

# The Guardian

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# UK Covid hotel quarantine system to target travellers from high-risk areas

Priti Patel to announce plans in House of Commons after ministers reject blanket policy

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

[Jessica Elgot](#) and [Natalie Grover](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 18.16 EST First published on Tue 26 Jan 2021 09.41 EST



Labour wants all travellers arriving in the UK to have to quarantine in hotels. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

A hotel quarantine system targeted at arrivals from high-risk countries will be announced by the home secretary, Priti Patel, on Wednesday, after

ministers met to sign off the more targeted approach.

Boris Johnson rejected calls at Tuesday evening's meeting for a blanket policy, opting instead for imposing hotel quarantine on British citizens from a limited number of countries such as South Africa and Brazil.

Ministers were presented with a number of options, with some – including Patel and the health secretary, Matt Hancock, in favour of a more blanket approach, a larger number of countries on the list, or even a temporary closure of UK borders.

Labour said a country-by-country quarantine policy would be “half-baked” and leave the UK’s vaccination programme vulnerable to as-yet-unknown strains of coronavirus.

Patel will give a statement to the House of Commons on Wednesday setting out the measures after prime minister’s questions. The policy is expected to take a number of weeks to implement.

The UK will reserve the right to expand measures beyond what was agreed on Tuesday evening, a government source said. Bans are already in place on visitors from South Africa, Portugal, Brazil and other South American countries in a bid to control the spread of new variants of Covid-19.

The big thing about infectious diseases is that they don’t respect international borders

*Prof Paul Hunter, University of East Anglia*

Labour said on Tuesday that it was calling for a comprehensive hotel quarantine system. The shadow home secretary, Nick Thomas-Symonds, told the Commons the policy “cannot be restricted to only a handful of countries, leaving gaping holes in our defences against different strains of the virus emerging around the world, and the government must announce a sector support package for aviation”.

He described the limited policy as “half baked” saying: “From the start of the pandemic the government’s handling of measures with the border has

been chaotic.”

Patel told MPs that the UK had “a world-leading vaccination programme … We are proud of that programme and the government will do everything that it can to protect that vaccine from new strains of the virus.”

She is understood to have argued privately that a more comprehensive quarantine scheme would protect the UK from as-yet unknown new variants.

Scientists said they favoured the blanket approach, highlighting that most countries do not have sophisticated surveillance systems that can detect existing or new variants, which makes limiting the policy to certain countries futile.

“The big thing about infectious diseases is that they don’t respect international borders,” said Paul Hunter, a professor in medicine at the University of East Anglia.

But Hunter questioned whether the policy was sustainable over the longer term. “I think there are some benefits to this, but we can’t rely on it, and the crucial thing is to make sure we vaccinate as many of our population as we can.”

Susan Michie – a member of the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Behavioural Science, a Sage subcommittee – added that limiting the policy to only certain countries may incentivise people to travel from one country to another before entering Britain.

Within the UK, data suggests a quarter of people who are supposed to be self-isolating still think they can go to the shops, Michie said. “I don’t think British people are necessarily different than people from the rest of the world. People are likely to go out unless it’s really managed and well supervised.”

Gabriel Scally, a visiting professor of public health at the University of Bristol and a member of the Independent Sage committee, said there was no evidence that the voluntary self-isolation policy had been satisfactory.

Regarding the targeted approach to certain countries, he said: “At the best, it’s a very poor sticking plaster and it will … certainly not stop the entry of new variants to the UK.”

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# 'I'm deeply sorry': Boris Johnson faces questions over UK Covid death toll

PM says it is ‘hard to compute the sorrow’ after number of deaths passes 100,000

- [‘A huge loss’: tributes to victims of the UK’s Covid second wave](#)
- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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[Niamh McIntyre](#), [Peter Walker](#), [Pamela Duncan](#) and [Robert Booth](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 13.09 EST First published on Tue 26 Jan 2021 08.51 EST

[Boris Johnson](#) has insisted his government “did everything we could” to limit coronavirus deaths and said he was “deeply sorry” after the UK toll exceeded 100,000 on nearly every metric.

But faced with questions over how Britain reached one of the world’s worst counts amid the pandemic, the prime minister refused to discuss the reasons it might be so high.

Experts reacted with dismay and sorrow. “This time last year, it would be almost impossible to believe that a wealthy island nation with a universal healthcare system would go on to have one of the highest death tolls from the emerging coronavirus pandemic,” said Richard Murray, chief executive of the King’s Fund.

“Yet the UK has now passed the grim milestone of 100,000 coronavirus deaths, with many more likely to follow.”

The archbishops of Canterbury and York called on the public to pause, reflect and pray. In an [open letter](#), Justin Welby and Stephen Cottrell said:

“100,000 isn’t just an abstract figure. Each number is a person: someone we loved and someone who loved us.”

On 13 January, a Guardian analysis of the most up-to-date death figures confirmed the 100,000 toll for the first time. On Tuesday morning the [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS) said the UK had passed that threshold on 7 January, based on death certificates.

Later in the afternoon, the government’s [Covid dashboard](#) also passed 100,000 after 1,631 daily deaths were reported within 28 days of a positive test, the second-highest figure ever.

Experts have said that a key measure of the impact of the virus is excess deaths compared with a typical year. These have reached 99,278 in the UK based on death registrations.

At a Downing Street press briefing on Tuesday, Johnson took a sombre approach, saying it was “hard to compute the sorrow contained in that grim statistic” of 100,000 deaths.

The prime minister said: “The years of life lost, the family gatherings not attended and, for so many relatives, the missed chance even to say goodbye – I offer my deepest condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one.”

But asked several times by journalists why the UK’s death toll was so high, and what he and the government could have done differently, Johnson declined to tackle the question.

“I think on this day I should just really repeat that I am deeply sorry for every life that has been lost, and of course as I was prime minister I take full responsibility for everything that the government has done,” he said, when asked what had gone wrong with the UK response.

“What I can tell you is that we truly did everything we could, and continue to do everything that we can, to minimise loss of life and to minimise suffering in what has been a very, very difficult stage, and a very, very difficult crisis for our country, and we will continue to do that.”

Prof [Chris Whitty](#), the chief medical officer for England, described a “very sad day” and told the press conference that it was impossible to say how many deaths might occur overall, but that while infection rates were slowing, fatality numbers could plateau for some time at the current very high levels.

“Unfortunately, we are going to see quite a lot more deaths over the next few weeks,” he said.

### [ONS figures on Covid-19 deaths](#)

There are signs that case rates in England have [begun to level off](#), however, according to the latest infection survey from the ONS, which found that positivity had decreased slightly. However, deaths will continue to increase after cases have subsided.

There were 1,631 deaths reported on Tuesday, according to the government’s daily figures, taking the overall total to 100,162. The government figures also count mentions of Covid-19 on death certificates that were registered by 15 January. By this measure, there have now been 103,602 deaths.

The total death toll from the UK’s statistical agencies, which includes deaths that occurred up to 15 January but were registered up to 23 January, is now 107,907.

Figures from the ONS also show that 1,719 care home residents died from the virus in the week to 15 January – more than doubling the death toll since Christmas.

The Guardian had previously reported that the [milestone of 100,000 deaths](#) had been passed on 13 January, by combining figures from the statistical agencies and the government’s daily figures.

Dr David Spiegelhalter, chair of the Winton Centre at Cambridge University, said: “There will be a lot of attention given to deaths with Covid reaching 100,000, but this is based on the figures released each day, which only include people who had a positive test and then died within 28 days.

“The more accurate ONS data show that over 100,000 people in the UK had already died with Covid on their death certificate by 7 January, nearly three weeks ago. This rose to 108,000 by 15 January, and the total now will be nearly 120,000.

“Around 90% of these had Covid as the immediate cause of death, and so perhaps we can say that around 100,000 people in the UK have now died because of Covid. An awful total.”

In care homes, the sharpest rises in deaths were seen in the north-east, which reported a 58% rise in deaths, ONS data showed.

The number of deaths involving Covid in England’s care homes reported to the [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\)](#) regulator jumped from 1,292 to 1,705 in the week ending 22 January, as rising outbreaks earlier in the month caused by the more transmissible variant led to an increase in fatalities.

The figures bring the UK death toll from Covid in care homes to more than 27,000 when deaths [registered in Scotland](#) and [Northern Ireland](#) in the same period are included.

In the week to 22 January, 47% of all deaths in care homes in England involved Covid, up from 41% the week before, [data from the CQC](#) showed.

“Today’s figures make grim reading once again and our thoughts go out to everyone who has lost someone to Covid-19,” said Mike Padgham, chair of the Independent Care Group. “Hopefully, the figures will soon start to improve, as we always knew there would be a lag before the impact of lockdown and the vaccine started to show. Covid-19 is still taking an awful toll and we cannot afford to become complacent.”

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## Coronavirus

# Why has Britain suffered more than 100,000 Covid deaths?

There are a string of reasons that have contributed to that extraordinary number

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

## Robert Booth

Tue 26 Jan 2021 14.59 EST Last modified on Tue 26 Jan 2021 17.29 EST



Union Jack flags and banners with a message reading ‘Thank you #ourheroes’ in London’s Regent Street in July. The death toll would continue to rise. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

On nearly every metric, the UK death toll from coronavirus has now exceeded 100,000. Here, we look at why that figure is so high.

## Health of the nation

Britain went into the Covid-19 pandemic in poor health in some key areas. In 2018, the proportion of adults who were obese had already [reached 28%](#), having almost doubled over 25 years. Morbid obesity tripled over the same period.

The NHS has [identified](#) obesity as a cause of clinical vulnerability to Covid. After Boris Johnson was hospitalised with Covid in April, he remarked he was “way overweight” and soon after he was discharged he launched a national anti-obesity campaign.

Diabetes, another key comorbidity was also rising. At the start of 2020 3.9 million people had a diagnosis – up 100,000 on the previous year. Britain also had a substantial elderly population, although a smaller proportion of over-65s than European neighbours such as France and Germany. But with people aged 80 or older 70 times more likely to die than those under 40, the country’s elderly were at risk and the most vulnerable were not properly shielded.

## Care homes

More than 26,000 people in care homes have died from Covid so far in the UK with the majority in the first wave of the pandemic. The health secretary, Matt Hancock, had promised to throw “a protective ring” around them, but by late May 16,000 had died, compared with fewer than 3,000 in Germany and none in Hong Kong.

[Advice to the sector in late February](#) was that face masks weren’t needed, visits were fine and “it remains very unlikely that people receiving care in a care home … will become infected.” Thousands of hospital patients were discharged into care homes amid fears the NHS would be overwhelmed. Thirty-three Covid outbreaks in the first week of March turned into 793 by the end of the month. Care workers struggled for supplies of PPE and testing

was scarce. Many homes continued to use agency workers who, [research found](#), spread infection.

## Government lockdowns

The government's priorities to protect people from the twin menaces of Covid and economic ruin rarely aligned, leading to months of uncertainty as restrictions were lifted and tightened repeatedly. The government went into the first lockdown too late, according to Prof John Edmunds, who sits on the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage). He [said in June](#): "It would have been very hard to pull the trigger [earlier] but I wish we had ... I think that has cost a lot of lives unfortunately."

Messaging about what was and wasn't allowed often seemed to conflict, and the [scandal over Dominic Cummings](#)' alleged rule-breaking trip to Durham in May, which researchers said [dented public confidence](#) in the government's grip on the crisis and [possibly adherence](#) to the rules, was a prime example.



Dominic Cummings, then a senior aide to Boris Johnson, makes a statement in May in the garden of 10 Downing Street, over allegations he breached coronavirus lockdown restrictions. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/AP

After a summer of low infection rates, the virus surged again in September and ministers again seemed slow to react. On 21 September, Sage called for a “circuit-breaker” lockdown but Johnson opted for less stringent measures, including the “rule of six” for social mixing and 10pm pub closures.

Unlike fellow island nation New Zealand, which rapidly got on top of the virus, the UK did nothing to close its borders to travellers from China or other hard-hit countries, or impose strict quarantine restrictions on arrivals from elsewhere.

### Graphic

## New variant

The lockdown in November appeared to be working in the north of England but infection rates in Kent kept rising. It would transpire that a new variant of the virus – soon to be named B117 – was at work. When the national lockdown lifted on 2 December, it took off. [Coronavirus](#) mutations occur more readily when there are high levels of transmission so the failure to suppress the virus earlier may have been a factor.

We now know the new variant spreads between 30% and 70% faster than others and it could be [30% more deadly](#) for some people. The chief medical adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance said that of 1,000 60-year-old men infected with the old variant, 10 of them might be expected to die. This rises to about 13 with the new variant.

## Compliance with test and trace

The £12bn [NHS](#) test-and-trace system has not been as “world-beating” as everyone hoped. The government’s Sage advisers concluded in September it was “having a marginal impact on transmission” because of “relatively low levels of engagement with the system coupled with testing delays and likely poor rates of adherence with self-isolation suggests.”

The impact of a well-functioning test-and-trace system was spelled out by [a study by imperial College](#), which found that if 80% of cases and contacts are identified and there is immediate testing following symptom onset and

quarantine of contacts within 24 hours, then the R number could potentially be reduced by up to 26%.

But a [study by King's College London](#) and Public Health England between March and August found that of those who reported the key Covid symptoms only 18% had self-isolated.

Sage warned that “unless the system grows at the same rate as the epidemic, and support is given to people to enable them to adhere to self-isolation, it is likely that the impact of test, trace and isolate will further decline in the future.”

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## Coronavirus

# 'A huge loss': tributes to victims of the UK's Covid second wave



Composite: Handouts

Composite: Handouts

Stories of a 10-year-old and a 102-year-old, a heart doctor, a kebab shop partner and a Santa

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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*[Lucy Campbell](#) and [Sarah Marsh](#)*

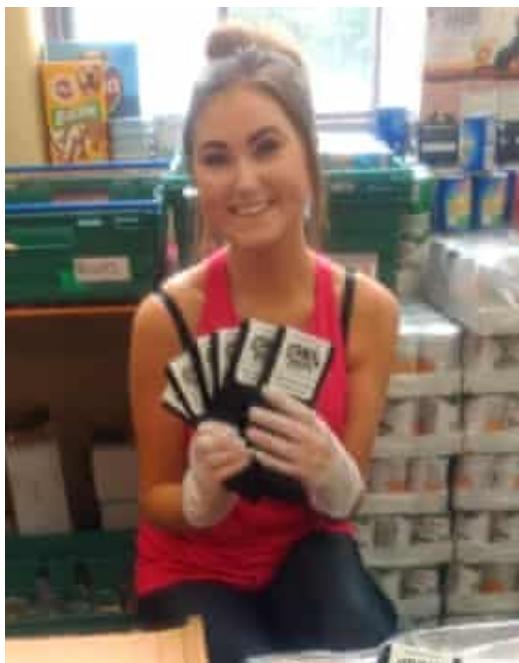
Tue 26 Jan 2021 08.44 EST

The number of lives lost with Covid-19 recorded on the death certificate in the UK has [passed 100,000](#), an incalculable loss to the families and loved

ones left behind. As the second wave of the pandemic shows no sign of abating and the daily death toll continues to climb, we pay tribute to some of the stories, lives and memories of those we have lost, many well before their time.

- [Share your tributes and memories of lives lost during the second wave](#)

### **Claudia Marsh, 25**



Claudia Marsh, who died in Liverpool on her 25th birthday.

Teacher and charity volunteer Claudia died on her 25th birthday on 20 January. She worked with the Merseyside-based charities, Talking Eating Disorders (TEDS) and the Whitechapel Centre, which she had helped her recover from an eating disorder several years before.

Her mother, Tina Marsh, from Heswell in the Wirral, told the BBC she was “very proud” and “blown away” by the tributes after her daughter’s death. Family friend Leigh Best, who founded TEDS, described the death as “heartbreaking”.

She added: “Claudia was very special, kind, caring and a dedicated teacher. She supported countless families across the UK. Claudia made her own little

packs to give out to others with eating disorders with positive affirmations. She was full of positivity, kindness and hope, and had a smile that would brighten up the whole room.”

A fundraiser for both charities, set up by her mother, has raised more than £12,000.

### **Sam Akadi, 32**



Sam Akadi, 32

Sam first developed Covid-19 symptoms around 7 January, quickly receiving results showing he was positive for the virus. Shortly afterwards he was admitted to hospitalised and taken to intensive care, where he died on 22 January.

His partner Amy Skallist, 31, told MailOnline the couple’s son, Isaac, aged three, “doesn’t really understand and keeps asking where daddy is”.

She said that their family from Bromley, south-east London, had followed all the rules strictly. “This is your worst nightmare,” she said.

The couple started dating when they were both in their teenage years, staying together for 15 years. They were due to be married but pushed their

wedding back after the arrival of their son.

“If you’re someone who dismisses Covid you’re not going to understand until you’re the one either sitting in the chair with someone in a hospital bed, or you’re in the bed dying,” she said.

### **Malcolm Erridge, 58**



Malcolm Erridge, 58

Malcolm died at his home in Deal, Kent. Colleagues at the Martha Trust, a charity providing care for people with physical and learning disabilities, paid tribute to the “dedicated support worker” and said he would be “sadly missed”.

The deputy chief executive at the trust, Julie Gayler, said: “It was with great sadness that we learned on Saturday evening that one of our team, Malcolm Erridge, had passed away at home.”

“Malcolm was a dedicated support worker, who worked tirelessly to give Martha residents a happy and fulfilling life. He will be sadly missed by all his friends here, staff and residents alike.”

On 11 January, Malcolm tweeted to say: “Oh well, managed to keep Covid away in 2020 but it got me in 2021.”

He said he believed he caught it from a client at work. “Stay safe everyone,” he wrote.

As well as working as a carer, Malcolm was also said to be a popular and well-known local birdwatcher. On his Twitter account, he described himself as a “birder for 45+ years” and said that “sea-watching off Deal seafront” was his main love.

### **Malinda Dissanayake**



Malinda Dissanayake, 51

The 51-year-old worked as a doctor in the accident and emergency department at North Middlesex hospital. He died due to multi-organ failure after being infected by Covid-19 and was treated in his trust’s intensive care where he worked.

His family are currently in Sri Lanka and his wife has now left the UK. A crowdfunding page has been set up by his colleague to raise money for his relatives.

It reads: “Malinda was a man that touched so many people as a doctor and simply as a person. His gentle manner and calm demeanour brought comfort to so many patients and colleagues. He was a dedicated doctor who went above and beyond the call of duty. He will be remembered for his undying selfless attitude and his eternal optimism in the face of adversity. He worked tirelessly as a frontline [NHS](#) doctor in accident & emergency departments in busy London hospitals and he was at the forefront of the fight against Covid.”

“As his colleagues we watched him dedicate so much of his time and effort to treating and comforting patients during this pandemic. This made it even more painful to see this gentle soul admitted as a patient, and treated in the intensive care unit, in the very hospital where he worked.”

The page said that Malinda would want everyone who knew him to “look forward and celebrate his life”.

### **Tony Brown, 73**



Tony Brown , 73

Tony worked as a lorry driver and it has been reported that he picked up the virus while delivering bread. He was interviewed by Sky News the day

before he died on 22 January. His family agreed for his interview to be shared posthumously.

In his interview with Sky, Brown said battling Covid was “very, very frightening” and he had had some worrying nights.

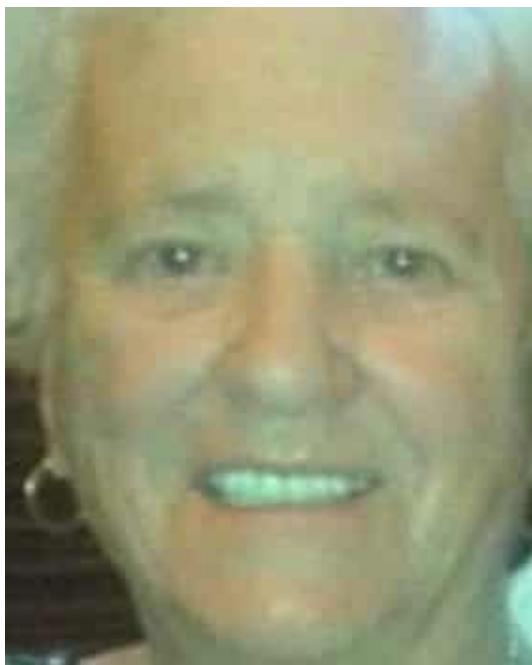
“Twice I went to ring my wife, to tell her I weren’t coming [back]. It is very hard,” he admitted.

“If people would have taken a lot more care when this came out and hadn’t ignored it, we wouldn’t be such a mess we’re in. We wouldn’t have had so many deaths, so many people who are critically ill. And the NHS are fantastic, brilliant.”

He blamed people who didn’t socially distance or wear a covering for helping to spread Covid.

Speaking about his wife Linda, whom he regularly spoke to on the phone before he died, he said that he hoped to see her again soon. “Oh I miss her,” he added.

### **Mary Green, 92**



Mary Green, 92 Photograph: NCJ Media

The grandmother died with Covid-19 five days after her first vaccine dose, before the inoculation was able to give her immunity. Her son Chris, 52, said the family had a visit to see Mary at Charlton Court care home cancelled on 2 January due to lockdown.

“She was a casualty of what we’re going through at the moment with Covid,” he told the ChronicleLive.

“The care she needed in her final days wasn’t in a care home setting, it was in a hospital setting, and she couldn’t have that.”

Doctors said she couldn’t be moved to the hospital after falling ill as she was too frail to cope with invasive treatment and would find the move confusing. She died 12 days later of suspected sepsis, which they said was likely to have been triggered by the virus.

### **Doris Hobday, 96**



Doris Hobday, 96

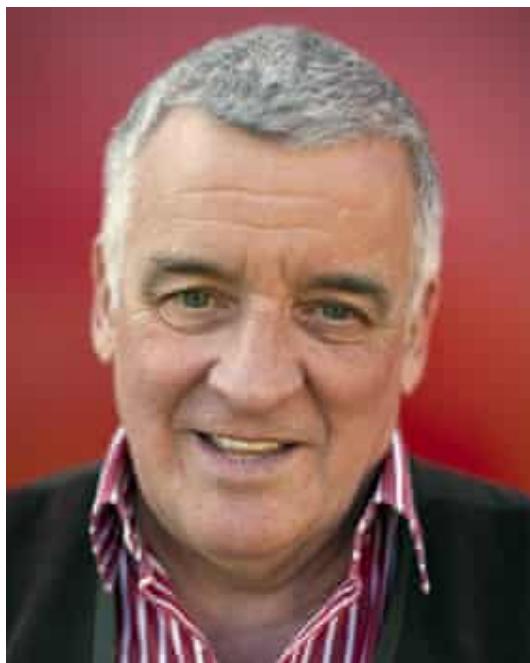
Doris Hobday died aged 96 in January. She was one of Britain’s two oldest identical twins and had lived in Tipton in the West Midlands her whole life. Her sister Lil is also ill with the virus.

The twins went viral after a cheeky interview on Good Morning Britain, which left the hosts in hysterics after they revealed their secret to long life was sex.

Doris's family shared a statement with GMB that read: "Both were determined to live until 100, they had so much to live for...Doris was only a few weeks away from being safe! With her vaccine letter arriving two days after her death. If you are offered the vaccine please take it, do not refuse it. Doris didn't get this choice."

Doris will be laid to rest beside her husband of 56 years following her funeral on 15 February.

### **Gerry Cottle, 75**



Gerry Cottle, 75 Photograph: Heathcliff O'Malley/REX/Shutterstock

Gerry Cottle died aged 75 in a hospital in Bath after contracting coronavirus.

Gerry found fame in the 1970s with the touring Gerry Cottle Circus, while he also presented the Moscow State Circus and Chinese State Circus in Britain.

He had planned to enter the circus trade ever since he saw a performance in Earl's Court, London, at the age of eight. At 15 he ditched his O-levels and left his family in Surrey to join the circus, and learned juggling, stilt walking, acrobatics, clowning and barebacked horse-riding. He put on his first circus show of his own in the summer of 1970 in Sturminster Newton, Dorset, with just five performers including himself, staged inside a second-hand tent previously used to sell flowers.

Later in his career, Gerry helped pioneer animal-free circus performances and reportedly stopped using animals in shows during the 1990s. He retired from the circus in 2003 bought Wookey Hole, a museum and amusement attraction in Somerset.

Described by his agent as “a loving family man”, Gerry is survived by his wife Betty, four children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

### **The Archbishop of Glasgow, the Most Reverend Philip Tartaglia, 70**



Philip Tartaglia.

Archbishop Tartaglia died at his home in Glasgow at the age of 70. The Catholic Church has said the cause of his death is not yet clear. He tested positive for Covid-19 in December.

He was ordained a priest in 1975 and had served as leader of Scotland's largest Catholic community since 2012. He was also a lifelong Celtic fan.

Scotland's Catholic bishops described Archbishop Tartaglia as a "gentle, caring and warm-hearted pastor". They said in a statement: "His loss to his family, his clergy and the people of the Archdiocese of Glasgow will be immeasurable but for the entire Church in Scotland this is a day of immense loss and sadness. His contribution to the work of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland over the past 16 years was significant and we will miss his wisdom, wit and robust Catholic spirit very much."

### **Donal O'Donoghue, 64**



Professor Donal O'Donoghue

Leading kidney care doctor Prof Donal O'Donoghue died from Covid-19 on 3 January. Tributes were paid to the medic who helped to shape modern kidney care and was a highly respected figure in the British renal medicine community.

O'Donoghue, who was based at Salford Royal and was registrar of the Royal College of Physicians, was made an OBE in 2018 for his services to kidney patients. He had previously served as president of both the British Renal Society and the Renal Association and chair of the board of trustees at

Kidney Care UK. He was appointed as the first national clinical director for kidney care at the Department of [Health](#) in 2007.

The RCP president, Prof Andrew Goddard, led the tributes: “Donal was the loveliest person and considered by many to be the ‘big daddy’ of British renal medicine. I will miss him terribly”.

### **David Weir**



Dr David Weir

Dr David Weir, who was in his sixties, died from coronavirus on 3 December. He was a respiratory consultant and had worked for the NHS in north Manchester for 30 years, before moving over to east Lancashire to help with the frontline pandemic response.

The East Lancashire Hospitals NHS trust, chief executive, Kevin McGee, told the [Lancashire Telegraph](#): “David spent his life helping people in their time of need.

“When not at work David would walk his four dogs and relaxed in his beloved garden, tending to his vegetable patch, making jam and baking bread, he truly enjoyed the good life.

“David will be greatly missed, and we send our deepest and heartfelt condolences to his wife Jane, their children and family.”

### **Eve Branson, 96**



Eve Branson

Eve Branson died at the age of 96 after contracting Covid-19.

Her son, the business magnate Richard Branson, said that rather than mourn the loss of his mother, he wanted to “celebrate her wonderful life, her tremendous spirit, the joy she brought to so many, and the love she gave us all”.

He said the “fearless” and “inventive” grandmother-of-11 and great-grandmother-of-10 had lived a colourful and adventurous life. She had taken glider lessons disguised as a boy, acted on the West End stage, enlisted in the Wrens during the second world war and toured Germany as a ballet dancer in the postwar years.

Later in life, she founded the Eve Branson Foundation, a small non-profit based in Morocco providing young people with craft skills training.

Her son also credits her with starting off his career when she gave him the money she had earned from selling a necklace. “One day in the late sixties mum saw a necklace lying on the road near Shamley Green and took it to the police station,” he said. “After three months nobody had claimed it so the police told her she could keep it. She came up to London, sold the necklace and gave me the money. Without that £100, I could never have started Virgin.”

### **Alan Henry**

Alan Henry, from Ballymena, Country Antrim, died on 6 January after being admitted to intensive care. He and his wife, Noeleen, who has been working as a nurse in the same ICU where her husband died, contracted Covid-19 in December despite taking extra care.

Alan was a former member of Antrim area hospital’s rapid response team before joining the dementia team. He died just days after his wife shared an emotional plea on social media for people complaining about lockdowns to take the virus seriously and not take chances. “Are these excuses really worth a life?” she had asked.

He is survived by Noeleen, three children, and four grandchildren. Noeleen described her husband as a “friendly and caring gentleman”.

### **Kevin Hughes, 63**

Kevin Hughes died at the age of 63 on 8 January at the Wrexham Maelor hospital after a long illness with Covid-19. His death came less than three weeks after he delivered an appeal from his hospital bed for people to observe social distancing over the festive period.

Hughes had planned to do a coast-to-coast walk this year in aid of Hope House but he died only a month after the funeral of his mother, June Margaret Hughes, 89, also from the virus on 25 November at the Countess of Chester hospital. He had spoken of his sadness at missing her funeral after he tested positive for the virus, describing it as one of the “darkest days” of his life.

Born in Chester, Hughes had a varied career. He joined Cheshire constabulary and was a police diver during his service and after his retirement worked for a time as head diver at the Blue Planet Aquarium, at Cheshire Oaks. He moved into journalism with the Chester Chronicle and rose to be editor of the Flintshire Chronicle before his retirement and in recent years worked in public relations and represented Gwernymynydd as a Flintshire county councillor.

He was also a passionate football fan, first with his native Chester and latterly as a season ticket-holder at Premier League Aston Villa, a keen motorcyclist and photographer.

He is survived by his wife, Sally, with whom he celebrated 40 years of marriage three years ago, sons Chris, Steve and Andy, and seven grandchildren. His son Andy wrote on Facebook: “At 12.45 this morning Dad passed away. So proud of him, not only in the final few weeks but over an incredible 63 years walking this earth, making his mark on it in a way that only he could.”

### **Colin Morris, 68**

Colin Morris, who had worked at Bridgnorth Cliff Railway for 20 years, died of Covid-19 in December aged 68.

He had previously been a relief driver as well as a night porter at the hotel in Alveley. Having retired from the hotel, Colin became a regular member of the cliff railway’s staff from December 2012 and colleagues said he had remained a “very fit and active 68-year-old” upon retiring last year.

The railway’s owner, Malvern Tipping, paid tribute, saying Colin was a man who “always retained a sense of humour and remained unflappable in times of crisis”.

### **Rachel Trott, 36**



Rachel Trott

The mother of three died aged 36 just three months after starting a job she had always dreamed of working with the NHS. She contracted Covid-19 while working as a healthcare assistant in Ashford, in Kent, and died at her mum's house on New Year's Eve.

Her partner, Finn Carmody, said in a statement: "Rachel was an amazing person, who would do anything for anyone, and always put other people first." She is the mother of three children: Charlie, nine, Lily, six, and Willow, 20 months.

Susan Acott, chief executive of the East Kent Hospitals trust, said Trott was a valued member of the team. "Rachel's commitment to her role was clear," she added. "And her friendly and reassuring nature made her an instant hit with patients as well as staff."

Lyn Marshall, Trott's ward manager, said: "Rachel had only been with us for a short time but had made an impact on many of us with her lovely caring nature and warm personality."

"She was a lovely girl who will be greatly missed."

### **Jamie Slade, 35**



Jamie Slade

Father-of-two Jamie Slade died aged 35 from the virus, prompting his brother to warn that Covid-19 is “no hoax”. The father-of-two from Ipswich died on 3 January after testing positive over Christmas. His brother Gary described him as a “get up and go type” who “could walk into a pub on his own and come out with new friends”.

He warned on social media that Covid causes “endless heartbreak” and urged people to take it seriously. Speaking to BBC Radio Suffolk, Gary said that his brother died from a Covid-related cardiac arrest two days before he was due to come out of isolation.

He said he felt “absolutely numb” after losing “more than a brother - a best friend, a confidant, a drinking buddy”. In a Facebook post, he said: “Covid is no hoax, take this serious, it’s real, and causes endless heartbreak.”

### **Joseph Araneta, 50**



Joseph Araneta

The 50-year-old night porter from Eltham in south-east London died of coronavirus on 3 January. His brother-in-law, Terry Millard, said it was Joseph's dying wish to be with his wife Emy Angeles, 47, and son Miguel, 12.

Terry said: "Joey was the kindest, most generous, gentle-hearted, thoughtful person, who embodied the Filipino values of family - he was fiercely protective and loving of his family."

Araneta moved from the Philippines with his sister as a teenager to live with his dad in the UK, after the death of his mum.

Emy, his wife, said her husband died suddenly and her family are now recovering from Covid. "He stayed at home for a while – for seven days – and we were hoping he would recover but we had to call an ambulance as his oxygen got low. We were surprised: it happened very quickly."

She said her husband was a stay-at-home father who cooked for the family and did night shifts as a porter at a hotel. "He looked after our son, picking him up from school and preparing dinner for him before he went to work at night. He was furloughed until December so he was asked to go into work

before Christmas Day. He did not want to work as he had an underlying illness – a heart problem – so we don't know where he got the virus.”

A [charity fundraising page](#) has been set up by Terry Millard.

### **Augustine Obaro**



Dr Augustine Obaro

Obaro worked as a family doctor in Walthamstow, London for the last 17 years and died on 1 January. He moved to the UK from Nigeria in 1999 to start GP training and went on to serve as part of the Waltham Forest GP Federation.

Obaro was active in his local community. He completed a postgraduate diploma in diabetes with the University of Leicester in 2015 and was working to become a trainer in general practice before his death.

Patients paid tribute to him on Twitter, with one saying: “Have just heard. This is horrendous. He was wonderful with my youngest when she was very ill - am heartbroken for his family. He was a great doctor and I believe him to have been a great man... R.I.P.”

### **Tommy Pilling, 62**



Tommy Pilling

Tommy Pilling, 62, from Shoeburyness in Essex, died on 1 January, two weeks after contracting the virus. He and his wife, Maryanne, one of Britain's first married couples with Down's syndrome, marked their 25th wedding anniversary in July and had been shielding since March.

Pilling's sister-in-law Lindi Newman wrote, on Facebook: "I will cherish the thousands of memories I have with him."

In the statement, on the couple's Facebook page, Newman said: "Thank you for making Maryanne so happy and for being the best uncle my children could ever ask for.

"Thank you for being you and making the world a better place, touching the lives of millions just by being you.

"Marriage made you my brother-in-law, love made you my brother."

### **Babatunde Elemosho, 62**



Babatunde Elemosho

Babatunde, who died with Covid-19 on 23 December, was a pillar of the Nigerian community in his area. The father-of-six hailed from Gorton, in Manchester.

The project worker was a well-known volunteer in the city's Nigerian community. He was chief executive of the Community Inspire Foundation and was involved in the first Levenshulme Manchester Boys Brigade.

Babatunde was a former general secretary of the Nigeria Community Manchester, a not-for-profit body that represents the cultural, social, welfare and economic interests of Nigerians in the region.

Mimi Veheary, welfare officer at the Nigeria Community Manchester, said: "Mr Elemosho's was a dear friend, husband and a father, but above all a great pillar to our community. His contribution will never be forgotten, but as we say farewell till we meet again his gift of love for our community will remain with us all for ever."

**Barclay Mason, 56**



Barclay Mason Photograph: Handout

Barclay Mason, 56, a senior NHS emergency department nurse died after contracting Covid-19.

Mason, who was originally from New Zealand, was treated for coronavirus at Princess Alexandra hospital NHS trust in Harlow in Essex, where he worked for more than 20 years.

Lance McCarthy, the trust's chief executive, said: "It is with great sadness that I confirm the death of Barclay Mason, 56, a member of our emergency department team who will be remembered for his commitment to patient care, his kindness and as a valued friend and colleague to many at the Princess Alexandra hospital."

His family and close friends, in a tribute issued through the hospital, said: "The sadness we feel is more than words can express. The most amazing man in our life, father to our children, has died. He leaves behind committed colleagues and friends who are shocked but who continue to go to work every day with compassion and care for their patients, just as Barclay did."

They shared a Māori blessing in his honour, including the lines: "Fly free, o spirit/ Fly to the realms of the heavens/ Uplifted by the sun."

## **Derek Sugar**



Derek Sugar

Derek Sugar, the brother of the Apprentice star Alan Sugar, died on Monday after contracting the coronavirus. Lord Sugar, 73, paid tribute to his sibling on social media.

He tweeted: “Today I lost my long-suffering brother Derek, another victim of Covid, which added to his underlying health issues. He was a lifetime, passionate Spurs supporter. I never forget my sister-in-law joking with me, thanking me for buying him the club. A sad day for us all in the family,”

He posted a picture of Derek on Instagram with the caption: “RIP bro.”

The BBC Breakfast host Dan Walker was among those sending their condolences, writing: “Sorry for your loss.”

## **Pete Bland, 79**



Pete Bland. Photograph: Handout

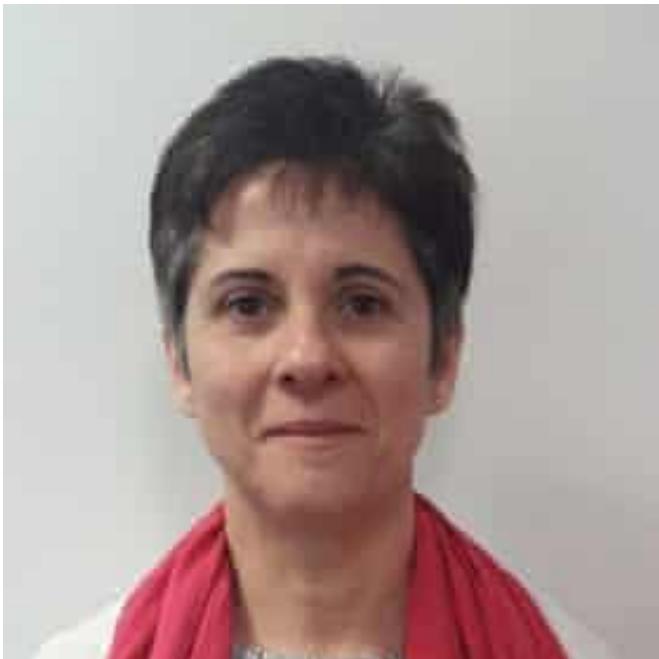
Pete Bland passed away on 28 November. He had tested positive for Covid-19 on 7 November and was admitted to hospital on 16 November.

Bland was one of the Lake District's best known athletes, described as a "true legend" of the local running community and a fell running icon. He started running at school, where he won many cross-country events, and had a long running career in the Lakeland fells.

He later set up the beloved Kendal running store Pete Bland Sports with his wife Anne, and he was a regular at local races selling kit from his trade van. He was honoured as a life member of the team at Ambleside Sports. A statement from Pete Bland Sports read: "Pete devoted most of his life to two things: family and running."

Billy Procter, the president of Kendal-based running club Helm Hill, [told the Westmorland Gazette](#): "You could not go to a fell race without the name of Pete Bland being brought up in conversation. He was not only a phenomenal runner, but then went on to help other fell runners achieve their dreams, as well as raising the profile of the sport to the exceptional levels we see today."

## Kalli Mantala-Bozos, 50



Kalli Mantala-Bozos.

Mantala-Bozos, a clinical psychologist and bereavement specialist in Halifax, West Yorkshire, died on 26 November. She had four children aged 11 to 17 with her husband, Stavros.

She was born in Greece and studied psychology at the American College of Athens. After further study in Glasgow and receiving a PhD from Birmingham, she became a clinical psychologist in the Calderdale core mental health team and part of the trust's bereavement group.

Colleagues described her as “so full of life and a beautiful person to be around”. Another said: “Kalli was a genuine, kind-hearted individual who made time to build relationships, bring a smile to others’ faces, and who put her all into her clinical work while being family-oriented and a cornerstone of her community.”

A Facebook post shared by the Greek Orthodox Community of Leeds paid tribute to her volunteer work for the church and community, describing her as “a kind-hearted and generous lady”. [A charity fundraising campaign](#) set up in her memory has raised more than £10,000 in one week.

### **Barbra Hassack, 55**



Barbra Hassack.

Healthcare worker Hassack, known to loved ones as Babs, died at her home in Strelley, Nottingham, on 29 November. She had tested positive for coronavirus six days earlier.

Hassack was an assistant practitioner and had been with Nottingham CityCare for 19 years. The team said they were heartbroken by her death. Her sister Patricia Hodgkinson, speaking on behalf of the family, [told NottinghamshireLive](#): “Babs was a very special person, full of enthusiasm and kindness. She brought laughter and happiness to everyone who knew her, and leaves behind a family who will miss her dearly.”

### **Fehzan Jamil, 10**



Fehzan Jamil

Fehzan is believed to be one of the youngest victims of coronavirus in the UK. The 10-year-old from Bradford, who had a number of underlying health issues including epilepsy, died in hospital after contracting the virus. A funeral was held on 23 November.

His parents, Tayyaba and Mohammed Jamil, [spoke to Channel 4 News](#) about their “indescribable pain” following his death. “There were four of us, now there are only three,” said Mohammed. Tayyaba said: “I just can’t describe our loss. Everything feels empty now.” They described their son as a “really brave fighter” and a “soldier” who was cheerful in spite of his health problems.

Fehzan’s family tried to shield him during the pandemic, knowing that his health issues made him vulnerable to Covid-19. They kept him at home as much as possible, and anyone entering the home had to wear a mask. “We tried our best to keep him safe but somehow Covid got to him,” Mohammed said.

The family praised the care Fehzan received from staff at Bradford Royal Infirmary, where he had been receiving treatment for several years. “All of the staff were very good to us. They have known Fehzan for many years

now and have always looked after him,” Tayyaba said. “They let us be beside him when he died. It meant a lot.”

### **Anthony Gershlick, 69**



Anthony Gershlick

Gershlick, a leading heart doctor, died on 20 November in intensive care at the hospital where he worked. Known as Tony, he was a renowned clinician and researcher. He had worked as a consultant cardiologist at Glenfield hospital in Leicester for more than 30 years, pioneering research into using wire stents to improve blood flow.

Tony specialised in coronary intervention and was involved in use of the procedure from shortly after its introduction in the UK in the mid-1980s. He received the inaugural British Cardiovascular Intervention Society lifetime achievement career award in 2017, and remained active clinically until becoming unwell recently. He had been a professor of interventional cardiology at the University of Leicester since 2018.

Colleagues paid tribute to the “talented, dedicated and much-loved” professor who had “made a difference to many, many lives”. A minute’s silence was held in remembrance at the university and hospital after his death.

## Owen and Bredge Ward, both 69



Owen and Bredge Ward

The couple, from Strabane, County Tyrone, died 12 hours apart in hospital after contracting Covid-19. They loved the simple things in life and lived for their six children and nine grandchildren, on whom they “doted”.

Their son, Martin, held his father’s hand as he died, and his siblings were with his mother at the funeral home. [Speaking to BBC NI](#), he asked for people to think of others and follow coronavirus guidance: “Treat everyone the same – with respect and as if they are one of your family – so you can minimise the harm to others.”

At their funeral at St Mary’s church in Melmount, where the couple married almost 50 years earlier, the parish priest, Fr Michael Doherty, spoke poignantly about how the couple “had a great love of life” and were “united in life and death”.

Owen was an avid GAA supporter and former player of both hurling and football. He was described as outgoing and highly respected. Bredge was known as a quiet and friendly woman. They were happiest when spending time with their ever-growing family, who were “the love of their lives”.

Owen loved spending time with the dogs, Bredge enjoyed reading, baking and knitting, and together they loved going for walks.

### **Hannah Jackson, 36**



Hannah Jackson

Jackson died from Covid-19 on 21 November, having been taken to hospital the day before. She had contracted the virus around a week earlier. She was a staff nurse at Medway Maritime hospital in Kent, having left her family in Dominica to join the NHS in 2019. She had been sending money to her relatives to help them after the devastation of Hurricane Laura in August.

Her death came as a shock to her loved ones in her village, Castle Bruce, who remember her as a loving, kind, gentle person. Her sister Hannel [told Dominica News](#): “She lived for nursing and she cared. She went away to make life better for herself and her family; family came first to her.”

Colleagues described Hannah as a “much-loved” and “amazing lady” and said there was “never a frown in the room while she was around”.

### **Asaf Oktem, 65**



Asaf Oktem

Oktem, a father of seven, died on 18 November, shortly after celebrating his 65th birthday. His youngest son, Alex, 26, described his father as amazing and warm. He [told LancsLive](#): “He was just a really warm person. He was probably drawn to people that others would maybe write off and he’d try and keep them right. He was just such a warm presence and he was always smiling. He was just class.”

Oktem was a partner at a kebab shop, Ali Baba on North Road, which opened in 1985, and he was known fondly by regulars as Mr Ali Baba. Customers shared memories of him, calling his passing “a huge loss to the city of Lancaster”. One wrote: “A world with Asaf in was always a brighter, better place. RIP sweetheart.”

A statement posted on the takeaway’s Facebook page read: “Asaf Oktem, you’re now up in the stars, you will never, ever be forgotten and our lives will never be the same without you. We will try our best to continue your work and make you proud! RIP Asaf.” The takeaway was closed on the day of his death but reopened on the following night, with staff saying Asaf “wouldn’t have it any other way”.

### **Derek Masterton, 66**



Derek Masterton

Masterton, a former Daily Record journalist, died on 13 November, two weeks after testing positive for coronavirus. Having had lung cancer and sepsis in recent years, he had been shielding during the pandemic.

Derek grew up in Irvine and attended Ravenspark Academy, where he met his future wife, Nanette. He moved to Germany aged 16 where he took on a factory job to improve his German, before attending Glasgow University to study languages. He became fluent in German but quit university to become a reporter at the Irvine Times.

He moved to the Record in 1979, where he spent 30 years and rose to assistant news editor, before becoming a senior media relations officer for the Red Cross in 2009. He retired from that job two months before his death.

The former Record news editor Andy Lines, who knew Derek for 35 years, said: “Derek was a brilliant journalist and a Daily Record legend. He was a great reporter and if there was something going on in his beloved Ayrshire he knew about it before anyone else.”

### **Tracey Donnelly, 53**



Tracey Donnelly

Donnelly, a support worker for an autism charity, died in Sunderland general hospital after testing positive for coronavirus. Her death followed those of Sue Gargett, 53, and 66-year-old Margaret Blyth, who worked for the same charity. The charity said there was no evidence any of them contracted Covid-19 through their work.

Born and raised in Edinburgh, Tracey moved from Scotland to the north-east of England when she met her husband, George, whom she married in 2012. She joined the North East Autism Society five years ago and worked at several locations across the region, for the past two years mainly at three residential homes in Sunderland. She had four sons, three stepchildren and eight grandchildren.

“I loved her the first time I saw her and I always will. She was so loving and kind – just an extra-special person in every way,” said George. “The one bit of comfort I’ve been able to draw is the number of private messages I’ve had from her colleagues, along with a letter from the parent of one of the service users. That shows what she meant to everyone.”

**Jim Pass, 102**



Jim Pass recalling his wartime service at his home in Sheffield. One of Yorkshire's last Dunkirk and D-day veterans, he died with Covid at the age of 102. Photograph: Yorkshire Post/SWNS

Pass, one of Yorkshire's last Dunkirk and D-day veterans, died on 4 November shortly after being diagnosed with Covid-19. He had been moved into a care home in July following a fall at home. His stepdaughter Kerensa Welsby said he was unable to have visitors including his wife, Rita, inside the care home due to the pandemic. "It has been quite a traumatic period. But there are blessings," she [told the Yorkshire Post](#). "'He was 102 and actually died quite peacefully. He didn't suffer, which he could have done with Covid, and he lived an amazing life."

Pass was a motorbike dispatch rider in the Royal Army Service Corps early in the second world war. He narrowly escaped death at Dunkirk, where after waiting for seven days he boarded a paddle steamer that was hit by a bomb. Jim was among those saved by a naval destroyer. On D-day he played a key role, driving a DUKW amphibious vehicle bringing ammunition onshore to Sword beach. After D-day, Jim landed a glider in Holland and fought across to Germany where he reached newly liberated Belsen.

For more than 50 years after the war, Jim was a keen member of the Camping and Caravanning Club. He was awarded the Légion d'honneur in

2016 for his service in liberating France.

### **Walter Parnham, 79**



Walter Ernest Parnham

Parnham was taken to Pilgrim hospital in Boston, Lincolnshire, after a heart attack in October and contracted Covid-19 while being treated. He died on 21 November.

Since the mid-1980s Parnham, known locally as Wally or Mick, had brought Christmas cheer to thousands of children in his home town of Wainfleet, Lincolnshire, by dressing up as Santa Claus and handing out gifts during appearances at schools and events. A keen drummer, he also worked as an engineer and lorry driver and was part of the Wainfleet Theatre Club, regularly helping out with the scenery.

His son, Carl, 55, [told LincsLive](#): “He was full of kindness, he would do anything for anybody and never make a fuss or ask for anything in return. I guess that generosity is what made him a good Santa. I’m heartbroken, and it’s even more crushing that it has happened at this time of year. It was his favourite time and I’m sure many will have fond memories of him bringing them the magic of Christmas.”

## **Oskar Hartwig, 59**



Oskar Hartwig

Hartwig died on 19 November after he was hospitalised and then moved to intensive care after contracting Covid-19. About four weeks prior to his death, he and his wife, Jan, caught the virus. While Jan had a mild form of Covid-19, Oskar had underlying health conditions and had to be put on a ventilator.

He worked for Nuneaton and Bedworth borough council for close to 30 years, and while on duty he was known as “Gentle Giant” or “Big Man”. His niece Jackie [told CoventryLive](#) he was “Uncle Osk” to many. “He wasn’t just my uncle, he was everyone’s uncle, he was everyone’s friend, an amazing husband to Jan and just as an amazing dad to Kelly, Andy and Sarah and an absolute fabulous grandad. Everyone who got to be in his presence was just instantly drawn in with that beaming smile and that Scotch voice of his and just instantly fell in love with him.”

## **Andrew Sumner, 78**



Andrew Sumner

Sumner died at Lancaster Royal Infirmary on 12 November after testing positive for Covid-19. Born in Preston, he studied at Preston grammar school and Manchester University before becoming a teacher, and head of modern languages at Penwortham girls' school, until his retirement. Apart from his family, his greatest love was boxing and he became an amateur coach, mentoring young people in gyms in Preston, Blackpool and Bolton.

*Additional reporting Harry Taylor*

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# Wednesday briefing: Quarantine for arrivals from risky countries

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## Climate change

# UN global climate poll: ‘The people’s voice is clear – they want action’

Biggest ever survey finds two-thirds of people think climate change is a global emergency



In countries where fossil fuels are a major source of emissions, people strongly supported renewable energy. Photograph: John Giles/PA

The biggest ever opinion poll on climate change has found two-thirds of people think it is a “global emergency”.

The survey shows people across the world support climate action and gives politicians a clear mandate to take the major action needed, according to the UN organisation that carried out the poll.

The [UN Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#) questioned 1.2 million people in 50 countries, many of them young.

While younger people showed the greatest concern, with 69% of those aged 14-18 saying there is a climate emergency, 58% of those over 60 agreed, suggesting there is not a huge generational divide.

Even when climate action required significant changes in their own country, majorities still backed the measures.

In nations where fossil fuels are a major source of emissions, people strongly supported renewable energy, including the US (65% in favour), Australia (76%) and Russia (51%).

[Two-thirds of people around the world said climate change is a global emergency](#)

Where the destruction of forests is a big cause of emissions, people supported conservation of trees, with 60% support in Brazil and 57% in [Indonesia](#).

Overall, the most popular actions to tackle the climate crisis were protecting and restoring forests, followed by renewable energy and climate-friendly farming. The promotion of plant-based diets was the least popular of the 18 policies in the survey, with only 30% support.

Gender was a factor in some countries, with at least 5% more men and boys saying there is a climate emergency than women and girls in 16 countries. However, in four nations – the US, Australia, Canada and the UK – significantly more women and girls were concerned about global heating.

The UNDP ran the “Peoples’ Climate Vote” in 50 high-, middle- and low-income countries, representing more than half the world’s people. Experts at Oxford University weighted the replies to reflect the population of each nation.

[Majority of all ages say climate change is a global emergency](#)

“The voice of the people is clear – they want action on climate change,” said Cassie Flynn, the UNDP’s strategic adviser on climate change.

“If 64% of the world’s people are believing in a climate emergency then it helps governments to respond to the climate crisis as an emergency.

“The key message is that, as governments are making these high-stakes decisions, the people are with them.”

Flynn said the survey connects the climate concerns of people, particularly the young, with governments at a time when accelerated action must be agreed, in particular at a UN climate summit in November. The climate crisis continued unabated in 2020, with the [joint highest global temperatures on record](#).

“We are at a fork in the road and the poll says ‘this is how your future generations are thinking, in specific policy choices’ – it brings a way to envision the future,” she said.

Flynn heads the UNDP’s [Climate Promise](#) programme that helps countries take more ambitious climate action.

### [Majority of all ages say climate change is a global emergency](#)

The poll found the highest proportion of people saying there is a climate emergency was in the UK and Italy, both at 81%. Australia was at 72% and the US at 65%, the same as Russia, and India was at 59%. Even the lowest proportion, in [Moldova](#), was 50%.

The relatively low support for the promotion of plant-based diets may be because there are few plant-based options in some countries or people may have felt that diet is more of a personal choice, said the UNDP. Support was highest in Germany (44%) and the UK (43%).

The reason why more men and boys said there was a climate emergency than women and girls in countries such as Nigeria and Vietnam may be because girls have less access to education in those places.

The poll found that the more education a person had completed, the more likely they were to think there is a climate emergency. Why more women and girls are more concerned in the four English-speaking nations is unclear.

The poll was distributed via advertisements in video games and puzzles, including Angry Birds, Subway Surfers, Sudoku and Words With Friends, and this particularly helped reach younger people.

The idea came to Flynn when she was on the subway in New York City: “I looked around and everyone was on their phones and most were playing games.”

The data was collected between October and December 2020 and, despite the coronavirus pandemic, 59% of the people saying there is a climate emergency also said the world should “do everything necessary and urgently” in response.

Prof Stephen Fisher at Oxford University said: “The Peoples’ Climate Vote has delivered a treasure trove of data on public opinion that we’ve never seen before. Recognition of the climate emergency is much more widespread than previously thought.”

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## Air pollution

# UK mayors urge Boris Johnson to commit to tougher air pollution targets

Cross-party group sign joint letter after inquest into death of nine-year-old Ella Kissi-Debrah



Recent studies suggest air pollution may be damaging every organ in the body. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

Recent studies suggest air pollution may be damaging every organ in the body. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

[Matthew Taylor](#)

Wed 27 Jan 2021 01.21 EST

City mayors representing more than 17 million people across the UK are urging Boris Johnson to commit to tougher air pollution targets after the inquest into the death of nine-year-old [Ella Kissi-Debrah](#).

The cross-party group, including the Labour mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and the Conservative mayor of the West of England combined authority, Tim Bowles, have signed a joint letter along with city leaders from Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and the North of Tyne to urge Boris Johnson to enshrine in law a commitment to achieve [World Health Organization air pollution guidelines](#) by 2030.

Ella's mother, Rosamund Kissi-Debrah, signed the letter after a coroner ruled that illegal levels of air pollution had caused the death of her daughter in 2013. She called on the prime minister to act immediately to protect the lives and wellbeing of other young people across the country.

[Air pollution a cause in girl's death, coroner rules in landmark case](#)

[Read more](#)

"We need to take action now which will have long-term benefits," she said. "People act as though we have time – we don't have time because children are continuing to actually die."

The letter, which has also been signed by a range of business leaders, is calling for a £1.5bn boost to government spending on measures to improve air quality across the UK and for WHO targets to be included in [the delayed environment bill](#).

According to research by UK100, a group of more than 100 local authorities that coordinated the letter, the money could fund the removal of nearly half a million of the most polluting cars and vans from the road and incentivise people into cleaner vehicles, public transport, cycling and walking.

Polly Billington, Director of UK100, said: "We cannot wait any longer to prevent more tragic deaths like Ella's. Forty-thousand people die prematurely in the UK every year from air pollution. We need to act with the fierce urgency of now, not just to serve Ella's memory, but to prevent more needless loss of life."

A growing body of research underlines the devastating impact air pollution – both indoors and outdoors – is having on the nation's health. Recent studies suggest it may be damaging [every organ in the body](#), with effects including

heart and lung disease, diabetes, dementia, reduced intelligence and increased depression. Children and unborn babies may suffer the most.

Earlier this week it was revealed that small increases in air pollution are linked to an increased risk of irreversible sight loss from age-related macular degeneration. Another recent report revealed that home wood burners triple the level of harmful particulates inside the home as well as creating dangerous levels of pollution in the surrounding neighbourhood.

More than a third of local authorities in the UK have areas where the level of PM2.5 – one of the most dangerous toxic particles – exceeds World Health Organization limits. Research from 2017 showed that every borough in London exceeded WHO limits.

In the letter the city leaders call for a clear post-Brexit commitment to WHO air pollution targets in the delayed environment bill. Campaigners and regional leaders fear that, without a cast-iron guarantee from government, environmental protections may be watered down now that Britain has left the EU and that progress on tackling air pollution could be jeopardised.

Khan said Ella's death must be a turning point in a national effort to clean up the UK's air.

The mayor of London said: "Including WHO recommended limits in the environment bill will be one of the most effective ways of ensuring other families do not have to suffer the same heartbreak as Ella's have ... Ministers must now learn the lessons from the coroner's conclusion in Ella's case and do more to tackle the deadly scourge of air pollution in London and across the country."

Andy Burnham, the mayor of Greater Manchester, said air pollution was an injustice that hit the poorest hardest, contributing to at least 1,200 deaths a year in his region.

Burnham said Greater Manchester had a comprehensive package of measures including the largest clean air zone outside London to tackle the issues, but added: "We need concrete commitment from national government to provide sufficient funds to support those vehicle owners,

many of whom live in the communities most affected, who have made previous vehicle choices in good faith.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/27/uk-mayors-boris-johnson-tougher-air-pollution-targets>

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## Tips for studentsClimate change

# Climate activist Luisa Neubauer: 'how can we turn this anxiety into something constructive?'

The German activist gives her advice to young people on how to help tackle the climate crisis



According to a recent report, 1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050 due to climate change. Photograph: Hayoung Jeon/EPA

According to a recent report, 1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050 due to climate change. Photograph: Hayoung Jeon/EPA

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## About this content

[Abby Young-Powell](#)

[@abbyyoungpowell](#)

Wed 27 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

“Once we decide to do something about [the climate crisis] we can move mountains.” If the motivational quote sounds familiar, that’s because it is. Meet “the [German Greta](#)”, 24-year-old climate activist Luisa Neubauer, one of the main organisers of the Fridays for Future movement in the country, which organised the school strikes prior to the pandemic.

A “sense of loss,” she says, led to her involvement in climate action. “I felt we’re losing our safe space, our ecosystems, our species, and the sentiment that we could grow up on a safe planet.”

Neubauer’s father passed away in 2015, the year the Paris Agreement was signed. “There’s a lot that connects these moments of grief,” she says.

Born in Hamburg and now living in Berlin, she studies geography at the University of Göttingen, alongside her activism. She is one of the many students who have become a powerful voice in the battle to tackle the climate crisis. Last week, more than one million young people around the

world [urged governments](#) to prioritise measures to protect against the ravages of climate breakdown during the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Before Covid-19 restrictions, millions of school children walked out of classrooms around the world every week to strike for the climate. The movement began in 2018 when a then 15-year-old Greta Thunberg sat outside the Swedish Parliament every school day to demand urgent action on the climate crisis.

“Generations have failed us. If we don’t do this, they won’t,” Neubauer says. And the need for action is more urgent than ever; last year was the joint [hottest year](#) ever recorded, with the world’s oceans also reaching their [hottest level](#) in recorded history. The planet is facing a “ghastly future of mass extinction, declining health and climate-disruption upheavals”, a group of international scientists [warned](#) this month. On top of this, 1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050 due to climate change, a recent report [said](#).

“The sooner we get going the more we can do about it,” Neubauer says. So what’s her advice for young people?

## Connect with nature

A lot of human crises arise from a disconnect between humans and the environment, Neubauer says. “Allow yourself to be touched by what we’re seeing around the world. Feel grief [at what’s already been lost] and joy about what’s still there,” she says. “That’s an important first step.”

## Join a movement

There’s power in numbers and in getting organised. [Students](#) can join the Fridays for Futures movement, for example, or a student society that focuses on tackling the climate crisis. “We’re facing a challenge where we need people to unite behind certain ideas,” Neubauer says. “Movements work because people join something that already exists, that is good and solid, and they can make it better.”

## Take to the streets

To create change, governments need to take the climate crisis seriously and protests help to apply pressure. “We know that a lot of the answers are already out there, but what we lack is awareness, pressure on governments, and a crisis mode that we need to adopt,” Neubauer says. “This is what we need to do on the streets.”

Psychologists [have warned](#) that young people’s mental health has been particularly affected by the reality of the climate crisis. They’ve also said that getting out, taking action and doing something about it, [helps](#). Neubauer says it’s understandable to feel anxious. “It’s frightening and we know this affects us and what this means for our lives,” she says. “So the question is, how can we turn this anxiety into something constructive? This can be a source of energy for us and something that empowers us.”

## Push for systemic change

Lifestyle changes, such as cycling regularly or having a plant based diet, are good for your health and for the planet. However, the most important thing is fighting for systemic change, Neubauer says. “Every gram of emissions that is not emitted is good – but it’s a question of where we channel our energy,” she says. “Having a low emission diet is something I do because it gives me energy to focus on systemic changes.” Keeping up pressure on governments is key.

## Learn lessons from the pandemic

The pandemic has shown that we can take a crisis seriously if we want to and the same energy is needed for the climate crisis. “[It has shown] we can listen to the science,” Neubauer says. “That is the thinking we desperately need in the climate crisis.”

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## [Animals farmed](#)[Live exports](#)

# EU revealed to be world's biggest live animal exporter

Bloc exported more than 1.6 billion chickens, pigs, sheep, goats and cattle in 2019, but faces criticism over welfare failings



A cow looks out from a transport truck after being sold at the livestock market by auctioneers. Photograph: Bloomberg/via Getty Images

A cow looks out from a transport truck after being sold at the livestock market by auctioneers. Photograph: Bloomberg/via Getty Images

Animals farmed is supported by



## About this content

Sophie Kevany

Wed 27 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

New analysis suggests the EU could be responsible for up to 80% of the global trade in live farm animals, which continues to be linked to animal welfare failings.

Global data provided to the Guardian by the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) indicates that 1.8 billion live chickens, pigs, sheep, goats and cattle were moved across a border in 2019. The EU was estimated to be responsible for more than three-quarters of that total.

“A large part of the cross-border movement of live animals takes place in the EU,” said the FAO’s livestock development officer, Anne Mottet.

The global trade in live farm animals – worth more than \$20bn (£14bn) a year – has more than quadrupled in size over the past 50 years. However, inadequate regulation means that animals might be put at risk on some journeys, or exposed to cruelty when they reach their destination.

The government is proposing to ban the export of live animals from England and Wales, unless it is for breeding or longer-term use – not just for fattening

and slaughter.

Concerns about animal welfare during transport led the EU to establish a [committee of inquiry](#) last year to investigate alleged failings.

## [Two billion and rising: the global trade in live animals in eight charts](#)

[Read more](#)

Transport risks for live animals include stress during loading and unloading, injury, hunger, thirst and exhaustion, according to a [report](#) published today by animal advocacy organisation Eurogroup for Animals, which also highlighted the potential for lower slaughter standards on arrival and the higher risk of infectious disease spread during stressful transportation.

The Eurogroup for Animals is calling for regulatory reform including shorter journey times, rather than a ban. It said it wants to, “shift from live transport to a trade in meat and carcasses as well as genetic material.”

The FAO argues that it does not make sense to aggregate all transported animals in the same way. “Some are very small and other large. One cannot add chicken and cows. For example, 95% of the 1.8 billion animals that crossed a border in 2019 are chicken, while cattle represented less than 1% of this total,” said Mottet.



A farmer guides pigs to a cargo zone cage them to be loaded onto a cargo plane en route to China from the airport in Guipavas, Brittany, on 10 March 2020. Photograph: Fred Tanneau/AFP via Getty Images

One of the factors driving the EU's live transport of animals, said Ditte Erichsen, a veterinarian with Animal Protection Denmark, is that countries tend to specialise in producing a particular food animal, often for export.

"Denmark has become the world's largest exporter of pigs," said Erichsen. Most of them, she said, are piglets of about three months in age and their journey times are often over eight hours. According to the Eurogroup report, which uses Eurostat data, about 15.7 million Danish pigs left the country in 2019.

"This is the result of a tendency which we have seen over the last decade, where the pig production has specialised to a degree, where the piglets are born in one country, fattened in another and maybe slaughtered in a third country," Erichsen said.

Particular risks for pigs, she said, are heat stress because pigs cannot sweat, suffocation due to overcrowding, prolonged hunger and thirst and no space to rest.

Iris Baumgaertner, of Swiss-German NGO AWF-TSB, said in Germany the specialty is hatched chicks. The report found that the country exported 312 million head of poultry within the EU in 2019, of which almost 100 million weighed under 185 grams.

[EU's live export trade puts welfare of millions of animals at risk – report](#)  
[Read more](#)

"The number of animals being transported around the EU, and the millions of chickens leaving Germany, is the insane result of globalisation and specialisation," Baumgaertner said.

EU subsidies are another factor driving animal transport, said Gabriel Paun, a Romanian animal advocate and EU director for NGO, [Animals International](#). "In the Middle East and north Africa, they prefer [their] local

sheep meat but the Romanian meat is very cheap, partly because of the EU subsidies,” Paun said.

Paun said 2020 data is expected to show that an estimated 3 million Romanian sheep were exported to Saudi Arabia. Transport itself is cheap, with a shipment to Saudi Arabia costing about \$25 (£18) per head, or less on larger ships, Paun said.

Romania has recently been accused of “[complete silence](#)” over its investigation into the sinking of the Queen Hind in November 2019, which resulted in the deaths of more than 14,000 sheep.



The livestock vessel Queen Hind, which overturned carrying 14,600 sheep in November 2019. Photograph: Animals International

Although data on the live transport of fish is limited – and counts fish in weight rather numbers of animals – the Eurogroup report estimates that nearly 54,000 tons of live fish were transported around the EU in 2019. Of those, 75% are trout, carp, eel and bluefin tuna.

Live fish are equally prone to transport stress. “[Fish] are starved for at least a day prior to transport, but sometimes up to two weeks, which can cause aggression between fish as they look for food,” said Christine Xu of the

Aquatic Life Institute. Other transport risks include poor water quality and overcrowding.

A European Commission spokesperson said in an email it was cooperating with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) “to improve the welfare conditions of the animals transported outside the EU” and that it would “continue to monitor exports of live animals and take all the necessary measures within the remit of its competence in order to improve the implementation of the EU legislation.”

*Sign up for the [Animals farmed monthly update](#) to get a roundup of the best farming and food stories across the world and keep up with our investigations. You can send us your stories and thoughts at [animalsfarmed@theguardian.com](mailto:animalsfarmed@theguardian.com)*

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## Trump impeachment (2021)

# Boost for Trump as 45 Republican senators vote to dismiss impeachment

Procedural objection fails but indicates stiff challenge of persuading 17 Republicans to vote for conviction

- [US politics – follow live](#)



Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky tried to have the impeachment trial thrown out on a point of order. Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky tried to have the impeachment trial thrown out on a point of order. Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

*[David Smith](#) in Washington*

*[@smithinamerica](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 16.38 EST

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Donald Trump's hopes of avoiding conviction by the US Senate received a boost on Tuesday when 45 Republicans tried to dismiss his [impeachment trial](#) before it even began.

The procedural vote was not enough to prevent the trial going ahead, since 55 senators voted that it should, but it did suggest that Democrats face an uphill battle to get the 67 senators they will need for a conviction on a two-thirds majority vote.

[Impeachment guide: how will Donald Trump's second Senate trial unfold?](#)  
[Read more](#)

Trump was impeached by the House of Representatives on the charge of "incitement of insurrection" following the [storming of the US Capitol](#), including the Senate chamber, by an angry mob on 6 January. Senators gathered at the scene of the crime on Tuesday to begin his trial.

After they were sworn in and signed the oath book – each using a different pen due to coronavirus precautions – Rand Paul of Kentucky challenged the legitimacy of the trial.

He argued on a point of order that, since Trump is no longer president, pressing ahead with it "violates the constitution".

Chuck Schumer, the Democratic majority leader, dismissed Paul's theory as "flat-out wrong", contending: "It's been completely debunked by constitutional scholars from all across the political spectrum ... The history and precedent is clear. The Senate has the power to try former officials."

Schumer said: "The theory that the Senate can't try former officials would amount to a constitutional get-out-of-jail-free card for any president who commits an impeachable offence."

00:39

Schumer pledges 'real accountability' in Trump impeachment trial – video

Senators then voted 55-45 against Paul's point of order, ensuring the trial will proceed – but also signalling the strength of Trump's residual support

among Republicans in the Senate and beyond.

The only five Republicans who voted to go ahead with the trial were the longtime Trump critics Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Mitt Romney of Utah, Ben Sasse of Nebraska and Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania. Romney was the sole Republican to vote for Trump's removal from office at his first impeachment trial a year ago.

Trump is the first president to have been twice impeached by the House of Representatives and the first to face a trial after leaving power.

The House approved a single article of impeachment – the equivalent of an indictment in a criminal trial – on 13 January, accusing him of inciting an insurrection with a speech to supporters before they stormed the US Capitol on 6 January. A police officer and four other people died in the riot.

The nine House Democrats who will serve as prosecutors set the trial in motion on Monday by [delivering the article](#) of impeachment to the Senate in a solemn march along the same halls where the mob rampaged three weeks ago.

The supreme court chief justice, John Roberts, is not presiding at the trial, as he did during Trump's first impeachment, because the president is no longer in office. Instead, Senator Patrick Leahy, a Democrat who serves in the largely ceremonial role of Senate president pro tempore, oversaw proceedings.

The trial will begin in earnest in the week of 8 February. Despite his departure, Trump remains a significant force among Republicans and his supporters have vowed to mount election challenges to senators who support conviction.

Larry Sabato, director of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia, tweeted: “45 GOP Senators just voted that Trump’s trial is unconstitutional since he isn’t in office now. Those who thought 17 R Senators would somehow vote to convict Trump have presumably awakened from their dream. As guilty as Trump is, Rs still cower before him.”

Joe Biden told CNN that the trial "[has to happen](#)" but doubted the chances of conviction.

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## [Russia](#)

# Navalny supporters call for fresh protests across Russia

A woman beaten by police becomes a symbol of opposition as Vladimir Putin tries to contain the anti-corruption movement



A man holds a poster of Alexei Navalny reading ‘One for all and all for one’, during a protest rally in St Petersburg. More rallies are planned across Russia this weekend. Photograph: Dmitri Lovetsky/AP

A man holds a poster of Alexei Navalny reading ‘One for all and all for one’, during a protest rally in St Petersburg. More rallies are planned across Russia this weekend. Photograph: Dmitri Lovetsky/AP

*Staff and agencies*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 20.49 EST

Supporters of the Russian opposition leader [Alexei Navalny](#) have called for more rallies across the country this weekend to demand his release after he

was put in pre-trial detention over parole violations he denies.

One of Navalny's leading allies, lawyer and politician Lyubov Sobol, told reporters on Tuesday that his anti-corruption movement would continue to operate despite many people being detained after protests swept through Russian cities at the weekend.

[Biden presses Putin on election interference and Navalny arrest in first call](#)  
[Read more](#)

As a wave of criminal cases were launched against those detained by police, a woman who was kicked to the ground by a baton-wielding policeman in St Petersburg has emerged as a symbol of the heavy-handed way the authorities cracked down on the protesters.

The case of Margarita Yudina, 54, has become a national scandal after footage of her being kicked in the stomach by a policeman for asking why the officer and his colleagues had detained went viral online.

⚡ 54-летняя Маргарита Юдина, которая получила от полицейского удар в живот в ходе митингов 23 января в Санкт-Петербурге, заявила, что не простила силовика, не знает его фамилии и намерена обратиться в Следственный комитет. Об этом Юдина сообщила в интервью «Новой газете».  
[pic.twitter.com/ODUWHSkWVN](https://pic.twitter.com/ODUWHSkWVN)

— Новая Газета (@novaya\_gazeta) [January 25, 2021](#)

In the video, Yudina is seen falling back on the pavement after being kicked, banging her head hard. Hospital documents show she suffered concussion and needed stitches to the back of her head.

Although the officer visited her in hospital and apologised, Yudina told Novaya Gazeta newspaper on Tuesday that she wanted justice.

“This case needs to run its legal course,” she said. “So I intend to appeal to the Investigative Committee and to find out who attacked me. I want the

person who kicked me to be found, named and punished according to the law.”

The Kremlin said that the “violence” by some protesters was unprecedented and aggressive. Incidences of police violence were far fewer and being investigated, it said.

But Navalny’s supporters were undeterred, Sobol said, and would continue with demonstrations calling for his release despite “arrests of our followers and allies, open criminal probes (and) criminal probes that are yet to come.

She said they planned protests on 31 January and 2 February, when a court is scheduled to consider motions to convert his suspended sentence into a real prison term.

She added that one of their goals was to stop president Vladimir Putin’s party, United Russia, in the upcoming parliamentary balloting.

“There are lots of plans and tasks for the nearest future, [as well as] midterm and longterm [ones], and everyone understands what needs to be done both tomorrow, and a month from now, and half a year from now,” Sobol said.

“One of the main goals is to ... destroy the monopoly of United Russia in the parliamentary election that will take place this September.”

The crackdown on the protesters continued to bring international outrage. The top diplomats of the United States, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan, as well as the high representative of the European Union, condemned the “politically motivated arrest and detention” of Navalny and said they were “deeply concerned by the detention of thousands of peaceful protesters and journalists.”

Joe Biden raised concerns about the case when he spoke to Putin for the first time as US president on Tuesday.

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## Renting property

# Private rents fall in UK's biggest cities by up to 12% amid Covid crisis

Central London and Edinburgh city centres hardest hit by downturn as northern England sees rising rents

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



Rightmove's rental trend report found average asking rents for central London fell by 12.4% with Durham, Keighley and Wigan the top three highest growth areas. Photograph: Peter Summers/Getty Images

Rightmove's rental trend report found average asking rents for central London fell by 12.4% with Durham, Keighley and Wigan the top three highest growth areas. Photograph: Peter Summers/Getty Images

*[Rupert Jones](#)*

Wed 27 Jan 2021 00.59 EST

Private rents in some of the UK's biggest city centres have fallen by up to 12% in a year but have risen sharply in parts of northern England as some tenants swapped an [urban life for the suburbs](#), smaller towns and villages.

Property website Rightmove's latest rental trends report said the [pandemic had led to falling asking rents](#) and a "flood" of properties coming on to the market in many areas.

Central London has been "hardest hit", said the website, with average asking rents down by 12.4% on a year ago, followed by [Edinburgh](#) city centre, which was down 10%, and Manchester city centre, down 5.3%.

Away from city centres it was a different picture, with agents reporting busy markets and rising rents.

Rightmove named the top three highest growth areas outside [London](#) as the city of Durham, the town of Keighley in West Yorkshire, and Wigan in Greater Manchester.

In Durham, the average asking rent a month for a two-bedroom property jumped from £543 in the fourth quarter of 2019 to £632 in the same quarter last year – an increase of 16.4%. The equivalent annual RISES for Keighley and Wigan were 14.6% and 11.2%, respectively.

Rightmove looked closely at the centres of 10 of the UK's biggest cities, and said there were regions where asking rents were still rising on an annual basis, including Bristol and Liverpool, although the 2% increase in both of those locations was below the national average of 3.7%.

The number of rental properties on Rightmove more than doubled in some city centres, with the biggest jumps in Leeds, London and Nottingham.

Tim Bannister, Rightmove's director of property data, said its findings on rents "bring a challenge for some landlords, but also an opportunity for tenants who may be able to make a longer-term decision and move into a city centre now ... at a more attractive rent than this time last year".

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## **City centres where average asking rent has fallen most**

Inner London £2,219 (-12.4%)

Edinburgh £1,124 (-10%)

Manchester £1,022 (-5.3%)

Birmingham £883 (-4.6%)

Leeds £811 (-4.4%).

*\*Figures are per month*

## **The five highest rental growth areas outside London\***

Durham, County Durham £632 (+16.4%)

Keighley, West Yorkshire £556 (+14.6%)

Wigan, Greater Manchester £559 (+11.2%)

Rochdale, Greater Manchester £585 (+10.8%)

Rossendale, Lancashire £548 (+10.3%).

*\* Average asking rent a month for two-bed property*

## HS2

# HS2 protesters dig 100ft tunnel under London park

HS2 Rebellion say they are ready to occupy space under Euston Square Gardens to stop it being sold off



A protester known as 'Larch' in part of a tunnel network dug in secret under Euston Square Gardens in central London. Photograph: HS2 Rebellion/PA

A protester known as 'Larch' in part of a tunnel network dug in secret under Euston Square Gardens in central London. Photograph: HS2 Rebellion/PA

*PA Media*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 19.33 EST

Protesters claimed they have dug and are ready to occupy a 100ft tunnel network under a small central London park they claim is at risk from the [HS2 line development](#).

HS2 Rebellion, an alliance of groups and individuals campaigning against the planned high-speed railway, claim Euston Square Gardens, a green space outside Euston station, will be built over with a temporary taxi rank before being sold off to developers.

The protest group said “[tree protectors](#)” were prepared to occupy the tunnels, dug “in secret” over the last few months, and stay underground “for as long as it takes to stop HS2”.



The protest camp at Euston Square Gardens. Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP

HS2 said it could not comment on the specifics of protesters’ activities as it was yet to take possession of the land, but said “illegal” actions could be a danger to people’s safety.

A community notification issued in December detailed the need to build an “interim” taxi rank on the east side of Euston Square Gardens to support the construction of a proposed HS2 station. Construction works are due to begin in January and continue until December.

Tunnellers have worked “around the clock” using pickaxes, shovels and buckets to create the network, code-named Kelvin, HS2 Rebellion said.

With the help of local residents, spoil from digging has been used to “fortify the barricades” at the network’s entrance and insulate the “pallet fortress” to keep tunnellers warm as they sleep between shifts.

Tunnels are supported by wooden joists and thick boards to prevent collapse and inside there are stashes of food and water, protesters said.

HS2 Rebellion said it expected protesters to be evicted from the site from Wednesday morning.

It added: “They believe they can hold out in the tunnel for several weeks and hope in this time that a court will rule against HS2 for breaking the law by attempting an eviction without a court order and during the national coronavirus lockdown.”

HS2 Rebellion claims that the planned HS2 line, due to link up London, the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland, will see [108 ancient woodlands](#) “destroyed” and “countless people being forced from their homes and businesses”. It called on the government to scrap the “expensive, unpopular and destructive” scheme.

HS2 limited said only 43 ancient woodlands would be affected by the railway’s route between [London](#) and Crewe, with 80% of their total area remaining intact.

One protester, Blue Sanford, 18, from London, said: “I’m in this tunnel because they are irresponsibly putting my life at risk from the climate and ecological emergency.

“They are behaving in a way that is so reckless and unsafe that I don’t feel they are giving us any option but to protest in this way to help save our own lives and the lives of all the people round the world.”

Construction work started in September on phase one of HS2 from London to Birmingham. Phase 2a is planned to run from Birmingham to Crewe, and Phase 2b from Crewe to Manchester, and from Birmingham to Leeds.

The government-commissioned [Oakervee Review](#) warned in 2019 that the final bill for HS2 could reach £106bn at that year’s prices.

An HS2 spokesperson said: “Illegal action such as this is costly to the taxpayer and a danger to the safety of the activists, HS2 staff, high court enforcement officers and the general public, as well as putting unnecessary strain on the emergency services during the pandemic.

“Safety is our first priority when taking possession of land and removing illegal encampments.”

She said HS2 provided “a cleaner, greener way to travel, helping to cut the number of cars and lorries on our roads, reduce demand for domestic flights, and help the country to cut its carbon emissions in the fight against climate change”.

She added HS2 had been approved by MPs on “multiple occasions”, would support Britain’s economic recovery and was supporting thousands of jobs.

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## New Zealand

# 'Seen all this before': Tourism NZ says ditch influencer shots for something new

No more lavender fields or mountain tops please, urges agency in effort to stop people 'travelling under the social influence'



Tourism NZ took aim at shots of people quietly contemplating panoramic views and doing the 'spread eagle' on summits. Photograph: Raquel Mogado/Alamy Stock Photo/Alamy Stock Photo

Tourism NZ took aim at shots of people quietly contemplating panoramic views and doing the 'spread eagle' on summits. Photograph: Raquel Mogado/Alamy Stock Photo/Alamy Stock Photo

*[Elle Hunt in Wellington](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 20.42 EST

New Zealand's tourism agency is seeking to edge out influencer-style photoshoots at tourism hotspots with a tongue-in-cheek campaign against "travelling under the social influence".

In a video, the comedian Thomas Sainsbury stars as a lone ranger in the "social observation squad", chiding tourists for perpetuating tropes such as a hat-wearing woman in lavender field, a man quietly contemplating on a rock, and "a classic one in these parts: the summit spread eagle".

"We've seen all this before. We all have," Sainsbury [tells the couple](#) caught posing with their arms and legs splayed out atop a mountain.

The call by Tourism NZ to skip the cliche social media shots and "share something new" follows the launch in May 2020 of its Do Something New campaign to boost domestic tourism while borders remained closed to international visitors.

[Instacrammed: the big fib at the heart of New Zealand picture-perfect peaks](#)  
[Read more](#)

Travellers were encouraged to share their creative travel shots with #DoSomethingNewNZ to go into win a \$500 domestic travel voucher.

"We noticed that the same pictures or poses kept coming up, time and time again, no matter the location," Bjoern Spreitzer, Tourism NZ domestic manager, was [quoted as saying by Stuff](#). "There are so many incredible things to do in New Zealand, beyond the social trends."

Instagram has driven the popularity of a few scenic spots in New Zealand, including [the tree in Lake Wanaka](#) and the day hike to Roy's Peak nearby.

In 2018 a photograph of the "social media queue" on the track [went viral](#) for showing the behind-the-scenes of the "summit spread eagle" shot.

At the time, the Department of Conservation warned that tourists were often so "fixated" on photo opportunities that they put themselves in harm's way.

In Tourism NZ's new campaign Sainsbury [singles out](#) "run-me-over" photos of people walking down deserted highways as one of the social media-driven trends to be retired.

Not only is it dangerous, he says – it makes for a "very middle-of-the-road picture".

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/27/seen-all-this-before-tourism-nz-says-ditch-influencer-shots-for-something-new>

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## Fox News

# Fox hosts accuse media of ‘gushing’ over Biden – after four years of fawning over Trump

Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham comments have raised eyebrows and struck many as hypocritical



Fox News hosts, from left, Tucker Carlson, Laura Ingraham and Sean Hannity. Photograph: AP

Fox News hosts, from left, Tucker Carlson, Laura Ingraham and Sean Hannity. Photograph: AP



[Adam Gabbatt](#)

[@adamgabbatt](#)

Wed 27 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

The hosts at Fox News have been furious in recent days. The mainstream media, they say, has been “gushing” over [Joe Biden](#), offering “nauseating” coverage of the new president and “not hiding their excitement”.

Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham are some of the rightwing commentators at the conservative channel getting good mileage from the alleged Biden-fawning – but their accusations have raised eyebrows among those who watched Fox News’s hosts spend four years [largely functioning](#) as an extension of Donald Trump’s White House.

Fox News, however, is not known as a place for self-reflection, or irony, which meant Hannity – [who has literally campaigned with Trump](#) – was able to chide other journalists’ coverage of Biden.

“The tingling sensation up and down the media mobs’ legs,” [Hannity noted last week](#), “Well they are throbbing like never before.”

Hannity’s comments will have struck many observers as hypocritical, given Hannity’s own unbridled passion for the previous president.

“Promises made, promises kept,” [Hannity told the crowd](#) at a Trump rally in 2018. “Mr President, thank you.”

The sight of a journalist campaigning for a political candidate would have been strange, had it not been for Hannity’s [long-running fascination with the twice-impeached president](#). The host has spent years lauding Trump, and has repeatedly contorted himself to support the ex-president when praise barely seemed possible.

“You were very strong at the end of that press conference,” [Hannity assured Trump](#) during a Fox News interview in July 2018. The press conference Hannity was referring to was the infamous, widely condemned, Helsinki joint press conference by Trump and the Russia president, Vladimir Putin, where Trump [sided with the Kremlin](#) over its denial of election meddling.



Donald Trump greets talk show host Sean Hannity at a Make America Great Again rally in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, in November 2018. Photograph: Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images

A couple of months earlier, Hannity had kicked off a segment on his show [with the words](#): “President Trump has already accumulated an amazing record of accomplishments.” According to Hannity, those accomplishments

included Trump's approval ratings. At the time, [42% of Americans approved of Trump](#), and 52% disapproved.

More recently, Hannity approvingly compared Trump – then stricken by coronavirus – [to Winston Churchill](#).

Hannity, however, was far from alone in his fawning attitude towards Trump – as a ["Then and now" video montage](#) by the Daily Show illustrated on Tuesday.

“Well get ready, it’s gonna be four years of nauseating, gauzy coverage,” thundered Laura Ingraham on [Fox News](#) this week. “The watchdogs? Well, they’re just lapdogs.”

Ingraham, host of the Ingraham Angle Fox News show, is something of an expert in this field.

“I don’t see anybody else on the horizon that’s fighting for the American people like he is,” Ingraham said of Trump in 2017, while she has also suggested Trump will be viewed similarly to Ronald Reagan, which in Republican circles is considered a compliment. In December 2020, Ingraham even [dedicated a segment to Trump’s “triumphs”](#), while when granted an interview with Trump, in 2017, she posed questions that brought a new meaning to the term softball.

“Are you having fun in this job?” Ingraham asked Trump, later asking the president: “Look at the economy. Are you getting credit for this economic revival?”

Two years later, Ingraham used [an interview](#) with Trump to praise his “incredible trip” to France and to criticize Nancy Pelosi, asking Trump: “How do you work with someone like that?”

Another Daily Show clip captured Jesse Watters as he used his show on [Fox News](#) to lay out accusations of media bias. “They continue to fawn over this guy like he’s Jesus Christ!” said Watters, who outside the rightwing media world is mostly known for presenting a segment [in New York City’s Chinatown](#) which was widely condemned as racist.

Like his hosts, Watters has done his fair share of fawning, including [over Trump's botched coronavirus response](#) and the ex-president's warmth towards [North Korea](#).

Tucker Carlson, whose professionally enraged shtick – and [closeness to Trump](#) – has made his show the highest-rated cable news program in the US, was also upset at the treatment of Biden, as [the TV host laid out](#) in a heavily sarcastic segment on 20 January.

“He will fill the yawning void where our empathy should be. He is medicine,” was Carlson’s recap of inauguration day, after he played a selection of clips of people on TV suggesting Biden might be a healing presence in the White House.

In recent days Steve Doocy, a host on the show Fox and Friends, also got in on the act and [proclaimed](#) “the mainstream media loves him!” of Biden. Doocy had previously used an interview with Trump [to praise the then president's ‘beautiful hotel’](#).

Doocy’s colleague Jeanine Pirro was also upset with Biden’s treatment, in contrast to her own interactions with Trump. “Given your ability, your successes,” Pirro told Trump in [an interview](#) during his presidency that functioned more as a campaign huddle, “How are we going to get that across to the American people?”

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## Costa book awards

# 'Utterly original' Monique Roffey wins Costa book of the year

The Mermaid of Black Conch takes £30,000 award for 2020's most enjoyable book, acclaimed by judges as a classic in the making



'I really wanted this book to be seen and read' ... Monique Roffey.  
Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

'I really wanted this book to be seen and read' ... Monique Roffey.  
Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

[Alison Flood](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 14.30 EST

Monique Roffey has won the £30,000 Costa book of the year award for her sixth novel, *The Mermaid of Black Conch*, which opens as a fisherman on a Caribbean island sees a “barnacled, seaweed-clotted” mermaid raise her head from the sea.

Suzannah Lipscomb, the historian and broadcaster who chaired the judges, said the novel was “utterly original – unlike anything we’ve ever read – and

feels like a classic in the making from a writer at the height of her powers". Based on a legend from the Taino, an indigenous people of the Caribbean, the novel is a dark love story about fisherman David and Aycayia, a beautiful woman cursed by jealous wives to live as a mermaid, who has swum the Caribbean for centuries.

"It's a book that will take you to the furthest reaches of your imagination – we found it completely compelling," said Lipscomb. "The Mermaid of Black Conch is an extraordinary, beautifully written book – full of mythic energy and unforgettable characters, including some tremendously transgressive women."

Roffey is a Trinidadian-born British writer who has been shortlisted for the Orange and the Costa prizes in the past. The Mermaid of Black Conch was published by small independent press Peepal Tree, which focuses on literature from the Caribbean, with Roffey turning to crowdfunding to raise money for a publicity campaign for the book in 2019.

"I really wanted this book to be seen and read, so this time last year we were all ready to go, then Covid-19 hit us all and the book fell into a black hole and disappeared, got swallowed up. And now this. It's been a rollercoaster," said Roffey. "I'm 55 now, I've been writing for 20 years – really there's no superlative that I could use that's enough to describe what a great breakthrough this is."

Peepal Tree, which won the prestigious TS Eliot poetry prize last year with British-Trinidadian dub poet Roger Robinson's collection [A Portable Paradise](#), is rushing through a reprint of [The Mermaid of Black Conch](#), which beat titles including Lee Lawrence's memoir about his quest to find justice for his mother, *The Louder I Will Sing*, and Ingrid Persaud's debut *Love After Love* to win the overall book of the year. The award, for the year's "most enjoyable" book, pits the winners of five categories – first novel, novel, biography, poetry and children's book – against each other, and has been won in the past by Helen Macdonald's *H Is For Hawk* and Hilary Mantel's *Bring Up the Bodies*.

Lipscomb said the judges deliberated for three hours before choosing Roffey as their winner. "The novel feels like one of those stories you think you must

have known before, because it already feels like a classic,” she said. “The mermaid is pulled out of the sea in this really arresting scene that, pun fully intended, hooks you in the novel just as much as she is hooked by the fisherman. And then it’s a question of whether she could become a woman again, and live in a modern Caribbean society and all the questions that raises. When we think of mermaids, because of Disney we think of fairytales, but this is a visceral mermaid – as she becomes a woman parts of her tail fall off and she smells. It’s very evocative in terms of the physicality.”

Roffey first imagined her mermaid while staying in Charlotteville, Tobago, in 2013. After a fishing competition, she saw a marlin hanging above the jetty, and dreamed that night that the fish was a mermaid who had been dragged from the sea. Later, she learned of the legend of Aycayia, or Sweet Voice. Her story, which she began to write in 2016, is set in 1976, in the tiny village of St Constance on the island of Black Conch.

“I think when you work with legend, you’re pricking that nerve of the collective unconscious. But old stories, they are flawed, especially if they’re starring women. They’ll always be about female surrender, or teaching the woman a lesson, or something to do with controlling women,” said Roffey. “The mermaid is cursed and exiled and denied her erotic rite of passage in the old story, so I got to change that, and give her a love story. And when she goes back, she has beaten the curse. I’m trying to say ‘OK. Let’s bring her out of the sea again. Let’s give her what she’s been denied.’”

Roffey was announced as winner at a virtual awards ceremony hosted by the presenter Penny Smith. Lipscomb was joined on the judging panel by television and radio presenter Angellica Bell, poet Zaffar Kunial, actor and writer Stephen Mangan, book vlogger Simon Savidge and writers Horatio Clare, Jill Dawson, Sadie Jones and Patrice Lawrence. The late Irish poet Eavan Boland’s final collection *The Historians*, and the children’s author Natasha Farrant’s *Voyage of the Sparrowhawk*, had also been in the running for the overall prize.

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# **Head of AstraZeneca rejects calls for UK vaccine to be diverted to EU**

Chief executive of pharmaceutical giant says the firm will honour UK's earlier contract despite EU anger over shortfall

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



AstraZeneca announced on 22 January there was a shortfall of more than 60% on deliveries to the EU in the first quarter of 2021. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

AstraZeneca announced on 22 January there was a shortfall of more than 60% on deliveries to the EU in the first quarter of 2021. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

*[Daniel Boffey](#), [Sarah Boseley](#) and [Dan Sabbagh](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 16.10 EST

AstraZeneca's chief executive has insisted the UK will come first for vaccines as he rejected calls to divert doses to the [European Union](#) following a breakdown in supply.

Amid a [growing row](#), Pascal Soriot, the French head of the pharmaceutical giant, said the UK was benefiting from being early to sign a contract for 100m doses.

There is growing anger in Brussels and EU capitals at AstraZeneca's announcement on Friday of a shortfall of [more than 60%](#) on the intended schedule of deliveries to the bloc in the first quarter of this year.

[EU threat will not impact Covid vaccine deliveries to UK, says minister](#)  
[Read more](#)

While the UK has administered vaccine first doses to about 10% of adults and plans to vaccinate the most vulnerable 15 million – including all over-70s – by mid-February, the EU has reached 2% so far. The UK's regulator approved the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine in late December and the EU's is expected to do so on Friday.

But Soriot said Downing Street would have first claim on the doses manufactured in the UK and that the EU would have to wait. "The UK agreement was reached in June, three months before the European one," he said. "As you could imagine, the UK government said the supply coming out of the UK supply chain would go for the UK first. Basically, that's how it is."



Pascal Soriot told *La Repubblica* that in the EU agreement it states the manufacturing sites in the UK were an option for Europe – ‘but only later’. Photograph: Neil Hall/Reuters

The European commission did not deny claims on Tuesday that during heated talks EU officials had asked the Anglo-Swedish company to redirect doses made in the UK to make up for problems at a Belgian plant.

In a speech to the World Economic Forum on Tuesday, the president of the European commission, [Ursula von der Leyen](#), made clear her anger at AstraZeneca’s approach, warning the EU “means business”.

“The EU and others helped with money to build research capacities and production facilities,” she said. “Europe invested billions to help develop the world’s first Covid-19 vaccines. To create a truly global common good. And now, the companies must deliver. They must honour their obligations.”

The commission is to release details of a new export register by the end of the week to oblige vaccine suppliers to notify it [of exports](#) – with the German government raising the spectre of a block on the movement of doses outside the EU.

Soriot called for calm, insisting the UK had a right to the doses produced with scientists at Oxford University. In an interview with the Italian

newspaper *La Repubblica*, he said: “In the EU agreement it is mentioned that the manufacturing sites in the UK were an option for Europe – but only later. But we’re moving very quickly, the supply in the UK is very rapid.

Europe invested billions to help develop the world’s first Covid-19 vaccines. And now, the companies must deliver

*Ursula von der Leyen*

“The government is vaccinating 2.5 million people a week, about 500,000 a day, our vaccine supply is growing quickly. As soon as we have reached a sufficient number of vaccinations in the UK, we will be able to use that site to help Europe as well. But the contract with the UK was signed first and the UK, of course, said ‘you supply us first’, and this is fair enough.”

Analysis by Airfinity, a UK-based analytics company working for the life sciences industry, suggests the UK will have achieved effective “herd immunity” by vaccinating 75% of the adult population by 14 July while the EU will have to wait until 21 October based on supply deals and the latest delays.

Soriot said his company had little choice but to cut supply to the EU because of “reduced yields” at a manufacturing plant in Belgium, where the vaccine is initially cultivated.

The company has created separate supply chains in every major market the vaccine will be available – but unlike in the EU, the UK operation is already established.

Soriot said: “The UK contract was signed three months before the European vaccine deal. So with the UK we have had an extra three months to fix all the glitches we experienced. As for Europe, we are three months behind in fixing those glitches.”

Reuters news agency reported that the EU had asked AstraZeneca whether it could divert doses produced in the UK until at least March but it had not responded. Negotiations are continuing.



Jens Spahn, Germany's minister of health, said that the row was not about 'EU first' but about the 'fair share'. Photograph: Getty Images

"We see that doses are being delivered elsewhere and we know that we have signed an agreement," the commission's chief spokesman said.

Germany's health minister, Jens Spahn, said it was clear that AstraZeneca had sufficient doses to fulfil other contracts. He said: "With a complex process like vaccine production, I can understand if there are production problems, but then it has to affect everyone fairly and equally.

"This is not about 'EU first', this is about ... the fair share and that's why, from my point of view, it makes sense that we have an export restriction."

"[That] means that vaccines that leave the EU need a permit so that we can first of all know what is being manufactured in Europe, what is leaving Europe, where it is leaving Europe and whether it is then also a fair distribution."

With the UK we've had three extra months to fix all the glitches. For Europe, we are three months behind

*Pascal Soriot*

Speaking in Downing Street, Boris Johnson said he did not expect Brussels to stand in the way of the government's orders of Pfizer jabs, which are made in Belgium. "We expect and hope that our EU friends will honour all contracts," he said.

AstraZeneca's first supply contract was signed with the UK in May last year. Ministers were keen to ensure that a UK company commercialised the Oxford University technology, rejecting an alternative deal with US giant Merck.

Insiders at the time were worried that Donald Trump, the former US president, might put pressure on Merck to halt supplies to the UK. "What we didn't expect was the EU might end up going down this path," a former UK government official said.

A deal between AstraZeneca and the EU was signed in August for 300m doses with an option on a further 100m, giving less time to set up the manufacturing process.

In evidence to the European parliament, the executive director of the European medicines agency, Emer Cooke, said she hoped that the supply shortages within the EU would be "short-lived".

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/26/head-of-astrazeneca-confirms-uk-has-prior-claim-on-vaccine>

## Netherlands

# Covid vaccine supply issues could see Dutch violence repeated in rest of EU

Analysis: Frustration around restrictions and vaccinations could be voiced in other countries

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

## Daniel Boffey

Tue 26 Jan 2021 16.32 EST Last modified on Tue 26 Jan 2021 18.17 EST



Police officers clashed with young people in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.  
Photograph: Marco de Swart/EPA

In recent nights, rioters have poured on to the streets of 10 Dutch cities in what has been the closest [Europe](#) has come to open revolt against the

coronavirus restrictions imposed across the continent.

The violence, the worst in four decades, might be put down to the liberty-loving culture of the country but, perhaps not coincidentally, the [Netherlands](#) is also the very last EU member state to start vaccinating the public and offer some hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

The reality is, however, that the Dutch are not standout stragglers among the pack of 27 member states. The EU as a whole has been lethargic in getting the vaccines they have purchased into the arms of the citizens whose taxes have paid for it.

The UK has administered 10.5 doses per 100 people. The best performing EU member state is the tiny country of Malta, with four doses administered per 100 people. The EU average is just two doses per 100 people.

A new forecast provided to the Guardian by the data analytics company Airfinity, based on the agreed vaccine supply deals and taking into account the latest developments in terms of delayed production, suggests that the UK will have achieved herd immunity by vaccinating 75% of the population by 14 July, closely followed by the US on 9 August. The EU will have to wait until 21 October.

### [graphic](#)

“The EU’s challenge is largely supply related,” said Rasmus Bech Hansen, Airfinity’s chief executive. “Their rollout is behind the UK because the EU approved vaccines later, made preorders later and, until recently, purchased less on a per capita basis than the UK.

“The EU has also much less production of the working vaccines, especially AstraZeneca, and only limited production of Pfizer/BioNTech. Furthermore, the EU invested less on a comparative basis in early R&D and production which is now causing delays in production scale-up. Within the EU there are substantial differences in roll-out speed which can be explained by differences in national preparedness.”

To add British insult to injury, Boris Johnson and his health secretary, Matt Hancock, have not been shy in highlighting the UK's singular triumph in getting jabs in arms.

Conservatives (@Conservatives)

We have ensured Britain is leading the way on vaccinations by accelerating our Vaccines Delivery Plan, the largest vaccination programme in British history.  [pic.twitter.com/EdeNKwYf9w](https://pic.twitter.com/EdeNKwYf9w)

January 12, 2021

It is perhaps not surprising then that the fear in Brussels and elsewhere is that that frustrations vented in Rotterdam, Eindhoven and Amsterdam will be voiced elsewhere.

If Brussels cannot offer hope that the curfews and cafe closures will end this summer, then attitudes are only likely to harden towards governments and the EU as a project. The difficulties with the EU's vaccination strategy do not come out of a vacuum, after all.

Italy had cause to criticise the EU for a lack of solidarity during the early weeks of the pandemic last year, when personal protective equipment was lacking in its over-burdened hospitals.

The 27 member states' agreement on €750bn recovery fund was held up by a row over attempts to tie Hungary and Poland to rule of law conditions, sparking questions over the shared values of the member states.

It is in this context, then, in which the European commission received AstraZeneca's "surprising" announcement last Friday that there would be a 60% shortfall in the pharmaceutical company's expected deliveries of its vaccine this quarter.

The bloc is relying on the company, once its product receives the expected regulatory authorisation on Friday, for a total of 400m doses – just under a quarter of that had been due in the first quarter of this year.

The commission's health commissioner, Stella Kyriakides, was visibly angry as she castigated AstraZeneca in a statement on Monday night, announcing plans for a new register to force vaccine suppliers to notify the commission of any exports out of the bloc. Germany's health minister, Jens Spahn, fleshed out the plan: exports would need approval. The EU wanted its “fair share”.

There is a lot at stake in the coming weeks. For all the economic consequences of Brexit for Britain, its comparative success on vaccinations will be held up as proof positive that another way can be fruitful. The scenes from the Netherlands will be taken as a warning that for all that the Europe's streets are generally, spookily, still, emotions are at risk of running high.

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## Coronavirus

# Why has AstraZeneca reduced promised vaccine supply to EU and is UK affected?

Analysis: technical problem at Belgium plant failed to produce enough vaccine but EU demanding fulfilment of contract

Sarah Boseley

Tue 26 Jan 2021 13.54 EST Last modified on Tue 26 Jan 2021 23.36 EST



An NHS staff member prepares an AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccination. The UK has ordered 100m doses of AZ's vaccine and 40m of Pfizer's in total. Photograph: Hugh Hastings/Getty Images

## Why has AstraZeneca reduced its projected vaccine supplies to the EU?

AstraZeneca warned the European commission on Friday that there would be a significant shortfall in the promised 100m vaccine doses this quarter, of [up to 60%](#). It says this is due to a technical issue: not enough vaccine is being produced by the main plant making the supplies destined for Europe, which is in Belgium.

Making vaccines is not like building houses, where you can add a few more bricks to a wall if it's too short, they say. This is a biological process and it's not possible to be certain how much vaccine is going to be made once production is under way. The yield varies.

### [Guardian graphic](#)

In this case, there appears to have been a low yield from the cells dividing in the bioreactors in the Belgium plant. The same could happen in any of the other factories around the world making the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, including the UK.

AstraZeneca's chief executive, Pascal Soriot, [spoke to EU president Ursula von der Leyen about this](#), telling her they would have to cut their supply of vaccines to Europe.

That went down badly in [Europe](#), where there are already tensions over the low numbers immunised with the two jabs licensed so far – from Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna. The UK is thought to have immunised 10% of its residents, and the EU just 2%. The EU's health commissioner, Stella Kyriakides, said AstraZeneca must live up to its contractual obligations.

## **Will AstraZeneca dispatch extra doses to Europe from its vaccine production sites in the UK?**

This looks unlikely or very difficult. AstraZeneca has committed to delivering 2m doses a week to the UK as part of its order for 100m doses in total. That is pushing capacity fairly hard and depends on no unforeseen issues arising, such as poor yield as in Belgium or other issues such as batch quality.

## **What can the European commission do?**

There are tacit threats of vaccine wars. The commission could take measures to block the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine – which is made in Europe – from being dispatched to the UK. Kyriakides said Brussels would now insist on being notified of any exports of vaccines from EU sites.

The precedent is personal protective equipment (PPE). Back in March, the commission required member states to give export authorisations to those seeking to export PPE out of the EU “in order to ensure adequacy of supply in the union in order to meet the vital demand”.

So the new mechanism might be a register of exports – and the addition of a need for export authorisations by member states for vaccines. The German health minister has been taking a hard line, but it is uncertain what the commission will now do.

## **Would this impact the UK?**

Yes. The government likes to say it has ordered 357m doses of vaccine in total. That’s from the seven separate vaccines it has bought. But only three have so far been authorised by the UK regulator. Moderna’s vaccine, of which the UK bought 17m doses, has been licensed but supplies are not expected until April.

So for the ambitious vaccination programme to proceed at the hoped-for speed, supplies of both the AstraZeneca and the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine need to arrive at a steady pace. The UK has ordered 100m doses of AZ’s vaccine and 40m of Pfizer’s in total.

## **How big are concerns about supply more broadly?**

This is the second supply hitch. The first was Pfizer slowing down supplies in order, it said, to upgrade its plant and be able to produce more vaccine.

There will be other problems. Sometimes it will be to do with the amount of vaccine that can be supplied, and sometimes about quality. These would go

unnoticed in normal times, and be resolved – but now the whole world is watching, and desperate to get hold of the vaccines.

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# AstraZeneca vaccine may not go to older people, EU medicines chief suggests

European Medicines Agency approval could stipulate age range, says Emer Cooke

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

[Sarah Boseley](#) and [Philip Oltermann](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 15.32 EST Last modified on Tue 26 Jan 2021 23.36 EST



Emer Cooke of the EMA, who is Irish, said the regulatory body is examining the ‘totality of the data’. Photograph: AP

The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine may be authorised only for younger people in [Europe](#), because there is insufficient data on how well it works in the over-65s, the head of the regulatory body has suggested.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) is expected to authorise the [AstraZeneca](#) vaccine at the end of this week, a month after it was approved in the UK.

Emer Cooke, the EMA's executive director, told the European parliament that it is examining the "totality of the data" provided by AstraZeneca across different age groups.

In an interview with [la Repubblica on Tuesday](#), AstraZeneca's CEO, Pascal Soriot, acknowledged there was "a limited amount of data" on the effects of the vaccine in older people, but insisted the information they had showed "very strong antibody production against the virus in the elderly, similar to what we see in younger people".

He said he understood if some countries "out of caution, will use our vaccine for the younger group".

But he added: "Honestly, it is fine. There's not enough vaccines for everybody. So if they want to use another vaccine for older people and our vaccine for younger people, what's the problem? It's not a problem."

Their comments follow the comprehensive [rejection of claims](#) in German newspapers that the efficacy of the vaccine may only be 8% in the over-65 age group.

AstraZeneca said the 8% figure was "completely incorrect" and pointed to the data published in the Lancet medical journal and by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority (MHRA) in the UK, which gave the vaccine emergency authorisation in December.

The vaccine is being widely used in the immunisation campaign in the UK for people over the age of 70.

The German health ministry suggested the reports had confused the efficacy rate with the number of people over 65 in the trials.

“At first sight, it appears that two things have been muddled in the reports,” said the statement.

“Around 8% of participants in the AstraZeneca efficacy trials were aged between 56 and 69 years old, only 3 to 4% were over 70. This does not result in an efficacy of only 8% among seniors.”

But the German government also voiced concerns about the breadth of AstraZeneca’s trial participation: “It has been known since the autumn that fewer seniors were included in the trials supplied by AstraZeneca than the trials of other manufacturers.”

AstraZeneca has said 10% were over the age of 65.

In a session of the European parliament’s health committee, Cooke said she would not prejudge any decision on approval for the vaccine.

But she said it was possible that any authorisation might stipulate that it should only be given to certain age groups.

Experts as well as the company say that earlier trials showed people over the age of 65 had a very good antibody response to the vaccine. It caused them to make levels of antibodies against the coronavirus that were as high as those of younger people.

“In November, we published data in the Lancet demonstrating that older adults showed strong immune responses to the vaccine, with 100% of older adults generating spike-specific antibodies after the second dose,” said a spokesperson for AstraZeneca.

The regulator in the US, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), has not yet licensed the AstraZeneca vaccine, preferring to wait for the results of a large American trial involving 30,000 people.

That trial is designed to answer the outstanding questions as to whether the vaccine protects a diversity of people, including older adults as well as people from black and ethnic minority populations, who were also not well enough represented in previous trials.

Independent experts said they were mystified by the stories of efficacy as low as 8%.

Adam Finn, professor of paediatrics at the University of Bristol, who has reviewed the data, said: “I can confirm what is stated about the Lancet paper – I’m not an author on that manuscript but I’ve have read it.

“Elderly people were recruited to the UK phase 3 relatively late and were relatively well shielded, so there were few cases of Covid that had occurred at the time of submission of data to the MHRA for approval.

“There may have been more by the time of the EMA submission. No idea where the 8% figure comes from.”

In a statement, the German newspaper Handelsblatt said it stood by its report that there were ongoing concerns over the AstraZeneca vaccine’s low efficacy within the German government, although the newspaper did not repeat the specific 8% figure previously cited.

“According to information by Handelsblatt, the government’s doubts about the efficacy of the AstraZeneca vaccine among elder risk groups have not been dispelled.

“A high-ranking official within the health ministry told Handelsblatt: ‘A mix-up of the numbers is impossible. On the basis of the data made available to us so far, the efficacy among the over-60s lies below 10%.’”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/26/astrazeneca-vaccine-may-not-be-given-to-older-people-says-eu-medicines-chief>

## Coronavirus

# 'Pleasure ripped out': the people suffering long-term loss of taste after Covid

Those in professions that rely heavily on taste and smell fear the loss of their careers

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After food and wine writer Suriya Bala recovered from a nasty bout of Covid, her smell and taste had completely gone. Photograph: c/o Suriya Bala

After food and wine writer Suriya Bala recovered from a nasty bout of Covid, her smell and taste had completely gone. Photograph: c/o Suriya Bala

*[Lucy Campbell](#)*

Wed 27 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Around three weeks after Covid-19 completely took away her sense of smell and taste, Maggie Cubbler had a beer. It was a pale ale she'd had before and, to her excitement, it tasted wonderful – just as she remembered. She was ecstatic to feel she was on the road to normality, but she soon found that recovery from Covid is by no means linear.

“After that I started noticing that many things started smelling terrible – like absolutely revolting – and one of them was beer.” For a beer sommelier and writer of ten years, this was a devastating and isolating development. When the pandemic halted her beer travel business and decimated the industry generally, Cubbler had pivoted into doing a beer podcast. Now, with her sense of taste still muted and the source of her livelihood unbearable to smell, her career has been thrown into uncertainty.

“It’s so frustrating and dejecting. It’s a real stresser for people in these industries, we’re all lamenting our lot in life right now,” Cubbler said. She’s had no choice but to put her relationship with beer to one side for the foreseeable future, pivoting again to create an online magazine for women in their 40s. “I’m a pragmatic person but I’ve had to start a whole new career path at 40, which is really daunting. If I start to think about what I’ve lost, it’ll overwhelm me.”

More than half of people with Covid-19 [experience the loss of smell or taste](#) and while two-thirds recover within six to eight weeks, many are left without much improvement months down the line. Chrissi Kelly, the founder of smell loss charity AbScent, said there are over 200,000 cases of [long-term anosmia in the UK](#), and smell loss had the potential to make people feel isolated and depressed.

With so much still to be learned about coronavirus, the potential lasting effects are yet to be fully realised. For professions that rely heavily on taste and smell, particularly in the hard-hit food and drinks industry, it could spell the end of careers.

Prof Barry Smith, the UK lead for the Global Consortium of Chemosensory Research (GCCR) examining smell loss as a Covid-19 symptom, said many people affected in the food and drinks industry are afraid to publicly discuss what they’re going through for fear for their livelihoods.

Recovery is a waiting game, but smell training can help hasten natural recovery. “It’s known that parosmia that follows complete smell loss is a sign of recovery where olfactory neurons are regenerating,” Smith said. “Finding more and more ‘safe’ food ingredients, without a distorted smell, and repeatedly sniffing them will improve discrimination and may help to reset and regularise one’s sense of smell.”

As a seasoned sommelier, Cubbler has found she can redirect her skills to train her brain to focus on stopping a trigger smell before it infiltrates, locks and overwhelms her. Though she has started smell training, she is conscious not to make herself anxious with trying to recover her senses. “I’m trying not to rush it because it will overwhelm me. But it’s a bit like Russian roulette because it’s still new and I don’t know what smell will gross me out next.”

When lockdown hit, food and wine writer Suriya Bala’s labour of love and income stream, a business running food and wine tours around Notting Hill, was killed off suddenly. She moved back home to Australia to write a series about west Australian wines, but tested positive for Covid-19 during her 14-day stay in hotel quarantine. When she recovered from a nasty illness, her smell and taste had completely gone.

Three months later, she can taste basics – sweet, sour, salty, bitter – but the anosmia has graduated to hyposmia: a decreased ability to detect odours. “Without scent you don’t have flavour,” she said. “I can now taste the top and bottom end but all the middle, the nuances and perfumed notes which is what wine is all about, it’s all gone. It’s a really empty experience.”

With her livelihood and passion revolving around food and wine, the smell loss could be life-changing. “For me, wine is art and right now it tastes like a glass of acidic water. I never ever thought Covid would affect me in this way. You don’t know until you’ve lost it.”

She has been practising smell training and trying to re-train herself to recognise and re-learn scents, but even with her scent now back at around 70% she fears it isn’t enough. “If I wasn’t able to recover my full smell and taste, I can’t imagine moving forward in the world of wine and food – the pleasure has been ripped out of it,” she said. “It’s rendered me pretty useless

in what I'm here to do, which is almost too life-altering and dreadful to think about."

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/27/pleasure-ripped-out-the-people-suffering-long-term-loss-of-taste-after-covid>

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## Vaccines and immunisation

# Most poor nations 'will take until 2024 to achieve mass Covid-19 immunisation'

Forecast predicts handful of developed countries fully vaccinated by late 2021 while others race to catch up

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Vaccine delivery will be a global faultline that will run through the first half of this decade, according to Agathe Demarais, of the Economist Intelligence Unit. Photograph: Guillermo Legaria/Getty Images

Most poor countries will not achieve mass Covid-19 immunisation until at least 2024 and some may never get there, according to a new forecast, which maps a starkly divided world over the next few years in which a handful of developed countries are fully vaccinated while others race to catch up.

Countries such as the UK, US, Israel and those in the EU will probably achieve “widespread vaccination coverage” – meaning priority and vulnerable groups, and almost all of the rest of the population – by late 2021, according to analysis from the Economist Intelligence Unit. They will be followed by a slew of other developed countries by the middle of 2022 and then most middle-income countries by the end of that year.

But 84 countries that make up the world’s poorest will not receive enough doses to sufficiently immunise their populations for at least a further year, a global faultline that will run through the first half of this decade, said Agathe Demarais, the unit’s global forecasting director and author of the report.

“It’s going to define the global economy, the global political landscape, travel, pretty much everything,” she said.

Announcements beginning last December that successive vaccine candidates were safe and highly effective provided a light at the end of the tunnel, but the report released on Wednesday underscored that, in most countries, the end of the outbreak is still a year away, at least.

The key reason is the myriad hurdles in delivering doses into arms: securing vaccine ingredients, production constraints, delays in delivery, poor medical infrastructure in some countries and lack of trained health workers to administer injections, among others.

In countries such as India and China, with vast populations scattered across large landmasses, “reaching everyone in the most remote regions is going to be quite an endeavour”, Demarais said.

The forecast was put together using a model that assessed more than 200 countries based on factors including existing supply deals, production capacity, vaccine deliveries so far, infrastructure to administer doses and vaccine hesitancy rates.

High scepticism towards vaccines in Japan was a factor in why it was unlikely to achieve full immunisation this year, Demarais said.

The report was sceptical of forecasts by Covax, a global vaccine-sharing alliance, that it would supply enough doses this year to cover 27% of populations in member countries including more than 92 lower-income ones. The scheme aims to begin administering vaccines next month and will announce each country's first allocations this week.

"There's a lot of political hope that the targets will be hit ... but we can see there are already delays for production and delivery in richer countries, so we can expect some delay in poor countries," Demarais said.

A study released on Monday found that unequal distribution of vaccines could sap more than \$9tn from global GDP this year by depressing consumer demand in unvaccinated countries where normal life had yet to resume.

Ongoing lockdowns and widespread sickness would also interrupt global supply chains, with wealthier, vaccinated countries bearing about half the economic cost, the report from the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) said. "[Sharing vaccines equitably] is not charity, it is economic common sense," said the ICC's secretary-general John Denton.

The WHO director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, last week said the world was on the edge of a "catastrophic moral failure" in the unequal distribution of vaccines so far, with more than 40m doses given in about 50 countries, most of them wealthy or upper-middle income.

Medical rights groups have called for patents on Covid-19 vaccines and treatments to be shared so that qualified manufacturers can also begin producing them and ease global shortages. Demarais said that, even if pharmaceutical companies shared their technology, patents and knowhow, there would still be challenges in finding workers trained to produce vaccines.

"There are a number of factories now that are running out of labour supply, experienced workers who can manufacture the vaccines to sufficient quality," she said.

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[Coronavirus live](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

# Coronavirus live news: UK to quarantine arrivals from high-risk countries; global Covid cases pass 100m

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# French self-esteem hit after Pasteur Institute abandons Covid vaccine

Politicians say project, halted after disappointing trials, a ‘national humiliation’ and a ‘sign of decline’

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[Kim Willsher](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 12.15 EST Last modified on Tue 26 Jan 2021 15.37 EST



Laboratory technicians at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. Photograph: Christophe Archambault/AFP/Getty Images

French politicians have reacted with dismay to news that the prestigious Pasteur Institute is abandoning its main coronavirus vaccine after

disappointing test results.

Researchers at the institute said clinical trials on its vaccine had shown it was less successful in combatting the virus than hoped. It had been trying to adapt an existing vaccine used against measles, in partnership with the US company Merck.

The announcement came as a further blow to the French government, which is facing criticism over the slow rollout of its vaccine programme, and the news that laboratories producing authorised vaccines, including Pfizer, are struggling to keep up with demand.

France's other pharmaceutical giant, Sanofi, has said its vaccine will not be ready until the end of this year, again because of disappointing initial results.

On Tuesday, Sanofi announced it would produce 100m doses of the Covid-19 vaccine developed by its competition Pfizer/BioNTech by the end of this year.

The company's chief executive, Paul Hudson, told *Le Figaro*: "As we're a few months behind on our main vaccine we asked ourselves how we could be useful now, how we could also participate in the collective effort to end this crisis as quickly as possible.

"We studied different possible options and we approached Pfizer/BioNTech and signed an agreement with them on Tuesday." Sanofi will start making the vaccines at its factory in Frankfurt from July.

The failures and delays around France's development of a vaccine have sparked soul-searching in the country, once a world leader in medical breakthroughs and the birthplace of microbiology pioneer Louis Pasteur, who invented vaccines against rabies and anthrax.

The centre-right Les Républicains parliamentary group [tweeted](#): "In a race against the clock, the Pasteur Institute throws in the towel on its main vaccine project, while Sanofi announces a delay until the end of the year, because of a lack of efficiency after so many grand announces. This scientific decline is a slap in the face."

Bastien Lachaud, an MP for the hard-left La France Insoumise, was equally withering. “No vaccine in the country of Pasteur! What a symbol. This is where the impoverishing of public research, the primacy of the private sector and the triumph of management and profit are leading,” he [tweeted](#).

Centrist François Bayrou, an ally of President Emmanuel Macron, lashed out at what he described as a “brain drain” that was causing a national humiliation.

“It’s a sign of the decline of the country and this decline is unacceptable,” Bayrou, head of the MoDem party, who was named commissioner for long-term government planning, told [France](#) Inter radio.

He referred to Stéphane Bancel, the French national who heads the US-based biotech firm Moderna, whose vaccine was the second given approval for use in the US and [Europe](#).

“It is not acceptable that our best researchers, the most brilliant of our researchers, are sucked up by the American system,” Bayrou added.

The vaccine issue has touched several raw nerves in France where some see it as an assault on the country’s self-esteem.

### Cases

Bayrou said France had to boost its “public actions including research”. “It’s about money, but it’s money well spent and a necessary investment,” Bayrou added.

Sanofi, the world’s fifth largest pharmaceutical company by prescription drug sales, caused a storm last year when the chief executive Paul Hudson – a British citizen – said the US would get any vaccine it produced before the rest of the world.

Earlier this month, Sanofi announced 1,700 job cuts, including 1,000 in France, 400 of them in research.

“This is a shame for a group like Sanofi … and it’s a humiliation for France, not able to vaccinate, not capable of putting a vaccine on the market,”

Fabien Roussel, national secretary of the French Communist party told French radio.

Roussel added it was a scandal as Sanofi benefited from €100-150m in tax credits for its research from the state.

The Pasteur Institute began phase 1 testing of its vaccines on human volunteers in August 2020. It reported that “the immune responses induced were inferior to those observed in people cured of a natural infection as well as those observed with other vaccines against Covid-19.”

Prof Bruno Hoen, director of medical research at the Pasteur, told France Inter the findings were “bad news, of course”. The Pasteur said it would continue working on other coronavirus vaccine products that remained at a preliminary stage and have not been subjected to clinical trials on humans.

Others said the institute’s failure was more nuanced than the political outbursts suggested.

Jacques Haiech, emeritus professor of biotechnology at the University of Strasbourg, told France 24: “Vaccine research depends partly on luck. The option chosen by the Pasteur Insitute was just not the best.

“Beyond the question of austerity policies, which are very real and have an impact on the capacities of French research, there is above all the disappearance of the research centres of the French pharmaceutical industry, which has preferred to outsource for several years, because a vaccine is not a blockbuster product.”

In a report for the Terra Nova thinktank on the lessons to be learned from the race to develop Covid-19 vaccines, Anne Bucher, former director general for health at the European commission, concluded the European Union as a whole had shown its limits.

“The EU has not been able to put as much money on the table as the US,” she wrote.

The US government has invested more in vaccine research in past decades, experts say. French researchers lament that it is easier and quicker to raise

funds from private investors in the US. A 2019 study found biotechs in Europe received five times less private funding than their American counterparts who rely heavily on investment from venture capital funds.

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- [Children Lockdown may have played part in rise of domestic child killings, says Met](#)
- [Money Cash machine use fell 38% in 2020 due to Covid contact fears](#)

## Schools

# Schools in England need post-Covid fund to tackle mental health decline, says report

Study finds worsening wellbeing and self-esteem among teenagers, raising fears pandemic will exacerbate trend

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The study by the Education Policy Institute and the Prince's Trust identified heavy social media use and lack of exercise among factors that had a negative impact on teenagers' wellbeing. Photograph: Peter Cripps/Alamy

The study by the Education Policy Institute and the Prince's Trust identified heavy social media use and lack of exercise among factors that had a negative impact on teenagers' wellbeing. Photograph: Peter Cripps/Alamy

Sally Weale Education correspondent

Wed 27 Jan 2021 01.01 EST

The government has been urged to set up a post-pandemic wellbeing fund for schools in England to match its [£650m academic catch-up funding](#), after a major study highlighted worsening mental health among young people, with teenage girls particularly severely affected.

The research tracked the experiences of young people in [England](#), at the ages of 11, 14 and 17, and found that while wellbeing declined for all groups as they got older, girls experienced far lower levels of wellbeing and self-esteem than boys and were more likely to feel unhappy about their physical appearance.

The [study](#) by the Education Policy Institute and the Prince's Trust, conducted over two years and based on data from the [Millennium Cohort Study](#), found the proportion of girls that felt unhappy about their appearance rose sharply between the ages of 11 and 14, from one in seven (15%) to about one in three (29%).

Researchers found that poverty, heavy use of social media, being bullied in childhood and lack of physical exercise all had a negative impact on wellbeing, and warned that the experience of the pandemic was likely to exacerbate existing [mental health](#) and wellbeing problems among young people.

Whitney Crenna-Jennings, the report's author and an EPI senior researcher, said: "Young people already face significant challenges at this stage in their lives, but this generation have also had to deal with a pandemic that will have starved them of the vital relationships and experiences needed to support their journey through adolescence."

"The government has provided extra academic support for pupils but there is now a compelling case for it to consider emergency funding to support young people's mental health and wellbeing. If we fail to counter the ill-effects of this crisis on young people's health and development, there is a real risk that it inflicts irreversible damage on their later life chances."

With most children and young people studying from home during lockdown, the government is coming under growing pressure to set out when and how schools will reopen amid mounting concern about young people's mental health. An [NHS Digital report](#) published last year found one in six young people have a probable mental illness, up from one in nine in 2017.

The schools minister, Nick Gibb, faced a battery of questions from disgruntled MPs when he appeared in the Commons on Tuesday to respond to an urgent question from Labour, amid continuing uncertainty about when and how schools will reopen and criticism of the government's laptop scheme.

Among those MPs in favour of getting all children back in school was the Tory MP Dr Caroline Johnson, who said the balance of risk was now in favour of reopening schools. She said: "As a paediatrician, I see the damage that is being done to children's mental health when they're not at school.

"With the vaccination programme steaming ahead, levels of Covid falling and in some cases lower than they were last term when schools were open, does he agree with me that the balance of risk is now in favour of reopening schools and that they should reopen at February half-term at the very latest?"

Meanwhile, the children's commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, has published [her own roadmap](#), calling for progress on school reopening to form a regular part of the Downing Street briefings. Among her proposals for gradual reopening are halving class sizes, staggered returns, rotas, a regionalised approach and the use of additional community spaces to spread pupils and make schools safer.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: "It is clear that the pandemic has taken a heavy toll on the mental health and wellbeing of many children, and we fully endorse this report's recommendation for additional funding for schools to deliver extra support."

A Government spokesperson said: "We are absolutely committed to supporting the mental wellbeing of children and young people, particularly

through the challenges of this pandemic which have uniquely impacted this generation.

“Early intervention and treatment is vital and we are training a new dedicated mental health workforce for schools and colleges across the country as well as teaching what good mental and physical health looks like.”

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## Coronavirus

# Life in hotel quarantine: 'I'm on day two. It's around day 11 things get difficult'

Ian Samson, originally from Edinburgh, describes his experience of Hong Kong's strict isolation rules for travellers



Ian Samson on a spin bike in his Hong Kong hotel room. 'The quarantine is costing me £1,900 ... I paid £600 extra for a window that opens.'

Ian Samson on a spin bike in his Hong Kong hotel room. 'The quarantine is costing me £1,900 ... I paid £600 extra for a window that opens.'



[Amelia Hill](#)

[@byameliahill](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 13.11 EST

## **Ian Samson, 28, who was born in Edinburgh, moved to Hong Kong in 2019 and works in investment management**

I have a pile of 20 bananas in my hotel room here in Hong Kong, a spin bike I've had delivered and some rapidly dying flowers that the hotel gave me on the first day as a morbid reminder of how little sunlight I would be getting for the next 21 days.

The quarantine is absolute and very strict. We're allowed to open the door of our rooms to collect groceries left on a stool outside and that's it. It's actually pretty funny in a bleak way: the corridor is very dark with a red light, so when you open the door, it's almost like a horror film out there. Sometimes you see the delivery guy disappearing round the corner as they leave. That's as much human contact as I'm going to get for the next 21 days, except on days 12 and 19 when they come in, all suited up in protective gear, to test me.

[Labour attacks 'half-baked' targeted Covid quarantine policy](#)

[Read more](#)

I'm on day two of my 21-day hotel quarantine and, based on the two very strict home quarantines I've done here after previous trips out of the country – each of which lasted only two weeks – it's around day 11 that things start to get difficult.

The difficulties might kick in earlier this time, of course: there's a psychological difference between strict home quarantines where you shouldn't go out, to a hotel quarantine where you absolutely can't go out. God knows how I'm going to find the third week in this room of just 20 sq metres. I can't imagine it's going to be great.

I don't think I'll feel lonely: I feel pretty connected online to my friends at home and in Hong Kong. The lack of human contact is not that much worse than being under quarantine at home, although of course I am really, absolutely alone. So we'll have to see how that goes into the third week.

There are routines at the hotel: we can't have cleaners in our rooms, so we have to leave our bin bags outside the room at 2pm every day. If we leave it at any other time, there's a £5 fine. We can leave our laundry out once a week too.

The quarantine is costing me £1,900 in hotel bills – I paid £600 extra for a window that opens, even though it opens on to a road that's pretty much a motorway. I wanted a window that opened because apparently otherwise you get really dehydrated: breathing air that's just endlessly circulating round the hotel for 21 days. It seems like a little thing but I've been told it really matters.

I work very long hours – from around 10am to 9pm. I use my laptop and link it up to the hotel's screen. It's not great but it's OK. I do my spinning and a couple of hours' Mandarin every day. I watch the Simpsons and old football matches on YouTube and mess around on Twitter.

The food is incredibly bad in this hotel, so I've bought a microwave. It's quite hard to source microwave food that isn't noodles, so that's going to be

a challenge for 21 days. Because my first grocery order got duplicated, I've got a pile of 20 bananas, 15 apples and a load of cereal to get through too.

Today the hotel alarm went off and I opened my door. There was just this dark corridor with a red flashing light, and the shadow of someone scuttling past. I like to think the alarm was to alert the hotel to one of us trying to escape. One of us bolting to freedom.

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## Crime

# **Lockdown may have played part in rise of domestic child killings, says Met**

Force says strains on mental health during pandemic have likely contributed to an increase in cases

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While the number of children killed in London in 2020 rose rates of overall homicides fell. Photograph: Hollie Adams/Getty Images

While the number of children killed in London in 2020 rose rates of overall homicides fell. Photograph: Hollie Adams/Getty Images

*[Vikram Dodd](#) Police and crime correspondent*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 12.31 EST

The pressures of lockdown may have played a part in a rise in children killed in domestic homicides, Britain's biggest police force today said.

A total of 12 children were killed in 2020, in London, up from 7 the previous year.

The Metropolitan police said all domestic child killings were being reviewed and a decline in mental health caused by restrictions to combat the pandemic, may have been a factor.

Overall homicides in the capital fell from 150 in 2019 to 126 in 2020, with a big fall in teenagers killed.

But domestic homicides rose from 16 in 2019 to 22 last year. Of those 12 were children aged 12 years or younger, where the suspect was a family member, usually a parent or guardian.

Commander Dave McLaren said he could not discuss individual cases with reviews under way to see if children could have been better protected and whether any warning signs were missed.

McLaren, asked if lockdown had been a factor, said: “It is fair to say that mental health has played a part in a number of those crimes this year and it isn’t a massive leap of faith to say that lockdown, has an impact on all of us in terms of our wellbeing.

“So I’m sure the impact of lockdown on the mental health of individuals, will have had an impact across the board.”

He added: “In terms of those cases, we have to see those reviews through and better understand the circumstances surrounding each of them before we get to the point of drawing a conclusion that there’s a direct correlation with lockdown.”

Among children killed last year were Dylan Freeman, found dead at in Acton, west London, on 15 August.

His mother Olga Freeman, 40, denies her son's murder but has admitted manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility, a plea the prosecution accepted.

Dylan was found covered by a duvet with toys placed beside him.

In April 19-month-old Pavinya Nithiyakumar and her three-year-old brother, Nigish, were killed by their father Nadarajah Nithiyakumar. He has been ordered to be detained indefinitely in a psychiatric institution.

In 2020, most types of serious crime fell, with knife crime down 27%.

But some serious crime categories did not, despite the months of lockdown when fewer people were on the streets.

The Met said the number of incidents where guns were fired increased, from 266 in 2019 to 288 in 2020.

Knife crime with injury and grievous bodily harm fell during lockdown, then rose once restrictions lifted as simmering gang tensions boiled over.

Commander Jane Connors said: “As the restrictions were lifted, as we came out through May, June, July, and into the early part of August, we did start to see that the offence levels rose above pre-Covid levels.

“And that predominantly is because there were more people out on the streets, but also because some of the gang tensions that had been playing out on social media and people not able to take their reprisals, we did start to see a slight rise in some of the knife injuries that we were seeing.”

The force is monitoring social media as part of a raft of measures to thwart similar rises in violence when current lockdown measures are lifted.

McLaren said: “During the first lockdown, as a once-in-a-career situation, we were pretty unsure as to how crime trends would react coming out of lockdown.

“We saw that there were tensions that were growing between different groups, factions, gangs, that did ultimately result in an increase in firearms discharges in the months when we came out of lockdown.

He added: “As you would expect during this current lockdown, we are absolutely attuned, have learned from the previous lockdown and have activity ongoing just now to make sure that we are on the front foot targeting

those individuals who we think may be a threat so that we don't see that same rise when we come out of this current lockdown."

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## Contactless payments

# Cash machine use fell 38% in 2020 due to Covid contact fears

Decline in withdrawals could lead to closure of ATMs or having to impose fees, warns operator Link

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Link said the government's promise of legislation to protect ATMs was 'needed urgently'. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

Link said the government's promise of legislation to protect ATMs was 'needed urgently'. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

*[Rupert Jones](#)*

Wed 27 Jan 2021 01.01 EST

A sharp fall in cash machine usage last year has prompted a warning that more ATMs could end up being closed or imposing fees.

[Link](#), the UK's largest cash machine network, said its latest data showed there was a 38% decline in ATM transactions in 2020, caused in large part by the coronavirus crisis.

John Howells, Link's chief executive, said this sharp decline in ATM usage "brings significant problems" and "places enormous strain on the cash infrastructure".

He told the Guardian: "ATMs are run by commercial operators and as we use less cash, if they aren't making money on those cash machines, they will either close or become charging. We welcomed the government's promise of legislation after it was announced in the last budget, and this is now needed urgently."

The coronavirus outbreak has rapidly accelerated the adoption of contactless payment, and many people prefer not to handle physical money at the moment because of the potential health risks.

Link said that, in total, £81bn was withdrawn from ATMs in 2020 compared with £116bn in 2019 – a fall of 30%. Meanwhile, the total number of transactions (made up of cash withdrawals and balance inquiries) fell from 2.6bn to 1.6bn over the period – a 38% drop.

At the same time, the number of ATMs fell by 10% – from 60,600 to 54,300. Just under one in four of all ATMs are fee-charging.

Link said ATM transactions had typically been falling by about 10% a year. However, in April 2020, ATM transactions initially plunged by up to 68%.

Howells said the pandemic "has changed our relationship with cash ... Our research shows 75% say they will use less cash going forward." But he added that millions of people [still rely on cash](#) and were not ready or able to go digital.

Guardian business email sign-up

Link has 35 members and is a voluntary scheme, so one or more banks could in theory decide to leave if the costs were too great. Link's interchange fee – a payment made by the card issuer to the ATM operator each time a machine is used – is about 21p a transaction.

Natalie Ceeney, the chair of the independent [Access to Cash Review](#), said the UK was fairly unique in that it had an extensive free-to-use ATM network, plus free cash withdrawals and deposits over post office counters. "However, this is all run on a voluntary basis. If just one large bank left the Post Office agreement or the agreement with Link for ATMs, we could see this whole model collapse," she added.

In the 2020 budget the government announced plans to introduce legislation to protect access to cash for those who need it, though the industry said it was still waiting for this.

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## How to live nowHealth & wellbeing

# Lockdown cabin fever? Here are 56 tried, tested and terrific ways to beat the boredom



(Clockwise from left) a giraffe; a chess knight; homemade fudge; Laura Snapes' drawing of her boyfriend; a pair of chickens; the band Shame. Illustration: Guardian Design

(Clockwise from left) a giraffe; a chess knight; homemade fudge; Laura Snapes' drawing of her boyfriend; a pair of chickens; the band Shame. Illustration: Guardian Design

Shaun Ryder keeps chickens, while Mel Giedroyc organises chutney tastings. These small, affordable suggestions won't end lockdown misery – but they might help

Wed 27 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

## **1. Draw your partner**

If you live with someone else, draw each other. My boyfriend, a professional artist, has a gross advantage – so I hold the most atrocious pose possible to challenge him. Then I challenge the foundations of our relationship by trying to depict him in a fashion that won't result in him dumping me. [Our relationship survived the last time](#), although we almost died laughing. **Laura Snapes, Guardian deputy music editor**

## **2. Have a chutney-tasting competition**

When you're middle class and get to the age of 52, your friends make chutney and give it to you. A lot. I've got 14 different chutneys. My cunning plan to combat weekend lockdown ennui? A four-person chutney-tasting competition. Two freelancer parents, two teenagers at peak lockdown cabin fever, all blindfolded. Will it be the Brixton fig chutney or the Hastings pineapple and sultana that emerges victorious? The sad thing is, I haven't looked forward to something so much in years. **Mel Giedroyc, broadcaster**

## **3. Play online chess**



Josie Long.

Every time you're tempted to go on social media, go on [chess.com](https://www.chess.com) instead and play a 10-minute game with a stranger. You can meet people around the world and then be beaten by them. I'm sure I've been ground into the dust by someone who was probably 13. It's fine, though, because at the end you say: "Good game lol!" and feel good about the world. **Josie Long, comedian**

## 4. Film spring coming into bloom

My son told me that the cure for lockdown boredom is to rush up to a stranger in the street, then (from a 2-metre distance) ask: "What year is it?" and, on hearing the answer, scream: "Oh my God, it WORKED!" and run away. I don't have the energy for that, so I suggest something that works well for spring. On your lockdown stroll, take a daily photo of the same tree, to curate a time-lapse image-succession of the tree coming into leaf. You can then use an editing app to create a video. **Peter Bradshaw, Guardian film critic**

## 5. Watch The West Wing



Jed Bartlet (Martin Sheen) in The West Wing. Photograph: NBC

I'm watching the whole of [The West Wing](#) (seven series, 156 episodes) from the start again – and reminding myself how depressing it is that we don't have a leader in the UK like Jed Bartlet, or a team around that leader like Leo, CJ, Toby, Josh, Sam and especially Mrs Landingham. **Piers Morgan, broadcaster**

## 6. Make your own paper and ink



Felix's homemade paper and ink.

I'd heard that you can make ink out of [iron galls you can find on oak trees](#). I saw some when I was out hiking between the lockdowns, so I brought them home, found some good instructions online and made the ink. Then I thought: "Well, if I've made ink, I could make paper." So I've been collecting the dead leaves off a New Zealand flax plant from my local golf course, which is now open to the public. I've been making birthday cards – unlike the ones bought in the shops, they will last for hundreds of years.  
**Felix, East Sussex**

## 7. Run off the beaten track

Sick of jogging along the same streets near home, or weaving in and out of exercisers at the park? Get some trail-running shoes with treads made to

handle mud. For about £30, you can escape the asphalt for rain-sodden grass and puddle-filled woods. Paths? You don't need no stinking paths. **Phil Daoust, Guardian deputy features editor**

## 8. Make cushions for friends



A Sharleen Spiteri blanket. Photograph: Provided by Sharleen Spiteri

I've been making cushions with the fabric my mum had been collecting over the years. I thought: "It's two squares, how hard can it be!?" I FaceTimed my sister to show off my work and she asked me to make her some in specific shapes and sizes for Christmas – it has grown to making them for my friends from that. I can't stop buying fabric now. My mum had taught me how to crochet a few years ago, so this lockdown I made a blanket: just simple granny squares, done with a chunky hook. **Sharleen Spiteri, musician**

## 9. Listen to Shame

During lockdown, you realise how much we rely on the world of the arts to make the endless hours pass. It's strange that the government hasn't done more to support the arts and the businesses within it that are struggling financially. For me, lockdown is about listening. I'm delighted that my

favourite indie band, Shame, have done really well with their second album, [Drunk Tank Pink](#). It's brilliant, energetic and raw and it makes me happy.  
**Mel B, musician**

## **10. Watch some strangers get married**

You may have tried exercise or meditation to get through lockdown 3.0, but may I suggest involving yourself in the lives of some strangers on E4? [Married At First Sight Australia](#) is on five nights a week, so even if you don't have a schedule, MAFS does. It works best with a dedicated WhatsApp group to discuss dodgy hair extensions and epic rows, followed by a postmatch conference call. **Nick Grimshaw, broadcaster**

## **11. Read Shakespeare out loud**

Try a Shakespeare sonnet each day, read aloud. There are 182 in total: the 154 published together in 1609, plus sonnets taken from the plays. The scholars Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson provide excellent insights. It can be hard going: some difficult, some impenetrable, some sublime. But it's not time wasted. Precious, in fact. **Joan Bakewell, journalist and Labour peer**

## **12. Draw a My Little Pony**



Tim Jonze's pony portraits. Photograph: Provided by Tim Jonze

I tried to get through the first lockdown by drawing ponies for my four-year-old daughter to colour in. Pathetically, I kept finding myself so impressed by my own unlocked artistic talent that each time I finished one I had to tell her that she wasn't allowed to colour it in (AKA ruin it) after all. "I'll draw you another one," I'd say, but the same thing would happen. She has now accepted the situation, so we sit next to each other at the kitchen table, quietly drawing and colouring in our own ponies. It's truly uplifting when you correctly capture the glint in their eyes – and as close as 24/7 childcare gets to reaching a state of zen. **Tim Jonze, Guardian associate culture editor**

### 13. Cook your way to better health

During what I now call the “Cummings lockdown”, I was diagnosed with diabetes. Type 2. The type you have to work at. Cooking became my life support and I threw myself into it with a convert’s zeal. Not everything has been a success: the camel on Christmas Day was a poor choice. But I am off the diabetes medication and chillies are my new sugar. **Mark Thomas, comedian**

### 14. Do the (very) small tasks

I recommend dedicating yourself, as I have done, to unsubscribing from all the email lists that you have signed up to that no longer fulfil your needs or that signed you up without a by-your-leave. Next, I plan to find, flatten and fold every carrier bag in the house and relocate them to one easy-to-access spot, that they may one day fulfil their porting destiny. I have no plans after that. **Lucy Mangan, Guardian TV critic**

## 15. Cook a recipe on the back of a random tin



Homemade fudge. Photograph: bhofack2/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Make the classic recipes hiding in plain sight on the boxes and tins in your food cupboards: the fudge on the condensed milk can; the marshmallow squares on the box of Rice Krispies. You will find yourself smiling into saucepans like Nigella. You will experience foreign and subversive feelings of Britishness, nostalgia, even pride. You will get fudge. **Chitra Ramaswamy, writer**

## 16. Make beats on your laptop

Music has always been a comfort throughout my life and, in recent spates of boredom, I've been passing the time by tinkering around with basic music production software and a keyboard, learning to make music for myself. It

has been a calming way to get lost in something other than the news or work. **Ammar Kalia, Guardian global music critic**

## 17. Get chickens

There's no time for boredom when, like me, you have four birds on the go. I am in love with all of them. Edna, Dusty, Mabel and Flo – or blue, green, red and yellow when I forget their names. They keep me occupied for hours. They are cooped up at the moment and in their lockdown through bird flu, but cleaning up bird poo and feeding them worms blows my tiny mind.

**Shaun Ryder, musician**

## 18. Watch Bez become the new Joe Wicks

Watch the trailer for Bez's fitness channel.

Last lockdown, I got fat, unhealthy and unfit. It was shocking. This lockdown I'm buzzin': I've set up a YouTube fitness channel so everyone can watch and laugh, or join in. It's called [Get Buzzin' With Bez](#). Let's have it! **Bez, dancer and musician**

## 19. Look up at night

I try always to look at the moon and stars before I go to bed – clouds permitting, of course. Even just a few seconds of focusing outwards lifts my mood. **Rebecca Front, actor**

## 20. Try a writing exercise

Write an appreciation of the last work of art you remember being moved by in a gallery or museum. Describe it from memory, not from a screen image. Try to put down as many visual details as you can, what they made you feel and what it might mean. The effort to bring that experience to life in words is one way to get out of the moment – it may even get you started on your lockdown novel. **Jonathan Jones, Guardian art critic**

## 21. Train your kids to be massage therapists

This lockdown, I've trained my daughters to walk on my back. My younger is the perfect size to deal with the tension in my shoulders, while my elder does the lower back. As I lie face down, I can really focus on [The Masked Singer](#). Last time, I guessed Mel B and Glenn Hoddle correctly and felt a huge sense of achievement. **Katherine Parkinson, actor**

## 22. Watch Curb Your Enthusiasm



Larry David in Curb Your Enthusiasm. Photograph: HBO

With the state of everything, I've been more concerned with staving off a nervous breakdown than beating boredom. I've managed this by rewatching [Curb Your Enthusiasm](#) and doubling down on my grumpiness when I'm not having to force myself to be cheerful on the BBC Radio 1 Breakfast Show for work. **Greg James, broadcaster**

## 23. Try a poem a day

When my husband, John, died last year, boredom and grief joined forces. They are noisy, constant companions. To drown out the cacophony and to fill the huge, aimless space where our life together used to be, I read poetry: Galway Kinnell, Anne Sexton, Robert Frost, Elizabeth Bishop, John Donne. Inspired by poetry's quick route to the heart, the conversations in my head

began to take shape and form poems of my own. They're private and preoccupying. They don't even rhyme. Most of the time. **Janet Ellis, broadcaster**

## 24. Get a hot tub

My wife bought a hot tub for lockdown and we're never out of it. It has Bluetooth speakers and we make Spotify playlists and sit in the bubbling water with only our heads exposed to the freezing weather until our skin becomes pruned and has the consistency of wet soap. **Craig Charles, broadcaster**

## 25. Make videos for your family



Ade Adepitan. Photograph: Pål Hansen/Contour by Getty Images

Our first baby, Bolla, was born three weeks ago. My wife and I set up [a YouTube channel called Adepfam](#). We've made 20 films, sharing our journey through her pregnancy. Bolla is my mum's first grandchild and it has been a great way for her to watch our journey through lockdown. **Ade Adepitan, former athlete and broadcaster**

## 26. Discover history YouTube

I've been watching YouTube videos to learn about historical events and keep boredom at bay. Specifically, I've been learning about how costumes for The Crown were researched and constructed. There is so much information out there, on almost any subject – it's wonderful for dull moments. **Barbara Hulanicki, fashion designer**

## 27. Have an Elton John power half-hour



Elton John in 1984. Photograph: Bob Riha Jr/WireImage

I have taken to doing something I call an Elton John power half-hour. As soon as I turn off my work computer, I open a low-alcohol beer (other beverages are acceptable) and blast out [a string of his hits](#) while dancing around my living room. I always start with Daniel and end on Sad Songs Say So Much – which very much speaks to now. It's a wonderful release. **Jenny Stevens, Guardian commissioning features editor**

## 28. Document the species on your daily walk

I try to spot a species in the gardens, fields and hedgerows that I've never noticed in my neighbourhood before. It might be completely suburban – a monkey puzzle tree in a garden – or an exotic visitor, like the flock of [fieldfares](#) I was delighted to hear calling by the old railway line. There is always something unexpected to discover. When I can't identify something, I take its photo (easier with a weed than a fast-flying bird) and seek help from friends or social media. I'm starting a "local patch" species list, too.

