

# The Guardian

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# Headlines

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## European Super League

# European Super League collapsing as all six English clubs withdraw

- Clubs make U-turn after pressure from fans and government
- Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur apologise to supporters
- [Updates as Premier League clubs withdraw – live](#)

01:16

Chelsea fan protests turn to celebrations as club pulls out of Super League – video

*[Sean Ingle](#), [Peter Walker](#) and [Nick Ames](#)*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 01.35 EDT

The [European Super League](#) was collapsing on Tuesday night after all six English clubs dramatically signalled their intention to withdraw from the competition after being taken aback by the furious backlash from fans and the government.

It left the £4.5bn league dead in the water [less than 48 hours after it was launched](#), with Chelsea the first go to followed by Manchester City and then, shortly before 11pm, by Arsenal, Manchester United, Liverpool and Tottenham.

The stunning set of U-turns leaves the reputations of the clubs' owners at an all-time low as they attempt to repair their relationship with supporters. Manchester United's executive vice-chairman, Ed Woodward, a key architect of the planned breakaway, also resigned after his position became untenable.

[Super League plans unravel as Chelsea and Man City withdraw – live!](#)

[Read more](#)

While most club statements blandly acknowledged their decision, Arsenal admitted the response from fans in recent days had given them “time for further reflection and deep thought”. In a statement, the club said: “It was never our intention to cause such distress, however when the invitation to join the Super League came, while knowing there were no guarantees, we did not want to be left behind to ensure we protected Arsenal and its future.

“As a result of listening to you and the wider football community over recent days we are withdrawing from the proposed Super League.” The club added: “We made a mistake, and we apologise for it.”

The Tottenham chairman, Daniel Levy, also issued an apology to supporters. “We regret the anxiety and upset caused by the ESL proposal,” he said.

The pullout by English clubs left just half of the original 12 “founder members” of the super league. Italian giants Milan and Internazionale were on Tuesday night reportedly also considering jumping ship, leaving a third Serie A club, Juventus, and Spanish trio Real Madrid, Atlético Madrid and Barcelona as the last standing members of the breakaway group. In the early hours of Wednesday [the Super League vowed to “reshape the project”](#), pausing it but insisting it could still ultimately go ahead.

“Despite the announced departure of the English clubs, forced to take such decisions due to the pressure on them, we are convinced our proposal is fully aligned with European law and regulations,” an ESL statement said.

“Given the current circumstances, we shall reconsider the most appropriate steps to reshape the project, always having in mind our goals of offering fans the best experience possible while enhancing solidarity payments for the entire football community.”

On a seismic day for football, Boris Johnson had earlier warned that the government would “drop a legislative bomb” to stop the Super League.

The Guardian revealed earlier on Tuesday that Chelsea and Manchester City [were having severe misgivings](#) about the Super League, which would have seen 15 founding clubs receive a £200-£300m “golden hello” to play in a

midweek competition from which they could never be relegated. Hours later it became official - with other English clubs quickly joining them.

Chelsea's decision emerged [amid protests by around 1,000 fans](#) about the Super League and after their players had told the club's chairman, Bruce Buck, that they would not want to play in the Super League if they were banned from participating in international football.

Shortly afterwards Manchester City also withdrew, as one by one the dominoes began to fall. Earlier in the day the club's manager, Pep Guardiola, had admitted [he was not in favour](#) of the new competition, saying: "It is not a sport where the relation between the effort and the success, the effort and the reward, does not exist."

Ok bye ☺

— Raheem Sterling (@sterling7) [April 20, 2021](#)

As City announced they had "formally enacted the procedures to withdraw from the group developing plans for a European Super League", the U-turn was welcomed by Aleksander Ceferin, the president of Uefa, European football's governing body. "I am delighted to welcome City back to the European football family. They have shown great intelligence in listening to the many voices – most notably their fans – that have spelled out the vital benefits that the current system has for the whole of European football; from the world beating Champions League final right down to a young player's first coaching session at a grassroots club."

Hours after the other English clubs withdrew, Ceferin issued a new statement. "It is admirable to admit a mistake and these clubs made a big mistake. But they are back in the fold now and I know they have a lot to offer not just to our competitions but to the whole of the European game. The important thing now is that we move on, rebuild the unity that the game enjoyed before this and move forward together."

Although Chelsea still have issues with Uefa's governance of European football, they have decided that taking part in the competition is not the right

thing to do. Sources said that Roman Abramovich, the club's owner, did not enter football for personal financial gain.

