united front when Joe Manchin, [a conservative Democrat from West Virginia](#), agreed to vote for the procedural motion after weeks of suspense.

[Leader behind bleach ‘miracle cure’ claims Trump consumed his product](#)

[Read more](#)

The outcome intensifies pressure for Democrats to abolish the filibuster so legislation can be debated and passed by a simple 51-vote majority – with Harris holding the tie-breaking vote. But Manchin and some colleagues have deep reservations about doing so.

Kyrsten Sinema, a Democratic senator from Arizona, wrote in the Washington Post: “The filibuster compels moderation and helps protect the country from wild swings.”

She added that she welcomed a full debate, “so senators and our constituents can hear and fully consider the concerns and consequences”.

Biden held talks with Manchin and Sinema at the White House on Monday, aware the congressional stalemate threatens to stall his agenda. Manchin told reporters at the Capitol on Tuesday: “We had a very good conversation, very respectful … We’ve just got to keep working.”

Advocacy groups and activists expressed disgust with Republicans for obstructing the reforms. Stephany Spaulding, a spokesperson for Just Democracy, said: “Senate Republicans’ filibuster circus today was shameful, and a direct attack on the millions of Black and Brown Americans who this broken body denied equal voting rights.

She added: “It is equally shameful that a handful of Senate Democrats turned their backs on the very people who elected them, and permitted Republicans to use the Jim Crow filibuster to inhibit progress on equal voting rights, instead of eliminating this procedure.”

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Hong Kong

Hong Kong police arrest editorial writer at Apple Daily newspaper

Arrest of journalist who publishes under the name Li Ping is the first of a writer at the pro-democracy newspaper



An editorial writer at Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper has been arrested. Photograph: Jérôme Favre/EPA

An editorial writer at Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper has been arrested. Photograph: Jérôme Favre/EPA

[Helen Davidson](#)

[@heldavidson](#)

Wed 23 Jun 2021 01.18 EDT

The editorial writer for Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper has been arrested, the latest move in a media crackdown under the national security

law that saw [hundreds of police raid its newsroom](#) and arrest senior figures last week.

Police confirmed the arrest of a 55-year-old man in Tseung Kwan O on Wednesday morning, “on suspicion of conspiring to collude with foreign countries or foreign forces to endanger national security”.

He was later identified by the pro-democracy Apple Daily as its lead opinion writer, who publishes under the name Li Ping.

Li is the first known arrest of a writer connected to [the police operation](#) launched on Thursday last week. Authorities said the five arrested executives, including editor-in-chief Ryan Law and chief executive Cheung Kim-hung, who were later charged, were responsible for more than 30 articles that called for foreign sanctions against the Hong Kong and Chinese governments.

[Hong Kong's first 'national security' trial begins without jury](#)

[Read more](#)

Police would not specify which articles were deemed acts of foreign collusion, but said some dated back to 2019, well before the June 2020 implementation of the law, which is not supposed to be retroactive.

Li has written numerous comment pieces for Apple Daily, criticising government crackdowns on the pro-democracy movement and the media. After the arrest of Apple Daily’s founder and owner, Jimmy Lai, last year, Li said Beijing was venting its anger over US sanctions by targeting [Hong Kong](#) media and people.

In an April column, Li criticised [the prosecution of producer Bao Choy](#) at broadcaster RTHK, who had accessed a publicly available database as part of her research into an infamous attack on protesters in Yuen Long in 2019.

Under the headline “Freedom, once an everyday commodity, now a luxury”, Li accused authorities of seeking to intimidate the press, by “using all sorts of legislative and judicial means to try to silence Hong Kong’s journalists and push media outlets to close down voluntarily”.

The board of Apple Daily's parent company, Next Digital Media, has said if authorities do not release the paper's funds and accounts, frozen as part of the operation, they will be [forced to shut down on Friday](#). Apple Daily has already shut down its financial news and English language services and its nightly online broadcast, and a number of staff have already resigned. [Saturday's paper](#) is expected to be its last.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/23/hong-kong-police-arrest-editorial-writer-at-apple-daily-newspaper>

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World news

Hong Kong's first 'national security' trial begins without jury

The first trial under the new law is a landmark moment for the financial hub's fast-changing legal traditions



Police ahead of Tong Ying-kit's trial under the national security law at a court in Hong Kong on Wednesday Photograph: Vincent Yu/AP

Police ahead of Tong Ying-kit's trial under the national security law at a court in Hong Kong on Wednesday Photograph: Vincent Yu/AP

Agence France-Presse

Tue 22 Jun 2021 22.46 EDT

The first trial under Hong Kong's new national security law began on Wednesday without a jury, a watershed moment for the financial hub's fast-changing legal landscape.

Tong Ying-kit, 24, was arrested the day after the sweeping new law came into effect when he allegedly drove his motorcycle into a group of police officers during protests on 1 July last year.

Footage showed his motorcycle was flying a flag that read “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times”, a popular pro-democracy protest slogan that is now deemed illegal under the national security law.

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

[Read more](#)

Tong faces charges of inciting secession and terrorism, as well as a charge of dangerous driving. He pleaded not guilty to all three charges as the trial began on Wednesday morning.

“Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times” was little used until huge and often violent democracy protests convulsed Hong Kong for months in 2019 where it became the dominant rallying cry.

For some, it meant advocating for full independence. But for many others, it was a broader call for democracy or greater autonomy as well as a cry of frustration at Beijing’s rule.

Tong’s trial is a key legal test for whether the slogan is now illegal.

As they opened their case, prosecutor Anthony Chau said his team would show the phrase meant separating Hong Kong from China, or seeking “regime change”.

Chau added that the terrorism charge was justified because Tong was trying to coerce the government “to pursue a political agenda”.

Two courts have rejected Tong’s plea to have his case heard by a jury, which his legal team had argued was a constitutional right given that he faces a life sentence if convicted.

Trial by jury has been a cornerstone of Hong Kong’s 176-year-old common law system and is described by the city’s judiciary on its website as one of the legal system’s “most important features”.

But the national security law, which was written in Beijing and imposed on Hong Kong last year after the democracy protests, allows for cases to be tried by three specially selected judges.

The city's justice secretary invoked the no-jury clause for Tong's trial, arguing that juror safety could be compromised in Hong Kong's febrile political landscape.

Tong's legal team has yet to decide whether to bring their case to Hong Kong's court of final appeal.

However, the wording of Beijing's security law makes clear that it trumps any local regulations in the event of a dispute, something successive court rulings have already upheld.

Tong's case is unusual because he is the only Hongkonger so far charged under the security law with an explicitly violent act.

More than 60 people have now been charged under the law, including some of the city's best-known democracy activists, but their offences are related to political views or speech that authorities have declared illegal.

Hong Kong and Chinese authorities have hailed the security law for successfully restoring stability after the 2019 demonstrations. But it has also transformed the city's political and legal landscape – which was historically firewalled from the authoritarian mainland.

The law furthermore grants China jurisdiction over some cases and empowers mainland security agents to operate openly in the semi-autonomous city for the first time.

It has removed the presumption of bail for non-violent crimes. Those charged have to instead prove to judges they will no longer pose any sort of national security threat.

The vast majority of those charged have been remanded in custody. Those released have faced a host of restrictions including house arrest, no contact with foreign officials and no media interviews or social media.

The law has also caused jitters within Hong Kong's business community. Last week, it was invoked to freeze the assets of Apple Daily, a popular pro-democracy newspaper.

Under the security law, no court order or conviction is required for the government to freeze a company's assets and Apple Daily has since warned it will likely stop publishing this weekend.

Critics, including many western nations, say China has broken its "one country, two systems" promise that Hong Kong could maintain key freedoms after its handover from Britain in 1997.

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[**Rights and freedom**](#)[**Global development**](#)

China issues furious response after Canada condemns human rights record

Canada leads more than 40 countries in voicing concern over Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet, sparking clash at UN



A perimeter fence is constructed around what is officially known as a vocational skills education centre in Dabancheng in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China. Photograph: Thomas Peter/Reuters

A perimeter fence is constructed around what is officially known as a vocational skills education centre in Dabancheng in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China. Photograph: Thomas Peter/Reuters

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[Leyland Cecco in Toronto](#)

Tue 22 Jun 2021 18.18 EDT

Canada has led more than 40 countries in expressing serious concerns over Beijing's repressive actions in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet, prompting a furious response from Beijing over Canada's colonial history.

The exchange at the UN human rights council on Tuesday marks the latest downturn in relations between Canada and China, which have deteriorated steadily as the two countries clash over human rights, trade and allegations of "[hostage diplomacy](#)".

Canada urged China to allow "immediate, meaningful and unfettered access" so independent observers can visit its western [Xinjiang region](#), where UN experts say nearly a million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims have been detained in camps.

[China's Uyghurs living in a 'dystopian hellscape', says Amnesty report](#)

[Read more](#)

“We are gravely concerned about the human rights situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region,” Canada’s ambassador Leslie Norton said Tuesday. The joint statement – backed by Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain and the US – cited reports of torture or cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment or punishment, forced sterilization, sexual and gender-based violence, and forced separation of children from their parents.

China pre-empted the statement by attacking Canada’s colonial past – a move that reflected growing frustration over scrutiny of its Xinjiang policies, and its increasingly tense relationship with Canada.

Citing the recent discovery of what are [believed to be the unmarked graves of 215 children at the site of a former residential school](#), Jiang Duan, a senior official at China’s mission to the UN in Geneva, called for a “thorough and impartial investigation” into Canada’s historical treatment of Indigenous peoples and compensation for victims.

Jiang’s statement was read out on behalf of Russia, Belarus, Iran, North Korea, Syria and Venezuela, all of which have been accused of wide-ranging human rights abuses.

“Historically, Canada robbed the Indigenous people of their land, killed them, and eradicated their culture,” the statement said.

Justin Trudeau said that Canada continued to have a deeply fractured relationship with Indigenous peoples – but he argued that Canada had taken steps to acknowledge past injustices.

“In Canada, we had a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Where is China’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission?” said Trudeau. “Where is [China’s] truth?”

The commission concluded in 2015 that [Canada had pursued a policy of “cultural genocide”](#) towards Indigenous people and recommended a string of actions to repair the damage. Seven years later, a majority of the commission’s [94 “calls to action”](#) have gone unanswered.

In recent months, western countries have become increasingly bold in their criticism of China's treatment of the Uyghur Muslim minority in the Xinjiang region. China denies mistreating the Uyghurs, saying the government is simply running vocational training centres aimed at countering extremism.

In February, Canadian [parliament passed a motion](#) declaring that China's abuse of Muslim minorities constituted genocide. The British, Dutch and Lithuanian parliaments have all passed similar motions, and two successive American presidents have called the Chinese action a genocide.

"China is not recognizing there is even a problem. That is a pretty fundamental difference," said Trudeau. "Where is the openness that Canada has always shown and the responsibility that Canada has taken for the terrible mistakes of the past ... many of which continue into the present?"

[China stepping up use of secret detention without trial, report warns](#)
[Read more](#)

Relations between China and Canada have remained tense for more than two years since the arrest on a US warrant of [Huawei's Meng Wanzhou](#) in December 2018. Within days, two Canadian citizens – Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor – were detained in China. In March, the men were subjected to secret court trials after more than two years in jail. Canada has described the men's detention as "[hostage diplomacy](#)".

China's attacks on Canada's colonial legacy mirror a similar strategy against the United States earlier this year, after calls for [boycotts of Xinjiang cotton](#) put China on the defensive amid accusations of forced labour.

Using historical photos of cotton fields in the American south, the foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told reporters in January that the United States had a far worse human rights record.

"Here is a picture of black slaves being forced to work in cotton fields in the US," said Hua. "Here is another picture of cotton fields in China's Xinjiang where more than 70% of the cotton is picked with machines. There is never 'forced labor' in picking cotton in Xinjiang."

Stephanie Carvin, a professor of international affairs at Carleton University in Ottawa, said the Chinese response followed a tried and tested formula.

“This ‘what-about-ism’ is an authoritarian reflex,” she said. “And it’s not new. Canada faced criticism over its treatment over Indigenous people from the Soviet Union during the cold war. But it’s also important to recognize it for what it is- a strategy to deflect from meaningful criticism, which, in this case, is the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.”

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[**Russia**](#)

Moscow sees hottest June day for 120 years with more to come

Temperatures reach 34.7C in Russian capital as weather bureau blames climate change



People cool off in Meshchersky pond in Moscow as temperatures soared.
Photograph: Sergei Fadeichev/TASS

People cool off in Meshchersky pond in Moscow as temperatures soared.
Photograph: Sergei Fadeichev/TASS

Agence France-Presse

Tue 22 Jun 2021 19.56 EDT

Moscow has sweltered through its hottest June day for 120 years after the temperature hit 34.7C with even hotter weather expected over the coming days.

Russia's weather service, Roshydromet, which blamed climate change for the soaring temperatures.

The weather service, which has kept records since 1881, is forecasting temperatures above 35C on Thursday and Friday. Monday was the hottest June since 1901.



Trucks spray water in Sadovoye Koltso Street in Moscow to protect the road surface from overheating. Photograph: Mikhail Tereshchenko/TASS

“The increase in temperatures recorded in Moscow for these days is unprecedented in 120 years,” said Marina Makarova from Roshydromet.

“This is because of global climate change.”

The highest-ever recorded temperature in Moscow – more than 38C – was in July 2010 when much of western Russia suffered a [massive heatwave and huge fires](#).

Russia's second city, St Petersburg, 370 miles (600km) north-west of Moscow, has also had hot weather this month, with temperatures hitting 34C, the highest since 1998.

Not all Muscovites were ready to face the sweltering challenge.

“We’re not used to such heat, that’s the truth,” said Pavel Karapetyan, a 35-year-old auditor, adding that it was “difficult”.

Others welcomed the change, especially compared with Russia’s long, cold winters.

“We’ve come from Siberia. It’s cold there, so it’s nice to be here,” said visitor Alexander Shmel, 33.



A woman at a fountain in the centre of Moscow. Photograph: Mikhail Metzel/TASS

As global temperatures rise with climate change, heatwaves are predicted to become more frequent and intense, and their effects more widespread.

Russia has set numerous records in recent years and in June 2020 [registered 38C in the town of Verkhoyansk](#) – the highest temperature recorded above the Arctic Circle since measurements began.

The rising mercury levels have contributed to devastating floods and forest fires that have affected Siberia with increasing regularity.

They are also contributing to the melting of permafrost, which covers about two-thirds of Russia’s large territory.

Russia is also set to benefit from climate change, with a decline in the summer ice cover of Russia's Arctic maritime shipping route, called the northern sea route, allowing for longer transit periods.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/23/moscow-sees-hottest-june-day-for-120-years-with-more-to-come>

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Iran

US takes down dozens of Iran-linked news sites, accusing them of disinformation

Notices appear on Iran-affiliated sites saying they had been seized as part of law enforcement action



The website of Iran-linked Masirah TV, which is run by Yemen's Houthis, is seen with a notice saying it had been seized by the US. Photograph: REUTERS/Reuters

The website of Iran-linked Masirah TV, which is run by Yemen's Houthis, is seen with a notice saying it had been seized by the US. Photograph: REUTERS/Reuters

Agencies

Tue 22 Jun 2021 20.39 EDT

US authorities have seized a range of Iran's state-linked news websites, which they accused of spreading "disinformation" on Tuesday, a US official said, a move that appeared to be a far-reaching crackdown on Iranian media amid heightened tensions between the two countries.

The US government official, who spoke on Tuesday on condition of anonymity because the case had not yet been officially announced, said the US had effectively taken down roughly three dozen websites, the majority linked to Iranian disinformation efforts.

Notices appeared on Tuesday on a number of Iran-affiliated media websites saying they had been seized by the United States government as part of law enforcement action.

[Raisi's election victory raises difficulties as Iran nuclear deal talks resume](#)

[Read more](#)

Iranian news agencies said the US government had seized several Iranian media websites and sites belonging to groups affiliated with Iran, such as Yemen's Houthi movement. Some of the sites later started to display as normal.

The website of the Arabic-language Masirah TV, which is run by the Houthis, read: "The domain almasirah.net has been seized by the United States government in accordance with a seizure warrant ... as part of a law enforcement action by the Bureau of Industry and Security, Office of Export Enforcement and Federal Bureau of Investigation." The site quickly opened up a new, working website.

Iran's Arabic language Alalam TV said on its Telegram channel: "US authorities shut down Al-Alam TV's website."

Notices also appeared on websites of Iran's English-language Press TV and Lualua TV, an Arabic-language Bahraini independent channel which broadcasts from Britain.

"In what seems to be a coordinated action, a similar message appears on the websites of Iranian and regional television networks that claims the domains

of the websites have been 'seized by the United States government," Press TV said on Twitter.

The notices appeared days after Ebrahim Raisi, a prominent hardliner and fierce critic of the west, was elected as Iran's new president and after envoys for Iran and six world powers including Washington adjourned talks on reviving the 2015 nuclear accord and returned to capitals for consultations.

It's not the first time that the US has seized domain names of sites it accuses of spreading propaganda.

In October last year, US prosecutors seized a network of web domains they said were used in a campaign by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to spread political disinformation around the world.

The US Justice Department said at the time that it had taken control of 92 domains used by the IRGC to pose as independent media outlets targeting audiences in the United States, Europe, Middle East and south-east Asia.

The semi-official Iranian news agency YJC agency said on Tuesday the US move "demonstrates that calls for freedom of speech are lies".

With Reuters and and Associated Press

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Myanmar

Myanmar: Facebook promotes content urging violence against coup protesters – study

Posts ranging from wanted posters to death threats remain online for months, breaching platform's own standards



The Global Witness report said the Facebook content promoted in Myanmar advocating violence against coup protesters showed self-regulation was not working. Photograph: Stringer ./Reuters

The Global Witness report said the Facebook content promoted in Myanmar advocating violence against coup protesters showed self-regulation was not working. Photograph: Stringer ./Reuters

[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) South-east Asia correspondent

Wed 23 Jun 2021 00.09 EDT

Facebook is promoting content that incites violence against Myanmar's anti-coup protesters and amplifies junta misinformation, despite promising to clamp down on the misuse of its platform, according to a study.

An investigation by the rights group Global Witness found that Facebook's recommendation algorithm continues to invite users to view content that breaches its own policies. After liking a [Myanmar](#) military fan page, which did not contain recent posts violating Facebook's policies, the rights group found that Facebook suggested several pro-military pages that contained abusive content.

[Myanmar coup: army blocks Facebook access as civil disobedience grows](#)
[Read more](#)

Among the posts featured on one of the pages was an image of a "wanted" poster offering a \$10m bounty for the capture "dead or alive" of a young woman. The post claimed she was among protesters who had burned down a factory following a military crackdown. Images of the woman's face and a screenshot of what appeared to be her Facebook profile were posted alongside a caption reading: "This girl is the one who committed arson in Hlaing Tharyar. Her account has been deactivated. But she cannot run."

Global Witness said that its report demonstrated that self-regulation by Facebook was not working, and called for Facebook's recommendation algorithm to be subject to independent audit.

Other posts identified by Global Witness included a death threat, the glorification of military violence and misinformation, such as the incorrect claims that Isis is present in Myanmar, and that the military had seized power due to "voter fraud". The military has accused Aung San Suu Kyi's party of vote rigging in last year's election in order to justify February's coup – a suggestion that has been discredited by observers, including by the independent monitoring group Asian Network for Free Elections.

Facebook [said in February](#) that it would remove false claims of widespread fraud or foreign interference in Myanmar's November election from its site. It also said it had banned military-controlled state and media entities, and introduced a specific policy for Myanmar "to remove praise, support and advocacy of violence by Myanmar security forces and protestors". Content that supported the arrests of civilians by the military and security forces in Myanmar would be removed under this policy.

A spokesperson for Facebook said its staff “closely monitor” the situation in Myanmar in real time and has taken action on any posts, pages or groups that break its rules.

However, content identified by Global Witness has remained online for months, according to the rights group.

Separate analysis by the Guardian found numerous recent examples of posts that also appeared to breach Facebook’s standards:

- In one post from 19 June, which received more than 500 likes, an image showed a man with a bloodied face and rope tied around his neck. The caption states: “This is how you should arrest them”, referring to protesters.
- Posts often mock and encourage violence against protesters. One post, also from 19 June referred to a recent flower strike, where protesters wore flowers to mark Aung San Suu Kyi’s 76th birthday, stating: “Every single one of the real men that wore the flowers in public today must be killed … Trash. They all need to be killed so that the children will not have the wrong role models.” The post was liked 175 times.
- Another post, from 1 June, targeted children. It showed an image of students outside their school, with a sign that states: “We are students and we will go to school. You are criminals, and you will go to prison.” Many children have not returned to school, despite orders to do so by the junta. The post had been liked more than 4,300 times.
- Posts often share misinformation, for example, blaming pro-democracy politicians for leading “terrorists”. A post states “only real news outlets in this country are MOI, MRTV and MWD and other state-run news”, referring to military-controlled channels.

Facebook has [previously acknowledged](#) that its platform has been misused in Myanmar, where it is hugely popular and influential. The site is used by almost half the population and, for many, it is the primary way of accessing the internet.

In 2018, following the massacre of Rohingya Muslims by the military, Facebook admitted that its platform had been used to “foment division and incite offline violence”. A UN fact-finding mission drew similar conclusions the same year, stating that Facebook had been “a useful instrument for those seeking to spread hate” and that the response of the company had been “slow and ineffective”.

['Overreacting to failure': Facebook's new Myanmar strategy baffles local activists](#)

[Read more](#)

In February, Facebook said its staff were working around the clock to keep its platform safe. The coup greatly increased the likelihood “that online threats could lead to offline harm”, Facebook said at the time.

The Global Witness report also called for Facebook to further investigate other types of content it hosted, including the circulation of forced confession videos by political prisoners, military adverts, and posts that amplified military propaganda – such as the claims that the army is acting in a measured way.

In a statement, Facebook said: “We proactively detect 99% of the hate speech removed from Facebook in Myanmar, and our ban of the Tatmadaw [military] and repeated disruption of coordinated inauthentic behaviour has made it harder for people to misuse our services to spread harm. This is a highly adversarial issue and we continue to take action on content that violates our policies to help keep people safe.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/23/myanmar-facebook-promotes-content-urging-violence-against-coup-protesters-study>

[France](#)

Mother killed children's abusive father to save them, French court hears

Valérie Bacot admits shooting Daniel Polette, who had raped her aged 12 and had four children with her



Valérie Bacot's lawyer, Janine Bonaggiunta, said her client was suffering from battered woman syndrome. Photograph: Jeff Pachoud/AFP/Getty Images

Valérie Bacot's lawyer, Janine Bonaggiunta, said her client was suffering from battered woman syndrome. Photograph: Jeff Pachoud/AFP/Getty Images

[Kim Willsher](#) in Paris

Tue 22 Jun 2021 13.12 EDT

To their neighbours in the small village of Baudemont, in the Burgundy region north of Lyon, the Polette family seemed perfectly normal.

They were discreet and did not socialise, but when they did villagers remarked that the four Polette children were well brought up and polite.

Inside their home it was another story, a court was told, when Valérie Bacot, the children's mother, appeared in court accused of killing their father, a man jailed for raping her aged 12 who then subjected her to 24 years of abuse, the court heard.

A jury heard that Daniel Polette, 61, who had been Bacot's stepfather before he installed her as his wife and had four children with her, was subject to alcoholic rages he took out on everyone in the household, especially her.

Bacot has admitted killing Polette, who she says was prostituting her to men in the back of the family car parked in a nearby wood. He would spy on her and give her instructions on what to do with the "clients" he arranged through an earpiece.

On 13 March 2015, after she says one of the men raped her, she used a pistol her husband kept in the car and shot Polette in the neck as he was driving off.

On Tuesday, asked why she had not sought help, Bacot told the court the police had "done nothing" when alerted to her husband's alleged violence. She said she had acted in fear of her life and those of her children.

Asked by the president of the court if there had been an alternative, her son Kévin, 20, replied: "What do you think we could do? We went to the gendarmerie, but they told us: 'We can't do anything.'"

"There are plenty of other solutions than killing a man," the advocate general Eric Jallet said. "Like a divorce."

"Where do you think we could go? We were trapped. He would have found us," Kévin replied. He told the court he had never known a single happy moment with his father who he described as "irascible and difficult", especially when he had been drinking.

He would call his children "idiots" and "retards" when they had difficulties at school and hit them regularly, they told the court. The violence was an

“almost daily” occurrence, Kévin said.

“When he came home he drank, so he was always annoyed,” he added. “I don’t miss my father.”

Of his mother, he said: “She isn’t guilty. Nobody helped us. We were trapped and we didn’t know how to get out.”

Karline, 19, the third of the couple’s four children, said her mother feared Polette would turn his attention to his daughter.

The day before the killing he had asked the teenager, who was then 14: “How are you sexually?” She said her father would watch her undress and his behaviour became “more and more bizarre”.

“He asked me to come into the bed and would stroke my hair. He asked if I was wearing knickers under my pyjamas. He watched me undress,” she said. “I didn’t feel comfortable when he looked at me or stroked my hair. It wasn’t tenderness,” she said.

Her mother wept. She said that when Polette started questioning Karline about her budding sexuality, Bacot said she decided that “this has to stop”.

She said she wanted to make sure her daughter wouldn’t suffer the same fate that she had. “I wanted to save her,” she said.

Lucas Granet, a schoolfriend of Bacot’s children, helped bury Polette’s body with the couple’s two eldest sons, Dylan and Kévin.

He said before Bacot shot her husband, the atmosphere in the family home had been “heavy” with Polette’s aggression.

“When he wasn’t there, everyone was fine, happy. When he arrived, no one spoke. Everyone was in his corner ... it was no longer the same family,” Lucas told the court.

The couple’s eldest son, Dylan, 22, said it had been important not to annoy their father, but said his mother had always supported the children.

“He could punish us for no reason. At the beginning I thought it was like that in all families.” He described how he had been born left-handed but his father insisted he always use his right hand to write “because according to our father, people who write with their left hand do not succeed in life”.

Dylan said his mother had never spoken about killing their father but added his mother “would be dead from his violence” if she had not acted.

The public prosecutor has been attempting to prove Bacot’s actions were premeditated. Bacot says she had no choice.

Her lawyer, Janine Bonaggiunta, said outside the court at Chalon-sur-Saône: “We have to show this woman is not guilty or the person who is violent but the victim. Valérie was suffering from battered woman syndrome, she was abused since she was 12 and she could not reason like you or me. She was forced to do something that was not in her [nature] to save herself. It was an act of survival.”

The trial will last a week and Bacot, who is accused of murder, faces life imprisonment if convicted.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/22/mother-killed-childrens-abusive-father-to-save-them-french-court-hears>

Dubai

Statement purporting to be from Dubai's Princess Latifa says she is free to travel

Remarks attributed to emirate ruler Sheikh Mohammed's daughter come a day after a photo of her in Spain appeared online



A photograph of Princess Latifa with Sioned Taylor in Madrid airport appeared on Taylor's Instagram feed on Sunday. Photograph: shinnybryn/Instagram

A photograph of Princess Latifa with Sioned Taylor in Madrid airport appeared on Taylor's Instagram feed on Sunday. Photograph: shinnybryn/Instagram

[Dan Sabbagh](#)

Tue 22 Jun 2021 13.48 EDT

A statement issued by Princess Latifa's lawyers, purporting to come from the daughter of Dubai's Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, declared she could now "travel where I want" a day after a picture of her in Madrid airport [appeared online](#).

The brief remarks are the first time that Latifa has been quoted since her dramatic flight from the emirate three years ago, though the lawyers, Taylor Wessing, insisted they should only be reported as coming directly from the princess herself.

On Sunday, a picture had appeared on Instagram showing Latifa posing with a British friend, Sioned Taylor, at the Spanish capital's main international airport, accompanied by a caption saying they were having a "Great European holiday".

Responding to questions about the photograph, Taylor Wessing issued a statement, which the lawyers said came from Latifa. "I recently visited 3 European countries on holiday with my friend," it began.

"I asked her to post a few photos online to prove to campaigners that I can travel where I want. I hope now that I can live my life in peace without further media scrutiny. And I thank everyone for their kind wishes."

Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed, has come under international pressure to demonstrate that Latifa is free and well after she unsuccessfully attempted to flee the emirate in February 2018, accusing him of years of abuse in a YouTube video released online [after the escape plan failed](#).

The princess, 35, is one the sheikh's estimated 25 children by several wives. Sheikh Mohammed is the vice-president and prime minister of the [United Arab Emirates](#), as well as being the hereditary ruler of Dubai, one of seven emirates that make up the country.

Driving first to neighbouring Oman, Latifa and a friend boarded a yacht, setting sail across the Indian Ocean in an attempt to escape abroad. But as fuel ran short 30 miles from Goa in India, the vessel was boarded by commandos from the Indian army, whom the ruler of [Dubai](#) had successfully asked for help.

Sheikh Mohammed has repeatedly denied all allegations of mistreating Latifa, But [a UK family court found](#) in a judgment published in March 2020 that she had been detained under house arrest, in conditions “akin to a prison” in the initial period after she was recaptured at sea.

[Princess Latifa: Instagram image appears to show Dubai ruler's daughter in Spain](#)

[Read more](#)

Latifa’s plight was highlighted as part of a child custody battle in the British courts involving Sheikh Mohammed and his second “official” wife, Haya Bint al-Hussein, who had fled to the UK in 2019 with her two young children.

Haya’s lawyers argue that the treatment of Latifa helped justify her demands in relation to her children, claims that are contested by Mohammed’s legal representatives. The case between the two is ongoing.

In the last month, Latifa has appeared in Instagram posts on Taylor’s account, suggesting she enjoys an increasing degree of freedom. Two images from Taylor showed her in and around shopping malls in Dubai, followed by the picture from inside the Madrid airport on Sunday.

According to Taylor Wessing, Latifa visited Spain but is no longer in the country, and is very likely to travel again. A repeated complaint made by the princess to friends in the past was that she did not have a passport and was not able to leave the emirate after a previous failed escape attempt in 2002.

Campaigners seeking Latifa’s release have welcomed developments and the princess is understood to be in direct contact with some friends by phone and letter again. On Monday, the Free Latifa campaign said it was putting on hold its campaigning activities, and said it was “seeking guarantees” that would help “secure the present day and future safety and wellbeing of Latifa”.

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US military

US military training manual describes socialism as ‘terrorist ideology’ – report

Navy document, obtained by the Intercept, lists political philosophy alongside anarchists and neo-Nazis



The US navy document was entitled Introduction to Terrorism/Terrorist Operations. Photograph: REX/Shutterstock

The US navy document was entitled Introduction to Terrorism/Terrorist Operations. Photograph: REX/Shutterstock

Guardian staff

Tue 22 Jun 2021 15.46 EDT

A [US military](#) training document has described the political philosophy of socialism – a relatively mainstream term in politics around the world – as a “terrorist ideology” akin to neo-Nazism.