**Patrick Barkham, Guardian nature writer**

## 29. Keep a diary

Perhaps it's because I've been dipping into Pepys, but I find keeping a diary is one way to beat boredom. I started on New Year's Day and, even though there is no live theatre and social life is minimal, I find plenty to write about: sport, politics, books, telly. I don't do it daily, but it is a good way to keep a cultural record and overcome ennui. **Michael Billington, theatre critic**

## 30. Take joy in colourful dressing



Priya Elan. Photograph: Ali Elan

Lockdown has dissolved my lifelong rule of only dressing in dark, muted tones. Now I put on tie-dye joggers accessorised with rainbow Crocs, or

wear an aubergine-coloured rollneck with a gold chain. Dressing has become a balm: it makes the days feel less repetitive and it energises me. Unexpectedly, I've found that dressing like no one is watching gives me motivation. **Priya Elan, Guardian deputy fashion editor**

## 31. Start cycling

I finally bit the bullet and joined a cycling club after the last lockdown, mainly to shift my newly acquired spread, but also to get my Zoom-induced seized joints on the move. It has been a godsend. Although club rides have been put on hold, doing rides with others gave me the confidence to get out and explore on my own. I love the sense of freedom a bike gives you; it takes me back to my childhood, when I would spend all day exploring far and wide and discovering new places. Plus, it helps me sleep. **Maxine Peake, actor**

## 32. Watch A Teacher

I'll have to give you a TV suggestion, of course, so watch [A Teacher on BBC iPlayer](#). It's about a teacher in her 30s who has an affair with her 18-year-old student. It's a straightforward story told with amazing insight and depth. No tricks. Just honesty. A brilliant piece of work. Plus, it's in half-hour episodes, which are perfect for little breaks – if you have anything to break from, that is. **Russell T Davies, screenwriter**

## 33. Find your local giraffes

I go to the outer circle of Regent's Park and stop opposite the entrance to London zoo, where the giraffe enclosure is clear to see from the road. Sometimes, the giraffes will parade; other times, they throw shapes from their windows. It always lifts my spirits. If you are not within walking or cycling distance of London zoo, find a giraffe enclosure near you – or a substitute on YouTube. **Arifa Akbar, Guardian theatre critic**

## 34. Try a Stephen Fry audiobook

Audiobooks have got me through. They allow you to astrally project out of a lockdown living room into adventure. In my case, this involves Stephen Fry narrating everything ever written by Arthur Conan Doyle. **Tom Watson, former Labour MP**

## 35. Set up a 70s film club

I've set up a Friday night cinema club just for me. I'm working my way through the New Hollywood movies of the 70s (The Last Detail, Shampoo, Five Easy Pieces). It gives me something very specific to look forward to on a night that would otherwise be just like any other night of the week. I'm transported to another time. Goes well with dinner and a martini. **Sarah Habershon, Guardian art director**

## 36. Start making a collage



Jenny Offill. Photograph: Christopher Lane/The Guardian

My teenage daughter often asks if we can make art together. She's a very good artist, but I, sadly, am a very bad one. Recently, though, we found an art form I can manage. I have a book called Curious Moments, which is an archive of press photographs from 1900 to 1967. It contains wonders such as the world's tallest man meeting the world's smallest woman and monkeys

being suited up for space. Ever since I agreed to cut it up to make collages, my art has improved miraculously. It is strangely soothing to cut things out with tiny scissors – and strangely soothing is what we are looking for these days. **Jenny Offill, author**

## 37. Start a lockdown band

Luckily for me, my band Elbow have been writing remotely for years and haven't stopped. I also formed a lockdown band with [Nathan Sudders](#) (the Whip), [Ben Christophers](#), [Alex Reeves](#) (Elbow, Bat for Lashes, Dizzee Rascal) and [Pete Jobson](#) (I Am Kloot); we will have a really out-there album for release in no time. **Guy Garvey, musician**

## 38. Create a mini sauna



Kwame Kwei-Armah. Photograph: Leon Puplett/Young Vic

My top tip is to buy a portable infrared sauna. Yes, I know I said: 'Buy a sauna,' and this will not be attainable for everyone. The particular one I'm talking about costs about £200, it is small enough to keep anywhere in your house and you can fold it up. I stand in it, up to my neck, sweating at 65C for 30 minutes each night. It has really stopped me going stir-crazy. **Kwame Kwei-Armah, writer and Young Vic artistic director**

## **39. Play a rowdy card game**

During this lockdown, I've gone back to playing one of my favourite childhood card games: [racing demon](#). I love it, because it is wonderfully simple, but totally immersive, fun and fast. To win, you have to have intense powers of concentration and think very fast. The more you play, the quicker you get. While it almost always ends with good-natured shouting and even shoving, it is a brilliant way to take your mind off things. **Louise Minchin, broadcaster**

## **40. Travel the world through cinema**

Some friends and I have been watching a film from a different country each week, going through the alphabet. For Denmark, we had [Festen](#); for Iran, it was [Under the Shadow](#); for Japan, [Shoplifters](#). We chat about the films on Zoom afterwards, which has been so nice. **Chris, Manchester**

## **41. Read Aldous Huxley**



Johnny Marr. Photograph: Niall Lea

Aldous Huxley has kept me on a relatively even keel through the lockdowns. It's a shame that he is known almost entirely for *Brave New World* and [The Doors of Perception](#), for, as monumental as they are, his essays are perhaps even greater. There are six volumes, going up to 1963, in which he takes on everything from science, the Enlightenment, silence, technologies, the perennial philosophy and much more. He's easily one of the world's greatest ever thinkers, an actual genius. **Johnny Marr, musician**

## 42. Take up the ukulele

I've started ukulele lessons via Zoom with a local teacher. He's been really encouraging and I've gone from not being able to play a single chord to learning some recognisable pop songs and Christmas carols. It has worked surprisingly well remotely and it has been nice to put something in my diary each week other than work commitments. **Lizzy Dening, writer**

## 43. Be receptive

The heron waits on the roof of next door's shed, eyeing up the pond below. Every morning, there he is, visible from my bed. For days last summer, a hawk moth sat in the hedge, an astonishment whenever it opened its wings. And our two young dogs, whose pleasures are all in the moment, demand the same of me. All are gifts. The non-human world, even in south-east London, keeps me afloat, at least some of the time. Staying receptive and noticing what is around you in the everyday is the opposite of passivity, an antidote to boredom and panic. **Adrian Searle, Guardian art critic**

## 44. Make a collaborative quilt



Lucy (*left*), Vee and their baby, Asher, with a quilt made for them by Ruth Evans. Photograph: Ruth Evans

I've been making quilts for lockdown babies who won't get to see people for a long time. I've asked friends to post squares of fabric – some of them cut up old clothes, or embroider their patch or add applique. Then I sew them all together to give when the baby arrives, with a scrapbook of notes from everyone. I love opening the parcels and I get to watch rubbish TV while I sew. **Ruth Evans, Cardiff**

## 45. Try an online poker game

Every couple of weeks, we've been playing poker with some friends on a free site called Poker Now. It has been something nice to look forward to and there's a lot of fun buildup chat in the days leading up to the game. It has got to the point where we have fake names, walk-on music at the start of the game, catchphrases and somebody's friend even did a Super Bowl-style half-time Zoom show for us. **Eliza, Cornwall**

## 46. Make your own television



Kamien Deane in his lockdown sitcom. Photograph: Provided by Kamian Deane

I wrote, performed, recorded, edited and published a one-man lockdown sitcom, despite having no previous experience of writing, performing, recording or editing. All episodes were filmed in the corner of one small room of my small flat. It helped me, but also many of my friends, to beat the boredom, as they enjoyed watching it. **Kamien Deane, London**

## 47. Help at a vaccine centre

In the first lockdown, I volunteered with my local surgery, delivering medication to people who live in nearby villages. For some housebound and sheltering residents, I was the only person they saw all day. I'm volunteering again, this time at our local vaccination hub. Once more, it's been a very humbling experience, as I chat to the people who talk of their hopes for the future, the dreams of a more normal life and, of course, the ability to hold their grandchildren in their arms. **Jenni Bradbury, north Cotswolds**

## 48. Peruse Luke Unabombers' Instagram account

This has been a [constant source of inspiration](#) during lockdown. Granted, listening to a middle-aged DJ from Sheffield talk about his favourite records,

how to stave off negative self-talk and his hatred of the “namaste death cult” isn’t for everyone, but, for people who miss sweaty nightclubs and friends that take the piss when you buy expensive candles, this is a no-nonsense, much-appreciated intervention. **Lanre Bakare, Guardian culture reporter**

## 49. Memorise poems



Idris Khan with his piece Numbers. Photograph: Nils Jorgensen/Rex/Shutterstock

I heard somewhere that trying to memorise text is excellent for the brain, so I am giving it a go with poetry in lockdown. Each day, I have been trying to read and memorise one of the great Paul Celan’s later poems. The book is called *Breathturn Into Timestead* and it was introduced to me by the artist [Edmund de Waal](#). I’ve always admired Celan and his struggles – and this book makes me understand him even more. **Idris Khan, artist**

## 50. Start a gratitude journal

My internal monologue was getting very boring. So, for five minutes a day, I started to write down some things I was grateful for. I write about the fleeting joys – the rainbows and snow days – and the big things – health – I should not take for granted. Now, every time my husband passes me a coffee

– its foam created using our lockdown-acquired milk frother – I say: “I’m putting you in my gratitude journal.” **Hannah Marriott, Guardian fashion editor**

## 51. Bake with your kids

I’m such a foodie and I am really missing eating out. Baking treats has helped fill a bit of the void – plus I am eight months pregnant and therefore always hungry! My daughter loves it, too, and getting her to help out is a good way of keeping her entertained. It has been good researching different recipes to try and having those treats to look forward to as well. **Rebecca Adlington, former athlete**

## 52. Try an online truth mandala

I have been taking part in truth mandalas via Zoom. They are powerful group rituals from the environmental activist and Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy, taken from her book Coming Back to Life (written with Molly Brown). The idea is to honour our pain and love for the world together. I find they help me to realise and express my feelings, to connect with people from different places and to show up authentically in the world. **Raphaela, Bristol**

## 53. Move your furniture around



Laura Marling. Photograph: Partisan Records

I have been mostly rearranging furniture in the vain attempt to conjure some sort of aesthetic perfection, which helps in a hamster-on-a-wheel kind of way. As does putting up bookshelves to store the books I'm not reading.  
**Laura Marling, musician**

## 54. Take a pen and paper – and write

Watch The Bureau twice. Read novellas – try Veilchenfeld by Gert Hofman. Get a notebook and a pen, go offline for an hour and write down three memories. Then three extended thoughts. Teach yourself to make a [farinata](#) – there are many good recipes online. **Ian McEwan, author**

## 55. Make friends with Alexa

Alexa has got me through lockdown. I'm using her (in the nicest sense) to play me classic albums that I've never listened to – Van Morrison's Veedon Fleece, Terry Reid's River and Aretha Franklin's I Never Loved A Man The Way I Loved You are just a few of my choices. It's become an obsessive and unfulfilled search for the perfect song, one that will make my soul soar. Today, I asked Alexa for a classic album – she came up with Ultimate Manilow ... **Simon Hattenstone, Guardian feature writer**

## 56. Watch the sunrise



Sophie Radcliffe. Photograph: Provided by Sophie Radcliffe

I've been getting up in the mornings to watch the sunrise – even in the winter, it's amazing. It's free, accessible and a great way to start the day. Every day looks different and it's a good way to break the routine of lockdown life. I love being outside when the world is waking up – it really makes me feel alive, and grateful to be able to take a moment to breathe and connect with nature. **Sophie Radcliffe, London**

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## Art

Interview

# 'Like witnessing my own funeral': Michael Landy on destroying everything he owned

[Charlotte Higgins](#)



'I'd destroy things then go to the pub' ... the artist performing Break Down in 2001. Photograph: Ray Tang/Rex Features

'I'd destroy things then go to the pub' ... the artist performing Break Down in 2001. Photograph: Ray Tang/Rex Features

The artist caused a sensation by shredding all his possessions – car, toothbrush, love letters, even his dad's old sheepskin coat. Two decades on, does the former YBA have any regrets?



Wed 27 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Twenty years and an epoch ago, Michael Landy [destroyed his worldly goods](#), all 2,277 of them, in the just-closed flagship branch of C&A on Oxford Street in London. It was a wildly theatrical event. The mise en scène involved a snaking conveyor belt bearing tubs full of carefully catalogued objects, with a team of blue-boilersuit-clad “operatives” painstakingly disassembling each item, and the artist himself standing atop a high platform flinging items into great bins according to their material, prior to their long funereal journey to recycling or landfill.

In the centre of this tableau stood Landy’s red Saab 900, which gradually shrank as its doors, engine and electicals were removed. The whole thing took two weeks and his record collection was last to go: the team played Joy Division’s Love Will Tear Us Apart and David Bowie’s Breaking Glass over and over.

The world was a different place in February 2001. The paint was barely dry on Tate Modern. The art world in London was much smaller and less globalised, and the Young British Artists (YBAs) were in their pomp, Landy, then in his late 30s, being very much one of them. “We’re like the ex-members of a band,” he says now. “Yeah, it was good for a while.” Back

then, the cloud and social media were not yet repositories of our archives and memories; everything owned had a material presence. Landy shredded family photos, handwritten love letters from former girlfriends, artworks he had made, artworks that friends had made. All are gone, for ever. And Break Down, as the artwork was named, has defined him ever since.



‘I literally can’t think of anything I miss’ ... Landy today, in his studio.  
Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

Of course, I want to know if he regrets it. His work studio is in east London, and is about 10 metres long, empty but for two tables, a sofa, a stool and a chair. The only artworks are some drawings on a table of the Dagenham Idol, an extraordinary wooden figure dating from around 2250BC, excavated when the Ford car works were being built. He’s playing with them for a forthcoming show at Colchester’s [Firstsite](#) about the idea of the “Essex man”.

The minimal aesthetic suggests that Landy’s lifestyle tends towards the ascetic, rather than the accumulative. But still: regrets? “I don’t miss anything,” he says. Then he hesitates. “I’ve never owned up to it, so I can’t own up to it now. I’ve always stuck to that. No, I literally can’t think of anything that I miss.” That’s his story and he’s sticking to it.

Looking back at Break Down, it is easy to think of it as a piece of YBA grandstanding: a stunt, a deliberately shocking gesture. But that's to misunderstand it. "It wasn't a frenzy of destruction," says James Lingwood of [Artangel](#), the commissioning body that produced it, when we speak on the phone. "It was more a quiet public dissection of possessions and what they are made up of. It was a lifestyle being taken apart, dissected and recycled."

I guess the most emotional bits were my mother coming in. She started crying and I had to throw her out

I do wonder whether he felt he had any kind of duty of care to Landy, as he made such an extreme gesture. After all, the title of the work hints at psychological disturbance. "He displayed none of the symptoms of mental ill health," says Lingwood. "He set about it in a methodical, calm and systematic way. He's an all-in artist." No kidding.

There was a long, slow buildup to the two weeks of destruction: every item Landy owned – down to vitamin tablets, faxes, socks, paint rollers, cat food, teabags – was inventoried and classified by type, and [logged on a computer](#). The event itself was oddly mundane, Landy tells me, a job of work. "For those two weeks, it was simple. I'd don my blue boilersuit, go into work, destroy things, come back, go to the pub and have a few drinks and take some Solpadeine the next morning." A [film](#) shows operatives carefully dismembering, say, a toothbrush, separating out its constituent materials. Occasionally, a hammer is taken to something, but on the whole, says Landy, it was like "a production process in reverse".

What was it like when it was all over? In the pub on the last night, he says: "I got very paranoid. I have talked about it as the happiest two weeks of my life, but it was also like witnessing my own funeral. People would come along who I hadn't seen for years, and then I worked it out: I was only seeing them because I'd in a sense died."



The disassembly line ... the conveyor belt in Break Down. Photograph: © Michael Landy. Courtesy the artist, Thomas Dane Gallery and Artangel. Photo: Parisa Taghizadeh

His gallery gave him some Gap clothes. Someone else got him a toothbrush. He was living with his partner, artist [Gillian Wearing](#), “so I sponged off her stuff basically”. Soon afterwards, he was due to go to Spain. But he’d destroyed his passport and his birth certificate. That was a pain. Serves him right, you might say. (While Break Down is a remarkable artwork, I still find the idea of needlessly destroying perfectly good things a terrible and rather decadent waste – which Landy would say is part of the point.)

He didn’t make any art for a year. Then he began again, [with etchings](#) of the tiny, modest, overlooked plants that grow in cracks in urban pavements. “I’d had 12 operatives destroying things, 50,000 people coming to the exhibition in two weeks: it was all very public. I wanted to simplify my practice, to get it all back to just me and a plant.”

You might think of this – basically, botanical illustrations – as the absolute opposite of the gesture of Break Down. But it was another way of listing, making an inventory – not of possessions, but of obscure organisms that he felt some solidarity with. He’d done a lot of this kind of thing as a child: drawing as a way of amassing, categorising. Etching the little plants “was a

homage to those stoical things that just exist, they don't need us. I was one of those plants, I guess I didn't need much nourishment to exist. And I was going back to cataloging things. I was becoming the quiet Michael again."

He's so chatty, friendly and forthcoming that it's hard to think of Landy as quiet – and yet he was, he says, when growing up in Hackney and Ilford in east London, and then studying art at Goldsmiths with his YBA gang. "At school, I had a fringe and I just wanted to disappear behind it. At college, during group tutorials, I never really said anything."



Pieces of a life ... Landy's possessions broken up and bagged according to material. Photograph: Artangel

Break Down was a kind of shock therapy, forcibly turning him into an extrovert: he had to find ways to talk about the work, since there were reporters and film crews in every day, not to mention members of the public who wanted to ask questions and share stories about their own relationship with possessions. He'd figured out how to talk about the project by doing a ton of research on consumption and consumerism.

But I wonder, now, whether that wasn't something of a smokescreen. Was that all it was about? Consumerism? Wasn't it also, I ask, about your sense of self, your personhood? "Well, yes. Perhaps. I was probably in denial at

the time. That's the part I didn't really want to deal with. I guess the most emotional bits were my mother coming in, and she started crying and I had to throw her out." Wait a minute: you threw your weeping mother out of the show? "Yeah, it was like your mother's crying, you're dead or whatever. She's crying as if she's crying over your grave, and I had to chuck her out. I couldn't deal with that."

Landy's mum and dad were Irish immigrants. "They worked hard, and they didn't work for me to destroy my worldly belongings. Luckily, when my mum did come in, I was up on the platform, because otherwise she would have given me a clip around the ear." One object that Landy didn't destroy until right at the end, which went round and round the conveyor like an unclaimed suitcase, was a big old sheepskin jacket – his dad's. "My mother had bought it on credit just before he had his industrial accident. After that, it became too heavy for him to wear any more. She still had to pay it off. In a sense, this sheepskin coat became him, travelling around on this yellow tray."



'I had 12 operatives' ... Break Down. Photograph: © Michael Landy. Courtesy the artist, Thomas Dane Gallery and Artangel. Photo: Hugo Glendinning

John Landy, who died in 2012, had been a tunnel miner. “He built bits of the underground, the kind of immigrant work that other people don’t want to do.” In 1977, working near Hexham in Northumberland, a tunnel collapsed on him and he suffered a spinal injury. He never worked again, and was described in his medical notes as “a total wreck case”.

Landy later made a significant work about his dad, Semi-detached, in which a precise replica of his parents’ Ilford semi was erected in Tate Britain’s Duveen Galleries in 2004. It was the sort of emotionally loaded artwork he couldn’t have imagined making before Break Down. “I was interested in my dad’s value as a human being. What’s rubbish? What’s a weed? Why is my dad a total wreck case? That’s what preoccupies me.”

Those two dramatic weeks in C&A turned out to be an artistic enrichment, not an impoverishment. A beginning, not an ending.

- Materials from Break Down will be at Thomas Dane Gallery, London, when it reopens. A virtual version, with James Lingwood and Michael Landy in conversation, goes live on the anniversary on 10 February.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/jan/27/like-witnessing-my-own-funeral-michael-landy-shredding-everything-owned-yba-break-down>

# From ancient Egypt to Cardi B: a cultural history of the manicure

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# Sent to Coventry: the city of culture's brutalist architecture - in pictures

Concrete Coventry ... blocks of flats near Butts Road. All photographs by Andrew Fox

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## [Virtual travel guides](#)[Istanbul holidays](#)

# Istanbul: a virtual tour through books, film, food and music



Süleymaniye mosque from Galata Bridge. Photograph: Matthew Doehring/Alamy

Süleymaniye mosque from Galata Bridge. Photograph: Matthew Doehring/Alamy

Crime writer Barbara Nadel explores the ‘vibrant but maddening megacity’ that inspires her books

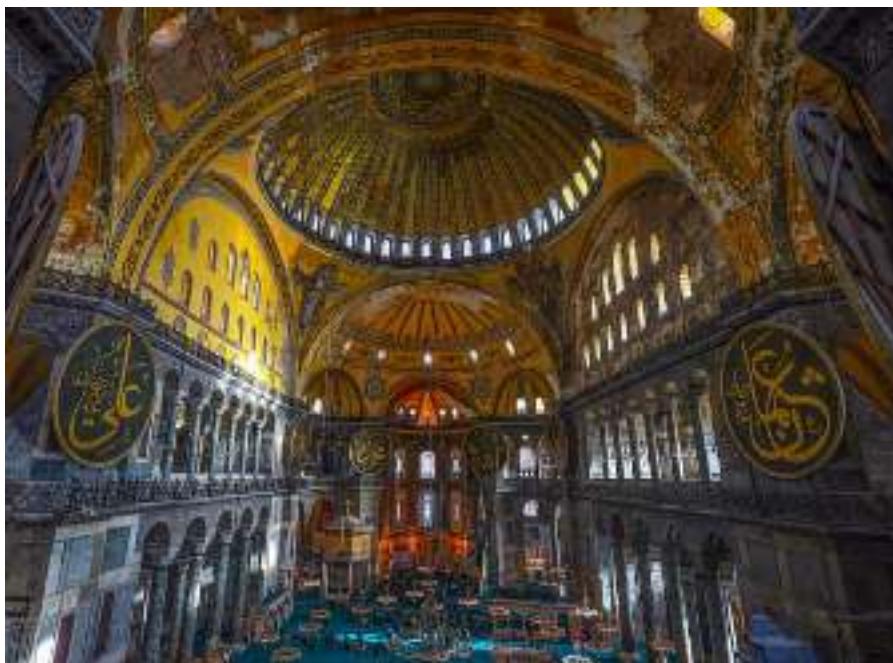
Wed 27 Jan 2021 01.30 EST

When I first saw this view of Istanbul, decades ago, it was as if I'd just met the love of my life. From the northern end of the Galata Bridge, looking across the Golden Horn to what is known as the Old City, the view remains breathtaking even on an iron-grey winter's day.

Rising above the waters of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus are: to my left, the vast Topkapı Palace complex; before me, the Byzantine wonder that is the Hagia Sophia and the Blue mosque; and to my right, the Kapalıçarşı or Grand Bazaar and the Süleymaniye mosque. This last was created by Turkey's greatest architect, Mimar Sinan, for its greatest sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent.

Istanbul does divine well, but it gives raffish a run for its money, too

I'm not even scratching the surface of this megacity of 17 million souls, as modern in places as Singapore, yet as old and as mysterious as time. The shirt of steel the season has thrown over the city does not detract from her ancient beauty. Moved almost to tears, I find myself experiencing a moment of *huzun*, an almost untranslatable Turkish concept, which can loosely be described as pleasurable melancholy.



Interior of Hagia Sophia. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Walking across the Galata Bridge, I nod to the windswept fishers who come, day in and day out, in the hope of catching *palamut* (skipjack tuna) and *cinekop* (bluefish). I look in their buckets to see what they've caught, knowing I'm being watched by several of Istanbul's many street cats.

Felines are greatly loved in Istanbul – some neighbourhoods even have little cat houses on street corners, lovingly decorated by adoring humans.

A middle-aged man in a long overcoat passes by, smiling at me, and I wonder if I know him. Istanbul is known as the “biggest village in the world”, where one may meet relatives, passing acquaintances and old lovers in the space of one morning. Even the dead pop up from time to time.

I take my Istanbulkart travel pass out of my pocket and wonder whether to take the tram up the hill from the dockside district of Eminönü or continue walking, in the frigid air, up to the centre of the Old City. I choose the latter.

I am fortunate in being able to write books set in this vibrant, opulent, often maddening city. Condensing its essence into a few paragraphs is virtually impossible. But I’ve been giving it a go for more than 20 years now, even when the sky looks like a threat.

## Read



Author Orhan Pamuk on the Galata Bridge while he takes pictures of empty ‘lockdown’ streets in Istanbul, 23 May 2020. Photograph: Ozan Köse/AFP/Getty Images

[\*\*Istanbul: Memories and the City\*\*](#), by perhaps Turkey's greatest living writer, Orhan Pamuk, is a brilliant guide to its greatest monuments and its labyrinthine backstreets. Here are beggars and witches, shops selling buttons, others offering terrifying flesh-coloured corsets, and half-forgotten Greek *ayazma* (sacred springs). Istanbul does divine well, but it gives raffish a run for its money, too.

When I reach the southern end of the Golden Horn, I look back to where I started my walk – the hilly New City dominated by the Galata Tower. Built by the Genoese in 1348, it is 63 metres tall and has a viewing area at the top. In 1638, adventurer Hezârfen Ahmed Çelebi attached wings to his body, jumped off the tower and glided across the Bosphorus.



Galata Tower. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

This area, now known as Beyoğlu, is home to what were once big foreign embassies, but are now just ornate consulates. The waterfront district of Karaköy, is the setting for Elif Safak's novel [\*\*10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World\*\*](#). Based on the lives of sex workers and transsexuals, this is a compassionate and intimate portrait of the area. Make no mistake, Istanbul is not an easy city, and this novel exposes many of its citizens' daily struggles to survive.

Fans of thrillers and crime will enjoy a glimpse into the city's criminal side in **Istanbul Noir**, an anthology of short stories edited by Mustafa Ziyalan. By contrast, Halidé Edip's **House with Wisteria** (out of print) follows the early life of one of Turkey's foremost feminists in Ottoman and early republican Istanbul.

## Watch



Drone photo of Sultanahmet Square. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

As I walk up the hill from Eminönü to Sultanahmet, I pass between Gülhane Park (once part of the Topkapı Palace) and the Sublime Porte – seat of the Imperial Ottoman government. These locations remind me of one of the most popular Turkish TV series ever, **Muhteşem Yüzyıl** (Magnificent Century). Set at the court of Suleiman the Magnificent, it tells the story of that sultan's reign and his personal life, centering on his harem. Not a biopic or a soap opera, Muhtesem is a *dizi*, a particularly Turkish television phenomenon that can be ancient or modern, but must feature drama, passion and acts of courage. To find out how Istanbul was captured by the Turks, the TV miniseries **Rise of Empires: Ottoman** (on Netflix) is a mix of expert commentary and wonderful reconstructions.

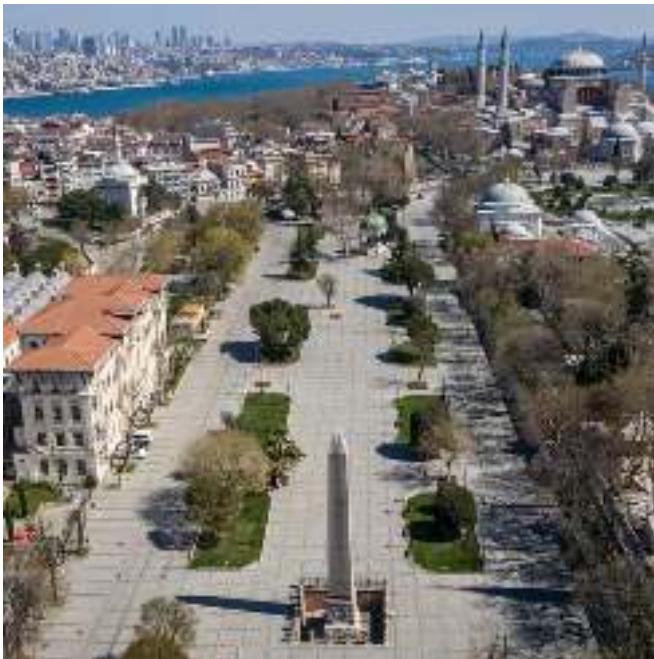


Publicity image for TV show Muhteşem Yüzyıl (Magnificent Century).  
Photograph: Tims Productions

In a mildly sensual haze, evoked by memories of *dizi*, I spot a couple of damp belly-dancing costumes hanging outside a souvenir shop. Probably my favourite Turkish film of all time, 2011's [Zenne Dancer](#) is based on the lives of belly dancers – or rather their male counterparts, *zenne*. Traditionally, these young men perform at celebrations, but these days [though not pandemic days] they can be seen in nightclubs, too. This often brings them into conflict with their families and with religious authorites, a reminder that large sections of the city are culturally conservative.

## See

Most of Sultanahmet's sights are on my left as I climb the hill and step on to Divanyolu, Sultanahmet's main thoroughfare. The first is **Hagia Sophia**, once the greatest church in Christendom, then a mosque, then a museum, it is now a mosque again and closed to visitors when worshippers are at prayer. From the outside it's a terracotta-coloured masterpiece; inside it is sublime with marble and mosaic.



Obelix of Thutmose III, Hippodrome. Photograph: Chris McGrath/Getty Images

I wander along to the **Sultanahmet mosque**, a vast, domed structure whose interior is decorated with exquisite blue Iznik tiles, hence its other name, the Blue mosque. The iron skies lower, and I make my way to the **Hippodrome**, where the Romans held chariot races and the Byzantines who followed them held their sometimes violent games. There are three main monuments to see here: the Byzantine Walled Obelisk, the Ancient Greek Serpent Column, and the Obelix of Thutmose III, brought from Egypt in AD390.

## Taste

I retrace my steps along Divanyolu. On my left I pass **Lale Restaurant** (nicknamed the Pudding Shop). Opened in the 1950s, it was once a hangout for young western travellers on their way to Kathmandu hoping for enlightenment. These days it still sells its delicious *tavuk gögsü* pudding, made from sweetened, pounded chicken breast, rice and milk. But on this occasion I'm going underground for my treat.



*Simit* bread-seller. Photograph: robertharding/Alamy

At the end of Divanyolu there is the entrance to the **Yerebatan Saray**, or Underground Palace. It's a subterranean Byzantine water cistern, and has a cafe selling *sahlep*, a winter drink made from milk and powdered orchid root, and dusted with cinnamon. I spend time listening to the classical music played in that vast, vaulted space, and watching the multicoloured light show dance among the ancient columns.

The city is great for street food, from *simit* – sesame seed-dusted rings of enriched bread sold everywhere – to steaming *kokoreç*, spiced lamb intestines on a skewer. Tea, *çay*, which is served black here, is available all over the city, including on the ferries that cross the Bosphorus. Turkish coffee, *kahve*, is not quite so ubiquitous but can be found nearby on Divanyolu at a lovely *pastane* (patisserie) called **Cigdem**. It also serves wonderful savoury pastries called *börek* (with cheese or spinach) and some of the best sticky, nut-studded *baklava* known to humanity.

## Listen

Turkey's rap scene is big but little-known outside the country. You can hear kids rapping on the streets, particularly in poor parts of town, such as

Tarlabası, a multi-ethnic sometimes troubled but always creative place. Probably the most famous rap track is a 14-verse epic called **Susamam**, a deeply political work produced by a collective of Istanbul rappers.

['It's possible to live together in peace': the Turkish rap epic taking on the government](#)

[Read more](#)

More my kind of listening is **Arabesk**: influenced by Arabian music, it's a form that identifies with the working classes and their struggles. A sort of musical *dizi*, it can be deeply melancholy, especially in its treatment of thwarted love. Its biggest stars, singers including **Bülent Ersoy** and **İbrahim Tatlıses**, live turbulent lives straight out of TV drama. Turkish pop is exemplified by singer-songwriter **Tarkan**.

As I return to the Galata Bridge, my mind drifts to the man I saw there earlier. An old friend or someone famous? Maybe my long-dead grandfather? In the magical city of *huzun*, anything is possible.

**Barbara Nadel's Çetin Ikmen crime novels are set in Istanbul. Her most recent, **Blood Business** (Headline, £8.99), is out now in paperback. Her next book is **Forfeit**, to be published on 13 May**

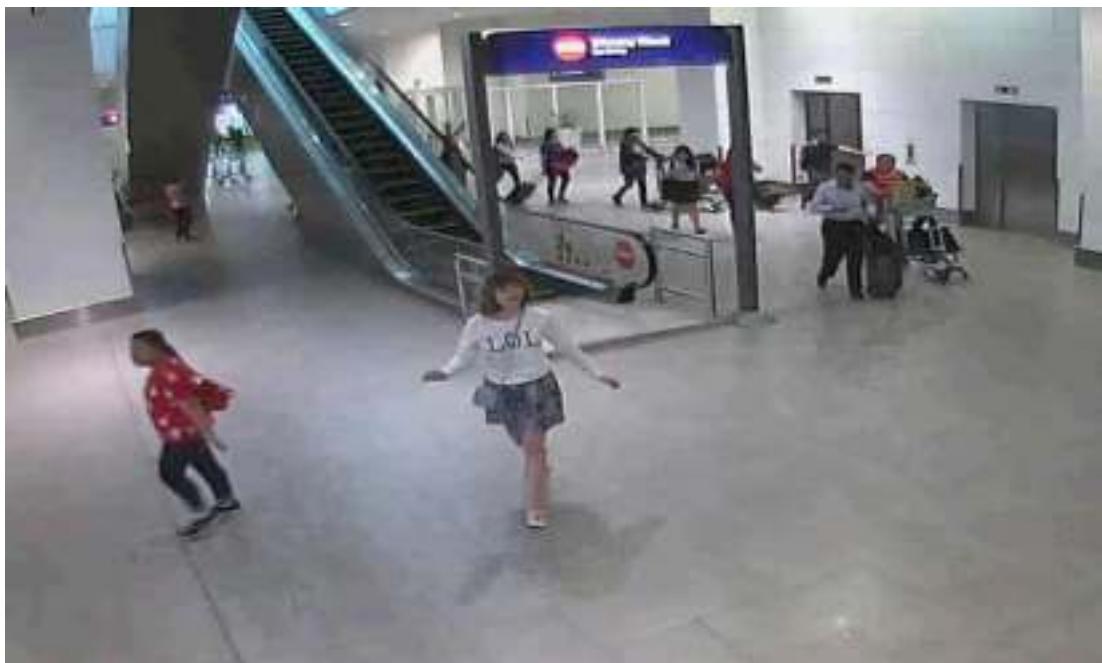
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## Film

# **Assassins review – the 'prank show' killing of North Korea's pretender**

This gripping documentary explores the story of the two young women who carried out a nerve-agent attack on Kim Jong-nam



Doan Thi Huong, centre, walking through Kuala Lumpur international airport after the assassination

Doan Thi Huong, centre, walking through Kuala Lumpur international airport after the assassination



Peter Bradshaw

@PeterBradshaw1

Wed 27 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Nothing to do with the 1990 musical by Stephen Sondheim about the people throughout history who have tried to kill the US president ... yet maybe this film should itself be turned into a musical or opera. It is a documentary about the extraordinary [2017 assassination of Kim Jong-nam](#), North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's half-brother, who had been living in exile in China and was not merely a persistent critic of the regime but seen as a possible alternative ruler.

Bizarrely, Kim Jong-nam was killed by having VX nerve agent smeared in his face in Kuala Lumpur international airport's departure hall by two young women, Siti Aisyah and Doan Thi Houn - from Indonesia and Vietnam respectively - who had been duped by North Korean agents posing as TV producers into thinking they were filming a hidden-camera prank show. The Malaysian government quickly and timidly allowed the North Koreans to go free when the regime effectively held Malaysian embassy staff hostage with their families in Pyongyang. So that left the two vulnerable young women facing a mandatory death penalty for murder, just so the Malaysian legal system could indict someone and save face.

It is a gripping story, well told by documentary film-maker Ryan White, with the help of two journalists who covered it at the time: Bloomberg reporter Hadi Azmi and the Washington Post's former Beijing bureau chief Anna Fifield. There is something genuinely chilling about the way the North Koreans groomed and gaslit their two young victims, making them do dozens of supposed pranks on people over many months, with regular payment and spurious reassurance: eerie dummy-run stunts, just to get them used to the technique.

Aisyah and Huong were manipulated like young women being sex-trafficked and, in the strangest, unknowing way, like jihadis being schooled for a big attack. (The nerve-agent element has an extra resonance for the UK after the Russians' novichok outrage in Salisbury in 2018.) Only the state has access to chemical weapons, and their use is designed to send a sickening message of triumphalism and nationalism.

What an extraordinary story of sexism, violence, diplomatic bad faith and dishonesty on an international scale. One question remains: who had the bizarre yet satanically clever idea of a fake prank show? And how is it that the North Koreans, supposedly marooned in their Soviet past, managed to dream up something dripping with contemporary media irony? It could be down to a certain mysterious Japanese national who was identified as an accomplice, but never tracked down. Perhaps a true-crime podcast should now be devoted to finding him.

- Assassins is available on digital platforms from 29 January.
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## [Art](#)

# 'I refused to let them intimidate me': the untold stories of LGBT+ seniors



'I didn't find there was much difference between loving a man and loving a woman. In general, love is love' ... portraits from Not Another Second.  
Photograph: Karsten Thormaehlen, nAscent Art New York and RXM

'I didn't find there was much difference between loving a man and loving a woman. In general, love is love' ... portraits from Not Another Second.  
Photograph: Karsten Thormaehlen, nAscent Art New York and RXM

At a new exhibition, Not Another Second, 12 LGBT+ seniors share stories of resilience, struggle and love

[Nadja Sayej](#)

Wed 27 Jan 2021 02.06 EST

When [Pearl Bennett](#), now 69, came out as a transgender woman at a family dinner [when she was 50](#), she wasn't warmly embraced.

Bennett's mother leaned in and asked: "What is all this?"

"I saw that look in my mother's eyes, she was a little drunk," recalls Bennett.

['Not married but willing to be!': men in love from the 1850s – in pictures](#)  
[Read more](#)

"My mom stroked my breast, came in close and said: 'I just want you to know that West Palm Beach is not big enough for 'Pearl' and the Bennetts,'" recalls Bennett.

"I felt ostracized by my family."

This heartbreakin anecdote and many more are part of [Not Another Second](#), an exhibition in New York City which tells the stories of a dozen LGBT+ senior citizens who tell their own coming out stories. Each photographic portrait and video interview is marked with a number, like "16 years", representing the time they lost to staying in the closet, based on societal expectations of the past.

The exhibition is on view at the Watermark Retirement Communities at Brooklyn Heights (a \$330m [Brooklyn senior home](#) redeveloped from the former Leverich Towers Hotel), which has over 60 locations across the country) and is presented in partnership with SAGECare building certification and an agency, RXM Creative.



A portrait of Pearl. Photograph: Karsten Thormaehlen, nAscent Art New York and RXM/Jose Studios ©2020. All Rights Reserve.

“To this day, this group of individuals continues to face challenges that need to be acknowledged,” said David Barnes, Watermark’s CEO and president. “It reminds us that we can’t take our rights for granted and must continue working toward a more accepting future for everyone.”

The photos, taken by the German photographer Karsten Thormaehlen, capture the seniors in joyful exuberance. They’re smiling, laughing, gazing off into the distance or staring straight into the camera lens, fearlessly.

Each video interview details how they fought the conventions of their time, stood up for their rights and paved the path for today’s generation of LGBT+ activists.

“These are honest and genuine shots of authentic people,” said Thormaehlen. “I truly hope this will encourage many people, younger and older, who still are suffering from hiding their personality, to create more tolerance, which leads to more fruitful discussions in society.”

The exhibition features photos on the walls alongside quotes from the elders. In one, Ray, 82, says: “If you came out to your family in our generation,

usually it was disastrous. I stayed in the closet until I retired. I didn't want to hurt my mom or the rest of the family."

One 78-year-old woman named Ellie [talks about](#) being bisexual. "I didn't find there was much difference between loving a man and loving a woman," she said. "In general, love is love."

Ronnie, 78, said: "When I first met my partner Earl, I looked at him and thought, 'You are a knockout.' I told God: 'If you let me have him, I'll never want anybody else.' We stayed together for 44 years, until he passed away."

One of the seniors who was profiled as part of the series is [Paul Barby](#), the first openly gay man to run for Congress in 1996 in Oklahoma City. He wrote in a [public letter](#) at the time – when he was 61 – announcing his candidacy: "I am gay. Always have been. It has not held me back as I have worked for causes to help my fellow Americans."

"A lot of people knew me, but they didn't know I was gay," he said from his home in Tucson, Arizona. "I thought 'we have to re-energize.' I'm glad I did it. It made life easier for many gay people in Oklahoma. Someone has to be first."

Until 1973, the American Psychiatric Association considered homosexuality to be a mental disorder. For Nick, 73, coming out in the 1970s was not even an option. "It was still a crime," he said.



A portrait of Ronnie. Photograph: Karsten Thormaehlen, nAscent Art New York and RXM/Jose Studios ©2020. All Rights Reserve.

As Ronnie explains in the video, he came out when he was in his 50s. “And even when I came out, I still had this stigma that it was wrong,” he says. “Now, I see gay couples holding hands in public, that is something we could have never dreamed of.”

The [Rev Goddess Magora Kennedy](#), 81, recalls her stern upbringing in New York. “Being black, a lesbian and in the church, it was difficult, but I stood my ground,” said Kennedy. “I refused to let people intimidate me.”

The video details the struggles around gay marriage, which was legalized in the US in 2015, and the fight for gay troops to serve in the military.

Bennett, for one, recalls the 1960s being a time when “queer” wasn’t a popular term, neither was being “gay”. And yet, she served in the Vietnam war in the 1960s and early 1970s.

It resonates today, considering Joe [Biden recently ended the ban](#) on transgender troops in the military, allowing them to serve.

“I am so thrilled,” said Bennett. “It disgusted me when Trump banned trans people from the military. It interrupted their lives, their careers. Treating

trans people like less than citizens. My heart just broke.”

More than anything else, this exhibition is a reminder to not waste precious time. “You have to have a support group, it’s one of the main things,” said Bennett. “I would tell anyone to have a support group, or someone who supports you. Don’t try to do it alone because it’s overwhelming.”

It’s also about self-acceptance, as well as valuable wisdom for the younger generation. “My advice is to just know that you’re OK,” said Barby. “Just know we’re human beings and continue to be a good person. Don’t worry about pretending to be something you’re not.”

- [Not Another Second](#) is on view at the Watermark Retirement Communities in New York City until 27 March
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[\*\*CIA\*\*](#)

## **CIA file on Russian ESP experiments released – but you knew that, didn't you?**

Declassified memo details two Russian scientists' 1980s research, claiming one 'perfected his method' of extra-sensory perception



The reports of the Russian ESP experiments sound like a storyline from the cult TV series *The Prisoner*. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

The reports of the Russian ESP experiments sound like a storyline from the cult TV series *The Prisoner*. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

*[Lauren Aratani](#)*

Wed 27 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

In a recently declassified memo, [\*\*CIA\*\*](#) agents in 1991 described two Russian scientists who were conducting experiments on extrasensory perception,

known as ESP, which is the ability to gain information, or influence physical objects, using only the mind.

[Bent spoons, flying saucers and remote control donkeys: military myths explained | Mark Pilkington](#)

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The memo said one of the Russian scientists had “perfected” his methods.

A short document was published on Monday on the Black Vault, an online archive of declassified government documents typically obtained through public records requests filed by the site’s founder, John Greenewald.

It is unclear what purpose the [declassified document](#) served, but it details the bizarre research of two Soviet scientists who performed ESP experiments in the 1980s.

One, Konstantin Buteyko, was described as having “perfected his method” of ESP by conducting experiments in which he would put a volunteer in the middle of a room that had two concave mirrors on opposite sides. The document noted that researchers believed “the mirrors focused psychic energy”.

A medical specialist would “concentrate on transmitting psychic energy to the patient as well as empathetically experiencing the patient’s discomfort” in an attempt to “transmit bioenergy” to the patient and help them control or cure various diseases ranging from asthma to heart disease.

The CIA noted that the research institute where Buteyko worked received 450,000 rubles to research the effect of Agent Orange, a herbicide used in chemical warfare, on the human immune system. In 1987 and 1988, about 3,000 patients underwent “nontraditional medical treatment” at the institute, including “the use of psychic methods”.

A second scientist, Vlail Kaznacheev, was described as a “well-known authority on ESP” and had helped to conduct experiments in which volunteers “attempted to relay to one another images of geometric shapes such as squares or circles”.

Greenwald on his website [said](#) the document was released to him in November 2020 after he filed a records request to the Defense Intelligence Agency for documents related to ESP.

Initially, the agency said that it had found CIA records that were classified, but after Greenwald filed an appeal the agency declassified one of the documents and made it available for the public. In a letter to Greenwald, the CIA said that one document on ESP must remain classified.

ESP has been a subject of fascination and legitimate research in Russia and the [US](#), though whether it is a true phenomenon is a subject of strong debate in scientific circles.

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## 2021.01.27 - Opinion

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[\*\*Opinion\*\*](#)[\*\*Coronavirus\*\*](#)

## Covid lies cost lives – we have a duty to clamp down on them

[George Monbiot](#)



When governments fail to ban outright falsehoods that endanger their citizens, they are neglecting their primary duty

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



‘Lobby groups funded by plutocrats and corporations are responsible for much of the misinformation that saturates public life.’ A protest march against Covid vaccines in east London, 5 December 2020. Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

‘Lobby groups funded by plutocrats and corporations are responsible for much of the misinformation that saturates public life.’ A protest march against Covid vaccines in east London, 5 December 2020. Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

Wed 27 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Why do we value lies more than lives? We know that certain falsehoods kill people. Some of those who believe such claims as “coronavirus doesn’t exist”, “it’s not the virus that makes people ill but 5G”, or “vaccines are used to inject us with microchips” fail to take precautions or refuse to be vaccinated, then contract and spread the virus. Yet we allow these lies to proliferate.

We have a right to speak freely. We also have a right to life. When malicious disinformation – claims that are known to be both false and dangerous – can spread without restraint, these two values collide head-on. One of them must give way, and the one we have chosen to sacrifice is human life. We treat free speech as sacred, but life as negotiable. When governments fail to ban

outright lies that endanger people's lives, I believe they make the wrong choice.

Any control by governments of what we may say is dangerous, especially when the government, like ours, has authoritarian tendencies. But the absence of control is also dangerous. In theory, we recognise that there are necessary limits to free speech: almost everyone agrees that we should not be free to shout "fire!" in a crowded theatre, because people are likely to be trampled to death. Well, people are being trampled to death by these lies. Surely the line has been crossed?

Those who demand absolute freedom of speech often talk about "the marketplace of ideas". But in a marketplace, you are forbidden to make false claims about your product. You cannot pass one thing off as another. You cannot sell shares on a false prospectus. You are legally prohibited from making money by lying to your customers. In other words, in the marketplace there are limits to free speech. So where, in the marketplace of ideas, are the trading standards? Who regulates the weights and measures? Who checks the prospectus? We protect money from lies more carefully than we protect human life.

I believe that spreading only the most dangerous falsehoods, like those mentioned in the first paragraph, should be prohibited. A possible template is [the Cancer Act](#), which bans people from advertising cures or treatments for cancer. A ban on the worst Covid lies should be time-limited, running for perhaps six months. I would like to see an expert committee, similar to the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage), identifying claims that present a genuine danger to life and proposing their temporary prohibition to parliament.

While this measure would apply only to the most extreme cases, we should be far more alert to the dangers of misinformation in general. Even though it states that the pundits it names are not *deliberately* spreading false information, the new Anti-Virus site [www.covidfaq.co](http://www.covidfaq.co) might help to tip the balance against people such as Allison Pearson, Peter Hitchens and Sunetra Gupta, who have made such public headway with their misleading claims about the pandemic.

But how did these claims become so prominent? They achieved traction only because they were given a massive platform in the media, particularly in the Telegraph, the Mail and – above all – the house journal of unscientific gibberish, the Spectator. Their most [influential outlet is the BBC](#). The BBC has an unerring instinct for misjudging where debate about a matter of science lies. It thrills to the sound of noisy, ill-informed contrarians. As the conservationist Stephen Barlow argues, science denial is destroying our societies and the [survival of life on Earth](#). Yet it is treated by the media as a form of entertainment. The bigger the idiot, the greater the airtime.

Interestingly, all but one of the journalists mentioned on the Anti-Virus site also have a long track record of downplaying and, in some cases, [denying, climate breakdown](#). Peter Hitchens, for example, has dismissed not only [human-made global heating](#), but the [greenhouse effect itself](#). Today, climate denial has mostly dissipated in this country, perhaps because the BBC has at last stopped treating [climate change as a matter of controversy](#), and Channel 4 no longer makes films claiming that [climate science is a scam](#). The broadcasters kept this disinformation alive, just as the BBC, still providing a [platform for misleading claims](#) this month, sustains falsehoods about the pandemic.

Ironies abound, however. One of the founders of the admirable Anti-Virus site is Sam Bowman, a senior fellow at the Adam Smith Institute (ASI). This is [an opaqueley funded lobby group](#) with a long history of misleading claims about science that often seem to align with its ideology or the interests of its funders. For example, it has [downplayed the dangers](#) of tobacco smoke, and argued against smoking bans in pubs and [plain packaging for cigarettes](#). In 2013, the Observer revealed that it had been taking [money from tobacco companies](#). Bowman himself, echoing arguments made by the tobacco industry, has [called for](#) the “lifting [of] all EU-wide regulations on cigarette packaging” on the grounds of “civil liberties”. He has also railed against government funding for public health messages about the [dangers of smoking](#).

Some of the ASI’s past [claims about climate science](#) – such as statements that the planet is “failing to warm” and that climate science is becoming “[completely and utterly discredited](#)” – are as idiotic as the claims about the pandemic that Bowman rightly exposes. The ASI’s [Neoliberal Manifesto](#),

published in 2019, maintains, among other howlers, that “fewer people are malnourished than ever before”. In reality, [malnutrition has been rising](#) since 2014. If Bowman is serious about being a defender of science, perhaps he could call out some of the falsehoods spread by his own organisation.

Lobby groups funded by plutocrats and corporations are responsible for much of the misinformation that saturates public life. The launch of the Great Barrington Declaration, for example, that champions herd immunity through mass infection with the help of [discredited claims](#), was hosted – physically and online – by the [American Institute for Economic Research](#). This institute has received money from the [Charles Koch Foundation](#), and takes a wide range of [anti-environmental positions](#).

It’s not surprising that we have an inveterate liar as prime minister: this government has emerged from a [culture of rightwing misinformation](#), weaponised by thinktanks and lobby groups. False claims are big business: rich people and organisations will pay handsomely for others to spread them. Some of those whom the BBC used to “balance” climate scientists in its debates were professional liars paid by fossil-fuel companies.

Over the past 30 years, I have watched this business model spread like a virus through public life. Perhaps it is futile to call for a government of liars to regulate lies. But while conspiracy theorists make a killing from their false claims, we should at least name the standards that a good society would set, even if we can’t trust the current government to uphold them.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
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## Children

# **Children's social care is in crisis. What's needed is more cash, not privatisation**

[Patrick Butler](#)



The government's review of England's children's services must look at funding to improve the life chances of those in care



In 2011 there were 65,520 looked-after children in England; that had risen to more than 80,000 by the end of March 2020. Photograph: Ian West/PA

In 2011 there were 65,520 looked-after children in England; that had risen to more than 80,000 by the end of March 2020. Photograph: Ian West/PA

Wed 27 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

The recent ministerial announcement of a “bold and wide-ranging” [review of children’s social care](#) in England was timely, maybe even tardy. Few would deny change is needed: after a decade of austerity the system is at breaking point, and in parts chaotic, while the life chances of the growing cohort of children taken into care remain stubbornly dismal. But will the review be as comprehensive as it suggests?

The education secretary, [Gavin Williamson](#), has promised an inquiry of the root-and-branch kind: everything will be examined, from early years help to child protection, fostering and kinship care and care homes. It will be independent, will listen to children and care leavers, and its recommendations will feed into “ambitious and deliverable” reforms tackling thorny issues such as reducing the number of children entering care.

['Bad parent': children's watchdog to accuse state of care failings in England](#)

[Read more](#)

These are pressing issues. In 2011 there were [65,520 looked-after children](#) in England; that had risen to [more than 80,000](#) by the end of March 2020. The number of children on child protection plans has increased by more than half over the past decade. Cases have become more complex and serious – there have been big increases in numbers of children assessed by councils as suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

Residential provision is a [dysfunctional mess](#), highlighted by the costly [scandal of unregulated children's care homes](#). For many children in care the experience is [appalling](#). Once out of it, care leavers remain disproportionately likely to end up homeless or in prison. Educational outcomes are dismal: 43% of all 19 year-olds are at university; for care leavers that figure is just 13%.

This is a field in which the government's stated aim of "levelling up" ought to have real meaning, not least in preventing children going into care. There are huge regional and economic inequalities in care needs. In the affluent home counties borough of Wokingham, 24 children in every 10,000 are in care. By contrast, in the deprived seaside town of Blackpool, 223 children in every 10,000 are in care.

And yet the review was greeted, one sensed, with apprehension rather than unbridled excitement in wider social work and local authority circles. Williamson enthused over the "once in a lifetime opportunities" afforded by such a comprehensive review. For many working in and around the system, however, the nagging question was: opportunity for what?

A brief look at the recent history of government policy in children's social care gives a clue as to why so many are nervous. The common thread of Tory thinking in this area has been the desire to detach social services provision from council control, academy trust-style, and create outsourcing [markets for private providers](#), justified on the optimistic grounds that all this will let innovation bloom and drive down costs.

[Revealed: thousands of children in care placed in unregulated homes](#)  
[Read more](#)

Thus in 2014, the then coalition education secretary, Michael Gove, notoriously proposed allowing private companies [to bid to run core child protection](#) services, giving profit-seeking entities the power to take children from their families. Two years later the government [attempted to legislate](#) to strip away protections for children built up over decades since the landmark 1989 Children Act. Both proposals were defeated, the former amid widespread [public and professional opposition](#).

This hardly inspires a deep well of trust. Many doubt the independence of the review chair, Josh MacAlister, the founder of Frontline (the social work version of Teach First, which fast-tracks graduates into the teaching profession). For some he is a divisive figure, a chumocrat, too close to government and corporate interests (others point to his drive and commitment, and genuine zeal to improve children's care).

Another concern is that the [terms of reference](#) do not require asking if children's social care is adequately funded. The pandemic, and the inevitable reckoning for social services, is astonishingly not mentioned. Will the review make the link between poverty, austerity and rising pressure on families, or acknowledge that where we are now follows years of chronic local authority underfunding, and the [evisceration of early years services](#)?

It feels churlish to doubt the intentions of someone who promises to deliver a plan to “extend the joy, growth and safety of childhood and the esteem, love and security of family life to all children”. But the worry is that MacAlister will fulfil what many believe is the review's unspoken remit: to provide a dull, predictable charter for market-style reforms. The fear is that for all the hype, it will be neither honest enough nor bold enough.

- Patrick Butler is the Guardian's social policy editor
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[Opinion](#)[Hobbies](#)

## Jigsaw puzzles make you smarter – and I'm living proof

[Arwa Mahdawi](#)



Should I worry about my addiction to 1,000-piece brainteasers? Not according to the scientists



‘My idea of a wild night is now crouching over a table, rummaging through a cardboard box, and going “Ooh!” when I locate the right piece.’  
Photograph: Markus Spiering/Getty/EyeEm

‘My idea of a wild night is now crouching over a table, rummaging through a cardboard box, and going “Ooh!” when I locate the right piece.’  
Photograph: Markus Spiering/Getty/EyeEm

Wed 27 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

If you looked at my Google search history (which I would obviously never let anyone do), an alarming percentage of it would consist of variations of: “Is X actually good for you?” With X being whichever bad habit I’m engaged in. The amazing thing about the internet is that you can always find a [random study that justifies anything](#). Is binge-watching Netflix actually good for you? Why yes, experts have said that it’s a [healthy way of destressing](#). Is being a night owl who hits the snooze button 15 times every morning a sign you’re a genius? Why yes, a [2009 study](#) has found intelligent children are more likely to grow up to be nocturnal adults.

My latest adventures in confirmation bias are centred on jigsaw puzzles. At the beginning of the pandemic, everyone [got obsessed with 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzles](#); they were flying off the shelves like toilet paper. Losers, I thought at the time. Why would anyone over the age of eight and under the

age of 108 bother piecing together a stupid picture? You know what comes next: I reached the stage of pandemic despair where I became addicted to puzzles. My idea of a wild night is now crouching over a table, rummaging through a cardboard box and going “Ooh!” when I locate the right piece. Depressingly, I also seem to have reached an age where it is possible to strain a neck muscle from overenthusiastic puzzling.

So, is my latest hobby a complete waste of time? My partner says yes; science says no. Research suggests puzzles can help increase concentration and [sharpen your memory](#). And, [according to one study](#), doing jigsaws “recruits multiple visuospatial cognitive abilities and is a protective factor for visuospatial cognitive ageing”. I have no idea what that means, but it sounds like a great excuse to order another puzzle.

- Arwa Mahdawi is a Guardian columnist
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## [OpinionRussia](#)

# The Guardian view on Russia's protests: Navalny isn't Putin's only problem

[Editorial](#)

Mass demonstrations triggered by the arrest of the opposition leader reflect deeper discontent



A man holds up a poster with a portrait of Alexei Navalny that says, ‘One for all and all for one’, during a protest rally against the jailing of the opposition leader in St Petersburg, Russia. Photograph: Dmitri Lovetsky/AP

A man holds up a poster with a portrait of Alexei Navalny that says, ‘One for all and all for one’, during a protest rally against the jailing of the opposition leader in St Petersburg, Russia. Photograph: Dmitri Lovetsky/AP

Tue 26 Jan 2021 13.54 EST

Politicians know that they have a problem when they have to deny it. On Monday, Vladimir Putin insisted that an extravagant palace on the Black Sea

coast [did not belong to him](#), following a video exposé released by the opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, and so far watched by around 90 million people. Footage of him swimming in a giant pool was fake. Nothing described as his property there either “belongs to or ever belonged to me or my close relatives. Ever”, Mr Putin said. (His opponent has said that the estate formally belongs to four proxies.)

The Russian president and his allies have preferred to publicly ignore Mr Navalny. Now, they are attacking him and his claims head-on, and denouncing the protests he has inspired as illegal and dangerous. Tens of thousands [took to the streets](#) in more than 100 cities across the country on Saturday, in the largest show of opposition for years – prompting police to arrest thousands, including Mr Navalny’s wife, Yulia, and many of his allies. The demonstrations were sparked primarily by Mr Navalny’s [arrest](#) on his return to Russia, following treatment in Germany after the [suspected FSB assassination attempt](#). He could be sent to a penal colony, perhaps for years, by the end of this month.

His extraordinary courage, charisma and savvy social media tactics – as well as shock at the novichok poisoning (for which officials say there is no evidence) – have brought support from disparate parts of the Russian opposition, many of whom may not share his broader political outlook. Mr Putin’s approval ratings [still appear high](#), but are well below their peak. Underlying these protests are frustration at poor standards of living and the dismal economic situation, worsened by low oil prices and the pandemic, as well as resentment at corruption and other political abuses. In many places, local issues have fused with wider complaints.

More protests have been called for this weekend, ahead of Mr Navalny’s court hearing. In 2013, he escaped a prison sentence thanks to public pressure. This time, the scale of opposition has rattled the Kremlin, and the uprising that began in Belarus last summer has sharpened anxieties. Mr Navalny, [long a nuisance](#), now looks like a threat. Assaults, pressure on his family, jail and even poisoning have failed to silence him. Keeping him behind bars would keep him quiet, while warning off others. But supporters hope the protests will at least help to maintain attention on his case – and, perhaps, safeguard him while in custody.

The US, EU and UK have rightly called for his immediate and unconditional release. The EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, says that he will press the case in Moscow next month. Whether action results – or amounts to more than largely symbolic sanctions – is another matter. Germany is determined to [press ahead](#) with the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, despite growing opposition in Europe and sanctions imposed by the US. Angela Merkel said last week that the attack on Mr Navalny had not changed her basic view of the project. The UK has done embarrassingly little to crack down on money laundering by close friends of the Kremlin. A [damning report](#) from the intelligence and security committee last year called the City of London a “laundromat” for illicit funds. Britain’s [unexplained wealth orders](#) – introduced in 2018 – could, and should, be used more effectively.

Russian officials and state media are already busy portraying Mr Navalny as a western stooge, though he has always been careful to keep his distance from foreign governments. Mr Putin’s real problem is not his jailed opponent, but the Russian people whose dissatisfaction he harnesses. Their daily experiences do as much to erode the Kremlin’s authority as Mr Navalny’s viral videos. While the president may prefer to ignore it, there is no denying public discontent.

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

## Covid is teaching the Tories basic social democracy – but they won't learn

[Rafael Behr](#)



They can see that Britain's shocking inequality needs addressing, but the solutions go against their true instincts



Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak visit a Tesco.com distribution centre in Erith, south-east London. Photograph: Andrew Parsons/No 10 Downing Street

Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak visit a Tesco.com distribution centre in Erith, south-east London. Photograph: Andrew Parsons/No 10 Downing Street

Tue 26 Jan 2021 10.59 EST

There is an ancient Indian parable about a group of blind men encountering a huge animal for the first time. Each man grasps a different part of the creature. One thinks he is dealing with something hard and pointed, like a spear. Another thinks it is a vast leathery wall. A third presumes it is a serpentine coil. They each get part of the picture, but none can conceive of the whole elephant.

Thus does the Conservative party prod and grope at the problem of inequality.

The pandemic has made it harder to ignore this beast marauding across the social and economic landscape. Britain has some of the [widest disparities](#) of income and wealth in Europe, and the most extreme [regional imbalances](#). Uneven distribution of money, qualifications and job opportunities feeds bitter cultural resentments on matters of identity and respect. Inequality over

such a broad spectrum depletes the belief in common national endeavour that is required for stable democracy.

The Brexit referendum gave vent to decades of accrued frustration. The Tories correctly identified that as a political opportunity, but have not pursued the diagnosis much further. They have crawled over parts of the problem, grabbing at component grievances – immigration, dilapidated high streets, financial insecurity – without getting a picture of the whole elephant.

[UK Covid live: vaccine protectionism not the answer to supply issues, says Hancock](#)

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Confronting an angry public, politicians have two options: stoke the anger to exploit its energy for electoral gain, or develop policy to calm the rage by addressing its causes. Boris Johnson's government dabbles in both. Some ministers would apply dollops of exchequer balm, spending in deprived areas to heal wounds on the body politic. Others prefer to rub in [salty culture war reaction](#), reminding Brexit-supporting voters why they abandoned a “woke”, open-border, Europhiliac Labour party.

Before Brexit was even a word, David Cameron was feeling his way around these issues. His [“big society” agenda](#) and assertions that we were “all in it together” contained some recognition that politicians ought to care about egregious inequalities. But that insight did not survive contact with more potent ideological imperatives: hawkish fiscal conservatism, allergy to state intervention, and mistrust of the public sector.

The pandemic has imposed a limited re-evaluation of that creed. To avert apocalyptic unemployment, Rishi Sunak has embraced deficit spending at a rate well beyond what George Osborne once denounced as ruinous profligacy. Public borrowing is no longer the subject of parsimonious Tory moralising, but that argument has been postponed, not settled. The prime minister's post-pandemic agenda is “levelling up”, which involves applying wads of Treasury money to prop up the “red wall” – [former Labour heartlands](#) that Johnson captured in 2019, overcoming historic cultural resistance to his party.

If the revenue for that project cannot all be borrowed, taxes must rise. That involves the Treasury transferring money from the traditional Conservative base, mostly in affluent southern shires, to the prime minister's new personal base in northern and Midlands seats. Tory MPs from places footing the bill will resist.

Johnson's route to power was paved with capitulation to the right wing of his party. It would be out of character to pick a fight with the low-tax, small-state libertarians who put him in Downing Street. If he cannot change Tory attitudes to redistribution, he will go to his default setting: cosmetic changes and snake oil salesmanship; spending too little, promising too much, filling the gap with bluster and lies. That will disappoint the clan of Tory MPs whose interest in levelling up has intellectual roots, a foundation in evidence and an eye for more than cynical electoral calculus.

They gather around the Onward thinktank, [talk about](#) reweaving the social fabric, engage respectfully with the left. That is a significant part of Johnson's coalition, but not one he fears. Obedience to the leader and satisfaction with pathetic crumbs of policy are reliable traits in the moderate Tory.

The sight of Tories stumbling around the same old elephant supports the view once expressed by Hopi Sen, a [Labour](#) blogger, that "compassionate conservatism is social democracy for slow learners". The Tory tradition venerates cultural continuity and civic institutions that bind individuals into communities. It also identifies markets and individual enterprise as wealth-generating engines. Every so often, the realisation dawns that those beliefs are in conflict. A market free-for-all, plus a cult of self-enrichment, separates society into winners and losers, undermining cohesion, degrading civic institutions and sowing instability. Inequality is a drag on wellbeing paid by rich as well as poor. But the repertoire of Conservative solutions is limited by resistance to state regulation and the belief that taxes offend liberty.

[Never mind Boris Johnson, Rishi Sunak is central to the UK's Covid mess |](#)

[Owen Jones](#)

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Plenty of Tory MPs feel the social pressure for an egalitarian correction, but they are outnumbered by those who reject the most effective methods as a slippery slope to communism. All can agree that “levelling up” is the solution as long as they do not have to define the problem.

Labour cycles through a different set of repetitive failings in this area. It struggles to persuade voters that it can be trusted with their money; that it taxes for the common interest, not from spite to punish ambition. It forgets to say a good word about private enterprise. It fails to enforce the boundary between a moderate left that would regulate markets, and revolutionary Marxists who would abolish them. [Keir Starmer](#) looks reluctant to articulate that difference.

The pandemic has made the case for social democracy better than any recent Labour leader. It has revealed the penalty we all pay for neglect of public health infrastructure. It has reminded people that social security is a moral proposition, not a subsidy for scroungers. It has illuminated a deep cultural longing for solidarity [expressed in devotion to the NHS](#).

It should not be beyond the skills of a centre-left leader to pull those themes together with an upbeat patriotic inflection, describing the road ahead in bold, broad terms that has Conservative voters nodding along, while inviting the conclusion that Labour is better qualified to meet the challenge.

- Rafael Behr is a Guardian columnist
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[First Dog on the Moon](#)  
[Snakes](#)

**In which First Dog on the Moon bravely  
stares death in the slithery face! A true  
story!**



[First Dog on the Moon](#)

A tiger snake moved into our garden. Danger noodle. Murder worm. Death piece of string. The devil's spaghetti

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## Premier League

# Manchester City go top after Gündogan turns on style in 5-0 rout of West Brom



Manchester City's Ilkay Gundogan celebrates scoring his first goal against West Brom with teammate Phil Foden. Photograph: Nick Potts/Reuters

Manchester City's Ilkay Gundogan celebrates scoring his first goal against West Brom with teammate Phil Foden. Photograph: Nick Potts/Reuters

*[Peter Lansley at The Hawthorns](#)*

*[@PeteLansley](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 17.15 EST

Manchester City became the ninth team to top the Premier League this season but while Pep Guardiola claimed the table is the last thing he will look at, his team appear set to stay significantly involved in this title race. The numbers behind this victory are staggering but barely do justice to how superior Guardiola's team were to humbled West Brom.

Ilkay Gündogan continued his hot streak by scoring twice as his manager paid tribute to his neighbour. “He’s an exceptional human being to start with,” Guardiola said, “and an exceptional player.” City made light of the absence of Kevin De Bruyne to record an 11th successive wins in all competitions for the first time since 2017.

[Lacazette completes comeback win at Southampton to keep Arsenal on rise](#)  
[Read more](#)

It seems hard to conceive West Brom managed to draw 1-1 at the Etihad Stadium last month, especially as that was the game in which they traded Slaven Bilic for Sam Allardyce as manager. They have now conceded 29 goals in their 10 [Premier League](#) games at The Hawthorns this season and sit six points adrift of safety, with the worst goal difference in the division. They are the first team since Chelsea in 1978 to concede at least three goals in five successive top flight home games. That derby win at Wolves a fortnight ago seems a mirage.

City have the best goal difference and, while they will be overtaken if Manchester United beat Sheffield United on Wednesday, they are seven points clear of the ailing champions Liverpool. With Sheffield United and Burnley next for City before a visit to Anfield, Guardiola’s third title at the Etihad looks within his hands.

“The last thing I’m thinking about is the league table,” he said. “Now I want to get home safely, have a few days off, then Sheffield United. What’s important is to be calm, like when we were 12th.” This City certainly are, even if they were aided by Albion’s meekness. Never mind assistant referee Sian Massey-Ellis raising a misguided flag for City’s second goal, the home team appeared to be waving a white flag as they were four down by half-time.



Raheem Sterling scores Manchester City's fifth goal. Photograph: Laurence Griffiths/EPA

The loss of De Bruyne to a hamstring injury last week could have been a glimmer of vulnerability but Gündogan is finding the form of his life in a more advanced role. He has now scored seven times in eight league games as City adapt to life without a regulation centre forward by getting the midfielders to score instead.

Yet City had looked rattled inside two minutes when Ederson saved from Semi Ajayi at close range as Darnell Furlong hurled in a succession of long throw-ins. City responded and, after Sam Johnstone tipped Phil Foden's shot on to a post, Gündogan took a neat touch to his right on the D before lofting a neat shot into the far corner in the sixth minute.

In a tight match, Massey's indecisive flag for the second goal might have been controversial. Only after Riyad Mahrez had received João Cancelo's pass out wide and started dribbling back did she signal for offside. When the ball came back for Cancelo to take control and shoot into the far top corner, left-footed, it was unclear whether the West Brom defence had stopped for the flag or not. At the moment, it is difficult to tell the difference.

VAR showed Mahrez had been played onside by Furlong and the offside decision was overturned. “You can’t tell me about all that play to the whistle stuff,” Allardyce said. “That’s nonsense. The assistant referee made a mistake but that was just one mistake. We made lots more than that.” Callum Robinson shot just wide from a good chance for West Brom before Gündogan made it 3-0. Karlan Grant nodded the ball back towards Romaine Sawyers but Gündogan picked it off his opponent and shot home left-footed from 20 yards.

[Jack Harrison's winner for Leeds heaps pressure on Steve Bruce and Newcastle](#)

[Read more](#)

Mahrez scored just before half-time in trademark style as he cut inside after collecting Raheem Sterling’s crossfield pass and swerved home a left-footed shot.

West Brom signalled their bid for damage limitation at half-time by replacing their centre-forward Callum Robinson with a third centre-half in Kyle Bartley; City replaced Foden and Gündogan. It was like a tacit agreement to go easy for more realistic challenges ahead.

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Rodri shot against the top of the crossbar as City remained so encamped deep in West Brom territory their holding midfielder fancied his chances of a goal.

Then he sand-wedged a delightfully angled ball for Mahrez to run on to and, delicate as you like, half-volley a square pass across goal for Sterling to tap in his ninth goal in all competitions this season. Who needs strikers?

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## Premier League

# Lacazette completes comeback win at Southampton to keep Arsenal on rise



Arsenal's Alexandre Lacazette scores their third goal. Photograph: Andy Rain/Reuters

Arsenal's Alexandre Lacazette scores their third goal. Photograph: Andy Rain/Reuters

*[Ben Fisher](#) at St Mary's*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 17.12 EST

As the wind and rain swirled around St Mary's, an Arsenal side propelled by the exuberance of Bukayo Saka swept aside Southampton to exact revenge and record a fifth win in six [Premier League](#) matches. Nicolas Pépé cancelled out Stuart Armstrong's sweet opener before goals by Saka and Alexandre Lacazette helped Arsenal train their sights on the top four after jumping to eighth, although almost all of those above them have games in hand.

At times Arsenal flowed from back to front with the ease of yesteryear and, for Mikel Arteta, this result goes a long way to justifying his weakened selection in [the FA Cup defeat](#) here last weekend. Better still, the absent Kieran Tierney should return against Manchester United on Saturday, when the incoming Martin Ødegaard could debut.

[Manchester City go top after Gündogan turns on style in 5-0 rout of West Brom](#)

[Read more](#)

Saka celebrated his goal by making a heart shape with his hands and when Lacazette capped the scoring, he poignantly spelled out the number 14, a nod to Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who remains absent owing to personal reasons. Arteta dedicated victory to his captain. “I love how they support each other and how they protect each other,” Arteta said. “Auba is having a difficult time. We are all behind him and this win is for him.”

This game was played at such a frenetic pace one could be forgiven for thinking this was a knockout competition. [Southampton](#) took the lead inside three minutes when Armstrong met James Ward-Prowse’s corner to send a rasping half-volley beyond Bernd Leno. Jack Stephens’ dummy run fooled Pépé and Armstrong thundered towards the penalty spot to finish. Eight of Southampton’s last 10 league goals have stemmed from set plays.

Arteta acknowledged defeat in the Cup exposed much room for improvement but for the Southampton pair stepping into the boots of the first-choice full-backs Ryan Bertrand and Kyle Walker-Peters, who were missing through suspension and injury respectively, it proved a cruel lesson. Yan Valery was caught the wrong side of Pépé for Arsenal’s equaliser and on the opposite flank Jake Vokins was caught cold by Saka’s incisive run, when [Arsenal](#) seized the lead six minutes before the interval. The reborn Granit Xhaka, who effortlessly slipped in Pépé for the equaliser, again proved the catalyst, this time feeding Lacazette, whose exquisite first-time pass found Saka. He coolly rounded Alex McCarthy before firing into an empty net.

Ralph Hasenhüttl bemoaned his side’s naivety, acknowledging they were soft goals that exposed a skeleton squad nursing injuries to key players. “We are definitely running out of players at the moment,” he said. “But we

shouldn't be too negative, we have 29 points and we knew such a situation could come. We know we are a good team if everything is perfect and we are in good shape. It looks like they have a little bit more quality than we have."

This was the third meeting between these sides in six weeks and there was a sense of déjà vu in the manner in which Southampton presented Arsenal with a flurry of early chances. First, Jan Bednarek was guilty of gifting possession straight to Xhaka, who sent Lacazette clear through on goal inside 50 seconds, only for the returning McCarthy to deny the striker. Then Arsenal's equaliser stemmed from another sloppy pass out of defence. Stephens squandered possession cheaply, allowing Saka to retrieve the ball before Xhaka played in Pépé, who sent a crisp finish into the far corner.

## [Southampton v Arsenal: Premier League – live!](#)

[Read more](#)

Carlos Cuesta, the Arsenal assistant coach perched behind the away substitutes, relentlessly encouraged Cédric Soares, Emile Smith Rowe and Lacazette, in particular, to squeeze the Southampton back line into awkward avenues. Leno saved superbly from Che Adams in the first half and the Arsenal goalkeeper had to be alert in the second when Danny Ings danced into the box. Ings breezed beyond Thomas Partey, Héctor Bellerín and Rob Holding but at the byline a towering Leno confronted him.

Willian replaced Smith Rowe with 20 minutes to play but the worry for the Saints remained taming Saka, who sent a curling effort wide when freed. They had been warned and, moments later Saka's invention teed up Lacazette to finish and maintain the feelgood factor. "Bukayo is doing really well, all the time asking to train more and asking for areas where to improve," Arteta said. "Scoring goals is definitely one of those things."

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## Premier League

# Jack Harrison's winner for Leeds heaps pressure on Steve Bruce and Newcastle



Jack Harrison (third from left) watches his nonchalant shot evade Karl Darlow's grasp for Leeds' winner. Photograph: Lindsey Parnaby/Reuters

Jack Harrison (third from left) watches his nonchalant shot evade Karl Darlow's grasp for Leeds' winner. Photograph: Lindsey Parnaby/Reuters

*[Louise Taylor](#) at St James' Park*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 15.21 EST

As the final whistle blew Steve Bruce stared at the players slumped disconsolately on the pitch before turning to offer Marcelo Bielsa a polite fist bump. The Leeds manager sensed it was no time for social distancing and immediately placed both hands on his Newcastle counterpart's shoulders.

A couple of minutes of intense looking monologue from the Argentinian ensued, resulting in a rare smile from Bruce. “He was very complimentary about my team and said we deserved more,” Newcastle’s manager reported. “He said we played very well second half.”

### [Gündogan fires sublime Manchester City to Premier League summit](#)

[Read more](#)

After nine [Premier League](#) games without a win – and 11 in all competitions – Bruce seemed genuinely encouraged by a much-improved second-half display following an appalling first 45 minutes. “The performance was much, much better,” said a manager who detected cause for optimism after Allan Saint-Maximin stepped off the bench. “I’ve seen enough to know we’ll be fine.”

Without quite mirroring Newcastle’s alarming plunge towards dangerous relegation waters Leeds have endured a mini-depression of their own in recent weeks but memories of a run of three successive defeats diminished as Raphinha and Jack Harrison scored a goal apiece and Bielsa’s defence for once held firm at set pieces.

Like Bruce, the Leeds manager said he had “not seen” the moment when Rodrigo appeared to spit at Fabian Schär as the Newcastle defender lay prone on the pitch prompting an altercation resulting in bookings for both players.



Steve Bruce was unable to inspire his side to halt a miserable run without a victory – they are now winless in 11 games. Photograph: Lee Smith/PA

Bolstered by news of further impending significant investment from the San Francisco 49ers NFL franchise which will, among other things, enable them to renovate Elland Road, Bielsa's side began strongly. When Jacob Murphy lost the ball far too easily just inside his own half, Patrick Bamford and Rodrigo combined to conjure a shooting chance on the counterattack which Raphinha revelled in converting.

[Lacazette completes comeback win at Southampton to keep Arsenal on rise](#)  
[Read more](#)

As the Brazilian winger met Rodrigo's cut back on the edge of the area and, having taken a steady touch, shot low and left-footed beyond Karl Darlow, Bruce thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his club anorak and stared at the ground. His sole consolation must have been that there were no fans inside St James' Park to barrack him. Given the ease with which Bielsa's players controlled possession and overran his side in a midfield dominated by Kalvin Phillips, the invective echoing from a full Gallowgate End would have hurt.

At one point Bruce scratched his head as if irritated by an insect. Out on the pitch, Leeds were swarming all over their hosts with Harrison missing a sitter. Time after time, they dissected Bruce's five-man rearguard on the break and, had Bamford not occasionally taken one touch too many, they could have all but won the game by half-time. Yet once Stuart Dallas had a goal disallowed for handball early in the second period, Newcastle were transformed. When Jamal Lascelles won an important challenge, Jonjo Shelvey and Callum Wilson worked the ball into the path of the advancing Miguel Almirón who delighted in squeezing a shot beneath Ilan Meslier.

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All too typically Newcastle promptly lost concentration. Having left Harrison unmarked they watched in horror as he caught Raphinha's pass with the outside of his left foot and the resultant shot crashed in off the inside of a post.

The moment had come for Bruce to reintroduce Saint-Maximin following a two-month coronavirus-induced absence. The Frenchman made an instant impact, unnerving Leeds and galvanising teammates in equal measure as the game turned moved from end to end. Cued up by Saint-Maximin, Jamal Lewis hit the bar and Meslier saved well from Schär and Shelvey but Leeds held firm. "It became very difficult," Bielsa said. "But it was a very important win for us."

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## Premier League

# Tomas Soucek double sends West Ham fourth with win over Crystal Palace



Tomas Soucek celebrates scoring for West Ham United in their Premier League win against Crystal Palace. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/NMC Pool/The Guardian

Tomas Soucek celebrates scoring for West Ham United in their Premier League win against Crystal Palace. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/NMC Pool/The Guardian

[Jonathan Liew at Selhurst Park](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 15.09 EST

Somehow, the Premier League's perennial tearaways have become the model students. The responsibility for this lies less with a fatally flawed ownership than with impressively drilled players, and a manager in David Moyes who has taken a thin, uneven squad into the upper reaches of the top flight. Whisper it, but believe it all the same: West Ham are very good.

Just how good, of course, remains a matter of some conjecture. Contrary to popular belief, the league table lies freely and often, and West Ham's ascent into the top four is attributable largely to having played more fixtures than the teams around them. Moyes himself was keen to temper expectations.

[West Ham ready to clear way for Lingard loan by buying Benrahma this month](#)

[Read more](#)

"I've sensed for a while that we're getting better," he said. "But I want to grow steadily. It's very rare that you can get to this position and stay there."

Still, the way they came from behind to dismantle [Crystal Palace](#) here really offered all the evidence you needed. This is a club operating at the very limits of their potential and, with a judicious signing or two in the remaining days of the transfer window, might just be able to challenge for European football next season.

Again West Ham were indebted to their midfielder Tomas Soucek, whose two goals in the first half took his tally for the season to an improbable seven. Soucek is no physical freak or technical genius. What he does as well as anyone is anticipate, pre-empt, interpret flight and human movement in a way that allows him to reach the ball at the optimum moment, often ghosting in late and unmarked. Since his arrival in the Premier League last January, only Bruno Fernandes has more goals from midfield.

"John Wark comes to mind, scoring great goals running from deep," Moyes said of Soucek. "With his attitude and commitment, he's a joy to work with."

In truth, West Ham could have scored plenty more here. The eternally thwarted Michail Antonio probably should have had four on his own. Aaron Cresswell had another sparkling game at left-back, Declan Rice was again quietly excellent in midfield, Said Benrahma was a constant threat in possession and quietly tenacious out of it. But essentially West Ham's strength is as a collective, an unstarry and unfussy group of players who help each other, push each other, know each other's jobs as well as their own.

This was how they managed to turn a game they had barely been able to start. Palace were ahead within three minutes through Wilfried Zaha, whose neat shimmy and low shot was probably their best move of the game. Again the home side's recurring weakness to set pieces and transitions would come back to haunt them. On nine minutes Soucek headed in Antonio's cross after a neat chip from Pablo Fornals on the left wing. On 25 minutes the Palace defence, preoccupied by the threat of Antonio, allowed Soucek to drift towards the back post and slam Cresswell's free-kick in from close range.



Tomas Soucek scores to make it 2-1 to West Ham. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/NMC Pool/The Guardian

Palace never really recovered their composure after that. Their buildup through midfield was too slow, and their unwillingness to push up their full-backs meant most of their attacks tapered off harmlessly about 40 yards from goal. Meanwhile, West Ham continued to charge forward on the break: Antonio had a chance to add a quick third straight from kick-off, as well as another from close range shortly before half-time, but hit the post on both occasions.

A glaring miss by Zaha, putting a one-on-one chance straight at the goalkeeper, seemed to set the tone for the second half. A painful clash of

heads between Cheikhou Kouyaté and Gary Cahill summed up their evening.

Craig Dawson settled matters from a Jarrod Bowen corner, and though Palace dominated possession in the final stages at no point did they look like claiming anything from the game. Indeed, the only real point of interest was Antonio finding more and more creative ways to miss from close range.

Michy Batshuayi bundled in a late consolation with virtually the last kick of the game, but by then the points had already gone. And again, a failure to convert a promising start into a decent performance will reflect badly on Roy Hodgson. The need to switch things around, to try something new, was obvious after about 25 minutes. Instead the same predictable substitutions arrived at the same predictable times, with the same predictable results.

Palace are not safe, and on this evidence nor is Hodgson.

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[Chelsea](#)

## 'It feels amazing': Tuchel takes Chelsea manager's job on 18-month contract

- German replaces Frank Lampard with club ninth in league
- He will be in dugout for Wednesday's game against Wolves

03:19

*Jacob Steinberg*

[@JacobSteinberg](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 13.14 EST

Thomas Tuchel will sit in the dugout rather than watch from the stands when he takes charge of his first [Chelsea](#) game on Wednesday, signalling the German's desire to make an immediate impact after his appointment as manager.

Tuchel got straight to work after signing an 18-month deal with an option for another year, holding his first training session on Tuesday night after [replacing Frank Lampard](#). The former Paris Saint-Germain manager wants to be on the bench when Chelsea, who are six points behind fourth-placed West Ham in the Premier League, host Wolves. He told allies he wants to take responsibility for his new side's performance.

[In Thomas Tuchel, Chelsea are pivoting to a kind of anti-Lampard](#)

[Read more](#)

It has been a whirlwind start to the week for Chelsea, who fired Lampard less than 24 hours after [beating Luton](#) in the FA Cup on Sunday. Tuchel, who was [sacked by PSG](#) last month, was soon installed as the 11th permanent manager of the Roman Abramovich era. Negotiations with

Marina Granovskaia, the influential director, were said to be tough but Tuchel is excited by the challenge after arriving in London on Tuesday.

“I would like to thank Chelsea for their confidence in me and my staff,” Tuchel said. “We all have the greatest respect for Frank Lampard’s work and the legacy he created at Chelsea. At the same time, I cannot wait to meet my new team and compete in the most exciting league in football. I am grateful to now be part of the Chelsea family – it feels amazing.”

Many sources expected Lampard to be sacked after last week’s [defeat at Leicester](#). It is believed Covid-19 protocols delayed Tuchel’s arrival, which led to Lampard remaining in charge. However Tuchel can enter Chelsea’s secure bubble, in accordance with Covid rules, after testing negative.

Tuchel, who is expected to install Arno Michels as his assistant, inherits a struggling side. Chelsea’s slump under Lampard has left them at risk of missing out on Champions League qualification after spending £220m last summer.

The board began succession planning earlier this month. RB Leipzig’s Julian Nagelsmann was out of reach until the summer and Chelsea also considered Ralf Rangnick, another German, on an interim basis. The Ukraine manager and former Chelsea striker, Andriy Shevchenko, was another option but was seen as too inexperienced.

Tuchel, who led PSG to the Champions League final last season and won two league titles with the club, emerged as the preferred candidate. Chelsea looked at the former Borussia Dortmund manager in 2018, only to hire Maurizio Sarri. The hierarchy were aware of his interest in the job by the time Lampard’s side [lost 3-1 to Manchester City](#) at the start of January.



Timo Werner reacts after missing a penalty against Luton. Will Thomas Tuchel get more out of his fellow German? Photograph: Catherine Ivill/Getty Images

Tuchel, who is regarded as a fine tactician and began his managerial career at Mainz in 2009, spoke to Chelsea's struggling German attackers, Kai Havertz and Timo Werner, before training. He sees vast potential in attack – he managed Christian Pulisic at Borussia Dortmund and is a fan of Callum Hudson-Odoi – and believes he can work with Mateo Kovacic, Jorginho and N'Golo Kanté in central midfield. He has a close relationship with Thiago Silva after managing the centre-back at PSG.

Chelsea insiders insist the change is not because of Havertz and Werner. They point to the entire team's loss of confidence. Some senior players had awkward relationships with Lampard. Jorginho and Antonio Rüdiger could earn fresh starts given that Tuchel wanted them at PSG.

Yet Tuchel does not come without risks. He clashed with other figures at Dortmund after replacing Jürgen Klopp in 2015 and [experienced similar problems](#) after joining PSG in 2018.

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The first German to manage Chelsea will need to keep his new bosses happy. Although Tuchel's first task will be lifting the side back into the top-four race, he must challenge for the title in the long run.

"It is never easy to change head coach in the middle of the season but we are very happy to secure one of Europe's best coaches in Thomas Tuchel," Granovskaia said. "There is still much to play for and much to achieve, this season and beyond."

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[Chelsea](#)

## In Thomas Tuchel, Chelsea are pivoting to a kind of anti-Lampard

The tactical modernist is very different from his predecessor at Stamford Bridge but could be just what Chelsea need now

03:19



[Barney Ronay](#)

[@barneyronay](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 04.02 EST

According to the Thomas Tuchel playbook, managing a football team is “something you need to learn and understand, not a thing you do because there’s nothing else left or because it seems like the logical next step after 400 professional matches”. Tuchel wasn’t talking about [Frank Lampard](#) when he said these words.

Although it would surely make his likely arrival at Stamford Bridge a little spicier if he could rehash this statement for his opening remarks at the unveiling-station – ideally while wagging his finger and brandishing his economics diploma, his youth coaching medals, and all the other evidence of a coaching hinterland, a life spent outside the inner circle, that separates him from his immediate predecessor.

[Abramovich era leaves Lampard with no time to pull out of nosedive | David Hytner](#)

[Read more](#)

What does seem certain is that should [Chelsea](#) end up recruiting Tuchel they will, by accident or design, have landed on a kind of anti-Lampard. Exit one underqualified celebrity appointment. Enter the gangling Bavarian uber-nerd, tactical modernist and obsessively-minded details coach, a man whose stated hobbies include nights in drinking orange spritzer and “an interest in furniture design”.

All managerial hires tend to oscillate between extremes to some degree. Lampard is a superstar. Tuchel was no kind of player at all. Lampard was already being touted around as a manager by his uncle before he’d even taken his first steps. Tuchel believes in coaching and management as a kind of vocation, something to learn and understand, an intellectual discipline as much as a function of status and personality.

And yes, it is already possible to hear the knives being sharpened, Lampard’s friends in the media taking pre-umbrage at the presence of this outsider, who has already upset a few people along the way and seems certain to have his early collisions and wrong turns.



Thomas Tuchel communicates with Kylian Mbappé at PSG, where he seemed a weird appointment. Photograph: Socrates Images/Getty Images

But there is plenty of good sense too in this pivot towards a Tuchel-type figure. Where Lampard was a tactical blank, a manager still working out how he wants his teams to look, Tuchel is very clearly associated with a way of playing, with direct links to the current hot headliners of the German school of gegenpressing, rapid transition and all the rest. Another point of contrast: Tuchel is demonstrably qualified to do the job. In fact he is an upgrade on pretty much every professional level, with the exception of one key quality: he isn't Frank. And this kind of thing really does matter at Chelsea.

Lampard's sacking may have arrived with startling speed, the executioner's block wheeled into place with that familiar brutal efficiency, but it was, in the end, a victory for the circle of life.

[Chelsea to appoint Thomas Tuchel as manager after Frank Lampard is sacked](#)

[Read more](#)

Lampard returned to Stamford Bridge with an idea of reasserting the basic Chelsea identity, the Chelsea of his own playing days. In which case – job

done. The end may have arrived with a merciless swish of the blade, but this was in itself a reassertion of the deep Chelsea culture of the Abramovich years. This is the model. And in a commendably ruthless fashion the model has now done away with one of its own favourite sons. And so we go on. The circle of life demands fresh meat for the shredder.

Tuchel looks, in outline, the best Chelsea hire since Antonio Conte, and before that Carlo Ancelotti, 11 years and seven empty chairs down the line, albeit one who arrives with a degree of uncertainty over his own trajectory.

At this point it is worth recalling how Tuchel first announced himself. Rewind 21 years and Tuchel was playing under Ralf Rangnick at Ulm, a club in the process of a transformative rush up through the divisions. A cartilage injury forced Tuchel into retirement aged 24, and a spell in the wilderness. He worked as a barman in Stuttgart. He raged at his bad luck. He settled into a youth level coaching role under Rangnick, groomed as an awkward, clever, challenging coach in the making.

Tuchel got his break at Mainz in 2009, following on from Jürgen Klopp. He trimmed his squad, refocused the players, and did well enough to create a kind of wonderkid buzz around himself, a persona that propelled him on to Dortmund in succession to Klopp once again. Tuchel was a success at Dortmund: he brought Christian Pulisic through, he experimented with positions and roles, and he ended up being sacked three days after winning the club's first trophy in five years following disagreements with assorted levels of the club hierarchy.

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Paris Saint-Germain followed, a weird appointment in itself: PSG is a star project, Tuchel is a systems manager who demands the players act as a collective. But he won a lot of games, won the trophies he was supposed to win and took that team to the Champions League final. At the end of which nobody really knows what Tuchel's ceiling might be. He's done quite well, without ever looking the ideal fit in his environment.

There are some obvious advantages at Chelsea. Through Rangnick – an early mentor of both Timo Werner, the player, and Tuchel the manager – he

has a direct line in to how to get the best out Chelsea's £50m striker. No excuses here: Tuchel looks like the ideal choice for a player who needs to be used in a specific way to replicate his Bundesliga form. Rangnick is also a huge fan of Kai Havertz, who he once described as Cruyff-like in his all-round game. Should Tuchel get the job it is to be hoped the odd long chat with his old boss is in line.

Otherwise Tuchel will make Chelsea's players fit his pattern, with obsessive drills, and a very clear idea of where he wants them to be on the pitch. The Tuchel style is based on running, hard pressing, and speed of thought and deed. In Germany this playing style was considered at one point to be classically "English".

## Timeline

### **Frank Lampard: key dates as Chelsea manager**

Show

4 July 2019

Lampard leaves Rams to make return

After Chelsea agree to pay Derby £4m in compensation, Lampard returns to manage the club he scored a record 211 goals for, winning three Premier League titles and the Champions League in 2012. "Everyone knows my love for this club and the history we have shared, however my sole focus is on the job in hand," he says. "I am here to work hard, bring further success to the club and I cannot wait to get started."

11 August 2019

A rocky start at Old Trafford

In his first Premier League game in charge, Chelsea lose 4-0 at Manchester United. After the heaviest defeat by United since 1965 he vigorously defends his players. "There were lots of elements about today that I liked," he says. "We were intense in our pressure. We won the ball back high in lots of areas. We dominated the midfield. For big spells in the first half they couldn't get out."

1 August 2020

Top-four finish and Cup final defeat

Having qualified for the Champions League by finishing fourth, Chelsea fall short in the FA Cup final, losing 2-1 to Arsenal, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scoring twice while Matteo Kovacic is sent off. Chelsea fail to recover from injuries to captain César Azpilicueta and goalscorer Christian Pulisic. "It all came together for us today: two hamstrings, a dislocated shoulder," says Lampard. "It's the end of a long, long season and it was the tipping point for us."

4 September 2020

Big money, bigger expectations

Kai Havertz is signed from Bayer Leverkusen for a fee of £89m, the most expensive signing of a £222m summer spree. Lampard's successes the previous season had been achieved despite a transfer embargo, but Havertz and £47.5m forward Timo Werner struggle to adapt. "It's not an easy transition to this league," says Lampard in January. "I think people that question them should give them time."

19 January 2021

Foxes failure marks beginning of the end

A comprehensive 2-0 defeat at Leicester is Chelsea's fifth in eight Premier League matches as they tumble out of the title race. Lampard, as has been his recent practice, suggests his players carry significant blame. "There are players who are not playing as well as they should be," he says. "They are the only ones who can deal with that. How you handle setbacks is what defines you." Victory over Luton in the FA Cup is not enough to save Lampard, who is sacked on 25 January.

Timeline by **John Brewin**

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

So much for the good news. There is also plenty that will be picked away at and used to beat him with. Tuchel does not suffer fools, speaks brusquely at times, and has some quirks: no use of surnames, and an insistence players look into each other's eyes while saying good morning; an obsession with good manners and punctuality. There is plenty to work on here if, or indeed when, things start to go bad.

For now, should he get the job, he has a blank slate: a hugely powerful squad, a natural tactical fit with some key players, and even the added benefit of an empty stadium into which to ease his awkward frame. Over to you, the anti-Frank.

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## Alistair Brownlee

Interview

# **Alistair Brownlee: 'I've got to make the most of it while I can'**

Sean Ingle

The 32-year-old triathlete on trying to win a third Olympic gold in Tokyo and smashing the ironman record in the next 18 months



Alistair Brownlee wants to become the first athlete to complete an ironman race in less than seven hours. Photograph: World Triathlon

Alistair Brownlee wants to become the first athlete to complete an ironman race in less than seven hours. Photograph: World Triathlon



[@seaningle](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

“I’ve just been out training for three and a half hours and it has rained for every single second,” says [Alistair Brownlee](#), in a tone that almost veers into relish. “The weather is horrendous. Everywhere’s flooded. You can hardly run anywhere because it’s so muddy and wet.” And yet the double Olympic triathlon champion still splishes and splashes on towards further glories, even in this bleakest of midwinters, having set his sights on an extraordinary double crescendo to cap his career.

[Mo Farah claims Olympic athletes have been told they will get Covid vaccines](#)

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The first part? Winning a [third triathlon gold medal in Tokyo](#) this summer. But then, Brownlee says, he intends to follow it up with something even more audacious: becoming the first man to complete an ironman sequence in less than seven hours. “I am not getting any younger,” says Brownlee, who turns 33 in April. “So I’ve got to make the most of it while I can.”

The best time for a full ironman distance – a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile cycle and 26.2-mile run – is 7hr 35min, by the German Jan Frodeno. However, in echoes of [Eliud Kipchoge's sub two-hour marathon project](#), Brownlee's idea is to use technology to create history.

"It would be impossible under normal conditions," says Brownlee, who will make the attempt in the spring of 2022. "But like with the sub two-hour marathon, we are choosing the boundaries. We will have special HUUB wetsuits that will be thicker than permitted under ironman rules, and provide more buoyancy and make us faster. While on the bike, we will draft off pacers like in the Tour de France. As the bike is over 112 miles, that's the obvious place to find the time."



Alistair Brownlee on the Tokyo Games: 'As an athlete, I have to 100% believe it will go ahead.' Photograph: Mana Sports and Entertainment Group

It will be an almighty challenge, with organisers claiming Brownlee will need to swim at the pace of an Olympic open-water medallist, cycle at an average speed of more than 30mph and run a sub 2hr 30min marathon.

"What makes it so hard is that there are so many moving parts to an ironman, even when compared to an Olympic distance triathlon [1500m swim, 40km bike and 10km run]," says Brownlee.

“You’ve got to fuel yourself correctly for seven hours, which is hard given we all get sick of gels. You have to get your fluids right. On the bike things like aerodynamics and helmet position are so important because if you save yourself five watts or 10 watts, that’s a significant difference. And there is also that fear – have I gone five minutes too hard, and is that going to cost me?”

Brownlee knows just how painful it can get when things go wrong. The first time he raced an ironman, at the world championships in Kona in 2019, he blew up in the heat on the run and dropped from third place to 21st. “At one point there was nothing on this planet that would have made me run at even a five-minutes-a-kilometre pace. There’s no way I wasn’t finishing but those final 10 miles were the worst of my life.”



Alistair (right) and Jonny Brownlee with their gold and silver medals after the men's triathlon at the Rio Olympics. Photograph: Mike Egerton/PA

Six weeks later, though, Brownlee competed in another ironman race in Australia and won by more than 10 minutes and smashed the course record, finishing in 7hr 45min.

While Brownlee will attempt to go under seven hours in a yet-to-be-decided venue, another Briton, Lucy Charles-Barclay, will aim to become the first

woman to dip under eight hours. Their attempt will be backed by the Pho3nix Foundation, a Polish not-for-profit organisation that supports sporting participation among young people.

[Alistair and Jonny Brownlee: 'The lockdown has made us appreciate sport'](#) |  
[Donald McRae](#)

[Read more](#)

“They are all about inspiring activity and health and education in young people and I’m keen to use the vessel of triathlon to do that – as well as seeing how we can maximise human performance in terms of physiology,” says Brownlee.

What does his brother Jonny, who won Olympic bronze and [silver in 2012](#) and 2016 respectively, make of it? “He thinks it’s mental,” replies Alistair. “He doesn’t know it yet but he’s going to be helping me out on the swim and the run.”

Isn’t Brownlee a bit of a sadist to keep torturing himself, given all the injuries he has endured? “Yeah, I definitely am to an extent,” he replies, laughing.

Before then, however, Brownlee is focusing on qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics. And, having finished second behind the Frenchman Vincent Luis in a World Cup sprint triathlon in Valencia in November, he is confident his best form is looming into view. “I came the closest that anyone’s come to beating him last year. If I can race like that obviously I’ll qualify easily and be in with a shot at Tokyo.”



Alistair Brownlee (left) finishes second to Vincent Luis at a World Cup sprint triathlon in Valencia in November. Photograph: David Aliaga/MB Media/Getty Images

That, of course, is [assuming the Games take place](#). “As an athlete, I have to 100% believe it will go ahead. And I am sure the IOC will move heaven and earth to get it on. As we have seen, Covid is a movable beast. We’re on the curve of things going badly, but by the summer things could look much more hopeful.”

But should they go ahead if it means athletes flying in and out of Tokyo and competing in front of no crowds? “Any Olympics is better than no Olympics. And as long as the sport and the competition is on, stripping everything else out isn’t too much of a problem.”

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As we finish I ask Brownlee his response to those who fear, as great as he has been, his most glorious days are behind him. “You might be right,” he says, as a flicker of defiance comes across his face. “But I’m doing everything I can to prove them wrong – and myself wrong.”

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## Olympic Games

# Lapland town of Salla highlights climate crisis with 2032 Olympics campaign

- Tongue-in-cheek promotional video launches ‘bid’
- Campaign seeks to highlight alarming climate variations



In the ‘launch’ video, one local resident says: ‘In 12 years the ice will be gone and this will be a perfect lake.’ Photograph: VW Pics/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

In the ‘launch’ video, one local resident says: ‘In 12 years the ice will be gone and this will be a perfect lake.’ Photograph: VW Pics/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

*[Paul MacInnes](#)*

*[@PaulMac](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 14.02 EST

The race to host the 2032 summer Olympics looks set to be one of the most fiercely contested in history. So when the Lapland town of Salla announced its intention to vie with Jakarta, Istanbul and Seoul-Pyongyang, it was competing against the odds. But the “coldest town in the world” had a secret weapon up its sleeve.

“I’ve never felt warmth before, but I’m sure it’s coming,” said one resident [in a promotional video](#) released this week to launch the candidacy. “In 12 years the ice will be gone and this will be a perfect lake,” said another. “I can’t wait for the snow to melt,” said a third, wielding a surfboard. While other cities might have the infrastructure, Salla has the climate crisis.

[Breaking good: the British dancers ready to send Paris 2024 Olympics into a spin](#)

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The [official Salla 2032 website](#), with its logo depicting a melting mountainscape and Olympic rings like pulsing suns, promises a Games like no other; where the Arctic landscape has been replaced by something more suitable to traditional summer activities.

“We liked the idea because we are concerned about climate change and also because we live here in the Arctic circle and we see the changes that are happening,” said the town’s mayor, Erkki Parkkinen, the face of the campaign. “We want the winters to be like they used to be, real winters.”

Right now there is still enough snow in Lapland to shoot the pristine images that summon up winter in the world’s imagination. But the Arctic is experiencing some of the most radical variations in climate brought on by global heating and the Finnish town of Salla is no exception.

“Winters come later than they did before and weather has become more unpredictable,” Parkkinen said. “Some days we can have -30C and two days later it’s plus some degrees. Changes come more quickly than they used to. In autumn snow comes later. It can be raining, then minus degrees and ice, then the snow and the reindeers cannot get food.” The mascot for Salla 2032 is a heat-exhausted reindeer.

Salla has joined with [Fridays for Future](#) to spread the word about their campaign, with Parkkinen enthused by the energy of Greta Thunberg's activists: "The climate crisis is now and they are good partners in that sort of way."

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The Olympics was also a perfect target. "If you think from the beginning of history, their values are to unify people and nations," Parkkinen said. "The Olympic movement unites people, it is global and climate change is a problem for all the world."

A collaboration between the Lapland tourist board and the town, Salla 2032 hopes to win hearts and minds, even if it never actually gets the Games themselves. As yet Parkkinen has not submitted the requisite paperwork to the International Olympic Committee. "We didn't submit the bid," Parkkinen says. "We don't want to be the best place to host the summer Games."

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## Tokyo Olympic Games 2020

# Mo Farah claims Olympic athletes have been told they will get Covid vaccines

- Four-times champion confident Tokyo Games will go ahead
- ‘They have said everyone will be able to get Covid injections’



Mo Farah believes the Olympic Games will go ahead this summer.  
Photograph: Justin Kernoghan/PA

Mo Farah believes the Olympic Games will go ahead this summer.  
Photograph: Justin Kernoghan/PA

*PA Media*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 11.23 EST

Mo Farah believes the [Olympic Games](#) will go ahead this summer and says athletes have been told they will receive vaccinations against Covid-19.

Farah, who has won gold in both the 5,000 and 10,000 metres at the last two Games in London and Rio, has previously said he is targeting success in the longer distance only in Tokyo. However, the Games are again under threat from the coronavirus pandemic, which were originally postponed by 12 months in March last year.

[Breaking good: the British dancers ready to send Paris 2024 Olympics into a spin](#)

[Read more](#)

The idea of vaccinating athletes has been floated by International Olympic Committee member Dick Pound, and Farah told TalkSport: “I think most people in a career want to go to an Olympics and take part in an Olympics. The key thing is to stay safe and see what the country can do. What they have said to us is basically everyone will be able to get Covid injections and after that it’s less risk of spreading the disease, and then from there just see what happens and take one day at a time.”

“I think [the Games] will go ahead but at the same time, for me I have had the experience of taking part in three Olympics and I have to see it as another race and see what happens.”

It is understood the British Olympic Association is not involved in any active conversations with the Government in regard to vaccinating athletes. A spokesperson for the BOA said: “As we have clearly stated, the priority at this time remains the vulnerable, elderly and front line workers. We have not spoken to any athletes about vaccinations as we await a clearer understanding of the programme’s roll-out.”

IOC president Thomas Bach has previously said there is “no reason whatsoever” to further delay the Games, which are due to start on 23 July. The Games organisers and the IOC have stated vaccinations are not mandatory for entry to Japan but are encouraging countries to get their delegates vaccinated where possible.

The IOC is understood to be working with the World Health Organisation and the Covax group on how vaccines are being distributed globally, to

ensure some athletes are not put at a competitive disadvantage compared to others.

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## Australian Open

# Nadal takes veiled swipe at Djokovic over Australian Open quarantine

- World No 2 responds to criticism from Guido Pella to ESPN
- Nadal: ‘Some need to make public [what] they do for others’



Rafael Nadal is seen waving from his balcony at the M Suites accommodation in North Adelaide, where tennis players are undergoing mandatory quarantine ahead of the Australian Open. Photograph: Morgan Sette/Reuters

Rafael Nadal is seen waving from his balcony at the M Suites accommodation in North Adelaide, where tennis players are undergoing mandatory quarantine ahead of the Australian Open. Photograph: Morgan Sette/Reuters

[Guardian sport](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 13.05 EST

Rafael Nadal has responded to criticism of his silence on the ongoing [imbroglio over Australian Open quarantine conditions](#) with a veiled swipe at Novak Djokovic.

Djokovic has courted controversy over the past week for publicly lobbying [Tennis](#) Australia and the Victorian state government to loosen restrictions for the 72 overseas players forced into hard quarantine after traveling on flights with confirmed positive coronavirus cases.

But it was Nadal who became the target of criticism from Argentinian player Guido Pella, who described his silence as “strange” last week.

“Djokovic’s balcony is bigger than my room but at least he said something,” Pella said. “I’m surprised with Nadal and Thiem’s silence.”

[Australian Open buildup shows no sport handling pandemic as clumsily as tennis | Tumaini Carayol](#)

[Read more](#)

Nadal, the 20-times grand slam champion who is keeping his own quarantine in Adelaide, hit back at those criticisms in an [interview with ESPN on Monday](#) and appeared to reference Djokovic.

“Some need to make public all these things they do for others, some of us do it in a more private way without having to publicize everything,” Nadal told ESPN.

“The calls we make to help the most disadvantaged players, some of us don’t need or want to advertise it.”

Nadal went on to address the alleged favoritism shown to the top players who have been placed in the separate Adelaide bubble.

“There has been talk that Adelaide people have better conditions, but I have not heard from any Melbourne player that some have much better rooms than others,” he explained.

“I have not seen some of those who have complained so much about the conditions in Adelaide complaining about the conditions of the more than 20

players who have not practiced.

“Complaints always come from a disadvantaged position. At the time of talking about fair play or equal conditions, people don’t tend to complain about the position of those who are worse off than them.

“In the end we all try to get the most out of our possibilities and help each other.”

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## England rugby union team

# Sam Underhill pulls out of England's Six Nations squad with hip injury

- Eddie Jones without five forwards for opener against Scotland
- Jack Willis of Wasps called up to replace Underhill in squad



The Bath flanker Sam Underhill hopes to be fit before the end of the Six Nations. Photograph: Dan Mullan/The RFU Collection/Getty Images

The Bath flanker Sam Underhill hopes to be fit before the end of the Six Nations. Photograph: Dan Mullan/The RFU Collection/Getty Images

*[Gerard Meagher](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 13.55 EST

England have been dealt yet another blow before their [Six Nations](#) title defence with Sam Underhill the latest frontline forward to withdraw from Eddie Jones's squad on Tuesday. Underhill has a hip injury and after being

assessed by England's medical staff he pulled out with Wasps' Jack Willis taking his place.

Jones was already without Joe Marler, Mako Vunipola, Joe Launchbury and Kyle Sinckler for England's Six Nations opener against Scotland on Saturday week and Underhill's absence means he will be without half his first-choice pack.

[Hiring and firing is the Eddie Jones way but at what cost to English rugby?](#)

[Read more](#)

The Bath director of rugby, Stuart Hooper, is hopeful Underhill will be out of action for weeks rather than months, suggesting he may be fit before the end of the championship, but conceded England go into their Calcutta Cup clash without "one of the best flankers in the world".

"It is disappointing news first up for him," said Hooper, who confirmed Underhill sustained the injury against Wasps this month. "The outlook is generally pretty positive. We are talking weeks rather than anything else. We know from Sam the destructive nature of his game and the ability he has got on both sides of the ball with carrying and defence."

Underhill's injury means England's formidable back-row trio, also featuring Billy Vunipola and Tom Curry, will be broken up for the foreseeable future with Willis, Ben Earl, Mark Wilson and Courtney Lawes among the options to step in. Wilson and Earl were included in the initial 28-man squad but the former has not played for England since last March and the latter has won all eight of his caps from the replacements bench. Lawes is fit again while Willis made a try-scoring debut against Georgia last November and has been promoted from the shadow squad.

Jones, who will miss the first day of the training camp at St George's Park on Wednesday because he is self-isolating, has also added Alec Hepburn – last seen in an England jersey in November – Dave Ribbons and Lewis Ludlam to those players effectively on standby.

Meanwhile, Jones's former assistant Paul Gustard has been appointed as Benetton's defence coach, less than a week after his shock departure from

Harlequins. Writing on his LinkedIn page, Gustard said: “I decided in December that I wanted a new experience and challenge, and was pleased to have so many different opportunities domestically, internationally and abroad available. I wanted to join a group where there was a clear vision, deep level of trust and a dynamic environment which was driven towards high performance.”

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## Kobe Bryant

# 'The music stopped': Kobe Bryant remembered on anniversary of death

The basketball world remains in a state mourning over Bryant, his daughter Gianna and the other seven people who climbed aboard a helicopter on a Sunday morning one year ago



Adam Dergazarian stands in front of a mural painted by artist Louie Sloe Palsino that depicts Kobe Bryant and his daughter, Gianna, on Tuesday. Photograph: Jae C Hong/AP

Adam Dergazarian stands in front of a mural painted by artist Louie Sloe Palsino that depicts Kobe Bryant and his daughter, Gianna, on Tuesday. Photograph: Jae C Hong/AP

*[Guardian sport and agencies](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 16.51 EST

Kobe Bryant wasn't in the bubble with the Los Angeles Lakers last October when they won the NBA championship. He wasn't at the All-Star weekend in Chicago where half the players wore his number on their uniforms, the other half wearing his daughter's jersey number. He wasn't there to hear the [Basketball Hall of Fame announced](#) that his career was worthy of enshrinement.

Yet his presence was so clearly felt in each of those moments.

"Everything stopped," Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr told reporters last week. "The music stopped. The players stopped. Nobody said a word. A lot of guys dropped to the floor and started crying. Nothing happened for 10 minutes. We all just sat there in silence. It was one of the worst moments of all our lives."

"Jarron Collins came over to me and whispered the news in my ear. I think it was the same thing where a couple people on our staff whispered it to a couple players on our team. We were all like a deer in the headlights, you know? We just froze and all tried to absorb the news and everything stopped."

Bryant, his daughter Gianna and the other seven people who climbed aboard that helicopter on a Sunday morning in southern California have been gone for exactly one year now – Tuesday marks the grim anniversary of [the crash that took their lives](#).

Tears have been shed. Stories have been told. Tributes have been made.

And if there was any doubt about what kind of legacy Bryant – a five-time [NBA](#) champion, still the No 4 scorer in [NBA](#) history, a 20-year veteran of the league – left behind, it has been erased now. He still resonates, maybe more than ever.

"God rest his soul, God rest the soul of Gigi and the seven others that perished," said Miami assistant coach and former NBA player Caron Butler, who was close with Bryant for years. "The legacy that he left, man, he did it all. He inspired. When you think about being better, embracing the storm,

having the right mentality and perspective about life and always trying to be better, he embodied it all and that's why his legacy will live forever."

Bryant is gone, but that doesn't mean Butler is wavering on a promise he made. Butler famously had a longtime affinity for Mountain Dew, even drinking it during games when others thought he was having Gatorade. When Butler played for the Lakers, Bryant strongly urged him to kick the habit.

Butler was taping an ad last year for Mountain Dew. He took a sip for the cameras. He then spit the drink out.

"Out of respect to my brother," Butler said.

Butler and Bryant were brothers in the teammate sense. Tony Altobelli lost his actual brother, John Altobelli, in the crash. Alyssa Altobelli was a teammate of Gianna Bryant; she was on the helicopter along with John, her father, and mother Keri.



Anthony Calderon and Dontate Matthews leave flowers to pay their respects at a makeshift memorial on Tuesday at the site of the helicopter crash a year ago that killed nine people including Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna. Photograph: Patrick T Fallon/AFP/Getty Images

John Altobelli was the baseball coach at Orange Coast College in southern California. Tony Altobelli is the sports information director at that school; sports information directors are tasked with promoting their teams, in good times and bad, always trying to find a positive way to tell a story. And somehow, even for a story this painful, Tony Altobelli has managed to do that.

His brother died with [Kobe Bryant](#). That's how the world got to know who his brother was.

"It's nice to see his memory, and just his way of his life being celebrated by people far beyond our area," Tony Altobelli said. "It takes a little bit of the sting off what happened. I've kind of jokingly said if it had to happen, I'm glad a global figure was with him when it happened because now the whole world knows about my brother, my sister-in-law and my niece. And I think that's pretty cool."

Christina Mauser died in the crash as well; she was one of the coaches at Bryant's academy. Tony Altobelli and Mauser's husband, Matt, have become friends in the last year; they didn't know each other before 26 January 2020. Matt Mauser has organized a concert to honor those who died in the crash and to serve as a benefit for the foundation he started in his wife's memory ; it streams Tuesday night.

Sarah Chester and her 13-year-old daughter Payton, another of the players along with Gianna and Alyssa, also were on board. Also killed was the pilot, Ara Zobayan. The Lakers were in the air when the news broke, flying home from a game in Bryant's hometown of Philadelphia.

The Lakers are not planning any formal marking of the day, nor is the NBA. It is not a day for celebration. It is a day for remembrance, not that it's needed.

Bryant's legacy lives on. He won't be forgotten. Nor will 26 January 2020.

"I don't think any of us will ever forget that day," Kerr said.

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## 2021.01.27 - From the uk

- Libby Squire Man accused of murdering student 'only wanted to help', court told
- 'Systemic illegality' Prosecution service accused over dropped rape cases
- William Shawcross Selection for Prevent role strongly criticised
- George Hollingbery Former Tory MP's posting as UK ambassador to Cuba raises fresh cronyism claims
- Immigration Skilled Commonwealth migrants still facing 'unlawful' deportation
- Conservatives Party illegally collected data on ethnicity of 10m voters, MPs told
- Unite Union apparently doubles expenditure on hotel project to £74m
- Energy bills Ovo to launch 'half-price' electric vehicle charging tariff
- Exclusive Government plans to turn England homes green 'in chaos' with debt and job losses
- WhatsApp UK regulator to write to firm over Facebook data sharing
- Cutting crime 31 Met officers face fine for haircuts at police station

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## [UK news](#)

# Man accused of murdering Libby Squire 'only wanted to help', court told

Pawel Relowicz, 26, tells jury he offered Hull University student a lift home and denies raping her



Court sketch of Richard Wright QC cross-examining Pawel Relowicz.  
Photograph: Elizabeth Cook/PA

Court sketch of Richard Wright QC cross-examining Pawel Relowicz.  
Photograph: Elizabeth Cook/PA

[Alex Mistlin](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 12.59 EST

A 26-year-old man accused of raping and murdering student Libby Squire "only wanted to help", a jury has heard.

Pawel Relowicz told Sheffield crown court that he had consensual sex with Squire on the evening she disappeared, but said she was not “a target”.

He denies raping and murdering the 21-year-old in Hull, east Yorkshire, on 1 February 2019.

The court had earlier heard that he drove her to Oak Road playing fields, where he raped and murdered her before putting her into the River Hull. Her body was recovered about seven weeks later in the Humber estuary.

Speaking through an interpreter, Relowicz told the court that he was “looking for a woman to have easy sex” on the night of 31 January but said he just wanted to help Squire, whom he had found drunk and distressed in the street after being refused entry to a nightclub.

In cross-examination on Tuesday, Richard Wright QC for the prosecution asked Relowicz: “And though you told us yesterday that you were looking for easy sex, this drunk, hypothermic, lost girl was not the easy sex you were looking for?”

Relowicz, who worked as a butcher in Malton, North Yorkshire, replied: “She wanted my help and I only wanted to help her.”

He told the jury that he offered Squire, a philosophy student at the University of Hull, a lift home. After describing how he could not get an address out of Squire, Relowicz told the court he stopped near Oak Road as he thought she was going to be sick.

Relowicz said she asked for a hug and they ended up kissing before they had sex on the ground near his car. The defendant said she tried to kiss him again but he turned away and she scratched his face.

He told the court that he then drove away and saw her behind his car shouting at him not to leave her. Wright asked Relowicz why he did not say this to the police when he was arrested five days after Squire disappeared.

He said: “it was not a deliberate decision. I had two children and a wife and I didn’t want her to find out I had cheated on her.

“I didn’t do anything to Libby. I didn’t kill her, I didn’t rape her and I left her where I said I left her.”

The trial continues.

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[Rape: reported](#)

[Rape and sexual assault](#)

## CPS accused of 'systemic illegality' in charging rape cases

Changes in policy since 2016 have led to an overly risk-averse approach, court of appeal hears

[Alexandra Topping](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 15.36 EST First published on Tue 26 Jan 2021 11.21 EST



The Crown Prosecution Service has denied a change of direction in dealing with rape prosecutions. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has been accused of “systemic illegality” in its approach to charging rape cases in a [landmark judicial review](#) into how the crime is prosecuted.

On the opening day of the hearing at the court of appeal, lawyers for the Centre for Women's Justice (CWJ) and End Violence Against Women (EVAW) accused the CPS of "raising the bar" for rape prosecutions, which they argued had led to a steep drop in the number of cases being charged.

Reports of rape have increased by almost a third in the four years to March 2020, but in the same time period the number of rape prosecutions has more than halved, falling 60% to the lowest figure on record.

### Graphic

Phillippa Kaufmann QC, acting for the CWJ and EVAW, told the court that since 2016 the CPS had rolled back progress made "in improving the volumes of cases that were prosecuted" while Sir Keir Starmer was the director of public prosecutions and Alison Levitt QC, his principal legal adviser, was in post.

Kaufmann argued that a focus from 2009 until 2016 on "the merits-based approach" – which explicitly dictates a prosecutor should treat evidence as if it will be heard by an unprejudiced jury, rather than the "bookmaker's approach" where a prosecutor tries to second-guess a jury – had produced "positive feedback". She said: "[B]ecause as women see that the CPS is taking these events as seriously, that what they're doing is producing results, their confidence to come forward necessarily grows."

She added that prosecutors were trained to "put aside myths and stereotypes" and to recognise that even in instances where there was "no corroboration" of the complainant's accusations, "it was still possible to prosecute".

The CPS took a decision to change this policy in 2016, implementing a "target" to improve the rape prosecution rate and removing references to the "merits-based approach" from guidance, she said. The CPS's director of legal services, Gregor McGill, also carried out a "roadshow" to try to improve the conviction rate, she added.

In 2018 the Guardian reported that CPS prosecutors were urged in these training sessions to put a "touch on the tiller" and [take a more risk-averse](#)

approach to prosecuting rape by weeding “the weak cases out of the system”. The CPS has consistently denied a change in approach.

Kaufmann said the CPS’s actions amounted to “systemic illegality”, adding: “The roadshows in the context of the conviction rate target and the changes to the guidance [...] inevitably would have left some prosecutors so confused that [they] would have been left thinking the bookmaker’s approach now applies. [O]thers would have become so risk-averse that they ended up taking decisions not to prosecute where the evidential threshold was established and crossed.”

The court heard that the change in policy was based on “the basis of a confusion, [that] prosecutors were misapplying the merits-based approach by treating it as a separate and lesser test than the full-code test”, applied by prosecutors when deciding to charge all cases. For a case to be charged under the code it must have a “realistic prospect of conviction” and be in the public interest.

Kaufmann told the court that the CPS had not properly consulted on the change and had failed to consider its public sector equality duty, which states that public bodies must consider the impact of decisions on people protected under the Equality Act.

In written submissions, lawyers for the CPS have argued that the case is not suitable for legal challenge and asked the court of appeal to dismiss the claim. Tom Little QC said the term “merits-based approach” (MBA) had been removed out of a concern that some prosecutors were using it as a lower standard, adding: “The concern was that people were being prosecuted when the case ought not to have been charged.”

The roadshows and removal of MBA guidance “did not result in any substantial change in the application of the evidential test in the code for Crown prosecutors”, and “did not give rise to a systemic risk that prosecutors would apply a bookmaker’s test”, he argued. In the documents Little argued that a 2019 report from the CPS inspectorate concluded prosecutors correctly used the code in 98% of cases out of 250 where no further action had been taken.

A CPS spokesperson said: “There has been no change of approach in how the CPS prosecutes rape. Our skilled prosecutors are experienced and highly trained to make sure criminals can be brought to justice. No matter how challenging the case, whenever our legal test is met, we always seek to charge.

“Independent inspectors have found no evidence of a risk-averse approach and have reported a clear improvement in the quality of our legal decision-making in rape cases. The principles of the merits-based approach are enshrined in the Code for Crown Prosecutors, which guides every charging decision.

“Along with the police, we remain committed to making real, lasting improvements to how these horrific offences are handled.”

The judicial review hearing, before the Lord Chief Justice Lord Burnett, Lord Justice Holroyde and Lady Justice Elisabeth Laing, comes after a government [end-to-end review](#) into how rape is investigated and prosecuted was [announced in March 2019](#). This is the third court hearing, after the case was originally [dismissed by the high court](#) in March 2020, a decision later [overturned at an appeal hearing](#) in July 2020.

It is expected to last for two days with the court due to hear from CPS lawyers on Wednesday.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/26/cps-accused-of-systemic-illegality-in-charging-cases>

## Prevent strategy

# William Shawcross's selection for Prevent role strongly criticised

Muslim groups point to history of negative remarks about Islam by man tasked with review of anti-radicalisation programme



William Shawcross is a writer and broadcaster and former head of the Charity Commission. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

William Shawcross is a writer and broadcaster and former head of the Charity Commission. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

*[Jamie Grierson](#) and [Vikram Dodd](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 14.05 EST

William Shawcross, a former head of the charity watchdog who has made controversial comments about [Islam](#), is to lead the struggling review of the government's anti-radicalisation programme Prevent.

The review, announced in January 2019, has been beset by delays. It has taken 13 months to appoint Shawcross to lead it, after the government's first choice, Lord Carlile, was [forced to step down](#) in December 2019.

The government initially committed in law to complete and respond to the review by August 2020 but removed this requirement in new legislation.

Civil liberties and human rights organisations such as Amnesty International have been calling for an independent review of Prevent for some time, saying it fosters discrimination against people of Muslim faith or background and inhibits legitimate expression.

The appointment of Shawcross, who chaired the Charity Commission between 2012 and 2018, was met instantly with criticism over [previous remarks he has made about Islam](#).

William Shawcross is singularly unfit to be a neutral and fair assessor of this government policy

#### *Muslim Council of Britain*

In 2012, as a director of the neoconservative thinktank the Henry Jackson Society, he said: “Europe and Islam is one of the greatest, most terrifying problems of our future. I think all European countries have vastly, very quickly growing Islamic populations.”

The Charity Commission for England and Wales under Shawcross’s tenure was accused of institutional bias against Muslims by the Claystone thinktank, while Muslim groups have highlighted as concerning comments he made in his book Justice and the Enemy, which appear to support [use of torture](#) and the detention camp at [Guantánamo Bay](#).

Dal Babu, a former senior Muslim officer in the Met police, condemned the appointment. Babu, who described Prevent as a toxic brand in 2015, said: “Shawcross is a man who has demonstrated lack of independence in matters involving the Muslim community and sadly this is a missed opportunity to develop an effective [programme] that safeguards our children.”

A spokesperson for the Muslim Council of Britain said Shawcross's appointment was a "Trumpian" move. They said: "Once again, the government is making it clear it has no interest in truly reviewing the policy. William Shawcross is singularly unfit to be a neutral and fair assessor of this government policy, which has been criticised for unfairly targeting British Muslims, given his frightening views about Islam and Muslims.

"It is ironic that a policy supposedly charged with preventing extremism is to be scrutinised by a person who holds hostile views on Islam and Muslims, who has links to people with extreme views on us, and who defends the worst excesses of the so-called 'war on terror'."

The home secretary picked Shawcross, who is a fellow with the rightwing thinktank Policy Exchange, over Nazir Afzal, the former chief crown prosecutor in the north-west who is from a Muslim background.

Afzal was interviewed for the final stages of the process. On Tuesday he [pointed out on Twitter](#) that the Telegraph had reported that Shawcross was ministers' favoured candidate a week before they were interviewed, which did not "suggest a fair fight".

He added: "I threatened to withdraw my application at that stage as I was just in race to give public impression that it was open selection. But I didn't go to Eton (just humble comprehensive) nor was I best mates with ministers. Independence means a different thing to me. I'm not disheartened."

The [Prevent strategy](#) includes a statutory duty for schools, NHS trusts, prisons and local authorities to report any concerns they have about people who may be at risk of turning to extremism.

Supporters of the strategy say statistics prove that it does not target one community in particular and has successfully diverted vulnerable individuals from being radicalised and becoming terrorists.

The independent review is supposed to consider the strategy, delivery and future of the Prevent programme.

Following his appointment, Shawcross said: “I intend to lead a robust and evidence-based examination of the programme, to help ensure that Britain has a clear and effective strategy to protect vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism.”

Just 11% of referrals to Prevent were ultimately deemed to be at risk of radicalisation, most recent figures showed.

Home Office data showed there were 6,287 referrals in the year to 31 March, up 10% compared with the record low in the previous year. Ultimately, 697 were deemed at risk of radicalisation and taken on by the government’s Channel programme for specialist support.

A Home Office spokesperson said: “There was a full and open recruitment process to find the new independent reviewer of prevent.

“A panel, led by an independent chair, assessed the candidates and found that Mr Shawcross met the criteria and possessed the right range of skills and experience to conduct this important review.”

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## Conservatives

# Former Tory MP's posting as UK ambassador to Cuba raises fresh cronyism claims

‘Man in Havana’ role usually taken by experienced diplomats goes to ex-trade minister George Hollingbery



George Hollingbery visiting Downing Street in 2019. The former trade minister has been appointed as Britain’s ambassador to Cuba. Photograph: PjrNews/Alamy

George Hollingbery visiting Downing Street in 2019. The former trade minister has been appointed as Britain’s ambassador to Cuba. Photograph: PjrNews/Alamy

*[Rajeev Syal](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 15.08 EST

Boris Johnson's government has been accused of fostering a culture of cronyism after the appointment of a former Conservative MP as ambassador to [Cuba](#).

George Hollingbery, the former minister and MP until 2019, was announced on Tuesday as the UK's new "man in Havana", a post usually taken by experienced diplomats.

Dave Penman, the head of the FDA union, which represents [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#) (FCDO) staff, said the appointment was evidence that the government is sacrificing the art of diplomacy to hand jobs to political friends.

### [The rise of the 'chumocracy'](#)

[Read more](#)

"Sir George Hollingbery's appointment, with little obvious relevant expertise and no competition, once again suggests that to this government, who you know is more important than what you know."

"Ambassadorial posts are key to securing the UK's interests abroad. Political appointments undermine the country's longer-term interests, as they will almost inevitably change with a change in government," he said.

Penman said the UK should not follow the US practice of encouraging political appointments, which damage diplomatic relations.

"As we're witnessing in the United States at this moment, more than 200 key ambassadorial roles need to be filled as part of around 4,000 civil service posts that have to be appointed by the new administration," he said.

Hollingbery, a former close ally of Theresa May, was a minister in the department of trade when he stood down from parliament in 2019.

After entering parliament, he was a parliamentary private secretary to May in the home office and No 10, and a lord commissioner to the Treasury.

Before entering parliament, he was the deputy leader of Winchester council and developed a veterinary chain which he sold to the firm Pets at Home.

Welcoming the new ambassador, the foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, said: “Sir George Hollingbery brings a wealth of experience to the role, including from his time as a trade minister.”

Jolyon Maugham, the director of the Good Law Project, which has launched [legal action](#) against the government over the handing of Covid contracts to “VIPs”, said: “Perhaps he is a good chap but he doesn’t have any obvious qualifications for the role. Treating these posts as political gifts can’t serve the national interest – and it must be pretty dispiriting for talented and hard-working Foreign Office staff.”

The government has faced criticism for making [major Coronavirus-related appointments](#) without proper process. [Dido Harding](#), whose husband is the Conservative MP John Penrose, who is close to Johnson, is now the head of test and trace. [Kate Bingham](#), whose husband is the minister Jesse Norman, who was at Eton with Johnson, was appointed in May as the chair of the UK vaccine taskforce. She stood down from the role at the end of 2020.

Retired Labour MPs were also given plum diplomatic roles under Tony Blair. Paul Boateng, the former Labour minister, was the UK’s ambassador to South Africa from 2005. Helen Liddell became the high commissioner to Australia in the same year, and was followed in the role by Valerie Amos.

Under the [Conservatives](#), Ed Llewellyn, David Cameron’s former chief of staff, was given the role of ambassador to France.

A government source said: “The FDA’s criticism is nothing but pointless political posturing.”

An FCDO spokesperson said: “Sir George has a wealth of international and government experience that he will bring to this role, including from his time as trade minister. It is not unusual to make political appointments in the diplomatic service.”

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## Immigration and asylum

# Skilled Commonwealth migrants still facing 'unlawful' deportation

More than 70 people refused right to remain despite 2019 ruling that Home Office misused Immigration Act, report finds



The report says the treatment of the migrants is 'endemic of the government's enforcement of hostile environment policies'. Photograph: Mike Kemp/Corbis/Getty Images

The report says the treatment of the migrants is 'endemic of the government's enforcement of hostile environment policies'. Photograph: Mike Kemp/Corbis/Getty Images

*Diane Taylor*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 12.28 EST

Dozens of highly skilled migrants from Commonwealth countries are still facing deportation almost two years after the court of appeal ruled the Home

Office was acting unlawfully in refusing them leave to remain, according to a new report.

In 2018, MPs and immigration experts criticised the use of the [controversial section 322\(5\)](#) of the Immigration Act, which was designed in part to tackle terrorists and individuals judged to be a threat to national security.

The act was used to accuse highly skilled migrants, including teachers, doctors, scientists and engineers, of lying in their applications – either for making minor and legal amendments to their tax records, or having discrepancies in declared income.

It was hoped that a [court of appeal ruling](#) in April 2019 – known as the Balajigari case – would resolve the situation. The court ruled that the Home Office had been acting unlawfully by not giving this group of migrants an opportunity to explain tax discrepancies before refusing them leave to remain.

However, a new report from the NGO Migrants' Rights Network (MRN), published on Wednesday, finds that at least 70 of these cases have “fallen through the cracks” since. All of the cases are from Commonwealth countries, including Pakistan, India and Nigeria, and all have been in the UK for 10 or more years, and have built a life, family and career here.

As a result, authors of the report have accused the Home Office of “racially discriminatory immigration policies”. Although more than 90% hold a postgraduate degree from the UK and nearly a quarter have postgraduate qualifications, many are now on the verge of destitution, forbidden from working, using the NHS, renting property or receiving benefits.

Four out of five have had no “minded to refuse” letter, a Home Office warning providing migrants the opportunity to explain any discrepancies.

The Home Office's own internal guidance to case workers specifies that section 322(5) should only be triggered in cases involving “criminality, a threat to national security, war crimes or travel bans”. But the discretionary section also allows the Home Office to refuse an applicant by inferring that

their “character and conduct” make them undesirable to be allowed to live in the UK.

Ahmed Tilal Pasha, 38, from Pakistan, has lived, studied and worked in the UK since 2003 and had been working as a sales consultant. His problems began in 2015 when the hostile environment rules relating to a discrepancy in his tax return prevented him from being granted indefinite leave to remain. He said the tax return was filed by his accountant and that he was innocent of any deliberate error.

He is living with his wife, who has a life-threatening heart condition, and their five-year-old daughter and three-year-old son in one room.

“I’m not allowed to work, we have sold everything we have. I’ve lost my job, I’ve lost my dignity and I’m mentally exhausted,” he said.

MRN and Highly Skilled UK, a support group that represents workers, are now calling for a reassessment of the decisions in the remaining cases and an end to the use of “good character” references under rule 322(5) for non-criminal acts.

They call for all highly skilled migrants with pending indefinite leave to remain applications to be granted the rights to work in the UK and visit family overseas.

Katharine Thane, the senior advocacy officer at MRN and a report author, said: “The criminalisation of these highly skilled Commonwealth migrants of colour is endemic of the government’s enforcement of hostile environment policies. The policies have made it impossible to build a life in the UK – and local authorities are picking up the bill to now support these families to survive. Leaving this group in legal limbo for non-criminal acts shows that we have not yet learned the lessons from Windrush.”

Kevin Foster, minister for future borders and immigration, said: “To equate these cases to Windrush is wrong and inflammatory. In 2019 the court ruled our use of these immigration rules was appropriate and we were justified to expect a full and convincing explanation about glaring discrepancies between their visa applications and their tax records.

“Our review found 88% of those refused under 322(5) claimed in their visa applications their earnings were more than £10,000 a year higher than was shown by their tax records – these are not small mistakes in tax records.

“The majority of the cases have either been concluded or are being actively reconsidered – the courts timescales are beyond our control, but we are working to resolve these outstanding cases fairly and as quickly as possible. Those awaiting the outcome of their application are not destitute, they have been granted permission to study or work while their cases are reconsidered.”

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## Data protection

# Tory party illegally collected data on ethnicity of 10m voters, MPs told

Information commissioner says data was voluntarily deleted amid concerns about ‘weak’ enforcement



Elizabeth Denham, the information commissioner, said the Tories' collection of data on voters' ethnic origin, religion and country of birth had no legal basis. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Observer

Elizabeth Denham, the information commissioner, said the Tories' collection of data on voters' ethnic origin, religion and country of birth had no legal basis. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Observer

*Damien Gayle*  
[@damiengayle](https://twitter.com/damiengayle)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 11.58 EST

The Conservative party acted illegally when it collected data on the ethnic backgrounds of 10 million voters before the 2019 general election, the information commissioner has told a committee of MPs.

However, Elizabeth Denham insisted there had been no need to issue an enforcement notice against the party, as it had voluntarily deleted the data it held after a “recommendation” from her office.

Answering questions at a digital, culture, media and sport select committee meeting on Tuesday morning, Denham said that the Conservatives’ collection of estimated data on voters’ ethnic origin, religion, and country of birth had no legal basis.

“We made the recommendation that they destroy the data because they didn’t have a legal basis to collect it,” she said, adding, under sustained questioning from the SNP MP John Nicolson: “It was illegal to collect the ethnicity data.”

The breach was first highlighted in November in a report by the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), assessing political parties’ compliance with data protection laws. It reported that the Conservatives had purchased so-called estimated onomastic data – which attempts to identify individuals’ ethnic origin, religion, country of birth and other characteristics, based on their first and last names – and appended it to the records of 10 million people.

The Conservative party has a history of the controversial use of such data. In 2016, Zac Goldsmith’s Conservative party campaign for London mayor was accused of trying to exploit anti-Muslim sentiment among Hindu, Sikh and Tamil voters as he competed for votes with Labour’s Sadiq Khan, [which Goldsmith denied](#).

On Tuesday, Denham faced accusations from Nicolson that the ICO was “weak when it comes to enforcement”. No political party has been served an enforcement notice for its use of data, despite the ICO identifying a number of breaches by parties in its November report. Denham insisted that enforcement had not been necessary after parties voluntary complied with her recommendations.

Jim Killock, the executive director of Open Rights Group, called for more clarity on the ICO's role regarding political data collection.

He said: "Elizabeth Denham finally confirmed the unlawful nature of this profiling by the Conservative party under pressure from MPs on the DCMS committee. Yet the ICO still has not explained what parties can and can not do. Mass profiling of voters continues, even if this data has been removed. The ICO needs to act to stop unlawful profiling practices. That's their job."

Denham's comments also seemingly [contradicted a statement made in parliament by John Whittingdale](#), the data minister, last month.

Questioned by Nicolson in a Commons debate on data protection on 10 December, Whittingdale said of the ICO's report: "As I recall, the information commissioner examined the practices of all political parties and made comments against all of them. However, it did not find that any breaches of the law had occurred."

Denham would not be drawn into commenting on Whittingdale's statement.

Cat Smith, the shadow voter engagement minister, said: "The Conservative party's illegal misuse of ethnic race data – a characteristic protected by law – is deeply concerning.

"With the government's discriminatory voter ID laws due to come into law this year, such racial profiling by the party that is in charge of upholding our data protection laws raises serious alarm bells."

A Conservative Party spokesperson said: "The Conservative Party complies with all prevailing electoral, data protection and electronic marketing legislation.

"The Party has assisted the Information Commissioner in its review of political parties' practices and have taken on board the constructive feedback from the review."

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/jan/26/conservative-party-illegally-collected-data-on-ethnicity-of-10m-voters-mps-told>

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**Unite**

## **Unite union apparently doubles expenditure on hotel project to £74m**

Leaked accounts come days before meeting to discuss claims project costs have spiralled out of control



Len McCluskey. The building contract was awarded in 2015 to the Flanagan Group, a Liverpool company run by an associate of the Unite general secretary. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

Len McCluskey. The building contract was awarded in 2015 to the Flanagan Group, a Liverpool company run by an associate of the Unite general secretary. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

*[Rajeev Syal](#) and [Rob Davies](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 13.39 EST

Unite, Labour's most generous backer, appears to have more than doubled its planned expenditure on a controversial construction project in just five

years.

Amid concern over the cost of building the hotel and conference centre in [Birmingham](#), leaked accounts indicate that the union spent £74m up to the end of 2019. In 2015, media reports claimed the project was expected to cost £35m.

It comes days before the union, headed by Len McCluskey, [holds a special meeting of its ruling body](#) to discuss claims that the cost of the project has spiralled out of control. Unite has declined to comment directly on the figures, saying it would be inappropriate to do so before the executive council meets.

[Unite calls special meeting over alleged overspend on £50m building project](#)  
[Read more](#)

The contract to build the 170-room hotel and conference centre was awarded in 2015 to the Flanagan Group, a Liverpool company run by an associate of McCluskey, who is the union's general secretary. Another contract on the project was given to a company owned by the son of [Joe Anderson, Liverpool's mayor](#).

The leaked document, called an AR21, was signed off by McCluskey in early December and then again by the accountants BDO. It was supposed to be filed over the summer.

A note in the accounts says: “Included in land and buildings above is £74.0m (2018: £42.6m) of assets in the course of construction for the National Education and Conference Centre & Hotel in Birmingham. No depreciation has been charged on these assets on the basis that they are not yet available for use.”

The document also states that “the conference centre and hotel is operated by Blackhorse HCC Ltd which owns 76%”. McCluskey and four executive council members of the union are directors of Blackhorse.

One source with knowledge of the document said the union was declaring spending of £74m to date on the project. The accounts do not show any

evidence of a re-evaluation of the property.

The Flanagan Group is under investigation by Merseyside police in connection with Operation Aloft, an inquiry into the sale to developers of council-owned land in Liverpool. Paul Flanagan, the head of the group, was arrested in September on suspicion of conspiracy to commit bribery. Joe Anderson and his son David have also been arrested.

The union vehemently denied any wrongdoing following allegations [in the Times](#). A spokesperson said there was no connection between the Merseyside investigation and the Birmingham project and McCluskey had nothing to do with the tendering process.

On Friday, executive members will expect to hear from McCluskey and other key officials about the building project, which includes a Marriott-branded hotel, a conference room, an education centre and regional offices for the union.

The media reports in 2015 quoted [Unite](#) officials saying the building would cost the union £35m, money it would recover by hiring out conference facilities and by holding its own conferences on the site in Birmingham Science Park Aston.

McCluskey, who is stepping down next year, was one of the former [Labour](#) leader Jeremy Corbyn's closest allies and has criticised his successor, Sir Keir Starmer, over his decision to pay damages to ex-staffers who said the party had not dealt with antisemitism. Unite has cut its support to [Labour](#) since the decision.

Labour will be watching the leadership contest closely, with two candidates from the left, Howard Beckett and Steve Turner, expected to stand. Gerard Coyne, a Starmer supporter who narrowly lost to McCluskey in 2017, said this month he would stand again.

Asked to comment on the figures, Coyne said: "Spiralling costs, poor reporting and contractual questions mean there must now be a full, externally-led and published review into Unite the Union's Birmingham

conference centre and hotel project. If this had been a public sector build then unions would have been making the same demand.”

A Unite spokesperson defended the project, saying: “These continuing efforts to create the impression that something untoward has occurred with the construction of our Birmingham facility are pathetic. This is a world-class facility, which will provide conference, education and hotel facilities for our entire union and help regenerate a neglected part of the UK’s second city.

“In a sector beset with blacklisting and insecure working, we are also extremely proud that this facility was built using unionised labour, as determined by our executive council. The costs and management of the project will be considered by our executive on Friday. It would be completely inappropriate for Unite to enter into discussion of these with the media beforehand.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/26/unite-union-apparently-doubles-expenditure-hotel-project>

## Energy bills

# Ovo to launch 'half-price' electric vehicle charging tariff

New Drive Anytime rate bids to mirror rivals' off-peak tariff with savings of 60% a year, supplier claims



Ovo claims its 'type of use' tariff will be less than half the typical rate of rival suppliers by automatically charging vehicles when prices are low.  
Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

Ovo claims its 'type of use' tariff will be less than half the typical rate of rival suppliers by automatically charging vehicles when prices are low.  
Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

*[Jillian Ambrose](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 14.57 EST

Ovo [Energy](#) plans to launch an electric vehicle charging tariff, at half the usual price, to compete with typical off-peak rates even when electricity

demand is at its highest.

The [UK's second-largest energy supplier](#) will set the tariff at a flat rate of 6p per kilowatt-hour no matter what time of day their customers choose to charge their vehicle, in direct competition with suppliers which offer cut-price charging during set hours overnight.

The supplier hopes to rival the so-called “time of use” tariffs which offer customers ultra-low rates as long as they charge when demand for electricity is low, and avoid charging when renewable energy is scarce and prices are high.

Instead Ovo’s “type of use” tariff will be less than half the typical rate from rival suppliers – without limiting the times when customers can charge – by automatically charging vehicles when prices are low. When prices are high, energy could be drawn back into the grid from the batteries of [electric vehicles](#) sitting idle.

Rivals typically range between 14.3p per kilowatt-hour (KWh), offered by EDF Energy, and 19.5p/KWh offered by British Gas, according to data from Zapmap.

Ovo’s new tariff is broadly in line with rival off-peak rates, which range from 4.5p per KWh from EDF Energy to 10.44p/KWh from E.On, but typically require cars to charge after midnight and before 7.30am.

The energy company’s tech arm, Kaluza, has used algorithms to model electricity market patterns and customer behaviour to predict that it will have more than enough idle electric vehicles to help [balance the energy grid](#) even if some individual customers choose to charge or drive at these times.

Customers will be able to set when they require their vehicle to be fully charged, or override Kaluza’s software to charge at short-notice, without any impact to the rate they pay.

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Marzia Zafar, head of strategy at Kaluza, said its software gives electric vehicle users “the energy they need, precisely when they need it, at the

lowest environmental impact, and now at a guaranteed price that saves them money”.

Ovo expects customers on the new Drive Anytime tariff will be able to cut their EV charging bill by more than 60%, or £200 a year, without altering their behaviour.

“Electric vehicles and renewable energy are the perfect companions for a zero-carbon world, but we have got to demonstrate that they can be easier and cheaper, as well as greener,” Zafar said.

“Kaluza shields customers from the complexities of the energy transition, while at the same time driving it forward.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2021/jan/26/ovo-to-launch-half-price-electric-vehicle-charging-tariff>

## Environment

# Government plans to turn England homes green 'in chaos' with debt and job losses

Exclusive: firms out of pocket and losing faith in scheme administered by US-based corporation

- [US firm running eco grants scheme has won multiple UK government contracts](#)



Workers installing solar electric panels on a house roof. Photograph: Ashley Cooper/Global Warming Images/Alamy Stock Photo

Workers installing solar electric panels on a house roof. Photograph: Ashley Cooper/Global Warming Images/Alamy Stock Photo

*[Sandra Laville](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 07.00 EST

England's much-hyped £2bn green homes grant is in chaos, renewable energy installers say, with some owed tens of thousands of pounds and struggling to stay in business.

Members of the public have been left waiting nearly four months, in some cases, to take advantage of the scheme to fit low carbon heating systems. Some installers say customers are pulling out after losing faith in the green grants.

Boris Johnson touted the grants as one of the key programmes in his ten [10-point plan for a green industrial revolution](#). It aims to help 600,000 households switch their energy to low carbon and help the UK meet its commitment to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Ministers awarded the contract to run the programme to [ICF](#), a large American consulting corporation based in Virginia. Details of the value of the government contract have not yet been published.

[US firm running eco grants scheme has won multiple UK government contracts](#)

[Read more](#)

But renewable energy businesses say the administration of the grants is chaotic, inefficient, confused and is creating long delays for the public and installers. Emails from the administrators are being sent during US office hours; in the evening and late at night, making communication impossible, businesses say.

Companies involved in installing heat pumps and solar thermal heating say they are laying off workers and struggling to stay afloat. Some are refusing to do more work until they are paid the tens of thousands of pounds owed for work dating back to last autumn.

“It is a desperate situation from everyone’s point of view, not just the installers,” said Bryan Glendinning, chief executive officer of Engenera, based in Newcastle. “This scheme was supposed to create jobs, but it is not doing that. We were ready to go last autumn, we had set up a call centre for 40 staff, I have now got two in there.”

Glendinning says he has 300 potential customers, some of whom have been waiting since September for vouchers from the scheme to get their renewable heating systems installed.

He told the Guardian that only 61 householders had been given the vouchers to go ahead. He has installed six systems but has not been paid for any by the government, and so far is out of pocket £250,000 from the scheme.

One installer, Eddie Gammage of EDG installations, said: “Chaos is an understatement for what is going on. We haven’t received any payments at all yet for seven jobs we have completed. I have had to lay people off.”

### [Green homes: how to shut out the winter cold and save cash](#)

[Read more](#)

Bhumit Chandi, who runs Anglian Renewables in Uxbridge, said his company is owed £87,000 from work dating back to last November. “We had to register with this American company back in September. Everything is done remotely, we have 200 customers waiting for the scheme to issue vouchers and only 25 have been given approval. So since last September we have only done 16 jobs and haven’t been paid for any of them.

“This is the story across the board for installers. Some are down tens of thousands and some hundreds of thousands of pounds. We are all small companies and it is hard to sustain this. We cannot afford to do any more work.”

The scheme run by the Department for Business, [Energy](#) and Industrial Strategy, was launched last autumn, with the website up and running on 30 September.

Members of the public can claim vouchers of up to £5,000 to pay for two-thirds of the work to replace fossil fuel heat systems with renewable energy appliances such as solar thermals or heat pumps.

Homeowners who are on benefits can claim up to £10,000. Local authorities are also able to apply for work on their properties. Installers have to be

registered with Trust Mark – which charges the installers £30 plus VAT to log each job.

The scheme was due to end in March this year, but the government announced its extension until March 2022 because of delays. But the evidence from renewable energy installers is that the situation has worsened.

Cutting carbon emissions from homes – which emit 20% of the UK's CO<sub>2</sub>, is seen as crucial if the country is to reach net zero by 2050.