Chelsea players were also said [to be frustrated to receive no warning](#) about the scheme from their clubs or elsewhere, while staff across the clubs are understood to be particularly upset at the lack of notice given.

One source described Chelsea's players as "shocked and confused" by the news; similarly a figure close to one of their putative Super League rivals said their players were "as shocked as everyone else".

The U-turn from the clubs came after a widespread public backlash and amid mounting pressure from the government and the football leagues. [Johnson described the plans](#) for the Super League as a "cartel" and warned he would use a "legislative bomb" to stop English clubs joining.

[PM sides with fans in Super League outcry – but will he stay with them?](#) |

[David Conn](#)

[Read more](#)

Speaking before any clubs signalled their intention to pull out of the ESL, Johnson condemned the proposed league – in which 15 founder members, including six English clubs, could never be relegated – as "against the basic principles of competition" in his strongest comments to date and "propelled by the billions of banks".

Johnson said he would use legislation to scupper the breakaway competition if the Premier League were unable to stymie the move on their own. The row has seemingly emboldened ministers over wider plans to reform the governance of English football, tilting the power balance more towards fans rather than billionaire owners.

Football was "one of the great glories of this country's cultural heritage", Johnson told the Downing Street press conference otherwise devoted to coronavirus, adding: "How can it be right when you have a situation where you create a kind of cartel that stops clubs competing against each other?"

Johnson had told a meeting of the Football Association, Premier League and fans groups: “We should drop a legislative bomb to stop it – and we should do it now.” He gave no details, however, and officials have been similarly vague about specific proposals.

The prime minister gave a strong hint that one long-term solution could be to oblige English clubs to give fans a majority stake, based on the so-called 50%+1 system used in Germany. Asked whether he supported the German model, Johnson said this was ultimately a matter for a review into football governance announced on Monday and led by Tracey Crouch, the Conservative MP and former sports minister, announced on Monday.

“I really wouldn’t want to pre-empt what she’s going to say,” Johnson said. “But I know she’s very interested in those sorts of models, and what that may or may not involve.” The Manchester United Supporters Trust, which attended the meeting, said: “While actions speak louder than words, we were struck by the strength of commitment from the prime minister, who said whilst he is a staunch free marketeer, ‘this proposal itself is anti-competitive and we should drop a legislative bomb to stop it – and we should do it now’.”

One of the inadvertent effects of the Super League plan has been to give new impetus and immediacy for a fan-based review. While the idea was in the Conservatives’ 2019 manifesto, ministers had decided to wait until the disruption of the Covid pandemic was over. However, the plan prompted them to move immediately.

[Chelsea’s Thomas Tuchel insists Super League owners ‘love competition’](#)  
[Read more](#)

Johnson and the culture secretary, Oliver Dowden, welcomed the English clubs’ U-turn. The prime minister tweeted: “The decision by Chelsea and Manchester City is – if confirmed – absolutely the right one and I commend them for it. I hope the other clubs involved in the European Super League will follow their lead.”

Sir Keir Starmer welcomed the news of Chelsea and Manchester City’s sudden withdrawal. “Fantastic news,” the Labour leader tweeted. “Other

clubs should now follow suit. But let's not lose the energy of the last few days – this must be a watershed moment, where we change our game to put fans first again.”

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## European Super League

# European Super League plans in tatters as English clubs withdraw – live!

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## European Super League

# England's big six pull out of European Super League: what they said

Arsenal went furthest in their statement, apologising to fans, but there were only brief announcements from Liverpool and Manchester United



Chelsea fans gather to protest the introduction of the European Super League before the game against Brighton. Photograph: Charlotte Wilson/Offside/Getty Images

Chelsea fans gather to protest the introduction of the European Super League before the game against Brighton. Photograph: Charlotte Wilson/Offside/Getty Images



[Marcus Christenson](#)

[@m\\_christenson](#)

Tue 20 Apr 2021 19.05 EDT

The six Premier League clubs who had signed up to become members of a [European Super League](#) pulled out on Tuesday night, less than 48 hours after the competition had been announced. It was a startling collapse which began with news that Chelsea, who were playing Brighton at a Stamford Bridge surrounded by protesters, were about to abandon the project. In the end Manchester City became the first club to pull the plug.

Here is what the clubs had to say after their humiliating climbdown.

[All Premier League clubs quit Super League after FA ban warning](#)

[Read more](#)

## **Manchester City, announced at 9.23pm BST**

Manchester City Football Club can confirm that it has formally enacted the procedures to withdraw from the group developing plans for a European Super League.