The document, which was [obtained by The Intercept news website](#), was used in the US navy. It was entitled: Introduction to Terrorism/Terrorist Operations, and aimed at some members of the navy's internal police, the outlet [reported](#).

On one page of the document, in a section titled Study Questions, the question is asked: “Anarchists, socialists and neo-Nazis represent which terrorist ideological category?”

The news is likely to come as a surprise to some of the increasingly popular mainstream US politicians who identify as democratic socialists, such as the former presidential candidate and Vermont senator Bernie Sanders and the star of the Democratic party’s left, New York congresswoman Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez.

Though socialism has long been demonized in the US, especially during the 1930s and the cold war, it has in recent years become more popular especially among young people. One poll last year found [that slightly](#) more Democrats viewed socialism favorably than they did capitalism.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/22/us-military-training-document-socialism-terrorist-ideology>.

Native Americans

US to investigate ‘unspoken traumas’ of Native American boarding schools

Deb Haaland announces initiative to ‘uncover the truth’ of policies that forced Indigenous children to assimilate



Deb Haaland, the US interior secretary, announced an investigation into Native American boarding schools. Photograph: Evan Vucci/AP

Deb Haaland, the US interior secretary, announced an investigation into Native American boarding schools. Photograph: Evan Vucci/AP

Guardian staff and agencies

Tue 22 Jun 2021 17.56 EDT

The US government will investigate the troubled legacy of Native American boarding schools and work to “uncover the truth about the loss of human life and the lasting consequences” of the institutions, which over the decades

forced hundreds of thousands of children from their families and communities.

The US interior secretary, Deb Haaland, has directed the department to prepare a report detailing available historical records relating to the federal boarding school programs, with an emphasis on cemeteries or potential burial sites.

“The interior department will address the inter-generational impact of Indian boarding schools to shed light on the unspoken traumas of the past, no matter how hard it will be,” Haaland said in a [secretarial memo](#). “I know that this process will be long and difficult. I know that this process will be painful. It won’t undo the heartbreak and loss we feel. But only by acknowledging the past can we work toward a future that we’re all proud to embrace.”

[Calls to find all Canada’s Indigenous unmarked graves after school discovery](#)

[Read more](#)

Haaland announced the review on Tuesday in remarks to the National Congress of American Indians during the group’s midyear conference.

Starting with the Indian Civilization Act of 1819, the US enacted laws and policies to establish and support Indian boarding schools across the country. For more than 150 years, Indigenous children were taken from their communities and forced into boarding schools that focused on assimilation.

Haaland talked about the federal government’s attempt to wipe out tribal identity, language and culture and how that past has continued to manifest itself through long-standing trauma, cycles of violence and abuse, premature deaths, mental disorders and substance abuse.

The recent [discovery of children’s remains](#) buried at the site of what was once Canada’s largest Indigenous residential school has magnified interest in that legacy in Canada and the US.

In Canada, more than 150,000 First Nations children were required to attend state-funded Christian schools as part of a program to assimilate them into society. They were forced to convert to Christianity and were not allowed to speak their languages. Many were beaten and verbally abused, and up to 6,000 are said to have died.

After reading about the unmarked graves in Canada, Haaland recounted her own family's story in [a recent opinion piece](#) published by the Washington Post.

"Many Americans may be alarmed to learn that the United States has a history of taking Native children from their families in an effort to eradicate our culture and erase us as a people," she wrote. "It is a history that we must learn from if our country is to heal from this tragic era."

She continued: "I am a product of these horrific assimilation policies. My maternal grandparents were stolen from their families when they were only eight years old and were forced to live away from their parents, culture and communities until they were 13. Many children like them never made it back home."

Haaland cited statistics from the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, which reported that by 1926, more than 80% of Indigenous school-age children were attending boarding schools that were run either by the federal government or religious organizations. Besides providing resources and raising awareness, the coalition has been working to compile additional research on US boarding schools and deaths that many say is sorely lacking.

Officials with the interior department said aside from trying to shed more light on the loss of life at the boarding schools, they would be working to protect burial sites associated with the schools and would consult with tribes on how best to do that while respecting families and communities.

The report from agency staff is due by 1 April.

During her address on Tuesday, Haaland told the story of her grandmother being loaded on a train with other children from her village and being

shipped off to boarding school. She said many families had been haunted for too long by the “dark history” of these institutions and that the agency has a responsibility to recover that history.

“We must uncover the truth about the loss of human life and the lasting consequences of these schools,” she said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/22/us-investigation-native-american-boarding-schools>

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[**Rights and freedom**](#)[**Global development**](#)

Top Nicaraguan journalist flees country amid escalating crackdown

- Carlos Fernando Chamorro: ‘They won’t silence journalism’
- Chamorro’s sister among 19 jailed in pre-election crackdown



Carlos Fernando Chamorro, who previously fled the country in 2019, had his home raided on Monday night after two previous raids on his news outlet, Confidencial. Photograph: Oswaldo Rivas/Reuters

Carlos Fernando Chamorro, who previously fled the country in 2019, had his home raided on Monday night after two previous raids on his news outlet, Confidencial. Photograph: Oswaldo Rivas/Reuters

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[Wilfredo Miranda](#) in Managua

Tue 22 Jun 2021 16.15 EDT

Nicaragua's most prominent journalist has fled the country for a second time after police raided his house during [a widening crackdown on opposition figures](#) by the country's Sandinista rulers.

Carlos Fernando Chamorro, the editor of the Confidencial website and a member of one of the country's most influential political families, said on Tuesday he had left the Central American country to "safeguard his freedom".

"I demand an end to this police harassment," Chamorro tweeted. "Reporting the truth is not a crime."

[Nicaragua rounds up president's critics in sweeping pre-election crackdown](#)

[Read more](#)

Nineteen people, including Chamorro's sister and four other potential candidates in November's presidential elections, have been arrested in what

the US state department has called a “campaign of terror”, as President Daniel Ortega systematically clears the field of potential challengers.

Many of the detainees have been held under sweeping legislation granting the government the power to classify citizens as “traitors to the homeland”.

Two other prominent media figures were detained over alleged crimes against the state. Miguel Mora – the former director of the 100% Noticias news outlet who stood down last year to run for president – was arrested on Sunday night, hours before Miguel Mendoza, a sports reporter and former political prisoner.

Police also said they had put former first lady María Fernanda Flores Lanzas, wife of ex-President Arnoldo Aleman, under house arrest for alleged crimes against the state.

“High-profile arrests and other serious human rights violations against critics appear to be part of a broader strategy to eliminate political competition, stifle dissent and pave the way for President Daniel Ortega’s re-election to a fourth consecutive term,” Human Rights Watch said.

Michelle Bachelet, the UN human rights chief, described the arrests as “arbitrary” and said on Tuesday that the human rights situation in [Nicaragua](#) was deteriorating rapidly.

“This makes it unlikely that Nicaraguans will be able to fully exercise their political rights in the elections,” she told the UN human rights council in Geneva.



A man walks by a mural depicting President Daniel Ortega in Managua.
Photograph: Oswaldo Rivas/Reuters

The current wave of arrests began with [the detention of Chamorro's sister Cristiana](#), who was widely seen as the leading candidate to beat Ortega in November's election.

Neither of the siblings has been charged, although officials say both are under investigation for financial irregularities.

But the family represents a history of political and personal opposition to Ortega, who is seeking his fourth consecutive term in office.

In 1990, their mother, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, defeated Ortega to become the first non-Sandinista president after the 1979 revolution.

Ortega was returned to power in 2006 and oversaw changes to electoral rules allowing him to run for repeated re-election. After an unprecedented outbreak of political unrest in 2018, police raided the offices of Confidencial, and the following year, Carlos Fernando Chamorro [went into exile in Costa Rica for 11 months](#). He returned in 2020, but Confidencial's offices were raided once again earlier this year.

“Daniel Ortega twice shut down the Confidencial newsroom. Now the police are raiding my house,” Chamorro tweeted on Monday. “They won’t silence journalism.”

Pedro Vaca, the rapporteur for freedom of expression at the InterAmerican Commission for Human Rights, condemned the crackdown. “The darkness in which the regime operates fears the light of independent journalism,” he said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/22/nicaragua-journalist-exile-carlos-fernando-chamorro-ortega>

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Headlines tuesday 22 june 2021

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- [Live UK Covid: Matt Hancock says growth rate in coronavirus cases is slowing](#)
- [Business UK government borrowing eases as recovery helps tax take](#)
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[Coronavirus](#)

Hancock plans to scrap quarantine for fully vaccinated amber-list travellers

Government ‘working on’ ending requirement in England for 10 days’ isolation upon return

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Asked if plans could be in place by August, Matt Hancock said: ‘We’ll get there when it’s safe to do so.’ Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

Asked if plans could be in place by August, Matt Hancock said: ‘We’ll get there when it’s safe to do so.’ Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

*Sarah Marsh
@sloumarsh*

Tue 22 Jun 2021 04.22 EDT

Ministers are planning to allow quarantine-free travel to amber-list countries for people in England who have been fully vaccinated, the health secretary has said.

Matt Hancock confirmed that ministers were considering how to scrap the requirement for people to isolate for 10 days on return from a country on the list, adding he was “in favour of moving forward in this area”.

Asked if these plans could be in place as soon as August, Hancock said: “We’ll get there when it’s safe to do so.”

He told Sky News: “This hasn’t been clinically advised yet – we’re working on it,” adding that the government wanted to allow “the vaccine to bring back some of the freedoms that have had to be restricted to keep people safe”.

Hancock also said the government was “on track” for the easing of restrictions next month but acknowledged that opening up travel abroad was “more difficult”.

“Thankfully, because of the vaccination programme, we have been able to free up a huge number of the restrictions here at home,” he said. “We are on track to deliver the step 4, the further openings, on July 19, which is good.”

Hancock was also pushed on the government’s social care plan for England and whether it would be delivered this year. He said it was a priority but declined to answer a question about whether a key meeting on this between him, the prime minister and the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, had been postponed.

“Absolutely I am not going to get into diary management,” Hancock said. “I talk to the prime minister every single day and we’re working very closely together on the delivery of this policy.

“We absolutely were working on the plan before the pandemic struck but, you will understand, and your viewers will undoubtedly understand, that

when the pandemic struck it was all hands on deck to protect lives and to get us out of this as fast as possible, and the vaccine is doing that.”

The health secretary said there would be a ramped-up flu vaccination drive this winter owing to concerns about a tough period ahead as influenza and Covid would be circulating.

“It is because we did not see any other communicable disease last winter in any serious size at all, and the clinical concern is that our immunity will be lower, fewer people had flu ... almost no one has had it for 18 months,” he said in an interview with BBC Radio 4 Today programme.

“We are currently doing all the work to see if can have a Covid booster shot and flu jab at the same time and that will help to manage this in the winter, but this winter will be challenging.”

“We do need to make sure we protect the NHS this coming winter. We have got time to do the preparation for that now, though, and make sure we are as vaccinated as possible because that is the way to keep people safe.”

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

Scotland keeps restrictions amid 40% case rise; nearly 250,000 English pupils missing school – as it happened

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Government borrowing

UK government borrowing eases as recovery helps tax take

Reopening of economy in May causes rush to shops and increases VAT and fuel duty receipts

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



People queue outside the Prince Charles cinema in central London. Cinemas were among the indoor venues to reopen on 17 May. Photograph: Akira Suemori/Rex/Shutterstock

People queue outside the Prince Charles cinema in central London. Cinemas were among the indoor venues to reopen on 17 May. Photograph: Akira Suemori/Rex/Shutterstock

*Phillip Inman
@phillipinman*

Tue 22 Jun 2021 03.36 EDT

The government borrowed less than expected in May when the reopening of the economy prompted a rush to the shops and pushed VAT and fuel duty receipts higher.

Official figures showed borrowing in May was £24.3bn, undershooting the £28.5bn estimate by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) by £4.2bn.

It was the [second highest borrowing total for the month of May](#) since records began in 1993, but was £19.4bn less than May 2020 when the impact of the first coronavirus lockdown was reflected in the public finances.

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

The Office for National Statistics warned that its figures were estimates that were more likely to be revised than in previous periods due to the difficulties of collecting data during the pandemic.

However, the Treasury is likely to be cheered by central government receipts that came in at £56.9bn in May, well above the OBR's £55.2bn forecast.

VAT receipts were 23% higher in May than a year earlier, at £12.2bn, while PAYE income tax receipts were 5.3% higher at £14.1bn. Fuel duty receipts more than doubled compared with May 2020 to £2.3bn.

Central government spending of £81.8bn was also lower than the £84.9bn estimated by the OBR, mainly due to a smaller-than-expected quarterly grant payment to self-employed people.

The deficit in spending by local government and public corporations was higher than the OBR expected, forcing them to increase their borrowing.

Philip Shaw, an economist at Investec, said: "None of this is to say the picture for public finances is rosy. The deficit is still very much inflated by

pandemic-related outlays, with current expenditure during May a whopping 28.6% above May 2019 levels.”

Isabel Stockton, a research economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies said: “Looking further ahead the path of borrowing will depend on the completeness of the economic recovery, whether the income tax and corporation tax rises announced in the Budget go ahead as planned and - as seems likely - the degree to which this year’s Spending Review ends up being more generous than the figures currently penciled in by the Chancellor.”

The ONS said public sector net borrowing, which excludes publicly owned banks from its calculation, for the full year to March was estimated to have been £299.2bn, revised down by £1.1bn from last month’s provisional estimate. After unprecedented spending by the NHS and other government departments on tackling the pandemic, it remains the highest borrowing since financial year records began in 1946.

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Michal Stelmach, a senior economist at KPMG, said the public finances should benefit from the winding down of the furlough scheme over the next few months.

“Spending should continue to recover in the coming months as the economy absorbs more furloughed workers during the reopening phase,” he said.

“The furlough scheme, which the OBR expected to cost nearly £50bn less this financial year, is likely to undershoot that forecast thanks to stronger demand for staff and some companies returning unused cash to the exchequer.”

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Coronavirus

No 10 says G7 summit not to blame for rise in Cornwall's Covid cases

Rates have gone up in Carbis Bay where event was held; however, surge in county is blamed on several factors

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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G7 world leaders in Cornwall led by Angela Merkel and Boris Johnson on 11 June. Photograph: Adrian Wyld/AP

G7 world leaders in Cornwall led by Angela Merkel and Boris Johnson on 11 June. Photograph: Adrian Wyld/AP

[Nicola Davis](#), [Jessica Elgot](#) and [Aubrey Allegretti](#)

Tue 22 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Downing Street has denied the G7 summit is behind a rapid rise in Covid-19 cases in [Cornwall](#), an increase that is raising significant concern about extra tourism pressures on the region in the summer weeks.

Recent seven-day case rates have risen rapidly for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, increasing from 4.9 per 100,000 people on 3 June to 130.6 per 100,000 people on 16 June.

Outbreaks among students, as well as the impact of people travelling to and from Cornwall during half term, are believed to have significantly contributed to the rise.

There have been significant outbreaks in Carbis Bay – where [the G7 summit was held](#) – as well as [nearby St Ives](#), and Newquay West – where many delegates stayed.

Rates are currently high in Ponsanooth, Mabe Burnthouse and Constantine, where the surge has been linked to an [outbreak at the Penryn campus](#) shared by Exeter and Falmouth universities.

Andrew George, the former Lib Dem MP for St Ives who is now a councillor in Cornwall, said the government must publish its risk assessment for the summit, a request he said had been denied.

“The correlation between [G7](#) and the tsunami of Covid-19 caseload in St Ives/Carbis Bay and Falmouth is undeniable,” he told the Press Association.

“It ought to drive public bodies to at the very least maintain an open mind about the connection between the two. Those who were responsible for that decision and for the post-G7 summit Covid-19 case management and assessment should be held to account for their decisions and actions.”

On Monday, a spokesman for Boris Johnson denied a link between the event and the rise in cases.

“We are confident that there were no cases of transmission to the local residents. All attendees were tested, everyone involved in the G7 work were also tested during their work on the summit,” he said. “We always said,

following the move to step three, that we will see cases rising across the country. That is what we're seeing playing out."

Concerns have [been raised](#) that those indirectly linked to the G7 summit could be associated with the rise, with police, hospitality venues, and a protest camp in St Ives all reporting cases of the virus.

Graphic

Rowland Kao, a professor of epidemiology at the University of Edinburgh who contributes to the Spi-M modelling subgroup of Sage, said Cornwall is not an outlier for vaccination uptake or levels of the Delta variant, suggesting other factors are behind the rise in rates.

These, he said, may include low rates of infection in previous waves – meaning those not yet vaccinated are also unlikely to have natural protection – as well as seasonal working patterns and increased mixing among locals working.

"Of course any risks would have been exacerbated by the large numbers of people arriving in Cornwall both for the G7 summit and for recreational purposes, increasing both crowding and contact," he said.

Dr Michael Head, a senior research fellow in global health at Southampton University, also said a mix of factors was probably in play.

"Whilst the arrival of the G7 attendees may have had some impact upon the numbers we are now seeing [in Cornwall], cases are predominantly in 15-24 year olds. These populations will mostly be unvaccinated, and there may well have been a fair amount of travelling to tourist sites over the recent half-term week," he said.

The increase in Cornish cases is likely to raise questions about the prospects for other holiday hotspots in the UK with the public now being advised to avoid international travel.

Officials believe that a vaccination drive, particularly targeting younger adults, before the school holidays is now possible with the four-week delay to the final easing of lockdown restrictions.

“The overall expectation is that mixing in schools – and related contacts with parents and people working in the sector – will go down, conversely this also means that summer holiday locations like Cornwall can expect more,” said Kao.

“The net effect should be relatively positive – but holiday locations are more likely to [experience] higher levels of infection and therefore be at greater risk of more hospitalisations. And in that case, yes, vaccinations in those areas will definitely help.”

On Monday, the health secretary, Matt Hancock, confirmed people in England who have had both doses may soon no longer need to isolate should they be notified by the NHS Covid-19 app that they have come into close contact with someone infected with the virus.

Hancock said that a system was being trialled to let people avoid isolating who were fully inoculated but had been identified as a close contact of someone who had tested positive for Covid – so long as they took a lateral flow test every day.

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- [Live Coronavirus: Italy to lift outdoor mask wearing rules from 28 June; North Korea tells WHO it has no cases](#)
- [England Fully vaccinated may not need to isolate](#)
- ['Totally disproportionate' Burnham calls on Nicola Sturgeon to justify Covid travel ban](#)
- [Indonesia More restrictions amid record new infections](#)

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Poland announces quarantine for UK travellers – as it happened

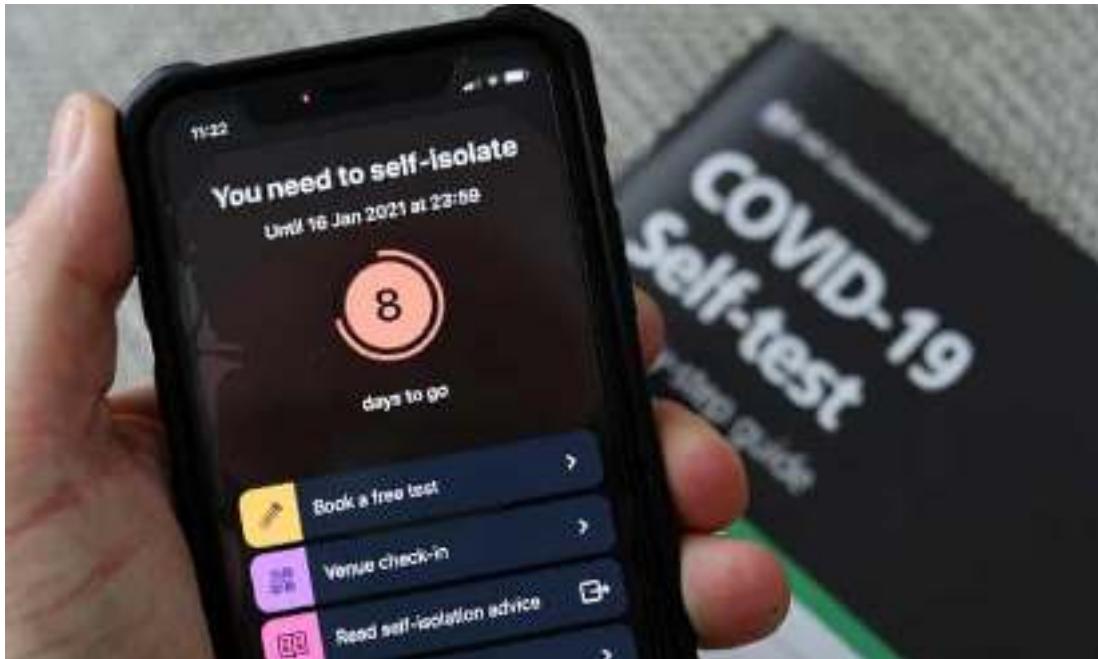
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Health policy

Fully vaccinated people in England may not need to isolate, Hancock says

Health secretary looking to drop 10-day ‘stay at home’ order for those in close contact with person infected with Covid

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The NHS Covid-19 app notifies people who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus. Photograph: Huw Fairclough/Getty Images

The NHS Covid-19 app notifies people who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus. Photograph: Huw Fairclough/Getty Images

*Aubrey Allegretti Political correspondent
@breeallegretti*

Mon 21 Jun 2021 07.57 EDT

People in England who are double vaccinated but notified by the [NHS Covid-19 app](#) for coming into close contact with someone infected with the virus may soon no longer need to isolate, the health secretary has confirmed.

Matt Hancock said he was looking to drop the 10-day “stay at home” order for some people as part of a wider loosening of restrictions expected to be brought in over the summer, as [Boris Johnson](#) repeated his pledge the delayed final stage of his roadmap planned for 19 July was a “terminus point”.

Uniform rules have been in place for those who have and have not been inoculated, since the vaccine rollout began last December. But now all adults are able to book an appointment, the government is considering restoring some freedoms to those who have had two doses.

The Guardian revealed last week that ministers were [considering letting travellers from amber list countries skip quarantine](#) if they have had both jabs.

On Monday, Hancock said that a system was being trialed to let people who were fully inoculated but identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for Covid avoid isolating – so long as they took a lateral flow test every day.

He told BBC Breakfast the approach was being piloted “to check that that will be effective, but it is something that we’re working on”.

He added: “We’re not ready to be able to take that step yet, but it’s something that I want to see and we will introduce, subject to clinical advice, as soon as it’s reasonable to do so.”

Hancock also dismissed the revelation from former No 10 aide Dominic Cummings that [Boris Johnson had called him “totally fucking hopeless”](#) in a text exchange last spring.

01:15

Hancock says Johnson calling him 'useless' is not embarrassing – video

The health secretary admitted that politicians say “all sorts of things in private” when they are under pressure but insisted he and Johnson worked “very strongly together”.

“Honestly, it feels like ancient history,” he said. “At times of stress, people say all sorts of things in private. What matters is how well you work together.”

Johnson also repeated his promise that the lifting of all restrictions in England scheduled to happen on 21 June but pushed back to 19 July was a “terminus point”.

[Flu could be ‘bigger problem than Covid in UK this winter’](#)

[Read more](#)

Speaking on a visit to a lab in Hertfordshire, the prime minister said cases of the Delta variant were [still rising by 30% every week](#) – mirrored, he said, by a similar increase in patients admitted to hospital and intensive care.

“We’ve got to be cautious, but we’ll be following the data the whole time,” he said.

Johnson also did not rule out a return to restrictions later in the year, when some scientists fear a new peak given the cold weather will lead to significantly more socialising taking place indoors.

“You can never exclude that there will be some new disease, some new horror we simply haven’t budgeted or accounted for,” said the prime minister. “But looking at where we are, looking at the efficacy of the vaccines against the variants that we can currently see … I think it’s looking good for July 19 to be that terminus point.”

He added: “We may have a rough winter for all sorts of reasons.”

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[Andy Burnham](#)

Burnham calls on Nicola Sturgeon to justify travel ban

Greater Manchester mayor says move ‘totally disproportionate’ given case rate in Bolton is lower than Dundee

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Andy Burnham said the ban had repercussions: ‘If the first minister of a country stands up at a press conference and announces that the UK’s second city is going under a travel ban, it has an impact.’ Photograph: Phil Noble/Reuters

Andy Burnham said the ban had repercussions: ‘If the first minister of a country stands up at a press conference and announces that the UK’s second city is going under a travel ban, it has an impact.’ Photograph: Phil Noble/Reuters

[Alex Mistlin](#) and [Severin Carrell](#)

Mon 21 Jun 2021 15.00 EDT

Andy Burnham has called on [Nicola Sturgeon](#) to justify the “totally disproportionate” travel ban between the north-west of England and Scotland in an open letter.

The mayor of Greater [Manchester](#) intervened after Sturgeon extended the ban on non-essential travel – it was already in place for Bolton and Blackburn with Darwen – to [Manchester](#) and Salford on Friday.

In the letter, which was copied to all MSPs and posted on Twitter, Burnham expressed concerns about the restrictions imposed “and the manner in which they were announced.”

“It was disappointing that neither you nor your officials thought it was appropriate to contact us to discuss the proposals or provide advanced warning of the announcement,” he said.

Challenging Sturgeon to justify the non-essential travel ban policy, he added: “I would be grateful if you could set out in detail what criteria you are using.

“Why is Bolton under a travel ban today, when it has a case rate that is quite a lot lower than Dundee? How is that fair?”

□ "Our 2.8 million residents deserve to be treated with due respect and proper consideration when restrictions are being implemented which will affect their lives."

The Mayor has written to Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland.

Read □ pic.twitter.com/ohKaFLW17Y

— Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham (@MayorofGM) [June 21, 2021](#)

Bolton's rolling case rate for the seven days to 15 June was 269.2 cases per 100,000 people. The equivalent figure for Dundee was higher – at 318.1.

Earlier in the day, Burnham called on the Scottish government to provide compensation payments for Greater Manchester residents who had been negatively affected by the policy change.

Citing an email he had received, he said: “You know if you’re an elderly couple from Bolton and you are both double-jabbed and you haven’t seen your grandkids for two years, and all of a sudden you can’t go to your holiday cottage this week and you’re a couple of grand out of pocket, I think they are owed an explanation.

“It seems totally disproportionate to me to take that away from them.”

Defending her decision on BBC News, Sturgeon, Scotland’s first minister, said: “These are public health measures. I have a duty – and it’s one I take very seriously – to keep [Scotland](#) as safe as possible.”

Sturgeon went on to suggest that Burnham was seeking to “generate a spat” with her in order to position himself in a future Labour leadership contest. When asked about Sturgeon’s comments, Burnham said he found the suggestion that he was primarily motivated by his own political fortunes “insulting”.

“If the first minister of a country stands up at a press conference and announces that the UK’s second city is going under a travel ban, it has an impact. People elsewhere in Europe, around the world, hear that. So it’s not like it’s just a sort of more localised thing between us and [Scotland](#), it has an impact on our city region.

“I don’t think we’ve been treated with the respect we deserve and I’m talking mainly there of the people of Greater Manchester, not myself.”

The Guardian understands Sturgeon’s officials are privately sympathetic to the predicament faced by holidaymakers or business people whose visits to Scotland have been disrupted by the travel ban, but argue it has been another of the many impacts on people forced by the Covid crisis.

They acknowledge Burnham could have a point about improving communications between devolved administrations, but rejected his compensation claims as unmerited.

Labour MSPs took to Twitter to criticise the Scottish government's handling of the announcement.

Labour MSP [Daniel Johnson](#) said: "Let me get this straight – Andy was supposed to have known about the restrictions before they were announced and he should have called her? Andy Burnham is a talented man, but I didn't know he is clairvoyant."

Criticising the fact that GMCA, as representatives of the people affected, were not contacted, Labour MSP Colin Smyth said: "We need cooperation not constant conflict."

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Global health

Indonesia tightens restrictions as it confirms record new coronavirus infections

The country's infections, the worst in south-east Asia, have passed two million

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Indonesia has tightened restrictions after recording 14,535 new Covid cases over the past 24 hours, bringing total tally to 2 million Photograph: Trisnadi/AP

Indonesia has tightened restrictions after recording 14,535 new Covid cases over the past 24 hours, bringing total tally to 2 million Photograph: Trisnadi/AP

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Mon 21 Jun 2021 23.15 EDT

Indonesian health authorities are battling a new surge in coronavirus infections, as the National Agency for Disaster Management (BNPB) reported the highest one-day total, with [14,535 cases](#) confirmed in the 24 hours to Monday.

Daily case totals are reaching levels last seen in January, the peak of Indonesia's fight against the virus.

The tally brought Indonesia's total to more than two million, the third highest in Asia after India and Iran. At least 294 people died on Monday, bringing the country's total confirmed fatalities to more than 54,950. Both the total cases and total deaths are the highest in south-east Asia.

[Delta variant of Covid spreading rapidly and detected in 74 countries](#)

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Public health experts say widespread travel during the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holiday period and the circulation of the more transmissible Delta variant are

believed to be driving the latest surge.

The increase is putting pressure on hospitals, including in Jakarta, where 80% of hospital beds are full, and has added urgency to the government's plan to inoculate 1 million people each day by next month. Authorities have so far only fully vaccinated 12.3 million of Indonesia's 270 million people and partially immunised another 10.9 million.

The World Health Organization last week said [Indonesia](#)'s drastic increase in hospital bed occupancy rates was a major concern and necessitated stricter public health and social measures, including large-scale social restrictions.

The government has resisted a large-scale lockdown due to fears of the economic impact. But tighter restrictions will apply for two weeks in 29 "red zones" nationwide where infection rates are high, with religious activities at houses of worship suspended and restaurants and cafes and malls required to operate at 25% capacity, the coordinating economic minister, Airlangga Hartarto, said.

"The situation is worrying," said Riris Andono Ahmad, an epidemiologist at Gajah Mada University. "We are facing a second wave of Covid-19 with the most transmissible variant and the public's low compliance with health protocols." He urged stricter measures.

[cases](#)

"All of the government's efforts and policy to curb Covid-19 transmission will be ineffective if it gives room for people to gather and crowd," he said.

The national Covid-19 taskforce said a spike in infections has been seen in Jakarta, Banten, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta and East Java provinces. All are on Java, the most populous of Indonesia's more than 17,000 islands.

The country's case fatality rate also reached 2.7% as of Monday, higher than the global average of 2.2%. East Java, home to Surabaya, has the highest rate in of any country in the province, with 7.3%. Despite the increase in

cases, Indonesia hasn't revised the plan to [open Bali for international visitors](#) in July.