Giles Hanford, who runs the Small Solar Company in St Albans, told the Guardian that he is owed £20,000 for the four jobs he has carried out. He has 300 potential customers but only 10 have had their vouchers for the work issued by the administrators.

“We are very disappointed at the level of communication and at not being able to get answers. The administrators constantly refer us to the website, send more emails, and more emails. The vast majority of our customers have had queries about the work from the scheme, which we have responded to. We have broken down all the quotes for customers. But the lack of communication from the scheme means we still don't know what they require.”

Businesses say they spent money and time preparing to expand to meet the demand once the scheme was announced, but instead are now laying off staff because of the delays and chaos.

Charles Montlake, who runs Use the Sun in Basildon, said the green home grants scheme was destroying the market rather than boosting take up of renewable heating systems.

“The Green Homes Grant scheme is writing to our customers and telling them we are overpriced and they should get another quote. Destroying our reputation whilst refusing our sales is truly killing us and the market,” he said.

Jacqui Sloat, office manager for Solar Air UK based in Whitstable, said 50 out of a potential 500 customers had had vouchers issued, and two recently

had those put on hold by the GHG administrators.

On Christmas Eve at 9.35pm an email was sent from the scheme to thousands of people applying for the grants, saying they were unable to verify their identity, and the quote for the work was too high, despite the installers the Guardian has spoken to providing estimates within the accepted range of the industry body the MCS.

“Because of all this we have had 100 people drop out, they got sick of the green homes scheme full stop. They don’t think it will ever happen,” Sloat said.

Sloat said the company was down about £170,000 for the equipment it bought ready to install. “We should be scaling up our work and taking people on, but we are laying people off. People are losing faith in the scheme.”

In Newcastle, Glendinning said he – like other installers – would not be doing any more work under the GHG because of the chaos.

“I am concerned I am not going to be paid,” he said. “No one seems to be taking responsibility and sorting this out, which is a shame. It is a really good principle, the scheme, but it is not being run properly.”

Shadow business secretary Ed Miliband said: “This scheme has descended into an absolute fiasco. The Government needs to urgently sort out this mess and crucially make sure small businesses are paid what they are owed.

“Far from creating green jobs, the Government’s approach means workers in the renewable energy industry are actually being let go - worsening the economic crisis.”

Miliband criticised the outsourcing of the scheme to a private company. “This is yet another example of ministers cutting corners and outsourcing to companies that just aren’t up to the task. They must come clean about the details of this contract so taxpayers know exactly what their money has been spent on.”

ICF, which has a London operation that is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Virginia based company, said it had referred the Guardian's questions to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

A spokesperson for the department said approvals were running at over 25%. They said the contract to run the grants was put out to tender in August 2020, and details of ICF's contract would be published in due course.

"We are working with consumers and installers to ensure they are clear on the information and checks required so that vouchers can be paid as quickly as possible.

"So far, 17,000 Green Homes Grant vouchers have already been issued, with more going out every day to improve the energy efficiency of homes and support jobs as we build back better from the pandemic."

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/26/government-plans-to-turn-england-homes-green-in-chaos-with-debt-and-job-losses>

## WhatsApp

# UK regulator to write to WhatsApp over Facebook data sharing

Information commissioner says the chat app committed in 2017 not to share contact and user information



The privacy-focused chat apps Signal and Telegram have benefitted from WhatsApp's user exodus. Photograph: Chesnot/Getty Images

The privacy-focused chat apps Signal and Telegram have benefitted from WhatsApp's user exodus. Photograph: Chesnot/Getty Images

*Alex Hern* Technology editor  
*@alexhern*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 11.38 EST

The UK's data regulator is writing to WhatsApp to demand that the chat app does not hand user data to [Facebook](#), as millions worldwide continue to sign up for alternatives such as Signal and Telegram to avoid forthcoming changes to its terms of service.

Elizabeth Denham, the information commissioner, told a parliamentary committee that in 2017, [WhatsApp](#) had committed not to hand any user information over to Facebook until it could prove that doing so respected GDPR.

But, she said, that agreement was enforced by the Irish data protection authority until the Brexit transition period ended on 1 January. Now that Britain is fully outside the EU, ensuring that those promises are being kept falls to the Information Commissioner's Office.

“The change in the terms of service, and the requirement of users to share information with Facebook, does not apply to UK users or to users in the EU,” Denham told the digital, culture, media and sport sub-committee on online harms and disinformation, “and that’s because in 2017 my office negotiated with WhatsApp so that they agreed not to share user information and contact information until they could show that they complied with the [GDPR](#).<sup>10</sup>”

Asked by the committee chair whether there was any more recent agreement than the 2017 one, however, Denham said there was not. “Up until 1 January, it was the Irish data protection authority’s job to oversee the activity of WhatsApp. As long as we were in the transition period, the one-stop-shop meant it was my Irish colleague who was responsible for WhatsApp. That’s changed now.”

The information commissioner also revealed that she uses Signal, a privacy-focused competitor to WhatsApp, for her personal messaging, and does not have an account with either Facebook or WhatsApp.

“What’s really interesting about WhatsApp’s announcement on its ongoing sharing with Facebook is how many users voted with their virtual feet and left the platform to take up membership with Telegram or Signal,” she added.

“Users expect companies to maintain their trust and not to suddenly change the contract that they have with the users, and I think it’s an example of users being concerned about the trustworthiness and the sustainability of the promises made to users.”

## [Should you keep using WhatsApp? Plus five tips to start the year with your digital privacy intact](#)

[Read more](#)

The [user exodus from WhatsApp](#) began in early July, when the company announced plans to implement a new privacy policy on 8 February. Those plans, which have now been delayed to early summer, caused substantial panic among the app's users. Some of the concern was around changes that explicitly spelled out, for the first time, the existing data-sharing arrangements between WhatsApp and Facebook outside the "European region", which includes the EU and UK.

Others were concerned by misinformation, ironically spread on WhatsApp itself, that the new terms of service would allow Facebook to read user messages. That is not the case – the end-to-end encryption applied by WhatsApp prevents Facebook from accessing message contents even if it desired, but the claim spread far enough for WhatsApp to buy advertising declaring: "Neither WhatsApp nor Facebook can read your messages or hear your calls."

Signal and Telegram, the two big beneficiaries of the panic, have added millions of users each in the first three weeks of January. Signal, which was not in the top 1,000 apps in Britain at the beginning of the year, spent several days as the most downloaded app in the country, and has gained 7.5 million users globally.

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## Metropolitan police

# Cutting crime: 31 Met officers face fines for haircuts at police station

Officers face £200 fines for marathon haircut session at Bethnal Green station in breach of Covid rules

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



Met Police officers patrol Piccadilly Circus. The incident is embarrassing for the force as it leads a crackdown on rule breakers in London. Photograph: Hollie Adams/Getty Images

Met Police officers patrol Piccadilly Circus. The incident is embarrassing for the force as it leads a crackdown on rule breakers in London. Photograph: Hollie Adams/Getty Images

*Vikram Dodd* Police and crime correspondent

Tue 26 Jan 2021 12.27 EST

The [Metropolitan police](#) says that 31 of its officers broke lockdown rules to have a haircut in a police station while on duty.

The Met, Britain's biggest force, said each officer would face a £200 fixed penalty notice after their trim turned into an embarrassing brush with the law.

Under the [rules for the national lockdown in England](#), barbers and hairdressers cannot operate because of fears the proximity to their clients could aid the spread of the highly infectious Covid-19.

The haircutting took place at Bethnal Green police station, east [London](#), on 17 January, the Met said.

The force said it received allegations that a professional barber had been operating at the police station.

An investigation was launched with 31 officers identified as having sat in the barber's chair, in breach of Covid regulations, and having had their haircut. [Police](#) chiefs have decided they should be issued with a fine.

The Met said the investigation had identified two officers as being involved in organising the marathon haircutting session. They have been notified that they face an investigation for misconduct.

The incident is embarrassing in a number of ways for the Met. The latest lockdown saw the police commissioner, Cressida Dick, announce a [crackdown on rule breakers](#) among the public as infection rates skyrocketed.

Last week nine Met officers were fined for having breakfast together and the government wants police to lead the charge on stricter enforcement.

DCS Marcus Barnett, a local police chief, said: "It is deeply disappointing and frustrating that my officers have fallen short of the expectation to uphold Covid-19 regulations. Although officers donated money to charity as part of the haircut, this does not excuse them from what was a very poor decision. I expect a lot more of them."

“It is right therefore [that] officers should each face a £200 fine, as well as misconduct action for those two who organised this event.

“Quite rightly, the public expect police to be role models in following the regulations which are designed to prevent the spread of this deadly virus. I hope this action proves that police are not immune to enforcement of the rules, and we are prepared as an organisation to take action if we see officers have behaved irresponsibly.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/26/cutting-31-met-officers-fined-for-hair-cuts-at-police-station>

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## [China](#)

# Let WHO experts meet Wuhan families, says coronavirus victim's son

Zhang Hai has been organising relatives to demand accountability from Chinese authorities



Zhang Hai holds up a photo of his father, who died after contracting coronavirus in Wuhan, China. Zhang has called for the WHO to speak to Wuhan families affected by Covid. Photograph: Ng Han Guan/AP

Zhang Hai holds up a photo of his father, who died after contracting coronavirus in Wuhan, China. Zhang has called for the WHO to speak to Wuhan families affected by Covid. Photograph: Ng Han Guan/AP

*Associated Press*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 20.05 EST

A relative of a coronavirus victim in China is demanding to meet a visiting [World Health Organization](#) team, saying it should speak to affected families

who say their voices are being stifled by the Chinese government.

China approved the visit by researchers under the auspices of the UN agency only after months of negotiations. It has not indicated whether the experts will be allowed to gather evidence or talk to families, saying only that the team can exchange views with Chinese scientists.

“I hope the WHO experts don’t become a tool to spread lies,” said Zhang Hai, whose father died of Covid-19 in February 2020, after travelling to the Chinese city of Wuhan and getting infected. “We’ve been searching for the truth relentlessly. This was a criminal act and I don’t want the WHO to be coming to China to cover up these crimes.”

China’s foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

[Wuhan doctor: China authorities stopped me sounding alarm on Covid](#)  
[Read more](#)

The WHO team arrived in Wuhan on 14 January to investigate the origins of the virus, and is expected to begin field work this week after a 14-day quarantine.

Zhang, a Wuhan native living in the southern city of Shenzhen, has been organising relatives of coronavirus victims in China to demand accountability from officials.

Many are angry that the state [played down the virus](#) at the beginning of the outbreak, and have attempted to file lawsuits against the Wuhan government.

The relatives have faced immense pressure from authorities not to speak out. Officials have dismissed the lawsuits, interrogated Zhang and others repeatedly, and threatened to fire relatives of those who speak to the foreign media, according to interviews with Zhang and other relatives.

Zhang said chat groups of the relatives were shut down shortly after the WHO team’s arrival in Wuhan, and he accused the city government of trying

to silence them.

“Don’t pretend that we don’t exist, that we aren’t seeking accountability,” Zhang said. “You obliterated all our platforms but we still want to let everyone know through the media that we haven’t given up.”

The WHO says its visit to China is a scientific mission to investigate the origins of the virus, not an effort to assign blame, and that “in-depth interviews and reviews” of early cases are needed. It did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

China initially rejected demands for an international investigation after the Trump administration blamed Beijing for the virus, but it bowed to global pressure in May for an inquiry into the origins.

On Monday, Dr Anthony Fauci, the top infectious disease official in the US, said at the World Economic Forum that the origins of the virus that had brought the world to its knees remained unknown – “a big black box, which is awful”.

The mission was repeatedly delayed by negotiations and setbacks, one of which prompted an unusual public complaint by the head of the WHO, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

The arrival of the WHO mission has revived controversy over whether China allowed the virus to spread globally by reacting too slowly in the early days.

From the beginning WHO officials have been trying to get more cooperation from China, with limited success.

Audio recordings of internal WHO meetings obtained by the Associated Press and aired for the first time on Tuesday show that even while the WHO praised China in public, officials were complaining privately about not getting enough information.

The UN agency has no enforcement powers so it must rely on the goodwill of member countries.

Keiji Fukuda, a public health expert at the University of Hong Kong, has said the visit is an “image building mission” in addition to a scientific one, with China eager to come off as being transparent and the WHO keen to show it is taking action.

“Both China and WHO hope to get some brownie points,” said Fukuda, a former WHO official. “But it all comes down to what will the team have access to. Will they really be able to ask the questions that they want to ask?”

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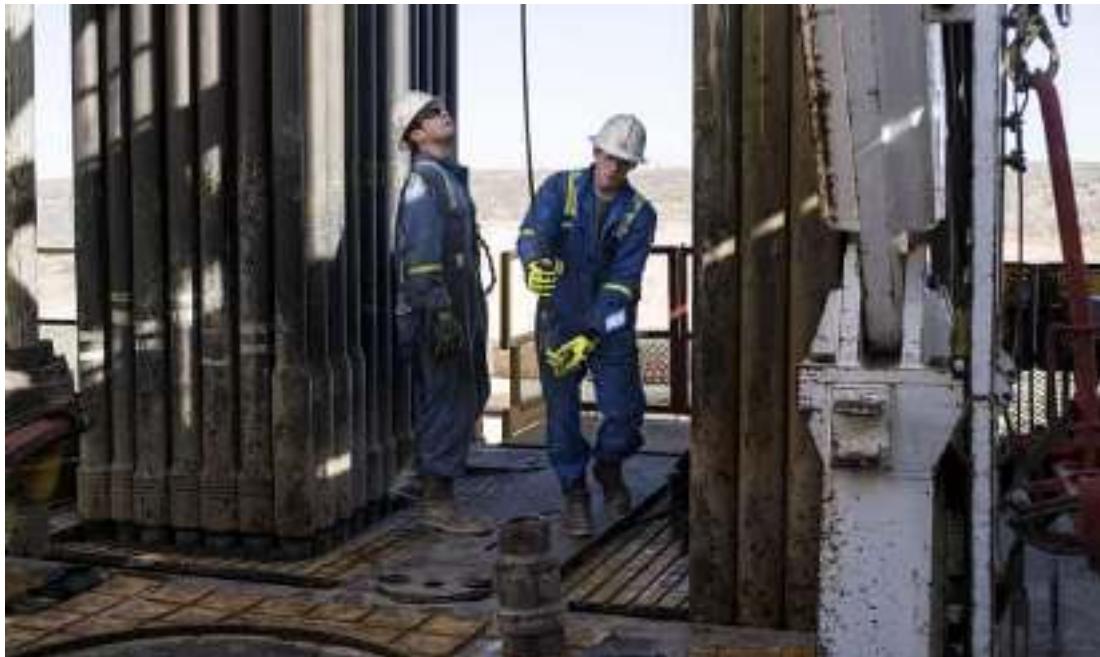
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## Business

# Rating agency S&P warns 13 oil and gas companies they risk downgrades as renewables pick up steam

Firms including Woodside, Chevron, Shell and Exxon Mobil, told they could be downgraded within weeks



Royal Dutch Shell rig operators in Texas. Oil and gas companies have been told they could be downgraded between one and two notches as S&P increases risk rating for the entire sector.

Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

Royal Dutch Shell rig operators in Texas. Oil and gas companies have been told they could be downgraded between one and two notches as S&P increases risk rating for the entire sector.

Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

[Ben Butler](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 21.02 EST

Rating agency S&P has warned 13 oil and gas companies, including some of the world's biggest, that it may downgrade them within weeks because of increasing competition from renewable energy.

On notice of a possible downgrade are Australia's Woodside Petroleum as well as multinationals Chevron, Exxon Mobil, Imperial Oil, Royal Dutch Shell, Shell [Energy](#) North America, Canadian Natural Resources, ConocoPhillips and French group Total.

S&P said it was also considering downgrading four large Chinese producers – China Petrochemical Corp, China Petroleum & Chemical Corp, China National Offshore Oil Corp and CNOOC.

[Energy agency forecasts lower demand for oil as Covid cases surge](#)

[Read more](#)

The rating agency said it had increased its risk rating for the entire oil and gas sector from “intermediate” to “moderately high” because due to the move away from fossil fuels, poor profitability and volatile prices.

It said it also had a negative outlook for two other big oil and gas companies, British multinational BP and Canadian group Suncor, but did not plan to immediately reassess their credit ratings.

[Business Council of Australia backs Zali Steggall's climate change bill for 2050 net zero target](#)

[Read more](#)

“In particular, we note significant challenges and uncertainties engendered by the energy transition, including market declines due to growth of renewables; pressures on profitability, specifically return on capital, as a result of high dollar capital investment levels over 2005-2015 and lower

average oil and gas prices since 2014; and recent and potential oil and gas price volatility,” S&P said on Wednesday.

It said it did not plan to downgrade companies by more than one notch as a result of the risk to the industry as a whole.

“This said, we cannot exclude a combination of the industry risk revision and other material factors leading to a two-notch downgrade, especially given the potential for negative surprises after the Covid-19 impacts in 2020,” it said.

A two-notch downgrade would put Woodside at BBB-, which is one notch above a junk rating.

Woodside shares fell 3.25% on Wednesday morning.

[BlackRock holds \\$85bn in coal despite pledge to sell fossil fuel shares](#)  
[Read more](#)

A lower credit rating can make it harder or more expensive for companies to borrow money. In particular, many fund managers will not invest in companies with a junk rating.

S&P’s move came after the world’s biggest funds manager, BlackRock, [said it might dump shares in big greenhouse gas emitters](#) in support of limiting global heating to 1.5C by 2050.

“I believe that the pandemic has presented such an existential crisis – such a stark reminder of our fragility – that it has driven us to confront the global threat of climate change more forcefully and to consider how, like the pandemic, it will alter our lives,” BlackRock chief executive Larry Fink said in a letter to CEOs.

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## Netherlands

# Brexit: Dutch warehouse boom as UK firms forced to invest abroad

Hornby and JD Sports among firms after space to offset port delays, extra freight costs plus new VAT and customs fees

- [‘An absolute killer’ – small firms struggle with Brexit VAT](#)
- [Move to EU to avoid Brexit fees, UK department says](#)



The Prologis warehouse in Nieuwegein, Netherlands. Photograph: PROLOGIS/Reuters

The Prologis warehouse in Nieuwegein, Netherlands. Photograph: PROLOGIS/Reuters

*[Joanna Partridge](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 10.53 EST

Logistics and warehousing companies in the [Netherlands](#) are being inundated with requests from British businesses looking to rent warehouse space, as the country experiences a [Brexit](#) boom in investment and jobs.

Thousands of small businesses have been plunged into crisis by the UK's departure from the EU, with exports to the continent collapsing because of delays at ports, increased shipping costs, and the [sudden addition of VAT](#), customs duties, and in some cases tariffs, on shipments sent from the UK to customers within the bloc.

### ['An absolute killer': small UK firms struggle with Brexit VAT rules](#)

[Read more](#)

Many have been left with no option but to invest in distribution networks within the EU, and the Dutch logistics industry is reaping the rewards.

Netherlands logistics companies have been flooded with calls for help, while the number of British companies searching for a base in the country has doubled in the last 18 months, the [Netherlands](#) Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA) said on Tuesday. The agency has a list of more than 500 global firms considering investing in the [Netherlands](#) because of Brexit – half of which are UK companies.

The toy train maker Hornby and clothing retailer JD Sports are among those thought to be considering warehousing in the Netherlands.

### [Move to EU to avoid Brexit costs, firms told](#)

[Read more](#)

“We know for a fact it is going to be complete madness into summer,” said Jochem Sanders, a business development manager at the Holland International Distribution Council, a non-profit body which he describes as a “matchmaker” for Dutch logistics firms.

Sanders said he has been contacted by more than one British company per day throughout December and January, all looking for warehousing space, and he expects the number of requests to continue.

“I have had requests from 25 UK companies so far in January, and in December more than 30, asking can you put us in touch with Dutch logistics firms,” Sanders said.

The number of companies searching for a base in the Netherlands has surged in recent months, according to Michiel Bakhuizen, a spokesperson for the NFIA, which is a government agency tasked with attracting foreign investment.

While around half are British companies, the other half are from places such as the US and Asia, who want a foothold in the EU, and have decided against locating in the UK following its departure from the bloc.

By distributing from inside the bloc, UK firms are able to avoid their customers in the 27 EU member states being hit by [VAT charges, customs duties](#) and lengthy port delays which have impacted cross-border trade since 1 January.

“A lot of companies are thinking of establishing themselves on the European mainland and the Netherlands is one of the big hubs for that,” Bakhuizen said. “We are pretty busy because of Brexit at the moment.”

Part of the country’s popularity can be linked to Rotterdam, Europe’s largest port, as well as Schiphol airport in Amsterdam.

But the Netherlands logistics sector also boasts the ability to reach customers in all corners of the EU – from Rome and Madrid to Stockholm and Warsaw – within 24 hours.

['A Brexit nightmare': the British businesses being pushed to breaking point](#)  
[Read more](#)

For now the EU, with its 500 million consumers, remains the UK’s largest trading partner. The UK exported £294bn of goods and services to the bloc in 2019, [according to official statistics](#), representing 43% of UK trade. [Hornby](#) has reorganised its operations. It has resumed EU exports after a pause of several weeks, and will begin serving its European customers from a new warehouse based in mainland Europe within weeks.

The chief executive, Lyndon Davies, said: “We bring in 300-400 containers per year and we are shipping to our warehouses in the US, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, so we will consolidate at our factory and probably bring it direct into Europe.”

The move will save European customers from having to pay higher shipping costs and VAT to receive items ordered from the company’s website, as well as the tariffs levied on certain models.

Under the [“rules of origin”](#) outlined in the Brexit agreement, products that are not made in Britain, such as Hornby’s Chinese-produced toys, attract tariffs when re-exported from the UK into the European market.

[JD Sports](#), which hit £1.6bn of European sales in 2020, has said it is also working out how to negotiate the complex new rules, given much of the clothing and footwear it sells is imported from Asia, and would incur tariffs if re-exported to the EU without being processed in the UK.

The retailer is looking at a range of EU countries – including Germany and the Netherlands – to locate a new warehouse to serve EU customers.

[Smaller businesses have also been looking at how to prevent paying double duty](#), or seeing its EU customers charged VAT to receive their products. About one in five small businesses exports overseas, according to the Federation of Small Businesses.

Brie Read, the chief executive of the hosiery retailer Snag Tights, based in Livingstone, Scotland, decided the firm “just couldn’t wait for a decision on Brexit” and began to look for an EU warehouse last July.

The firm, which sends 1,000 parcels, or 30% of its orders, to Europe each day, has leased a warehouse in Venlo in south-east Netherlands, close to the German border.

“Everyone speaks English – and links are great to both the north and south of Europe,” Read said.

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Even Strokes, an online retailer specialising in motocross gear and parts, and only established in 2019, has recorded a “horrific” fall in sales since the start of January, said its founder, James Burfield. “Brexit threw us a bigger curveball than Covid.”

DPD, the courier service used by Burfield, [paused its road service](#) to Europe, blaming new border procedures and additional customs paperwork for increased transit times. Customers have also complained to Even Strokes about higher shipping costs and waiting times. Some have demanded refunds.

As a result, Burfield wants to rent a warehouse in the Netherlands or Belgium and employ a new staff member overseas.

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## Brexit

# EU citizens offered financial incentives to leave UK

European nationals added to voluntary returns scheme, which can include flights and up to £2,000 for resettlement



A government advertisement at South Kensington station in London encouraging EU nationals to apply to the EU settlement scheme.  
Photograph: Adrian Dennis/AFP/Getty Images

A government advertisement at South Kensington station in London encouraging EU nationals to apply to the EU settlement scheme.  
Photograph: Adrian Dennis/AFP/Getty Images

[Diane Taylor](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 09.32 EST

EU citizens are being offered financial incentives to leave the UK, the Guardian has learned, months before the deadline to apply for settled status.

From 1 January EU citizens have quietly been added to the government's [voluntary returns scheme](#) where financial support is offered as an encouragement to return to their country of origin.

Payments can include flights and up to £2,000 resettlement money. The scheme is designed to help some migrants in the UK to leave voluntarily.

People working to help vulnerable EU citizens in the UK said the offer of money to return home contradicted the government's claim that it was doing everything it could to encourage people to register for settled status. The deadline for Europeans living in the UK to apply for the EU settlement scheme (EUSS) is 30 June.

[EU citizens: are you experiencing settled status issues in the UK?](#)

[Read more](#)

Benjamin Morgan, who runs the EU homeless rights project at the Public Interest Law Centre, said: "It is clear from our casework that some of the most vulnerable EU citizens are yet to resolve their status. Barriers to application and delays in [Home Office](#) decision-making remain significant factors.

"This mixed messaging around settled status on the one hand and voluntary returns on the other, seriously undermines the government's claim that the rights of vulnerable Europeans will be protected after [Brexit](#)."

A Home Office spokesperson said: "Some people may choose not to obtain status under EUSS and may not wish to remain in the UK after the deadline. That is why we have written to stakeholders to inform them that EEA nationals who wish to leave the UK may now be eligible for support to help them do so under the voluntary returns scheme."

The news came as research from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JWCI) warned that thousands of European key workers risked losing their legal right to remain in the UK.

The report, titled [When the Clapping Stops: EU Care Workers After Brexit](#), warns that thousands of European citizens currently fulfilling key worker

roles in the care sector, as well as those working in construction, manufacturing and agriculture, are at risk of losing their legal status and face removal from the UK.

Of 295 care workers surveyed by the charity, one in seven were unsure what EUSS was, one in three had not heard about it before being in touch with JCWI, and one in three did not know there was a deadline for the settlement scheme, nor when it was. Most of the surveys were conducted between January and March last year.

“If even a tiny fraction of the estimated EEA+ (EU, EEA and Swiss) residents are unable to apply in time, tens of thousands will lose their status overnight,” the report states.

“Without urgent action, the care sector is likely to be devastated,” it adds.

The report calls for the immediate lifting of the deadline for applying to the EUSS, for European citizens to be automatically granted settled status, and for an end to [“hostile environment”](#) policies.

It states that workers in industries with poor conditions, low pay and insecure contracts such as care, construction and agriculture are particularly at risk of slipping through the cracks in the scheme. Those unable to apply on time will be subject to measures including detention and removal and could be criminalised for working, [renting accommodation](#) or driving a car.

Chai Patel, of JCWI, said: “Our research scares me because the people we talked to were far less vulnerable than other groups hidden in exploitative working conditions, who no one has been able to reach to ask questions. Despite warnings from us and many other experts, the Home Office is burying its head in the sand about this just like they did with [Windrush](#) and making excuses instead of finding solutions.”

JCWI is not the only organisation to warn that some might slip through the net. The Migration Observatory has [expressed concern](#) that some groups are at risk of being unregistered by the 30 June deadline.

The immigration minister, Kevin Foster, said the JCWI report presented “an incredibly misleading picture of the EU settlement scheme” as it relied on “a small survey of less than 300 people conducted a year ago”.

“Since then millions of applications have been received by the scheme,” he said. “We have now had almost 4.9m applications to the hugely successful EU settlement scheme. There is now less than six months before the 30 June 2021 deadline and I would encourage all those eligible to apply now to secure their rights under UK law. A wide range of support is available online and over the telephone if you need it and we are funding 72 organisations across the UK to ensure no one gets left behind.”

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**Bali**

## 'We live here': fears tourist tweets on gay lifestyle may backfire on Bali's LGBT community



Kristen Gray has been deported from Bali for celebrating its welcoming of gay people. But local LGBT residents fear a crackdown in the conservative country. Photograph: Made Nagi/EPA

Kristen Gray has been deported from Bali for celebrating its welcoming of gay people. But local LGBT residents fear a crackdown in the conservative country. Photograph: Made Nagi/EPA

Expulsion of US woman who promoted Indonesian island as ‘queer-friendly’ reveals how acceptance extends only to visitors

*Gemma Holliani Cahya in Jakarta*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 23.09 EST

When American tourist Kristen Antoinette Gray began writing about her stay in [Bali](#) on Twitter, she apparently had little idea of the controversy she would cause.

Gray and her girlfriend had travelled to Bali for six months but, when the pandemic hit, decided to wait it out on the island. The move had transformed their lifestyles, she wrote, allowing them to enjoy an “elevated lifestyle at a much lower cost of living”. Her business, which she ran as a digital nomad, had started to take shape, and the island had offered a much-needed respite from the political turmoil in the US. It was also, she said, a safe place for the black and queer community.

Not everyone here can express themselves that freely.

*I Made Arya, Gaya Dewata Foundation*

After sharing her experience, she posted a link to an ebook she had created, which she said contained visa tips. It also gave advice on getting into Bali during the Covid-19 pandemic – despite an entry ban for foreign visitors, which was put in place to stop the spread of the virus.

Her post immediately [prompted an online storm](#) among Bali residents. Her comments, her critics felt, summed up the privileged attitude of foreign tourists who ignore local rules. They pointed out that she showed little awareness of huge economic inequality on the island, or of the impact of the pandemic on local people. Within days, authorities announced that she would be deported.

For the queer community in Bali, the episode has been especially fraught.

Explaining their decision to deport Gray, officials not only accused her of operating a business in Bali, but also of having “disseminated information disturbing to the public”. Her description of the island as a welcoming place for LGBT travellers was among the comments they highlighted.

Bali, a Hindu-majority island and a tourist destination that attracts gay travellers, is considered more open-minded than other areas of [Indonesia](#), where discrimination against LGBT people is rife.



American graphic designer Kristen Antoinette Gray, center, is escorted by her lawyer in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia before she left the island. Photograph: Firdia Lisnawati/AP

LGBT residents on the island, however, do not enjoy the same privileges as visitors, said I Made Arya, a program manager at Gaya Dewata Foundation, an NGO that provides health and educational services for LGBT people.

“It is friendly here for LGBT tourists because they are here as tourists. The people in the tourism business will accept them whatever their sexuality is, they will be served well,” Arya says.

“But we all have to understand the culture, and the local condition, and be careful with our actions to protect the local community. Not everyone here can express themselves that freely,” he added.

[Gender conversion 'therapy' made me suicidal. I fear for other young Nigerians](#)

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Some fear the publicity generated by Gray’s deportation could prompt the authorities to crackdown on LGBT people in Bali. Over recent years, there have been worrying signs of increased hostility. Last year, authorities

announced they were investigating a villa that had marketed itself as a destination for gay travellers, with one official stating at the time that “here in Bali we don’t recognise that culture”. In 2019, a Bali-based LGBT pageant held its crowning ceremony in secret after it was targeted with online criticism.

So far in Bali, there has been no action against the community, says Arya. But he adds: “As tourists they will return to their countries, but we live here, we are staying here. We [the local LGBT community] are the ones who have to deal with the impact if something happened.”

Homosexuality is legal in Indonesia, except in Aceh province, but LGBT people lack legal rights and face widespread prejudice. Exorcism and conversion therapy continue to be imposed upon people, while the Indonesian Psychiatrists Association (PDSKJI) classifies homosexuality, bisexuality and transsexualism as mental disorders that can be cured through proper treatment.

A [study by Pew Research Center](#) published in 2020 found that only 9% of Indonesians agreed that homosexuality should be accepted by society.

Gray has denied any wrongdoing in relation to her business activities, stating that she had not made money in Indonesian rupiah in Indonesia. “I’m being deported because of LGBT,” she said last week.

Her lawyer, Erwin Siregar, said that the couple had not broken any laws and that they were just trying to promote Bali, and help people come to the island after coronavirus restrictions were lifted.

Kai Mata, a musician and campaigner against LGBT discrimination who has spoken open out about her own sexuality, says the episode demonstrates that Indonesia – including Bali – is not queer-friendly.

She fears for travellers who might listen to Gray’s advice, and for Indonesian queer people who, she says, “undergo not only laws that threaten us, but also highly pressured society that thinks we’re not normal and that we need to be cured”.

“It has now exploded into a story that has lasting repercussions on a very unprotected and vulnerable minority which is us, in the queer community,” Mata says.

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## Weapons technology

# US has 'moral imperative' to develop AI weapons, says panel

Draft Congress report claims AI will make fewer mistakes than humans and lead to reduced casualties



Activists from the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots protest in Berlin in 2019.  
Photograph: Annegret Hilse/Reuters

Activists from the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots protest in Berlin in 2019.  
Photograph: Annegret Hilse/Reuters

*Reuters in Washington*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 17.38 EST

The US should not agree to ban the use or development of [autonomous weapons powered by artificial intelligence \(AI\) software](#), a government-appointed panel has said in a draft report for Congress.

The panel, led by former Google chief executive Eric Schmidt, on Tuesday concluded two days of public discussion about how the world's biggest military power should consider AI for national security and technological advancement.

['Machines set loose to slaughter': the dangerous rise of military AI](#)  
[Read more](#)

Its vice-chairman, Robert Work, a former deputy secretary of defense, said autonomous weapons are expected to make fewer mistakes than humans do in battle, leading to reduced casualties or skirmishes caused by target misidentification.

"It is a moral imperative to at least pursue this hypothesis," he said.

The discussion waded into a controversial frontier of human rights and warfare. For about eight years, a coalition of non-governmental organisations has [pushed for a treaty banning "killer robots"](#), saying human control is necessary to judge attacks' proportionality and assign blame for war crimes. Thirty countries including Brazil and Pakistan want a ban, according to the coalition's website, and a UN body has held meetings on the systems since at least 2014.

While autonomous weapon capabilities are decades old, concern has mounted with the development of AI to power such systems, along with research finding biases in AI and examples of the software's abuse.

The US panel, called the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence, in meetings this week acknowledged the risks of autonomous weapons. A member from Microsoft for instance warned of pressure to build machines that react quickly, which could escalate conflicts.

The panel only wants humans to make decisions on launching nuclear warheads.

Still, the panel prefers anti-proliferation work to a treaty banning the systems, which it said would be against US interests and difficult to enforce.

Mary Wareham, coordinator of the eight-year Campaign to Stop Killer [Robots](#), said the commission's "focus on the need to compete with similar investments made by China and Russia ... only serves to encourage arms races."

Beyond AI-powered weapons, the panel's lengthy report recommended use of AI by intelligence agencies to streamline data gathering and review; \$32bn (£23.3bn) in annual federal funding for AI research; and new bodies including a digital corps modelled after the army's Medical Corps and a technology competitiveness council chaired by the US vice-president.

The commission is due to submit its final report to Congress in March, but the recommendations are not binding.

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## HSBC

# HSBC denies taking political stance over China's crackdown in Hong Kong

Bank's chief executive, Noel Quinn, claims business not in position to question police requests

- [Nils Pratley: the pressure on HSBC to split grows](#)



HSBC's chief executive has ruled out leaving the Hong Kong market.  
Photograph: Anthony Wallace/AFP/Getty Images

HSBC's chief executive has ruled out leaving the Hong Kong market.  
Photograph: Anthony Wallace/AFP/Getty Images

*[Kalyeena Makortoff](#), Banking correspondent*

*[@kalyeena](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 14.49 EST

HSBC's chief executive has denied taking a political stance on China's crackdown in Hong Kong, claiming the bank was not in a position to question police requests when it agreed to [freeze accounts of pro-democracy activists](#).

Questioned by MPs on the foreign affairs committee on Tuesday, Noel Quinn ruled out exiting the Hong Kong market in light of Beijing's [controversial new security laws](#), saying it "would only harm" local customers.

### [Shareholders push HSBC to cut exposure to fossil fuels](#)

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In a 90-minute exchange that left many MPs exasperated, the HSBC boss repeatedly refused to comment on issues of "democracy or political systems" and said his main motivation was to help Hong Kong's economy and its citizens "through the current challenges".

The London-headquartered bank [has come under fire](#) not only for backing the security law, but freezing the accounts of pro-democracy protesters – including veteran activist Ted Hui – who critics claim are the real target of Beijing's crackdown. The bank has also been accused of protecting its own interests in Hong Kong, where it employs about 30,000 of its 235,000 global staff and makes more than half its profits.

But Quinn said the bank was not singling out activists, and was merely following police orders as it would in any of its markets, including the UK. "I cannot cherrypick which law to follow," he said.

MPs pushed Quinn to justify his decision to support the security law, and allow his Asia-Pacific chief executive, Peter Wong, to sign a petition backing Beijing's new rules. HSBC's statement at the time said it would "respect and support laws" that would help the territory "recover and rebuild."

Quinn said on Tuesday that the bank had hoped the security law would restore calm in a city that had faced months of disruption due to pro-democracy protests. "We had to ask 30,000 people to work from home

because they were afraid to travel on public transport. Buildings were being firebombed,” he said.

“We believe that it was appropriate to stabilise the security position in Hong Kong,” Quinn added.

The Labour MP, Chris Bryant, claimed HSBC seemed to “adopt a moral stance when it suits you, but not when it doesn’t”.

### Dormant asset scheme to be expanded beyond bank accounts

[Read more](#)

However, Quinn defended the bank’s decision: “It’s not my position to make a moral or political judgment on these matters, I have to comply with the law.”

He quashed rumours that HSBC may consider splitting its Asian and western operations, or pulling out of Hong Kong entirely, to avoid the reputational damage of being associated with China’s anti-democratic crackdown.

Quinn said pulling out of the territory “would only harm” customers. “I am nowhere near the point at which the challenges Hong Kong faces would even give me any hints or consideration of walking away from Hong Kong. We’re committed to it.”

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## [Italy](#)

# Italy's power struggle raises fears over Covid and the economy

Italians struggle to fathom Giuseppe Conte's resignation as prime minister and resulting political limbo

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Giuseppe Conte resigned on Tuesday after weeks of feuding with former prime minister Matteo Renzi. Photograph: Filippo Attili/Chigi palace press office/EPA

Giuseppe Conte resigned on Tuesday after weeks of feuding with former prime minister Matteo Renzi. Photograph: Filippo Attili/Chigi palace press office/EPA

*[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 13.16 EST

Italy's political crisis has left the country in limbo in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, raising fears that a power struggle in the heart of government will hamper its economic recovery plan.

The prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, [resigned on Tuesday](#) after weeks of feuding with former prime minister Matteo Renzi, who [withdrew his small Italia Viva party](#) from the ruling coalition following clashes over the handling of the pandemic and a spending plan for the €209bn (£185bn) Italy is due to receive from the EU's economic recovery plan.

Italians are [struggling to fathom the motives](#) behind a crisis at a time when the economy is in deep strife and Covid-19 is killing hundreds of people a day. Italy reported 541 coronavirus-related deaths on Tuesday, up from 420 the day before, while the daily tally of new infections rose to 10,593 from 8,561.

“With a government that has resigned, everything will be slower and more difficult,” warned the foreign minister, Luigi Di Maio, one of the leaders of the populist Five Star Movement (M5S), the largest party in parliament.

Italy was the first European country to face the full force of the pandemic and has since suffered badly. Parts of the country remain under partial lockdown and the vaccination programme has slowed – a problem the government has blamed on delays in deliveries from pharma giant Pfizer.

Its current political turmoil essentially boils down to a game of tactics between Conte, who stays on in a caretaker capacity, and Renzi, known by Italians by the nickname *Rottamatore* (“the wrecker”).

Conte resigned after confidence votes in both houses of parliament last week [left him without an outright majority](#), and in the hope that it would maximise his chances of leading a new government, which would be his third, with a more stable coalition.

But as he struggled to obtain a stronger majority, Conte was reportedly pressured by the two main coalition parties – the Five Star Movement (M5S) and the Democratic party (PD) – to preemptively quit in order to dodge a

humiliating defeat in a key vote on judicial reform that had been due to take place this week.

Defence minister Lorenzo Guerini of the PD told *La Repubblica* that Conte is “irreplaceable” but said it was time for the ruling coalition to regroup, Italia Viva included, around “a new political pact” lasting until 2023.

Debora Serracchiani, the deputy head of the PD, told state broadcaster RAI that Conte was “the essential element and we need to broaden and relaunch the government’s action”.

All the ruling parties want to avoid snap elections, which opinion polls suggest would hand power to the centre-right opposition comprising billionaire former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia and Matteo Salvini’s far-right League party.

Conte’s gamble might pay off or president Sergio Mattarella, the ultimate arbiter, could decide to appoint an alternative prime minister to form a government unless strong support for Conte emerges through his consultations with party leaders over the next couple of days.

“I imagine that our European partners are very concerned about the instability in Italy,” said Roberto D’Alimonte, a politics professor at Rome’s Luiss University. “But then in Italy things change and then they don’t change – we’ll see a new government pretty soon and it will be more or less like the last one.”

Meanwhile, Renzi is betting on his party, which attracts less than 3% in polls, re-entering government but with a stronger hand and without Conte.

“They became enemies,” said Mattia Diletti, a politics professor at Rome’s Sapienza University. “But what kind of substantial change can you have when you have the same majority and only changed the prime minister? I really don’t see the point.”

It was Renzi, Italy’s prime minister between 2014 and 2016, [who brought together](#) the M5S-PD coalition in August 2019 in order to keep the far-right

out of power. He then left the PD to form Italia Viva, while promising to support the coalition.

“But Conte neglected him, only dealing with the PD and M5S, and so Renzi decided to call his shots now to try and gain more visibility and weight inside the government,” added D’Alimonte.

Most analysts agree that early elections are the most unlikely outcome of the crisis.

“I believe we will find a solution … which in any case will be a weaker government compared with the previous government,” said Diletti.

Conte, a once obscure law professor, has already led two governments of different political shades since taking office after the 2018 general election: a fractious and unashamedly populist coalition between M5S and Salvini’s League, which ended when the latter pulled out in August 2019, and the so-called Conte II government between M5S and the PD, two former sworn enemies.

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## Grindr

# Grindr fined £8.6m in Norway over sharing personal information

Fine from by the Norwegian Data Protection Authority is 10% of Grindr's global annual revenue



Grindr argued that sexual orientation, a specially protected category of data, was not exposed by selling its users' data, since some of them may be straight. Photograph: Hassan Ammar/AP

Grindr argued that sexual orientation, a specially protected category of data, was not exposed by selling its users' data, since some of them may be straight. Photograph: Hassan Ammar/AP

*Alex Hern  
@alexhern*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 11.36 EST

Grindr has been fined 100m krone (£8.6m) by the Norwegian Data Protection Authority after an investigation revealed the dating app was sharing deeply personal information with advertisers, including location, sexual orientation and mental health details.

The fine is 10% of Grindr's global annual revenue and is particularly high because of the personal nature of the information shared.

"This is a milestone in the ongoing work to ensure that consumers' privacy is protected online. The Data Protection Authority has clearly established that it is unacceptable for companies to collect and share personal data without users' permission," said Finn Myrstad, the director of digital policy in Norway's Consumer Council (NCC).

In 2019, the NCC launched a study of the data practices of 10 apps, including period trackers and dating services. At the time, it found that Grindr stood out for the lack of information contained in its privacy policy: the company told users that they needed to check with advertising partners to find out how their data was used, but only listed one such partner, MoPub, an ad network owned by Twitter. Twitter dropped Grindr soon after.

Grindr argued that sexual orientation, a specially protected category of data, was not exposed by selling its users' data, since some of them may be straight. That argument was rejected by the Norwegian authorities, who noted that the app explicitly markets itself as "exclusively for the gay/bi community".

Max Schrems, the chairman of consumer rights group noyb, which supported the case, said the claim was "rather remarkable". "An app for the gay community, that argues that the special protections for exactly that community actually do not apply to them, is rather remarkable. I am not sure if Grindr's lawyers have really thought this through."

Ala Krinickyte, a data protection lawyer at noyb, said the fine also created precedent for companies that simple "take it or leave it" terms of service were not sufficient to claim user consent. "The message is simple: 'take it or leave it' is not consent. If you rely on unlawful 'consent' you are subject to a hefty fine. This does not only concern Grindr, but many websites and apps.

“We do not expect any successful objection by Grindr. However, more fines may be in the pipeline for Grindr as it lately claims an unlawful ‘legitimate interest’ to share user data with third parties – even without consent. Grindr may be bound for a second round.”

Last June, Grindr attempted to blunt controversy over a different use of user data, after [the company committed to removing](#) an “ethnicity filter” from its app to mark its support for the Black Lives Matter movement. The company had long defended the feature, which allowed users to filter out people of particular ethnic backgrounds from their search results, even though the company’s head of communications said [as far back as 2018](#) that the option “does promote racist behaviour in the app”.

The company did not reply to a request for comment.

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## Netherlands

# Netherlands shaken by third night of riots over Covid curfew

About 150 anti-lockdown protesters arrested after shops looted and cars set alight in several towns and cities

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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01:26

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

Tue 26 Jan 2021 08.40 EST

A third night of rioting has shaken the [Netherlands](#) as protesters rampaged through towns and cities around the country after government introduced a night-time curfew.

More than 180 people were arrested on Monday in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, where shops were vandalised and looted and the mayor, Ahmed Aboutaleb, issued an emergency decree giving police broader powers of arrest.

“These people are shameless thieves, I cannot say otherwise,” Aboutaleb said. But trouble also flared in smaller centres around the country such as Den Bosch, Zwolle, Amersfoort, Alkmaar, Hoorn, Gouda – where several cars were set on fire – and Haarlem, where police were attacked with stones.



Police officers arrest a man during clashes in Beijerlandselaan. Photograph: Marco de Swart/ANP/AFP/Getty

Officials said the rioters, who reportedly used social media apps to organise, were overwhelmingly teenagers. Experts questioned the extent to which many were motivated by opposition to the 9pm curfew, which came into force on Saturday.

A leading Dutch criminologist, Henk Ferwerda, said the riots involved “virus deniers, political protesters and kids who just saw the chance to go completely wild – all three groups came together”.

Some were originally peaceful protests that were “hijacked” by people looking for violence, Ferwerda [told the Dutch public broadcaster, NOS](#), while others appeared planned from the start by people “knowingly and intentionally” seeking to cause trouble.

In the light of the past three nights’ events, he said, genuine protesters “should now be more likely to think twice: it’s now a bit naive to say, ‘come and demonstrate’”. Those left will be “the ones who are purely there for the violence. They should receive the punishment they deserve.”

The mayor of Haarlem, Jos Wienen, described the riots as a “serious disturbance of public order”. The anti-Covid measures were tough for

everyone, he said: “We all want to be free to move. But that does not entitle anyone to start fires, let off fireworks and commit vandalism.”

Mayors in several Dutch cities have [announced they would introduce emergency measures](#) to try to prevent further rioting.

The prime minister condemned the weekend riots in which anti-lockdown protesters attacked police and set cars on fire. “What motivated these people has nothing to do with protest; this is criminal violence,” Mark Rutte said.



A vehicle burns after being torched by protesters in Beijerlandselaan in Rotterdam. Photograph: Marco de Swart/ANP/AFP/Getty

Police said 300 people were detained on Saturday and Sunday after youths threw rocks and in one case knives at officers, attacked a hospital and burned down a Covid testing station. More than 5,700 fines were issued for breaking the curfew.

Bars and restaurants have been shut in the Netherlands since October, with schools and non-essential shops following suit in mid-December. Infection numbers are falling but authorities fear the possible faster spread of the UK variant of the virus.

Rutte's government is acting in a caretaker capacity before the election, scheduled for 17 March, after resigning last week over a child benefit scandal.

Koen Simmers, the head of the national police union, told Dutch television officers were prepared should the rioting continue. "I hope it was a one-off but I'm afraid it could be a harbinger for the days and weeks to come," he said.

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# EU means business over Covid vaccine exports, says Von der Leyen

Commission president says firms must deliver on orders after AstraZeneca warns of shortfall

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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[Daniel Boffey](#) in Brussels and [Peter Walker](#) in London

Tue 26 Jan 2021 10.06 EST Last modified on Tue 26 Jan 2021 10.33 EST



Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum, listens as Ursula von der Leyen speaks on Tuesday. Photograph: Salvatore Di Nolfi/EPA

The EU “means business”, [Ursula von der Leyen](#) has said, as the bloc doubled down on plans for tighter monitoring of vaccine exports to countries

outside of the union, such as the UK.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum, the president of the European commission said the EU had invested billions and “companies must now deliver” to the 27 member states.

The EU’s executive branch will bring forward details of a new transparency register by the end of the week to oblige pharmaceutical companies to notify the commission [of all vaccine exports](#).

Speaking on Tuesday morning, Germany’s health minister, Jens Spahn, had described the plan variously as an “export restriction” and a permit system to ensure the EU retained its fair share of vaccines produced on its territory.

In her speech on Tuesday, Von der Leyen said the EU needed to see a return on its advance orders. The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is expected to be authorised by the European Medicines Agency on Friday.

Von der Leyen said: “The EU and others helped with money to build research capacities and production facilities. Europe invested billions to help develop the world’s first Covid-19 vaccines. To create a truly global common good. And now, the companies must deliver. They must honour their obligations. This is why we will set up a vaccine export transparency mechanism. [Europe](#) is determined to contribute. But it also means business.”

AstraZeneca had informed the commission last Friday that there would be a [60% shortfall](#) in its vaccine deliveries this quarter as a result of production problems at a site in Belgium. EU officials have informed the company that it must honour its contractual obligations to supply about 80m doses by the end of March.

Reuters reported on Tuesday that officials had requested that [AstraZeneca](#) divert doses from the UK to EU member states to make up on the shortfall.

A commission spokesman said: “We cannot comment on comments. However, the commission always insisted on a precise delivery schedule on the basis of which member states should be planning their vaccination programmes, subject to the granting of a conditional marketing

authorisation. The matter will be discussed at tomorrow's steering board meeting. We will re-evaluate the state of play after this meeting.”

On Monday, the EU health commissioner, Stella Kyriakides, said she had received unsatisfactory answers over the new delivery schedule. She proposed that “an export transparency mechanism be put in place, as soon as possible”.

AstraZeneca produces much of its vaccine in the UK, but the country is also reliant on the export of Pfizer/BioNTech doses from a laboratory in Belgium, raising fears of a potential breakdown in distribution.

Britain’s vaccine minister, [Nadhim Zahawi](#), said he was confident Pfizer would deliver the number of coronavirus injections needed in the UK.

A spokesperson for Von der Leyen declined to lay out how the new transparency register would work but said the main purpose was not to block exports but to monitor them. “Let me just emphasise the word that is important here is transparency. This is not about blocking, this is about knowing what the companies are exporting or will export to markets outside of the [European Union](#).”

Downing Street also sought to play down any potential row, saying ministers did not foresee any disruption to UK vaccine supplies.

“AstraZeneca are committed to delivering 2m doses a week to the UK, and we’re not expecting any changes to that,” Boris Johnson’s spokesperson said. “We are confident in our supply, and anybody who has booked an appointment or has been asked to come forward for a vaccination should do so.”

They declined to discuss what the UK might do if the EU did attempt to curb vaccine exports, saying: “I’m not going to get into hypotheticals.” Pressed on this, the spokesperson said: “I would point you to the EU about any questions about their policy.”

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## 2021.01.27 - Climate crisis

- [Environment US returns to global climate arena with call to act on 'emergency'](#)
- [Green shoots Spanish company tackles plastic waste from shotgun cartridges](#)

[John Kerry](#)

## US returns to global climate arena with call to act on 'emergency'

At virtual Global Adaptation summit, John Kerry says 'we're proud to be back' after four-year absence



The US climate envoy, John Kerry, told world leaders that the climate crisis was a top priority for the new president, Joe Biden. Photograph: Mark Makela/Getty Images

The US climate envoy, John Kerry, told world leaders that the climate crisis was a top priority for the new president, Joe Biden. Photograph: Mark Makela/Getty Images

*[Fiona Harvey](#) Environment correspondent*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 11.35 EST

The US has returned to international climate action with a focus on helping the most vulnerable on the planet, Joe Biden's climate envoy announced at a

global climate summit, promising financial assistance for those afflicted by the impacts of climate breakdown.

John Kerry told world leaders at the virtual [Global Adaptation summit](#) on Monday: “We’re proud to be back. We come back with humility for the absence of the last four years, and we’ll do everything in our power to make up for it.”

He called on countries to “treat the crisis as the emergency that it is” by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and warned that the costs of coping with the climate change were escalating, with the US spending more than \$265bn (£194bn) in one year after three storms. “We’ve reached a point where it is an absolute fact that it’s cheaper to invest in preventing damage or minimising it at least than cleaning up.”

Current greenhouse gas emissions, he said, put the world on track to experience, “for the most vulnerable and poorest people on earth, fundamentally unliveable conditions, so our urgent reduction in emissions is impelled by common sense”.

Kerry said the climate was a top priority for Biden. “We have a president now, thank God, who leads and tells the truth … and he knows that we have to mobilise in unprecedented ways to meet this challenge that is fast accelerating, and we have limited time to get it under control,” he said.

He said the US was [working on a national plan](#), known as a [nationally determined contribution](#) to be submitted to the UN under the [Paris agreement](#), for emissions reductions to 2030. That would be published “as soon as practicable”, he promised.

There would also be financial assistance to the poorest and most vulnerable, he promised. “We intend to make good on our climate finance pledge,” he said.

Financial assistance from the US to poor countries suffering the impacts of climate-related disasters all but dried up during the Trump administration, as the US [refused to continue payments into the global Green Climate Fund](#).

The [UN secretary general warned](#), in an interview with the Guardian last December, that without the \$100bn a year in climate finance which has long been promised to flow to poor countries by 2020, the developing world would lose trust.

A sizeable slice of that \$100bn is expected to come from the US, directly through overseas and indirectly through development institutions and businesses.

The [Climate Adaptation summit](#), hosted by the Netherlands, included contributions from the UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres, Germany's chancellor Angela Merkel, the UK's Boris Johnson and India's prime minister Narendra Modi, as well as former UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon, and [Kristalina Georgieva, head of the International Monetary Fund](#).

Kerry warned that adaptation to the impacts of extreme weather must go along with drastic reductions in emissions. "There is no adapting to a 3C or 4C world, except for the very richest and most privileged," he warned.

"Some of the impacts are inevitable, but if we don't act boldly and immediately by building resilience, we will see dramatic reversals in economic development for everybody, and the poorest and most vulnerable communities will pay the highest price," he warned.

Kerry called for all countries to come forward to the forthcoming [UN Cop26 climate summit, in Glasgow this November](#), with commitments to reach net zero emissions by mid-century and national plans to reduce greenhouse gases in the next decade.

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## Plastics

# Green shoots: Spanish firm tackles plastic waste from shotgun cartridges

BioAmmo aims to make 50m of its plastic-free, biodegradable cartridges this year



Shotgun cartridges often have a plastic casing and plastic wadding.  
Photograph: Getty Images/iStockphoto

Shotgun cartridges often have a plastic casing and plastic wadding.  
Photograph: Getty Images/iStockphoto

*[Sam Jones](#) in Madrid*

*[@swajones](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 00.00 EST

One day a little over 12 years ago a Spanish entrepreneur, Enrique López-Pozas, was playing [Airsoft](#) when he was struck not by an opponent's shot but by an equally uncomfortable realisation.

What, he wondered, would become of all the little plastic pellets being fired? And, come to that, what about all the shotgun cartridges discarded by hunters and sports shooters around the world?

Born into a military family, López-Pozas grew up around weapons. And in his former career as the head of a hotel chain he saw the scale of plastic use and the pollution it causes.

“I realised we were leaving plastic in the environment that would remain there for ever,” he says. “And I realised we needed something biodegradable or we’d be storing up problems for the future. So I set about studying things.”

After more than decade of research and development, López-Pozas’s company, [BioAmmo](#), created 100% plastic-free, biodegradable and bio-compostable shotgun cartridges that are now sold in more than 20 countries.

The traditional plastic casing and plastic wadding – the layer that separates the powder from the shot – have been replaced with a vegetable biopolymer, and the metal base is a non-toxic alloy of copper and zinc designed to oxidise and disappear. Customers can choose lead or steel shot.

“Our cartridges’ uniqueness is that they are completely plastic-free,” says Peter Chatland, BioAmmo’s head of international markets.

“This obviously has important consequences for environmental sustainability across all shooting disciplines and sectors. For example: no plastic to contaminate the planet for hundreds of years, no microplastics to enter the food chain and no plastic to add to landfill.”

Chatland says relatively few of the hundreds of millions of single-use plastic cartridge cases shot each year are recycled, and fibre wads can end up polluting the countryside as they often contain bitumen and plastic.

He says BioAmmo’s cartridges, which hold a patent in 55 countries, can be consumed by micro-organisms in the soil within a year or two, thrown on a compost heap or added to organic domestic rubbish.

The firm employs almost 30 people at its factory 12 miles from the city of Segovia, and it is hoping to hire more staff when the pandemic slows.

“After 12 years of research and finally taking the decision to bring the products to the market, we ended up doing so in a year that was the worst for everyone,” says López-Pozas.

[The lesson I learned at my local dump? There are beautiful times up ahead | Emma Beddington](#)

[Read more](#)

“But it has given us time to be present in more than 20 countries, and we’ve made the most of it. We hope that orders will be very high [this year] when things return to normal. We export around 95% of our products because hunting and shooting has come to standstill in [Spain](#) and our sales here are minimal.”

BioAmmo’s biggest market is the US, and its biggest European market is the UK followed by Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Output last year was restricted to about 5m cartridges, but the firm is hoping to manufacture 10 times that amount this year, including non-toxic and non-lead shot loads.

As far as López-Pozas is concerned, the days of the plastic cartridge are numbered.

“Plastic is a great material in some ways – it was designed to weigh little and last a long time – but humanity didn’t think about the fact that it’ll be around for ever,” he says. “That’s the problem, and one that we need to deal with.”

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This article was downloaded by [calibre](#) from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/25/green-shoots-spanish-firm-tackles-plastic-waste-from-shotgun-cartridges>

## 2021.01.27 - Culture

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## The Great British art tourArt

# The Great British Art Tour: surreally saying something

With public art collections closed we are bringing the art to you, exploring highlights from across the country in partnership with Art UK. Today's pick: Swindon's mysterious gift from Desmond Morris



The Mysterious Gift (detail), 1965, by Desmond Morris. Photograph: Swindon Museum and Art Gallery

The Mysterious Gift (detail), 1965, by Desmond Morris. Photograph: Swindon Museum and Art Gallery

*Katie Ackrill, engagement officer, Swindon Museum and Art Gallery*

Wed 27 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Is that a wine glass, or a bowl? A bone or a stem? Eggs or some strange unknown fruit? There is no wrong answer. The beauty of this surrealist artwork lies in its ambiguity; its meaning depends on the viewer's

experiences. Desmond Morris's still life painting, [The Mysterious Gift](#), offers a selection of unusual and strangely presented objects, whose identity is open to the interpretation of the curious viewer.



The Mysterious Gift, 1965, by Desmond Morris (H 99cm x W 70.7cm).  
Photograph: Desmond Morris/Swindon Museum and Art Gallery

Morris is a man of many talents. You may recognise him as a [broadcaster](#), a world-renowned [zoologist](#), or the author of the landmark book [The Naked Ape](#). Yet Morris' fascination with human behaviour goes even further than that; bleeding into his surrealist paintings of [barren landscapes littered with biomorphic forms](#).

His career as a surrealist artist began in the 1950s, some 30 years after the movement was born of a fascination with theories of the unconscious mind. Surrealist artists and writers embraced the idea that art does not need to be shaped by reason, but rather something more instinctual, something unexpected, uncanny and unconventional.

Before creating The Mysterious Gift in 1965, Morris stretched the canvas back to front, in order to paint on to the raw surface of the material. This was common practice for Morris's friend, the seminal artist [Francis Bacon](#). Morris took his cue from Bacon here, but of his many paintings (almost

3,500), it is the only instance where he has employed this unconventional technique.

The Mysterious Gift is unique within Morris's oeuvre, so it is fitting that he himself presented it to [Swindon](#) Museum and Art Gallery in 1965. After all, [Swindon](#) was the place where it all began – Morris moved to the town as a child, and held his first one-man exhibition at the [Swindon](#) Art Centre. He has recently celebrated his 93rd birthday, and has been known to refer to himself as the “last living surrealist”.

- You can see more art from the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery on [Art UK here](#), and find out more on the [gallery's website](#).
  - *This series is brought to you in collaboration with [Art UK](#), which brings the nation's art together on one digital platform and tells the stories behind the art. The website shows works by 50,000 artists from more than 3,000 venues including museums, universities and hospitals as well as thousands of public sculptures. Discover the art you own [here](#).*
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[TV review](#)[TV crime drama](#)

## Marcella review – Anna Friel thriller doesn't shock like it used to

ITV's troubled, amnesiac detective is back – deep undercover in Belfast – but the credulity-stretching twists are just too much this time around



Now, where was I? ... Anna Friel as Marcella/Keira in Marcella. Photograph: Patrick Redmond/Buccaneer Media/ITV

Now, where was I? ... Anna Friel as Marcella/Keira in Marcella. Photograph: Patrick Redmond/Buccaneer Media/ITV



[Rebecca Nicholson](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 17.55 EST

If ever there is a “previously on …” to look forward to, it would be Marcella’s (ITV), if only to see how much they could pack into a single recap. The third season of the largely ludicrous crime noir begins with Marcella, a former-ish detective (Anna Friel, often in the bath), deep undercover in Belfast. She has assumed a new life as Keira Devlin, which she is able to do, you may recall, because she is supposed to be dead, having cut her own mouth open with scissors at the end of the last season in one of her violent fugue states, after learning that she was responsible for the death of her baby daughter. That is the short version of events, anyway.

In Belfast, Marcella/Keira is struggling to tell the difference between the two. She is attempting to embed, with the emphasis on bed, herself within the Maguire family, who live a kind of Downton-meets-Top Boy lifestyle, running the organised crime scene in the city and beyond. The fugue states seem to have disappeared without a mention, though maybe they are saving them up for one big blackout. Keira is shacked up in a nice house, with a nice car and a nice boyfriend, Lawrence, who does the accounts for the Maguires, while sneakily helping himself to a slice of the profits.

Crossing a family like the Maguires is not a wise move. They are led by Katherine, played with expert froideur by Amanda Burton, taking the cold matriarchal role that Niamh Cusack ran with in season one. As is often the plot in gritty dramas, Katherine has funded a big new housing project on the estate where she grew up, no doubt as a front for some of the family's more gruesome methods of earning a living. She does not trust Keira one little bit, no matter how far she goes to prove herself. Frank, who is overseeing Marcella's new posting, is appalled at some of his officer's less-than-conventional methods. "That breaks every rule in the book," he tuts. "Like using a presumed dead cop to go undercover?" she fires back, to which the obvious answer is, well, yes, especially one who might forget what she's up to at any second, when the family being targeted knows she was once a police officer, when Belfast is really not very far away from London, and when that blond wig isn't fooling anyone.

Katherine has a more immediate problem to deal with, however, in the form of son-in-law Bobby, who is both desperate to prove himself and a catastrophe magnet. Bobby looks after the docks, which is fine until a truck full of bodies exposes the Maguires' human trafficking operation. While on a trip to London, Bobby blows off a little too much steam and gets himself tangled up in the political establishment in the most unfortunate of ways. Who is sent to investigate that particular upset? Why, DI Rav Sangha, of course, last seen tied up in the bogs by Marcella in one of her "now, where was I?" states.

If it's a coincidence then it's a hell of a coincidence, and the credulity-stretching twists really are starting to strain at the edges. Marcella just about got away with some of its more fanciful storylines because it was so ridiculously over-the-top. It has always traded in bleak and vicious shocks and there are plenty of those in this trigger-happy double bill, but they don't quite work like they did. It is almost as if they have decided to try to out-grim the child-killing from last time, and have chucked everything at it in the hope that something else horrible sticks. A 13-year-old heroin addict? Beating someone to death with a champagne bottle? A pervert masturbating in the attic?

It was always divisive, but I was quite fond of its previous outings, though fond seems an odd choice of word for a show that is so relentlessly violent

and humourless. Partly, I think, it was because it was one of the most enjoyable shows to watch people watching on Gogglebox, to see the audience squirm at some of its more eccentric plot twists. On the basis of this opener, however, it all seems a little done, which is a strange flaw for a series about a violent amnesiac detective who is supposed to be dead. Of all the shows that might suffer from a sense that you have seen it before, *Marcella*, surely, should be one of the less likely candidates.

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Watched with motherTelevision

## Stephen Mangan: 'My kids have YouTube – I had cartoons made in a shed'

The actor and Landscape Artist of the Year presenter on the delights of Roobarb and Custard and Mr Benn – and how they compare with his children's favourite shows



Stephen Mangan ... 'People made these very idiosyncratic shows.'  
Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Observer

Stephen Mangan ... 'People made these very idiosyncratic shows.'  
Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Observer



*As told to [Hannah J Davies](#)*

*[@hannahjdavies](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 09.30 EST

I was born in 1968, and one of my enduring childhood TV memories is watching Roobarb when I was six or seven years old. It's a five-minute cartoon from the mid-70s about an enthusiastic, hyper, bone-loving dog called Roobarb and a slightly machiavellian, sly, toothy-grinned cat called Custard, who was his nextdoor neighbour. It's such a vivid memory – everything about it was kind of arresting. All of the voices were done by Richard Briers, who sounded like he was having a ball.

Like most children, my sisters and I were brought up on Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, The Jungle Book, Tom and Jerry and all those very slick American cartoons, whereas this was a deliberately rough-looking show that had a very particular style. I've done a bit of animation since and I learned it's called "boiling". All the pictures are drawn with marker pen and they're all slightly out of alignment – you're not trying to make it look as smooth as possible, so the whole thing sort of pulses and vibrates, which makes it feel exciting. There's a lot of skill involved in the seeming amateurishness.



‘It’s such a vivid memory’ ... Roobarb and Custard.

There were a lot of weird children’s shows around at that point, such as Bagpuss and Fingermouse – which had started as Fingerbobs and was a guy with a mouse puppet on his index finger. Mr Benn was another one. It had a very laid-back style – it was just a drawing and a camera wandering around the frame, looking at various bits of it. Mr Benn is essentially living an actor’s life – he goes into a shop, chooses a costume, walks through a door ... and suddenly he is somebody else. If you want to get pop psychological on it, that’s probably why I enjoyed it so much.

TV was quite strange then – and eclectic, to put it politely. There was no big business involved, so people were kind of left to make the shows they wanted. We weren’t all as connected to each other. People made these very idiosyncratic shows – Bagpuss was made in a shed.



Stephen Mangan with his sister Anita. Photograph: Courtesy of Stephen Mangan

My children are 13, 10 and four and the way they watch TV is so different. It isn't their main interest, because they're watching YouTube videos, but, when they do watch TV, they're able to choose what they want to stream. At the same time, they're probably not as exposed to as wide a range of stuff. My 10-year-old just watches Horrible Histories, Black-ish and the animated series The Amazing World of Gumball on a loop. We would watch everything from The Waltons to Blake's 7. I remember watching Triangle, for goodness sake, which was a series about a cross-channel ferry. You think: did I make that up? Or did that actually happen?

My children are having a totally different upbringing in that respect. I hated the endless days, especially in the school holidays, where you ended up digging a hole in the ground. I'm jealous of this vast array of stuff they can choose from.

*Landscape Artist of the Year* airs Wednesdays at 8pm on Sky Arts. *Escape the Rooms*, a children's book by Stephen and Anita Mangan, will be published in June.

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## Film

# A Ghost Waits review – haunting, heartwarming romcom

A handyman cleaning up an empty house falls for a ‘spectral agent’ sent from the afterlife to scare away new residents



Spooky presence ... Natalie Walker in A Ghost Waits

Spooky presence ... Natalie Walker in A Ghost Waits

*[Leslie Felperin](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 09.00 EST

Chock full of delightful narrative surprises, imaginative genre tweaks, and warming performances from its two leads, this low-budget romcom-horror story is worth seeking out. Director Adam Stovall, who co-wrote the script with the film’s star MacLeod Andrews, makes an impressive feature debut with an obviously teensy budget. It’s smartly deployed to cover essentially

one set, some theatrical makeup and kit for some fetching black-and-white cinematography that simultaneously recalls vintage-era spooky movies of the 30s as well as too-cool-for-school early Jim Jarmusch films such as *Stranger Than Paradise*.

Andrews' protagonist Jack is a handyman who works for a property management company. His job is to check over houses for damage and do some light cleaning after tenants move out. However, it looks as if the former residents of an ordinary looking, two-storey suburban house left in a hurry, leaving all their possessions behind; Jack's boss wants him to find out why so many previous clients similarly skipped out in a rush.

Turns out it's because the place is haunted by Muriel (Natalie Walker), a "spectral agent", as she insists on being called, who has felt a particular sense of ownership over the building for many years. At first, Jack doesn't even notice the doors opening by themselves or the lights turning on, but eventually Muriel gets his attention and makes herself visible; the two discover a spiritual affinity of sorts, that grows into a friendship and more.

Like Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice*, the script's world-building posits a kind of afterlife bureaucracy in charge of hauntings, albeit one that seems to have gone through a very 21st-century style rebranding that has banished use of the word "ghost". Muriel is a respected worker, but her boss, officious desk ghoul Ms Henry (Amanda Miller), is determined to undermine her and puts another co-worker (Sydney Vollmer) on the case as well.

All of this ensures the film is not in the least bit scary, and clears room emotionally for a conclusion that's as weird as it is apt and genuinely moving. Choice musical cuts from Honeyhoney, the Bengsons and Wussy further enhance the film's insouciant street cred.

- *A Ghost Waits* is released on the Arrow player in the UK, US and Canada on 1 February.
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**Denzel Washington**

## The Little Things review – Denzel Washington killer thriller is a big mess

The star's reliable presence can't save a drab, self-important procedural that can't quite decide if it wants to be thrilling or thoughtful



Denzel Washington and Jared Leto in *The Little Things*. Unfortunately, the big problems in this film are impossible to ignore. Photograph: Nicola Goode

Denzel Washington and Jared Leto in *The Little Things*. Unfortunately, the big problems in this film are impossible to ignore. Photograph: Nicola Goode



[Benjamin Lee](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 13.00 EST

There's a self-serious portent to the drab serial killer thriller *The Little Things*, a smug sense of grandiosity informing us that it's not only more substantial than the average stalk-n-stab schlock, but that it's going somewhere we might not expect, ending with gravity rather than gristle. To its credit, the film, from *The Blind Side* writer-director John Lee Hancock, does find itself in slightly unconventional territory in its rushed finale but it's not a place that's either satisfying or smart enough to warrant the hushed solemnity that precedes it. It's a film trapped between a low- and a highbrow version of a story we know all too well, landing firmly in the middle of the road.

[Palmer review – Justin Timberlake aims for redemption in familiar drama](#)

[Read more](#)

With elements of *Seven* and *Zodiac* in the mix, arguably the film it most resembles is *Insomnia*, both the Norwegian original and Christopher Nolan's excellent remake, its very title recalling a key recurring line about focusing on the small things during an investigation (Hancock insists any comparisons are coincidental with the first draft of the script written back in

1993). In what feels like an adaptation of a potboiler but is actually an original story, deputy sheriff “Deke” (Denzel Washington) finds himself unavoidably dragged back into the thrust of a case he’s not supposed to be involved in (after an admittedly effective *Silence of the Lambs*-esque cold open). Once a celebrated member of the force, with age he’s found himself pushed to the back, lumped with grunt work over anything more rewarding. But when another young woman is murdered, he’s unable to resist, much to the chagrin of Jimmy (Rami Malek), the point guy on the case. The story also interweaves with an unsolved case from Deke’s past as well as a local stranger (Jared Leto) who may or may not be involved.

Maybe if Hancock’s film *had* been produced back in the early 90s, it would have at least felt like a more admirably serious-minded riposte to a subgenre that often devolves into silliness. But at a time when even small-screen procedurals have perma-frowned detectives who spend more time haunted by their past than actually solving crimes in the present, it all feels a little too familiar and a little too minor. As a slow, meditative character-driven drama, it’s too shallow and as a dark, disturbing serial killer thriller, it’s too boring and so quite who this film is for remains a bigger mystery than the one at its centre.

As probably *the* most reliable leading man currently working in Hollywood, Washington can put a shine on even the dullest of material and while he’s no doubt stretched here, he avoids a mere sleepwalk and singlehandedly helps muster up just enough interest to drag us through. His character is mostly standard issue, but it’s a sturdy, accomplished turn, the kind that only he can do quite this well, yet his other two Oscar-winning co-stars struggle. Playing a dogged LAPD detective with the same otherworldly strangeness that won him plaudits for *Mr Robot* and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (and makes him a perfect choice for a [Bond villain](#)), Malek is awkwardly ill-suited for the role, a performance so discordant, it makes one question the actor’s long-term versatility and just how Hollywood will best make use of him. While Leto certainly looks the part of “potential killer of women” with his pale sunken skin and greasy long hair, his line delivery is so embarrassingly unsubtle that he might as well have walked off the set of a Hammer horror parody, never convincing us that he’s playing anything other than an Evil Movie Villain. That juicy killer-cop interplay, the spiky cat and mouse game that drives

films such as this, just isn't really there, Hancock struggling to differentiate his film from the many others that have come before, as admirably hard as Washington tries.

That aforementioned ending, while theoretically interesting, just doesn't land with the impact Hancock seems to think it does, a big swing that misses. Part of me admires him for it, but it's such an empty coda presented with such weight, urging us to take what's mostly a rather rote serial killer movie with awards-worthy seriousness, that it ultimately annoys (what it says about cops is also rather uneasy at this, or frankly any, moment). There are little things here that work but the big problems are impossible to ignore.

- The Little Things is released on HBO Max and in cinemas in the US on 29 January and in the UK on 12 February
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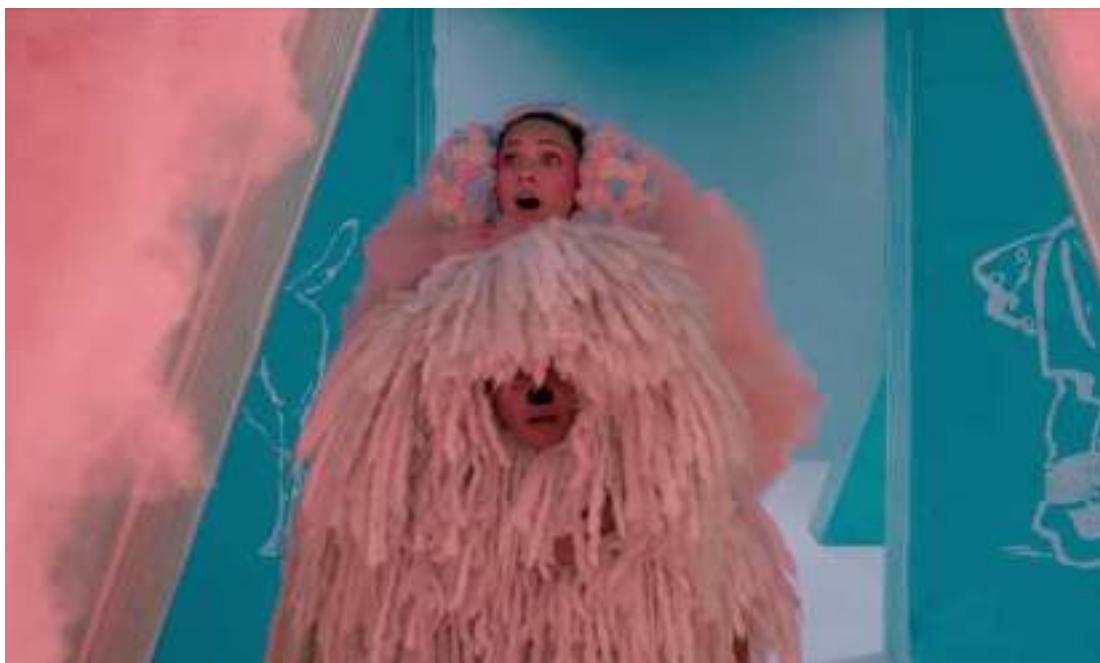
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## Film

# Sia's film Music misrepresents Autistic people. It could also do us damage

[Clem Bastow](#)

Autistic people are used to being underestimated and infantilised – but for **Clem Bastow** it was still a shock to see it on the big screen



‘Based on tired tropes’: Maddie Ziegler in Music. Photograph: Merrick Morton

‘Based on tired tropes’: Maddie Ziegler in Music. Photograph: Merrick Morton

Tue 26 Jan 2021 11.30 EST

When my girlfriend and I sat down to watch Music, the [directorial debut of Australian pop superstar Sia](#), we were well aware of the tide of outrage that had preceded it.

In [casting her regular collaborator](#), Maddie Ziegler, as the film's eponymous Autistic character – and then [doubling down when criticised](#) for doing so – Sia [invoked the warranted ire](#) of Autistic advocates and neurodiversity activists worldwide.

We did not enter the cinema with high hopes: we're both Autistic, and well used to both the tropes of [Autism Stories™](#) in screen media and the misunderstandings they foster in the non-Autistic community. We came, in a way, to bear witness.

[Music review – Sia's controversial film about autism lacks coherence and authenticity](#)

[Read more](#)

It may relieve some, then, to hear that like much like Rain Man, Music isn't really a film "about Autism". Instead, it's a self-improvement narrative punctuated by song-and-dance dream sequences – but rather than those fantastical moments giving flight to something uplifting or illuminating, the film is predictable and suffocating. Those dream sequences occur in a studio that seems to have had Fun Fur stapled to the walls in a great rush; even in its moments of fantasy, Music has a cheap, oppressive quality.

If its representation of Autism is based on tired tropes, so too does the film's broader worldview (or lack thereof) extend only to a parade of abject stereotypes. These include but are not limited to the ephemeral western concept of "Africa", and unedifying portrayals of Asian Americans, immigration, family violence, rehabilitation programs, the elderly, the poor, and even the concept of music itself.

Nearly everybody in the cast – which includes Oscar-nominee Kate Hudson as Music's sister, Zu; and Tony-winner Leslie Odom Jr as her neighbour Ebo – moves through the film as though they are slogging through a hangover on a hot day. As Ebo, a stereotypically saintly immigrant, Odom Jr has a sad look in his eyes that suggests he's making a mental note to enter a witness protection program every time his character has to utter the words, "In Africa ..." or, "Back in my village ..." He exists only to impart his wisdom so that Zu can better herself.



‘The cast moves through the film as though they are slogging through a hangover on a hot day’: Leslie Odom Jr in Sia’s film *Music*. Photograph: Studio Canal

Ziegler’s performance as Music, however, is the standout disaster, serving us “Autism” the Rain Man way, all tics and whooping and capital ‘A’ Acting. She affects a honking, hiccuping gait occasionally punctuated by phrases – “make your eggs”, “braid your hair” – delivered in a voice that lands somewhere between a school bully mimicking Meryl Streep’s low register and a dog waking up from dental surgery. One wonders what support and guidance was offered to Ziegler, just 14 at the time of the production. (Sia claims, in a *Variety* [interview](#), that on set Ziegler expressed concern that “anyone” – presumably Autistic people – would think she was making fun of them, and that Sia assured her “honey, I won’t let that happen”. And yet.)

It’s especially upsetting when Autistic characters with complex support needs are presented as problems to be solved

It’s not that Autistic people don’t have meltdowns, or echolalia, or tics; there are elements of truth to Ziegler’s performance, but even a stopped clock gives the right time twice a day. Any pathos is undone by the (mis)understanding of Autism betrayed by Sia’s lyrics: “In my dreams my

body does not control me” are the first lines sung. Music is gifted an [AAC device](#) to aid her communication, but it seems to only have two phrases installed: “I’m happy” and “I’m sad”. (For context, popular AAC app ProLoQuo2Go has a default setting of 4,750 unique words.) Music manages to both underestimate Autistic people and infantilise them.

Autistic people are used to this, but somehow it’s still a shock to see it played out on the big screen: ah, yes, this is what people think of us. It’s especially upsetting when Autistic characters with complex support needs, like Music, are presented as problems to be solved, at any cost.

At one point, Music experiences a meltdown, and neighbour Ebo rushes in, lying on top of her in an effort to calm her. “I’m crushing her with my love,” Ebo explains as Zu watches on. In reality, the use of prone or supine restraint has [killed dozens of children – often ones on the Autism spectrum – and injured many more](#) in US schools, juvenile justice settings and psychiatric facilities. Just last year, [Autistic boy Eric Parsa died when sheriff’s deputies allegedly placed him in prone restraint](#), taking turns sitting on him, for nine minutes. Eric’s “crime”: experiencing a meltdown in public.



Maddie Ziegler and Kate Hudson in Music. Photograph: Merrick Morton

Sia [claims](#) that casting an Autistic performer at Music's "level of functioning" would be cruel. Putting aside the fact that functioning labels are outmoded and offensive (indeed, "functioning" is rarely static), being nonverbal doesn't necessarily mean lacking in agency. This begs the question: was it so important that Music's characterisation play into stereotypical notions of what Autism "looks like"? What if "in [her] dreams", Music's body is, actually, exactly the same as it is in real life?

But let's assume that Sia is being sincere in assuring us that a nonverbal performer, cast prior to Ziegler, [found the production process too stressful](#): she could have still cast an Autistic actress. Just this past year alone we've seen [Lillian Carrier and Kayla Cromer captivate audiences in Josh Thomas's Everything's Going To Be Okay](#), while Australian [Autistic self-advocate and TikTok star Chloe Hayden](#) is a star on the rise. It's not that Autistic people are underrepresented in acting classes (quite the opposite); more that filmmakers aren't willing to give them a chance. If Sia was prepared to, [as she claims](#), "cast thirteen neuro-atypical people" in supporting and featured roles, why not extend that approach to the role of Music herself?

The question of [whether or not it's appropriate for actors to "crip up"](#) continues to roil Hollywood. There are occasional examples of non-Autistic actors and actors without disability portraying these characters with grace and dignity (Patty Duke in *The Miracle Worker*, Wesley Snipes in *The Waterdance*, Claire Danes in *Temple Grandin*). These rare performances require sensitivity, months of preparation, and close work with advisers with lived experience.

The performances "of" Autism that really excite me, however, are the ones that are truly authentic. Pixar's 2020 short *Loop*, about a nonverbal Autistic girl's day out, [featured the engaging vocal performance of Madison Bandy](#), a young Autistic woman the filmmakers cast through a neighbourhood art centre. There are plenty of other examples.

It appears from Music's plot and songs, however, that Sia had no intention of authentically representing an Autistic experience. Perpetuating the notion of a rich –read non-Autistic – fantasy world trapped by the flesh prison of the Autistic body diminishes us all. Autistic people with complex support needs have value even without the song and dance. Music is just another hamfisted

person-first narrative that depicts Autism as something “suffered”, by Autistic people, but even more so by those who are “brave” enough to love them.

It may be tempting to laugh it off as a “so bad it’s good” camp classic, but unlike The Room or Sharknado, Music has the power (in playing to both Sia’s and Ziegler’s vast audiences) to do untold damage to the gains made by Autistic self-advocates the world over.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/jan/27/sias-film-music-misrepresents-autistic-people-it-could-also-do-us-damage>

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## 2021.01.27 - Lifestyle

- Your problems, with Anna Tims My 'Brexit bonus' proved to be a customs duty bill from DHL
- Tribute tattoos Is it wise to honour your beloved in everlasting ink?
- With the help of my family, I swam in the sea for the first time in years
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- Kitchen aide How important are measurements, really?

Your problems, with Anna TimsOnline shopping

## My 'Brexit bonus' proved to be a customs duty bill from DHL

Whether picture frames or trainers, buyers are counting the cost of ordering from the EU



Ordering online from the EU is attracting this dreaded sticker on the delivery. Photograph: David J Green/Alamy

Ordering online from the EU is attracting this dreaded sticker on the delivery. Photograph: David J Green/Alamy

*Anna Tims*

Wed 27 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

**My daughter purchased some prints and frames online from Sweden on 30 December. The cost (including VAT) was £71.74 with “free delivery”, which she paid. She has now been told by DHL there is an “import**

**duty” due of £25.34 – more than a third of the original price. Is this what the government means by a “Brexit bonus”?**

***GW, Edinburgh***

**I bought some trainers from a company in Italy which cost in total €490. I ordered two pairs of different sizes and styles, intending sending one back.**

**The shoes arrived today by DHL followed by a text saying I owe £131 in import duty. Why was there no indication of this when I ordered them? Also, what should I be entitled to if I send one pair back?**

***RG, London***

Now the transition period has ended, customs duty and import VAT are levied on all goods over £135 (and on items like alcohol, tobacco or perfume that are worth less than that).

**GW’s daughter made the purchase the day before the transition period ended, but the new rules apply from when goods are shipped, not from when they were ordered. Import VAT is charged at the same rate (mostly 20%) as equivalent items in the UK. Customs duty isn’t due on products of EU origin.**

The trouble is, stuff that may be made or sold in the EU may be compromised if any component is imported from elsewhere. So if the frames contained woods or rivets bought from, say, China, customs may apply, and there’s no way a casual customer will be able to tell.

If customs duty is due, the rate will vary depending on the exact nature of the product. To find out, you have to consult [www.trade-tariff.service.gov.uk](http://www.trade-tariff.service.gov.uk). Allow several hours and a stiff drink.

As to the trainers, there are a number of categories for footwear, depending on what the sole is made of, and how it’s attached, which will make your hair stand on end. Clothes, shoes and food incur the highest rates; on 40% of merchandise there’s none at all.

Added to that is the handling fee charged by the delivery firm – and customers rarely get to choose which one it is.

Royal Mail has a flat fee of £8, and won't deliver until you pay up. DHL pays the customs duty and import VAT on your behalf, but charges a fee of 2.5% of the duty/tax, with a minimum charge of £11.

The questions show how Brexit has compromised many of the consumer rights we take for granted. Take a seller's failure to warn of the extra charges.

EU consumer protection legislation doesn't generally apply now the UK has left the EU, according to James Kane of the Institute for Government, although member states can choose to extend it to non-EU consumers under the new Omnibus Directive.

So no, the seller doesn't necessarily have to publish a warning to customers outside the bloc. And as for returning items, EU sellers may not have to apply distance-selling regulations which allow customers to cancel within 14 days.

“EU sellers might refuse to accept returns from the UK because they would then have the hassle of clearing the goods back through customs, and having to claim exemptions from EU import duty,” says Kane. “You, as the ‘exporter’ of the goods you’re returning, will have to fill out a customs declaration form, which you can get from the post office.”

A final piece of bad luck for **RG** was choosing to buy shoes which incur among the highest rates of customs duty at 16%.

***If you need help email [your.problems@observer.co.uk](mailto:your.problems@observer.co.uk). Include an address and phone number. Submission and publication are subject to our [terms and conditions](#)***

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## Pass notesTattoos

# Tribute tattoos: is it wise to honour your beloved in everlasting ink?

Brooklyn Beckham is the latest celebrity to get a tattoo in honour of his partner – but when it comes to body art, it is probably safer to pay tribute to a pet



Get it in the neck ... Brooklyn Beckham's tattoos. Photograph: @luigiandiango/Instagram

Get it in the neck ... Brooklyn Beckham's tattoos. Photograph: @luigiandiango/Instagram

Tue 26 Jan 2021 09.31 EST

**Name:** Tribute tattoos.

**Age:** For all time, allegedly.

**Appearance:** Like graffiti on a flesh-coloured background.

**What's the difference between a tribute tattoo and a regular tattoo?** A tribute tattoo is in honour of a specific person, or sometimes a dog. A regular tattoo is just, like, an anchor or something.

**You mean in honour of someone dead?** No, it might just be your significant other.

**Why would you need a tribute to them, if they're right there?** It's supposed to be romantic.

**I don't get it. Can you give me an example, preferably involving a celebrity?** Certainly. The actor [Chris Zylka had Paris Hilton's first name inked on his forearm](#), in the Disney font, six months before they got engaged.

**Seems weird, but I guess it's OK if you're getting married.** Oh, they never got married – [the couple split in late 2018](#).

**Sad. Do you have any more recent examples, possibly involving a celebrity I have heard of?** Of course. Brooklyn Beckham has just got [a new tattoo on the back of his neck](#) in honour of his fiancee, the actor Nicola Peltz.

**What's it like?** It's something she wrote to him – “My forever boy. Read this any time you feel anxious. I want you to know how deeply loved you are ...” – underneath a rendering of her eyes, which he already had.

**I suppose that's quite sweet.** It continued: “You have the kindest heart I've ever met and hope I never go a day without your love.”

**He must have a very long neck.** Sorry, there's more: “I think you are so incredible. Just know we can get through it all together if you breathe slow and trust. I love you beyond. Love always, your future wifey.”

**I'll bet she wishes she had proofread it now.** This is Beckham's fifth tribute tattoo in honour of Peltz, so I'm sure she checks her spelling these days.

**It shows a lot of commitment, and a very high pain threshold.** Sadly the celebrity world is littered with tattoos that outlasted relationships: Johnny Depp’s “Winona Forever”; comedian Pete Davidson’s inked tributes to Ariana Grande; Rob Kardashian’s former girlfriend’s name on his chest.

**So tribute tattoos are tattoos for people who don’t understand that tattoos don’t come off?** There seems to be a basic misunderstanding somewhere.

**A whole-back portrait of a departed dog seems quite sensible by comparison.** True – a dead pet can’t break up with you.

**Do say:** “Hey, I just met you / And this is crazy / But here’s my bum where / I wrote this essay.”

**Don’t say:** “Leave the name blank, mate – I’ve got a Sharpie for that.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2021/jan/26/tribute-tattoos-is-it-wise-to-honour-your-beloved-in-everlasting-ink>

## OpinionDisability

# With the help of my family, I swam in the sea for the first time in years

Kate Thomas

My neuromuscular condition means taking on the waves is more logistics operation than quick dip



‘As I floated, I felt like a guest in a new world.’ Photograph: Sam Mooy/AAP

‘As I floated, I felt like a guest in a new world.’ Photograph: Sam Mooy/AAP

Tue 26 Jan 2021 21.11 EST

Just after Christmas, I swam in the ocean for the first time since, well, I actually can't remember when.

For most people, swimming in the sea is a rite of the Australian summer.

We pad barefoot along the sand, sea breeze fanning our cheeks, with a knowing grin that it's finally time: summertime.

Feeling the glory of waves splashing and soothing our hot skin, cooling the sun's bite. It's a delightful homecoming.

So I have found out.

Accessibility, at its best, means that people of all abilities have equal access

For many years I stared into the big blue and wondered what it'd be like to slide into the ocean. With a neuromuscular condition, going for a swim in the ocean is more of a logistics operation, with blueprints, diagrams and multiple personnel, than a quick summer's dip. So the dream was often put aside with the hope of *maybe one day*.

But this summer it happened.

Being on holidays on the north coast and with the helping hands of my family, I wasn't going to let this chance slip by.

I was seated in an accessible beach wheelchair – practically a deck chair with a polypipe-like frame, netting for a seat and all-terrain wheels attached and modified, and with multiple beach towels squished around my body to support and hold me upright. I felt a bit like an online shopping order packed with a generous amount of styrofoam balls.

['I felt less alone': how Australians with disabilities are fearing life after the pandemic](#)

[Read more](#)

I eased on to the sand with the help of my uncle, and other family members jostled around. We made our way down the beach, the entourage treading along the tide while the wheels flicked sand on my feet, at first coarse until gradually feeling natural on my skin.

With the sea breeze pulling stronger, I wondered if the sea would gulp me whole.

With my cousin on one side, my dad on the other, they lifted and carried me towards the water. We began laughing as the first bracing sting of cold water hit, then another. And we couldn't stop laughing, even when waves splashed hard – my cousin soon taking the position as bodyguard against the surf in an attempt to stop the next crashing blow.

Each wave that rolled in and out was a tug on my body as if an invitation to stay. It was both comfortable and freezing. Moving my arms in the water I was shocked when I touched the bottom – I'd never actually felt the gritty, soapy, sandy floor before.

As I floated, I felt like a guest in a new world. Free from gravity I could easily look up, without kinking my neck, to the sky and let my mind drift.

Journalist and author [Julia Baird has described](#) her daily ocean swim as a time to feel small, to think and be in awe at something unfathomable.

[For those who love the sea but fear it too, ocean pools are a revelation | Josephine Tovey](#)

[Read more](#)

As people make their way down to the water this summer, and in others to come, there's some still only imagining what it'd feel like to be carried by the tide.

While accessibility to the ocean and beaches is largely dependent on the physical environment and really isn't within our control, there are other elements that are in our power to change.

Accessibility, at its best, means that people of all abilities have equal access. This means inclusion of people with disability in education settings and the workplace, true representation on boards, in the media and in leadership across Australia, but it also means having greater access to enjoy our favourite pastimes like swimming at the beach.

Local governments, councils and various committees are improving beach accessibility by purchasing helpful equipment such as beach wheelchairs or rolling out accessible mats that stretch from sand to sea. And then there are lifeguards who can be kind and happy to help when possible. But without my family to support, I'm not sure that I would have been able to have taken part in this rite of the Australian summer.

On our way back towards the main beach, still cold and drying, with sea salt crystals on our skin flickering in the sun and sand in places you thought it'd never be, a lifeguard stopped us and asked what it was like. Almost lost for words I replied, "the best thing ever".

I'll always remember that December at the beach, my family and that summertime swim ... and will probably keep finding traces of sand in the most random places.

- Kate Thomas is a 25-year-old freelance journalist who works as a copywriter. She is currently based in Wiradjuri Country (central New South Wales).

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/27/with-the-help-of-my-family-i-swam-in-the-sea-for-the-first-time>

## Haute couture shows

# Haute couture goes for an MTV-style makeover



Chanel's film and album of 'family portraits' were shot by Anton Corbijn.  
Photograph: Anton Corbijn/Chanel

Chanel's film and album of 'family portraits' were shot by Anton Corbijn.  
Photograph: Anton Corbijn/Chanel

Chanel and Valentino enlist artists from music and film as couture adapts to Covid by going digital



[Jess Cartner-Morley](#)

[@JessC\\_M](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 12.46 EST

The ultimate luxury for 2021? A joyful family party. That is what we want more than anything else this season, according to [Chanel](#)'s Virginie Viard.

Since luxury fashion is ultimately about what is aspirational – and with blockbuster catwalk shows being off the cards for the foreseeable – Viard put up a marquee, strung fairy lights between rose arbours, scattered petals on the floor and staged her spring haute couture collection as a family reunion.

“I knew we couldn’t organise a big show … so I came up with the idea of a small cortège that would come down the stairs of the Grand Palais and pass between arches of flowers. Like a family celebration, or a wedding,” said Viard before the show.



Chanel's 'show' was staged in the style of a family celebration. Photograph: Chanel

The organza and lace dresses typical of couture were worn with sunglasses and flower crowns, as if for a festival, and the mood was a little more casual than couture's usual air of haughty perfection. Vanessa Paradis and Penelope Cruz kicked back in vintage Chanel from seasons gone by. Linda Ronstadt's Be My Baby soundtracked the show with honeyed sentiment.

Chanel's film and the album of family portraits released with it were shot by Anton Corbijn, the [director of](#) the Ian Curtis biopic Control and mastermind of visual identity for bands including Depeche Mode and U2.

The Italian luxury house [Valentino](#) collaborated with Massive Attack's Robert Del Naja, who made a "collagist" film to accompany a collection reveal which was staged in the baroque splendour of Palazzo Colonna in Rome. Taffeta ballgowns were worn with stripes of New Romantic face paint and Ziggy Stardust platform boots.



Palazzo Colonna was the setting for Valentino's show. Photograph: Valentino

With audiences forbidden and the supermodels and front-row celebrities who drive engagement grounded, fashion brands are on a steep learning curve. The most elevated couture houses need to compete with [sea shanties](#) and [Bunny the Talking Dog](#), if they are to get eyeballs on TikTok and Instagram. As a result the rarified world of haute couture is having an MTV makeover.

Replacing catwalk with video is “like making a film instead of doing theatre”, said Bruno Pavlovsky, Chanel’s president of fashion, in a Zoom call. “With a catwalk show, Virginie [Viard] and the models feel the energy of 2,000 people in the room – you can’t get that when the audience is just a few cameras.” He believes Chanel’s next show, in March, is likely to be digital-only but is hopeful that a show planned for Provence in early May could take place in front of an audience. “For now we plan for both scenarios,” he said.



Chanel says couture orders have been badly hit by the pandemic.  
Photograph: Chanel

Chanel occupies a quasi-official place in French public life. As a bastion of excellence in fashion, they are an informal “department of chic”. Couture orders have been badly hit by the logistical issues of the past year, with most clients unable to travel to Paris for the fittings in the atelier that are integral to the process, but any show-must-go-on instincts must yield to the greater good.

“Values are extremely important to Chanel. This is bigger than fashion. We understand that and we respect all of the rules and constraints,” said Pavlovsky. He added that none of the orders for gowns placed for 2021 had been cancelled to date, despite the absence of events for them to be worn to. “These clients are not easily put off. They will always want iconic Chanel.”

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## How we met Life and style

# How we met: 'I saw him and thought, oh God. Now I have to make small talk with a stranger'

Lucy King, 32, and Paul Crane, 31, met at a gig in 2011. They now live together with their two-year-old son and their cat in Worthing



'We've never really had any proper arguments. We find it so easy to compromise ...' Lucy and Paul in 2018. Photograph: Provided by Lucy King

'We've never really had any proper arguments. We find it so easy to compromise ...' Lucy and Paul in 2018. Photograph: Provided by Lucy King

*[Lizzie Cernik](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 05.59 EST

Lucy King had almost completed her last year at university when she treated herself to a solo night out in May 2011. “I wanted to go and see Sufjan Stevens at the Royal Festival Hall in London,” she remembers. “I’d been to lots of gigs by myself before. I liked to get there early and watch the support bands.” She was scrolling through her phone waiting for things to kick off when Paul Crane started walking towards her. There were only a handful of others in the hall at the time, but his ticket was for the seat next to her’s. “I saw him coming and thought ‘Oh God. Now I’ll have to make small talk with a stranger.’”

Paul, who was also a student at the time, had bought tickets for two Sufjan Stevens gigs. “It was a busy time with university exams so I wasn’t sure if I’d be able to go. I ended up putting both tickets on sale and someone bought the one for the second night so I decided to go to the other gig by myself.” When he sat down next to Lucy, he knew they’d end up chatting. “It would have been too awkward not to speak to each other.” They got on well throughout the evening and discovered they had plenty in common. After the gig was over, Paul suggested she add him on the music website Last FM. They exchanged a few messages there before becoming Facebook friends. “I didn’t think he was interested in me in a romantic way at all,” says Lucy. “I’m quite cynical and I’d gone through my teens and university years without a boyfriend. I didn’t really feel like anyone would be interested in me like that.”

Paul was living in Norwich at the time, while Lucy was in Oxford, so they agreed to meet up in London. She still assumed it was a friendship. “We sent each other messages regularly and made each other mix CDs. My housemates kept telling me he was really keen,” she says. For Paul, the CDs were definitely a way to express his interest. “I made them a lot in my school days,” he says. “Before I met Lucy, I would project a lot of that emo teenage angst on to girls. I was finally comfortable with myself by the time I met her.”

In early June they met in the capital and went to some art galleries. After an embarrassing moment for Lucy when a gust of wind blew her skirt up, they went back to the coach station to say their goodbyes. “I thought he was going in for the kiss, so I kissed him,” she remembers. Paul was pleasantly surprised. After graduating, Lucy moved back to her family home in

Brighton, but the pair continued to meet regularly. “We didn’t live close to each other so it was a bit scary to commit but we decided to give it a go in July,” says Lucy. When Paul had completed his final year of university, he moved to Brighton, where he started a job in accountancy in September 2012. Lucy was already working in administration at a local college.

In 2016, they bought a house together in Worthing, and their son joined the family three years later. They still love going to gigs, as well as travelling and watching true-crime documentaries. “We’ve got a lot in common,” says Paul. “After we started dating we realised we’d been at lots of the same gigs together before we met.” During lockdown they have been treating themselves with nice meals or walks on the beach. Lucy loves her partner’s laid-back nature. “We’ve never really had any proper arguments because neither of us is confrontational. We find it so easy to compromise,” she says. “He’s also really supportive when I need him and hands-on as a dad.” Paul likes that his partner is always kind, caring and funny. “I never need to worry when she’s near. I know she’ll always be there to take care of me and our son, Leo,” he says. “I’ve always felt we were on the same wavelength about everything.”

*Want to share your story? Tell us a little about you, your partner and how you got together by [filling in the form here](#).*

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## Kitchen aideChefs

# How important are measurements, really?

Do you have to be so precise when measuring ingredients? After all, what difference does 5g of flour actually make?

- Got a culinary dilemma? Email [feast@theguardian.com](mailto:feast@theguardian.com)



A measly 5g here or there might not be a big deal with some ingredients such as flour, but with the likes of spices, it could change the whole complexion of a dish. Photograph: marilyna/Getty Images/iStockphoto

A measly 5g here or there might not be a big deal with some ingredients such as flour, but with the likes of spices, it could change the whole complexion of a dish. Photograph: marilyna/Getty Images/iStockphoto

*[Anna Berrill](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 09.00 EST

A recent Feast recipe uses three types of flour: [two requiring 55g and one 50g](#). Surely 5g won't make a difference? US cups are less accurate than British pounds and ounces, and American cooks get by on those. Why not use teaspoons for smaller quantities and round figures otherwise?

*Judy, Leamington Spa*

"I get Judy's frustration," says [Feast perfectionist Felicity Cloake](#). "It often doesn't make that much difference at all." In fact, Nigella Lawson writes about this very predicament in [her latest book, Cook, Eat, Repeat](#): "I struggle, as many food writers do, with just how precise to be, and my books reflect how I feel at any given time about what is helpful and what is confining." Lawson might specify "a large onion", give an approximate weight or simply call for "an onion". "The truth is, the weight of an onion, or the size of it, is not always critical." However, as Cloake points out, "[Yotam Ottolenghi](#) says that if one of his recipes stipulates an eighth of a teaspoon of ginger, that's because it has been tested with that – and with more and less, too – and that's what works."

Essentially, it mainly depends on the ingredients you're using – and what you're making. As [Nik Sharma](#), author of [The Flavour Equation](#), explains, "The zest of one lemon won't make that much difference in terms of how big the lemon is – the more flavour, the better – but the amount of juice will affect the dish dramatically." This, he says, is why he doesn't tell people to buy one lemon: "It's misleading."

Even when writing for an American audience, Sharma first measures by weight before translating into cups for the simple reason that certain ingredients just don't lend themselves to the latter: "It's a game of numbers. Two pounds of spinach is more than 30 cups, which sounds humongous even though it's not." Plus, he says, spinach is sold by weight, so measuring it in this way makes shopping easier. When it comes to smaller quantities, however, Cloake is #TeamTeaspoon: "I'm a big fan of measuring spoons, so my solidarity is with Judy." But don't be tempted just to reach into the cutlery drawer: "Make sure you're using an official 5ml teaspoon."

As for the specifics of Judy's flour question, Sharma says she's right in that 5g flour won't make a whole lot of difference. The larger the amount you're

weighing, the more forgiving that error margin will be. “If I weigh out 100g flour, but I’ve actually got 95g, my recipe will be fine,” he says. “With baking, we always talk about this degree of accuracy, but it’s within some limits.”

It also depends on what kind of cook you are. “Some people want accuracy to the nth degree, while others are more fluid,” Sharma says, “so it’s better to give as much information as possible, and let people then choose what’s best for them.” But if you do deviate from the recipe, it’s at your own peril, Cloake says: “There should be some wiggle room, but you might want to blame any tweaks you make that don’t work on yourself.”

- Got a culinary dilemma? Email [feast@theguardian.com](mailto:feast@theguardian.com)
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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2021/jan/26/how-important-are-measurements-really-kitchen-aide>

## 2021.01.27 - Take part

- Living in the UK Have you booked a holiday after being vaccinated?
- Tell us How have you been affected by long Covid?
- Notes and queries How can we tell if we see colours in the same way?
- Coronavirus Have you spent time in a Covid quarantine hotel?

## [Travel & leisure](#)

# **Living in the UK: have you booked a holiday after being vaccinated?**

We would like to hear from older people who have been vaccinated and are thinking of going on holiday abroad



Saga Holidays cruise ship Saga Pearl II departing Southampton in 2010.  
Photograph: Peter Titmuss/Alamy Stock Photo

Saga Holidays cruise ship Saga Pearl II departing Southampton in 2010.  
Photograph: Peter Titmuss/Alamy Stock Photo

[Guardian community team](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 08.40 EST

The travel and insurance company for those who are over-50, Saga, has said customer retention levels have recently jumped to 86% showing the “[pent-up demand for cruises among our guests who will benefit from the first round of vaccine rollout](#)”.

If you live in the UK and have been vaccinated, or will be soon, and are looking to book a holiday abroad, we would like to hear from you.

## Share your experiences

What does being able to go on holiday mean to you? Do you have any concerns?

You can get in touch by filling in the form below or [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions. One of our journalists will be in contact before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

*If you're having trouble using the form, click [here](#). Read terms of service [here](#).*

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## Long Covid

# Tell us: how have you been affected by long Covid?

We would like to hear from people who have long Covid and their experiences of living with it



An NHS staff member prepares an AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccination at Stithians Showground, near Truro. Photograph: Hugh Hastings/Getty Images

An NHS staff member prepares an AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccination at Stithians Showground, near Truro. Photograph: Hugh Hastings/Getty Images

[Guardian community team](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 11.11 EST

A survey by [Patient Led Research for Covid-19](#) (a group of long Covid patients who are also researchers), found that many people who are suffering from “long Covid” are [still unable to work at full capacity six months after infection](#).

We would like to hear from those who have long Covid and what their experience is like living with it.

## Share your experiences

How has it affected the way you live and work? Have you had any treatment?

You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions. One of our journalists will be in contact before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

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[Notes and queries](#)[Life and style](#)

## How can we tell if we see colours in the same way?

The long-running series in which readers answer other readers' questions on subjects ranging from trivial flights of fancy to profound scientific and philosophical concepts



See your true colours? ... boats in Pokhara, Nepal. Photograph: Anthony Carpinelli/Getty Images/EyeEm

See your true colours? ... boats in Pokhara, Nepal. Photograph: Anthony Carpinelli/Getty Images/EyeEm

Tue 26 Jan 2021 07.00 EST

Given that we have a naming convention for colours, we all know that blue is blue. So how do we know that if I saw blue through someone else's eyes, I wouldn't see it as yellow, or pink etc?

*David Snell*

*Post your answers below or send them (and new questions) to [nq@theguardian.com](mailto:nq@theguardian.com). The best will be published on Friday.*

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/jan/26/how-can-we-tell-if-we-see-colours-in-the-same-way>.

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## Coronavirus

# Have you spent time in a Covid quarantine hotel?

We'd like to hear from travellers who have had to stay in a quarantine hotel either in the UK or elsewhere. Share your experiences



An aeroplane passes over a Sofitel hotel as it takes off from a runway at Heathrow Airport on January 25, 2021 in London, England. Photograph: Chris J Ratcliffe/Getty Images

An aeroplane passes over a Sofitel hotel as it takes off from a runway at Heathrow Airport on January 25, 2021 in London, England. Photograph: Chris J Ratcliffe/Getty Images

[Guardian community team](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 05.56 EST

New quarantine rules for travellers to the UK are expected to be announced on Tuesday. One of the measures is thought to be the introduction of

quarantine hotels in airports.

We'd like understand what it's like to spend time in a 'Covid hotel' either in the UK or elsewhere: is it stressful, lonely, expensive and boring – or reassuring, calm : a mundane necessity?

## Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish or via WhatsApp by clicking here or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions.

One of our journalists will be in contact before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

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## 2021.01.27 - Explore

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# 'I just needed to find my family': the scandal of Chile's stolen children

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## Farming

# Specieswatch: dexters – the small cattle breed that is booming

These hardy animals, a third the size of a Friesian, are popular in conservation projects



Black dexter cattle grazing in a field in Cumbria.

Photograph: Jennifer MacKenzie/Alamy

Black dexter cattle grazing in a field in Cumbria.

Photograph: Jennifer MacKenzie/Alamy

*[Paul Brown](#)*

Wed 27 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Dexters are the smallest breed of cattle in Europe and among the hardiest, which makes them popular in conservation and rewilding projects. They are a third the size of a Friesian milking cow and other European commercial

breeds of cattle. All these varieties go by the same Latin name, *Bos taurus taurus*, to distinguish them from Asiatic and African species.

Although they are now bred all over the world, dexters originated in the west of Ireland and are believed to be the domesticated cattle of the Celts. Curiously, about half have a genetic trait that gives them short legs, making them seem even smaller.

[The Dexter Cattle Society](#) says both long and short-legged individuals are acceptable but discourages “extremes of either type”. Most are black but can be red or dun.



Dexter cattle are shown in Warwickshire. Photograph: John Martin/Alamy

As a breed they are docile and many are naturally without horns so are perfect for conservation areas where there is public access. They also require little looking after and are able to survive on sparse and rough vegetation. This makes them ideal to graze areas that need to be kept open in rewilding projects. Hoof marks help wild flower seeds to grow. Small farmers say they also provide high quality beef and milk so, from once being endangered, the breed is booming.

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## The Society interviewDown's syndrome

Interview

# **Ken Ross: 'I want to see a disabled person who's as famous as Brad Pitt on screen'**

Kate Hodal

The film producer on how having a son with Down syndrome inspired him to promote inclusion in the industry



Film producer Ken Ross: ‘hadn’t fully grasped until Max’s birth how excluded people with Down syndrome, or other disabilities, really were.’  
Photograph: Millie Pilkington/The Guardian

Film producer Ken Ross: ‘hadn’t fully grasped until Max’s birth how excluded people with Down syndrome, or other disabilities, really were.’  
Photograph: Millie Pilkington/The Guardian

@katehodal

Tue 26 Jan 2021 02.30 EST

Award-winning film producer Ken Ross is calling for more people with disabilities to be seen on TV and film screens all around the world. “If we never give individuals these roles, we’ll never move forward. We don’t need to change people to be the part we want them to be, and we don’t need to be worried about casting someone with a disability,” he says. “You would never ask someone to ‘black up’ to play Nelson Mandela – so why would you ask an actor to ‘impersonate’ someone with a disability?”

Ross has spent the past two decades working with the UK government, the NHS, Bafta and various other institutions to promote greater diversity and inclusion of people with disabilities. And although much has changed for the better (the [Baftas](#) and [Oscars](#) both recently revamped their diversity requirements, and actors such as [Tommy Jessop](#), who has Down syndrome, are increasingly gaining industry-wide recognition), there is still serious work to be done. Ross says: “We need to get sales agents feeling more comfortable screening films that have people with disabilities. And we’ve got to see people writing their own stories, too.”

Today, despite [Covid-19 preventing many TV and film projects](#) from getting off the ground, Ross, who is also a real estate investor, has been screening calls from producers and directors keen to cast more actors with disabilities, among them George Clooney, who is talking to Ross about improving opportunities for people with Down syndrome across the industry. Ross’s last two projects, [Innocence](#) and [My Feral Heart](#), both of which star actors with the condition, won various international awards, with Innocence in the running for an Oscar this year.

“Producers call me up and say, ‘Look, I’ve had a part written for this actor after I saw him in your film and was blown away,’” explains Ross. Creating jobs for people with Down syndrome in the film industry is great for both spreading awareness of the condition and showing that it can be seen in a positive light, he adds. “When statistics show that only [6% of people with a learning disability](#) are in paid work, it makes sense to create jobs in the film industry, where you can reach an audience of millions and encourage people to think a little bit more about how they can include others.”

[Cerrie Burnell: 'Disabled people have been shut away during the pandemic'](#)

[Read more](#)

Ross had an “epiphany” about disability in 2004, he says, when his wife Rachael gave birth to their third son, Max, who has Down syndrome. At the time, the condition was still considered so taboo that even the hospital staff were pointed in how they discussed it.

“I hadn’t fully grasped until Max’s birth how excluded people with Down syndrome, or other disabilities, really were,” explains Ross.

“Instead of celebrating our new child, the doctor sought to highlight lots of fears and worries that could be associated with any birth. So much knowledge of Down syndrome in the health service has been got through outdated anecdotes, false stereotypes and unwelcome assumptions on how lives are ‘valued’.”

Ross is trustee and vice-chair at Portsmouth Down Syndrome Association, a charity Rachael co-founded in 2010 in order to fill the void of specialist support for families with children with the condition. While some organisations in the UK use the term Down’s syndrome to refer to the condition, Ross feels very strongly that no apostrophe is necessary and has requested the Guardian not to use it.

“I, like many others, don’t like ‘Down’s syndrome’, because it erroneously implies that the physician who first identified the condition, John Langdon Down, also had it. I also believe it can encourage the use of offensive terminology like ‘a Down’s person’. Globally, the term ‘trisomy 21’ is now increasingly used in place of Down syndrome, which I personally feel is more appropriate, and we may see a greater shift towards this name in the future.”

Over the past decade, the charity has provided hundreds of children with tailored learning in more than 100 mainstream schools in Hampshire and further afield, while also training NHS professionals and teachers on diversity and inclusion.

“The goal is for society to understand that individuals with a learning disability can lead semi-independent lives, make essential contributions and be valued members of their communities – as well as have the same hopes, dreams and aspirations as everyone else,” explains Ross.

Much of the prejudice towards people with Down syndrome can be traced back to the “segregation” of just a few decades ago, he says. In 1945 in the UK, the life expectancy for a child born with Down syndrome was just 12 years, while up until the 1970s it was still commonplace for babies with the condition to be taken straight from the hospital to an institution. Today, roughly 40,000 people in the UK have Down syndrome and life expectancy is beyond 60, due to medical advances, as well as the fact that most children with the condition today live at home and can go on to lead full lives.

But much more needs to be done in terms of policy, says Ross. “Down syndrome is the least funded, yet most prevalent chromosomal learning disability in the UK, and there is no [national] policy at all regarding the education or employment of people with Down syndrome.”

Covid-19, and its disproportionate effect on people with learning disabilities, has only underlined how biased the system is, adds Ross: “The Covid-19 death rate for people with learning disabilities is six times the rate of the general population, and the [unlawful] “do not resuscitate” orders that have been issued to people with learning disabilities are extremely worrying. This all just goes to highlight the institutional bias that exists within the health service towards people with learning disabilities, whether directly or indirectly.”

Ross points to the current prenatal NHS screening offered to all expectant mothers, which assesses a woman’s chance of having a baby with Down syndrome, as further evidence of that bias. An estimated 90% of women whose unborn babies are diagnosed with the condition go on to have an abortion, which is legal right up until birth.

“Why do you need to know if your baby is going to have Down syndrome or not?” asks Ross, who is lobbying parliament to remove the NHS screening on grounds that it is prejudicial. “A life is a life, and the only difference with Down syndrome is that you have one extra chromosome and a learning disability. . Yet this screening programme makes people feel like they’re not meant to be here.”

I was fearful of my daughter's Down syndrome diagnosis. I had much to learn and more to unlearn | Elizabeth Callinan

[Read more](#)

The screening test took centre stage in a recent [Emmerdale storyline](#), in which a couple chose to selectively abort their unborn child after learning that the baby had Down syndrome. It attracted [hundreds of Ofcom complaints](#) before it even aired and more than [31,000 people have since signed a petition](#) calling on ITV to cancel the storyline.

“I have no doubt that if they had attempted this storyline with any other minority, they would have been closed down early,” says Ross.

“What I want to see on the screen is someone with Down syndrome as recognisable as Brad Pitt, just to open the doors for everyone else. If one person can do it, everyone else can follow. It’s not impossible.”

## **Curriculum vitae**

**Age:** 49.

**Lives:** Hampshire.

**Family:** Married with three sons.

**Education:** British School of Paris; Southampton University (History and French); Southampton Institute (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants).

**Career:** 2011-present: principal, RBH Group; 2019: producer, [Innocence](#); 2018: executive producer, [Scarborough](#); 2016: executive producer, [My Feral Heart](#); 2012: executive producer, [Gallowwalkers](#); 1998-2009: principal, various real estate companies; 2005: investor, [Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were Rabbit](#); 2005: investor, [Oliver Twist](#); 1994-1998: estate agent, Black Horse Agencies.

**Public life:** 2009-present: strategist, trustee and vice chair, Portsmouth Down Syndrome Association; 2018-present: co-founder, National Policy Group for Down Syndrome; 2018-present: co-originator, Bafta diversity and inclusion panel; 2004-2009: fundraiser and promoter, Down Syndrome Education International.

**Interests:** Family, inclusion, rugby, travel, film and TV, history.

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## UK unemployment and employment statistics

# UK jobs market moves fast as Covid-19 policies launch and unravel

**Analysis:** The unemployment rate hit a four-year high in the autumn and there is a risk it could go higher



UK job losses have tended to be concentrated in sectors of the economy such as hospitality and tourism. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

UK job losses have tended to be concentrated in sectors of the economy such as hospitality and tourism. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

*[Larry Elliott](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 05.03 EST

These are fast-moving times. The latest official unemployment figures tell us what was happening to the UK labour market in the autumn and they already have a historical feel about them. Since the jobless rate hit a [four-year high](#)

of 5%, restrictions on the economy have been loosened and then reimposed even more stringently. A mass vaccination programme has got under way.

Even so, there are four key messages from the [unemployment statistics](#).

[UK unemployment reaches four-year high in Covid-19 lockdown](#)

[Read more](#)

The first is that the jobs market is sensitive to the tightening or easing of the lockdown. Last summer, when there was hope for a while that the crisis might be over, the number of job vacancies rose but the recovery in vacancies slowed towards the end of 2020 when the second wave of the pandemic arrived. On a more positive note, the number of employees on payrolls increased by 55,000 in December, the period between the end of the four-week lockdown in England and a new national lockdown being imposed.

The second is the importance of the government's coronavirus job retention scheme, which has kept the rise in unemployment in check. To be sure, the number of people in payrolled employment is 828,000 lower than it was in February last year and the official jobless rate has risen from 3.8% to 5%, but the picture would have been a lot worse without the furlough. In the recessions of the early 1980s and 1990s, the unemployment rate exceeded 10%.

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The third message is that the job losses have tended to be concentrated in specific low-wage sectors of the economy, such as hospitality and tourism, and in parts of the country where those sectors account for a high proportion of jobs, such as London. Annual earnings growth has picked up to 3.6% because higher-paid workers have tended to remain in full-time employment while the axe has fallen on people working in pubs, restaurants and bricks-and-mortar retail.

The final message is that there is the risk of further job losses unless the exit from the furlough is handled with care. Rishi Sunak, the chancellor, has announced that wage subsidies will be maintained until the end of April but

he is under pressure from the CBI and other employers' groups to extend it into the summer so that continued support can be provided to vulnerable parts of the economy.

In an ideal world this would not be necessary because the vaccines would allow restrictions to be lifted and the employment outlook would brighten as those currently stuck at home spent the savings they have accumulated on eating out and holidays. That, though, was also the hope last summer. Things don't always go according to plan.

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## Vaccines and immunisation

# Could understanding the history of anti-vaccine sentiment help us to overcome it?

Ever since Edward Jenner developed the first vaccine for smallpox there have been opportunistic people willing to spread misinformation. As the Covid-19 vaccines are administered, what's the best way to counter them?



Anti-vaccine protesters in London. Photograph: James Veysey/REX/Shutterstock

Anti-vaccine protesters in London. Photograph: James Veysey/REX/Shutterstock

[Laura Spinney](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 05.00 EST

Sarah and her brother Benjamin (not their real names) have never seen eye to eye. She's a professional scientist, he – according to Sarah's description – is someone who is susceptible to conspiracy theories. They maintained an uneasy truce until a few weeks ago. Tensions came to a head when Sarah was on the phone to her mum, talking her through the online procedure to book a slot for her Covid-19 vaccination.

If she was still having trouble after they rang off, Sarah suggested, she could ask Benjamin to come over and help. Mother and son live close by and a long way from Sarah; they've shared a bubble this past year. "There was a silence," Sarah says. "And then she replied that he didn't want to. He's against the vaccine. Well, that was it for me. You can't help your 77-year-old mum do something that might save her life? I'm sorry, that's wrong."

This happened in France, where surveys tell us levels of vaccine hesitancy are particularly high, but [similar confrontations](#) are taking place in many countries. Now tensions are coming to a head because the long-awaited vaccines are finally being administered and talk is having to be translated into action – or not. There's a lot riding on the outcome. Statisticians [estimate](#) that close to 90% of us will need to get vaccinated in order to achieve herd immunity.

Experts refer to vaccine "hesitancy" because it covers a spectrum, from those with very narrow and specific doubts – or sometimes just questions – to the extreme and unassailable anti-vaxxer, and understanding that is key to thinking about how hesitancy shapes people's behaviour. One optimistic school of thought holds that much hesitancy will just melt away. In August, Paul Offit, the head of the Vaccine Education Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, [warned](#) against taking surveys that were then showing worryingly low levels of willingness to get vaccinated too seriously, because no vaccine existed, and, in a data vacuum, it was reasonable for people to be sceptical. And indeed, a recent [survey](#) showed that the proportion of French people willing to get vaccinated jumped from 39% in December to 51% in January – a pattern [repeated](#) in other countries.

But others see a different trend unfolding. "The pandemic has increased empathy for people who are hesitant," says Bernice Hausman, a cultural theorist at Penn State University and the author [Anti/Vax](#). Partly it has done

so, she believes, by highlighting structural inequalities in healthcare and their historical roots. Lately, for example, US [media](#) have been full of talk of the infamous [Tuskegee study](#) of the middle 20th Century, which unethically tracked the course of syphilis in African-American sharecroppers without ever offering them treatments known to be effective. Public perceptions have undergone a huge shift during the Covid pandemic, Hausman says, from seeing the vaccine-hesitant as victims of misinformation, to seeing them as mistrustful for valid social and historical reasons.

It's too early to say how these opposing forces will shape vaccine uptake. "I think right now we're in a bit of a honeymoon period," says the anthropologist Heidi Larson, who directs the Vaccine Confidence Project at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. Vaccine is scarce and supplies are being reserved for the most vulnerable, who tend to be enthusiastic. "We may be looking at a bumpier road in February and March, when it moves into the broader population," she says.

Could history shed light on what to expect, and how to steer it for humanity's collective benefit? Paula Larsson, a historian of medicine at the University of Oxford who [studies](#) anti-vaccination movements, thinks it can. Hesitancy is as old as vaccines, she says. For at least a century after Edward Jenner came up with the first vaccine in 1796, against smallpox, vaccination was a much riskier enterprise than it is today, though the protection it conferred still far outweighed any harms it provoked. It wasn't always carried out in the most sanitary conditions, which meant it sometimes caused secondary infections. The side-effects could be unpleasant and lingering, and, if they forced a worker to take time off work, could result in a loss of income.



At a protest against coronavirus lockdown restrictions in Trafalgar Square, in October 2020. Photograph: James Veysey/REX/Shutterstock

These were legitimate concerns throughout the 19th century, when the smallpox vaccine was the only one most people were offered, and they resurfaced during epidemics when health authorities made efforts to increase vaccine coverage. What also surfaced in epidemics were individuals Larsson refers to as “white knights”, who harnessed popular concerns to drive their own agenda and paint themselves as heroes.

She gives the example of Dr Alexander Ross, the author of a pamphlet that circulated widely in Montreal in 1885, during an outbreak of smallpox in the city. “Talk no longer of Russian tyranny,” railed Ross, implying that the Russians – just then persecuting Jews in pogroms – had nothing on the city health officials when it came to trampling civil liberties. He assured his readers that vaccination did not prevent smallpox, but that it did cause other nasty diseases such as syphilis and smallpox itself, and it killed children “outright”. What’s more, he claimed, there wasn’t really an epidemic in the city and, if there was, the best way to protect yourself was “pure air, cleanliness and temperance”. For “proof” he offered the testimonies of a number of individuals whose names were prefixed by “Prof”, “Dr” or “Sir”.

Ross's tactics have been the tactics of the figureheads of anti-vaccination movements throughout history, Larsson says: talk down the disease threat (smallpox killed one in three of those it infected and left most of the survivors scarred for life), talk up the vaccine threat, hint at a bigger conspiracy and appeal to other authority figures who, like you, dare to challenge the consensus. Because of their use of disinformation, she reserves the pejorative label “anti-vaxx” for these individuals and makes a clear distinction between them and the majority of the vaccine-hesitant (Ross, it turns out, got himself vaccinated during the epidemic).

The most obvious recent reincarnation of Ross is Andrew Wakefield, the disgraced former doctor whose [fraudulent 1998 study](#) reported an association between the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism, but others have emerged since the beginning of this pandemic. One is Judy Mikovits, the virologist whose [debunked claims](#) featured in a widely viewed pair of conspiracy theory videos entitled Plandemic even before a Covid-19 vaccine existed. Now that several such vaccines have been approved in a limited way, Larsson expects other white knights to step up. “We will probably see a lot of these people in the next year,” she says.

History also teaches us that the reasons people are hesitant about vaccines are diverse, complex and exquisitely sensitive to social and political context. During the Montreal outbreak, for example, resistance was fuelled by pre-existing tensions between the city’s francophone and anglophone populations. “French-speaking workers resented the upper-class English doctors who wanted to stick needles into them,” Larsson says. It didn’t help that a contaminated batch of vaccine caused some cases of the skin infection erysipelas early on. And yet it was only later, when the authorities made vaccination compulsory, that resistance erupted into riots.

Historically, mandates often crystallised anti-vaccine sentiment, in part because of fears that they would be applied in a brutal or discriminatory fashion. Such fears were not unfounded. There are grisly [accounts](#) of ethnic minorities being vaccinated at gunpoint, or medically vulnerable populations being forcibly given experimental concoctions. Delivering the 1905 supreme court ruling known as Jacobson v Massachusetts, which upheld US states’ right to mandate vaccination, the civil war veteran Justice John Marshall Harlan implicitly acknowledged the brutality of the mandate when he stated

that collective self-defence may sometimes involve risk of bodily harm to the individual, as when a citizen was compelled “to take his place in the ranks of the army of his country and risk the chance of being shot down in its defence”. Vaccine sceptics were a step ahead of him. At that time, the term “conscientious objector” referred to someone who objected to vaccines; it was only during the first world war that it came to mean a person who objected to taking up arms. But the 1905 ruling galvanised them, and in 1908 the Anti-Vaccination League of America was created. “Vaccination has always been violent,” says Hausman.



A vaccination against smallpox in the countryside, 1868. Photograph: Heritage Images/Getty Images

The number of diseases for which vaccines existed began to increase rapidly at around the turn of the 20th century, but progress came with setbacks. In 1929, in Lübeck, Germany, a contaminated batch of the BCG vaccine for tuberculosis led to the [deaths](#) of 72 babies and a resurgence of anti-vaccine sentiment. Yet such accidents, or scandals, drove improvements in oversight, to the point where Offit could [write](#) in 2006 that vaccines enjoyed a safety record “unmatched by any other medical product”. And they transformed human health. Smallpox killed more than 300 million people in the 20th century before claiming its last victim in 1978. Yet despite vaccines’ impressive track record and far more sophisticated approaches to mandates –

involving fines rather than guns, for example, and allowing exemptions on religious and other grounds – vaccine hesitancy is at a 20-year high, according to some polls, and growing.

Efforts to educate people haven't worked, Hausman says, and a clue as to why lies in the shift that has happened this year – from understanding hesitancy as an information issue to understanding it as one of trust. Public health experts focus on the benefits of vaccination to populations, she says, “but people don’t experience vaccine injury at the population level, they experience it personally”. It’s therefore important to understand their concerns, because a person of African American heritage, say, may have very different ones from a person with allergies who is reading about the – few, it must be emphasised – cases of anaphylactic shock that have been reported in recipients of some Covid-19 vaccines.

In her recent book, [Stuck](#), Heidi Larson quotes, and agrees with, the Australian epidemiologist Stephen Leeder: “Facts are not rejected because they are seen as being wrong, but because they are seen as being irrelevant.” Vaccine educators are on to this, and increasingly privilege stories over statistics. Someone you know had a bad reaction? OK, let me tell you about a couple last week, your age, who got the vaccine and are doing fine. They also realise that different kinds of people should be saying these things. As the marketing expert Stacy Wood told [Science](#) recently, it shouldn’t always be Anthony Fauci, as effective a spokesperson as he is.

The storytelling approach has its critics. The Spectator recently dismissed it as showing “a supercilious contempt for ordinary people”. But it’s exactly the approach that has been used so successfully by true anti-vaxxers, who have harnessed social media and who, according to a recent report published by the international non-profit the Center for Countering Digital Hate, are now coordinating their efforts to try to drive long-term vaccine hesitancy. Plus, says Hausman, it isn’t just “ordinary people” who are more influenced by stories than stats; powerful ones are too, including some of those taking decisions in this pandemic.

It’s easier to stop people from taking an action than to persuade them to take it, which means that Team Jenner will always have to work harder than the opposition. “All the white knights have to do is sow a doubt,” says Larsson.

But the main lesson from history is that it's not just what they do that matters. Underpinning the success of vaccination is a strong social contract, and ours is fraying. As the author of *Stuck* writes: "Immunisation has become a profound test of our ability to cooperate."

*Laura Spinney is the author of *Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How It Changed the World**

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[Rape: reported](#)

[Rape and sexual assault](#)

## Rape victims speak out ahead of legal challenge to CPS policy

Court of appeal hearing comes amid record low in rape prosecutions in England and Wales

- ['I don't have words for how betrayed I feel'](#)

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

Tue 26 Jan 2021 01.00 EST Last modified on Tue 26 Jan 2021 08.07 EST



The CPS has denied any change in approach to rape prosecutions.  
Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA Archive/PA Images

Rape victims at the heart of a landmark court case have told the Guardian they have been failed by the [Crown Prosecution Service](#), ahead of a legal

challenge to how the crime is charged and prosecuted.

The case, which begins in the court of appeal on Tuesday, comes amid [growing concerns](#) about the treatment of serious sexual crimes in England and Wales. Rape prosecutions have dropped every year since 2016-17 and are now at an annual record low.

“What is happening can’t be allowed to continue and the CPS shouldn’t be allowed to get away with it,” said Olivia\*, a gay woman [whose case against a man she accuses of violently raping her was dropped](#). “To be treated the way I’ve been treated and to know that other people have been treated the same way, to not be able to get justice, is absolutely appalling.”

The judicial review mounted against the CPS by the Centre for Women’s Justice (CWJ) and End Violence Against Women (EVAW) coalition, will hear that a [change in approach](#) led to a more cautious approach and a subsequent collapse in rape prosecutions.

The Guardian reported in 2018 that CPS prosecutors were urged in training sessions in 2017 to put a “touch on the tiller” and [take a more risk-averse approach to prosecuting rape](#) by weeding “the weak cases out of the system”. The CPS has consistently denied any change in approach.

Reports of rape have increased by almost a third in the four years to March 2020. However, the number of rape prosecutions has more than halved, falling 60% to the lowest figure on record, in the same time period.

### [Graphic](#)

In November 2019, the CPS [admitted it had a “level of ambition” to reach a 60% conviction rate in rape cases in 2016](#). They told the Law Society Gazette, which first reported the story, that they dropped the policy two years later, as it may give prosecutors a “perverse incentive” to prosecute fewer, less complicated, cases.

Marie\*, who told police she had been raped and subjected to violent abuse between the ages of 17 and 19, said complainants like her, [who had not seen their cases progress to court, felt “beaten down”](#).

“We’re fighting the law, and that’s just so difficult to do,” she said. “But the Centre for Women’s Justice has just got to keep pushing, because this is happening time and time again.”

Sarah Green, the director for End Violence Against Women (EVAW), said: “It has been a very long road to the courtroom this week. In 2018 alarm bells were already ringing when the CPS’s own data showed an enormous drop in the charging rate for rape.

“Although we are a tiny charity, we decided we needed to take the risk and look at bringing the CPS to court for what amounts to an unlawful change in their rape prosecution policy and practice which was never consulted on, has happened covertly, and has had terrible consequences which very disproportionately affect women and arguably make all of us less safe,” Green added.

This is the third court hearing, after the case was originally dismissed by the high court in March 2020 and later overturned at an appeal hearing in July 2020.

The case has been crowdfunded with small donations from survivors and supporters and has raised more than £100,000 to date. The CPS has rejected the arguments presented and sought to cover its full legal costs. A judge has capped costs at £75,000.

Harriet Wistrich, the director of the CWJ, said: “There’s huge concern about this sudden collapse in prosecutions and although there are a number of different factors, the key factor we say is the training. They wanted to change the direction and bring about a change of approach even if it was, ‘a touch on the tiller’.

“The problem is, even if it’s just a very slight change, when you go from the top down it has a massive butterfly effect by the time it hits the bottom. The director of public prosecutions [DPP] seeks to blame the police but in fact the police say they are tearing their hair out and building strong cases that still get dropped.”

Senior police officers have also [expressed frustration at how the CPS now charges cases](#). In July last year they said it was “becoming harder to achieve the standard of evidence required to charge a suspect”.

Since 2010 the CPS has had budget cuts of 25% and a 30% reduction in staff. In 2018/19, there were [5,684 full-time equivalent CPS staff](#) compared with 8,094 in 2010/11. In the December [spending review](#) the government promised the CPS a £26.4m cash increase in core resource funding.

The hearing comes after a government [end-to-end review](#) into how rape is investigated and prosecuted was [announced in March 2019](#).

A CPS spokesperson said: “There has been no change of approach in how the CPS prosecutes rape. Our skilled prosecutors are experienced and highly trained to make sure criminals can be brought to justice. No matter how challenging the case, whenever our legal test is met, we always seek to charge.

“Along with the police, we remain committed to making real, lasting improvements to how these horrific offences are handled, so every victim will feel able to come forward with confidence that their complaint will be fully investigated and, where the evidence supports, charged and prosecuted.”

\*Names have been changed

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- 'We attend with optimism' Greece and Turkey in talks to try to avert military escalation

## Education policy

# English schools not expected to start fully reopening until at least March

Downing Street, under pressure to set out timetable, says review of lockdown will come on 15 February

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Gavin Williamson has promised to give schools at least two weeks' notice of reopening. Photograph: Alamy

Gavin Williamson has promised to give schools at least two weeks' notice of reopening. Photograph: Alamy

*Peter Walker Political correspondent  
@peterwalker99*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 08.45 EST

Schools in England are not expected to start fully reopening until at least early March, Downing Street has indicated, as Tory MPs and children's advocates pressurised Boris Johnson to set out a timetable for the process.

The government has promised to reassess lockdown measures on 15 February, and Johnson's spokesperson said this would be the point at which the evidence would be examined to see if any easing could take place.

The spokesperson also reaffirmed Gavin Williamson's pledge to give schools at least two weeks' notice of reopening, meaning it would be March before the process could begin.

The comments came after the prime minister said he would examine "the potential of relaxing some measures" connected to lockdown once the top four categories of vulnerable adults had had their first Covid-19 vaccination, due to happen by mid-February.

"It has always been our intention to ease restrictions when we can from that point on the 15th, and schools are obviously our top priority," Johnson's spokesperson said. "We will undertake the review on the 15th. Then we will set out what happens post the 15th."

Asked whether the two-week notice period was confirmed, he said: "You've got what Gavin Williamson said yesterday about ensuring we give a two-week heads-up before we can open schools."

Earlier on Monday, the 70-strong [Covid Recovery Group](#) (CRG) of Conservative MPs said ministers must set out a timetable for the process.

The children's commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, said that while she accepted that the high coronavirus infection rates made reopening schools difficult, more clarity was needed and there seemed to be a "slight sense of defeatism" over the issue.

On Sunday the health secretary, Matt Hancock, refused to commit to either mid-February, after the half-term break, or after Easter as a point for schools to reopen fully.

Mark Harper, the former chief whip who now chairs the CRG, reiterated [the group's call](#) for reopening efforts to begin three weeks after the top four priority groups for the coronavirus vaccine have received their first dose.

"It seems to us [that] at that point you need to start bringing the economy back to life, and the first thing that needs to be reopened are our schools," Harper told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. "All we're asking for at this point is for the government to set out that sort of plan, based on milestones, based on evidence, so that school leaders, parents, children, have some hope and know what to expect."

Harper said the government could expect dissent from MPs if it did not take this action. "Set that plan out, and enable us to debate that plan in parliament. I would love the government to set a plan out. I'm not trying to second-guess the government. But if the government doesn't come forward with a plan, it can't be surprised if other people will fill the vacuum."

Robert Halfon, who chairs the Commons education select committee and has been an influential voice on the issue, said urgent action was needed.

He told Times Radio: "We need to get our teachers and support staff vaccinated. That will make a big difference. But I'm hugely worried about the impact on mental health, on educational attainment, on safeguarding, the longer we keep our schools closed."

Longfield said the long and repeated closures of schools since March had brought about a huge rise in mental health issues among children, with one in six now experiencing problems, and had also widened attainment gaps.

"We're looking at children with sleep disruption, who have lost the ability to cope, who are fearful about their future," she told Today. "This is a very serious issue for those children, and for their families."

She said families "will need hope and clarity about what comes next", and she called for a robust Covid testing system for schools, and the possible use of vaccinations.

“There is a sort of slight sense of defeatism in the air,” she said of the government’s attitude, arguing that unions and local councils meanwhile believed they could get at least some classes back before too long.

“It can be done, and I think that’s what parents need to know now,” she said. “I would like a slide on every No 10 briefing to show progress back to school, to keep parents and children informed.”

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

## **Hancock stresses need for caution at borders; cases fall to lowest daily level for a month – as it happened**

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## Health policy

# Coronavirus vaccine: councils to get £23m to encourage high-risk groups to have jab

Funding will help English local authorities target minority ethnic and older people

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A number of experts and politicians recently called for people in high-risk minority ethnic groups to be prioritised for immunisation against Covid.  
Photograph: SolStock/Getty Images

A number of experts and politicians recently called for people in high-risk minority ethnic groups to be prioritised for immunisation against Covid.  
Photograph: SolStock/Getty Images

Clea Skopeliti

Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.18 EST

The government will provide £23m in funding to dozens of councils in England to help fight misinformation around coronavirus vaccines and to encourage uptake of the jab among more high-risk communities.

Councils with plans to contact people from minority ethnic backgrounds, older people and disabled people have been chosen for the financial support, as these groups have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and are more likely to be dealing with its long-term effects.

A number of experts and politicians [recently called](#) for people in high-risk minority ethnic groups to be prioritised for immunisation, and for them to be targeted by publicity campaigns aimed at tackling vaccine scepticism.

There are concerns about vaccine uptake within some groups, after research showed [up to 72% of black people](#) said they were unlikely or very unlikely to have the jab.

Meanwhile, a number of BAME [community leaders](#) have taken action in the fight against vaccine hesitancy, with Qari Asim, the chair of the [Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board](#), and a number of other Muslim leaders telling the Guardian they had started a campaign to encourage BAME communities to get vaccinated.

Their activism has included hundreds of mosques recently using Friday prayers to spread coronavirus awareness and combat myths around vaccinations.

Local councils and voluntary organisations will use a community champions schemes to communicate accurate health information, using outreach techniques such as helplines, school programmes and workplace engagement. They will also phone people in at-risk groups, as well as hosting training sessions to help people provide information and advice in an effort to expand networks of local champions.

Community champions schemes are in place across various parts of England. The backing of local leaders and advocates to “communicate public health messages with credibility and impact” was one of a number of recommendations issued by the government’s Race Disparity Unit (RDU) advisory group in October.

## [UK vaccine adviser says delay of Covid second dose will save lives](#) [Read more](#)

The funding will also go towards supporting outreach campaigns working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, the communities secretary, Robert Jenrick, said.

Jenrick warned in a statement that “false information about Covid-19 vaccines could cost lives”, and he said the central government money would allow local authorities and community groups to build on their existing campaigns to provide people with accurate information.

The vaccine deployment minister, Nadhim Zahawi, said: “We want all communities to take up the offer of a free vaccine.” He said he had been working alongside faith and community leaders to “ensure those who may be at higher risk of harm from this virus know how they can benefit from a vaccine”.

According to Office for National Statistics figures up to late July, the Covid death rate for black African men in England and Wales was 62 per 100,000, compared with 12 per 100,000 for white men. The rate for men from Bangladeshi backgrounds was 61 per 100,000.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/25/councils-to-get-23m-to-encourage-high-risk-groups-to-have-jab>

## Coronavirus

# Johnson being urged to impose blanket Covid border controls

Cabinet ministers and scientists say more protection needed against unknown variants entering UK

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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The arrivals area at Heathrow last week. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

The arrivals area at Heathrow last week. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

*[Jessica Elgot](#) and [Nicola Davis](#)*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 12.54 EST

Boris Johnson is facing increasing pressure from cabinet ministers and scientists to impose blanket border control measures against Covid instead

of his preferred option of a targeted approach as experts warned that this may not protect the UK from importing further mutations.

Ministers are to meet on Tuesday to weigh up the merits of a border policy that could require all new arrivals, including British citizens, to quarantine at their own expense in government-supervised hotels.

Johnson and the transport secretary, Grant Shapps, are said to favour a more targeted approach that would only require travellers from high-risk countries, like Brazil or South Africa, to stay in quarantine hotels.

[Coronavirus UK: Covid cases, deaths and vaccinations today](#)

[Read more](#)

The health secretary, Matt Hancock, and the [home secretary, Priti Patel](#), are said to be arguing for stricter measures, backed by some scientists on the government [Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies](#) (Sage). Downing Street has said both options remain under consideration and a source said the debate was still “live” about the best approach.

Patel, who has openly said she was among those who wanted to close the borders at the height of the first wave of the pandemic in March, is among ministers making the case for the need to “act decisively” in order to protect the advances the UK has made in its vaccination drives.

“Anyone who slips through could be a new mutant strain, hence the need for blanket measures,” one Home Office source said.

Hancock said he was concerned about unknown variants coming into the UK and that while both Brazil and South Africa had “decent-sized” genomic sequencing programmes, other countries did not.

“The new variant I really worry about is the one that is out there that hasn’t been spotted,” he told Sky News. “There’s probably those elsewhere that simply haven’t been picked up because the country doesn’t have that genomic sequencing service.”

It is understood that the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, is not among those resisting tougher quarantine measures for travellers and is even open to wider restrictions, though he has asked for there to be a roadmap of how those quarantine measures would be eased.

Others in cabinet are said to be concerned about unintended consequences of a blanket policy, including fears that hotels could struggle to cope with the numbers in the first days after the policy is introduced or that it could prompt an unsafe rush to the UK, which ministers believe they were already seeing evidence of in crowded scenes pictured over the weekend.

“Hotels will for the most part be grateful for it but there is a chance we could exhaust capacity in the immediate vicinity,” one Whitehall source said.

Travellers to Britain are already required to self-isolate for 10 days, or five with a negative test, but enforcement has been patchy.

Those arriving in the UK, apart from children, hauliers and travel crew, must test negative for Covid in the 72 hours prior to arrival in order to be allowed entry and anyone arriving without a negative test faces a fine of up to £500.

The UK has been criticised for its decision not to put in place tougher border restrictions at the beginning of the pandemic.

A new campaigning organisation, One Rule For Them, which takes inspiration from the Lincoln Project in the US which targeted Donald Trump with brutal and personal attack ads, is to launch a campaign in northern English seats this week about the border failures.

The campaign is run by a former Labour adviser, Adam McNicholas – unlike whereas the Lincoln Project which is run by anti-Trump Republicans – and is designed to damage the credibility and electoral appeal of Johnson in key seats.

Hancock emphasised in his interviews that the situation was particularly acute now given the vaccine programme.

“That’s why the conversation has changed about the borders. It’s not just about protecting Britain from countries abroad where there’s a high degree

of spread – not least because there are very high levels of coronavirus here in the UK right now – it's that these new variants can really set us back and we need to protect ourselves against them coming in.”

Prof Kamlesh Khunti, professor of primary care diabetes and vascular medicine at the University of Leicester, who sits on both Sage and the [Independent Sage group of experts](#), said variants could “appear anywhere” and the border policy should reflect that.

“We should therefore have a blanket policy on border control, otherwise people may be traveling from high-risk countries to low-risk countries and then to the UK in which case we will miss these cases,” he said. “Giving this clear recommendation also gives less risk of confusion as the risk in various countries will change over time.”

Gabriel Scally, visiting professor of public health at the University of Bristol and a member of the Independent Sage group of experts, also supported the use of hotels for managed isolation of travellers and said the policy would need to apply to all those entering the country.

“If you apply it to some countries then people will just go via a third country and give you potentially accurate but misleading information on their passenger location form,” he said.

Prof Susan Michie, a member of the government’s Covid-19 behavioural science team, a subgroup of Sage, also agreed that the policy should be applied to those entering from all countries.

“It is generally recognised that not controlling borders earlier has been one of the weaknesses of the government’s Covid-19 strategy,” she said. “We only know about variants in countries where there has been genomic sequencing so a blanket approach at this point of crisis would seem to be sensible.”

Dr Michael Head, senior research fellow in global health at the University of Southampton, said: “Quarantine for all arrivals into the UK should have been introduced since the first wave, and should certainly be in place right

now. It's difficult to appropriately discern the risks between different countries, so a blanket policy is a better idea."

Prof Andrew Hayward, director of UCL's Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care, also agreed that the blanket approach would be safest. "Obviously, this would have major economic and social consequences, especially if used as a long-term strategy to prevent the importation of new variants," he said.

However, Hayward said it was important to note that there was not yet any evidence of strains escaping vaccine-induced immunity. "The likely scenario in the future is that there will need to be global surveillance of coronavirus strains and the extent to which they may evade vaccine related immunity and regular update of the vaccine components to account for this," he said. "This is exactly the model used in flu.

"In the meantime, tightening border controls whilst we gain a better understanding of emerging variants is prudent and the short-term economic costs may be greatly outweighed by the future gains."

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## Gordon Brown

# UK at risk of becoming failed state, says Gordon Brown

Former PM says Westminster government is out of touch and fundamental changes are needed



Gordon Brown in 2019. He is calling for a ‘commission on democracy’ that would review the way the UK is governed. Photograph: Andrew Milligan/PA

Gordon Brown in 2019. He is calling for a ‘commission on democracy’ that would review the way the UK is governed. Photograph: Andrew Milligan/PA

*Damien Gayle*  
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Mon 25 Jan 2021 03.57 EST

The UK is at risk of becoming a failed state and breaking up unless there are deep reforms of the way the country is governed, the former prime minister [Gordon Brown](#) has said.

“I believe the choice is now between a reformed state and a failed state,” Brown wrote in the [Daily Telegraph](#). “It is indeed Scotland where dissatisfaction is so deep that it threatens the end of the United Kingdom.”

Brown, who was chancellor of the exchequer for 10 years from 1997 and became prime minister in 2007, said many Britons were disillusioned with the way the country was governed by and in the interests of a London-centric elite.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme on Monday morning, he accused Boris Johnson and his government of being out of touch. He said: “I do think Boris Johnson has not quite understood how deep the resentment is, how the lack of trust is causing him a problem, a problem about his acceptability in different parts of the country.”

On Sunday, polls carried out in the four nations of the UK showed that a majority of voters thought Scotland was likely to be independent within the next 10 years. In Scotland, the poll found that 49% of people backed independence compared with 44% opposed – a margin of 52% to 48% if undecideds are excluded. Scotland’s first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, [promised a new referendum on independence](#) if the Scottish National party won another majority in elections to the Scottish parliament in May.

Brown said Sturgeon and her party viewed the future of the country “in terms of a battle between [Scotland](#) and the rest of the UK” and claimed that Scots were more interested in action to solve social problems than independence.

The coronavirus pandemic had exposed divisions between different parts of the UK, Brown said. “You’ve got not only the Scottish first minister but you’ve got the regional mayors saying they are not consulted and listened to, you’ve got the Welsh first minister saying their letters are not even replied to by Boris Johnson, you’ve got no mechanism, no forum for coordinating the regions and nations, and I think that the public are fed up.”