## **Liverpool, 10.55pm**

Liverpool Football Club can confirm that our involvement in proposed plans to form a European Super League has been discontinued. In recent days, the club has received representations from various key stakeholders, both internally and externally, and we would like to thank them for their valuable contributions.

## **Arsenal 10.55pm**

The last few days have shown us yet again the depth of feeling our supporters around the world have for this great club and the game we love. We needed no reminding of this but the response from supporters in recent days has given us time for further reflection and deep thought.

It was never our intention to cause such distress, however when the invitation to join the Super League came, while knowing there were no guarantees, we did not want to be left behind to ensure we protected Arsenal and its future.

As a result of listening to you and the wider football community over recent days we are withdrawing from the proposed Super League. We made a mistake, and we apologise for it.

We know it will take time to restore your faith in what we are trying to achieve here at Arsenal but let us be clear that the decision to be part of the Super League was driven by our desire to protect Arsenal, the club you love, and to support the game you love through greater solidarity and financial stability.

Stability is essential for the game to prosper and we will continue to strive to bring the security the game needs to move forward.

The system needs to be fixed. We must work together to find solutions which protect the future of the game and harness the extraordinary power football has to get us on the edge of our seats. Finally, we know this has been hugely unsettling at the end of what has been an incredibly difficult year for us all.

Our aim is always to make the right decisions for this great football club, to protect it for the future and to take us forward. We didn't make the right decision here, which we fully accept. We have heard you.

## **Tottenham, 10.55pm**

We can confirm that we have formally commenced procedures to withdraw from the group developing proposals for a European Super League (ESL). Chairman Daniel Levy said: "We regret the anxiety and upset caused by the ESL proposal. We felt it was important that our club participated in the development of a possible new structure that sought to better ensure financial fair play and financial sustainability whilst delivering significantly increased support for the wider football pyramid.

"We believe that we should never stand still and that the sport should constantly review competitions and governance to ensure the game we all love continues to evolve and excite fans around the world. We should like to thank all those supporters who presented their considered opinions."

[Chelsea's Thomas Tuchel insists Super League owners 'love competition'](#)  
[Read more](#)

## **Manchester United, 10.55pm**

Manchester United will not be participating in the European Super League. We have listened carefully to the reaction from our fans, the UK government and other key stakeholders. We remain committed to working with others across the football community to come up with sustainable solutions to the long-term challenges facing the game.

## **Chelsea, 12.45am**

As reported earlier this evening, [Chelsea](#) Football Club can confirm that it has begun the formal procedures for withdrawal from the group developing plans for a European Super League. Having joined the group late last week, we have now had time to consider the matter fully and have decided that our

continued participation in these plans would not be in the best interests of the Club, our supporters or the wider football community.

01:16

Chelsea fan protests turn to celebrations as club pulls out of Super League – video

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## European Super League

# European Super League vows to ‘reshape’ after English clubs pull out

- Six Premier League clubs bow to pressure and withdraw
- ESL puts out statement insisting proposal is legally sound



A newsagent in Livorno shows the front page of Tuttosport. Photograph: Laura Lezza/Getty Images

A newsagent in Livorno shows the front page of Tuttosport. Photograph: Laura Lezza/Getty Images

*[Mike Hytner](#)  
[@mike\\_hytner](#)*

Tue 20 Apr 2021 22.44 EDT

The [European Super League](#) has vowed to “reshape the project” after its plans were left in tatters following the withdrawal of the six English clubs

initially signed up for the breakaway competition.

Chelsea led the way on Tuesday, signalling an abrupt U-turn just 48 hours after Sunday's bombshell announcement about the creation of the controversial league. Manchester City followed suit before Liverpool, [Manchester United](#), Arsenal and Tottenham completed the Premier League contingent's [embarrassing volte face](#).

[England's big six pull out of European Super League: what they said](#)

[Read more](#)

“Despite the announced departure of the English clubs, forced to take such decisions due to the pressure on them, we are convinced our proposal is fully aligned with European law and regulations,” an ESL statement read.

“Given the current circumstances, we shall reconsider the most appropriate steps to reshape the project, always having in mind our goals of offering fans the best experience possible while enhancing solidarity payments for the entire football community.”

Italian clubs Milan and Internazionale were on Tuesday night reportedly also considering jumping ship, leaving a third Serie A club, Juventus, and Spanish trio Real Madrid, Atlético Madrid and Barcelona as the last standing members of the breakaway group.