Police officers install road barricades as they close the road following the government's decision to impose tighter social restrictions amid the rising number of Covid-19 infections in Jakarta. Photograph: Mast Irham/EPA

['I have to do this to survive': a night with Jakarta's silvermen](#)

[Read more](#)

In the district of Kudus, where 308 healthcare workers have been infected, bed occupancy rates exceeded 90% last week. The workers were infected despite most of them having received the Sinovac vaccine earlier this year, raising questions over its effectiveness.

But Badai Ismoyo, head of the Kudus health department, said that he believed the vaccine had prevented the workers from severe infection. Just over 5% of the workers vaccinated had later been infected, he told the [Jakarta Globe](#).

Last week, President Joko Widodo ordered authorities to step up the vaccination rate. The slow progress in immunisations so far can be attributed to the limited global supply of vaccines, the unpreparedness of the national health system and vaccine hesitancy, national Covid-19 taskforce

spokesperson Wiku Adisasmito said.

The government has received 104.7m vaccine doses, including 94.5 million of Sinovac, 8.2 million of AstraZeneca, and 2 million of Sinopharm. It expects to receive about 50m Pfizer doses in the coming months, followed by 50m Moderna doses.

The health minister, Budi Gunadi Sadikin, has said deals to import around 104m AstraZeneca doses have been hit by delays and now only 20m doses are expected to arrive this year.

– With the Associated Press

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2021.06.22 - Spotlight

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- Unknown treasures The forgotten women of Manchester's Factory Records
- Joni Mitchell's Blue at 50 My favourite song – by James Taylor, Carole King, Graham Nash, David Crosby and more
- Stormont Where Northern Irish politics splits and where it holds together

[Television](#)

Interview

Mischa Barton on success, paparazzi and survival: 'I'm not broken'

[Emine Saner](#)



'I think I'm in a very transitional period' ... Mischa Barton. Photograph: Gian Marco Flamini; fashion stylist, Adeel Khan; hair, Erin Barney at Kim Võ Salon; makeup, Muamera

'I think I'm in a very transitional period' ... Mischa Barton. Photograph: Gian Marco Flamini; fashion stylist, Adeel Khan; hair, Erin Barney at Kim Võ Salon; makeup, Muamera

As party girl Marissa in *The OC*, Barton found fame at a time when young female stars were being hounded by the press. She talks about strength, resilience and her battle against revenge porn



[@eminesaner](#)

Tue 22 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

For some actors, the roles they have played stick to them like shadows, long after they should have been left behind. Just ask Mischa Barton. It is 15 years since she starred as Marissa Cooper in the teen drama The OC, and yet still she can't shake her off. When Barton appeared in the reality show The Hills in 2019 – inspired by The OC's privileged young Californians but featuring real-life people – she was supposed to be herself, but the producers expected Cooper. "It is the constant mistake," she says wryly. "They were even calling me by my character name. Seriously? Like, this far down the line they can't get my name right?"

The parallels, though, are irresistible. Marissa was a troubled party girl with a love of fashion who met a tragic end. Mischa (even their names are similar) was also a troubled party girl with a love of fashion, whose life at times seemed out of control. There was the extreme fame, the breakdown, the reported threats of suicide, estrangement from her parents and a “revenge porn” court case. Barton has weathered it all with a sense of humour and now, at 35, a bit of perspective.

She is at home in Los Angeles when we speak over Zoom, her 15-year-old dog Charles Dickens somewhere at her feet and a black curtain as a backdrop – it's where she has been doing video auditions during the pandemic.

“I think I’m in a very transitional period,” she says of her career, which started with an explosion and seemed to burn itself out in a bonfire of tabloid headlines and drama. There has been the recent foray into reality TV, and a role in an indie film, but Barton feels that now is a good time to reset.

“My manager is smart about what roles he sends me and he knows exactly what it is I want to play. They do have to have some sort of depth to them because, you know, I’ve lived quite a wild life, I’ve been through a lot and so that sort of vapid twentyomething ...” She pauses. “I didn’t even like playing it [in *The OC*] when I was that age, but even less so now.” She is also thinking about doing a documentary series about her life – something, she says, that is “finally from my perspective”.



Barton with Benjamin McKenzie in *The OC*, 2003. Photograph: Warner Bros TV/Kobal/Rex/Shutterstock

There has been a recent, and overdue, reappraisal of how we view the young women who were famous in the early 2000s, and what they went through –

the misogyny, the hounding by the paparazzi, the upskirt pictures, the constant scrutiny of their appearance, the complete disregard for their mental wellbeing. The most famous example is Britney Spears, the subject of the recent documentary [Framing Britney Spears](#), but Barton was another target and is starting to speak out.

“I think a lot of people deserve apologies for the things that were done to them at that time,” she says. “The Britney doc really got to me. Watching that was very strange because I was in all the same places.” Her experiences of being followed by the paparazzi were similar. “Certainly, you couldn’t get away with it today to the same extent, not the same kind of danger,” she says.

Is it frustrating that people had, and maybe still do have, a tabloid image of her? “Yeah, it is, and it’s probably one of the main reasons why I think I’m going to do a docuseries.”

I had an amazing time growing up in my 20s. It was all a bit rock’n’roll.

Barton says she felt typecast, in work and in life, as Marissa Cooper, “like there’s no separation. It’s some weird image that’s stuck – that spoiled rich girl thing.” She certainly grew up with privilege, but hers was a more cultured, eccentric background. She is basically British and has a punkish streak to her personality. Despite all she has been through in public, she is still unguarded, to a point. Unlike most other actors I’ve spoken to, she seems to say what she thinks.

The Hills “was just kind of like a shitshow,” she laughs. She can also be contradictory – she says she didn’t enjoy the reality show’s bitchier side, but wrote a mean Instagram post (since deleted) about the woman who replaced her on it. But she is quick to laugh, including at herself, and there is something compelling about her edginess. Although I think she has been treated horribly over the years, she doesn’t seem to feel sorry for herself. “I had an amazing time growing up in my 20s, and you roll with the punches,” she says. “It was all a bit rock’n’roll.”



‘Things can happen terribly fast, overnight, if you’re under that much stress’
... Barton. Photograph: Gian Marco Flaminini; fashion stylist, Adeel Khan;
hair, Erin Barney at Kim Võ Salon; makeup, Muamera

Barton was born in London, and moved to the US when she was six. Her English father worked in finance and her Irish mother, now a film producer, was Barton’s manager (Barton would later try to sue her for lost earnings, and her mother filed for bankruptcy). Barton says she was an introverted child who loved literature and entering poetry competitions. It was at an arty summer camp that she discovered acting. While the other kids were running around outside, she was indoors writing monologues. “And that’s where somebody saw me and, you know, the luck of the world – their mother was an agent and that was that.”

She loved acting, she says, because she was “really painfully shy. Acting is really what helped me come out of my skin.”

At eight, she was performing in professional plays in New York. Then she was in the indie movie *Lawn Dogs*. She had kept her head down at school, wary of attracting negative attention for her extra-curricular life, but a small part in *The Sixth Sense*, and the film’s huge success, “bust it open”. Busier with work, and starting to be bullied a little, Barton wanted to move from her state school to New York’s Professional Children’s School, where child

actors, dancers and musicians (mostly) fit their education around their careers. Her father, she says, “had already paid a lot of money for my big sister’s education [she is now a QC in London] and he wasn’t interested in Take Two, so he was like: ‘Well, if you want to do it, you pay for it.’” So, with her earnings, she did.

At a certain point, I think that’s when you shut off. You just learn to disconnect

Then, when Barton was 17, she got her part in *The OC*. She had played a small role on the 2002 crime show *Fastlane*, and one of its producers, McG, who was also working on creating *The OC*, fought to get her the role of Marissa. In the medieval era before streaming, and for those of us whose only TV excitement – in the UK at least – came courtesy of Channel 4’s youth channel, *The OC*, with its sex, drugs, drama and glamorous, though morally bankrupt, wealthy Californian lifestyles, became massive. Within a year, the attention “was almost out of control”, she says.

She came under intense scrutiny, and some of it was vicious, particularly about her weight (this was the size-zero era). “It was stupid because you couldn’t do right or wrong. It was like, you’re either too thin and then you put on five pounds: ‘Oh, she’s too fat – she’s got to lose weight.’ At a certain point, I think that’s when you just shut off. You just learn to disconnect from it.”

Has it left a lasting impact? “I think I fared pretty well.” Being able to laugh at it helps, she says. But other aspects of that intense period continue to affect her. “I get mild PTSD about certain things to do with ...” She trails off. “I’m not broken by any means but I certainly don’t like, and I’m very aware of, people taking pictures of me. I’m very aware of camera flashes and cars following me and stuff. And it’s not all in my head – it still happens.”

It felt right to leave *The OC* in 2006. “I wanted to go and do films,” she says. Also, she adds, it hadn’t always been a pleasant working environment. “There was so much other stuff going on behind the scenes, and I wasn’t being treated great by a couple of people,” she says. She pauses, choosing

her words carefully. “It’s complicated.” It had become, she claims, “completely abusive. I had a couple of bad experiences behind the camera, and unfortunately that sort of set the tone for the rest of my experience on the show. And it was just a bit much for me. They weren’t appreciative of how hard I was working or what I was going through off-camera either, so it didn’t feel like I was supported.”



‘It was like, you’re either too thin and then you put on five pounds: “Oh, she’s too fat – she’s got to lose weight”’ ... in *The OC*, 2003. Photograph: Warner Bros TV/Kobal/Rex/Shutterstock

She doesn’t want to say what those experiences were. “I’m very slow to feel comfortable about [talking about] it. It’s hard because I was young, I was very immature. There’s people who are a lot older than you, and 17-year-olds, 18-year-olds, can seem like adults, and I certainly was quite a sophisticated one, I guess. So maybe there was a misconception about how young I really was a lot of the time.” Barton was much younger than the rest of the cast – the actor playing her love interest, for instance, was seven years older than her, a big gap at that age. “Most of my ‘firsts’ were on camera – I grew up through the screen,” she says. [In a piece she wrote for Harper’s Bazaar](#) last week, Barton said she had her first kiss on screen (in the film *Pups*, shot when she was just 12), and that her character got her period – something Barton hadn’t experienced at the time. When she joined *The OC*,

she was still a virgin and felt “like a fraud” for playing Cooper in this sexy teen show; pursued by older men, she felt she had to get her first experience of sex “out of the way”.

Although she worked steadily for the next few years, Barton became more famous for her turbulent life than for her career. In 2009, she was held in a psychiatric hospital, the US equivalent of being sectioned. “When I had that breakdown, it was around a show that I was trying to get going, and I was forced into a bunch of different situations that I didn’t want to be in, and so things snowballed and really took on a life of their own. And then next thing you know, you’ve hit a wall. Things can happen terribly fast, overnight, if you’re under that much stress.”

[How I get dressed : Mischa Barton](#)

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At the beginning of 2017, Barton was briefly taken to hospital again after behaving erratically in her back garden – cruelly, pictures taken by a neighbour appeared on a celebrity news website. In a statement afterwards, she said her behaviour had been caused by being drugged while out the night before. In a TV interview a few months later, talking about the time leading up to her breakdown, Barton claimed her team had put her on prescription drugs to keep her working. “Welcome to America,” she says now, laughing. “There’s a pill [for everything]. That’s why I always like taking my sabbaticals in England – not that the Brits don’t go nuts in their own ways – because it just gets a bit much out here. There’s always a way to keep you going and make sure that the machine keeps turning.”

Does she feel, now, that she wasn’t protected as much as she should have been? “Yeah, a little bit. I think it’s a tough job but yes, I think there were people a lot older than me who should have known better. Or been a bit more compassionate with a young person. But it’s complicated. Everybody is trying to do their thing. I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders – you always want to please everybody. You’re making people money, you want to make sure that you’re still doing that for them, that things don’t fall apart … But, you know, I don’t go around blaming people.”

The rest of 2017 didn't get much easier – a month after that TV interview, Barton's legal battle with the two men she had accused of attempting to distribute videos and images of her came to a head. Both were former boyfriends; one had filmed them having sex and taken nude images without her consent; the other made copies. They reached an agreement to hand the images over.

It sounds like a gruelling and lonely fight – this was a few months before the [**#MeToo movement**](#) erupted. It would have been easier to have gone through the case in light of that, wouldn't it? "Oh yeah," says Barton, laughing, adding that her two sisters tease her about her bad timing. "It was right before anybody felt sorry for you in the slightest. But I am extremely proud to say we won that case – it took a lot – and that's all that really matters. It was a very desperate, dark moment: I really thought that what he'd done was going to get released, and that the rest of my life was over."

[Mischa Barton sex tapes: OC actor speaks of her horror](#)
[Read more](#)

During this period, Barton had moved to upstate New York for a while, to get away from Los Angeles. She has now been back in the city for a while and seems excited about the next chapter of her career. "I've had every opportunity to walk away from the industry and come back to it," she says. Has her career gone the way she had hoped? "Have there been huge interruptions in the middle? Yes. But I think there's plenty of time to see. I'm positive that I can find the right thing for me. I know what my strengths are and I know the type of people I like to work with."

Barton seems admirably resilient, given everything. She has had therapy, but doesn't currently see a therapist. She is reconciled with her family, and enjoying everyday pleasures such as "nature, my dog, my friends and my boyfriend" (the photographer Gian Marco Flamini). And she has let go of any bitterness towards those who could have been kinder to her. "I think karma is a real thing and it all comes back around. Do I think that unfair treatment of young women is not a cool thing? Yes, definitely. But I'm not resentful."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/jun/22/mischa-barton-on-success-paparazzi-and-survival-im-not-broken>

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Culture

Unknown treasures: the forgotten women of Manchester's Factory Records



FAC checking ... (clockwise from top left) Love Will Tear Us Apart 12-inch, Peter Saville, 1980; Lindsay Reade and Tony Wilson; Jon Savage flyer, 1980; Night Shifts to the Factory, Linder Sterling flyer, 1978; Reade on the cover of I Get Along Without You Very Well by Durutti Column, Mark Farrow, 1983; New Order, 1989; Poster by Tony Wilson and Anthony Howard, made at the same time as FAC 1.

FAC checking ... (clockwise from top left) Love Will Tear Us Apart 12-inch, Peter Saville, 1980; Lindsay Reade and Tony Wilson; Jon Savage flyer, 1980; Night Shifts to the Factory, Linder Sterling flyer, 1978; Reade on the cover of I Get Along Without You Very Well by Durutti Column, Mark Farrow, 1983; New Order, 1989; Poster by Tony Wilson and Anthony Howard, made at the same time as FAC 1.

A new exhibition shines a light on the female creatives and managers who helped turn the home of Joy Division and New Order into a three decade-

long powerhouse

[Leonie Cooper](#)

Tue 22 Jun 2021 04.00 EDT

From its figurehead Tony Wilson through to the male-dominated bands that found fame on the label, [Factory Records](#) is sometimes seen as the epitome of a muso lad fest. But [a new exhibition at Manchester's Science and Industry Museum](#) is having a go at changing all that, casting welcome light on the women who were integral not only to Factory's birth but its three decade-long survival.

[The Guide: Staying In – sign up for our home entertainment tips](#)

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Use Hearing Protection displays the first 50 items to receive the label's famed FAC catalogue numbers, starting with a 1978 Peter Saville-designed poster for the first Factory club night and finishing with New Order's debut album, 1981's Movement. But rather than simply letting attendees bask in the artefacts' counter-cultural greatness, the exhibit homes in on the label's female forces, letting long-unsung talents such as general manager Lesley Gilbert – no relation to New Order's Gillian Gilbert – as well as New Order's current co-manager Rebecca Boulton, and the writer Liz Naylor, who co-edited Manchester music zine City Fun and created the four-page film script for the never-made Too Young to Know, Too Wild to Care (catalogue number FAC 20), get their dues.

Lindsay Reade also plays a vital part in the story. "I really am a co-founder, because it was our household savings that we used to make the first record," explains [Tony Wilson](#)'s ex-wife of A Factory Sample, a 1978 EP (FAC 2) that featured songs by Cabaret Voltaire, Joy Division and the Durutti Column. It was Reade, too, who stumbled upon a demo by the unknown band Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark while going through the stacks of cassettes sent to Wilson. "It wasn't his thing, but I told him: 'I really think this is going to get somewhere.'" On Reade's advice, the band released their hugely influential debut single, Electricity (FAC 6), with Factory. "He subsequently got rid of them without discussing it with me!" says Reade.

A former schoolteacher, Reade met Wilson – who died in 2007 – at a party. Upon hearing plans for this exhibition, Reade looked back through her mementos of their fiery relationship and found a stack of letters he had sent her. “They run the gamut from falling in love at first sight, then the marriage going wrong and the infidelities, then him desperately trying to get me back,” says Reade, who is currently looking for a publisher for them. “He was a great writer and it’d be a shame for them to just go in the bin.”

Portraits of Reade taken by Wilson and the sleeve of Durutti Column’s I Get Along Without You Very Well – featuring Reade on vocals as well as the artwork – are also included in the exhibition. She was integral to nurturing Joy Division and became disillusioned after the 1980 death of their frontman Ian Curtis. “It was then that I began to hate Factory,” she says. “I felt that we’d failed. Nothing’s worth a casualty like that.” Although she and Wilson divorced, Reade later returned to the label as an employee, setting up Factory’s overseas licensing department and briefly co-managing the Stone Roses.



Durutti Column poster, Jon Savage, 1980. Photograph: Factory Records

It helps that one of the women curating Use Hearing Protection is a proper old-school Factory fan. “It really struck a chord with me when Gillian [Gilbert] joined what became [New Order](#),” explains Jan Hicks, archives

manager of the Science and Industry Museum and one of the driving forces behind the exhibition's female focus. "The fact that this band had a woman in it who was a core musician and not just a singer was really important."

Hicks was keen to upend the traditional telling of the Factory story by celebrating the less-heralded likes of photo-montage artist Linder Sterling, who was one of the first to design flyers for Factory. "You've got this boys' club feel around Factory, but actually right at the start, the way that they were presenting themselves incorporated radical feminist imagery," she explains.

Sketches on a napkin of a menstrual egg timer – a sort of period tracking abacus – dreamed up by Sterling is one of the items on display. "It never got made but that napkin was taken by Tony and given a Factory number, so it's FAC 8," says Hicks. A few years later, Sterling wore a dress made entirely of meat during a performance at the Haçienda – 30 years before Lady Gaga – and her work has since been displayed everywhere from Tate Britain to New York's Museum of Modern [Art](#).

If period-related innovations are the last thing you would expect to find alongside a geeky collection of [A Certain Ratio](#) cassettes, then think again. "Factory is a label that tells the story of independent thought and of inspiration coming from unusual places," states Hicks. "It encapsulates Manchester's radical history as well – as a place of nonconformity."

Use Hearing Protection is at Science and Industry Museum, Manchester, to 3 January

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/jun/22/unknown-treasures-the-forgotten-women-of-manchesters-factory-records>

[Culture](#)

Joni Mitchell's Blue: my favourite song – by James Taylor, Carole King, Graham Nash, David Crosby and more

As the legendary album turns 50, the musicians it inspired – and those who inspired it – tell us which track means the most to them and why



‘She took off like a rocket’ ... Joni Mitchell in 1970. Photograph: Martin Mills/Getty Images

‘She took off like a rocket’ ... Joni Mitchell in 1970. Photograph: Martin Mills/Getty Images

Interviews by [Dave Simpson](#)

Tue 22 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

[Martha Wainwright: All I Want](#)



Joni came along when few women wrote their own songs. They were marginalised and surrounded by men, but she was never defined by that. Her songs are her own story – and she just happens to be a woman. All I Want is incredibly hard to sing because the melodies are all over the place. It's a pretty song about an idyllic love that unravels. “I am on a lonely road and I am travelling, travelling, travelling.” There was so much sadness around her relationships, but also freedom from them too. As if she's saying, “I won't let you destroy or hurt me. I will triumph in the end with my songwriting and my freedom.” I met her four or five years ago at an intimate dinner party, where she held court like a magnificent queen.

Fran Healy, Travis: My Old Man



The piano on *My Old Man* is like sunshine bursting through leaves and every single line is a perfect observation. “My old man, he’s a singer in the park, he’s a walker in the rain, a dancer in the dark.” And then: “But when he’s gone, me and those lonesome blues collide, the bed’s too big, the frying pan’s too wide.” I’m getting teary thinking about how it must feel to have that written about you. To hear it when you’ve split up must be heartbreak. Every thread of the album is what happened to her and what she wanted to happen – reflections and projections. I’d never heard anything as honest. It’s a perfect album. That’s why it’s lasted.

Birdy: Little Green



Little Green is about the daughter Joni gave up for adoption as a poor folk singer in Toronto. The guitar is so sweet and light, it makes it almost more sad. And, while the lyrics are veiled, Little Green represents new life and hope. After all she's been through, she just wants the child to be happy. She was so young. To go through that, and then the agony of writing a song about it, just shows what a strong person she is.

KT Tunstall: Carey



I bought Blue when I was 17 or 18 and wore the CD out. She's one of the great guitar players but that's overlooked because her writing and vocal talent is unmatched. Carey [inspired by a red-haired chef she met in Crete called Cary Raditz, [whose kitchen exploded](#)] grabs you by the collar and pulls you into a different universe. I can relate to it because she sings: "I miss my clean white linen and my fancy French cologne." That is my life and it's probably how hers was: being on the road with a bunch of blokes and the bus smelling like boys.

She behaved in many ways like a lot of the guys who would have been on the road, just having fun and not getting tied down. Causing trouble basically. She had that wildness in her, a gentle, sweet person actually doing what the fuck she wants. You can hear that in All I Want. "I want to talk to you. I wanna shampoo you." It's just delightful. What guy could resist that?

Carole King: Blue



When the album was released in 1971, I was blown away by Joni's open guitar tunings, unpredictable chord changes, and amazing vocal chops that allowed her to move effortlessly from warm, rich low notes to bell-like high notes and back again. I loved the simplicity of her rhythmic accompaniment on piano, guitar, or dulcimer.

Then I got into the lyrics. It was hard to hear her painfully honest emotions. As a young mother, I found Blue and Little Green especially moving, but then she'd break into something wickedly funny, as in California. The album is such a perfectly sequenced collection of inspired and well-crafted songs that it's difficult to choose one as a favourite. I'll just say to my sister in songwriting: "Congratulations, Joni, and thank you."

Guy Garvey, Elbow: Blue



Between 17 and 30, I was dotting between party houses, bedsits, spare rooms and shared flats. Although I'd never admit it, I was often very scared. Joni was my big sister, my wise, hip auntie and always a reminder what a heartfelt song could do. Blue's title track would touch me most when I was regretting decisions or feeling neglected or just jaded and scared. Something in the first gentle "Hey Blue, here is a song for you" told me she was really worried for who she was singing for. I took it for my own comfort.

These days she's my little sister, knocked out by the world she's moving through, proudly jiving, taking no shit, cooing and wooing her way into all of those hearts. You hear the phrase "free spirit" a lot. This is a perfect recording of one.

Josh Groban: Blue



I've been listening to Blue a lot as we edge out of the pandemic. The really great storytellers like Joni continue to tell our stories in the modern day. We're going through the same experiences and feelings. It's just the details that are different. The album is a perfect 36 minutes, full of unexpected twists and turns. Her piano-playing is so inventive and adventurous. There's a real nothing-to-lose quality about the way she was then.

Blue itself is an extraordinary song. Whether you're in a relationship, breaking up, or you've just lived through the last year in general, everybody is looking into the mirror a little closer to ask: "What am I and who am I without this person?" Blue is the journey to perspective, but she writes songs about being at the other end as well – and falling on her face. It's an absolute masterpiece.



‘It’s one of the best things in my life that I’ve known her’ ... James Taylor with Joni around 1970. Photograph: Jim McCrary/Redferns

James Taylor: California

Joni had succeeded in music. She had a house and an automobile and wanted to have fun and see the world. After a year or two travelling in Europe with her portable dulcimer, she came back with lots of songs and ideas. We moved in the same circles and ended up together. I’m not saying I was sober, but my then addiction to heroin was relatively quiet.

It was a calm, peaceful, amazing, creative time. She quit smoking and her voice was excellent. She was at the height of her powers. It felt natural and easy for me to play on the album. There were very few people in the sessions. Blue’s brilliance lies in its minimalism. It thrives on her voice, melody and personality. It’s pure Joni.

California, which she wrote in Paris, is a coming home song. After travelling, your home has a different context within the world and California captures that. It’s delightful, personal and genuine. When I was taking her to meet my family in North Carolina, between flights she suddenly said she had to return to California and left me at the airport - at the altar, so to speak. Maybe she sensed the wreckage of my next 15 years and didn’t want to be

tied down. She is totally real and self-invented and it's one of the best things in my life that I've known her.

Gary Kemp, Spandau Ballet: California



California is a postcard song from her escape trip to Europe. She ended up living in Matala, Crete, [with a bunch of cave-dwelling hippies](#) and her dulcimer. It's a wonderfully chatty lyric about her experiences there, good and bad. She'd left Laurel Canyon and Lookout Mountain, but was longing to return to the heartland of the counterculture and pop-making. Yet California was also a place of semi-conscious denial: the opening verse touches on the early realisation, in the 1970s, that peace and love seemed over. The song feels pregnant with those times.

Her return to LA had her falling for [James Taylor](#). Although the relationship left her in despair, he joins her exquisitely on guitar for this difficult yet uplifting song of homesickness and her need to escape back to the garden.

Green Gartside, Scritti Politti: This Flight Tonight



Blue was more beautiful and more sophisticated than any other record of its time. There's not one second that is compromised or ill-judged. Like a rocket trailing an exquisite pyrotechnical display, she took off and transcended her influences, such as [Judy Collins](#) and [Joan Baez](#). There are melismatic vocal runs where she sings syllables over extraordinary, twisting runs of notes. They're not folk or jazz or pop, but I think they're among the most incredible things the human voice has ever achieved. [I love “Sneaky” Pete Kleinow’s pedal steel playing on this song](#) and Joni’s restless exploration of guitar tunings gives a gentle dissonance that kind of unsettles. As a teenager, the music sent the most complex and emotionally ambiguous shivers up my spine.

Graham Nash: River



I met Joni in 1967 when I was in the Hollies and we played Ottawa. Later, I flew from London to spend a few days with her in Los Angeles. When I arrived, I could hear voices in the house. David Crosby and Stephen Stills were having dinner with her. The Byrds had thrown David out and Stephen's band, Buffalo Springfield, were over. We smoked a big one and Stephen played this fabulous song, [You Don't Have to Cry](#), with David and myself singing harmonies. So Joni witnessed the birth of Crosby, Stills and Nash.

We were a couple for two years – and I watched her write many of the songs on Blue. She didn't finish it until after we parted. River made me sad, because it chronicled the end of our relationship, but also elated, because it was such a beautiful song and she had the courage to bare her soul. We were very much in love. I treasured that relationship.

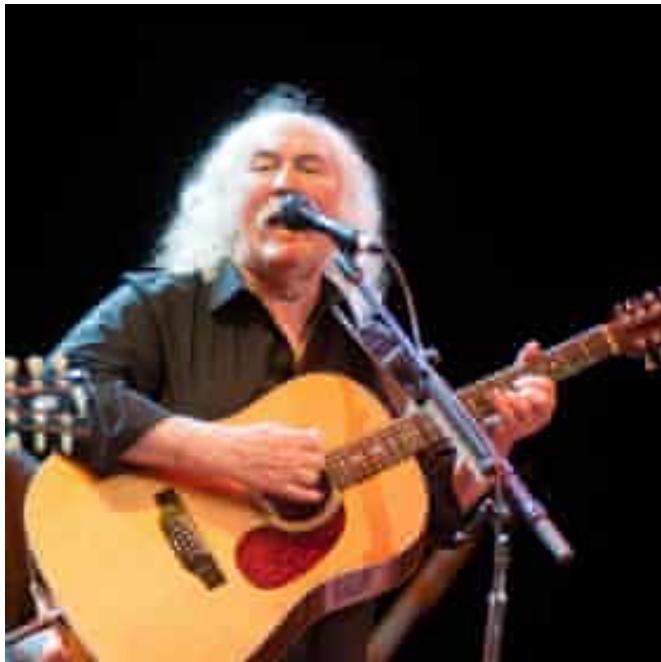
I remember leaving the house to give her the space to finish My Old Man. I'm sad that it's about me again, but it's so brilliant. Like the song suggests, I asked her to marry me but I think she thought I wanted a "wife" to cook meals and so on, which was never my intention. I wanted her to be as free as possible, to be as brilliant as possible. She's an amazing woman. I'm proud to have been a part of her life. In 100 years' time, people will remember the Beatles, Bob Dylan and Joni.

Gregory Porter: River



Part of Joni's genius is that it's not always immediately clear where she's coming from. I've heard this played at Christmas concerts, because it begins with: "They're cutting down trees, they're putting up reindeer." Despite the festive imagery, it gradually dawns that she is dreadfully unhappy and she wishes she had a river to just skate the hell away from all the merriment. There's a sophisticated melancholy in her writing and even her public image: not tons of smiling pictures. To me, Joni is always playing with the borders between happiness, sadness, love, hate, sanity and a breakdown, which is where we all are, many times.

David Crosby: A Case of You



Joni went out with me, Graham Nash, James Taylor, Jackson Browne and Leonard Cohen. She was exciting and turbulent and fun and we all loved her – yet I don't think she was ever happy. She'd been through polio, the marriage to Chuck Mitchell and giving up a child – and music was her way of processing this. It could be difficult to be around her because she'd have you laughing or crying real tears in the same half an hour, like her music. It's genuinely who she is.

Bob Dylan's as good a poet as Joni, but nowhere near as good a musician. Paul Simon and James Taylor made some stunners – but for me, Blue is the best singer-songwriter album. Picking a song from it is like choosing between your children. Can you imagine a better song than A Case of You? She was so brilliant as a songwriter, it crushed me. But she gives us all something to strive for.

Jimmy Webb: A Case of You



I saw Joni on stage at the Troubadour in LA in 1968, this golden-haired beauty playing gorgeous chords and singing with mind-blowing abandon in terms of what she was willing to reveal about herself. I wrote her a fan/love letter and sent red roses. Some years later, she found the unopened letter while moving house and said: “I’d love to have tea with you!” We’d become very good friends by then.

She first played A Case of You for me at A&M studios. She was transitioning from guitar to piano and the chords were more modern, complex and dissonant. Lyrically, she was really pushing the envelope in terms of the confessional songwriter. “I could drink a case of you,” she sings, “and still be on my feet.” She’s saying that her love for someone is in her blood like holy wine, but even as she’s swept away she’s going to survive. Her lyrics were deeply personal revelations, shocking sometimes. She changed how people write songs.