Brown called for fundamental constitutional changes led by a “commission on democracy” that would “review the way the whole United Kingdom is governed”. He suggested setting up citizens’ assemblies in the regions of the UK, telling Today: “You can’t have the elites talking to the elites, you have got to involve the people in what you are talking about, and they have got views now on how the pandemic was dealt with, how the recession has been dealt with.”

A Sunday Times poll found that 47% of people in [Northern Ireland](#) still wanted to remain in the UK, 42% were in favour of a united Ireland, and 11% were undecided. When asked if they supported a referendum on a united Ireland within the next five years, 51% said yes and 44% no.

In [Wales](#), where support for independence has been weakest, 23% backed leaving the UK and 31% supported holding a referendum.

Brown wrote in the Telegraph: “No country can have national integration without political inclusion, and the commission might start by learning from the experience of countries like Australia, Canada, Germany and America where, partly because of British influence in times past, second chambers are senates of their regions, and minorities who can easily be outvoted are guaranteed a stronger voice.”

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## Debenhams

# Debenhams to close all stores with 12,000 jobs at risk as Boohoo buys brand

Chain's remaining shops will be wound down when they can reopen after Covid-19 lockdown

- [Debenhams deal and Topshop talks put thousands of jobs at risk](#)
- [Boohoo buying Debenhams: a changing of the guard in retail](#)
- [Asos in talks to buy Topshop, Topman and Miss Selfridge](#)



Debenhams' shop on Oxford Street, London, is among its remaining high street stores. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Debenhams' shop on Oxford Street, London, is among its remaining high street stores. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

[Mark Sweeney](#) and [Sarah Butler](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 05.51 EST

The online retailer Boohoo has acquired [Debenhams](#) in a £55m deal that will result in the department store disappearing from the high street with the likely loss of up to 12,000 jobs.

Boohoo, which is also buying the brands Maine, Mantaray, Principles and Faith, said Debenhams' remaining stores will be wound down after the high street lockdown ends and they can reopen to sell off stock.

The 243-year-old Debenhams chain is already in the process of closing down after administrators failed to secure a rescue deal for the business and its remaining 124 stores last year. The company had already announced that six of those shops would not reopen after lockdown, including its flagship department store on London's Oxford Street.

[Boohoo snaps up Debenhams for £55m; Asos in exclusive talks to buy Topshop – business live](#)

[Read more](#)

“The group will only be acquiring the brands and associated intellectual property rights,” Boohoo said. “The transaction does not include Debenhams’ retail stores, stock or any financial services.”

Debenhams made approximately £400m in online revenues in its most recent financial year to 31 August 2020.

Boohoo said the Debenhams website receives 300m visits a year, making it a top 10 retail website in the UK by traffic.

“This is a transformational deal for the group, which allows us to capture the fantastic opportunity as e-commerce continues to grow. Our ambition is to create the UK’s largest marketplace,” said Mahmud Kamani, the executive chairman at Boohoo.

“Our acquisition of the Debenhams brand is strategically significant as it represents a huge step which accelerates our ambition to be a leader, not just

in fashion e-commerce but in new categories including beauty, sport and homeware.”

The retail trade union Usdaw said it was seeking urgent meetings with Debenhams’ administrators and called on the government to do more to save high streets.

Dave Gill, Usdaw’s national officer, said: “It is devastating news for our high streets that Debenhams’ administrators have sold the company brand to an online-only retailer. Throughout Debenhams’ difficulties the company and then administrators have refused to engage with Usdaw; the staff are being treated appallingly.”

The union wants the government to extend business rates relief and help with millions of pounds of rents that have gone unpaid as shops have been forced to close during the coronavirus pandemic.

John Lyttle, the Boohoo chief executive, said the company was still “working through the numbers” on how many jobs might be saved but that there were “no definitive numbers at this point”. Some jobs in beauty are expected to be saved.

He said Debenhams will operate as a digital “shop window” for Boohoo’s brands, including Pretty Little Thing and Nasty Gal, as well as third-party brands. Boohoo will take a commission on third-party sales, but not responsibility for delivery or customer service, in a similar way to online marketplaces such as Amazon or Zalando.

“Initially, we want to get the [Debenhams] marketplace launched in the spring to early summer,” Lyttle said in a call with analysts. “Across the group, just under half of our revenues are made internationally, so there is an opportunity to launch the marketplace in international markets over time.”

He also added that strong Debenhams brands, such as Principles, Maine and Faith, could get their own standalone retail websites as well as being sold within the marketplace. Lyttle said that post-acquisition Boohoo would still have more than £380m in cash to fund further acquisitions.

Boohoo has already taken advantage of the damage the pandemic has wrought on traditional retailers by buying the Oasis, Coast and Karen Millen brands out of administration, but not their high street stores.

Susannah Streeter, the senior investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown, said the acquisition marked a significant moment for Boohoo and for retail.

“Boohoo aims to break into the retail big time with this deal. It marks quite a journey for the company, which started as a fast fashion upstart and is now turning into a sprawling empire, by scooping up household names which have fallen into distress,” she said.

“Showing just how far the once mighty have fallen, Boohoo has only had to dip a little into its deep cash pockets to snap up the department store chain’s most precious assets.”

Shares in Boohoo rose 4% after the detail was announced on Monday.

Debenhams had been trying to find a buyer since the summer but its administrators – which have been running the business since April – said they had not received “a deliverable proposal”.

The deal with Boohoo marks a final rebuff for Mike Ashley’s Frasers Group, the owner of Sports Direct, which had been in talks to buy Debenhams for some weeks after [failing to gain control](#) of the department store before its first fall into administration in 2019.

Ashley is expected to try to take on a number of Debenhams stores from landlords to house his Flannels, Sports Direct and House of Fraser chains.

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Debenhams [traces its roots back to 1778](#), when William Clark established a drapers store on Wigmore Street in the West End of London. Its current name stems from 1813 when William Debenham invested in the company, which became Clark & Debenham.

Last year, Debenhams entered rescue talks with JD Sports but the sports retailer pulled out when Arcadia, the parent company of brands including Topman, entered administration. Arcadia operated more concessions in Debenhams than any other retailer and Arcadia is believed to have sold about £100m of clothing a year via Debenhams' shop floors.

On Monday, the online retailer [Asos confirmed](#) that it is in exclusive talks to buy a number of Arcadia's brands.

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# Boohoo snaps up Debenhams for £55m; Asos in exclusive talks to buy Topshop – as it happened

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## Trump impeachment (2021)

# Trump plots revenge as Democrats push on with second impeachment trial

- President mulls third party amid impeachment debate
- Conviction over US Capitol attack still seems unlikely
- [Robert Reich: Don't believe corporate anti-Trump hype](#)
- [Lloyd Green: Will Trump really start his own party?](#)

00:40

*[Richard Luscombe](#)  
[@richlusc](#)*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 17.30 EST

Republican divisions over Donald Trump's [second impeachment trial](#) came into clearer focus on Sunday, as the former president spent his first weekend out of office plotting revenge against those he says betrayed him.

[Can Trump do a Nixon and re-enter polite society? Elizabeth Drew doubts it](#)  
[Read more](#)

Stewing over election defeat by Joe Biden, four days after leaving the White House, Trump continued to drop hints of creating a new party, a threat some saw as a gambit to keep wavering senators in line ahead of the opening of his trial, in the week after 8 February.

Democrats will send the single article of impeachment to the Senate for a reading on Monday evening. It alleges incitement of insurrection, regarding the [6 January riot](#) at the US Capitol that left five dead, including a police officer.

Trump spent the weekend at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, splitting rounds of golf with discussions about maintaining relevance and influence and how to unseat Republicans deemed to have crossed him, the [Washington Post](#) reported.

Trump, the Post said, had said the threat of starting a Maga (Make America Great Again) or Patriot party, gave him leverage to prevent senators voting to convict, which could lead to him being prevented from seeking office again.

Later on Sunday, the New York Times reporter Maggie Haberman [cited](#) sources “familiar with his thinking” when she said Trump was backing off his threat to create a new party, after it was “gently pointed out to him” that “threatening a third party while simultaneously threatening primaries makes no sense”.

Nonetheless, those in Trump’s crosshairs include Liz Cheney, the No3 House Republican, Georgia governor Brian Kemp and others who declined to embrace false claims of election fraud or accused him of inciting the Capitol riot.

Other senior Republicans clashed on Sunday over Trump’s trial and the party’s future. [Mitt Romney](#), the Utah senator, former presidential candidate and fierce Trump critic who was the only Republican to vote for impeachment at his first trial last year, said the former president had exhibited a “continuous pattern” of trying to corrupt elections.

“He fired up a crowd, encouraging them to march on the Capitol at the time that the Congress was carrying out its constitutional responsibility to certify the election,” Romney told CNN’s State of the Union. “These allegations are very serious. They haven’t been defended yet by the president. He deserves a chance to have that heard but it’s important for us to go through the normal justice process and for there to be resolution.”

Romney said it was constitutional to hold a trial for a president who has left office.

“I believe that what is being alleged and what we saw, which is incitement to insurrection, is an impeachable offence. If not, what is?”

Romney, however, said he did not support action against Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley, senators who supported Trump’s claims of a rigged election and objected to results.

[Chaos of Trump's last days in office reverberates with fresh 'plot' report](#)

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“I think history will provide a measure of judgment with regard to those that continue to spread the lie that the [former] president began with, as well as the voters in our respective communities,” he said. “I don’t think the Senate needs to take action.”

Other Republicans, including Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine and Ben Sasse of Nebraska, are expected to vote to convict. But the party is deeply fractured. For a conviction, 17 Republicans would need to vote with the 50 Democrats. It is unclear if that number can be reached, despite assertions from minority leader Mitch McConnell that the mob [“was fed lies”](#) by Trump.

Haberman [reported](#) that Trump had “started to believe there are fewer votes to convict than there would have been if the vote had been held almost immediately after 6 January”.

Marco Rubio of Florida said he thought the trial was “stupid and counterproductive”.

“We already have a flaming fire in this country and it’s like taking a bunch of gasoline and pouring it on top of the fire,” he told Fox News Sunday.

“I look back in time, for example [Richard Nixon](#), who had clearly committed crimes and wrongdoing. In hindsight I think we would all agree that President Ford’s pardon was important for the country to be able to move forward. I think this is going to be really bad for the country, it’s just going to stir it up even more and make it even harder to get things done.”

John Cornyn of Texas threatened retaliation, [tweeting](#): “If it is a good idea to impeach and try former presidents, what about former Democratic presidents when Republicans get the majority in 2022? Think about it and let’s do what is best for the country.”



Trump supporters inside the US Capitol on 6 January. Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

Mike Rounds, of South Dakota, said he believed the impeachment was unconstitutional, telling NBC's Meet the Press: “[The US constitution] specifically pointed out that you can impeach the president and it does not indicate that you can impeach someone who is not in office. So I think it's a moot point.

[Courtrooms and creditors likely to loom large in Trump's post-presidency life](#)

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“But for right now there are other things we'd rather be working on. The Biden administration would love more of their cabinet in place and there's a number of [Republicans](#) that feel the same way. We should allow this president the opportunity to form his cabinet and get that in place as quickly as possible.”

Republican unity appears increasingly rare. On Saturday, the Arizona Republican party voted to [censure Cindy McCain](#), the widow of the former senator and presidential candidate John McCain, and two other prominent party members who have crossed Trump.

The actions drew swift praise from the former president, who backed Kelli Ward, the firebrand state party chair who was the architect of the censure, and who recently won a narrow re-election.

Trump, the [Post](#) reported, called Ward to offer his “complete and total endorsement”.

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# **US House delivers article of impeachment against Trump to Senate – as it happened**

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## [Russia](#)

# EU foreign chief to fly to Moscow to condemn Navalny arrest

Josep Borrell says that while there are no concrete proposals as yet, bloc is ‘ready to react’



Alexei Navalny shortly before his flight to Moscow and ‘completely unacceptable’ arrest. Photograph: Mstyslav Chernov/AP

Alexei Navalny shortly before his flight to Moscow and ‘completely unacceptable’ arrest. Photograph: Mstyslav Chernov/AP

*[Daniel Boffey](#) in Brussels and [Andrew Roth](#) in Moscow and [Luke Harding](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 11.53 EST

The EU’s foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, will fly to Moscow to personally deliver the bloc’s condemnation of the “completely unacceptable” arrest of the opposition leader, [Alexei Navalny](#).

The heads of state and government of the 27 member states will then reassess the EU's relationship with [Russia](#) at a summit in March.

Borrell said there was no “concrete proposal” from the member states as yet as to the consequences of the continued detention of Navalny and 3,000 of his supporters but that the EU was “ready to react”.

Poland’s president, Andrzej Duda, is among those who have called for sanctions, including Italy, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. He had also asked for the EU official to cancel his planned visit to Moscow. But after a meeting of foreign ministers, the bloc’s high representative for foreign affairs said the trip in the first week of February to meet Russia’s foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, would go ahead.

“I don’t share the opinion that when things go bad, you don’t talk,” Borrell said. “Quite the contrary, that’s the moment to talk.”

He added: “[On] the arrest of Navalny and the crackdown of supporters, the council considered it completely unacceptable, condemned the mass detentions, and the police brutality over the weekend, and we call on Russia for the release of Mr Navalny and those detained.”

The development came as Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin, denied that a lavish palace built on Russia’s Black Sea coast belonged to him, following a video exposé by Navalny made public following his arrest.



A view of an estate overlooking Russia's Black Sea. Navalny's team posted the video exposé alleging that the lavish palace was built for Vladimir Putin. Photograph: Alexey Navalny Youtube Channel/AFP/Getty Images

In a sign that the opposition figure's investigation has touched a nerve with the Kremlin, Putin took the unusual step of claiming he had nothing to do with the property. It neither "belongs to or ever belonged to me or my close relatives. Ever," Putin declared.

Putin dismissed [the video](#), so far seen by more than 70 million people, as "boring". He said he hadn't had time to watch it and had merely glanced at a few clips compiled by his assistants. The montage of him swimming in a giant pool was "fake", he said.

Putin's denial is unlikely to convince the hundreds of thousands of Russians who took to the streets on Saturday, demanding Navalny's release from custody. Navalny shot the video while recuperating in Germany from novichok poisoning, before his arrest a week ago when he flew back to Moscow.

Navalny claims the FSB spy agency was behind the bungled operation in Siberia last August – following a personal order to kill him by Russia's president.

A student asked Putin today about the palace which was the subject of [@navalny](#)'s film. Putin says he didn't have time to watch it "because of too much work" but that he can assure him that "none of this belongs to him or his relatives". [pic.twitter.com/YGoFKXoDVb](https://pic.twitter.com/YGoFKXoDVb)

— Christo Grozev (@christogrozev) [January 25, 2021](#)

The video investigation describes the palace near the southern resort town of Gelendzhik as "the most secret and guarded facility in Russia".

"This is not a country house, not a dacha, not a residence. It has impregnable fences, its own port, its own guards, a church, its own access control, a no-fly zone and even its own border checkpoint," Navalny alleges.

He adds: "It is directly a separate state within Russia. And in this state there is a single and irreplaceable king: Putin."

Putin's carefully worded comments about ownership do not contradict the investigation. According to Navalny, the residence formally belongs to four proxies. All have ties to Putin's close friends and to official state security bodies, he suggests.

The palace's actual ownership is revealed by the fact that the federal security service guards the building round the clock, he adds. There are other clues, including a ban on boats cruising past the property.

### The Navalny video

Critics of Putin joked on Twitter that the palace actually belonged to "Mikhail Ivanovich", a codename used by those involved in the secret construction project to refer to the Russian president, in power for more than two decades. "Putin could not ignore what the whole country is discussing," Lubov Sobol, a Navalny ally, [tweeted](#).

The United States, Britain and EU countries had criticised Putin's government on Sunday, with the French foreign minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, describing [the mass arrest of thousands of protesters](#) in several Russia cities as "an intolerable affront" and a "slide towards authoritarianism".

Clashes broke out in Moscow, St Petersburg, Vladivostok and other cities on Saturday and some protesters clashed with riot police in body armour and helmets. Dozens of people were injured.

[Alexei Navalny's home makeover show exposes Vladimir Putin on every front | Rowan Moore](#)

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Manfred Weber, a senior German conservative and head of the centre-right EPP grouping in the EU parliament, told Germany's RND newspaper group that the arrest of protesters should not be tolerated and that Russia should face financial sanctions.

“The EU foreign ministers are not allowed to dodge this once again and stop at general appeals,” he said. “The EU has to hit where it really hurts the Putin system – and that’s the money,” Weber said, adding that the bloc should cut financial transactions from Putin’s inner circle.

[From the archive: Killer, kleptocrat, genius, spy: the many myths of Vladimir Putin – podcast](#)

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In addition, a threat to stop the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which is meant to double natural gas deliveries from Russia to Germany, must remain on the table, Weber added.

A German government spokesperson declined to comment when asked whether Berlin was willing to support new sanctions against Russia following Navalny’s arrest.

EU lawmakers passed a resolution on Thursday calling for the bloc to stop the completion of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline as a response to Navalny’s detention.

Germany’s chancellor, Angela Merkel, who has continued to back the project despite criticism elsewhere in the EU, said on Thursday her view of the project had not changed despite the Navalny case.

During the protests, a spokeswoman for the US embassy in Moscow, Rebecca Ros, said on Twitter that “the US supports the right of all people to peaceful protest, freedom of expression. Steps being taken by Russian authorities are suppressing those rights.” The embassy also tweeted a Department of State statement calling for Navalny’s release.

Putin’s spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said comments by the US were “inappropriate” and he accused Washington of “interference in our internal affairs”.

The US ambassador to Russia, John Sullivan, was summoned on Monday for a conversation with Russia’s deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov. Ryabkov protested about the Biden administration’s support of Saturday’s demonstrations, which Moscow says were “illegal”.

The US was guilty of meddling in Russia’s internal affairs by allowing its tech companies to circulate pro-Navalny content, a foreign ministry spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, said.

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## Alcohol

# English and Scottish get drunk most often, 25-nation survey finds

Average of more than 33 times last year is more than twice the rate of several other nationalities



Beer, pre-pandemic. English people were among the least remorseful in the survey about getting drunk. Photograph: Getty Images/iStockphoto

Beer, pre-pandemic. English people were among the least remorseful in the survey about getting drunk. Photograph: Getty Images/iStockphoto

*[Matthew Weaver](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

English and Scottish people have topped an international league table of how often people get so drunk that they lose their balance and slur their speech.

The [Global Drugs Survey](#) (GDS) for 2020 suggests the UK's problem with drink is far more dangerous than the use of any other drug. More than 5% of people under 25 in the UK who took part in the survey reported having sought hospital treatment after getting drunk, compared with a global average of 2%.

The GDS report noted: "Seeking emergency medical treatment is a serious consequence of drinking, with a cost to the health service as well as the individual."

The UK rate of hospital admissions because of alcohol was higher than among users of any other drug cited in the report apart from heroin, and consumption of alcohol was much more widespread, with 94% of people surveyed in the UK saying they had drunk alcohol in the last year, compared with 2.3% who had used heroin.

The survey questioned more than 110,000 people around the globe, including 5,283 in the UK, in a three-month period from November 2019 to February 2020, before the coronavirus pandemic. It is an online survey that targets people who tend to already use drugs, with the aim of highlighting differences and trends among users, rather than a country's population as a whole.

It repeated last year's finding that people in the UK get drunk more often than those in other countries, and this year's finding was more robust because the survey defined what it meant by getting drunk. Respondents were asked to say how many times they had got so drunk that "your physical and mental faculties are impaired to the point where your balance/speech was affected, you were unable to focus clearly on things, and that your conversation and behaviours were very obviously different to people who know you".

Using this definition, people in [Scotland](#) and England said they had got drunk on average more than 33 times in the last year. This was the highest rate of all 25 countries studied and more than twice the rate of several European countries, including Poland, Hungary, Germany, Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal. The global average was just over 20 times, with Colombians reporting the lowest at 6.5 times.

Only 7% of Scottish and English people surveyed reported not having been drunk at all in the past 12 months. Only Danes and Australians had a lower proportion, at 5%.

The English were among the least remorseful about getting drunk. On average, 32.8% of people around the world said they regretted getting drunk. In [England](#) it was only 31%, and in Scotland 33.8%, compared with 88.3% of Colombians.

The report said this finding was particularly alarming. “Given that for most people getting drunk is a voluntary activity, it’s striking that on a third of occasions they regretted it. Previous GDS research suggested that when getting drunk most people are likely to be consuming almost their entire weekly allowance in one sitting, exposing them to acute harms such as accidents, trauma and suppression of their immune system (a particular worry during Covid).”

A separate study by the GDS last year found that [48% of Britons](#) said they had been drinking more since the start of the pandemic.

Prof Adam Winstock, the chief executive and founder of the GDS, said: “We don’t have a culture that is honest about the impact of intoxication. Drinking is a lousy coping strategy and it is putting a higher burden on the NHS.

“British people have never really embraced moderation when it comes to drinking. While many other cultures regard alcohol as an accompaniment to a social event and frown upon public drunkenness, we’ve often embraced it as a cultural identity. The challenge is making people realise drinking a bit less does not make you boring. In fact, you’ll probably have a better night. It’s like as a country we need to leave our adolescence behind.”

He urged the government to stand up to the alcohol lobby and introduce mandatory health warning labels and minimum pricing, and lowering the drink-drive limit.

Winstock said: “These are all incredibly sensible things that have been recommended by several commissions, but have been ignored in the face of resistance from the alcohol lobby.”

- This article was amended on 25 January 2021 to add more details about the survey itself.
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## US politics

# Sarah Sanders, former Trump press secretary, runs for Arkansas governor

Formal announcement confirms 38-year-old's bid to succeed her father, Mike Huckabee, in state leadership role

- [US politics – live coverage](#)



Sarah Sanders served for almost two years as White House press secretary, a tenure characterised by lies, mistruths and attacks on the press. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Sarah Sanders served for almost two years as White House press secretary, a tenure characterised by lies, mistruths and attacks on the press. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

*Guardian staff and agencies*  
Mon 25 Jan 2021 09.12 EST

Sarah Sanders, the former White House press secretary, has launched a campaign for [Arkansas](#) governor, releasing a pre-recorded message laden with Trumpist rhetoric and touting her widely criticized record in the former administration.

[Tweets, lies and the Mueller report: Sarah Sanders' lowest moments](#)

[Read more](#)

Sanders, 38, is the daughter of Mike Huckabee, the former Republican Arkansas governor who served in the role for more than a decade and launched two failed presidential bids. She served for almost two years as White House press secretary, a tenure characterised by lies, mistruths and attacks on the press.

Interviewed by the former special counsel Robert Mueller, Sanders [admitted](#) to making unfounded claims about support for the firing of the former FBI director James Comey, which she later described as “a slip of the tongue” in “the heat of the moment”.

In her campaign announcement video, [posted to Twitter on Monday](#), Sanders continued to rail against the press, stating: “As White House press secretary I never had to worry about the far left and their allies, CNN, the New York Times, defining me. Because I have a creator who has already done that.”

Sanders joins an Arkansas primary that already includes two statewide elected leaders, the lieutenant governor, Tim Griffin, and the attorney general, Leslie Rutledge. The three are running to succeed the governor, Asa Hutchinson, a Republican unable to run due to term limits. No Democrats have announced a bid in the election, which will take place in November 2022.

Sanders launched her bid less than a week after the end of Donald Trump’s presidency and as the [ex-president faces a second impeachment trial](#). Arkansas is a red state where Republicans tend to embrace the former president. But it has elected a number of Democratic governors in recent decades, including Bill Clinton.

In her announcement video, Sanders railed against “socialism and cancel culture” and claimed: “Our freedom and the rule of law are under attack.”

She had been widely expected to run for the office after leaving the White House, Trump having publicly encouraged her. She has been laying the groundwork for a candidacy, speaking to Republican groups around the state.

In the event, she made her move in the aftermath of a riot by Trump supporters at the US Capitol that left five people dead. More than 130 people have been charged in the insurrection, which was aimed at halting the certification of Joe Biden’s election victory.

Sanders made a passing reference to the 6 January insurrection in her announcement, but made no mention of Trump’s role inciting the mob.

“We’ve seen violence in our streets, at a congressional baseball practice and at our Capitol,” she said. “This is not who we are as Americans.”

Sanders was the first working mother and only the third woman to be White House press secretary. But she also faced questions about her credibility.

[Trump told Sarah Sanders to 'take one for the team' after Kim Jong-un wink](#)  
[Read more](#)

During her tenure as Trump’s chief spokeswoman, daily televised briefings led by the press secretary ended after Sanders repeatedly sparred with reporters who aggressively questioned her about administration policy and the investigation into possible coordination between Trump’s campaign and Russia.

Trump’s tumultuous exit from the presidency may do little damage to Sanders in Arkansas. Republicans hold all statewide and federal seats, as well as a solid majority in both chambers of the legislature.

Griffin and Rutledge have combined raised more than \$2.8m in a race which could get even more crowded. Republican state senator Jim Hendren, a nephew of Hutchinson, is considering a run.

Sanders, who published a book last year and joined Fox News as a contributor, a position she has now left, enters the race with by far the highest candidate profile.

On Monday morning, Donald Trump Jr [tweeted](#): “Let me know how I can help! You’re going to win and you will be great!”

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## Environment

# Global ice loss accelerating at record rate, study finds

Rate of loss now in line with worst-case scenarios of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change



The rate of ice loss accelerated by 65% between 1994 and 2017, the paper found. Photograph: Education Images/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

The rate of ice loss accelerated by 65% between 1994 and 2017, the paper found. Photograph: Education Images/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

*[Fiona Harvey](#) Environment correspondent*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

The melting of ice across the planet is accelerating at a record rate, with the melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets speeding up the fastest,

research has found.

The rate of loss is now in line with the worst-case scenarios of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's leading authority on the climate, according to a [paper published on Monday in the journal The Cryosphere](#).

Thomas Slater, lead author and research fellow at the centre for polar observation and modelling at the University of Leeds, warned that the consequences would be felt around the world. "Sea level rise on this scale will have very serious impacts on coastal communities this century," he said.

[About 28tn tonnes of ice was lost between 1994 and 2017](#), which the authors of the paper calculate would be enough to put an ice sheet 100 metres thick across the UK. About two thirds of the ice loss was caused by the warming of the atmosphere, with about a third caused by the warming of the seas.

Over the period studied, the rate of ice loss accelerated by 57%, the paper found, from 0.8tn tonnes a year in the 1990s to 1.2tn tonnes a year by 2017. About half of all the ice lost was from land, which contributes directly to global sea level rises. The ice loss over the study period, from 1994 to 2017, is estimated to have raised sea levels by 35 millimetres.

The greatest quantities of ice were lost from floating ice in the polar regions, raising the risk of a [feedback mechanism](#) known as albedo loss. White ice reflects solar radiation back into space – the albedo effect – but when floating sea ice melts it uncovers dark water which absorbs more heat, speeding up the warming further in a feedback loop.

[Glaciers](#) showed the next biggest loss of ice volume, with more than 6tn tonnes lost between 1994 and 2017, about a quarter of global ice loss over the period. The shrinking of glaciers threatens to cause both flooding and water shortages in some regions, because as large volumes melt they can overwhelm downstream areas, then shrunken glaciers produce less of the steady water flow needed for agriculture.

Inès Otosaka, report co-author and a PhD researcher at the University of Leeds centre for polar observation and modelling, said: "As well as

contributing to global mean sea level rise, mountain glaciers are also critical as a freshwater resource for local communities. The retreat of glaciers around the world is therefore of crucial importance, at both local and global scales.”

The study, titled Earth’s Ice Imbalance, used satellite observations over the 23-year period to assess ice all over the globe. [Previous studies](#) have examined parts of the world rather than making a comprehensive assessment of the data. The research team included the University of Edinburgh, University College London and Earthwave, a data science organisation, and was funded by the UK Natural Environment Research Council.

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## [Greece](#)

# Greece and Turkey resume talks to try to avert military escalation

After three-hour meeting in Istanbul, sources say second round of dialogue will take place in Athens



Warships taking part in a military exercise in the eastern Mediterranean last August. Photograph: Greek defence ministry/AP

Warships taking part in a military exercise in the eastern Mediterranean last August. Photograph: Greek defence ministry/AP

*[Helena Smith](#) in Athens*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 11.14 EST

After a five-year hiatus marked by increasingly heated relations, sabre-rattling and near conflict, Greece and [Turkey](#) have taken a tentative step towards reconciliation, agreeing to resume talks in an attempt to avert further military escalation in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean.

Following a three-hour meeting of delegations from both sides in Istanbul on Monday, diplomatic sources confirmed the high-level contacts would continue, with a second round of talks taking place in Athens.

The news was greeted with relief, with Germany's foreign ministry expressing hope that the decision would enable the historic foes to "once again establish a mutual confidence and trust" after protracted tensions that had pushed them [to the brink of war](#) over offshore energy exploitation rights.

"We are happy that the direct talks ... are starting again today," said the ministry's spokesperson Maria Adebahr. "We hope it will be possible to once again establish a mutual confidence and trust between the two sides ... in order for a solution to be found jointly in the framework of international law."

Ahead of the talks, the Greek prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, voiced hope that progress could be made on resolving what Athens regards as the neighbours' biggest difference: delimitation of contested maritime borders.

"We will attend with optimism ... but zero naivety," he told parliament as MPs voted to extend Greece's western territorial waters from six to 12 nautical miles off its coast last week after a landmark accord with Italy.

Much remains at stake. The talks come amid heightened mutual mistrust, aggressive rhetoric and an [arms race](#) that has prompted Greece to embark on a massive upgrade of its military capabilities in the face of the perceived threat of confrontation from Turkey.

Tellingly, as the discussions got under way, the Greek defence minister met his French counterpart in Athens to sign off on a €2.5bn (£2.2bn) deal to acquire 18 Rafale fighter jets from Paris as part of the overhaul.

"A lot hangs on these talks," said Prof Kostas Ifantis, a political scientist at Panteion University in Athens who specialises in Turkish affairs. "If there's no breakthrough, we'll return to a state of play where the potential for violence is high, not only because of dangers posed by the lack of trust but the proximity in such a small geographic area of military hardware that is so advanced."

The discussions, described as exploratory rather than official, were the 61st time since 2002 that Greek and Turkish diplomats have met in closed session.

Since stalling in March 2016, bilateral relations had deteriorated to the point where even communication between the countries' foreign ministers had broken down. Against that backdrop any movement towards resolving differences is welcome, EU diplomats say.

Tensions between the Nato rivals reached new levels of animosity last year after the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, [announced he was opening the gates to Europe](#) and encouraged hundreds of thousands of migrants to cross into Greece.

[Chaotic scenes ensued at the land border](#) as desperate people tried to breach the frontier and guards on either side responded by [firing teargas](#) indiscriminately. As the crisis worsened Athens rushed to reinforce its land and sea borders with help from the EU amid criticism of Erdogan "weaponising" refugees to pursue his own policy goals.

By the summer, competing claims over potentially lucrative deep-sea gas reserves had strained ties further. Turkey raised the stakes by deploying the Oruc Reis research vessel, escorted by navy ships, to search for the resources in contested waters on the edge of Greece's continental shelf.

In a standoff that lasted close to three months, Greek armed forces were placed on high alert, with gunboats from both sides fanning across the Aegean as combat aircraft patrolled the skies above.

[With tensions also running high](#) over exploration rights off Cyprus, where Ankara had previously [dispatched drill ships](#), western officials sounded the alarm due to concerns of an accident or a miscalculated move provoking armed conflict – a scenario that almost came to pass when Greek and Turkish warships rammed into each other as they shadowed the Oruc Reis. Not since 1996 when the two came close to conflict over an uninhabited islet in the Aegean [had tensions been as high](#).

The [EU responded with the threat of sanctions](#), prompting Turkey to call back the Oruc Reis. Greece and Cyprus, strongly backed by France, say Ankara should be punished for its “provocative actions”, accusing it of engaging in “a game of cat and mouse” with the bloc whenever talk of sanctions emerges. Despite last year’s unprecedented souring of relations with Brussels, Turkey remains an official EU candidate member.

In recent weeks there has been a noticeable shift in the mood music. Since Donald Trump’s electoral defeat in the US, Erdoğan has waged a charm offensive with the EU, attributed, in part, to the dawn of a new era in the White House and Ankara seeking to reset its relations with the west.

[EU leaders approve sanctions on Turkish officials over gas drilling](#)

[Read more](#)

But last Friday Turkey’s foreign minister warned of all-out war if Greece elected to extend its territorial waters in the Aegean, saying other issues that divided the countries, including airspace and demilitarisation of Greek isles, should also be brought to the table.

His words elicited a tart rebuke from Nikos Dendias, the Greek foreign minister, at the weekend. “I want to be clear, that the topic [under discussion] is solely the demarcation of the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean,” he told the *Efimerida Ton Syntakton* newspaper. “In the exploratory talks there will be no discussion on demilitarising islands. No discussion on an issue that has to do with national sovereignty.”

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## 2021.01.25 - Coronavirus

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- Global report Mexico's president tests positive; Joe Biden to reinstate travel bans
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- Covid variants UK and South Africa types may spread more easily – what are the implications?
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- Trump Deborah Birx says there were 'definitely' Covid deniers in White House
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- Parents juggling work and family 'Don't talk to papa until he's had his cup of tea'

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# Spain sees record rise in cases – as it happened

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## Coronavirus

# Global coronavirus report: Mexico's president tests positive; Joe Biden to reinstate travel bans

López Obrador to speak to Putin about obtaining Russian vaccine; Biden to include South Africa in restrictions for non-US travellers

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Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador has tested positive for coronavirus. Photograph: Henry Romero/Reuters

Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador has tested positive for coronavirus. Photograph: Henry Romero/Reuters

*Helen Sullivan and agencies  
@helenrsullivan*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 22.45 EST

Mexico's president, Andrés Manuel López Obrado – who has [long been accused of](#) complacency in his approach to the pandemic – has tested positive for Covid-19 and is undergoing treatment with mild symptoms, according to his Twitter account.

As the **United States** prepared to reinforce travel restrictions from a host of other countries on Sunday night, López Obrador tweeted: “I regret to inform you that I am infected with Covid-19. The symptoms are mild but I am already under medical treatment. As always, I am optimistic. We will all move forward.”

The 67-year-old has rarely been seen wearing a mask and has continued to keep up a busy travel schedule including travelling on commercial flights.

[Covid fatalities soar in Mexico as president condemned for inaction](#)

[Read more](#)

He has resisted [locking down the economy](#), noting the devastating effect it would have on many Mexicans who live day to day.

Early in the pandemic, asked how he was protecting Mexico, López Obrador removed two religious amulets from his wallet and proudly displayed them. “The protective shield is the ‘Get thee behind me, Satan,’” he said, reading off the inscription on the amulet, “Stop, enemy, for the Heart of Jesus is with me.”

In November, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization, said that [“Mexico is in bad shape”](#) with the pandemic and urged its leaders be serious about the coronavirus and set examples for its citizens.

Mexico has registered nearly 150,000 coronavirus deaths and more than 1.7 million infections, according to Johns Hopkins University. Hospitals in the capital have been near capacity for weeks as a surge of cases followed the holiday season.

Adhanom Ghebreyesus did not name López Obrador, but said: “We would like to ask [Mexico](#) to be very serious.”

“We have said it in general, wearing a mask is important, hygiene is important and physical distancing is important and we expect leaders to be examples,” he added.

At the start of the pandemic López Obrador was criticised for still leaning into crowds and giving hugs. The eternal campaigner, López Obrador’s style of politics has always been very hands on and personal. As the pandemic grew he began limiting attendance to his events and maintaining his distance from supporters.

As of Sunday night, Mexico had administered nearly 630,000 doses of vaccine.

López Obrador’s announcement came shortly after news emerged that he would speak to Russian president Vladimir Putin on Monday about obtaining doses of the Sputnik V vaccine. The vaccine has not been approved for use in Mexico, but the government is desperate to fill supply gaps for the Pfizer vaccine.

In the **United States**, which on the weekend passed 25m coronavirus cases and is nearing 420,000 deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins University tracker, President Joe Biden will [reinstate](#) coronavirus travel restrictions on non-US travellers from **Brazil**, **Ireland**, the **United Kingdom** and 26 other European countries that allow travel across open borders, according to two White House officials.

The officials, who spoke to the Associated Press on the condition of anonymity to discuss the order, also confirmed on Sunday that **South Africa** would be added to the restricted list because of concerns about a variant of the virus that has spread beyond that nation.

Biden is reversing an order from then-president Donald Trump in his final days in office that called for the relaxation of the travel restrictions as of Tuesday.

The South Africa variant has not been discovered in the United States, but another variant originating in the United Kingdom has been detected in several states.

New Zealand officials [said on Monday](#) that its first community case for two months was the South African variant.

In north-east **China**, Tonghua, a city of close to 400,000 people, was placed under sudden lockdown a week ago, prompting complaints on social media that people were left short of provisions and could not buy medicines. Some of them had only two or three days of food rations.

The city's deputy mayor, Jiang Haiyan apologised on Sunday for slow deliveries of daily necessities to residents at a daily briefing. In addition, the local epidemic control department [issued an announcement](#) promising residents that five days of basic living materials will be supplied to each household at half price from now on.

Tonghua has reported 246 coronavirus cases including 50 asymptomatic ones.

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## [Australian universities](#)

# Vaccine passport plan for international students in Australia 'premature', health expert says

Prime minister Scott Morrison also plays down comments by education minister on plan's potential



Dr Sanjaya Senanayake, an infectious diseases specialist, says plan to bring international students back to Australia with vaccine passports is 'a bit premature'. Photograph: Mark Baker/AP

Dr Sanjaya Senanayake, an infectious diseases specialist, says plan to bring international students back to Australia with vaccine passports is 'a bit premature'. Photograph: Mark Baker/AP

*[Naaman Zhou](#)  
[@naamanzhou](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 01.22 EST

An infectious diseases expert has said plans to bring international students back to Australia with vaccine passports are “premature” and unlikely to start this year.

On Monday the education minister, [Alan Tudge](#), said that “digital vaccine certificates” could allow international students to return to Australia without the need for hotel quarantine.

The federal government planned to include vaccination status as part of an upcoming digital incoming passenger card, and Tudge [told the Sydney Morning Herald](#) that, depending on vaccine effectiveness and distribution around the world, this had “the potential to be able to bring in more international students”.

But Dr Sanjaya Senanayake, an infectious diseases specialist from the Australian National University, said it was still unclear how long vaccine immunity lasted and whether it stopped transmission.

[Australian universities plan to ramp up in-person learning in early 2021](#)  
[Read more](#)

The prime minister, Scott Morrison, also told reporters on Monday morning that linking the vaccination passport to the return of international students was “somewhat premature”.

“It is not a silver bullet because there are still limitations to what these vaccines can do,” he said.

Senanayake told Guardian Australia that it was “likely” that three vaccines – Oxford/AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Moderna – would reduce transmission, but it would take more than six months for that to be known.

“We also don’t know the duration of immunity we get from these vaccines,” he said. “Hopefully for one or two years we might have good immunity, but you never know.”

“At this stage, we can’t say if a vaccine passport means an immunity passport.”

Senanayake said that a vaccination on its own would not be enough for students to bypass quarantine entirely when they arrive in Australia – but it could be combined with alternative solutions such as custom accommodation or shortened isolation times.

“I still see the need for a quarantine and testing program, even if you have received the vaccine, but perhaps it could be shortened for people from low-risk countries like Taiwan and New Zealand,” he said.

“Ways around it could be, you have your vaccine passport and if you are from a low-risk country you go into quarantine for 14 days or seven days, a shorter time, and you get regular testing. Or for those people the quarantine could be performed in a university-type accommodation, instead of going to hotels, that could be considered.”

Last week, Tudge also told the Australian that it would be “very difficult” for significant numbers of students to return to Australia in 2021.

Asked about the potential to use digital vaccination cards to bring students back, Morrison said: “It’s just too early to say. I don’t want to create any false expectations or false hopes there.”

[Pfizer Covid vaccine approved for Australia rollout but PM warns jabs not 'a silver bullet'](#)

[Read more](#)

The prime minister also said the government’s priority was to bring Australians back, and said hotel quarantine was the best system for quarantine, rather than special accommodation set-ups.

“If you want to get at least 5,000 people into Australia a week, which is what we had been achieving, then the idea that you can build some sort of national set of camps that can accommodate that, that’s not a practical way to achieve it,” he said.

“The advice was, and I think it was right and it was agreed to by the states and territories, that the best and most effective and safest way to do that is to

take advantage of the accommodation capacity that sits through the hotel quarantine system that has been used.”

Senanayake said the picture would be clearer after a year.

“Maybe when the vaccines have been rolled out, and six months after in Australia, we are heading to close to a year of immunisation, and we see that people have got durable immunity and there is reduced transmission, that is a different story. Right now, it is a bit premature.”

The secretary of the Department of Health, Brendan Murphy, also said it would take time to know how effective the various vaccines were.

“That is the data we have to get from the experience of the world’s vaccinations over the next – what we call the phase 4 data, the real time experience,” he told reporters.

“It may be that people will need additional doses of vaccines, possibly annually. These things are completely unknown at the moment.

“I have said to the prime minister, I think about a year ago, I wouldn’t want to predict more than three months ahead with this pandemic. That still stands.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jan/25/vaccine-passport-plan-for-international-students-in-australia-premature-health-expert-says>

[\*\*Datablog\*\*](#)  
[\*\*Coronavirus\*\*](#)

## **New UK and South Africa Covid variants may spread more easily, so what does this mean for the fight against coronavirus?**

**Analysis:** The B117 and 501YV2 strains may be as much as 50% more transmissible than the regular virus. This would mean stricter measures need to be taken to lower spread



A researcher analyses positive Covid-19 samples for the coronavirus variant B117, also known as the UK Covid strain. Photograph: Ritzau Scanpix/Reuters

New research suggests that new coronavirus variants may spread more easily than the regular, or wild type coronavirus.

Fifty-five countries have now reported the presence of the coronavirus variant B.1.1.7, originally identified in the UK, and 23 countries have identified the 501Y.V2 variant, originally identified in South Africa.

### [map showing variant locations](#)

It's important to note that most of the research characterising the new variants has been published as "preprints", which means that the studies have not yet gone through the usual peer review and journal publication process.

Mutations in the variants [change the structure of the "spike" proteins](#), which is the mechanism by which the coronavirus attaches to cells.

Two separate studies have looked at the "transmissibility" of the B.1.1.7 variant, that is how easily it spreads. One paper from [researchers at the Centre for Mathematical Modelling of Infectious Diseases \(CMMID\) in the UK](#), used modelling to explore different explanations for the surge in prevalence of the B.1.1.7 variant. They found "strong evidence of higher relative transmissibility estimated at 56% higher than preexisting variants".

They also acknowledge that there are other mechanisms that might produce similar outcomes, such as an increase in the duration for which the virus is infectious.

Another study, [with researchers collaborating from several institutions](#), estimated transmissibility for B.1.1.7 in the UK to be approximately 47% higher than other coronavirus types.

So what does this mean?

One the most important characteristics of viruses and other pathogens is how contagious or transmissible they are. One key measure is the [R<sub>0</sub>, or basic reproduction number](#), which indicates how many new cases one infected person generates.

So for an R<sub>0</sub> of three we would expect each new case of a disease to produce three other infections. This is not just a measure of the inherent

infectiousness of a disease. It also depends on other factors, including the rate of contact within a population and the duration of the infectious period. It's a situation-dependent value, so in one city the  $R_0$  might be higher and in another lower. It also assumes that the entire population is susceptible to the disease.

Earlier in the pandemic, with fewer interventions like social distancing and masks, the mean for various estimates of  $R_0$  for the coronavirus was around 2.6. Given a 50% increase in transmissibility, the  $R_0$  for a more infectious variant in the same situation might be around 3.9:

### [comparison of \$R\_0\$ 2.6 and 3.9](#)

But the  $R_0$  is not the only important number. The effective reproduction number,  $R$ , is a value that takes into account the susceptibility of the population. With any  $R$  value greater than 1 the infection will increase, spreading through the population.

But if some people are not susceptible to infection – because of immunity through vaccination, because they have previously been infected or because of other biological reasons – or if transmission is curbed due to part of the population being isolated, or through the use of masks, then the effective  $R$  value declines.

If the effective  $R$  is reduced below one the spread can be halted.

So, for example, [one of the papers published on B.1.1.7](#) found that the effective  $R$  for wild type coronavirus was around 0.85 during lockdowns in various parts of the UK. This means that with these interventions, new cases were decreasing. Here you can see how an effective  $R$  of 0.85 results in cases trending to zero:

### [curve comparison](#)

However, at the same time the B.1.1.7 variant had an effective  $R$  of around 1.25. In the same chart you can see how an effective  $R$  of 1.25 results in cases increasing, despite the lockdown conditions still being effective against the wild type.

However, when lockdown and other interventions are tightened, the effective R can be reduced below 1 even for the more infectious variant, lowering new case numbers.

This all means that in areas where more infectious variants are established in the community current controls are likely to be less effective and need to be strengthened to prevent the risk of an increase in cases, deaths and long-term illness.

In countries such as Australia, Vietnam or New Zealand, where potentially more infectious variants have been found only in quarantined travellers, existing controls may be sufficient unless it is transmitted into the community, according to Hassan Vally, associate professor in epidemiology at La Trobe University, Australia.

“We just don’t want this virus to get established, because if it does get established it can spread throughout the population quicker, and be harder to control,” he said.

“But if you’re coming from a low base, then you should be able to cope with it using much the same strategies as we are using now.”

However, in countries such as the UK and the US, the situation is more concerning.

“The change from a virus circulating to having a higher R value, because of the multiplicative effect, and exponential growth, you’re going to see the threat to the population be much greater,” Vally said.

Stuart Turville, an associate professor in virology and immunology at the Kirby Institute, said the findings of the preprint studies would need to be verified by further work, but any increase in transmissibility from a coronavirus variant would “raise the bar” for controls.

“If this thing becomes fitter, you raise the bar for antibodies, you raise the bar for quarantine, you raise the bar for lockdowns, it becomes a harder target,” he said.

Turville said the most important question with emerging coronavirus variants is the effect any mutations will have on the vaccine response.

Early research, again published as preprint studies, does suggest that vaccines are effective against the B.1.1.7 variant, but there may be [complications from the 501Y.V2 variant](#).

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## Coronavirus

# Fauci says he was the 'skunk at the picnic' in Trump's Covid team

Public health expert says he could not resign as someone had to push back against 'nonsense'

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



Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, giving a White House press briefing last Thursday.  
Photograph: Alex Wong/Getty Images

Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, giving a White House press briefing last Thursday.  
Photograph: Alex Wong/Getty Images

*Martin Pengelly in New York  
@MartinPengelly*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 18.37 EST

Dr Anthony Fauci was the “skunk at the picnic” in Donald Trump’s White House coronavirus taskforce, the top US public health expert told the New York Times in a candid interview on Sunday.

[Deborah Birx says Covid deniers in Trump White House 'derailed' response](#)  
[Read more](#)

More than 25m cases of Covid-19 have been [recorded in the US](#) and close to 420,000 people have died. The economy has cratered and the rollout of vaccines has not been smooth. On Sunday senior officials in the new Biden administration [added to criticism](#) of Trump’s response.

Fauci said some people had assumed that he was “complicit in the distortions emanating from the stage” at White House Covid briefings early in the pandemic, at which Trump held forth. He [clashed with the president](#) often but he said he never considered resigning.

“I felt that if I stepped down,” he said, “that would leave a void. Someone’s got to not be afraid to speak out the truth. [White House staff] would try to play down real problems and have a little happy talk about how things are OK. And I would always say, ‘Wait a minute, hold it, folks, this is serious business.’ So there was a joke – a friendly joke, you know – that I was the skunk at the picnic.”

The idea that they knew that nonsense could not be spouted without my pushing back on it, I felt was important

*Anthony Fauci*

Trump criticised Fauci and flirted with firing him but never moved against the vastly experienced and [widely loved](#) head of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who has served every president since 1984.

Fauci, 80, has previously discussed [getting death threats](#) due to his differences with Trump on subjects including basic social mitigation measures and unproven treatments including bleach, ultraviolet light and the

antimalarial drug hydroxychloroquine, all pushed by Trump as the death toll mounted.

Fauci is [married to Christine Grady](#), the top bioethicist at the National Institutes of Health. She, he told the Times, “brought up that I might want to consider” leaving.

“And after a conversation, she ultimately agreed with me. I always felt that if I did walk away, the skunk at the picnic would no longer be at the picnic. Even if I wasn’t very effective in changing everybody’s minds, the idea that they knew that nonsense could not be spouted without my pushing back on it, I felt was important.

“I felt it would be better for the country and better for the cause for me to stay, as opposed to walk away.”

Dr Deborah Birx, an army physician [known for her Aids work](#) who was Trump’s taskforce coordinator, also [spoke](#) this weekend about why she did not quit a White House containing “people who definitely believed [Covid] was a hoax”.

00:43

Trump presented graphs 'I never made', says Deborah Birx – video

Birx [will soon retire](#). Fauci has agreed to be chief scientific adviser to Joe Biden, a role he [said](#) produced a “liberating feeling”. He told the Times he did not know how long he would serve the new president, who is only two years his junior.

['Brand-new disease, no treatment, no cure': how Anthony Fauci's fight against Aids prepared him to tackle Covid-19](#)

[Read more](#)

“You know,” he said, “my whole life professionally has been fighting pandemics ... This is what I do.

“I think what I bring to the table is something that’s very much value-added. I want to keep doing it until I see us crushing this outbreak, so that people

can get back to normality. And even after then, there's still HIV, to which I've devoted the overwhelming proportion of my professional life."

Finally, Fauci was asked if he thought Trump "cost the country tens or hundreds of thousands of lives".

"I can't comment on that," he said. "People always ask that and ... making the direct connection that way, it becomes very damning. I just want to stay away from that. Sorry."

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# Deborah Birx says Covid deniers in Trump White House 'derailed' response

- ‘There were people who definitely believed Covid was a hoax’
- [‘A massacre, a horror film’: inside Brazil’s Covid disaster](#)



Deborah Birx, the former US coronavirus response coordinator. Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

Deborah Birx, the former US coronavirus response coordinator. Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

[Amanda Holpuch](#) in New York

[@holpuch](#)

Sun 24 Jan 2021 12.09 EST

The former US coronavirus response coordinator Deborah Birx has said people in the Trump White House considered Covid-19 a hoax.

['A slow drip versus an explosion': inside California's divided Covid reality](#)  
[Read more](#)

Birx questioned the Trump administration's response to [the coronavirus pandemic](#) in a wide-ranging interview broadcast on Sunday. Elsewhere, advisers to Joe Biden described the new president's plans to control Covid-19 – a challenge made tougher, chief of staff Ron Klain said, by Trump having left office without a vaccine distribution plan in place.

More than 417,000 people have died of Covid-19 in the US, out of a caseload of nearly 25m, according to [figures kept](#) by Johns Hopkins University in Maryland.

In the White House and in the broader public “there were people who definitely believed this was a hoax”, Birx told Face the Nation, on CBS.

The former army physician attributed some such skepticism to people’s different experiences with the virus.

“They saw people get Covid and be fine and then they had us talking about how severe the disease is and how it could cause these unbelievable fatalities to our American public,” she said.

The process to distribute the vaccine ... did not really exist when we came into the White House

*Ron Klain*

Asked if she blamed some such skepticism on Donald Trump, who repeatedly downplayed the virus, Birx said some statements by political leaders “derailed” the coronavirus response.

“When you have a pandemic where you’re relying on every American to change their behavior,” she said, “communication is absolutely key, and so every time a statement was made by a political leader that wasn’t consistent with public health needs, that derailed our response. It is also why I went out on the road, because I wasn’t censored on the road.”

Birx, who played a key role in the [fight against Aids](#), said she believed the 2020 election was a factor in how information about the coronavirus was shared and that she had “always” considered quitting her White House role under Trump.

“I always feel like I could have done more, been more outspoken, maybe been more outspoken publicly,” Birx said. “I didn’t know all the consequences of all of these issues.”

Birx has long promoted a data-driven response to disease outbreaks and she suggested such efforts were undermined by people working in the Trump White House. From the time she arrived until she left, she said, unknown advisers were supplying “parallel” coronavirus data.

“I saw the president presenting graphs that I never made,” Birx said.

00:43

Trump presented graphs 'I never made', says Deborah Birx – video

Efforts to vaccinate the public have been plagued by delays while a new and more contagious variant of coronavirus [that originated in Britain](#) has been identified in at least 20 states.

On Sunday Dr Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases who also served under Trump but unlike Birx has transitioned to advising Biden, told CBS: “The Moderna and Pfizer vaccines seem to continue to be protective against the mutant strain.”

He also said a “mutant” virus variation “now prevalent in South Africa” was “a little bit more concerning”.

“It looks like it does diminish more so the efficacy of the vaccine,” he said. “But we’re still within that cushion level of the vaccines being efficacious against these mutants.”

On Thursday, the first full day of his presidency, Biden released a 198-page [Covid-19 strategy](#). He has also signed 10 related executive orders or other

directives since taking office. The White House said it aims to provide 100m vaccine doses in 100 days.

Biden's nominee for surgeon general, Dr Vivek Murthy, told ABC's This Week the success of the vaccination campaign should be determined by not just by quantity, but also by how equitably inoculations are delivered.

To do this, Murthy said, the government must increase supply by using the Defense Production Act and better targeting distribution with mobile units and community vaccination centers.

"We already know from the Covid crisis over the past year that there are certain communities that have been hard hit by this virus," he said, "that rural communities have had a harder time getting access to resources, that communities of color have experienced more cases and deaths, that seniors have struggled, especially those in long-term facilities".

Murthy also called for a greater investment in treatment strategies, contract tracing and testing. Such efforts combined with people getting vaccinated and adhering to public health guidance, he said, could allow the US to control the pandemic.

"If we do these things, and if we continue to work on taking the safety precautions, like masking and avoiding indoor gatherings of people outside your household, then I think we can be on a path to not only turning the pandemic around, but, most importantly, getting our schools open, our workplaces back up and running, and regaining our way of life."

['I can't grieve': LA families wait months to bury loved ones as Covid deaths rise](#)

[Read more](#)

Biden's nominee for health secretary, Xavier Becerra, warned that improving the pandemic response "won't happen overnight".

"We can't just tell the states, 'Here's some PPE, some masks, here's some vaccines, now go do it,'" Becerra told CNN's State of the Union.

Klain, Biden's chief of staff, told NBC's Meet the Press: "The process to distribute the vaccine, particularly outside of nursing homes and hospitals out into the community as a whole, did not really exist when we came into the White House."

Klain said obstructions to better distribution include the need for more vaccines, more people to administer shots and more sites to provide it. Klain said the Biden administration was focused on convincing people who are [vaccine hesitant](#), particularly in communities of color, that the vaccine is safe.

"Unless we can reduce vaccine hesitancy," he said, "unless we can get all Americans to take this vaccine, we're going to continue to see Covid be a problem in our country."

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# The information warriors fighting 'robot zombie army' of coronavirus sceptics

[Coronavirus](#)

## The information warriors fighting 'robot zombie army' of coronavirus sceptics

The Anti-Virus website takes on figures like Toby Young and Allison Pearson - and its creators think it has them on the run

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



[Archie Bland](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.00 EST Last modified on Mon 25 Jan 2021 04.57 EST



Sam Bowman, left, of the Adam Smith Institute, and Stuart Ritchie, a lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience at King's College, London, have created a website to combat Covid disinformation. Photograph: Teri Pengilley/the Guardian

Sometimes, Stuart Ritchie feels like he's being pursued by an army of smiley faces. The lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience at King's College London, is not delusional: instead, and somewhat to his surprise, he is on the frontline of a coronavirus information war.

The emojis often decorate the [Twitter](#) profiles of the self-proclaimed "lockdown sceptics", a subset of social media users who remain unconvinced that coronavirus restrictions are necessary, even as the number of deaths in the UK approaches 100,000.

Often they are indignant at the efforts of Ritchie and others to refute the claims of a small but thoroughly amplified cadre of columnists, academics and enthusiastic amateurs, ranging from the free speech advocate Toby Young to the engineer and [diet guru](#) Ivor Cummins, who provide dubious but densely argued justifications for their stance. At some point they settled

on the smiley as their membership badge. If it is meant to be friendly, it doesn't necessarily come across that way.

"When you tweet anything to dispute these claims, they come after you endlessly," said Ritchie. "And with the emoji, it's almost cult-like. They make the same discredited arguments over and over again. It's like a robot zombie army." In the course of a telephone interview, he got four disapproving tweets from the same user, whose profile picture was a great big yellow grin.



Toby Young: admitted on Newsnight he had been wrong to write 'the virus has all but disappeared' in June. Photograph: Ray Tang/Rex

In recent weeks, though, Ritchie – also the author of *Science Fictions*, a well-reviewed book about shortcomings in scientific research – has found himself participating in a fightback. He is one of a group of volunteers, ranging from a politician to an anonymous doctor, behind a new website, [Anti-Virus: The Covid-19 FAQ](#). Pitched as a source of reliable information, the site is devoted to demolishing the claims of the sceptics and, when they pivot to new predictions, holding them to account.

"Their story always shifts," said Neil O'Brien, the MP and Conservative party vice-chair, who is one of the progenitors of the group and perhaps the

most prominent. “Seeing that in a forensic way is useful. We’re able to track where they’ve been wrong again and again but doubled down, or simply moved on to the next subject.”

The site, which has been live since Wednesday, may signal the start of a new phase in the fight to defend lockdowns against prominent critics, whose visibility vastly outstrips the proportion of expert views they represent. While public support for lockdowns has remained solid, with most criticism reserved for the government’s execution of the policy rather than for the principle, those behind Anti-Virus view the prospect of widespread vaccination – coupled with the staggering death toll being published each day – as lending a new urgency to their cause.

Quick guide

## Debunking the coronavirus sceptics

Show Hide

A summary of rebuttals offered by the [Anti-Virus website](#) to selected claims made by sceptics – detailed in full on the site.

### Claim: The infection fatality rate (IFR) is very low – 99.5% of people who get it survive

**Response:** The 0.5% figure has been challenged by significantly higher recent estimates, and it understates how lethal Covid is to older people who get it. The IFR is being kept low by lockdown – and if the virus were allowed to spread, the death rate would be higher because there wouldn't be enough space in hospitals to treat those who need it.

### Claim: 91% of Covid ‘cases’ are false positives. This is a ‘casedemic’

**Response:** This theory is based on a statistical misunderstanding, and since during the summer (when Covid cases were low) only 0.3% of tests were showing positive results, it cannot be that a much greater proportion of positive tests are now “false”. In any case, the huge rises in hospitalisations and deaths disprove the idea that people aren’t really getting sick.

**Claim: There are no excess deaths**

**Response:** The ONS recently estimated 14% more deaths in the previous year than the baseline from the previous five years – and that happened even though in the latter part of the year, deaths from causes other than coronavirus actually fell.

**Claim: Lockdowns cause more deaths than they prevent**

**Response:** This contradicts all the evidence that virtually all of the excess deaths we have seen have been attributable to Covid. Suicide rates have not risen, and violence may have fallen. Pressure on the NHS is being increased by coronavirus, not lockdown, and would only grow if restrictions were lifted.

**Claim: Danish study shows masks don't stop the spread**

**Response:** The study was only testing protection for the wearer, not others in the vicinity. Problems with its design were pointed out before it was conducted, and there is lots of evidence from around the world that mask-wearing is associated with a lower rate of increase in the spread of the virus.

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

“I think you can see that the government is indirectly influenced by [lockdown sceptics],” said Sam Bowman, director of competition policy at the International Center for Law and Economics and another of those behind the site. He pointed to Boris Johnson’s reluctance to impose Christmas restrictions until the last minute, in part because of backbench Tory opposition. “These arguments begin on the fringes and get into newspapers and then get regurgitated by backbenchers, but the people behind them are not accountable.”

The idea for Anti-Virus was born when Bowman, a friend of Ritchie’s, found himself exchanging messages about the problem with O’Brien (who notes he does not share that view of influence on policy). Both were participants in the same fight, and although they felt they were having some success, their opponents were difficult to pin down.

With most of the group on the right – two thirds, Bowman estimates - there is a sense of reputation management, too. “We were both, independently, really aggravated,” said Bowman. “Maybe it’s the narcissism of small differences – seeing people who are also theoretically on the right making such dangerous claims, it’s exasperating.”

Bowman and O’Brien had found large audiences on Twitter by posting threads of messages highlighting some of the more outlandish claims made by the likes of [Young](#), who has deleted his old tweets, the TalkRadio presenter [Julia Hartley-Brewer](#), and the Daily Telegraph columnist Allison Pearson, including confident assertions last year that the virus had vanished. Bowman’s [examined Pearson’s record](#), finding declarations such as that she would not wear a mask because she found them demeaning, and got 126,000 likes. (“It’s sort of sad that the most successful thing I’ll ever do in my life is owning a Telegraph columnist,” he said.)

### [Graphic](#)

But while these public skirmishes helped blow off steam, the claims of the sceptics, who are fond of opaque references to the infection fatality rate (IFR), serological surveys, and polymerase chain reaction tests, were being reproduced far from that context and, critics say, persistently misrepresent scientific reality.

“It’s really easy to lose track on social media,” Bowman said. “And most people are not on Twitter, but this stuff percolates on to Facebook, WhatsApp chats, everywhere.”

The ambition, Ritchie says, is not “for [Toby Young](#) to tweet, actually I was wrong. They’re in an ideological system where they’re not interested in a real debate. It’s for the person who hears someone say something bizarre, and thinks, I don’t know how to reply to that.”

Among other things, the Anti-Virus site explains that the claim there are no excess deaths relies on a vast misreading of the ONS data; it sets out why claims of “false positives” – the so-called casedemic theory, which has gained some traction in sceptic circles in recent months – don’t make sense

when so many people are going to hospital and dying. Also, it points some fingers.

As well as items on Young, Pearson and Hartley-Brewer, the site has pages devoted to other prominent sceptics, including the Oxford university academics Sunetra Gupta and Carl Heneghan, and the former Pfizer vice-president Dr Michael Yeadon. It is not their contrarianism that earns them a spot, the authors argue; it's their track record.



Julia Hartley-Brewer: called the MP Neil O'Brien a 'Witch-Finder'.  
Photograph: David Mirzoeff/PA

As an unsigned Q+A on the site puts it: "A few people, for whatever reason, have consistently made false claims and bad predictions throughout the Covid pandemic, and have refused to admit when they've got it wrong ... We try to use their own words to show that many of them are not reliable people to listen to."

Young, Hartley-Brewer, Heneghan, Gupta and Yeadon did not respond to requests for comment.

With 30,000 views in its first two days, the resource, put together by the group through a collaborative editing process with a website-building tool called Notion, and discussed as they went on a Twitter DM thread, is

gathering steam. It has been praised as “excellent” by Stian Westlake, the CEO of the Royal Statistical Society, while O’Brien says some of his fellow MPs have started sending its explanations of supposedly contentious issues to concerned constituents.

As the site gains prominence, it is unlikely to be universally viewed as constructive, with some saying it stifles free speech. On Thursday, the Times columnist Iain Martin accused O’Brien and Bowman of attempting a “Munich-style” reckoning with the “guilty men”. When O’Brien’s threads taking them on went viral, Young suggested he was being smeared, while Hartley-Brewer called him a “Witch-Finder” and “Hancock’s house-elf” who should stick to his day job.

“This idea it’s none of an MP’s business – trying to get to the facts of a deadly pandemic is absolutely an MP’s business,” O’Brien said. “You’ve got to look at people’s testable propositions and see how they’ve panned out. That’s how science works.”



Allison Pearson: said she would not wear a mask because she found it demeaning. Photograph: Aled Llywelyn/Athena Pictures

With claims of massive failings in the scientific consensus looking increasingly outlandish in the face of a grimly rising death count, there are

signs that the sceptics are recalculating. Besides retweets, Pearson has remained largely quiet on social media since a row after she threatened to sue a critic at the beginning of January; Young admitted on Newsnight he had been wrong to write that “the virus has all but disappeared” in June, and was the subject of an IPSO ruling finding that a Telegraph column was “significantly misleading”. Heneghan and Gupta, whose names appeared in the Telegraph and Mail 137 times last year before Johnson announced a Christmas lockdown on 19 December, have been mentioned just four times since then.

On Wednesday, meanwhile, O’Brien highlighted another prominent sceptic, Dr Clare Craig, who said that “we are now in the midst of a false positive pseudo-epidemic”, and that there have been “no excess deaths”. Craig accused O’Brien of making false claims that she was spreading disinformation, saying he had no evidence, and demanded an apology. She, too, had deleted her old tweets – and she has removed the smiley from her profile picture.

“I’ve really picked up the sense among the extreme sceptics that they feel the walls are closing in,” said Bowman. “And I think they’re right.”

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[The Guardian picture essay](#)

# 'Don't talk to papa until he's had his cup of tea': parents juggling work and family – photo essay

Graeme Robertson's photographs of parents working from home

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## 2021.01.25 - Coronavirus uk

- [Economics Covid leaves Boris Johnson with an expensive 'levelling down' problem](#)
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- [Grace Victory British YouTuber in coma with Covid a month after giving birth](#)
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## Economics

# Covid leaves Boris Johnson with an expensive 'levelling down' problem

The prime minister's promise to level up the UK north will be four times more difficult, warns thinktank

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The pandemic has badly affected towns relying on airline industry jobs, including Crawley, near Gatwick, and Slough (near Heathrow). Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

The pandemic has badly affected towns relying on airline industry jobs, including Crawley, near Gatwick, and Slough (near Heathrow). Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

*[Richard Partington](#) Economics correspondent  
[@RJPartington](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 00.59 EST

The economic impact of Covid will leave Boris Johnson's government with a costly "double challenge" to [level-up](#) the north and Midlands while protecting the affluent towns and cities in southern England suffering most job losses, according to a report.

Warning that the prime minister's election promise to rebalance Britain's lopsided economy had been made four times harder by the pandemic, the Centre for Cities said a dual approach to the post-Covid recovery was required.

In its annual study of the UK's major urban areas, the independent thinktank said Covid had created a new challenge in the south and added significantly to the scale of the existing challenges in the north and Midlands.

London and the south-east has been [disproportionately hit by job losses during the crisis](#), according to the research, which warned ministers that rapid action would be needed to avoid "levelling down" these places. At the same time, places across the north and Midlands need support to recover from Covid-19 and also to go further to match pre-pandemic levels in the south.

Birmingham, Hull and Blackpool face the biggest levelling-up challenges, according to the report. However, London, [Crawley](#) and Slough are among the prosperous places of concern following their reliance on businesses hit hardest by lockdowns and physical-distancing restrictions.

Unemployment has increased by more than 114% since the pandemic struck, with more than 2.6 million people across the UK now claiming unemployment-related benefits.

Before the crisis, 36 cities and large towns – 25 of which are located in the north and Midlands – had an above-average claimant count rate, in a reflection of the economic challenges facing places at the heart of the levelling-up agenda. Bringing them in line with the national average would have meant almost 170,000 fewer people claiming unemployment-related

benefits. According to the report, this has now increased to 634,000 – meaning the task of levelling-up has become four times harder.

In response to the pandemic, the Centre for Cities said the chancellor, [Rishi Sunak](#), needed to make permanent the £20 per week increase in the value of [universal credit](#) launched at the start of the crisis. Despite intense opposition, the government [plans to cut universal credit at the end of March](#). It also said support for the hospitality sector – potentially through a renewed Eat out to help out scheme once the health situation is safe – was also required.

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However, the thinktank warned that acting to prevent further economic damage by Covid-19 was not the same as levelling up. Once the health crisis ended, it said ministers would need to spend extra money on further measures to level up, including on education and transport infrastructure.

Andrew Carter, the chief executive of the Centre for Cities, said: “Covid-19 has made the government’s pledge to level up the north and Midlands much harder. It was promised on the assumption that places in the south would remain prosperous. Covid-19 has shaken this assumption, with cities ranging from London to Crawley now struggling.

“Levelling up the north and Midlands and stopping the south’s levelling down will not be cheap and will require more than short-term handouts. Government support and investment for new businesses in emerging industries will be essential, as will spending on further education to train people to do the good-quality jobs created.”

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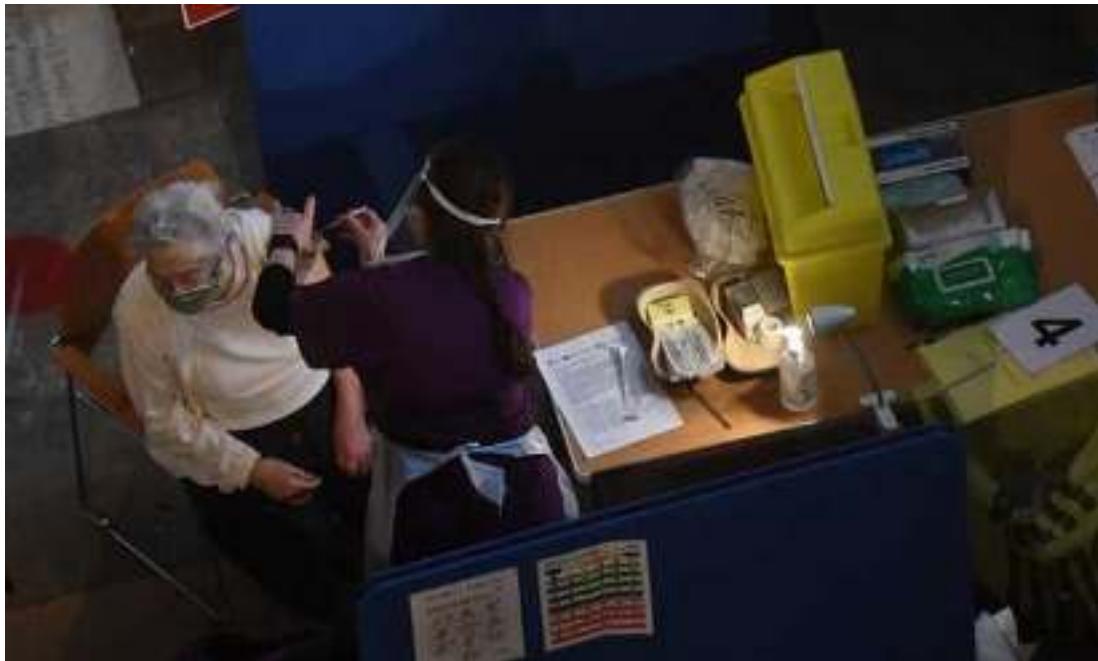
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## Health policy

# UK vaccine adviser says delay of Covid second dose will save lives

JCVI deputy chair defends extended gap between jabs as Hancock warns end of restrictions ‘long way off’

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A nurse administers the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in Salisbury Cathedral.  
Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

A representative of the UK’s vaccine advisory committee has defended its decision to delay giving people a second dose, saying it will “save many lives”, as the health secretary, Matt Hancock, warned lifting restrictions was “a long, long way off”.

Prof Anthony Harnden, of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), said the evidence was still in favour of delaying the dose, after a small Israeli study on people over the age of 60 suggested a first dose gave just 33% protection from coronavirus.

The JCVI has suggested doses should be given 12 weeks apart in order to give the maximum number of people some protection while supplies are limited. Pfizer, which manufactures one of the vaccines being administered in the UK and is also the provider of vaccines in Israel, has said it has tested its vaccine's full efficacy only when the two doses were given up to 21 days apart.

Meanwhile, ministers are preparing to announce tough new border measures to stop new variants of coronavirus from abroad scuppering the advances of the UK's vaccination programme. Reports suggest they may stop short of requiring all travellers to quarantine in government facilities.

Speaking on BBC One's Andrew Marr show, Israel's health minister, Yuli Edelstein, said there had been debates within his ministry about delaying the second dose. "I'll be very honest, we had debates about it in the ministry. And we decided to follow the instructions given by Pfizer. There were different opinions on that in Israel too. But as we have very little information at that stage ... So we decided to stick to the instructions we get from Pfizer.

"We are just at the beginning of the [vaccination] campaign. We do see cases of people that after getting the first dose still get sick with the coronavirus. At the same time there are some encouraging signs of less severe diseases, less people hospitalised after the first dose, so at this stage it's very difficult to say. We really hope that we will have better information in the near future."

Edelstein said his country would look to vaccinate "very high numbers, probably to 80%," before the country would consider it had herd immunity and restrictions would be lifted.

Harnden, the deputy chair of the JCVI, said the committee was examining the Israeli data in detail but the picture was not definitive.

Speaking to Sky News's Sophy Ridge on Sunday, Harnden said it had concluded in the case of the Pfizer vaccine that there was "no real evidence that a second dose gave you substantially longer and better protection ... We do believe you should have a second dose but we do believe that that can be delayed."

He said of the Oxford vaccine that "it may be that the longer you leave the second dose, the better protection you have".

He added: "The Israeli data is preliminary data. It does involve PCR testing, which is of course asymptomatic cases as well as symptomatic cases. They have not followed up for more than three weeks and the statistical methods they used are not clear."

Harnden said the committee still believed a delayed second dose would "save many lives nationally", saying the UK would begin to see a decline in hospital admissions and deaths a few weeks after the first four priority groups had been offered their first dose of the vaccine.

Hancock reiterated that there was "a high degree of confidence" that delaying the second dose would save more lives. "In a situation where there is a limited supply ... you want to get as many people to have as much protection as possible as quickly as possible."

Three-quarters of all those over 80 in the UK have been vaccinated, the health secretary announced.

He told Ridge the government was a "long, long, long way" from being able to lift coronavirus lockdown restrictions in England, and he refused to commit to schoolchildren being back in class by Easter. "We have got to look at the data, we have got to look at the impact of the vaccination programme," he said.

The government is expecting to meet to discuss new border measures on Monday, as fears grow about the spread of new variants. Hancock said there were 77 known cases of the South African variant in the UK, all linked to travel, and nine cases linked to one of the Brazilian variants.

“The new variant I really worry about is the one that is out there that hasn’t been spotted,” he told Sky News. “There’s probably those elsewhere that simply haven’t been picked up because the country doesn’t have that genomic sequencing service.”

Lisa Nandy, the shadow foreign secretary, said Labour had been “pushing the government to take tougher measures at the border since last spring”.

She said: “Scientists tell us that there are a number of countries where these strains are emerging that just simply do not have the capacity to map what is happening. So it’s not just countries who have identified the strains of the virus we ought to be careful about, actually what we’re likely to be seeing, even if we haven’t identified it, is strains emerging all over the world.

“On Monday we’ve got this delayed announcement yet again delayed. We would fully expect the government to bring in tougher quarantine measures, we would expect them to roll out a proper testing strategy and we would expect them as well to start checking up on the people who are quarantining.”

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## Coronavirus

# British YouTuber in coma with Covid a month after giving birth

Family of Grace Victory, who has more than 200,000 subscribers, urged people to pray for her

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Doctors induced Grace Victory on Christmas Eve before putting her in a coma the next day.

Doctors induced Grace Victory on Christmas Eve before putting her in a coma the next day.

*[Clea Skopeliti](#)*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 17.06 EST

The sister of a British YouTuber has said the family “still needs prayers” for the 30-year-old after she was placed in a coma with Covid-19 the day after she gave birth to her first child.

Grace Victory, from Buckinghamshire, contracted coronavirus in December while she was pregnant.

After her condition deteriorated, doctors induced the birth of the boy on Christmas Eve before putting her in a coma the following day due to respiratory issues.

In a [statement shared on Instagram](#) at the end of December, her family said that her condition was “currently stable” and that her newborn son was “doing well”.

Her sister Charleigh, a lifestyle blogger, also asked followers to keep her sister in their prayers in early January. She repeated the call for support at the weekend to say that she “still needs them” as her sister remains in hospital.

“We love her so, so much and we know she’ll come out of this stronger than ever. She has dedicated her whole career to healing people, we now ask you to pray to heal her,” the family said in a statement.

Model and activist Munroe Bergdorf sent her wishes for the family on Instagram, commenting “Thinking about you all. Love you Grace”, while Leigh-Anne Pinnock, from Little Mix, wrote: “Sending you so much love to you all.”

Victory has more than 200,000 subscribers on YouTube, where she discusses parenthood and relationships in her vlogs, as well as addressing mental health and body confidence.

The YouTuber developed coronavirus symptoms more than a month ago, but her health began to worsen as December went on. Despite her son not being due until February, doctors elected to induce the baby on Christmas Eve out of concern for her condition.

Her baby was born healthy but Victory had to be admitted into intensive care after developing breathing issues following the birth.

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## [The Observer](#)[Coronavirus](#)

Interview

# Jeremy Hunt: ‘This lockdown just isn’t working quickly enough’

[Sonia Sodha](#)



As chair of the health select committee, former health secretary Jeremy Hunt has become a prominent critic of the pandemic response. Photograph: Antonio Olmos/The Observer

As chair of the health select committee, former health secretary Jeremy Hunt has become a prominent critic of the pandemic response. Photograph: Antonio Olmos/The Observer

Former health minister wants better masks and cash for those who have to self-isolate



Sun 24 Jan 2021 03.45 EST

Jeremy Hunt cut a controversial figure during his tenure as Britain's longest-serving health secretary. Reviled by junior doctors for his proposed reforms to their training contracts, he also won affection for championing patient safety from those who lost relatives in scandals such as [Mid-Staffs](#), where many died as a result of substandard care.

He has undergone an unlikely transformation since his rival in the Tory leadership race, Boris Johnson, sacked him from the Foreign Office, refashioning himself into a critic of the government's pandemic response as chair of the parliamentary health select committee.

He believes the government must do more to combat the more infectious variant of Covid-19 that scientists now also think may be more deadly. "Current lockdown measures are just not working fast enough," he said when I spoke to him last week, pointing to data that suggests there may even have been a [rise in the rate of infections in January](#).

He is calling for FFP2 respirator masks – which, unlike surgical or cloth masks, protect the wearer by filtering both the inflow and outflow of air – to be made compulsory on public transport and in shops. This would [follow](#)

[Austria and parts of Germany](#), where higher-grade masks have been made compulsory.

“Last time we waited too long before requiring masks,” Hunt says, “let’s not make the same mistake again.” He also thinks government must review whether the two-metre social distancing rule is sufficient.

He sees two sides to the government’s record: “You have to balance early failures with extraordinary success on the vaccine.” But the lack of [financial support for people required to self-isolate](#) has been a blind spot; only one in four people say they are complying, and the government has sought to dampen speculation that more support will be forthcoming. Hunt thinks this is a mistake: “We should say that we will simply make up any loss in salary if you’re asked to self-isolate. People need to know that they’re not going to be out of pocket.”

That wouldn’t come cheap, but unlike the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, Hunt does not cast himself as a fiscal hawk. “When the NHS was set up by Aneurin Bevan in 1948 we were even more broke as a country than we were now, but the government had the imagination to do something huge.”

Would Hunt characterise himself more as a Blairite than a Johnsonite? ‘I think it’s too early to know what a Johnsonite is,’ he says

That might raise an eyebrow among Hunt’s critics: most of his time as health secretary spanned the [tightest funding settlement of the NHS’s 70-year history](#). But Hunt points out he fought hard for a [£20bn-a-year funding boost](#), awarded just before he moved on.

One of his big regrets, though, is that social care was not better protected from austerity. “It was the silent cut that people didn’t notice until too late,” he says. “You can’t possibly have a 1948 moment for the NHS without addressing the problems in social care.”

That would involve a more collective solution: “The fact that we treat people with dementia so differently to people with cancer is so immoral.” But it

would require more of a safety net than a national care service: “It doesn’t mean you have to pay for it in the same way you do the NHS.”

Bevan is not the only Labour politician Hunt admires. “One of our greatest foreign secretaries was Ernest Bevin; I didn’t know when I first became foreign secretary quite how transformational he was.” Hunt believes there are lessons for modern diplomacy in the way Bevin stood up to Stalin, and his role in founding Nato. “China will soon overtake the US as the world’s largest economy, and democracy around the world is in an almighty mess. No one has got a plan to secure the future of open societies.”

He recently hosted a Chatham House event with Tony Blair on this subject. And Blair and Hunt have not been making dissimilar noises on the pandemic. Does he talk to him? “I’ve had conversations with him – he was the first person who understood we couldn’t directly copy what South Korea was doing on testing because we left it too late,” he says.

How do he and Johnson get on? ‘It’s pretty affable, actually. We exchange texts every now and then. It went through a period of froideur last year’

By this stage, I’m wondering if Hunt would characterise himself more as a Blairite than a Johnsonite. “I think it’s too early to know what a Johnsonite is,” he says. He talks of the “consensual figure” he worked with on the 2012 London Olympics, when he was culture secretary and Johnson was mayor of London. “That is a kind of figure I could happily support and could turn out to be a very transformational PM.” He views Keir Starmer as a threat, though: “He appeals to moderate people living in my constituency in Surrey in a way that no Labour leader since Blair has ever succeeded in doing.”

[UK Covid restrictions may be too lax, health experts warn](#)  
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Hunt’s relationship with the prime minister has evolved from cabinet colleagues to leadership rivals, to Hunt grilling Johnson in his role as a select committee chair. How do they get on? “It’s pretty affable, actually. We exchange texts every now and then. It went through a period of froideur last

year when I was having to criticise some aspects of the government's response. Because of the kind of conspiracy-theory world that No 10 always operates in, people start to ask: 'Is there an ulterior motive?' But I'm sure he's spending a lot more time thinking about people in his cabinet than people he dispensed with," he says with a laugh.

I get the sense he is enjoying his outsider role. "I have been able to speak independently on the big issues in a way you can't as a cabinet minister," he says. "As a select committee chair, I feel I can make more difference on big decisions than as a mid-ranking cabinet minister. But there's a part of me that wants to finish off the things I didn't manage to do as health secretary."

That sounds like his leadership ambitions haven't receded entirely? "I haven't given them up, but I've found them ebbing over the last year as I've been spending more time with my family," he says smoothly, ever the consummate professional. "I don't rule out going back, but certainly not in the near future."

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## 2021.01.25 - Spotlight

- ['Seriously scarring' Jon Bon Jovi on wealth, love and his ugly tussle with Trump](#)
- [Girl A Abigail Dean on her shocking debut novel that's taking the book world by storm](#)
- [Sony WH-1000XM4 review Bose-beating noise cancelling headphones](#)
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- ['Her legacy lives on in us' Body of activist Karima Baloch returned to Pakistan](#)

## Bon Jovi

Interview

# **Jon Bon Jovi on wealth, love and his ugly tussle with Trump: 'It was seriously scarring'**

Hadley Freeman



Jon Bon Jovi: 'I was really shocked at the depths Trump went to.'  
Photograph: Drew Gurian/Invision/AP

Jon Bon Jovi: 'I was really shocked at the depths Trump went to.'  
Photograph: Drew Gurian/Invision/AP

The big hair and bombast have long gone and the thoughtful singer-songwriter remains. He talks about politics, pain and meeting his wife of 40 years in history class



@HadleyFreeman

Mon 25 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Jon [Bon Jovi](#) is singing Livin' on a Prayer to me. No, this is not another crazy lockdown dream; it is actually happening.

"Tommy used to work on the docks ..." he begins, strumming a guitar he produces out of nowhere, his still impressive bouffant ("I'm the only man in my field brave enough to let it go grey!") bouncing in time to the music.

I later look up how much it would cost to hire Bon Jovi for a private party. "More than \$1m" is the best estimate. All I did was ask if he was tired of being asked about his 1986 megahit. The answer, apparently, is no.

"Union's been on strike, he's down on his luck ..." he continues.

Going from the zero of lockdown to the zillion miles an hour of a Bon Jovi private performance is a helluva ride and I tell him I might pass out. He laughs the laugh of a man who is neither unaccustomed nor averse to female adoration.



Halfway there ... (clockwise from top left) Richie Sambora, Alec John Such, David Bryan, Jon Bon Jovi and Tico Torres in the mid-80s. Photograph: Ilpo Musto/REX/Shutterstock

“That song, God bless it. But my God, who knew? Not us, I can assure you. It was created on a day when none of us had any ideas, we just had a conversation and it came out of that. I’m sure happy my name’s on it!” Bon Jovi grins.

So he didn’t know it was a hit when he wrote it?

“Not at all. I remember walking out of the room with Richie [Sambora, his band’s second most famous but now former member] and I said: ‘Eh, it’s OK. Maybe we should just put it on a movie soundtrack.’ Richie looked at me and said: ‘You’re an idiot – it’s really good.’ I said: ‘I just don’t know where it’s going.’ But it didn’t have that boom boom boom bassline yet, so it sounded more like the Clash.”

Did it buy him a house?

Bon Jovi looks at me as if I had asked about the woods-based habits of bears.

“It bought a lot of people houses,” he says.

Bon Jovi, 58, is talking to me on Zoom from his house in New Jersey. “I am the crown prince of New Jersey,” he declares, which is probably true – he named one of his biggest-selling albums after the state and has stayed firmly loyal to his home turf. (Although I think we both know that if Bon Jovi is the prince of New Jersey, its king is Bruce Springsteen.) From the tiny amount I can see, his house looks lovely – wood-panelled walls and not over-flashy. “My life is much more normal than one would imagine,” says the [sixth wealthiest rock star in the world](#), sandwiched on that list between Sting and Elton John. “There are no platinum records hanging anywhere in my house. The trappings of rock stardom were never a part of my home.” He and his wife of 31 years, Dorothea, have four kids: Stephanie, 27, Jesse, 25, Jacob, 18 and Romeo, 16, and for a long time, he says, “my younger kids weren’t quite sure what I do”.

We are talking today because the latest single, Story of Love, from his album 2020, is about to be released in the UK. Anyone whose image of Bon Jovi is still locked in the [Livin’ on a Prayer](#) era – the big guitars, the bigger hair – will be somewhat taken aback by 2020. It is a thoughtful look at the past year, addressing gun control (Lower the Flag), the coronavirus crisis (Do What You Can) and the Black Lives Matter movement (the disarmingly beautiful American Reckoning). Perhaps you are thinking that you don’t especially need Jon Bon Jovi’s thoughts on BLM, but reason not the need: as he has done throughout his near 40-year career, he offers solid music and heartfelt lyrics, and, really, hats off to the man for engaging with the moment because Lord knows he doesn’t need to do anything at all any more. When lockdown hit, instead of running off to a house on the beach, Bon Jovi washed dishes every day in [JBJ Soul Kitchen](#), one of the two community kitchens he set up near his home, where meals are provided through donations or volunteering. As celebrity efforts go, that probably beats posting a [video of yourself singing Imagine](#).

But just singing about the human cost of the US’s gun laws will count to many as taking a side. Does he worry about alienating any of his fans? “There are men on my stage who see things differently, but I don’t let our differences come between us. I never wanted to become a captive to the stage. How I live my life’s up to me,” he says.



Campaigning for Joe Biden in October 2020. Photograph: Adam Schultz/Biden for President/ZUMA Wire/REX/Shutterstock

When we first speak, Bon Jovi is 48 hours from performing in a televised celebration for Joe Biden's inauguration. This is his second inaugural event, after singing for Obama in 2009. Bon Jovi first started palling around with politicians when "a governor by the name of Bill Clinton" contacted him in the early 90s, and he has been actively involved since. "If Al [Gore] had got in I'd have been secretary for entertainment," he jokes. In 2015 he allowed the Republican and then New Jersey governor Chris Christie to use his music in his presidential campaign. Springsteen has repeatedly rebuffed requests from Christie, a superfan, to play at his events. Does he disapprove of Springsteen's refusal to reach across the aisle?

"I don't know how Bruce has treated Chris, so I can't comment on that. But I would be a hypocrite if I told you I write songs that claim to be a witness to history, and then don't listen [to the other side]," he says.

Would he let Donald Trump use his music?

He recoils as if physically attacked. "No! No no no! On every issue we wholeheartedly disagree, from how he handled the Covid crisis to immigration to the Paris accord – everything! No! No!"

Bon Jovi and Trump have an extremely weird history. Back in 2014, the singer, along with some Canadian investors, [tried to buy the NFL team the Buffalo Bills](#), outbidding Trump. But there was suddenly strong anti-Bon Jovi feeling in Buffalo, NY, with “Bon Jovi-free” zones and negative graffiti, stemming from the rumour that he and his partners would move the team out of the city. Bon Jovi fiercely denied that, but the Bills ultimately went to a third bidder and that was the end of that – until three years ago, when it emerged, inevitably, that the [anti-Bon Jovi campaign](#) had been started by Michael Caputo, a political strategist, who had been hired by Trump.

“I was really shocked at the depths [Trump] went to. He wasn’t even qualified to buy the team, because you have to submit your tax returns, and he never filed the paperwork. Instead, he did this dark shadow assassination thing, hoping to buy the team at a bargain basement price. But I just couldn’t understand how this misinformation was being put out there. It was seriously scarring,” Bon Jovi says, eyes wide.

After Trump failed to get the team, he stomped off and ran for president. Maybe you should have just given him the team, I say.

“Yeah, for the sake of the world, he definitely should have got the team. Oh well,” he chuckles.

Caputo later worked for Trump when he was president and was questioned as part of the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election. It was [reported last September](#) that Caputo had orchestrated a pressure campaign for official reports into the Covid crisis to be altered to be more flattering to Trump.

“I guess we lived a page of Trump’s playbook in Buffalo,” says Bon Jovi.



In Detroit, 1985. Photograph: Icon and Image/Getty Images

How did it feel to see his nemesis become president only two years after the battle in Buffalo?

He hesitates. “Well, like all Americans, I have to support the office of the president – look how political I’m sounding! I’m trying to stop myself from bullshitting. The truth is, I was really disappointed.”

Often in interviews Bon Jovi can sound a little monotone and bored, talking about the same things he has been talking about for decades. But today he is strikingly engaged and I ask if that’s because we’re mainly talking about politics rather than music.

“Ha! Well, everyone’s an armchair quarterback when talking about politics,” he says.

So he’s not thinking of pivoting to politics, spending his days arguing with Republicans such as Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell?

“Or Chuck Schumer,” he adds, naming the Democrat leader in the Senate for balance. “It’s a shit existence – selling yourself and your soul. Hell no.”

John Bongiovi Jr was born and raised in New Jersey, the son of two former marines. He started making music as a kid and wrote Runaway, which would be his first hit, when he was 19. By 21 he had a record deal and a band, of which he was the name, the face and the boss (“More like a benevolent dictator,” he insists). Initially they were marketed as a hard rock band. They certainly looked the part – big hair, tight trousers – but Bon Jovi had a different plan.

“I said: ‘I want a tour with the Cars and Bryan Adams and all these pop groups,’ and my manager said: ‘No. You’re going to learn how to play with Judas Priest and Kiss and the Scorpions. Those audiences are loyal; pop audiences are fickle,’” he says. So they were packed off to open for Judas Priest, “a heavy metal band I’d never listened to,” Bon Jovi says. They won over audiences but he must have cut an unusual figure backstage: unlike pretty much everyone else on the 1980s hard rock scene, Bon Jovi never suffered from substance abuse issues. This has obviously worked in his favour: even aside from his unusual, maybe even unique career and marital stability, Bon Jovi at 58 looks like a man who spent his youth on yoga retreats as opposed to hanging out with Aerosmith. But how did he resist when he was so young?

“To be honest with you, I didn’t have the capacity to handle drugs. I didn’t find joy in it, and I didn’t need to bury myself emotionally, so what was the purpose?”

Was that because he had a reasonably stable childhood?

“Mine was as fucked up as anyone else’s, but not enough to start using drugs. I saw a lot of friends die or there was havoc in their personal lives, but I just didn’t have the need or desire,” he says.



In Moonlight and Valentino. Photograph: Moviestore/REX/Shutterstock

When the band made their third album, *Slippery When Wet*, Bon Jovi was “so over” being marketed as something he wasn’t that he took back control and worked on telling stories. The music was still rock, but the lyrics were about Tommy and the docks. The public loved it, and *Slippery When Wet* sold gazillions, its singles You Give Love a Bad Name, Wanted Dead or Alive, Never Say Goodbye and, of course, Livin’ on a Prayer becoming the inescapable soundtrack of the mid-80s. This was followed by *New Jersey* (Bad Medicine, I’ll Be There for You, Lay Your Hands on Me), and then the shift to the 90s, when Bon Jovi cut his hair and softened the rock a little (Keep the Faith, These Days) and became increasingly known for his ballads (In These Arms, Always). He sold more than 100m albums, at which point he moved into acting, which he was unexpectedly good at, in *Moonlight and Valentino* (hunky painter), *Ally McBeal* (hunky plumber) and *Sex and the City* (hunky photographer). Did he mind being the rent-a-hunk?

“Hell no – I never went to the Shakespeare Company!” he laughs. “Nobody had been able to do both [music and acting]: Madonna, Sting, Phil Collins – you tried and failed. I was so anxious to get work I said: ‘I will do the small role, the hunk, just to get enough of a résumé.’”

Yet he hardly needed the money. He talks about wanting to learn “humility” and (of course) “loving the craft”, all of which sounds like a euphemism for just needing a change. Producers told him that if he quit making music they would give him bigger parts but Hollywood’s appeal had already waned.

“I got the house in Malibu, saw the guys who are looking over your shoulder to see if they should go talk to someone else. That whole lifestyle was so vapid to me. I couldn’t wait to get away from it,” he says.

Critics sneer that Bon Jovi – the band and the man – have become too corporate, too cheesy. This isn’t exactly wrong, but it’s missing the point about why Bon Jovi – the man – is such an enduring phenomenon. He has always been a control freak, over himself and his band, as he admitted in his 2000 hit It’s My Life, and he knows what’s needed for his band to survive. His very un-rockstar-like stability has helped. He married his high school sweetheart, and has been with her more than 40 years. “She sat down next to me in history class, and that was it,” he says. His bandmates Tico Torres and David Bryan have also been with him since the beginning. Disruptions to plans upset him inordinately: he says the Buffalo debacle took him five years to get over. The departure of Sambora in 2013 upset him so much that he said he was plunged into “a dark place” for three years. Are he and Sambora in touch now?

“No. He chose to do what he did, but my heartbreak is I personally loved having him in the band – I loved my band. But there was not a chance in the world that we would discontinue because of his inability to go on,” he says, the sensitivity still audible.

At Bon Jovi’s suggestion, we talk again two days later after the inauguration. To many people’s surprise, instead of relying on the band’s back catalogue, he performed the Beatles’ Here Comes the Sun. “I never felt like I needed to sing a song more. It was cathartic,” he says. Initially I missed the usual Bon Jovi bombast, but as the sun rose behind him as he sang, there was no denying that the man knows what works in the moment. But the recording of my private performance of Livin’ on a Prayer? That will last for ever.

*Bon Jovi's album 2020 is out now. The new single, Story of Love, will be released on Friday 29 January. Visit [bonjovi.com](http://bonjovi.com).*

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/jan/25/jon-bon-jovi-on-wealth-love-and-his-ugly-tussle-with-trump-it-was-seriously-scarring>.

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## **Books**

### Interview

# Girl A: Abigail Dean on her shocking debut novel that's taking the book world by storm

[Alison Flood](#)



‘How do you live in the aftermath?’ ... author and lawyer Abigail Dean in Dulwich Park, London. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

‘How do you live in the aftermath?’ ... author and lawyer Abigail Dean in Dulwich Park, London. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

Has this Google lawyer written the book of the year? The part-time author talks about the inspiration for her thriller about siblings who flee abusive parents and their ‘house of horror’



Mon 25 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Abigail Dean was about to turn 30 when she suddenly realised that her job as a lawyer was using up all the oxygen in her life. “If I didn’t make a change,” she says, “I was going to still be there on my 40th birthday.” She took three months off, writing every day at Dulwich library in London, and ended up with the seeds of what would become her debut novel, *Girl A*.

“You don’t know me,” Lex, or Girl A, tells us as the novel opens, “but you’ll have seen my face. In the earlier pictures, they bludgeoned our features with pixels, right down to our waists; even our hair was too distinctive to disclose. But the story and its protectors grew weary, and in the darker corners of the internet we became easy to find.”

Lex’s mother, we are told, has just died in prison, and as Lex visits to collect her possessions and learn about her will, she remembers the last time she saw her: it was the day she and her siblings escaped from the family home where they had been chained, after a heart-stopping, agonising leap from a window. “Slowly, I straightened, and pulled my T-shirt down towards my knees, and there, at the kitchen door, was Mother. I waited for her to run at me, but she didn’t. Her mouth was moving, but I could only hear the blood

in my ears. We looked at one another for a long last second, then I turned and ran.”

A literary thriller expected to take the book world by storm, Girl A is less about the horrors Lex Gracie and her many siblings endured at the hands of their father, and more about how the nightmare follows them into adulthood. Lex, who narrates, is a successful lawyer who hopes to turn their “house of horrors” experience into a force for good.



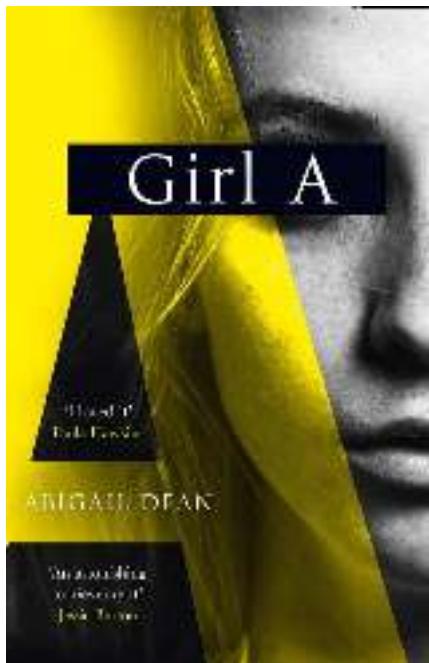
Louise and David Turpin who were jailed for abusing 12 of their children.  
Photograph: Facebook

As a true-crime follower, Dean drew inspiration from a number of real-life cases, from serial killers Fred and Rosemary West to the more recent case of David and Louise Turpin, the Californian parents who in 2019 were given life sentences for torturing and abusing 12 of their 13 children. The Turpins shackled their offspring to their beds, the alarm being raised by their 17-year-old daughter who broke free. Dean also read about Jasmine Block, the teenager who swam across a lake in Minnesota after being held captive for a month.

“From those cases and a few others,” says Dean, “I saw the power of teenage girls to escape and be incredibly strong. That was something I

wanted to think about in terms of Lex, her resilience and intelligence in the face of a devastating experience.” But Dean ultimately wanted the book to be “about hope rather than, ‘Will they or will they not get out of the house?’ So you have the reassurance at the start that Lex is OK, then it’s a case of the years that follow – what then? Once the headlines have been recycled, what happens to the people who have been at the heart of these things? How do you live in the aftermath of that?”

An only child who grew up in the village of Hayfield in Derbyshire, Dean has always had an interest in brothers and sisters. She wanted to “capture that chemistry between siblings – Lex has a wildly different relationship with each of her brothers and sisters, for better or worse”. She researched how the experience of captivity might affect each Gracie child differently, and considered how she might have reacted herself.



“I don’t think it’s a straightforward question, which of the siblings’ paths I would have followed. You always want to think, ‘I’d be the Lex of the story, I’d cope well and with grace.’ But I’m not sure I would.” Dean says the eldest brother Ethan, who becomes an academic, was very enjoyable to write. Girl A traces his journey from a boy at odds with his controlling, religious father, to one who does what he has to do to survive, to an adult who exploits his past while keeping part of it hidden. “I always used to think

that it would be you who would save us,” Lex tells him. “I waited. I would think – he isn’t even restrained. Any day now.” Dean says: “Ethan really behaves questionably, both in the house and after, in the way he manipulates the press attention.”

As a child, Dean wrote all the time, getting into fan fiction as a teenager (Final Fantasy stuff, she admits – she was a big gamer at the time). But after she got into Cambridge, where she studied English literature, she felt too daunted to continue. “It went on the back burner,” she says. “I found the creative writing scene at Cambridge quite intimidating and something I felt I wasn’t really good enough for.”

She took a law conversion course after finishing her degree and ended up focusing on technology law. “Certainly, throughout my late 20s, it was very much a 24/7 job. That was one of the reasons I started writing. Coming up to my 30th birthday, I was travelling a lot for work, doing incredibly long hours. I started to miss out on the things that made me happy. Taking three months off was partly to recover – I don’t think I was in a wonderful state – but also just to return to this thing I loved, writing, and see what happened.”

After three months, she had the bones of the novel, but it would take another year to finish the first draft of Girl A, during which time she started a new job as a lawyer for Google. “It’s a different kind of job with different hours. So I had evenings and weekends to chip away at the story. It was a great balance. I fell back in love with working – and I was also doing something that made me deeply happy, in terms of writing. I had liked the 25-minute walk to Dulwich library and the idea of a routine. But I had to become much less precious about writing once I was at Google. The second half of Girl A was written in the spare bedroom of my flat, or on the notes section of my phone on buses and tubes.”



‘I’m 10 per cent terrified’ ... Author and lawyer Abigail Dean, Dulwich Park, London Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

In June 2019, she sent the book out to agents and it ended up in a nine-way auction in the UK, where it sold for a “major” six-figure sum. North American rights went for seven figures, and more than 20 other territories have acquired the book, with screen rights going to Sony. Dean was on a work trip for Google in India, in a taxi in a rural area with no reception, when her agent started trying to get in touch to tell her the news. The experience, she says, was “just as crazy and surreal as you might imagine”.

Dean is 32 now and working on her second novel, but continues in her role at Google. These days, she’s enjoying the law. “I didn’t think about stopping, to be honest. Working with contracts and words all day is, for me, complementary to writing. Legal work forces you to think about every word in every sentence, and how they might be interpreted, which is helpful.”

January is traditionally the month when publishers launch the debut novels they think will be huge. It happened six years ago with Paula Hawkins’ [The Girl on the Train](#), a book that, along with 2012’s *Gone Girl*, triggered a deluge of thrillers with “girl” in the title. Industry magazine The Bookseller reckons *Girl A*, the latest in the line, will be “one of the biggest” fiction debuts of 2021.

Dean is “90% incredibly excited, 10% terrified” about seeing her story out in the world. “You spend so long with these characters,” she says. “It’s like a small obsession. I almost think about them all the time. It’s incredible that these people, who have been so real to me for years, will become real to other people. I’ve loved and detested numerous characters in my lifetime of reading. The idea that people will have equivalent feelings about my characters is just wonderful.”

- Girl A is out now, published by HarperCollins (£14.99).
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## Headphones

# Sony WH-1000XM4 review: Bose-beating noise cancelling headphones

Top sound, noise-cancelling and comfort with long battery life, plus connection to two devices at once



Fourth iteration of Sony's top noise-cancelling headphones are the best yet, offering a hard-to-beat combination of sound, comfort and features.  
Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

Fourth iteration of Sony's top noise-cancelling headphones are the best yet, offering a hard-to-beat combination of sound, comfort and features.  
Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

*[Samuel Gibbs](#) Consumer technology editor*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Sony's top of the line noise-cancelling headphones have long had a winning formula and the latest edition has a much-requested addition – multiple device connectivity – to make them the best of class.

The WH-1000XM4 have an RRP of £350 and on initial inspection little has changed for the fourth edition of the 1000X line, with its understated design. The high-quality plastic body is well made and lightweight at 254g but doesn't feel as premium as some metal or carbon fibre competitors that weigh more than 300g.

They are some of the lightest-feeling headphones you can buy, matching the longstanding comfort kings, the Bose QC35 II. The ear cups are well padded with a gentle, even pressure on the side of your head while a soft leatherette headband sits on your dome. It's easy to forget you are wearing them apart from when the headband slips forward when you tilt your head to look down.



Unlike most competitors, the headphones also twist and fold up into a compact shape for travel and come with a good hard case for protection.  
Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

## Specifications

- **Weight:** 254g
- **Drivers:** 40mm
- **Connectivity:** Bluetooth 5.0 with multipoint, 3.5mm, USB-C charging, NFC
- **Bluetooth codecs:** SBC, AAC, LDAC
- **Battery life:** 30 hours ANC on

## Controls and connectivity



The power button triggers pairing mode when held for several seconds from off. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The XM4 are a regular set of Bluetooth 5.0 headphones, making them compatible with most Bluetooth-sporting phones, tablets, computers and other devices. They support the universal SBC and AAC audio formats used by most devices. But they also support Sony's high-resolution LDAC Bluetooth audio format that is compatible with many Android devices for some of the highest-quality wireless audio.

They are Sony's first 1000X set to support the popular multipoint connection feature, which means you can have two devices connected at the same time, such as a phone for calls and a laptop for music. It works reliably with a variety of devices. The high-resolution LDAC audio cannot be used when multipoint is enabled, however, restricting connections to the more standard SBC and AAC.

There are four ways to pair the headphones – Google's Fast Pair or via a single tap with an NFC tag for instant pairing with an Android phone, using the Sony [Headphones Connect](#) app for Android or the iPhone and iPad, and manual pairing the old-fashioned way by holding down a button.

The headphones come with a standard 3.5mm headphones cable that can be used when the headphones are turned on or off. The microphone cannot be used over the 3.5mm cable, however.

The left ear cup has a power button and a custom action button, which can be set to control either Google Assistant, Amazon Alexa or noise-cancelling. The right ear cup has a touch pad for the rest of the controls, which work well with bare fingers but not with gloves. Double tap for pause/play, swipe forward or back for track skip, and up and down for volume. Tap and hold for Siri or Google Assistant from your phone. Hold your palm over the touchpad to quickly switch to an ambient listening mode, which is extremely handy for announcements and quick conversations.



A presence sensor in the left ear cup pauses the music when you take off the headphones and resumes when put them back on. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The Headphones Connect app for Android and iOS handles various settings and updates, including switching connected devices, noise-cancelling modes and sound options.

The XM4 have five mics for picking up your voice and are slightly improved compared with previous versions, with callers able to hear what I was saying in areas with a little background noise, but still do not compare with the class-leading [Bose Noise Cancelling Headphones 700](#).

## Active noise-cancelling



The grey headphones have gold accents around the top microphone ports.  
Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The XM4 have some of the best active noise-cancelling technology available, with a level of control that goes beyond most, effectively reducing most droning and low-frequency sound as well as some speech and other more sudden noise, matching the best from Bose.

Using the app you can personalise the noise-cancelling to take into account hair, glasses and other things that effect the seal of the ear cups, while a pressure optimiser that can determine whether you are on the ground or in the air helps when flying versus just the commute.

In addition, there are the ambient sound modes, which adjust the amount of background noise you can hear over 20 levels, plus a “focus on voice” for allowing speech through. It doesn’t rival Apple’s version in sounding as if you’re not wearing the headphones, but is good for awareness.

Adaptive sound control in the app can automatically adjust the level of noise-cancelling based on how loud it is in your current environment. The system learns your favourite locations and awareness levels, and switches automatically, such as maximum noise-cancelling at work but ambient sound level 10 at home.

## Fantastic sound



The Headphones Connect app has a full equaliser and options for customising noise-cancelling, controls and activating the DSEE Extreme sound enhancer. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

These are some of the best-sounding Bluetooth headphones you can buy, producing the sort of audio that has you discovering new nuances in well-worn tracks, putting them in the same league as the [B&W PX7](#) and [Apple's AirPods Max](#).

They are not neutral, with a default sound that is more mid-bass heavy than some competitors, but they produce well-controlled, deep and full bass, warm mids and sparkling high notes. Unlike many rivals, they have a full equaliser in the app to customise the sound to your liking, as well as music enhancement systems such as Sony's DSEE Extreme upscale audio to revive tones lost because of compression at the expense of battery life.

They do an excellent job of bringing the best out of most music genres, from pounding bass lines in high-energy electronica and a raw energy in grunge to sumptuous tones for jazz and soul and a wide sound profile for grand orchestral scores. Preservation of detail even in super complex tracks is top

notch, while they also sound great for movie soundtracks, with vocals preserved over the top of powerful bass.

## Battery life



One tap on the NFC spot is all that is needed to pair and connect compatible Android smartphones. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The headphones last for up to 30 hours between charges with noise cancelling turned on, which is 10 hours longer than many competitors. Turn it off and they last up to 38 hours or 22 hours with the ambient sound mode active. They last up to 24 hours of voice calling, too.

The headphones take three hours to fully charge via the USB-C port in the right ear cup using a 1.5A power adaptor, which isn't included in the box. A 10-minute charge provides up to five hours of playback if you're in a hurry.

## Sustainability

Sony does not provide an estimate of the number of full-charge cycles the battery should last. Batteries in similar devices can typically last for 500 cycles while maintaining at least 80% of their original capacity. The battery

can be replaced by an authorised service centre costing £39.46 plus £12 shipping out of warranty.

The headphones are generally repairable ([iFixit teardown](#)), and replacement parts, including the earpads, headband and mainboard are available. Sony did not comment on the use of recycled materials and does not publish environmental impact reports for headphones. It publishes [annual sustainability reports](#) and [its roadmap](#) to have zero environmental impact by 2050.

## Observations

- Google Assistant can read notifications on Android and iOS, while Alexa is also an option or you can use your phone's voice assistant such as Siri on an iPhone.
- Press the power button when the headphones are on to hear the battery percentage.
- They support [360 Reality Audio](#) for certain music services such as Tidal and Deezer.
- The Speak-to-Chat function detects when you're speaking loudly enough and automatically enables an ambient sound mode so you can carry out a conversation.

## Price

The Sony WH-1000XM4 cost [£350](#) in black or silver.

For comparison, the RRP of [Bose's Noise Cancelling Headphones 700](#) is [£349.95](#), the Bose QuietComfort 35 II cost [£299.95](#), the [B&W PX7](#) cost [£349.99](#), [Apple AirPods Max](#) cost [£549](#), the Master and Dynamic MW65 cost [£449](#) and the B&O Beoplay H95 cost [£700](#).

## Verdict

The Sony WF-1000XM4 are some of the best noise-cancelling wireless headphones money can buy.

They sound fantastic, have effective noise-cancelling and long battery life. They support multipoint Bluetooth 5 for connecting two devices at once, high-res music with the LDAC format and an instant ambient sound mode for listening for announcements, too.

They are also some of the lightest and most comfortable headphones you can buy, matching the long-term wearing comfort of the Bose QC35 II.

They don't look and feel quite as solid or premium as some competitors but they fold up for travel and appear durable in lightweight plastic. They are also fairly easy to repair and the battery is replaceable for a reasonable sum.

Call quality is average. Note that unlike most rivals, the WF-1000XM4 are often available at a discount on their RRP, so it's worth shopping around.

**Pros:** brilliant sound, excellent noise-cancelling, lightweight comfort, can connect to two devices at once, hi-res music support, long battery life, good controls, good ambient modes, 3.5mm headphone socket, fold up with good case, repairable, cross-platform companion app.

**Cons:** expensive, voice mic is hit and miss, don't feel as premium as rivals.



The XM4 are available in grey as pictured and black. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

## Other reviews

- [Bowers & Wilkins PX7 review: Bose-beating noise-cancelling headphones](#)
  - [Apple AirPods Max review: stunning sound, painful price](#)
  - [Bose Noise Cancelling Headphones 700 review: less business, more modern design](#)
  - [Beats Solo Pro review: Apple's on-ear noise cancelling headphones](#)
  - [Microsoft Surface Headphones 2 review: longer-lasting Bluetooth noise cancellers](#)
  - [Marshall Monitor II ANC review: classic headphones gain noise-cancelling](#)
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## Observer Food Monthly's 20 best recipesCurry

# The 20 best curry recipes

From Asma Khan's saag paneer to Lopè Ariyo's suya lamb, our exploration of the wider world of curry takes in recipes from south Asia, Nigeria and Japan



Saag paneer by Asma Khan. Food styling by Livia Abraham. Prop styling by Pene Parker. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

Saag paneer by Asma Khan. Food styling by Livia Abraham. Prop styling by Pene Parker. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer



Allan Jenkins

Mon 25 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

It was dal that done it, in Luton, Lucknow, London. When the raisin-studded school dinners of my childhood were replaced with sophisticated south-Asian cooking. Here we also celebrate some of the wider world of curry: recipes from Nigeria, Japan, Vietnam, the Caribbean. From Uyen Luu's ginger duck to Shuko Oda's keema curry, and Asma Khan's saag paneer to Lopè Ariyo's suya lamb. There is a pumpkin curry, a prawn curry, a black-eyed bean curry; Vivek Singh's perfect vindaloo, Meera Sodha's tomato curry and Madhur Jaffrey's peerless chicken korma. In short, the 20 best curry dishes from some of the finest cookery writers around.

## **Asma Khan's saag paneer – spinach with Indian cheese (pictured above)**

A rich, satisfying, meat-free midweek meal that can be eaten with bread or rice.

## **Nik Sharma's roasted cauliflower in turmeric kefir**

The acidity of fermented dairy works with the Maillard reaction to create a bittersweet taste and new aroma molecules in vegetables.



Roasted cauliflower in turmeric kefir. Photograph: Nik Sharma

## Vivek Singh's pork vindalho

This intense Goan curry is the real McCoy, true to its potato-free Portuguese origins.



Pork vindalho. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

## Rukmini Iyer's lime and coconut dal

This roasting tin version of the comforting dish uses Egyptian red lentils to avoid pre-soaking, with added limes for zing.



Lime and coconut dal. Photograph: David Loftus

## Kaeng khiao wan – Thai green curry by Wichek Khongphoon

Traditionally in south Thailand this vibrant curry is made with goat, but this version uses chicken.



Kaeng khiao wan – Thai green curry. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

## Aloo gosht – Punjabi mutton and potato curry by Sumayya Usmani

The simplicity of this Pakistani Punjab dish is a celebration of what the land provides.



Punjabi aloo gosht. Photograph: Joanna Yee

## Andi Oliver's curried coconut chickpeas and maple roast spiced winter ground provision

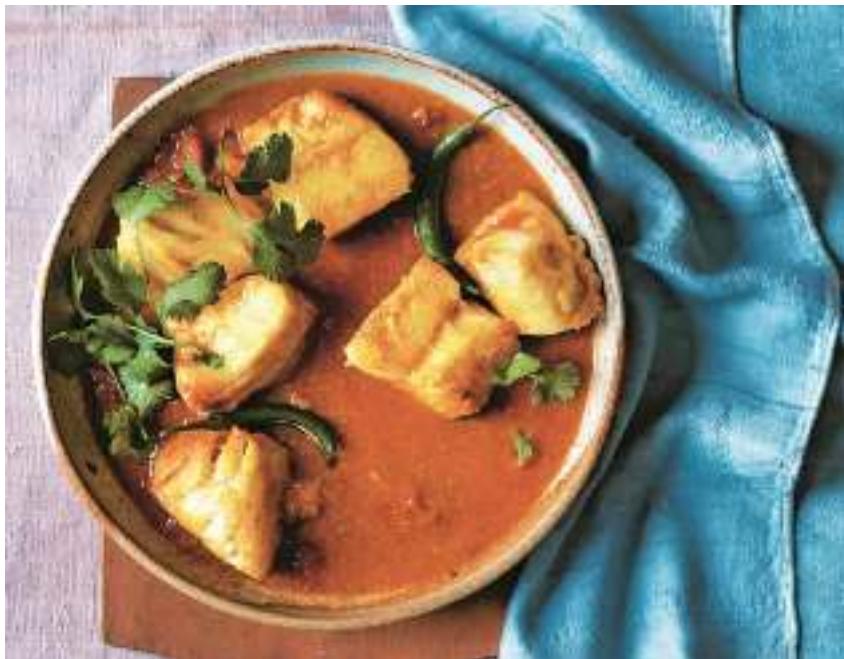
You can keep this dish vegan or customise it with a poached egg or grilled lamb chop.



Curried coconut chickpeas and maple roast spiced winter ground provision.  
Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

## Asma Khan's macher jhol – Bengali fish curry

Perfect for a family gathering – use filleted fish to make things easier for you and your guests.



Macher jhol – Bengali fish curry. Photograph: Kim Lightbody

## Kay Plunkett-Hogge's gaeng massaman – massaman curry

Shop-bought curry pastes are no match for taking the time to freshly grind spices for this complex, aromatic dish.



Gaeng massaman – massaman curry. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

## Ravinder Bhogal's crispy fried eggs with coconut curry and coriander sambol

This mellow Sri Lankan dish conjures up sunny days in Colombo.



Crispy fried eggs with coconut curry and coriander sambol. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

## [Shwe payon thee hin – pumpkin curry by Amy and Emily Chung](#)

This fragrant vegan dish is a delicious way to cook any kind of squash.



Shwe payon thee hin – pumpkin curry. Photograph: Martin Poole

## [Duck curry with aubergine and bamboo by Uyen Luu](#)

A great treat on cold wintry evenings with the comfort of melt-away potatoes and succulent aubergines.



Duck curry with aubergine and bamboo. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

## **Seychellois cari koko – king prawns with tamarind and coconut by Selina Periampillai**

The homemade massalé blend used here evokes the aromatic spice gardens of the Seychelles.



Seychellois cari koko – king prawns with tamarind and coconut.

Photograph: Yuki Sugiura

## [Madhur Jaffrey's shahi murgh korma – royal chicken korma](#)

A rich and creamy authentic Indian party dish.



Shahi murgh korma – royal chicken korma. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

## Lopè Ariyo's suya lamb curry

A Nigerian street food staple is transformed into a memorable home dish.



Suya lamb curry. Photograph: Ellis Parrinder

## Meera Sodha's tomato curry

The sweetness and acidity of tomatoes is married to classic pickling spices in this luxurious vegan dish.



Tomato curry. Photograph: David Loftus

## Dashi keema curry with onsen tamago egg by Shuko Oda

The umami flavours of this milder spiced keema are thanks to a fish-based dashi.



Dashi keema curry with onsen tamago egg. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

## Marie Mitchell's aubergine curry, coleslaw and roti

The addition of dark chocolate gives this dish an extra complexity.



Aubergine curry, coleslaw and roti. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

## Masroor Ahmed's paalag\_gosht – Mughlai lamb with by Madhur Jaffrey

This timeless Moghul recipe should be served with Indian breads or rice and a yoghurt dish.



Masroor Ahmed's paalag gosht – Mughlai lamb. Photograph: William Lingwood

## Punjabi lobia – black-eyed bean curry by Sam Jones

This spicy vegan dish is incredibly popular at the Refugee Community Kitchen.



Punjabi lobia – black-eyed bean curry. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

*The Observer aims to publish recipes for sustainable fish. For ratings in your region, check: [UK](#); [Australia](#); [US](#)*

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[Arab spring: 10th anniversary](#)  
[Middle East and North Africa](#)

## How the Arab spring engulfed the Middle East – and changed the world

An era of uprisings, nascent democracy and civil war in the Arab world started with protests in a small Tunisian city. The unrest grew to engulf the Middle East, shake authoritarian governments and unleash consequences that still shape the world a decade later

Mon 25 Jan 2021 03.00 EST Last modified on Mon 25 Jan 2021 07.09 EST

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## Seascape: the state of our oceans

# Drexciya: how Afrofuturism is inspiring calls for an ocean memorial to slavery

The Book Of Drexciya, graphic novel by Abdul Qadim Haqq and Dai Sato

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## Race

# 'Racism is in the bones of our nation': Will Joe Biden answer 'cry' for racial justice?



Demonstrators protest the death of George Floyd as they gather on the East side of the US Capitol in Washington on 3 June 2020. Photograph: Jacquelyn Martin/AP

Demonstrators protest the death of George Floyd as they gather on the East side of the US Capitol in Washington on 3 June 2020. Photograph: Jacquelyn Martin/AP

Activists are hopeful but cautious as president acknowledges ground shifted in the US after the police killing of George Floyd

*[Chris McGreal in Kansas City](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

In his first few minutes as America's new president, [Joe Biden](#) made a promise so sweeping that it almost seemed to deny history. "We can deliver racial justice," Biden pledged to his factious nation. It wasn't a commitment presented in any detail as he moved on to asserting that America would again be the leading force for good in the world, a claim that draws its own scrutiny.

But Biden acknowledged that the ground has shifted over demands for racial justice in the US following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis last May and the violent white nationalism of Donald Trump. "A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us. The dream of justice for all will be [deferred no longer](#)," said Biden. "And now, a rise in political extremism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism that we must confront and we will defeat."

The coronavirus pandemic has compounded the urgency given its disproportionate toll on minority communities because of economic inequality and a healthcare system that underserves the poor. But what does it mean to deliver racial justice? And how far does any American president have the power to do such a thing?

The anger that burst out of Minneapolis and fueled a surge in Black Lives Matter protests after video of a police officer squeezing the life out of Floyd by kneeling on his neck for nearly nine minutes drew an unusual degree of support across the country. Opinion polls showed most Americans were outraged by the killing and backed police reform, even if that diminished with the violence that accompanied some of the protests and with calls to "defund the police".

But Jeanelle Austin, an African American activist who lives a few blocks from where Floyd was killed and who tends his memorial constructed piecemeal in the street, said that the early promises of police reform in Minneapolis have come to little.

"Nothing has really changed. That's why we're still filling the street," she said. "They've only offered verbiage in terms of what they want to do or the ideas that they have. We haven't seen anything concrete in terms of reforming the Minneapolis police department."



Joe Biden delivers his inaugural address on the Capitol on 20 January: ‘A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us. The dream of justice for all will be deferred no longer.’ Photograph: Rob Carr/Getty Images

Shortly after Floyd’s death, Minneapolis city council voted to dismantle the city’s police force and to replace it with a system that shifted away from the use of armed officers in non-life threatening situations. But the police department remains in place albeit with an \$8m cut in funding, less than 5% of the total budget, redirected to violence prevention and the recruitment of mental health specialists.

The city council also backed away from cutting the number of police officers after the city’s mayor threatened to veto the measure because of a recent surge in gun violence. Austin, director of the [Racial Agency Initiative](#), hasn’t given up on forcing change locally but is looking to Biden to make the difference.

“Racism is deep within the DNA and the bones of the structures of our nation, and so it is a tall order for any one person to change it. Now, the president has a lot more power than anyone else to be able to set right some of the systems and policies and structures,” she said.

“It will be interesting to see which systems Biden plans on addressing head on because race impacts everything. The police, the education system, the financial system, the housing system, the criminal justice system, the health care system. He’s going to have to decide what he’s going to push.”

Within hours of taking office, Biden signed an executive order [“on advancing racial equity”](#) requiring federal agencies to investigate whether their policies create barriers in areas such as access to housing and food assistance.

Arisha Hatch, vice-president of Color of Change, a civil rights group, welcomed the “shift in tone” but said the new president will be held to account by African American voters who delivered victories in cities that decided the election.

“What we’re hoping for is longer term systemic change which will carry us beyond the executive orders issued over the next several days,” she said.

“I don’t take for granted that change is hard. My hope is that we’re in and surviving through a transformational moment. My hope is that people are looking for and moving towards serious change, that they understand the desperate and urgent need that people have. And that they understand their ability to stay in power will be determined by their ability to deliver over the next years.”

How to deliver is widely debated. Hatch wants to see Biden immediately address the pressing issues of the pandemic’s impact on the black community and police reform. Others, including Dreisen Heath of Human Rights Watch’s US programme, want to see a deeper reckoning.



Demonstrator gather to protest the death of George Floyd near the White House on 30 May 2020. Photograph: Evan Vucci/AP

“What Biden could do first is make good on his promise to study reparations for the black community. Legislation is already in place that would establish an expert federal commission to study the legacy of slavery, not just the slave trade, but the ongoing impacts in ongoing harms that are visible in access in lack of access to healthcare, lack of access to food, lack of access to housing, and so forth. And that commission would develop direct proposals for how to provide redress and repair,” said Heath.

Austin is hopeful but cautious. She wants to take Biden’s commitments at face value but Barack Obama’s presidency serves as a warning about putting too much confidence in one leader to bring about change. She said that continued popular protest and pressure will be required to keep the political momentum.

Still, Austin draws hope from Biden appointing the most diverse cabinet in US history and the election of Kamala Harris as vice-president.

“She is very important because Biden is still a white man. He has been groomed to view the world through the lens of a white male. Now is also the

most powerful man in our country and we're still looking at white male power," she said.

"So Vice-President Kamala Harris is huge in terms of being able to advise the president as to an experience that he has never had; he has never lived in a black body. He doesn't know firsthand what it is like to be black in America. But it's also going to be crucial for her to listen because she still doesn't embody everybody's experience. There are certain privileges that she has had, that other people who may even look like her had never had."

Still, given last year's Black Lives Matter protests, Heath said the demand for police reform will remain to the fore, and she is concerned about Biden's track record. "We want to keep military grade equipment out of our communities, we want to hold police departments, prosecutors offices and jails and prisons accountable for discriminatory and unlawful practices," said Heath.

"Biden has his own legacy of being an ally to law enforcement, of increasing the policing footprint. We want to see that footprint decrease and ending close involvement with people experiencing mental health crises, ending any police involvement in enforcement of immigration laws, not having police work as social workers in a capacity that they're not trained to do." Heath pointed to the 21st century policing plan created after the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri following the killing of Michael Brown by a police officer.

A former Minneapolis mayor RT Rybak, is pushing for his city to embrace that plan.

"My hope is that it won't just be about status quo. The 21st century policing plan is to my mind a playbook with specific steps on training, hiring, mental health. One of the key pieces would be a national effort to create a new type of community service officer and recruit young people of colour into that new style of public safety officer," he said.

"Part of the problem with dealing with policing is it's convenient to isolate that issue, but it's so deeply tied to every other part of injustice in our society. Housing, economic opportunity and education. An administration focused on racial justice is probably the most important thing we can do to have peace in our communities, because you can't have that without justice."

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[Pakistan](#)

## Grief, anger and a curfew as Pakistani activist Karima Baloch buried

Family of women's rights advocate, found dead in Canadian lake, call for police to reopen investigation



Karima Baloch was forced to flee to Canada in 2015, where she was later granted political asylum. Photograph: Baloch Students Organization Azad

Karima Baloch was forced to flee to Canada in 2015, where she was later granted political asylum. Photograph: Baloch Students Organization Azad

[Shah Meer Baloch](#) in Islamabad and [Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 06.38 EST

It was the homecoming they never wanted. Five years ago, Karima Baloch fled [Pakistan](#) after her work as a prominent human rights activist put her life in danger. On Sunday morning, on the tarmac of Karachi airport, she was returned to her family at last.

But though she lay lifeless in a wooden coffin, her body was confiscated by Pakistani security officials for hours. Then her home town in Balochistan was placed under the control of paramilitary forces, a curfew was imposed on the region and mobile services were suspended, all to prevent thousands turning out for her funeral on Monday. It was clear that, even in death, Pakistan viewed Baloch as a threat to national security.

News of 37-year-old Baloch's death, [whose body was found floating in Toronto's Lake Ontario](#) on 21 December, sent shockwaves through Pakistan and across the world.

Baloch was the most famous female human rights activist in Pakistan's turbulent region of Balochistan. Her fight for the rights and freedoms of the Baloch people had cost her family, friends and eventually her freedom to live safely in Pakistan and she fled to [Canada](#) in 2015, where she was later granted political asylum.

"Karima was the epitome of women's politics in Balochistan," said Sadia Baloch, 21, a student activist. "Because of her we can leave our houses in a tribal and conservative society. We can protest in a male-dominated society. She was one of the first to challenge the brutal state, outdated norms and tribalism. Her legacy lives on in us."

Even exiled from Pakistan, Baloch's vocal activism continued from Canada and in 2016 she was [listed by the BBC](#) in its 100 most inspirational and influential women. But according to her family, the threats to her life never abated. Though the Toronto police have declared her death by drowning as not suspicious, her family and many back in Balochistan are adamant there could have been foul play, connected to Baloch's high-profile activism.

The family say the circumstances of Baloch's death do not add up and they are pushing the Toronto police to investigate further. There were no witnesses to her death, and though she could not swim, the place where she fell in the lake, Toronto's central island pier, has waist-high railings the whole way round designed to make it hard to fall in accidentally.

Baloch was the second Pakistani dissident to die this year, following the [death of Sajid Hussain](#), a journalist, also from Balochistan, who was forced

to seek asylum in Sweden after facing death threats for his work exposing human rights abuses in Balochistan. In May, Hussain was found drowned in a river near his home. His family say they are unsatisfied with the police ruling of accidental death.

Sameer Mehrab, Baloch's brother who also lives in Canada, described the death threats that she had continued to receive for her activism until recently. "The police chief asked us to accept that it is a non-criminal case, but we will not. The police aren't ready to take into consideration the history or the threats Karima was facing in Pakistan and even in Canada. We demand that the case is investigated considering all the threats and the history," he said.

In a statement, Toronto police said they were still treating the death as non-suspicious and could provide no further details.



Protesters attend a demonstration on 24 December in Karachi, Pakistan, after human rights activist Karima Baloch was found dead in Canada.  
Photograph: Rizwan Tabassum/AFP/Getty Images

Karima Baloch was born on 8 March 1983 in Tump, Balochistan, growing up in a province which has been riddled with decades of conflict due to a long-running nationalist insurgency. Here, thousands of people are

kidnapped every year and “[disappeared](#)” by Pakistan security forces, with no justice or accountability.

It was during her years as a student that Baloch began to get involved in nationalist politics and activism. In defiance of conservative norms, she became the first female chair of the [Baloch Students Organization](#) (BSO-Azad), a political group advocating for the rights of Baloch people.

It was there that she met her husband, Hammal Haider, also at the forefront of the BSO movement. Haider said that Baloch had continually broken new ground for women in Balochistan and would travel to far-flung areas bordering Iran and Afghanistan to convince girls to study and join the political struggle, sometimes travelling to their homes to win over their parents.

“We could never have anticipated, until 2006 when Karima came along, that Baloch women would become a part of politics, let alone that one of them would become the chairperson of the organisation,” said Haider.

“In a society where women weren’t allowed to unveil or talk to men, Karima’s participation in BSO normalised the presence of women in public spaces in the tribal patriarchal society.”

[Pakistan: where the daily slaughter of women barely makes the news](#) |  
[Mohammed Hanif](#)

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However, around 2015 she began to receive death threats for her outspoken views, and fearing for her life, she fled to Canada where she sought political asylum. It was a long and arduous process that would take three years, and though she was thousands of miles away from Pakistan, the threats and tragedy still reached her.

In December 2017, while living in Toronto, Baloch received a message that unless she returned to Pakistan, her uncle, schoolteacher Noor Mohammed, would be killed. She refused to go back, and on 2 January 2018, hours before her asylum hearing, she received the terrible news; her uncle’s body had been found dumped in her home town of Tump.

“Karima was threatened that if she didn’t stop her activism in Canada, they would kill her uncle,” said Haider. “They, state authorities, eventually did as they said. But even these tactics never stopped Karima from raising her voice against human rights abuses in Balochistan.”

In the days after Baloch’s death in December, the streets of cities and towns in Balochistan, and the city of Karachi were filled with a groundswell of female protesters, chanting slogans against human rights abuses, calling themselves Karima and demanding a thorough investigation into her death. The protests were subjected to a blackout in Pakistan’s media, with barely any coverage at all.

It appeared that Pakistan security officials were fearful a similar crowd would fill the streets of Balochistan for her funeral. On Sunday, hundreds rallied in Karachi, denouncing the government for not allowing a funeral prayer to be held for her in the city. The military then closed all roads leading into Tump, where her funeral was held on Monday. Baloch was buried amid tight security, in the presence of immediate family members and hundreds of local mourners.

Video: Relatives & close family friends were allowed to participate in the last funeral prayers of [#KarimaBaloch](#). The huge participation of local women can also be seen in this video. People across the Balochistan were not allowed to farewell their leader.[@Gulalai\\_Ismail](#)  
[pic.twitter.com/mTw6iP3rJG](https://pic.twitter.com/mTw6iP3rJG)

— Niaz Baloch (@Niaz\_Zehri) [January 25, 2021](#)

“There is anger among women here which has been unseen in decades,” said a friend of Baloch’s, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals.

Abid Mir, a political analyst and author in Balochistan, said Baloch had introduced a women’s resistance movement into a conservative tribal society which had always been wholly controlled by powerful male elites. Her death had only fuelled this newfound fire in Balochistan’s women, he said. “Karima was not merely a woman, but a symbol of change in a patriarchal society,” he said.

“Women used to be the backbenchers, invisible in our society, but now they are leading on roads, activism and taking the front seat in politics in Balochistan,” said Mir. “There are thousands of girls who aspire to become Karima – this is what Karima started.”

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## [Opinion](#)[US politics](#)

# Biden wants unity and democracy. But in the US these have always been in conflict

[David Runciman](#)

Its institutions were designed to keep the people out. The new president could have blamed the founding fathers



Illustration by Matt Kenyon

Illustration by Matt Kenyon

Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

The three words that stood out in [Joe Biden's powerful inaugural address](#), if only for the number of times he used them, were “democracy”, “unity” and “truth”. But it was democracy that took centre stage. “This is democracy’s

day,” he said, in his first statement after taking the oath of office. “The will of the people has been heard … Democracy has prevailed.”

Is this apparent vindication of democracy enough for unity and truth to prevail as well? The founding fathers of the American republic, whose history and institutions Biden also repeatedly invoked, might have been surprised to hear him run the three together. They believed they were founding a state that was designed to keep democracy at arm’s length. James Madison, one of the authors of [The Federalist Papers](#) and a future president, stated that the American constitution he helped to write would mean “the total exclusion of the people, in their collective capacity, from any share [in the government]”.

The founders were as keen on unity and truth as Biden. But they thought too much democracy would put them at risk. They viewed the voting public as notoriously fractious and prone to believe all sorts of nonsense. The point of establishing a republic rather than a democracy was to ensure there were safeguards against populism in all its forms.

Biden clearly meant something different by democracy than the people gone wild. He was invoking a different, and much later tradition, that sees democracy as defined by the peaceful transfer of power. In academic circles this is sometimes called the minimalist theory of democracy. It says that it is sufficient for democracy if incumbents, who control the armed forces, hand over that control to the people who defeat them at the ballot box. The guns change hands when the voters change sides.

The trouble with this view is that it is so minimal, unity and truth are optional extras. There are many places around the world where democracy has failed even this test and defeated incumbents have refused to leave, leading to dictatorship or civil war. But when the test is passed it leaves unresolved most of the questions about how to do politics better.

Coming just two weeks after an attempt to [storm the Capitol](#) and prevent the certification of the election result, Biden’s inauguration took place in the shadow of the most serious threat to this minimal definition of democracy in recent American history. The country had come dangerously close to failing

the test. What Biden could also have said, but didn't, was that the founders were in part to blame.

The anger of Trump's supporters was stoked by the institutions designed to keep the people away from the most important decisions. In strict majoritarian terms Biden won the election comfortably, by a national margin of more than 7 million votes. But the [electoral college](#) made it seem much closer, and allowed the defeated president to look for a few thousand votes here or there that might have made the difference. Millions of voters are much harder to conjure out of thin air.

Trump's resistance to democratic realities also rested its hopes on the other institutions of the republic that were meant to keep the people out. He believed that the supreme court, with three of his appointees on it, should save him. He looked to the Senate, which gives a disproportionate influence to sparsely populated rural states, to have his back. The fact that these hopes were misplaced – and the Senate may yet convict him in an impeachment trial – doesn't mean that democracy was vindicated. The institutions that quelled popular resistance to the election result were the same ones that inflamed it.

This suggests it is not enough for Biden to fall back on the long history of American democracy in making his case for what should come next. The peaceful transfer of power obscures the ways in which American democracy is at odds with the institutions that achieved it.

There is a choice to be made here. Democracy could be enhanced – and institutions such as the electoral college and the Senate reformed to reflect current demography rather than ancient history. But that is likely to come at the cost of unity. [Republicans](#) would resist fiercely. Truth would probably suffer too, if only because we have learned that these days resistance tends to come as an assault on the facts. Any attempt to change the constitution would be challenged not just as unpatriotic, but probably as a foreign plot.

The alternative is to stick with the status quo and hope it is enough to paper over the cracks. In that case, unity will have been prioritised over democracy. It is probably the easier path, and Biden may think he has better things to do than pick a fight on democratic institutional reform. Any

bipartisan consensus is unlikely to survive changes that leave one party worse off in electoral terms. Enacting the people's will can be a deeply divisive enterprise.

One temptation – and Biden would hardly be the first president to succumb to it – is to use the word democracy as a catch-all while avoiding these difficult choices. In the short term, it might enable him to concentrate on tackling the immediate challenges the country faces, from the pandemic to the economy. But it also means that frustration with political elites will continue to build.

Invoking the will of the people while relying on institutions that are designed to stifle it is not a recipe for long-term stability. Yet doing anything about it risks the unity for which Biden stands. He is treating democracy as though it were a panacea, when in truth it is always a fight.

On the day of Biden's inauguration the people were indeed excluded, but not in the way the founders had intended. Instead, because of the threat from extremists, the crowds were kept away and replaced by military personnel around the podium and flags down the Mall. It was in keeping with an occasion that paid lip service to an idea whose reality is much more contentious.

The peaceful transfer of power, particularly achieved at such a high price, is only the bare minimum of what needs to be done for democracy to prevail. The rest is much less certain and comes with many risks.

It was the riskiness of democracy that made the founders nervous, but that is its point: the dynamism of people's politics has always gone with a dangerous unpredictability. But there are other risks too. Keeping democracy at bay for the sake of unity does not guarantee a peaceful life. The danger is that it comes to seem less like democracy fulfilled, and more like democracy endlessly deferred.

- David Runciman is professor of politics at Cambridge University
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[Opinion](#)[Television](#)

## In this seemingly endless lockdown, will we finally run out of TV?

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)



We've watched the best shows, we're bored of binge-watching and productions have been put on hold. But there is still hope



Carmela (Edie Falco) and Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini) in The Sopranos, one of the breakout hits of the first lockdown. Photograph: Craig Blankenhorn/AP

Carmela (Edie Falco) and Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini) in The Sopranos, one of the breakout hits of the first lockdown. Photograph: Craig Blankenhorn/AP

Mon 25 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

It is no great surprise that during the first lockdown people spent more time stuck to their screens. Last year, [Ofcom reported](#) that in April we were watching around a third more television and online video than we had been a year before that, and that was when the weather was good. Netflix and Amazon Prime have both recently reported [record numbers](#) of subscribers signing up over the past 12 months, with newcomers such as Disney+ attracting big audiences, too.

During that first lockdown, I was lucky enough to be able to work from home, and I set myself some TV goals. I would rewatch The Sopranos, because I had not seen it for at least 10 years, and I wanted to know if it still stood up as the best show in TV history. It does, and plenty of people had the same idea: it was one of the [breakout hits of 2020](#). I would catch up with [Schitt's Creek](#). I would use documentaries to educate myself, probably

starting with [Ken Burns](#), and I would make sure at least some of what I watched was not in English, because it's easier not to be on your phone when you're watching something Icelandic. (One Instagram scroll equals several crucial plot-points missed.) I thought there would be a new season of [Succession](#) soon enough. I had it covered.

But as the stay-at-home orders keep rolling in, a sort of viewing fatigue has descended. Like many, I have done the big box sets and the best shows of 2020. I have watched at least one and a half documentaries. On terrestrial TV – it's like Netflix, except you have to watch what's put in front of you – there are far more repeats than usual, and a growing suspicion that certain shows that might have languished in a daytime slot have been bumped to the evening without earning it. There is still no release date for Succession's third season. I whispered it quietly, shocked at the thought that I might have to spend an evening talking, or doing another puzzle: are we going to run out of television?

The first lockdown certainly delayed production on some shows and caused cuts to be made. Line of Duty's sixth season was pushed back. His Dark Materials lost an Asriel-focused episode from its excellent second season. A sixth Peaky Blinders was halted, and it was announced that it would be the final season. While it might take longer for the big blockbusters to come down the pipe, though, there is [new television](#) on its way – [Line of Duty has now wrapped](#), and the [final Peaky Blinders](#) series has resumed production. Even at the beginning, programme-makers showed themselves to be resourceful, overall, adapting to their new circumstances. Talking Heads was made on the set of EastEnders with actors doing their own make-up; The Great British Bake Off managed to happen by creating a bubble for presenters, contestants and crew. Zoom-based TV has been mercifully limited but what has emerged has been largely decent. The Serpent had to relocate filming from Thailand to Tring, using the Hertfordshire town as a stand-in, which I'm sure the cast and crew were absolutely fine with, but it was finished in time for its New Year's Day broadcast.

I don't think we are likely to run out of new television any time soon; it might just be a case of delayed gratification. And let's be realistic, there is too much TV for anyone to watch, even in more ordinary times. If every single show simply ceased production, there would still be decades' worth of

shows to work through. [One set of calculations](#) estimates that it would take four years, without sleeping, to “complete” Netflix’s library of TV and films. Even under this government, that is a pessimistic commitment.

I suspect there are a number of reasons for viewing fatigue, if you have it, beyond the seeming numbing endlessness of lockdown itself. It is no longer a novelty to have time to watch the series that once hovered in the back of your mind as possibilities, if only you had a spare five minutes. There isn’t much in the way of communal or “event” viewing at the moment, by which I mean Strictly, I’m A Celebrity and Bake Off, all of which played a role in cheering up the nation. And if it seems as though the top tier of television has been done, then move out of your comfort zone. I can be a snob about drama, but I have thoroughly enjoyed the daft escapism of Death In Paradise lately, and Channel 5 has grown into a haven for comfort-viewing, whether that is with shows about training dogs not to stare at their own reflections, or soaking up farm life or railway journeys by proxy.

Or take inspiration from [Carmela Soprano](#) herself, who starts a movie club with her friends, to work through a list of the 100 greatest films ever made. Apply that to television, and there might even be a way of getting through some of those long-abandoned documentaries.

- Rebecca Nicholson is a columnist and TV critic
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**OpinionCannabis**

# How a cannabis farm cured my fear of nature

[Zoe Williams](#)



A factory with more than 800 plants has been discovered in a building beside the Bank of England – and the news had an unexpected effect on me



The cannabis factory found in the City of London. Photograph: City of London Police/PA

The cannabis factory found in the City of London. Photograph: City of London Police/PA

Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

There's always a detail in apocalypse fiction that looms horrifically in your subconscious from your first encounter with the genre, when you were a bit too young for it. Mine is plants bursting through concrete, that stark reminder that mankind is evanescent and nature is stronger. As a child, it was the most terrible thing I could imagine: grass growing through pavement, creepers tendrilling out of defunct offices. I think I got this phobia from *The Day of the Triffids*, possibly the only book in the British canon where the plants are the bad guy.

It's easy to imagine it happening in the City of London, which is deader than every other dead place, eerie and full of foreboding. What happened instead was that someone [established a cannabis factory of “significant size”](#) (according to the police) right next to the Bank of England. It wasn't the gigantic tent with the 826 plants that gave it away, but rather the strong smell commonly associated with the class B drug. Can you call a smell a

smell when there's nobody around to smell it? Philosophically, maybe not, but yes, in the eyes of the law.

[Enslaved on a British cannabis farm: 'The plants were more valuable than my life'](#)

[Read more](#)

The fact that it got discovered shouldn't blind us to how ingenious this was. It's the first drugs bust of its kind made by City of [London](#) police. This Square Mile has been there, inhabited, full of buildings and whatnot, since the first century AD, possibly even before that, when centuries had no name, yet no one has ever tried to grow weed in it. (I'm not sure where the introduction of marijuana comes in the great timeline of Britain since the Romans.) Say what you like about soft-drug overlords, they know how to think outside the box. What's the best place to do crime? Somewhere crime has never been done, except on computers.

Something about the deliberation of the enterprise, imagining these completely out-of-place plants in their neat rows, carefully tended, with their own heat lamps, has got me completely past any lingering fear of unexpected botany. Nature is healing and, finally, I'm fine with that.

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**Guardian Opinion cartoon**

**Coronavirus**

## **Ben Jennings on the UK's growing Covid death toll – cartoon**

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[Opinion](#)  
[Australia Day](#)

## 26 January: a million bloody words written every year



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Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.20 EST First published on Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.13 EST  
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[\*\*Opinion\*\*](#)[\*\*US politics\*\*](#)

# **Joe Biden's talk of 'healing' is pointless, and will be seen as weakness by the right**

[\*\*Nesrine Malik\*\*](#)

The new president needs to be fearlessly radical – it's the only way to rebalance the economy and tackle the causes of division



‘Joe Biden (pictured with Kamala Harris) should be leading a government ready to take on the twin challenges of rooting out white supremacy and rebalancing the economy.’ Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

‘Joe Biden (pictured with Kamala Harris) should be leading a government ready to take on the twin challenges of rooting out white supremacy and rebalancing the economy.’ Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

Sun 24 Jan 2021 12.15 EST

Normal. The United States is returning to normal. During [Joe Biden's inauguration](#), the commentary was overwhelmingly about a country slowly regaining consciousness, blinking away the bad dream that was Donald Trump. That state of normal was one of not just reinstating all the protocols and rituals of high office, but of the pastoral hand of the president. Biden will now "heal" the nation and rebuild America's standing in the world. "Civility" will cleanse the US of the previous administration's toxicity.

But against the backdrop of the past four years in general and the previous two weeks in particular, the ceremonials all felt a bit flat, like trying to burn incense to banish the smell of a rotting corpse. Trump may be gone as president, but the morbidities he exposed remain. They hang heavily in the air: the 74 million people who voted for him despite four years of lies and carnage; the proportion of voters who still think the election was stolen; the [ongoing round-up](#) of those who stormed the Capitol; the hundreds of thousands of [lives claimed](#) by coronavirus.

None of this was wrought by Trump's hand alone. None of this could have happened without a pre-existing political culture, the "normal" to which the country now yearns to return. But every significant historical moment needs a narrative, and this was it: Trump had wounded a previously healthy America, divided it and lowered its tone, and Biden would now lay his healing hands on it with the help of a diverse coalition of grownups.

In her book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, Isabel Wilkerson likens the US to an old house, flawed in foundation, wrecked by age, weakened by cosmetic changes that never address the structural flaws. "You may not want to go into the basement after a storm to see what the rains have wrought," she writes. "Choose not to look, however, at your own peril. Whatever is lurking will fester whether you choose to look or not. Ignorance is no protection from the consequences of inaction. Whatever you are wishing away will gnaw at you until you gather the courage to face what you would rather not see."

The speed with which Trump's presidency sent the US into a vortex of racial and social discord is the first clue that the old house was built on shaky foundations. These forces cannot be summoned overnight. They were gnawing away at the core of the country long before Trump became

president. They are, in fact, *why* Trump became president. In describing the effects of Covid-19 on those with even mild pre-existing conditions, a doctor told me that the virus is a “mortality accelerant”. It takes the thing that might have claimed you in 20 or 30 years, and weakens your body so that it claims you today.

So let us look at the “normal” that Trump disrupted. Before he took office, the US was a country in which, since 9/11, far-right extremists have been responsible for almost [three](#) times as many attacks as Islamic terrorists. The year 2019 ended up being the deadliest [on record](#) for domestic terrorism in the US since then. Before Trump, while the country’s first African American president was in power, the Black Lives Matter movement was founded in protest at the impunity of those who kill black Americans. And despite the widely accepted fiction that Trump’s popularity was a white working-class revolt, he won against Hillary Clinton among high-income white voters, who went on to benefit from a tax-cut [windfall](#).

In a country already riven by economic and class inequality, Trump proved how easily such divisions could be exploited to benefit rightwingers promising economic prosperity for some at the cost of the rest. It may seem that, after four long years of disruption, what is needed is a quiet spell of stability. But what this moment signifies is not a retreat by the forces that Trump has brought to the surface, but a temporary scattering before they regroup (in “some form”, as Trump himself [said](#)).