The six Premier League clubs bailed after a furious backlash to the plan from fans, players and managers over the past two days. The UK government expressed its willingness to use legislation to derail the project, while there was also a royal intervention from Prince William.

01:16

Chelsea fan protests turn to celebrations as club pulls out of Super League – video

Meanwhile, the Football Association, European and world governing bodies Uefa and Fifa all threatened sanctions on clubs and bans for players at rebel clubs.

Yet undeterred by the fallout, the ESL, headed by Real Madrid president Florentino Pérez, said it remained committed to getting the project up and running, even though any competition that did emerge would bear little resemblance to what was originally planned.

“The European Super League is convinced that the current status quo of European football needs to change,” the statement said. “We are proposing a new European competition because the existing system does not work.

“Our proposal is aimed at allowing the sport to evolve while generating resources and stability for the football pyramid, including helping to overcome the financial difficulties experienced by the entire football community as a result of the pandemic.

“It would also provide materially enhanced solidarity payments to all football stakeholders.”

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## Lobbying

# Boris Johnson ‘promised James Dyson he would fix tax issue’

Entrepreneur lobbied prime minister directly at start of pandemic last year, BBC reveals



James Dyson said it was ‘absurd’ to suggest his firm was doing anything other than seeking to comply with Treasury rules. Photograph: David M Benett/Dave Benett/Getty Images for Luxury Cave

James Dyson said it was ‘absurd’ to suggest his firm was doing anything other than seeking to comply with Treasury rules. Photograph: David M Benett/Dave Benett/Getty Images for Luxury Cave

*PA Media*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 02.53 EDT

Boris Johnson personally promised the entrepreneur James Dyson he would “fix” an issue over the tax status of his employees after he was directly

lobbied by the entrepreneur, it has been reported.

The BBC said it has seen a series of text messages between the two men after Sir James was unable to get the assurances he was seeking from the Treasury.

The exchanges took place in March last year at the start of the pandemic when the government was appealing to firms to supply ventilators amid fears the NHS could run out.

The government said it was right to secure equipment for the NHS in “extraordinary times”, while Dyson said it was “absurd” to suggest his firm was doing anything other than seeking to comply with Treasury rules.

Labour, however, described the disclosures as “jaw-dropping” and said Johnson must now agree to a full, independent inquiry into lobbying.

Dyson, whose firm is based in Singapore, wrote to the Treasury asking for an assurance that his staff would not have to pay additional tax if they came to the UK to work on the project.

However, when he failed to receive a reply, the BBC said he took up the matter directly with the prime minister.

He said in a text that the firm was ready but that “sadly” it seemed no one wanted them to proceed.

Johnson replied: “I will fix it tomo! We need you. It looks fantastic.”

The prime minister then texted him again, saying: “[Chancellor Rishi Sunak] says it is fixed!! We need you here.”

When Sir James sought further assurance, Johnson replied: “James, I am First Lord of the Treasury and you can take it that we are backing you to do what you need.”

Two weeks later, Sunak told the Commons Treasury committee that the tax status of people who came to the UK to provide specific help during the pandemic would not be affected.

A government spokesman said it was right to take action in “extraordinary times” to ensure the NHS had the equipment it needed.

“At the height of the pandemic, there were genuine fears that we would quickly run out of ventilators, leaving the NHS unable to treat patients and putting many lives at risk,” he said.

“As the public would expect, we did everything we could in extraordinary times to protect our citizens and get access to the right medical equipment.”

Dyson said he was “hugely proud” of his firm’s response in “the midst of a national emergency”, and that he would “do the same again if asked”.

He told the BBC: “When the prime minister rang me to ask Dyson to urgently build ventilators, of course I said yes.

“Our ventilator cost Dyson £20m, freely given to the national cause, and it is absurd to suggest that the urgent correspondence was anything other than seeking compliance with rules, as 450 Dyson people – in UK and Singapore – worked around the clock, seven days a week to build potentially life-saving equipment at a time of dire need.

“Mercifully, they were not required as medical understanding of the virus evolved. Neither Weybourne [Dyson’s holding company] nor Dyson received any benefit from the project; indeed commercial projects were delayed, and Dyson voluntarily covered the £20m of development costs.”

Dyson also said his company had not claimed “one penny” from governments in any jurisdiction in relation to Covid.

The report came amid growing concern at Westminster over lobbying following the disclosures of David Cameron’s activities on behalf of the failed finance firm, Greensill Capital.