Kim Wilde: A Case of You



As an 11-year-old child who'd never had an alcoholic drink, A Case of You just carried me away. Joni's music and melancholic voice found their place deep inside my heart and the lyrics painted magical pictures in my mind. I would write endless lyrics in notepads inspired by her, but it took several years for me to find the confidence to develop my own songwriting.

One of the loveliest moments of my life was when our musician son Harry bought a lot of old Joni vinyl. I'd hear her tremulous voice drifting down from his bedroom entrancing him just as it had done me so many years before.

Holly Macve: The Last Time I Saw Richard



I was 18 and had just moved into an empty flat in Brighton. I'd been doing some pop co-writing which wasn't really me. I felt like I'd lost myself. Blue helped me find my own voice. The Last Time I Saw Richard was sparked by a conversation she had with [folk singer Patrick Sky](#). It's a philosophical argument between a romantic idealist and a cynical realist. As a dreamer myself, it has my favourite line on the album: "Go look at your eyes, they're full of moon." Then she sings: "You got tombs in your eyes, but the songs you punched are dreaming." It's a novel in four minutes. Just breathtaking.

The Reprise Albums (1968-71) containing remastered versions of Song to a Seagull, Clouds, Ladies of the Canyon and Blue is released in four-CD, four-LP and digital versions on 25 June via Rhino.

This article was amended on 22 June 2021. Green Gartside referred to Mitchell's vocal runs as "melismatic", not "melodramatic" as previously stated, and described her transcending her influences as "pyrotechnic", not "psychedelic". The errors arose in transcription.

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Northern Irish politics

Stormont: where Northern Irish politics splits and where it holds together

Data analysis of 21 years of legislation shows the faultlines and the room for hope

Tue 22 Jun 2021 05.48 EDT Last modified on Tue 22 Jun 2021 06.01 EDT

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2021.06.22 - Opinion

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Punishing the young serves Johnson's politics of nostalgia

[William Davies](#)

The pitiful school ‘catch-up’ funding reveals the Tories are only ‘moving left’ on spending where it’s electorally convenient



Boris Johnson in a Year 2 maths lesson at St Mary's CE primary school, Stoke-on-Trent, in March. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Boris Johnson in a Year 2 maths lesson at St Mary's CE primary school, Stoke-on-Trent, in March. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Tue 22 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

Boris Johnson's government has made some controversial spending decisions since March 2020, such as £37bn on a malfunctioning test-and-trace system, or the £3.7bn of Covid-related contracts flagged by Transparency International as [potentially tainted by corruption](#). The

unprecedented nature of the pandemic has destroyed any veneer of fiscal restraint, with the cost of the furlough scheme alone approaching £70bn.

Some of these decisions were rash, others were justifiable given the emergency at hand. But none have been as conspicuously destructive as the decision to deliver just a fraction of the “catch-up” funding for schools recommended by the government’s own “education recovery tsar”. Only [£1.5bn was offered](#), or one-tenth of what Sir Kevan Collins had recommended before he [resigned](#) in protest shortly after the announcement in early June. The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, who found so few opportunities to say “no” over the past 15 months, has finally rediscovered his inner Margaret Thatcher.

This is not merely a controversy about education: it is key to understanding Johnsonism in practice, which, for all the appeals to “levelling up” and fiscal extravagance, shares with Sunak a disregard for the longer-term future. The politics of nostalgia meshes well with the economics of austerity where children and young people are concerned, with neither ideology offering any serious hope for national renewal.

The economic arguments for spending more to compensate for “learning loss” during the pandemic are now well rehearsed. British children have lost more than half a year of normal school, which the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#) calculates could translate into £350bn of lost earnings over a lifetime, and £100bn of lost tax revenue. These sorts of calculations helped to justify the decision of the Netherlands to commit an additional £2,500 per pupil per year, compared with just £100 in the UK.

Public spending on education is also one of the central ways that market-oriented societies such as Britain’s strive to reduce inequality. An expert consensus has developed in recent decades that money spent on early-years education offers disproportionate benefits when it comes to tackling the lifelong impact of a disadvantaged background – thinking that was instrumental in New Labour’s introduction of Sure Start and free nursery places for three- and four-year-olds.

The closure of schools and early-years settings will have fallen particularly hard on disadvantaged children, who are likelier to have unequal access to

technology and smaller homes, and live in neighbourhoods where infections, and therefore school closures, are higher. Inequalities in reading and maths have [deepened along class and geographic lines](#). Many of these will have lifelong impacts.

Learning aside, young people have suffered deeply in many other ways, whether it be the loneliness and stress faced by university students or the job losses that fell [disproportionately on under-25s](#). The mental health of children and young people in Britain was already one of its most shameful social indicators before Covid-19 (referrals to children's mental health services [jumped by an astonishing 35%](#) in the year prior to the pandemic) and looks set to get worse. No amount of "catch-up" funding will address this crisis if it only leads to a further narrowing of the curriculum and more testing. But when all a government has is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Despair is not an unreasonable mindset for those approaching adulthood under these circumstances.

It is striking that nobody is standing up politically and naming this national abandonment of the young. What does it say about a nation that it can find £372bn (and counting) to fight a pandemic, but strives to shave every penny off the cost of renewing itself in the aftermath? This is the trajectory of social nihilism: a political project that has no spending limit when it comes to Tory donors, employers and voters in target seats, but refuses to see any value in the next generation of employees and citizens.

The fact that children and young people are extremely unlikely to be harmed by Covid-19 may be too obvious to need pointing out, or else sound like the prelude to an argument against lockdowns or school closures. But on the contrary, it is evidence that, over the past 15 months, we have witnessed one of the most remarkable acts of collective sacrifice since 1945 – of the young for the old, the low-risk for the high-risk. This is something to be recognised and celebrated. Instead, our political and media gerontocracy have simply pocketed the gift and barely mentioned it again.

The claim repeated by the intellectual friends of the Conservative party is that they have moved left on economics and right on culture. But the fiscal treatment of children (which will harm disadvantaged youngsters especially)

shows that Johnsonism is really just “moving right on culture” all the way down. The efforts to “move left” on economics turn out to be electorally motivated gestures towards particular groups of voters. The result is a political regime that offers symbolic recognition to regions and communities (the so-called “red wall”) that were injured by Thatcher four decades ago thanks to the vicious monetarist recession of the early 1980s, while ignoring the communities that are being injured in front of their eyes today.

Sigmund Freud made a distinction between “mourning”, in which a person suffers some loss or injury which they slowly and painfully move on from, and “melancholia”, in which they turn in on themselves in a hateful search for what’s been lost, refusing to accept that it is gone. In the early 2000s, cultural theorist Paul Gilroy adopted the same language to diagnose Britain’s “post-colonial melancholia”, suggesting that an unrelenting culture of flag-waving and Churchill-worship signified an unhappy, angry quest for something that had been mislaid. Our new era of enforced union jacks and government yachts has proved Gilroy more right than he could possibly have feared.

Boris Johnson didn’t invent this melancholic culture, but he has encouraged and exploited it ruthlessly. It is there in the jingoistic headlines of tabloids, just as it is there in the attention-seeking interventions of ministers in concocted “culture war” issues. But the attitude to younger generations is also a component, the insistence that the future cannot – *must* not – be better than the past. The sudden exercise of fiscal restraint when it comes to children’s education is symptomatic of something deeper than mere economics. It is the self-punishing aspect of melancholia that Freud identified – and today’s children are the ones on the receiving end.

What would a political tonic or alternative look like? Too often the left looks at the intergenerational schisms in our politics and economics, and simply waits for the ticking demographic timebomb under the Tory party and the press to explode. But the emergency for children and young people is *now*.

A more immediately plausible strategy for Labour would be to do whatever it takes to position itself as the party of children and young people, and therefore the party of realistic national hope. Melancholia works politically when it is channelled via the media and Downing Street machine, to focus

on manufactured “cultural” controversies. But it may have less psychological hold on people in their everyday lives, as they imagine their children and grandchildren growing older.

If there is hope for Labour, it must lie in the likelihood that many Tory voters are more compassionate and less nostalgic than their political representatives and media spokespeople, and can still recognise the most palpable social injustices. Few things have caused this government more discomfort over the past year than Marcus Rashford’s campaign for free school meals, or the righteous anger of GCSE and A-level students at having their results set by an algorithm.

School pupils may not vote, and young people may not vote enough, but to discount these people politically (as Sunak and Johnson have done) could still come back to bite them – if another party could make our society’s treatment of the young the political issue it deserves to be.

- William Davies is a sociologist and political economist. His latest book is *This is Not Normal: The Collapse of Liberal Britain*

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OpinionCoronavirus

Vaccines are not magic bullets – we'll still have to take precautions

[Zania Stamataki](#)

To make the most of England's vaccination rollout we may need to keep wearing masks even after restrictions are lifted

- Dr Zania Stamataki is a researcher in viral immunology



Leicester Tigers fans at Welford Road on 5 June. Photograph: Graham Wilson/Action Plus/Rex/Shutterstock

Leicester Tigers fans at Welford Road on 5 June. Photograph: Graham Wilson/Action Plus/Rex/Shutterstock

Tue 22 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Boris Johnson's government is pushing back the release of lockdown restrictions in England by four weeks, despite the UK being in the [top 10](#) countries with the highest percentage of vaccine doses administered. Reasonably, people are asking: why the need for prolonged restrictions when the rollout has been so successful? What does a safe level of vaccination look like?

To date, 46.8% of the population are [fully vaccinated](#) in the UK and 64.2% have received one dose of a coronavirus vaccine. The jabs approved in the UK use the virus's spike protein to educate our immune system so when it meets the real thing, it can produce antibodies and T-cells that recognise this spike and control the infection.

After the first vaccination (or natural infection) it takes a couple of weeks to expand the [relevant immune cells](#), but then memory cells protect us from severe disease in future infections. In [previously infected](#) people, the first vaccination acts like a booster, helping them retain antiviral immunity for longer. Immunological memory duration differs for different viruses, and this is why we need to monitor how long protection lasts for new vaccines and viruses, enabling us to work out when we need booster vaccinations.

The second vaccination in two-dose regimens acts to increase the power and duration of immunity after the first jab. We appreciate that immunity [may wane](#) a few months to a year after coronavirus infection, but the timing of this has yet to be established following vaccination.

Given the pressing clinical need and early sparsity of vaccine doses, the initial decision was taken to vaccinate at an interval of 12 weeks for two-dose vaccines. This helped us protect the most vulnerable faster, despite some vaccines being tested only at eight-week intervals in clinical trials. [The latest advice](#) is to bring forward the second jab appointments to eight weeks, to help keep us safe from a third wave of infection.

Vaccines, however, are not magic; they do nothing to stop us being exposed to a virus if someone sneezes over us, and this is why restrictions still play a role. Vaccines do help reduce the opportunities for the virus to take hold and the intensity of an infection's aftermath, while [cutting down transmission](#). [So far](#), they are estimated to have saved 12,000 lives in England alone, and

prevented more than 30,000 hospitalisations. Most vaccinated people will show mild symptoms or none at all when infected. But symptoms may also [depend on the variant](#).

There is still a chance that vaccinated people will pass the virus on, particularly at super-spreader events and with highly transmissible variants, such as the [Delta variant](#) now predominant in the UK. As new variants that carry mutated spike proteins emerge, the effect of our current jabs may be reduced and the vaccines will require updating. But right now, there is [evidence](#) that our vaccines are protective against the Delta variant.

So what does a safe level of vaccination look like, in order to protect those unable to have a jab and achieve [herd immunity](#)? It depends on the virus, and this coronavirus has [a few tricks](#) up its sleeve. At the beginning of the pandemic, experts estimated that about 70% of the population needed to be vaccinated to keep everyone safe from severe disease, but the Delta variant is [more transmissible](#) than the original virus, and the new estimate is closer to 85%.

We are on the right track, with cautious restrictions and extending the vaccine rollout, and upcoming school closures for the summer are on our side. We have to continue taking personal precautions to stop the spread, or new variants will emerge that will eventually escape the vaccines we have now. We are also rightly planning for a booster jab programme in the autumn, which itself raises questions, such as how to safely combine Covid vaccinations with winter flu jabs. The aim is to reduce the risk as much as possible for everyone; we don't yet fully understand long Covid, or the impact of infection on tissues such as [the brain](#).

Until the majority of us are fully protected and infection rates are brought back under control, I will continue to wear my mask in busy places and indoors after restrictions are lifted. We must do all we can to protect the effectiveness of our vaccines for as long as possible, or we will find ourselves back at square one. I will also continue to monitor immunity in vaccinated people, because we don't know yet how long protection will last. When immunity starts to wane, we need to detect this through immune surveillance tests and invite those who are vaccinated to get booster jabs of

the same or updated vaccines, as needed, in the years to come. There is still some way to go out of this pandemic.

- Dr Zania Stamatakis is a senior lecturer and researcher in viral immunology at the University of Birmingham
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[Opinion](#)[Older people](#)

I do love getting older. Here are five infuriating reasons why

[Emma Beddington](#)



A new scientific study has revealed what we all knew, deep down – you can't stop the ageing process. But it does come with some serious benefits



The first rule of quitting the fight club ... growing older and learning the shortcuts and cheat codes to avoid rows. Posed by models. Photograph: Flashpop/Getty Images

The first rule of quitting the fight club ... growing older and learning the shortcuts and cheat codes to avoid rows. Posed by models. Photograph: Flashpop/Getty Images

Tue 22 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Apparently – brace yourselves – we can't stop ageing. Time to pack up my crucible and robes and cancel my subscription to Practical Alchemy for Beginners. A [newly published international study](#) has concluded, in essence, that biological factors will continue to constrain our attempts to prolong life. "The trajectory towards death in old age has not changed," said José Manuel Aburto, part of the team that analysed mortality data, rather crushingly, like that kid who told you Santa wasn't real.

I could have told you that these flesh envelopes of offal have a sell-by date, simply from watching my husband (51) hobble around last weekend in a doleful cloud of Voltarol pain relief gel, having swapped his desk chair for an inflatable exercise ball for the afternoon in an attempt to strengthen his "core". For me (46), a new orthopaedic chair was supposed to sort out my seized-up shoulder but inexplicably gives me aching buttocks in exchange:

there is no combination of sitting, standing or lying that doesn't hurt after half an hour now, and no shred of grace or dignity in the transitions between these states. We have the built-in obsolescence of crappy white goods, not the perennial majesty of mountains.

But oh, the compensations. No one under 90 should probably be allowed to talk about ageing and I have read enough “30 things I learned by my 30th birthday” lists to know that no observed experience is universal enough, or particular enough, not to annoy someone. But I do love getting older and here are a few – doubtless infuriating – reasons why.

Fighting. My partner and I used to fight all the time: I remember sleeping in his bath to make some obscure, furious point, missing parties because something explosively stupid happened on the drive there and conducting silent telephone sulks in phone boxes as a queue lengthened behind me. Our 17-year-old doesn't have a middle name because of a dramatic blow-up en route to the register office. We still fight, obviously, but now we have all the shortcuts and cheat codes. I have probably been vile; he's probably escalated dramatically and we both just want it to end so we can enjoy watching the French judge from Bake Off: The Professionals saying “sponge” together.

Being a woman. The risk of terrible stuff happening is still out there, of course. But the chances of having a vaguely uncomfortable time have, in my experience, vastly diminished: I'm spared the street harassment and grisly attempts at flirting. My ageing face in repose seems to promise not erotic possibility, but a boner-killing monologue on compost. How could I not love my marionette lines, sagging chin and general air of deep weariness, when they offer this glorious freedom?

Bluffing. I don't do this sweaty, dishonest dance any more, the scrabbling, uneasy pretending to understand something when I don't. I haven't acquired wisdom, but I have accepted my own stupidity: on many topics (cryptocurrency, the boiler, South Sudan) I am as dumb as a rock and happy to admit it. That's the next best thing, because if you say you don't understand, you get to learn.

Social anxiety. When I did group therapy for anxiety at 30, perhaps one of the most reassuring revelations was that most of us rehearsed and agonised

over the most innocuous conversations. In my mid-40s I am not much more socially accomplished, but I do have a rich memorised catalogue of my past howlers and humiliations to draw on. None of those killed me, so calling Specsavers unscripted to change an appointment probably won't either.

Delight. The arrival of the Lakeland catalogue with its promise of novel storage solutions; a fig roll; managing to grow between one and three edible tomatoes ... the absurd delight I take in trivial stuff is the best bit of my current age. I suppose it's because my twingeing buttocks are constantly reminding me how fleeting everything all is. If I'm increasingly thrilled by tiny things, old age is going to be a Technicolor wonderland of perpetual delight as long as the Voltarol keeps flowing, right? If not, elders, don't disillusion me: this is one area of ignorance I'm quite happy to preserve.

Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#)[LGBT rights](#)

Hungary's classrooms have become the new battleground for the war on 'LGBT ideology'

[Mark Gevisser](#)

Viktor Orban has used a new law to equate gay people with paedophiles. He's not the first to use this tactic



Hungary's law 'sets a shocking new precedent': a protest in Budapest.
Photograph: PuzzlePix/Rex/Shutterstock

Hungary's law 'sets a shocking new precedent': a protest in Budapest.
Photograph: PuzzlePix/Rex/Shutterstock

Tue 22 Jun 2021 05.12 EDT

Last week, the Hungarian parliament [banned any portrayal of homosexuality or transgenderism](#) to minors, in educational material or on television.

Appending this to a law protecting children from child abuse, the country's president, Viktor Orbán, drew an explicit connection between homosexuality and paedophilia. In so doing, he resorted to a canard that much of the world has long dispensed with, but that is enjoying a troubling new emergence in the global battles against "gender ideology": the danger posed by homosexuals and trans people to children.

"The logic of the government is to find an enemy and pretend that they are saving the country from this enemy," said the Hungarian LGBTQ+ leader Tamás Dombos in a [presentation](#) to the United States Congress last week. Dombos described the new law as "a conscious and diabolic political strategy" by the government to divert public attention from its messy response to the Covid crisis. The law is also a salvo in a tough upcoming election, and an effective way of staking what I term a "[pink line](#)": a nativist boundary protecting, in this case, Hungarian "values" against the immoral imperialism of [George Soros](#) and Brussels.

In this way, the Hungarian law echoes what Vladimir Putin did in 2012 when he used Russia's "anti-gay propaganda" legislation to counter the growing urban opposition to his bid for a third presidential term. It also sets the scene for a Hungarian repeat of [Andrzej Duda's electoral campaign in Poland](#) last year, which attacked "LGBT ideology". Ironically, these "anti-west" politicians are using the playbook developed in the United States by Anita Bryant's 1977 "Save Our Children" campaign in Florida, which sought to expunge all references to homosexuality from curriculums, and resulted in several laws across the country. Long before Russia and Hungary, Margaret Thatcher's British government passed [section 28](#), banning the "promotion" of homosexuality in schools. This was only repealed in 2003 in England and Wales; in the US "no promo homo" laws are still on the books in four southern states. Recently, two states – Arizona and Tennessee – have come close to [restricting students' access to information](#) about sexual orientation and gender identity.

[Stonewall risks all it has fought for in accusing those who disagree with it of hate speech | Sonia Sodha](#)

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Meanwhile, in Brazil, the president, [Jair Bolsonaro](#), has committed himself to expunging the word “gender” and any talk of homosexuality or transgenderism from the curriculum. There are attempts to do so legally in [more than 100 Brazilian jurisdictions](#), and even though the supreme court has ruled against 11 of these already, the process continues unabated.

In Africa, several countries have retreated from a commitment to the [UN-approved comprehensive sexuality education \(CSE\)](#) because of spirited opposition from the religious right. In the runup to Ghana’s 2020 election campaign, a religious lobby constituted itself against what it termed “[Comprehensive Satanic Education](#)” – primarily because it allegedly promoted LGBTQ+ rights. The fear and hatred generated in this debate fuelled a clampdown in the country: its [first LGBTQ community centre was shut down](#) earlier this year; and 21 young people attending a paralegal training event were [arrested for “advocating LGBTQ activities”](#) last month.

A similar anti-CSE campaign was successful in Zambia, and is gaining ground in populous [Ethiopia](#), too. Like those in Latin America and eastern Europe, these campaigns used materials and tactics generated by “pro-family” movements in the US, primarily Family Watch International (FWI) and the World Congress of Families (WCF). FWI, which is based in Arizona, and led the anti-LGBTQ+ education campaign there, has provided the muscle to the Ghana and Ethiopia campaigns in particular.

In the Catholic world, these campaigns intersect with conservative organisations such as [Opus Dei](#), and more recently with Ordo Iuris, an influential organisation of Polish Catholic lawyers that has just opened a [university in Warsaw](#) as an explicit counterweight to George Soros’s Central European University. Eastern European conservatives claim to be mounting a counterattack against the leftist orthodoxy about gender and homosexuality, which they equate – as Hungary’s Viktor Orbán often does – to communist ideology.

As early as 1995, American religious conservatives came to Moscow to hatch the WCF with Orthodox activists seeking political traction in post-communist Russia. The WCF’s Russian members played a key role in selling the anti-gay propaganda idea to politicians; its last congress, in 2017, was hosted by the Hungarian government and [opened by Orbán himself](#).

Hungarian activists have no doubt that the law passed this week comes out of these global connections. The reason why these campaigns are so similar worldwide, and so potentially effective, is that – as Dombos put it: “Humans all over the world have similar fears. They are afraid for their children. They want the best for their children, so if you’re telling them, ‘These monster trans freaks are gonna turn your child into a trans person you will never recognise,’ people resonate with this.”

[Polls](#) show that a majority of Hungarians support LGBTQ+ rights, and that those against same-sex marriage only slightly outweigh those who are in favour. It is for this reason that Hungary’s ruling Fidesz party is tagging homosexuality to paedophilia in the new law, six months after it banned the adoption of children by [anyone other than heterosexual married couples](#). Having outlawed legal gender transition, it now seeks, explicitly, to stoke a moral panic about children.

All over the world, rightwing conservatives and their populist allies have sparked such panics in recent years. I have seen the destructive power of this myself with the Russian trans woman who [lost all access to her son](#) because a judge found she would be “promoting homosexuality” to him. There is clear evidence of the way the connection incubates violence, too, from the rising homophobic violence in Brazil, to ongoing murderous pogroms against homosexuals in Chechnya.

But even if the Hungarian law is part of this trend, it sets a shocking new precedent. In recent years, as gay people in particular have become more acceptable, there has been a move by rightwing activists to depersonalise hate through talk of “gender ideology” and “LGBT ideology”. But the Hungarian legislation brutally turns its blade directly towards actual people, by equating them to child abusers in the letter of the law itself.

Anita Bryant’s attempts to do this in Florida, in 1977, played a major role in mobilising the American gay rights movement of that era – and triggered widespread popular support for gay people. Something similar can, and must, happen now, in [Hungary](#) and globally.

Mark Gevisser is the author of *The Pink Line: The World’s Queer Frontiers*.

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OpinionDemocratic Republic of the Congo

Congo's latest killer is the climate crisis. Inaction is unthinkable

[Vava Tampa](#)

Lake Tanganyika sustains life for millions but ever more erratic weather threatens the entire Congo



Wading through floodwaters in Kinshasa, the DRC capital, after the Congo River burst its banks due to heavy rainfall. Photograph: Kenny-Katombe Butunka/Reuters

Wading through floodwaters in Kinshasa, the DRC capital, after the Congo River burst its banks due to heavy rainfall. Photograph: Kenny-Katombe Butunka/Reuters

Tue 22 Jun 2021 04.17 EDT

For thousands of years, Lake Tanganyika was an exquisite sight that soothed and supported generations of Congolese people. Those living by its shores in

the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#) (DRC) have snoozed in hammocks under the tropical sun, watching their children splash in Africa's oldest, deepest and longest lake. In the evenings, when boats head out for fishing trips, local people would light campfires on the beaches to fry their catch and dance to rumba.

But in the past two months, storms, torrential rain and flooding have killed at least 13 people and destroyed [4,240 homes and 112 schools](#) along the DRC's Lake Tanganyika coast. In less than a generation, the stretch from Uvira to Moba, [250 miles long](#), has become a place of catastrophe for the local people, who are dependent on the lake for food, trade, transport and their livelihood.

When I'm asked about the issues facing people in the DRC, I point to violence, the use of rape as a weapon of war, the Rwandan president [Paul Kagame](#), mass displacement and hunger; all of which are fuelled by impunity and now a new killer: the climate crisis. Floods and storms in a tropical country such as the DRC are natural. The problem is that storms and exceptional tides lapping metres high that used to occur once a decade are now frequent events.

Tens of thousands of Congolese displaced by the climate crisis are already living in makeshift camps

As global temperatures rise, torrential rains have steadily increased, even during the dry season, while deforestation in the DRC – a byproduct of poverty and violence – is affecting the entire Congo basin ecosystem with flooding and erosion.

A warmer, more erratic lake is flooding homes, destroying schools, ruining crops and, significantly for a country [with 27 million people suffering from acute hunger](#), decreasing yields of fish and crops. This pushes up food prices in one of the world's poorest countries, which is ranked 175th out of 189 on the UN Development Programme's [Human Development Index](#).

Since mid-April, 72,080 Congolese people have been displaced, according to the UN. What if global temperatures are allowed to [rise by 3C](#) above pre-

industrial levels by 2100? Given that the [DRC is home to more than half of Africa's lakes and rivers](#), the consequences of doing nothing for the fast-growing population in coastal regions are unthinkable.



A Congolese woman in a camp for internally displaced people in Kalemie, in the DRC's Tanganyika province, where conflict displaced 650,000 people. Photograph: John Wessels/AFP/Getty

This is a global, regional and local crisis that we cannot ignore. Located in the western branch of the great African Rift Valley, and shared with Tanzania, Zambia and Burundi, with the DRC possessing almost half [of the 1,136-mile-long coastline](#), Lake Tanganyika is home to about 17% of the Earth's available surface fresh water and a hotspot for biodiversity dating back 10m years.

Scientists say the lake is home to more than [840 aquatic plant and 1,318 animal species](#), including [almost 300 species of fish found nowhere else in the world](#). Up to 200,000 tonnes of fish are caught in the lake annually – so a major source of protein for millions of people in the region is at risk from rising water temperatures.

Put simply, the lake's value to local people – and in the fight for global climate justice – is difficult to overstate. Despite this, the world's attention

remains elsewhere. Tens of thousands of Congolese displaced by the climate crisis are already living in makeshift camps without security or running water.

[The world is slowly waking up to Paul Kagame's brutal actions in Rwanda | Michela Wrong](#)

[Read more](#)

What aggravates the situation is the violence, fuelled by impunity, which has killed more than 5.4 million Congolese and continues to leave millions displaced and facing acute hunger. This only amplifies reliance on the lake and the forests that surround it – which cover 107m hectares of land and store 8% of the world's forest carbon – for food, survival and income.

Solutions are possible. On a global level, we urgently need a commitment on ending carbon emissions. At a regional level, the DRC needs an immediate and massive reforestation programme to stop soil erosion and flooding. If nothing is done, the Congolese people could face a much more turbulent and deadly future.

Vava Tampa is a freelance writer, focusing on Africa's great lakes, decolonisation and culture

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2021.06.22 - Around the world

- Nagorno-Karabakh war ‘What if someone buried my son?’ Anguish of search for Armenia’s war dead
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[Armenia](#)

‘What if someone buried my son?’ Anguish of search for Armenia’s war dead

Overwhelmed labs struggle to process DNA tests after Nagorno-Karabakh war leaves 5,000 dead



A woman sits at the grave of her brother killed during the fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020. Photograph: Areg Balayan/AP

A woman sits at the grave of her brother killed during the fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020. Photograph: Areg Balayan/AP

Astrig Agopian in Yerevan

Tue 22 Jun 2021 00.00 EDT

Eight months after the end of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in [Nagorno-Karabakh](#) that left more than 5,000 people dead, many soldiers are

still missing. In Armenia, families are desperately looking for news about their loved ones. There is a growing lack of trust around DNA tests and a lack of information, leading to mounting pressure on the government.

Larissa Dureyan has been looking for her 20-year-old son Mxitar since October. He began his mandatory military service in July 2019 and was serving in Fizuli when war broke out in September last year.

On 12 October he called his mother to say he was being transferred somewhere else, without saying where. It was the last time she heard from him. “They brought a body of a boy wearing my son’s jacket. They also found his credit card in the pocket,” she said. “The face was not recognisable. My son’s hands were full of scars because he had been through surgery when he was a teenager. So first I looked at the hands of the body. They were perfect, completely scarless.

“I had given my DNA already, and I asked if they had checked. They said they had not but that it was certainly my son since his jacket and his credit card were on the body. I insisted that they check the DNA.” When the test was checked, officials realised it was not her son.

“Imagine if I had buried someone else’s child, they would not have been able to find him. And what if someone else has buried my son, thinking it’s theirs?” said Dureyan. Since the mistake was uncovered, she has continued searching for her son in morgues, hospitals and online, posting pictures of him on social media. But she has not found him.

[Armenian PM wins snap election as rival alleges fraud](#)

[Read more](#)

The numbers still missing or being held as prisoners of war in [Azerbaijan](#) remain unclear. Armenia’s prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, said in mid-April that 3,621 people were confirmed dead, there were 321 missing people, and 200 bodies yet to be identified. Human rights defenders have appealed to the European court of human rights about the fate of more than 200 PoWs.

While Dureyan still has no news, some families have ended up finding their sons. In January, Narine Gasparyan was told that forensics experts had identified the body of her son from a DNA sample. She was given three bones to bury, the only parts of him remaining, she was told.

Then a few weeks later Gasparyan received the news from the lab that it was not him. The family excavated the buried bones and continued looking for their son. “Two weeks later we found the full, still recognisable corpse of our son in a morgue. I saw him and it was him,” said Gasparyan.

Gasparyan does not want her son’s case to be used to criticise those working to identify the bodies. “I just think that scientists are people too, and maybe they were just tired because they work so much now. We talked with the lab and accepted the idea that it was a genuine mistake. Still, it was very painful,” she said. “But we feel lucky that at least we now found the body of our son and were at least able to properly bury him. Many people have nothing.”

A scientific challenge

Diana Harutyunyan is a forensic genetic expert at the Scientific Practical Centre of Forensic Medicine working under the authority of the health ministry. “We feel terrible about it. But you must know that it was a human mistake when transcribing figures, it has nothing to do with the machines,” she said.

The centre used to have only a few cases a year of DNA identification from bones, related to criminal cases or archaeological research. After the war in Nagorno-Karabakh it was deluged with several hundred bones and body parts to identify. The lab employees admit they were overwhelmed.