[The last four years of Trump were hell. What a relief it's finally over](#)  
Francine Prose

[Read more](#)

To talk about normality, civility, reaching across the divide and healing at a time like this, when millions have rejected that offering at the polls and hundreds marched on the Capitol, is pointless. For the duly elected Democratic party to feel it needs to reassure voters that it comes in peace is an act of weakness – as if it has no radical plans to take on foundational issues and reorder economic and racial relations in the country. This conciliation is a win for the American right – not only for its Capitol-insurrectionist wing, but for its longer-term scaremongering about the “radical left”. This is already evident in the backlash against Biden’s first

executive orders that, in merely undoing what Trump established, are seen as “[culture war aggression](#)”.

Biden should be leading a government ready to take on the twin challenges of rooting out white supremacy and rebalancing the economy, yet it risks being one that aims only to fix the leaks of the past four years. This should be a government that stops papering over the cracks, and finally confronts the causes of divisions and embeds permanent reform. Otherwise, though Trump may be gone, the nightmare will be ongoing.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist
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[England in Sri Lanka 2020-21](#)

## **England beat Sri Lanka in second Test to sweep series – as it happened**

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## England cricket team

# England's Jos Buttler lauds Joe Root for 'masterclass in batting against spin'

- Buttler describes Root's eight-hour 186 as 'an amazing effort'
- England end day three trailing by 42 runs on 339 for nine



Jos Buttler (left) made 55 and was in the perfect position to watch Joe Root's 186 in the second Test against Sri Lanka at Galle. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

Jos Buttler (left) made 55 and was in the perfect position to watch Joe Root's 186 in the second Test against Sri Lanka at Galle. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

*[Ali Martin](#)*

*[@Cricket\\_Ali](#)*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 11.11 EST

Joe Root was praised for giving his England players an education in skill and stamina after a masterful 186 in the heat of Galle that kept the tourists fighting in the second Test and continued his own golden start to 2021.

[Majestic Joe Root run out on 186 by Sri Lanka but keeps England in second Test](#)

[Read more](#)

The England captain, 30, set out on the current six-Test tour of Sri Lanka and India after his first year in international cricket without a century in any format and with self-defeating thoughts about his struggles to turn glossy fifties into innings of substance. But having driven England to a 1-0 series lead with [228 last week](#), and followed this up by batting for more than eight hours in 32-degree temperatures during the second Test, Root has set a standard before the four-match encounter in India that starts on 5 February.

Jos Buttler, who made 55 as England ended day three trailing Sri Lanka by 42 runs at 339 for nine, said: “It’s been a masterclass in batting against spin and it has been a great education for all of us watching from the sidelines. Technically, tactically and physically, it’s an amazing effort. To back up his double hundred in the first Test, both physically and mentally, and to show the application to go and do it again – that hunger just shows where he is at with his game.

“It’s not just young players but older players and people watching from home can learn a lot from watching Joe Root bat against spin.”

[Embuldeniya's spin for Sri Lanka stops England's Joe Root winning the day](#)

[Emma John](#)

[Read more](#)

Buttler is due to hand the vice-captaincy to Ben Stokes for the series in India, with the all-rounder one of three England players – along with Jofra Archer and Rory Burns – to have landed in Chennai on Sunday morning and begun a six-day quarantine in hotel rooms that may allow some limited gym use after three.

While the opening batsman Burns has been on paternity leave during the Sri Lanka tour, Stokes and Archer were rested as part of a rotation plan for England's multi-format cricketers that means Buttler will fly home for a break after the series opener.

The Spin: sign up and get our weekly cricket email

Buttler, who will pass the wicketkeeping gloves to Ben Foakes for the second Test in India, said: "No one wants to miss games but the ECB are looking after player welfare in such a strange time with the pandemic, and in such a busy calendar for English cricket."

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## SportblogEngland in Sri Lanka 2020-21

# **Embuldeniya's spin for Sri Lanka stops England's Root winning the day**

The spinner received limited appreciation at this stripped-back show but his performance handed the hosts the edge



Lasith Embuldeniya celebrates taking Dan Lawrence's wicket with the bowler giving Sri Lanka the edge. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

Lasith Embuldeniya celebrates taking Dan Lawrence's wicket with the bowler giving Sri Lanka the edge. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket



[Emma John](#)

Sun 24 Jan 2021 10.03 EST

Even when full, the ground at Galle has rarely been a raucous venue. There's something about its openness, not to mention the scenery and the sea breeze surrounding it, that gives off a laidback air. Without an obscuring crowd, without an embassy of England fans tooting and swaying through Sweet Caroline, the fort is a particularly steady sight, its grass-covered ramparts freshly green, its crenellations crisply outlined and overlooked by a benevolent watch tower.

Welcome to the austerity games, the stripped-back show that is as far from the crazed excitement of pre-Covid IPL as Quavers are from baked camembert.

[Majestic Joe Root run out on 186 by Sri Lanka but keeps England in second Test](#)

[Read more](#)

When Joe Root walked off the field on Sunday – having scored 186, his second consecutive score of over 150, and demonstrated the kind of return to brilliance that England have been waiting three years for – he deserved his

standing ovation. Unfortunately it came from a solitary fan, wearing cut-off jeans and toting a Mary Poppins umbrella.

There was similarly limited appreciation for Lasith Embuldeniya, the 24-year-old whose left-arm spin prevented Root's batting from winning the day. And yet he was a pleasure to watch, not least for the gorgeous manner in which he approaches the crease and delivers the ball, his lean, athletic figure easing through the motions like a yogi asked to take a beginners' level class in pilates.

The ball leaves his hand at the top of his whirling arc, leaving each delivery with a speculative look, as if he's bowling a question mark. On Sunday he made it drift and dip and bounce alarmingly, sometimes turning with vehemence, sometimes just spitting past the edge of the bat. His seven wickets may have yielded 132 runs but they may well have decided the future of the Test for the home side.

This is only the ninth Test of a career that began against South Africa two years ago. He took a five-fer on debut, before dislocating his thumb at the start of the next match, trying to catch Kagiso Rabada off his own bowling. His success since then has been low-key – 40 wickets at 38 – but of all the bowlers Sri Lanka have turned to fill the hole that Rangana Herath's retirement left, Embuldeniya is the one that comes with the legend's imprimatur.



Joe Root has been supremely confident at the crease during the Test series in Sri Lanka. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

“He has all the fundamentals a left-arm spinner needs,” said Herath, “and he also has something I never had, which is height.” He didn’t quite have the game to trouble Root, a player who, having worn the features of a young lad for such a long time, has seemed suddenly to start looking like the 30-year-old man he is. The boyish grin was very much in evidence, but the little-boy-haunted look he’s sometimes worn, when things have not been going his way, has disappeared. No surprise, given that he’s just worked his way past David Gower on the all-time England runs list. His helmet still looks too big for his head, though.

[England's Jos Buttler lauds Joe Root for 'masterclass in batting against spin'](#)  
[Read more](#)

Root has been cheerfully and supremely confident at the crease since the first Test, and there can be something a little pacifying about these kind of calm, chanceless innings – the kind you appreciate with cultured smiles rather than whooped cries. Embuldeniya’s efforts could have done with a bit of crowd reaction, however; the whistled in-breath that might have come from his very first ball to Dan Lawrence, the cheers (and groans) that would have accompanied Dom Bess’s dismissal near the end of the day.

From 5,000 miles away, much of the day lacked the air of tension that it merited. Television doesn't help: eerie drone shots that reinforce the sense of vacancy around the ground, and the long silences that accompany the action, rather leach any sense of drama. Radio has the edge in this regard; the practised modulations and vocal energy of its commentators manage to convey the action more viscerally, and keep some shape to the narrative.

Test Match Special has, of course, gone full Test Match Sofa, a little ironic given the kerfuffle the latter once created with its guerrilla commentary-from-the-couch. Simon Mann and co have been stripped of their press-box benefits and brought down to our level, forced to get up at 4am, Aggers in his dressing gown, Zaltzman freezing his little stats off in his shed.

Last summer they even had their cake privileges revoked because of Covid. On Sunday, we had Dan Norcross expounding on the joys of an early-morning sausage plait. Norcross was once Test Match Sofa's maverick founder, but no one raises an eyebrow now at calling the game off the TV.

Cricket has an honourable tradition of long-distance commentary, after all – the 1938 Ashes were broadcast ball-by-ball in Australia using telegraphed score updates, with commentators imagining the shots, making up the field settings and dropping pencils on their desk to replicate the sound of bat on ball.

The TMS team does not, as far as we know, employ a foley artist, unless that background burble of ambient noise we hear is actually being created by Henry Moeran blowing into a cardboard tube. But they do provide other unexpected delights, such as the sound of Phil Tufnell experiencing a sunrise, or musing on tranquillity. “There’s something very transfixing about empty stadiums” he says. Well, we’re all on a learning curve.

The danger, as Alastair Cook has voiced, is that it’s all working a bit too well, and the BBC might go down the route of the ICC’s home umpire policy, and stop shipping them abroad altogether.

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## [Australia sport](#)

# Australian players prioritise South Africa Test tour over New Zealand T20

- Abbott latest to commit despite country's Covid-19 troubles
- Greenberg named Australian Cricketers' Association CEO



Sean Abbott is the latest Australian player to declare his preference for Test cricket in South Africa over Twenty20 in New Zealand. Photograph: Brendon Thorne/Getty Images

Sean Abbott is the latest Australian player to declare his preference for Test cricket in South Africa over Twenty20 in New Zealand. Photograph: Brendon Thorne/Getty Images

*Australian Associated Press*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.45 EST

The Australian Cricketers' Association says players will commit to Test matches in South Africa ahead of the easier route of playing Twenty20 cricket in New Zealand. Sean Abbott on Monday became the latest player to declare his preference was Test cricket, even if it meant warming the bench rather than playing.

Despite the country battling a contagious new strain of coronavirus, Cricket South Africa is looking increasingly likely to host Australia for three Tests in March. That had at one stage looked likely to present tired multi-formatted players with a tantalising option of choosing white-ball cricket with both tours run at the same time.

[Raw talent plus IPL cash point to an era of Indian dominance | Andy Bull](#)  
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While the five-match T20 series in New Zealand will not require quarantine on return, players in South Africa will be in a hard bubble for around a month before a fortnight's hotel stay when they arrive back in Australia.

The South Africa visit will also be the first time Australia has played red-ball matches in the country since the 2018 ball-tampering scandal.

"I don't believe people will be looking for the easy route of T20 in New Zealand rather than a Test tour," ACA chairman Greg Dyer said. "They still want to play Test cricket. They recognise that they have a responsibility to the game, which actually transcends borders."

"And they will need to potentially travel internationally in order to make good those responsibilities. We're all on the same page in this. Cricket stands fairly united in terms of the way in which we want to go forward."

If both tours go ahead, it will raise several questions over the star power of the T20 team in a World Cup year. Selectors would likely want to take considerable back-up on the Test tour, given the difficulties associated with flying in players.

Abbott, Moises Henriques and Mitchell Swepson all played in Australia's last T20 and were unused squad members during the 2-1 Test series loss to

India. While Abbott will basically be guaranteed a game against the Black Caps, the New South Wales quick has his heart set on making a long-awaited Test debut.

“I’m not in the privileged position to have the choice and to say to JL [coach Justin Langer] ‘I want to go here or there’,” he said. “The dream is always to play Test cricket and I can’t play Test cricket if I’m in New Zealand, so I would definitely prefer to be going to South Africa with a chance of playing Test cricket.”

Alex Carey, who is seen as a long-term successor to Tim Paine as Australia’s Test wicketkeeper, said last week he would rather run drinks in South Africa than play in the white-ball series.

Carey was recently squeezed out of Australia’s T20 team but the 28-year-old would be a near-certain starter in New Zealand given the absence of Test players.

Abbott conceded players had some concerns about the 10,000 new cases of coronavirus per day in South Africa, but has put his faith in the experts. “They wouldn’t send us over there unless they were 100% certain they could keep us safe,” he said.

It comes as Todd Greenberg was appointed chief executive of the ACA – his first big job since quitting as [NRL](#) CEO last year.

Covid-19 remains cricket’s biggest challenge and while tensions between players and officials cooled last year, there remains a significant broadcaster issue. That will make Greenberg’s first two years crucial amid pay talks, with the current memorandum of understanding to expire in 2022.

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## Ten talking points from the weekend football FA Cup

# FA Cup fourth round: 10 talking points from the weekend's action

Luke Shaw is proving José Mourinho wrong, while West Ham could have European football on their minds next season



Pépé, Ben Tozer, Billy Gilmour. Composite: Getty Images/Shutterstock

Pépé, Ben Tozer, Billy Gilmour. Composite: Getty Images/Shutterstock

[Guardian sport](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

## 1) Shaw has turned his career around

“He was in front of me and I was making every decision for him. He has to change his football brain,” José Mourinho said of Luke Shaw after a game in 2017. “We need his fantastic physical and technical qualities, but he cannot continue to play with my brain.” Few could have imagined four years later

that the former Southampton defender could be first choice left-back at Old Trafford and eyeing up a return to the England squad. There is no arguing that Shaw looks far fitter now than four years ago but he has heeded Mourinho's advice to "change his football brain". Against Liverpool, Shaw was superb in defence and attack; going forward he made key overlapping runs, aiding Marcus Rashford to ensure United dominated that flank in a battle that was crucial to the victory. The arrival of Alex Telles seems to have spurred Shaw on to build on last season's form. Gareth Southgate will have taken notice. **Will Unwin**

- *Match report: [Manchester United 3-2 Liverpool](#)*

## 2) West Ham can dream of the Champions League

It may be 16 years since David Moyes [led Everton to Champions League qualification](#) but his assistant, Alan Irvine, can see plenty of parallels between that squad and West Ham this season. After the thrashing of Doncaster on Saturday, victory at Crystal Palace on Tuesday night would take Moyes's side ahead of the champions Liverpool in the table and into fourth spot. "There are similarities from the point of view that nobody expected it," said Irvine, who worked under his fellow Scot at Preston and Everton. "Of course we haven't achieved it but it's great for us to be there. When you come into a team that has been fighting at the wrong end of the table, which we did at Everton as well, then the first thing you want to do is get to a position when you're not looking over your shoulder. Then you can start resetting the goals." **Ed Aarons**

- *Match report: [West Ham 4-0 Doncaster](#)*

[Defensive struggles suggest Liverpool have stood still while others push on](#) | [Barney Ronay](#).

[Read more](#)

## 3) Arsenal are still carrying too many passengers

It said plenty that the three players to come out with flying colours from Arsenal's insipid defeat at Southampton on Saturday were Kieran Tierney,

Emile Smith Rowe and Bukayo Saka. The first two were left in London and Saka did, at least, manage to add some drive when hauled off the bench for the final half an hour. That could not really be said for Nicolas Pépé and Willian, recalled having both fallen from favour in the league, even if neither disgraced himself. Pépé created his side's best chance when playing Eddie Nketiah through, but the problem is that Mikel Arteta needs much more than that from his club-record signing, along with a pricey summer arrival from Chelsea. They need to be grabbing games by the scruff of the neck, but the tie passed Arsenal by until a late rally that fizzled out quickly enough. Arsenal have managed to belatedly solve the [Mesut Özil](#) and [Sokratis Papastathopoulos](#) conundrums over the past week: the nagging worry is that two further expensive millstones are coming down the track.

**Nick Ames**

- *Match report: [Southampton 1-0 Arsenal](#)*



Willian has struggled to prove himself in an Arsenal shirt. Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP/Getty Images

#### **4) Brighton must sharpen their shooting**

It was all a familiar sight. Brighton dominated possession, finished with 21 shots to Blackpool's five and created enough chances to score as many goals

as they pleased. They instead defeated a resolute opponent, a League One club dealing with five new positive Covid-19 tests, only after a long-range effort from Alexis MacAllister deflected into the net off Steven Alzate. A freak goal. There is little doubt about Brighton's quality, but it seems clear that their season will be defined by how clinical they can be in front of goal. Still, a relatively uncomplicated win over Blackpool is an improvement on being dragged to penalties by [League Two's Newport County](#) in the previous round, an experience Graham Potter described as "traumatic". **Tumaini Carayol**

- Match report: [Brighton 2-1 Blackpool](#)

[Chelsea set to sack Frank Lampard with Thomas Tuchel to replace him](#)

[Read more](#)

## 5) Gilmour is primed to make impact for Chelsea

It may be [Thomas Tuchel rather than Frank Lampard](#), but it is surely time for Chelsea's manager to unleash Billy Gilmour. The teenager is looking sharp after recovering from a long-term knee injury. Lampard has restricted Gilmour to appearances in a Champions League dead rubber and a couple of FA Cup ties, but the midfielder may keep his place when Chelsea host Wolves in the Premier League on Wednesday. The 19-year-old was outstanding in Chelsea's win over Luton, passing crisply, and his partnership with Mason Mount showed plenty of promise. His inexperience does not seem to be an issue. More seasoned midfielders, Mateo Kovacic and Jorginho, have not impressed recently and, if N'Golo Kanté is out again with a hamstring injury, it is hard to see why Gilmour should return to the bench against Wolves. He showed that he can handle himself against big opponents last season, demolishing Liverpool and Everton. **Jacob Steinberg**

- Match report: [Chelsea 3-1 Luton](#)

Quick Guide

### FA Cup: fifth round draw

Show

Burnley v Bournemouth or Crawley  
Manchester United v West Ham  
Sheffield United v Bristol City  
Wolves v Southampton  
Barnsley v Chelsea  
Everton v Wycombe or Tottenham  
Swansea v Manchester City  
Leicester v Brighton

*Ties to be played midweek, week beginning 8 February*

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

## 6) Foxes look defanged without Vardy

Jamie Vardy is 34, and on Saturday had an operation to fix a persistent hip problem. This may not be a problem for Leicester in the short term: “we can cope without him”, insisted Brendan Rodgers, and in any case Vardy is expected to be back within a couple of weeks. But perhaps Sunday’s [FA Cup](#) tie against Brentford offered a glimpse of a future Leicester would prefer not to confront just yet. Rather than trying to replace Vardy like-for-like, Rodgers used Ayozé Perez as a false No 9, with the wide forwards and James Maddison looking to make runs beyond. After some fits and starts it seemed to work, albeit against second-tier opposition. And yet, a note of warning: Leicester have not beaten a Premier League team without Vardy for almost 13 months. When injury or form finally claim Vardy, one thing is for certain: replacing him will be no easy task. **Jonathan Liew**

• Match report: [Brentford 1-3 Leicester City](#)

## 7) Rodríguez a cut above as he looks to inspire Everton

There was little to learn for [Everton](#) as they waltzed past Sheffield Wednesday into the next round but it did give the public a chance to see the quality James Rodríguez has to offer in the second half the season. The

Colombian regularly showed a standard of passing others in a Toffees shirt could only aspire to. If [Everton](#) are to push for a top-four finish, Rodríguez will be central to it, as he can make the difference against the best teams in the league, a match-winner who has proved himself at a World Cup and in the Champions League, which is the sort of experience Carlo Ancelotti will be relying on as winter turns to spring. The rest of the team look more positive when the midfielder is on the pitch, which was evidenced during his spell out of the team in December. Now he is back and looking ready to take on the Premier League. **Will Unwin**

- *Match report: [Everton 3-0 Sheffield Wednesday](#)*



James Rodríguez was impressive again as Everton eased past Sheffield Wednesday. Photograph: Clive Brunskill/Getty Images

## 8) Even Guardiola's galácticos struggle with long throws

When Pep Guardiola waxed lyrical about the maturity of his [Manchester City](#) squad, it was in effect a back-handed compliment that served as another reminder of how closely Cheltenham Town had run them. Michael Duff's players rode their luck, as he knew they would have to, but the League Two side came within nine minutes of unseating arguably the best team in the

country and recording a famous upset. City were rattled, none more so than when the Cheltenham captain Ben Tozer limbered up for another monstrous long throw late on. “Unfortunately in the Tony Pulis era at Stoke City I was not here,” Guardiola said. “But I heard a lot of stories from my staff about this weapon; it’s an incredible weapon. You can avoid corners and free-kicks but avoiding throw-ins is impossible and when they put it [in the box] it’s so difficult.” **Ben Fisher**

- Match report: [Cheltenham 1-3 Manchester City](#)

## 9) Can Brewster end his barren Blades run?

If Sheffield United hoped that a [£23.5m outlay on Rhian Brewster](#) would pay for a place in next season’s Premier League, the probability that the Championship beckons dictates that he is destined to remain their record signing for quite some time. The numbers are unflattering: 16 games have brought no goals and four shots against League One Plymouth did not produce the elusive first. “It’ll come for Rhian because he is a finisher,” said a supportive Chris Wilder. Brewster’s return of 11 goals in 22 games on loan at Swansea suggests as much but Billy Sharp looked altogether, well, sharper on Saturday. Brewster could be forgiven for lacking confidence as his drought continues but his failure so far means he and United could be stuck with each other. “He’s got to keep his own spirits up,” Wilder said. “We have belief in him. We are all rooting for him and it’ll come.” **Richard Jolly**

- Match report: [Sheffield Utd 2-1 Plymouth](#)

## 10) Striking issues remain for Nuno and Wolves

An FA Cup tie against a side 111 places below them in the league felt like the ideal opportunity for Wolves to rediscover the goal-scoring touch which has abandoned them of late. Vitinha’s fantastic long-range strike was enough to see off National League North side Chorley, but Nuno Espírito Santo’s side can count themselves extremely lucky to have not at least been taken to extra time in Lancashire on Friday. Wolves staggered rather than sauntered into round five, with [the absence of Raúl Jiménez](#) still painfully obvious.

The arrival of Willian José is certainly welcome, but both Patrick Cutrone and Fabio Silva did nothing to suggest they could provide serious competition for the Brazilian on Friday, with neither mustering a shot on target against part-time opposition. In the end, it was job done for Nuno in regards to avoiding a monumental upset, but the issues which have plagued his side in recent weeks show no signs of abating. **Aaron Bower**

- *Match report: [Chorley 0-1 Wolves](#)*
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## Manchester United

# Solskjær hails Manchester United's 'statement win' over Liverpool in FA Cup

- Manager's first win over Liverpool shows 'we can match the best'
- Jürgen Klopp says of poor run: 'We have to solve it together'

01:43

*[Jamie Jackson at Old Trafford](#)*

*[@JamieJackson](#)*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 15.41 EST

Ole Gunnar Solskjær hailed a "statement win" for [Manchester United](#) after Liverpool were beaten 3-2 in the FA Cup fourth round at Old Trafford.

An entertaining cup tie was decided by a late Bruno Fernandes free-kick as United progressed to meet West Ham in the next round at home. Solskjær admitted was particularly pleased with the manner of victory – [his first against major rivals Liverpool](#) at the fifth attempt.

[Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes sinks Liverpool in FA Cup thriller](#)  
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"For us it's a good feeling, to play on our terms," the manager said. "We've found a way of playing that we believe in, that the players believe in. We are getting stronger and stronger. We've had some good results previously, going with a diamond or a 3-5-2 to nullify the opponents. But today we had positive selection, that's the statement to ourselves, confidence boost that we can match the best with our style of football."

Solskjær scored the winner when United beat [Liverpool](#) in the FA Cup fourth round in 1999 as United went on to claim a historic Treble. The manager was asked if Sunday's result could also be pivotal to success this year. "Definitely in the dressing room now is a great atmosphere, but I will answer you on Wednesday [after hosting Sheffield United]," Solskjær said.

"I want to see the reaction, how we mentally go again. Everyone is elated and on a high, they should be. But tomorrow morning I want to see players thinking about Wednesday, not today."

One concern is a knee injury suffered by Marcus Rashford, who had created Mason Greenwood's equaliser after Mohamed Salah opened the scoring before later giving United a 2-1 lead. "Marcus will have to do a scan - hopefully it is not too bad, we will see tomorrow," Solskjær said.

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For Jürgen Klopp the loss continued Liverpool's concerning slump, his team managing only one win in seven matches. "It's not what we wanted so it's frustrating," said the manager. "But we made a lot of steps in the right direction."

Klopp insisted that Liverpool remain united. "Don't worry about us, as a group we are really together and we have to solve it together," said the German. "We are just in this moment and we try to win football games again."

Solskjær also that Jesse Lingard may leave in the current window.

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## SportblogAustralian Open

# Australian Open buildup shows no sport handling pandemic as clumsily as tennis

[Tumaini Carayol](#)

The year's first grand slam will not produce a fair competition with many players forced to compete without a proper warmup



Novak Djokovic prepares for the Australian Open by playing tennis on his balcony in quarantine in Adelaide. Photograph: Morgan Sette/AFP/Getty Images

Novak Djokovic prepares for the Australian Open by playing tennis on his balcony in quarantine in Adelaide. Photograph: Morgan Sette/AFP/Getty Images

Mon 25 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

No tennis player across the world attracts drama like Yulia Putintseva. The story goes that at just 16, she lost in the finals of the US Open junior event, stormed off the court and when officials beckoned her to return she dramatically proclaimed: “It’s not safe to be around me.” She once flipped off an [Australian Open](#) crowd on her way out after a loss. Her deliciously petty handshakes, so entertaining for onlookers, are detested across the sport.

[Extra women's tennis tournament scheduled for quarantined Australian Open players](#)

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There was always going to come a time when her name virally flitted across the internet, but the surprise was that it [came in the form of her social media posts](#). Throughout last week the Kazakh became one of the most prominent voices at the Australian Open [from those critical of the Victorian state government](#) for putting 72 players who arrived in the state on contaminated flights into a hard 14-day lockdown. In response, they received an avalanche of criticism from the Australian public.

In hindsight, the butting of heads between tennis players and the public was inevitable. Over the past 10 months, no sport has navigated the pandemic as clumsily as tennis. The tone was set by the Adria tour last April, [the superspreader event conceived by Novak Djokovic](#), and it has endured: Alexander Zverev partied when he should have been in quarantine, Sam Querrey flitted from Russia to London while infected with coronavirus. Most spectacularly, the recently retired Dominika Cibulkova managed to jump the queue and was vaccinated before the elderly and healthcare workers, to the rage of the Slovak public.

While complaints perceived as entitled are not at all in line with the reckless actions of some of their colleagues, the theme in tennis over the past nine months has been failure to grasp key aspects of the situation. Some continue to project a basic lack of understanding of how the virus works. Most recently, Juan Ignacio Londero of Argentina bemoaned the length of the quarantine since most players had tested negative: “They treat you like you have leprosy,” he said. A day later, on day seven of quarantine, Paula Badosa of Spain tested positive.

There has also been a failure to understand the mood of the public as people across the world deal with the fatigue, insecurity and trauma, 10 months and counting into the pandemic. Those sensations are even more heightened in Australia. Melbourne has gone more than two weeks without a new community case. The prospect of falling back into another lockdown never strays far from minds. For 10 months, athletes have been told that the essential role of sports in these times is to provide an escape and distraction. They have learned in Australia that many people do not believe that to be true.



Naomi Osaka is training for the year's first grand slam with a team of four.  
Photograph: Brenton Edwards/AFP/Getty Images

As the quarantine endures, the players have also received deserved sympathy. Many players adjusted to their new situation with a quiet resolve and those who amplified their problems have legitimate issues. Even if [Tennis Australia](#) did communicate the possibility of players being forced into a hard lockdown, both players and organisation carry the blame for so many players failing to understand the risks of travelling across closed borders in the middle of a pandemic.

Djokovic is not the villain in this story. Workers should always be able to make their collective opinions heard and [Djokovic's leaked list of requests](#)

to Tennis Australia's chief executive, Craig Tiley, widely characterised as a list of demands, seemed to be a genuine attempt to help his colleagues after discussions on WhatsApp. But, as is so often the case with Djokovic, the execution was a failure. The reasonable, constructive suggestions were counterbalanced by absurd ideas about potentially housing players in private compounds with courts and adjusting the coronavirus protocol.

[Andy Murray 'devastated' as he shelves Australian Open plans](#)

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As the players edge towards freedom, one lingering question is why this tournament exists. It certainly is not going to produce a fair competition. This period has shone a light on the inequalities in tennis. As tennis players confined in Melbourne strike balls against mattresses and mourn their fitness, they have seen Djokovic relaxing on his Adelaide balcony and Naomi Osaka training with a vast team of four. Many players will be forced to compete without any proper warmup and the men will have to do so in potentially sweltering heat across best of five sets.

While many residents have registered their opposition to the event, Tennis Australia does not gain financially from it. The recent dispute over the A\$40m (£22.5m) quarantine bill reflects an uncertainty about how the enormous costs will be funded.

The closest thing to an answer was provided by the Victorian premier, Dan Andrews, presenting the event as facing an existential threat. "If the Australian Open does not happen in Melbourne, it will happen somewhere else," he said. "It will happen in Japan, it will happen in China, it will happen in Singapore. The real risk then is, it doesn't come back."

It was deeply unconvincing. Most Asian tennis events have already been cancelled and a sport so deeply rooted in tradition is not going to rid itself of one of its most important events because of a pandemic. Once the quarantine ends and competitions resume, the hope is that the players themselves will allow us to forget these early complications with the force of their talent.

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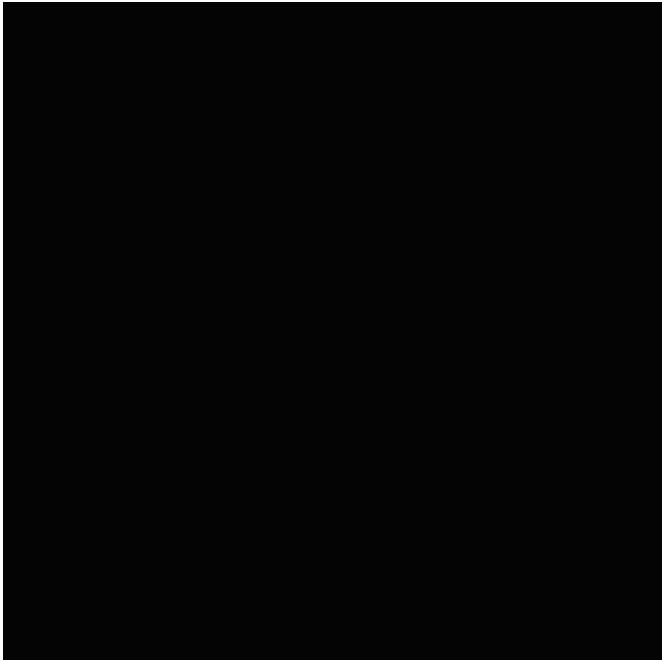
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## NFL

# Chiefs' Mahomes sets up Super Bowl showdown with Brady after win over Bills

- AFC Championship game: Buffalo Bills 24-38 Kansas City Chiefs
- Kansas City Chiefs have chance [to win second title in two years](#)



Patrick Mahomes celebrates after throwing a touchdown against the Buffalo Bills. Photograph: Jeff Roberson/AP

Patrick Mahomes celebrates after throwing a touchdown against the Buffalo Bills. Photograph: Jeff Roberson/AP

*Associated Press*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 22.21 EST

It took the [Kansas City Chiefs](#) five frustrating decades to make their second Super Bowl appearance. Now, the defending champs are headed there for

the second straight year.

Showing no lingering effects from a concussion, Patrick Mahomes sliced up Buffalo's secondary with ruthless efficiency as the Chiefs rolled to a 38-24 victory over Josh Allen and the Bills in the AFC championship game on Sunday night. Mahomes threw for 325 yards and three touchdowns, with most of the attention focused on his favorite targets Travis Kelce and Tyreek Hill.

[Tom Brady into his 10th Super Bowl as Buccaneers beat Packers](#)  
[Read more](#)

The Chiefs will face a familiar foe Tom Brady and the NFC champ Buccaneers in two weeks in Tampa, Florida.

Kelce finished with 13 catches for 118 yards and two touchdowns, and Hill added nine catches for 172 yards, becoming the first duo in [NFL](#) history with consecutive games of at least 100 yards receiving each in a single postseason.

Clyde Edwards-Helaire and Darrel Williams added short TD runs for the Chiefs, who will try to become the eighth franchise and first team since the Brady-led New England Patriots in 2003 and '04 to defend the Lombardi Trophy.

Allen, who had his worst game of the season in a Week 6 loss to the Chiefs, again struggled against the blitzing Kansas City defense. He finished with 287 yards passing with two touchdowns and an interception, but a big chunk of his numbers came as the Bills tried to rally from a 38-15 deficit in the final minutes.

Their frustration boiled over with 3:19 to go, when Allen was getting sacked by Tanoh Kpassagnon. Alex Okafor finished off the tackle, and Allen pitched the ball in his face in retaliation. Offensive linemen Jon Feliciano and Dion Dawkins rushed in and leveled Okafor, resulting in a flood of offsetting personal foul penalties.

It capped a bitter loss for the Bills, who had reached their first AFC title game since beating Kansas City at home on 1 January 1994. They had won 11 of 12 since their loss to the Chiefs earlier this season, and they hadn't trailed in the second half since Week 8 and were riding a wave of confidence that this might finally be their championship year.

Instead, after finally conquering the Patriots in the AFC East, the Bills have a new roadblock to the Super Bowl.

The Chiefs actually spotted the Bills a 9-0 lead, thanks in large part to Mecole Hardman's muffed punt inside their five that gifted Buffalo a touchdown. But the reigning champs were hardly rattled; the Chiefs, after all, rallied from double-digits in each of their postseason wins last season, including their Super Bowl triumph over San Francisco.

Mahomes and Kelce soon found their groove. And the rest of the Chiefs offense followed suit.

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## Green Bay Packers

# Aaron Rodgers' brilliance is clear but history may judge him unfairly



Aaron Rodgers walks off the field after the NFC championship game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Photograph: Morry Gash/AP

Aaron Rodgers walks off the field after the NFC championship game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Photograph: Morry Gash/AP

The Green Bay Packers quarterback fell short in a championship game once again. There is a risk his extraordinary talent will be obscured

*[Hunter Felt](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

The ball was in Aaron Rodgers's hands – until it wasn't. It was fourth down, with a little over two minutes left in the NFC Championship game and the Green Bay Packers needed a touchdown and a successful two-point conversion to tie the game. Still, Rodgers will almost certainly be named the

2020 NFL MVP in the coming weeks. If anyone had earned this opportunity, it was Rodgers. Yet, Packers head coach Matt LaFleur decided instead to bring out Mason Crosby for a field goal that cut the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' lead from eight points to five. This gave the ball back to Tom Brady with two minutes left to go. To practically nobody's surprise, Rodgers did not get the ball back. He instead was relegated to a mere spectator as he watched another Super Bowl dream die. The Buccaneers [defeated the Packers 31-26](#).

Rodgers is an all-time great quarterback. He's a two-time league MVP – and almost certainly will be named MVP again this year – and has been elected to the Pro Bowl nine times. A list of his statistical accomplishments takes up two whole paragraphs of the three-paragraph introduction to his [extremely long Wikipedia page](#). There you can learn, among many other things, that Rodgers is the fastest player to get to 400 passing touchdowns and has the highest single-season passer rating (122.5 back in 2011). It's ridiculous to think that his career could be considered a disappointment.

[Tom Brady into his 10th Super Bowl as Buccaneers beat Packers](#)

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Yet, if you want to be considered in the upper echelon of NFL quarterbacks, there's one statistic that trumps them all: Super Bowls, the number you reach and the number you win. Rodgers has gone one-for-one. He led the [Green Bay Packers](#) to victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers back in the 2010 Super Bowl. That was only his third year as a starting quarterback and, after being named the game's MVP, it felt like it would be the first of several championships over his career.

Rodgers has yet to return to the Super Bowl. Following his latest postseason loss, Rodgers is now 1-4 in NFC Championship games. This time around, playing at home in Lambeau Field after one of his most impressive seasons, it looked like he had his best chance at breaking that streak. Instead, the 37-year-old is increasingly in danger of being remembered – unfairly – as an underachiever.

It's beyond an understatement to say that, of all the players on the roster, the starting quarterback is the most important. In today's pass-heavy game, it's nearly impossible to win without a top QB. Still, even though they are the

focus, quarterbacks aren't the totality of the offense: their success is tied to the production of the receivers, running backs and tight ends that surround them – and the ability of the defense to stop the other team scoring. Even if a team is successful in all these areas, when it comes to a win-or-go-home playoff game, [one flub or poor coaching decision](#) can make the difference.

We all know this. This is Football 101. Yet, whenever any of us get around to discussing quarterback greatness, it seems we temporarily forget this. In this instance, it doesn't help that the winning quarterback for Tampa Bay was Brady, who is headed to his 10th Super Bowl with a chance to win his seventh ring.

Yet even Brady would be the first to say that his success is partly due to where he has ended up. [According to sportswriter Ian O'Connor](#), during his time with the Patriots, Brady said this about Rodgers: "He'd thrown for 7,000 yards every year. He's much more talented than me." While Brady is heading to the Super Bowl without Belichick's help this time, The Ringer's Kevin Clark [made the point](#) that Brady put himself in a better position to win by joining the Buccaneers considering "the Patriots' lack of offensive weapons."

None of this leaves Rodgers completely off the hook for the Packers' playoff struggles. In this game alone, Brady threw three interceptions, but Green Bay only managed to score points as a result of one of them. On the other two, their offense went three-and-out, something which has to be put mostly on Rodgers.

Even if LaFleur had decided to go for it on fourth down on the Packers' last possession, Rodgers would have had to connect for a touchdown and a two-point conversion just to tie the game. It was a longshot. Still, it felt like Rodgers had a chance to put his destiny on his own shoulders and he – and the fans – were denied the chance of knowing how that would have ended.

## MVP of the week

**Tyreek Hill, wide receiver, Kansas City Chiefs.** Was Patrick Mahomes at 100% when [the Chiefs beat the Buffalo Bills](#) to get a crack at their second championship in two years? Does it matter when you have targets like Hill

and Travis Kelce? Mahomes was still great on Sunday, of course, but Hill was almost impossible to cover and his ability to add yards after the catch slashed the Bills in the AFC championship game. Hill ended the game with 172 receiving yards. Mahomes rightly gets the plaudits for his otherworldly skills, but we shouldn't forget that his supporting cast help him reach exit velocity.

## Stat of the week



Tom Brady now has an NFC championship to go along with his long list of AFC titles. Photograph: Tannen Maury/EPA

**10.** Tom Brady will play in his 10th Super Bowl next month after the Bucs' victory over the Packers. While Rodgers and Mahomes have more pure talent, Brady's pathological commitment to winning remains breathtaking. Those who wondered whether his achievements with the New England Patriots were solely down to being paired with Bill Belichick's football genius now have their answer.

## Video of the week

The [@BuffaloBills](#) recover the fumble inside the 5! [#NFLPlayoffs](#) [#BillsMafia](#)

□: #BUFvsKC on CBS

□ : NFL app // Yahoo Sports app: <https://t.co/RTcXvhOR4u>  
[pic.twitter.com/DuEcjADKyd](https://pic.twitter.com/DuEcjADKyd)

— NFL (@NFL) [January 25, 2021](#)

The Bills couldn't have hoped for a better start to the AFC Championship game. They scored first, it was just a field goal but it was a solid start. Then the Chiefs' Mecole Hardman muffed a punt, giving possession right back to the Bills, who promptly converted it into a touchdown to go up 9-0. Then the good times came to a sudden end for Buffalo. Hardman made up for his mistake by scoring Kansas City's first touchdown and then the Chiefs rattled off 21 unanswered. The Chiefs eventually won 38-24. The Bills have plenty to be upbeat about after a successful season, but they must also shudder at the thought that they need to get past Mahomes and Co for the next 10 years if they are to make a return to the Super Bowl.

## Quote of the week

*“[The Packers have] a lot of guys’ futures that are uncertain, myself included”* – Aaron Rodgers after the loss to the Buccaneers on Sunday.

We started this column with Rodgers, and we'll end with him too. It's highly probable that the quarterback was merely a little low after another deflating loss in the NFC championship game. But he's enough of an eccentric that it wouldn't be the biggest surprise if he walked away after a season that was flawless until that final showdown with Tampa Bay.

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## Arsenal

# Arsenal win race to sign Real Madrid midfielder Martin Ødegaard on loan

- Real Sociedad and Ajax also interested in midfielder
- Norwegian poised for Gunners debut on Saturday



Martin Ødegaard is joining Arsenal on loan for the rest of the season, subject to a medical. Photograph: Albert Gea/Reuters

Martin Ødegaard is joining Arsenal on loan for the rest of the season, subject to a medical. Photograph: Albert Gea/Reuters

*[Fabrizio Romano](#)*

*[@FabrizioRomano](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 04.35 EST

Arsenal have won the race to sign the [Real Madrid](#) midfielder Martin Ødegaard on loan, beating off competition from Real Sociedad and Ajax to

secure the services of the 22-year-old attacking midfielder.

['Amazing journey': Mesut Özil thanks Arsenal as he seals Fenerbahce move](#)  
[Read more](#)

The two clubs have agreed the deal with [Arsenal](#) paying the player's salary until the end of the season. Ødegaard will have a medical before completing the move and the [Arsenal](#) manager, Mikel Arteta, hopes to have him available for the game against Manchester United on Saturday.

Ødegaard had an outstanding season on loan at Real Sociedad in 2019-20 but was recalled early by Real Madrid, only to be used sparingly by Zinedine Zidane this campaign. He will now have a chance to get this season back on track and will be an excellent addition for Arsenal.

There is no option to buy included in the loan deal but the two clubs will discuss the best way forward after the Norwegian's spell in north London has come to an end.

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Ødegaard joined [Real Madrid in 2015 aged 16](#) but has yet to establish himself as a first-team regular. He has made eight league appearances for Real and been loaned out to Heerenveen, Vitesse and Real Sociedad. He has 25 caps and one goal for Norway.

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## Gymnastics

# Nia Dennis wins plaudits for stunning 'black excellence' gymnastics routine

- UCLA athlete says routine ‘reflects everything that I am’
- Routine clinches victory for team over Arizona State



Nia Dennis is known for her eye-catching floor routines. Photograph: Kyusung Gong/AP

Nia Dennis is known for her eye-catching floor routines. Photograph: Kyusung Gong/AP

[Guardian sport](#)

Sun 24 Jan 2021 19.44 EST

US gymnast Nia Dennis’s latest floor routine, which she dedicated to black culture, has won praise from fans such as Missy Elliott and Simone Biles after it attracted millions of views on social media over the weekend.

This is what [#blackexcellence](#) looks like. [@DennisNia](#) does it again! □

□ [@Pac12Network](#) <pic.twitter.com/2vxgyTvUCG>

— UCLA Gymnastics (@uclagymnastics) [January 24, 2021](#)

Dennis, a senior at UCLA, started her routine with Kendrick Lamar, and the rest of the performance incorporated artists such as Beyonce, Tupac Shakur, Missy Elliott, Soulja Boy and Megan Thee Stallion. UCLA tweeted out the routine with the hashtag #blackexcellence and Elliott gave her one-word opinion on Twitter: “snappin”.

[Katelyn Ohashi's perfect 10 reminded America life could be fun again](#)  
[Read more](#)

Biles, [the best gymnast on the planet](#), tweeted her approval: “okay [@DennisNia](#) do the damn thing girl this was so fun to watch! keep killing it!” wrote the four-time Olympic champion.

Dennis said the routine was a celebration as well as a tribute to Los Angeles, where UCLA is based.

“This routine definitely reflects everything that I am today as a woman,” [Dennis told the Los Angeles Daily News](#), “and of course I had to incorporate a lot of parts of my culture. I wanted to have a dance party because that’s my personality and of course I had to shout out LA because we out here, UCLA.”

A □ isn't enough for this floor routine by [@katelyn\\_ohashi](#). □  
<pic.twitter.com/pqUzl7AIUA>

— UCLA Gymnastics (@uclagymnastics) [January 13, 2019](#)

Dennis follows in the footsteps of her former UCLA teammate Katelyn Ohashi, whose floor routine last year [pulled in tens of millions of hits](#). Like Dennis’s routine, Ohashi performed to a mash-up of different artists such as

Ike & Tina Turner and Earth, Wind & Fire along with the Jackson 5 and Michael and Janet Jackson.

Dennis is no stranger to the spotlight either. Last year, she won praise for a routine based around Beyonce's Crazy in Love and later appeared on the Ellen DeGeneres Show.

After competing on the road, [@DennisNia](#) had an unforgettable "Homecoming" performance in Westwood last weekend. □□

No. 3 [@uclagymnastics](#) returns to the floor Saturday to face No. 18 Oregon State at 1 PT/ 2 MT on Pac-12 Network.  
[pic.twitter.com/Y31HmZc6WP](#)

— Pac-12 Network (@Pac12Network) [February 27, 2020](#)

Dennis's performance proved crucial to her team: the judges awarded her 9.95, clinching UCLA a 196.150-195.950 victory over Arizona State.

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## England rugby union team

Interview

# **Ollie Lawrence: 'I wanted to emulate Tuilagi because his play excited me'**

[Robert Kitson](#)

The England newcomer insists comparisons to the injured centre will not be a burden as he looks to fill the void in the Six Nations



Ollie Lawrence is hungry for more Test rugby after featuring for England during the Autumn Nations Cup. Photograph: Ian Walton/AP

Ollie Lawrence is hungry for more Test rugby after featuring for England during the Autumn Nations Cup. Photograph: Ian Walton/AP



Sun 24 Jan 2021 17.00 EST

When Ollie Lawrence was young – and he is still only 21 – there was one England rugby player who captured his imagination. As a strongly built centre growing up in the Midlands, he looked at [Manu Tuilagi](#) and instinctively decided he would play the same way. Now here he is, waiting to kick off a Six Nations Championship in place of his injured idol.

It is both a massive opportunity and, potentially, an even more daunting challenge. There is only one Manu and simply trying to impersonate your childhood hero is a surefire route to top-level underachievement. As any old pro will testify, the smarter option is to be the best version of yourself rather than vainly seeking to become somebody you can never be.

['Standout candidate': Eddie Jones on Ed Robinson's England coaching role](#)

[Read more](#)

How refreshing, then, to listen to a young player who appreciates this and rationalises it perfectly. Plenty of good judges expect the Birmingham-born Lawrence to win a bucket-load of caps and, listening to him explaining why “the new Manu” headlines do not bother him, it is easy to see why. “It’s not a burden for me,” insists the [Worcester](#) centre. “If anything it’s flattering. I

know I'm never going to be Manu; Manu's never going to be me. He's got so many caps for England, he's probably one of the best centres to ever play. If people want to compare me to him that's their opinion. I'm not going to fight them on it."

Boom. Just like that, as so often on the field, the former Bromsgrove schoolboy is away and running gloriously free. Tuilagi may once have inspired him – “I wanted to emulate him because the way he played excited me; that’s probably how my game evolved, watching players like him” – but there is heaps more to Lawrence than relishing a spot of bosh. Tuilagi, recovering from a torn achilles, has 43 caps for England; the smart money is on his young replacement earning substantially more.

That depends, though, on him fulfilling the promise he has long since displayed in other sports. As a young footballer he was on the academy books of Birmingham and Aston Villa – he once scored a penalty to win a game against a Liverpool youth side – until, at the age of 11, the fun disappeared. “Football was my first love and there are so many perks to being a footballer but it’s just something I never saw myself being. The environment of being in an academy at such a young age wasn’t for me. It took the enjoyment out of it and I wasn’t ready for it at that age. I didn’t want football that much.”

He found Warwickshire age-group cricket – he played in the same side as England’s Tom Banton – more stimulating, particularly the Twenty20 format – “I want to bat and then to field and then go home, I don’t want to be stood on a field for four to five hours.” By his mid-teens, though, he was representing England Under-16s at rugby – his father, Michael, had played on the wing for Moseley – and had found the ideal outlet for his super-competitive nature. “Whatever sport I played – even badminton in a PE lesson – I couldn’t lose. It would annoy me if I lost. My competitive nature has come from when I was very young and I took it too far sometimes. There was no part of me that could play against people and just let them win. I took it as a sign of weakness. It is probably one of those traits that I wish I could control sometimes.”



Manu Tuilagi's attacking flair inspired Ollie Lawrence and he hopes to emulate his game. Photograph: Aaron Favila/AP

Off the field he now prefers to relax via computer gaming – sometimes for more than seven hours a day – but Lawrence also possesses a thoughtful side. Despite his young age he enjoys the company of slightly older teammates and was particularly affected when one of them, Michael Fatialofa, suffered a career-ending neck injury a year ago. “For me, personally, and quite a few of our closer group, it was hard. To see one of your best mates at the club go through what he went through … it makes you more grateful for the position you’re in. It makes you realise you can’t take things for granted in life because it can be taken away from you at any point.”

The last Worcester centre to play for England, Ben Te’o, also taught him the importance of keeping things in perspective. “His main advice was that you need to be as professional as you can on and off the field but rugby is just a game,” says Lawrence. “You don’t want to let it consume you.” For a while he found it hard to strike that tricky balance but the try-scoring success of another former Warriors teammate, Josh Adams, in a Wales jersey has encouraged him to believe that he, too, can make it big at the top level and add to the initial two caps he earned in the autumn. “We really can take our game and the way we train and play to another level,” he insists.

[Six Nations teams need to show more adventure – but don't hold your breath](#)

[| Paul Rees](#)

[Read more](#)

It does not do any harm that, in Tuilagi's absence, England clearly need a player such as Lawrence. Regardless of whether he wears 12 or 13, he offers a genuine gain-line threat, possesses those former cricketer's hands to complement his power and has the footwork to match. Owen Farrell offers a range of qualities at inside-centre but not the barrelling, direct threat that fixes opposition defences. With the classy Henry Slade alongside him and now Paolo Odogwu to add further competition, he knows the next challenge is to mature from promising newcomer into a game-winning presence.

"Getting a taste of it through the autumn whetted my appetite and made me hungry for more," Lawrence says. "I went away with a feeling of confidence of what I can offer the team. Test rugby is a huge step up compared to club rugby but it is one that I enjoyed. I want to play for England as many times as I can."

The Breakdown: sign up and get our weekly rugby union email

Eddie Jones [will want to see that desire](#) in training later this week and has already warned that the occasional eye-catching moment will not be enough. "He doesn't want me to be an 8/10 one week and a 4/10 or 5/10 the next. It's about being a consistent 7, 8 or 9 every week and not dipping below that. At the end of the day I guess that's what Test rugby is."

If Lawrence's stock continues to rise, even his hero Tuilagi may find it difficult to regain his place.

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## [Sportblog](#)[FA Cup](#)

# Defensive struggles suggest Liverpool have stood still while others push on

Rhys Williams had a difficult game against Manchester United but the fact he played at all implies a flaw in the Anfield system



Rhys Williams (right) found it hard to contain Marcus Rashford and a mistake by the Liverpool centre-back led to Manchester United's second goal. Photograph: Matthew Peters/Manchester United/Getty Images

Rhys Williams (right) found it hard to contain Marcus Rashford and a mistake by the Liverpool centre-back led to Manchester United's second goal. Photograph: Matthew Peters/Manchester United/Getty Images



[Barney Ronay](#)

[@barneyronay](#)

Sun 24 Jan 2021 16.03 EST

Three minutes into the second half at Old Trafford something happened that was simultaneously startling, avoidable, unfortunate, and also crushingly inevitable. Manchester United's second goal in this fun, highly watchable 3-2 FA Cup fourth-round win will be cast as a the fruit of a Rhys Williams mistake.

Correctly so: it was a horrible mistake. Rumbling back to cut out a diagonal pass from Mason Greenwood, Liverpool's centre-back scuffed a miskicked clearance that ran straight into Marcus Rashford's path, leaving him a clear run on goal.

[Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes sinks Liverpool in FA Cup thriller](#)

[Read more](#)

Rashford finished beautifully. Williams looked distraught, although to his credit he showed great resilience for the rest of the game and actually improved after that point, when he might have fallen apart.

But United were 2-1 up, went on to win 3-2, and that scuffed clearance will become a staging point in the archive reel of this game and a haunting little set piece for a teenager exposed in the most glaring of spotlights.

It is often said that football matches are decided on details, not least the kind of Cup tie [United and Liverpool produced](#) on Sunday, with five excellent goals and enough chances for the score to have swung the other way. But details also come from somewhere too. Details have cause and effect and a chain of command behind them. And only the hardest heart could lay the blame for that mistake at Williams' door.

Anatomy of a scuffed clearance: how deep do you want to go with this? Zoom out just a little and this was a moment built out of bad choices, wrong turns, neglected red flags along the way. This was a scuffed clearance that was there when the team sheets dropped. It was there in the buildup. It was there last week, as Liverpool struggled with the knock-on effects of shifting their best midfielders into defence.

The Fiver: sign up and get our daily football email.

That scuffed clearance was present in ghost form throughout the first half, flickering just behind the action, rattling its chains. It is, in its own way, an insight into how exactly Liverpool, the strongest club team in the world this time last year, have got themselves into a position where the season is contracting around them, trophies being chalked off, the [FA Cup](#) following the League Cup and a six-point drop off the top of the Premier League.

Liverpool's owners don't want to pay over par for a match-ready centre-back in the transfer window. This has not been the model. The model has been smart, considered, value for money. The model has worked.

But the game never stays still. Breaking that pattern, signing the best centre-back in the league, validated the rest of the model. Buying Virgil van Dijk helped make buying Andy Robertson such title-winning good sense. One doesn't happen without the other. And the stitches are starting to show back there.

With Joël Matip and Jordan Henderson injured, Williams was not just the natural choice, but the only choice to play at right-sided centre-back against the most effective left-sided combination in the Premier League. Rashford and Luke Shaw have a supreme understanding right now.

Williams, by contrast, has made one Premier League start. He's 19 years old, but a young-looking 19. At the same age Wayne Rooney had the physique of a grizzled Ukrainian middleweight boxing champion. Williams moves around the pitch like a slender sapling, bending with the wind, looking always in need of a strong bamboo switch to keep him upright.

01:43

'We can match the best': Solskjær delighted after win over Liverpool – video

He is good in the air. His defensive positioning is good. But one early run from Rashford demonstrated the alarming physical mismatch on show. Rashford is a sensational athlete, with a rare combination of speed, strength and lateral spring. Add in the purity of his movement, a man who seems utterly clear in his mind where to run, how to use the space on the right side, and it is a daunting challenge for any defender.

[What does Brexit really mean for the future of British football? | Ed Aarons](#)  
[Read more](#)

Let alone for Williams, who still has that rangy quality, and who looked utterly wide-eyed early on. United's first goal also came from his side. With 25 minutes gone Paul Pogba produced a telescopic grab just outside his own box, taking the ball away from Roberto Firmino with an extendable right leg, then whirling on the turf to sweep it away.

The ball was funnelled out to Rashford on the left. As he took the ball, Mohamed Salah could be seen waving Williams back, taking the man himself, but also failing to close him down and leaving Williams lost in a zone of no influence, galloping back through the open green spaces like a calf cut loose from the herd. Rashford conjured up a perfectly flighted path that skimmed James Milner's head and ran through to Greenwood, who finished expertly.

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As the game wore on Williams managed to rein Rashford in a little. But he just isn't ready for this, not to the levels required of the world club champions, of a team built to win every game, to steamroller the league.

He is instead a visible sign of something else; of an insistence on trying to game the game, of failing to fix the roof while the sun shines. And in the end the details will have their say, one way or another.

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## 2021.01.25 - From the uk

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## Scottish politics

# More than 2m people could use postal votes in Scotland elections

Shift away from in-person voting expected if Holyrood elections go ahead in May

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

Severin Carrell and Libby Brooks

Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.00 EST



Nicola Sturgeon speaking in Holyrood this week. Officials say the election on 6 May could be held safely if the pandemic remains under control.  
Photograph: Russell Cheyne/AFP/Getty Images

Scottish electoral officials believe upwards of 2 million people could use postal votes if Holyrood elections take place in May, to avoid using polling stations during the Covid pandemic.

Scotland's councils and electoral bodies have said the parliamentary election on 6 May could be held safely if the pandemic remains under control, but senior officials have told the *Guardian* it will present significant and costly logistical challenges.

Polling by the Electoral Commission, the UK's elections regulator, has found that up to 68% of Scotland's 4 million voters could opt for postal votes – nearly four times the normal number, adding significantly to the cost of staging it.

Scotland's political parties are planning to promote postal voting heavily among their supporters and target voters in the next few weeks to minimise the risk from the pandemic and mitigate the impact on turnout.

It is understood the [UK Labour party](#) is considering a similar campaign for the English council, mayoral and police and crime commissioner elections, borrowing the “vote early” slogan used in the recent US elections.

Both the UK and Scottish governments say publicly all elections planned [across England, Wales and Scotland](#) can be held as scheduled on 6 May, but privately doubts are being voiced about whether it will be possible.

Some council leaders are worried about the significant costs and health risks of staging an election, and have asked the umbrella body for the country's 32 councils, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, to assess whether it can be safely carried out.

Many council officials work from home, greatly increasing the organisational challenges of organising 2m postal votes, and those of running the election as a whole.

A number of [Labour](#) politicians have called for the Holyrood elections to be postponed, arguing the uncertainties of the pandemic, the costs and logistics,

and the risks that voter turnout could be heavily affected if some areas are hit by fresh Covid outbreaks.

[Nicola Sturgeon](#), Scotland's first minister, said on Friday the election could still be safely held and pointed to the recent US elections successfully taking place. New legislation allows the Holyrood election to be held over two days, for the count to take longer or for a six-month delay, if necessary.

Scotland's rate of Covid deaths and hospitalisations during the latest wave has been the lowest of all four UK nations, but in a subtle shift of tone, Sturgeon acknowledged on Friday that changes or postponement could be necessary.

As a contingency plan, the Scottish parliament's official dissolution has been postponed until 5 May to allow MSPs to reconvene for an emergency session if the Covid crisis means changes to the election are needed. Normally, Holyrood would be dissolved in late March.

"If there's any change made to the timing of the election or to the rules of conduct, it's really important that those are not decisions for the government of the day alone, it would be a cross-party decision and one that involves [Holyrood's] presiding officer as well," Sturgeon said.

Two opinion polls of Scottish voters carried out by the Electoral Commission since last August found that while 77% of voters could use polling stations if the right safety measures were in place, 23% would prefer a postal vote. That is in addition to the 18% of electors who usually vote by post.

Of voters who use polling stations, 61% said they would switch to a postal ballot if they were encouraged to do so, increasing the total number who could register for an absentee vote to about 2.7 million people.

It has alarmed council officials. It would mean registering 2 million extra voters for absentee ballots, checking their identities, and then printing, posting and validating their ballots. The Electoral Commission believes 3-5% of those votes could be spoilt by voters incorrectly filling out the forms, potentially invalidating up to 135,000 votes.

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## UK news

# London woman admits killing disabled son after breakdown

Olga Freeman, who struggled to care for son during lockdown, admits manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility



Court artist sketch of Olga Freeman. Photograph: Elizabeth Cook/PA

Court artist sketch of Olga Freeman. Photograph: Elizabeth Cook/PA

*PA Media*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 04.55 EST

A woman has admitted killing her disabled 10-year-old son after undergoing a mental breakdown while struggling to care for him during the lockdown.

Olga Freeman, 40, was charged with the murder of Dylan Freeman, who was found dead at their home in Acton, west London, on 15 August.

The boy was found in the master bedroom of the house, covered by a duvet. Toys had been placed beside him. A postmortem gave the cause of Dylan's death as restriction of the airways.

At the time of his death, his father, the celebrity photographer Dean Freeman, was in Spain.

At a virtual hearing on Monday at the Old Bailey, Freeman denied her son's murder but admitted manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility.

Gareth Patterson QC, prosecuting, said the plea was acceptable to the crown after careful consideration.

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## Asos

# Asos in talks to buy Topshop, Topman and Miss Selfridge

Sale by Arcadia would mean thousands of job losses as bidder only operates online

- [Debenhams deal and Topshop talks put thousands of jobs at risk](#)
- [Online brands are making clean sweep in great retail carve-up](#)
- [Boohoo buying Debenhams: a changing of the guard in retail](#)



A purchase by Asos would be bad news for Topman and Topshop staff as all the chains' stores would close. Photograph: Mike Egerton/PA

A purchase by Asos would be bad news for Topman and Topshop staff as all the chains' stores would close. Photograph: Mike Egerton/PA

[Mark Sweeney](#)

[@marksweney](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 06.03 EST

The online fashion retailer Asos is in exclusive talks to buy a number of the UK's best-known high street brands including [Topshop](#), Topman and Miss Selfridge.

The brands are part of Sir Philip Green's fashion empire Arcadia, which [collapsed into administration](#) last year.

If [Asos](#) can seal a deal it is likely to be bad news for thousands of staff and the high street store network as it operates as an online-only business. Arcadia Group as a whole employed 13,000 staff and had 500 stores across the UK when it entered administration in November.

[Debenhams to close all stores with job losses as Boohoo buys brand for £55m](#)

[Read more](#)

“Asos notes recent media speculation and confirms that it is in exclusive discussions with the administrators of Arcadia over the acquisition of the Topshop, Topman, Miss Selfridge and HIIT brands,” the company confirmed in a statement to the stock market.

“The board believes this would represent a compelling opportunity to acquire strong brands that resonate well with its customer base. However, at this stage, there can be no certainty of a transaction and Asos will keep shareholders updated as appropriate. Any acquisition would be funded from cash reserves.”

Asos shares rose 6% after the announcement on Monday. The Guardian first revealed on Friday that [Asos had emerged as a serious contender](#) to buy the Topshop brand.

Other bidders pursuing Topshop include Shein, a Chinese online fashion retailer; Authentic Brands, the US owner of the Barneys department store, which has been linked to a joint bid with JD Sports; and the billionaire Issa brothers, who in October [announced they were buying Asda for £6.8bn](#).

“Asos would by far be the most complementary new owner for Topshop, Topman and Miss Selfridge,” said Chloe Collins, a senior analyst at

GlobalData.

“The brands are already popular sellers through its third-party platform, proving that there is strong customer overlap, and Asos’s impressive global reach would help the Arcadia brands target new shoppers. The retailer’s digital prowess will aid the brands in gaining top-of-mind appeal, as they have so far fell behind online competition.”

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Administrators have been seeking buyers for Arcadia’s brands, which also include Dorothy Perkins and Burton. Evans, its plus-size clothing brand, was sold to City Chic Collective, an Australian retailer, for £23m.

Arcadia’s high street rival [Next](#), which was working [with the US hedge fund Davidson Kempner](#), pulled [out of the auction](#) on Thursday. In a statement, the consortium said it had been “unable to meet the price expectations of the vendor” amid speculation that Topshop, Arcadia’s prime asset, could fetch between £250m and £300m.

On Monday, the online fast fashion retailer Boohoo announced a deal to [buy the Debenhams brand](#) but it does not include the 118 high street stores or the 12,000 staff.

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## Flooding

# Swathes of England's vital flood defences 'almost useless'

Data from Environment Agency shows thousands of people and businesses 'at risk from ruined assets'

**Josh Halliday** North of England correspondent

Sun 24 Jan 2021 12.41 EST Last modified on Sun 24 Jan 2021 23.37 EST



Storm Christoph caused widespread flooding in Ironbridge, near Telford in Shropshire. Photograph: Nick Potts/PA

Thousands of England's vital flood defences were in such a state of ruin last year they would fail to protect communities from extreme weather, an investigation has found.

More than 3,400 of England's "high consequence" flood assets, defined as those where there is a high risk to life and property if they fail, were judged

by the Environment Agency to be in such a bad condition they were almost useless.

This means that more than one in 20 of the country's crucial flood defences were in disrepair in 2019-20, the highest proportion in years. This rose to nearly one in 10 in the regions battered by Storm Christoph last week.

The findings comes from Environment Agency data obtained by Unearthed, the investigative arm of Greenpeace UK, and shared with the Guardian. Doug Parr, the chief scientist and policy director at [Greenpeace](#) UK, said: "The poor state of so many critical flood defences in England is putting thousands of people and homes at risk. This is unacceptable."

Most of Britain was placed under a weather warning for snow and ice on Monday after an Arctic blast of cold air hampered the recovery effort from Storm Christoph, which caused at least 600 homes to be flooded as two months' worth of rain fell in 48 hours in some areas.

### [Disrepair map](#)

The Environment Agency said its 2020 recovery programme inspected more than 20,000 assets and that they were "winter ready" either through repairs or, if not, "robust contingency plans are in place". It said that 95% of its 78,000 flood assets, which range from embankments to culverts and tidal barriers, were in good condition and that repairs were prioritised when there was "significant threat to lives and livelihoods".

The Unearthed analysis found that 3,460 of England's most important flood defences were judged by the Environment Agency to be in a poor or very poor condition in 2019-20. This accounts for 5.9% of the total, the highest proportion in years, up from 4% in 2017-18.

Of the 3,460, 791 were judged "very poor", meaning they had "severe defects resulting in complete performance failure", essentially rendering them useless. The remaining 2,669 were in poor condition, meaning they have defects that would "significantly reduce" their performance.

Just under half of England's 59,000 vital flood defences are managed by a complex array of third parties, including government departments, local authorities and private landowners. The figures show that 8% of those managed by third parties are in poor or very poor condition, compared to 4% of those overseen by the Environment Agency. In the picturesque district of Hart, in Hampshire, all of its vital flood defences are managed by third parties and nearly half are in a state of ruin.

Experts have warned that the UK faces an increased risk from more extreme and unpredictable weather owing to the climate emergency. Major floods had been expected every 15 to 20 years in the last century but in the past decade this has shortened to every two to five years.

The Environment Agency has said it needs [£1bn a year](#) to build and maintain England's flood defences, significantly more than the £5.2bn announced by the government for 2,000 new projects up to 2027.

Parr urged ministers to increase funding to better protect England's flood defences and stop building on high-risk floodplains. He added: "We know that the climate crisis is making our winters wetter, increasing the risk of floods across the country. We've had warning of the climate threat for years so there's no excuse for not being prepared."

In the Midlands, South Yorkshire and north-west of [England](#), where nearly 600 homes were flooded last week, 831 of these vital defences are in a state of disrepair – 9% of the total. In Cheshire, where at least 150 people had to be rescued by firefighters last week, 16% of "high consequence" flood defences are in a poor or very poor condition, according to Environment Agency data.

Dan Jarvis, the mayor of the Sheffield city region, said residents would have to endure "sleepless nights" due to a £125m funding gap in its flood defence allocation from Whitehall.

Jarvis welcomed an additional £80m given to the region last week for flood management projects but said this was a "sticking plaster over a much bigger wound". He has asked ministers for months to fund 27 projects that

would protect 10,300 homes, 2,800 businesses as well as crucial infrastructure.

A Defra spokesperson said: “We know how flooding can devastate communities, which is why since 2015 a record figure of £2.6bn has been invested in flood schemes, better protecting 300,000 homes, and over the next six years we are doubling that investment – £5.2bn for 2,000 new defences to better protect a further 336,000 properties.”

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## UK weather

# Snow brightens UK landscapes, but Covid precautions 'still necessary'

With much of the country under a blanket of snow, police warn the public to stick to the rules

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

01:20

*[Matthew Weaver](#)*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 08.24 EST

The gloom of lockdown was lifted on Sunday by the unfamiliar glow of snow in large parts of the UK, but police reminded the public to confine snowball fights to back gardens and household bubbles only.

By midday on Sunday, much of the the UK including London, was blanketed in a thick layer of snow, with weather warnings for snow and ice extending to southern England.

The [Met Office](#) put a yellow weather warning in place stretching from coast to coast in southern England and ending just south of Manchester.

“Snow seems to bring out the big kid in everyone,” tweeted the minister for sport Nigel Huddleston with a video of him lobbing a snowball at a camera.

Snow seems to bring out the big kid in everyone...  
[pic.twitter.com/kA3I5vskbW](https://pic.twitter.com/kA3I5vskbW)

— Nigel Huddleston MP #StayAtHome (@HuddlestonNigel) [January 24, 2021](#)

MPs from all parties posted snowy scenes with glee. [“Who didn’t have some fun this morning?”](#) said Lib Dem justice spokesperson Wera Hobhouse.

While Labour’s Alex Davies-Jones posted: [“Do you wanna build a snowman?”](#)

The mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, was also out enjoying the weather. He posted a video of his family’s golden retriever Luna spinning around the garden as the snow fell. “Luna is loving the snow and hoping it settles,” he said.

But several police forces, such as Wandsworth in London, urged the public to confine snowman building and snowball fights to [back gardens](#).

Kingston police in west London urged people to stay inside. It [tweeted](#): “It’s so beautiful to watch the snow fall from the comfort of your own home. Plus there’s a pandemic going on. [#StaySafe](#) in the [#snowday](#) by playing in the back garden!”

Police in Rutland and [Surrey](#) questioned [why people were sledging](#) during lockdown.

[Gwent police in south Wales warned the public](#) not to break the lockdown rules. “Please stay home, and do not meet up with other households,” it tweeted. Several forces, [including Sandwell in the West Midlands](#), urged drivers to stay off the roads unless absolutely necessary.

Merton police in south-west London went for humour, [tweeting](#): “Sorry to be ‘that grumpy relative’ but with the snow coming down the way it is, please drive carefully. And if you’re going to have a snowball fight, please stick to your bubbles. Also do not eat yellow snow.”

The Met Office warned the public to expect more snow and icy patches on untreated roads and pavements, with journeys by road and rail likely to be affected.

The bad weather forced the closure of Covid testing centre in Lichfield, [Brent](#) and three [mobile testing sites in Birmingham](#). It also prompted police

to close Richmond Park in west London to traffic.

Several roads were closed due to snow, including one lane of the A38 in Burton, Staffordshire. And the frozen conditions prompted a points failure in Wembley disrupting [Southern rail services](#).

[The Met Office said](#): “Outbreaks of snow will continue over parts of north Wales, the Midlands, East Anglia and south-east England with some further significant accumulations causing disruption. Wintry showers will also affect western parts with local temporary accumulations and a risk of ice.”

A similar warning is in place down the [east coast of Scotland](#) and covering most of the island of Ireland. The showers of sleet and snow are expected to die out, with a heavy frost due to set in across most parts of the country on Sunday evening.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/24/snow-brightens-uk-landscapes-but-covid-precautions-still-necessary>.

## Counter-terrorism policy

# Terrorism watchdog to open inquiry into radicalisation in prison

Prison officers have suffered a ‘steady drumbeat’ of attacks by terrorists, says Jonathan Hall QC



Jonathan Hall QC, the government’s independent reviewer of terror legislation, says he is amazed that prisoners regard terrorists as higher status.  
Photograph: Andrew Aitchison/Corbis/Getty Images

Jonathan Hall QC, the government’s independent reviewer of terror legislation, says he is amazed that prisoners regard terrorists as higher status.  
Photograph: Andrew Aitchison/Corbis/Getty Images

*PA Media*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 18.13 EST

An inquiry into the way prisons deal with convicted terrorists is being launched by the independent terror watchdog amid concerns of growing

radicalisation behind bars.

Jonathan Hall QC said there had been a succession of terror attacks on prison officers while other inmates were coming under the influence of “high status” terrorist prisoners.

Hall, the government’s independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, said that if terrorist activity was taking place in jails then it had to be dealt with.

“There has been a steady drumbeat over recent years of terrorist attacks against prison officers, and an increasing number of individuals who may well have formed their terrorist intent in prison under the influence of high status terrorist prisoners,” he told the Times.

“If terrorism exists (in prison) then it ought to be dealt with. We need scrutiny of how prisons operate to either contain, or worse encourage, terrorism.”

His comments followed a series of high-profile cases, including the 2019 London Bridge attack when Usman Khan, a terrorist prisoner out on licence, stabbed two people to death.

Khairi Saadallah, who was given a whole life sentence earlier this month for murdering three men in a terror attack in a Reading park, had been befriended by a radical preacher while serving an earlier prison term.

Last year Brusthom Ziamani, who was serving a 19-year sentence for plotting to behead a soldier, was convicted of attempted murder for trying to hack an officer to death in the maximum security Whitemoor jail.

Hall said that he had been amazed at the way terrorist prisoners were looked up to by other inmates.

“I find it astonishing that someone should go to prison for plotting a terrorist atrocity and the concern is not that they themselves are at risk of attack, like a paedophile is often at risk of attack because prisoners generally say what they’ve done is terrible,” he said.

“Terrorists automatically achieve a sort of status.”

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson told the Times that it had trained more than 29,000 prison officers to better spot signs of extremism, increased the number of specialist counter-terrorism staff, and would separate the most subversive prisoners where necessary.

“Our tough measures to stop extremists spreading their poisonous ideologies in prison have been stepped up,” the spokesperson said.

“We ended the [automatic early release of terrorists](#) and our new legislation means they will also face tougher sentences and monitoring on release.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/24/terrorism-watchdog-to-open-inquiry-into-radicalisation-in-prison>

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## Scotland

# Burns Night goes virtual: 'It might be even bigger this year'

Thousands join events in Scotland and far afield, and post-a-haggis service is in high demand



Alistair McCulloch playing Gregg Violin, an instrument that Burns played at his dance classes, during the NTS Big Burns Night In. Photograph: National Trust for Scotland

Alistair McCulloch playing Gregg Violin, an instrument that Burns played at his dance classes, during the NTS Big Burns Night In. Photograph: National Trust for Scotland



*[Libby Brooks](#) Scotland correspondent*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 10.00 EST

It's the night when Scots emerge from mid-winter hibernation, says the Burns scholar Pauline Mackay. On the poet's birthday, 25 January, or thereabouts, thousands of societies, clubs and groups of friends across Scotland and around the world gather to celebrate the life and work of the national bard [Robert Burns](#).

The ritual elements of a Burns supper – addressing those gathered with his poem To a Haggis, completing several rounds of toasts and reading from the funny, sexy, radical diversity of his work – have remained constant since the first event was held by nine friends in 1801, five years after his death.

"It's always a lovely celebration at a difficult time of year, and I think that's why people are going all out this year to celebrate in the depths of a hard lockdown," says Mackay, a lecturer in Robert Burns studies at the University of Glasgow, whose new book, [Burns for Every Day of the Year](#), offers daily glimpses into his life, times and works. "There are so many drives to get people together virtually, it might be even bigger this year."

Mackay's colleagues at the Centre for Robert Burns Studies have sent out invitations to 2,000 addresses in more than 140 countries, including Scottish

societies, pipe bands, Burns clubs, Scottish country dance group, museums, schools and universities, to contribute to their [#VirtualBurnsNight](#). The aim is to create a map of Burns suppers around the world.



A statue of Burns in Edinburgh. Photograph: S Vincent/Alamy

More than 2,600 tickets were sold to a UK and overseas audience for the National Trust for Scotland's [Burns Big Night In](#) on Saturday, hosted by the DJ Edith Bowman from the cottage in Alloway, south Ayrshire, where the poet was born. On the opposite coast, a rotary club in Burntisland, Fife, welcomed more than 500 guests from around the UK and across the Atlantic after moving its traditional supper online. St Andrews University has 1,200 alumni and friends registered for its Global Burns Night on Monday, which features contributions from staff and students, including the rising star of Scots language poetry, [Len Pennie](#).

Nor is the momentum limited to Scotland: in Vancouver, Canada, the singer-songwriter [Bruce Couglan](#) was joined by 250 guests for his virtual celebration of the bard and his ballads last Friday. Couglan, who has toured Scotland a number of times, says: "You don't have to be Scottish to love Robbie Burns. There is something universal about his work that has intrigued people of all walks of life for over two centuries. His words echo

with such humanity and compassion that they've helped inspire sweeping social reform."

Mackay says: "He's a poet who travels very well," noting that Auld Lang Syne – with its sentiments of togetherness and friendship – is one of the world's most famous songs, and especially poignant at a moment when separation is being endured on a global scale. "He has been translated into hundreds of different languages since the 19th century. A part of the reason Burns is celebrated all over the world is that his work is so diverse. He writes on everything: love, friendship, sex, politics, religion. He could write very seriously, but also with great humour."



A haggis at a Burns supper last year. Photograph: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

No Burns supper would be complete without a haggis, and the [Scott Brothers](#) family butcher in Dundee has seen a steep increase in demand for its post-a-haggis service this year.

"There's a little extra sentiment because of all that's going on this year," says the manager, Graeme Cairns. "We've had a steady stream of orders, with messages saying 'sorry we can't be with you this year but we'll be together soon'."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/24/burns-night-goes-virtual-it-might-be-even-bigger-this-year>

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## Scottish independence

# Sturgeon: SNP will hold Scottish independence vote if it wins in May

First minister says she will hold advisory referendum, whether Westminster consents or not

00:43

*[Libby Brooks](#) Scotland correspondent*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 07.14 EST

Nicola Sturgeon has said she will hold an advisory referendum on independence if her Scottish National party wins a majority in May's Holyrood elections, regardless of whether Westminster consents to the move.

Her party is setting out an 11-point roadmap for taking forward another vote, which was to be presented to members of the SNP's national assembly on Sunday.

Scotland's first minister told BBC One's Andrew Marr show on Sunday morning: "I want to have a legal referendum, that's what I'm going to seek the authority of the Scottish people for in May and if they give me that authority that's what I intend to do: to have a legal referendum to give people the right to choose. That's democracy. It's not about [what I want](#) or what Boris Johnson wants."

Signalling a new approach, which moves beyond the current impasse of Johnson's repeated refusal to countenance a second vote, the roadmap states that if the SNP takes office after May, it will request from the UK government a section 30 order, which under the [Scotland](#) Act 1998 allows Holyrood to pass laws normally reserved to Westminster.

The document states that “there could be no moral or democratic justification for denying that request” and that if the UK government did adopt such a position it would be “unsustainable both at home and abroad”.

It adds that if agreement were not forthcoming from Westminster, the SNP government would introduce and pass a bill allowing a “legal referendum” to take place after the pandemic, and would “vigorously oppose” any legal challenge from the UK government.

Four-nation polling for the Sunday Times has found that a majority of voters in Scotland and Northern Ireland want referendums on the breakup of Britain.

Sturgeon told Marr: “The polls now show that a majority of people in Scotland want independence. If the SNP win the Scottish election in a few months’ time on proposition of giving the people that choice, then what democrat could rightly stand in the way of that?”

The plan has been welcomed by those within the SNP who have pushed for an alternative strategy on independence, rather than relying on Westminster permission to go ahead with a second vote. Some believe it would be possible for Holyrood to hold a consultative referendum without overreaching its powers.

Asked by Marr about the ongoing Holyrood inquiry into her government’s handling of sexual harassment complaints against the former first minister [Alex Salmond](#), Sturgeon insisted she did not mislead the Scottish parliament as her predecessor has suggested.

She said: “There are false conspiracy theories being spun about this … by Alex Salmond, by people around him, you can draw your own conclusions about that … but what is forgotten in all of that are the women who brought forward these complaints.

“At the time I became aware of this I tried hard not to interfere with what was going on and not to do anything that would see these swept aside. The Scottish government made mistakes in the investigation of that and that’s

part of the subject of the inquiry, but I didn't collude with Alex Salmond and I didn't conspire against him."

Later on Sunday, a spokeswoman for Salmond responded: "The two inquiries under way are into why Nicola Sturgeon's government acted unlawfully. Alex has submitted his evidence as requested and the parliamentary committee is now challenging the Crown Office to produce some of the text messages which they believe are being suppressed. The evidence, if published, will speak for itself."

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[The Observer](#)[Rape and sexual assault](#)

## ‘They decided the jury wouldn’t believe me’: CPS accused of secret change to rape policy

In a landmark hearing this week, rape victims aim to discover if their complaints failed due to a covert move to drop ‘weak cases’



Kat Araniello photographed in her home town in Hertfordshire. Photograph:  
Suki Dhanda/The Observer

Kat Araniello photographed in her home town in Hertfordshire. Photograph:  
Suki Dhanda/The Observer

*[Julie Bindel](#)*  
*[@bindelj](#)*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 05.30 EST

Over the course of four days in 2017, Kat Araniello was raped three times, once at knifepoint, by a man she had briefly dated.

“Ben\* was attentive, charming and attractive,” said Araniello, a 44-year-old HR professional. “He showed me his Metropolitan police warrant card when we first met. Because he was a police officer I immediately felt safe with him.”

But after a few weeks, Ben began to display signs of jealousy and possessiveness. During an evening at Araniello’s flat he “flipped”.

“He smashed my phone, punched me hard on my head, pulled out my hair and tried to break my hand,” said Araniello. “And then he raped me.”

She was too scared to ask Ben to leave in case it provoked even worse violence. “On the Sunday night, he appeared out of nowhere with a massive knife and started slicing at my clothes. Then he tied me up and raped me again.”

Araniello managed to get out of the flat and call a friend who contacted the police. Two officers attended. “One of them talked to him while the other took me to one side,” says Kat. “But I was really scared because he could hear what I was saying through the officer’s body camera. They left him there after falling for his bullshit.”

Araniello was able to leave the flat after the weekend to go to work, and once there she reported the crimes to the police. Ben was later charged with three counts of rape, impersonating a police officer, assault by beating, false imprisonment and criminal damage. He pleaded not guilty at a pre-trial hearing.

Subsequently, Araniello was informed by letter from the [Crown Prosecution Service](#) (CPS) that “there is not enough [evidence] to have a realistic prospect of conviction”.

Her case is one of 20 rape complaints the CPS failed to charge which will be used this week in a landmark case in the high court against the director of public prosecutions (DPP).

The case, brought by [End Violence Against Women](#) (EVAW), a coalition of women's organisations, will decide whether the CPS has changed its policy and practice on charging rape cases, leading to a significant fall in the number of cases going to court.

EVAW claims that the collapse in cases being proceeded is a result of a covert policy change, and that between 2016 and 2017 prosecutors were encouraged not to charge so called "weaker cases", with the aim of improving their conviction rate.

The claimants will present evidence of a "damaging and secretive change in CPS policy and practice on charging decisions in rape cases before the court". The legal challenge has attracted enormous public interest, with many campaigners and commentators arguing that the CPS shift has resulted in the effective "decriminalisation of rape".

CPS figures from July 2020 show that complainants face a 1 in 70 chance of their case being charged. The [Centre for Women's Justice](#) (CWJ), the lawyers representing EVAW, will present compelling evidence including statistical analysis and a dossier of 20 women's rape complaints which the CPS decided not to charge.

Evidence from a whistleblower within the CPS will also be submitted. According to CWJ, it shows how senior managers in the CPS directed prosecutors away from the merits-based approach which had been introduced to ensure that decisions to prosecute are made on the objective evidence rather than second-guessing a jury.

Instead, the campaigners argue, the CPS has been reluctant to put forward a case in which, for example, the complainant had previously had consensual sex with the defendant, had been drinking, or where her account of the incident contained inconsistencies.

After her case was dropped, Araniello was informed that her credibility was undermined by the fact that she had not reported the rapes to the police who visited her flat.

The prosecutor also pointed to WhatsApp messages with the perpetrator, which might be interpreted as “encouraging sex”.

Other evidence was disregarded, such as Ben’s police interview; photographic evidence of bruising to Araniello’s thighs and hands; exhibits of her slashed clothing and of the knife; WhatsApp messages from Ben apologising for “what he had done” and expressing disbelief and remorse.

For Araniello, being told there was little prospect of a conviction because she was “an unreliable witness” was almost as traumatic as the rape itself. “They had decided the jury wouldn’t believe me,” she says. “It would seem that these prosecutors were influenced by every rape myth on the planet.”

A CPS spokesperson said: “There has been no change of approach in how the CPS prosecutes rape. Our skilled prosecutors are experienced and highly trained to make sure criminals can be brought to justice. No matter how challenging the case, whenever our legal test is met, we always seek to charge.

“Independent inspectors have found no evidence of a risk-averse approach and have reported a clear improvement in the quality of our legal decision-making in rape cases. The principles of the merits-based approach are enshrined in the *Code for Crown Prosecutors*, which guides every charging decision.

“Along with the police, we remain committed to making real, lasting improvements to how these horrific offences are handled, so every victim will feel able to come forward with confidence that their complaint will be fully investigated and, where the evidence supports, charged and prosecuted.”

## Case studies

### Theresa’s story

In 1986, Theresa told a schoolteacher that she was being sexually abused by a male relative. The subsequent police investigation was inadequate and no charges were brought. In 1991, aged 18, Theresa attempted to reopen the case by contacting the police officer originally in charge of the investigation.

Claiming to want to talk to her about the case, he took her out in his car. “I was young, vulnerable, and naive,” says Theresa. “I had no idea this was so odd at the time.”

The police officer sexually assaulted her three times on two occasions, but she was too traumatised to report the crimes.

In 2014, Theresa reported the 1991 assaults by the police officer. Charges were brought and the trial was scheduled for September 2017. In February 2018, the CPS wrote to tell Theresa it would discontinue the prosecution because her “recollection of events has changed, quite significantly, over the course of proceedings”.

The inconsistencies were the words used by Theresa to describe her genitalia and exactly where the perpetrator touched her.

Following Theresa’s right to review, she was informed that the decision to offer no evidence had been upheld by a senior prosecutor. Theresa requested a further review as well as lodging a formal complaint against the CPS.

Again, the CPS upheld its decision on the basis of “conflicting accounts”, saying that “the jury would’ve questioned why, following the first assault, she was with the defendant for a second time”.

“This was a police officer who not only failed to investigate the child abuse allegations but later saw his opportunity to assault a young, vulnerable witness, asking for help,” says Theresa. “How the CPS could drop this case is beyond comprehension.”

### **Charlotte’s story**

Charlotte met Tom\* through a dating app in 2017, shortly after which he forced her to have unprotected oral and vaginal sex.

On the day she made a complaint to the police, Charlotte underwent a medical examination. Officers took both Charlotte’s and Tom’s mobile phones for investigation.

In July 2017, the CPS wrote to inform Charlotte that no further action would be taken because the defendant “has a defence if he has a reasonable belief

that you consented to what you both agree happened”.

The CPS relied on WhatsApp messages between the two to reach this conclusion.

Charlotte requested a review but was told that “the decision would stand”. In the same letter, it was admitted that the original prosecutor had failed to consider medical evidence of injuries to Charlotte’s mouth which were consistent with an allegation of oral rape.

“I am doing my best to fight for justice because I know it happens all the time to women,” says Charlotte. “Many people find it hard to believe women when they report rape. The CPS is adding to that problem.”

Charlotte is worried that her attacker has learned lessons about how to twist the system to his advantage to help him repeat his crimes and continue getting away with it.

“This is about men being able to get away with it because the CPS is allowing them to.”

*\*Some names have been changed*

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/24/they-decided-the-jury-wouldnt-believe-me-cps-accused-of-secret-change-to-policy>.

**Michael Rosen**

## **Michael Rosen backs campaign for big funding rise for NHS**

Patient-led pressure group says Covid pandemic shows need for extra £33bn a year

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Michael Rosen, who was in intensive care for 48 days due to coronavirus, says NHS desperately needs more support. Photograph: Youtube

Michael Rosen, who was in intensive care for 48 days due to coronavirus, says NHS desperately needs more support. Photograph: Youtube

**Matthew Weaver**

Sun 24 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

Michael Rosen, the poet and children's writer and one of the best-known Covid survivors, is backing a campaign for a massive cash injection into the NHS and social care.

The New Deal for the NHS, organised by the patient-led pressure group [Just Treatment](#), says the pandemic has exposed the need for "transformative investment" of £33bn a year in the NHS or 1.5% of GDP.

In foreword to a pamphlet setting out the plan, Rosen, [who spent 48 days in intensive care with Covid](#), argues that the injection of emergency funding by the government in the economy in the last year shows that such investment is possible through the creation of government bonds.

He writes: "If we've learned anything from the last year, it's that the government has levers which can literally 'create money'."

Rosen, who said the [NHS](#) saved his life many times over, added: "We're entitled to say, 'If you can raise cash like that for an emergency, why not raise it for the service that looks after us from cradle to the grave. We are the country. Without us, there is no country. What could be more important?'"

He pointed out the intensive ward where he was treated had over twice as many patients in it than could reasonably and safely be cared for. "Our NHS desperately needs more support – and needs us to fight for it," he wrote.

The pamphlet says: "A decade of underfunding has seen plummeting standards of care and huge increases in pressure on NHS staff who are leaving their jobs in record numbers. We cannot sustain and improve the health service with these austerity budgets ... We must increase health spend by 1.5% of GDP to match France and Germany so we can also match or surpass their numbers of health workers, beds and scanners."

[Michael Rosen completes new book after long battle with Covid-19](#)  
[Read more](#)

It concedes that the £33bn sounds like a lot, "but when £22bn has been wasted on a completely ineffective Covid test and trace programme it makes

the cost of a health system that can properly care for us when we need it seem reasonable.”

It also calls for a “democratic revolution” in the NHS to give patients and frontline staff decision making power, and end to corporate profiteering from health. And it demands a shift in focus to tackle the root causes of health inequalities, with big investment to tackle poor housing, and pollution and inadequate social care.

And the campaigns backs calls for an immediate public inquiry into the handling of the pandemic. It says this “must look at the errors in decision making during the crisis – but also the long term causes of vulnerability including NHS funding, dismantling of public health infrastructure and the profit-centred pharmaceutical innovation model”.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/jan/25/michael-rosen-backs-campaign-for-big-funding-rise-for-nhs>

## Malware

# Insurers 'funding organised crime' by paying ransomware claims

**Exclusive:** former cybersecurity chief calls for law change and warns situation is 'close to getting out of control'



Britain's former top cybersecurity official warned that paying claims from companies who have paid ransoms to regain access to systems after a hacking attack has made it 'OK to pay out to criminals'. Photograph: Getty Images

Britain's former top cybersecurity official warned that paying claims from companies who have paid ransoms to regain access to systems after a hacking attack has made it 'OK to pay out to criminals'. Photograph: Getty Images

*[Dan Sabbagh](#) Defence and security editor*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 12.31 EST

Insurers are inadvertently funding organised crime by paying out claims from companies who have paid ransoms to regain access to data and systems after a hacking attack, Britain's former top cybersecurity official has warned.

Ciaran Martin, who ran the National Cyber Security Centre until last August, said he feared that so-called ransomware was “close to getting out of control” and that there was a risk that NHS systems could be hit during the pandemic.

The problem, he said, is being fuelled because there is no legal barrier to companies paying ransoms to cyber gangs – typically from Russia and some other former Soviet states – and claiming back on insurance. “People are paying bitcoin to criminals and claiming back cash,” Martin said.

“I see this as so avoidable. At the moment, companies have incentives to pay ransoms to make sure this all goes away,” the former intelligence chief said. “You have to look seriously about changing the law on insurance and banning these payments, or at the very least, having a major consultation with the industry”.

Britain’s extortion laws prohibit the payment of ransoms to terrorists, and were drawn up largely in response to the threat of kidnapping. But cyber-attacks are not carried out by terror groups, and so there is no bar to paying ransom demands – and it is possible to make an insurance claim if no personal data was involved.

Criminal hacking groups tend to be based in Russia and former Soviet states outside the Baltic region, Martin said, operating while the Kremlin and other governments in the region turn a blind eye to their activities.

Some groups claim they have made so much money they are publicly announcing their “retirement” on line, while the Wizard Spider or RYUK gang is estimated to have made \$150m from online extortion according to a study of bitcoin transactions.

So called ransomware attacks involve groups hacking into and seizing control of corporate data systems. The gangs demand money – typically up to \$10m a time – to give back access to the systems. “Attackers often set

great store in being reliable once you have paid them, providing testimony from involuntary customers," Martin said.

Travelex, a UK-based provider of foreign exchange services, [paid \\$2.3m last year](#) to regain control after hackers shut down its networks, but the company [subsequently fell into administration](#) and had to be restructured with the loss of 1,300 jobs. [Smartwatch maker Garmin also reportedly paid to recover files](#), after suffering a crippling attack last summer.

Criminal attackers say they will not target hospitals or health centres, believing that such an attack would have wider diplomatic repercussions. But Martin said the worry is that IT systems do not readily identify themselves online, so a mistaken attack with wider consequences remains possible.

In 2017, NHS systems were among those seriously disrupted by the WannaCry attack, [which emerged from North Korea](#). Although not a ransomware attack, the disruption caused to hospital systems demonstrates how serious the health sector could be affected in the UK and elsewhere.

German police [launched an investigation in September after a woman died during a cyber-attack on a hospital in Dusseldorf](#). Doctors had been attempting to transfer the patient to another facility 30km away.

[Other recent ransomware attacks have been conducted against EuroFins](#), a Belgian company that provides forensic services and disrupted police investigations in England and Wales, and elsewhere for some months although this was not widely reported at the time. It too reportedly paid a ransom.

Gangs often scout their targets and will tailor their demands to the size of the customer – there are even examples of small businesses such as hairdressers being targeted and payments of £1,500 being demanded.

Companies who have effective backups and can otherwise shrug off a hacker attack also find themselves under pressure to pay, because gangs are now threatening to leak stolen data online, an evolution of the classic ransomware model.

Martin said it was difficult to track the level of ransomware activity, because there was a lack of disclosure obligations, unless personal data is involved. But he added that he regretted not being able to change the law during his time in government and action was needed soon.

“In the last year, experts are saying this is close to getting out of control,” the former intelligence agency chief said. “The law is nobody’s fault, it was written for another purpose, but it has become OK to pay out to criminals”.

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## Green economy

# French tech firm Schneider Electric tops global league of green firms

Paris-based company worth €70bn now seen as world's most sustainable company on Global 100 index



Schneider Electric has risen from 29th to No 1 in the Global 100 index of sustainable businesses. Photograph: Charles Platiau/Reuters

Schneider Electric has risen from 29th to No 1 in the Global 100 index of sustainable businesses. Photograph: Charles Platiau/Reuters

*[Jillian Ambrose](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 01.01 EST

A Paris-based tech company has seen off competition from the world's best-known green businesses to be named the most sustainable corporation on the planet.

Schneider Electric has climbed the annual Global 100 index, from a ranking of 29 last year, offering the technology and energy solutions needed by the likes of retailer Walmart, hotel group Marriott and steel business ArcelorMittal to meet their climate targets.

The annual green company league table, compiled by researcher Corporate Knights, ranked over 8,000 publicly listed companies which generate annual revenues of over \$1bn to find the most sustainable businesses.

In the latest rankings Schneider ousted [Danish windpower giant Ørsted](#) from last year's top spot, and left most UK firms in its wake, following a surge in the number of companies during the pandemic seeking automated technology to help shrink their carbon footprints.

The rising green ambition among the world's biggest companies has also helped Schneider, which operates in 100 countries around the world, to more than double its market value in the last two years to more than €70bn (£62bn).

Schneider is one of nine companies in the Global 100 index headquartered in [France](#), the European leader in the company rankings ahead of Germany which is home to seven of the top 100 countries. The US can lay claim to 20 companies in the index, the highest of any country, followed by Canada which has 12 on the list.

The UK, which [claims to be a global leader in climate action](#), has only five companies in the league table and none in the top 10. Britain's highest-ranking company was Atlantica Sustainable Infrastructure, a renewable energy services company, which is the 12th most sustainable company in the world.

Schneider Electric's long-serving chief executive, Jean-Pascal Tricoire, said the company acts as "doctor and pharmacist" to global companies by diagnosing their sustainability problems and providing the technology to meet their goals.

"For example, Walmart came to us because they want to be greener. But 90% of the [environmental] footprint of Walmart is with its suppliers. So

they contracted us to work with their thousands of suppliers to help save 1 gigatonne of carbon over the next 10 years,” he said.

By the end of 2020 more than 2,000 of the [US retail giant’s](#) suppliers had saved more than 230m tonnes of carbon – almost a quarter of the 10-year target – after Schneider helped them to adopt renewable-based energy systems.

Tricoire said the company experienced a surge of interest from other firms in 2020, despite the economic fallout of the Covid-19 restrictions.

“At the start of 2020 I feared that people facing a crisis would stop their environmental commitments, but it has been just the contrary,” he said. “The pandemic has made everyone realise that [we are vulnerable to natural events](#), and raised the consciousness around the need to reduce carbon emissions and help fight climate change.”

The second major trend to emerge from the crisis was a shift towards digital technologies and automated systems, he said, which have been the “foundation of Schneider’s business for the last 20 years”.

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Corporate Knight found that 70% of Schneider’s revenue comes from sustainable solutions and almost three-quarters of its investment is focused on green innovation. Schneider also performs strongly in racial and gender diversity and in resource productivity and safety, it said.

Schneider plans to double down on its own climate commitments between 2021 and 2025 by aiming to generate 80% “green revenues” and help its customers save or avoid 800 mega tonnes of carbon emissions.

Tricoire said environmental, social and corporate governance commitments “cannot just be a one-off, and we have reinforced ours every three years”.

“All of us – companies, governments, individuals – can contribute to make the world greener and more inclusive,” he said.

- This article was amended on 25 January 2021 to correct the spelling of the name Corporate Knights.
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## British Virgin Islands

# British Virgin Islands at a crossroads as outgoing governor decries corruption

With a judicial inquiry looming and the EU looking to blacklist the territory, the BVI is debating where its future lies



Yachts at Paraquita Bay in Tortola, British Virgin Islands. Photograph: Morrelli & Melvin Design and Engineering in Newport Beach

Yachts at Paraquita Bay in Tortola, British Virgin Islands. Photograph: Morrelli & Melvin Design and Engineering in Newport Beach

[Rupert Neate](#)

[@RupertNeate](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

The shuffling of diplomats around the UK's Caribbean territories rarely makes much of a splash. But Gus Jaspert ensured his last days as governor of the [British Virgin Islands](#) would be remembered.

In [an emotional Facebook video post](#) to the BVI's 30,000 inhabitants, he accused the country's government of overseeing a "plague" of corruption, interfering in the criminal justice system and attempting to silence anyone who raised concerns about the misuse of funds, including £30m to help the islands' fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

Jaspert claimed that the BVI government had deliberately delayed legal reforms and hindered local inquiries into a string of corruption allegations including £5m spent on a non-existent airline and nearly £1m on building a short wall around a school. Tens of millions more spent on a hospital and a cruise ship dock are in question. Citing concerns about organised crime, he mentioned \$250m (£180m) of cocaine seized from the home of a police officer last year.

Amid reports that the EU is [getting ready to blacklist the BVI](#) as a tax haven, the career civil servant – who for a time served as private secretary to Britain's former prime minister David Cameron – had a message for BVI's citizens: "Your voices have been heard. We have received the message loud and clear – the people of BVI want better."

The allegations will now be examined in a commission of inquiry, a formal process overseen by a British high court judge. Jaspert is acting with the backing of Dominic Raab, the British foreign secretary, who issued a written statement saying the UK had a "constitutional and moral duty to protect the interests of the people of BVI".

The surprise move has plunged the BVI into a constitutional crisis, and the coming months could determine whether these islands sever the last of their ties with the British crown.



Cane Garden Bay, Tortola, British Virgin Islands. Photograph: cdwheatley/Getty Images/iStockphoto

The BVI exports rum and fruit, and hundreds of thousands of tourists disembark each year from yachts and cruise liners to bask on its white sand beaches, but more than half of government receipts come from the financial sector.

Around [400,000 offshore companies are registered in the BVI](#). While most ordinary citizens will never need to park money in a tax haven, the [Panama Papers](#) and successive data leaks have revealed just how widely used they are by the rich and famous. The anonymity they provide also appeals to shady oligarchs and corrupt despots.

BVI businesses are black boxes, with no public register of their owners and no duty to publish accounts or pay taxes. Many hold property. In London alone, the real estate held by BVI shells is worth [billions of pounds](#).

The BVI is an overseas territory, where the Queen remains head of state and the judicial committee of the privy council in London is still the court of final appeal. Following recent clashes over UK legislation designed to limit its activities as a tax haven, the number of incorporations has plummeted and many on these islands are now calling for greater independence.

“Is this a prelude on a pre-step to the United Kingdom coming in and taking over?” Claude O Skelton-Cline, a [well-known BVI talk radio host](#), asked last week. A paid government consultant, Skelton-Cline’s views are though to be aligned with many of those in the higher echelons of BVI politics.

His fears are not unfounded. In 2009 the UK suspended the constitution of the Turks and Caicos and [assumed day-to-day control](#), after a commission of inquiry found widespread corruption.

Victor Bulmer-Thomas, a fellow at Chatham House and [Caribbean](#) expert, said the situation “looks very much like a rerun of the Turks and Caicos crisis a few years ago and is a reminder of how vulnerable the overseas territories are to the actions of unscrupulous individuals”.

He believes Westminster may have been prompted to intervene by reports that the EU plans to exploit Brexit by adding the nation to its list of tax havens. The sanction is largely symbolic, although banks could in future be reluctant to hold accounts for companies in blacklisted jurisdictions.

As Brexit continues to shake the foundations of Britain’s foreign relations, its ability to protect its territories from censure has been diminished. The onus is now on Raab to convince the EU that corruption will be stamped out.

Sir Gary Hickinbottom, whose experience includes a period as a supreme court judge in the Falkland Islands, has been chosen as the man for the job. He has already arrived on the main island of Tortola, where he [gave a press conference](#) on Friday. He has until July to make recommendations for action, including whether criminal proceedings should be brought against individuals.

For its part, the BVI government had been [due to review](#) its constitutional relationship with the UK later this year. Officials had talked of moving to a model of “free association” with the old colonial power, which would mean having a political alliance with the UK but more independent governance.

In 2018 a cross-party coalition of Westminster MPs led by the Labour politician Margaret Hodge and her Conservative colleague Andrew Mitchell won parliamentary support for legislation obliging the BVI and other UK

dependencies to [publish the names of shell company owners](#) in public registers.

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Islanders [took to the streets in protest](#), branding Hodge a modern-day imperialist. The slogans held aloft by the crowd made no bones about it: “No imperial legislation”; “You chained us, didn’t sustain us, now you constrain us”; and “Racist UK”.

“This week’s shocking revelations that corruption may be rife in the BVI are a shameful indictment of the tax haven model,” Hodge said. “It is clear that an economy based on secrecy and low taxes is a recipe for bad governance, corruption, and criminality.”

In a statement, the BVI premier, Andrew Fahie, said he welcomed the commission of inquiry, but appeared to suggest local inquiries into the allegations should be completed before the Hickinbottom investigation can begin. “It is only after these stages of the process are completed and investigations deemed inconclusive would the way be paved for a commission of inquiry. This has always been the process followed because it is the only process that allows for good governance to function in a manner that keeps the tenets of democracy sacred,” [he said](#).

Jaspert is being replaced this month by the governor of Bermuda, after four years in post. Signing off from his Facebook video address before packing up his bags in Government House, the official residence of the governor, he implored islanders to get involved with the inquiry. “It will be your opportunity to shape the way things are done and help put things right for the next generation.”

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## Trump impeachment (2021)

# Impeachment guide: how will Donald Trump's second Senate trial unfold?

If the trial is successful it would allow the Senate to bar the former president from holding office in the future



The signature of Nancy Pelosi on the article of impeachment during an engrossment ceremony after the House voted to impeach Trump.  
Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

The signature of Nancy Pelosi on the article of impeachment during an engrossment ceremony after the House voted to impeach Trump.  
Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

*Lauren Gambino  
@laurenegambino*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 21.08 EST

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The House of Representatives on Monday delivered an [article of impeachment](#) against Donald Trump to the Senate – the first time in history an American president will face a second impeachment trial.

[Trump plots revenge on Republicans who betrayed him as Senate trial looms](#)  
[Read more](#)

Though Trump is no longer in office, the trial is set to go ahead in February. If convicted, Trump could be barred from ever again holding public office, dealing a terminal blow to any hopes he may have of running again in 2024.

The charge originates from the former president's incendiary speech to an angry mob before it [assaulted the US Capitol](#) in Washington on 6 January, and will thus unfold in the one of the chambers ransacked by his supporters.

Here is what we know so far about the historic proceeding:

## **What happened on Monday?**

Nine Democratic impeachment managers brought the article of impeachment – the charge of incitement laid out and approved by the House – to the Senate in a small, formal procession through National Statuary Hall, where just weeks ago rioters paraded, waving Trump flags. In the Senate, Jamie Raskin, a Democrat from Maryland and the lead impeachment manager, read the article of impeachment on the floor of the chamber.

## **What happens next?**

Traditionally the trial would begin almost immediately upon receipt of the impeachment article. But Senate leaders have agreed on a two-week delay, allowing time for Joe Biden to install his cabinet and begin pursuing a legislative agenda.

Under the deal struck by Chuck Schumer, the majority leader, and Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader, the president's team and the House managers will have until the week of 8 February to draft and exchange written legal briefs.

Trump's legal team must submit an answer to the article by 2 February, the same day House managers must provide their pre-trial brief. Trump's pre-trial brief will be due on 8 February and the House will have until 9 February for a rebuttal, allowing for the trial to begin.

## **What is the charge?**

Trump is accused of "inciting violence against the government of the United States", for his statements at a rally prior to his supporters launching the attack on the Capitol in which five people died. The House impeached Trump for "high crimes and misdemeanors" on 13 January, exactly one week after the siege. The final vote was 232 to 197, with 10 Republicans joining Democrats.

## **Will witnesses be called?**

That is not yet known. In Trump's first impeachment trial, over approaches to Ukraine for dirt on political rivals, the Republican-held Senate refused to call witnesses. Now the Senate is in Democratic hands but many in the party are hoping for a speedy trial so as not to distract from Biden's first weeks in the White House. Some Democrats have said they do not expect to call witnesses, given that lawmakers bore witness to – and were the victims of – the attack on the Capitol.

## **Who runs the trial?**

The chief justice of the supreme court, John Roberts, oversaw Trump's first trial in February 2020. However, the constitution only stipulates that the chief justice must preside over the trial of a current president, leaving scholars divided over who should lead the chamber during the proceedings this time. If Roberts declined to preside, the task would likely fall to the president of the Senate: Kamala Harris, the vice-president. In the event she preferred not to become involved with the proceedings, which overlaps with her first weeks in her new job, the job could fall to Patrick Leahy, a Democratic senator from Vermont and the Senate president pro tempore, a position decided by seniority.

[Schumer promises quick but fair trial as Trump impeachment heads to Senate](#)

[Read more](#)

## How long will the trial last?

That is also still not known, but it is expected to be much quicker than the last impeachment trial – perhaps a matter of days, not weeks.

## What are the chances Republicans vote to convict?

A two-thirds majority of the Senate is needed to convict Trump. As with his first impeachment trial, many Republicans see that as unlikely. Only Mitt Romney dared break ranks last time and, while more are expected to do so this time, it would take 17 Republicans joining all 50 Democrats to convict. However, McConnell's public ambivalence over his own vote has led to some speculation that if he were to signal support for conviction, he could provide cover for more defections.

## If Trump is convicted what happens next?

If Trump is convicted, there will be no immediate consequences as he has already left office. However, lawmakers could hold another vote to block him from running again. A simple majority would be needed to block him from holding "any office of honor, trust or profit under the United States", blocking a White House run in 2024.

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## North Korea

# North Korean envoy defects in possible sign that Kim's power base is 'drifting'

Acting ambassador to Kuwait fled for South last year, says fellow defector



Defection could be sign that the North Korean elite who shore up power base of country's leader, Kim Jong-un, pictured, has been drifting away from him slowly but constantly, says politician. Photograph: 朝鮮通信社/AP

Defection could be sign that the North Korean elite who shore up power base of country's leader, Kim Jong-un, pictured, has been drifting away from him slowly but constantly, says politician. Photograph: 朝鮮通信社/AP

*Reuters in Seoul*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 03.59 EST

North Korea's acting ambassador to Kuwait has defected to [South Korea](#) in the latest high-profile escape from the isolated country.

Ryu Hyun-woo had led North Korea's embassy in Kuwait since the former ambassador So Chang-sik was expelled after a 2017 UN resolution sought to scale back the country's overseas diplomatic missions.

Ryu defected to South Korea last September, according to Tae Yong-ho, who was North Korea's deputy ambassador to Britain [before settling in the South in 2016](#) and being elected as a lawmaker last year.

Kuwait has been a key source of foreign currency for Pyongyang, which sent thousands of labourers there, mostly for construction projects.

Tae said Ryu is the son-in-law of Jon Il-chun, who once oversaw a Worker's party bureau responsible for managing the ruling Kim family's secret coffers, known as Room 39.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service declined to comment.

Ryu's defection could be a sign that the North Korean elite who shore up leader Kim Jong-un's power base has been drifting away from him slowly but constantly, Tae said.

Ryu fled several months after Jo Song-gil, who was North Korea's acting ambassador to Italy, vanished with his wife from the embassy and resurfaced in South Korea.

Tae told Reuters the knowledge and experiences of the outside world gained as a diplomat had fostered disillusionment among his family, and he decided to escape to "give freedom" to his children, calling for other officials to follow suit.

"I want to deliver to my colleagues working around the world and North Korean elites that there is an alternative to North Korea, and the door is open," Tae said in an interview.

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**Uganda**

## **Ugandan security forces withdraw from Bobi Wine's house**

Judge ruled on Monday that house arrest of presidential challenger was illegal



Bobi Wine has said he can prove the military was stuffing ballot boxes, casting ballots for people and chasing voters away from polling stations.  
Photograph: Jérôme Delay/AP

Bobi Wine has said he can prove the military was stuffing ballot boxes, casting ballots for people and chasing voters away from polling stations.  
Photograph: Jérôme Delay/AP

*[Jason Burke](#) in Johannesburg, [Samuel Okiror](#) in Kampala and agencies*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 06.34 EST

Security forces in Uganda have withdrawn from around the home of presidential challenger [Bobi Wine](#), complying with a ruling by a judge on

Monday that rebuked authorities for holding the candidate under house arrest for 11 days.

Wine, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, [has been unable to leave his home since 14 January](#), when Ugandans [voted in an election](#) in which the 38-year-old reggae star turned politician was the main challenger to 76-year-old Yoweri Museveni.

Ugandan authorities had said Wine could only leave his home on the outskirts of the capital, Kampala, under military escort because they feared his presence in public could incite rioting.

However, Justice Michael Elubu said in his ruling that Wine's home was not a proper detention facility and noted that authorities should criminally charge him if he threatened public order.

Both the police and military units that had been guarding Wine's home were seen leaving their positions late on Tuesday morning.

There were fears that neither would comply with the court order despite statements from both Uganda's military spokeswoman and police spokesperson that they would abide by the law.

The police will continue to "maintain surveillance to ensure [Wine] doesn't break the law during this period".

Wine met newly elected members of parliaments from his National Unity Platform (NUP) party outside his home.

"The people of Uganda are relying on us, they voted us and we must not disappoint them. While you take up these offices you need to remember that you are servants to the people," [he told the politicians](#).

Museveni won the election with 58% of the ballots cast while Wine had 34%, according to official results. Wine insists he was the winner and claims the military was stuffing ballot boxes, casting ballots for people and chasing voters away from polling stations.

Authorities moved to restrict Wine's campaign, though say their actions were entirely lawful.

On one occasion, police confronted the presidential candidate Bobi Wine during an online press conference where [he announced a petition to the international criminal court to investigate rights abuses in the country](#).

Wine is urging his supporters to protest against his loss through non-violent means but suggested in a statement on Friday that he might not launch a court challenge to the official results because of concerns a defeat would validate Museveni's win. He said he would announce a decision "in a few days".

Museveni has dismissed allegations of vote-rigging, calling the election "the most cheating-free" since independence from Britain in 1962.

Last week, security forces cordoned off the officers of the NUP in the capital. The move was aimed at complicating its efforts to collect evidence of poll irregularities. Uganda then accused the US of trying to subvert the [presidential elections](#) after the US ambassador attempted to visit Wine at his home.

The election [was marred by violence in the run-up to polling day](#) with dozens shot in protests.

The contest for power in Uganda is being keenly watched across the continent, where veteran leaders are coming under pressure to give way to politicians more representative of Africa's increasingly youthful, urban and educated population.

Wine grew up in poverty in Kampala before his successful musical career and has explicitly linked his campaign to efforts elsewhere across [Africa](#) to oust veteran leaders. He told the Guardian last year that his was "a generational cause". The median age in the country is less than 16.

There has never been a peaceful transfer of power in the country – one reason why even some within the ruling party publicly urge Museveni to preside over an orderly transition.

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## Whales

# Officials hail 'encouraging' number of north Atlantic right whale births

- At least 14 new calves seen off south-eastern US this season
- Advocacy group warns of ongoing ‘unusual mortality event’



A North Atlantic right whale swims off Duxbury beach in Massachusetts last May. Photograph: Boston Globe/Getty Images

A North Atlantic right whale swims off Duxbury beach in Massachusetts last May. Photograph: Boston Globe/Getty Images

*[Richard Luscombe](#) in Miami*

*[@richlusc](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Wildlife officials in Florida have reported an “encouraging” number of sightings of critically endangered North Atlantic [right whales](#) off the south-

eastern US, including at least 14 new calves, three born to first-time mothers.

[Left stranded: US military sonar linked to whale beachings in Pacific, say scientists](#)

[Read more](#)

The total count of winter sightings of the species has reached 65, the Florida state fish and wildlife conservation commission reported in its [latest bulletin](#) on Thursday.

On Friday, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reported an [additional sighting](#) of a right whale named Champagne and its newborn calf off Amelia Island, Florida. Champagne, 12, was one of three new mothers recorded this season. The others, Infinity and [Catalog #3720](#), which has no recorded name, are 19 and 14 years old respectively, state authorities said.

With the 11 other recorded newborns, the numbers represent what the advocacy group Defenders of Wildlife says is the “[most encouraging calving season in years](#)”.

But Jane Davenport, the group’s senior attorney, warned that right whales had been experiencing an “unusual mortality event” since 2017, with 32 confirmed deaths in US and Canadian waters as well as 14 serious or non-survivable injuries.

“While these births are an encouraging sign, the continued threats underscore that we still have to redouble our efforts to protect these vulnerable babies and their mothers,” Davenport said.

“Right whales face a daily gauntlet of fishing ropes and speeding vessels, which together have caused the deaths of more than 200 right whales in the last decade alone. We’re killing right whales far faster than they can reproduce. Unless we move quickly to abate these threats, we’re running out of time to save the species from extinction.”

According to FWC, the ages of the right whales spotted this winter range from one year to older than 47. Most sightings at this time of year take place in Atlantic waters from North Carolina to [Florida](#).

A [catalog of all 766 right whales](#) recorded since 1935 is maintained by the New England Aquarium, in Boston. According to Defenders of Wildlife, scientists estimated that only around 356 right whales were alive at the end of 2019. Of those, fewer than 70 were adult females.

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## Starwatch: follow the moon to the Winter Hexagon

A fun asterism containing stars from six constellations will have you ranging across the sky

### [Starwatch chart](#)

The moon will guide you to a fun asterism this week called the Winter Hexagon. Asterisms are patterns made by connecting stars, whereas constellations are the areas of the sky that contain the asterisms.

Not all asterisms belong to a single constellation, however. This week's pattern joins seven stars from six different constellations. The chart shows the view from London, looking south at 22.00GMT on 25 January.

The almost full moon will be cruising through the middle of the grouping. More than 90% of the moon's nearside will be illuminated, with just a tiny flattening visible from the unilluminated western hemisphere. To trace the Winter Hexagon, start with the familiar constellation of Orion, and move from Rigel to Aldebaran in Taurus. Then trace around the shape in an anticlockwise direction from Capella to Castor and Pollux to Procyon to Sirius, until you reach Rigel again.

Notice how much sky you have ranged across, putting even the large constellations of Orion, Gemini and Taurus into perspective. From Sydney, Australia, the same view is visible, but in the northern sky, and apparently upside down.

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## Malka Leifer

# **Malka Leifer departs Israel for Australia to face 74 counts of child sexual abuse in Victoria**

Leifer, who faced more than 70 extradition hearings, is accused of assaulting female students at Adass Israel girls school in Melbourne



Dassi Erlich, an alleged victim of Leifer who has led the campaign to have her former principal face legal proceedings in Australia, tweeted on Monday evening ‘Leifer is on the way back to Australia’. Photograph: Ahmad Gharabli/AFP/Getty Images

Dassi Erlich, an alleged victim of Leifer who has led the campaign to have her former principal face legal proceedings in Australia, tweeted on Monday evening ‘Leifer is on the way back to Australia’. Photograph: Ahmad Gharabli/AFP/Getty Images

*[Elias Visontay](#) in Sydney and [Oliver Holmes](#) in Jerusalem*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.53 EST

Israel has extradited Malka Leifer to Australia following a decade-long effort by accusers of the alleged child abuser to have her brought back to Melbourne.

The former principal, who faces 74 counts of child sexual abuse in Victoria, was rushed out of Israel before the main airport in the country was due to be shut on Tuesday as part of tightening coronavirus restrictions.

Authorities had moved her overnight from a women's prison where she was detained to the airport. Pictures published by Israeli media showed Leifer being escorted onto a plane while handcuffed and wearing a face mask.

Breaking: Malka Leifer has left Israel and is on an extradition flight to Australia to face charges child sex abuse charges in Melbourne, Israeli media have reported. More on @GuardianAus <https://t.co/rEvzO3hvH7> [pic.twitter.com/6kLpDP7zTA](https://pic.twitter.com/6kLpDP7zTA)

— Elias Visontay (@EliasVisontay) [January 25, 2021](#)

Leifer left Australia for Israel in 2008 after allegations were raised and she has since faced more than 70 extradition hearings over the course of a six-year trial. The long legal saga, as well as allegations of interference from an Israeli official, have tested relations between Israel and Australia.

Dassi Erlich, an alleged victim of Leifer who has led the campaign to have her former principal face legal proceedings in Australia, tweeted: "Leifer is on the way back to Australia".

Leifer is on the way back to Australia. [#leiferonthewayback](#)

— Dassi Erlich #bringleiferback (@dassi\_erlich) [January 25, 2021](#)

Politicians, diplomats and Jewish community leaders have said the campaign launched by three alleged victims - Erlich and her sisters Elly Sapper and Nicole Meyer - was instrumental in securing her extradition from Israel to Australia.

Josh Burns, the Labor MP whose seat of Macnamara takes in the Adass Israel school where the alleged abuse occurred, told the Guardian: “This is a day many of us worried would never come. But it came because of three brave sisters who never stopped fighting for their day in court.”

Dave Sharma, the Liberal MP for Wentworth and Australia’s former ambassador to Israel, said reports Leifer was on her way to Australia were “welcome news for all who care about justice in this case”.

“Justice one step closer,” Sharma said.

Pictures: [@ynetnews pic.twitter.com/k5RmqygxRp](https://pic.twitter.com/k5RmqygxRp)

— Elias Visontay (@EliasVisontay) [January 25, 2021](#)

A spokesman for Australia’s attorney general, Christian Porter, said the government was aware of the reports of Leifer having left Israel.

“The Australian government does not comment on logistics involving extradition arrangements against individuals until the extradition process has concluded,” the spokesman said, noting Victorian authorities were responsible for the physical return of Leifer now that the legal extradition process had ended.

A Victoria police spokesman said “with the extradition process underway and the matter before the courts it would be inappropriate to comment”.

I admit that years ago, as Head of Asia-Pacific at Israel's FM, and later as Ambassador to Canberra I was skeptical that Leifer would be extradited. But I was then unaware of the heroism and tenacity of [@dassi\\_erlich](#), Ellie, and Nicole. I've never been happier to be so wrong.

— Mark Sofer (@MarkSofer) [January 25, 2021](#)

The Australia Israel & Jewish Affairs Council said it welcomed “with an enormous sense of relief” the news that Leifer was en route to Australia.

Mark Leibler, the council's national chairman, said: "We hope the images of Malka Leifer being escorted onto a plane to Australia will bring some satisfaction to her many alleged victims."

Leifer's lawyer, Nick Kaufman, complained that Israeli authorities were expected to keep the transfer secret "to ensure maximum respect for Ms Leifer's dignity until she left Israeli jurisdiction".

He added: "This clearly did not happen given the fact that photographs of her being led in handcuffs and legcuffs were leaked to the press."

Leifer was arrested and placed under house arrest in Israel after extradition orders were filed by Victoria police in 2014.

An Israeli court initially found her mentally unfit to be extradited. However, Israeli police rearrested Leifer after private investigators filmed her going about her daily life in the West Bank settlement of Emmanuel where she was living.

The case made further news following accusations that Israel's then-deputy health minister Ya'acov Litzman – who comes from the same sect of ultra-orthodox Judaism as Leifer – allegedly tried to influence psychiatric evaluations of the former principal. Litzman has denied any wrongdoing.

In December, after Israel's supreme court found Leifer had been feigning mental illness and was fit to be extradited to Australia, the court rejected her final appeal.

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## Global development

# 'The lockdown was political': Chad under strain ahead of election

Opposition cries foul as Covid restrictions cut off incomes and health care in country where two-thirds live in severe poverty

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Security forces watch as people wait to get tested for coronavirus in Chad's capital, N'Djamena, on 27 December. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty

Security forces watch as people wait to get tested for coronavirus in Chad's capital, N'Djamena, on 27 December. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty

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[Zeinab Mohammed Salih](#) in N'djamena

Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.45 EST

For Abdulgadir Sanousi the decision to lock down the capital of [Chad](#) was “a nightmare”. His work driving from N’Djamena to Moundou in the south four times a week dried up overnight. This month any work has involved bribing police to let him through the checkpoints at N’Djamena’s four main entry points.

“The situation is just a nightmare for us. We are faced with difficulties by the police. In order to deal with them you need to bribe them, if not they would confiscate your vehicle,” says 27-year-old Sanousi.

President Idriss Déby [locked down](#) the city of around a million inhabitants on 1 January. Gatherings and public transport stopped, and schools, places of worship and restaurants closed. Markets, where the majority of the population make a living, also had to shut down. The airport closed except for cargo and the city was put under a dusk to dawn curfew.

On Thursday some restrictions on travel were eased, but the curfew remains in the central African country, which [has recorded](#) just over 3,000 cases and

114 deaths since the pandemic was declared last year.

The government supplied food staples to some neighbourhoods, says Sanousi: “They gave us very little stuff, even less than one meal a day.

### ['Millions hang by a thread': extreme global hunger compounded by Covid-19](#)

[Read more](#)

“Living in this country is very expensive. You need to wake up very early in the morning and work really hard just for food and basics. Imagine on top of that they locked down the city. People here do not think there’s coronavirus, even if there is, it’s not that severe.”

According to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), 66% of Chadians [live in severe poverty](#) and one in three are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The oil-rich country ranked 187th out of 189 countries in the 2019 human development index.

In a [briefing paper](#) published this week, the WFP said levels of malnutrition were a concern. But there have been [no reported](#) disruptions to aid deliveries during lockdown.

“We only have one meal a day,” says Madina Abdullah, who helps her mother sell *bakhoor* (woodchip soaked in oils) at a N’Djamena market. “These days my daughters and I have to wait for my mother all day so that she could bring us some food from the market. We only have dinner.”

Ahmed Osman, a father of four, who sells secondhand clothes, fears another lockdown. “There are not many buyers, we don’t sell much. Nobody wants to waste their money on clothes, people want to keep that for food, there might be another lockdown at any time. The government here does it without any warning.”

Opposition parties have accused the government of using lockdown to interfere with election campaigning ahead of the presidential vote scheduled for April.

Déby, who seized power in 1990, began his campaign rallies before the measures were introduced, visiting most of the main cities outside N'Djamena.

“He did his rallies and locked the city down to prevent us from doing the same thing,” says Yacine Sakin, a member of the Reformist party, part of an opposition coalition that aims to put forward a candidate in the election.

“The lockdown here is a totally political action. It is not about the coronavirus, the regime has no support from the public and they know that, and they simply want to restrict the freedom of movement of the people.”



Deserted roads in the usually bustling centre of N'Djamena, Chad.  
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

It's not just people living in the capital who have been hit by the lockdown. Chad is home to more than [478,000 refugees](#), the vast majority from Sudan, and is expecting an increase in refugees from Central African Republic following this month's election violence.

A Sudanese refugee who has lived in eastern Chad since leaving Sudan in 2004 told the Guardian that he usually travels to N'Djamena regularly for medical checkups, but has been unable to make the journey because of the lockdown.

Haroun Yahya, a 41-year-old father of 14, was shot in Darfur by Janjaweed militia and has multiple leg injuries. “I used to travel to the capital regularly with the help of the UN to get treatment, now I have been depending on local medicines to ease my pain,” he says.

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## 2021.01.25 - Climate crisis

- [Economies Helping poorest tackle climate crisis will boost global growth, says IMF head](#)
- [The age of extinction How creating wildlife crossings can help reindeer, bears – and even crabs](#)

## Climate change

# Helping poorest tackle climate crisis will boost global growth, says IMF head

Kristalina Georgieva says investing to create resilient economies is a ‘win-win-win’ scenario



Kristalina Georgieva says there is a fourfold benefit from policies aiming to reverse global heating. Photograph: Mike Theiler/Reuters

Kristalina Georgieva says there is a fourfold benefit from policies aiming to reverse global heating. Photograph: Mike Theiler/Reuters

*[Fiona Harvey](#) Environment correspondent*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

Helping the most vulnerable people to cope with the climate crisis can boost the global economy during the Covid crisis and governments should make this a priority, the head of the International Monetary Fund has said.

Kristalina Georgieva said international responses to the pandemic must urgently take account of the [need to adapt to the impacts of extreme weather and other climate shocks](#), as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Otherwise, the world risked billions of dollars of economic damage in the near future, as most countries were [unprepared for the](#) effects of a [rapidly heating climate](#), she warned.

“The good news is that it can be win-win-win-win,” she said. “Building resilience can be good for nature and ecosystems; it can be good for economic growth; at a time when economies have lost low-skilled jobs, it boosts job creation; and the fourth win is that it can bring health benefits [such as reduced air pollution].”

Georgieva pledged help from the IMF to countries hit by the climate crisis, and to those seeking to [fulfil the Paris agreement](#).

“What we want is for countries to think of the IMF as a source of help, and not be afraid to come to us,” she told the Guardian. “We want to build buffers to these shocks for countries that are highly vulnerable.”

These measures could not wait, she warned. “The impact of a changing climate is [already upon us](#), hitting vulnerable countries and vulnerable people most severely. These are countries that are often already experiencing economic and social problems.”

The IMF is the global international financial institution set up alongside the World Bank and in parallel with the UN, and other institutions at the end of the second world war, to support global trade.

It has been [heavily criticised](#) in the past for imposing [“structural adjustment programmes”](#) on poor countries that harmed their public sectors, including public health systems, and for promoting aggressive privatisation and other stringent measures, while [ignoring social and environmental considerations](#).

Georgieva, who took over her role in October 2019, shortly before the pandemic struck, signalled that she wanted [a different direction for the IMF](#).

“The IMF can do the right thing,” she said. “What the IMF brings is incredible ambition, analysis, policy and financial skills to transition to a new climate economy.

“We are the only institution that regularly takes the pulse of regional, national and global economy. We recognise that climate change is a macro-critical factor.”

Georgieva said the IMF stood ready to help countries decarbonise their economies in line with a goal of reaching net zero emissions by mid-century.

“The mandate [of the IMF] is not changing, not becoming something else, but incorporating growth, employment and financial stability. There is no question that climate change matters to growth, employment and financial stability.”

Georgieva was speaking ahead of a global summit on climate adaptation, at which world leaders and top officials – including the UN secretary-general António Guterres, British prime minister Boris Johnson, French president Emmanuel Macron, German chancellor Angela Merkel, Indian prime minister Narendra Modi and the US climate envoy, John Kerry – will meet virtually to discuss global preparedness for the impacts of the climate crisis.

### [Road to net zero: what the Committee on Climate Change recommends](#)

[Read more](#)

Protecting and improving infrastructure, from flood barriers to mobile telecoms for early warning systems, could add 0.7% to global economic growth in the next 15 years, and create millions of new jobs around the world, if governments were willing to take such actions, Georgieva said. “Every \$1 invested [in adaptation] brings \$4 to \$7 in damage prevented,” she noted.

Many of the measures needed, from adapting buildings and improving transport networks to restoring natural features such as [coastal mangrove swamps](#) and upland forests, would be labour-intensive, she added.

Georgieva, who is Bulgarian, has a history of pushing climate up the agenda of key institutions she has helped to lead.

At the World Bank, where she served in senior roles from 1993 to 2010, and again as chief executive then acting president from 2017 to 2019, she was noted for including climate in key policies.

At the European commission, where she was commissioner for humanitarian issues then international development from 2010 to 2016, she emphasised the need to coordinate climate policy with overseas aid.

Georgieva will build on the work of her IMF predecessor, Christine Lagarde, now president of the European Central Bank, who also pushed for more action on the climate.

The role of international institutions in the global heating crisis was highlighted at the [Paris climate summit in 2015](#), but their record has been mixed. Campaigners have warned that too much of their focus, particularly in the recovery from the pandemic, is still on [propping up the fossil fuel economy](#).

[Climate finance](#) – aid to poor countries to help them reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of extreme weather – will be a key pillar of the UN Cop26 climate summit, to be hosted by the UK this November.

[The UN recently called on rich countries to fulfil their promise of \\$100bn a year in climate finance](#) to the developing world, with international institutions expected to play a key role.

At the Climate Adaptation Summit, to be hosted by the Netherlands on Monday, Boris Johnson is expected to say: “It is undeniable that climate change is already upon us, and is already devastating lives and economies.

“We must adapt to our changing climate, and we must do so now. I’ll be making the need for a resilient recovery a priority of the UK’s G7 presidency this year.”

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## The age of extinction Wildlife

# How creating wildlife crossings can help reindeer, bears – and even crabs

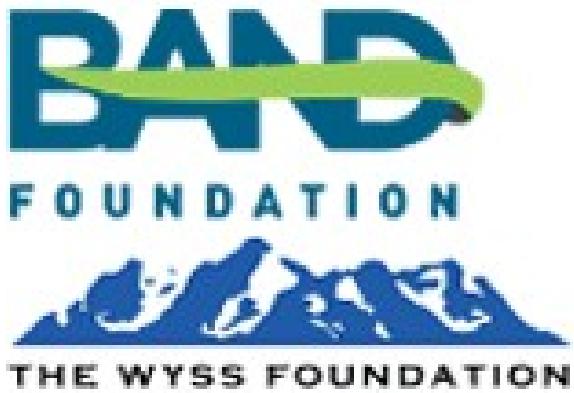


A wildlife overpass in Banff national park, in the Canadian Rockies.  
Photograph: Ross MacDonald/Banff National Park

A wildlife overpass in Banff national park, in the Canadian Rockies.  
Photograph: Ross MacDonald/Banff National Park

Sweden's announcement this week that it is to build a series of animal bridges is the latest in global efforts to help wildlife navigate busy roads

The age of extinction is supported by



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Sat 23 Jan 2021 03.30 EST

Every April, Sweden's main highway comes to a periodic standstill. Hundreds of reindeer overseen by indigenous Sami herders shuffle across the asphalt on the E4 as they begin their journey west to the mountains after a winter gorging on the lichen near the city of Umeå. As Sweden's main arterial road has become busier, the crossings have become increasingly fractious, especially if authorities do not arrive in time to close the road. Sometimes drivers try to overtake the reindeer as they cross – spooking the animals and causing long traffic jams as their Sami owners battle to regain control.

“During difficult climate conditions, these lichen lands can be extra important for the reindeer,” says Per Sandström, a landscape ecologist at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences who works as an intermediary between the Sami and authorities to improve the crossings.

This week, Swedish authorities [announced](#) they would build up to a dozen “renoducts” (reindeer viaducts) to aid the crossings and allow reindeer herds

to reach grazing more easily.



Reindeer viaducts in Sweden will keep herds safe from traffic as they roam in search of grazing. Photograph: Paweł Garski./Alamy

It is hoped the crossings will allow herders to find fresh grazing lands and alleviate traffic jams, and also help moose and lynx to move around the landscape. The country's 4,500 Sami herders and 250,000 reindeer have been hit hard by the climate crisis, battling forest fires in the summer and freezing rain in the winter that hides lichen below impenetrable sheets of ice.

"The animals that will really benefit from this system are long-ranging mammals that are really not meant to survive in these small, isolated pockets," says Sandström, who started his career in the US helping to create ecological corridors in Montana for grizzly bears.

The reducts are part of a growing number of wildlife bridges and underpasses around the world that aim to connect fractured habitats. On the Yucatán peninsula in Mexico, [underpasses have](#) been used to shield jaguars from traffic. Natural canopy bridges in the Peruvian Amazon [have helped](#) porcupines, monkeys and kinkajous pass over natural gas pipelines. On Christmas Island, bridges [have been built](#) over roads to allow millions of red crabs to pass from the forest to the beaches on their annual migration.



Red crabs on Christmas Island climb a bridge designed for their protection.  
Photograph: Chris Bray Photography/Swell Lodge

The wildlife bridges help avert some of the billions of animal deaths that happen on the roads every year around the world and counteract unintended consequences of human infrastructure.

In southern California, there have been signs of inbreeding among lions in the Santa Monica Mountains because busy freeways around Los Angeles have isolated populations with low genetic diversity. To help save the mountain lion population from local extinction, an \$87m (£63m) [wildlife bridge is planned](#) over the 101 highway north of LA, which would be the largest in the world.

“When habitat is isolated, we can have impact on individual animals where they might not be able to find water or food. We can also have impact on the genetic diversity of populations,” says Mark Benson, a member of the human-wildlife coexistence team for Lake Louise, Yoho and Kootenay at Parks Canada.

The agency has overseen one of the most successful uses of wildlife bridges in the world in Banff national park, Alberta, installing seven overpasses and 41 underpasses on the section bisected by the Trans-Canada Highway. A

[2014 study](#) found that fencing off the road and installing wildlife passes had maintained high genetic diversity in black and grizzly bear populations. Benson credits the passes with a big fall in roadkill along the highway, also significantly reducing human mortality from animal collision.

“We can go all the way back to 1983. There was an underpass that was put in place as part of twinning improvements [widening the highway] in the park. The first overpasses were put in place in 1996 and the twinning of the highway was completed in 2016,” he says.

### [Can there be a Hollywood ending for the 'Brad Pitt of mountain lions'?](#)

[Read more](#)

“It’s very effective in terms of allowing wildlife to move across the landscape.”

In the UK, wildlife bridges are likely to form part of the government’s nature recovery network which aims to link together biodiverse areas under a 25-year environment plan. A 2015 review by Natural England acknowledged the benefits for nature and cited the [example of the Netherlands](#), which is developing a network of “ecoducts” to help animals move around the country.

Highways [England](#) is increasingly building wildlife bridges as part of schemes around the country, with more planned for future infrastructure work. But some conservationists warn not enough is being done in the UK.

“We’re woefully behind the rest of the world. In Europe, it’s become second nature in some areas,” says Martin de Retuerto, director of conservation at Hampshire & Isle of Wight [Wildlife Trust](#).

The trust is advocating the creation of a green bridge across the M3 at Twyford Down, one of the [most controversial](#) road schemes in English history, built in the 90s. The motorway severed the link between the South Downs national park and St Catherine’s Hill, an iron age fort and nature reserve home to rare butterflies and wildflowers.



Twyford Down in Hampshire, where conservationists are calling for a green bridge to help wildlife cross the M3. Photograph: Steve Morgan/Alamy

Major protests against the scheme might have failed to stop construction but De Retuerto says they marked a shift in attitudes to environmental issues in the UK. For that reason alone, he says, a green bridge at Twyford Down should be made to kickstart the nature recovery network.

“It’s been heralded as the best bad example of how to do a road scheme. It’s symbolic and deserves to be the one where, politically, prioritisation is centred,” he said.

“If the Romanians can build them for bison, then we can build them for butterflies.”

*Find more [age of extinction coverage here](#), and follow biodiversity reporters [Phoebe Weston](#) and [Patrick Greenfield](#) on Twitter for all the latest news and features*

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## 2021.01.25 - Culture

- [Book of the day Everything Must Change! review – the left's big beasts tackle a post-pandemic future](#)
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[\*\*Book of the day\*\*](#)[\*\*Society books\*\*](#)

## **Everything Must Change! review – the left's big beasts tackle a post-pandemic future**



A nurse in a hospital in Rome, April 2020. Photograph: Alberto Pizzoli/AFP/Getty Images

A nurse in a hospital in Rome, April 2020. Photograph: Alberto Pizzoli/AFP/Getty Images

Conversations featuring the likes of Noam Chomsky, Brian Eno and Slavoj Žižek imagine a more communal world after Covid



[Tim Adams](#)

[@TimAdamsWrites](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

In Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, 10 friends escape from the city of Florence when it is shut down by the Black Death and hole up in a villa in the hills, where each night for a fortnight they tell one another stories of love and tragedy. Something of the same spirit animates this collection of conversations that occurred in the strangest of fortnights in our own times: the weeks at the end of March and the beginning of April last year when the whole world was first forced behind closed doors by Covid-19.

The conversations, conducted over Zoom, are mostly convened by the Croatian activist and writer Srećko Horvat who, along with Yanis Varoufakis, is the driving force behind [DiEM25](#), a radical initiative that aims to more fully democratise the EU. The storytellers in this case, isolated in their studies and sitting rooms across the world, include leading figures of the intellectual left such as Noam Chomsky and Richard Sennett; critics of surveillance capitalism like Shoshana Zuboff and Evgeny Morozov; artists, musicians and actors including Brian Eno and Gael García Bernal; and, inevitably, contrarians like Tariq Ali and Slavoj Žižek. Their subject is the

opportunity presented by the pandemic to reshape society, to “build back better” as the politicians’ phrase goes.

The moment seems to spark a sort of dreamy optimism among many of the speakers

The interest of these conversations is partly their content and partly their tone. They capture that sense of alarm that characterised the first weeks of the crisis, but also the slightly giddy initial novelty of isolation – quiet streets, upended timetables – a sense that revolution might be in the air. Horvat, author of [The Poetry of the Future: Why a Global Liberation Movement Is Our Civilisation’s Last Chance](#) and *The Radicality of Love*, is the perfect facilitator of these discussions. An old-school idealist, sentimental about the possibilities of communism – though his father had been an exiled dissident from Tito’s Yugoslavia – he introduces them with a studenty zeal: “Nothing of the old system must stay, and everything of the beauty and humbleness and determination of our common struggle must be cherished... less work, more love; less monologue, more dialogue; less ego, more compassion – and again, *lots* of organisation!”

[Srećko Horvat: ‘The current system is more violent than any revolution’](#)  
[Read more](#)

The moment seems to spark a sort of dreamy optimism among many of the speakers, as a counterpoint to their default one-upmanship in dystopian despair. Long-forgotten news items from the beginning of the pandemic – Cuba sending doctors to Italy; Boris Johnson temporarily nationalising the railways; [Britney Spears proposing a general strike](#); China sharing details of the virus sequencing – are seized on as unlikely evidence of a new collectivist reality. Clap for Carers is either greeted as a “horror” in which “royals and celebrities were clapping like seals to celebrate NHS workers” or, by Brian Eno, as the beginnings of a revolutionary acknowledgment of who exactly are the “essential workers” in our society.

Most of the speakers are friends, united both in their faith in international socialism and their desire to liberate Julian Assange. To reach a more utopian “new normal”, it is generally agreed that first we must negotiate the

escape from lockdown. Some solutions to this problem are more doctrinaire than others. Žižek proposes a “one-time communism” in which those who have recovered from the virus must be co-opted to do the frontline jobs of those who have not yet caught it: “it seems crucial today to have a list of people on whom we can rely and who should be ruthlessly mobilised. We are out of the economy of the market and money and are entering something else,” he says.

Sennett, more thoughtfully, sees the spontaneous seeds of a new community spirit, “a localised sociability” that can be encouraged by redesigning cities with the principle of decentralised “walking density”; recreating village-style communities that have all amenities, from grocery stores to schools to gyms, allowing people “not to take public transport”. He imagines Zoom “de-privatised” as a public good, using tech to “build solidarity”. “It is assumed that solidarity comes out of anger at injustice. But that’s not true; solidarity is a craft.”

Not all contributors are convinced that they should give up their class-warrior credentials quite so lightly post-pandemic, of course. Ali persists in making the argument that a vote for Joe Biden, say, would have no different effect for working people than a vote for Donald Trump (the pandemic at least, would argue otherwise). Roger Waters, of Pink Floyd, sees himself, without apparent irony, living like anyone else below the “i-cloud” of moneyed elites, “in a netherworld of fucking misery... where you never have more than \$20 in your pocket and are desperately wondering what you are going to do at the end of the month”. That netherworld, often conjured in these pages, can sometimes appear like one other far-off abstract in a behind-closed-doors project that is, by its nature, either a call to arms in organising realistic futures, or an entertaining distraction from current realities, depending on where you are sitting.

- *Everything Must Change! The World After Covid-19*, edited by Renata Ávila and Srećko Horvat, is published by [OR Books](#) (£19)
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[\*\*Jazz\*\*](#)

## **Jonas Gwangwa, South African jazz musician and activist, dies aged 83**

Trombonist heralded by president Cyril Ramaphosa as ‘a giant of our revolutionary cultural movement’



Jonas Gwangwa performing in 2017. Photograph: Sowetan/Getty Images

Jonas Gwangwa performing in 2017. Photograph: Sowetan/Getty Images

[Ben Beaumont-Thomas](#)

[@ben\\_bt](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 04.38 EST

Jonas Gwangwa, the Oscar-nominated South African jazz musician who campaigned against apartheid for decades, has died aged 83. The cause of death has not been announced.

South African president Cyril Ramaphosa [led tributes](#), saying:

A giant of our revolutionary cultural movement and our democratic creative industries has been called to rest; the trombone that boomed with boldness and bravery, and equally warmed our hearts with mellow melody has lost its life force. Jonas Gwangwa ascends to our great orchestra of musical ancestors whose creative genius and dedication to the freedom of all South Africans inspired millions in our country and mobilised the international community against the apartheid system.

Gwangwa, a trombonist, was born in 1937 and first found fame in the 50s with the Jazz Epistles, playing alongside musicians who would become some of South Africa's biggest jazz stars: trumpeter Hugh Masekela, pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, and saxophonist Kippie Moeketsi. In 1959, he and the Jazz Epistles recorded the first LPs by black South African jazz artists, two volumes of Jazz in [Africa](#) with visiting American pianist John Mehegan.

Following the advent of apartheid, when jazz musicians were censored in South Africa alongside a raft of other repressive measures, Gwangwa left the country and lived in exile. During the 80s he was musical director of the Amandla Cultural Ensemble, a large music and dance group organised under the African National Congress political party, who performed globally as a way of raising consciousness about the anti-apartheid movement.

In 1987, alongside English composer George Fenton, he composed the score for Cry Freedom, the drama about anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko starring Denzel Washington. He was nominated for two Oscars in 1988, for best original score and song.

He returned to South Africa in 1991, and continued to record and release music. In 1997, he composed the music for South Africa's bid for the Olympic Games.

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[\*\*TV tonight\*\*](#)[\*\*Television & radio\*\*](#)

## **TV tonight: Katie Price opens up about her son's disability**



Pride and joy ... Katie and Harvey Price. Photograph: Glen Gratton/BBC/Minnow Films

Pride and joy ... Katie and Harvey Price. Photograph: Glen Gratton/BBC/Minnow Films

The reality star explores Harvey's chances of independence in adulthood. Plus: a Euphoria special. Here's what to watch this evening

[Ammar Kalia](#), [Ellen E Jones](#), [Jack Seale](#), [Hannah J Davies](#) and [Paul Howlett](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 01.20 EST

**Katie Price: Harvey and Me**

## **8.30pm, BBC One**

Price talks candidly about a topic that has mostly stayed off limits throughout her two-decade TV career: raising her son Harvey, who lives with rare conditions including septo-optic dysplasia. As Harvey turns 18, Price explores the options for his adulthood and his chances of independence. She meets the mother of one of his friends, Jeanette, who recounts how her disabled child is now thriving at college, while another, Isabelle, details how her autistic son Matthew was sectioned at 15. **Ammar Kalia**

## **Lightning**

## **6.30pm, BBC Two**

The comedian [Zoe Lyons](#) tries her hand at hosting a gameshow. Six hopefuls are picked on by a roving spotlight and can pass on the glare only after they have answered a question correctly. If they are in the light when the clock runs down, they are eliminated from winning the £3,000 prize. **AK**

## **Corona: The Pandemic and the Pangolin**

## **8.35pm, PBS America**

There is nothing new about plagues and pandemics, but as Covid-19 continues to cause devastation, this documentary takes a closer look at the role of the illegal wildlife trade. Experts explore how the brutal slaughter of animals creates the right conditions for deadly viruses to thrive. **Ellen E Jones**

## **Cornwall: This Fishing Life**

## **9pm, BBC Two**



Plenty more fish in the sea? Ivan, Paul and Rhys Toms. Photograph: BBC/Frank Films

Although it is about Cornish fishing every week, this series always finds a new story to tell. Tonight, the Toms family from Looe try to revive the town's old reputation for super-fresh fish, caught immediately by a small boat. Can the agility of a small independent business take on the big boys from Plymouth? **Jack Seale**

## **Mark Kermode's Secrets of Cinema**

**9pm, BBC Four**

Kermode continues his entertaining romp through cinematic tropes with an episode on cult fan favourites, from Blade Runner to Fight Club. He unpicks what leads audiences to bestow cult status on a film, including a tendency towards transgression and genre-splicing. **AK**

## **Euphoria**

**9pm, Sky Atlantic**

A second special episode – this one entitled “Fuck Anyone Who’s Not a Sea Blob” – of [the teen drama starring Hunter Schafer and Zendaya](#). After a chapter centred on Rue (Zendaya), this follows Jules (Schafer), the anti-manic pixie dream girl who broke Rue’s heart. What happened after that night at the train station? **Hannah J Davies**

## Film choice



Face-off ... Frank Langella (Richard Nixon) and Michael Sheen (David Frost) in Frost/Nixon. Photograph: Universal/Everett/Rex Features

### **Frost/Nixon (Ron Howard, 2008), 12.40am, Sky Cinema Greats**

The interviews between the disgraced US president, Richard Nixon, and the British journo de jour, David Frost, made for compelling TV in 1977. This account of the machinations of their intellectual battle is riveting. Michael Sheen's Frost and Frank Langella's Nixon are mesmerising. **Paul Howlett**

## Live sport

**Test cricket: Sri Lanka v England** 6am, Sky Sports Main Event. Fourth day of the second Test.

**FA Cup football: Wycombe Wanderers v Tottenham** 7.45pm, BT Sport 1.  
Will Adams Park witness an unlikely upset?

**La Liga football: Athletic Bilbao v Getafe** 8pm, La Liga TV. Spanish top-flight action from San Mamés.

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[Steve Rose on filmFilm](#)

## **Smash hit or total turkey? In the age of streaming it's impossible to tell**

With the box office closed and only secretive viewing figures to go on, gauging a film's success is becoming a tricky proposition



‘Hands up who likes my film’ ... Gal Gadot boosts the ratings for Wonder Woman 1984. Photograph: Clay Enos/AP

‘Hands up who likes my film’ ... Gal Gadot boosts the ratings for Wonder Woman 1984. Photograph: Clay Enos/AP

[Steve Rose](#)

[@steverose7](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

Here’s a question: was [Wonder Woman 1984](#) a hit movie? How did it compare to the first Wonder Woman? Or how about [Soul](#), or [Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom](#)? Were they hits? How can we tell? In ordinary times we

wouldn't have to ask; we would have box-office figures to go by. Now, the pandemic has hobbled cinema-going, and for most of us the only way to access new movies is via streaming services, which tend to guard their numbers as if they're nuclear launch codes. WW84, for example, got a limited cinema release but was mainly consumed in the US via HBO Max. How did it do there? All Warners said was that it had "broken records and exceeded our expectations". If Hollywood is a place where "nobody knows anything", streaming is a place where we know even less.

[The Guide: Staying In – sign up for our home entertainment tips](#)

[Read more](#)

So as Netflix unveils its [formidable slate of star-studded new movies](#) for 2021, it is hard to know how excited to get. This time next year, it will be just as hard to know how excited we were. In late 2019, Netflix changed the metric by which it gauges its "most-watched original films". Previously, viewers had to have watched at least 70% of a film for it to count. Now it's just two minutes. By that measure, its top films of 2020 were [Extraction](#), [Spenser Confidential](#) and [6 Underground](#): all macho, mid-ranking action movies that generated very little wider buzz, and you suspect would have barely dented the box office had they been released in cinemas.