In response, Johnson ordered a review by the senior lawyer Nigel Boardman.

A Labour party spokesman said: “These are jaw-dropping revelations. Boris Johnson is now front and centre of the biggest lobbying scandal in a generation, and Tory sleaze has reached the heart of Downing Street ...

Boris Johnson must now agree to a full, transparent and independent inquiry into lobbying - and end the scandal of Conservative politicians abusing taxpayer money.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/apr/21/boris-johnson-promised-james-dyson-he-would-fix-tax-issue>

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## [Northern Ireland](#)

# Historians call for opening of secret Northern Ireland files to mark centenary

Push for transparency comes at a time of heightened tensions in region



A procession of Orangemen in Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1922. Photograph: Print Collector/Getty Images

A procession of Orangemen in Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1922. Photograph: Print Collector/Getty Images

*[Ben Quinn](#)*

*[@BenQuinn75](#)*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 02.00 EDT

Secret archives concerning some of the most controversial episodes from the inception of [Northern Ireland](#) could be opened amid pressure from historians

advising on its centenary commemorations.

They include an archive dedicated to the Ulster Special Constabulary (USC) – a quasi-military and overwhelmingly Protestant reserve police force known as the “B Specials” – and files potentially shedding light on their involvement in atrocities against the Catholic population.

Pressure for the release of these files and others held back due to security and other concerns has come from the Centenary Historical Advisory Panel, a group of eminent academics advising the UK government on marking the 100-year anniversary of the creation of Northern Ireland on 3 May.

The push for transparency comes at a time of heightened tensions in the region, with both the historians and the UK government keen to tread carefully. The Northern Ireland secretary, Brandon Lewis, has said the street violence seen in recent weeks is undermining unionist celebrations of Northern Ireland’s centenary year.

Planning has been mired in controversy, with Sinn Féin and the SDLP boycotting a separate panel coordinating the commemorations and the former blocking the erection at Stormont of a stone in the shape of Northern Ireland.

A relatively diverse panel of historians chaired by the cross-bench peer and historian Paul Bew has identified the unlocking of official archives as a priority.

“A great amount of material is already out there but we do know that there are files relating to the birth of Northern Ireland which are quite controversial and have been closed for 100 years,” said a panel member, Dr Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, a senior lecturer in modern history at the University of Sheffield.

“In some cases they relate to events that have reverberated down through the years. It’s understandable that there may have been security implications that would have prevented their release after the normal 30-year limit but after 100 years there’s a feeling that it’s really time to open them up in the spirit of openness and acknowledging the complexities involved.”

Files could include some shedding new light on the treatment of Northern Ireland's Catholic minority and incidents such as the murders of six Catholic civilians – five members of the McMahon family and a lodger – in 1922.

No one was brought to justice for the massacre, which was blamed on police officers led by one who went on to become a mentor to the former DUP leader and Northern Ireland first minister, Ian Paisley.

Panel members believe that a one-off opportunity has arisen for the release of the material and other files that are not even catalogued. They fear that undocumented material could be lost at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) as archivists retire.



Street barricades put up in Newtonards Road, Belfast, in 1922. Photograph: Bettmann Archive

Control of the archives is technically devolved to Northern Ireland's power-sharing administration at Stormont, but the panel is understood to have made its views clear in discussions with Lewis.

"I understand [Lewis] is not a historian – his priority is the future and prosperity – but to his credit I think he is aware it is a very sensitive set of commemorations. I think he regrets, for example, that the word 'celebration'

was used at a point and the government has been on the back foot since,” said one member.

Other initiatives being overseen by members of the panel include a website that has already started to publish material, a book with chapters by historians and public figures and an exhibition on Northern Ireland’s history that will be staged in Belfast and Westminster’s Great Hall. It may also travel around Northern Ireland and go to Dublin.

Separate plans for the commemorations, on which the UK government is spending £3m, include a special postmark, a “centenary rose” produced in Northern Ireland for the Queen, along with funding for community projects.

Lord Bew, meanwhile, told the Guardian: “Our view on the panel is that it would be entirely wrong to try and sugarcoat aspects of the foundation of the state which are so troublesome, particularly for the Catholic working class in Belfast.”

“The broad view of the historians involved diverges quite a lot but we all essentially committed to trying to tell this story in an unvarnished way and not to aggravate people.”

Having sifted through archives for decades, Bew believed there were still “some special problems” about releasing certain documents. “It’s not just whether the people are still around, but whether the families are still around and connections can be made,” he said.

“But equally I do believe that there should be more sensitive material released. We are all agreed on that.”