Graves at a military cemetery in Yerevan. Photograph: Aris Messinis/AFP/Getty Images

It was not only the number of victims that made it difficult to do the DNA testing. “There were mechanical and chemical hardships for those corpses,” Harutyunyan said. “We do have a few cases of fragments that are so deeply burned, so damaged, that we do not know if we will be able to identify them at all.” [Armenia](#) has accused Azerbaijan of using white phosphorus, which could explain the burns found on soldiers and corpses.

“Groups of people were hit and burned. They all died. A pit was dug; all the bodies were put in it. So all the bones have to be identified and the parts that have exactly the same profile, that’s when you understand they belonged to the same body and the same person.”

The lab has been giving out bones before reconstituting full corpses. “The Red Cross advised us to wait to identify several bones and parts of the body of one person and reconstitute a corpse before giving it back to the family,” Harutyunyan said. “Can you imagine us telling families we have your son but wait we are not giving him back yet? It is just impossible. Families are not that patient, they cannot wait, they put pressure on us.”

Lack of trust

Some families do not trust the results of the official lab and decide to verify them by sending DNA samples outside Armenia or by consulting private companies.

Anna Hovhannisyan is the CEO of Genetic Forensic Centre LLC, a private company doing DNA testing. Before the war, she didn't work on DNA-testing bones, but she started after receiving financial help from a group of French doctors, Santé Arménie.

“People come here with a DNA test from the official lab, and with DNA extracts. They give me the sample and I do the same internationally recognised research with markers like they did at the official lab,” Hovhannisyan said. So far she has only double-checked a few samples, without charging the families. All the samples matched the results of the official lab, meaning there was no mistake, except one.

“I have to refuse some people because I do not have the time or means to do so many tests. So people who have the financial means are contacting labs in [Europe](#) or the US,” she said.

“Parents do not trust us, so they test us. They bring the DNA samples of someone else not from the family, saying it is someone from the family, to see if we are going to realise it's not someone from the family or not. Of course, we test for real, so we do realise it is not someone from the family, but we lose very precious time.”

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Hong Kong

Hong Kong leader refuses to say how media can avoid arrest in wake of Apple Daily raids

Carrie Lam denies arrest of senior editorial figures at pro-democracy paper and seizure of its assets was an attack on press freedom



Hong Kong pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily has announced it will shut by the end of the week after authorities used national security law to freeze its bank accounts and funding and arrest top editors. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Hong Kong pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily has announced it will shut by the end of the week after authorities used national security law to freeze its bank accounts and funding and arrest top editors. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

*[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei
@heldavidson*

Tue 22 Jun 2021 01.27 EDT

Hong Kong's leader, Carrie Lam, has refused to clarify how journalists can avoid breaking the vaguely defined national security law following the raid and prosecution of journalists at a pro-democracy newspaper.

At a regular press conference on Tuesday the city's chief executive, Carrie Lam, defended [the arrest of senior Apple Daily executives](#) under the national security law (NSL) – two of whom have been charged with conspiracy to commit collusion with a foreign country – as well as the raid of its newsroom and freezing of assets.

Apple Daily has said [it will cease online publication](#) this week unless its assets are unfrozen. On Tuesday it closed its English edition.

[Hong Kong's Apple Daily could shut at weekend unless accounts are unblocked](#)

[Read more](#)

Lam denied it was an attack on press freedom and said foreign [criticism of the police operation](#), including from rights groups and world governments, was simply an attempt to recast acts that endangered national security.

“Don’t try to underplay the significance of breaching the national security law, and don’t try to beautify these acts of endangering national security,” she said. “Don’t try to accuse the Hong Kong authorities of using the national security law to suppress the media or stifle freedom of expression.”

Authorities said the raid and arrests related to more than 30 articles which called for foreign sanctions against the Hong Kong and Chinese governments. Authorities have refused to specify the articles in question, or say whether they were news or opinion.

Authorities have repeatedly refused to tell media how their work might breach the vaguely-defined law, including through publishing quotes, comments, or analysis by third parties.

Asked on Tuesday, Lam said “normal journalistic work would not endanger national security. She said the law was “very well defined” and “embraced all the important legal concepts”, but again gave no explanation of how it applied specifically to journalism.

“I believe media friends have the ability to grasp what kind of activities endanger national security,” she said. “It is fine to criticise the Hong Kong SAR government but if there is an intent or organising of activities to incite or subvert the government, that is another thing.”

Asked about the requests by Next Digital Media, Apple Daily’s parent company, to have their assets and accounts unfrozen so they could pay staff, Lam said the decision was up to the secretary of security.

11:22

'Resist until the end': On the ground with Apple Daily, Hong Kong's pro-democracy newspaper - video

Apple Daily, a vocal pro-democracy tabloid owned by activist and media mogul Jimmy Lai, has been a key target of the authorities’ its efforts to stifle Hong Kong’s press. Lai has been in jail since December, and is awaiting trial on three NSL charges. Hongkongers have bought copies of the paper in huge numbers, as an apparent show of support for the beleaguered title.

Thursday’s raid on the newsroom was the second in less than a year, and came with an unprecedented warrant to seize journalistic materials. It froze an estimated HK \$18 million in assets, and locked accounts holding more than \$500 million, according to Lai’s senior advisor, Mark Simon. The move, occurring before any prosecution had begun, left the company unable to pay future operational costs or wages.

The board of Next Digital told staff if the funds were not released, they would likely close the paper this week.

On Monday the title broadcast its final live news show online, thanking its audience and urging Hong Kong’s remaining media to stay steadfast and defend the truth, RTHK reported. On Tuesday it ceased its English-language service.

“This concludes the updates from Apple Daily English. Thank you for your support.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/22/hong-kong-leader-carrie-lam-apple-daily-arrests-national-security-law>

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Donald Trump

Leader behind bleach ‘miracle cure’ claims Trump consumed his product

Mark Grenon says in interview from prison he gave Trump the product and was the source of Trump’s fixation with disinfectant



At the press conference on 23 April 2020 Trump hailed chlorine dioxide as a potential cure for Covid, saying it ‘knocks it out in a minute, one minute’.
Photograph: Juan Karita/AP

At the press conference on 23 April 2020 Trump hailed chlorine dioxide as a potential cure for Covid, saying it ‘knocks it out in a minute, one minute’.
Photograph: Juan Karita/AP

*[Ed Pilkington](#)
[@edpilkington](#)*

Tue 22 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

The leader of a spurious church which peddled industrial bleach as a “miracle cure” for Covid-19 is claiming that he provided [Donald Trump](#) with the product in the White House shortly before the former president made his notorious remarks about using “disinfectant” to treat the disease.

[Republicans set to sink Democrats’ effort to advance key voting rights bill – live](#)

[Read more](#)

Mark Grenon, the self-styled “archbishop” of the Genesis II “church”, has given an interview from his prison cell in Colombia as he awaits extradition to the US to face criminal charges that he fraudulently sold bleach as a Covid cure. In the [90-minute interview](#) he effectively presents himself as the source of Trump’s fixation with the healing powers of disinfectant.

“We were able to give through a contact with Trump’s family – a family member – the bottles in my book,” Grenon says. “And he mentioned it on TV: ‘I found this disinfectant’.”

Grenon had [previously revealed](#) that he had written to Trump in the White House in the days leading up to the disinfectant episode, urging him to promote the healing powers of chlorine dioxide. But in the new interview Grenon goes considerably further, claiming that the bleach, which carries serious health warnings from federal agencies, was actually put into the hands of the then president who consumed it.

[Trump’s comments](#) about disinfectant, made at the White House on 23 April 2020 as coronavirus was tearing through the US, reverberated around the world. They caused astonishment in scientific circles, attracted widespread ridicule, and have come to symbolize the maverick response of the Trump administration towards the pandemic.

At the press conference Trump hailed disinfectant as a potential cure for Covid, saying it “knocks it out in a minute, one minute”. He went on to muse whether “we can do something like that, by injection inside or almost a cleaning”.

Why Trump suddenly embraced bleach as a possible Covid treatment has remained one of the mysteries of his presidency. Now Grenon claims that it was his product, marketed as Miracle Mineral Solution or “MMS”, that lay behind it.

The Guardian asked Trump’s office to clarify whether he had received and drank “MMS” bleach while in the White House, but received no immediate response.

Grenon made his claim that he supplied Trump with bleach solution to [Zakariya Adeel](#), a London-based astrologer and psychic. The interview was conducted apparently over a prison telephone line.

Grenon and his son Joseph are both being held in Colombia as they await extradition. In April a federal grand jury sitting in Miami [indicted them](#), along with two other sons, Jonathan and Jordan who are also in jail in Miami.

The four Grenon family members face charges of fraudulently marketing and selling industrial bleach as a cure for Covid, cancer, malaria and a host of other serious medical conditions. A criminal trial is expected in Miami later this year.

The US Food and Drug Administration has made it clear that drinking MMS is the same as drinking bleach. [It warns](#) that consumption can cause severe vomiting, diarrhea and low-blood pressure that can be life-threatening.

The FDA [describes](#) MMS as a “powerful bleach typically used for industrial water treatment or bleaching textiles, pulp and paper”.

In the video, Grenon repeats false claims that chlorine dioxide solution cures Covid. “We tried it with Covid – six drops every two hours for the first and second day. Boom! Gone, negative. You’re feeling great from feeling like you’re going to die – it works great,” he says.

Use of bleach as a miracle cure has proliferated across [Latin America](#) during the pandemic. Fiona O’Leary, a campaigner against pseudoscience, told the

Guardian that MMS peddlers were using Trump's comments on disinfectant as a marketing tool.

"You have the president of the United States telling people they can ingest bleach to treat Covid – so the response is hardly surprising. There's been a dramatic increase in the use of the product in several Latin American countries after he made those comments," she said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/22/bleach-miracle-cure-donald-trump>.

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[North Korea](#)

Kim Jong-un's sister dismisses hopes of US-North Korea nuclear talks

Kim Yo-jong's intervention appears to have thwarted any prospects for early resumption of negotiations



Kim Yo-jong, the sister and confidante of North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un. Photograph: Jorge Silva/EPA

Kim Yo-jong, the sister and confidante of North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un. Photograph: Jorge Silva/EPA

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo and agencies

Tue 22 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

Kim Jong-un's influential sister appears to have dismissed hopes for a breakthrough on nuclear talks with the US, warning Washington that it faced "disappointment" if it believed engagement with [North Korea](#) was a possibility.

Kim Yo-jong, a senior figure in the ruling party who is considered one of the North Korean leader's closest confidantes, said any US expectations for a resumption of talks were "wrong", according to the state-run KCNA news agency.

"A Korean proverb says that in a dream, what counts most is to read it, not to have it. It seems that the US may interpret the situation in such a way as to seek a comfort for itself," Kim said.

"The expectation, which they chose to harbour the wrong way, would plunge them into a greater disappointment."

She made the remark a day after the US's [North Korea](#) special envoy, Sung Kim, said Washington had offered talks with the North "anywhere, anytime and without preconditions".

Sung Kim, who is on a five-day visit to Seoul, said on Monday he hoped to see a positive reaction from Pyongyang soon, but added that US-led sanctions on North Korea would stay in place.

After a recent review of its approach towards the North, the US said it would seek "calibrated and practical" ways of persuading the regime to give up its nuclear weapons.

[Joe Biden](#)'s stance has been described as a combination of Donald Trump's direct engagement with [Kim Jong-un](#) and Barack Obama's policy of "strategic patience". But some experts do not believe Biden would ease sanctions until the North has taken demonstrable steps towards dismantling its nuclear arsenal.

Other US officials have voiced cautious optimism about a breakthrough on negotiations.

The US national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said Kim Jong-un had sent an "interesting signal" last week when he ordered ruling party officials to prepare for "[dialogue and confrontation](#)" with the Biden administration, although he placed an emphasis on the latter.

Sullivan told ABC News the US would wait and see if the North Korean leader's response was "followed up with any kind of more direct communication to us about a potential path forward".

Kim Yo-jong's intervention appears to have thwarted any prospects of an early resumption of nuclear talks, which have been deadlocked since Kim Jong-un met Trump in Hanoi in February 2019.

Their summit ended in disagreement after the US rejected North Korean demands for major sanctions relief in exchange for partial moves towards disarmament.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/22/kim-jong-un-sister-us-north-korea-nuclear-talks-kim-yo-jong>

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US voting rights

Obama backs Manchin's voting rights compromise before crucial Senate vote

Former president calls Democrats' proposal a 'product of compromise' and says the future of the country is at stake



Former president Barack Obama speaks at a Get Out the Vote rally in Atlanta, Georgia, on 2 November 2020. Photograph: Elijah Nouvelage/AFP/Getty Images

Former president Barack Obama speaks at a Get Out the Vote rally in Atlanta, Georgia, on 2 November 2020. Photograph: Elijah Nouvelage/AFP/Getty Images

[Amanda Holpuch](#), [Sam Levin](#) and agencies

Mon 21 Jun 2021 18.49 EDT

Barack Obama has backed conservative West Virginia Democratic senator Joe Manchin's voting rights proposal, calling it a "product of compromise"

as the landmark legislation struggles towards a crucial vote in the US Senate on Tuesday.

The former US president weighed in, as did his wife and former first lady, [Michelle Obama](#), decrying Republican efforts in many statehouses across the country to bring in new laws that restrict voting, and urging Congress to pass federal legislation “before it’s too late”.

Barack Obama said the future of the country was at stake.

“I have tried to make it a policy not to weigh in on the day-to-day scrum in Washington, but what is happening this week is more than just a particular bill coming up or not coming up to a vote,” he said in [an interview with Yahoo News](#).

He added: “I do want folks who may not be paying close attention to what’s happening ... to understand the stakes involved here, and why this debate is so vitally important to the future of our country,” Obama said.

And the White House said on Monday it views the Senate’s work on an elections bill overhaul and changes being offered by Manchin as a “step forward”, even though the Democrats’ priority legislation is expected to be blocked by a Republican filibuster.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the revisions proposed by Manchin are a compromise, another step as Democrats work to shore up voting access and what Joe Biden sees as “a fight of his presidency”.

“The president’s effort to continue that fight doesn’t stop tomorrow at all,” Psaki said.

The Senate is preparing for a showdown Tuesday, a test vote of the For the People Act, a sweeping elections bill that would be the largest overhaul of US voting procedures in a generation.

A top priority for Democrats seeking to ensure access to the polls and mail-in ballots made popular during the pandemic, it is opposed by [Republicans](#) as a federal overreach into state systems.

Manchin has been a vocal Democratic Party holdout on Capitol Hill, opposing the For the People Act and insisting on gleaning bipartisan support for such legislation.

But last week he introduced a list of compromises he would support, including 15 days of early voting and automatic voter registration. His compromise would also ban partisan gerrymandering and require voter ID.

Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky, said he opposed the compromise, and hopes are fading in many Democratic quarters that a vote on Tuesday in the Senate will take the legislation to the debate stage, thus leaving it stalled.

In his latest interview, Obama said Democrats and Republicans have abused the redistricting process, but shared concerns about efforts in Republican-controlled states to limit access to voting.

“Around the world we’ve seen once-vibrant democracies go in reverse,” Obama said. “It is happening in other places around the world and these impulses have crept into the United States … we are not immune from some of these efforts to weaken our democracy.”

“If we have the same kinds of shenanigans that brought about January 6, you know – if we have that for a couple more election cycles we’re going to have real problems in terms of our democracy long term.”

In a post on Instagram, Michelle Obama talked of the Biden legislation fighting voter suppression and strengthening democracy.

“Over the past few months, there’s been a movement in state legislatures all across the country to pass laws that make it harder for people to cast a ballot. That means we’ve got to pass the For the People Act before it’s too late. This bill is one of our best chances to ensure all of us have a say in our future – whether that’s issues like pandemic relief, criminal justice, immigration, healthcare, education, or anything else,” she wrote.

Manchin had been the sole holdout. His proposed changes to the bill are being well received by some in his party, and any nod from the White House

lends them credibility.

He has suggested adding a national voter ID requirement, which has been popular among Republicans, and dropping other measures from the bill like its proposed public financing of campaigns.

Among voting rights advocates, one key voice, Georgia-based Democrat and activist Stacey Abrams, has said she could support Manchin's proposal.

Ahead of Tuesday's vote, it is clear Democrats in the split 50-50 Senate will be unable to open debate, blocked by a filibuster by Republicans.

In the Senate, it takes 60 votes to overcome the filibuster, and without any Republican support, the Democrats cannot move forward.

"Will the Republicans let us debate it?" said Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer as he opened the chamber on Monday afternoon. "We're about to find out."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/21/barack-obama-joe-manchin-voting-rights-proposal>

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- Live UK Covid: Hancock suggests ‘stress’ was factor in Boris Johnson calling him ‘totally useless’
- Flu Illness could be a ‘bigger problem than Covid in UK this winter’
- Business UK economy accelerates as tourism and hospitality emerge from Covid lockdown
- UK 9,284 cases on day before lockdown was due to end

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Flu

Flu could be ‘bigger problem than Covid in UK this winter’

Low prevalence of flu during pandemic may have led to drop in immunity among population

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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A man receives a dose of the Pfizer BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine at a mass vaccination centre in London last weekend. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

A man receives a dose of the Pfizer BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine at a mass vaccination centre in London last weekend. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

*Damien Gayle
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Mon 21 Jun 2021 05.15 EDT

Flu could be a bigger problem than Covid-19 in the UK this winter, a senior government vaccine adviser has said, with low prevalence over the past months possibly leading to a drop in immunity among the population.

Prof Anthony Harnden, the deputy chair of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, said research was being carried out on whether flu vaccines could be given alongside coronavirus vaccines this autumn.

“I will emphasise that actually flu could be potentially a bigger problem this winter than Covid,” Harnden told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme.

“We’ve had a very, very low prevalence of flu for the last few years, particularly virtually nil during lockdown, and we do know that when flu has been circulating in very low numbers immunity drops in the population, and it comes back to bite us. So flu can be really, really important this winter.”

Harnden made his comments during a discussion of the need to plan for ongoing Covid vaccinations in order to ensure infrastructure is in place to provide booster doses before any potential new pandemic wave this winter.

In a statement, Chris Hopson, the chief executive of NHS Providers, and Martin Marshall, the chair of the Royal College of GPs, described the 19 July target to provide first doses to all adults as a “staging post”.

“We will have to live with the Covid virus for a long time to come, building a long-term set of defences, as we’ve done with influenza,” Hopson and Marshall wrote. “This will require a sustainable approach to Covid vaccination. One that enables the GPs and trusts we represent to carry on vaccinating whilst meeting the other pressures they face.”

The statement posed a number of questions, including how long immunity from the initial double dose of Covid vaccines lasts; whether if booster shots are needed it will be possible to give different vaccines to those initially administered; how vaccines altered to address new virus variants could be

incorporated; and whether flu and Covid vaccination campaigns can be safely combined.

“We wouldn’t be able to start any booster or re-vaccination campaign until these questions have been answered,” Hopson and Marshall added. “Science will help determine who gets what, and when. But with the flu campaign due to start in September, decisions will soon be needed.”

Speaking on Today, Marshall said: “We do need to dig into what a [vaccine] programme would look like for an endemic condition, when we’re outside the crisis mode that we’ve been in for the past six months. We do need to know, first of all, whether a booster vaccination programme is needed. Who will need it? We need to know where it will be given and by whom.

“In general practice, for example, where three-quarters of the vaccines have been given, our GPs and nurses are exceptionally busy. Is it possible that a booster campaign can be given by non-clinical trained vaccination staff?”

He added that general practices administered large flu campaigns in the winter and asked whether it would be possible to give a Covid-19 jab at the same time, as “clearly that would be a very efficient process”.

Last week Boris Johnson said the government would soon set out plans for a booster vaccination programme. Results of initial research into which vaccines might be most useful for the job are expected in September.

The Department of [Health](#) and Social Care said: “As the public would expect, the government is continuing to plan for a booster programme later in the year. Final decisions on what any booster programme would look like will ultimately depend on the data from ongoing clinical trials, such as the Cov-Boost trial, and the independent advice from the medical experts at the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

“We are making phenomenal progress with the vaccination rollout and all adults aged 18 and over in England are now being offered a first dose, with every adult across the UK set to be offered a first dose by 19 July.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/21/flu-could-be-a-bigger-problem-than-covid-in-uk-this-winter>

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Economic recovery

UK economy accelerates as tourism and hospitality emerge from lockdown

Output picked up in May as sectors reopened but lockdown extension may hit some hospitality firms

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



The UK tourism and recreation sector recorded the sharpest rise in output growth in May. Photograph: Peter Cripps/Alamy

The UK tourism and recreation sector recorded the sharpest rise in output growth in May. Photograph: Peter Cripps/Alamy

[Graeme Wearden](#)

Mon 21 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

The UK's economic recovery accelerated in May as tourism and recreation firms reopened, but the delay in ending Covid-19 restrictions is putting hospitality firms at risk, research shows.

Eleven out of 14 UK sectors reported faster growth in output month on month in May, up from nine in April, according to the Lloyds Bank UK Recovery Tracker, as the UK moved further out of lockdown.

The tracker found that the UK tourism and recreation sector recorded the sharpest rise in output growth as British hotels, pubs and restaurants benefited from pent-up consumer demand.

Firms took on more staff to handle rising demand. All 14 sectors reported jobs growth in May, led by manufacturing, while the tourism and recreation sector added jobs for the first time since January 2020.

Jeavon Lolay, the head of economics and market insight for commercial banking at Lloyds Bank, said sectors that had been acutely affected by coronavirus restrictions were now outpacing those that operated more freely during lockdown.

“Whether the four-week delay to further easing of restrictions will impact this trend is unclear. But while the delay is understandably disappointing for many businesses, there’s no denying that the economy is now on a much sounder footing,” Lolay said.

The survey also showed that companies across the economy raised their prices in May, led by chemicals and metals and mining producers.

“While UK inflation jumped higher than expected in May and stronger demand saw more businesses pass on rising costs to their customers, it’s arguably still too soon to worry about inflation spiralling out of control,” Lolay said.

The fast-food chain McDonald’s [announced expansion plans](#) on Sunday and will recruit 20,000 workers over the next 12 months as it opens 50 new restaurants in the UK and Ireland.

But the Covid-19 restrictions are continuing to hurt the hospitality sector, particularly the night-time economy.

About 25,000 licensed premises were still shut at the end of May 2021, according to research from CGA and AlixPartners, which warned that thousands more clubs, restaurants, pubs and bars are at risk from [the delay to ending lockdown](#).

CGA and AlixPartners found that more than three-quarters of Britain's licensed sites were trading by the end of last month, up from about a third in April, thanks to the return of inside service.

However, while more than nine in 10 food pubs, high street pubs and casual dining restaurants are open, sectors that rely on late-night trading are still in jeopardy of failure, the report found.

Guardian business email sign-up

“Many operators will have reopened in anticipation of restrictions falling away on 21 June, and likely forecast and accepted suppressed trade for the period up to that point,” said Graeme Smith, the managing director of AlixPartners.

“While far from ideal, knowing that ‘freedom day’ was on the horizon meant operators could battle through this challenging time, perhaps welcoming team members back to the business in anticipation and getting operations up to speed. A further delay of four weeks is a devastating blow, creating significant uncertainty and further financial strain.”

Michael Kill, the chief executive of the Night Time Industries Association, has urged the government to lift restrictions on 5 July – at the two-week review point set when the restrictions were extended. He said the industry was “on the verge of breaking”.

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Coronavirus

UK reports 9,284 Covid cases on day before lockdown was due to end

More than 1m jabs booked on Friday and Saturday after all adults in England invited to get vaccine

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Doctor Gino Amato prepares a dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine at Tottenham Hotspur's stadium in London, which was turned into a pop-up vaccination centre on Saturday. Photograph: Will Edwards/AFP/Getty Images

Doctor Gino Amato prepares a dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine at Tottenham Hotspur's stadium in London, which was turned into a pop-up vaccination centre on Saturday. Photograph: Will Edwards/AFP/Getty Images

[Nicola Davis](#) and [Jessica Elgot](#)

Sun 20 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

More than 9,200 Covid cases were reported in the UK on Sunday, the day before it was originally planned that all remaining Covid restrictions in England would be lifted.

It came as figures revealed that more than 1m Covid jabs were booked in two days following the invitation on Friday for all adults in England to come forward for vaccination.

Covid cases in the UK have been rising in recent weeks as a result of partial easing of restrictions together with the growth of the Delta variant. On Friday Public Health England revealed cases of the Delta variant had increased by 79% in the space of a week, and it is now believed to account for [99% of new Covid cases](#).

[Under-18s could be ‘reservoirs’ for virus when all adults are jabbed, expert warns](#)

[Read more](#)

The number of patients in hospital in the UK has also been increasing, albeit by far less than would have been expected without the vaccination programme. The number reached 1,316 on Thursday – the highest since the end of April.

The Delta variant is not only more transmissible than the Alpha variant, which previously dominated, but may also be linked to a greater risk of hospitalisation and is believed to be somewhat more resistant to Covid jabs, particularly after one dose.

The situation led [Boris Johnson to delay the](#) final easing of lockdown restrictions in England, pushing it back from 21 June to a possible date of 19 July, not least because the postponement will allow more people to receive their second vaccine dose.

Sunday's figure for new cases of 9,284 in the UK was down from 11,007 on Thursday. This was the highest figure since 19 February.

Surge testing, which has been used in hard-hit areas such as Bolton, has been expanded to other areas of fast Delta variant spread including [Lancashire](#) and [Cheshire West](#), where it was rolled out earlier this month. On Saturday surge testing was also announced for [parts of south London and Cumbria](#).

NHS England has said 1,008,472 appointments for Covid jabs were booked over Friday and Saturday following the announcement that all adults in England can now receive the vaccine. The figure is likely an underestimate as it does not include appointments made with GPs or those who had the jab at walk-in centres, such as the pop-up vaccination centre at Tottenham Hotspur's stadium in London which opened for the day on Sunday.

Dr Susan Hopkins, chief medical adviser for NHS test and trace, and deputy director of Public [Health](#) England's National Infection Service, said the UK was seeing the impact of vaccination in key infection hotspots, but infections were rising in other areas.

[Long Covid should be treated as disability, says TUC](#)
[Read more](#)

"We are definitely seeing some signals in some areas of cases slowing down. Bolton, for example, has definitely reversed, Blackburn and Darwen has stabilised," she told [the BBC's Andrew Marr show on Sunday](#). "But there are other parts of the country, particularly in some parts of the north-east, some parts of London, that are still rising quite fast."

"So I think this is not all doing the same thing all over the country, and we're seeing rises and falls as people go out and get tested and I think we are seeing the impact of vaccination and that is good news."

Hopkins' comments echo those from the mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, who pointed to a recent decrease in case numbers in Bolton, adding the same could happen in the rest of his region.

“I think we are coming through this. I think we now need to be careful and proportionate in terms of the way we manage things going forward,” he said.

As of 15 June, Bolton had a seven-day case rate per 100,000 population of 269.2, down from a peak of 452.8 on 21 May. By contrast, seven-day case rates in Manchester rose from 63.1 per 100,000 population on 21 May to 339.7 per 100,000 on 15 June, making it one of the worst-hit areas at present.

While the current picture is mixed around the UK, [experts have warned the country could be in for a difficult winter](#).

Hopkins said the future situation remains unclear. “We may have to do further lockdowns this winter. I can’t predict the future, it really depends on whether the hospitals start to become overwhelmed at some point,” she said. “But I think we will have alternative ways to manage this, through vaccination, through anti-virals, through drugs, through testing that we didn’t have last winter.”

She also said people who have had two jabs may not need to quarantine. “I’m not sure when, but a time in the future I can imagine a situation where we will have alternatives to isolation for people who have two doses of vaccine.”

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2021.06.21 - Coronavirus

- 'Mistakes need to be dealt with' Anger in South Africa as third wave hits
- Australia Vaccine rollout 'constrained' by Pfizer supply shortages until August
- 'Concern is there' Sydney's mask mandate 'likely' to be extended as NSW records two new Covid cases
- Global development Half of Zimbabweans fell into extreme poverty during Covid

South Africa

‘Mistakes need to be dealt with’: anger in South Africa as third wave hits



‘In the rich countries, they are going out and working’: Rebecca Mfungquza, 23, a resident of Union Street, Soweto. Photograph: Jason Burke/The Guardian

‘In the rich countries, they are going out and working’: Rebecca Mfungquza, 23, a resident of Union Street, Soweto. Photograph: Jason Burke/The Guardian

Cyril Ramaphosa’s government has been criticised for its slow reaction and faltering vaccination programme

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

[Jason Burke](#) in Soweto

Mon 21 Jun 2021 00.00 EDT

Governments across [Africa](#) are scrambling to reinforce health systems and accelerate vaccine drives as a third wave of Covid-19 infections threatens to overwhelm hospitals and kill tens of thousands of people.

South Africa, the worst-hit country in the continent, has reported a doubling of new daily cases over the past two weeks, with no sign of the rise slowing.

Gauteng province – home to a quarter of the country's population of 60 million as well as the administrative capital, Pretoria, and financial hub Johannesburg – is the centre of the latest outbreak, accounting for about 60% of the latest national daily increase.

Hospitals and health workers are close to being overwhelmed. One large hospital was shut earlier this year after a fire and other big facilities are closed because of a lack of trained staff. Doctors are making dozens of phone calls to secure a bed for critically ill patients.

South Africa has suffered two major waves already, pushing its official death toll to 60,000, though excess mortality figures reveal that at least another 100,000 people are likely to have died in the pandemic.

Last week, [Cyril Ramaphosa](#), the president, imposed light restrictions that most experts have said are unlikely to make much difference.

Expectations of the government are low, with much anger at a series of corruption scandals involving Covid-19 spending. Earlier this month, the health minister, Zweli Mkhize, was forced to step down while allegations of impropriety in the awarding of Covid-19 response contracts were investigated.



Zweli Mkhize, the former health minister, receiving a Covid vaccine in February. He stepped down this month over a corruption scandal.
Photograph: Reuters

The 60 or so inhabitants of Union Street, a narrow alley in Soweto, said they have learned the hard way not to hope for too much. “All the times were bad. It has always been tough here. But this is really worse. We have orphans in our church now,” said Leonard Magrwanya, 74.

“I trust in God. I have faith in God. One day Covid will be finished and we can go back to normal, but that lies only in the power of God,” he said.

South Africa had many advantages over other African countries before the Covid crisis: a greater ability to borrow money, a more extensive public health system reinforced by a large private sector, world-class scientists and long experience of dealing with pandemics.

Yet after a much-lauded early response, the authorities have struggled. The economic damage wrought by the pandemic has already been severe.