There are other ways to judge whether movies are popular. We have professional critics, of course, who are never, ever wrong. Which is why they can pan movies such as Venom or Transformers and audiences flock to them regardless. Same goes for awards panels (\*cough\* Green Book). Even review aggregators such as Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic are now open to question, and possibly manipulation. Right after it opened, WW84 had a Rotten Tomatoes score of 90%. A few weeks later, after more reviews had been taken into account, it dipped below the site's "fresh" threshold of 60%. What happened there?

We still have our excellent individual tastes to go by, and streamers are very good at catering to those (rather than giving out data about their movies, they collect data on *us*). But one of the great things about box-office figures is that they offer nowhere to hide. There is no disputing a franchise-spawning smash such as The Matrix or Avatar, or disguising a bomb such as

Cats. We celebrate those successes and revel in those failures together. It's Darwinian but democratic. It binds us as a society. With streaming, we might get exactly the same good and bad movies, but served as more of an algorithmically curated mulch of "meh", which nobody consumes in the same way. That doesn't bode well for the future of movies as popular culture.

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[The ObserverFiction](#)

## A Lie Someone Told You About Yourself by Peter Ho Davies review – a raw account of fatherhood

Little is left to the imagination in a tender work of autofiction about a writing teacher's experiences as a new dad



Peter Ho Davies: 'his recollections fizz with tell-all voltage'. Photograph: Lynne Raughley

Peter Ho Davies: 'his recollections fizz with tell-all voltage'. Photograph: Lynne Raughley

[Anthony Cummins](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

Peter Ho Davies's last novel, [The Fortunes](#), about Chinese migrants to the US, felt most alive when it swapped historical reconstruction for veiled

autobiography. Maybe he thought so too: his new book stays close to the source of his most stimulating material, portraying early fatherhood as experienced by an unnamed creative writing teacher in the US – Ho Davies in silhouette, basically.

The crystalline narrative makes the point that children grow up fast

Moving briskly from one milestone to the next, from C-section birth to first overnight school trip, the crystalline narrative makes the point that children grow up fast, even if it rarely seems that way to a protagonist mired in marital tit-for-tat over night-time feeds and dawn starts. One minute, there's drool cooling on his chest as he's rocking his newborn to sleep; the next, his floors are booby-trapped with Lego and he's boiling with rage at the more agile kids who leave his son for dust on an Easter egg hunt.

His recollections fizz with tell-all voltage: even [Karl Ove Knausgaard](#) might have blushed to write of his wife's fingers "discreetly rolling linty pills of toilet paper out of his ass hair", in a passage on how marriage makes sex "mundanely intimate". Deeper interest lies in the troubling memory of a prior pregnancy, aborted after advice about a possible genetic disorder. As the protagonist wonders what his son might think, an obscure sense of shame compels him to volunteer at an abortion clinic, escorting women across the picket line – a dubious gesture, not least because it forces his wife to reschedule work when his shifts clash with daycare pickup.

Philosophical as well as confessional, Ho Davies's autofictional proxy shrewdly dissects the mixed-up emotions of parenthood while speculating on, say, why children love dinosaurs (it's a way of thinking about adults), or why his distaste for anti-abortion rhetoric leaves him unsure of how best to tell them about "babies in tummies". Tender yet clear-eyed, this is a thoughtful, consistently intriguing book, covering a lot of ground in a short space.

- *A Lie Someone Told You About Yourself* by Peter Ho Davies is published by Hodder & Stoughton (£14.99). To order a copy go to [guardianbookshop.com](http://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply
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**Hear me outBen Affleck**

## Hear me out: why *Gigli* isn't a bad movie

Continuing our series of writers championing maligned films is a plea to reconsider Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez's Razzie-winning crime comedy



Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck in *Gigli*. Photograph: Allstar/Columbia

Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck in *Gigli*. Photograph: Allstar/Columbia

*Jason Bailey*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 03.09 EST

We were discussing biases and groupthink, my critic friend and I, when he recalled the press screening for the 2003 megabomb *Gigli*. “I had to spend 20 minutes before the movie started,” he said, “listening to hack writers cracking each other up with one-liners they’d pre-written about a film that hadn’t even started yet.” If anything, that’s an understatement of the degree to which knives were out when the Ben Affleck/Jennifer Lopez comedy hit

theaters that summer. It was greeted with vicious notices (The Wall Street Journal deemed it “The worst movie – all right, the worst allegedly major movie – of our admittedly young century”), unwanted “awards” recognition (it swept that year’s Razzies), and dire box office (its worldwide gross topped out at \$7.2m, against a reported \$55m budget).

[Hear me out: why Batman v Superman isn't a bad movie](#)

[Read more](#)

Its title – which rhymes, the film insists, with “really” – became a punchline, and then a shorthand for embarrassing flops. Writer/director Martin Brest, previously an Oscar nominee for Scent of a Woman (and the guiding hand behind Beverly Hills Cop), never made another film. The lingering odor of Gigli was so strong that ads for Affleck and Lopez’s next screen pairing, Jersey Girl, omitted her participation entirely. It took years for the actors to live the picture down.

But it’s important to frame this ghastly reception within the atmosphere of the moment. Affleck and Lopez met during the film’s production and quickly became an item – such a public one that, by the time it hit theaters a year later, the “Bennifer” backlash had built up quite a head of steam. They were young, impossibly good-looking, fabulously wealthy, and clearly hot for each other, so it seemed like a good time to knock them down a peg.

Gigli is not some misunderstood masterpiece – it has, to be clear, plenty of problems. Chief among them is the cringe-y work of Justin Bartha as the mentally challenged younger brother of a federal prosecutor; Larry Gigli (Affleck), a low-level mob hood, is sent to kidnap him. The character (and the performance) came off as a slapdash Rain Man riff when the film came out, and time has certainly not improved it. The same can be said for the sexual politics between Gigli and Ricki (Lopez), another “independent contractor” who is brought in for the job – Larry gets the hots for her right away (in her low-rise jeans and bare midriff, Lopez is a walking 2003 calendar), but quickly discovers that she’s a lesbian. *This* element was rightly dismissed as a knuckleheaded retread of Affleck’s earlier Chasing Amy.

Ignoring those aspects of the picture can require, at times, carriage-horse level blinders. But there's much about *Gigli* to admire, starting with Brest's cockeyed ear for ornate dialogue. He loves eccentrics – people who have specific, strange ways of communicating – and that comes out most in Lopez's Ricki, who first divulges her sexuality to Larry by whispering, "This might be a good time to suggest that you not allow the seeds of cruel hope to sprout in your soul." ("I don't know what that means, but it sounds beautiful," the big lug replies.)

Brest also stops the movie cold for a brief, quintessentially weird [Christopher Walken](#) performance – verbose, peculiar, filled with sprung timing, unpredictable shifts in volume and intensity, and odd turns of phrase. His appearance was unbilled and unadvertised, so it was a nice surprise for the few of us who turned out for *Gigli*'s opening weekend; same goes for Brest's previous star Al Pacino, who turns up as a powerful mobster and (yes) shouts and roars, but also purrs and prowls, and *then* gets absolutely declawed by Lopez. Throughout the picture, it's clear that Brest knew what *Out of Sight*'s Steven Soderbergh and *Hustlers*' Lorene Scafaria did: that she's at her best when she's got some edge, not in the kind of puffy romcoms that she spent the rest of the decade churning out.

And that edge is what makes her chemistry with Affleck so interesting. (It also helps that they're photographed by the great Robert Elswitt, who shoots them like the peak-desirable movie stars they are.) When she eventually decides to give him a go, the invitation she extends from bed ("It's turkey time, gobble gobble") was singled out in many a review as a crime against cinema – without acknowledging, or even allowing, that it is neither written nor played as a serious moment. It's playful, and funny, and silly. It lands; other moments don't.

As Roger Ebert wrote (in one of the film's few [credible reviews](#)), "The movie tries to do something different, thoughtful, and a little daring with their relationship, and although it doesn't quite work, maybe the movie is worth seeing for some scenes that are really very good." But in the 21st century, the mixed review has become an endangered species – most readers look for the Rotten Tomatoes rating and pull-quote, and little beyond that. Everything is the absolute holy-shit best or the godawful worst of all time, and there's nothing in between. *Gigli* is in between.

- Gigli is available on Starz in the US and to rent in the UK
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## Consumer championsMoney

# How can LV= increase our car insurance in the Covid-19 crisis?

Although our car has rarely been used it has raised our premium by 15%



LV= has been one of the best UK car insurers in recent years, but it has recently increased prices. Photograph: M4OS Photos/Alamy Stock Photo

LV= has been one of the best UK car insurers in recent years, but it has recently increased prices. Photograph: M4OS Photos/Alamy Stock Photo

*Mile*[Miles Brignall](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

**Can you ask LV= to explain how it can justify trying to increase my car insurance premium by 15%, given that I, and most people I know, have barely driven during the past 10 months?**

**I've been a good customer over the years, buying both house and car insurance, but I'm starting to feel the loyalty is rather one-sided. Last year I paid £213 to insure my Skoda Karoq and, although it spent much of the year in lockdown, the company has asked me to renew at £245.**

**When I complained, I was offered a new price of £226 which is still a 6% increase. It blamed it on the “increase in the price of parts as a result of Brexit which hasn't helped the insurance industry”.**

**Imagine my feelings when I read in the Guardian that car insurance claims were down by 48% in 2020. I made no claims or changes during the year.**

**NR, by email**

On the same day this letter arrived, Comparethemarket put out a note saying that car insurance premiums had dropped to the lowest winter level for five years. A day earlier, Confused.com said they had fallen by £52 following the “steepest annual price drop in two years”.

Meanwhile, James Blackham, who runs the pay-by-mile car insurance firm By Miles, went further. He said insurers have collectively saved in excess of £1bn through fewer claims, and that insurers should repay each 2020 customer about £65. So is a 15%, or even a 6%, rise justified? It certainly doesn't look that way.

What many LV= customers may not be aware of is that it is a mutually owned firm, formerly Liverpool Victoria, and completed the sale of its car insurance business to Allianz on 2 January. The German insurance giant paid a total of more than £1bn. Could the new owner be trying to recoup some of its expenditure by increasing premiums?

LV= is unrepentant, and told me the increase is correct. “As a result of cars being driven less because of the various lockdowns, we have been passing on these savings to our customers through their renewal premiums. But, unfortunately, there are other factors that have resulted in prices needing to increase,” it said. “Claims inflation continues to be high and the cost of

repairs continues to increase, too. These are factors we need to take into consideration.”

It will be a shame if these increases are seen across the board. LV= has been one of the best UK car insurers in recent years – competitively priced, with good customer service. But now customers, it seems, should definitely shop around come renewal. As one, I certainly will be.

**We welcome letters but cannot answer individually. Email us at [consumer.champions@theguardian.com](mailto:consumer.champions@theguardian.com). Please include a daytime phone number. Submission and publication of all letters is subject to our [terms and conditions](#)**

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## Mexico holidays

# I'll never forget the fish tacos I had in Mexico – here's the recipe

Recreating the fish tacos he ate for breakfast in Baja California takes our writer back to his hot, dusty 1,000-mile cycle down the peninsula



A roadside taco stall, or taqueria, in Baja California, Mexico. Photograph: Tom Kevill Davies/The Guardian

A roadside taco stall, or taqueria, in Baja California, Mexico. Photograph: Tom Kevill Davies/The Guardian

*Tom Kevill-Davies*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 01.30 EST

In early 2006 I arrived in Tijuana, Mexico, on a circuitous route from New York to Rio de Janeiro by bicycle. To the south lay the 1,000-mile-long Baja California peninsula, protruding between the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Cortez.

Lugging a heavy bicycle through a desert peninsula has its moments. Searing heat, countless cactus-induced punctures, unforgiving truck drivers and sleeping rough. But one of my fondest memories from that ride through Baja remains a breakfast of fish tacos.

Cycling the black ribbon of asphalt that weaves through the unceasing cactus forests, scrubland and arid mountains is monotonous, shadeless and hot. The villages that sporadically took shape on the hazy horizon became my oases, welcome opportunities to rest, replenish supplies and eat tacos.

In northern Baja, tacos are predominantly meaty, *carne asada* and *tacos de tripa*. But as the Transpeninsular Highway turns east to hug the beaches of the Sea of Cortez, Mexico's quintessential street food becomes decidedly fishy.

Dressing a fish taco is an art. Overload, and it will slide down your front. Too much spice will ruin your morning

At night the glimmer of lights from the *pangas* (fishing boats) reflects off the sea. At daybreak their catch is available in *tacos de pescado* from numerous *taquerias*. Often little more than makeshift kitchens of gas bottles, griddles, corrugated metal and sun-bleached plastic furniture, these roadside vendors of Baja cuisine are a cyclist's saviour.

Waking in the desert at first light, I would brew campfire coffee, pack my bike and then cycle to a *taqueria* in the next fishing village. Taking my place with the truck drivers, fishermen and *rancheros*, I would place my order with the smiling matriarch. “*Tres pescados por favor.*”

She would submerge a few hunks of lightly battered dorado into spitting oil, retrieving the golden morsels moments later and leave them to cool. Three warm corn tortillas were taken from a griddle, the fried fish was placed in the middle and the lot was handed over on a lurid plastic plate. “*Buen provecho!*”



‘Buen provecho!’ Tacos being made at a *taqueria* in Baja California.  
Photograph: Tom Kevill Davies/The Guardian

Presented with pieces of fried fish in a corn pancake, you might wonder what all the fuss is about. But subsequent do-it-yourself application of salsas and salads from the bar transform your taco: a little chipotle mayonnaise, some *pico de gallo* salsa, a pinch of shredded cabbage, some fresh coriander, sliced radish and, of course, a squeeze of lime.

Dressing a fish taco is an art. It requires time, patience and practice. Overload, and the ingredients will landslide down your front. Add too much spice and your morning is ruined. But carefully loaded and pinched between thumb and finger, a taco can be easily delivered to your mouth, bringing, with a first bite and gentle sucking, a moment of Baja bliss. The batter is light, the fish meaty; the cabbage has peppery crunch, the chipotle sauce is smoky and smooth. The red salsa provides just enough spice, trailed perfectly by a refreshing smack of lime juice.

The dictionary definition of a tachometer is a device that measures how fast a vehicle’s axle rotates. My definition is the number of fish tacos consumed before a morning’s cycling in Baja California.

## Fish taco recipe

**Serves 4**

**600g dorado/mahi mahi fillets (cod or halibut will do) cut into finger-size pieces**

**1 litre cooking oil**

**12 corn tortillas**

For the batter

**125g plain flour**

**1 tsp baking powder**

**1 tsp fine chilli powder**

**1 tsp salt**

**½ tsp ground black pepper**

**250ml Mexican beer**

Sieve the flour into a mixing bowl along with the baking powder, chilli powder and pepper. Turn through with your fingers before adding the beer and whisking until the consistency of thick paint. Leave to rest for an hour.

For the pico de gallo

**5 ripe tomatoes, diced**

**½ red onion, diced**

**Small handful of coriander leaves, chopped**

**1 small jalepeño pepper, seeds removed and diced**

**Juice of half a lime**

**Salt and black pepper, to taste**

Mix all the ingredients in a serving bowl and set aside.

To garnish

**Finely sliced red cabbage**

**Sliced radish**

**Your favourite hot sauce**

**Lime wedges**

**Chipotle mayonnaise (add a clove crushed garlic, a teaspoon chipotle paste, pinch of salt and squeeze of lime to a cup mayonnaise and mix until smooth)**

Heat oil to 170C in a deep pan or fryer – a small piece of bread should turn crisp and golden in a few seconds. Meanwhile, heat a non-stick frying pan and place the tortillas on the pan two at a time and warm until just lifting from the surface. Wrap in a clean tea towel to keep warm and moist.

Coat each piece of fish in the batter and submerge in the hot oil. Fry until golden brown, about two minutes. Transfer to a baking sheet or kitchen paper to drain.

To serve, place two pieces of fried fish in the centre of each tortilla, then add the other ingredients. My recommended order is: chipotle mayonnaise, pico de gallo, cabbage, radish, hot sauce and a squeeze of lime.

**Tom Kevill-Davies is the author of *The Hungry Cyclist: Pedalling the Americas in Search of the Perfect Meal*, and the owner of the [Hungry Cyclist Lodge](#) in Burgundy**

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## The ObserverDogs

# Who's a good boy? The unbreakable bond between humans and dogs



'He looks particularly attractive on a plush bed in a centrally heated house very far from the Newfoundland home of his ancestors': writer Simon Garfield with his beloved Ludo. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Observer

'He looks particularly attractive on a plush bed in a centrally heated house very far from the Newfoundland home of his ancestors': writer Simon Garfield with his beloved Ludo. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Observer

Our centuries old love of dogs has never been stronger. So what does a study of 'man's best friend' say about us?

[Simon Garfield](#)

Sun 24 Jan 2021 08.00 EST

Why is he here? Why is my dog lying at my feet in the shape of a croissant as I write this? How have I come to cherish his warm but lightly offensive

pungency? How has his fish breath become a topic of humour when friends call round for dinner? Why do I shell out more than £1,000 each year to pay for his insurance? And why do I love him so much?

Ludo is not a special dog. He's just another labrador retriever, one of approximately 500,000 in the UK (he'd be one in a million in the United States, the most popular breed in both countries). Ludo has a lot in common with all these dogs. He loves to play ball; obviously he's an expert retriever. He could eat all the food in the universe and leave nothing for the other dogs. He is prone to hip dysplasia. He looks particularly attractive on a plush bed in a centrally heated house very far from the Newfoundland home of his ancestors.

But, of course, Ludo is a unique animal to me and the rest of his human family. He is now an elderly gentleman aged 12 and a half, and we would do almost anything to ensure his continued happiness. We willingly get drenched as he tries to detect every smell on Hampstead Heath. We schedule our days around his needs – his mealtimes, his walks, the delivery of his life-saving medication (he has epilepsy, poor love). We spend a bizarrely large amount of our disposable income on him, and he never sends a card of thanks. When he's not with us for a few days (when our children take him for a weekend, say), then the house feels extraordinarily empty. I feel so fortunate to know him. Goodness knows how we'll cope when he dies.

This strongest of bonds has manifested itself over the centuries, and transformed so many millions of lives, human and canine. If it is at least partially true, as Nietzsche claims, that “The world exists through the understanding of dogs,” then perhaps it is also partially true that a study of dogs may provide a valuable insight into ourselves.

*Why is he here? Why is this man doing something that involves a repeated tapping noise and the occasional loving sigh? How many hot drinks can he make to interrupt this tapping? Why is his timekeeping so bad when it comes to my luncheon? Why can't this so-called memory-foam bed he bought me remember how I curled up so snugly last night? Why do I feel so fortunate to know him?*

***The anthropomorphism of*** dogs is not a new phenomenon. I have a photo on my desk of a black Labrador from the 19th century dressed as a lord in a suit and top hat (and smoking a pipe).

Talking dogs have been a mainstay of the movies almost from the birth of talking movies. But the collusion of dog and human has never been so abundant, imaginative and unnerving as it is today. The nature of our bond – our commitment to each other – appears to have deepened markedly in the past 50 years, not least because our scientific understanding of the dog has been enabled by advances in genetics, and our sociological interpretation of a dog's behaviour has led to more avenues for joint engagement. Like dancers emboldened by drink and tenacity, we are entwined with our best friends in an ecstatic embrace.

Such passion does not always end well, alas. Alongside my Victorian lord I have a photo of a dog in a flat Kangol cap and glasses who looks like Samuel L Jackson. On my computer I have pictures of dogs reading, sailing and riding bicycles. I know there is something morally wrong with these images, but I find it hard to resist adding more to the folder, given their wholly irresistible paws-to-the-floor adorableness.

Every week I get an email from the American magazine, *Bark*, with the subject line “Smiling Dogs”. Each message contains at least two pictures of beautiful grinning hounds, most recently Baxter (“Baxter has a bubbly personality, loves food, lounging in the sun, hiking outdoors and cuddling”) and Chad (“This handsome boy might come across as a little aloof at first, but that’s what makes him mysterious and charming!”) Appealing as these dogs are, they are not, of course, actually grinning. But the people at *Bark* know well that the photogenic often get a head start: most of the dogs in the emails are looking for new homes after a harsh beginning.



‘He remembers who has paid particular attention to him in the past and will make sure to greet them with gladness in his heart’: Simon with his dog, Ludo. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Observer

The names we give our dogs are increasingly names we would give to our children. For every old Fido we have a new Florence, for every old Major we have a new Max. This was not the case 30 years ago. Today the new names are the names of human heroes. Nelson is still popular; soon we will see a lot of Gretas. You have a female dog called Taylor, you will have a male one called Swift. Lawyers like to call their dogs Shyster, and architects favour Zaha, and there are an awful lot of young Fleabags in the parks these days. Only in rap music does it work the other way: Snoop Dogg, [Phife Dawg](#), [Nate Dogg](#), [Bow Wow](#).

We increasingly use dogs to describe ourselves. A tough radio interviewer is a rottweiler, a soft one a poodle (or a puppy). Friendly, faithful characters in novels are cuddly labradors. Venal men in the city are pit bulls. A person who won’t let go fights like a terrier, while a detective pursues her prey like a bloodhound. You get the idea. You get the idea because you are as fleet as a whippet and smart as a sheepdog.

We have long used our canine friends to describe our actions and emotions. After working like a dog we are dog-tired. We get drunk as a skunk, but we

drink the hair of the dog. Books containing doggerel get dog-eared. We root for the underdog, we bark up the wrong tree and then we're in the doghouse. A depression is a black dog, and we'll sport a hangdog countenance. A dog's breakfast is followed by a dog's dinner, but the dog ate my homework so I've gone to the dogs. These kinds of lists used to be the cat's pyjamas, but now they're the dog's bollocks. And we have sex in a position so popular among dogs that they have officially trademarked the style.

*In lockdown*, **Ludo** is the only presence in our house not looking anxious. Instead, he is exhausted. It has already become a cliché to observe that the pandemic has been perversely kind to dogs: they are seldom home alone now, and they are walked almost more than they can bear. Their companionship is a boost to mental health. Friends and neighbours want to borrow them: if you have a dog, you have a reason to be out. Rescue shelters report a surge in enquiries, and the cost of a pure-bred dog has tripled. And social media is awash with Covid-19 dog videos and cartoons: the sports commentator [Andrew Cotter](#) has made stars of his lovely labradors Olive and Mabel as they battle for lockdown supremacy, and the outpouring of grief when Monty Don announced the passing of his golden retriever Nigel was comparable with the death of Princess Diana. But a genuine concern has spawned the “dog is not just for Covid” headlines – many inexperienced buyers are finding the challenges of ownership unexpectedly demanding.

Even if you have never owned a dog, and even if you have only watched Crufts on television, you will know that our relationship with dogs is a rich, diverse, perplexing and complicated one – as rich, diverse, perplexing and complicated indeed as the relationship we have with other humans. Dogs are increasingly not just part of the home but part of the family, the closest connection we dare have with a species not our own.

In lockdown, the dog is the only being in our house not looking anxious

In many ways dogs have become an extension of ourselves. Albert Einstein once observed that Chico, his wire-haired fox terrier, was possessed of both great intelligence and an ability to hold a grudge. “He feels sorry for me because I receive so much mail; that’s why he tries to bite the mailman.” This approach – only the social scientists persistently call it

anthropomorphism; dog lovers tend to regard it as entirely acceptable behaviour – is widely frowned upon by most animal behaviourists as inhumane. But still we do it. In fact, we now do it with such conviction and sense of normality that not to treat our dogs to a diet involving turmeric may come to seem like neglect.

You cannot know a well-mannered dog for any length of time – more than, say, about an hour – and not wonder a little about what he or she is thinking, what makes him or her fearful or happy, and how the two of you may have fun together. A dog resides superbly within what the German biologist Jakob von Uexküll called its own self-centred world, or *Umwelt*. Or, as the primatologist Frans de Waal put it in the title of his book, *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* If a dog cannot fully comprehend systems of time and money it is not because they are unintelligent; it is because these things are not significant components of their world.

The average dog brain is about one-third the size of an average human brain. But the dog nose has more than 200m smell- sensitive receptors, compared to 5m in a human nose, and these suggest a quite different set of priorities. About a third of the dog's brain mass is devoted to olfactory duties, compared to 5% in humans.

I can't help but notice how my own dog, with his proud leathery snout, views the world around him. His exacting sense of smell makes him a very good judge not only of his environment and other dogs, but also of people: he can judge who may be frightened of dogs and keep away; he remembers who has paid particular attention to him in the past and will make sure to greet them with gladness in his heart and a special toy in his mouth; and he knows when his human companions are low and need comforting. I sometimes wonder whether we are treating him and his many friends with a similar level of sagacity and respect.

One of the many things that attracts us to a puppy – beyond their all-round damn helpless cuteness – is their inquisitiveness. Puppies like poking around in things, any thing. This inquisitiveness matures, but it doesn't depart: older dogs hear an irregular noise and they still want to investigate. Their investigative nature makes us dog-owners curious, too, acting at our most puppy-ish, we want to discover with increasingly forensic precision just

what it is that makes a dog a dog, and makes them such mutually enriching companions. And we are strangers only to ourselves: as dog owners and dog lovers we are part of a huge community, and the bond we have with our dog is something that binds us equally to millions of others; a shared humanity. As for Ludo, he is still best at being the thing he was 10,000 years ago, despite everything we have done to make him more like us. He is best at being a dog. He gets very excited about the prospect of lunch, or any food really, and he usually comes running when I call him, and we're always impossibly happy when we're together.

*This is an edited extract from [Dog's Best Friend: A Brief History of an Unbreakable Bond](#) by Simon Garfield. It is published on 4 February by W&N, for £16.99. To buy a copy for £14.78, go to [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com)*

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[Alex Bellos's Monday puzzleMathematics](#)

## Can you solve it? Irresistibly small and intolerably cute

The joy of micro puzzles

[UPDATE: Read the solutions here.](#)



Shameless clickbait. Photograph: Spiderstock/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Shameless clickbait. Photograph: Spiderstock/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[Alex Bellos](#)

[@alexbellos](#)

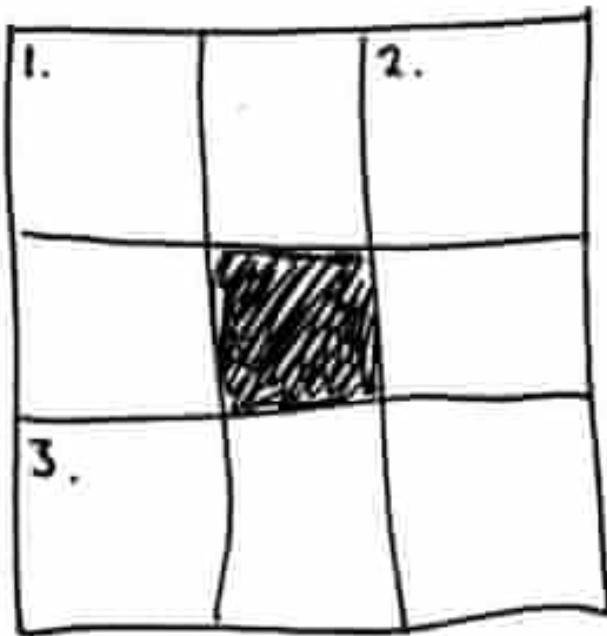
Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.10 EST

Today's puzzles are bijoux. Petite. Bite-sized. They are the canapés of the conundrum world, and so deliciously moreish you will devour them all. They come in two types, and I have included six of one, and half a dozen of the other.

First up: ‘equatum’ puzzles, devised by Justin Roughley. These are beautifully elegant number puzzles in which a single word must be transcribed into an equation. Clever stuff, literally.

*Replace each letter in the word CLEVER with one of the symbols: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 + - x ÷ =, so that the word becomes a balanced equation. Within the word, the same letter must represent the same symbol. Different letters must represent different symbols (i.e. you cannot have two different letters representing the same symbol). Once you have solved that one, do the same with each of these other words:*

- LOLLIPOP
- SEASHELL
- DELETED
- ESCAPEES
- REFERRAL



The second puzzle type is the mini crossword, devised by Thane Plambeck. The grid is always the 3x3 one here. Two across clues. Two down clues. What elevates this puzzle to a thing of beauty, however, is that there is a fifth word to be discovered, using the 8 letters of the final grid, which is spelled out using a knight's tour. (The knight's tour is a journey around the grid in which every move is a knight's move, i.e. two squares along and one across each time. You cannot land on the same square twice.)

#### Puzzle 1

**Across 1.** Write. **3.** \_\_\_\_\_ off (fall asleep).

**Down 1.** "I was struggling to understand how lightning works, and then it hit me," for example. **2.** Homer Simpson's neighbour, Mr Flanders.

**Knight's Tour** Sealed.

#### Puzzle 2

**Across 1.** Wager. **3.** Workout location now closed due to COVID-19.

**Down 1.** Request earnestly. **2.** A wool knit cap in Scotland.

**Knight's Tour** Computer storage unit.

#### Puzzle 3

**Across 1.** God of the wild, shepherds and flocks. **3.** Martini essential.

**Down 1.** Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web*, for example. **2.** Software complaint when a programmer attempts to divide by zero.

**Knight's Tour** Composer whose compositions were judged so difficult to play that he was suspected of being "in league with the devil."

#### Puzzle 4

**Across 1.** Humanoid monster brought into modern usage by J. R. R. Tolkien. **3.** Along with "a" and "and," one of the three most frequently used words in

English, and one that even has the audacity to appear in this clue.

**Down 1.** A widely cultivated cereal grass. **2.** An actor might wait for it.

**Knight's Tour** The activity of providing services to people who otherwise might not have access to them.

Puzzle 5

**Across 1.** Go bad. **3.** Saturn V launch point.

**Down 1.** Salesperson. **2.** A famous Kennedy who died 25 August 2009.

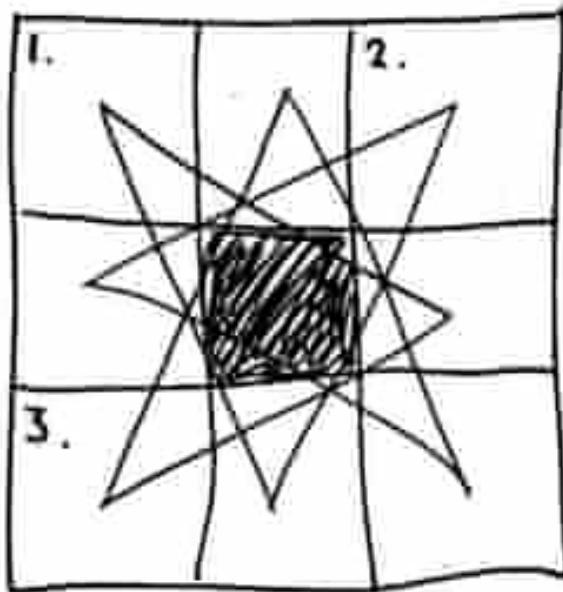
**Knight's Tour** What the surgeon had done while the patient was out.

Puzzle 6

**Across 1.** Distress call. **3.** Possible content of a call to the police.

**Down 1.** Word preceding UPON, BACK, FOOT, IN, or SAIL. **2.** Dip in liquid.

**Knight's Tour** Protium and tritium, for example.



For readers still confused about what a knight's tour is, here are how all the squares are connected using the knight's move.

I'll be back with the solutions at 5pm UK today. PLEASE NO SPOILERS. Please instead discuss and share your favourite micro puzzles.

[UPDATE: Solutions and a new puzzle are now up here.](#)

If any readers are inclined to invent their own equatum puzzles, or mini crosswords, [please send them in to me](#) and I will use the best ones in this column either today or at a later date. Equatum puzzles need to have a unique solution, and mini crosswords need to have a knight's tour. I'll send a copy of [The Language Lover's Puzzle Book](#) to the author of my favourite submission.

*Thanks to Justin Roughley and Thane Plambeck for todays puzzles.*

*Justin is a mathematician in Bristol and last year produced [a book of similar equatum puzzles](#). You can find out more [on his website here](#).*

*Thane lives in Palo Alto and works at [Counterwave](#).*

*I set a puzzle here every two weeks on a Monday. I'm always on the look-out for great puzzles. If you would like to suggest one, [email me](#).*

*I'm the author of several books of puzzles, most recently [the Language Lover's Puzzle Book](#).*

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/jan/25/can-you-solve-it-irresistibly-small-and-intolerably-cute>

## The ObserverSociety books

# All work and low pay: are we too devoted to our jobs?



Uber and Lyft drivers held a protest in Los Angeles after being denied unemployment insurance during the pandemic, April 2020. Photograph: Mario Tama/Getty Images

Uber and Lyft drivers held a protest in Los Angeles after being denied unemployment insurance during the pandemic, April 2020. Photograph: Mario Tama/Getty Images

Employment today is atomised, casual and unequal, argues US author Sarah Jaffe in her book *Work Won't Love You Back*. Here she discusses why the way we look at work needs to change



[Tim Adams](#)

[@TimAdamsWrites](#)

Sun 24 Jan 2021 08.00 EST

If the past year has made us ask one question, it must surely be: how is it that our society so often chooses to place the least value on the work it needs the most?

One effect of the pandemic has been to strip away some of the mythologies of the labour market to reveal its bare essentials, what we have come to know as our “key workers”: that extraordinary frontline army in the NHS, the indispensable “caring professions”, the teachers who have tried to manage their children at home and our children on Zoom, the refuse collectors and transport workers and shop assistants and delivery drivers who have risked their health to keep it all going. How can it be that these jobs, that none of us can do without and not all of us would be able or prepared to do, are routinely among the lowliest in terms of reward? Should it really only be the market that decides what work is worth? How can we continue to justify a world in which Dido Harding’s [management consultants](#) pocket in a couple of days what an ICU nurse might earn in a month or where Jeff Bezos makes many, many times more in a second than one of his warehouse workers takes home in a year?

Sarah Jaffe's book *Work Won't Love You Back* is an extremely timely analysis of how we arrived at these brutal inequalities and of some of the ways in which a deliberately atomised workforce is beginning to organise to challenge them. Through a series of detailed case studies of modern "labourers of love" – the unpaid intern, the overburdened teacher, the 24/7 domestic help, the NGO employee, the fixed-term academic, the discarded Toys R Us worker, the working single mother – Jaffe, a New York-based journalist, examines two of the most damaging philosophies of our times. The first is the idea that we need to get used to a "disrupted" world in which job security and regular hours and living wages are necessarily a thing of the past, quaint, pre-internet relics such as affordable housing and three TV channels; the second, perversely, that work is supposed, more than ever, to bring us pleasure, meaning, fulfilment, that we should be grateful for it and happy in it and if we are not, we are simply not trying hard enough or being "smart" enough. (Or, as she writes: "How dare we ask questions about the way our work is making other people rich while we struggle to pay our rent and see our friends.")

You get people who think about the nurses: we clap for you, aren't you grateful?

We live in perhaps the first period in history when the wealthiest members of society make a noisy virtue of never not being at work; weekends and evenings and families are all part of this advertised sacrifice. They never stop, they tell their employees – their staff at work and their staff at home – and they sell the idea that everyone must be equally prepared to do the same. Long gone is what Jaffe calls the "Fordist compromise" of labour in which workers would give up a reasonable amount of time and effort – five eight-hour days of work a week – in return for a pay cheque that was enough for a family to live on, with a bit over to enjoy free time and holidays and a pension at the end of it, what William Morris called "work for hope of rest".

The migration of factory-based industry to cheaper labour markets long ago changed that bargain. What has replaced it is that familiar working world in the west that sells precariousness and anxiety as flexibility and freedom and in which any failure to earn enough to live on or to find job satisfaction is explained in personal terms – you must have made the wrong choices or not

be making the most of opportunities. Reading Jaffe's account of how in the decentralised, "freelance" workplace "collective action is unthinkable, the only answer is to work harder on yourself or to leave", I was reminded of a statistic I once discovered when researching a story on mental health: that the number of working days lost to "stress-related illness" in the UK in 2015 – 9m – equated almost exactly to the number of days lost annually to strike action in the early 1980s. As Mrs Thatcher designed, shared grievance had been effectively privatised and concentrated in the individual.

I spoke to Jaffe about some of these questions last week, she isolating in her apartment in Brooklyn, me locked down in London. She agreed, to begin with, that her book was appearing at a critical moment – at a time when the desperation "to get back to normal" is offset by a much clearer understanding that "normal" didn't work, and will never work, for many millions of people.



'We're at a horrible, horrible moment': Sarah Jaffe. Photograph: Amanda Jaffe

A lot of that, she argued, was because of that unchallenged assumption that we should never place any value on the "emotional content" of a job, on stuff that can't be counted. "A few years ago, I did a lot of reporting on the nurses' union here in New York," she says. "And they would tell me that

they were getting told, in these exact words, ‘to not waste time on things that were non-productive’, by which the hospital bosses meant caring, getting to know patients.” One of the things that the pandemic has shown, if we didn’t know it already, is that, in fact, a great deal of the value of nursing lies right there, in that “non-productive” effort. That’s what we clapped for on a Thursday night. “Yes,” Jaffe says, “and then you get some people who are like, ‘We clapped for them, but shouldn’t we also be making sure they get a raise?’ And on the other side, you get people who think, ‘We clap for you. Aren’t you grateful?’”

Jaffe argues that our society’s internalised, stubborn perception of worth and “productivity” remains rooted in gendered and class-based assumptions about work. Just as “male” manual labour commanded greater respect and reward than “female” domestic work, so most “caring professions” are extraordinarily undervalued beside “knowledge workers”, in particular those functions that involve the most disengaged money management (“the uncaring professions” you might say).

The pandemic has exposed the false borderline of home and work as necessarily separate and hostile worlds, a line that justifies the belief that work done for love in the home is less “valuable” than work done for money out of it. The liberating spirit that justly celebrated women competing on the same career ladder as men often had less to say about the working conditions of the domestic help required to enable it. (Jaffe tells the story of one professional couple in the early pandemic who were “hurt” that their nanny would not agree to isolate completely from her own family after hours and many others desperate to get cleaners back into their homes so they could escape them to “be productive”).

When we think of the words “working class” or “trade union”, Jaffe suggests, the images that still come readily to most minds will be the man on the production line. Partly because of these outdated definitions, two generations in service jobs who did not fit that stereotype have been coerced into forgetting the power of the collective. Her book charts what might be the first signs of a reawakening of that spirit in a contemporary context: from the efforts of the National Domestic Workers Alliance in America to enhance the rights of perhaps the most “invisible” employees to the nascent

unionising of Silicon Valley (the collective efforts at Google to protest for [gender equal pay](#), for example.)

She suggests there might in that be the seeds of a generational shift among those her age and younger (she's 40), in recognising that they have been sold an idea of capitalism in which they have little prospect of capital (or housing or pensions or security or spare time). Her book is determinedly descriptive rather than prescriptive – “there are plenty of thinktanks for that” – but the unspoken goals are the “traditional” ones – “I am all for the four-day week, shorter working hours. Paid sick time and paid vacations, you know, raising protections, maternity provision” – as are some of the means of achieving them: re-energised worker solidarity (partly through innovative online organisation), a rethinking of redistribution, a proper conversation about universal basic income and sustainability and long overdue attention to maximum wages as well as minimum ones.

One starting point for that change, her reporting suggests, is a more evolved understanding of what “working class” now looks like; the realisation, for example, that the short-term-contract university academic has far more in common with the “death of the high street” retail worker or the gig-economy Uber driver than she or he might instinctively acknowledge. Another is the realisation that the forces dividing us include the false proposition that the expanding emotional demands of work should be a primary source of meaning and value in all our individual lives – “how devotion to our jobs keeps us exploited, exhausted and alone” as her subtitle has it. The pandemic both exacerbates those pressures and allows us to see their outlines. “We’re at a horrible, horrible moment,” she suggests. “But perhaps we can also start to see how to fight for the good future.”

- *Work Won't Love You Back* by Sarah Jaffe is published by Hurst (£20). To order a copy go to [guardianbookshop.com](#). Delivery charges may apply

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## Inside the GuardianFashion

# Permanent PJs and pivoting designers: how the pandemic hit the fashion world

Our fashion editor on a year in which sweatpants soared, masks went designer, Topshop tumbled – and a pause fuelled hopes of a reset



Model Maria Decremps poses for photographers prior to the Chanel womenswear spring/summer 2021 show as part of Paris fashion week last October. Photograph: Chesnot/Getty Images

Model Maria Decremps poses for photographers prior to the Chanel womenswear spring/summer 2021 show as part of Paris fashion week last October. Photograph: Chesnot/Getty Images



[Hannah Marriott](#)

[@maid\\_marriott](#)

Sun 24 Jan 2021 13.00 EST

I was on the Eurostar, somewhere between St Pancras and Paris, when a senior member of the Guardian team called and suggested that it might be a good idea for me to turn around at Gare du Nord and return to London.

It was 3 March 2020. This was not the plan. The plan had been to go to the Chanel show and report for the news pages. Instead, it was the beginning of all plans – work and otherwise – disintegrating.

2020 was a terrible year for the world, and a head-spinning one for fashion. Almost everything that could have unravelled did, from brands reneging on orders and shamefully leaving garment workers unpaid, to the cancellation of Hollywood red carpet events, to the nixing of fashion shows in New York, London, Milan and Paris.

At first, everything the Guardian's fashion desk did had to change. Our news coverage could no longer echo the rhythms of the fashion year; our stylists could not produce photoshoots, for social distancing reasons. The practical style advice we had planned – based on a summer of holidays and weddings

– was, of course, scrapped. In those early, doom-scrolling days, the only commodities of interest were face masks, hand sanitiser and loo rolls.



Topshop's landmark store in Oxford Street, London, which went into administration with the rest of Philip Green's Arcadia fashion empire last year. Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP

In truth, it was bewildering – until it dawned on us that the fashion industry being turned upside-down was, itself, a fascinating story.

We pivoted. And we reported on designers pivoting, too: on British designers [forming the Emergency Designer Network](#) to make PPE; on fashion magazines [featuring NHS workers, not celebrities](#), on their covers. We covered the moment when face masks became normalised and, inevitably, adopted by fashion. We reported on the weird new British high street – from [trousers being quarantined](#) to the fall of the [once-mighty Topshop](#).

Fabric was caught in the crosshairs of an unexpected number of major international news stories in 2020. As protests swelled in the US following the police killing of George Floyd, we reported on the ways in which clothing was weaponised, including Black Lives Matter slogans [being banned by employers](#). We reported on [Fred Perry withdrawing its polo shirt](#)

after it was adopted by the far-right Proud Boys group and the [“Vote”-slogan merch](#) produced and worn by Michelle Obama, among others, in an effort to mobilise young voters.



Naomi Osaka wearing a face mask with the name of Trayvon Martin at the US Open last year, showing her support for Black Lives Matter. Photograph: Matthew Stockman/Getty Images

We reported on the items selling, despite everything: in April, sweatpants were up (you're probably wearing a pair now); in October, it was all about the kind of strange shoes you might wear to take out the bins, [such as Crocs](#), which seemed to say something profound about the collective psyche. Some of the most interesting aspects of fashion came to the fore as people searched for soft, cocooning [duvet coats](#) to envelop them on winter walks, or bought detachable [“Zoom” collars](#) – surely the most 2020 of accessories – in order to present their best face as the world crumbled, and with all communications taking place through front-facing cameras.

The items that have been put on furlough – bras, high-heeled shoes, hard waistbands – [told a story too](#), as did our coverage of self-soothing lifestyle trends, from [decluttering](#) to [scented candles](#) to the improbable rise of [“tablescaping”](#).

One unexpected pleasure to be found in the absence of real-life people watching was the rise of the armchair fashion critic. During lockdown, analysis of style on TV has reached an all-time high – and we have been binge-watching too, writing about [Marianne's summer style](#) in Normal People, the controversial [Undoing coat](#), unpicking the weirdly prescient best-foot-forward dressing of [Schitt's Creek](#) and analysing the historical accuracy of the [breasts in Bridgerton](#). The popularity of these pieces seem to speak to a collective desire to enjoy aesthetics, and to analyse the meaning of a cuff, hem or cut, even when we are permanently in our pyjamas.



Guests wearing face masks at the spring/summer 2021 ready-to-wear collection show by designer Virginie Viard for Chanel during Paris fashion week last October. Photograph: Benoît Tessier/Reuters

Some normality has returned. Our stylists have been shooting celebrities and fashion stories again, when social distancing guidelines allow, and even [got the All Ages band back together](#) for Christmas. But mainly, as with everyone else fortunate enough to work safely from home, our worlds have become very small. We have found stories by speaking to contacts on the phone, monitoring social media trends, and watching audience-free catwalk presentations and digital shows which have mainly replaced the standard show calendar. Only our intrepid critic Jess Cartner-Morley attended a

handful of socially distanced Milan and London fashion week shows last September, where mask-clad designers held one-to-one appointments.

With concerns about sustainability at an all-time high, it has been encouraging to see so many designers discussing the [scaled-back ways in which they would like to rebuild the industry](#) after this crisis. It looks as though the fashion show circus – which all agreed was sprawling out of control – will be pared back, though it seems unlikely that digital shows will be a permanent or blanket answer. The human side of a fashion show – the ability to read the room, see which looks inspire gasps from the fashion students standing at the back, or spot the beginnings of a trend in the frontrow prevalence of a startling new haircut – has been sorely lacking.



Armstrong's vintage clothing store in Edinburgh, Scotland. The pandemic has resulted in a second-hand clothing boom. Photograph: Alan Wilson / Alamy Stock Photo/Alamy Stock Photo

That said, this pause – not to mention all our fresh concerns about economic crisis – has given us the opportunity to double down on our own “slow fashion” approach to style, whether recommending ways to [mend clothing](#), or to shop [second-hand first](#), or finding fresh ways to style [our existing clothes](#), or offering carefully-chosen shopping tips, such as clothes to keep you warm when socialising outside [as advised by outdoor workers](#), and the

best places to find chic, [ethically-made underwear](#). We have also had the opportunity to report on a few heartening developments – from the rise of DIY fashion, such as [tie-dye](#) and crochet, to the [second-hand clothing boom](#) in the pandemic – which suggest that a more mindful approach to style, and a slowing down of the late capitalist attitude towards consumerism in general, could be on the horizon.

Clearly, the world is in existential crisis, and the fashion industry with it. There seems a genuine chance, however, that fashion could rebuild in a slower, more considered way, leaving it looking better than it has for a long time. This period of change has also been rich from a journalistic point of view, even when it has been personally terrifying. That's something I would never have imagined, when my heart sank, as the world as we knew it started spinning away, that 3 March on Eurostar.

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## 2021.01.25 - Take part

- Living in the UK Have you been made unemployed during the pandemic?
- Young people Tell us how rising unemployment rates are affecting you
- Coronavirus Has losing your sense of taste or smell because of Covid affected your work?
- Tell us Do you have experience of DNAR orders in the UK?
- Coronavirus How has your pub been affected by the pandemic?

## Unemployment

# Living in the UK: have you been made unemployed during the pandemic?

We would like to hear from those who have lost their jobs due to coronavirus



UK unemployment could rapidly rise to more than 6 million people, according to a professor of economics. Photograph: Philip Toscano/PA

UK unemployment could rapidly rise to more than 6 million people, according to a professor of economics. Photograph: Philip Toscano/PA

[Guardian community team](#)

Wed 6 Jan 2021 04.59 EST

The rate of unemployment in the UK rose to 4.9% in the three months up to October, fuelled by job losses in retail and hospitality, latest [government figures show](#).

We would like to hear from people who have lost their jobs as a result of coronavirus.

## Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below or [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions.

One of our journalists will be in contact for publication before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

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## Unemployment

# Young people: tell us how rising unemployment rates are affecting you

We'd like to hear from those under 25 who have lost jobs, or are struggling to get work, due to coronavirus



The number of people in the UK claiming unemployment benefits has risen by 70% in the month of April alone. Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP via Getty Images

The number of people in the UK claiming unemployment benefits has risen by 70% in the month of April alone. Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP via Getty Images

[Guardian community team](#)

Wed 6 Jan 2021 04.48 EST

Young people have been hit hard by the unemployment dramatically worsened by the coronavirus pandemic, with youth unemployment in Britain

set to more than triple to its highest level since the early 1980s.

According to the latest government figures, redundancies rose to 370,000 in the three months up to October, the highest figure since records began in 1992.

We'd like to hear from those under 25 who have been made unemployed, or are struggling to get a job, due to coronavirus.

## Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below or via WhatsApp by clicking here or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/may/20/young-people-tell-us-how-rising-unemployment-rates-are-affecting-you>

## Coronavirus

# Has losing your sense of taste or smell because of Covid affected your work?

If you've lost your sense of taste or smell because of having coronavirus and it's affected your job, we'd like to hear from you



Woman spraying perfume.

Photograph: Rancz Andrei/Alamy Stock Photo

Woman spraying perfume.

Photograph: Rancz Andrei/Alamy Stock Photo

[Guardian community team](#)

Thu 21 Jan 2021 12.01 EST

Does your job rely on a sense of taste or smell? We are looking to speak to people whose careers have been affected because of having Covid-19 and losing their sense of taste and/or smell.

If you have had Covid and your job relies on your sense of taste or smell, for example - perfumers, wine tasters and buyers, cooks – we'd like to hear from you.

## Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions. One of our journalists will be in contact before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

***If you're having trouble using the form, click [here](#). Read terms of service [here](#).***

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## Coronavirus

# Tell us: do you have experience of DNAR orders in the UK?

We'd like to hear from people who've had experience of making - or considering - a Do Not Attempt Resuscitation order during the pandemic



Patient receiving end of life care. Photograph: Peter Dazeley/Getty Images

Patient receiving end of life care. Photograph: Peter Dazeley/Getty Images

[Guardian community team](#)

Fri 22 Jan 2021 08.02 EST

Regulators are examining the complex issue of Do Not Attempt Resuscitation (DNAR) orders during the pandemic.

Have you made a DNAR decision or been asked to consider making one by health or care professionals? If so please get in touch and tell us about your experience of this.

## Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish or [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions.

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## Hospitality industry

# Tell us: how has your pub been affected by the coronavirus pandemic?

We would like to hear from pubs across the UK about how they're faring during the coronavirus pandemic



A man stands outside a closed pub, in London. The industry body warns many are on the verge of financial ruin. Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

A man stands outside a closed pub, in London. The industry body warns many are on the verge of financial ruin. Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

[Guardian community team](#)

Tue 19 Jan 2021 11.39 EST

With mass closures across the UK as a result of coronavirus restrictions, pubs have been badly affected by the pandemic.

In England, nearly three-quarters of the pubs [promised](#) a £1,000 grant by the prime minister to help them survive the [loss of Christmas](#) sales in England are still waiting for the money, the industry trade body has warned. The British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA) warned that much of the industry was on the verge of financial ruin.

We would like to hear from both “wet-led” pubs, which do not serve food and rely on alcohol sales, and pubs which sell food, about how they’re coping during the pandemic.

## Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish or [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions. One of our journalists will be in contact before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

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## 2021.01.25 - Explore

- [Education Have you been inspired by the pandemic to study science at university?](#)
- [Vaccines 'I've had my first jab. It gives me hope of liberation... but not yet'](#)
- ['Ghost villages' As birth rates fall, animals prowl in our abandoned towns](#)
- [Arab spring: 10th anniversary 'The release of six decades of fear': Egypt's lost revolution](#)
- [Obituary Eileen Pollock](#)
- ['We had a lot to look forward to' Lissie Harper on the death of her police officer husband Andrew](#)
- [Larry King dies, Tom Brokaw retires The 'heroic age' of TV news slips further away](#)

## Tips for studentsScience

# Have you been inspired by the pandemic to study science at university?

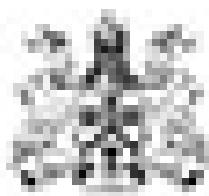
The pandemic effect has already led to increases in applications to sciences courses at some universities



Growing numbers of young people are feeling inspired by the scientists they've watched on TV and read about. Photograph: Fredrick Kippe/Alamy

Growing numbers of young people are feeling inspired by the scientists they've watched on TV and read about. Photograph: Fredrick Kippe/Alamy

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Mon 25 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

One of the few positive stories to emerge from the pandemic has been the power of science to understand and shape our world. Epidemiologists have charted and predicted the virus' progress, biochemists have developed the vaccine, doctors and nurses have diagnosed, cared for and cured the unwell – and these are just the highest profile scientific professions solving this century's biggest problem.

It's perhaps no surprise that growing numbers of young people are feeling inspired by the scientists they've watched on TV and read about online. A [recent poll](#) of 1,000 4-18 year-olds by the British Science Association found that 59% are more tempted by careers in science than they were prior to the pandemic. Celebrity scientist Brian Cox has even [predicted](#) that the pandemic will create "a new generation of scientists".

For some, such as west London 17-year-old Anita Salihu, watching medics save lives swung her decision to apply for medical school. "I wrote in my personal statement that I'd been inspired by how doctors, even when they

lacked PPE, would still go above and beyond, showing passion and trying to help. I felt like I would have done that, I would have loved to have been a part of it,” she says.

For others, such as Tanisha Lohia, a year 13 student from Essex, the pandemic has opened their eyes to the range of scientific careers on offer. “I have never wanted to be a doctor, but I wasn’t sure which career paths would be available to me. I knew I wanted to use science in my daily life, but I had no real understanding of what it meant to be a research scientist,” she says. “I now definitely want to research immune responses to different diseases, and maybe pre-empt any future diseases that could mutate the same way as Covid-19 has done.”

According to Katherine Mathieson, chief executive of the British [Science](#) Association, the pandemic has thrown a much-needed spotlight on lesser-known career paths. “Young people see that there isn’t just one path to take in order to contribute their skills to fighting global crises.”

For students considering which degree to study, biology and healthcare will lead to careers that are most obviously related to the pandemic. But any science degree will enable you to develop a scientific mindset open to ideas and experimentation along with analytical, problem-solving and research skills. Mathieson notes that chemistry can lead to careers in drug research; physics graduates can find better ways to detect disease; and maths and computing is good preparation for building models of disease spread.

The pandemic effect has already led to increases in applications at some universities. Mike Nicholson, admissions director at the University of Bath, which specialises in science, says biochemistry applications are up by 30% on two years ago; biomedical science is up 50%; pharmacy and pharmacology are seeing increases between 10% and 20%; and natural sciences, which enables students to keep their options open, has grown by 30%. Computer science and maths applications have been growing steadily thanks to great job prospects for its graduates, he adds.

The pandemic has also made lots of young people anxious about the future of the economy and where their degrees will take them. Charlie Ball, head of higher education at Prospects, says that vocational healthcare degrees are a

good way to ensure you will always find work. “There isn’t a single profession you can go into that has too many people, from radiologists to midwives,” he says.

While Ball says your choice shouldn’t be solely guided by career aspirations, as these can change, he recommends doing a little research to understand where opportunities are likely to lie. For instance, tech and engineering industries have skills shortages, whereas there is a surplus of biology graduates.

Ghislaine Dell, careers advisor at the University of Bath, adds that Covid-19 and Brexit have deepened skills shortages in some areas of science. “We are seeing increased demands for healthcare practice and clinical science, laboratory-based pharmaceutical research and development, software development, computer systems, coding and data science.”

So if you’ve decided you want to take the next step in science, what should you do? Nicholson says that choosing the right A-levels is the first step. For example, you’ll need both chemistry and biology for biochemistry or biomedical science, and maths for computer science. Another benefit is that these will give you “a good insight into the degree course content”, he says. Many universities also offer a broad-based science education in first year, enabling you to choose which subject you want to specialise in after that.

Nicholson also recommends choosing an extended project qualification in your proposed degree subject. If you do well, universities may give you a lower offer. Watching TED talks and doing online courses on platforms such as Futurelearn will also widen your subject knowledge, while visiting university open days and attending summer schools can help focus your aspirations.

If you’re wondering about what jobs these courses might lead to, Mathieson recommends seeking out work placements with hands-on practical experience when these become available again after the pandemic. In the meantime, students should work with teachers to find opportunities to run their own experiments and investigations, such as the [BSA’s CREST awards programme](#), and if possible find a mentor in the industry, she says. Students

who are soon to start university can ask their departments for preparatory reading lists, too.

Donald Campbell, a 16-year-old from Inverness, has used extra time under lockdown to explore his scientific interests. After completing two CREST awards, his work was noticed by a university professor who encouraged him to write an academic journal article. Working with academics “ignited my interest and has shown me that there are many opportunities to learn beyond what’s offered in schools”, he says.

But while job prospects matter, the important thing is to choose something you enjoy, says Dell. She advises opting for broader courses unless you have a set career path in mind, since lots of science techniques are widely transferable. Crucially, she recommends that you channel the scientific mindset and think laterally about your choices: “A career in science doesn’t have to mean a white coat.”

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[The Observer](#)[Vaccines and immunisation](#)

## I've had my first vaccine jab. It gives me hope of liberation... but not yet

Exactly a year after his first story about coronavirus, our science editor received the Pfizer injection last week. Here he reflects on a remarkable scientific achievement

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



Debbie Briody administers the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine to staff nurse Amanda Thompson at the NHS Louisa Jordan temporary hospital in Glasgow on 23 January. Photograph: Andy Buchanan/AFP/Getty Images

Debbie Briody administers the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine to staff nurse Amanda Thompson at the NHS Louisa Jordan temporary hospital in Glasgow on 23 January. Photograph: Andy Buchanan/AFP/Getty Images

*[Robin McKie](#) Science Editor*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

I marked a grim anniversary in an unexpected manner last week. On 18 January last year, I wrote [my first story](#) about a mysterious disease that had struck Wuhan, in China, and which was now spreading around the world. More than two million individuals have since died of Covid-19, almost 100,000 of them in the UK.

Remarkably, 12 months to the day that the *Observer* published my story, I was given my first dose of Covid-19 vaccine, allowing me to follow [nearly six million other newly immunised](#) UK residents who are set to gain protection against a disease that has brought the planet to a standstill. It was a rare, comforting experience after a year of unremitting sadness and gloom.

Not that the vaccine frees me up to have wild times. I am 70 after all. More to the point I have another two weeks until my first jab fully arms my immune system, before waiting for a second dose to seal the deal. And, even then, my continued risk of transmitting the virus – although unaffected by symptoms – means, quite rightly, that I am still subject to rules governing lockdown, mask-wearing and social distancing.

On the other hand, the vaccine has made me feel more secure. And by protecting people over the age of 70 – who account for vast numbers of Covid deaths in the UK – this should free up hospital beds and get our health service back on its feet. Normality might then return, albeit slowly.

Covid vaccines are a triumph of modern medical science, and the one beacon of hope we have in these dark days. But how, exactly, do they work?

My vaccine, made by Pfizer-BioNTech, contains genetic material that is known as messenger RNA or simply mRNA. These pieces are synthetic copies of mRNA found in Covid-19 viruses and are put in a protective chemical coat called a lipid. Injected into the muscle of my left arm, these pieces of mRNA were then swept up by tiny entities in my body called antigen-presenting cells.



NHS staff and key workers queue for the coronavirus vaccine in Glasgow.  
Photograph: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

The virus's mRNA will then have been incorporated into these presenting cells' protein-making machinery causing them to make pieces of virus. The cells, bearing viral protein, would then have been carried to my lymph glands in my armpits where my immune system should now be swinging into action. "The cells carrying viral protein tell your immune system there is something foreign invading your body and it is time it did something about it," Professor Adam Finn, of Bristol University, told me. "This is done by switching on entities called killer T-cells. Only a small number among millions are chosen, however: the ones that are perfectly suited to tackle cells carrying the offending pieces of foreign viral protein that is presented to them. These few cells have been circulating in your body just waiting to be called into action. They are instructed to start dividing and to grow until millions of copies are made in a few days."

This cellular armada of tiny killer T-cells will then sweep through my body to hunt out cells carrying offending virus particles, destroying them by issuing chemical instructions telling them to self-destruct. At the same time, another set of immune cells, known as B-cells, will start manufacturing antibodies specifically designed to latch on to pieces of viral protein and so block their action.

“This whole process takes two or three weeks to get under way,” added Finn. “If it were a real viral attack you might not have enough time to mount a defence and you could be swamped by invading viruses.”

### [World's poor need action, not Covid 'vaccine nationalism', say experts](#) [Read more](#)

However, by mimicking the Covid-19 virus, the vaccine is now preparing my immune system for an impending attack should I become infected one day.

Other vaccines, such as the Oxford-AstraZeneca version, operate in slightly different ways but are also designed to achieve the same goal – to stop Covid from gaining a beachhead in a person’s tissue before an all-out invasion. Dozens of other vaccines designed to trigger our antibody and killer T-cells are now in development. As government chief scientist Patrick Vallance put it last week: “We now have more vaccines than we could ever have dreamt of a year ago.”

But one question still concerns me about my Pfizer vaccine: just how well will I be protected against Covid-19? I ask because some reports say my first jab should give me at least 90% protection against serious illness; others say only 52%. Which is right? Vaccine efficacy is a critically important issue. It will determine how quickly and efficiently we get out of national lockdown and return to normality. The efficacy of a vaccine is calculated by comparing two groups of people: those who get the vaccine and those who get a placebo.

Infection rates for the two groups are measured daily. At first, there are no differences in case numbers because the vaccine needs time to take effect. This picture changes quickly, however. Slowly, infection rates decline in the first group as the vaccine takes effect, until, after three weeks, there are 90% fewer cases in the vaccinated group compared with the placebo group – hence the UK Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunity’s statement that “vaccine efficacy from the first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is around 90%.”



Pfizer takes a more cautious approach in calculating first-dose efficacy than does the UK Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunity. Photograph: Dado Ruvić/Reuters

By contrast, Pfizer takes the distinctly cautious approach of [calculating efficacy](#) from the day the first dose is given – when the vaccine has had no chance to provide protection and efficacy is zero. This process produces an average figure for vaccine efficacy of 52%.

The disadvantage of this approach is stressed by many scientists including UK vaccine expert Peter English. “If you include people who have not had time to respond to the vaccine then its efficacy obviously appears to be much lower. However, it is more appropriate to exclude them, as you wouldn’t have expected the vaccine to have worked yet.”

Why Pfizer takes this approach is a matter of some conjecture but the message is clear as far as I am concerned. I will have 90% protection against Covid-19 in another couple of weeks. So am I concerned that I will have to wait a couple of months more to get my second dose? No, I’m not. My existing protection should last well beyond that time.

[The pandemic one year on: 100,000 dead in the UK from coronavirus](#)

[Read more](#)

Not everything will be plain sailing, of course. [New variants](#) of the Covid-19 virus are appearing. At present, there is no evidence that existing vaccines will fail to neutralise the variants observed so far in the UK. But scientists are concerned that a new strain could evolve in future and evade current immunisations.

## [UK bosses set up IT systems to track Covid vaccine status of staff](#)

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“It is a genuine concern,” said Finn. “A new variant could start to avoid antibodies triggered by your vaccine. However, you will still have T-cells to mount a defence, and that means that the immunity provided by the vaccine you got last week is very unlikely to become completely useless should such a variant appear.”

It is not a blanket reassurance. But given what we have all endured over the past year, I am going to accept, with considerable gratitude, what Covid vaccines will do for my health, and for the wellbeing of others.

- This article was amended on 24 January 2021 to clarify that the synthetic mRNA is not incorporated into the genetic material of the body’s antigen-presenting cells as an earlier version stated. Instead, it is used by the protein-making machinery of these cells.
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## [The Observer](#)[Depopulation](#)

# As birth rates fall, animals prowl in our abandoned 'ghost villages'

Human populations are set to decline in countries from Asia to Europe – and an unusual form of rewilding is taking place



The village of Selas near Molina de Aragon, part of a vast region of central eastern Spain that is one of the least populated areas in Europe. Photograph: David Ramos/Getty Images

The village of Selas near Molina de Aragon, part of a vast region of central eastern Spain that is one of the least populated areas in Europe. Photograph: David Ramos/Getty Images

*[Cal Flyn](#)*

*[@calflyn](#)*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 06.15 EST

For many years it seemed that overpopulation was the looming crisis of our age. Back in 1968, the Stanford biologists Paul and Anne Ehrlich infamously predicted that [millions would soon starve to death](#) in their bestselling, doom-saying book *The Population Bomb*; since then, neo-Malthusian rumblings of imminent disaster have been a continual refrain in certain sections of the environmental movement – fears that were recently given voice on David Attenborough's documentary [\*Life on our Planet\*](#).

At the time the Ehrlichs were publishing their dark prophecies, the world was at its peak of population growth, which at that point was increasing at a rate of 2.1% a year. Since then, the global population has ballooned from 3.5 billion to 7.67 billion.

But growth has slowed – and considerably. As women's empowerment advances, and access to contraception improves, birthrates around the world are stuttering and stalling, and in many countries now there are fewer than 2.1 children per woman – the minimum level required to maintain a stable population.

Falling fertility rates have been a problem in the world's wealthiest nations – notably in Japan and Germany – for some time. In South Korea last year, birthrates fell to 0.84 per woman, a record low despite extensive government efforts to promote childbearing. From next year, cash bonuses of 2m won (£1,320) will be paid to every couple expecting a child, on top of existing child benefit payments.

The fertility rate is also falling dramatically in England and Wales – from 1.9 children per woman in 2012 to just 1.65 in 2019. Provisional figures from the Office for National Statistics for 2020 suggest it could now be 1.6, which would be the lowest rate since before the second world war. The problem is even more severe in Scotland, where the rate has fallen from 1.67 in 2012 to 1.37 in 2019.



Wolves are among the animals making a comeback as human populations decrease. Photograph: Alamy

Increasingly this is also the case in middle-income countries too, including Thailand and Brazil. In Iran, a birthrate of 1.7 children per woman has alarmed the government; it recently announced that state clinics would no longer hand out contraceptives or offer vasectomies.

Thanks to this worldwide pattern of falling fertility levels, the UN now believes that we will see an end to population growth within decades – before the slide begins in earnest.

An influential [study](#) published in the *Lancet* last year predicted that the global population would come to a peak much earlier than expected – reaching 9.73 billion in 2064 – before dropping to 8.79 billion by 2100. Falling birthrates, noted the authors, were likely to have significant “economic, social, environmental, and geopolitical consequences” around the world.

Their model predicted that 23 countries would see their populations more than halve before the end of this century, including [Spain](#), Italy and Ukraine. China, where a controversial one-child per couple policy – brought in to slow spiralling population growth – only ended in 2016, is now also

expected to experience massive population declines in the coming years, by an estimated 48% by 2100.

It's growing ever clearer that we are looking at a future very different from the one we had been expecting – and a crisis of a different kind, as ageing populations place shrinking economies under ever greater strain.



An abandoned house in Miyoshi, Japan, where empty buildings are now common because of declining population levels. Photograph: Carl Court/Getty Images

But what does population decline look like on the ground? The experience of Japan, a country that has been showing this trend for more than a decade, might offer some insight. Already there are too few people to fill all its houses – one in every eight homes now lies empty. In Japan, they call such vacant buildings *akiya* – ghost homes.

Most often to be found in rural areas, these houses quickly fall into disrepair, leaving them as eerie presences in the landscape, thus speeding the decline of the neighbourhood. Many *akiya* have been left empty after the death of their occupants; inherited by their city-living relatives, many go unclaimed and untended. With so many structures under unknown ownership, local authorities are also unable to tear them down.

Some Japanese towns have taken extreme measures to attract new residents – offering to subsidise renovation expenses, or even giving houses away to young families. With the country's population expected to fall from 127 million to 100 million or even lower by 2049, these *akiya* are set to grow ever more common – and are predicted to account for a third of all Japanese housing stock by 2033.

As the rural population declines, old fields and neglected gardens are reclaimed by wildlife. Sightings of Asian black bears have been growing increasingly common in recent years, as the animals scavenge unharvested nuts and fruits as they ripen on the bough.

Closer to home, in the EU, an area the size of Italy is expected to be abandoned by 2030. Spain is among the European countries expected to lose more than half its population by 2100; already, three-quarters of Spanish municipalities are in decline.

Picturesque Galicia and Castilla y León are among the regions worst affected, as entire settlements have gradually emptied of their residents. More than 3,000 ghost villages now haunt the hills, standing in various states of dereliction. Mark Adkinson, a British expat who runs the estate agency Galician Country Homes, told the *Observer* that he had “more than 1,000” abandoned villages on his books, adding that a staff member of his was continually on the road, leaving letters at abandoned properties in the hope of tracking down their owners and returning them to the market.

“I’ve been here for 43 years,” he said. “Things have changed considerably. The youngsters have left the villages, and the parents are getting old and getting flats closer to the hospital. You don’t want to get stuck up in the hills when you can no longer drive.”

As in Japan, nature is already stepping into the breach. According to José Benayas, a professor of ecology at Madrid’s University of Alcalá, Spain’s forests have tripled in area since 1900, expanding from 8% to cover 25% of the territory as ground goes untilled. Falling populations would continue to trigger land abandonment, he said, “because there will be fewer humans to be fed.”

France, Italy and Romania are among countries showing the largest gains in forest cover in recent years, much of this in the form of natural regrowth of old fields. “Models indicate that [afforestation of this kind] will continue at least until 2030,” Benayas said.

Rural abandonment on a large scale is one factor that has contributed to the recent resurgence of large carnivores in Europe: lynx, wolverines, brown bears and wolves have all seen increases in their populations over the last decade. In Spain, the Iberian wolf has rebounded from 400 individuals to more than 2,000, many of which are to be found haunting the ghost villages of Galicia, as they hunt wild boar and roe deer – whose numbers have also skyrocketed. [A brown bear was spotted in Galicia](#) last year for the first time in 150 years.

A vision of the future, perhaps, in a post-peak world: smaller populations crowding ever more tightly into urban centres. And outside, beyond the city limits, the wild animals prowling.

*Cal Flyn’s new book, [Islands of Abandonment: Life in the Post-Human Landscape](#), is out now (William Collins, £16.99)*

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# 'The release of six decades of fear': Egypt's lost revolution

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[Other lives](#)[Acting](#)

## Eileen Pollock obituary



Eileen Pollock pictured in 1990 during a run of the stage version of the BBC TV sitcom Bread, in which she played Lilo Lil. Photograph: Nils Jorgensen/Rex/Shutterstock

Eileen Pollock pictured in 1990 during a run of the stage version of the BBC TV sitcom Bread, in which she played Lilo Lil. Photograph: Nils Jorgensen/Rex/Shutterstock

*Peter Barnes*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 13.03 EST

My friend and colleague, the actor Eileen Pollock (Polly), has died aged 73. She was best known for playing Lilo Lil in the BBC sitcom Bread (1986-91), about the Liverpudlian Boswell family. The role was originally written as native Liverpool, so Polly tried out her Scouse on her taxi driver. When he asked what part of Australia she came from, she decided to stick to Irish. She loved playing the character, but other work meant more to her.

I first met Polly in the heady days of late-1970s feminism and ructions between the right and left in our union, Equity. Alternative theatre was booming. Polly worked with the political group Belt & Braces, but the lack of women's roles led her to co-found the feminist companies [Bloomers](#) and Camouflage, and write much of their material. In 1989, she was a fiery Mother Jones in *Fight Like Tigers*, about the Irish-American union activist. Polly was an articulate, passionate campaigner and outspoken socialist-feminist. As a friend said, she "could make the toughest of activists cower for an unguarded remark". However, she was hugely generous and would give her last penny to anyone who was down on their luck.

Polly loved to laugh and adored being the wicked witch in panto, because, she said, "I can't stand children and making them want to cry and scream is a wonderful battle of wits." Friends remember a witty, creative, talented actor and playwright, who was full of ideas and loved to experiment. "Acting and playwriting were integral from a young age," said her sister, Natalie.

Born in Belfast to Maura Keaney, a businesswoman, and William Pollock, a policeman, Polly attended Dominican college in Fortwilliam Park before going on to gain a BA in French and Spanish at Queen's University Belfast. After involvement with the university's drama society, Polly decided that acting was her future, although her parents hoped she'd get a "proper job" as a teacher, with a pension. After graduating, Polly worked briefly as a translator. Her first theatre position was at the Bush theatre, London, as an assistant stage manager.

Polly got every job she went for – rare for an actor. In her native Belfast, she worked with the [Brian Friel](#)/Stephen Rea company, Field Day, as Masha in *Three Sisters* (1981), opposite Rea in *Pentecost* (1987) and as Lady Wilde in *Saint Oscar* (1989). For [Pam Brighton](#)'s DubbelJoint theatre company, she was Kathleen Behan in the one-woman show *Mother of All the Behans* (1998) and Anna in [Women on the Verge of HRT](#) (1999). Polly gave acclaimed performances in *Scenes from the Big Picture* (National Theatre), [Philadelphia, Here I Come](#) ([Liverpool Playhouse](#), 2004) and [Henhouse](#) (The Arcola, 2004).

In films, Polly worked with Ron Howard, Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman (in [Far and Away](#), 1992), [Alan Parker](#) ([Angela's Ashes](#), 1999) and Sydney McCartney ([A Love Divided](#), 1999). Her final work was a short film, [Make Aliens Dance](#) (2017).

Polly is survived by her sister, Natalie, two nieces, Sarah and Deborah, two great-nephews and two great-nieces.

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[The Observer](#)[Crime](#)

## Lissie Harper: ‘We had a lot to look forward to’



‘It’s strange for me to be pushing this much. But it has to be personal’: Lissie Harper Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Observer

‘It’s strange for me to be pushing this much. But it has to be personal’: Lissie Harper Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Observer

The dreadful killing of her police officer husband, Andrew, led Lissie Harper to propose a new law to protect emergency workers. She explains why she had to take action



### [Lucy Rock](#)

Sun 24 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

At first glance Lissie Harper's artfully curated Instagram page reflects an idyllic life. Photographs of her cuddling her cat and walking in meadows sit alongside others featuring holidays abroad, her hen night and her wedding to her childhood sweetheart, Andrew. Yet, the words accompanying some of the posts reveal her true story, one of grief and loss which began 18 months ago when Andrew, a police officer, was killed in the line of duty.

Next to a picture of herself staring out to sea, Lissie notes: "Grief is like living two lives. One is where you pretend that everything is all right, and the other is where your heart silently screams in pain." Accompanying a photo of her and Andrew kissing on their wedding day, posted on the anniversary of his funeral, she's written: "'I miss you' doesn't even come close to the hollowness that has encapsulated me these past 14 months. My life is missing its brightest spark."

The future she had envisaged as they exchanged vows in a stone temple in the grounds of a Georgian manor house in front of family and friends in July 2019 was obliterated a month later when Andrew was called out to reports of a quad bike theft in Sulhamstead, Berkshire. As he tried to stop three

teenagers, his feet became tangled in a tow rope attached to the back of their getaway car and he was dragged along country lanes for more than a mile, suffering catastrophic, unsurvivable injuries. He was 28 years old.

***On a biting cold*** January afternoon, Lissie, is curled up on the sofa in her cosy 17th-century cottage in Oxfordshire explaining to me over Zoom how she's coped in the aftermath. She lets out a long sigh. "I had two choices: sit and rock in the corner and fall apart or keep going." Her support network is strong, she says, comprising close family, lots of friends and Andrew's "amazing" colleagues. While the lockdowns have been tough because she can't see people or take trips to distract her, in other ways she welcomed a break from the intense media interest that Andrew's death and the subsequent court case of the three teenagers attracted.

She excels at overthinking, she says. Her solution? "Keeping busy."

Lissie studied art at college and in her late 20s, after jobs painting ceramics and designing wedding cakes, she started a business, hand printing her work on to clothing and accessories. In recent months, however, she's pushed herself out of her creative comfort zone and has become increasingly well-versed in the law – because she's intent on introducing a new one. Harper's Law, named after her husband, proposes a life sentence with a mandatory minimum term for anyone guilty of killing an emergency worker (including police officers, firefighters and paramedics among others) while committing a crime.

Lissie's decision to campaign for Harper's Law – which has its fair share of critics – was born out of her frustration at the length of the sentences given to the young men who killed Andrew.

Following a trial at the Old Bailey, the trio were cleared of murder, but convicted of manslaughter. The driver, Henry Long, 19, was jailed for 16 years, while his passengers, Albert Bowers and Jessie Cole, both 18, were sentenced to 13 years each.

For Lissie, their punishment did not fit the crime – a view also held by the popular press and the attorney general [Suella Braverman](#), who referred the jail terms to the court of appeal to consider whether they were too lenient.

But just before Christmas, the appeal was dismissed by the judges, who said they fell within sentencing guidelines.

It was another significant blow for Lissie. She had sat through the hearing, an ordeal heightened by the fact that at the same time Long, Bowers and Cole were asking the judge to reduce their manslaughter sentences (they failed). Their faces were beamed into the panelled court room in London's Royal Courts of Justice via a live link from Belmarsh Prison.

They appeared to Lissie to have no remorse. "It's all a game to them, really. They haven't changed; they were sitting there like nothing really matters." Lissie is softly spoken and measured as she talks, but there's a flash of the anger deep inside her when she explains how she tries not to think about her husband's killers because – and here her voice rises and quickens – "I will never understand them."

She grew up in Oxfordshire with her older sister, younger brother and parents, Simon, who owns a car restoration company, and Julie, who works at a pet-rehoming centre, and began dating classmate Andrew at secondary school. They enjoyed what she calls "a simple life" filled with country walks, socialising with friends and family, and watching films. Andrew – whom she describes as "upbeat, kind and always joking about" – shared her love of travel and they took a career break in their mid-20s, visiting 14 countries, including Sri Lanka, Bali and Australia, over seven months.

On their return they bought their one-bedroom cottage, enchanted by the wood-burning stove and beamed ceilings (they checked that Andrew, who stood at 6ft 5in to Lissie's 5ft 3in, could clear them before they put in an offer). In 2017, on a trip to Sorrento, Italy, Andrew proposed as they walked along a cliff path at sunset. "We had a lot to look forward to," Lissie says.

***The Court of Appeal's*** decision strengthened Lissie's determination to see Harper's Law become a reality. In her view, the ruling "said it all – these are the guidelines that judges are working from and it's not enough".

Lissie, who is working in conjunction with the [Police Federation of England and Wales](#) on the campaign, suggests that Harper's Law might create a "separate conviction" or "new offence" to murder and manslaughter. She

emphasises that they are not seeking whole-life sentences and have yet to decide what the mandatory minimum term should be.



Happy days: childhood sweethearts Andrew and Lissie were married in the summer of 2019. Photograph: Mark Lord

She's been working hard on building cross-party support, meeting the home secretary [Priti Patel](#), and the shadow home secretary [Nick Thomas-Symonds](#), among others.

Lissie said: "We don't want this to be some kind of political battle – that's not what it's about. I'm quite positive about the support we're getting from both sides."

After the court of appeal's decision, Patel reiterated her support, saying: "[Robert Buckland](#) [the justice secretary] and I are working together to look at the changes we can bring in law. We owe it to them [Andrew's family] to give them justice."

As soon as it's possible, the campaign team hopes to meet with lawyers and civil servants to thrash out the finer details, before publication of a final draft.

“Writing a law is very complicated, I’ve come to know,” Lissie laughs. “We want to get that spot on and then we can use all the support we’ve got, including the cross-party support, to do the more political side of things.”

Lobbying politicians, mugging up on the legal system, appearing on TV and radio to publicise her mission... It’s a far cry from what she thought she’d be doing at 30.

She exhales loudly. “Yes! It’s a whole different world, going into the House of Commons and everything. At certain points I’ve thought it’s strange for me to be pushing this so much, but it has to be someone who’s really passionate about it and for whom it’s personal.”

She’s buoyed up by the 750,000 people who’ve signed a petition calling for Harper’s Law, although she realises support for it is not universal. The former deputy assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Stephen Roberts, has said it won’t act as a deterrent and that judges should be able to exercise discretion. Others believe victims should be treated equally, emergency worker or not.

Lissie rejects these points. “We’re not saying that a police officer deserves more, it’s not about that. It’s about giving them a level of protection that they don’t have and also, potentially, it being some kind of deterrent. At the moment there’s nothing, and there’s little respect. Anything to make people want to carry on doing these dangerous jobs... I think it’s the least we can try and do.

“If people lead a life of crime and see their friends or family commit a crime, go to court and get a lenient sentence, that will have some kind of effect in terms of, ‘They did that, they got away with it.’”

Some lawyers point out that guilt in offences of manslaughter is wildly variable, ranging from the horrific circumstances of Andrew’s death to the throwing of a bottle into a crowd which kills an emergency worker.

“That will be very finely written into the legal side of things,” Lissie says. “If something is an accident, then it will be dealt with by different legislation. There’s got to be a level of culpability, a level of intent –

somebody has to go out and commit a crime and sod what happens to anyone – that's the key to this sort of legislation.”

When Lissie used to worry about the dangers of Andrew’s job, she consoled herself by thinking that he was always “so strong, capable and fearless”. Ultimately, these attributes couldn’t save him. “That’s why I’m pushing for Harper’s Law,” she says, “to give protection to the people who protect us.”

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**CNN**

## Larry King dies, Tom Brokaw retires – and the 'heroic age' of TV news slips further away

Experts agree the great days of US news broadcasting are long gone, but this week still brought poignant reminders

- [News giants put more women in the White House](#)



Tom Brokaw delivers his closing remarks during his final appearance as anchor of NBC Nightly News, in 2004. Photograph: Richard Drew/AP

Tom Brokaw delivers his closing remarks during his final appearance as anchor of NBC Nightly News, in 2004. Photograph: Richard Drew/AP

*[Edward Helmore](#) in New York*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 08.18 EST

As Tennyson – [and Withnail's Uncle Monty](#) – had it, the old order changeth, yielding place to new. Larry King, [whose death was announced on Saturday](#), was not the only giant of US TV news to leave the scene this week.

[Larry King, talk-show titan who lit up worlds of politics and showbiz](#)  
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At NBC, Tom Brokaw retired after a 55-year career. Dan Rather, once a stalwart at CBS, is staying active but change came even to him, with the launch of [his own](#) newsletter on Substack.

Each fashioned his career before the age of the internet, Brokaw and Rather presenting network news, King [a talk show titan for CNN](#) in its days as a cable upstart.

Brokaw covered the 1968 presidential campaign, the rise of Ronald Reagan and the 9/11 attacks. Rather, the assassination of John F Kennedy and the rise and fall of Richard Nixon. King was the veteran of 50,000 interviews.

Robert Thompson, director of the [Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture](#) at Syracuse University in New York state, said this week merely brought “one more transition” away from an older era.

“The real transition occurred in 2004, 2005,” he said, “when the legacy evening news anchors, ABC’s Peter Jennings, Brokaw and Rather stepped away”.

Each in their own way was an inheritor of Walter Cronkite, [the giant of CBS](#) who ended each evening broadcast with the phrase: “And that’s the way it is.”

“That seems so quaint today – like a statement that could have been uttered in colonial Williamsburg from ye olden days,” said Thompson, adding that Cronkite, Rather and Brokaw covered the big stories of the late 20th and early 21st centuries “at least with the lingering sense that their reports were the data we could talk about and agree upon a narrative”.

Rather is now 89, Brokaw 80. They have, Thompson said, “outlived that news environment by many years and represented remnants of a [TV news](#) culture that was already breaking up into many different cultures of news”.

Earlier, [Rather told](#) the Washington Post: “The distance between 2005 and 2020 in terms of how journalism in this country has evolved is pretty staggering. Never mind going back as far as the 1970s when [Walter Cronkite](#) ... ruled supreme at the anchor desk.”

Recently, Brokaw had been an occasional contributor for NBC. Announcing [his formal retirement](#) on Friday, the network noted that he was the only anchor to have led all three of its major news shows: Nightly News, Today and Meet the Press.

King was CNN’s only star for at least two decades. It was only after Fox figured out how to keep people watching 24-hour cable news without any breaking stories, Thompson said, essentially by putting on opinionated star hosts like Bill O’Reilly, that CNN and its competitor MSNBC “limped toward playing the same game and started countering with Chris Cuomo, Don Lemon and that kind of thing”.

Paying tribute to King, CNN founder Ted Turner said: “If anyone asked me what are my greatest career achievements in life, one is the creation of CNN and the other is hiring [Larry King](#). ”

[Larry King obituary](#)

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New York Times television critic James Poniewozik also said this week’s changes were a postscript to bigger shifts many years ago.

“There’s always a tendency to look back to a Periclean age,” he said. “The world has always been going to hell from the point of view of people looking back to whatever the last thing was.”

“Anchors of Brokaw and Rather’s era had a level of power consolidated in them and a level of influence because they had these huge aggregate

audiences that don't exist anymore and they were competing with fewer other voices.

“They were in a way like world luminaries in themselves.”

- This article was amended on 25 January 2021 to correct Dan Rather’s age from 79 to 89.
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## Schools

# Ministers won't commit to reopening schools in England after Easter holidays

Stubbornly high Covid infection rate means no end in sight for home schooling for most pupils

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Sun 24 Jan 2021 14.27 EST Last modified on Mon 25 Jan 2021 04.30 EST



Ministers are not even beginning to discuss in public when all pupils might return to the classroom. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

The government has refused to commit to schools being open even after the Easter holidays, raising the prospect that parents will have many more weeks

of homeschooling before even a phased return of most pupils to the classroom in [England](#).

A senior government source cautioned that although the data was starting to show signs of a slowing of infections, rates were not falling nearly as sharply as had been expected. The source said the picture had become “more pessimistic” over the past week about the government’s ability to ease any measures in the short term.

Discussions are under way in the Department for Education to decide which pupils could be prioritised, with early years and those facing exams in the summer among those who could be brought back first. Attendance rotas could also be introduced to keep numbers down in schools, but allow for more face-to-face teaching.

The chair of the education select committee expressed dismay at the delay, urging ministers to put “the whole engine of the state” behind paving the way for schools to reopen.

### [UK covid case rate](#)

Robert Halfon said parents would be alarmed by the latest indications especially because of the advances made by the vaccination programme.

“The whole engine of the state must do everything possible to get our schools open after half-term as was originally proposed,” he told the Guardian. “If it means priority vaccinations for teachers and support staff then it is worth it because despite the efforts of individual teachers and support staff who are doing their best we are facing an epidemic of mental health problems and educational poverty.

“This is putting [enormous pressure on parents](#) and families, many of whom have to give up their livelihoods to look after their children at home. With all the laptops in the world, you still need motivation from parents and when they are working that is very hard, especially with younger children.”

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said reports that children will not be back in school until after

Easter did not reflect discussions he had been having with government. “At a time when we are worrying about the mental health of young people, the last thing we need now is no one back in school till after Easter,” he said.

Conservative MPs are expecting to increase pressure this week for ministers to design a clear roadmap for the easing of restrictions once the majority of the most vulnerable have had their first doses of the vaccine in early March. The former minister Steve Baker, one of the leading figures in the Covid Recovery Group of MPs, said public compliance could not be expected indefinitely with no hope in sight.

Downing Street and the Department for Education are expected to examine the data this coming week before making a judgment, with one option including a limited phased return of some pupils.

The education secretary, [Gavin Williamson](#), who has said schools will be given a minimum of two weeks’ notice to plan a return of pupils, is hoping to be able to give teachers and parents an update on the roadmap for schools’ return this week.

However, it is now believed the majority of pupils will not return until at least Easter, despite previous government aspirations that schools could begin to allow pupils to return from February half-term.

The latest government figures for the rollout of the vaccine programme across the UK showed another record day, with 491,970 people receiving their first dose, taking the total to more than 6.3 million. A further 610 people have died within 28 days of testing positive for Covid-19 as of Sunday, bringing the UK total to 97,939.

The health secretary, [Matt Hancock](#), told Sky News that any easing of lockdown restrictions was a “long, long, long way off” and said the UK was still in a dire situation. “You can see the pressure on the NHS – you can see it every day.”

Hancock refused to commit to either mid-February or after Easter as a point for schools to reopen fully to all pupils.

“We’re really clear we want to get schools back and as safe as we can, but we have to watch the data,” he told the BBC’s Andrew Marr Show.

“Of course I hope schools go back after Easter and the vaccination programme is going fast. But we’ve got to make sure that we get the cases down and we’ve got to protect the country from new variants coming in from abroad.”

Baker, who is deputy chair of the CRG, which has previously led parliamentary rebellions against lockdown measures, said: “Covid causes death and serious harm and we must control it, but these lockdowns, restrictions and school closures are causing untold damage to people’s health, livelihoods and prospects.”

He said that the top four risk groups should have immunity by 8 March and at that point “the government should start easing the restrictions in a way that is safe and proportionate. But the public need to hear today what the plan for easing restrictions is.”

Baker said it was “not enough to expect public compliance with prolonged severe measures, without giving some hope, and showing some optimism and light at the end of this very dark tunnel.”

A source in the Department for Education said Williamson wanted pupils “back as soon as possible” but did not deny that a delay until after Easter was possible.

Williamson said as recently as last Thursday that he would “certainly hope” schools would be able to reopen before Easter, though those remarks were not endorsed by the prime minister’s spokesperson, who said it would be guided by the data.

Around 14% of pupils, who are either vulnerable or the children of key workers, are already attending schools. Numbers could be built up gradually, with the youngest seen as a high priority for returning to class, as well as those who have been preparing to sit GCSEs and A-levels this year. The full exam series has been cancelled and the exam regulator Ofqual is now consulting on how pupils will be assessed.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: “We continue to keep plans for the return to school under review and will inform schools, parents and pupils of the plans ahead of February half term.

“The government remains committed to supporting young people’s education, including providing 1.3m laptops and tablets for those who need them, as well as partnering with mobile data companies and online education resource providers. We will continue to work to reopen schools as soon as possible.”

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## WhatsApp

# WhatsApp loses millions of users after terms update

Poorly-executed change to terms of service sends messaging app's subscribers flocking to competitors



Data showed WhatsApp fell from the 8th most downloaded app in the UK at the beginning of the month to the 23rd by 12 January after an update to its terms of service. Photograph: Thomas White/Reuters

Data showed WhatsApp fell from the 8th most downloaded app in the UK at the beginning of the month to the 23rd by 12 January after an update to its terms of service. Photograph: Thomas White/Reuters

*Alex Hern  
@alexhern*

Sun 24 Jan 2021 11.53 EST

A poorly explained update to its terms of service has pushed [WhatsApp](#) users to adopt alternative services such as [Signal](#) and [Telegram](#) in their millions.

The exodus was so large that [WhatsApp](#) has been forced to delay the implementation of the new terms, which had been slated for 8 February, and run a damage limitation campaign to explain to users the changes they were making.

Over the first three weeks of January, Signal has gained 7.5 million users globally, according to figures shared by the UK parliament's home affairs committee, and Telegram has gained 25 million.

In both cases, the increase appears to have come at WhatsApp's expense. Data tracked by the analytics firm App Annie shows WhatsApp falling from the eighth most downloaded app in the UK at the beginning of the month to the 23rd by 12 January. By contrast, Signal wasn't even in the top 1,000 apps in the UK on 6 January, yet by 9 January it was the most downloaded app in the country.

Niamh Sweeney, WhatsApp's director of public policy for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, told the home affairs committee that the exodus was believed to be related to the update to the company's terms of service. She said that update was intended to do two things: enable a new set of features around business messaging, and "make clarifications and provide greater transparency" around the company's pre-existing policies. "There are no changes to our data sharing with [Facebook](#) anywhere in the world," Sweeney said.

But after viral posts – ironically, widely spread on WhatsApp – claimed that the privacy policy instead gave the service the right to read users' messages and hand the information over to its parent company Facebook, WhatsApp announced a delay in the implementation of the new terms of service. "We want to be clear that the policy update does not affect the privacy of your messages with friends or family in any way," WhatsApp said in an update posted to its site, which it is paying to advertise on Google under searches for "WhatsApp privacy policy". The company says it will delay the implementation of its new policy until 15 May.

App Annie's director of market insights, Amir Ghodrati, said moving quickly was important. "These types of shifts in messaging and social networking apps are not unusual. Due to the nature of social apps and how the primary functionality involves communicating with others, their growth can often move quite quickly, based on current events. We've seen growing demand over the last few years for encrypted messaging and apps focused on privacy."

The shift to more privacy-focused messaging apps had been building before WhatsApp's public relations disaster, Ghodrati said. "Messaging apps that provide privacy features saw the greatest engagement growth in [the first half of] 2020. These apps saw on average 30% more active users than the alternatives. Apps like Signal, Telegram, Wickr, and WhatsApp offer privacy features ranging from end-to-end encrypted data transfer to '[self-destructing messages](#)'."

Ironically, in some ways WhatsApp is more privacy-focused than its competitor Telegram. The former applies end-to-end encryption – which prevents the service provider from being able to access user messages – by default to every chat except those between users and large businesses.

Telegram, however, only turns on end-to-end encryption for "secret chats", an option that users must actively select for each individual contact. Such chats "are meant for people who want more secrecy than the average fella", the service explains in an FAQ.

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# Monday briefing: New Covid could 'slip through' without quarantine

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- [Live UK coronavirus: government 'confident' about vaccine supply after EU threat](#)
- [Covid vaccines EU threatens to block exports of jabs amid AstraZeneca shortfall](#)
- [UK New quarantine rules expected for arrivals](#)
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## [Vaccines and immunisation](#)

# **EU threat will not impact Covid vaccine deliveries to UK, says minister**

Nadhim Zahawi says he is confident of Pfizer jab supply after threat to block exports

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The UK's vaccine minister, [Nadhim Zahawi](#), has said he is confident that Pfizer will deliver the number of coronavirus injections needed in the UK.

It follows concerns over [vaccine supply in the EU](#), prompting the bloc to tell pharmaceutical companies they can only export to Britain with its explicit permission.

Asked whether the EU could prevent Pfizer vials from leaving its borders, Zahawi told Sky News: "No, I'm confident that the Pfizer vaccine will be delivered."

The EU issued an angry warning to AstraZeneca on Monday over its unexpected delay in delivering millions of doses of its Covid-19 vaccine to the bloc.

Last Friday, the pharma multinational said it would not meet its contractual delivery commitments to the EU because of unexplained "reduced yields" in its European supply chain.

The EU has currently authorised two vaccines for distribution, manufactured by BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna.

Zahawi said: "Pfizer has made sure that they have always delivered for us, they will continue to do so.

“They have made a very important announcement on the equitable supply of the whole world, including the European Union, and I’m sure they will deliver for the European Union, the United Kingdom and for the rest of the world.

“We have got 367m vaccines that we have ordered from seven different suppliers, so I’m confident we will meet our target and continue to vaccinate the whole of the adult population by the autumn.”

He added: “The EU has to make decisions as it does. We will always support them and it is unwise for me to engage in their negotiations or deliberations on vaccine programs … No one is safe until the whole world is safe, which is why we need to work together.”

On Sky News, he also said that “it is far too early for us to speculate about the summer” and booking holidays later in the year.

He added that an announcement about quarantine hotels would be made later on Tuesday. Boris Johnson is expected to make a decision about a requirement to isolate in a hotel for 10 days after discussing the proposals with senior ministers later.

The measures are likely to apply to UK citizens and those with permanent residency arriving from high-risk countries such as South Africa. Most foreign nationals from high-risk countries already face UK travel bans.

Concerns have been raised about the impact of this on the travel industry and Zahawi said that they will be “engaged with heavily to explain the decision-making” at a health and business level.

When pressed on whether people could book holidays for the summer, the minister said it was still “far too early to speculate about this” as 37,000 people were in hospitals with Covid-19.

The vaccine minister was also asked about schools, saying he could not give a definite date on when they were likely to reopen. “Once we see infection

rates drop to levels that are safe and acceptable we will as much to teachers and schools,” he said.

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# **UK Covid: Johnson 'sorry for every life lost' and takes 'full responsibility' as death toll passes 100,000 – as it happened**

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# EU threatens to block Covid vaccine exports amid AstraZeneca shortfall

Bloc may receive only half of purchased 100m doses in first quarter of the year

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[Daniel Boffey](#) in Brussels

Mon 25 Jan 2021 13.10 EST Last modified on Mon 25 Jan 2021 23.36 EST



The EU's health commissioner, Stella Kyriakides, expressed frustration at AstraZeneca's behaviour following the delays. Photograph: Thierry Monasse/Getty

The EU has threatened to block exports of coronavirus vaccines to countries outside the bloc such as Britain, after AstraZeneca was accused of failing to give a satisfactory explanation for a [huge shortfall of promised doses to member states](#).

The pharmaceutical company's new distribution plans were said to be "unacceptable" after it "surprisingly" informed the [European commission](#) on Friday that there would be significant shortfalls on the original schedule.

The EU has been due to receive 100m doses in the first quarter of this year. But it is feared that the bloc will only receive half of that despite making large advance purchases ahead of authorisation of the vaccine by the European medicines agency.

In a heated call with AstraZeneca's chief executive, Pascal Soriot, on Monday, the European commission president, [Ursula von der Leyen](#), said the company must live up to its contractual obligations. The EMA is expected to authorise the vaccine by the end of this week.

Von der Leyen's spokesperson said: "She made it clear that she expects [AstraZeneca](#) to deliver on the contractual arrangements foreseen in the advance purchasing agreement.

"She reminded Mr Soriot that the EU has invested significant amounts in the company up front precisely to ensure that production is ramped up even before the conditional market authorisation is delivered by the European Medicines Agency.

"Of course, production issues can appear with the complex vaccine, but we expect the company to find solutions and to exploit all possible flexibilities to deliver swiftly."

The EU's health commissioner, Stella Kyriakides, made a televised statement to express her frustration at the company's behaviour, warning that the answers so far provided had not been satisfactory.

Late on Monday evening following discussions with executives representing the pharmaceutical company, Kyriakides [tweeted](#): "Discussions with

AstraZeneca today resulted in dissatisfaction with the lack of clarity and insufficient explanations.

“EU member states are united: vaccine developers have societal and contractual responsibilities they need to uphold.

“With our member states, we have requested from [Astrazeneca] a detailed planning of vaccine deliveries and when distribution will take place to member states. Another meeting will be convened on Wednesday to discuss the matter further.”

The development has raised pressure on the commission just as it is being criticised for the slow rollout of vaccination programmes in EU member states in comparison with the UK and the US.

The UK has administered more than 10 doses per 100 residents but according to data gathered by Airfinity, a London-based life sciences analytics company, the EU has administered just under two doses per 100 residents.

Kyriakides said Brussels would now insist on being notified of any exports of vaccines from EU sites, including that produced by Pfizer on which the UK is reliant on European laboratories for supplies, raising the spectre of export bans.

She said: “You know that AstraZeneca vaccine is currently in the final stages of approval with the European Medicines Agency. If all requirements are met, the European Medicines Agency could recommend market authorisation by the end of this week.

“But there is a problem in the supply side. Last Friday, the company AstraZeneca surprisingly informed the commission and the [European Union](#) member states that it intends to supply considerably fewer doses in the coming weeks than agreed and announced.

“This new schedule is not acceptable to the European Union. That is why I wrote a letter to the company at the weekend in which I asked important and

serious questions. The European Union has pre-financed the development of the vaccine and its production, and wants to see the return.”

Kyriakides said the EU wanted to “know exactly which doses have been produced where by AstraZeneca so far. And if, or to whom, they have been delivered”.

“These questions were also discussed today in the joint steering board of the commission and the 27 member states with AstraZeneca,” she said. “The answers of the company have not been satisfactory so far. That’s why a second meeting is scheduled for tonight. The European Union wants the order and pre-financed doses to be delivered as soon as possible. And we want our contract to be fully fulfilled”.

The EU has spent €2.7bn (£2.3bn) on the rapid development and production of coronavirus vaccines. Kyriakides said the commission had proposed that the member states agreed on “an export transparency mechanism be put in place, as soon as possible”.

Germany’s health minister, Jens Spahn, gave Berlin’s backing to the commission proposal. “We, as the EU, must be able to know whether and what vaccines are being exported from the EU,” he said. “Only that way can we understand whether our EU contracts with the producers are being served fairly. An obligation to get approval for vaccine exports on the EU level makes sense.”

Astrazeneca said in a statement that the company’s chief executive in his conversation with Von der Leyen had “stressed the importance of working in partnership and how AstraZeneca is doing everything it can to bring its vaccine to millions of Europeans as soon as possible.”

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# New quarantine rules expected for travellers to UK

Measure would be an ‘effective closure of our borders’, the airline industry says

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[Jessica Elgot](#) and [Gwyn Topham](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 15.38 EST Last modified on Mon 25 Jan 2021 23.36 EST



Boris Johnson has hinted that he favours more comprehensive rather than more limited restrictions, to provide ‘the maximum possible protection against reinfection from abroad’. Photograph: Chris J Ratcliffe/Getty Images

Boris Johnson is expected to sign off sweeping new quarantine rules for travellers in airport hotels on Tuesday as cabinet ministers rebuffed pressure from Tory MPs to set out a timetable for the [easing of lockdown](#).

In what Downing Street said was a more [cautious approach](#) since England's third lockdown, a No 10 source said: "We don't ever want to unlock anything if we have to lock it again." It may mean coronavirus travel curbs and other restrictions remaining in place for months.

The [hotel quarantine](#) measure, which government sources said may take "weeks rather than days" to implement, would be an "effective closure of our borders", the airline industry said.

Ten-day stays are expected to cost upwards of £1,000 for each traveller. Some countries, which imposed similar regimes from March last year, charge many thousands for accommodation, board and security, with occupants confined to their rooms, including for exercise.

Ministers had previously discussed limiting hotel quarantine to "hotspot" countries, including South Africa and parts of South America, but Whitehall sources said that was now likely to be expanded to a blanket quarantine policy for all arrivals, or a wider targeted approach, which still may cover entire continents, such as South America.

A final decision will be made by cabinet ministers at a Covid-O meeting on Tuesday, with the prime minister presented with several options. Details yet to be confirmed include the cost and whether a "test to release" policy will operate, like the measure which now allows travellers to leave quarantine if they test negative after five days.

A blanket policy covering all travellers is favoured by the home secretary Priti Patel and the health secretary [Matt Hancock](#), and backed by the chancellor Rishi Sunak – though he has said he needs to see a plan of how to taper off the policy. Grant Shapps, the transport secretary who has been cautious about the workability of the policy, has also requested a roadmap for easing the rules.

Hancock said on Monday it was “incredibly important that we are cautious at the border … It is important that we protect from new variants should they have vaccine evasion. And it is also reasonable to take a precautionary principle to protect this country whilst we work on the science and the analysis of the different variants that are discovered around the world”.

Johnson also hinted that he favoured more comprehensive restrictions, saying the policy should provide “the maximum possible protection against reinfection from abroad”.

On Monday the UK recorded 22,195 further cases – the lowest daily figure for more than a month. The numbers have not been this low since 20,263 new cases were recorded on 14 December. Week on week, new cases have fallen by 25%. There were 592 reported deaths.

The expected quarantine rules could prompt a scramble of returns to the UK before they are introduced. The aviation industry warned the policy would be “catastrophic” for the sector.

A Heathrow airport spokesperson said Sunak must provide a comprehensive financial support package for UK aviation including full rates relief and the extension of furlough while the policy remains in place.

In a joint statement, the Airport Operators Association and Airlines UK said the move would impact freight, including PPE supplies, and said any further measures must be short-term.

Heathrow is understood to be seeing around 6,000 passengers a day, comparable to the depths of the spring 2020 lockdown when around 3% of the normal 200,000 passengers a day travelled through. Current hotel capacity around Heathrow is believed to be around 10,000 rooms though some hotels have been shuttered for months.

Only a handful of inbound flights were operating at the UK’s three next largest airports on Monday – London Gatwick, Stansted and Manchester – with unofficial estimates of as little as 1% of normal passenger traffic arriving, a figure representing just a few hundred people.

Hancock issued a robust warning on Monday that no one in the UK should be travelling, except for extremely limited reasons. “Under this lockdown, it is illegal to travel abroad unless you have a reasonable excuse because it’s illegal to leave your home unless it’s for one of the very small number of reasons set out,” he said.

The move comes with the government under increasing pressure from Conservative lockdown sceptics to set out a roadmap to ease restrictions. Children’s commissioner for England Anne Longfield asked for a timeline for schools to reopen in a letter to Johnson on Monday.

A Whitehall source said England’s chief medical officer Chris Whitty and the chief scientific adviser Patrick Vallance had advised it was not yet safe to make any changes to the current lockdown.

Johnson was among a number of cabinet ministers who publicly resisted calls to set out a timeline for restrictions to ease, though a No 10 source said that would happen as soon as feasible.

The prime minister suggested the government would be “looking at the potential of relaxing some measures” before the review date of 15 February, a slip-up that caused a flurry of speculation.

Downing Street sources said Johnson meant the government would look at the evidence and that no restrictions would be lifted before 15 February. The prime minister also gave no commitment that schools would reopen by Easter but added that people “shouldn’t assume” that they definitely would not.

“When we announced this lockdown, the PM made it clear schools would be the first things we would look to unlock,” a No 10 source said. “We do not want to unlock anything if we have to lock it again. Everything we say makes that clear.”

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## Rape: reported Crown Prosecution Service

# Rape victims' battles with CPS: 'I don't have words for how betrayed I feel'

Four women describe their traumatic interactions with the Crown Prosecution Service

- [Victims speak out ahead of legal challenge to CPS policy](#)



'Marie': 'Each time I was telling this story, I was getting retraumatised.'  
Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

'Marie': 'Each time I was telling this story, I was getting retraumatised.'  
Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian



Alexandra Topping

Tue 26 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

## ‘Marie’

Marie was 17 when a relationship turned violent. “We’re talking daily rape, and at least weekly fighting,” she says. At times during their two years together, her boyfriend would also confiscate her clothes, keep her awake at night and hack her phone, she says.

It was only 10 years later that she reported the rapes to police, encouraged by them to do so when she was reporting another crime. She was hesitant at first, but then recorded a four-hour video statement, handed over a 41-page journal written in the aftermath of the relationship ending, and gave officers a list of around 30 people she had told at the time.

“Then they told me that the video had been corrupted. And that they might think about dropping the case because that was my first account,” she says.

Eventually, they took the statement again. “It was really awkward and really upsetting,” she says. “Each time I was telling this story, I was getting retraumatised.”

ITwo years after reporting the rapes, Marie was told no further action would be taken, in a letter that stated there were “difficulties with the evidence”. She asked to speak to the relevant prosecutor, who three months after the initial decision told her the decision was “not based upon us not believing” her account, but on a “forecast” of what a jury would think.

She discovered that police had accidentally sent details of the case to her old address where she had lived with her ex-partner. The CPS said it hadn’t seen medical records Marie says she sent to officers stating that she had bleeding after sex and that her vulval pain was “probably due to an abusive relationship two years ago and concurrent post-traumatic stress disorder”.

She requested a victims’ right to review (VRR) and received a reply days later saying a jury might disregard medical evidence and not believe that she had been raped as she had continued in an abusive relationship.

Responding to a further legal letter the CPS said it was reconsidering the complaint, but eight months later a final decision was made: the case was closed.

“Over the last four years I’ve had to relive an abusive relationship that was only two years long in the first place,” she says. “I don’t have words for how betrayed I feel by the system. I feel like I was so silenced. I was gaslighted, essentially – gaslighted over and over again. It’s left me with more scarring because now he is walking around thinking that he’s won. And this wasn’t even my fight, I didn’t even want to start this fight, I didn’t even want to report it.”

**‘Nina’**



‘Nina’: ‘His face was really evil, like a devil. That’s the only way I can explain it.’ Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Nina thought the man in her church wanted to help her. She, then in her 20s, told the senior figure about problems she was having. He, married and in his 50s, said he could heal her. “I was brainwashed,” she says. “I fell for everything he said.”

At first the relationship was platonic, but it progressed until, she says, he was controlling her and watching every move she made. She remembers on one occasion trying to stop him having sex with her, closing her legs and saying it hurt. She says she went into a dissociative state. “When I came around, he was on top of me,” she says. “His face was really evil, like a devil. That’s the only way I can explain it.”

She told no one, too scared to talk to anyone about the relationship and too scared to leave, she says. “He said to me: ‘If you tell anybody, I’ll come after you, I’ll kill you, then I’ll kill myself because my life won’t be worth living.’ So how could I speak out?”

She ended the relationship and when the man was convicted of physically assaulting a woman Nina went to the police and told them what had happened to her. “I was just like, I’m on this, I can do this,” she says.

Around two years later she received a letter saying the CPS had decided not to charge the man because of inconsistencies in her account. She says the prosecutor who made the decision was cold in a meeting, and when Nina provided her with more information the prosecutor ignored it.

She challenged the decision three times, and in the final letter she received she learned that the man had denied the relationship was sexual – a fact the prosecutor agreed was provably false. But the letter said rape “within the context of a relationship” was extremely complex to prove, and added that text messages sent by the man suggested he believed the sex was consensual.

Nina says she still lives in fear, but she supports the case against the CPS because she feels she has been failed and wants to stop others going through the same experience. “But even if the CWJ get the outcome they want, then it’s good for people that come after this but it’s not going to help me in any way,” she says.

The last time she spoke to the police they said there was a possibility they could reopen her case if the man offended again. “I said: so you’re basically telling me that we’ve got to wait until another girl gets her life fucked up like mine? And then you’re going to do something about it? No, fuck off.”

## **India**



India volunteered for a Rape Crisis centre: ‘I saw the violence that I had experienced wasn’t unusual.’ (She consented to her face being shown in this image.) Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

When India was 20 and a university student, she went on a date with another student. She found him arrogant and egotistical, but when he walked her to his house instead of walking her home, she reluctantly agreed to go in for a cup of tea, thinking she would leave straight after.

As soon as she walked into his room, he locked the door behind her. Then he told her he had a gun and took it out of a drawer, pointed it at her and asked: “Are you scared?” She said no and asked to hold it. “It sounds a bit strange, but I was thinking of all those hostage situations where they tell you to make friends,” she says. She was, in fact, terrified.

“When he showed me the gun, that was the point at which my options were just gone,” she says. “I basically stayed in that room and just let him do whatever, until eventually he got tired and said that he was going to go to bed.” It lasted hours, she says. “It was violent, it was sustained.”

India left in a daze. Unable to process what had happened, her mental health started deteriorating. She started self-harming, taking drugs, shutting herself

away, and at one point she was so sure she was about to take her own life that she went to A&E.

Somehow, she started to piece her life back together. She went back to university, became pregnant, had a daughter and completed her course. She moved to a different town, started a new life and volunteered for a local Rape Crisis centre. “I saw the violence that I had experienced wasn’t unusual.”

Years after the incident, she decided to report what had happened to the police. A search for the man on Facebook showed he had sold a fake gun matching the description of the weapon she had given.

But four months later the CPS said the case would not be charged. In a letter, it said that although it was clear that India had not consented, it was not clear her attacker had been aware of her lack of consent. The letter noted that India had not said “no” to her attacker, and said the way she had described the incident with the gun “indicated that it was not a serious threat”.

She pored over the CPS’s [code for crown prosecutors](#), which states that the crown must be able to prove a suspect did not have a “reasonable belief in consent”. “I asked if the law states it is reasonable for a man to place a woman in a threatening situation like this and reasonably believe that anything she goes along with is done out of free choice,” she says.

She asked for a VRR, but the decision was upheld. She asked for another review. In October 2017, a senior prosecutor upheld the decision not to charge, but for a different reason.

The letter said that based on her medical records it was possible that India had been on antidepressants or using recreational drugs at the time of the incident, which could have affected her memory. India was floored, explaining that she had come off the antidepressants a year before the rape and had taken drugs only a couple of times.

She requested a further review, pointing out that the decision was based on inaccurate information, but in November she received a letter that appeared to accept that a mistake had been made about her medical records but maintained that the CPS would not be charging the case.

## ‘Olivia’



‘Olivia’: ‘From the start she made me feel as though it was my fault.’ (She consented to her face being shown in this image.) Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

On a beautiful summer afternoon , Olivia met her parents for drinks and food. She went home, had a few more drinks and went back out to the pub, this time on her own. When she left at 11pm, she was, by her own account, very inebriated.

A little after 1am she was found distressed and semi-conscious outside a shop, after a worried friend who had taken a call from her phoned the police. Olivia, who is gay and has chronic pain caused by a bone disease and ME, could only remember the night in snippets, but knew she had been raped. “I don’t remember any conversations with him apart from saying ‘no, I don’t want that’,” she says.

She told police what little she could remember: that the man was white and had an accent; about the grass and twigs under her feet; realising at one point she was naked from the waist down; calling the friend, crying.

Later the same day she was examined at a sexual assault referral centre, and she was told that police had CCTV footage and made an arrest. He was charged and a trial was set for late February. But in December the case was dropped. The CPS offered no evidence at a pre-trial hearing and the case was dismissed.

“I kept wondering if I had done something wrong. It sent me loopy,” she says. Despite the investigating officer telling her it was the strongest case he’d seen in 15 years, the CPS said CCTV footage showed in its view that Olivia wasn’t incapacitated through drink, she “engaged” with the defendant, and there were inconsistencies between her recollection and the CCTV evidence.

Olivia exercised her right to a meeting with the prosecutor. “From the start she made me feel as though it was my fault,” she says. “I said I would never go with a guy even if I’m drunk, and she said it could have been sex with regret and my sexuality was irrelevant.”

Olivia approached the Centre for Women’s Justice, which wrote to the CPS asking for a review of the decision. She only saw the CCTV footage after the process had finished. “It was too late for me to respond to the CPS about their incorrect interpretations,” she says.

A letter to the CPS from her lawyer stated that footage showed the man forcing her hand down his trousers and putting his hand down her shorts; when she removed both hands, he did it again. It stated that the CCTV footage did not include a crucial 40-minute period and argued that Olivia’s medical conditions had prevented her from running away. The letter added: “No weight appears to have been placed on why the defendant had left our client on the floor, outside at night, in a semi-conscious state.”

A few months after the case was initially dropped, the CPS said the decision to discontinue proceedings had been correct.

Olivia now suffers from PTSD, and her flashbacks include moments from her meeting with the CPS. “I don’t think people realise that a public organisation can harm someone to that extent and get away with it,” she

says. “Unless you’ve been through the system, you wouldn’t realise just how badly it is going wrong.”

*\*Names have been changed.*

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## [Trump impeachment \(2021\)](#)

# US House delivers article of impeachment against Donald Trump to Senate

Senate trial will be the first-ever of a former US president but the chances that Republicans will convict him are slim

01:11

*Lauren Gambino* in Washington  
[@laurenegambino](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 20.28 EST

The US House delivered its article of impeachment against [Donald Trump](#) to the Senate on Monday evening, setting the stage for the first ever Senate trial of a former US president.

For the second time in just over a year, nine House impeachment managers carried an impeachment charge against Trump in a ceremonial procession across the US Capitol, where just a few weeks ago a violent mob laid siege to the building in a deadly assault on the seat of American government.

[Impeachment guide: how will Donald Trump's second Senate trial unfold?](#)  
[Read more](#)

Standing before the Senate, representative Jamie Raskin, the lead impeachment manager and a constitutional law scholar, formally notified the 100-member body that the managers were prepared to lead the prosecution of the former president. He then read the article aloud.

“Donald John Trump engaged in high crimes and misdemeanors by inciting violence against the government of the United States,” he said, as senators

listened silently.

Though the delivery and formal reading of the charge marks the opening of Trump's unprecedented second impeachment trial, Senate leaders agreed last week to delay the proceedings for two weeks, allowing time for the chamber to consider Joe Biden's cabinet nominations while Trump's defense prepares its case.

Biden on Monday [told CNN](#) Trump's trial "has to happen", even if chances that Republicans will vote to convict are slim.

Still, the timing ensures that the initial weeks of Biden's presidency will be dominated by the impeachment trial of his predecessor, who, deprived of his Twitter account, has remained conspicuously quiet since departing the White House last week.

Raskin said in a statement on Monday the managers were prepared to "present overwhelming evidence of the facts" that Trump's incendiary speech to supporters at a rally near the White House during which he implored them to "fight like hell" paved the way for the violence that followed.

Unlike during Trump's first trial, Senator Patrick Leahy, the Senate president pro tempore, presided from behind the dais, assuming a role filled last time by Chief Justice John Roberts.

While the constitution clearly states that the chief justice of the supreme court oversees an impeachment trial of the president, it does not address who should preside over proceedings for other officials, including former presidents.

Leahy, a Vermont Democrat, only recently reclaimed the title, reserved for the longest-serving senator in the majority party, after Democrats took control of the Senate earlier this year. Earlier this year, Leahy joined his Democratic colleagues in voting to convict Trump on two counts: abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

In a statement on Monday, Leahy vowed that he would “not waver from my constitutional and sworn obligations to administer the trial with fairness, in accordance with the constitution and the laws”.



Senator Patrick Leahy vowed on Monday that he would ‘administer the trial with fairness’. Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/EPA

The Senate received the article as divisions deepened within the Republican conference over whether to convict Trump for his role in stoking the 6 January assault on the US Capitol that left five people dead.

Unlike Trump’s first trial, Republicans have been slower to rally to his defense. Senator Mitt Romney has said he believes Trump committed an impeachable offense, while others, including Mitch McConnell, the minority leader, have signaled an openness to convicting the former president, after he waged a baseless, weeks-long campaign to overturn his election defeat.

But they are two of just a handful of Republican senators who have expressed an openness to convicting Trump, who left office with the lowest approval rating of his presidency but maintains strong support among the Republican base.

Most Republican senators have refused to engage with the question of whether Trump committed an impeachable offense. Instead, they have

objected to the nature of the trial itself, arguing that the Senate does not have the constitutional authority to convict a president after he has left office. Some have said they hope to hold an early vote to dismiss the trial entirely, though the effort is unlikely to succeed.

The mounting opposition to a trial is a sign that many Republicans are still unwilling to cross Trump. Democrats would need the support of 17 Republican senators to convict him. If convicted, the Senate could then hold a vote to disqualify him from office.

The House impeached Trump earlier this month, in an emotional vote exactly one week after the Capitol siege. Ten Republicans joined with House Democrats to charge Trump with “high crimes and misdemeanors”, making him the first president in American history to be impeached twice.

But as time has passed and Trump retreats from the national stage, Republican anger over his actions has faded. In the hours after the siege, Senator Lindsey Graham, a stalwart ally of Trump, furiously denounced the then president’s actions. But in the weeks since, the South Carolina senator has argued vehemently against impeachment and helped connect Trump with an attorney to represent him in his upcoming impeachment trial.

Appearing on NBC this Sunday, Senator Mike Rounds, Republican of South Dakota, called the trial “a moot point” because it could not result in Trump being removed from office. Calling a trial “stupid” and “counterproductive”, Marco Rubio of Florida said on Sunday that he would vote to end the proceedings “the first chance I get”.

The Senate majority leader, Chuck Schumer, rejected the argument as illogical in a floor speech on Monday, saying it “makes no sense whatsoever that a president – or any official – could commit a heinous crime against our country and then defeat Congress’s impeachment powers by simply resigning, so as to avoid accountability and a vote to disqualify them from future office”.

“The trial is going to happen,” Schumer concluded. “It is certainly and clearly constitutional. And if the former president is convicted, there will be a vote to disqualify him from future office.”

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## Trump impeachment (2021)

# Joe Biden on Donald Trump's impeachment trial: 'It has to happen'

The president said the outcome might have been different if Trump had had six months left in his term



President Joe Biden said Donald Trump's impeachment trial 'has to happen'.  
Photograph: Kevin Dietsch/EPA

President Joe Biden said Donald Trump's impeachment trial 'has to happen'.  
Photograph: Kevin Dietsch/EPA

*[Maanvi Singh](#) and agencies  
[@maanvissingh](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 20.49 EST

The impeachment trial of Donald Trump "has to happen", Joe Biden [told CNN](#) on Monday.

While acknowledging the effect it could have on his agenda, the president said there would be “a worse effect if it didn’t happen”.

Biden said he didn’t think enough Republican senators would vote for impeachment to convict, though he also said the outcome might well have been different if Trump had had six months left in his term.

“The Senate has changed since I was there, but it hasn’t changed that much,” Biden said.

[Schumer promises quick but fair trial as Trump impeachment heads to Senate](#)

[Read more](#)

The US House on Monday [delivered](#) its article of impeachment against Trump to the Senate, setting the stage for Trump’s second impeachment trial and the first ever Senate trial of a former US president.

Trump has been charged with inciting the attack on the US Capitol on 6 January, when a violent pro-Trump mob led to the deaths of five people.

Monday’s delivery and formal reading of the charge marks the opening of the trial, although arguments are set to start the week of 8 February.

Republicans and Democrats last week agreed to a two-week delay to the start of the proceedings to allow both sides to prepare arguments and give senators a fortnight to negotiate vital legislation to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus and consider Biden’s cabinet appointments.

Following Trump’s impeachment in the House on 13 January, Biden [had said](#) he hoped senators would “deal with their constitutional responsibilities on impeachment while also working on the other urgent business of this nation”.

At least 17 Republican senators will have to vote with all the Democrats in order to convict Trump.

Although Senate Republicans have been slower to rally to Trump's defense than during his first impeachment trial, and a handful of Republicans have signaled an openness to convicting the former president, a conviction remains an uphill battle.

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## UK unemployment and employment statistics

# UK unemployment reaches four-year high in Covid-19 lockdown

Jobless rate rose to 5%, or 1.7 million people, in three months to the end of November

- [Analysis: Jobs market moves fast as Covid-19 policies unravel](#)
- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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UK unemployment has reached its highest level since April 2016.  
Photograph: John Sibley/Reuters

UK unemployment has reached its highest level since April 2016.  
Photograph: John Sibley/Reuters

*[Richard Partington](#) Economics correspondent  
[@RJPartington](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 05.57 EST

Unemployment in the UK has reached the highest level for more than four years as the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic and tougher lockdown measures place more pressure on businesses and workers.

The [Office for National Statistics](#) said the unemployment rate rose to 5% in the three months to the end of November – representing more than 1.7 million people – from 4.9% in the three months to the end of October, reaching the highest level since August 2016. Unemployment was 4% in February before the pandemic struck.

In a snapshot of the jobs market during the second English lockdown and as tough restrictions were imposed in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to limit the spread of Covid-19, the ONS said redundancies hit a record high during the quarter. [Job losses](#) were most heavily concentrated among younger workers, and in the retail and hospitality sectors.

However, weekly figures indicated the number of people being made redundant had started to ease slightly from a peak in September, as the jobs market showed signs of stabilising after worse damage earlier in the pandemic.

Separate figures from HMRC for December, which offer an earlier snapshot of the jobs market than the official ONS figures, showed a 52,000 rise in the number of people on company payrolls on the month, but there are still 828,000 fewer workers on payrolls than in February, before the crisis hit.

Economists said widespread use of the furlough scheme had helped to prevent a more substantial increase in unemployment. Nye Cominetti, senior economist at the Resolution Foundation thinktank, said: “While the labour market continued to deteriorate, the furlough has held back the tide on jobs losses. Around one in six private sector workers were furloughed during England’s second lockdown in November, and even more are likely to be furloughed today.”

The government extended the multibillion-pound wage subsidy scheme at the last-minute with only a matter of hours to spare, despite repeatedly committing to close the programme at the end of October. Amid persistently

high Covid infections and tougher restrictions, the number of jobs on furlough has doubled to about 5 million since November from the level in October, while [Rishi Sunak](#) has further [extended the scheme until the end of April.](#)

However, the chancellor is under pressure to provide further support as the unemployment rate continues to rise, including scrapping plans to cut a £20-a-week uplift in universal credit benefits launched last year at the start of the crisis, which is due to be removed in March.

Responding to the unemployment figures on Tuesday, Sunak said: “This crisis has gone on far longer than any of us hoped – and every job lost as a result is a tragedy. While the NHS is working hard to protect people with the vaccine we’re throwing everything we’ve got at supporting businesses, individuals and families.”

The latest figures from the ONS showed the number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits has shot up to more than 2.6 million, a rise of 113% since March last year, as the pandemic puts people out of work and reduces opportunities for finding a new job.

Dave Innes, head of economics at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, said the figures showed it was vital for the government to keep the higher rate of universal credit. “Cutting benefits just as unemployment accelerates is bad economics and bad policy. Nor is it acceptable to leave millions of families in the dark about whether their incomes will be cut by £20 a week in April.”

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The Office for Budget Responsibility, the government’s independent economics forecaster, expects [unemployment to peak at about 7.5% later this year](#) – representing 2.6 million people – once the furlough scheme is wound down. Union leaders said the government needed to recognise the damage done by withdrawing support too soon, and from leaving its announcements until the last-minute.

Frances O'Grady, general secretary of the TUC, said the furlough scheme should extended until the end of 2021 to remove uncertainty facing employers and workers and to help the UK's economic recovery from Covid-19.

“The more people we keep in work, the faster we can recover. But with the job retention scheme set to end in April, millions of people’s jobs hang in the balance,” she said.

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**Business live**

**Business**

# IMF downgrades UK recovery but raises global growth outlook – as it happened

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## Ghislaine Maxwell

# Ghislaine Maxwell lawyers say jurors who indicted her not diverse enough

Legal team makes series of arguments to dismiss case, including that 2008 Epstein plea deal should shield client from prosecution



Prosecutors in New York show a picture of Ghislaine Maxwell with Jeffrey Epstein as they announced charges against her last July. Photograph: Lucas Jackson/Reuters

Prosecutors in New York show a picture of Ghislaine Maxwell with Jeffrey Epstein as they announced charges against her last July. Photograph: Lucas Jackson/Reuters

*Victoria Bekiempis and agencies in New York*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 09.33 EST

Lawyers for [Ghislaine Maxwell](#) complained on Monday that the pool of grand jurors who indicted her was not diverse enough, according to new

court documents.

“The fact that Ms Maxwell herself is neither Black nor Hispanic does not deprive her of standing to raise this challenge,” the attorneys wrote in court papers, arguing that the US constitution “entitles every defendant to object to a [pool] that is not designed to represent a fair cross section of the community, whether or not the systematically excluded groups are groups to which he himself belongs”.

Maxwell’s purported concerns about diversity stem from the geographical circumstances surrounding her indictment.

Maxwell is facing charges in the southern district of New York’s Manhattan division relating to her alleged involvement in her late friend [Jeffrey Epstein](#)’s sex trafficking of minor girls.

However, she was indicted by a grand jury in the SDNY’s White Plains division before her 2 July [arrest](#), as Covid-19 had limited grand jury proceedings in Manhattan.

White Plains grand jurors hail from counties outside of New York City. Maxwell’s attorneys said they were therefore “drawn from a community in which Black and Hispanic residents are significantly underrepresented by comparison.

“The sixth amendment guarantees a criminal defendant a grand jury selected from a fair cross-section of the community. Ms Maxwell’s right under the sixth amendment to a grand jury drawn from a fair cross-section of the community applies to the grand jury that indicted her.

“Here, the use of a White Plains jury resulted in the systematic underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic persons from the jury selection process, in violation of Ms Maxwell’s sixth amendment right.”

Maxwell’s lawyers also argued that prosecutors could have waited to convene a grand jury in Manhattan, claiming that one such panel met “as early as” 25 June.

“There appears to have been no reason, other than a publicity-driven desire to arrest Ms Maxwell on the anniversary of the Epstein indictment, why the government could not have waited until that time,” they said.

Maxwell’s attorneys made the claims as part of their [push](#) to dismiss her case. Among 12 arguments attacking the indictment, they said a non-prosecution deal Epstein reached with the federal government in 2008 should shield Maxwell too.

The agreement sought to protect Epstein and those around him, but Maxwell was not identified by name in a document signed when Epstein agreed to plead guilty to state charges in Florida that forced him to register as a sex offender.

Lawyers for Epstein planned to argue that the deal protected him against [sex-trafficking charges](#) in New York City. Manhattan prosecutors maintained they could proceed against Epstein or those who worked for him regardless. Epstein [killed himself at a Manhattan federal prison](#) a month after his arrest.

Maxwell, 59, [was arrested in July](#) and [has remained jailed on grounds she might flee](#). She has pleaded not guilty to charges that she recruited three teenage girls, including a 14-year-old, for Epstein to sexually abuse from 1994 to 1997. The indictment alleged she sometimes joined in the abuse.

Prosecutors declined to comment on Monday’s filing. They will file arguments in response in a few weeks’ time.

Maxwell’s trial is scheduled for July. In a recent bail application, Maxwell revealed she had set aside \$7.7m to be spent on lawyers out of \$22.5m in assets belonging to herself and her husband.

In the event Maxwell’s lawyers cannot force the dismissal of charges, they also made requests that would reduce the number of charges she faces.

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## Schools

# Teachers in England ‘should pick vulnerable pupils for early return’

Leading scientist says schools should let staff decide rather than bringing back entire year groups



About 14% of pupils in England are currently being taught in person, including the most vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers.  
Photograph: Hollie Adams/Getty Images

About 14% of pupils in England are currently being taught in person, including the most vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers.  
Photograph: Hollie Adams/Getty Images

*[Sally Weale](#) and [Peter Walker](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Schools should let teachers select additional vulnerable pupils for an early return to classrooms to increase numbers gradually, a leading scientist has

said as the children's commissioner demanded a roadmap for full reopening.

In an interview with the Guardian, the president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Prof Russell Viner, said any increase in pupil numbers in England's schools would depend on infection rates and demand on NHS services.

But when safe to do so, vulnerable children currently not attending school could be prioritised for a return to the classroom, he said, rather than the reintroduction of entire year groups which would have a greater impact on Covid transmission rates.

About 14% of pupils in England are currently getting in-person teaching, including children of key workers and the most vulnerable pupils, amid closures planned until February half-term.

But with the government [declining to guarantee](#) that schools will reopen even after Easter in April, many in the sector are arguing for a phased return, with early years, primary and exam years among groups likely to be considered first, and with rota systems in secondary schools to limit transmission.

Viner said: “We could look at a gradual increase in school attendance, starting with more vulnerable children and those coming to harm at home. If we asked every teacher, most would be able to identify five children doing less well at home. We may have some room to bring those children back into school before we open up to whole years.”

The call came as the children's commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, urged Boris Johnson to set out key criteria that need to be met for schools to safely reopen, and what additional measures may be necessary in schools, such as testing or staff vaccinations, to suppress the virus.

“Unfortunately, it is much easier to close schools than to reopen them,” she wrote in a letter to the prime minister. “That is why we are calling on the government to produce a clear roadmap for reopening schools to all pupils. Without it, there is a risk that the status quo becomes embedded as a default position.”

In further pressure on Johnson, the Times reported that Public Health England has concluded primary schools can safely reopen after half-term if cases keep falling. It said a series of studies had concluded that pupils in that age group play a small role in spreading infection.

Earlier, Downing Street indicated that schools in England are not expected to start fully reopening until at least early March. The government has promised to reassess lockdown measures on 15 February, and Johnson's spokesperson said this would be the point at which the evidence would be examined to see if any easing could take place.

The comments came after the prime minister said he would examine "the potential of relaxing some measures" connected to lockdown once the top four categories of vulnerable adults had had their first Covid vaccination, due to happen by mid-February.

Labour accused the prime minister of causing further confusion over when schools will reopen and called on the government to guarantee that schools and colleges will be first to reopen when lockdown eases.

Speaking ahead of an urgent question in the Commons on Tuesday, shadow schools minister Wes Streeting said: "Labour has been clear that safeguarding our children's education must be the top priority: that means schools must be the last to close and first to reopen.

"The government should be working with education staff to develop a credible plan to get pupils back to schools and colleges safely as soon as possible."

Longfield said children and families had been left "stunned" by the apparent unravelling of return plans, and called on the government to have more ambition and not to be "defeatist".

She said it seemed more manageable for primary children to return to school and there was a strong argument for children to go back in stages. "There's the potential to have some blended learning so children can learn at home for half the week, but children need that sense that actually there's an end to this and they can start to get their lives back."

A Mumsnet survey of 1,000 UK parents of school-age children found that 62% were in favour of primary children and those in exam years returning to school after February half-term. Three-quarters said school lockdowns were harming their child's education, and 73% of those doing home-schooling said their child was more demotivated and disengaged than usual.

The Mumsnet founder, Justine Roberts, said: "Most parents accept that the national situation demands restrictions on school attendance, but the impacts on parents and children are serious. Working mothers in particular are really struggling, and worrying about their own future in the workplace as well as children's education and wellbeing."

New research into remote education by the schools watchdog Ofsted raised concerns about pupil motivation, with nearly half of parents who took part in the survey struggling to keep children focused. Almost two-thirds of parents of pupils with special educational needs said their children were disengaged from remote learning.

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## Air pollution

# Air pollution linked to higher risk of irreversible sight loss

Large UK study found small pollution rise associated with more cases of age-related macular degeneration



Air pollution is being linked to an increasingly wide range of diseases.  
Photograph: by Grzegorz Polak/Getty Images

Air pollution is being linked to an increasingly wide range of diseases.  
Photograph: by Grzegorz Polak/Getty Images

*[Damian Carrington](#) Enviroment editor  
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Small increases in air pollution are linked to an increased risk of irreversible sight loss from age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a large UK study has found.

Previous work had already found a [link between dirty air and glaucoma](#) and a link to cataracts is suspected. The scientists said the eyes have a particularly high flow of blood, potentially making them very vulnerable to the damage caused by tiny particles that are breathed in and then flow around the body.

The study is the first to assess the connection between air pollution and both diagnoses of AMD that the patients said they had been given, and measurements of harmful changes in the retina. It found a small increase in exposure to tiny pollution particles raised the risk of AMD by 8%, while small changes in larger pollution particles and nitrogen dioxide were linked to a 12% higher risk of adverse retinal changes.

AMD is the leading cause of irreversible blindness among the over-50s in high-income countries and there are 200 million people around the world with the condition. In the UK about 5% of people over 65 years old have the disease.

The biggest risk factors for AMD are genetics and poor physical health issues, such as smoking and obesity. But as lifestyles become healthier, the impact of air pollution will become more important, the researchers said, and, unlike genetics, levels of dirty air can be reduced with the right policies.

Air pollution is being linked to an increasingly wide range of diseases, and the World Health Organization says 90% of the world population live with dirty air. A global review in 2019 concluded that [air pollution may be damaging every organ](#) in the human body, as inhaled particles travel around the body and cause inflammation.

“There is an enormously high flow of blood [to the retina] and we think that as a consequence of that the distribution of pollutants is greater to the eye than to other places,” said Prof Paul Foster, at University College London, UK, and who was part of the study team. “Proportionately, air pollution is going to become a bigger risk factor as other risk factors are brought under control.”

“It’s important to keep things in context – people shouldn’t be looking outside their door and thinking: ‘I can’t go out because it is polluted out

there'," he said. "The study gives people information that they can use to alter their lifestyle choices. For example, it may be another reason why we might consider going for an electric car, instead of buying a diesel."

The research is published in the journal [British Journal of Ophthalmology](#) and used data on 116,000 people in the UK Biobank database aged 40-69 with no eye problems at the start of the study. The health of the retina was examined by scans for more than 50,000 people.

The researchers found that people exposed to an additional 1 microgram per cubic metre of tiny particles had an 8% higher risk of AMD. The average level of tiny particles in the UK is  $10\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , which is relatively low compared with many other countries. The researchers took account of other factors that might influence the development of AMD, including age, smoking, weight and deprivation.

"This UK-based study is similar to a [2019 study from Taiwan](#) on traffic-related pollution," said Prof Chris Inglehearn, at the University of Leeds and not part of the study team. "The fact that these two independent studies reach similar conclusions gives greater confidence that the link they make is real."

Prof Robert MacLaren, at the University of Oxford, said: "This finding is significant. Furthermore, the study had an average age of around 60 and this small increased risk of 8% is likely to be compounded further over ensuing decades."

The air pollution data used were levels of outdoor pollution but Foster said levels inside homes were likely to be important. "We suspect there's a lot more that is relevant going on inside the house," he said. "Anything that produces smoke is likely to be driving some of the risk."

Foster said further research on how indoor air pollution affects eye health had been planned but was postponed by the coronavirus pandemic. A recent study found that [wood burners triple the level of harmful pollution particles](#) inside homes.

“The traditional sign-off with anything to do with eyes and vision is to encourage everybody to have a routine eye examination once a year, particularly those over 40,” Foster said. “It’s a great way of spotting eye disease.”

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## Harvey Weinstein

# Weinstein Co to pay out \$17m over sexual abuse claims as part of liquidation

Bankruptcy judge rejects objections from some of Harvey Weinstein's accusers seeking to pursue further claims



Harvey Weinstein's accusers will be paid \$17m out of the liquidation plan for the Hollywood mogul's company.

Photograph: John Minchillo/AP

Harvey Weinstein's accusers will be paid \$17m out of the liquidation plan for the Hollywood mogul's company.

Photograph: John Minchillo/AP

*Reuters*

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A US bankruptcy court judge has approved the Weinstein Co's liquidation plan, which sets aside \$17m for women who accused co-founder [Harvey Weinstein](#) of sexual misconduct.

Judge Mary Walrath, presiding over a remote hearing from Wilmington, Delaware, overruled an objection from a handful of women who have been looking to pursue appeals of their claims outside the bankruptcy court.

She noted that 83% of sexual misconduct claimants in the bankruptcy “have expressed very loudly that they want closure through acceptance of this plan, that they do not seek to have to go through any further litigation in order to receive some recovery, some possible recompense … although it’s clear that money will never give them that.”

The Weinstein Co sold its assets to Lantern Entertainment, which later became Spyglass Media Group, for \$289m after it filed for bankruptcy in 2018. The bankruptcy was precipitated by widespread claims of sexual misconduct against company founder, Harvey Weinstein, who is [serving a 23-year prison term](#) after being convicted of sexually assaulting a former production assistant and raping an actress.

[Harvey Weinstein's California hearing on sexual assault charges postponed](#)  
[Read more](#)

Insurers have contributed \$35m under the plan, so holders of sexual misconduct claims will get almost half of that. The Weinstein Co’s lawyers said the women who filed the claims could each see six-figure recoveries.

They will have the option to forgo most of their payout under the plan if they want to continue pursuing their claims against Harvey Weinstein and former officers and directors of the company.

A group of women with sexual abuse claims argued that the choice between a full payout and continuing to pursue their claims was unfair. But lawyers for the company and an unsecured creditors’ committee, which includes women who filed sexual misconduct claims, say those releases for former officers and directors are a key component of the plan.

A lawyer for the company, Paul Zumbro of Cravath Swaine & Moore, said during the hearing that the plan was “remarkable” and a “favourable closure of this really ugly story”.

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## Plastics

# UK supermarkets not doing enough to cut plastic use, says report

Ten biggest retailers produced 900,000 tonnes of packaging and 2bn plastic bags in 2017



Iceland was ranked bottom for plastic reduction as increases in plastic from branded goods offset progress in its own-brand products. Photograph: PetaPix/Alamy Stock Photo

Iceland was ranked bottom for plastic reduction as increases in plastic from branded goods offset progress in its own-brand products. Photograph: PetaPix/Alamy Stock Photo

*[Sandra Laville](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 01.11 EST

Supermarkets are still putting nearly 900,000 tonnes of plastic packaging on to the market, representing a plastic footprint which is bigger than in 2017, a

new report has found.

The retailers sold more than 2bn plastic bags, according to the study by [Greenpeace and the Environmental Investigation Agency](#), which called for the government to require companies to publish independently verified audits of their plastic footprint, alongside their financial reports each year.

In 2019 the 10 biggest UK supermarkets put 896,853 tonnes of plastic packaging on the market. The weight of plastic waste was down on 2018, but up 1.2% from 2017.

The report found an average 57 ‘bags for life’ per UK household in 2019 - a 65% increase since 2017.

Production of plastic bags was down 8% on 2018, but still significant. The supermarkets sold 2.1bn plastic bags in 2019, including 1.58bn “bags for life” which are intended to be reusable. This equates to almost 57 “bags for life” per UK household in 2019, more than one a week, and is a 65% increase since 2017.

The report, *Checking Out on Plastics*, said: “Overall, the scale of plastic carrier bag usage remains incredibly high ... The government charge for single-use carrier bags is due to increase to 10p in April 2021, but the data suggests the current plastic ‘bag for life’ model, whereby a heavier bag is offered at a slightly higher price to encourage reuse, is not working.”

The amount of plastic cutlery sold or given away has also risen sharply, from 143m items in 2017 to 195.5m in 2019.

Christina Dixon, a senior campaigner at the Environmental Investigation Agency, said: “In our third year of looking at plastic packaging in UK supermarkets, we had hoped to see a much sharper downwards trajectory as strategies and targets bear fruit.

“Instead, we are looking at a relatively static picture which represents a drop in the ocean of tackling plastic pollution. The sector urgently needs to pick up the pace of plastic reduction.”

Waitrose was ranked as the leader in plastic reduction by the study, reporting an absolute plastic reduction of 6.1% since 2017, with the lowest plastic use per unit market share of all 10 retailers.

Iceland was bottom. Although the supermarket has reduced the plastic in its own-brand products by 29% since 2017, increases in plastic from branded goods offset its progress.

Iceland also sold 73m more “bags for life” in 2019 than in 2018.

The report said Aldi had done the most to change its position, from bottom to second place. The supermarket was praised for its high level of transparency, and for its elimination of single-use carrier bags and reductions in ultra-light produce bags and “bags for life”. Lidl was also picked out for progress, for a plastic reduction of 2.6% in its own brands since 2017.

Morrison’s position fell from second place to ninth, primarily because of an increase in sales of plastic bags since 2018.

The report praised the positive news that many supermarkets had stopped selling single-use plastic bags completely and that overall sales of single-use carrier bags had fallen by 56% between 2017 and 2019.

But not enough was being done to cut plastic packaging. “A higher and more consistent trajectory across the board would be expected if plastic reduction efforts were sufficient and having the necessary impact,” the report said.

The report said supermarkets could do more to press companies to reduce plastic. “We urge all the supermarkets to undertake more robust engagement with the major polluting brands, such as Coca-Cola, Nestlé and PepsiCo, to rapidly scale up initiatives in reuse, refill, recycled content, recyclability and overall packaging reduction.”

While supermarkets have become more open about their plastic footprint, more transparency was needed, said the report.

“The next step in terms of increasing transparency in the sector would be to disclose plastic reports in a sector-wide standardised format and to treat

these reports like financial audits, having them independently verified and publicly available,” the authors said.

All the supermarkets were approached for comment. The following responded.

A Tesco spokesperson said: “We recently announced we successfully removed 1bn pieces of plastic and got rid of hard-to-recycle materials. Through these actions, Tesco is driving change.

“We continue to remove excess packaging from our business, and despite major challenges of Covid, we have made good progress in tackling the impact of plastics through our 4Rs packaging strategy – remove, reduce, reuse, recycle – and we have ambitious plans for 2021 and beyond.”

An Asda spokesperson said: “We are pleased that Greenpeace has recognised the steps we are taking to reduce plastic waste by highlighting that more than half of the total plastic weight reduction across the industry in 2019 was the result of measures introduced by Asda.

“However, we know there is more to be done and have an ambitious goal to remove 3bn pieces of plastic packaging from our operations by 2025.”

A Co-op spokesperson said: “We have one of the smallest plastic footprints of any major food retailer and almost half of our packaging uses recycled content. We are committed to eliminating unrecyclable plastic and will make all of our packaging recyclable this year and we continue to rollout compostable carrier bags as an alternative to bags for life.”

A Sainsbury’s spokesperson said: “We were the first major retailer in the UK to make a significant commitment to reduce our use of plastic packaging by 50% by 2025, and then go further. We reduced plastic by 4% in 2019. We know there is more to do and by collaborating across the industry, together we can protect the environment for future generations.”

A Waitrose spokesperson said: “We’re proud that Greenpeace has recognised our efforts to decrease our plastic packaging footprint. The last 12 months has inevitably created challenges for the industry, but we’re

committed to ensuring that by 2023, all own-label packaging will be widely recycled, reusable or home compostable. Our leadership in innovating to find packaging alternatives, or ways to boost reuse, will continue at pace this year.”

Sian Sutherland, the co-founder of the campaign group A Plastic Planet, said that three years on from the launch of the world’s first plastic-free aisle in Amsterdam, supermarkets were giving far too many “plastic pledges” and too little real action.

“We call today, yet again, for national reduction targets to be set by our government and for mandatory plastic footprint transparency throughout all supermarkets and industry.”

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## Insects

# ‘A remarkable phenomenon’: billions of cicadas set to emerge across eastern US

Last such event for 15 states including New York, Ohio, Illinois and Georgia occurred in 2004



‘When they are this abundant, they fly, land and crawl everywhere, including occasionally landing on humans,’ said Gary Parsons of Michigan State University. Photograph: Jim Lane/Alamy

‘When they are this abundant, they fly, land and crawl everywhere, including occasionally landing on humans,’ said Gary Parsons of Michigan State University. Photograph: Jim Lane/Alamy

*[Oliver Milman](#)  
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Billions of [cicadas](#) that have spent 17 years underground are set to emerge across large areas of the eastern US, bringing swarming numbers and loud mating calls to major towns and cities.

The periodic cicadas – bugs with strikingly red eyes, black bodies and orange wings – burrow underground as nymphs and suck fluids from the roots of plants as they grow, eventually bursting into the open as adults in mass synchronized events.

[Quarter of known bee species have not been recorded since 1990](#)  
[Read more](#)

The last such event for 15 states including New York, Ohio, Illinois and Georgia occurred in 2004. The cicadas emerge in a 17-year cycle, meaning they will appear this year once temperatures are warm enough, expected to be mid-May

“They may amass in millions in parks, woods, neighbourhoods, and can seemingly be everywhere,” said Gary Parsons, an entomologist at Michigan State University. “When they are this abundant, they fly, land and crawl everywhere, including occasionally landing on humans.”

Parsons said that while cicadas will not harm people, pets that gorge on them may become ill. It is thought that long underground development helps cicadas survive predators, as their huge and synchronized arrival provides protection in numbers.

The noise made by the enormous swarms will be noticeable, however, with males emitting mating calls that can reach 100 decibels, the same sound as standing next to a motorcycle revving its engine. The males produce these mating “songs” by vibrating their tymbals, two rigid, drum-like membranes on the underside of the abdomen.

Experts say if people are able to forget about the noise and the surprise of surroundings covered with cicadas, they will be able to appreciate a rare wonder of the natural world.

The emergence of the cicadas is “a wonderful opportunity for millions of people to witness and enjoy a remarkable biological phenomenon in their own backyard that happens nowhere else on the planet”, Michael Raupp, an entomologist at the University of Maryland, [told Newsweek](#).

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# Covid in the UK: how first cases exposed flaws in response

[Coronavirus](#)

## Covid in the UK: how first cases exposed flaws in response

Handling of earliest cases early last year provided ominous foretaste of things to come

- [Timeline of the first Covid cases in the UK](#)
- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



[Matthew Weaver](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 04.19 EST Last modified on Tue 26 Jan 2021 14.46 EST



Illustration: Guardian Design

The handling of the first two cases of Covid in the UK a year ago this week provided an ominous foretaste of the country's response to the pandemic, according to those caught up in the incident.

On 30 January last year the official threat level from coronavirus was moved from "low" to "moderate", as rescue flights were organised for 273 people stranded in Wuhan in China's Hubei province, where the outbreak began.

It was also the day that the first two people, already in the UK, tested positive for the virus. Although this first outbreak was successfully contained, the incident did expose some now familiar flaws in Britain's approach to the virus.

The pair involved, a 23-year-old Chinese national studying at York University and his 50-year-old mother, were among [more than 18 million people who travelled to the UK in the first three months of 2020](#). Unlike the rescue flight evacuees, these travellers were not made to quarantine on arrival.