A spokesperson for Northern Ireland’s Department for Communities said PRONI had received a request and aimed to open administrative records of the USC for the 1920s once a “sensitivity review” and classification were completed.

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## Coronavirus

# Justin Welby calls for start to public inquiry into handling of Covid

Archbishop of Canterbury says investigation must be independent, with power to place witnesses under oath

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(Left to right) Rabbi Daniel Epstein, of the Cockfosters and North Southgate United Synagogue, Kazeem Fatai, Imam of the Old Kent Road mosque, and the archbishop of Canterbury touring the Covid-19 Memorial Wall. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

(Left to right) Rabbi Daniel Epstein, of the Cockfosters and North Southgate United Synagogue, Kazeem Fatai, Imam of the Old Kent Road mosque, and the archbishop of Canterbury touring the Covid-19 Memorial Wall. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

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

Wed 21 Apr 2021 02.00 EDT

The archbishop of Canterbury has called on the government to start [a public inquiry](#) into the handling of the Covid pandemic in the UK, saying it should call out “reckless error” and have the power to compel witnesses to attend.

In a move that will reignite [pressure on Boris Johnson](#) to finally deliver on a promise to launch an investigation, Justin Welby told the Guardian: “It has got to be an utterly independent statutory public inquiry, that has complete access, that can call witnesses, subpoena them if necessary and if necessary put them under oath.”

“I think we are at the point where they could start doing it,” the archbishop said. “If we ever have anything like this again, a national catastrophe on this scale, what do we do?”

He made the call on Tuesday evening as he met people bereaved by the pandemic at the Covid-19 Memorial Wall on the South Bank of the Thames opposite parliament, where more than 150,000 red hearts have been inscribed in memory of the UK dead. He was joined by Rabbi Daniel Epstein, of the Cockfosters and North Southgate United Synagogue, and Kazeem Fatai, Imam of the Old Kent Road mosque.

Johnson has rebuffed multiple calls from the bereaved, Labour and leading scientists to launch an inquiry immediately. The prime minister told MPs last month that he considered it “an irresponsible diversion” of official time at the moment. Labour has said it wants the inquiry to start as soon as Covid restrictions are lifted.

[Bereaved families issue legal ultimatum to Boris Johnson over Covid inquiry](#)

[Read more](#)

Welby said that while walking along the 460-metre long memorial he had the sense of “a tidal wave of grief that has not been released”.

“There are 150,000 hearts here,” he said. “That represents a million or more people [grieving]. If you add all the people who died from any cause, none of whom have been able to have a proper goodbye, our estimate is six to eight million people [grieving]. That’s a wartime number. How as a society, as faith leaders do we enable this to be expressed and for healing to be found?

“One of the things people want to know when something goes wrong is that something has been learned from it and mistakes won’t be repeated,” he said. “One of the most comforting things for people that are bereaved is [knowing that] what happened to you, we can do better next time.”

He said a public inquiry should examine the core issues of lockdown timing, PPE provision and the performance of test and trace, as well as exploring more hidden impacts of the pandemic. Care homes, he said “were prioritised by Covid, but unfortunately they didn’t get the attention they should have done”.



Rabbi Daniel Epstein and archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby with surviving relatives Michelle and Courtney Rumball. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

“I think it has to be very wide-ranging indeed because this pandemic has been very wide ranging,” he said. “You can break it into sub-groups with a co-ordinating group in the middle. You can do it in two, three or four years, but with interim reports.”

Welby added: “Where there has been serious error, it has to be called out, particularly reckless error. But you won’t get anywhere where the main thing is to apply blame. It has to be [about] lessons learned. You do want people to be able to say ‘I got that wrong and I regret it’ and not to be criticised.”

People he met at the memorial, which was initiated by the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Group, included Ben Spencer, 43, who lost his father, Brian Spencer, 70, a taxi driver in April last year. He said he wants an inquiry to find out why the initial lockdown came later than it might have done.

“That might have saved so many lives,” he said.

The archbishop also prayed with Courteney Rumball, 20, and her mother, Michelle Rumball, 49, who lost her mother, Violet Partington, 78, in April 2020. They said they wanted an inquiry to examine the advice given by NHS 111 helpline which told Violet to self-isolate for seven days. She died within two days. They also want an investigation of the application of do-not-resuscitate orders, after one was applied to Violet without the knowledge of her family by the hospital where she died.