Tasneena Sylvester, 35, who has lived on Union Street for 11 years, lost her job as a cleaner, and her husband was laid off by the construction firm that had employed him for years during the hard lockdown in March and April last year.

Now the couple and their three children live on government handouts, and spend their days watching television and pirated Netflix films traded on USB drives.

“I want education for my children, and a job to survive. But there is nothing now,” she said.

At the tiny shack that is the headquarters of the Soweto Kliptown Youth organisation, Bob Nameng, the 51-year-old founder, accused the government of mishandling the crisis.

“There is too much corruption. The rich are benefiting from the tears of the poor. The poor are weeping. The rich are dancing,” he said.



Bob Nameng, founder of Soweto Kliptown Youth. Photograph: Jason Burke/The Guardian

Nameng said he believed the ruling African National Congress, in power since 1994, had “become the opposite of what the people of Soweto fought for” during the long battle against the racist, repressive apartheid regime.

“They don’t care about anyone but themselves. We supported the ANC but we won’t for ever. They have lost a lot of votes. A hungry man is an angry man,” he said.

South Africa's faltering vaccination campaign has yet to reach more than one in 30 of the population, after a series of missteps and misfortunes were compounded by bad decision-making, critics say.

Officials were [slow to initiate discussions with manufacturers](#), and the talks were then held up by bureaucracy and internal factional battles.

The UN-backed Covax programme delivered a million AstraZeneca jabs, which were rejected once it became clear they were less effective against the new local variant.

Finally, a consignment of 2m Johnson & Johnson vaccines had to be destroyed when regulators decided it might have been contaminated after breaches of safety and sanitary rules in a factory in the US.

With wealthy nations in the west buying up millions of doses for their populations, it has been hard to secure supplies for South Africa.

"What has constrained us has been the lack of vaccines. All the provinces and private sector have been champing at the bit to open additional sites," [said Nicholas Crisp, the deputy director general of the health department](#).

The vaccination campaign has also been suspended at weekends to allow health workers to rest, and because there is "no overtime budget".

In a media briefing last week, the acting health minister, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, promised the campaign would accelerate, as sufficient shots finally began to arrive, and said army medics would be brought in to reinforce the health system in Gauteng.

One big problem is vaccine hesitancy. [In a recent survey](#), 67% said they would definitely take the vaccine, with 18% saying they would not. The survey found that those who think Ramaphosa and his government are doing a bad job are much less likely to accept a vaccine.

On Union Street, some even doubt the existence of Covid-19.

"I think it is all made up. They want us to believe there is Covid and follow their instructions. And I've heard the vaccines shut down your body

systems,” said Jemima Dladdegane, 54.

Officials say they are aware of the problem and will try to communicate better in the future. After extensive interaction in early months of the pandemic, ministers and government specialists have rarely given briefings. Ramaphosa has limited interventions to infrequent televised speeches.

Alex van den Heever, professor of public administration at Wits University, Johannesburg, said the failure to acknowledge the true death toll in the pandemic, as revealed by excess mortality figures rather than recorded hospital deaths, stemmed from a “political decision made early on”.

“They wanted to make sure the pandemic management was seen as being done by the ANC, and negative issues minimised. That is an improper intent. The information must be made public, mistakes need to be dealt with and any questions answered,” he said. “The reality is we have had a severe, severe epidemic.”

Most residents of Union Street have seen images from the US or Europe, and are aware that the pandemic is ebbing there.

“In the rich countries, they are going out and working. They have better governments, I think,” Rebecca Mfungquza, 23. “Maybe they could help us a bit. We need it.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/21/mistakes-need-to-be-dealt-with-anger-in-south-africa-as-third-wave-hits>

[Australia news](#)

Australia's vaccine rollout 'constrained' by Pfizer supply shortages until August

States and territories say more GPs will be needed to dispense Pfizer when supplies increase later in the year



Australia's vaccine rollout will be limited by Pfizer supply constraints until deliveries increase from August. Photograph: Dan Peled/AAP

Australia's vaccine rollout will be limited by Pfizer supply constraints until deliveries increase from August. Photograph: Dan Peled/AAP

[Paul Karp](#) and [Josh Taylor](#)

Mon 21 Jun 2021 07.51 EDT

Shortages of the Pfizer Covid vaccine are expected to slow Australia's rollout through June and July, as states and territories call on the commonwealth to sign up more GPs to dispense doses when supplies increase in August.

The national cabinet met on Monday to discuss Australia's coronavirus vaccine rollout in the wake of [updated health advice](#) that AstraZeneca is not the preferred vaccine for those aged 50 to 59 due to the risk of rare blood clots.

At the meeting, the head of the rollout, Lt Gen John Frewen, gave states and territories projections of the maximum and minimum number of vaccines they will be allocated. The aged care minister, Richard Colbeck, is expected to table the figures at the Senate's Covid-19 inquiry on Monday evening.

[NSW Covid update: Sydney's mask mandate 'likely' to be extended as two new cases recorded](#)

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Before the meeting, the commonwealth agreed to New South Wales's request for 50,000 Pfizer doses, which Cdr Eric Young told reporters in Canberra would be spread over three weeks.

Frewen said that vaccines will continue to be allocated in line with state and territory populations and the 50,000 doses were "not additional" but rather shifts NSW "up to the maximum of its allocation in response to the current situation".

Australia is due to receive 1.7m doses of Pfizer this month, rising to 2.8m in July. The states and territories had about 800,000 Pfizer doses on hand as of Monday. But the extra 2.1 million people in the 50-59 age bracket who are now eligible for Pfizer and the need to provision for second doses is causing delays.

At national cabinet, the commonwealth conceded that supply is the rollout's biggest constraint. The meeting agreed to prioritise Pfizer appointments for people aged 40-59 and phase 1a and 1b eligible people under the age of 40 years of age.

Asked if the supply constraints were likely to delay younger people's access to Pfizer, Frewen conceded this was the case but said supplies were "suitable" for the categories already eligible.

Australia is still on track to offer every eligible person in Australia a first dose of a Covid-19 vaccine by the end of 2021, he told national cabinet.

Ahead of the meeting, the Victorian government expressed concerns that the commonwealth had back-tracked from the national cabinet commitment on 4 June that “states and territories do not need to provision for second doses as the commonwealth retains doses for second use”.

At the meeting, Frewen confirmed that the commonwealth delivers all first dose allocations to states and territories with matching second dose allocations delivered three weeks after first doses are administered.

Afterwards, he told reporters the rollout is still “resource constrained” with respect to Pfizer and “we need to carefully manage” supplies until August, September and October when “we will have far freer flows of Pfizer and start to be able to allocate that more freely”.

The NSW premier, Gladys Berejiklian, with the support of other state and territory leaders, urged the commonwealth to prepare more GPs to dispense Pfizer, ahead of more doses becoming available in August.

The national cabinet statement said: “By the end of July, all 136 commonwealth vaccination clinics, 40 Aboriginal Community Controlled [Health Services](#) and 1,300 GPs will be administering Pfizer.

“Many more primary care providers will be offered the chance to administer mRNA vaccines as the supply of Pfizer significantly increases and the first supplies of Moderna arrive in September/October.”

A ramp-up of Covid-19 vaccine communications to encourage Australians to be vaccinated is also planned, but Frewen said the commonwealth had yet to begin the “rallying phase” because “we want to make sure we don’t start the campaign until we are comfortable we can meet the demand”.

Despite GPs reporting large numbers of patients cancelling appointments to receive their second dose of AstraZeneca, the chief health officer, Paul Kelly, said that federal health authorities’ surveys show that “most [patients] are going to get the second dose”.

The health department secretary, Prof Brendan Murphy, told the Senate committee examining the government's response to the Covid pandemic it was too early to say whether people were cancelling their second doses. But, over the weekend, vaccination rates remained the same.

Murphy said people who received a first jab of AstraZeneca could not get Pfizer for their second dose at the moment due to limited data on mixing the vaccines.

The health department assistant secretary, Lisa Schofield, also rejected [recent reports](#) that the Australian government rejected an offer of 40m doses of Pfizer in mid-2020.

Schofield said she attended the 10 July meeting and there was no offer on the table at the time.

“Pfizer presented where it was up to … they talked through the work that they were doing on their clinical trial for their Covid vaccine, they talked broadly about the manufacturing strategy and supply chain activities,” she said.

“It was a pretty preliminary sort of view of where they’re up to and what they were thinking. There were no numbers or details that were put on the table in that discussion.”

She said the offer of 10m doses Australia took up towards the end of 2020 was the first offer.

The commonwealth has, meanwhile, started publishing more detailed daily data about Australia’s vaccination rate.

Earlier on Monday, Scott Morrison said the data showed 60% of those aged over 70 have now had their first dose, more than 45% of those over 50 have, and one in four of people aged over 16 have.

“So we’ve really been lifting the rate of vaccination, six and a half million doses already having been delivered,” the prime minister told 2GB radio.

“And when it took 45 days to do the first million, it only took 10 days to get that last million to 6m doses. So a lot of progress is being made.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jun/21/australias-vaccine-rollout-constrained-by-pfizer-supply-shortages-until-august>

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[Australia news](#)

Sydney's mask mandate 'likely' to be extended as two new cases recorded

Gladys Berejiklian is urging people to remain vigilant, saying latest coronavirus cluster has spread from 'scarily' fleeting contact

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NSW Covid update: premier Gladys Berejiklian says the mask requirements in greater Sydney are likely to be extended beyond five days after the city recorded two new coronavirus cases. Photograph: Brook Mitchell/Getty Images

NSW Covid update: premier Gladys Berejiklian says the mask requirements in greater Sydney are likely to be extended beyond five days after the city

recorded two new coronavirus cases. Photograph: Brook Mitchell/Getty Images

Luke Henriques-Gomes

@lukehgomes

Mon 21 Jun 2021 02.47 EDT

Gladys Berejiklian has said Sydney's mask mandate will likely be extended beyond Wednesday, as [New South Wales](#) recorded two new local cases of Covid-19.

The two new cases were recorded after 8pm on Sunday, meaning they will be recorded in Tuesday's numbers. Two separate cases were also reported which had already been announced on Sunday.

"Whilst this isn't a bad outcome, our level of concern is still there," the NSW premier said.

[Australians who skip second AstraZeneca vaccine are 'almost wasting' first dose, AMA warns](#)

[Read more](#)

She said people in [Sydney](#) and surrounding areas would likely need to continue wearing masks after Wednesday.

The current rules require masks to be worn indoors in the local government areas of Randwick, Bayside, Canada Bay, Inner West, City of Sydney, Waverley and Woollahra.

Face masks are also compulsory on public transport in greater Sydney, as well as the the Wollongong and Shellharbour local government areas.

"Given the situation we are in and given we don't want to see further restrictions imposed more broadly across our city and our state, in all likelihood, the existing settings we have in place will continue beyond the five days," Berejiklian said.

Asked if she expected more restrictions would be needed, NSW's chief health officer, Kerry Chant said authorities were "just watching every new case that comes in" and monitoring for unlinked cases and new exposure venues.

"This is a critical part in the response," Chant said.

"It is critical that we all do our part in moderating our behaviours taking that extra care, and that applies to individuals but also businesses."

Berejiklian said this meant refraining from large gatherings unless "absolutely necessary" and to "assume that you or somebody in close proximity to you has the virus".

"We know from the number of cases that we've seen already in this particular cluster that in some instances, the exchanges have been scarily [fleeting]," she said.

"Literally people coming, not even physically touching each other, but literally fleetingly coming into the same air space."

The new cases reported were a woman in her 50s from Sydney's south and a man in his 50s from the Sutherland shire who were both close contacts of an existing case.

Also on Monday, [Queensland](#) authorities revealed that a new case reported at the weekend had leaked from hotel quarantine.

[Covid travel restrictions: where you can and can't go within Australia](#)
[Read more](#)

Authorities said on Sunday a woman had tested positive after completing her 14 days of hotel quarantine. She had visited a Brisbane shopping centre, the CBD and a restaurant.

On Monday, the Queensland chief health officer, Jeannette Young, said there was "no doubt" the woman had contracted the virus from someone else at a hotel quarantine facility at Four Points.

“We’re just working out how that transmission occurred but there is no doubt she has acquired it in the hotel or at some point when she has come in contact with that person,” Young said.

The woman travelled from Portugal to Australia on an Emirates flight in order to work as cabin crew for other airlines.

Young said the woman had the “Alpha” variant, which was not as contagious as the “Delta” variant.

Queensland recorded no new cases on Monday.

In [Victoria](#), one new case was recorded – a resident of a Southbank apartment complex at the centre of an existing outbreak.

The person was already isolating when they tested positive.

The acting premier, James Merlino, said he expected the state government would be able to relax restrictions further this week.

“I do have confidence and an expectation that later in the week we’ll be announcing a whole range of easing of restrictions for regional Victorians and Melburnians,” Merlino said.

“But I don’t want to foreshadow those today. As Prof [Brett] Sutton always says, everything is on the table in terms of assessment, and it will be public health advice in terms of what can be eased further in a Covid-safe way.”

Merlino also hit out at the pace of the vaccine rollout ahead of a national cabinet meeting on Monday.

“When you compare how Australia is going with the rest of the world, we are falling so far behind it’s not funny,” he said on Monday morning.

Merlino said he was worried Victoria would face a shortfall in doses coming from the commonwealth in July and August.

That would be followed by a “mad rush” towards the end of the year, he said.

Speaking after national cabinet, Berejiklian said it was a “relief” to learn vaccines would be distributed to states and territories on the basis of population.

She said if NSW got the vaccines the federal government was now promising, more GPs will also need to join the rollout.

Victoria added the NSW local government areas of Bayside, Canada Bay, Inner West and Randwick to its list of orange zones on Sunday evening.

It means people who travel to Victoria from these areas must get a test and isolate until they receive a negative result.

The City of Sydney, Waverley and Woollahra LGAs were already listed as orange zones.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jun/21/concern-is-there-sydney-smask-mandate-likely-to-be-extended-as-nsw-records-two-new-covid-cases>

Global development

Half of Zimbabweans fell into extreme poverty during Covid

Poor families cannot afford healthcare and schooling but good harvests offer some hope, World Bank finds



Children play at a borehole in Mbare township, Harare. Aid agencies are recording high levels of malnutrition and stunted growth in Zimbabwe.
Photograph: Aaron Ufumeli/EPA

Children play at a borehole in Mbare township, Harare. Aid agencies are recording high levels of malnutrition and stunted growth in Zimbabwe.
Photograph: Aaron Ufumeli/EPA

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[About this content](#)

[Nyasha Chingono](#) in Harare

Mon 21 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

The number of Zimbabweans in extreme poverty has reached 7.9 million as the pandemic has delivered another economic shock to the country.

According to the [World Bank's economic and social update report](#), almost half of Zimbabwe's population fell into extreme poverty between 2011 and last year, with children bearing the brunt of the misery.

“The number of extreme poor is expected to remain at 7.9 million in 2021 amid continued elevated prices, and a slow recovery of jobs and wages in the formal and informal sectors,” according to the report.

“Given limited social safety nets for protecting the high numbers of poor, households are likely to turn to negative coping strategies,” it said.

“Poor households are likely to forgo formal health care as they are unable to pay for services, and to keep children out school to avoid education costs, such as for school fees, uniforms and textbooks.”

The pandemic added 1.3 million Zimbabweans to the numbers of extreme poor as jobs and income were lost in urban areas.

According to the [World Bank](#), the “extreme poor” are defined as people living under the food poverty line of US\$29.80 (£21) for each person a month.

Those living below this threshold doubled from 3 million in 2011 to 6.6 million in 2019, with higher numbers than ever recorded in rural areas.

Child poverty has risen exponentially around the country and humanitarian agencies are recording high levels of malnutrition and stunted growth.

“Due to economic and climatic shocks, poverty rose sharply, and extreme poverty reached 42% in 2019 – up from 30% in 2017. Nearly 90% of the extreme poor lived in rural areas, and 1.6 million were children,” it said.



Boys play on an improvised pool table in Hopley, outside Harare. As the Covid lockdown closed schools, poorer children were left to their own devices. Photograph: Aaron Ufumeli/EPA

Rising prices for fuel and food have hit the poor, with increases for maize and maize meal alone estimated to have boosted extreme poverty by two percentage points between May and December 2019.

“According to the survey, in July 2020 nearly 500,000 households had one member who had lost her or his job since the onset of the pandemic, worsening the plight of the poor and forcing more households into intermittent or prolonged suffering. The most common stated reason for losing a job in urban areas was business closure due to the lockdown,” the report said.

While wages dropped, 23% of the poorest people – who were working before Covid-19 – had lost their jobs by June 2020, adding thousands to the unemployment numbers.

“Among the non-poor, this figure was also high at 20%. As fewer of the poor were working even before the pandemic, the proportion of households affected by job losses is about the same for both the poor and the non-poor,” the report said.

['My parents sold me': poverty drives trade in child brides in Zimbabwe | Nyasha Chingono](#)

[Read more](#)

As Zimbabweans struggled with successive lockdowns, 1.4 million people went without staple foods.



A stallholder with a tattered \$20 note at a busy market in Harare. The continuing economic crisis means enterprising traders are repairing old notes for desperate customers. Photograph: Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi/AP

The grim reading of Zimbabwe's economic prospects comes as the government boasts of [a budget surplus](#) of \$9.8bn (US\$19.5m), maintaining that the economy has grown under the leadership of President Emmerson Mnangagwa, but the reality on the streets of Harare tells a different [story of struggle](#) as families scrape a living.

However, despite uncertainty over a third wave of Covid, the bank suggested that Zimbabwe could have an economic rebound in 2022 with a bumper harvest expected to ensure most rural families have enough to eat and leading the economy to 3.9% growth.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/21/half-of-zimbabweans-fell-into-extreme-poverty-during-covid>

2021.06.21 - Spotlight

- 'I am very shy. It's amazing I became a movie star' Leslie Caron at 90 on love, art and addiction
- 'People are feeling pent-up' Swansea struggles with rise in violence
- Do what you love – and take it easy Eight ways to get back lost fitness and motivation
- The Guardian picture essay Documenting violence against migrants in South Africa

The G2 interviewMovies

‘I am very shy. It’s amazing I became a movie star’: Leslie Caron at 90 on love, art and addiction



‘I love the spirit of the English’ ... Leslie Caron at home in London.
Photograph: Antonio Olmos/The Guardian

‘I love the spirit of the English’ ... Leslie Caron at home in London.
Photograph: Antonio Olmos/The Guardian

The legendary actor reflects on her riches-to-rags childhood, confronting depression and alcoholism – and dancing with Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire



[Simon Hattenstone](#)

Mon 21 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Leslie Caron and her companion, Jack, greet me at the front of their apartment. They make a well-matched couple – slight, chic, immaculately coiffured. Caron, the legendary dancer and actor, is 90 in two weeks' time. Jack, her beloved shih tzu, is about nine.

Caron heads off to make the tea, with Sidney Bechet's summery jazz playing in the background. I am left alone with Jack to explore the living room. It feels as if I am tunnelling through the history of 20th-century culture. Here is a photo of a pensive François Truffaut; below is a smirking Warren Beatty. The centrepiece on the wall is a huge watercolour of Caron's great friend Christopher Isherwood, painted by his partner, Don Bachardy. To the left is Louis Armstrong, to the right Rudolf Nureyev, with whom she starred in 1977's *Valentino*, and further along is Jean Renoir, who she says was like a father to her. And we have barely started.

Caron leads me into her magnificent garden, long and thin as a cricket wicket. "What do you think?" she says, with undisguised pride at her handiwork. She points out the petunias, geraniums, forget-me-nots and a solitary rose trailing on the wall. The pots, some of them almost as big as

she is, line up like a military tattoo. “The rose came out in the night. Fabulous.” She licks her lips.

Caron is birdlike and as elegant as ever. Her hair is brown and bobbed with the now trademark white streak, eyes large and dusty blue, voice youthful and distinctly French. Her sentences are punctuated with a pealing laugh. From a distance, she sounds so full of *joie de vivre*. And she is, in a way. But when she tells her story, it is not quite so carefree.



‘He was a great guy, he really was’ ... Caron with Gene Kelly in 1951’s *An American in Paris*. Photograph: MGM/Allstar

It is 70 years since Caron became France’s first great female Hollywood star, opposite Gene Kelly in the musical [An American in Paris](#). At 16, she had signed up with the choreographer Roland Petit’s Ballet de Paris, hoping to be the next Anna Pavlova. She even considered changing her name to Leslie Caranova. At 17, she was spotted by Kelly performing in Paris. Eighteen months later, she was working with him in Hollywood. Caron could not have looked more innocent, with her pixie haircut, cherubic cheeks and toothy grin. She seemed born to play cute ingenues. And so she did. But her characters could not have been more different from her. “I had a tendency to be melancholy,” she says.

Caron felt so much older than her years. She had already lived such a full and fraught life, coming from wealth on her father's side and scandal on her mother's. Her father, Claude, was a Parisian pharmacist, perfumer and boutique owner. Her mother, Margaret, was a divorcee who smoked, dyed her hair and had been a professional dancer until she married Caron's father. During the second world war, the family lost their fortune – and, ultimately, far more. "My mother died of it," she says baldly. Her mother, who had grown up in poverty, could not cope with their reduced circumstances. She became depressed and an alcoholic and, in her 60s, killed herself.

As for Caron, she says the war defined her – and continues to do so today. She still roasts her potato peelings and sticks slivers of soap together so they don't go to waste. But it goes deeper than that. "The thing about the war is people turned really nasty. Everyone talks about the solidarity of the war, and it may have happened in England, but not in France. We were ashamed to have given up and to have the German enemy right there. So there was shame and animosity. You couldn't ask somebody in the street where anywhere was – they would insult you. Even to this day, I cannot ask people for help. I expect to be turned down." She became anxious and anorexic.

Before *An American in Paris*, I had never spoken in my life on the stage ... having to act out loud was a nightmare

Caron went to an elite school run by nuns. The girls were highly educated, but with little expectation of a career – they would simply marry into even more money. But with no dowry, Margaret accepted that her daughter would have to work, just as she had. "My mother said: 'There's only one profession that leads you to marrying money and becoming a princess or duchess, and that's ballet.'"

Her mother decided they would tell her father and grandparents over Sunday lunch. "She said: 'Leslie has something to announce,' and I said: 'I want to be a ballet dancer.' My grandfather whispered heavily: 'Margaret, you want your daughter to be a whore?' I heard it. This has always followed me."

The thing is, Caron says, there was a truth to it. "In those days, a ballet dancer was a little whore. It was all organised. In the intermission, the little

dancer went with her mother into the foyer and gentlemen would come and make a choice and discuss the terms.” Ballet was beneath her class. “Ballet dancing was for what is called *la fille de la concierge* – the caretaker’s daughter.” She giggles.

Caron has an ambivalent attitude to so much of her career. While she adored ballet, her grandfather’s comments stayed with her. She loved many of the people she worked with in the movies, but often something held her back from fully enjoying the experience. While making *An American in Paris*, directed by Vincente Minnelli, she had mononucleosis and was malnourished. “I hadn’t eaten properly for five years,” she says. She was also terrified. “I had never spoken in my life on the stage and having to act out loud was a nightmare for me. A *nightmare!*”

Kelly, 19 years her senior and her leading man, supported her when she was most vulnerable. “He always called me the Kid. And he’d say: ‘Listen, guys, the Kid needs a rest.’ He was a great guy, he really was.” Did she find it strange being cast opposite men who were old enough to have been her father? “No. I didn’t question it. I was thrilled to be asked by those great actors. I think the movies have caught up with reality a little more these days.”



Urbane and genteel ... Fred Astaire and Caron in 1955's *Daddy Long Legs*.
Photograph: Archive Photos/Getty Images

Caron is one of only six women who danced with Kelly and Fred Astaire in movies. She says that while Kelly always danced close to the ground, with Astaire (in 1955's *Daddy Long Legs*) she felt as if she was floating. Who did she prefer? She gives me a look. "It's not fair to ask me that. For 70 years, I've refused to answer that. A great dancer is a great dancer." She says they were such different men – Kelly tough and generous, Astaire urbane and genteel.

Seven years after *An American in Paris*, she made the romantic comedy *Gigi*, again directed by Minnelli. It became one of Hollywood's most successful musicals, winning nine Oscars. Caron was now 27, but could still pass as a schoolgirl. She was a huge musicals star. There was only one problem: "I thought musicals were futile and silly." She smiles. "I appreciate them better now."

Was she happy in Hollywood? "No, I was very young and very lonely. I couldn't find many people who had the same experience. People would say: 'Oh yes, we had a harsh time in the war – we could only get one chocolate bar a week.' You can't explain to people what it was like living with the enemy, machine guns and smell – the constant fear."

She didn't have much time for the men who ran the studios. Like so many stars, she was signed on a seven-year contract as an unknown and ended up earning a pittance at her peak. She couldn't stand the way female actors were treated. "Women were kept in their infancy. In England, actresses are allowed to age; in Hollywood, absolutely not."

Caron wanted to do more serious acting, so she studied the [Stanislavski method](#), learned about psychological realism and found it thrilling. In 1962, she used it to great effect in *The L-Shaped Room*, an adaptation of the Lynne Reid Banks novel. Caron showed she could do gritty, playing a single pregnant woman deciding whether or not to have an abortion. She won a Bafta and a Golden Globe and was nominated for a best actress Oscar.



‘He loved to be trailed around by journalists and to have everything you did photographed’ ... Caron and Warren Beatty in 1965’s *Promise Her Anything*.
Photograph: Archive Photos/Getty Images

She says Tom Bell, who played her lover, Toby, in the film, was the most empathetic actor she worked with. “He really listened. He was fabulous.” Who was her most talented leading man? “Cary Grant,” she answers immediately. In 1964, she starred with Grant in the romcom *Father Goose*; Grant was 27 years her senior. “Cary was a complicated brain,” she says, pointing to her head. “He was a remarkable performer. He was very instinctive, seductive, intelligent. But when he got mad he would get into a terrible state. He worried about money.” Surely he had plenty of it? Yes, she says, but when you grow up poor you always think like a poor person. “I remember Charlie Chaplin saying to me: ‘If I were rich ...’” When Chaplin died in 1977, he left more than \$100m to his fourth wife, Oona.

Caron has been married three times. Her mother had taught her that she should always be subservient to the men in her life, that if she were smarter than them she should never show it. And yet she walked out of each marriage. In 1951, at 20, she wed the American musician George Hormel, the heir to the Hormel meat-packing company. Three years later, she left him. “Geordie Hormel was a junkie. That’s why I walked away so fast.”

In 1956, she married the English theatre director Peter Hall, who was to become known as the great impresario of his age. They had two children, Christopher and Jennifer, and were regarded as a golden couple. It was an exciting life – travelling the length of Britain searching out new talent. But, again, there was a problem. “There was no room for me. He didn’t want me to act with him or to work with somebody else. He wanted me in the kitchen preparing sandwiches for him. I just couldn’t accept the situation Peter insisted on.”

Did she tell him? “Of course. I said: ‘Look at the Oliviers. There’s room for both.’ But I wasn’t Vivien Leigh. She had a very strong will.” But you had strength in a different way? Yes, and no, she says. “I walked out. But I do regret walking out on Peter. I wish I’d had the confidence to say: ‘Now, look, this is the way it’s going to be,’ because he didn’t want to split up and he spent several weddings trying to find me again.” In what way? “Everybody would say: ‘My God, she looks just like you!’ Wife No 2, wife No 3.”

As she talks, I am looking at the three classy rings she wears. What do they represent? “Nothing,” she says. She points to a gold ring with a pearl perched on top. “This was my grandfather’s wedding ring to my grandmother. And the pearl was given me by my father and mounted.” She moves to the next. “This is a modest little ring with specks of diamond, which isn’t worth much. It was my mum’s and it saved my finger. A heavy garage door fell on my hand and squashed the ring. My finger would have been severed.” On to the third – four claws holding up the world. “That is the first jewel I bought with the first money I earned in Hollywood. It’s to give me confidence.”

Everything with Warren Beatty was too dramatic. I didn’t think I could keep up the pace

Has she kept her three wedding rings? “No, I just had them melted for cufflinks for my two grandsons. Hehehehe! All three of them. Hehehehe!” She rocks with laughter.

Caron and Hall divorced in 1965, but not before she had embarked on a two-year affair with Warren Beatty. Beatty and Caron were gold dust for the gossip mags – as gorgeous as they were scandalous. There is a story she tells of him waking her up in the middle of the night to tell her he was worried that she wasn't thinking about him. "I thought it was funny!" she says. Did she find it romantic or disturbing? "Yes, it's romantic when you're young and somebody is thinking obsessively about you in the middle of the night. You are quite flattered."

She also realised it was a sign of his narcissism and desire to dominate. "He considered himself my tutor and told me how to dress and wear makeup and how to behave."

Beatty wanted to marry her, she says, but she turned him down – repeatedly. "He kept asking me and I kept saying: 'No, Warren, no.'" Why not? "Everything with him was too dramatic. I didn't think I could keep up the pace. And I couldn't, and eventually I left him because of that. He wanted everything to be so well announced. He loved to be trailed around by journalists and to have everything you did photographed. I just couldn't accept that kind of life."

I couldn't imagine two more different people, I say. "Yes, I'm not somebody who likes public life. In fact, it's amazing that I became a movie star, because I am very shy and retiring."

Was the contrast part of the attraction? "If you really want the truth, Warren always had girlfriends who resembled his sister [Shirley MacLaine] and I had many of her qualities. I was a dancer, I had a very good figure, I was independent. Until he was a fully grown man, his sister was the centre point of his life. I always said those two, brother and sister, ought to be head of a studio." I am not sure she means it as a compliment.



'I thought musicals were futile and silly' ... Caron as Gigi in the 1958 film of the same name. Photograph: Silver Screen Collection/Getty Images

At the beginning of the 70s, she decided she had had it with England and the US and headed back to France. Caron calls it a 40-year mistake. There was one more marriage, to the film producer Michael Laughlin in 1969, which ended in divorce in 1980. As soon as you found somebody stifling, I begin to say – "Yes, I walked away." Again, she mentions her mother – with whom she had a troubled relationship – saying it was Caron's duty to play second fiddle to men. "But I couldn't stand it. I really couldn't stand it. And this is why I'm all by myself now." She says it without a hint of self-pity. Are you happier for it? "Don't know. Probably. I still am the same. I can't stand macho men. Can't *stand* them."

She looks at Jack disapprovingly. "Jack, what are you doing?" He seems to be tap-dancing on my computer bag, I say. She smiles indulgently and says he is named after her great friend Jack Larson, the actor, who was also on the small side.