The son had travelled from Hubei to the UK on 6 January. His parents flew to Britain from Hubei to visit him on 23 January. A day later they checked into the Staycity apartment hotel in [York](#) with their son. The mother began

feeling queasy on 26 January and when her son also fell ill, he called NHS 111 to complain they were both suffering with a dry cough and a fever.

We had very little understanding of what this was

Just before 8pm on 29 January all three guests were ushered to an ambulance by paramedics in hazmat suits. They were initially taken to hospital in Hull, where they were tested. According to an [article in the Journal of Infection](#) by the doctors who treated them “they were managed in separate negative pressure cubicles with anterooms”.

One of the authors, [Dr Patrick Lillie, said](#): “At the time, there were less than 10,000 reported cases of coronavirus in the world. Therefore we had very little understanding of what this was, how infectious it was, what the spectrum of the disease was and what we were dealing with.”

The patients’ test samples were analysed at Public [Health](#) England’s (PHE) lab in Colindale, north-west London. On 30 January both mother and son tested positive. As Lillie and his colleagues noted “interestingly” the father “remained asymptomatic throughout and had negative tests”.

On Friday 31 January, the family were transferred to a high-level isolation unit in Newcastle.

There was intense media interest amid growing public concern in York after the guests were seen being removed by paramedics in hazmat suits on 29 January. But the positive results were not announced until the afternoon of Friday 31 January. Until then journalists were give the “[runaround](#)” by all the organisations involved. PHE, NHS England, the Department of Health, and Newcastle hospital, all refused to discuss the incident.

Staycity hotel was also staying quiet about the incident to its increasing anxious guests. On at least one occasion, a staff member told guests that reports of a suspected coronavirus case were “all lies”. Staycity now says this was unauthorised comment and that it followed PHE guidance throughout.

Sami, not his real name, was one of at least six members of the hotel to have come into contact with the infectious guest when he checked them in. Contract tracers from PHE got in touch with him to ask how long he had spent with the family.



The Staycity hotel in York, where the first UK patients who tested positive for coronavirus stayed. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Observer

Speaking to the Guardian, he said: “When I checked the CCTV it showed I was with them for three minutes and you could tell they were not 100% well.”

He added: “They [PHE] said there was no risk. I asked if I could get a test because I was worried but they told me I didn’t need to. They said I could carry on working and to call 111 if I had any symptoms. I was surprised, because we were getting customers calling asking: ‘How are you still open?’; they kept swearing, saying: ‘Have you not seen the news? Just close the bloody hotel.’ We were refunding customers non-stop.”

That weekend Staycity had 388 cancelled bookings at a cost of £51,000.

The hotel gave PHE the names of six individuals who had come into contact with the infected guests. They included an engineer who had fixed a washing machine in their room and a cleaner who was advised to self-isolate

for two weeks. The room was later decontaminated with a hydrogen peroxide-based product developed in the US to tackle an anthrax attack.

In total PHE contacted 52 individuals who had close contact with the family, according to [a paper in Epidemiology and Infection](#) that was co-written by some of the PHE staff involved. They included taxi drivers, hotel staff and 45 healthcare workers.

People were very frightened right from the beginning

It revealed there was particular concern about the risk to cleaners. “A small number of contacts had exposures with potentially higher risks such as those cleaning environments, which were potentially contaminated. These groups were placed under active follow-up but did not develop Covid.”

Another cleaner was also exposed to potential contamination because of the scarcity of information shared by PHE, according to York Central’s Labour MP, Rachael Maskell.

This also hampered efforts to reassure the public, she said. “People were very frightened right from the beginning, and that fear fell first in York. Institutions were frustrated that they were not being informed, even the local authority were not being kept informed of what PHE were unveiling.”

On 1 February, York University issued a statement confirming that one of its students had tested positive but had had no contact with the university while infectious. But on 4 February, PHE revealed the student had spent a night at privately provided student room days before he tested positive.

Maskell says this clarification came too late to prevent a cleaner entering that room unprotected. “PHE should have been talking earlier to the university to highlight a potential risk to students and cleaning staff,” she said.

Prof Charlie Jeffery, York University’s vice-chancellor, said: “Clearly it wasn’t helpful that we didn’t have the full information at first. But I don’t think they [PHE] had got the full story from the family at that time.”

Sharon Stoltz, York city council's director of public health, is less forgiving. She said: "Data sharing was a constant battle. We weren't given the right information at the start. People were highly anxious and afraid of being exposed to the virus, so it was vital that we gave accurate information and that was difficult."

Fear in the city was becoming ugly, with some incidents of racist abuse against people with an east Asian appearance. Stoltz said: "There were exaggerated fears about overseas students in the city. We were very concerned about potential civil disorder and community safety."

And fears were stoked as other people were taken away by paramedics in hazmat suits. Stoltz wanted to confirm that these turned out to be negative tests to reassure the public. But she was advised against citing specific areas or streets by the Department of Health and PHE for fear it could undermine patient confidentiality.

After some "lively discussions", Stoltz decided to ignore the central diktat to issue only generic messages. "We couldn't depend on PHE getting information out to us quickly enough and that the tone needed to be personalised to York," she said.

In the paper they co-wrote, PHE staff said: "Contact tracing was complex and fast-moving. Additional challenges were encountered through media and national interest and having to rapidly review the available evidence and develop scientific consensus to inform actions. Despite these challenges, no confirmed links [to these patients] were identified."

Dr Mike Gent, PHE's deputy director, said: "PHE had robust plans in place to detect and respond to the first case of Covid-19 in the UK. We shared necessary information promptly with stakeholders as the incident evolved, working closely with NHS partners, city of York council and the [University of York](#), to trace close contacts of the cases and successfully prevent any further cases of infection linked to the initial cases."

Despite the communication problems, Maskell said the incident showed that contact tracing worked. But she questioned why the government initially moved away from trying to trace contacts as cases increased. "At the

beginning it was a central tool for being able to manage the pandemic, so why was there a decision to change that?"

The identity of the student and his family have never been revealed. York University's vice-chancellor said: "I have never known the identity of the student because I didn't need to. Some of my colleagues did and I was told there was real appreciation for the efforts we took to maintain their anonymity."

On 17 February they were released from hospital in Newcastle after twice testing negative.

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## Coronavirus

# Timeline of the UK's first recorded Covid cases last year

A 23-year-old student from China and his parents arrived in the UK last January. Here's a short timeline of what happened next

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



Buildings on the Heslington East campus at the University of York.  
Photograph: Anna Gowthorpe/PA

Buildings on the Heslington East campus at the University of York.  
Photograph: Anna Gowthorpe/PA

*[Matthew Weaver](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

## **6 January 2020**

A 23-year-old York university student travels from his family home in Hubei province to the UK for the start of new term.

## **23 January**

The student's parents travel from Hubei to the UK to visit their son in York and go on a sightseeing trip.

## **24 January**

The government holds its first meeting of the emergency committee Cobra to discuss the coronavirus. Matt Hancock, who chaired the meeting in the absence of Boris Johnson, told reporters afterwards that the [risk to the UK public was “low”](#).

## **26 January**

The student's mother first starts feeling ill after checking in to the Staycity apartment hotel in York.

## **29 January**

The son rings NHS 111 to say he and his mother both have a fever and a cough and that she had just arrived from Hubei. At 7.50pm two paramedics dressed in hazmat suits arrive at the hotel. An ambulance takes the family to hospital in Hull, where they are tested.

## **30 January**

The risk level from the virus in the UK is raised from low to moderate as the World [Health](#) Organization declares the pandemic a global health emergency. Tests conducted at Public Health England's lab in Colindale, north-west London, confirm the York patients have coronavirus.

## **31 January**

The family are transferred to a specialist hospital unit in Newcastle. PHE announces the [first people in the UK to test positive for coronavirus.](#)

## **1 February**

University of York confirms that one of its students is among those who tested positive. In a statement it said: “Current information from PHE suggests that the student did not come into contact with anybody on campus whilst they had symptoms.”

## **4 February**

Public Health England reveals that the student did spend a night in student accommodation days before testing positive.

## **17 February**

The two patients are released from hospital in Newcastle after twice testing negative. They suffered relatively mild and short-lived symptoms, according to the doctors that treated them. There were no further confirmed cases linked to their infections.

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## Schools

# Group campaigning for UK schools to reopen wins backing of 17 Tory MPs

UsForThem, advised by a Tory lobbyist, twice met with the DfE before key decisions on schools policy were made



A coronavirus sign is displayed outside a primary school in Newcastle Under Lyme, England. Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty Images

A coronavirus sign is displayed outside a primary school in Newcastle Under Lyme, England. Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty Images

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

Mon 25 Jan 2021 17.14 EST

It was set up eight months ago by three mothers in Cambridgeshire and has since established itself as an increasingly prominent voice [campaigning for schools to fully reopen](#). Now [UsForThem](#), which has also opposed some

Covid safety measures in schools, has won the backing of 17 Tory MPs, and is growing.

As well as being advised by an influential Tory lobbyist, the group met twice with civil servants from the [Department for Education](#) (DfE) before key government decisions on coronavirus schools policy were made last year, the Guardian has learned.

It contrasts with fruitless attempts for Whitehall meetings by another grassroots parents' groups lobbying from a different perspective. Parents United Against Unsafe [Schools](#), whose Facebook group has 23,000 members as opposed to UsForThem's 9,600 on its England Facebook group, said they have continually reached out to the DfE.

Meanwhile [Gavin Williamson](#), the education secretary, responded six months ago to an UsForThem petition on Change.org calling for masks not be made compulsory in schools, which has gained 16,588 signatures. He has yet to respond to a Parents United for Safe Schools petition with 288,294 signatories, which asks that parents are not fined if they decide against sending their children to school.

UsForThem is being advised by Ed Barker, a former Tory parliamentary candidate and Westminster PR man who played a key role in Boris Johnson's leadership campaign. He is also advising the Covid Recovery Group (CRG) of lockdown-sceptic Tory MPs, members of which have backed the UsForThem bid to fully reopen schools.

A press release put out by Barker on Monday said that six more Tory MPs, including Steve Baker MP, deputy chair of the CRG, were backing the campaign, meaning it is now supported by 17 Conservatives.

“Children have now faced almost a year of educational disruption with 700 million days of schooling lost in 2020,” said Liz Cole, one of the three co-founders of UsforThem.

“Report after report tells us of the harms of school closure to children’s physical and mental health, educational outcomes and life prospects. Anxiety and depression among school-age children have increased

substantially and, tragically, it is the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children who are most severely affected and the attainment gap is widening.”

['Open all schools!' 'Close all schools!' What England really needs is creative thinking | John Harris](#)

[Read more](#)

The National Education Union (NEU), the largest teachers’ union, is among those asking questions about the power of UsForThem and its links. In November, the parents’ group projected the slogan “Keep Schools Open” on to the side of the union’s headquarters.

“Parents and school staff will be extremely concerned at the apparent influence this group wields with the government,” said Dr Mary Bousted, NEU joint general-secretary, who said there needed to be full accountability and transparency about its sway.

“While it appears that they have connections in the highest echelons of power, the voices of parents, carers and school staff across the country, as well as scientists, local authorities and public health experts, have been systematically ignored with disastrous consequences for public health and wellbeing.”

UsForThem’s website describes itself as “a community of tens of thousands of parents across the UK campaigning to #ReopenSchools”. It believes that children should be in school and supports what it describes as “evidence-based, proportionate Covid-19 protective measures to ensure schools remain open”. It says it supports “the vast majority of the precautionary hygiene measures that have been proposed by DfE and adopted for schools”.

However, it has lobbied against the use of face masks in schools – pupils and teachers in all English secondary schools have been required to wear face coverings in communal areas and corridors since November – and has also opposed social distancing in education settings. [It states on its website](#) that “natural immunity” to Covid should be allowed to build in the population and that the process is being impeded by lockdowns.

But an array of pages on UsForThem's website, which provides templates for how to lobby MPs by letter and telephone, also appear to have been taken down recently as the organisation came under scrutiny. They included pages directing visitors to "resources" such as articles on a US website claiming that face masks are harmful to the healthy. The same US site hosts articles by conspiracy theorists claiming the pandemic is a hoax and that vaccines are "killing" people.

Barker, whose ties were flagged in [an article by Bylinetimes](#), did not respond to questions about how his work with UsForThem was funded, how he knew the group and if he had facilitated meetings with the DfE. UsForThem, whose website states it has managed to raise £7,646 in donations, also did not respond to a series of questions.

Bousted added: "Some of the views that have been put forward by UsForThem are deeply concerning, particularly the promotion of herd immunity. Other views shade into conspiracy theory and really should not be entertained by government ministers responsible for the safety and wellbeing of millions of children and school staff."

A government spokesperson said: "We are fully committed to reopening schools as soon as the public health picture allows, and right through the pandemic have taken every step to ensure schools stayed open as long as they could."

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/26/group-campaigning-for-uk-schools-to-reopen-wins-backing-of-17-tory-mps>

## [Culture](#)

# EU's creative sector 'faces economic devastation from Covid'

Report calls for major investment as arts revenues fall faster than in all other industries except aviation

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Jean-Michel Jarre, who will present the report to the EU commission, said: 'Culture has become a scarce resource in Europe today.' Photograph: Stéphane de Sakutin/AFP/Getty Images

Europe's cultural and creative sector has been hit harder by the coronavirus crisis than every other industry except aviation, according to a study that calls for major public and private investment to avert possibly irreparable long-term damage.

According to the report, revenues in the sector – which includes TV, cinema, radio, music, publishing, video games and the performing and visual arts – plunged by 31.2% last year compared with 2019. It was hit even harder than tourism, which lost 27% of its income.

Only the aviation industry, where revenue fell by 31.4%, has suffered more, say the authors of the report, commissioned by [EU authors' and creators' rights organisations](#) and due to be presented to the European commission on Tuesday.

“Culture has become a scarce resource in [Europe](#) today and we are the worse for it,” said the French electronic music pioneer Jean-Michel Jarre, who will hand over the study. “We are learning the hard way the truly essential value of art in our society.”

In 2019, before the pandemic hit, Europe’s cultural and creative sector was a fast-expanding powerhouse employing about 7.6 million people, more than twice as many as the telecoms and automotive sectors combined and 700,000 more than in 2013.

Its annual turnover of €643bn (£570bn) had grown by 2.6% a year over the previous six years to represent about 4.4% of the EU’s overall GDP, said the report’s authors, the accountancy firm EY, generating a surplus for the bloc of more than €8.6bn.

“What we have seen since then, however, are the dramatic consequences of shutting down literally thousands of venues,” said the study’s coordinator, Marc Lhermitte. “Culture was the first sector to suspend most of its activities, and will probably be the last to resume without restrictions.”

Lhermitte said Covid shockwaves had been felt across the sector, with revenues collapsing by 90% in the performing arts and 76% in the music industry. Visual arts, books, the press, films and TV saw declines of between 20% and 40%, while only video games – whose turnover rose 9% – held up.

Even sectors that seemed protected by home consumption suffered sharp falls in income, Lhermitte noted, since physical experiences – such as live performances, exhibitions and screenings – and physical sales were

significant drivers of many business models and production and distribution costs had become unmanageable.

An increase in digital consumption was no compensation for loss of revenues generated in physical sales and events, he said: physical sales in the music industry were down 35% but digital revenues rose only 8%, while European cinemas were estimated to have lost about 75% of their earnings.

Royalties collected for authors and performers by rights organisations had fallen by 35% in 2020, the report said, meaning many would inevitably suffer a sharp fall in earnings over the next two years even if business picked up in 2021.

Lhermitte said the early closure in many countries of all cinemas, theatres, music venues and museums, and the cancellation of summer festivals vital for the exposure of young artists and performers in particular, was “an absolute body-blow” that would be felt for years to come.

Without an early resumption of offline production and distribution and live events, investment in new projects risks collapsing altogether, the report said, warning that even if venues did reopen soon, 46% of respondents in one recent poll said they would not feel comfortable going to a concert for several months, and 21% for several years.

Meanwhile, since more than 90% of operators in the cultural and creative sector are independent authors and artists or small or medium-sized independent companies, the shift online had created “a real risk that their unbalanced relationships with global internet platforms” will jeopardise their futures.

The report, which included the UK since Britain was to all intents and purposes still in the EU until 31 December, said it was vital that the EU and its member states provided public funding and encouraged private investment in the creative and cultural industries’ recovery “to an extent that reflects its weight and importance”.

It must also move fast to establish a “solid legal framework” to rebuild confidence in the sector’s financial viability, it recommended. “The critical

period we are going through demands truly unprecedented measures,” the report concluded.

“Europe’s creative sector has never known such economic devastation in the past, and its profound after-effects will be felt throughout the coming decade.”

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[\*\*Coronavirus\*\*](#)

## **EU 'to stop short of vaccine export ban' – as it happened**

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## [Indonesia](#)

# Covid patients turned away as hospitals in Indonesia face collapse

One man died after rejection from 10 hospitals as country passes one million cases of coronavirus

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



Mourner Coki Pratomo places petals on the grave of his mother, 68-year-old Lolly Dumora Sari Siregar, in a Jakarta cemetery for Indonesia's coronavirus victims.

Photograph: Willy Kurniawan/Reuters

Mourner Coki Pratomo places petals on the grave of his mother, 68-year-old Lolly Dumora Sari Siregar, in a Jakarta cemetery for Indonesia's coronavirus victims.

Photograph: Willy Kurniawan/Reuters

*[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) South-east Asia correspondent and [Gemma Holliani](#)  
Cahya in Jakarta*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 05.25 EST

Health experts in [Indonesia](#) have warned that hospitals in some areas are on the brink of collapse as the nation passed one million confirmed cases of coronavirus.

In one case, a man died after he was turned away from 10 hospitals, including three in Jakarta, with doctors under greater strain than at any time in the pandemic.

Irma Hidayana, a public health expert and co-founder of Lapor Covid-19, a volunteer group that aims to improve data collection during the pandemic, said that over recent weeks her team had been in touch with dozens of patients unable to find a hospital bed.

[Philippines and Indonesia back Chinese Covid jab despite efficacy doubts](#)  
[Read more](#)

Halik Malik, a spokesman for the Indonesian Doctors Association, said that in several regions patients had faced difficulties accessing Covid-19 intensive care units and isolation rooms, due to a rise in demand. “It seems that the current overload or overcapacity situation is the worst during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia,” he added.

The health ministry announced that new daily infections rose by 13,094 on Tuesday to bring the country’s total to 1,012,350, the most in south-east Asia. The total number of deaths reached 28,468.

There is concern that recent regional elections, as well as the holiday period, have contributed to a rise in transmission.

If the number of cases does not begin to fall over the next week, hospitals in Java and Bali would collapse under the pressure, said Lia Gardenia Partakusuma, secretary general of the Indonesian Hospital Association (PERSI).

“Collapse means we will be in a condition where we can only treat the patients that are already in the hospital,” she said, adding that currently hospitals have little choice but to ask patients to queue for hours in emergency rooms.

“Even my very close relative has just died in the emergency room from Covid because there was no room available. So, this is real. This is not a fiction. Not a rumour. This has been happening in several hospitals.

“We don’t want it to be like this. We are obligated to help, we want to help, we don’t know where else we can put the patients,” Lia added.

Surgeries for non-Covid patients, including heart surgeries, have been delayed because there is not enough space in intensive care units, she said.

We still hear complaints from health workers saying – we have to purchase our own PPE

*Irma Hidayana, public health expert*

The government is attempting to boost treatment capacity, but Irma said tighter social distancing rules were needed to slow the rate of infections. “You need to take emergency steps, and an epidemiological approach – testing, and restricting people from moving from one to another area. But we have seen nothing. As a result hospitals are now collapsing,” she said.

Some restrictions are in place to reduce physical contact, for example, limits on the proportion of employees allowed to work from their company office. Malls and restaurants, however, remain open.

Limited testing and delays in obtaining results have hampered efforts to carry out contact tracing. According to Our World in Data, an Oxford University initiative that tracks data relating to the pandemic, the positive rate for tests was 27.70% over the past seven days. The World Health Organization (WHO) said in May that a positive rate of less than 5% was one indicator that the epidemic was under control.

Halik said there had been a spike in Covid-19 infections, especially severe cases, while hospitals were also struggling to care for non-Covid patients.

The increase in demand has placed huge pressure on medical staff, who, according to Lapor Covid-19, continue to report shortages of protective equipment. Since the start of the pandemic, at least 647 medical workers have died, according to the group.

“We still hear complaints from health workers saying – we have to purchase our own PPE ourselves, we have to wash our n95 masks 10 times and then iron [equipment] and make sure it’s really sterilised, and put it on again and again,” said Irma.

This month, Indonesia began its vaccination campaign, one of the biggest in the world, with priority given to health workers. As of Friday, 132,004 medical staff had received their first of two jabs of CoronaVac, a vaccine made by Chinese company Sinovac, which was approved for emergency use in Indonesia.

Indonesian trials of the Sinovac vaccine found it to have about 65% efficacy, though trials from [Brazil found a much lower efficacy rate](#) of 50.4% – only just above the requirement set by the WHO.

Only people aged 18-59 qualify for CoronaVac in Indonesia because the country’s regulator says it does not have enough data on the vaccine’s impact on older people. “The first priority is the front liners, which means health workers and the public service, and we [will] include the elderly in the next phase,” said Siti Nadia Tarmizi, the health ministry’s vaccine spokeswoman. Older people will be vaccinated either when more data on CoronaVac becomes available, or when other vaccines arrive in the country, she said.

There are concerns over suggestions that the government may allow companies to procure their own vaccines. “The stock in the world is very limited,” said Pandu Riono, an epidemiologist at the University of Indonesia, who added that he feared this would create an unequal system where wealthy people could jump the queue.

The government aims to eventually vaccinate 181.5 million people, about 67%, of its population, a mammoth and complex task for health teams working across the sprawling archipelago.

Siti Nadia Tarmiz said that the government would not allow any private vaccination campaigns to disrupt the government supply.

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## Coronavirus

# Why are people still flying into the UK despite Covid-19 rules?

Crowded scenes at Heathrow airport prompted concerns about reasons permitted for foreign travel

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Air travellers queue at terminal 5 of Heathrow airport for border checks.  
Photograph: Pia Josephson/Reuters

Air travellers queue at terminal 5 of Heathrow airport for border checks.  
Photograph: Pia Josephson/Reuters

*[Simon Murphy](#) and [Gwyn Topham](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 05.30 EST

In scenes last week labelled “[incredibly worrying](#)”, row upon row of travellers queued for border checks at Heathrow airport after flying into the country. Although face masks were visible, there appeared to be little social distancing.

But as well as concerns over [the risk of “super-spreading”](#), the images also prompted the question: why are thousands of people still travelling into the country despite coronavirus restrictions?

## What are the current restrictions?

Earlier this month, Johnson scrapped the government’s travel corridor policy, which had allowed passengers from some countries to avoid quarantining on arrival. However, travellers not arriving from high-risk countries – such as Brazil and South Africa where new variants have arisen – can still leave isolation sooner if they pay for a Covid test after five days that returns a negative result.

In a further toughening of measures, international arrivals – including UK nationals – must also present proof of a negative Covid-19 test taken up to 72 hours before departure. Carriers are required to ensure all those boarding have this, or face being fined, while non-compliant arrivals face a £500 penalty. From next week, carriers will check for passenger locator forms, used to aid test and trace efforts. Separately, Border Force officials are already making checks for negative Covid tests and passenger locator forms.

## Who is exempt?

UK rules state people must not leave home or travel – including internationally – unless they have a legally permitted reason, such as work.

There is a [lengthy list](#) of jobs that qualify for varying sorts of exemption, although it has been trimmed recently. For example, although drivers of goods vehicles need to complete a passenger locator form, they do not need to present a negative Covid test or self-isolate. Whereas, domestic elite sportspeople do need to take a Covid test and complete a locator form before travel, but need not self-isolate.

The broad list of exempted jobs includes government and defence contractors, and a range of infrastructure workers. Since 18 January company directors, journalists, performers and TV production staff no longer qualify for exemptions.

However, despite these rules and exemptions, it is understood there are not any specific reason-for-travel checks by officials on arrivals.

## **So how many are still coming into the country?**

One newspaper suggested about 10,000 a day fly into Heathrow – a figure that airport insiders suggest is overstated by several thousands. The airport, and others, are tight-lipped about publicly stating current numbers, and the Home Office and the Department for [Transport](#) were not able to provide recent figures.

What is clear is that only a fraction of normal scheduled flights into the UK are operating, with many planes understood to be carrying far fewer passengers than usual. Passenger flights are still being maintained on some routes for essential workers and possible repatriation, although holiday companies such as TUI have now grounded all flights.

## **Where are they coming from?**

At [Heathrow](#) on Monday, the first flight to arrive was BA flight 74 from the Nigerian city of Lagos, at 4.44am – a Boeing 777 with typically 250-300 seats. Others followed from Hong Kong, Singapore, Ghana and Kenya, before a second morning wave, largely from North America and the Gulf – but only 30 services in total by 9am, when traffic had peaked. By the afternoon only a handful of international flights arrived every hour at what was once Europe's busiest airport.

Heathrow's numbers nonetheless far outstrip others: at London Gatwick, which is more oriented towards leisure travel, there were only six in-bound flights scheduled on Monday – two from Dublin, plus Belfast, Kyiv, Riga, and Madrid. London Stansted had only five incoming flights scheduled for Tuesday, from Ireland and eastern Europe. The airport has not confirmed

figures but one insider said fewer than 300 passengers were said to have used the airport on the quieter days last week.

- This article was corrected on 26 January 2021. Lagos is not the capital of Nigeria as stated in an earlier version.
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- [Scotland Nicola Sturgeon under fire over slower Covid vaccine rollout](#)
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## [Coronavirus](#)

# Meera Syal and Moeen Ali star in video urging BAME people to take vaccine

Celebrity campaign aims to counter Covid-19 jab misinformation targeted at ethnic minorities

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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03:06

*[Haroon Siddique](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 15.19 EST

Actors Adil Ray and Meera Syal, cricketer Moeen Ali and comedian Romesh Ranganathan are among celebrities who have joined forces to counter [coronavirus vaccine misinformation in ethnic minority communities](#) as a race equality thinktank called for greater government action on the issue.

The rate of Covid infections and [deaths among minorities has been disproportionately high](#) compared with the white British population but [polls have suggested they are less likely to take the vaccine](#), with concerns raised they are being targeted by campaigners spreading anti-vaccine propaganda.

The [Citizen Khan creator and star Ray](#), who helped to organise a video launched on Monday to counter vaccine myths, said: “Unfortunately we are now fighting another pandemic – misinformation – where communities who are ignored are preyed upon and voices that endanger lives are amplified.

“Whilst these communities must accept some responsibility too, and take the vaccine to save lives, we all must do what we can and come together to fight

this deadly virus. We hope this video can help dispel some of the myths and offer some encouragement for everyone to take the vaccine.”

The Runnymede Trust also released a video on Monday urging people to take the vaccine, including contributions from the chief rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, Imam Mohammed Mahmoud of East London mosque, and Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin. The thinktank also urged the government to prioritise ethnic minorities “who are living under circumstances with higher infection risks and whose elderly are dying at dire rates”.

It says the government should prioritise the rollout of vaccines to black and minority (BME) communities in dense urban areas “where the need is greatest” and work with BME community leaders to address misinformation and boost confidence in the vaccine. Last week, [figures from NHS England showed London had the lowest number of people – 388,437 – who had received at least one dose of a Covid vaccine](#). The capital has the UK’s highest BME population and one of the highest proportions of ethnic minorities.

The greater reluctance of people from ethnic minority communities has been ascribed to various factors including poorer engagement with the health service historically, lack of trust, and exploitation of religious concerns through claims the vaccine contains pork or alcohol, is not halal or alters DNA.

The video – which also features actors Sanjeev Bhaskar, Asim Chaudhry and Nina Wadia, presenter Konnie Huq, the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and the former Tory party chair [Sayeeda Warsi](#) – debunks those falsehoods and others.

Abdullah Afzal, an actor and comedian who co-stars with Ray in Citizen Khan, says in the video: “In fact, the scientists who developed the most widely used [Pfizer] vaccine are Muslim, [Prof Uğur Şahin and his scientist wife, Özlem Türeci](#), from Turkey.” The Bollywood star Boman Irani highlights that India is a leading country in vaccine manufacturing and people are urged to speak to their doctor if they have any misgivings.

Many in the video reveal details of relatives who have already received the vaccine. Shobna Gulati, who appeared for many years in Coronation Street and in the sitcom Dinnerladies, says: “We will find our way through this, and be united once again with our friends and our families. All we have to do is take the vaccination. My sister’s had the vaccine and I’m really looking forward to when it’s my turn.”

### Calls for key workers to be vaccination priority after ONS Covid figures Read more

The Runnymede Trust said the lack of trust surrounding the vaccine among BME groups was partly because of hostile environment policies, adding: “The vaccine finally provides a way out of this dire situation and a way of protecting those who need it most. There must be immediate action to localise resources to the most in need areas. These are densely populated urbanised areas with large numbers of BME citizens.”

Nadhim Zahawi, the minister for Covid vaccine deployment, said: “We want every eligible person to benefit from a free vaccine, regardless of their ethnicity or religious beliefs.

“The Department of Health and the NHS are working closely with Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities to support those eligible for a vaccine and all those who have questions about Covid-19 vaccines.

“As part of this we’re working with faith and community leaders to give them advice and information about the benefits of vaccination and how their communities can get a jab.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/25/meera-syal-and-adil-ray-among-celebs-in-video-urging-covid-vaccine-take-up-by-ethnic-minorities>

## [Coronavirus](#)

# Nicola Sturgeon under fire over slower Covid vaccine rollout in Scotland

Scotland falling behind other parts of UK, but first minister points to high rate in care homes

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Defending her record, Sturgeon said that, unlike England, Scotland had vaccinated nearly all care home residents. Photograph: Russell Cheyne/Reuters

[Nicola Sturgeon](#) has come under fire from Scottish opposition parties over the country's rate of Covid vaccinations, which is far slower than the rest of the UK.

[The latest data](#) showed Scotland's per capita rate of vaccinations of over-18s stood at 9.4% on Monday, lower than the UK average rate for over-18s of 12.4%, with England close to reaching a first-dose vaccination rate of 13%.

While Scotland's seven-day average rate had improved, its total number of people given their first dose remains, relative to population, the lowest of all four UK nations. Opposition criticisms intensified after it emerged that only 11,364 people were vaccinated in [Scotland](#) on Sunday, the lowest daily figure of recent weeks.

The UK government has been using [mass vaccination centres](#), with GPs providing late night and weekend services in England. Senior figures at the British Medical Association Scotland raised concerns last week over “patchy” and slow distribution of vaccines to GP surgeries.

[Defending her record](#), Sturgeon said that, unlike England, Scotland had vaccinated nearly all care home residents. About 90% had had their first dose, the Scottish first minister said. This was one of the most important cohorts to reach, given the much higher mortality rates in care homes, she said.

Sturgeon added that it had also been technically challenging distributing the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to GP surgeries, since it required storage at -70C. The availability of the more easily transportable Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine meant that the programme was now “picking up pace”.

She said the Scottish government planned to accelerate the speed and breadth of the vaccination programme, possibly including 24-hour services, once vaccinations had been extended to other age groups.

“We are looking at all of these options to make sure that as the supply increases, we can get it to people as quickly as possible,” she said.

Opposition parties said Sturgeon’s focus on care homes failed to explain why overall vaccine rates were low or why GPs were not inoculating many more people. The two things were not mutually exclusive, said Willie Rennie, the Scottish Liberal Democrat leader.

“The first minister’s excuses on the rollout of the vaccine are wearing very thin,” he said.

“It may take longer to vaccinate someone in a care home but that doesn’t mean the hundreds of thousands of unused vaccines should be left in storage when GPs could be sticking them in people’s arms.”

While 90% of Scottish care home residents have had their first dose, Sturgeon said that 46% of over-80s had had one. Matt Hancock, England’s health secretary, said that three-quarters of over-80s had been vaccinated UK-wide, as had three-quarters of England’s care home residents.

Douglas Ross, the Scottish Tory leader, said a pattern was emerging. “They are failing to deliver the seven-day service that was promised,” he said, “and GPs are still not getting supplies quickly enough from the SNP. While vaccinations slowed over the weekend, the SNP were debating their plan for a second independence referendum this year.”

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## Coronavirus

# Calls for key workers to be vaccination priority after ONS Covid figures

Some of highest death rates among restaurant and catering management and taxi driving

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An Uber taxi. Photograph: Laura Dale/PA

An Uber taxi. Photograph: Laura Dale/PA

*[Robert Booth](#) and [Caelainn Barr](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 14.31 EST

Trade unions are calling for priority vaccination for key workers after official figures showed that Covid-19 death rates among people in jobs such

as machine operation, taxi driving and restaurant management were up to three times higher than the national average.

Data from the Office for National Statistics showed people in some of the lowest-paid manual jobs were significantly more likely to die from coronavirus than those in higher-paid white-collar jobs as the death toll in the working-age population in England and Wales approached 8,000.

[Covid deaths higher among low-paid workers in England and Wales, analysis shows](#)

[Read more](#)

Frontline health and social care workers are already among the nine [highest priority groups](#) for the vaccine agreed by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). But death rates in other occupations that do not feature on the list were similar or even higher. The GMB union said it wanted all key workers to be prioritised for the vaccine in the next phase of the rollout.

“Workers are still being forced to use inadequate PPE [personal protective equipment], and some people are attending work despite being infectious because they cannot afford to self-isolate,” said Dan Shears, the GMB’s national health, safety and environment director. “The time for action is now. Ministers and employers must urgently convene with workers’ representatives to address the ongoing and needless risks in workplaces before more lives are lost.”

The average death rate from Covid for men in the wider working-age population was 31.4 per 100,000. For women it was 16.8. But rates in many occupations were far higher.

Some of the highest rates were among male restaurant and catering managers at 119 deaths per 100,000, while for male taxi drivers it was 101, and for male bus and coach drivers it was 70. Among women the highest rates included social workers at 32 deaths per 100,000 and sales and retail assistants at 27 per 100,000.

“It is blindingly obvious there should be a prioritisation of some workers,” said James Farrer, the general secretary of the App Drivers and Couriers Union, which represents Uber drivers. “The statistics show they should be top of the list for the vaccine.”

Farrer said one of his members, a driver in Nottingham, died from Covid-19 on Sunday and that prioritising workers in badly affected occupations could help prevent transmission in often public facing jobs.

The figures showed social care workers had significantly raised rates of death involving Covid-19 – at more than double the rate for men and women compared with the wider working-age population. Three hundred and thirty-seven care workers died from coronavirus since the pandemic began up to 28 December as well as 101 nurses, 70 of whom were women.

Currently the JCVI’s top priority groups cover everyone aged over 50, plus people with underlying health conditions, the clinically extremely vulnerable and frontline health and social care workers.

The figures, said the ONS, did “not prove conclusively that the observed rates of death involving Covid-19 are necessarily caused by differences in occupational exposure”.

But Ben Humberstone, the ONS head of health analysis and life events, said: “Jobs with regular exposure to Covid-19 and those working in close proximity to others continue to have higher Covid-19 death rates when compared with the rest of the working-age population.”

The Trades Union Congress said the figures exposed huge inequalities and called for a fast and comprehensive rollout of the vaccine.

“People working in low-paid and insecure jobs have been forced to shoulder much higher risk, with too many losing their lives,” said Frances O’Grady, the general secretary of the TUC. “The government urgently needs to beef up its workplace safety guidance and get tough on employers who put their workers in harm’s way.”

[Tell us: how have you been affected by the coronavirus?](#)

[Read more](#)

Christina McAnea, the general secretary of Unison, said the government must guarantee proper pay for care workers who were ill or were having to self-isolate.

“Sick or self-isolating care staff and home care workers still feel forced to attend work by shameless employers,” she said. “This is because they’re being denied full wages.

“This unacceptable situation puts staff at risk and the people they look after. It must end.”

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# Forty-year-old MP says he received leftover dose of Covid vaccine

Brendan Clarke-Smith says he got jab that would have otherwise gone to waste after doing voluntary work at hospital

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Brendan Clarke-Smith got the jab after an afternoon volunteering at a local hospital. Photograph: UK Parliament/PA

A 40-year-old Conservative MP who received the coronavirus vaccine after spending an afternoon volunteering at a local hospital has said this happened because there were some left-over doses, which would have otherwise gone to waste.

Brendan Clarke-Smith, who became MP for Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire at the 2019 election, received his first vaccination dose on Friday, after helping at Retford hospital.

In a [Facebook post](#), Clarke-Smith wrote that he had spent the afternoon volunteering at the hospital.

He said: “As a volunteer I was also asked to have a vaccine. Many people have asked me about the safety of vaccines and I have always said that my family and I would all have no problem having one.”

He added: “Some have suggested that politicians should test them out first – although they are usually the same people who then say politicians get preferential treatment, so I suppose it’s difficult to win! I hope having the vaccine today will reassure people and that everybody who is offered a vaccine will take this up.”

According to [a priority list](#) drawn up by the official Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the first four groups to get the vaccine are older care home residents and carers; those over 80 and frontline health and social care workers; people over 75; those over 70 and people seen as very clinically vulnerable.

Asked whether he received the vaccine because his volunteer role put him in the category of frontline staff, or because there were spare vaccines left, Clarke-Smith MP told the Guardian it was the latter.

“I have just started volunteering at a local vaccination centre in my constituency,” he said in a statement.

“At the end of a day of volunteering there were some left-over vaccinations and rather than letting them go to waste they offered me a vaccination so I don’t put people at risk while continuing to volunteer.”

Asked about Clarke-Smith’s vaccination, Boris Johnson’s spokesperson said he was not aware of the circumstances of the case, adding: “We have set out who should receive the jab, and the JCVI set out the priorities in detail.”

He said that in general, spare vaccines should be given to the most vulnerable people: “We have asked for vaccine providers to have back-up lists of patients and staff in the top four cohort, so it’s ready to give them if there are any vaccines available at short notice. I would re-emphasise the point that we have prioritised these four groups for a reason, that they are the most vulnerable to the virus.”

However, one official said that there was an acceptance that this would not always work in practice, and that it was accepted that any doses which might not be usable the next day should be injected if possible: “If it’s the case that a hospital or a GP has a spare vaccine, it is obviously preferable that it’s used rather than throw it in the bin.”

Speaking earlier this month at a Downing Street press conference, Chris Whitty, the chief medical officer for England, said it was right for people like GPs to “make sure that they eke every vaccine out that they can”.

Whitty said: “And there have been some perfectly sensible decisions made by individual GPs, particularly with Pfizer vaccine where there is an issue about shelf life once something’s been unfrozen, to make sure that actually it’s possible to maximise the number of people vaccinated.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/25/forty-year-old-mp-says-he-received-left-over-dose-of-covid-vaccine>

## 2021.01.26 - Spotlight

- '[Cancer made me pull my life together' Zandra Rhodes on fun, fashion and Freddie Mercury](#)
- [Capital gains Communities of 90s London](#)
- [Come on in! The exhilarating joy of outdoor ice-bathing](#)
- [The Capote Tapes Inside the scandal ignited by explosive final novel](#)
- [The stage on screen After Audition: Takashi Miike's rehearsal-room shocker Over Your Dead Body](#)
- [The Great British Art Tour Thomas Paine and his upside-down Rights of Man](#)

# 'Cancer made me pull my life together': Zandra Rhodes on fun, fashion and Freddie Mercury

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2021/jan/26/cancer-made-me-pull-my-life-together-zandra-rhodes-on-fun-fashion-and-freddie-mercury>.

# Capital gains: communities of 90s London - in pictures

London is the place for me ... from Roy Mehta's new book Revival.

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## Swimming holidays

# Come on in! The exhilarating joy of outdoor ice-bathing



Wendy Masterton (left) and her friend Tracey Bewick breaking the ice. *All photographs by Anna Deacon*

Wendy Masterton (left) and her friend Tracey Bewick breaking the ice. *All photographs by Anna Deacon*

The popularity of outdoor swimming has soared during lockdown. These bathers are even breaking the ice to go for an endorphin-releasing winter dip

*Anna Deacon*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 02.12 EST

The path to the water is treacherous. The snow has covered the ice making it slippery underfoot. It is 7.45 am and dark, but my friend Vicky and I have head torches and the moon is bright.

Our walk – prior to lockdown 2021 – is through the woods and down the path to the edge of Threipmuir reservoir in the Pentland hills, just south of Edinburgh. It is impossible to tell where the water starts as everything is covered in a thick layer of snow. And the snow is also coming down in earnest, landing on our eyelashes and into our dry bags, as we unpack and start to undress.

Once stripped to our swimsuits, neoprene boots, gloves and woolly hats, we approach the ice. A pickaxe makes little impact to begin with, but we continue with one of us using the axe while the other smashes away with boots and moves huge chunks of ice with our hands. It is quite a workout and seems so ridiculous that we laugh until we have tears rolling down our faces.

## Q&A

### Safety advice

#### Show

- Preparation is key as ice-bathing can potentially be a dangerous pastime in the UK, as we don't have places, such as Finland, where there are 260 winter-swimming centres, which often include changing facilities and saunas – as well as specific entry and exit points in the ice.
- Ice-bathing must always be approached with caution, never alone, and having risk assessed the location first. Acclimatise to cold water carefully, keeping your dip short and warming up quickly afterwards with layers of clothes and a hot drink.
  - Going in to very cold water (typically less than 10C) can cause numbness and pain, particularly in the extremities, such as the hands and feet. Neoprene socks and gloves can help protect hands and feet.
  - The Outdoor Swimming Society has [tips on how to acclimatise to cold water](#)

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

After about five minutes, we start to make headway, working as a team to create a little plunge pool. When we visited two days previously we were able to clear a long swimming channel, but today the ice is too thick. A flock of Canada geese fly past, skimming the top of the ice, and a bullfinch hops around the shoreline, its pinkish plumage the only colour visible in this white landscape. Finally, we have cleared enough ice to swim.



Wendy and Tracey brave the ice

Preparation is key as ice-bathing can potentially be a dangerous pastime in the UK, as we don't have the infrastructure of places such as Finland, where there are 260 winter-swimming centres which often include changing facilities and saunas – as well as specific entry and exit points in the ice. Here, we often need to look to more remote spots in order to find ice, which adds a huge element of risk to the process.

It must always be approached with caution, never alone, and having risk assessed the location first. Acclimatise to cold water carefully, keeping your dip short and warming up quickly afterwards with layers of clothes and a hot drink.

I lower myself down into the 0.8C water until my shoulders are beneath the surface, and try to calm my breathing and bring my heart rate down as I absorb the shock of the cold. Even though I have swum through four winters, my body's automatic response to the extreme cold is still powerful.

I try to remain calm, swimming a few strokes and trying to avoid the ice shards, which can cut. Despite having gloves and socks, my fingers and toes are numb, my body sending all available heat to my core. I feel utterly alive and exhilarated, though. But there is a fine line between fun and hypothermia, so we tear ourselves away as the dawn light turns the mountains pink. Beginners should stay in the water for two minutes maximum.



Vicky, the writer's friend, takes the plunge

Then it is a race to warm up, using cold, muddled fingers to put socks on top of socks and more layers than you imagine possible, pouring hot drinks from flasks, doing star jumps and squats to get the body warmed back up. Though the massive rush of energy and unbridled joy far outweigh thoughts of frozen toes.

As we are packing up to leave, we hear belly laughs and people approaching through the snow, and then encounter three women armed with an axe and a

rolling pin to continue what we started. As the hilarity of the moment hits them, Wendy Masterton tells us: “We’ve been cold-water swimming with ice around the edges before but this is the first time we’ll actually experience breaking the ice in order to get into the water.”

Outdoor swimming has [seen a dramatic rise in popularity over the last year](#). As swimming pools closed due to Covid restrictions and holidays were cancelled, many people turned to their local beach, river, loch or lake to swim. And many have continued, despite the reopening of some pools during summer and early autumn. The [Outdoor Swimming Society](#) (OSS) has seen website traffic increase by 46% to 785,000 unique users and membership increase 36% to 136,000; its Facebook group has grown by 73%.

It's the perfect activity for a life under the pressures of a pandemic

*Kate Rew, OSS*

In addition, local wild swimming groups have reported to the OSS growths in membership of their Facebook pages of between 50% to 500%. [Open water lakes are also reporting a huge increase in visitors](#).

“Outdoor swimming is now part of the UK psyche, part of our love of free-spirited adventure,” says OSS founder Kate Rew. “People are looking for exercise and adventure closer to home, thousands have made this their time to embrace rivers, lakes and the sea. For some, it is about self-sufficiency and stoicism: the perfect activity for a life under the pressures of a pandemic. I think others are winter swimming to achieve a high that we can’t get anywhere else right now.”

A [study by Dr Chris van Tulleken and Dr Mark Harper](#), published by the BMJ, discovered that “regular open-water swimming results in a post-swim ‘high’, triggered by the release of beta-endorphins, dopamine and serotonin. Furthermore, facial immersion in cold water stimulates the vagus nerve, resulting in an anti-inflammatory response.”



‘Same time tomorrow?’

Ice swimming, once only attempted by a few hardy souls, has been [dominating Instagram feeds this winter](#) as more swimmers seek out the extreme cold. Claire Williams began outdoor swimming at Wardie Bay, Edinburgh, in May after losing her mother to dementia

“Outdoor swimming has helped me massively, the people I’ve met, the friends I’ve made and also just the peace I’ve found from being in the cold water,” she says. “With the [new research suggesting cold-water swimming wards off dementia](#), I will never ever give it up. I only wish my mum had been around to enjoy it with me.”

Cassandra Barron had her first ice swim at Threipmuir reservoir earlier this month after taking up swimming in the sea at Wardie Bay during the spring lockdown.

“I have swum every day in January so far and wanted to push myself further so I had my first exhilarating ice-swimming experience this week,” she says.

In Scotland [as in England], we are still able to exercise outdoors within our local area with one person from another household, so outdoor swimmers who live near water are able to meet with another person during this time,

providing a lifeline for those who swim to help deal with the stress of the pandemic.

It might be extreme but immersing yourself in icy water is a wonderful way to fill up with endorphins, get a nature fix and have a thrilling adventure without having to travel.

- *The [OSS's tips on acclimatising to cold water](#)*

**Taking The Plunge** by Anna Deacon and Vicky Allan, is published by Black & White publishing. Follow Anna on Instagram at [@wildswimmingstories](#)

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## Documentary films

Interview

# The Capote Tapes: inside the scandal ignited by Truman's explosive final novel

[Ryan Gilbey](#)



‘He’d spit it all out and you’d eat it all up’ ... Capote, who had a genius for gossip. Photograph: Bettmann/Bettmann Archive

‘He’d spit it all out and you’d eat it all up’ ... Capote, who had a genius for gossip. Photograph: Bettmann/Bettmann Archive

He partied with high society America but caused outrage when he spilled their secrets. Ebs Burnough talks us through his new film about Answered Prayers – the ‘smart, salacious’ novel Capote never finished

Tue 26 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

When [Truman Capote](#) died in 1984, he left the remains of a novel he had been hatching for nearly two decades, and talking about for almost as long. *Answered Prayers*, the story of a budding writer screwing his way through polite society, was intended to be Capote's most explosive achievement. He likened it to a deadly weapon. "There's the handle, the trigger, the barrel, and, finally, the bullet," he told *People* magazine. "And when that bullet is fired from the gun, it's going to come out with a speed and power like you've never seen – wham!" Having bragged about the book for years, all he had to do now was write it.

A contract was signed in 1966, but advance chapters published in *Esquire* magazine nine years later proved to be far below the standard of his defining successes, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and the "non-fiction novel" [In Cold Blood](#). There was a cost to his social reputation as well as his literary one. As soon as the socialites and wealthy wives with whom he had mingled happily for years – including Slim Keith, Babe Paley and Gloria Vanderbilt, whom he called his "swans" – saw how casually he had spilled their most intimate secrets, those friendships were dead. Capote hadn't bitten the hand that fed him. He'd gnawed it off at the wrist.

### [Watch a trailer for The Capote Tapes](#)

The scandal of *Answered Prayers* is central to *The Capote Tapes*, a new documentary that incorporates archive footage of the writer's TV appearances alongside new interviews with confidantes and admirers, among them writers Jay McInerney and Colm Tóibín. Most fascinating, though, are the previously unheard audio recordings of Capote's friends and contemporaries, drawn from interviews conducted by the late [George Plimpton](#) for his 1997 book, *Truman Capote: In Which Various Friends, Enemies, Acquaintances and Detractors Recall His Turbulent Career*.

We hear [Lauren Bacall](#) pointing out the contrast between Capote's "little boy voice" and "deep male laugh". [Norman Mailer](#) marvels at his literary gifts – "He wrote the best sentences of anyone of our generation" – and uniqueness: "He had a special life and he was going to live it in a special way." The journalist Sally Quinn remembers his flair for generating gossip. "He'd spill it all out and you'd eat it up," she says. "He was bitchy but he was smart."



Social whirl ... from left, Jerry Hall, Andy Warhol, Debbie Harry, Capote and Paloma Picasso, at Studio 54 in 1979. Photograph: Sonia Moskowitz/Getty Images

That wasn't quite enough to save him once the excerpts from *Answered Prayers* were published. But Ebs Burnough, the director of *The Capote Tapes*, has always had a soft spot for that flawed, incomplete final book. "To me it feels smart and salacious, like *People* magazine or *Vanity Fair*," says the 40-year-old first-time film-maker, who served previously as deputy social secretary at the White House, and senior adviser to [Michelle Obama](#).

At the age of nine, he wrote an essay called *Miss Busybody* about Harper Lee's mother. He got in trouble, but won a prize

"It's not his best work by any means," says Burnough. "Part of the reason was his addiction to alcohol and prescription pills. But in writing about people he knew, layering and exaggerating the truth, he was only doing what he had always done. At the age of nine or 10, he entered a newspaper competition with an essay called *Miss Busybody*, which was all about a local woman who sat on her front porch – [Harper Lee](#)'s mother, in fact. He got in terrible trouble for that, too. But he won the prize."



‘Women were queuing up to claim they were the inspiration’ ... Audrey Hepburn as sex worker Holly Golightly in the film of Breakfast At Tiffany’s. Photograph: Paramount Pictures/Allstar

Had the book been better written, Burnough suggests, Capote would have escaped such a lambasting. “Don’t forget Holly Golightly in [Breakfast at Tiffany’s](#) was a prostitute, and yet women were lining up to claim they were the inspiration.” Not so with Answered Prayers. “He goes to places he wouldn’t have gone before, such as when he writes about a woman having sex while on her period, the blood all over the sheets. It didn’t need to be so direct, or such a full-frontal assault. He made us feel for Holly, and showed empathy for the murderers from In Cold Blood, but you don’t feel for anyone in Answered Prayers. You just feel that everyone’s bad.”

Promising for so long that the novel would be his greatest book must have exerted its own pressure, but leaving it incomplete also meant that it could never strictly be branded a failure. Was it part of his plan not to finish it? “I actually do believe he finished it,” says Burnough. “Too many people have said they saw him working on it, saw these huge stacks of paper.”

He also dismisses the rumours, mentioned in the film, that the full manuscript resides in a safe deposit box somewhere. “My theory is that one night he got really smashed and something happened to the rest of it. I can

easily imagine that, after those excerpts were published, and after the phone stopped ringing, he might have woken after a wild night and seen pieces of it in the fireplace. That's what addiction can do to people."



Memories ... Ebs Burnough interviews TV chatshow host Dick Cavett for The Capote Tapes. Photograph: © Hatch House Media Ltd.

Burnough was first introduced to Capote's work by a school librarian at the age of 12. "The southern gothic voice was immediately recognisable," he says, "because I grew up in northern Florida, near south Georgia, all oak trees and plantations and Spanish moss." He devoured everything Capote wrote ("Though the canon's not huge, let's be honest"). He can even watch the sanitised 1961 film version of Breakfast at Tiffany's without fast-forwarding through the scenes of Mickey Rooney playing Asian. "It's so fucked up and yet we can't pretend it didn't exist. We need to be able to say, 'Look how far we've come.'"

Burnough is opposed generally to the soft-soaping of past prejudices. He had no reservations about including in his film Mailer's description of Capote as a "beautiful faggot prince", which may cause modern audiences to flinch. "That comment shows what Truman was up against," he insists. "He didn't live in a world of LGBT+. He lived in a world where you were just another

‘fag’. It was so matter-of-fact. But if we remove that from the record, how are we supposed to learn from history?’”

Burnough – who is married to Pierre Lagrange, the Belgian hedge-fund heavyweight estimated to be worth £237m – traces Capote’s career chronologically, from the luminous promise of his first novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, published in 1948 when he was just 23, to the dismal fallout from *Answered Prayers*. The film doesn’t stint on the seamier details: the writer’s friend and self-proclaimed fellow voyeur Dotson Rader is on hand to reminisce about nights spent in New York’s gay bathhouses and in the darker corners of the nightclub Studio 54.



‘Adoptive daughter’ ... Kate Harrington, left, with Capote and Gloria Swanson. Photograph: Ron Galella/WireImage

Pride of place in *The Capote Tapes*, though, is given to new interviews with [Kate Harrington](#), who at the age of 13 was unofficially “adopted” by the writer. Her father, a Long Island bank manager, was Capote’s lover, and had left the family home to be with him. Capote took Harrington under his wing, coaching her in etiquette and taking her along as his companion to boozy, celebrity-strewn lunches. When she found herself wearying of the social whirl, or zoning out at the lunch table, he advised her to squeeze the situation for every drop of possible scandal or gossip. “He told me that what

I should do is sit and listen to the conversation next to us,” she says in the film. “And on the way home, I could tell him everything they talked about.”

He told me to listen to the conversation next to us. And on the way home, I could tell him everything they talked about

That adoptive-father-daughter relationship was vital for Burnough in unlocking his subject’s life. “I never knew before that Truman essentially adopted his lover’s daughter,” he says. “He wanted a family so desperately at a time when he wasn’t allowed to have one. It just wasn’t on the table for someone like him, and yet still he made the life he wanted to live. That to me is rather extraordinary. He’s someone who has been given short shrift historically, in part because he is characterised as merely bitchy. And yes, there was that component. But he was also a pioneer – an out gay man, famous, on TV, being honest about who he was. He deserves more than just the image of a vicious little queen.”



‘His Instagram would be outrageous’ ... Capote’s Black and White Ball at the Plaza Hotel, New York, 1966. Photograph: Elliott Erwitt/Magnum Photos

Would a Capote figure even register as scandalous today? “The difference now is that everyone is always telling us personal things on social media,”

says Burnough. “You’ve got celebrities like Taylor Swift and Madonna talking about their experiences, or Hilaria Baldwin discussing her miscarriage on Instagram. The idea that someone could tell a story about another person’s intimate life is less compelling today, because we’ve probably heard it already from the person concerned.”

Since leaving the White House in 2012, Burnough has worked largely in public relations. Would he have taken Capote on as a client? “No!” he says, without missing a beat. “I would be cancelled. Truman would be fine, but people would ask me, ‘How can you represent him?’” Still, he admits he would follow him avidly on social media. “His Instagram would be outrageous. And Truman on Twitter would be a beast. He’d be attacking people left and right, or telling Kim Kardashian: ‘Darling, who cares?’”

- [The Capote Tapes is available from 29 January at altitude.film](#) and on digital platforms.
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## The stage on screenStage

# After Audition: Takashi Miike's rehearsal-room shocker Over Your Dead Body

Continuing our series on the best films about theatre, a 200-year-old Japanese ghost story takes centre stage in a movie merging reality and fantasy



Stage fright ... Ebizô Ichikawa in the play within the film Over Your Dead Body. Photograph: OYDB Film Partners

Stage fright ... Ebizô Ichikawa in the play within the film Over Your Dead Body. Photograph: OYDB Film Partners



[Chris Wiegand](#)

[@ChrisWiegand](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

The prolific Japanese director [Takashi Miike](#) is best known for his 1999 horror film [Audition](#), in which a widower advertises a role in a fake movie production, intending to choose a wife from those who apply. The backdrop of the screen industry suggests that his casual misogyny is symptomatic of a [wider social disease](#). Fifteen years later, Miike released *Over Your Dead Body*, a sort of companion piece, following a group of theatre actors in and out of rehearsals. Like *Audition*, the film – whose Japanese title is *Kuime* – explores deception and vengeance with slow-burning and increasingly grisly intensity. Amid its schlock and horror, it vividly retains a traditional theatricality that left me longing to see a proper production of the play at its centre.

That play is the ghost story [Yotsuya Kaidan](#), about a ruthless samurai who is haunted by his rejected wife, Oiwa. The samurai is portrayed in the play by the cruel Kosuke who abandons his lover, the established stage performer Miyuki (who plays Oiwa in their production), and starts an affair with a younger actor.

When *Yotsuya Kaidan* was first staged, about 200 years ago, it was presented in a kabuki double bill with another play over two days: half of each play on the first day, the culminating halves on the next. Miike's film itself entwines two narratives. We watch lengthy scenes of *Yotsuya Kaidan* in its dress rehearsals, using meticulously designed historical sets on a revolve stage. These are intercut with the actors' dressing-room encounters and scenes in Miyuki's sleek apartment. In most films about theatre, the offstage dramas are the real focus and we see only snippets of the show they are creating. In *Over Your Dead Body*, considerably more time is given to the play within the film.



Expertly inhabiting her roles ... Ko Shibasaki. Photograph: OYDB Film Partners

There are some startling perspectives along the way – in one of the opening scenes, the camera looks out from inside a washing machine. Strikingly, the world of the play is presented as a linear, more straightforward narrative while the lives of the actors become increasingly surreal, merging reality and fantasy. In one disturbing sequence, Miyuki's bedroom is dressed as if it was an outlandish set design, with blood pooling on plastic sheets covering the furniture.

The kabuki play's plot is loosely paralleled by the offstage lives of its lead actors. "Sometimes I wish the play was my real life," says one of Miyuki's colleagues, who is unhappy at home. Miyuki shudders in horror at the idea. Several actors find themselves repeating lines from the play in the context of their personal lives. Ko Shibasaki and Ebizô Ichikawa expertly inhabit each of their roles as the central couple in both film and play.

The sumptuously staged rehearsals unfold in a cavernous modern theatre space and are captured elegantly, with the camera roaming among the action as if this was the slickest of NT Live productions. In one striking scene, the actors look like miniature figures lost in a model box. The audience for this play comprises the director and his fellow creatives, sitting behind separate desks lit with a table lamp and cluttered with notes. Miike's decision to show a rehearsal period rather than a full public production creates a curious effect. It invites us to analyse each of its scenes more closely, questioning the purpose of each, in the spirit of a rigorous rehearsal.



Troubling darkness ... Over Your Dead Body. Photograph: OYDB Film Partners

It also emphasises the intense relationship between the actors and the characters they play. When the samurai in Yotsuya Kaidan decides to abandon Oiwa, he is supplied with poison by a scheming woman; the actor

who plays that woman watches keenly from her desk as if she is personally complicit when Oiwa suffers. As Kosuke and Miyuki's relationship is breaking down, he kicks out at her in a rehearsal scene and, instead of feigning violence, she is badly injured. Their private conflict is exposed to the rest of the cast by being enacted on stage.

Over Your Dead Body, as the title suggests, has much to say about ambition. But stardom is seen throughout as perilous not glorious: one recurrent shot, of Miyuki's fish in a tank, emphasises the exposing nature of fame. If Miyuki feels jaded by celebrity then her younger colleague, played by Miho Nakanishi, is hungry for it. When she begins an affair with Kosuke, it is suggested that her real intention is to feel closer to Miyuki's life and her stardom. This is pure All About Eve, whose plot haunts so many films about theatre.

In Audition, the widower decides he wants a performer for a wife because of the confidence she will have gained from artistic training; he chooses a woman who was once a ballerina. "When I danced, it purified the dark side of me," she tells him. There is no such hope for the stars staging Yotsuya Kaidan, as the drama's troubling darkness invades their own visions and nightmares, and the horror seeps off the stage.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2021/jan/26/takashi-miike-over-your-dead-body-best-films-set-in-the-theatre>

## The Great British art tourArt and design

# **The Great British Art Tour: Thomas Paine and his upside-down Rights of Man**

With public art collections closed we are bringing the art to you, exploring highlights and hidden gems from across the country in partnership with Art UK. Today's pick: Thetford's Thomas Paine statue



The gilded bronze statue of Thomas Paine (1737–1809) by Charles Thomas Wheeler (1892–1974) in Thetford, Norfolk. Photograph: Robert H Taylor/Art UK

The gilded bronze statue of Thomas Paine (1737–1809) by Charles Thomas Wheeler (1892–1974) in Thetford, Norfolk. Photograph: Robert H Taylor/Art UK

*Dr Anthony McIntosh, public sculpture manager, Art UK*  
Tue 26 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Thomas Paine was born in Thetford, Norfolk, on 29 January 1737. A complex and controversial character, he was a writer and political activist who was influential in both the American war of independence and the French Revolution.

An inscription on the plinth describes him as an “Englishman by birth; French citizen by decree; American by adoption.” The statue, by Charles Thomas Wheeler (1892-1974), was unveiled on 7 June 1964, gifted to the town of Thetford by the Thomas Paine Foundation in New York.



The Thomas Paine statue in Thetford, unveiled in June 1964. Photograph: Robert H Taylor/Art UK

The gilded bronze figure stands in a dramatic pose on top of a large plinth. In his outstretched right hand, he holds a quill pen, and in his left he holds a copy of Rights of Man (conspicuously upside down).

Paine sailed to America in 1774 with a letter of introduction from Benjamin Franklin. He published essays condemning slavery and criticising British colonial policy and in 1776, wrote the widely distributed pamphlet Common Sense, supporting the case for American independence, which led to his being hailed as a patriot by the Americans, and as a traitor by the British. It has even been suggested that he played a part in the writing in the

Declaration of Independence. [President Obama quoted Paine](#) in his 2009 inauguration speech.

After moving to France, Paine published [Rights of Man \(1791-92\)](#), a controversial treatise supporting the French Revolution, and probably his most famous work. He was involved in the trial of Louis XVI but later fell out of favour with the revolutionary government, and was imprisoned himself, only escaping [execution by chance](#). Released in 1794, he returned to America in 1802 but received a hostile reception there, primarily because of his publication *Age of Reason* (1794-1807) which attacked Christianity and other formal religions.

Paine died in New York on 8 June 1809. In a macabre twist to his story, his bones were exhumed and stolen in 1819 by the radical journalist and politician William Cobbett, who wanted them reburied in England with a fitting memorial. Cobbett had them in his possession until his death in 1835, but then they disappeared. All over the world there are those who claim to possess parts of the skeleton, including one suggestion that some of the bones were made into buttons!

Paine is also remembered in Lewes, East Sussex, where he lived for six years; the town boasts a [striking portrait sculpture of him by Marcus Cornish](#).

- [Discover more sculpture on Art UK](#), and search for other [artworks and artists on Art UK here](#).
- *This series is brought to you in collaboration with [Art UK](#), which brings the nation's art together on one digital platform and tells the stories behind the art. The website shows works by 50,000 artists from more than 3,000 venues including museums, universities and hospitals as well as thousands of public sculptures. [Discover the art you own here](#).*

## 2021.01.26 - Opinion

- The combination of Covid and class has been devastating for Britain's poorest
- Covid has made inequality even worse. The only answer: squeeze the super-rich
- The biggest secret parents keep? The life-changing brilliance of teenagers
- 'A dangerous distraction' The Guardian view on calls to reopen schools
- The Tory fixation on wokeness is all about division. Labour must build bridges instead
- Johnson's last-minute bid to save the union can't undo years of neglect

[Opinion](#)[Poverty](#)

## The combination of Covid and class has been devastating for Britain's poorest

[Owen Jones](#)



With care workers, nurses and bus drivers among those most likely to die, drastic action is needed by the state



A bus stop in Westminster – ONS figures show bus drivers have among the highest death rates in the pandemic. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

A bus stop in Westminster – ONS figures show bus drivers have among the highest death rates in the pandemic. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

Tue 26 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

Britain's class system determines who is wealthy, who has power, and even who lives. Before Covid-19 arrived, if you were a man in one of [England's poorest communities](#), you could expect to live nine years fewer than someone in one of its most affluent areas. Those living in the poorest parts of Britain have a greater chance of suffering from [heart](#) and [lung disease](#), and their children are more than [twice as likely](#) to be obese as those in the richest parts. People condemned to poor-quality housing are more likely to have illnesses [such as asthma](#), and with mental health disproportionately damaged by the [stresses of poverty](#), the poorest men are [up to 10 times](#) more at risk of suicide than the richest.

From the very start, the pandemic was always going to be shaped by the inequalities that define contemporary Britain. This is a virus that disproportionately inflicts the worst illness – and death – on those with

underlying health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity, which disproportionately affect the poor. While middle-class professionals have the luxury of working in Covid-compliant homes, millions of working-class Britons cannot perform their tasks remotely. Many have no option but to cram into public transport en route to workplaces which often [do not enforce](#) safe social distancing to protect them. Recent [statistics from the Office for National Statistics](#) show that care-home workers and nurses are among those most likely to die from coronavirus, alongside machine operatives, home carers, chefs, restaurant managers, nurses and bus drivers. These figures do not surprise, but they should still shock. Many of the key workers who people applauded from porches, windows and balconies during the first lockdown were cheered to their deaths.

[Britain has plenty of cash to bail out big business, yet nothing for the poorest](#)  
[| Simon Jenkins](#)

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Throughout the crisis, the defining strategy of Britain's authorities has been to throw themselves at stable doors months after the horse has bolted. This week, test and trace supremo [Dido Harding declared](#) that workers are too scared to come forward to be tested because of a lack of financial support from the government. While salaried professionals generally have no fears about feeding children or paying bills if they self-isolate, the same does not apply to the millions of workers whose families are in poverty even though they're working. At just £95.85 per week, our statutory sick pay is [among the lowest in Europe](#): how many deaths would have been prevented if more workers felt financially secure when staying away from their workplaces?

While hiking statutory sick pay would be a belated vital measure, if we are to – to borrow the cliche of the moment – “build back better”, we need far more ambitious reforms. Covid-19 collided with Britain's class system and made existing inequalities more fatal. When we are finally through this nightmare, poverty will continue to rob the health and lives of working-class Britons. The class system is itself a public health crisis: [the most unequal countries](#) are those with the worst health outcomes.

Just as the second world war paved the way for the construction of the welfare state, the pandemic must provide the same impetus for confronting social injustices. There is no vaccine for poverty. But a reconstructed welfare state, an emergency national housing programme, a genuine living wage and a revamped public health strategy could provide cures. It is too late to prevent the deaths of over a hundred thousand disproportionately poor citizens: but the legacy of Covid Britain could save many more lives, if only the political willpower was there.

- Owen Jones is a Guardian columnist
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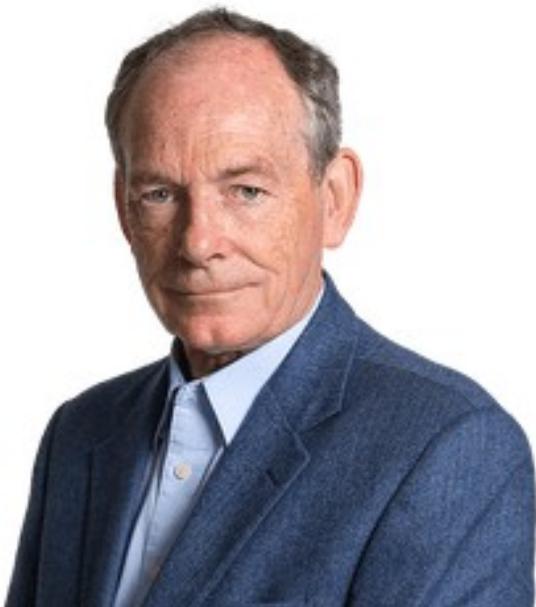
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**Opinion**[The super-rich](#)

## Covid has made inequality even worse. The only answer: squeeze the super-rich

[Simon Jenkins](#)



It's not right that the world's 10 richest people have amassed £400bn since the start of the pandemic while billions struggle



‘The billions of dollars in the world’s protected tax havens make the possible yield from the world’s 10 richest people look like pocket money.’ Luxury yachts moored in the harbour in Monaco. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

‘The billions of dollars in the world’s protected tax havens make the possible yield from the world’s 10 richest people look like pocket money.’ Luxury yachts moored in the harbour in Monaco. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Tue 26 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Comparisons are odious, but some are sensational. According to Oxfam, the wealth of the world’s 10 richest individuals [has risen by £400bn](#) since the start of the pandemic. That sum could apparently vaccinate every adult on Earth, as well as restore the income lost in 2020 to the world’s poorest people.

These figures emerged on the opening day of the Davos World Economic Forum, which is taking place virtually this year. They have not, I suspect, been peer-reviewed. And since the economic relief so far expended by world governments amounts to a [massive \\$12tn](#) (£9.2tn), it is difficult to believe that another half-trillion would make that much difference. But it is hard to quarrel with the report’s conclusion that current economic policies have

enabled “a super-rich elite to amass wealth in the middle of the worst recession since the Great Depression, while billions of people are struggling to make ends meet”.

Political economists on both the left and the right are coming to the conclusion that the gap between rich and poor countries, as well as between rich and poor people, is destabilising and dangerous to democracy. The so-called Gini coefficient of inequality in personal incomes and wealth fell steadily in the latter decades of the 20th century, but has risen sharply in the 21st. The world is getting less equal.

The reasons are many, but some are thought to relate to seismic innovations in technology. The surplus wealth accruing to entrepreneurs such as Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk has piled up over the past nine months largely from the boom in the online economy, reflected in the rise in the stock market. Bezos has added roughly \$100,000 to his wealth for every one of his Amazon employees. As was said of captains of industry in 1918: “They look as if they have done very well out of the war.”

Vague Oxfam exhortations that we need to “shape more equal societies” are unlikely to get anywhere. Whatever Davos may pretend, the world does not have one government or one tax regime, let alone one ideology. Emotional rhetoric is rarely a good agency of reform – answers can lie only in details. Governments are piling massive debts on to future generations. Even if some means are found, as they surely must be, to write off the debts of the past exceptional year, more buoyant sources of national revenue will be required. The sources must lie in taxation.

The world’s most successful industries – largely the concern of the top 10 wealthy individuals – are still operating virtually tax-free. The reason at root is that these industries are global, while taxation is national. Tax regimes tend to be deeply conservative, continuing to undertax wealth, notably property, and overtax lower and middle incomes. Fiscal authorities, such as Britain, are also cynically indulgent towards tax avoidance and money laundering, while loading taxpayers with regressive imposts such as council tax and VAT.

The global marketplace of Apple, Facebook, Google and their sprawling dependencies is essentially left alone in space. No one country has yet had the nerve to confront it – except possibly China – despite its vast tax potential. This will end only when Europe and America take the lead and act in concert, which should be a top item on Joe Biden's agenda.

Meanwhile, it is for governments to track down and police those who, far from not paying enough tax, pay little or none at all. They grow rich by keeping their wealth offshore and refusing to contribute to treasuries from which they and their families draw a lifetime of benefit. The billions of dollars in the world's protected tax havens – denying national revenues estimated [at \\$250bn](#) a year – make the possible yield from the world's 10 richest people look like pocket money. British taxpayers alone are reckoned to lose £8.5bn. Meanwhile, the chancellor fiddles with a damaging airport VAT change.

There are three possible answers to the question of how to increase the contribution of the super-rich: shrug, shame or tax. Shrugged is easy. It has ruled policy in Britain ever since the days of 80% surtax ended in the 1980s. Shame is dubious. Andrew Carnegie may have said “the man who dies rich dies disgraced”, but most take that risk. To be fair, Zuckerberg has tipped much of his wealth into a charity, while Bezos has delegated billions to his ex-wife. But do we really want the world's welfare left to the whims of a rich oligarchy? As William MacAskill of Effective Altruism has argued, the random distribution of charitable wealth can be stupefyingly inefficient.

As for higher personal taxes, Oxfam argues that if Argentina can levy a one-off emergency surtax on its 12,000 richest citizens, so surely can the richer countries of the world. Thousands of companies and their owners may have been bankrupted this past year through no fault of their own. But the very rich have been able to lie low, contributing to the reported £200bn that fortunate Britons have stored up in their bank accounts this past nine months.

This pandemic is undeniably worsening the gulf between the very rich and the poor – a gulf that is not inevitable and is for democracy to remedy if it chooses. When in time of trouble some are seen to gain so grotesquely at the expense of others, something is wrong. A surtax must be the answer.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist
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**OpinionFamily**

# The biggest secret parents keep? The life-changing brilliance of teenagers

[Emma Beddington](#)



They are always talked of in terms of bad attitudes and wet towels. But the truth is, while their lives are painfully hard right now, they remain creative, compassionate and funny



‘Teens are great, but, for all the ebullience, emojis and TikTok routines, they are fragile.’ (Posed by model) Photograph: Hello Africa/Getty Images

‘Teens are great, but, for all the ebullience, emojis and TikTok routines, they are fragile.’ (Posed by model) Photograph: Hello Africa/Getty Images

Tue 26 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

A friend has fallen in love with [Depop, the Gen Z fashion eBay](#), and its teen sellers. I downloaded the app on her recommendation, but I am bamboozled by the listings: a “perf lil crop top” appears to be a shirt collar and sleeves without any other shirt parts; a corset is “for dat peek-a-boo bad b lewwk kk ... wear her alone and sessi or over your fav big T”. I feel 1,000 years old.

“I message them questions because the listings are lacking useful info, such as what size it is, and they answer almost entirely in emojis and put kisses after everything, and I love them,” says my friend.

The fashion is emphatically not for me, but I understand. She has stumbled on something that is, mysteriously, a closely guarded secret: how great teenagers are. There is a sort of omertà among parents of teens to talk only about the attitude and wet towels. Why? Do we want to keep them to ourselves?

Nothing is as life-affirming as a half-hour audience with teenagers

Because nothing is as life-affirming as a half-hour audience with teenagers. I am not just saying it because I have two: I used to have toddlers, and you would never have heard me say they were basically misunderstood and a delight to be around.

Teenagers – not mine specifically – are creative, compassionate and careful of others; they are stoic about their constrained lives. Mine make me laugh and think constantly: this week alone about my attitude to other people's success (wrong), my upper body strength (abysmal) and Japanese abstract expressionism ([unexpected](#)).

When we do talk positively about teens, it is in a breezy, how-marvellous-is-Greta-Thunberg way. This “young people will save us” discourse is well meant, but I hate it: it is a shrug of helplessness. Their [mental health is in freefall](#), their present bleak and their future grimly unknowable. Teens are great, but, for all the ebullience, emojis and TikTok routines, they are fragile. It is still up to us to try to make things OK for them: we are the grownups, after all.

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[Opinion](#)[Education policy](#)

## The Guardian view on calls to reopen schools: a dangerous distraction

[Editorial](#)

With more than 1,000 deaths from Covid every day for weeks, talk of looser restrictions is reckless. The prime minister should ignore his backbenchers



‘Home schooling going on for months is a poor substitute for professional teaching among peers.’ Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

‘Home schooling going on for months is a poor substitute for professional teaching among peers.’ Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Mon 25 Jan 2021 14.08 EST

The coronavirus situation in the UK could hardly be more serious, with [more than 1,000 deaths a day](#) every day since 9 January. Hospitals are at breaking point, as the eruption of a [row over medical staff criticising the public](#) for rule-breaking showed. Energy must be focused on driving

infections down, and vaccinations up, particularly in view of [warnings](#) about the new variants.

Against this backdrop, a series of statements from Conservative politicians demanding that the government should announce when schools will reopen seems reckless politicking. The risk is that the public will be misled into thinking that the worst is over. Teachers and other school staff are already under huge pressure, as [the prime minister acknowledged](#) on Monday. When there is no timetable for vaccinating them or a solution to the problem of high rates of infection among children, why would one endanger frontline workers or the communities they serve?

Schools being closed is far from ideal. Home schooling is a poor substitute for professional teaching among peers. Education is among the greatest social goods. The absence of in-person lessons, in classrooms, has already increased [inequalities](#) of all kinds, and reduced community cohesion, which is promoted by people being together.

Education is the responsibility of the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. No one has got schools completely right. In England, Downing Street made serious errors in the autumn, for which the country is paying a high price. Infection rates among secondary-age pupils [multiplied by 75](#) between September and December; before Christmas, [children were the most infected age group](#). Ignoring calls for a longer half-term break to create a “circuit breaker” was one mistake. A rota system in secondary schools leading to smaller classes was another pragmatic step that ministers chose not to take. But schools were rightly among the country’s top priorities.

That picture has now grown far more murky, with economic activity of various kinds taking place – as shown by raised traffic levels, compared with last year – while schools stay shut. When [Robert Halfon](#), Conservative chair of the education select committee, calls for tighter restrictions “in other parts of the economy” in order that schools may reopen, he has a point. Similarly, Anne Longfield, the children’s commissioner for England, is right to warn of the toll on young people’s mental health, and to say that greater clarity about what comes next would help.

Discussions are needed about a staggered return, or whether a balance can be struck between learning on and off school sites. But this is the wrong moment to push for dates. Right now, the focus must be on driving transmission down and giving people sufficient money so that they are able to stick to the rules, including quarantining. It seems that the administrations in charge of education understand this. But the purpose of the Covid Recovery Group of Conservative backbenchers is to bolster a wider argument against lockdown and in favour of economic activity, and to create a diversion from a disastrous situation.

The prime minister must stand firm. The Tory right's dogmatism lies behind many of the difficulties the country now faces: the threat to export businesses due to Brexit, renewed pressure on the unions with Scotland and Northern Ireland, weakened public services struggling to cope with the pandemic. There are good reasons to be concerned for children's welfare. But finely balanced decisions about when and how to reopen schools must be based on scientific evidence, not ideology.

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## OpinionPolitics

# The Tory fixation on wokeness is all about division. Labour must build bridges instead

[Zoe Williams](#)



The government's version of identity politics has proved potent. The only response is to change the nature of the debate



Keir Starmer during an address to the Fabian Society on Saturday 16 January. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Keir Starmer during an address to the Fabian Society on Saturday 16 January. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Mon 25 Jan 2021 11.05 EST

I never thought I'd miss the 2010s, but I do have some nostalgia for them. At least last decade's "opposite world" meant what it said: whatever the truth was, ministers would blame the opposite. In the creation of poverty, [the culprit](#) was the poor rather than the rich; in the nightmare of Brexit, the [problem was remainers](#) rather than leavers; in a runaway climate crisis, the root cause was Extinction Rebellion rather than fossil fuels and all those who'd hitched their finances to them.

It was pretty tedious, but it was preferable to today's opposite world, in which, despite whatever is important – from Covid rates to customs turmoil – ministers will be trying their level best to talk about what is petty. (A piquant, if tangential, example: Monday's Daily Telegraph, the little drummer boy of the endless culture war, reported approvingly the idea of an "[anti-woke Citizens Advice](#) service".) They create pantomimes, patriots battling straw men over trivia. This would make no sense if it came from a state in the grip of a crisis, but it makes every sense from a state with only

one aim – the survival of its ruling party. To the modern conservative, all government business is party business.

A typical explanation is that it's all distraction: while we're blaming each other for wokeness or bigotry, that's all energy not directed at the government. The more intense the debate, the more divisions it opens up within as well as between each side, so there is no oxygen for more productive discussions. This theory is true as far as it goes but, like the one about [why planes stay in the air](#), it's insufficient. An electorate fighting among itself will always be less challenging to its government – yet governments do not typically rely on disunity and sourness, still less work so hard to create them. The question is, what political capital does all this generate?

[It's Churchill or bust: now Britain's culture warriors are looking to Washington | Marina Hyde](#)

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In the late 1990s, the sociologist Nancy Fraser described how “[cultural recognition](#)” – the recognition of difference, what we used to call identity politics – had displaced “socioeconomic redistribution as the remedy for injustice”. It was Fraser's aim to try and knit recognition and redistribution back together, since justice required both: there was no point being culturally emancipated if you were still materially oppressed by low wages.

Over four grim Brexit years, William Davies, another sociologist, drew out the evolution of “recognition” politics to the present day. Our concept of different identities had shrunk to one: the “[left-behind](#)”, AKA the red wall, previously known as the white working class. All other banners that people might congregate behind – ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality – were collapsed into “metropolitan”, which was then elided with “elite” to become de facto inauthentic. Nobody had to recognise you if you weren't real. It was a bit of a surprise, to be honest; not to find that I'm a despised elite (I knew that), but that so was my whole postcode.

In terms of the left-behind, which may have been newly prominent in 2016 but wasn't a new construct, the Labour government had typically been good at redistribution but bad at recognition. This reached its apotheosis in

Gordon Brown's famous “[bigoted woman](#)” moment. As gaffes go, it would have passed without remark had it not been seen to contain some essential truth – that he and his predecessor despised the very people they claimed to prioritise.

Three Conservative prime ministers, meanwhile, have been very good at recognition and heartbreakingly bad at redistribution. They have systematically impoverished the very people whose worldview they say they champion. Their failure to redistribute needs little analysis: they don't do it because they choose not to.

Yet this quest for identity-building issues – patriotism, [British exceptionalism](#), nostalgia, monoculturalism – is much more than a simple balancing act: “Here, have this orgy of flag-waving in lieu of liveable sick pay.” It has proved extremely useful to them in neutralising the Labour party, which for more than 10 years has been unable to find solid ground on this matter.

Successive Labour leaders have essayed the acts of recognition that focus groups have told them were required, and either failed quietly, by shuffling away their inconvenient points of difference, or failed explosively – Ed Miliband’s “curbs on immigration” mug, [Jeremy Corbyn’s bungled attempt](#) to whip for abstention on a really ugly immigration bill in 2019. The problem is not that they disappoint their beloved liberal elite, but rather that nobody believes them; nobody ever bought that Miliband was anti-immigration, or that Corbyn supported Brexit, or that Keir Starmer has a union flag in his kitchen. If they’re not who they say they are, who on earth are they? They defy definition, and the blurring effect follows them even when they exit enemy territory to talk about the NHS or regional inequality, so that a soft Tory like Jeremy Hunt can sound more convincing on social care than any given Labour MP.

The Conservatives’ culture wars, as boring as they are, have been magnificently effective, partly because they are agile. The current fixation on “[wokeness](#)” is an adaptation to the fact that “elitism” as an idea was beginning to fray. Labour cannot carry on surrendering to a Tory version of recognition which will always shape-shift on demand, but nor can it go back to ignoring recognition altogether.

Instead, Labour needs to attack the foundational myth: the Conservatives haven't done anything complicated; they have merely characterised the red wall exclusively by those features with which all the other walls – the youth wall, the tartan wall, the metropolitan wall – could not possibly agree. But there are other issues on which these constituencies would agree, ideas that may sound economic but actually form the cornerstone of identities: that one ought, for instance, to be able to sustain oneself with dignity and without hardship by working. This has much higher salience than what “woke” does or doesn't mean. There is opportunity in the sheer silliness of the current debate for Labour to start building their red bridge.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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## Johnson's last-minute bid to save the union can't undo years of neglect

[Martin Kettle](#)



Scotland's moves towards independence have panicked the UK government, but its hasty plans for reform may be too late



Pro-EU campaigners outside the Scottish parliament, Edinburgh, January 2020. Photograph: Jane Barlow/PA

Pro-EU campaigners outside the Scottish parliament, Edinburgh, January 2020. Photograph: Jane Barlow/PA

Mon 25 Jan 2021 11.36 EST

The potential breakup of Britain has crept up on Boris Johnson in plain sight. Cavalier inattention in Downing Street to the souring political mood towards Whitehall in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as in parts of northern England, has been increasingly reckless. It may already be impossible for the Conservatives to retrieve the situation and [keep the United Kingdom together](#) much longer.

Nevertheless, although it is late in the day, and in spite of the fact that ministers are arming themselves with policy responses that may prove ineffective, the Johnson government now claims to be on [full alert](#) over the threat to the union. As it finally faces up to this country's potential breakup, the government is preparing a counterattack that may prove too little and too late, and may fail. Yet it unquestionably marks a distinct change of approach after years of complacency.

This week Johnson [heads to Scotland](#) to launch what was described on Monday as “an all-out bid to save the United Kingdom” and, rather less plausibly, “a charm offensive”. My understanding is that key ministers, and Johnson himself, are determined to move the constitutional debate away from the increasingly bitter polarisation between the status quo on the one hand and independence on the other. The new approach involves carving a third way between the two extremes, based on the principle of the UK adding value to the devolved settlement, as well as launching an all-UK strategy that could involve new and wider devolution and a more federal structure to the UK’s constitutional arrangements, potentially extending to reform of the House of Lords.

One minister tells me the plan is for Johnson to announce that he considers the UK’s existing constitutional architecture is not working. Whether these issues are to be remitted to a constitutional commission of some kind, perhaps similar to the one [proposed by the](#) Labour leader Keir Starmer in December, will soon be made clear. These discussions are described as “very live”. But the target audience is clear: the voters whom ministers describe as the majority of the electorate in all four parts of the UK who do not have a passion for breaking up Britain.

The problem facing the UK government is that the reform ship may already have sailed while the government’s attention was focused elsewhere. It is just about possible to excuse some of the neglect and delay of the post-general election period. Covid has, after all, absorbed the lion’s share of ministerial attention for almost a year.

Other aspects of the neglect, though, are less easily excused. This government’s entire original raison d’être was to get Brexit done. This was bound to place it in fundamental opposition to [majority opinion in Scotland](#) and to a narrower majority in Northern Ireland. The overwhelming impression since 2019 has been that senior Tories did not really care about that and that the pro-Europeans had to lump it.

Brexit also marked the Johnson government as emotionally English-centred – unable to display much feeling for the other parts of the UK. This is a trait that Johnson himself embodies in a particularly southern English way, as Theresa May had also done, though without the toxic sense of entitlement

that Johnson exudes. While Dominic Cummings ruled in Downing Street, the government also exhibited raw contempt for opponents and for inherited institutions, including devolution. Its unionism was unapologetically centralist as well as English, not pluralist or based on arts of compromise or reform.

The upshot has been the disunited Britain to which many London-based politicians and commentators have only recently woken up – if indeed they yet have. Its features were usefully summarised in the weekend [Sunday Times surveys](#) that found British identity disintegrating across these islands in favour of English, Welsh, Scottish and two kinds of Irish identities. Border polls now have narrow majority backing in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and unprecedented support from a third of Wales.

That such findings come as a shock to many is itself shocking. Anyone who has followed these arguments and movements for the past decade and more is familiar with the strength and importance of the process and a direction of travel towards UK fragmentation that can often seem unstoppable. Yet the mindset of “devolve and forget” still clings on, even as the days of reckoning for the UK draw nearer.

More recently, differences of approach to Covid have thrust the UK’s complex political diversity into English minds as nothing else in the 20-plus years since the Blair government’s devolution settlement. Reporting from Scotland, in particular, has become better and more common than before on the BBC and in parts of the press. An entire academic and publishing industry has grown up around these issues too. Just this week, the latest example, a book titled [Englishness: The Political Force Transforming Britain](#)” landed on my desk.

Whether or not that claim about Englishness is true, the immediate battleground is without doubt Scotland. There are several reasons. The most important is the continuing ascendancy of the SNP. The May 2021 [Holyrood elections](#) have long been earmarked as the moment at which Nicola Sturgeon will seek a mandate to initiate a second referendum on independence. Polls in Scotland show steady majorities for separation. The polling expert John Curtice [said at the weekend](#) that the SNP is on course for a landslide.

Until recently, the Johnson government's policy towards all this was to just say no. But that is changing now. There is panic and realism in the new approach. The SNP is formidable but not unbeatable. Divisions between reformists and ultras – between [Sturgeon and Alex Salmond](#) and their respective backers – may change the mood. If Sturgeon or any successor is pushed into calling an illegal referendum, it would trigger a widespread [boycott](#) that could open the way for different politics.

Scotland is very much the catalyst for the new approach. But the policy holds big implications for other parts of the UK. Get [Scotland](#) wrong and Wales becomes more fractious, including for the Tory party internally. Any change to Northern Ireland's future necessarily involves the Irish Republic and the EU. And the elephant in the room in any debate about a new UK order is always England, which has 85% of the whole population and has no national self-government at all.

[Gordon Brown argued](#) on Monday that reform is now the only alternative to UK state failure. Many ministers have come, with varying degrees of willingness, to a similar conclusion. Whether the Labour and other reformers can or should work with Conservatives – or vice versa – on these issues is fraught. There are big egos involved and conflicting interests. The SNP is licking its lips. But if the two pro-union traditions spend all their time squabbling, who benefits there except the nationalists?

Ministers say they recognise the immensely delicate issues involved. The Tory mind instinctively fears this is a Pandora's box that could empower separatists from Caithness to Cornwall. But the Tory bottom line is also that they would now lose a zero-sum contest. They cannot appear as if they are arrogant colonial masters, says one minister. So the reform path, however difficult, must be followed. It is an enormous risk, and time is running out fast.

- Martin Kettle is a Guardian columnist

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## [Chelsea](#)

# Chelsea to appoint Thomas Tuchel as manager after Frank Lampard is sacked

- ‘This was a very difficult decision’ says Roman Abramovich
- ‘Proud’ Lampard leaves Chelsea ninth in Premier League

03:19

*Jacob Steinberg*

[@JacobSteinberg](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 06.33 EST

Chelsea are set to appoint Thomas Tuchel as their new manager after the ruthless dismissal of [Frank Lampard](#), who was sacked less than 24 hours after watching his side beat Luton Town in the FA Cup fourth round.

The sensitivity over firing one of the greatest players in Chelsea’s history was reflected by Roman Abramovich, the club’s owner, taking the unprecedented step of releasing a statement after deciding to relieve Lampard of his duties. Abramovich was regretful in tone, speaking of his “excellent personal relationship” with the 42-year-old and calling him an important icon, but the Russian was also pragmatic, saying that the Stamford Bridge hierarchy felt that a managerial change was required “under current circumstances”.

[Abramovich era leaves Lampard with no time to pull out of nosedive](#) | [David Hytner](#)

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Lampard's status at Stamford Bridge was not enough to save him after a run of form which has seen Chelsea slide to ninth in the [Premier League](#), five points below Liverpool in fourth place, despite spending £220m on seven players last summer. They have lost five of their last eight league games and trust that Tuchel, who is available after being fired by Paris Saint-Germain last month, is capable of reviving their hopes of qualifying for the Champions League.

The 47-year-old German is expected to be installed in time for Chelsea's home fixture against Wolves on Wednesday and the club hope he will be able to attend the game, which he can do after first being permitted to join their secure bubble, in accordance with Covid-19 rules. Although Tuchel is not exempt from quarantine rules, meaning he will have to stay indoors when not at training or games, he can link up with his new squad as long as he tests negative before entering the country.

If Tuchel is unable to take charge against Wolves, first-team coaches Joe Edwards and Anthony Barry could stand in, with help from Petr Cech, the club's technical and performance adviser.

Chelsea said the decision to sack Lampard, who was 18 months into a three-year deal, was not taken lightly. Yet the writing was on the wall after the [shambolic 2-0 defeat to Leicester](#) last Tuesday. Lampard feared that game would mark the end of his tenure. It is understood that he even said goodbye to some players in the dressing room after full time.

Lampard hung on for a few more days and it seemed that he had bought himself some time [after the win over Luton](#). Yet Chelsea were not swayed by victory over a Championship side.

After Wolves they host Burnley on Sunday, visit Tottenham on Thursday week and face Atlético Madrid in the last 16 of the Champions League next month. The hierarchy want to give a new manager time to build momentum and informed Lampard of his sacking after delaying training on Monday yesterday morning. The former England midfielder's trusted assistants, Jody Morris and Chris Jones, are also expected to depart.

In a statement released on Monday night via the League Managers Association, Lampard said: "When I took on this role I understood the challenges that lay ahead in a difficult time for the football club. I am proud of the achievements that we made, and I am proud of the academy players that have made their step into the first team and performed so well. They are the future of the club. I am disappointed not to have had the time this season to take the club forward and bring it to the next level."

Chelsea had long been concerned with performances and the club began to consider alternatives after recent defeats by [Arsenal](#) and [Manchester City](#). They were aware of Tuchel's interest and stepped up succession planning after the Leicester game. Petr Cech, the club's technical and performance adviser, was involved in identifying replacements for Lampard, his former Chelsea teammate.

RB Leipzig's Julian Nagelsmann was one option but, after exploring the possibility of hiring Ralf Rangnick on an interim basis, Chelsea turned to Tuchel. The former Borussia Dortmund manager, who won two Ligue 1 titles with PSG and led the French side to the Champions League final for the first time last season, will be charged with rebuilding the entire squad's damaged confidence.

## Timeline

### **Frank Lampard: key dates as Chelsea manager**

Show

4 July 2019

Lampard leaves Rams to make return

After Chelsea agree to pay Derby £4m in compensation, Lampard returns to manage the club he scored a record 211 goals for, winning three Premier League titles and the Champions League in 2012. "Everyone knows my love for this club and the history we have shared, however my sole focus is on the job in hand," he says. "I am here to work hard, bring further success to the club and I cannot wait to get started."

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Having qualified for the Champions League by finishing fourth, Chelsea fall short in the FA Cup final, losing 2-1 to Arsenal, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scoring twice while Matteo Kovacic is sent off. Chelsea fail to recover from injuries to captain César Azpilicueta and goalscorer Christian Pulisic. "It all came together for us today: two hamstrings, a dislocated shoulder," says Lampard. "It's the end of a long, long season and it was the tipping point for us."

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Kai Havertz is signed from Bayer Leverkusen for a fee of £89m, the most expensive signing of a £222m summer spree. Lampard's successes the previous season had been achieved despite a transfer embargo, but Havertz and £47.5m forward Timo Werner struggle to adapt. "It's not an easy transition to this league," says Lampard in January. "I think people that question them should give them time."

19 January 2021

Foxes failure marks beginning of the end

A comprehensive 2-0 defeat at Leicester is Chelsea's fifth in eight Premier League matches as they tumble out of the title race. Lampard, as has been his recent practice, suggests his players carry significant blame. "There are players who are not playing as well as they should be," he says. "They are the only ones who can deal with that. How you handle setbacks is what

defines you.” Victory over Luton in the FA Cup is not enough to save Lampard, who is sacked on 25 January.

### Timeline by **John Brewin**

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Tuchel’s task is not just to revive his German compatriots Timo Werner and Kai Havertz, both of whom have struggled since moving to England. Werner has scored one goal in his last 16 games and Havertz has disappointed but the problems are widespread. Lampard has been unable to find a balanced team, while Chelsea conceded too many goals during Lampard’s reign. Kepa Arrizabalaga, the £71.6m goalkeeper, has struggled.

There were positives under Lampard, who overcame a transfer ban to qualify for the Champions League last season. His legacy will be seen in promoting academy products, many of whom are said to be fiercely loyal to him. Yet expectations were higher this season and Lampard, who has struggled to win over the powerful director, Marina Granovskaia, has failed to move Chelsea closer to Liverpool and City at the top of the league.

There was a lack of consistency in selection and players felt the team had no identity. Unrest in the dressing room has grown, with the mood worsened by Lampard’s occasional public criticism of his side after defeats. It is understood that Antonio Rüdiger, an influential figure in the dressing room, had fallen out with Morris.

[Does Frank Lampard genuinely deserve to be fired right now? | Barney Ronay](#)

[Read more](#)

Lampard was not helped by his own awkward relationship with Rüdiger. The German defender was fifth-choice centre-back at the start of the season and was expected to leave. Yet he ended up staying and Lampard, whose bloated squad also contained three left-backs, ended up trying to protect harmony within the squad by bringing Rüdiger, who is rated by board members, back into the fold in recent weeks.

It came to feel that Lampard, who had spent only a year managing Derby County in the Championship before returning to Stamford Bridge, was too inexperienced when he replaced Maurizio Sarri in 2019. Although he did well in his first campaign there has been no visible progress this season.

Chelsea's fans remained behind Lampard but he had the worst points-per-game average of any manager in the Abramovich era. It is down to Tuchel to pick up the pieces. He comes with risks given that he has a reputation for falling out with his bosses, but his coaching pedigree is not in doubt.

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[Chelsea](#)

## Abramovich era leaves Lampard with no time to pull out of nosedive

Chelsea's latest ex-manager is yet another victim of a hierarchy that will not hesitate to make a change if they feel Champions League qualification is at risk

03:19



[David Hytner](#)

[@DaveHytner](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 13.51 EST

Frank Lampard may allow himself a rueful smile, albeit only when the pain begins to ease. At another club, Chelsea's latest former manager might have been granted more time; the means to pull out of the nosedive.

Look at Manchester United and Arsenal, where Ole Gunnar Solskjær and Mikel Arteta have seemed close to crashing and burning at various points. Solskjær appeared doomed after United's [6-1 home defeat](#) against Tottenham on 4 October while he continued to dice with disaster through November and into the early part of December. Arteta's horror period was more sustained, the moments of respite rather more sporadic. When his Arsenal team [lost at Everton](#) on 19 December, they had taken only five points from 10 Premier League games.

[Chelsea to appoint Thomas Tuchel as manager after Frank Lampard is sacked](#)

[Read more](#)

But United made it clear they would stand by Solskjær and Arsenal did the same with Arteta – the club's chief executive, Vinai Venkatesham, going on record with his support on 12 December, describing his manager as a “really, really powerful individual”.

Look at United and Solskjær now, sitting pretty on top of the table and, if Arteta has not completely turned it around at Arsenal, he has at least restored an upward trajectory with four wins and a draw in five league matches.

[Lampard has similarities with Solskjær and Arteta](#). Like them, he was back at the club where [he enjoyed success and adulation as a player](#). The trio are in the same age bracket and they are at early stages of their managerial careers, having taken elite jobs for the first time.

But Lampard always knew that the Chelsea of the [Roman Abramovich](#) era has a different culture when it comes to backing a manager through a crisis. As a player at the club, he lived through nine managerial changes in 13 years and each time and, indeed, on those that post-dated his first departure from Stamford Bridge in 2014, there would be no escape once the death roll had started; only silence from the top and a growing sense of inevitability.

It has to affect the players. Top-level professionals are used to constant pressure but when it is ratcheted up to this degree, it takes a particular type to be able to maintain performance. The disillusioned, meanwhile, might begin to think they could outlast the manager.



Frank Lampard has seen expectations rise after the £220m splurge on new signings last summer. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

Lampard was finished on Tuesday of last week after the mess that was the [2-0 defeat at Leicester](#) – his fifth reverse in eight league games – with sources expecting him to depart within 24 hours. That said, when he stayed put and took charge of Sunday's FA Cup [win over Luton](#), it did raise the prospect of him fighting on for a little longer.

It is strange to remember that [Chelsea](#) were third on the morning of 12 December and only two points off the top. The slide then began with the 1-0 loss at Everton but, when the board noted in the communication of Lampard's sacking on Monday that the team was "without any clear path to sustained improvement", they were looking at the bigger picture.

It showed this season that whenever Chelsea faced high-calibre opposition in the league, they either drew 0-0 or lost miserably. It showed that expensive signings were lacking direction and belief. And it showed an overall lack of positive collective identity. United and Arsenal could see the on-field structures that their managers were trying to put in place, even in the bad moments. Chelsea, whose directors are notoriously jittery whenever they feel that Champions League qualification is in jeopardy, could not.

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Lampard has paid for the lack of progress, with expectations having been inflated by the £220m splurge on new signings last summer. It had felt as if Chelsea's transfer ban in the summer of 2019 – when Lampard arrived – had offered him a bit of leeway. This season, the pendulum swung the other way and the struggles of Timo Werner and Kai Havertz, in particular, who were bought for a combined £119.5m, were a large stick with which to beat Lampard. There was a weird symbolism in Werner's 85th-minute penalty miss against Luton, which was pretty much the last act under Lampard.

Recruitment, as ever at Chelsea, has been an issue. Did Lampard truly want so many new attacking options, with Hakim Ziyech added as well? It left him struggling to please a cast that also featured Callum Hudson-Odoi, Mason Mount, Christian Pulisic, Tammy Abraham and Olivier Giroud. The squad was similarly bloated in other areas, including central defence where Lampard's decision to freeze out Antonio Rüdiger at the start of the season created friction.

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## Timeline by **John Brewin**

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

There were times, especially in recent weeks, when Lampard was overwhelmed by frustration at the basic errors of various players and he called them out publicly. It is well documented that he built his career as a midfielder on a ferocious desire to prove people wrong, to use criticism as a spur and he would argue that his players ought to be able to deal with a few home truths from him. And yet there was the nagging suspicion that he strayed too close to laying the blame for Chelsea's slump at the feet of his squad, which is a risky business in modern football with the egos involved.

Where Lampard succeeded was last season, in finishing fourth to secure Champions League qualification; in a number of impressive wins – most notably the two over José Mourinho's Spurs and the one over Pep Guardiola's Manchester City – and in blooding a clutch of young players, showing that there can be a pathway from the academy to the first team. Mount was the biggest success story, with Reece James and Abraham close behind.

[Does Frank Lampard genuinely deserve to be fired right now? | Barney Ronay](#)

[Read more](#)

Around it all was something intangible – the connection that Lampard restored between the club and the match-going fans. After the stodge of Maurizio Sarri's tenure, supporters actually enjoyed going to Stamford Bridge again and they badly wanted Lampard to do well.

In the end, there is the impression that Lampard was merely the latest interchangeable piece of the Chelsea puzzle. He could not say no to the opportunity, even if he had been mindful of his lack of managerial experience – what would that have said about his boldness?

Had Lampard won trophies, it would have been impossibly sweet for Chelsea but now they are on to the [next thing in the shape of Thomas](#)

Tuchel. This is a club where creative tension around the manager is worn like a badge of pride and considered to be a driver for the honours under Abramovich. Nobody knows what patience and greater stability could bring.

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[The FiverFootball](#)

## An appointment with Mr Roman's twitchy, well-scuffed sacking shoe

[Sign up now!](#) [Sign up now!](#) [Sign up now?](#) [Sign up now!](#)



Po' Frank's a-cold! Photograph: John Sibley/Action Images/Reuters

Po' Frank's a-cold! Photograph: John Sibley/Action Images/Reuters

[Scott Murray](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 11.48 EST

## CHELSEA DAGGER

Stamford Bridge is swathed in snow, but that's not why Po' Frank Lampard's a-cold. Po' Frank's a-cold because Frank Lampard's Chelsea [have just issued him with Frank Lampard's P45](#), Mr Roman's notorious and oft-operated boot sending him bouncing eastbound along London's fashionable King's Rahd in style, his old school tie trailing in the breeze.

Seems scraping past 10-man Fulham, eking out a turgid win against second-tier Luton, and having his coaching trousers washed, pressed and handed back to him on a silver platter by Brendan Rodgers wasn't enough to save his dream job after all. Hey, it's lucky Brenny gave him back those breeks, huh kids, because Mr Roman has hoofed him down the Rahd with some force and feeling. Imagine the neon chafing that would otherwise have occurred by the time he reached Sloane Square.

As he whistles down the trendy tarmac at breakneck speed, Po' Frank may take a moment to wonder where it all went wrong. It was barely 50 days ago that his side topped the Premier League, and Jürgen Klopp had anointed them as favourites for the title. That proved to be the Liverpool manager's worst judgment call of the season by some distance. Not bad going for someone who has seen his new star striker get crocked in a dead rubber, and willingly went into the campaign with only three centre-backs, two of whom were constructed using a compound mixture of talc, tears and hope.

[Chelsea to appoint Thomas Tuchel as manager after Frank Lampard is sacked](#)

[Read more](#)

Chelsea's subsequent meagre haul of seven points from the next 24 on offer saw them plunge into mid-table irrelevance, a sorry state of affairs that inevitably led to Monday's appointment with Mr Roman's famously twitchy and well-scuffed sacking shoe. So all Po' Frank has to keep him warm are the memories: the bittersweet knowledge that he leaves behind a youthful legacy, turned a Bundesliga scoring sensation into a solid four-goal-a-season Premier League stalwart, performed contemporary dance in front of Marcelo Bielsa, ranted self-righteously at someone else's backroom staff while his side were busy shipping five goals, and enjoyed a better win ratio than Danny Blanchflower, Geoff Hurst and André Villas-Boas. That's our Frank: manager, leader, legend.

In an ideal world, Po' Frank's successor would be Neil Warnock, finally agreeing to take the job that was his in 1991, had he only wanted it. Failing that, popularity's Rafa Benítez, who has suddenly become available after downing tools in China. But it's going to be Thomas Tuchel, a wise move given the 47-year-old German's CV. His Bundesliga experience should help

get a tune out of Timo Werner and Kai Havertz; he got Paris Saint-Germain to their first-ever Big Cup final, no mean feat even if they subsequently forgot to turn up for it. Finally, he's not afraid to tell recalcitrant star players and opinionated billionaire owners exactly what's what, so much so that all three of his previous gigs have ended in overheated acrimony. This is going to be great. We give it three months.

## LIVE ON BIG WEBSITE

[Join Ben Fisher for hot FA Cup Monday night MBM coverage of Wycombe 1-3 Tottenham \(7.45pm GMT\).](#)

## RECOMMENDED VIEWING

Oh Frank! Where did it all go wrong? Big Paper's Jacob Steinberg [has some ideas](#), so watch his video analysis.

03:19

Frank Lampard sacked: what went wrong at Chelsea? – video

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Sam Allardyce is a genius to take teams when everyone believes it is over. It happens once, twice, three times you can’t say it is lucky” – Pep Guardiola gives the Baggies boss a serious ego stroke before his Manchester City rough it up again with an inevitable 5-0 win at the Hawthorns on Tuesday.

## RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Football Weekly will be here [any minute now](#), with the podders reflecting on the FA Cup action until Lampard was axed mid-recording.

## FIVER LETTERS

“Perhaps the Fiver would consider a new name for the erstwhile Frank Lampard’s Chelsea Manager Frank Lampard: Regular Old [Frank Lampard](#),

or ROFL for short” – Simon Riley.

“Has the news that Frank Lampard’s Chelsea Manager Frank Lampard is soon to become Insert Broadcaster Here Pundit Frank Lampard prevented your lead story being about Ole’s Double-winning triumph following their 3-2 hammering of Liverpool?” – Martin Landrygan.

“Never mind Poland having drastic changes in manager names [[Friday's Fiver](#)], in 1994 Wolves replaced Graham Turner with Graham Taylor. A 66% similarity score and also a big cost saving on monogrammed managerial wear” – Phil Russell.

“A strange noise accompanied my reading of Sholem Lenkiewicz’s letter [Friday’s Fiver]. It was the sound of 1,057 jaws simultaneously dropping at the idea of somebody, anybody, *respecting* The Fiver” – Colum Farrelly.

Send your letters to [the.boss@.com](mailto:the.boss@.com). And you can always tweet The Fiver via [@guardian\\_sport](#). Today’s winner of our prizeless letter o’the day prize is ... Phil Russell.

## NEWS, BITS AND BOBS

Four players and the president from the Brazilian club Palmas [died in a plane crash on Sunday](#). The group were travelling separately from the rest of the team after testing positive for coronavirus.

Aston Villa Women have appointed Marcus Bignot as interim manager, with Gemma Davies continuing to lead the WSL side’s coaching team.

Arsenal [have won the race to borrow 2015's Martin Ødegaard](#) from Real Madrid, while Leicester’s Demarai Gray must choose between [Monaco](#), [Lisbon](#) and [Croydon](#) as his next destination.

Ole Gunnar Solskjær was c0ck-a-hoop with his tricky Manchester United players after the 3-2 FA Cup win over Liverpool. “We’ve found a way of playing that we believe in,” [he whooped](#).

Elsewhere, Bruno Fernandes has [given an insight](#) into his winning mentality. “For me, losing is not normal,” purred Fernandes, a sentiment to which The Fiver cannot relate.

Hold off on the unveiling, Roman. Big Phil Scolari is available after ending a brief stint with second-tier Cruzeiro in his native Brazil.



Big Phil realises he left it too late. Photograph: Guadalupe Pardo/Reuters

Hut! Hut!! Hut!!! Patrick Bamford may need to brush up on his receiving skills after the [San Francisco 49ers increased their stake in Leeds to 37%](#).

José Mourinho has had to warn golf legend Gareth Bale he must earn playing time by [putting in the hard yards](#). Who saw that coming, eh? “I cannot give players minutes,” sniffed Mou. “The most important thing for him is to be consistent in training.”

And Wayne Rooney’s Derby County players have finally been paid their outstanding wages for December. The Wayne Rooney’s Derby County manager, Wayne Rooney, would also like to sign some new players before next Monday’s transfer deadline.

**STILL WANT MORE?**

Ten talking points from the weekend's FA Cup fourth round, including defanged Foxes and Arsenal passengers.

Rachel Brown-Finnis's WSL talking points are [right here](#).



Complete with stellar compo work. Composite: Getty Images, Reuters, VisionHaus

The title looks to be heading to Bayern Munich again after their title rivals collectively soiled themselves this weekend, [writes Andy Brassell](#).

Josip Ilicic's brilliance inspired a flurry of goals to put Atalanta in the title picture as they thrashed 'winter champions' Milan. [Here's Nicky Bandini](#).

Sid Lowe on Youssef En Nesyri, [the Sevilla striker who is outscoring Messi and co.](#)

Here's our Ligue Urrrrrrm aficionados Adam White and Eric Devin on Frédéric Antonetti, [who is having the last laugh as Metz rise up le table](#).

Oh, and if it's your thing ... [you can follow Big Website on Big Social FaceSpace](#). And [INSTACHAT, TOO!](#)

## **OUR KIND OF CONTENT**

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**Liverpool**

## Where did all the fun go? Liverpool must rediscover risk-taking brilliance

[Jonathan Liew](#)



At some point last season, Jürgen Klopp's side adopted a measured approach based around control and drilled patterns but they mislaid a part of themselves in the process



Sadio Mané reacts to scoring against Aston Villa in the FA Cup, but should he and Mo Salah have been playing against a youthful Villa side?  
Photograph: Andrew Powell/Liverpool FC/Getty Images

Sadio Mané reacts to scoring against Aston Villa in the FA Cup, but should he and Mo Salah have been playing against a youthful Villa side?  
Photograph: Andrew Powell/Liverpool FC/Getty Images

Tue 26 Jan 2021 03.05 EST

What came first, the football or the fun? Does excellence on the pitch beget its own virtuous circle of good times, good vibes and good decisions? Or is successful football simply an expression of deeper traits: curiosity, ingenuity, outlook, an urge to move and be moved? Either way, these are probably the sorts of questions worth pondering as we address Liverpool's current predicament. Because Liverpool's biggest problem right now isn't their league position or their front three or their cover at centre-half. It's the absence of fun.

Results will bounce back soon enough. The underlying performance against Manchester United on Sunday was good, undone by some individual errors and a [brilliant free-kick from Bruno Fernandes](#). They are neither as bad as they look now nor as good as they looked a month ago when many sensible observers were predicting they would win the league by 10 points. The

centre-half issue, too, will work itself out. Injured players will return to fitness. Young players like Rhys Williams will find their feet.

['World is a crazy place': Klopp accuses Liverpool critics of lacking patience](#)  
[Read more](#)

Perhaps somebody new will arrive in the next few days. If not, Fabinho seems to be doing fine for now. Pandemic-ravaged finances will recover once the pandemic subsides and fans return to Anfield. Thiago Alcântara has had a tough start to the season but is too good not to succeed in the long term. The same goes for the full-backs. In fact, virtually all of the apparently urgent crises facing Liverpool will probably evaporate within the next six months. But the fun: once that goes, that's harder to retrieve.

At this point we should probably define exactly what we mean by fun in a footballing sense. Essentially, you could describe it as caprice, mystery, enterprise, madness; a rejection of the routine, the orthodox, the banal. And perhaps the defining mood music around Liverpool now is not defeat or calamity but banality: tired, joyless players led by a tired, joyless manager playing tired, joyless football for a tired, joyless public. If Ole Gunnar Solskjær's Manchester United are currently the prime minister, quipping and joshing and urging us all to go out and lick each other's faces, then Liverpool are Keir Starmer: austere and sensible and assuring us in a thin, reedy voice that posterity will prove him right in the end.



Jürgen Klopp has led Liverpool to win the Champions League and the Premier League but his side have slipped down the table after a poor run of form. Photograph: Getty Images

The fun, it seems to me, began to drain away at some point during the second half of last season. Liverpool from around 2013-19 were one of the most thrilling and exuberant clubs on the planet: not always good and not always successful, but instinctively likeable and interesting, fuelled by a boisterous fanbase and charismatic managers and an absolutely demented sense of their mission in life. They had a throw-in coach. They had Daniel Sturridge. They had the comebacks against [Dortmund](#) and [Barcelona](#). They had [the Gerrard slip](#) and the 97-point runners-up season. They won the Champions League with an £8m left-back from Hull and persuaded Bournemouth to pay £19m for Dominic Solanke. Somehow, even though they didn't always win, Liverpool kept winning.

But something changed last season, somewhere along their frictionless march to the Premier League title. Out, for the most part, went the thrilling risk-taking football and the dramatic failures. In came a measured and conservative approach based around possession and control and drilled, inexorable patterns. Hey – it worked a treat. The ends spectacularly justified the means. But equally, there was a very marked tonal shift between the

Liverpool of 2017-19 and the Liverpool of 2020 onwards, and only now has it really become apparent.

['A punch in the face': Klopp takes blame as Burnley rip up Anfield record](#)

[Read more](#)

What happens when a football club misplaces its sense of fun? It starts making boring, counterproductive decisions. Over the close season the board [opted not to sign Timo Werner](#) from RB Leipzig, arguing that the numbers didn't add up. From a staid, empirical perspective it probably made sense. Pundits and fans lined up to congratulate Liverpool on their far-sighted parsimony. But in this most illogical of seasons in this most illogical of sports, a gifted but knackered front three demanded a shake-up. Werner, with his rocket pace and traction engine of a right foot, would have suited Liverpool's full-throttle game perfectly. Diogo Jota is fine. But Werner would have been fun. Fabinho at centre-half is fine. But smashing the wage structure for David Alaba: now that would be fun.

Also not fun: flogging Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mané in an [FA Cup tie against Aston Villa's schoolboys](#). Not fun: signing Takumi Minamino to do post-match warm-downs. Not fun: expending industrial vats of bile on a [stupid challenge by Jordan Pickford](#). Not fun: picking a pointless fight with Des Kelly on BT Sport over 12.30pm kick-offs. (Project Big Picture *was* quite fun, in its own evil, fatally doomed way.)

Naturally there will have been a cold rationale to each of these choices. In a way, that's Liverpool's problem all over: a club that made you believe in the impossible, that was having far too much fun to care what you thought about them, now feels shackled in a cage of its own angry logic, trapped in eternal arguments about possession triangles and net spend.

Maybe this is just what Liverpool needed to do to reach the pinnacle: to tune out the risk, to dial down the fun, to turn themselves into cold, joyless killers. Maybe in another world, under pre-pandemic rules, it would even have fuelled the sort of bloodless dynasty they enjoyed in the 1970s and 1980s. As it is, they feel like a club that won it all but mislaid a part of itself in the process, and no longer knows how to recover it.

That's the problem with building a winning machine: once you take the winning away, what remains?

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## Manchester United

# Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes on his mentality: 'I don't like to lose'

- Portuguese is now the club's leading scorer with 16 goals
- Fernandes is confident United can win a trophy this season



Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes (far left) watches his free-kick find the Liverpool net at Old Trafford to win Sunday's FA Cup tie. Photograph: Phil Noble/PA

Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes (far left) watches his free-kick find the Liverpool net at Old Trafford to win Sunday's FA Cup tie. Photograph: Phil Noble/PA

[Jamie Jackson](#)  
[@JamieJackson](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 10.11 EST

Bruno Fernandes has revealed the mentality that has helped to make him so successful for [Manchester United](#) by saying that losing is “not normal for me”.

The Portuguese’s late free-kick against Liverpool at Old Trafford on Sunday knocked the champions out of the FA Cup fourth round. This was Fernandes’s 16th goal of the season to make him United’s leading scorer, and his 28th in total since signing almost a year ago. He also won four Premier League Player of the Month awards in 2020, a record for a calendar year.

[Solskjær hails Manchester United's 'statement win' over Liverpool in FA Cup](#)

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The 26-year-old was asked about his will to win. “I don’t conform with [the idea that] losing games is normal stuff,” said Fernandes. “For me, losing is not normal so my mentality comes from that, you know? I always was like this. I don’t like to lose, so maybe the mentality is more like I don’t like to lose.

“Also playing whatever it is, when I was playing with my friends, my brother, my neighbours, I never wanted to lose, I want to win every time. This mentality will be with me for the rest of my life, I think.”

United face West Ham in the fifth round of the Cup, are the Premier League leaders, and begin their Europa League campaign next month. Fernandes is confident he can help to deliver the first trophy of Ole Gunnar Solskjær’s tenure as manager.

“I came to the club because I knew this is a club who wants to win everything. So you have to be confident, you have to trust your teammates, you have to trust yourself, and you have to believe. And I will believe until it’s not possible. Like when I see someone get the trophy before me [only] then I will [have] lost my belief.”

Of the strike against Liverpool, Fernandes said: “Every goal is a great moment, every win is a great moment for us. Personally, of course, scoring

the last goal in a game like this against one of the biggest rivals we have is always important. But I think the most important moment in the club [for me] will be when I get a trophy.”

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## British Cycling

# Dr Freeman worked with 'sleepers' when buying Testogel, tribunal told

- GMC QC alleges Freeman 'lied at every stage'
- 'There were dopers in the past within these organisations'



Dr Richard Freeman has admitted 18 of 22 charges, including misleading a UK Anti-Doping investigation, but denies helping to dope a rider.  
Photograph: Mike Egerton/PA

Dr Richard Freeman has admitted 18 of 22 charges, including misleading a UK Anti-Doping investigation, but denies helping to dope a rider.  
Photograph: Mike Egerton/PA

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Mon 25 Jan 2021 14.04 EST

The former Team Sky and [British Cycling](#) doctor Richard Freeman was working with “sleepers” in the organisations, who had previously used banned drugs, when buying testosterone to boost the performance of an unnamed rider, his medical tribunal has heard.

Summing up the General Medical Council’s case, Simon Jackson QC said Freeman had “lied at every stage” about ordering 30 sachets of Testogel in 2011 – and then had tried to cover up his “web of deceit” by setting up the former head coach Shane Sutton as “the fall guy”.

[Dr Richard Freeman 'crossed line' buying banned drug, tribunal hears](#)  
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“Dr Freeman looked at what the riders wanted and he didn’t focus on what the World Anti-Doping Agency Code prevented,” added Jackson. “He was prepared to sign up with an incoming doctor with his unknown magic and he, on this occasion and other occasions, crossed the rubicon by ignoring medical convention to do what he thought would provide an answer.”

Freeman has admitted 18 of 22 charges, including misleading a UK Anti-Doping investigation, but denies helping to dope a rider. He also claims that he bought testosterone for Sutton’s erectile dysfunction, a claim Sutton strongly denies.

Jackson told Freeman’s fitness-to-practise tribunal that while the GMC were not able to name a single rider that had been given Testogel, “the only logical and proper conclusion” from the evidence “was that the intended use was a doping use”.

Concluding his summing up, Jackson added: “I underline that Team Sky and British [Cycling](#) were not aware of this but there were sleepers, there were dopers in the past who were within these organisations, when Dr Freeman was acquiring the Testogel.

“They had doped before. And so these aren’t bold allegations in the sense they are unsubstantiated. The GMC has been able to pull all these strands together. The only reasonable conclusions are they weren’t clinically indicated but they were used to dope a rider.”

Earlier Jackson cited medical evidence that there was no clinical indication to support Freeman's claims that Testogel would help Sutton's erectile dysfunction. He also said that Freeman tried to trap Trish Meats of the supplement company Fit4Sport, his colleague Dr Steve Peters and Sutton in his "web of deceit".

Jackson also cast doubt on Freeman's claims that Sutton had sent him threatening texts, saying that the doctor had provided no evidence to substantiate them – and had destroyed or wiped data off his phone and laptops that could have helped him.

"Not only was there no bullying related to the ordering, there's no basis for concluding Mr Sutton wanted it, needed it or would have benefited from it," added Jackson, who said that Sutton had been a "convenient suspect" when UK Anti-Doping began investigating the banned drugs.

"We have only Dr Freeman's word that he destroyed the testosterone at home," added Jackson.

In a brief response Freeman's QC Mary O'Rourke, who will begin her summing up on Tuesday said: "There are things that Mr Jackson has said this morning, and at 2.30pm this afternoon, that we have never heard before. He's put a completely different case. I perceive a complete change in the GMC's case."

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## SportblogEngland in Sri Lanka 2020-21

# **England's spin twins show promise in Sri Lanka but real test is yet to come**

Dom Bess and Jack Leach delivered under pressure to bowl out Sri Lanka, but will India's batsmen be so accommodating?



The England spinner Dom Bess, who took four wickets in Sri Lanka's second innings, bowls during the second Test in Galle. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

The England spinner Dom Bess, who took four wickets in Sri Lanka's second innings, bowls during the second Test in Galle. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket



[Andy Bull](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 10.49 EST

The Test was in the balance early on the fourth morning. Sri Lanka's openers had rattled off 15 quick runs from the opening overs of their second innings, and their team's lead was just up above 50. And all the time, in the back of the mind, there was the nagging flashback to all the ham-fisted collapses England have endured over the years, and their early struggles having been set 74 to [win the first Test](#) on this same ground in the fourth innings last week. The way Lasith Embuldeniya had been bowling so far this series, you wondered how many more runs he would need up his sleeve to run through them again in the fourth innings here. Would 100 be enough? Or 150?

[Spinners skittle Sri Lanka out before Sibley and Buttler wrap up series](#)

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Embuldeniya's bowling was a large part of the reason why Sri Lanka had this lead. He had been the difference between the teams in the first innings, when he had worked England over single-handedly with seven wickets from 42 overs. His English counterparts, Dom Bess and Jack Leach, had not managed one in 64 overs between them and Jimmy Anderson (29-13-40-6) had to pick up the slack.

Regardless, it was Bess and Leach to whom Root turned now, as the game was just threatening to get away from him. After four overs, he pulled Anderson and Sam Curran out of the attack and tossed the new ball to the two spinners as if to say: “Here, turn this around for me.” Leach and Bess were under some pressure: even though they had been outbowled in the first half of the match the expectation was that, now the pitch was spinning, they would be able to roll Sri Lanka over in the second.

All the while, everyone has got half an eye on the series against India which begins next week, with Moeen Ali watching from back in the dressing room, waiting for an opportunity to prove he can still do it.

Bess started with an arm-ball, the one that goes straight on, which slipped through the gap between Lahiru Thirimanne’s bat and pad, and beat the wicketkeeper too. Two balls later he got another delivery to pop off the pitch, which Thirimanne fended away to gully. Immediately, then, Bess was in the game. At the other end, Leach quickly dismissed Kusal Perera lbw with his second delivery, which plugged the batsman flush in the gut as he dropped on to one knee to play a slog-sweep. Moments later, Bess got Oshada Fernando, caught at short leg. Then Leach dismissed Thirimanne the same way. Sri Lanka were three down now, and their lead was 74.



The Somerset and England spinner Jack Leach in action during the first Test, when he took six wickets in total, with five coming in Sri Lanka's second innings. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

That meant the game had reached another tipping point. Sri Lanka's two best and most experienced batsmen, Dinesh Chandimal and Angelo Mathews, were together in the middle. But not for long. Neither seemed quite sure how to play the situation, whether it would be best to stick or twist. Bess bowled Mathews as he played a slog-sweep, Leach had Chandimal caught at mid-on, trying to hit the second of what would have been back-to-back fours. Niroshan Dickwella seemed confused too, and clothed a drive straight to cover. Dilruwan Perera was caught at short leg, and Ramesh Mendis off a ball that bounced up off his boot. Leach and Bess had turned the game on its head with eight wickets for 61 runs in 22 overs.

A churl might argue that they didn't bowl so very well as all that makes it sound. They had a spinning pitch to work with and were up against a group of batsmen who seemed to have forgotten how to go about their business. They had a lot of help from the fielders, too, even though Root missed a couple of catches at slip. Zak Crawley was superb at short leg, and Anderson took a spectacular running catch at mid-on, looking back over his shoulder into the sun. And in among the wickets, both Leach and Bess bowled a few more bad balls than either would have liked, which is why Embuldeniya and Suranga Lakmal were able to put on 48 runs together for the ninth wicket.

The Spin: sign up and get our weekly cricket email.

In the end Root had to bring himself on to finish off the innings. Which meant that while England's seamers had taken all 10 wickets in the first innings, their spinners had taken all 10 in the second. It was (the statistician [Andrew Samson pointed out](#)) the first time that had happened in the history of Test cricket.

They say you can go a long way in journalism with a plausible manner, a little ability and a rat-like cunning. It sometimes feels like Bess succeeds in international cricket with a similarly limited armoury – a little luck, a lot of pluck, and just enough batting to get by on. And fair enough. Leach is more convincing, but is still working his way back into shape after missing so

much cricket last year. In the middle of all this, Leach actually became England's leading wicket-taker in Sri Lanka. He has taken 28 in five Tests there now. He hasn't taken one in India yet, though. And while it seems odd to worry after [such a fine series victory as this](#), anyone who follows England long frets easily, and the thought occurs that he and Bess will [find the batsmen less forgiving there](#).

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## England in Sri Lanka 2020-21

# **Joe Root believes England can go to India confident after Sri Lanka win**

- Captain says England need to be ‘at the top of our game’
- Four-Test series in India starts in Chennai on 5 February



Joe Root celebrates with Jos Buttler after taking the wicket of Lasith Embuldeniya. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

Joe Root celebrates with Jos Buttler after taking the wicket of Lasith Embuldeniya. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

[Ali Martin](#)

[@Cricket\\_Ali](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 12.27 EST

Joe Root claimed his England team “could not be in a better place” to take on India in their own backyard provided they continue to show the attitude

and character witnessed during their two Test victories in Sri Lanka.

A four-match series against Virat Kohli's side begins in Chennai on 5 February with the [quality of opposition ratcheted up significantly](#) – the hosts are coming off the back of their [famous victory in Australia](#) and are unbeaten at home since Graeme Swann and Monty Panesar [spun England to a 2-1 win in 2012](#).

The prospect of Root's current touring party following suit is not helped by a six-day quarantine period in hotel rooms that leaves only three days of training before the series opener. The in-form Jos Buttler sitting out the final three Tests for rest similarly hampers their chances, even if [two more trump cards return in Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer](#).

[England's spin twins show promise in Sri Lanka but real test is yet to come | Andy Bull](#)

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Speaking after his side's [six-wicket win in Galle](#), Root said: “We’re going to have seven or eight days with no cricket, then three very important days of preparation. But what we have got is a huge amount of confidence coming out of these two games.

“We’re going to have different challenges, different surfaces, different situations to manage in India. It is about reacting to that and having that same attitude, that same character and desire to go on and win like we have here.

“We have to look at this win as a platform and a starting position, not be happy with what we’ve achieved. India are arguably the best team in the world in their own conditions. We’ll have to play right at the top of our game to win out there but we couldn’t be in a better place to go and challenge them.”

England’s win in Sri Lanka made it five in a row away from home – a run last achieved in 1914 – while the 2-0 scoreline theoretically keeps them in the hunt for the summer’s World Test Championship final, even if they need to win three matches in India.

Dom Bess and Jack Leach would probably need to surpass Swann and Panesar nine years ago to make it so, but having watched [the pair claim 24 of his side's 40 wickets](#), Mickey Arthur, the Sri Lanka head coach, fancies England have a chance.

Arthur said: “We saw good signs for England with Bess and Leach. And Joe Root has batted at another level on this tour. He has been the difference and the beacon that I’ve always tried to use as an example to our batsmen. So I think England can go to India with every chance of winning that Test series.”

[Spinners skittle Sri Lanka out before Sibley and Buttler wrap up series](#)  
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England will switch batting consultants for India. Jonathan Trott replaces Jacques Kallis after a short spell that certainly appeared to help Root as he scored 426 of his side’s 1,005 runs during the series. Trott’s former Warwickshire teammate Dom Sibley also praised the input of Kallis after an unbeaten 56 on the final day saw his tour end brightly.

Sibley said: “Watching Joe makes you feel a little inadequate to be quite frank. The way he has played this series has been incredible. With Jacques as well there have been some tough net sessions.

“I have been trying to change things mid-series when I felt really confident coming into the series with what I’d done to play spin. To doubt that and change things mid-series was obviously something that takes a little bit of courage.”

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## West Ham United

# West Ham ready to clear way for Lingard loan by buying Benrahma this month

- David Moyes interested in Manchester United midfielder
- Bringing forward Benrahma deal would clear loan space



Jesse Lingard at a Manchester United training session on Monday. He has fallen out of favour at the club. Photograph: Matthew Peters/Manchester United/Getty Images

Jesse Lingard at a Manchester United training session on Monday. He has fallen out of favour at the club. Photograph: Matthew Peters/Manchester United/Getty Images

*[Jacob Steinberg](#)  
[@JacobSteinberg](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 03.17 EST

West Ham plan to bring forward the permanent transfer of Saïd Benrahma if they press ahead with a loan move for Jesse Lingard.

Manchester United have decided to allow Lingard to go on loan this month, sparking interest from David Moyes as he seeks to add depth to his squad. However Premier League clubs are allowed only two domestic loan players in their squad and West Ham, who are also keen to sign a striker, have borrowed Craig Dawson from Watford and Benrahma from Brentford.

[Anger management: study suggests lack of fans has made players calmer](#)  
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West Ham are likely to pave the way for Lingard to join on a temporary basis by buying Benrahma. They [paid a £5m loan fee](#) for the winger in October and have an agreement to sign the Algerian for £20m plus £5m in add-ons at the end of the season. Benrahma, who has made five Premier League starts, will sign a five-year deal.

Lingard has fallen out of favour at United, who are demanding a sizeable loan fee, and has not featured in the league this season. The midfielder has been restricted to three cup appearances and needs a fresh start. Newcastle, West Brom and Sheffield United have also shown interest in the 28-year-old but Moyes, who managed the England international at United, is at the head of the queue.

West Ham remain in the market for a striker after [selling Sébastien Haller to Ajax](#) for £20m. They have shown interest in Bournemouth's Joshua King, Montpellier's Gaëtan Laborde, [Sevilla's Youssef En-Nesyri](#) and Reims' Boulaye Dia.

Moyes has so far been frustrated in attempts to find cover for Michail Antonio. A quick fix could be an overseas loan. The latest name on the list is RB Leipzig's Hwang Hee-chan. The 25-year-old South Korean has struggled in the Bundesliga this season but he impressed at his previous club, RB Salzburg.

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## [FA Cup](#)

# Bale, Winks and Ndombele ensure Spurs avoid Wycombe FA Cup shock



Tanguy Ndombele celebrates with his Tottenham teammates after scoring his second in injury time. Photograph: Tottenham Hotspur FC/Getty Images

Tanguy Ndombele celebrates with his Tottenham teammates after scoring his second in injury time. Photograph: Tottenham Hotspur FC/Getty Images

*[Ed Aarons](#) at Adams Park*

*[@ed\\_aarons](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 17.00 EST

José Mourinho had warned Gareth Bale he would have to fight for his place in this Tottenham team. But even if he is still showing signs of rustiness four months into his second spell at the club as he spurned several chances, it was the Welshman's equaliser that ensured Spurs avoided the embarrassment of being eliminated from the [FA Cup](#) by the team currently propping up the Championship.

## [Wycombe 1-4 Tottenham: FA Cup fourth round – as it happened](#)

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Tottenham trailed to Fred Onyedinma's excellent strike for [Wycombe](#), and Bale had already passed up three good opportunities when he eventually found the net on the stroke of half-time, before late goals from Harry Winks and two from Tanguy Ndombele set up a tie with Everton in the fifth round. In truth, it was far more than they deserved after struggling to break down Gareth Ainsworth's battling side until Harry Kane, Son Heung-min and Ndombele were brought off the bench.

Yet having seen Bale complete 90 minutes for the first time since he rejoined on loan from Real Madrid, Mourinho said he had been pleased with his performance. "He looked good, taking on players and scored the goal," he said. "I never felt that he could not play 90 minutes, I never felt I had to take him off. That is good. I am happy."

With half an eye on Liverpool's visit on Thursday, Mourinho had made 10 changes from the side that defeated Sheffield United. But there was no place on the bench for Dele Alli, whose future at Spurs remains in doubt amid strong interest from Paris Saint-Germain in reuniting him with Mauricio Pochettino.

Football Weekly

## **Lampard sacked, FA Cup drama and National League woes**

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Ainsworth said he had shown his players highlights of the first-ever meeting of these two clubs in 2017 at the same stage of this competition, when it took late goals from Alli and Son to [rescue Tottenham from an embarrassing exit](#) at White Hart Lane to opponents who were then in League Two. Wycombe have since made it to the second tier for the first time in their 134-year history, having been promoted to the Football League in 1993 under Martin O'Neill.

Yet while Ainsworth's side find themselves 10 points from a safe position at the halfway stage, their manager had warned they have improved significantly in the past four years and were hungry to match the club's famous run to the semi-finals under Lawrie Sanchez two decades ago.



Gareth Bale diverts Lucas Moura's cross past Ryan Allsop. Photograph: Eddie Keogh/The FA/Getty Images

Having sailed past Marine in the previous round, Tottenham began this game in confident manner and should have gone ahead in the fourth minute when Bale somehow nodded wide from Lucas Moura's corner. Another effort from Bale soon after that fizzed off target was an indication that he is not quite the player who earned a world-record move to Real Madrid.

[Anger management: study suggests lack of fans has made players calmer](#)  
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The importance of those missed early chances was underlined when Wycombe went ahead after a well worked routine from a throw-in. Uche Ikpeazu showed immense strength to hold off the challenge of Toby Alderweireld and Joe Hart was left with no chance against the mysteriously unmarked Onyedinma. Another missed opportunity from Bale within minutes of the goal left Mourinho looking less than happy on the touchline.

When first Moussa Sissoko and then Japhet Tanganga struck the bar, he could have been forgiven for thinking it was not Tottenham's night. But with the deftest of touches from Moura's cross that diverted it past Ryan Allsop, Bale finally got on the scoresheet just before half-time to settle his manager's nerves slightly.

Despite the sub-zero temperatures, Pierre-Emile Højbjerg was sent out early to warm up in the break without his tracksuit and when he was introduced for Tanganga, Sissoko switched to right-back. Moura and Bale both spurned chances to give Spurs the advantage at the start of the second half before Allsop did well to parry Érik Lamela's deflected strike. Mourinho decided it was time to call for the cavalry in the form of Kane, Son and Ndombele, while Ainsworth turned to his own talisman Adebayo Akinfenwa after Allsop had denied Kane.

[Abramovich era leaves Lampard with no time to pull out of nosedive | David Hytner](#)

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Son came within inches of finding the breakthrough as Tottenham threw everything at Wycombe in an attempt to avoid extra time. The South Korean uncharacteristically rushed his next effort and watched in horror as the ball sailed harmlessly over the bar. Luckily for him, Winks was much more assured when the next chance fell his way after Allsop had again denied Kane. The England midfielder curled a sumptuous shot with his left foot from outside the area before Ndombele scored twice in the dying minutes to give the final scoreline a rather flattering look.

“It’s not a reflection of the game although they were fantastic at the end – I am flattered they had to put some big names on to get in front,” said Ainsworth. “We will take a lot of heart from this.”

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## **Boxing**

Interview

# **Joe Joyce: 'The aim is to be undisputed heavyweight champion of the world'**

**Donald McRae**

The unbeaten fighter reflects on his battle with Daniel Dubois, the courage and hope absorbed from his mother, and his love of art



Joe Joyce: ‘Sadiq Khan used to be in the gym with his son doing boxing, and he actually advised me to go for the Olympics.’ Photograph: Alex Davidson/Getty Images

Joe Joyce: ‘Sadiq Khan used to be in the gym with his son doing boxing, and he actually advised me to go for the Olympics.’ Photograph: Alex Davidson/Getty Images



[@donaldgmcrae](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 08.00 EST

We talk about fear and remorse, audacity and embarrassment and, of course, about art and boxing. A long conversation with Joe Joyce, the unbeaten heavyweight who seems so calm at the easel and in the ring, meanders along many different paths. We talk in detail about his new painting commission and his [recent battle with Daniel Dubois](#), where Joyce ignored all the predictions to [offer a stark lesson](#) in the pitiless realities of the fight game while stopping his lauded young opponent.

But the deeper we go the more we return to his mother, Marvel, and the way in which she has refused to allow blindness to diminish her. She has offered lessons in courage and hope which her son has absorbed as, quietly, he has risen to the point where he could be just one fight away from facing [Anthony Joshua](#) or Tyson Fury for the undisputed heavyweight championship of the world.

[Anthony Joshua says he wants to take Tyson Fury's 'head off his shoulders'](#)

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I like the fact that, for more than an hour, we don't talk once about the extravagant fame and wealth surrounding Joshua and Fury. Joyce appears more interested in smaller moments which illuminate his life.

"Generally, before all my fights, I don't feel fear," Joyce says as he explains how he dealt with the intensity of fighting the dangerous Dubois. "I'm just relaxed and chilled."

Yet he admits there was an [added edge to the contest](#) eight weeks ago because Dubois had insulted his mum and her blindness before the fight. It was typical of Marvel that [she had spoken up](#) before the altercation. After Joyce's manager, Sam Jones, accused Dubois of feigning illness to avoid a difficult fight as an amateur, Marvel chipped in at the press conference. "Daniel," she said, after requesting the microphone, "if you get ill before the fight, are you going to pull out?"

"No, my dear," Dubois said. "I'm going to do you a favour. Because you can't see your son, after he's been knocked out you'll be spared the heartache."

Joyce explains now: "At the time I didn't really hear what he'd said but watching the clip back I realised he didn't respect his elders and he's saying something nasty to my mum and about her disability. So in the end it was an eye for an eye."

This last sentence is a rare false step for Joyce. Dubois fought courageously before he sank to one knee in the 10th round because he sensed his right eye had been badly damaged. It was soon confirmed that [Joyce's punishing jab had broken the orbital bone](#) and caused nerve damage to Dubois's eye.

Joyce soon sounds understanding and compassionate when he considers the accusations from former fighters and keyboard warriors that [Dubois had been cowardly](#) when quitting. "It was a smart thing to do," he insists. "His eye felt like it was going to fall out and so the only way of saving it was to take a knee and live to fight another day. I felt remorse after the fight because I was hearing that he might not box again. It was a big fight but he's only a young guy and he's got plenty more to do. For me to finish his career there? No. You could say it serves him right for saying that about my mum

but that's too heavy for a young man with plenty more to come. I believe he will become world champion one day."



Joe Joyce punches Daniel Dubois during their fight in London in November last year. Photograph: Julian Finney/Getty Images

Londoner Joyce, at 35, is 12 years older than Dubois. He had only started boxing seriously at the age Dubois is now and, before [Joyce won his silver medal](#) at the 2016 Olympics they sparred together on the GB squad. "I knew how hard he can hit," Joyce says of Dubois, "because in preparation for Rio we had some good spars. I was wary of his punch power but I had the perfect game plan. The objective was to establish my jab, take his jab off him and avoid his heavy punches landing cleanly. He just couldn't get away from that jab. I'm pretty good with my accuracy and timing and I could hear his breathing as I was whittling him down with the jab. But, watching it back, you can see how close it was."

His mother lost her sight as a little girl but she continues to live a full life. Joyce talks of his happy childhood but, while he is still close to both of them, his parents separated when he was still young. "I had to help my mum when I was growing up with reading bus numbers or what train station it is," he remembers. "I've always been a guide and carer to her. I also used to make fun of her sometimes. I'd say: 'Oh, there's something there!' and she'd

be like: ‘What, where?’ I’d say: ‘Only joking!’ But she was so smart. I remember trying to sneak up on my mum as a child. She could feel me coming. I would try and hide from her and let her walk past and she’d look at me straightaway. I couldn’t get away with things like that.”

['They all have the magic – it's almost spiritual': the fighting Dubois family](#)

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Joyce laughs, as he does when recalling some of the holidays he and his mum have taken – whether cross-country skiing in Norway, with his mother tied to a guide, or riding around Thailand on a tandem with his baby brother attached to their bicycle in a buggy. When his mother became pregnant with his brother Torann, who is 18 now, “she was still doing kickboxing and kung fu. I don’t know how many weeks pregnant she was but she had this big belly”.

His mother was always as fiery as she was protective and she would call the police to complain whenever Joe was stopped and searched needlessly. “I guess the police would stop someone who looks like they might cause trouble,” Joyce says calmly, “and usually they would target young black males. What do they call it – racial profiling? I was tall and they thought I was much older. But my mother had coached me how to act.”

She would then berate the police on Joe’s return home. “My mum is a strong woman. She could be a little overbearing sometimes but her life is her children and she wants to look after me and Torann. If anything happened in or outside school she’d be first to have a word with the headmaster or the police.”

He stresses his good fortune in having such “creative parents”. His dad was an art teacher and his mum did “a lot of pottery; I did my first oil painting when I was seven”. Encouraged by his parents, Joyce completed a degree in fine art before turning to boxing in his 20s – when he was trained by Sid Khan, the brother of the London mayor Sadiq Khan.

Joyce says: “Sadiq Khan used to be in the gym with his son doing boxing, and he actually advised me to go for the Olympics.” That connection with the Olympics, and reaching the final of the super-heavyweight division in

Rio, where he was denied gold by a contentious decision, underpins his new artistic commission.



Joe Joyce painting at Delta London Studio as part of the Purplebricks campaign. Photograph: Harry O'Neill/Beat Media

In a Purplebricks campaign called “Home Support”, Joyce is one of three painters – alongside the remarkable mouth artist Henry Fraser and the former professional triathlete Vanessa Raw – who have been asked to create artworks to show the backing of the country for Team GB before the Tokyo Olympics.

“I had some ideas that were brewing,” Joyce says, “and it was great to get back in the studio. I did quite a few I wasn’t happy with so I started a fresh painting and built it up from there. It’s like with boxing. You need to practise your skills.”

Joyce cites the early works of Picasso and the street art of Jean-Michel Basquiat as his formative influences. Is he now happy with his final work for the Olympic campaign which will eventually be seen on Purplebricks boards around the country? “I am – it came out really well. I’ll be driving round looking for it so I can say: ‘I did that!’”

Before then Joyce hopes to fight Oleksandr Usyk, the highly skilled Ukrainian who has moved up to heavyweight after dominating as the undisputed world cruiserweight champion. “It gives us an opportunity to fight the winner of AJ-Fury. I’m fairly confident I can beat him. I saw the fight against Derek Chisora. [which Usyk won on points] and he’s put on more muscle and weight and he’s slowing down a little. At the same time I know it’s going to be tough because he’s so skilled. But can he weather my punches for 12 rounds?”

[Lennox Lewis: 'I knew I would meet Mike Tyson in the ring'](#)

[Read more](#)

They have fought once before, as amateurs in 2013, and Usyk won clearly. “He was fresh from the London Olympics where he won a gold. I hadn’t fought many southpaws and Usyk’s an incredible fighter. He’s had 350 amateur fights and won 95% of them. So he was too seasoned,” says Joyce. “It was a bit like myself and Dubois where I had so much more experience. It will be different next time and I’m hearing it could be in the spring.”

Joyce has sparred against Fury and, even more often, Joshua. Who does he expect will win when the two British world champions meet this year? “It’s a 50-50 fight but, on recent performances and skills, I think Fury. But at the same time but I wouldn’t be surprised if AJ knocks him out. I think I’m edging with Fury.”

The plan is for Joyce to eventually fight the winner and, with the audacity of hope and unlimited vision that his mother has instilled in him, he says: “I love it – and the aim is to become the undefeated and undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. That’s what I’m going for now.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/25/joe-joyce-the-aim-is-to-be-undisputed-heavyweight-champion-of-the-world>

## [Australian Open](#)

# **Paula Badosa slams 'lamentable' quarantine conditions before Australian Open**

- ‘I feel abandoned,’ says Spanish world No 67
- Badosa may not be able to return to training until 5 February



Spain’s Paula Badosa had been in hotel quarantine for seven days when she returned a positive Covid test. Photograph: Charles Platiau/Reuters

Spain’s Paula Badosa had been in hotel quarantine for seven days when she returned a positive Covid test. Photograph: Charles Platiau/Reuters

*Reuters*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 17.43 EST

Spanish tennis player Paula Badosa has described her extended period of quarantine ahead of the Australia Open following a positive Covid-19 test as

the worst moment of her career, adding she felt abandoned by organisers.

Badosa, ranked 67 in the world, was the first player to test positive for the virus upon arrival in Australia ahead of the tournament and cannot leave her hotel room until 31 January.

[Australian Open buildup shows no sport handling pandemic as clumsily as tennis | Tumaini Carayol](#)

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If she is found to have been infected with the new strain of coronavirus, Badosa will only return to training on 5 February which the Spaniard believes will be too late to regain her fitness.

The grand slam, which has been delayed by three weeks due to disruption caused by the pandemic, takes place from 8 to 21 February.

“I feel abandoned because I don’t have training equipment which I requested five days ago, I haven’t been told which type of the virus I have, I’ve had no information from the tournament,” she told Spanish newspaper Marca.

Australian Open organisers did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Badosa, who said she had been suffering from anxiety and claustrophobia, has been limited to doing sit ups in her hotel room and using water bottles as weights to try to stay in shape.

The 23-year-old added that the room, which she is sharing with coach Javier Marti, was not suitable for an elite athlete.

“It’s far and away the worst experience of my career,” Badosa said.

“The conditions here are lamentable, I wasn’t expecting that. The number one thing people recommend when you have the virus is to open the windows to let in air, but I don’t have windows in my hotel room and it’s barely 15 metres square.”

“I have lost a lot of my fitness levels, especially my strength. If I can come out on January 31 I’ll have a week to get in shape. If it’s February 5 it’ll be impossible to recover in time [for the tournament],” Badosa said.

[Extra women's tennis tournament scheduled for quarantined Australian Open players](#)

[Read more](#)

The Spaniard, arrived in Melbourne after playing in Abu Dhabi earlier this month and was on her seventh day in quarantine when her test came back positive.

Seventy two players have been confined to hotel rooms for two weeks after passengers on three charter flights taking them to Australia had tested positive.

Last week, Kazakhstan’s world No 28 Yulia Putintseva complained she had been struggling to sleep in her hotel room due to rodents scurrying around.

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## 2021.01.26 - From the uk

- [Retail Debenhams deal and Topshop talks put more than 20,000 jobs at risk](#)
- [Friar crushed by cart Bone analysis hints at causes of medieval deaths](#)
- [Manufacturing sector Rolls-Royce says new Covid-19 strains will slash travel this year](#)
- [Facebook News Service launches in UK following deals with publishers](#)
- [Property Construction material shortages could delay UK housebuilding](#)
- [Manchester Arena attack Inquiry hears of 'unacceptable' security failures](#)
- [Jenners Edinburgh's landmark department store to close after 183 years](#)
- [Food Clare Smyth and Hélène Darroze celebrate three Michelin stars](#)
- [Crime Man, 19, who groomed and murdered schoolboy jailed for life](#)
- ['I heard the gunshots' Mother says she heard gunfire that killed son, Keon Lincoln](#)

## Retail industry

# Debenhams deal and Topshop talks put more than 20,000 jobs at risk

Boohoo buys chain's brand and Asos interested in parts of Arcadia Group

- [Debenhams to close all stores as Boohoo buys brand](#)
- [Asos in talks to buy Topshop, Topman and Miss Selfridge](#)
- [Boohoo buying Debenhams: a changing of the guard in retail](#)
- [Online brands are making clean sweep in great retail carve-up](#)



Debenhams' roots go back to 1778. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

Debenhams' roots go back to 1778. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

*[Sarah Butler](#) and [Mark Sweeney](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 15.52 EST

More than 20,000 high street jobs are at risk after the online retailer Boohoo bought the [Debenhams](#) brand and its rival Asos said it was poised to buy Topshop.