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# Wednesday briefing: Day of justice for George Floyd

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## Conservatives

# Defence minister Johnny Mercer dismissed from government

Junior minister had indicated he was preparing to quit over concerns about prosecutions of Northern Ireland veterans



Downing Street said Boris Johnson had accepted Johnny Mercer's resignation. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

Downing Street said Boris Johnson had accepted Johnny Mercer's resignation. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

*[Dan Sabbagh](#) Defence and security editor*

Tue 20 Apr 2021 15.35 EDT

Johnny Mercer has been abruptly dismissed as a junior defence minister after accusing Boris Johnson of breaching a commitment to implement a controversial pledge to prevent veterans who served in [Northern Ireland](#) from being prosecuted.

The junior minister was preparing to quit on Wednesday but his resignation was accepted by the chief whip early on Tuesday evening, eager to put a stop to speculation he was on the brink of departure.

Downing Street said Johnson had “accepted the resignation” in a terse statement and thanked Mercer “for his service” as a minister since 2019 – forcing the ex-minister to publish a resignation letter dated to Wednesday.

In it, Mercer said he had hoped Johnson’s tenure as prime minister would signal “a step-change in veterans affairs,” but said that despite the rhetoric, the government was failing “to match that with what we deliver” – an issue he said he had raised with Johnson the last time he saw him, a month ago.

I’m sorry to have been relieved of my responsibilities in Government tonight. [pic.twitter.com/AWai59fVhE](https://pic.twitter.com/AWai59fVhE)

— Johnny Mercer (@JohnnyMercerUK) [April 20, 2021](#)

Mercer is particularly unhappy about a series of looming trials of British army veterans dating back to the time of the Troubles – although his position has exasperated colleagues in government.

Next week, two former members of the parachute regiment, known only as Soldier A and Soldier C, who are both in their 70s, are to go on trial for the murder of the Official IRA commander Joe McCann in Belfast in 1972.

A defence source said Mercer had hoped the trials would not go ahead, but said that there was no real prospect of devising legislation to retrospectively halt ongoing prosecutions. His position was unrealistic, they said.

During his Tory leadership campaign Johnson had promised to end the “scourge of vexatious historical investigations” of Northern Ireland veterans. But the government has struggled to bring forward legislation to match that pledge because of the sensitivities of the issue.

[Peers vote to halt plans to limit UK soldiers’ accountability for war crimes](#)  
[Read more](#)

About 3,500 people died during the Troubles, which began in the late 1960s, but despite the passage of time many of the deaths have only been gradually investigated by the authorities, as would have happened elsewhere in the UK.

Others being prosecuted include Soldier F, a former paratrooper who is accused of murdering two people on Bloody Sunday, the date in 1972 when soldiers opened fire on civil rights demonstrators in Derry.

Earlier, reports circulated that Mercer was planning to quit in the coming days, leaks that allies of the former minister blamed on Downing Street. When confronted by the news, No 10 said it was not immediately aware of Mercer's intentions, although the chief whip was asked to resolve the issue.

News of his resignation overshadowed a significant concession made by ministers on the related [overseas operations bill](#), agreeing to drop plans for a five-year limit on torture and war crimes prosecutions for those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ministers had sought to end what the government called "vexatious prosecutions" affecting soldiers who served abroad, in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, by bringing forward the bill.

Its key feature was to introduce a presumption against prosecution of military personnel, which would apply after five years. Sexual offences were excluded from the bill's time limit. But until the concession, torture and war crimes were not excluded. Last week peers [voted by 333 to 228](#) to reverse that, forcing the Commons to consider the issue again.

On Tuesday afternoon, the [Ministry of Defence](#) (MoD) announced a surprise climbdown, saying "we have listened to concerns". An MoD spokesperson said: "Excluded offences in part one of the bill will be expanded to include torture, genocide and crimes against humanity."

Labour said it welcomed the reversal but John Healey, the shadow defence secretary, said he wanted to study the detail.

The human rights charity Reprieve said the concession was significant, but noted that cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment was not included in the

list. Dan Dolan, Reprieve's director of advocacy, added: "This move to decriminalise torture was always disastrously ill-judged."

Mercer rose to the rank of captain in the Royal Artillery and served three times in Afghanistan. He declared that he went into politics nearly a decade ago to improve the treatment of veterans. He became MP for Plymouth Moor View in 2015, taking the seat from Labour.

Sometimes prone to outbursts, Mercer described Theresa May's government as a "shit show" in 2018, complaining that her compromises over Brexit had pleased nobody. He said he would not necessarily vote Conservative if he were not an MP for the party.