In 1977, she starred in Truffaut's film *The Man Who Loved Women*. Truffaut was another great friend; she adored him and said he was like an older brother. "He was a wonderful teacher; he taught me cinema. He used to take me to see films and he'd dissect them – 'You see, this is the first act,

second act.' He was a very good critic. It was wonderful. We were watching an Ernst Lubitsch film and he said: 'See, that's the beginning of the joke – it will come out soon in the third act.' He was just fantastic."

But working with him was a different matter. "He was so directive. There was another one who also was dictatorial – René Clair. He was like Hitchcock. He would even play my part. Finally, I said: 'René, why don't you let me suggest things that you may like?'" The directors she loved working with encouraged her to express herself, she says. "They are people who by their presence make you talented. You can smell, you can sense, if they are pleased. Their talent, their imagination, comes your way and you become creative in their style. With Minnelli, I would even place the camera."



'He wanted me in the kitchen preparing sandwiches for him. I just couldn't accept the situation' ... Caron and Peter Hall with their children, Christopher (*left*) and Jennifer, in 1959. Photograph: Chris Ware/Getty Images

I start to ask what her career in France was like, but she answers before the question is out: "Nonexistent." She says the French never accepted her – she was regarded as not quite French and not quite foreign. Caron felt she was punished for her success in the US. "They adore someone who's really British or really American, but somebody who's French and has made it in

Hollywood – and I was the only one who had really made it in a big way – they can't forgive.” Did they regard her as disloyal? “Something like that. I'm tainted. I'm not true foreign. There I am in Hollywood, but I ‘pretend’ to be French.”

Did that frustrate her? “It saddened me. Really saddened me.” Work dried up and she slumped into a deep depression. As her mother had, she began to drink. Occasionally, she went to work abroad, but returned feeling even bleaker. “I worked with Krzysztof Zanussi in Poland. It was very exciting working with him, then I came back to my flat and felt crushed. I just drank for two or three days. I should have never gone back to France to live. In the eyes of the French, I lost everything I had obtained by being a Hollywood star.”

Most of her later movie appearances have been cameos, playing mothers and widows in films such as *Damage*, *Chocolat*, *Funny Bones* and *Le Divorce*. By the 90s, disillusioned with the lack of substantial parts, she started restoring a ruin in Burgundy and transforming it into a hotel and restaurant. During the week, she put her heart into the auberge, then at the weekends she was lost.

“I was extremely lonely and overtired and the weekends were abominable. I didn't want to live them,” she says. Why were they so bad? “Because nothing happened. There was no building to do. I overdid things with too much passion, then found myself alone and crashed.” In 1993, the auberge opened. She was proud of what she had created, but running it left her anxious and exhausted.

Did she worry that what happened to her mother would happen to her? “Yes.” I ask if she came close to taking her life. “Oh yes. I think it's pure luck that I didn't.” One black morning in 1995, she woke up thinking: “I don't think I want to live through this day.” Two days later, she emerged “from a pill- and wine-induced slumber”. She immediately called her son, returned to London and saw a psychiatrist, who asked her to tell him about herself. In *Thank Heaven*, her excruciatingly honest 2009 memoir, she writes: “The floodgates opened, my life seemed such a failure, such a list of mediocre work, a series of foolish mistakes, a road full of wrong turns … an

hour later I was still crying uncontrollably.” She was put on tranquillisers and antidepressants and hospitalised for a month.

Caron realised she was different from her mother: she wanted to live. “My mother went further.” She starts to talk in stubby sentences, trying to work out why her mother killed herself, whether she could have been stopped. “She was wounded as a child by her father walking out and by being poor. Children who have been raised with emotional security, uncles, cousins, friends, that doesn’t happen. My mother didn’t have anything to save her. I guess my father wasn’t enough.”



The cameo years ... Caron in 2000's Chocolat. Photograph: David Brown Productions/Allstar

What saved you, I ask. “My children,” she says. She went to Alcoholics Anonymous for years; she learned coping mechanisms (“Now I have tricks. I know that you better walk out in the streets and suddenly something will interest you and pull you out”); she wrote her fine memoir (she had already written a book of short stories in the 80s called Vengeance); she found reasons to live.

Soon after her breakdown, she was offered a part in the comedy Funny Bones, as the mother of a brilliant, autistic vaudevillian played by Lee

Evans. The director Peter Chelsom said that her character was the only sane person in the family. “Ironic to be playing the only sane character when I had just been released from the psychiatric ward,” she writes in *Thank Heaven*.

Running the auberge proved too tough. By her 80s, she had had enough and decided it was time to return to England. It felt like home. She settled in London with Jack, whom she had rescued from the animal charity the RSPCA, she grew her garden, caught up with old friends, made new ones, hung out with her grandchildren and discovered life could be good. She even got herself some regular acting shifts in the TV series *The Durrells*.

She loves being back in England. For 40 years, she missed the spirit of her adoptive country. “I love the spirit of the English, as demonstrated by the Queen’s courage. Courage is the most precious quality that the British have.” Has she got that courage? “I think I’m developing it, yeah. I take example from the British fortitude.”

As for drink, she hasn’t touched it for decades. “I’m not interested. I never was. It was just to pass out.” She looks around her. “I’ve got a dog, a garden, family, friends. I do my exercise every morning in the corner there and I keep fit. I owe it to my little dog to keep him fit.”

It is time to leave. Life is slowing down, she says, and she is happy with that. “During the first lockdown, I decided I was retiring. I don’t have to get up tomorrow morning to do something. I can oversleep, I can stay up and watch the end of the film. That liberty is wonderful.” You’ve earned it, I say. “Yes, I think so, too!”

A couple of days later, I call her and find her sounding less sure about the retirement: “You never know what will happen.” She tells me she is in the garden and has some news. “There are four roses now. The new ones came out overnight,” she says joyously. “Fabulous!”

In the UK and Ireland, Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123 or by emailing jo@samaritans.org or jo@samaritans.ie. In the US, the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) is 1-800-273-8255. In Australia, the crisis

support service [Lifeline](#) is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at [befrienders.org](#).

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UK news

‘People are feeling pent-up’: Swansea struggles with rise in violence

Residents and politicians say lockdown, deprivation and social division played a part in recent riot



Adam Romain, whose car and house were vandalised, sits on one of the concrete barriers installed at Waun-Wen Road. Photograph: Dimitris Legakis/Athena/The Guardian

Adam Romain, whose car and house were vandalised, sits on one of the concrete barriers installed at Waun-Wen Road. Photograph: Dimitris Legakis/Athena/The Guardian



[Steven Morris](#)

[@stevenmorris20](#)

Mon 21 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

A month on, Adam Romain is still clearly deeply traumatised by the outburst of violence that took place on the doorstep of his Swansea home.

Rioters set fire to cars outside his terrace house, and when he attempted to stop them, hurled bricks through his windows. Delivery driver Romain [turned on a head-cam](#) and captured the screams of his partner and children as glass smashed and the flames danced outside. He dialled 999 and told the operator: “They’ve targeted my house. They are throwing bricks at my house. I have two children inside, please come.”

A quietly spoken, thoughtful man, Romain, 34, has spent hours mulling the causes of the Mayhill riot, in which scores of people took to the streets, pushed a car down the dizzyingly steep Waun-Wen Road and attacked police vans after a vigil for a local teenager turned sour.

He has come to believe the riot was part of a bigger social problem. “I think the feeling has grown that you can get away with a lot and nobody will do anything about it, a sense of lawlessness,” he said. “A lot of people seem to

think they don't have much to lose. The lockdowns may have something to do with it. People are feeling pent-up, frustrated."

Romain has moved his family away. "I can't imagine sitting in the front room not knowing when the next brick is going to come through the window."



The derelict Swansea Boys' Club building in Mayhill, damaged in a fire last November. Photograph: Dimitris Legakis/Athena/The Guardian

The riot has not been the only outbreak of violence and antisocial behaviour in the area in recent months. On Bonfire Night, the derelict Boys' Club just across from Romain's house [was set on fire](#). There was a previous incident in which a car was rolled down Waun-Wen Road, and residents frequently have to dodge out of the way of motorbikes hurtling along pavements. In the early spring there were [brawls involving gangs of young people](#) a mile or so down the hill on the waterfront in Swansea.

There have been other incidents across south Wales. Armed officers were on the streets of Pontypool following reports of teenagers carrying weapons, while hundreds defied social distancing rules to party in front of the Welsh parliament building in Cardiff.

Martin Innes, the director of the [Crime and Security Research Institute at Cardiff University](#), believes pressure that has built up during lockdowns, combined with social problems exacerbated by the Covid crisis, is leading to explosions of violence.

“It is a worrying situation,” he said. “Forces are coming together. Compliance with lockdown was pretty good. The problem is when you take the handbrake off. There is a sense among some young people that they have been abandoned and the future is hopeless.” He does not believe it is a situation unique to Swansea or south Wales but one that could hit anywhere in the UK. “We may have a long, difficult summer coming up.”

There are obvious signs of what is being done in the aftermath of the Swansea riot. Blocks of concrete have been positioned towards the top of Waun-Wen Road to stop cars being rolled down. “It feels a bit like the Berlin Wall,” said retired toy factory worker Pamela Yates, who lives on the road. “But if it keeps us safe, fair enough.”

Mayhill and neighbouring Townhill – referred to locally as “the Hill” – have a rollercoaster history. They were created a century ago as a “garden city estate” built to get people out of the city slums. Many houses have wonderful views over Swansea Bay and towards the Gower peninsula or the Brecon Beacons.

In the 1990s, however, it was a car crime hotspot with dozens of chases between joyriders and police taking place in a single night. The area was used as a location for [the 1997 film Twin Town starring Rhys Ifans](#), which tells the story of a pair of joyriding brothers.

Lockdown has been more frustrating to young people, and the poorer you are the harder it is to sustain yourself

Things improved, thanks largely to the success of projects such as the Phoenix Centre, which was opened in March 2001 by the then prime minister, Tony Blair, and backed by funding from the EU. Twenty years on, it continues to run a successful nursery, library, sports facilities and job clubs.

Mike Durke, a former chief executive officer of the trust that operates the Phoenix, said the approach was to listen to what people said they wanted. “We wanted to be led by local people who had been pushed to the margins. It worked better than anyone could have felt possible, because we treated people with dignity.”

But the area remains one of the most deprived in Wales. In Mayhill, 14% of people have never worked or are long-term unemployed, against 5% for Swansea as a whole, [according to the council's ward profile \(pdf\)](#). The proportion of single parent households is at 25%. Crime has increased this year, with offences for the January to March quarter [the highest for three years.](#)

Leanne Dower, the manager of the Phoenix, said her reaction to the riot was: “Wow, where did that come from?” Dower grew up in the area and remembers the time when the area was known as the “Hill of Despair”. “It is really not like that now,” she said.

She is proud of the reaction of people following the disturbance. Other residents helped the victims clean up and children from a nearby school, Ysgol Gymraeg y Cwm, wrote letters to those affected expressing their sorrow. “This behaviour should not be tolerated,” wrote one, “the violence was mad.”

Swansea council has promised to work with residents to make the place better. Joint deputy leader and Townhill councillor David Hopkins said: “Those who took part in the disorder are a minority and their disgusting behaviour was unacceptable. We’re working with partners including the Welsh government and the police to understand how the incident happened, what can be done to further support families and to ensure this doesn’t happen again.”

Swansea as a whole is on the up. A new [city-centre arena](#) is nearing completion; there is a Marco Pierre White restaurant on [the SA1 waterfront](#); poetry lovers flock to the [Dylan Thomas Centre](#).

“All that doesn’t do us much good,” said Jon (not his real name), a Hill resident who was present on the night of the riot, though only as an

onlooker. “There’s a bit of an us and them kind of vibe – loads to do down there but fuck all up here. We’re the forgotten ones.”

There did seem precious little for youngsters to do this week. The youth centre at the community hall was closed and nobody was playing football or basketball on the Phoenix pitches. The doors of the boxing club were shut.



Tony Roper in Townhill. Photograph: Dimitris Legakis/Athena/The Guardian

Tony Roper, 75, who was born and bred on the Hill and is a former chair of a group that acted as a link between the police and community, said it was very different when he was young. “There was something on every night for the young people, from sports to basket-weaving. That’s all gone.”

He suggested a reason for the riot may be that people have simply got used to images of people protesting or fighting the police. “They see people standing up to authority and think they can do it too.”

Julie James, the Labour Welsh parliament member for Swansea West, said it seemed clear that the violence escalated after images of its beginnings were shared on social media, and said a review would look at whether it should have been anticipated or spotted sooner and stopped. She also raised

concerns that the area is going to miss out on funding in this post-Brexit world. “There’s no doubt the loss of EU funding will hit the area,” she said.

The Welsh government launched a fierce attack this week on the UK government’s replacement for EU funds, the shared prosperity fund (UKSPF). It pointed out that the pilot for the UKSPF, the community renewal fund, is worth £220m across the UK in this financial year.

Welsh ministers argued that if the UK had remained in the EU, Wales would have had new EU structural funding worth at least £375m each year for seven years from January 2021 – on top of funding from the current EU programmes. James said: “This is a serious cut in the amount of money Wales should get.”



Jonathan Russ with his partner Nicola Rogers. The riots in Mayhill began after a vigil for Russ's son Ethan Powell. Photograph: Dimitris Legakis/Athena/The Guardian

The UK government’s Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government disputes the Welsh administration’s claims as “misleading and based on highly speculative figures, arguing: “Our UKSPF will invest in people, communities and local business to level up and create opportunity in places most in need and for people who face labour-market barriers.”

James also believes lockdown may have played a part. “Lockdown has been more frustrating to young people, and the poorer you are the harder it is to sustain yourself in lockdown – you have less access to IT and outside space.”

Another person still trying to understand the Mayhill riot is Jonathan Russ, the father of Ethan Powell for whom the vigil was held after his sudden death at the age of 19. “It left us angry and embarrassed that his name was even connected to what went on. He was such a lovely boy,” Russ said.

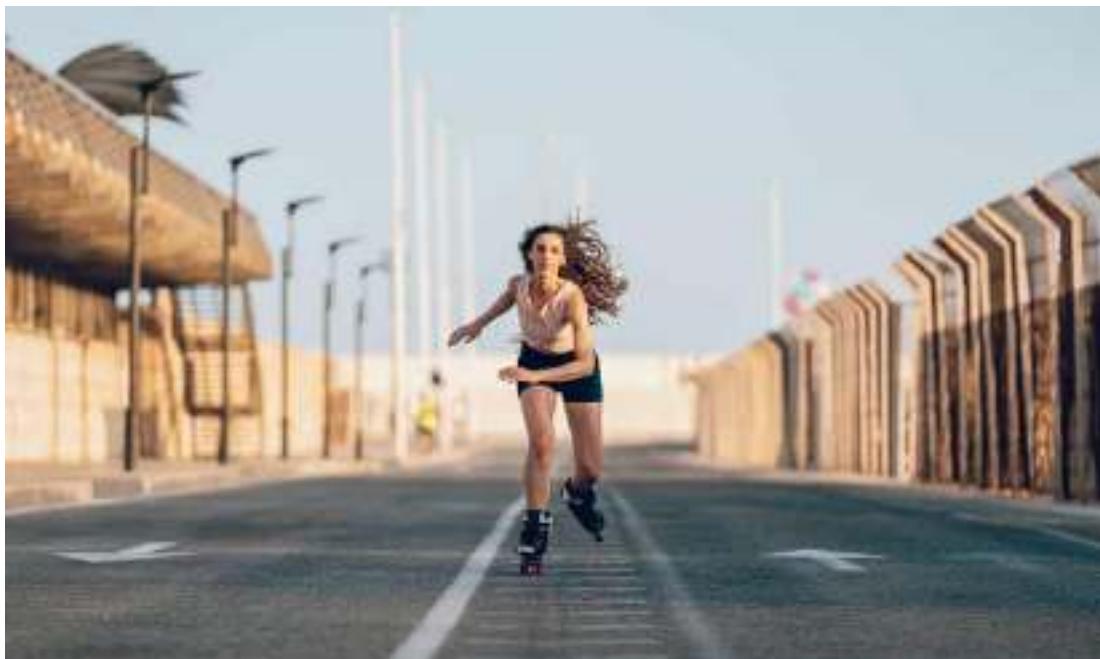
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Fitness

Do what you love – and take it easy: eight ways to get back lost fitness and motivation

The pandemic has left many of us feeling tired, out of sorts and beaten. But it is possible to get your exercise rhythm back. Here's how



Inline skating can provide great exercise out of the gym (posed by model).

Photograph: Westend61/Getty Images

Inline skating can provide great exercise out of the gym (posed by model).

Photograph: Westend61/Getty Images



Sirin Kale

Mon 21 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

Many of us have been working at home for more than a year now, without the “ambient” exercise we used to get during the 9 to 5 – walking to and from the station, say, or up and down the office stairs. And so we’ve made a conscious effort to get our feet moving and our hearts pounding.

Even in the gloomy months of January and February, it was surprisingly easy to stay motivated. Endless mournful laps of the neighbourhood park, brisk jogs past shuttered high streets and empty window displays; they gave you a legitimate excuse to get out of the house. But now that pubs and bars have reopened and we can finally see our friends, many of us have found that our fitness and enthusiasm have plunged off a cliff.

How best to get back into exercise? The experts weigh in.

Don't be ashamed

Exeter-based [personal trainer Joe Edmonds](#) sees this all the time: people who want to exercise more, but are terrified to venture into the gym because they are worried that regular users will laugh at them. The reality, he says, “is

that, generally speaking, other people don't care. They're doing their own thing." Edmonds advises people to push past the discomfort for a few sessions. "I find that if people can just get in for one or two weeks, they soon change their perception of the gym space, and themselves within the gym space. They just need to get in in the first place."

Find your personal incentive

If you're naturally inclined to be sedentary, or don't particularly enjoy working out, it can be difficult to motivate yourself to lace on a pair of trainers and head out for a run. "I would try to encourage that person to find another reason for them to exercise," says [Zahir Akram](#), personal trainer and founder of Akram Yoga Studio in Addlestone, Surrey. "For me a huge motivation to continue training and get healthier isn't aesthetics, but because of my son. I like to remind clients that there are people who rely on them and they need them to be strong. If you can't exercise for yourself, do it for the people who rely on you to be healthy."



Don't try to be Jet from Gladiator from the start (posed by model).
Photograph: mixetto/Getty Images

Don't overdo it

Although it's tempting to embark on a full-throttle fitness kick when you feel that you've been slacking, it's actually counterproductive. "When I work with clients who are getting back into things, I tell them not to go from doing nothing to being Jet from Gladiator by the end of the week," says the London-based [personal trainer Hannah Lewin](#). "I know it's super-tempting when you are in a down phase to amp it up to the max, but it's not realistic."

Identify something you enjoy

If you hate running or find yoga boring – don't do it. "If you start with something you really dislike, it won't help you get back into anything," says Lewin. "Finding something you don't hate is a good place to start, and it will also help build your confidence level. Confidence and motivation go hand in hand, so if you are finding something makes you feel bad, exercise will be even more stressful, and your motivation will decline even further."

Don't obsess about the gym

There are many ways to exercise that don't include gyms. Skating in the park with friends; a dip in the lido; a long walk down the beach: all get the blood circulating, and, more importantly, are enjoyable (providing you don't fall over on the skates). "You don't have to think of exercise as going to the gym or for a 5km run," says Akram. "Just going for a 15-minute walk every day will contribute to health, make your joints feel better, and loosen you up. Lots of people have a mistaken idea of what exercise is. If you go walking regularly, that's exercise. So if you don't want to go to a gym, at least get up and move around more."

Consider measuring your progress

"Incremental gains can be really motivating," says Edmonds. [Fitness apps such as Strava](#) have free-to-use versions, and are great for monitoring your progress. "A lot of people are numbers-based," says Edmonds, "and being able to write down and see their progress and logging it can be very beneficial for them. Others will be motivated by training with someone else. You have to understand what motivates you."



Running apps can be very motivating (posed by model). Photograph: Luis Alvarez/Getty Images

Use the resources that are available

We've all heard of Couch to 5K, but there are many other brilliant programmes that can help you get into fitness for the first time, or rediscover your motivation. "The [FIIT app](#) has some indoor-based workouts that are really good for lots of different levels," says Lewin. "I also like to recommend [Keiser's The Ride](#), which is an indoor cycling programme that is much less intimidating than Peloton, and you can use any indoor bicycle." Nike also does a very good free-running app with plenty of beginner routes. And avail yourself of your local gym's reopening offer. "Most of the bigger gyms are doing free back-to-the-gym personal training sessions," says Lewin. "You'll get 45 minutes for free with a personal trainer. Even if you're a seasoned gym-goer, it's really worth it, as it will give you a bit of fire for trying something new."

Be consistent – and kind to yourself

"It's better to have a few shorter sessions a week that are manageable than packing in lots of classes, and then dropping out," says Lewin. "The more

consistent you are, the higher your motivation levels will stay. But consistency needs you to be realistic. Otherwise, it gets overwhelming.”

Lewin would encourage people to be kind to themselves. “Compare where you are now with where you were a year ago,” she says. “My God, we have all gone through such a lot since then. And instead of thinking: ‘Oh, I was fitter last year’, think about how this year you’re going to build back better.”

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Documenting violence against migrants in South Africa – a photo essay

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/21/documenting-violence-against-migrants-in-south-africa-a-photo-essay>.

2021.06.21 - Opinion

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GB News is no joke, despite the risible start

[Nesrine Malik](#)

Rightwing grievance politics has a new home. As much as it might like to, the left can't pretend the channel doesn't exist



‘GB News has gathered up the material of grievance that has been floating around for years.’ Nigel Farage in the green room, at the channel’s launch event in London. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

‘GB News has gathered up the material of grievance that has been floating around for years.’ Nigel Farage in the green room, at the channel’s launch event in London. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

Mon 21 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

The most striking thing about [GB News](#), the television news channel that launched this month, is not how original it is, but how familiar it feels. For a

project that is supposed to be taking a “fresh approach” to the news, according to its founder Andrew Neil, the only novelty lies in the fact that it’s on television: after watching it this past week, my impression is that the channel is essentially a combination of the sensationalism of the print tabloid press and the ill-temperedness of phone-in radio.

That said, the medium does lend itself to ranting and provocation, perhaps more than print or radio. To sustain 24 hours of TV with little original news gathering and a lot of chat between anchors and guests, the tone needs to be constantly pitched at a high note of something: outrage, frustration, dolefulness. The result is a circus of fractious energy and unpredictable monologues. One gets the sense that anchors don’t quite know how they are going to finish a sentence once they start it off.

But finishing a thought is not really the point of GB News. The project is building on the political energy that is already out there, rather than generating it. GB News has gathered up the material of grievance that has been floating around for years. That material, from Brexit-based resentment against the EU to anti-“wokeness” and all the positions associated with it – hostility to immigration, racial equality movements, “cancel culture” and lockdowns – is an inexhaustible source of cheap content.

Neil’s show has a slot called “Woke Watch”. In the first episode, he said the police had become more like “social workers in uniform, guardians of political correctness, arbiters of our thoughts”, who seemed to “spend more time policing what we post on Twitter” than patrolling the streets. Another GB News presenter, Andrew Doyle, then turns up and agrees with Neil.

It seems that not a lot of care has gone into how that content is pulled together, but slickness isn’t the point either. The purpose is to give these broadly rightwing sentiments a full-time home of their own. GB News’s motto might as well be “You’re in our house now”. In his launch speech, Neil declared that GB News would not “slavishly follow the existing news agenda”, that it was not a conventional news bulletin provider but a channel built “round passionate presenters with character, flair, attitude, opinion”. He declared that the channel had a clear aim, which was to “puncture” the pomposity of elites, and expose “their growing promotion of cancel culture for the threat to free speech and democracy that it is”.

[Is GB News a threat to democracy? That's the million-dollar question |](#)

[Stewart Lee](#)

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There is a real appetite for such an offering: the [ratings so far are good](#). This shouldn't be surprising. GB News is a natural extension of the increasing popularity of a sort of conservative grievance politics, more concerned about what pictures students have on their walls than how the economy works or the outcomes of public policy. It is presented as an institution built in exile, forced out from a mainstream, but the reality is that its politics is so popular and handsomely backed by funders that it has outgrown its space in the mainstream broadcast world.

When those political views are rehoused away from the production standards of, say, the BBC, the end result looks impossible to take seriously. In the past week, cameras and mics failed on such a regular basis that a whole Twitter account dedicated to the “fails” was set up. A guest has tried to clarify, for some reason, that Jeffrey Epstein was an “ephebophile” rather than a paedophile; an anchor claimed that the police couldn’t do their jobs if they were incapacitated by taking the knee. This is not intelligent stuff. But it would be a mistake to write it off as a rickety project that will be sunk by its poor quality. It may be plagued by comedic technical issues, but it is entirely serious.

Regulated by Ofcom, the channel is keen to emphasise that it is committed to balance, but its programming is built around opinionated personalities whose selling point is often their “straight talking” and “sharp takes”. Reporters make what appear to be random appearances during the commentary, opinion and discussion, but it seems like their purpose is to furnish more talking points rather than to break ignored stories. Steadily a political worldview reveals itself. Dan Wootton, who has a 9pm show, wrote that “so many debates about thorny issues have been shut down in the broadcast media, where woke producers proudly make decisions on what stories should be covered”. He and his colleagues are part of a “broadcasting revolution in the UK, where presenters like me are honest about what we believe”. One of his first acts in that revolution was to quote from an article in the Sun, which asked “whether there is a link between lockdown and the government’s drastic zero-emissions green agenda”.

And here we come to the risk of a common mistake: concluding that this is a fake news network that should be ignored, because the only way it achieves traction is via the friction of controversy, reaction and virality. But just because it appears not to be credible or competent doesn't mean that it is not viable or that it won't corrode our political culture further. You might not be watching, but other people are, and will.

But neither should we take the bait entirely, and become engulfed in the reactionary outrage that feeds the sort of polarisation upon which such ventures thrive. GB News is planted in a soil that has already been tilled by the rightwing press. In power is a government that is only too happy to comment on and nourish culture-war confections, giving such stories a stamp of legitimacy. As the days and months pass, the GB News audience will be slowly radicalised, helping to push Boris Johnson's post-Brexit England even further to the right. It is incumbent on us to pay attention. Call it GB News Watch.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist
- Gary Younge and fellow journalists Lynsey Hanley and Natalie Morris will be talking about the importance of newsroom diversity, at a Guardian Live event tomorrow, Tuesday 22 June, 1pm-2pm BST [Book tickets here](#)

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OpinionSustainable development

The pandemic has revived hope that a more sustainable world is possible

Jeremy Caradonna

Economic growth is inextricably linked to the climate crisis, but the past year has taught us that such growth isn't essential



Some locals glimpsed the Himalayas for the first time after the pandemic made the smog vanish. Photograph: Manish Swarup/AP

Some locals glimpsed the Himalayas for the first time after the pandemic made the smog vanish. Photograph: Manish Swarup/AP

Mon 21 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

Some of the most striking images from the early days of the pandemic, when public health orders and lockdowns ground economies to a halt, were the arresting photos of the Himalayas, suddenly visible from across northern

India, as decades of unrelenting smog finally abated. Unbelievably, some locals glimpsed the immense mountain range for the first time in their lives.

It's never too late to clear things up. And the pandemic has revived a movement that has its roots in the 18th century, when the word "[sustainability](#)" was first coined (in German) to describe a new approach to forestry enabling a continual harvest of wood. It's a movement widely believed to have entered the mainstream with the 1987 Our Common Future report – a UN-backed initiative, overseen by Norway's then prime minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, which laid out an ambitious pathway towards a "sustainable economy". This left us with the enduringly relevant [definition of sustainability](#) as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Historians of the future will see the last year as a major turning point in world history, and perhaps even the dawn of a new era. The enforced economic slowdown of the pandemic, which inadvertently drove down emissions and induced simple living (gardening, sour dough, local hiking!), provides new momentum for recalibrating cultural values and changing the very trajectory of our globalised industrial society.

In many ways, sustainability has been a success story. It has driven an unprecedented increase in renewable energy, revived local and organic food markets, led to the start of the phasing out of single-use plastics, catalysed circular economy systems and sparked an unprecedented normalisation and institutionalisation of sustainability within governments, NGOs, corporations and universities, making many organisations less wasteful, more energy-efficient and more committed to the "triple bottom line", which means weighing equally social, environmental and financial wellbeing. The rise of theories such as Kate Raworth's "doughnut economics", [adopted by the city of Amsterdam](#), offer exciting new ways for such ideas to be further adapted.

Moreover, sustainability has had an enormous impact on consumer behaviour, driving sales in everything from [shade-grown coffee](#), environmentally friendly bath products and Fair Trade chocolate, to investor decisions. So-called ESG investments (ones that support environment, social wellbeing and good governance) [captured \\$51.1bn of net new money from](#)

[investors](#) in 2020. Increasingly, consumers want to see their values reflected in their spending and investing habits.

On balance, however, the sustainability movement has failed to solve the most pressing social, economic and environmental challenge of the day – climate change, and the fossil-fuelled economic growth that sits as its principal driver. Hence the increasing urgency from activists and climate scientists alike.

The [Paris climate agreement](#) of 2016 was certainly a win for sustainability, but it took far too long to get all of the world's countries on the same page. Sustainability wasn't mainstream, or widely seen as a priority, until around 2000. Before that the pressure to act on sustainability came largely from specialised interest groups, including climate scientists, energy specialists, some policymakers, ecological economists and simple living advocates who had been inspired by environmentalism.

As a result, the major milestones in the history of sustainability are largely institutional, methodological and top-down in nature – the 1987 [Montreal protocol](#) that banned ozone-depleting substances, the [creation](#) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 1988, the [1992 Rio Earth Summit](#), among others. These milestones have had beneficial impacts, but they did not result in the systemic transformations that was their original intent. As 2030 climate targets bear down upon us, our inability to solve the major crisis of our age serves as a potent reminder of why much of the pandemic-era slowdown must, in some form, remain.

The smartest jurisdictions figured out how to advance sustainability during the pandemic and make the most of the precipitous decline in traffic congestion. Cities from Milan to Mexico City and Mumbai took [tangible steps to advance](#) active transportation, build new bike lanes and create “[the 15-minute city](#)”. A realistic goal will be for communities to come together and decide cooperatively on a new, sustainable, low-impact vision for the future that would undoubtedly include more robust healthcare, emergency and basic support systems. In a survey, [around two thirds of Europeans said](#) they did not want to return to pre-pandemic levels of air pollution. That dream will become a reality only with a concerted effort.