Debenhams, which traces its roots back to 1778, will disappear from the high street with the likely loss of up to 12,000 jobs after the £55m [Boohoo](#) deal, which does not include the department store chain's high street operation. As part of the deal, [Boohoo](#) will buy the retailer's Maine, Mantaray, Principles and Faith labels, while Debenhams' remaining 124 stores will be permanently closed once they are allowed to reopen in order to sell off stock.

[Edinburgh's landmark department store Jenners to close after 183 years](#)

[Read more](#)

The online fashion retailer [Asos](#) is, meanwhile, in exclusive talks to buy [Topshop](#), Topman, Miss Selfridge and the athleisure label HIIT from Arcadia, Sir Phillip Green's former retail empire, which collapsed into administration last year and employs 13,000 people.

If [Asos](#) finalises a deal for Arcadia's leading brands it is likely to be bad news for thousands of staff at the relevant stores, which are not expected to be taken on by the online specialist. Arcadia Group – which also owns Dorothy Perkins, Wallis and Burton – had 500 stores across the UK when it entered administration in November. So far only the group's plus-size retail chain, Evans, has been sold off. After the £23m deal with the Australian retailer City Chic Collective, all Evans shops and concessions will shut as the brand becomes an online-only business.

While Arcadia and Debenhams have been struggling for some time, the two deals highlight the disparate fortunes of the online specialists and their ageing rivals reliant on physical stores, which have been forced to close for months during the coronavirus pandemic.

Richard Hyman, a retail analyst and partner at the consultancy TPC, said Covid-19 had only accelerated an existing trend: "Twenty years ago there was no such thing as online retailing. Non-food retail sales online hit £90bn

in 2020. [Since 2000] the number of physical stores have not gone down and something has got to give.

“It is terrible for the people that work there but there is going to have to be a lot of repurposing as UK retail is oversupplied.”

According to the Centre for Retail Research, [the UK high street shed 177,000 jobs in 2020](#), and a further 200,000 are expected to be lost this year.

The retail trade union Usdaw is seeking urgent meetings with Debenhams’ administrators and called on the government to do more to save high streets.

Dave Gill, Usdaw’s national officer, said: “It is devastating news for our high streets that Debenhams’ administrators have sold the company brand to an online-only retailer. Throughout Debenhams’ difficulties, the company and then administrators have refused to engage with Usdaw; the staff are being treated appallingly.”

The union wants the government to extend business rates relief and help with millions of pounds of rents that have gone unpaid during the government’s high street lockdowns.

Boohoo plans to use Debenhams to help attract more mature shoppers and expand into new product categories beyond fashion. It also wants to begin selling brands it does not own for the first time from late spring, turning Debenhams into a marketplace, similar to Amazon or Zalando, with third-party labels handling distribution of their products sold on the site.

Debenhams made approximately £400m in online revenues in the financial year to 31 August 2020 and welcomed 300 million visitors, making it a top 10 retail website in the UK.

“This is a transformational deal for the group, which allows us to capture the fantastic opportunity as e-commerce continues to grow. Our ambition is to create the UK’s largest marketplace,” said Mahmud Kamani, the executive chairman at Boohoo.

“Our acquisition of the Debenhams brand is strategically significant as it represents a huge step which accelerates our ambition to be a leader, not just

in fashion e-commerce but in new categories including beauty, sport and homeware.”

The company said that after the Debenhams deal it had £387m in cash to fund further potential acquisitions.

The deal with Boohoo marks a final rebuff for Mike Ashley’s Frasers Group, the owner of Sports Direct, which had been in talks to buy Debenhams for some weeks after [failing to gain control](#) of the department store before its first fall into administration in 2019.

Ashley is expected to try to take on a number of Debenhams stores from landlords to house his Flannels, Sports Direct and House of Fraser chains.

#### Guardian business email sign-up

Shares in Asos rose almost 6% after it said it was in talks to buy the Arcadia brands.

The company said a deal would be funded from cash reserves and “represent a compelling opportunity to acquire strong brands that resonate well with its customer base”.

However, it said there could be “no certainty of a transaction and Asos will keep shareholders updated as appropriate”.

Chloe Collins, a senior analyst at the consultancy GlobalData, said: “[Arcadia] brands are already popular sellers through its third-party platform, proving that there is strong customer overlap, and Asos’s impressive global reach would help the Arcadia brands target new shoppers.”

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## [Archaeology](#)

# Friar crushed by cart: bone analysis hints at causes of medieval deaths

Research from three Cambridge grave sites suggests poor people were at greatest risk of injury



The remains of an individual buried in an Augustinian friary in Cambridge. The study found a surprising absence of weapon-related injuries.  
Photograph: Nick Saffell/University of Cambridge/PA

The remains of an individual buried in an Augustinian friary in Cambridge. The study found a surprising absence of weapon-related injuries.  
Photograph: Nick Saffell/University of Cambridge/PA

[Nicola Davis](#)

[@NicolaKSDavis](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

A friar crushed by a cart, another the victim of an attack by bandits: it sounds like the plot of a medieval mystery. But according to new research these are some of the possible misfortunes to have befallen those in centuries gone by.

An analysis of bones from 314 individuals aged 12 or older, dating from around 1100 to the 1530s, and found in three different sites across [Cambridge](#), reveals that bone fractures were common among those buried in a parish cemetery – where many ordinary workers would have been laid to rest. But the team also found evidence of horrific injuries among those buried in an Augustinian friary, suggesting the clergy were not protected against violent events.

“Medieval life was difficult for everyone,” said Dr Jenna Dittmar, study lead author from the University of Cambridge.

[Writing in the American Journal of Physical Anthropology](#), Dittmar and colleagues report how they analysed previously excavated medieval bones dating up to the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. While she said not all bones at the three sites have been excavated and analysed, those examined so far give insights into different spheres of society.

“[Our results] are going to be fairly representative because we have a parish cemetery, we have a hospital and we also have an Augustinian friary,” she said.

The team found bone fractures were most common among those buried in the parish graveyard, with 44% of the skeletons analysed showing signs of such damage compared with 32% of those buried in at the friary. Multiple fractures were also most common among those buried in the parish cemetery.

“The people that were buried in the All Saints parish cemetery would have led really hard lives,” said Dittmar, noting many were ordinary folk who would have had manual jobs, from agricultural work to builders. By contrast those buried in the friary would either have led a clerical life or been wealthy benefactors.

While such injuries were more common among men, some women showed them too. “[One] poor woman had her jaw broken at some point in her life, and it did heal … but she had a number of other injuries as well including broken ribs and [a] foot,” said Dittmar – although she said it is not clear if the injuries were from one event. While the broken jaw could have come from a fall, there are other possibilities said Dittmar: in modern times women generally sustain broken jaws as a result of domestic violence.

Only 27% of individuals excavated at the Hospital of St John the Evangelist had evidence of bone fractures – although one man appeared to have fractured his knee in a fall.

“People would assume that a hospital is a place where individuals that are sick or poor or infirm would go, and you would expect them to have more fractures – which turned out to not be the case,” said Dittmar.

Dittmar said the hospital was focused more on pastoral care. “The concept of a medieval hospital takes a bit of getting used to in modern times,” she said, noting that many people in the hospital would have been poor, elderly and chronically ill with conditions like tuberculosis.

Another surprise, said Dittmar, was that there was no evidence of weapon-related injuries, whether healed or not, among the dead – despite wars being common during medieval times.

But that did not mean violence was unknown: indeed the team report the remains of a friar who survived what Dittmar said may, among other explanations, have been an attack by bandits, with signs that he was hit on the head with a blunt object.

“He could have bumped his head on something,” said Dittmar. “[But] he also has a fracture to his arm, which is a defensive injury, so it suggests that he raised his arm to protect himself .”

Another friar was not so lucky: his skeleton showed a broken neck and legs – with one possibility that he was run over by a cart.

“The injuries that he has are most similar to what people experience when they are hit by the car, right at about thigh level,” said Dittmar. “We think it is safe to say he probably died as a result of whatever serious kind of accident he was involved in.”

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## Rolls-Royce

# Rolls-Royce says new Covid-19 strains will slash travel this year

Engine-maker's shares tumble as it says it expects to burn through £2bn in cash

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Rolls-Royce's business model relies heavily on the number of hours its engines spend in the air. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

Rolls-Royce's business model relies heavily on the number of hours its engines spend in the air. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

*Mark Sweney  
@marksweeney*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 04.17 EST

Rolls-Royce has slashed its forecast of flying hours and expects to burn through £2bn in cash this year, as uncertainty about the new coronavirus variants and increased travel restrictions put the brakes on a recovery in air travel.

The engine-maker said it expects engine flying hours to be about 55% this year compared with pre-Covid levels in 2019.

The latest forecast is significantly down on the prediction made by Rolls-Royce, whose business model relies heavily on the number of hours its engines spend in the air, in October of a base case of flying hours this year running at 70% of the 2019 level.

Shares fell 9% after the update on Tuesday, making Rolls-Royce the biggest faller on the FTSE 100, as analysts had expected cash burn this year to be lower between £1bn and £1.5bn.

“Continued progress on vaccination programmes is encouraging for the medium-term recovery of air traffic and economic activity,” the company said in a trading update. “In the near-term, however, more contagious variants of the virus are creating additional uncertainty. Enhanced restrictions are delaying the recovery of long-haul travel over the coming months compared to our prior expectations, placing further financial pressure on our customers and the wider aviation industry, all of which are impacting our own cashflows in 2021.”

Rolls-Royce, which in October [announced a £5bn emergency funding plan](#) to weather the pandemic-fuelled slump in demand for its engines, said the reduction in flying hours means it expects to see an increased free cash outflow of £2bn this year. The company said it expects the cash burn to be steepest in the first half of the year and become cashflow positive as flying hours pick up in the second half.

“Significant uncertainty remains over the precise shape and timing of the recovery in air traffic,” the company said. “We continue to expect to turn cashflow positive at some point during the second half, reflecting our forecasted profile of flying hours as they recover from today’s low base.”

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The company insisted it had a strong enough balance sheet to weather a delayed recovery in the aviation industry.

“With liquidity of approximately £9bn, we are confident that despite the more challenging near-term market conditions we are well positioned for the future,” the company said.

Rolls-Royce said it has cut 7,000 of 9,000 jobs, the biggest restructuring in the company’s history, which will save £1.3bn annually upon completion in 2022.

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## Media

# Facebook News launches in UK following deals with publishers

Stories from the Guardian, Daily Mail, Economist and more will appear in a dedicated feed



The UK launch of the Facebook News service is the first outside of the US and will be a financial boost to the publishers. Photograph: Sascha Steinbach/EPA

The UK launch of the Facebook News service is the first outside of the US and will be a financial boost to the publishers. Photograph: Sascha Steinbach/EPA

[Archie Bland](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

Stories from news outlets including the Guardian, the Daily Mail and the [Financial Times](#) will appear in a dedicated Facebook feed from today.

The UK launch of the [Facebook News](#) service is the first outside the US. In addition to [already-inked deals](#) involving the Guardian, the Economist and

hundreds of local sites, Facebook on Tuesday announced new partnerships with Channel 4 News, Daily Mail Group, DC Thomson, Financial Times, Sky News and Telegraph Media Group.

The deal, which will earn leading publishers millions, will be a financial boost as they face a bleak economic landscape, in part because such a large proportion of the ad market is now controlled by the social network.

Facebook said the investment was intended to “support the industry in building sustainable business models”.

However, it will also be seen as a strategic play by the company aimed at discouraging wider international regulation of the news media market – by showing that it is prepared to support local publishers without government intervention.

It comes as Australia [moves ahead](#) with a proposed “news media bargaining code”, which would force tech companies to enter into negotiations for payment for content or face third party arbitration if they cannot reach a deal.

Meanwhile, the EU copyright directive threatens a similar scenario across Europe. [Last week](#) Google agreed a deal to pay news publishers for online content in France, the first such deal on the continent.

Facebook said that the deal in the UK, where the EU copyright directive does not apply, was “the beginning of a series of international investments in news” that “puts original journalism in front of new audiences as well as providing publishers with more advertising and subscription opportunities to build sustainable businesses for the future”.

Contracted news editors – working for news aggregator Upday but overseen by Facebook’s curation team – will select stories of the day, while other stories algorithmically selected according to a user’s interests will also appear.

Facebook said that the product would provide curated “news digests” covering the most important reporting on the stories of the day, giving an

example of a collection of coronavirus-related stories to coincide with the launch.

Although some publishers have signed seven-figure deals, others are not paid upfront and will rely on a boost to referral traffic or views of ads on Facebook's Instant Articles format.

Besides its regulatory concerns, Facebook will also hope that by giving news a separate feed it can bolster its reputation as a responsible platform in an era of unreliable sources.

It may also hope that by giving news a feed of its own it can eventually separate highly controversial stories from the more palatable pets-and-family content which remains the most powerful draw for most users – although a post by Jesper Doub, director of news partnerships in Europe, said that “news articles shared by people and pages will continue to appear in News Feed [Facebook's main feed], just as they do today”.

Of the UK's national news publishers, [News UK](#) – which publishes the Times, the Sunday Times, and the Sun – is the most significant holdout. It already has a deal with Apple News.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/jan/26/facebook-news-launches-in-uk-following-deals-with-news-outlets>

## Construction industry

# Construction material shortages could delay UK housebuilding

Builders battle for supplies on back of Covid crisis and price increases

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One builders' merchant was given an August delivery date for roofing materials, such as pitched roof tiles, compared with a usual three-month wait. Photograph: Roger Bamber/Alamy

One builders' merchant was given an August delivery date for roofing materials, such as pitched roof tiles, compared with a usual three-month wait. Photograph: Roger Bamber/Alamy

*Zoe Wood*

*@zoewoodguardian*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

A growing shortage of key construction materials could delay housebuilding this year as builders fight for fresh supplies against a backdrop of coronavirus-related challenges and price increases.

One builders' merchant said they were being given an August delivery date for roofing materials, such as pitched roof tiles, compared with a usual three-month wait because, even with extra shifts, UK factories were struggling to keep up.

The industry also continues to be affected by shortages of power tools, screws and fixings, stemming from congestion at [UK ports](#). Companies now face increased shipping costs because of a global shortage of empty containers. Timber prices are also up by a fifth.

The Builders Merchants Federation (BMF) said if the problems were not resolved it could "have an impact on the number of houses that we are able to build in the UK" as well as cause delays to smaller projects, such as extensions and loft conversions.

"I wouldn't say it's having a major impact on contractors and housebuilders yet," said John Newcomb, the BMF's chief executive. "But it could do over the next couple of months because clearly you can't build houses without roof tiles."

Builders' merchants and DIY stores have enjoyed a [sales bonanza](#) over the past year as Britons spent lockdowns renovating their homes. The trend did not even let up at Christmas, with merchants recording growth of more than 10%, a figure Newcomb said was unprecedented. Recent figures from B&Q's owner, [Kingfisher](#), showed sales [up 17%](#).

The implications of the Brexit deal were bubbling away in the background but for builders the major concern was just getting their hands on enough materials to keep working.

"Right now, the main issue is that the demand for products like roof tiles is outstripping supply," Newcomb said. "That will come into balance but a lot of these things are a spillover effect from April, May when factories were closed."

The BMF said there continued to be shortages of plumbing materials and bathroom suites that come from the east Asia because of the problems at major container ports such as Felixstowe, which are struggling to cope with a combination of high container volumes and coronavirus restrictions.

### Guardian business email sign-up

Three-quarters of building materials are made in the UK but Newcomb said the industry needed access to “goods from around the world to keep the industry running”. The cost of shipping goods from China to Europe has also hit record highs in recent weeks, with producers unable to absorb the huge price increases.

Lakes Showering, which imports bathroom equipment from China, said the cost of a container load had increased from \$2,100 (£1,536) a year ago to \$15,750. It was also finding carriers were reluctant to take bookings for the UK because of the congestion problems.

“We’ve found the shipping companies are not even quoting contract rates; it’s all based on spot pricing, where you get what’s available at a price, on that day,” said Mike Tattam, the sales and marketing director. “It’s having a very serious impact and it’s a situation that’s getting rapidly worse.”

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## Manchester Arena attack

# Manchester Arena inquiry hears of 'unacceptable' security failures

Lawyers point out series of failings in buildup to bombing that killed 22 and injured hundreds



Flowers, messages and tokens are left in tribute to the victims of the attack on Manchester Arena, in central Manchester in 2017. Photograph: Phil Noble/Reuters

Flowers, messages and tokens are left in tribute to the victims of the attack on Manchester Arena, in central Manchester in 2017. Photograph: Phil Noble/Reuters

*Alex Mistlin and agency*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 15.52 EST

A series of “unacceptable and unjustified” security failures occurred before the [Manchester](#) Arena bombing, the public inquiry into the attack has been

told.

The inquiry heard lawyers' closing statements on chapter seven, relating to security at the venue. The arena is operated by SMG, who employed the company Showsec to provide security and stewarding services there.

Duncan Atkinson QC, representing seven of the families who were bereaved by the attack said: "The evidence has shown a security operation that was under-resourced, malcoordinated and insufficiently focused on counter-terrorism and especially the threat from person-borne improvised explosive devices.

"This made the arena an attractive target for terrorists and led to a series of missed opportunities to prevent, deter, detect and/or mitigate the attack."

Suicide bomber Salman Abedi killed 22 people and injured hundreds in the attack on 22 May 2017 after an Ariana Grande concert.

Atkinson said the evidence showed that "costs concerns were prioritised ahead of the provision of all reasonable measures to address the risk from terrorism ... they were focused on the risk of the audience, not to the audience."

Peter Wetherby QC, representing seven more families, said it was "blindingly obvious" that SMG, an "enormous corporate enterprise", should have employed a dedicated counter-terrorism expert to look after the arena.

He added: "SMG took the money for ensuring security and public safety in the City Room [the arena's foyer] but very plainly failed to discharge those responsibilities."

Wetherby was also critical of the government's lack of urgency over venue security. He told the hearing that the government's failure to set out a timetable for change had raised the risk of "further outrages".

A planned new law to improve venue safety in the wake of the arena bombing has been delayed by Covid-19.

The inquiry continues.

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## Retail industry

# Edinburgh's landmark department store Jenners to close after 183 years

Fraser Group's failure to reach tenancy agreement will result in 200 job losses



Edinburgh's Jenners department store will shut on 3 May. Photograph: Murdo Macleod/The Guardian

Edinburgh's Jenners department store will shut on 3 May. Photograph: Murdo Macleod/The Guardian

[Sarah Butler](#)

[@whatbutlersaw](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 11.35 EST

Edinburgh's Jenners department store is closing its landmark site on Princes Street after 183 years with the loss of 200 jobs.

Mike Ashley's [Frasers Group](#), which operates Jenners as part of its House of Fraser department store chain, said the store would close on 3 May after it had been unable to reach an agreement with the site's owner on the extension of a tenancy deal.

[Debenhams to close all stores with 12,000 jobs at risk as Boohoo buys brand](#)

[Read more](#)

The Danish fashion billionaire and major Scottish landowner Anders Holch Povlsen, who bought the Jenners building for a reported £50m in 2017, is set to restore and renovate it under plans to turn more than half of the site into a hotel.

The owner said in 2019 that a department store was "a vital future part of the project", which includes restoring the building's Victorian facade and three-storey central atrium, as well as adding cafes and restaurants.

On Tuesday, a spokesman for AAA United, the Povlsen-backed company that owns the Jenners site, said Frasers had decided to quit the building despite being offered rent-free periods during all the high street lockdowns as well as rent deferrals and payment plans. It said it was in talks with other retailers about operating a department store there, although the store would not be able to trade as Jenners because [House of Fraser](#) owns the trading rights.

Anders Krogh Vogdrup, director of AAA United, said that plans to redevelop the building were currently "on hold due to the current economic climate".

He added: "Jenners is a much-loved Edinburgh institution. It is our aspiration to recapture its former glory; and that this building will continue to be home to the city's anchor department store."

Department stores have come under serious pressure, with Debenhams about to [permanently shut](#) all its 124 remaining outlets, [Beales closing all its stores](#) after falling into administration, and John Lewis [closing eight stores](#) last year.

## Guardian business email sign-up

Sports Direct bought House of Fraser out of administration in August 2018. Since then, [at least 14 of the group's original 59 stores](#) have closed, including Frasers on Princes Street in Edinburgh and stores in Exeter, Shrewsbury and Cirencester.

A spokesperson for Frasers, which owns Sports Direct, Evans Cycles, Jack Wills and Flannels as well as House of Fraser, said regarding Jenners: “Despite the global pandemic, numerous lockdowns and the turbulence caused for British retail, the landlord hasn’t been able to work mutually on a fair agreement, therefore, resulting in the loss of 200 jobs and a vacant site for the foreseeable future with no immediate plans.

“Our commitment to our Frasers strategy remains but landlords and retailers need to work together in a fair manner, especially when all stores are closed.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/25/edinburgh-jenners-store-on-princes-street-to-close-on-3-may>.

## Michelin Guide

# Clare Smyth and Hélène Darroze celebrate three Michelin stars

Female chefs awarded maximum stars in online ceremony after tough Covid-hit year for hospitality



Clare Smyth won the ranking for Core in Notting Hill, west London, which opened in July 2017. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Clare Smyth won the ranking for Core in Notting Hill, west London, which opened in July 2017. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

[Sarah Marsh](#)

[@sloumarsh](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 17.21 EST

Clare Smyth, who catered for [Prince Harry](#) and Meghan's evening wedding reception, was celebrating on Monday night after becoming one of two

female chefs to be awarded the maximum three stars in this year's Michelin guide for Great Britain and Ireland.

Monday night's online ceremony unveiling the 2021 results shone a light on women at the top of the industry, with Smyth's restaurant Core in Notting Hill, west London, going from two to three stars, as did Hélène Darroze at The Connaught in Mayfair, central London.

Despite a very tough year for hospitality across the globe shuttered or scaled back in the pandemic, the event marked a significant point for UK restaurants according to Gwendal Poullennec, the international director of Michelin guides.

He said: "To have two new three-star restaurants is a historic moment [for the Great British and Irish culinary scene]."

The [lack of women at the top](#) has long been an issue in the industry and although there were victories at this year's awards, among the new winners only a handful were female.

The ceremony, presented by Davina McCall, nodded to the challenges the industry has faced, shining a light on those who offered food to NHS staff and delivered top-quality food in takeaway boxes. It hailed chefs who managed to pivot their businesses and feed their communities.

Darroze said: "I am thinking [of] all women in the kitchen and I want to let them know that ... everything is possible and believe in who you are. Live your passion."

Smyth, a protege of [Gordon Ramsay](#), said: "It's been my dream to achieve this level but I never imagined it could happen ... Core opened three years ago and it was my passion since I was 16 years old ... For the future, I hope young chefs – both male and female – have the chance to own a restaurant and achieve success. It's an important message for now [given coronavirus]."

Poullennec said those who achieved three Michelin stars were the "crème de la crème of the world of gastronomy". Only 130 restaurants across the world

have this coveted rating.

He added: “Despite a challenging year our inspectors were glad to find new talents emerging everywhere in Great Britain and Ireland.”

Andrew Wong and his venture, A Wong, in south-west London won two Michelin stars, making it the first Chinese restaurant in the UK to get such an award.

“It is massively humbling and today is a historic day for Chinese communities ... It’s not just for my team but for every Chinese restaurant who laid the groundwork,” Wong said, as his children came on screen to congratulate him.

Tom Aikens won a Michelin star for his new restaurant, which was only open for two months before lockdown. After the ceremony, he posted on Instagram: “Thank you all so so much. Hard work, long hours and passion for what you do sincerely pays off, I couldn’t be happier.

“What an unimaginable and challenging year we have all had, but every cloud has a silver lining. Despite the current circumstances, we sincerely hope and believe that we will all be able to get back to doing what we love soon, as our journey has only just begun and we have a lot more in store for you all.”

Lorna McNee was awarded a Michelin star for Cail Bruich, the first restaurant in Glasgow to get such an accolade for 18 years.

The event, which was raising money for the homeless charity Street Smart, this year touched on how hard it has been for the hospitality industry, featuring Michelin-starred chef James Sommerin, who lost his flagship restaurant in Penarth due to Covid-19.

He has since opened a bistro in October, although it only was only in operation for 29. “I’m a little different and more relaxed and you have to take the positive from the negative,” he said.

For 2021, the guide also awarded green stars to ventures that worked to be kinder to the environment, working in a greener way. They included

# Angela's in Margate, the Black Swan in Oldstead and Hypha in Chester.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2021/jan/25/clare-smyth-and-helene-darroze-celebrate-three-michelin-stars>

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## [Crime](#)

# Man, 19, who groomed and murdered schoolboy jailed for life

Matthew Mason beat Alex Rodda, 15, to death with a wrench after paying him to keep relationship secret



Matthew Mason was described by the judge as a selfish individual.  
Photograph: Cheshire constabulary/PA

Matthew Mason was described by the judge as a selfish individual.  
Photograph: Cheshire constabulary/PA

[Maya Wolfe-Robinson](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 11.44 EST

A 19-year-old man who groomed and then beat a schoolboy to death in some woods in Cheshire has been jailed for at least 28 years, for what the judge described as a carefully planned, premeditated murder.

Matthew Mason, who killed 15-year-old Alex Rodda with a wrench after paying him more than £2,000 in an attempt to stop him revealing their sexual relationship, was sentenced to life imprisonment on Monday at Chester crown court.

Sentencing Mason, Judge Stephen Everett said he was a selfish individual who had deliberately chosen the “devastating weapon” and secret spot in woods outside Ashley, near Altrincham, on 12 December 2019.

He said that Mason, who was older and more emotionally mature than his victim, had groomed and encouraged the relationship with Rodda by sending him an explicit photo and a video.



Alex Rodda was a loving boy with many friends, his father said.  
Photograph: Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School/PA Media

“This was carefully planned and ruthlessly carried out, showing no empathy and a callous disregard for Alex, his family and friends,” the judge told Mason.

Alex’s father, Adam Rodda, described his son as a loving boy with many school friends in a statement to the court.

Lisa Rodda, Alex's mother, said: "When you lose your child in the most horrific and brutal circumstances, as parents you really do experience hell."

Mason admitted beating Alex to death but denied murder, saying he had experienced a loss of control during the killing after being blackmailed by the younger teenager. The trial heard they had a brief sexual relationship before Alex told Mason's then girlfriend that the older teenager had sent him explicit photos and messages.

Mason, who lived with his family on a farm near Knutsford, Cheshire, claimed Alex had tried to attack him before his death. Mason told jurors he had asked friends and family for money to pay Alex but did not tell them what it was for. He said he was embarrassed and worried after having sex with the younger boy, adding that he thought it was wrong "because he was a male and, secondly, his age".

Evidence showed that Alex had been struck at least 15 times in what was described by the prosecution as a "brutal" attack. The court heard that after the attack Mason left the scene and went to a friend's farm to clean up, and then to two pubs where he met friends – in part to form an alibi. The court heard Mason, who returned to the scene later that night, was arrested the following day after refuse collectors discovered Alex's body.

Mason was [found guilty of murder](#) by a majority of jurors at Chester crown court on 7 January.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/25/man-19-who-groomed-and-murdered-schoolboy-jailed-for-life>

## UK news

# 'I heard the gunshots': mother says she heard gunfire that killed son, Keon Lincoln

Sharmaine Lincoln has appealed for witnesses to the killing of teenager in Handsworth, Birmingham last Thursday

01:25

*[Vikram Dodd](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 14.14 EST

The mother of a [15-year-old boy](#) gunned down and stabbed to death in a daylight attack has said she heard the gunshots that killed him.

Keon Lincoln was set upon in the street in Handsworth, Birmingham last Thursday afternoon. Police believe a group of youths were behind the unusually violent attack.

The victim was so young that he was taken to Birmingham Children's Hospital, where he died.

On Monday his mother Sharmaine Lincoln appealed for information to bring his killers to justice and told of her heartbreak and devastation. She said her son loved his family and friends.

Four youths remain in custody with detectives from West Midlands police trying to determine why Keon was shot and stabbed to death, with a gang motivation being one line of inquiry.

Sharmaine Lincoln said: "I heard the gunshots and my first instinct was 'where's my son?' Those were the first words I said. Then a few minutes

went by – I found out that there was somebody up the road and ... it was my boy.

“What he could have done to warrant this type of brutality makes no sense. How do you live after your child’s been taken away from you? It’s every parent’s worst nightmare. He can’t have been taken like this and nobody is punished for it.”

Family friend Pastor Neville Popo said the violence had to stop, condemned what he termed “black on black violence” and added: “It’s not just the Lincoln family that are suffering traumatic pain today, but I would imagine the parents of those who committed the crime will also be devastated by what took place.”

Four youths aged 16, 15 and two 14-year-olds remain in custody after being arrested in connection with the investigation. Another 14-year-old has been released under investigation.

DCI Alastair Orencas, said: “The answer to this investigation lies in the community. In the 24 years that I’ve been serving in the police service, and I don’t say this lightly, this is the most gratuitous use of violence seeing a combination of knife and gun attack which ultimately killed Keon.

“We know that the nature of this crime, where it involves a young man that has lost his life and young men that have committed the crime, means that the information and intelligence is highly likely to rest with the younger community but also their parents.

“I know it’s not easy to come forward but there is a moral obligation – imagine this was your friend or your son, you’ve got to come forward.”

Orencas added: “There are multiple offenders involved in broad daylight. I simply don’t believe there isn’t information out there that can help me with the inquiry.”

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## 2021.01.26 - Around the world

- Biden administration Janet Yellen confirmed as first female treasury secretary
- 'Empty words on paper' China's animal health rules alone won't stop viruses crossing to humans – experts
- 'Less expensive this way' Pompidou Centre in Paris closes under renovation for four years
- US Capitol breach Fears grow that efforts to combat US domestic terrorism can hurt minorities
- Italy Giuseppe Conte to quit as PM in tactical move
- European Union Brussels warns Britain against downgrading ambassador's status
- France Some homemade Covid masks banned for use in public
- Egypt Political prisoners 'denied healthcare and subject to reprisals'
- Global development Covid 'imperils family planning in poorest countries', says global project
- Birdwatch Twitter pilot will allow users to flag misinformation

**Janet Yellen**

## **Janet Yellen confirmed as first female treasury secretary**

- US Senate approves former Federal Reserve chair
- Yellen must try to revive economy decimated by coronavirus



Janet Yellen was removed from the Federal Reserve by Donald Trump.  
Photograph: Christopher Aluka Berry/Reuters

Janet Yellen was removed from the Federal Reserve by Donald Trump.  
Photograph: Christopher Aluka Berry/Reuters

*[Dominic Rushe in New York](#)*

*[@dominicru](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 18.25 EST

Janet Yellen has been confirmed as the first woman to head the US Treasury.

The former chair of the Federal Reserve and noted economist was approved by the Senate on an 84-15 vote. She sailed through a congressional hearing [last week](#) and had already been unanimously approved by the Senate finance committee and backed by all living former treasury secretaries.

[Janet Yellen says Biden must 'act big' with coronavirus relief package](#)

[Read more](#)

She faces a monumental task. Last week another 900,000 people filed for unemployment benefits – more than the population of San Francisco and four times the number of weekly claims made before the coronavirus pandemic struck.

Businesses are closing across the US amid a surge in infections. The US reported more than 188,000 new cases for Thursday, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University, and close to 4,000 people are dying each day.

At the hearing Yellen said it was imperative for the government to “act big” on the next coronavirus relief package and argued now is not the time to worry about the costs of a higher debt burden.

Tackling the fallout of Covid-19 would be her top priority, said Yellen, and especially its disproportionately hard impact on communities of color. Black and Latino workers are still experiencing far higher rates of unemployment, at 9.9% and 9.3%, compared with their white counterparts, 6%.

“We need to make sure that people aren’t going hungry in America, that they can put food on the table, that they’re not losing their homes and ending up out on the street because of evictions,” Yellen said. “We really need to address those forms of suffering, and I think we shouldn’t compromise on it.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/25/janet-yellen-confirmed-treasury-secretary-first-woman>

## [Animals farmedChina](#)

# **China's new animal health rules alone won't stop zoonotic outbreaks, experts warn**

Enforcement of rules and boosting numbers of vets to help with inspections, quarantines and general animal health seen as critical



A Chinese vet vaccinates a duck against bird flu in a village in Yongchuan, southwest China. Photograph: Handout/Reuters

A Chinese vet vaccinates a duck against bird flu in a village in Yongchuan, southwest China. Photograph: Handout/Reuters

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[Michael Standaert](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

China's attempts to prevent another zoonotic disease outbreak will fail without deep changes in enforcement, oversight, and extensive investment to ramp up veterinary capacity, say experts.

China's top lawmakers last week approved revisions to the country's law on preventing the spread of animal diseases. Amendments to the [Animal Epidemic Prevention Law](#), due to come into force in May, were accelerated in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The outbreak of the deadly pig disease African swine fever (ASF), which has [decimated as much as 40%](#) of China's pig production since 2018, has been an added impetus for reform.

The new measures include a system of quarantine standards for captive bred wildlife; revisions to a system for classifying animal epidemics based on their potential impact on human health, the economy and the public; compulsory vaccinations; and stipulations for veterinarians to pass qualification tests.

However, observers said the challenge was poor enforcement of rules, rather than the need for new ones. “If [China](#) is truly to prevent and tackle future viruses, it is immensely important that the revised law is not simply adopted or revised and then ignored,” Peter J Li, a [China](#) policy specialist at the Humane Society International, told the Guardian.

Li said existing laws were already strong enough to have prevented both the Covid-19 pandemic and the Sars epidemic but that rules largely were not followed or enforced.

Anyone raising captive bred wildlife must already ensure that animals pass health inspections and quarantines, but these rules are not strictly followed within the wildlife farming community, he said. Central and local government authorities who view the wildlife trade as a cash cow do little to enforce the law.

[Bamboo rats left in limbo as breeders push back against China wildlife ban](#)  
[Read more](#)

It is already prohibited to transport animals without health certification and to fail to report outbreaks. Existing rules mandated wastewater treatment and sterilisation facilities; and rules requiring farms, slaughterhouses and processing facilities to be located far from human activity were on the books, he said.

“Unfortunately, these articles have universally been violated or held in contempt by the animal-related businesses, and local authorities have failed massively to enforce the law,” Li said.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization both declined to comment on the amendments when contacted by the Guardian.

“The Chinese government, especially the local health and law enforcement authorities, must put more efforts and resources into policing and enforcing the laws,” said Deborah Cao, a professor at Griffith University in Australia

and an expert in China's animal-related laws. "Otherwise, the laws will just be reduced to, as the Chinese say, empty words on a piece of paper."

## China needs more vets

Increasing the number of qualified veterinarians across China to help with inspections, quarantines and general animal health is seen as an important step.

According to Wang Gongmin, deputy chief of the agriculture ministry's Department of Veterinary Services, by 2018 China had around 100,000 veterinarians – but the country needs nearly 400,000 to adequately address animal disease prevention.

The problem is particularly acute in rural areas where pay is low and recently-graduated veterinarians are less likely to go. Opening a pet shop and clinic in a major city is much more profitable.

"Producing more veterinarians can be a solution, and licensing the existing veterinary practitioners may be a short-cut," Li said.

While China moved to stop all breeding of wildlife for meat consumption in mid-2020, it still allows the use of wildlife for fur farming, traditional Chinese medicine and other similar uses, raising concerns of the potential for disease in the absence of proper biosecurity measures.

The wildlife ban angered thousands of farmers who had been encouraged to raise wildlife by local government. Many breeders still do not understand why they were shut down with no proof that the Covid-19 virus came from the species of animal they raised.

"I used to raise pigs, then ASF hit, and my pigs were culled. Then I turned to raising bamboo rats and then this happened," said a 34-year-old former soldier turned farmer in Fujian province, who did not want his name used for fear of reprisals from local authorities.

"The authorities made a mistake [in thinking bamboo rats spread Covid-19] but the country just went with it, and now we're suffering as a result," he

said.

Mr Zhu from Hunan province, who had raised nearly 500 bamboo rats, said he was only able to get 27,000 yuan (£3,000) in compensation for his culled animals although he had invested over 120,000 yuan in the operation.

Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak no inspectors or veterinary authorities ever came to check on his bamboo rat business, which he had operated since 2013, Zhu said. “This is a special type of farming and there are just too many of us for that.”

*Sign up for the [Animals farmed monthly update](#) to get a roundup of the best farming and food stories across the world and keep up with our investigations. You can send us your stories and thoughts at [animalsfarmed@theguardian.com](mailto:animalsfarmed@theguardian.com)*

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/26/chinas-new-animal-health-rules-alone-wont-stop-zoonotic-outbreaks-experts-warn>

[France](#)

## Ageing Pompidou Centre in Paris to close for four years for renovations

French culture minister says it will be quicker and cheaper to close the cultural landmark entirely



The Pompidou Centre will be completely closed to make refurbishment quicker and cheaper, said France's culture minister. Photograph: Nisian Hughes/Getty Images

The Pompidou Centre will be completely closed to make refurbishment quicker and cheaper, said France's culture minister. Photograph: Nisian Hughes/Getty Images

*[Kim Willsher](#) in Paris*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 07.01 EST

The Pompidou Centre, one of Paris's top cultural attractions and home to Europe's biggest modern art collection, is to close from 2023 for four years

of renovations, France's culture minister has said.

Designed by architects [Renzo Piano](#) and [Richard Rogers](#), the Pompidou Centre's groundbreaking design put the nuts-and-bolts inner workings of the museum on the outside, freeing up gallery space inside but has shown signs of ageing since its 1977 opening.

“There were two options,” culture minister Roselyne Bachelot told the Figaro newspaper on Monday. “One involved renovating the centre while keeping it open, the other was closing it completely.

“I chose the second because it should be shorter and a little bit less expensive,” she said.

[Pompidou Centre: a 70s French radical that's never gone out of fashion](#)  
[Read more](#)

In 2017, Serge Lasvignes, president of the Pompidou Centre, [told the Observer](#) of plans for the museum to undergo a major facelift costing at least €100m. Work on a €19m renovation to its external “caterpillar” escalators that snake up the front of the building – part of the larger project – began in September 2019, when the Covid-19 health crisis struck.

Like all cultural attractions in Paris, the Pompidou Centre closed from March to June last year during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic and has been closed again since late October. Work on the escalators was briefly halted but recommenced last spring and is expected to be finished in May.



The Pompidou Centre will be closed for renovation from 2023 to 2027.  
Photograph: Anne-Christine Poujoulat/AFP/Getty Images

The building's radical design pushes almost all its structural and mechanical elements to the exterior. The maze of blue airconditioning conduits, green water pipes, yellow electrical casings and red elevators on display outside however suffer from continual exposure to the elements. It previously closed for an €88m refurbishment between 1998 and 2000.

"It means that the building needs a lot of renovation," Lasvignes said in 2017, adding that there were no plans to change the outside of the building even though some structures, like the large funnels that were once part of the air system, are now purely decorative.

The bold project in the historic heart of the French capital faced heavy opposition at the time it was mooted in the 1970s, including lawsuits.

When it opened in 1977, *Le Monde* called it "an architectural King Kong" while others said it looked like it was covered in scaffolding. Even now, it divides opinion. Parisians who hate it tell visitors the best view of the city can be had from its rooftop terrace – now home to a chic restaurant – not because you can see its most famous landmarks, but because you cannot see the Pompidou Centre.

For others it has since become a much-loved landmark, despite the exterior looking increasingly shabby in recent years.

A total of 3.2 million people visited the museum in 2019 before the onset of the coronavirus crisis. It has 120,000 works of art in its collection, only 5% of which are on display.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/26/ageing-pompidou-centre-in-paris-to-close-for-four-years-for-renovation>

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## US Capitol breach

# Fears grow that efforts to combat US domestic terrorism can hurt minorities



Ten progressive members of Congress say in letter: ‘Trump mob’s success in breaching the Capitol was not due to a lack of resources at the disposal of federal law enforcement.’ Photograph: Reuters

Ten progressive members of Congress say in letter: ‘Trump mob’s success in breaching the Capitol was not due to a lack of resources at the disposal of federal law enforcement.’ Photograph: Reuters

Civil rights advocates worry that moves to fight far-right extremism will be used against communities of color and leftwing activists

*Noa Yachot*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

An expanded no-fly list. New crimes put on the books. Increased use of the death penalty.

These are some of the ways that politicians, pundits and law enforcement want to head off a repeat of the 6 January attack on the Capitol. But a renewed national security push aimed at addressing domestic terrorism has civil liberties groups steeling themselves, concerned that moves to combat far-right extremism will instead redound against communities of color and leftwing activists.

Last summer's racial justice protests jump-started a national conversation over the endurance of racism within America's law enforcement and security apparatus. But despite campaigning on the need to reform those institutions, some mainstream Democrats are now taking the lead on calls to expand them.

The Senate majority leader, Chuck Schumer, has called for the Capitol rioters to be placed on the no-fly list. President Joe Biden, whose campaign website [pledges](#) his administration will "work for a domestic terrorism law", has ordered a comprehensive assessment of domestic violent extremism. The House speaker ,Nancy [Pelosi](#), has called for a new "9/11-type commission". And the first domestic terrorism [legislation](#) to follow the Capitol attack was introduced in the House last week by the Illinois Democrat Brad Schneider.

The Democratic party, however, isn't entirely united on the issue.

Ten progressive members of Congress, led by the Michigan congresswoman Rashida Tlaib have sent a [letter](#) to congressional leadership expressing opposition to an expansion of national security powers.

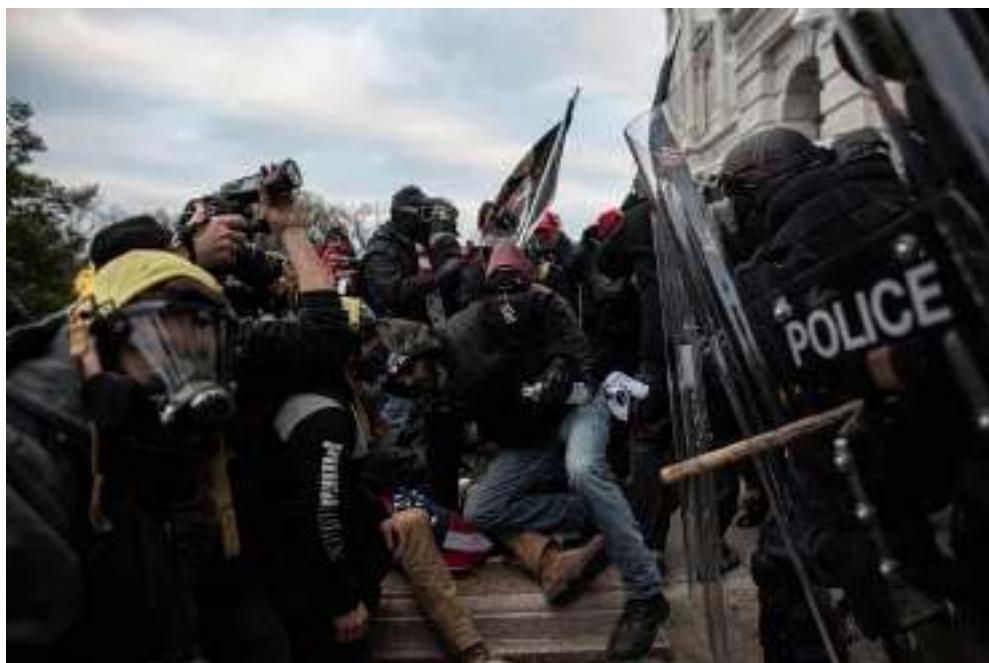
"The Trump mob's success in breaching the Capitol was not due to a lack of resources at the disposal of federal law enforcement," the letter reads. "We firmly believe that the national security and surveillance powers of the US government are already too broad, undefined, and unaccountable to the people."

"Our history is littered with examples of initiatives sold as being necessary to fight extremism that quickly devolve into tools used for the mass violation of the human and civil rights of the American people," the letter continues.

It cites as examples the McCarthy-era House Un-American Activities Committee, the surveillance of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and the invention of a category in 2017 called “Black Identity Extremism” the FBI claimed posed a risk of domestic terrorism.

More than 100 civil and human rights organizations have also joined [in a statement of opposition](#) to any new domestic terror legislation.

Since 6 January, security officials have resurrected the same well-honed argument trotted out when the debate around domestic terrorism resurfaces: that the law hamstrings police from effectively fighting white nationalist violence. “There are so many limitations on law enforcement,” Bill Bratton, former commissioner of the NYPD, [recently told](#) CNBC. “We don’t have many of the tools to battle domestic terrorism that we have to battle international terrorism.”



Pro-Trump mob clashes with police as they try to breach the US Capitol on 6 January. Photograph: Reuters

Civil rights and civil liberties experts say that argument is disingenuous, a ploy to seize power in a time of national crisis, and [point to the many laws](#) at the disposal of law enforcement in fighting domestic extremism. What they lack, they say, is the will to go after white supremacists the way they do

communities of color, despite white supremacists accounting for the [vast majority](#) of criminal acts that are classifiable by law as domestic terrorism.

“In the last four years, white supremacists and far-right militias have engaged in public violence, and have made public statements about their intent to do so,” said Mike German, a former FBI agent now with the Brennan Center for Justice. “So it’s a little hard for me to understand how the FBI and local law enforcement had no idea that the attack on the Capitol was being planned.”

The government does have more expansive powers – powers that ballooned in the decades since 9/11 – to target Americans it claims are associated with groups designated by the state department as “Foreign Terrorism Organizations”. While the Patriot Act and other post-9/11 authorities did expand the government’s ability to investigate and prosecute domestic terrorism, it has so far avoided extending all of those authorities to domestic groups. That’s in part due to first amendment-related concerns, as the US constitution permits non-violent association with hateful groups.

Advocates also point out how damaging those anti-terrorism powers have been to Muslim-American communities and the rule of law. The “terrorism” label has been used to justify the surveillance of entire communities, mass arrests and deportations, entrapment, harassment, an inflated watchlist system and, of course, the Muslim ban, one of the original sins of the Trump presidency.

“An expansion of domestic terrorism won’t mean more focus on white terrorism,” said Diala Shamas, an attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights. “When you consider the biases that law enforcement has – with its focus on black political dissent, Muslim political dissent, Palestinian organizing – it’s not far-fetched to imagine that those are the groups that will be disproportionately represented in any so-called domestic terrorism framing.”

Shamas says the concept of terrorism can’t be divorced from its legacy of politicization and abuse. “The caution I urge in using that terminology is because of this acute awareness that it ends up triggering such expansive state action.”

Asad Dandia, a Brooklyn-based community organizer, has first-hand experience with the upheaval the terrorism label can wreak.

When Dandia was a teenager, his charity was infiltrated by an informant working for the NYPD who spent months spying on Dandia, his family and friends, as part of the police department's notorious, years-long surveillance program of the city's Muslim communities. Dandia joined a lawsuit against the NYPD in 2013 that [settled in 2017](#) after the NYPD agreed to a series of reforms.

He recently reread the confession the informant posted on Facebook. "I was an informant for the NYPD, for a little while, to investigate terrorism," it read.

"I had totally forgotten that keyword was there," Dandia says of the word terrorism. "We, my community and my friends, were given that designation. To argue for that designation for another community would implicitly mean to accept it for myself. And I refuse to accept it for myself."

Policymakers are currently considering a number of options. The bill introduced last week calls for the creation of domestic terrorism offices within the FBI and the departments of homeland security and justice, and for increased monitoring and reporting on threats and investigations.

The proposal that has civil liberties most concerned is a bill first introduced in 2019 by the House intelligence chair, Adam Schiff, which would give the attorney general the authority to identify certain crimes as acts of terrorism. Given [the aggressive policing](#) and prosecutions of last summer's racial justice protesters – in just one example, an Indigenous man now faces 10 years in prison for his [Facebook posts](#) – they say it's easy to imagine charges against protesters inflated even more with a terrorism designation green-lit by an unsympathetic attorney general like William Barr.

"In addition to further harming already marginalized communities, these charges could be used to brand as terrorists people who protest against government injustices by engaging in civil disobedience or actions that result in property damage," the American Civil Liberties Union wrote in a [letter](#) opposing that bill.

German, the former FBI agent, [recently published](#) a report tying biased policing to the extensive infiltration of police departments by white supremacists.

German charges the FBI with playing a “semantic game” in claiming the US lacks a domestic terrorism law, [pointing](#) to the dozens of statutes relating to what the law [defines](#) as domestic terrorism. The best way for police to target white supremacist violence, he says, is by rooting out racists within their ranks and enforcing laws that already exist.

Shamas and German both point to the need for a broader reckoning with the reasons the government has historically turned a blind eye to far-right extremism. “In my view, the real problem with white supremacy is the proximity to the state,” says Shamas. “It’s the fact that we have representatives in Congress who are white supremacists, it’s the fact that police departments are being infiltrated by these groups.

“None of that is captured when you say, ‘these are terrorists.’ The relationship with the state gets blurred.”

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**Italy**

## **Giuseppe Conte quits as Italy's PM in tactical move**

Resignation handed in to president Sergio Mattarella on Tuesday morning



Giuseppe Conte has been asked to stay on in a caretaker capacity while talks continue. Photograph: Italian Prime Minister's Press O/AFP/Getty Images

Giuseppe Conte has been asked to stay on in a caretaker capacity while talks continue. Photograph: Italian Prime Minister's Press O/AFP/Getty Images

*[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 07.23 EST

Italy's prime minister, [Giuseppe Conte](#), has resigned in a tactical move aimed at maximising his chances of leading a new government.

Conte officially handed his resignation on Tuesday to the president, Sergio Mattarella, who will begin consultations with party leaders on Wednesday.

Mattarella asked Conte to stay on in a caretaker capacity while talks continued.

If Mattarella believes Conte has a strong enough prospect of forming a majority, then he could be reappointed and tasked with forming a new executive with a broader coalition.

Conte's resignation comes after he [survived confidence votes](#) in both houses of parliament last week after the former prime minister Matteo Renzi [triggered a political crisis](#) by withdrawing his small Italia Viva party from the ruling coalition. However, the confidence votes left Conte with only a slim majority and he has since failed to strengthen support.

Conte has the backing of the two main coalition parties – the [Five Star Movement](#) (M5S) and Democratic party (PD) – as well as the small leftwing group Free and Equal. The opposition, led by Matteo Salvini's far-right League party, is calling for early elections to be held.

Establishing a broader coalition could depend on Italia Viva returning to the fold. Conte, as well as politicians from the PD and M5S, insisted last week that they would not work with Renzi again.

“It is currently unclear whether Conte can succeed in such an effort,” Wolfgango Piccoli, the co-president of the research company Teneo Holdings, wrote in a note. “The PD and M5S are deeply divided internally on whether to negotiate with Renzi. Both parties are also striving to reduce the power that Conte has accumulated thanks to the pandemic over the last 11 months.”

Conte enjoyed popularity for his handling of the pandemic during the first wave, when the country endured a tough two-month lockdown, but has lost some credibility over the government’s haphazard approach to subsequent restrictions and weak financial response to businesses affected.

The crisis comes as [Italy](#) struggles to emerge from the pandemic and recession. Renzi was widely criticised after pulling Italia Viva, which attracts less than 3% in the polls, from the coalition. He did so over disagreements about the handling of the pandemic and a post-Covid-19

economic recovery plan. [Italy](#) is set to receive over €200bn (£178bn) from the EU's recovery fund.

If Conte succeeds in forming a broad coalition, it would be his third administration in less than three years.

“A new coalition, either under Conte or a different prime minister, remains the most likely outcome,” said Piccoli. “However, it is doubtful that a more effective prime minister and government will emerge given the current parliamentary composition and the preferences of the main parties.”

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[European Union](#)

## Brussels warns Britain against downgrading EU ambassador's status

Denying mission full privileges under the Vienna convention risks poisoning diplomatic ties, No 10 told



João Vale de Almeida, the EU's representative in the UK, has not been granted full diplomatic status. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty

João Vale de Almeida, the EU's representative in the UK, has not been granted full diplomatic status. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty

[Daniel Boffey](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 13.09 EST

Downing Street has been warned by Brussels that downgrading the status of the EU's ambassador to the UK will poison diplomatic relations for years to come.

The UK has so far declined to grant the bloc's representative, João Vale de Almeida, and his 25-strong mission the privileges and immunities afforded to diplomats under the Vienna convention.

The British government's approach has stirred anger in Brussels as the EU has 143 delegations around the world, each of which has full diplomatic status.

Speaking after a meeting of foreign ministers for the 27 member states, Josep Borrell, a former Spanish minister who is the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, said there was "clear view" in the capitals at the apparent snub.

"It's not a friendly signal," he said, "the first one that the United Kingdom has sent to us immediately after leaving the [European Union](#). If things continue like this there are no good prospects."

The Foreign Office's opening position with the EU is that it does not want to set a precedent by treating an international body in the same way as a nation state.

Other international organisations would then apply, it is argued, leading to a proliferation of others seeking diplomatic status.

It is claimed the lower status the government is willing to grant the EU's delegation would not impact on the ability of their staff to carry out their job with only an audience with the Queen being the major difference.

The protection offered by the UK includes embassy property and documents being inviolable, and some staff being exempt from taxes. No delegation staff can be prosecuted for acts committed in the course of their diplomatic duties and the head of the mission's residential home is inviolable. They are not required to pay any taxes or open personal baggage at airports.

But Borrell warned that the attitude in London was "unacceptable".

He said: "We do not ask for something new or we don't ask for special treatment. The external status of the European Union is recognised by countries and international organisations around the world. And we expect

that [the] United Kingdom treat the European Union delegations accordingly, and without delay.

“We have 143 delegations around the world. Without a single exception, all host states have accepted to grant these delegations and their staff and establish the equivalent to that of diplomatic missions of the states under the Vienna convention.

“And the UK is very well aware of that – 143 states around the world, all of them have reciprocal treatment based on this convention, a standard practice between equal partners. And we are confident that we can clear this issue with our friends in London in a satisfactory manner. But we will not accept that the United Kingdom will be the only country in the world that doesn’t recognise the delegation of the European Union the equivalent of a diplomatic mission.”

The British approach follows a pattern of behaviour exhibited during the trade and security negotiations over the last year. The UK’s chief negotiator, David Frost, irritated his counterpart, Michel Barnier, by repeatedly referring to the EU as “your organisation”.

The UK also declined to open negotiations on foreign policy coordination during the talks, preferring to focus on bilateral arrangements with key member states.

The issue of the EU delegation’s status remains under consideration in Whitehall, however, with no final decision yet made. Last week a letter from Borrell complaining about the failure to grant full status was leaked on the day that the appointment of the UK’s head of mission to the EU, Lindsay Croisdale-Appleby, was announced.

Should the UK continue to reject the EU’s appeal for full status, there is a risk that Croisdale-Appleby’s status could be downgraded although it is more likely that the issue will be settled in the coming weeks.

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## [Coronavirus](#)

# France bans certain homemade Covid masks for use in public

Advice also covers industrially made category 2 fabric masks with lesser filtering qualities

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

[Kim Willsher](#) in Paris

Mon 25 Jan 2021 12.15 EST Last modified on Tue 26 Jan 2021 03.41 EST



A range of fabric and FFP2 face masks. Homemade masks will be banned in the workplace Photograph: Jean-Philippe Ksiazek/AFP/Getty Images

[France](#) has issued a decree banning certain homemade masks from being worn in public, saying they do not offer sufficient protection from the newer,

more contagious Covid-19 variants.

Olivier Véran, the health minister, said a decree published on Friday came after recommendations from the country's health experts.

"The high council for public health recommends, as do I, that the French do not wear masks they have made at home," Véran said. He said the advice also covered industrially made fabric masks with lesser filtering qualities, listed as category 2.

On Monday, France's junior minister responsible for health at work confirmed that official advice was to be changed to stop people wearing homemade masks in the workplace.

"The government is scrupulously following the recommendations of the High Council for Public Health and has done so since the beginning of this crisis," Laurent Pietraszewski told Franceinfo radio.

He said the new health protocol in the workplace would be adapted "as usual, after discussions with the unions".

Only three types of masks will be recommended: surgical, the FFP2 and fabric masks made to category 1 standards.

The recommendation has been criticised by the French Academy of Medicine that says there is a lack of scientific proof that homemade masks do not offer sufficient protection if worn properly.

The French authorities have admitted the new decree will be difficult to enforce.

"I don't imagine the police are going to be asking people the protection level of their mask," a spokesperson for the prime minister said.

Category 1 masks filter 95% of 3-micrometre particles, whereas category 2 devices only filter 70%. Surgical masks filter 95%. FFP2 masks filter 94% of even smaller 0.6-micrometer particles.

The government says the aim of the decree is to ensure “better individual protection, but above all to increase collective protection by ensuring a maximum of people are wearing a mask that filters enough”.

### The differences between a face mask and a FFP2 respirator

“We ask that this is the norm from now on ... we have to get this clear message across to the French,” the PM’s office added.

Officials admit it is not always easy to know the filter properties of masks. The category is not marked on most masks, though it is supposed to be clearly printed on the packaging or accompanying customer notice.

Prof Jean-François Delfraissy, president of the government’s scientific committee, told BFMTV: “The coronavirus mutations and variants have completely changed the game over the last three weeks.” He said the new strains of Covid-19 were more contagious and therefore spread more quickly.

Last Friday, two associations – one of doctors and a second of victims of Covid-19 – lodged an official demand to the state council demanding the wearing of FFP2 masks be made obligatory in public transport, shops and universities. The council will consider the demand this week.

Véran said scientific committee had not – as yet – recommended the widespread use of FFP2 masks.

“Theoretically they provide better protection, but they have to be used correctly and must fit closer to the face,” Alexandre Bleibtreu, an infection specialist at the Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital in Paris told La Croix newspaper.

## Global development

# Egypt's political prisoners 'denied healthcare and subject to reprisals'

International community must put pressure on Egypt to prevent prison deaths, warns Amnesty International



Prisoners being treated in the clinic of Borg el-Arab prison near the Egyptian city of Alexandria. Amnesty has highlighted a lack of basic care in the country's prisons. Photograph: Mohamed El-Shahed/AFP via Getty Images

Prisoners being treated in the clinic of Borg el-Arab prison near the Egyptian city of Alexandria. Amnesty has highlighted a lack of basic care in the country's prisons. Photograph: Mohamed El-Shahed/AFP via Getty Images

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*Ruth Michaelson* in Cairo

Tue 26 Jan 2021 02.15 EST

A decade after the uprising that overturned politics in [Egypt](#), political prisoners are being targeted inside the country's overcrowded prison system.

Egypt's prisons hold at least twice the number of people they were built for, with prisoners of conscience targeted by security forces and denied healthcare, [according to Amnesty International](#). Prisoners of all kinds risk dying in custody because of the profound lack of basic care by the authorities, said the human rights organisation.

“There is a sense that inside prisons, the guardians and especially the national security agency are trying to crush the revolution through targeting these individuals, undermining their right to health and dignity,” said Hussein Baoumi, of Amnesty International.

The rights organisation gave details of reprisals against political prisoners, including solitary confinement for up to 23 hours a day, denial of family visits and of access to essential food packages delivered by relatives. It

tracked the welfare of 67 detainees in 16 prisons across the country; 10 died in custody and two died shortly after release.

A decade after protests ended the 30 year rule of autocrat Hosni Mubarak, many of the figures who spearheaded or participated in Egypt's revolution now languish behind bars. Their detentions span the once-broad political coalition that banded together to topple Mubarak, from Islamist political prisoners to rights lawyers and ordinary citizens arrested on commonly-deployed charges of "spreading false news", and seeking to overthrow the current regime.



Protestors hold placards during a protest against Egyptian president Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's state visit to France, in Paris, France, 8 December 2020. Photograph: Mohammed Badra/EPA

Mary Lawlor, the UN special rapporteur on human rights defenders, [recently condemned](#) Egypt's targeting of activists and bloggers, with many now languishing in pre-trial detention. "Not only are these human rights defenders, journalists and other civil society actors unduly targeted for their legitimate and peaceful defence of human rights and fundamental freedoms, they are wrongfully accused of belonging to terrorist organisations and portrayed as a national security threat under vague legal provisions," she said.

Since coming to power in a military coup in 2013, President Abdel-Fatah al-Sisi has purged all political opposition and targeted free speech, cracking down on the right to protest and even [jailing a lone man who held a placard](#) demanding he step down. Recent high-profile arrests include [human rights workers, doctors](#) who spoke out about Covid-19 and [TikTok influencers](#). On 24 January, security forces detained cartoonist Ashraf Abdel Hamid after he helped create a short animation about the anniversary of the revolution.

Amnesty said overcrowding is now commonplace, with large groups packed into tiny cells and many political prisoners held in facilities originally intended for those convicted of other crimes. On average a prisoner is afforded 1.1 sq metres of space, far less than the 3.4 sq metre minimum recommended by the International Red Cross.

Sisi has [long maintained that](#) there are “no political prisoners in Egypt”, and the government does not release data on its labyrinthine prison system. According to the UN high commissioner on human rights, Egypt’s prison system holds at least double the 55,000 inmates the president has previously claimed.

[‘It would spread quickly in those cells’: Covid-19 imperils packed Egypt prison](#)

[Read more](#)

For years rights groups have tried to identify the precise number of prisoners of conscience behind bars in Egypt. “It’s clear it’s in the tens of thousands, with political cases divided among those tried by the Supreme State Security Prosecution, the thousands in pre-trial detention and those repeatedly convicted in multiple cases, but collecting that information is extremely difficult,” said Baoumi.

Groups like the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies also [point to the widespread practice](#) of “recycling cases” where prisoners are arbitrarily charged with new crimes to prevent their release. The practice is associated with the Supreme State Security Prosecution, a court that works in tandem with the National Security Agency to [create what Amnesty described](#) as “a parallel justice system”, targeting alleged enemies of the state.

The growing numbers inside Egypt's prisons have done little to change Sisi's reception abroad. President Emmanuel Macron recently presented his Egyptian counterpart with France's highest honour, the Légion d'honneur during a visit. British arms-tracking group Campaign Against the Arms Trade reported that the UK has licensed at least £218m of arms to Egypt since the uprising in 2011.

"Now is an extremely important time for the international community," said Baoumi, who stressed the need for pressure on Egypt to reveal more to international organisations about the conditions inside prisons. "Now is the time to do it, in order to save lives. Otherwise more people will die in prison."

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## Women's rights and gender equality

# Covid 'imperils family planning in poorest countries', says global project

Sixty million more girls and women using modern contraceptives due to global campaign, but pandemic recession threatens services



The number of contraceptive users across Africa has grown 66% since 2012.  
Photograph: Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi/AP

The number of contraceptive users across Africa has grown 66% since 2012.  
Photograph: Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi/AP

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[About this content](#)

*Liz Ford*

[@lizfordguardian](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 01.30 EST

Sixty million more women and girls in the world's poorest countries are now using modern contraceptives, after an eight-year global effort to expand family planning services.

But the [FP2020 global partnership](#), launched in London in 2012, warned that the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting financial crisis imperils further progress.

According to the FP2020's final progress report, published on Tuesday, 320 million women and girls are using some form of modern contraception in the 69 focus countries, up from 260 million in 2012.

The partnership had hoped to reach a figure of 120 million additional women and girls by 2020, but the increase was almost a third higher than had been projected over that period before the initiative began.

The number of users across Africa – which had the lowest uptake in 2012 – has grown by 66%, from 40 million to more than 66 million women and

girls. In central and west Africa, users doubled, while in eastern and southern Africa, the number grew by 70%.

However, Covid-19 could cast a long shadow on progress. In April, two-thirds of the 103 countries surveyed by the World Health Organization reported disruptions to family planning services. The UN population fund (UNFPA) projected that as many as 47 million women and girls in 114 poorer countries could lose access to contraception.

[Covid-19 threatens access to abortions and contraceptives, experts warn](#)  
[Read more](#)

While the worst-case scenario was averted through “partners working heroically to maintain services”, said Beth Schlachter, executive director of FP2020, the report noted that “the threat to reproductive health remains severe”, and would not be resolved soon.

The pandemic had “unleashed a host of corollary effects: a global increase in gender-based violence and child marriage, a global drop in women’s workforce participation and girls’ school enrolment, and a global economic recession”, said the report.

“The budgetary implications for family planning programmes are stark. Domestic government allocations and expenditures are threatened in numerous countries, and donors are already anticipating a decrease in their financial commitments or an inability to deliver on their commitments,” it said.

“A pandemic-related global recession will have knock-on effects throughout the world, potentially imperilling family planning resources for years to come.”

According to the report, before the pandemic the outlook for international funding for the next decade was that it would remain stagnant or even shrink.

Schlachter said the partnership had “bent the curve of progress sharply upward”, not only in reaching more women and girls but in expanding the

choice of contraceptive methods available to them, firming up supply chains and reaching more young people. Without Covid-19, the target figure could have been achieved over the next four or five years, she said.

Funding was a concern, she said. “We are not sure that there is going to be additional funding.”

National governments would need to prioritise family planning in their budgets. But advocates would also need to form new partnerships with groups working in other development sectors, Schlachter said, such as those trying to mitigate the climate crisis or halt biodiversity loss.

“We have to expand aspirations, how we work with other partners,” she said. “We know that when women and girls use contraceptives they generally have smaller families. A rights-based approach to family planning sets us up for world where women are making decisions ... that has a positive impact on population growth, climate change and on biodiversity.”

On Tuesday, the FP2020 will update its name to FP2030 and the number of countries involved will increase.

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[Twitter](#)

## Birdwatch: Twitter pilot will allow users to flag misinformation

Company has faced growing calls to better combat misinformation, particularly after the 2020 presidential election



Twitter said it expects to have between 1,000 and 100,000 ‘Birdwatchers’ who are being admitted on a rolling basis and who will not be paid. Photograph: Olivier Douliery/AFP/Getty Images

Twitter said it expects to have between 1,000 and 100,000 ‘Birdwatchers’ who are being admitted on a rolling basis and who will not be paid. Photograph: Olivier Douliery/AFP/Getty Images

*[Kari Paul](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 16.42 EST

Sign up for the Guardian Today US newsletter

Twitter will allow users to flag and annotate misleading or inaccurate tweets in ongoing efforts to address misinformation on the platform.

The pilot program, called Birdwatch, is being tested in the United States, the social media firm [said in a blogpost](#). It comes as calls to better combat misinformation on social media have grown substantially in recent years, particularly surrounding the 2020 presidential election.

Twitter in the past year started adding labels and warnings about misinformation on the site, including about the [Covid-19 pandemic](#) and the US election. It permanently [banned Donald Trump](#) in the days leading up to the inauguration of his successor after the former president's use of Twitter was seen to praise or enable the storming of the Capitol on 6 January.

Executives of the platform, along with those of other big tech firms, have been called to [testify in front of Congress](#) multiple times in the past year to answer for issues that include misinformation as well as the reach of big tech's influence and power.

Following its launch, Birdwatch can be found on a separate section of Twitter – [twitter.com/i/birdwatch](https://twitter.com/i/birdwatch) – and pilot participants who apply to the program can write posts identifying and rebutting misinformation. Their notes will initially not be visible on Twitter for users outside the pilot group but will be visible on the Birdwatch site.

Twitter said it expects to have between 1,000 and 100,000 Birdwatchers who are being admitted on a rolling basis and who will not be paid. In the blogpost, the Twitter vice-president of product, Keith Coleman, said the notes will ultimately be visible to the global Twitter audience.

“We know there are a number of challenges toward building a community-driven system like this – from making it resistant to manipulation attempts to ensuring it isn’t dominated by a simple majority or biased based on its distribution of contributors,” said Coleman in the blogpost.

Pilot participants can rate the helpfulness of notes from other contributors.

“We believe this is a model worth trying,” he said.

Some have [criticized Twitter](#) for delegating the important task of moderating questionable content to unpaid users. But others say it could be a step in the right direction. Evan Greer, the director of online activist group Fight for the Future said the effectiveness of the program will depend largely on how, exactly, it is carried out.

“There is definitely a need for creative thinking when it comes to addressing disinformation beyond just ‘let’s censor more things’. And it makes sense to explore more decentralized models rather than giving more power to big tech companies,” she said.

“That said, as always the devil is in the details. Twitter and other companies should consult with experts and members of impacted communities as they craft their policies and experiment with possible solutions to complex problems.”

*Reuters contributed to this report*

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## 2021.01.26 - Culture

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[Book of the day](#)[Fiction in translation](#)

## The Faces by Tove Ditlevsen review – a tortured life turned into art



Tove Ditlevsen, the Danish poet and author who died in 1976. Photograph: Jarner Palle/Ritzau

Tove Ditlevsen, the Danish poet and author who died in 1976. Photograph: Jarner Palle/Ritzau

A welcome, posthumous translation of a magnificent 1968 novel about the mental sufferings of a children's author

*[John Self](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Here is a book whose time has come, first, because it fits the openness of conversations about mental health today, but also because there's an appetite for more work by [Tove Ditlevsen](#), following the publication of her exceptional [trilogy of memoirs](#) in 2019. *The Faces*, which was published in

Danish in 1968 and now has its first UK publication, translated by Tiina Nunnally, was written in the same period as Ditlevsen's trilogy and is inspired by her life, but transforms the material alchemically into art.

The central character, Lise Mundus, is a writer of children's books, struggling with arbitrary success; she has won an award for a book she "considered no better or worse than her other books" and is phoned up by newspapers seeking the views of "prominent women" on trivial issues ("are miniskirts destroying marriage?"). Fame has "brutally ripped away the veil that always separated her from reality" and now she "clings to that fragile sense of security which was nothing more than the absence of change".

Despite the horror it depicts, Ditlevsen's writing is deeply humane and understanding

You can tell from the number of quotations in that paragraph that Ditlevsen's writing is at all points the perfect expression of its ideas, impossible to improve upon. This precision is important because *The Faces* seeks to portray "madness" from within, with all the unreliability that entails. Lise, for example, believes her husband, Gert, is having an affair with their housekeeper, Gitte, having seen his previous lover Grete kill herself. (The use of similar names adds to the reproduction of a mental blur in the reader.) She also believes that Gitte is supplying her with sleeping pills to drive her to kill herself.

These thoughts of Lise's are delusional, but there's plenty really going on that's harmful enough. She takes an overdose of the pills and ends up in a secure hospital, "tied to the bed with a wide leather belt covered with bolts and screws". Her life there becomes the centre of the book, as ambiguous and shifting as her life outside, and as powerful as other accounts of institutional life, such as Janet Frame's *An Angel at My Table*. Lise longs for "a different place, another reality, where it might be possible to exist" – even if that means a locked ward.

She is tormented by intrusive voices and fears other people's faces for their changing, unpredictable expressions. Her mother visits her but is unsympathetic: "You always thought you were better and smarter than your

father and me.” But throughout, Ditlevsen’s sublime imagery fills the mind: “Reality disappeared behind her like someone on a railway platform as the train pulls away.” And “in hospitals there was a white peace that smelled of ether – like the white peace after giving birth, after the pain has been endured”.

Despite the horror it depicts, Ditlevsen’s writing is deeply humane and understanding. She knows the mind’s cruel ingenuity to tailor pain to our worst fears; as a writer, Lise believes people are accusing her of plagiarism and, more wryly, of having “never caught on to modernism”. And she recognises that the opposite of fear is not happiness, but hope, hope that “moved like gentle, melodic sentences through her body”.

Yet even when there is a hint of a happy ending, Lise “knew it wouldn’t last” and this is what makes *The Faces* occasionally hard to read; its strengths come from real suffering and we know that for Ditlevsen too, happiness didn’t last. To say, then, that her death by her own hand in 1976 was a loss to literature is insufficient, insensitive even – but undoubtedly true.

- *The Faces* by Tove Ditlevsen, translated by Tiina Nunnally, is published by Penguin (£8.99). To order a copy go to [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply
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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/jan/26/the-faces-by-tove-ditlevsen-review-a-tortured-life-turned-into-art>

## Documentary films

### 'A culture of fear': inside a shocking film on how cheerleaders are treated



A still from A Woman's Work. Photograph: 1091

A still from A Woman's Work. Photograph: 1091

In A Woman's Work, a striking new documentary, NFL cheerleaders reveal the underbelly of an industry that leaves them underpaid and mistreated

*[Adrian Horton](#)*

*[@adrian\\_horton](#)*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 03.02 EST

Maria Pinzone thought she had landed her dream job when, in 2012, she successfully auditioned for the Jills, the cheer squad for her beloved hometown NFL team, the Buffalo Bills. Pinzone had long dreamed of cheering in the NFL, but as the season went on, parts of the job began to unsettle her. The job required hours on hours of practice and dozens of

community events, all unpaid. The Bills made more than \$250m as an organization that year, but Pinzone had to pay \$650 for her uniform, and was paid just \$105 for [840 hours](#) of work.

['It's a hard and challenging sport': inside the world of competitive cheerleading](#)

[Read more](#)

Pinzone quit the team in 2013. When another Jill confided the same misgivings about their compensation, Pinzone took her contract to a lawyer. The meeting in late 2013 “felt like a prayer confession, almost”, she told the Guardian. Something felt off about the contract – the Bills’ mascots, concession workers, janitors and cleaning staff were all paid for their work and time, yet the cheerleaders in the same stadium each week were not. But doubt crept in. “Am I crazy?” she thought. “Here I was signing up to be an [NFL cheerleader](#) – such a high prestige [job],” she said, “it just never occurred to me at all that there could be something wrong with that contract.”

A Woman’s Work: The NFL’s Cheerleader Problem, a documentary completed in 2019 and now available on demand, probes the context for Pinzone’s lawsuit and traces the protracted, hard-won efforts by cheerleaders across the league to compel the NFL to fairly compensate its most visible female employees. Since Pinzone, one of two former cheerleaders followed by the film-maker Yu Gu as they sought compensation for minimum-wage back pay and legal fees, and four teammates filed a lawsuit against the Jills, their managers, and the Bills in 2014, the NFL, which generated over [\\$15bn in revenue](#) in 2019, has come under increased scrutiny for widespread [underpayment, restrictive contracts and mistreatment](#) of its cheerleaders. Ten out of the 26 NFL teams with cheerleaders have since faced lawsuits alleging wage theft, sexual harassment, body-shaming, [hostile work environments, criminally low pay](#) (some as low as [\\$2.85 an hour](#)), and [“blatant discrimination”](#).

But back in 2014, few were speaking publicly about fair pay for cheerleaders, a decades-long staple of the NFL whose traditional “volunteer” position from the 1960s barely adapted to the league’s ballooned wealth,

visibility and professionalism. Highly competitive NFL cheer squads developed their own arrangements justifying maximum training and minimal pay – speak up or challenge loyalty to the football team, and you’re benched. “It happened across such a long time, and this culture of fear was really instilled in the cheerleaders from day one,” Gu told the Guardian. “It was such a huge barrier to overcome.” That was, until Lacy Thibodeaux-Fields, an Oakland “Raiderette” originally from Sulphur, Louisiana, and the film’s other subject, [filed a class-action lawsuit](#) in early 2014.

Like Pinzone, Thibodeaux-Fields, lithe and preternaturally bubbly, long dreamed of being a professional cheerleader – by the time she joined the Raiderettes in 2013, Thibodeaux-Fields had put 10,560 hours into 18 years of dance training, a body of work calculated onscreen in *A Woman’s Work*. The NFL did not reward that expertise, and the terms of the job were untenable: Raiderettes weren’t paid until the end of the season, nine months after they began practice. Thibodeaux-Fields was expected to pay for the requisite hair, nails and spray tan at \$225 a pop and was, all told, paid less than \$5 an hour for her work, including eight-hour shifts.

Gu first heard of Thibodeaux-Fields’s lawsuit in the Los Angeles Times while a graduate student at the University of Southern California. Born in China and raised in Vancouver, Gu was familiar with cheerleading stereotypes but baffled by America’s football-obsessed culture. Stripped of the American mythos used by teams to justify low pay – that it was privilege to cheer in the NFL, that sisterhood and prestige were worth more than money, that it offered visibility and had always been this way – Thibodeaux-Fields’s case seemed straightforward, “a pathway to understand some of the core mythologies of American culture”, Gu told the Guardian.



Maria Pinzone. Photograph: 1091

A Woman's Work observes Thibodeaux-Fields and Pinzone over five years, as the lawsuits and their echoes – the hurtful gossip on Facebook groups, the recognition of widespread issues across the league, the slow unlearning of “lucky to be here” gaslighting, the way recognizing it reframes one’s whole worldview – braid into their everyday lives, at times searingly personal. Gu’s camera finds Thibodeaux-Fields on the floor with her children, overwhelmed with childcare and too frazzled to engage with her husband after work. We stare from the passenger’s seat at Pinzone, days after losing her mother – her own best friend and biggest cheerleader – to cancer, as she melts into tears in her car.

The film’s unvarnished, lawsuit-unrelated footage demonstrates “the consequences, the repercussions, of being mistreated in the workplace, of being underpaid or undervalued”, said Gu. Without a Raiderette wage, Thibodeaux-Fields was dependent on following her husband’s job and providing childcare for their growing family. Maria balanced the stress and time of the lawsuit with her accounting career and primary caregiving for her mother.

Thibodeaux-Fields eventually reached a settlement with the Raiders, but Pinzone’s case, a [class-action suit](#) joined by 73 other Jills (60 more opted

out) that eventually included the NFL as a defendant, dragged on, and is still in a tense stalemate. Days after the lawsuit was filed, the Bills shut down the Jills, unceremoniously ending a nearly 50-year old program. “I just couldn’t believe that they did that and turned it around on us, so we became the bad guys,” Pinzone said. “That was really hard to navigate through. At one point in the film, the defendants offer a low-ball settlement agreement rather than pay fair back wages. “The fact that they thought we would accept something so low shows what they think of us: that we’re nothing,” Pinzone says over footage of her accompanying her father to a medical appointment.



Photograph: 1091

The NFL, for all its [recent work](#) to address sexism and racism within the league, and its 2016 “[women’s summit](#)” held in the wake of the league’s domestic violence scandal, has punted on addressing cheerleader compensation at the league level. Contracts and pay for the cheerleading squads are still at the discretion of individual teams and their owners. In Gu’s view, the league is “not justifying” the hands-off approach to safe and fair work environment for cheerleaders, “I think because they feel like they don’t have to justify it,” she said. Cheerleaders or no, fair pay or not, people will still watch football. “Because the league’s stance is that it’s the responsibility of each team, there’s just a lack of consistent rules and

guidelines across the different teams, and there's a lack of transparency and communication between the different teams," Gu explained.

Still, she added, it was "heartening" to see teams change their policies in the wake of several lawsuits – the Raiderettes have changed their contract to abide by labor laws, and the California assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, who appears in the film, [introduced legislation](#) specifically aimed at protecting professional cheerleaders.

Some teams have "realize[d] these women are an asset to their organization and they should be compensated for that", said Pinzone. Though she "had no idea when we signed up" how long the lawsuit, delayed by the bankruptcy of one defendant and the pandemic, would go on, Pinzone is hopeful for resolution this year. "We're just going to keep moving forward," she said, "and hope that once this does get settled, that they too will bring back the Jills and do it the right way."

- A Woman's Work: The NFL's Cheerleader Problem is now available to rent digitally in the US with a UK date yet to be announced
- 

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## TV comedy

# Epic win: the stars of Dead Pixels offer their tips for a 48-hour gaming sesh



Game on ... (clockwise from top left) David Mumeni, Will Merrick, Alexa Davies, Charlotte Ritchie and Sargon Yelda in *Dead Pixels*. Photograph: Channel 4

Game on ... (clockwise from top left) David Mumeni, Will Merrick, Alexa Davies, Charlotte Ritchie and Sargon Yelda in *Dead Pixels*. Photograph: Channel 4

Protein bars at the ready ... the gamer sitcom's leads plot a marathon session, featuring SAD lamps, Domino's and motivational pep talks

*Graeme Virtue*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

In the classic 70s arcade shoot 'em up Defender, players could jab a screen-clearing panic button when they felt overwhelmed. [E4's compulsive sitcom](#)

[Dead Pixels](#) uses linguistic fireworks to similar effect, as its characters – addicted to the overblown fantasy role-playing game Kingdom Scrolls – vent over voice chat. (Creator Jon Brown, a producer on HBO’s [Succession](#), is no stranger to inventive swearing.)

[The Guide: Staying In – sign up for our home entertainment tips](#)

[Read more](#)

Since 2019 the show has skilfully skewered gaming culture, from the rise of pricey loot boxes to the artform’s march into the mainstream: “Oh Drake, what the fuck have you done?” mutters lifelong gamer Meg (Alexa Davies), as the rapper’s endorsement of their favourite game triggers an influx of disrespectful young avatars.

It seems apt to talk to Davies and Will Merrick, who plays Meg’s BFF Nicky, over Zoom: their characters often communicate via headset despite living in the same Northampton flat (with exasperated non-gamer Alison, [Ghosts star Charlotte Ritchie](#)). “It’s weird seeing Will’s face,” says Davies. Merrick agrees: “This is more technical than the show – we’re usually listening to each other’s voices through a thin wall.”



RPG-force ... (l-r) Meg’s avatar, Greta Longstocking, and Nicky’s character, Lord Morwick the Unwavering. Photograph: Channel 4

The sarcasm-infused house share is a sturdy sitcom blueprint, but what gives Dead Pixels its surreal edge is its ability to zap viewers into the world of Kingdom Scrolls, a plausible [Warcraft](#)-type mega-game. Merrick sees it as “the cherry on top. You get to go into this brilliant-looking game, and the animation can be funny in itself,” he says. “We can be talking about something totally different, but you’re watching our avatars clubbing seal pups for tiny amounts of coins.”

The gang’s self-isolating habits predate the pandemic, but in the lockdown era it might be an emotional tonic: Meg and Nicky’s platonic but freighted relationship gives the show real heart. “They need each other,” says Davies. “Whatever one is doing, no matter how negative, the other will always back them up because they are as bad as each other. And that’s kind of lovely.”

Meg and Nicky are endurance-gaming veterans, clocking up epic sessions in well-worn chairs, aided by questionable snacks. Season two begins with the gang tackling an epic expansion quest. So if you were about to embark on your own 48-hour gaming marathon, how would you do it the #DeadPixels way?



High-scroller .... Alexa Davies. Photograph: Channel 4

## **Day zero**

### **Pre-mission prep**

**Will Merrick** When I was gaming more, I really hated being interrupted – I loved that feeling of being lost in it and didn't want anything to break that immersion. So I think you really want to get everyone else out of the way for the 48 hours. Alexa is more of a gamer than me, so I would also immediately turn to her for advice.

**Alexa Davies** I would be so prepared ... but I would suggest veering more toward a healthier version of what Meg and Nicky do. Although I'm such a sleeper I can't even really imagine keeping going for the full 48 hours.

## **Day one, midnight**

### **The quest begins**

**AD** If you start your session at midnight, you'd probably need a lot of coffee. I might also need a bottle of prosecco or two.

**WM** Yeah, I would probably need some booze ...

**AD** We could do cocktails!

**WM** Or mocktails?

**AD** That's a good shout – a little bit of sugar.

## **Day one, 9am**

### **Sunrise**

**WM** Keep the curtains drawn. There's nothing worse than seeing the sun. Then you start to get the fear, and you really don't want that happening when you're only nine hours in.

**AD** I'd actually say: let the sun *in*. You need to feel that on your skin to keep you awake, to keep the happy going. My boyfriend recently got a seasonal

affective disorder light that imitates the sun to make your body think that you're outside and get that serotonin going. So it would be a good thing to have a SAD lamp on hand, especially for Meg. Her bedroom doesn't even have any windows.



Levelling up ... Will Merrick. Photograph: Kevin Baker/Channel 4

## **Day one, 3pm Comfort breaks**

**WM** We know Meg has previously used a metal bucket to save time.

**AD** Yes, we know that she's gone full metal bucket before. I feel gross even saying it, because it's not something I would even contemplate. There is a chance she would set up some sort of second chair with a bucket underneath – maybe in the wardrobe, so she can still see the screen. She would be away from the keyboard but with her headset still on. And it would be painfully obvious to her team what she was doing.

## **Day two, 2am Breaking the wall**

**AD** In a 48-hour session, I think the middle 24 hours would be the problem. The first and the last 12, they'd be fine. The last leg, you just tell yourself you only have a little more time to play through and just get on with it.

**WM** Yeah, the wall is somewhere in the middle, isn't it? Then it's all downhill to the end. I can imagine Meg having prepared pep talks for if some doubts creep in, when people on the voice chat start saying things like: "Maybe we should just take five minutes off ..." I feel like you could whip out a motivational speech.

**AD** Pre-recorded!

**WM** Nice, so you don't even have to say it live.

## **Day two, 7pm**

### **Time for dinner**

**AD** Three days earlier, get on to Domino's so they deliver to the flat on both days at the right times. Leave the door open so they have easy access.

**WM** I can imagine a delivery guy in the flat but Meg and Nicky still don't come out of their bedrooms. Just slide it under the door, mate: sorted.

**AD** Maybe you could try a 48-hour fast – that would solve the food problem.

**WM** You could use those nutrient packets that runners have. Not much in them, but your body gets everything it needs.

**AD** It's not like you're really burning much energy anyway.

## **Day two, midnight**

### **The finish line**

**AD** Meg and Nicky would probably just carry on, wouldn't they?

**WM** I would be happy to call it quits but they would plough on. Maybe they don't even realise 48 hours has passed. Their flatmate Alison comes back three days later and they're staggering round the kitchen trying to toast bread in the freezer.

**AD** Personally, I would have a little cry.

*Dead Pixels season two starts 26 January, 10pm, E4; all episodes will then be available on All 4*

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## Thrillers of the monthThrillers

# The best recent thrillers – review roundup

Captivity, secrets and the spirit of Raymond Chandler lurk in remarkable new titles from Will Dean, Abigail Dean, Jane Harper and Steph Cha



An illegal migrant hobbles across fields in a bid to escape her captor in Will Dean's *The Last Thing to Burn*. Photograph: Robert Morris/Alamy

An illegal migrant hobbles across fields in a bid to escape her captor in Will Dean's *The Last Thing to Burn*. Photograph: Robert Morris/Alamy



[Alison Flood](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

## [The Last Thing to Burn](#) **Will Dean**

*Hodder & Stoughton, £12.99, pp256*

Will Dean's narrator "can feel bone shards scraping together, six-year-old shards" in her ankle, as *The Last Thing to Burn* opens. She hobbles across the fields, desperate to escape the hell in which she has been living. But the vast flats of the east Midlands defeat her, and her captor drives up in a tractor to take her back to his tumbledown cottage. Thanh Dao, Dean's heroine, is a Vietnamese woman who has illegally entered the UK with her sister, and found herself sold to a farmer who calls her Jane and treats her as his wife. She has been there for years, her life utterly controlled and utterly bleak, kept from escaping by the thought of what it would mean for her beloved sister. Any transgression means the farmer, Lenn, will burn one of her scant remaining possessions. Broken and drugged, she nonetheless finds some scrap of hope remaining. *The Last Thing to Burn* is one of the best thrillers I have read in years: I consumed it in great gulps, desperate to find

out how Thanh Dao's story played out, and then read it again, more slowly, savouring her courage and her unvanquished sense of self, despite everything.

## **Girl A**

### **Abigail Dean**

*HarperCollins, £14.99, pp336*

Captivity is central, again, in *Girl A*, Abigail Dean's debut, another astonishingly good thriller. Here, though, the escape comes first, as Lex recounts the horrific details of how, as a child, she escaped from the bed in which she'd been chained by her father, smashing a window and jumping out, running for help despite her injuries, stopping a passing car. Dean shows us what has happened to Lex – known in the press as Girl A – after her escape, and to her many siblings, now they are adults. Lex picks over the details of how their father – “the rot in my bones” – gradually spirals into a religious mania and begins to curtail his children’s freedoms. She reassesses her relationships with her siblings, from Evie, who shared the filthy room in which she was chained, to Ethan, the oldest, who has made a somewhat distasteful name for himself as an adult, talking about how he overcame his “personal trauma”. Moving back and forth between the present, where their mother has died in prison, and the past, *Girl A* is harrowing, gripping and also, somehow, life-affirming – an incredible achievement for a first novel.

## **The Survivors**

### **Jane Harper**

*Little, Brown, £14.99, pp385*

The Australian novelist Jane Harper is known for her excellent outback noir novels, from *The Dry* to *The Lost Man*, in which the harsh, sun-baked expanses of the landscape play as much a part as her protagonists. Her latest, *The Survivors*, moves the action to the coast of Tasmania, and shows that Harper doesn't need sun and sand to write a compelling, terrifying thriller. Kieran Elliott has returned to his small home town of Evelyn Bay with his

girlfriend and baby – his father has dementia, and he needs to help his mother clear out the family home. But Kieran hasn't come home for years – a choice he made as a teenager had devastating consequences, ones that still echo through his family's life and the lives of the town's inhabitants. As Harper puts it, "soft hoary layers of guilt" still envelop Kieran, and not everyone is happy to see him return. When the body of Bronte, a girl who has been working in the local bar, is found on the beach, the events of the past come roaring back. As Bronte's mother says: "Unless you want every secret in this place dragged to the surface, I recommend everybody in this room opens their mouths and starts talking." Harper continues to go from strength to strength (although *The Lost Man* remains my favourite).

## **Follow Her Home**

**Steph Cha**

*Faber, £8.99, pp288*

The wonderful Juniper Song trilogy by Steph Cha, author of *Your House Will Pay*, is being released in the UK by Faber this month, and lovers of Raymond Chandler-tinged noir are in for a huge treat. In the first, *Follow Her Home*, we are introduced to Juniper Song, a Korean-American "half-employed" twentysomething from Los Angeles. Obsessed with Chandler and his PI hero Philip Marlowe, she jumps at the chance when her best friend, Luke, asks her to find out if his father is playing away with a young woman at his work. "I was no Marlowe, and Luke no violet-eyed knockout, but he was someone I wanted to help." But Song has only just started her surveillance when she gets knocked unconscious, and the next day finds a dead body in the boot of her car. Song is a fantastic creation, sardonic and laid-back, permanently lighting up Lucky Strikes and smirking as she considers what Marlowe might do if faced with her challenges. But, warned off by "a man in a smart blue suit and polished brown oxfords", she finds herself at a loss: her family has been threatened, and this wasn't an issue Chandler's detective ever encountered. "There were few threats which could stop him cold," but Song has a mother and a little sister she loves very much. Cha's follow-ups, *Beware Beware* and *Dead Soon Enough*, are also out this month.

- To order *The Last Thing to Burn*, *Girl A*, *The Survivors* or *Follow Her Home* go to [guardianbookshop.com](http://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply
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## Action and adventure films

# **Godzilla vs Kong: the big dumb action movie we've been waiting for?**

The trailer for the monster match-up promises bad dialogue and convoluted mythology, but also two giant creatures fighting until the death



Godzilla vs Kong: ‘It turns out that I apparently miss the sight of a massive gorilla punching a radioactive sea monster right in the middle of its face.’  
Photograph: Courtesy of Warner Bros

Godzilla vs Kong: ‘It turns out that I apparently miss the sight of a massive gorilla punching a radioactive sea monster right in the middle of its face.’  
Photograph: Courtesy of Warner Bros



[Stuart Heritage](#)

[@stuheritage](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 11.27 EST

We can all agree that the restrictions brought about by Covid have reinforced all the things we previously took for granted. Some miss their loved ones. Some miss the pulsating mass of warm strangers on an unplanned night out. Me? It turns out that I apparently miss the sight of a massive gorilla punching a radioactive sea monster right in the middle of its dumb face.

[Charlie Cox's Daredevil would be a welcome addition to the Marvel Cinematic Universe](#)

[Read more](#)

I didn't know this, of course, until I watched the trailer for Godzilla vs Kong. Ostensibly, Godzilla vs Kong is the grand culmination of a long-gestating plan; a cinematic universe where we are first introduced to the biggest, most iconic creatures in movie history, then gasp in awe as they're trained upon each other. Ostensibly, to enjoy Godzilla vs Kong, you would need to re-watch and appreciate 2014's [Godzilla](#), 2017's [Kong: Skull Island](#) and 2019's [Godzilla: King of the Monsters](#) in quick succession. But you're not going to do that, because the entirety of this film's backstory is

completely contained within its three-word title. It's a film about King Kong punching Godzilla.

And, honestly, I can't wait. No, really. In terms of sheer cinematic spectacle, the past year has been a total non-starter. I've managed to see just two films theatrically in the last 12 months; one was *Proxima*, a sad French drama about maternal guilt. And the other was *Tenet*. *Tenet*, for crying out loud. A film that committed the dual sins of being too incomprehensible to stay awake for and too noisy to sleep through. *Tenet* was advertised as nothing less than the saviour of the theatrical cinematic experience, which would have been great save for the fact that it wasn't very good.

Now, imagine if [Godzilla](#) vs Kong had taken *Tenet*'s place. Imagine if cinema's escape plan had been a film where a 120-metre prehistoric allegory for nuclear destruction gets the atomic beam smacked out of its mouth by a gorilla wielding what appears to be a skyscraper aerial like a medieval battleaxe. No, really, imagine it. Because it is my sincere belief that a film like this would have not only kept the cinemas open, but forced the coronavirus into a terrified retreat.

I'm exaggerating, but not by much. After the year we've all had, the act of watching the *Godzilla* vs *Kong* trailer was like getting a massage. It felt like someone had lifted your brain from the top of your skull and carefully dipped it into a nice warm bath. "I know things have been tough", it seemed to say, "But here's a film about two gigantic idiots whaling on each other for reasons that aren't even slightly important. Nothing to worry about here. We've got this".

Genuinely, they should put that trailer on the Headspace app. There's something so relaxing about how completely, unapologetically stupid it is. To see King Kong jump off an exploding boat like he's auditioning for a 1990s Steven Seagal film. To hear [Rebecca Hall](#) say like "I made a promise to protect her, and I think that in some way Kong did the same". To see the shot where someone has taped the newspaper headline 'Monarch stumped as to *Godzilla*'s motives' onto a map of the world like it is somehow a clue. To hear the agitated choral stirrings on the soundtrack, reminiscent of Ligeti's

Requiem, and think “Bog off, this is a film about a monkey fight”. The whole thing is perfect.



Photograph: Courtesy of Warner Bros

True, the film itself could be awful. It could wrongly assume that people want to see a film rich with mythology and well-drawn characters, when all anyone wants to see is King Kong punch Godzilla in the mouth for two hours. It could get bogged down by an over-complicated plot, like *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* did, when all anyone wants to see is King Kong punch Godzilla in the mouth for two hours. It could have identifiable scenes and motivations, when all anyone wants to see is King Kong punch Godzilla in the mouth for two hours. Any of these would be a crying shame.

Because this is what cinema is for. It isn't about important character pieces, or even tentpole juggernauts. It's about stupid, middling, March-released monster movies like this, that you only go and see because it's raining and nothing else is on. It's about leaving all your expectations at the door and still sort of hating it. It's about the experience of collectively gasping with the realisation that someone actually made this rubbish. I'm not joking. I miss that. And, as such, *Godzilla vs Kong* has got me more excited than any film I can remember.

- Godzilla vs Kong is released in cinemas and on HBO Max in the US on 26 March and in the UK on 21 May
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## Television

# The magic question: can a Harry Potter TV show work?

News of a Harry Potter show in early development at HBO Max raises the question: what can justify another extension to an already stretched universe?



A still from Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part One. Photograph: Jaap Buitendijk/Publicity image from film company

A still from Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part One. Photograph: Jaap Buitendijk/Publicity image from film company

[Adrian Horton](#)

[@adrian\\_horton](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 16.19 EST

When I saw the news, reported by [the Hollywood Reporter](#), that HBO Max was in talks to develop live-action Harry Potter television series, all details

and talent TBD, my first reaction was: oh no. Like many late millennials, I grew up a fan of the books – more accurately, I grew up *with* the books, from some of my earliest reading memories through the time I literally crashed my car while listening to the sixth installment on tape for the fourth time. But my appetite for wizarding content has waned over the last eight years or so, as unquestioned Potter standom (self-proclaimed Gryffindors and Slytherins) soured into generational parody, creator JK Rowling [doubled down](#) on her [transphobic views](#), and the Potterverse expansion seemed less interested in the earnest fun of fan culture – the midnight premieres, the trivia board games, the rangy wikis – than the consistent wringing out of a highly lucrative franchise for paced output.

[Harry Potter fan sites distance themselves from JK Rowling over transgender rights](#)

[Read more](#)

Like the edges of the universe, the expansion of the highly profitable Wizarding World is an inexorable force, with increasingly high odds of strain. Still, the tiresome charges of Rowling and the relentlessly profitable Potter production do not mean a new entry can't be fresh, insightful, or authentic to the genuine, often revelatory relationship fans have developed to the Potter world. It's worth asking, what would we want from a new Potter spin-off?

The new entries into the Potterverse, while hailed by some, have grown up awkwardly with the zeitgeist. There's the popular, if surreal, Wizarding World of Harry Potter theme park in Orlando. The 2016 play [Harry Potter and the Cursed Child](#), written by Jack Thorne based on a Rowling short story, picked up where the seventh and final book's epilogue left off, and imagined the Hogwarts of Harry's son Albus Severus, a bullied Slytherin who befriends the son of original nemesis Draco Malfoy – a relationship which drew some accolades for its depiction of close, vulnerable male friendship, as well as charges of [queerbaiting](#). The two films of the [Fantastic Beasts](#) franchise – a prequel of sorts, fleshing out the story behind one of Harry's magical creatures textbooks in pre-war New York, with another due next year and presumably two more to follow – have received mixed to good reviews while [underperforming](#) at the box office. But they have weathered collateral damage from Rowling perpetually and often perplexingly kicking

the hornet's nest, such as her continued [support](#) for the casting of Johnny Depp as series villain Gellert Grindelwald despite ongoing allegations of domestic abuse. (The films and speculative HBO Max show, as part of the Wizarding World franchise, will be made with Rowling's input.)



Katherine Waterston and Eddie Redmayne in *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*. Photograph: Allstar/Warner Bros.

The farther you stretch a fantasy world, the more the rough terrain of reality – its ugly strains of racism, sexism and unresolved inequities of history, or simply the work of treating other cultures and communities with the same detailed care as one's home perspective – poke through the story's fabric. For example, Rowling's Magic in North America, Potter-centric writing released in 2016 on Pottermore in anticipation of the film adaptation of her fictional *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* textbook, imagined a Magical Congress in Washington DC years before the city existed and glancingly lifted the Navajo concept of shape-shifting "skin walkers" in a way that drew criticism from many Native readers as trivializing.

A new series, however, could dig into issues of representation where Rowling's post facto addendums have read at best as flippant, at worst opportunistic, self-serving and patronizing – that, as she announced months after the final book's publication, Dumbledore was gay despite no explicit

references in the books), or that a Jewish student was in Ravenclaw, or that a school for magic exists in Japan with a name that makes no sense in Japanese. Rowling's viewpoints aside, the original series was built around resistance to blood-purity doctrine, a spirit of inclusion and empathy that's fertile territory for prequel, sequel or, hell, even a Riverdale-esque hot teen drama at Hogwarts.

As Rowling herself said in her 2008 Harvard commencement speech, revisited in Molly Fischer's [deep dive](#) in the Cut into Rowling's increasingly polarized status in the years since the final book's publication, as the internet has eroded her podium of Potter authority. "Unlike any other creature on this planet, humans can learn and understand without having experienced. They can think themselves into other people's place," she said. But "many prefer not to exercise their imaginations at all. They choose to remain comfortably within the bounds of their own experience, never troubling to wonder how it would feel to have been born other than they are."

That is, perhaps, the way forward for a Potter-verse TV series: a program that leans less on magical arcana by authorial decree, and more on the books' capacity for compassion and guiding current of tolerance, trusting people to know who they are. A show that relies less on groundless revisions, and more interested in exploring with detail identities in the magical world, as in ours, given more due on Rowling's Twitter account than in her original writing. To borrow Rowling's own words, a show that chooses to exercise imagination toward new characters and perspective rather than burrow into the known.

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## 2021.01.26 - Lifestyle

- [Consumer champions Lastminute.com hasn't given us a refund for Covid-cancelled flight](#)
- [Knitting How to make Bernie Sanders' inauguration mittens](#)
- [Fashion Dior plays the tarot card as haute couture comes up trumps](#)
- [The simple fix Thomasina Miers' recipe for savoy cabbage and fennel sausage 'lasagne'](#)

## Consumer championsMoney

# Lastminute.com hasn't given us a refund for Covid-cancelled flight

We have been struggling since April and getting nowhere with the online travel agent



Lastminute.com has been one of our most complained-about travel firms in recent months. Photograph: M4OS Photos/Alamy

Lastminute.com has been one of our most complained-about travel firms in recent months. Photograph: M4OS Photos/Alamy



Miles Brignall

Tue 26 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

**We are among the many people still struggling to get a refund for Covid-cancelled flights booked through Lastminute.com. Our son's flight from America in May was cancelled by Austrian Airlines in April and, after very many emails, we got a reply from Lastminute.com in June, offering a refund of £517.**

**No payment was received. In November, an email told us we had to provide bank details. Then, without explanation, it reduced the amount to £173 and said we had to accept within three months.**

**We have sent numerous emails. There is no working phone line. The airline has told us twice it has repaid Lastminute.com, but can't give the sum, and says we must contact the agent.**

**SL, Lewes**

It will be little consolation to know that you are not alone – Lastminute.com has been one of our most complained-about travel firms in recent months. In December [the Competition and Markets Authority forced it to start refunding passengers](#) following an investigation.

After a great deal of pressure on my part, Switzerland-based Lastminute.com finally agreed to call you. You have accepted the £173 to put an end to the matter. It seems the company had replied to your emails, albeit from a different address, and these ended up in your spam folder.

When things finally get back to normal, you might want to stick to UK-based travel agents or, better still, book flights with airlines direct. We welcome letters but cannot answer individually. Email us at [consumer.champions@theguardian.com](mailto:consumer.champions@theguardian.com). Please include a daytime phone number. Submission and publication of all letters is subject to our [terms and conditions](#)

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## Knitting

# How to make Bernie Sanders' inauguration mittens

Feel the Bern, not the cold, with your own pair of winter-proof hand warmers – here's how to stitch them at home



Warm welcome ... Bernie Sanders' mittens, as worn at Joe Biden's inauguration. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Warm welcome ... Bernie Sanders' mittens, as worn at Joe Biden's inauguration. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

[Ellie Violet Bramley](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 07.52 EST

While it was [Michelle Obama's hair that brought the glamour](#) to Joe Biden's inauguration day, it was [Bernie Sanders' mittens that delivered the memes](#). Sitting at the event in a winter coat and mittens, arms and legs crossed, he was the yin to the rest of the Capitol's sharp-suited yang – and promptly

Photoshopped into [Edward Hopper paintings](#), [scenes from Glee](#) and the vice-presidential debate, [replacing the fly atop Mike Pence's head](#).



Meme material ... that picture of Sanders. Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

It has been a welcome distraction in the world of knitting. “I’ve seen a lot of mittens in the last couple of days,” says Kate Atherley, the author of books including [Knit Mitts](#). She has found it “utterly charming ... it is just so desperately Bernie”.

Mittens by the original maker, Jen Ellis, are [no longer on sale](#); the Vermont primary school teacher has pointed those looking to get their hands on a similar pair towards the multitude of small-scale crafters on [the website Etsy](#). But what if you fancy trying to make them yourself?



Hot property ... Mittens by Jen Ellis, who made Sanders' pair. Photograph: @vtawesomeness/Twitter

## Use shrunken knitwear

Although Sanders' mittens have a hand-knitted aesthetic, they are not the product of knitting. In fact, they are made from repurposed jumpers, which Atherley describes as “a fantastic, indirect way of achieving the look of a hand-knitted mitten”. To make a pair as similar as possible as Sanders’, then, recycle a jumper.

If you are after extra-warm mittens, go for shrunken knitwear – jumpers that have been machine-washed in hot water might be too small to wear, but Atherley says they will make “for a warmer, denser mitten ... if you live in Vermont, it’s recommended”.



Waste not, want not ... old woollens are ideal for making mittens.  
Photograph: Evgenii Parilov/Alamy

## Make a lining

For extra authenticity, you will need a lining. [According to a tweet by Ellis](#), Sanders' mitts are "lined with fleece (made from recycled plastic bottles)". Atherley recommends a "flannel, fleece or even a sweatshirt-type fabric". The lining is useful, she says, "because some people don't like to have wool directly against their skin. Also it's an extra layer."

Take a piece of paper and lay your hand on it. Trace around it in a mitten shape, leaving a good 2-3 cm to allow for the seam. Cut out and pin the paper to your lining fabric. "Cut two of those for each hand and sew them together," says Atherley. Be sure to leave the opening unsewn. Layla Totah, a London-based sewing teacher, recommends also leaving a gap of 8-12cm unsewn on one side – for reasons that will become clear.

## Make the outer layer

Next, repeat the process, but with the wool. Atherley suggests tracing around your hand while wearing the lining layer, to make sure the mitten is bigger. Then, sew the outer layers of each hand together.

## **Stitch the layers together**

Whip-smart ... how to whip stitch.

Now that you have your lining layers and your outer layers, it is time to sew them together. Do this by placing the left-hand glove inside the left-hand lining, so that the mitten is inside-out. Repeat for the right hand. “Then sew the inner and outer layers of each side together,” says Atherley, being careful not to sew it shut. She recommends using [whip stitch](#) and thick cotton to sew the two layers together at the cuff.

## **An alternative ending**

If you leave a gap in your lining, as Totah suggests, you will be able to turn the whole mitten through this hole, thus hiding all your stitching. “Sew up the gap and push the lining into the woollen mitten,” says Totah. If you would rather use a pattern, Totah recommends the [Atlas Mitten](#).

## **The knitted version**

If you choose to knit a version of Sanders’ mittens, be warned that this is not a task for newbies. Atherley compares the former method to making a cake from a box and the knitted solution to “a technical challenge in the last week of Bake Off”.

## **Use a thick yarn and a trusted pattern ...**

If it has struck you that Sanders’ mittens look like they could have been repurposed from [Sarah Lund’s famous jumper](#), that is no coincidence. “The two homes of this technique are Scandinavia and Fair Isle, Shetland,” says Atherley. Because you are often working with multiple colours, making it extra thick, “it is popular in cold, draughty places”.



Scandi chic ... Sofie Gråbøl as Sarah Lund in *The Killing*. Photograph: Tine Harden/DR

Atherley recommends the knits sold by a Shetland-based company called [Jamieson & Smith](#), as well as [Jamieson's of Shetland](#) and Lancashire-based [Susan Crawford Vintage](#). The knitting instructor and author Tanis Gray recommends [Ravelry](#), which has dozens of free patterns.

Gray also suggests using a [worsted weight yarn](#). “There are eight weights of yarn, zero being like dental floss, seven being the width of your thumb,” she says. “Worsted is number four.” Armed with that, and a pattern, you are good to go.

## **... or keep it simple**

If you feel out of your depth, try following an online tutorial. Atherley recommends [Hazel Tindall](#) – “one of the great living masters of this type of knitting” – and says there is “lots of good learning via her site”. Alternatively, you could try making mittens in a single colour. “They’re a small project and you can use thick yarn and learn relatively quickly,” says Atherley. “Using multiple colours is where it gets more complicated.”

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## Haute couture shows

# Dior plays the tarot card as haute couture comes up trumps

Maria Grazia Chiuri presents film shot in Tuscan castle while fashion's superleague defies pandemic



Dior designer Maria Grazia Chiuri's latest creations are based on tarot card characters. Photograph: Christian Dior

Dior designer Maria Grazia Chiuri's latest creations are based on tarot card characters. Photograph: Christian Dior



Jess Cartner-Morley

@JessC\_M

Mon 25 Jan 2021 13.57 EST

In the age of sweatpants, haute couture – fashion’s superleague, in which dresses are made to order and cost about £100,000 – is enjoying an unlikely boomtime.

The haute couture lineup has been invigorated by diverse new names including contemporary American artist Sterling Ruby, who counts the thrash metal band Slayer among his fashion influences and whose new collection includes a red, white and blue loose-yarn coat, which alludes to “the current political climate, the Trump administration and the ongoing threat of rightwing anger”.

The house of Schiaparelli, fresh from a triumphant Lady Gaga moment at the inauguration, have embellished this season’s gowns with jewelled seahorses and gold casts of molar teeth.

Alber Elbaz, a cult figure much missed since his departure from Lanvin five years ago, will launch his new AZ brand with a digital collection and a livestreamed talkshow on Wednesday. Fendi join the January haute couture

schedule for the first time in their 95-year history, with a womenswear debut from new British signing, Kim Jones. The digital Fendi show is rumoured to star Demi Moore, as well as Kate Moss and her daughter Lila.

With catwalk shows off limits, [Dior](#) designer Maria Grazia Chiuri costumed tarot card characters for a 15-minute film shoot at a Tuscan castle by Gomorrah director Matteo Garrone: the Magician wore a floor-length hooded evening coat embroidered with feathers; the Sun a sundress with celestial embroidery on pale gold lace.



Maria Grazia Chiuri (centre). Photograph: Benoît Tessier/Reuters

Since 2016 Chiuri has rebooted Dior as a progressive brand, phasing out old-fashioned concepts of feminine charm in favour of the primacy of the female gaze. The tensions of the past year have seen her retreat from political statements towards a daintier aesthetic and a more whimsical mood, with the hot-take feminist slogan T-shirts, which had become a signature, on hold. In a Zoom call from her [Paris](#) studio before the show, an angelic beauty from Botticelli's Pallas and the Centaur could be seen on Chiuri's moodboard. The centaur, which in the painting the goddess of knowledge holds firmly by his hair, was cropped out of sight.

Garrone's film had charm – and, after last season's criticism for lack of diversity, a black High Priestess. There was a brief love scene, suggesting that fashion is learning a few of Hollywood's tricks of the trade for keeping audiences engaged, for as long as film continues to sub in for catwalk shows. There was even a pinch of Bridgerton spice in the cantilevered empire line bosom of the Wheel of Fortune's cloud-grey gown. "There is one school of thought that says tarot cards are about the future, but the point of view that fascinates me says that they help you to learn about yourself," said Chiuri.

Dior clients "are ordering beautiful clothes to wear at home," Chiuri said. "There are many countries with a culture of dressing beautifully within the home. And the beauty of haute couture is that if a client wants something simpler, then we can make it for them. We can make pyjamas in our couture atelier," she said, before adding: "I am a little bit lazy, myself. If I am alone, I don't care so much what I wear."

The survival of haute couture is a reflection of the inequity with which the pandemic has hit incomes. The privileged few who make up haute couture's target market have been largely insulated from the economic insecurity of the last year. But it also points to an industry shifting away from the four-seasons-a-year trend cycle which has driven the blockbuster ready-to-wear shows and a return to a slower pace. Haute couture dresses are made to order over several months and worn not just for several seasons, but for several generations – and so do not pander to fleeting trends.

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## The simple fixFood

# Thomasina Miers' recipe for savoy cabbage and fennel sausage 'lasagne'

A rich and reassuring layered dish of sausage ragu and silky cabbage leaves



Thomasina Miers' savoy cabbage and fennel sausage lasagne. Photograph: Yuki Sugiura/The Guardian. Food stylist: Aya Nishimura. Prop stylist: Louie Waller. Food assistant: SongSoo Kim.

Thomasina Miers' savoy cabbage and fennel sausage lasagne. Photograph: Yuki Sugiura/The Guardian. Food stylist: Aya Nishimura. Prop stylist: Louie Waller. Food assistant: SongSoo Kim.



[Thomasina Miers](#)

[@thomasinamiers](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 06.00 EST

One of January's great pleasures (along with spending long evenings in front of fires with cosy socks and plenty to read/watch) is to sink wholeheartedly into experimenting with new ways to cook with winter's stellar crop of vegetables. I am still eating mushrooms and squash in November; in December I am wrapped up in Christmas recipes; so it is only in January that I can really enjoy the delights of those steely, green brassicas and soft, comforting roots. How do you eat yours?

## **Savoy cabbage and fennel sausage “lasagne”**

This is a spectacularly delicious way to eat a savoy, using its leaves in place of pasta sheets for a light but rich, creamy and thoroughly indulgent lasagne.

**Prep 15 min**

**Cook 1hr 20 min**

**Serves 6-8**

**2 tbsp olive oil**, plus extra to drizzle  
**1 onion**, peeled and chopped  
**6 pork sausages**  
**2 garlic cloves**, peeled and chopped  
**130g green lentils**, rinsed in cold water  
**1 tsp fennel seeds**  
**½ tsp dried chilli flakes**  
**1 small handful sage leaves**, shredded  
**1 x 400g tin plum tomatoes**  
**250ml whole milk**  
**⅔ savoy cabbage**, leaves separated  
**2 eggs**, beaten  
**100g parmesan**, grated  
**250g ricotta**

Warm the oil in a medium pan over a medium heat, add the onion, season and saute gently for five minutes. Remove the sausage from its skin and crumble into the pan with the garlic, breaking up the sausagemeat with a spoon so it doesn't clump together. Once the onion is soft and the pork has coloured a little, add the lentils, fennel seeds, chilli and sage, and stir to coat in the fat. Add the tomatoes and milk, and simmer for 20 minutes.

Heat the oven to 180C (160C fan)/350F/gas 4. Bring a deep pan of salted water to a boil. Cut out and remove the backbones of the cabbage leaves and cut the leaves into two or three pieces. Blanch the leaves in the boiling water for a few minutes to soften; do this in a few batches. Once they're cooked, transfer to a colander to drain.

Stir the eggs and 75g parmesan into the ricotta and season. Spoon a third of the sausage ragu into a large baking dish and cover with a third of the cabbage leaves. Repeat twice more, then spoon on the ricotta mix and spread it over the top. Sprinkle with the remaining parmesan and drizzle with a little oil, cover with foil and bake for 15 minutes. Remove the foil and return to the oven for another 15-20 minutes, until the top is beautifully risen and golden.

**And for the rest of the week ...**

I would double the quantities, make two lasagnes and put one in the freezer – there is nothing better than an edible hidden gem to whisk out at a moment's notice. Shred leftover cabbage into hot noodle dishes, or sauté in butter as a delicious side.

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## **2021.01.26 - Take part**

- [UK healthcare staff Have you been affected by people who think Covid is a hoax?](#)
- [Tell us Are you still flying in and out of the UK?](#)
- [UK teachers and parents Share your experience of education during the second wave](#)

## Coronavirus

# UK healthcare staff: have you been affected by people who think Covid is a hoax?

We'd like to hear from healthcare staff who've had to deal with security issues or conspiracy theories brought about by people who do not believe in Covid



A patient arrives in an ambulance outside the Royal London Hospital in east London. Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP

A patient arrives in an ambulance outside the Royal London Hospital in east London. Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP

[Guardian community team](#)

Tue 26 Jan 2021 03.54 EST

We'd like to hear from [NHS](#) staff and healthcare staff about who've been affected by any actions from people seeking to prove the coronavirus pandemic is not real.

On New Year's Eve [hundreds of people turned up](#) outside St Thomas' Hospital on New Year's Eve to protest the "covid hoax." In the first case of its kind, a woman [was fined under Covid-19](#) regulations after posts appeared on social media claiming parts of a Hampshire hospital were "empty". Four men who were filming inside hospitals in the West Midlands and Worcestershire [were arrested](#).

If you're working in UK health services – have you experienced any security issues in the workplace or anywhere else? How do hoaxes and conspiracy theories about coronavirus affect you or your work? Have you ever had to treat patients or deal with loved ones who do not believe Covid is real? Have you encountered colleagues who have also appeared to have been swayed by conspiracy theories about the virus?

## Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish or [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions.

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## Coronavirus

# Tell us: are you still flying in and out of the UK?

We would like to hear from those who are still flying in and out of the country and their reasons for doing so



Travellers in the international arrival area of Heathrow airport. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

Travellers in the international arrival area of Heathrow airport. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

[Guardian community team](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 05.38 EST

The shadow home secretary Nick Thomas-Symonds has said images of large crowds at Heathrow airport are "[incredibly worrying](#)".

International arrivals, including UK nationals, [must now present proof of a negative Covid-19 test](#) from within 72 hours before their departure, and outbound travel from the UK is only permitted for a small number of reasons, such as work purposes.

We'd like to hear from people who are travelling and their reasons for doing so.

## Share your experiences

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## Education

# **UK teachers and parents: Share your experience of education during the second Covid wave**

We'd like to hear from parents and teachers, and those who are both, about their experience of learning during the second wave



Angela Atkins helps her son Jess Atkins work on a math problem on his laptop during home schooling at their home in Oxford, Miss., on Dec. 18, 2020. Photograph: Leah Willingham/AP

Angela Atkins helps her son Jess Atkins work on a math problem on his laptop during home schooling at their home in Oxford, Miss., on Dec. 18, 2020. Photograph: Leah Willingham/AP

[Guardian community team](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 06.27 EST

With vulnerable and key worker children in school, but other students learning remotely, education has been turned on its head during the coronavirus pandemic.

We'd like to hear from parents and teachers about their experience of teaching and learning during the second wave of the pandemic. We're particularly interested in hearing from parents who are also teachers.

## Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish or [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions.

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## 2021.01.26 - Explore

- [US unions US companies using pandemic as a tool to break unions, workers claim](#)
- ['No system is perfect' Siouxsie Wiles on New Zealand's fight against Covid complacency](#)
- ['It's a struggle' Three teachers on remote learning and returning to school](#)
- [Boohoo buying Debenhams A changing of the guard in retail](#)

## US unions

# US companies using pandemic as a tool to break unions, workers claim

Employers are alleged to be leveraging coronavirus-induced unemployment to mount an assault on collective bargaining



Elementary teachers sit outside Suder Montessori Magnet elementary school in solidarity with pre-K educators forced back into the building in Chicago earlier this month. Photograph: Anthony Vazquez/AP

Elementary teachers sit outside Suder Montessori Magnet elementary school in solidarity with pre-K educators forced back into the building in Chicago earlier this month. Photograph: Anthony Vazquez/AP

*[Michael Sainato](#) in Florida*

Tue 26 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

Dalroy Connell has worked as a stagehand for the Portland Trailblazers since 1995 when the basketball team began playing games at the Rose

Garden Arena. When the pandemic hit the US in March 2020, public events were shut down and NBA games were briefly suspended before the season moved to a “bubble” in Orlando, Florida, and the season recommended without fans in July 2020.

Connell and his colleagues have been on unemployment ever since, but when the 2020-2021 NBA season began in December 2020, instead of bringing back several of these workers, the Portland Trailblazers replaced most of the unionized crew who work their games with non-union workers, even as their jobs running the sound and lighting equipment are required whether or not fans are in attendance.

[Healthcare to the electoral college: seven ways 2020 left America exposed |](#)

[Robert Reich](#)

[Read more](#)

Like many workers around the US Connell believes he has been locked out from his job by a company that has used the coronavirus pandemic as a tool to break unions.

“It’s a blatant slap in the face,” said Connell. “They’re using positions in the house, people who already work there to do things we normally do.”

The workers’ union, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Local 28, has filed unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board and held protests outside of Portland Trailblazers home games.

Connell alleged management at the Portland Trailblazers has frequently fought the union over the past several years, with the latest refusal to recall union workers an extension of this trend.

“Here we are wasting a ton of money on legal fees just to give a few guys some work. It’s a five-hour job. It’s so easy to work this out,” he added.

The Portland Trailblazers and Rip City Management did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Lockouts are [work stoppages](#) initiated by the employer in a labor dispute where the employer uses replacement workers.

Earlier in the pandemic, some employers resorted to conducting mass layoffs of workers after union organizing drives surfaced, such as at [Augie's Coffee Shop](#) in California and [Cort Furniture](#) in New Jersey. Several workers have claimed they had been fired in retaliation due to worker organizing efforts by employers such as [Amazon](#), [Trader Joe's](#) and most recently [Instacart](#). Now some employers are beginning to use lockouts as a tactic to seemingly suppress organizing efforts.

“Lockouts are an economic weapon employers use to take the initiative in collective bargaining,” said Alex Colvin, dean of the school of industrial and labor relations at Cornell University. “During the pandemic, lockouts pose a greater threat to unions due to the high unemployment rate and greater availability of replacement workers.”

According to an [analysis by Bloomberg Law](#), no employer lockouts were conducted in 2020 during the first several months of the pandemic, but after previous economic recessions in the US, lockouts rebounded as disputes over wages and benefits became more intense.

“The intent of many lockouts is to actually try to break the workers’ unions by showing that the union’s position has led to the loss of work, and the only way to restore work is through unconditional surrender,” said Moshe Z Marvit, a labor and employment lawyer and fellow at the Century Foundation.

In Los Angeles, [California](#), dozens of workers at Valley Fruit and Produce represented by Teamsters Local 630 went on strike in May 2020 in protest of intimidation of union members and efforts to decertify the union during new contract negotiations.

Amid negotiations to end the strike and bring back workers, Valley Fruit and Produce replaced several workers with non-union members, while the union alleges workers who did return to work were coerced into signing declarations against the union.

The union is currently pursuing unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board for the produce distribution company circumventing the union to directly negotiate with workers, in addition to several allegations of intimidation and harassment.

“Through their union buster lawyer, Valley Fruit talked to foremen to call workers on the picket line, using intimidation and scare tactics to get them back to work., When workers went back inside, they were forced to sign documents to say they didn’t want to be a part of the union any more,” said Carlos Santamaria, divisional representative for Teamsters Local 630.



The Portland Trail Blazers meet the Los Angeles Lakers in the 2020 NBA playoffs in Orlando, Florida, in August after the pandemic forced games to be relocated. Photograph: Kim Klement/USA Today Sports

“I’m disappointed in what Valley has done to all the workers,” said Rene Gomez, who worked at Valley Fruit and Produce for 21 years and has been locked out of his job since last year. “My family and I are having a hard time economically because of everything going on. We’ve gone to food banks. We’ve been stressed because we don’t know how we’re going to keep paying rent at the end of the month.”

Roberto Juarez, who has worked for Valley Fruit and Produce for six years before getting locked out of his job, argued the company has attempted to “destroy the union in the workplace”, through negotiating in bad faith by pushing for reduction in benefits, wage freezes, hiring union avoidance attorneys, while receiving between [\\$2m and \\$5m](#) in paycheck protection program loans from the federal government.

“When the pandemic started and hit hard, we never stopped working and we were working a lot of hours. We were exposing ourselves, coming to work, exposing our families, and they didn’t really care,” said Juarez.

Valley Fruit and Produce did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Earlier this month in [Chicago](#), Illinois, the [Chicago](#) public schools district began locking out dozens of teachers who are being ordered to return in-person to schools, which have been conducting virtual learning since the pandemic hit the US in March 2020.

Kirstin Roberts, a preschool teacher at Brentano elementary math and science academy in Chicago, refused to return to in-person teaching due to unsafe working conditions, even as all of her students had opted to continue remote learning.

The city of Chicago [remains](#) under a stay-at-home advisory with travel restrictions in place to try to mitigate the spread of coronavirus. Chicago public schools [threatened](#) to declare teachers ordered to work in school buildings who do not show up as “absent without leave”, and docking their pay.

Teachers across Chicago and the Chicago Teachers Union held a virtual teach-in [protest](#) of a return to in-person teaching outside of the board of education president’s home on 13 January.

Roberts attended the protest and taught on Facebook live because she was locked out of her Chicago public schools Google account, banning her access to continue teaching her students remotely and shutting her out of her work email account.

“They’ve been trying to impose conditions on the workforce without input from the union,” said Roberts. “Even though we’re in the middle of a pandemic, Chicago public schools is willing to use our students, hurt our students, and deny students things they need like access to their teachers in a game to one-up the Chicago Teachers Union and that’s ridiculous.”

According to Chicago public schools, 87 teachers and staff are currently considered absent without leave, with an attendance rate of about 76% of school district employees in attendance who were expected to return to work in-person, not including employees who had an approved accommodation.

“We are grateful to the teachers and school-based staff who have returned to their classrooms, and we are continuing to meet regularly with the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU),” said a spokesperson for Chicago public schools in an email.

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## New Zealand

# 'No system is perfect': Siouxsie Wiles on New Zealand's fight against Covid complacency

The country's most visible scientist worries Kiwis aren't doing their bit when it comes to preventing another mass outbreak



Dr Siouxsie Wiles says widespread complacency reflects the belief that containing the coronavirus is the government's battle, not that of individuals

Photograph: Arvid Eriksson/NZ Herald

Dr Siouxsie Wiles says widespread complacency reflects the belief that containing the coronavirus is the government's battle, not that of individuals

Photograph: Arvid Eriksson/NZ Herald



[Elle Hunt](#) in Wellington

Mon 25 Jan 2021 19.18 EST

On Christmas morning, Siouxsie Wiles got a call from her father-in-law. He had woken up feeling fluey after attending an event a few days before.

As he spoke, Wiles looked up his closest Covid-19 testing centre on her phone. “I recommend you give them a call,” she told him, “because you are not coming for Christmas dinner.”

Her parents-in-law had been down to bring the ham. Christmas was, if not exactly cancelled, deferred to the day after Boxing Day, when Wiles’ father-in-law’s test came back negative.

It will no doubt have struck some as an overreaction. Wiles and her family live in Auckland, where local transmission of coronavirus had not been recorded since November. Since then, life in [New Zealand](#) had seemed deceptively normal.

That is what concerns Wiles. Last January she was a microbiologist at the University of Auckland, specialising in the scientific possibilities of bioluminescence, as well as a widely awarded media commentator.

[New Zealand Covid case appears to be South African variant, officials say](#)

[Read more](#)

Twelve months later, Wiles is New Zealand’s most famous scientist (at least its most visible, thanks to her trademark pink hair) and a lynchpin of its pandemic success, having been tireless and ever-present in her efforts to explain how the virus spreads.

At her peak she was doing 20 to 30 interviews a day. But while many might see her as a figure of 2020, for Wiles the threat remains very much at hand.

Though New Zealand’s border restrictions have been bolstered since the new variant of coronavirus took off in December, a steady stream of cases have been confirmed in arrivals in quarantine.

It seemed inevitable that one would eventually slip through and that is what happened on Sunday, when it was revealed that a woman who had spent two weeks in quarantine had [returned a positive test after leaving](#). Experts say she was likely infected while in managed isolation.

“No system is 100% perfect,” says Wiles.

“The most frustrating thing is the idea that if we get incursions through the border that it’s a failure of our systems. … Every defence you put in place has some inherent foibles, so you layer them all up to make things better.”

An animated gif demonstrating this so-called “Swiss cheese model” of crisis response, which Wiles created with The Spinoff cartoonist Toby Morris, was one of her breakthrough communiqués last year – framing personal responsibility as just as necessary a safeguard as masks.

“We’re going to need to keep working at elimination,” [she wrote in October](#). But three months later, by and large, Kiwis aren’t doing their bit.

Should coronavirus start spreading in the community following Sunday’s case in Northland, or any other case that might emerge, contact tracing will be vital to limiting its advance – but use of the government’s Covid-19 tracer app [has fallen dramatically](#) since the peak of 2.5m daily scans in September.

To Wiles, the widespread complacency reflects the belief that containing coronavirus is the government's battle, waged only at the borders.

"We obviously have to rely on the government and we need managed isolation to work ... but the idea that we are *entirely* reliant on them, and we don't have any responsibilities ourselves, drives me crazy," she says.

We've been pitted against each other a lot ... People will always bring up 'You're a woman, you've got pink hair'

Mounting anxiety about the new variant has sparked calls for even tighter border controls – causing Wiles to worry that the community spirit that made the national lockdown so successful has waned.

When the government moved in December to require pre-departure tests, Wiles was [a lone voice warning](#) of its potential to discriminate along socio-economic lines, with tests often costly.

The scientific case in favour is indisputable, says Wiles – "but that's not the only thing that counts." The risk of incursion must be balanced against overseas New Zealanders' right to return home, she says.

"The whole idea that you would say 'just stop flights, or make it as hard as possible, because we're trying to keep living our unstoppable summer' – it just makes me really angry, on a human level," she says.

In her public appearances and commentary, Wiles has sought to strike a balance – often prompting unfavourable (and gendered) comparisons with the epidemiologist Michael Baker, who has consistently pushed for a hardline response.

"We've been pitted against each other a lot, and that's been really difficult ... People will always bring up 'You're a woman, you've got pink hair' – and Michael fits the bill of what an expert looks like."

[The daily grind never felt sweeter: New Zealanders should enjoy their Covid-free liberties](#)

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Both their approaches were reflected in New Zealand's response, Wiles agrees, combining authority and empathy.

But at this crucial juncture, when sense of connection to the world is dwindling but complacency could be deadly, Wiles quotes the UN secretary general: "None of us is safe until all of us are safe."

It is not enough to just mind our own borders, she says. "We actually need to be doing all we can to advocate for all the measures possible overseas ... to stop the pandemic, to stop variants like these arising."

She sees three opportunities for [New Zealand](#) to contribute to the global effort – first, by expanding knowledge of how the virus spreads.

There has been so little community transmission in New Zealand, it has been traced to the level of [bin lids and lift buttons](#). "Almost every cluster has been identified ... so we can add really good science to this, which helps with controls," says Wiles.

Secondly, as one of the few western countries to have succeeded in controlling coronavirus, New Zealand (and Australia) can model to others specific "things that we did – and you can do them too," says Wiles. "The UK could *still* do these things."

Wiles is a Brit herself, having relocated to New Zealand with her Kiwi husband and their daughter (now 14) just over a decade ago. Her parents, at home in Hull, have been shielding for a year due to her mother's health condition.

"I have been very strict with her," says Wiles. But the hardest part of watching the UK from afar has been "knowing that it doesn't have to be that way".

Giving interviews to UK press early last year, Wiles was often asked what New Zealand knew that led it to take the path it did. "We had the same evidence – then we acted differently based on values," she says.

That saw the UK government [task the private sector](#) with crucial responsibilities – contact tracing and testing – it did not have the skills to do;

and prioritise the economy over public health, Wiles says.

More relevant to New Zealand's success than its small population or remote location, Wiles believes, was its “political values that saw people as the economy, and our health as important” – and leadership that followed the science, without ego.

She fondly recalls the prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, calling her up, out of the blue, to ask her to explain how the virus transmitted via surfaces.

It was of a piece with a government response that had combined strength and softness, “putting the scaffold in place but asking people to do it – to help each other,” says Wiles.

That is the third way New Zealand can contribute: by demonstrating the possibility of dramatic collective action, which will also be needed to tackle other challenges like the climate crisis..

“I would hope that we could go: ‘Look, you can totally make these drastic changes and adjust, can we do this for other things?’” But the speed with which complacency has set in suggests that may not be the case, Wiles adds ruefully.

Her father-in-law understood completely at Christmas. “He said, ‘I knew when I rang you that that was what you were going to say’.”

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## Schools

# 'It's a struggle': three teachers on remote learning and returning to school

What are the effects on pupils of Covid lockdown and how do they feel about getting back to the classroom?

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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‘At primary age, it’s a struggle to get children to do literacy and numeracy, and you can’t just sit them down and ask them to work independently.’  
Photograph: Anna Kraynova/Alamy

‘At primary age, it’s a struggle to get children to do literacy and numeracy, and you can’t just sit them down and ask them to work independently.’  
Photograph: Anna Kraynova/Alamy

*[Molly Blackall](#)*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 14.24 EST

The prime minister's spokesperson has announced that schools are not expected to fully reopen until at least early March, extending months of online teaching for many pupils.

Three teachers who are also parents spoke about their concerns over the impact of remote learning on children, and when they would feel confident re-entering the classroom.

## **‘My greatest concern is social interaction’**

“Both as a parent and a teacher, I feel more prepared this time around,” said Amy\*, a secondary school teacher in Norfolk who has two children aged two and five. “During the first wave, my daughter was sent the odd worksheet or link home from her primary school, but it wasn’t consistent. This time it feels a lot more organised.

“As a teacher, the first time round the provision we provided was not good enough, and I think honestly, most schools would say the same. We had very little warning,” she said. “This time, we have provided every student with access to the internet, and devices to access work. They have a mixture of live and pre-recorded lessons, and work set online.”

With children in primary school and a career in secondary, Amy has seen the challenges faced by different age groups.

“At primary age, it’s a struggle to get children to do literacy and numeracy, and you can’t just sit them down and ask them to work independently,” she said. “At secondary age you get a lot more engagement, except for year 11s, since they’ve been told they’re not having exams. But at that age, students are able to work independently, and they email if they’re having any problems.”

Amy’s “greatest concern” is the impact of a lack of social interaction on her students and children. Despite this, she doesn’t want schools to reopen preemptively.

“The academic side we can catch up,” she said. “Our trust has set up live form times three times a week so that the students can talk to one another,

and as a parent to younger kids I've been setting up FaceTimes with my children's friends.

"No teacher wants go be going through lockdown, my job is 10 times easier in a classroom, but I don't think we should rush back. Let's get it right so we don't have to go through it again. It's far more disruptive for kids to go back to school, and then back into lockdown again."

## **'The ground you make is so easily lost'**

For secondary school teacher Andy Calvert, 47, in Leeds, the main concern was the impact on the educational development of children, particularly those in primary school like his eight-year-old son.

"My son is in year 3, he's just started to get number bonds, times tables and spelling. The ground you make is so easily lost," said Calvert, who lives and teaches in Leeds. "His teachers have been absolutely brilliant online, and I'm privileged that I can teach him certain things, but it's a specialist job. It's also about learning together. At my son's age, it's almost a team thing. He loves school and meeting his pals, and online learning is hard."

"I don't think being a teacher always makes it easier," he added. "While we're privileged to be able to, we've had to buy a new laptop so my son could learn from home, and because we're working full time we're trying to juggle that and home schooling. You can't leave a child of that age in front of a screen no matter how skilled the teacher is."

Calvert said he wanted to see schools open, "the sooner the better", but that the death rate was still too high for it to be a safe decision.

"When I got coronavirus back in March, we were sending 60 or 70 kids home a day," he said. "We've set the bar very high for home learning, but that was when the plan was for 25 days. If this goes on until May, can you keep going? I think the system might collapse."

## **'Teaching is a profession for a reason'**

“My wife was also a headteacher, and is at home with our children. All three of them are finding it hard, so if an expert professional with motivated children finds it tough then, it is many times harder for many other parents,” said Simon\*, a secondary headteacher in Wales and parent to three primary school children. “The reality is that teaching is really hard, it’s a profession for a reason.”

At his own school, Simon said he was concerned about the rising number of children who were being classed as vulnerable as a result of the pandemic.

“For students who had existing issues, we’re not able to see them, so it’s harder to spot things. On a normal day, if they’re absent, it’s noticeable,” he said. “But the pandemic has also meant that lots of students who wouldn’t have fallen into the safeguarding category now do.”

Even within a secondary school, Simon said the social and educational needs for children were very varied.

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“Within a secondary school, you have 11-year-olds who only left primary school six months ago, and need a lot of guidance and structure at home,” he said. “Older students are more self-motivated, so you really have to tailor their provisions to the education staff they’re at. But they’re all experiencing screen burnout, and all really missing the community aspect of being at school.”

*\*Some names have been changed*

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## Retail industry

# Boohoo buying Debenhams: a changing of the guard in retail



Boohoo, whose co-founders are Mahmud Kamani (left) and Carol Kane, has acquired Debenhams in a £55m deal. Illustration: Guardian Design

Boohoo, whose co-founders are Mahmud Kamani (left) and Carol Kane, has acquired Debenhams in a £55m deal. Illustration: Guardian Design

Deal by 15-year-old online upstart shows how Covid crisis has further shifted sales away from high street

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- [Debenhams to close all stores with 12,000 jobs at risk](#)
- [Online brands head for clean sweep in great retail carve-up](#)



[Sarah Butler](#)

[@whatbutlersaw](#)

Mon 25 Jan 2021 15.05 EST

The symbolism is stark: a venerable 243-year-old department store chain acquired by a 15-year-old online upstart. [Debenhams](#) will disappear from British high streets after its sale to Boohoo, swallowed by a company that thrives in the world of fast fashion and has become mired in controversy in the process.

Boohoo has drawn criticism for poor working conditions in its supply chain but continues to make strong sales growth as it feeds a voracious consumer appetite for affordable fashion that responds quickly to shifts in taste and style.

[Asos in talks to buy Topshop, Topman and Miss Selfridge](#)

[Read more](#)

The £55m deal also marks a changing of the guard in UK retail prompted by a radical acceleration towards buying clothes, beauty products and homewares online during the pandemic.

First launched in 2006, Manchester-based Boohoo has grown from a three-employee operation to a business with sales of more than £1.2bn last year and a 5,000-strong workforce. Sales jumped 40% in the run-up to Christmas as shoppers shrugged off revelations about treatment of workers in [factories making Boohoo's clothing in the UK](#) and [overseas](#).

[An investigation by the Guardian](#) found that factories in Leicester making the company's clothes were failing to pay workers the minimum wage and were putting the health of staff at risk during lockdown.

[Sir Brian Leveson](#), who led the phone-hacking [inquiry](#), was drafted in to lead change at Boohoo after a [damning independent review](#), which found that media reports of poor conditions in the company's supply chain were "substantially true".

The Boohoo co-founder Mahmud Kamani said this month that he was proud of the speed at which his team had reacted to the supply chain scandal. But Leveson said a clean-up of the retailer's supply chain had a "long way to go".

The issues at factories are not the only reason Boohoo has drawn criticism.

Shortly after unveiling the record profits last year, Boohoo announced a [controversial scheme](#) under which its bosses could receive a £150m bonus if the company's shares rose by two-thirds over three years. Its co-founders Carol Kane and Kamani would receive two-thirds of the payout.



At one time, Debenhams had partnerships with some of the world's best-known designers. Photograph: Graham Turner/The Guardian

In May last year, Boohoo raised £200m to buy up brands and has already taken advantage of rivals' difficulties to snap up Oasis, Warehouse, Karen Millen and Coast. It also consolidated its stake in Pretty Little Thing, giving Mahmud's son Umar Kamani and his business partner, Paul Papworth, [more than £260m](#) for their 35% stake.

The Debenhams deal is the latest in this consolidation campaign. The long-troubled department store chain has been on the radar of would-be buyers for some time. It began looking for a rescue bidder last summer after calling in administrators twice in a year.

Founded in 1778, Debenhams is one of the world's oldest department stores but has been brought down after being loaded with debt by a force in modern finance: private equity. First listed on the London Stock Exchange in the 1920s, at one time the group had more than 200 large stores across 18 countries and partnerships with some of the world's best-known designers, including Jasper Conran and Julien Macdonald.

But in recent years sales have stagnated as it struggled to cope with heavy debts built up under private equity ownership. In 2003 the group was taken

over by a private equity consortium. The trio of funds, TPG, CVC Capital and [Merrill Lynch](#), collected £1.2bn in dividends in less than three years.

In 2005, 23 shops were sold for £495m, as part of an effort to pay down debts linked to the buyout. Debenhams leased the stores back, on expensive rent deals up to 35 years in length. As it struggled with those long leases and heavy debts, Debenhams lacked resources to improve the appeal of its ageing stores and was slow to shift towards selling online.

Debenhams' online business takes £400m a year from 300 million visitors

While some of its in-house brands remain quite large, growth has stalled as they have not been updated sufficiently and some rely on designer names that were considered old hat a decade ago.

Despite that, Debenhams' online business takes £400m a year from 300 million visitors, making it one of the top retail websites in the UK.

Analysts say the acquisition of Debenhams' website will take Boohoo to a new level, helping it appeal to older shoppers and giving access to new markets including beauty, homewares and sportswear.

Boohoo hopes to use its existing systems to take Debenhams brands such as Principles, Maine and Mantaray overseas, and improve their distribution in the UK. The company also wants to set itself up as a marketplace – similar to Amazon or Zalando – selling third-party brands for the first time using Debenhams' existing relationships.

Andrew Wade, an analyst at the stockbroker firm Jefferies, said Boohoo had “bought a lot of asset for £55m” if Debenhams’ relationships with brands were added to its expertise in beauty, homewares and sportswear.

But the permanent closure of Debenhams' remaining 124 stores will leave enormous gaps on high streets around the country and the loss of thousands of steady jobs, the majority of which were held by women.

Meanwhile, Boohoo has plenty of money to pull off similar deals and says it has £387m of cash left to fund further acquisitions. The impact of coronavirus on the high street will produce many more targets.

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## **Thérèse Coffey's Zoom walkout leaves even Piers Morgan lost for words**

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Minister blames death total on ageing population and obesity crisis before abruptly ending ITV call

01:27

Mon 25 Jan 2021 15.09 EST

Thérèse Coffey is normally a glass half-full kind of minister. Sent out to do the media round on Monday morning, she even managed to claim to LBC's Nick Ferrari that getting just 1,868 young people – out of a targeted 120,000 – starting roles on the government's kickstarter scheme had "actually been a huge success". I hate to think what a massive failure might look like.

But even the work and pensions secretary struggled when she came up against Piers Morgan and Susanna Reid on ITV's Good Morning Britain. Having first delivered the classic line that "the best way to tackle this virus is to avoid contracting it in the first place" – no shit – Coffey made the elementary error of giving a direct answer to a direct question.

Other ministers have gone to great lengths to appear totally mystified and avoid saying why the UK [has the highest coronavirus death rate in the world](#), but Coffey just jumped straight in. It was because we had an ageing population and an obesity crisis. So it was basically our own fault and we had it coming. We were living far too long and eating far too much. If only we had all died younger or half-starved to death, then all of this could have been avoided. The humanity in her response was touching.

Morgan couldn't believe his luck. So what you're saying, he observed, was that we Brits were basically too old and too fat. Whereupon the minister completely lost it and accused Morgan of being insulting for repeating back what she had just said. Only Coffey wouldn't have it. Apparently there was no link between an ageing population and people getting old and a population getting obese and being fat. Or maybe she was just irritated with herself for failing to mention a succession of failures in government policy that had considerably boosted the mortality rate.

Whichever it was, Thérèse spent the next two minutes trying to distance herself from ever having brought up "old" and "fat". Morgan was just trying to twist her words. What she had meant by ageing was an important boom in senior living. And by obese she had meant that under the Tories there was no longer anyone going hungry; it was just a coincidence that the poorest people tended to have the worst diets.

Realising that what she had hoped would be an easy interview had turned into a car crash, Coffey just reached for the off switch on her Zoom call. It's one way of terminating an interview, I suppose. If not one generally found in the politician's handbook. Time's up, got to go, she said desperately before her screen went dead. "Wow," Morgan commented. Wow indeed. It's not often that the TV presenter is lost for words. It had been eight months since Coffey had last been on GMB. Don't hold your breath for another appearance in the next eight months.

How Coffey must wish she was sometimes let loose in No 10 as Matt Hancock had a rather more comfortable time when [fronting the Downing Street press conference](#). Largely because he had nothing new to say and because he was able to ignore any questions that felt remotely tricky. Rather he – along with the deputy chief medical officer, Jenny Harries, and Public Health England’s Susan Hopkins – eased their way through the 45-minute session as if it was a cosy fireside chat.

A few harsh reminders that the virus was far from beaten and that people still needed to obey the rules, interspersed with the good news that more than 6.5m vaccinations had been given and that the early evidence was that the vaccine was effective against the UK variant.

This was the ideal gig for the health secretary. Normally he’s sent out when there’s a crisis of some sort going on. But now we’ve got so used to every day being near enough a crisis, that when things stay more or less the same and the death and hospitalisation figures are slightly lower then it’s cause for celebration in No 10. Even though the numbers would have been considered completely terrifying if anyone had mentioned them as a possibility even a month ago.

Disaster has become the new normal, so when things are no worse than they were the day before it almost feels as if a corner has been turned. And over the course of the pandemic, Door Matt has become quite accomplished at sounding reassuring yet resolute. Or maybe our expectations of him and other ministers have become so low we now mistake mediocrity for comfort.

It also helps when no one actually asks any tricky questions. Had Hancock been asked the killer Coffey question of why the UK has the highest global death figures then he might have struggled. Instead he was asked when the lockdown restrictions might be lifted – though no one mentioned schools – and was quite easily able to point out that rather depended when deaths, hospitalisations, variants and vaccines co-aligned. It appears the rate of infection is no longer part of the equation.

He also hinted that he was in favour of quarantine hotels for all arrivals – not just for those from areas with known variants, without having either to specify how many beds they expected to need or why the government had

taken so long to come round to this idea. In fact, by the end, Door Matt even looked as if he was rather enjoying the press briefing. For the rest of us, it had been three-quarters of an hour of our lives we would never get back. Still, there are days when even Hancock gets an even break. And as Coffey will tell you, there are advantages to being dull.

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**Donald Trump**

## Trump campaign distances itself from new 'Patriot party'

Trump team rejects claims by new party's founder that they are holding joint fundraising activities



Donald Trump campaign committee has disavowed a the new 'Patriot Party'. Photograph: Alex Edelman/AFP/Getty Images

Donald Trump campaign committee has disavowed a the new 'Patriot Party'. Photograph: Alex Edelman/AFP/Getty Images

*Helen Sullivan*

*@helenrsullivan*

Mon 25 Jan 2021 22.44 EST

Donald Trump's campaign has sought to distance him from efforts to create a "Patriot party", an idea the former president [has reportedly toyed with](#) since his election defeat.

On Monday, the former president's campaign committee, Donald J Trump for President (DJTFP), disavowed claims by a new political action committee (PAC) called the Patriot party, that the two were part of a joint fundraising campaign. It coincided with Trump setting up the “Office of the Former President”, in Florida.

DJTFP said it made the statement to the Federal Election Commission “out of concern for confusion among the public, which may be misled to believe that Patriot party’s activities have been authorised by Mr Trump or DJTFP – or that contributions to this unauthorised committee are being made to DJTFP – when that is not true”.

[Trump plots revenge as Democrats push on with second impeachment trial](#)  
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Trump had hinted in the days following Biden’s inauguration that he was considering forming his own party, which analysts speculated he might be doing to discourage senators from voting to convict him in [the upcoming impeachment trial](#). If Trump is convicted, it could render him unable to run for office again.

[Will Trump start his own political party? | Lloyd Green](#)  
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On Sunday, New York Times reporter Maggie Haberman said [sources](#) [“familiar with his thinking”](#) indicated Trump was reconsidering starting a new party, after it was “gently pointed out to him” that “threatening a third party while simultaneously threatening primaries makes no sense”.

The claim that the Patriot party and Trump campaign were fundraising together appeared in a filing by Michael Joseph Gaul of Georgia to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) on 22 January.

Trump spokesperson Jason Miller [told Axios](#): “We are not supportive of this effort, have nothing to do with it and only know about it through public reporting,” Miller said in a text message.

Axios reported that a group called the “MAGA Patriot Party National Committee” has also falsely claimed to have a similar agreement with the Trump campaign.

On Monday Trump opened an office in Florida that will handle his duties as a former US president and, according to a statement by the office, seek to further his administration’s agenda.

“The Office will be responsible for managing President Trump’s correspondence, public statements, appearances, and official activities to advance the interests of the United States and to carry on the agenda of the Trump Administration through advocacy, organising, and public activism,” the statement said.

In farewell remarks on his last day as president last Wednesday, Trump told supporters: “We will be back in some form.” He has made no public appearances since flying that day to his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida.

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