It is no longer heretical to observe that economic growth will not, and cannot, solve our climate crisis. From spring 2020 until the early months of 2021, absolute emissions worldwide decreased for the first time in decades, [by an average of 26%](#). Sadly, [the early signs](#) from 2021 suggest that emissions are already bouncing back. The economic downturn of 2008 slowed emissions growth, but we haven't witnessed an absolute dip [since the USSR broke apart](#), creating a temporary slowdown in the world economy. It is now time to face this elephant in the room – that [more growth means more emissions](#). We, of the wealthy global north, must find ways to [create prosperity](#) without aggregate economic growth.

Promise comes, too, from the energy sector, where peak oil seems finally to have occurred, thanks in part to the pandemic. Demand for oil [fell by 9%](#) in 2020, and although it's already rebounding, it is clear that we're witnessing the global plateauing of fossil fuel demand. What a post-fossil fuel economy will look like is anyone's guess, but one clear takeaway from the pandemic is that we cannot return to self-centred and worry-free air travel. People need to stop flying, or at the very least, to fly far less often, and only out of absolute necessity – as in the case of a death in the family.

Happily, we finally have the fossil fuel companies against the wall. Shell was recently ordered to limit emissions in a [historic court case](#), and both ExxonMobil and Chevron recently had [shareholder revolts](#) over climate concerns. The divestment movement grows daily. With sustained pressure, we will see a near-complete receding of fossil fuel consumption [over the next two decades](#), even if China stubbornly drags its feet.

As we look ahead to the After Times of the pandemic, we can mitigate our collective trauma by making meaning from the suffering we've endured and by reviving a flagging sustainability movement. Let us learn to normalise and enjoy the low-carbon, low-cost, simple pleasures that truly sustain us.

- Dr Jeremy L Caradonna teaches in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria and is the author of *Sustainability: A History*, which will be published by Oxford University Press as a second edition in April 2022

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OpinionRobots

Robots may soon be able to reproduce - will this change how we think about evolution?

[Emma Hart](#)

Nature is full of examples of biology adapting to its surroundings. Technology may just be about to catch up



Scotland's health secretary, Humza Yousaf, watches a surgical robot at work at Glasgow Royal Infirmary. Photograph: Jane Barlow/PA

Scotland's health secretary, Humza Yousaf, watches a surgical robot at work at Glasgow Royal Infirmary. Photograph: Jane Barlow/PA

Mon 21 Jun 2021 05.10 EDT

From the bottom of the oceans to the skies above us, natural evolution has filled our planet with a vast and diverse array of lifeforms, with

approximately 8 million species adapted to their surroundings in a myriad of ways. Yet 100 years after Karel Čapek [coined the term](#) *robot*, the functional abilities of many species still surpass the capabilities of current human engineering, which has yet to convincingly develop methods of producing robots that demonstrate human-level intelligence, move and operate seamlessly in challenging environments, and are capable of robust self-reproduction.

But could robots ever reproduce? This, undoubtedly, forms a pillar of “life” as shared by all natural organisms. A [team](#) of researchers from the UK and the Netherlands have recently demonstrated a fully automated [technology](#) to allow physical robots to repeatedly breed, evolving their artificial genetic code over time to better adapt to their environment. Arguably, this amounts to artificial evolution. Child robots are created by mixing the digital “DNA” from two parent robots on a computer.

The new design is first sent to a 3D printer that fabricates the body of the robot, then a robotic arm attaches a “brain” loaded with control software inherited from the parents, along with any new components, such as sensors, wheels or joints, selected by this “evolutionary” process. A digital replica of every new robot is also created in a computer simulation. This enables a novel type of evolution: new generations can be produced from a union of the most successful traits from a virtual “mother” and a physical “father”, combining the benefits of fast but potentially unrealistic simulated evolution with the more accurate assessment of robots in a real physical environment. The new robots therefore inherit traits that represent the best of both types of evolution.

While this technology can operate without a human in the loop, it also allows for collaboration with a human “breeder”: just as humans have been selectively breeding crops since the dawn of farming, the robot breeder could influence selection of robots with particular traits. One might even imagine breeding farms, producing robots adapted to specific conditions and user requirements. They might be bred for qualities such as battery life or carbon footprint, just as we breed plants for drought-resistance or taste.

[‘Some people feel threatened’: face to face with Ai-Da the robot artist](#)

[Read more](#)

Such farms should be subject to the same strict controls and ethical considerations as, say, breeding of genetically modified crops, for example enabling an entire facility to be shut down at the touch of a button, or limiting supplies of raw materials. Furthermore, it is also important to consider the possibility that evolution might result in robots exhibiting malicious or harmful behaviours and put appropriate preventive measures in place.

The idea of digital evolution – imitating biological evolution in software to successively breed better and better solutions to a problem over time – is not new. It can be traced back to the 1960s when engineers in Germany programmed a computer to evolve the optimal design of a jointed plate subject to turbulent airflow. Since then, “evolutionary algorithms” operating inside a computer have been used to design everything from tables to turbine blades, by simply telling the evolutionary process what metric it should seek to optimise (for example, the power generated by the turbine blade). In 2006, Nasa sent a satellite into space with a [communication antenna](#) designed by artificial evolution.

We are now at a breakthrough moment. While scientists have always been confident that digital evolution could be effective as an optimisation tool, its creativity in producing original and unusual designs that would not have been conceived by a human has been more surprising. The creativity of biological evolution is clearly apparent in the natural world. In the Cuban rainforest, vines have evolved leaves shaped like satellite dishes that amplify the signals propagated by echolocating bats to direct them to its flowers, increasing pollination. In the freezing Southern Ocean, fish manufacture their own “anti-freeze” proteins to survive.

But numerous examples of creativity in digital evolution have also been observed. Asked to find behaviours for a six-legged robot that would enable it to walk even if it had been damaged, digital evolution discovered multiple ways of walking that used only subsets of the legs, even discovering a way for the robot to move if *all* its legs had been snapped off, by shuffling along on its back. In another case, it evolved an electronic circuit on a chip where elements of the circuit were disconnected, exploiting [electromagnetic coupling](#) effects specific to flaws in the silicon on the actual chip.

Digital evolution now finds application in avenues that we might imagine to be uniquely human, for example in creating [music](#) and art (even winning an award in a University of Wyoming art competition where judges were unaware the winning picture was created by an algorithm). While this may sound to the uninitiated like artificial intelligence, digital evolution is a specific subset of that wider field.

The idea of harnessing evolution to design robots is particularly appealing, especially in cases where humans have little knowledge of the environment the robot should operate in – for example, undersea mining, clean-up of legacy waste inside a nuclear reactor, or using nano robots to deliver drugs inside the human body. Unlike natural evolution which is driven simply by the goals of “survival and reproduction”, artificial evolution can be driven by specific targets. Once this evolutionary process is set in chain, and with the technology outlined above, of a computer system instructing a 3D printer to create improved models of the robots for these particular environments, we have the beginnings of a theoretical framework for a self-sustaining robot population that is able to reproduce itself, and “evolve” without too much input from humans.

Which isn’t to say that humans would be redundant. Digital evolution will probably be a collaborative process between human and machine, with humans providing descriptions of *what* is desired while evolution provides the *how*. So for example a human might demand an “energy-efficient robot made from sustainable materials to move heavy waste inside a reactor”, leaving evolution to figure out how this can be achieved. Advances in manufacturing technology that facilitate automated and rapid prototyping in a range of materials including flexible soft plastics have played an important role in enhancing our ability to replicate evolution on practical timescales.

If this all might seem to border on science fiction, there is a serious point. [Robots](#) clearly have a role to play in our future, whether in revolutionising healthcare or undertaking tasks too dangerous for humans. We are rapidly using up stores of raw materials on our planet, and current manufacturing processes increase carbon emissions and create serious problems with waste disposal. Perhaps the creativity of evolutionary methods will enable the design of new types of robot, unfettered by the constraints that our

understanding of engineering, physics and materials science impose on current design processes.

From another perspective, until we discover extraterrestrial life, biologists have only one “system” on which to study evolution. Just as the Large Hadron Collider provides us with an instrument to study the intricacies of particle physics, perhaps a reproducing system of robots provides a new instrument to study fundamental questions about life itself.

- Emma Hart is a professor in the School of [Computing](#) at Edinburgh Napier University and a member of the Autonomous Robot Evolution: Cradle to Grave project at the University of York
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Opinion[Vaccines and immunisation](#)

Moderna, Pfizer or AstraZeneca? The ridiculous, diverting rise of vaccine envy

[Zoe Williams](#)



Casual vaccine chat is today's only form of small talk, so it's not surprising it would take a lightheartedly tribal turn. Ultimately, of course, gratitude is at the heart of the conversation



‘You can’t distinguish yourself with the Oxford vaccine – you are basically running with the herd.’ Photograph: Dinendra Haria/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

‘You can’t distinguish yourself with the Oxford vaccine – you are basically running with the herd.’ Photograph: Dinendra Haria/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Mon 21 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

Last week, I had cause to go searching for images of men getting vaccinated (it’s not a fetish – it was for work) and I turned up a photo from a flu vaccination drive in 2012. I tried to think back nine years: did we have anti-flu-vaxxers? Were there different types of vaccine and did we care which one we got? These are rhetorical, by which I mean stupid, questions. Even when I think I don’t remember, I remember perfectly well. We never thought about the flu vaccine, because we didn’t really feel anything about flu.

There’s something endearing about the intensity of opinions about Covid vaccinations, as though we’re all trying to wrestle every untamed feeling about the giant, untoward event of the pandemic into more manageable shapes and sizes: tribes and allegiances, preferences and views. It’s like being a teenager again – the emotions are just too vast to comprehend, too volatile to make sense of. But maybe if I scratch “AstraZeneca” on to my

desk, someone else might like [AstraZeneca](#), too, and then at least there would be two of us.

In the vaccine tribes, people who have been Pfizered have the most kudos. Pfizer seems to be more effective after two doses than the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine (protection against hospitalisation is [about 96% with Pfizer and 92% with AstraZeneca](#), and AstraZeneca fares worse after one shot), but this sense of prestige has nothing to do with effectiveness. It's just that a lot of them were first to get the jab. That makes no sense – they were first because they were the oldest, or the most clinically vulnerable. But there's no point splitting hairs about why they were first, because they were.

If we look back on anything from this brutal period fondly, it will be those early days at the vaccination centres, people grinning from ear to ear and thanking everyone, even the obligatory local-news cameraman. There was also a kind of performative fearlessness, one in the eye to the anti-vaxxers. I'm not afraid, because medicine is nothing to be afraid of.

The fact that the Pfizer vaccine has to be stored initially at an extremely low temperature also makes it sound hyperscientific, like an ultramedicine from the future. It also has a great origin story: it was invented by [Dr Uğur Şahin and Özlem Türeci, a husband-and-wife team](#), who did lab work on their wedding day and are astronomically rich, but still spend all their time reading journals. I don't know why this detail is remarked on so often. How are rich people supposed to pass the untenanted hours? Counting their money? Never mind, there it is: the more I think about the Pfizer, the more I wish I'd had it.

Moderna has rarity value. This makes no sense, either, by the way. The UK has bought [17m doses of Moderna](#) – it's about as rare as a mouse on a tube track – but you have to admit, you still get a little bit excited when you see one. When people who have had the Moderna meet at parties, they nod at each other like Beetle drivers. (I'm guessing here, as there are no parties.)

AstraZeneca is normcore, the 100m-dose monolith of the UK market. You can't distinguish yourself at all with an Oxford vaccine: you are basically running with the herd (although at least you have immunity). Unfortunately,

humans yearn for distinction, so everyone who has had AstraZeneca tries to find some novel spin on it, usually with side-effects. You never hear people who have had [Pfizer](#) talking about their sore arm, or their mild, flu-like symptoms. It's not because they didn't get them – it's because they were special already.

There's a view that, if you get side-effects that aren't life-threatening, you shouldn't mention them, as you just put off other people from being vaccinated – and besides, what are you, a baby? I definitely agree with this. Stoicism is a great asset and a headache is a small price to pay for protection against a potentially deadly virus. It's quite rude to scientists, when you think about it, that they bust their balls and pull who knows how many all-nighters to save a billion lives, only to find us all turning round, going: "I still felt a little bit tired in the afternoon, three days later."

Unfortunately, if anything happens to me at all, I am constitutionally incapable of not mentioning it. If I see someone on a bus with the same face mask as me, I mention it. If I spend a day incapable of doing anything but watching crime procedurals and asking for fizzy drinks in a whiny voice, I'll be mentioning that for weeks. So this is what passes for singularity, in Oxford-vaccine-world: we all tell each other in private how we felt afterwards, on a minute-by-minute basis, while maintaining a public face of "just a scratch, nothing to see".

Just when I'd about had it with vaccine news, two friends, double-AstraZeneca-ed, found out both their teenagers had Covid. The chances of social distancing in a family are basically zero – and still neither adult got it. These things really work, goddammit.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

This article was downloaded by [calibre](#) from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/21/moderna-pfizer-or-astrazeneca-the-ridiculous-diverting-rise-of-vaccine-envy>.

2021.06.21 - Around the world

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[France](#)

Macron and Le Pen lose out as French voters shun local elections

Abstention rate estimated at 68%, and exit polls suggest Le Pen's National Rally failed to get expected support



Emmanuel Macron at a polling station in Le Touquet-Paris-Plage.
Photograph: Christian Hartmann/Reuters

Emmanuel Macron at a polling station in Le Touquet-Paris-Plage.
Photograph: Christian Hartmann/Reuters

[Kim Willsher](#) in Paris

Sun 20 Jun 2021 15.06 EDT

Emmanuel Macron's centrist party and Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally both failed to garner expected support in French regional elections that saw an unprecedented rate of abstention.

The president and his government failed to mobilise supporters, with an estimated 68% of voters shunning the polling stations – an unprecedented rate of abstention. If there was any consolation for the ruling party it was that exit polls suggested Le Pen's far-right National Rally had failed to garner its expected support.

Early results indicated that the main winners were various centre-right parties, including the main opposition Les Républicains, who were supported by 29.3% of voters. National Rally polled 19.1% and the Socialist party 16.5%. Macron's La République En Marche (LREM) was estimated to have won 10.9% of votes.

[Emmanuel Macron slapped in the face during walkabout](#)

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Asked about her party's result, Aurore Bergé, an MP for LREM, said it was a “democratic slap in the face for us all” because of the low turnout but admitted her party had had a bad night. “I'm not going to come on here and rejoice at our score,” she told BFMTV.

In the Île de [France](#), which includes Paris, the centre-right candidate Valérie Pécresse was in a strong position to retain control of the region.

In regional elections in 2015 just over 50% of French people failed to vote, a drop on just under 53.7% in 2010.

The vote was to elect new councils for France's 13 mainland and one overseas regions as well as 96 departments. Regional councils have budgets running to billions of euros and are responsible for schools, transport and economic development. There were a total of 15,786 candidates standing for 4,108 seats. Winners are normally elected for a six-year term.

Le Pen did not run as a candidate but campaigned hard, particularly in rural areas where support for the far right remains high.

“Our voters didn't turn out,” she said in her first comments after the vote from her stronghold of Henin-Beaumont in northern France. “I call on them to respond urgently.”

In the Paris region, voters had a choice of 11 lists – candidates present a list of proposed councillors – including Pécresse for a rightwing coalition, the former journalist Audrey Pulvar for the Socialists, Julien Bayou for [Europe Ecology](#) the Greens, and Clémentine Autin for the hard left Unbowed France.

This year's campaign – with voting delayed by three months because of the pandemic – has been unique in that health measures meant there could be no door-to-door canvassing, which in any case is not a widespread French electoral tradition, and until recently outside rallies were constrained by health restrictions.

Parties were required to present electoral lists that listed male and female candidates consecutively on their lists. The number of candidates from each list who are elected depends on each party's score.

Le Pen's National Rally hopes to win control of a region to boost her decade-long effort to legitimise her party, formerly the Front National. The region thought to most likely to tip into far right hands is the National Rally's traditional stronghold in the south-east Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur region which covers Marseille, Saint-Tropez and Cannes. However, the party was strong in five other regions, including the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Centre-Val de Loire, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Occitanie and Brittany.

In [Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur](#), early estimations suggested the National Rally is jostling neck-a-neck with Les Républicains after the first-round vote.

Between Sunday's results and next week's second round, the focus will be on what alliances are made between parties. Candidates standing in the first round must obtain at least 10% of votes to pass into the second round, and a major question for the runoff is whether French voters will again band together to keep Le Pen's party out of power as they have in the past.

There is general agreement that it is unwise to conflate regional results with predictions of what will happen in next year's presidential election. Neither

the mainstream right, Les Républicains, nor the mainstream left, the Socialists, have any credible presidential candidate at this stage.

Analysts said the abstention level threw any political predictions into doubt.

A recent poll for the Journal du Dimanche suggested that 49% of French people considered that any regional win would make National Rally a “danger for democracy”.

Most polls suggest the 2022 presidential race will be a second-round run-off between Macron and Le Pen.

The second round run-offs in the regional and department elections take place next Sunday.

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[Hong Kong](#)

Hong Kong's Apple Daily could shut at weekend unless accounts are unblocked

Adviser to jailed owner Jimmy Lai says newspaper cannot pay staff after officials froze banking facilities



Activists in London demonstrate in support of Hong Kong's Apple Daily staff and executives. Photograph: May James/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

Activists in London demonstrate in support of Hong Kong's Apple Daily staff and executives. Photograph: May James/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Mon 21 Jun 2021 05.32 EDT

Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper and website could shut down this weekend if authorities do not agree to the board's request to unfreeze its assets, after the arrest of its senior editors and executives last week.

According to various local reports on Monday afternoon, an internal memo said Next Digital, Apple Daily's parent company, would seek restored access to its accounts so it can pay staff, but that if this did not happen by Friday it would make a decision to stop publication of the pro-democracy title.

The potential end of the 26-year-old paper comes after a police operation in which officers [raided the homes of five executives](#), including Apple Daily's editor-in-chief, Ryan Law, and arrested them under the national security law, before raiding the newsroom with an unprecedented warrant allowing the seizure of journalistic materials.

Police froze HK\$18m (US\$2.3m) in assets of three companies, Apple Daily Ltd, Apple Daily Printing Ltd and AD Internet Ltd. Mark Simon, a close adviser of the paper's jailed owner, Jimmy Lai, said an additional \$500m was in the locked accounts.

The board of Next Digital had held crisis meetings over the weekend and on Monday, urgently seeking information in order to make assessments about [the future of the paper](#), according to Simon.

[Two years on since Hong Kong's pro-democracy protests – in pictures](#)
[Read more](#)

“The only thing that matters is the secretary of security has locked up all the accounts, and any ability to work with the accounts, so no money equals no news,” he told the Guardian.

National security officials have blocked access to the company's accounts, leaving it unable to pay staff and suppliers or accept funds, Simon said.

[Hongkongers queue to buy Apple Daily copies after editor-in-chief arrested](#)
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Apple Daily said on Sunday the freezing of its assets had left it with cash for “a few weeks” of normal operations.

Law and the company's chief executive, Cheung Kim-hung, [were charged on Friday](#) with colluding with foreign or external forces, and were denied

bail. The three companies connected to Apple Daily are also being prosecuted for the same crimes.

Simon, who has relocated to the US, is wanted by Hong Kong police under the national security law. Law could face life in prison.

Police said the operation and charges related to more than 30 articles published in the paper since 2019 – despite the non-retroactive law only coming into force in 2020 – which allegedly called for foreign sanctions on the Hong Kong and Chinese governments.

11:22

'Resist until the end': On the ground with Apple Daily, Hong Kong's pro-democracy newspaper - video

The police operation is a significant escalation in the government's moves to [stifle Hong Kong's press](#), of which the pro-democracy tabloid was widely considered to be a primary target. Lai has been in jail since December on protest-related charges and awaiting trial for national security charges, including for alleged foreign collusion.

In an editorial published on Monday, Apple Daily said the impact of the raid and the arrests and charges of its leaders had been "huge".

"Large-scale searches and arrests by the police have caused psychological distress, and journalists are much more concerned about stepping on the red line as they carry out their daily reporting work," it said. "The aftermath of the searches and arrests has not been settled, and the political and legal pressure will continue to escalate."

It said the use of the warrant to [seize about 40 journalists' computers](#) was a warning to the rest of Hong Kong's media. "The police were able to obtain news information that was originally confidential, meaning that journalists and news organisations can no longer effectively protect sensitive information, and identities of 'whistleblowers' could easily be revealed," it said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/21/hong-kong-apple-daily-newspaper-crisis-talks-avert-shutdown-advisor-says>

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Plastics

New EU rules would permit use of most polymers without checks, experts warn

Proposals would allow common plastics to be used despite valid concerns about possible harms, scientists say



Plastic waste illegally dumped by a roadside is seen near Alibeykoy Dam in Istanbul. Photograph: Ümit Bektaş/Reuters

Plastic waste illegally dumped by a roadside is seen near Alibeykoy Dam in Istanbul. Photograph: Ümit Bektaş/Reuters

[Fiona Harvey](#) Environment correspondent

Mon 21 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

New rules on chemicals to be debated by the EU this week would allow most polymers to be used without further checks, according to a group of scientists.

Only about 6% out of about 200,000 polymers would require extensive safety checks under proposals being discussed as part of Europe's Reach chemicals regulations.

This is too little, and would allow many common plastics to be used despite valid concerns about their possible future harms, [according to a group of 19 scientists](#) who have written to the European Commission.

The European Environmental Bureau, an NGO, says exceptions to the safety checks include polystyrenes, which have been linked to lung inflammation in rats; polyacrylamides used in the treatment of wastewater, adhesives and food packaging, which can degrade to the monomer acrylamide, a neurotoxin; polyesters used in textiles, which are sources of [microplastics](#); and polyolefins, also a source of microplastics.

A [report for the European Commission](#) concluded that some plastics could have harmful impacts if unchecked.

The commission said the proposals were at an early stage, and further discussion would take place on Tuesday. A spokesperson said: "This meeting will discuss some technical aspects of how to register polymers, but not yet discuss the final outcome of how polymers shall be registered, and there is no draft regulation available yet."

"We have seen the IPCP publication [the letter signed by 19 scientists] and we will, to the extent possible, take the concerns raised into consideration while advancing our proposal. As the commission proposal for the registration of polymers is not yet finalised, we cannot disclose further information or comment on the estimated number of polymers that need to be registered."

Bethanie Carney Almroth, an associate professor of ecotoxicology at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden and a signatory to the letter, said: "The main goal of the [EU] process should be to ensure a high level of protection of people and environmental health. But our main concern is regarding the lack of data and lack of transparency. There is not enough data to ensure the safety of thousands of polymers in production, even if toxicity has not been demonstrated yet."

She said regulators should abide by the precautionary principle, by which new substances should not be assumed to be harmless, but the onus should be on the producers to demonstrate that they are safe.

She added: “[Plastic use is pervasive](#), and [the term] polymers goes beyond plastics to include many more types of products used in numerous applications throughout society. So the question of exposure is significant, and not negligible. There are studies indicating some polymers or their monomers/oligomers can cause negative impacts for human health, including hormone disruption and canerogenicity. There are data showing that these effects can occur in organisms in the environment.”

Ksenia Groh, another signatory, who is group leader of bioanalytics for Eawag, the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology, said: “Data about the risks of specific polymers are scarce to nonexistent. Up to now, a transparent, comprehensive data collection on the safety of all polymers has not been carried out. Absence of data does not equal absence of harm. It just means that we don’t know … It’s not the public, government, consumers or scientists who should provide this data, but the producer themselves.”

Dolores Romano, chemicals policy acting manager at the European Environmental Bureau, said the increasing pervasiveness of microplastics in the environment showed that polymers could now be finding their way into our bodies in ways that are more harmful than regulators have anticipated. She called on the [European Commission](#) to act.

Romano said: “Polymer pollution is out of control. We are exposed to it daily, as they are used in plastic, textiles, cleaning products and even cosmetics. We used to think of plastic pollution as [bulky junk massing](#) in the environment. Now we know that it breaks up into a [vast cloud](#) of micro- and nanoplastics contaminating the land, water and air, as well as [showing up in our bodies](#). We know already that dozens of polymers are toxic, so officials must be allowed to check the safety of the rest.”

She accused the plastics industry of seeking to block more comprehensive rules from the EU. “Industry is hijacking a once-in-a-decade opportunity to

probe polymers and share this information. We can't afford to have them close our eyes to a growing problem for another decade.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/21/new-eu-rules-would-permit-use-of-most-polymers-without-checks-experts-warn>

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[Sweden](#)

Swedish PM Stefan Löfven loses no-confidence vote

Premier is first in country's history to be ousted by opposition MPs and has a week to decide next move



Stefan Löfven speaks during a press conference after the no-confidence vote on Monday. Photograph: Anders Wiklund/EPA

Stefan Löfven speaks during a press conference after the no-confidence vote on Monday. Photograph: Anders Wiklund/EPA

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

Mon 21 Jun 2021 06.24 EDT

Sweden's parliament has backed a no-confidence vote in the centre-left prime minister, Stefan Löfven, making him the first premier to be ousted by

opposition MPs in the country's history and giving him a week to resign or call snap elections.

The vote, called by the nationalist Sweden Democrats barely a year before a general election, plunges Sweden back into political uncertainty two years after the last inconclusive poll [produced a deadlocked parliament](#) and led to months of negotiations to form the current Social Democrat-Green coalition.

Löfven's fragile minority government has been propped up by tacit support from two small centre-right parties and the formerly communist Left party, which [withdrew its backing](#) over plans to ease rent controls on new apartments.

After the vote, the Social Democrat leader, 63, said he wanted to "take some time", although "not necessarily the whole week", to decide on his next step. "Regardless of what happens, I and my party will be available to shoulder the responsibility for leading the country," he said. "My focus has and will always be to do the best for Sweden."

The motion, voted on by all 349 MPs despite Covid restrictions, needed 175 votes to pass and got 181. The Sweden Democrat leader, Jimmie Åkesson, told parliament the government was historically weak and "should never have come to power".

The Left party blamed the prime minister for the crisis, with its leader, Nooshi Dadgostar, saying the Social Democrat-led government had "given up on the Left party and the Swedish people", rather than the other way round.

The political commentator Mats Knutson told the public broadcaster SVT: "For a long time it looked like the minority government would make it until the end of the term, but the built-in divisions in the government's base have finally become too big."

Last-ditch efforts by the Social Democrats to appease the Left party, which has 27 MPs, over the weekend proved in vain, with the party insisting the government's plans to overhaul rent controls, potentially opening the door

for landlords to freely set rents for new-build apartments, ran counter to Sweden's social model.

Three scenarios now look possible: Löfven could resign, leaving the parliamentary speaker with the job of finding a new majority; a snap election could be called, even though the 2022 poll must proceed as planned; or a political compromise could allow the government to stay on in a caretaker capacity.

However, with the two main left and rightwing blocs still deadlocked in parliament and evenly balanced in opinion polls, it is not clear how a new administration could be formed or whether fresh elections would resolve the situation.

Analysts said they expected Löfven to resign, but added that the former union boss, who is famed for his backroom negotiating skills, could well return.

“I think nobody wants an extra election … and the Social Democrats would, according to recent polls, lose quite a lot of votes in an election right now,” said Anders Sannerstedt, a political scientist at Lund University.

Sannerstedt told Agence-France Presse that if the prime minister departed, the continuing parliamentary deadlock could allow him to rise again. Jonas Hinnfors, a political scientist from the University of Gothenburg, agreed.

“He is an extremely good negotiator,” Hinnfors said. “Given that the seat distribution is the same, the most likely outcome is that Löfven will come back.”

However, Nicholas Aylott, a political scientist at Södertörn University, described the defeat of a prime minister in a no-confidence vote as a “very significant” event in Swedish political history. “I think an extra election is a real possibility,” Aylott said.

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Medical research

High stress may make ‘broken heart syndrome’ more likely, study finds

Condition also known as takotsubo cardiomyopathy is brought on by an acute emotional shock



Takotsubo cardiomyopathy is named after the Japanese word for ‘octopus trap’, because the distorted left ventricle, shown here, resembles one.
Photograph: Am J Case Rep, 2017

Takotsubo cardiomyopathy is named after the Japanese word for ‘octopus trap’, because the distorted left ventricle, shown here, resembles one.
Photograph: Am J Case Rep, 2017

Natalie Grover Science correspondent
[@NatalieGrover](#)

Sun 20 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

Two molecules associated with high stress levels have been implicated in the development of broken heart syndrome, a condition that mainly affects post-menopausal women and is usually brought on by severe stress, such as the loss of a loved one.

The syndrome, formally known as takotsubo cardiomyopathy, is characterised by weakening of the heart's main pumping chamber and was first identified in 1990 in Japan. It looks and sounds like a heart attack and is consequently often confused for one.

Affecting an estimated 2,500 people in the UK each year, the syndrome also carries a risk of complications similar to that of an actual heart attack. It is unclear what causes takotsubo, but sharp spikes in adrenaline caused by acute stress like bereavement, car accidents, earthquakes and even happy events such as weddings are understood to drive loss of movement in part of the heart wall, which then precipitates the acute heart failure.

Two molecules – called microRNA-16 and microRNA-26a – that are linked to depression, anxiety and increased stress levels had previously been detected in the blood of takotsubo patients. Researchers assessed the impact of exposing cells from human hearts (taken from organs that were unsuitable for transplants) and rat hearts to the two molecules.

Afterwards, both sets of heart cells were more sensitive to adrenaline, they wrote in the journal *Cardiovascular Research*.

In patients with takotsubo, the bottom of the heart stops beating, and the top of the heart beats more, said the lead study author, Dr Liam Couch from Imperial College London. “Basically, we found the exact same thing happens when we increase the exposure to the molecules [in an experimental setting]. It reproduced exactly what happens in takotsubo, so it made it more likely for the takotsubo to occur.”

Overall, the findings appeared to link long-term stress and the dramatic takotsubo response to a sudden shock.

However, the problem is that it is not possible, for now, to diagnose takotsubo in patients before it happens, making it difficult to test whether

these molecules are elevated in real-life cases, Couch explained.

“But if we know someone’s had takotsubo, theoretically we can measure these molecules, and then predict if they’re likely to have it again, because there’s a one in five chance that they could have it again,” he said.

Joel Rose, chief executive of the charity Cardiomyopathy UK, said the study provided important insights on a less well known and poorly understood form of cardiomyopathy. “It has the potential to improve our understanding of who may be more susceptible to developing the condition and subsequent improve our ability to manage its impact,” he said.

Further research is needed, said Prof Metin Avkiran, the associate medical director at the British Heart Foundation, to “determine if drugs that block these microRNAs could be the key to avoiding broken hearts”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/jun/21/high-stress-may-make-broken-heart-syndrome-more-likely-takotsubo-cardiomyopathy>.

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