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**NHS**

## End NHS staff shortages now, Boris Johnson told

There are almost 90,000 vacancies in England, says letter on behalf of 1.4m workers, while sickness and stress may prompt more to leave



A letter to Boris Johnson has been signed by representatives of the 1.4m workforce of NHS England. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

A letter to Boris Johnson has been signed by representatives of the 1.4m workforce of NHS England. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

*[Denis Campbell](#) Health policy editor*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 03.00 EDT

Doctors, nurses and NHS bosses have pleaded with [Boris Johnson](#) to spend billions of pounds to finally end the chronic lack of staff across the health service.

The strain of working in a perpetually understaffed service is so great that it risks creating an exodus of frontline personnel, they warn the prime minister in a letter published on Wednesday.

They have demanded that the government devise an urgent plan that will significantly increase the size of the workforce of the [NHS](#) in England by the time of the next general election in 2024.

Their intervention comes after the latest NHS staff survey found that growing numbers of them [feel their work is making them sick](#) and that almost two-thirds believe they cannot do their jobs properly because their organisation has too few people.

[NHS poll shows rising toll of work stress on staff health](#)

[Read more](#)

The letter has been signed by unions and other groups representing most of the NHS's 1.4 million-strong workforce, including the Royal College of Nursing, British Medical Association and Unison. NHS Providers and the NHS Confederation, which both represent hospital trusts, have also endorsed it, as has the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, a professional body for the UK's 240,000 doctors.

In the letter they draw attention to the fact that the NHS in England has almost 90,000 vacancies: "We are very aware of the strain and stress placed on NHS services and teams by the vacancies we see across services and roles. There is a very real risk that these vacancies are the greatest threat to the retention of our people."

Johnson has lavished praise on NHS staff for their dedication and hard work in treating huge numbers of Covid patients during the pandemic, and acknowledged his personal debt to them after his spell in intensive care with the disease in April 2020. But his decision to offer NHS staff only a 1% pay rise this year has triggered an outcry, including from some Conservative MPs.

The NHS's much-vaunted People Plan, drawn up by the Conservative peer Lady Harding in her role as chair of NHS Improvement, has not led to

meaningful changes to increase staff numbers – with government reluctance to spend the money needed the reason, the signatories claim.

“It appears that no such plan can be developed because the government has not been able to commit to funding the implications … Billions in additional investment will be required by the end of this parliament to address these longstanding issues of supply and education,” the letter adds.

Demanding that staff shortages be banished once and for all, the authors tell the prime minister that staff are “exhausted” after a year fighting Covid and ask him to “give them hope – hope that there is a plan, matched by investment, which will address shortages of NHS staff in the medium and long term”.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: “This government is committed to supporting the NHS and its staff in the fight against Covid and beyond the pandemic through the NHS People Plan. There are over 6,600 more doctors and 10,900 more nurses working in our NHS, compared to last year, and we are on track to deliver 50,000 more nurses by the end of this parliament.”

The spokesperson said an extra 1,500 places had been created in medical schools, and an undergraduate studying to become a nurse, midwife, physiotherapist or occupational therapist now received at least £5,000 a year to help with living costs.

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## The Queen

# The Queen marks 95th birthday

The Queen spending day quietly while still in official royal mourning for Prince Philip



Queen Elizabeth II at the funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh. Photograph: Leon Neal/AP

Queen Elizabeth II at the funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh. Photograph: Leon Neal/AP

[Caroline Davies](#)

Wed 21 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

The Queen is marking her 95th birthday on Wednesday while still in official royal mourning for her husband of 73 years, the Duke of Edinburgh.

For a second consecutive year, the traditional 41-gun and 21-gun salutes, traditionally fired in Hyde Park and the Tower of London on the occasion, have been cancelled.

Buckingham Palace is also not expected to issue any official photograph of the monarch.

## [The Queen alone: how Prince Philip's death will change the monarchy](#)

[Read more](#)

Instead, she is said to be spending the day quietly. Close family members may join her but it is thought these may not include the Prince of Wales.

Prince Charles is reported to have retreated to his official Welsh home Llwynywermod, in Myddfai, Llandovery, to mourn the loss of his father, having travelled there from Windsor, where he and senior royals were among the 30 mourners to attend Prince Philip's funeral.

It is not known if the Duke of Sussex will have been able to see his grandmother before returning to California to be with the pregnant Duchess of Sussex, who is expecting the couple's daughter in the summer. He has been staying at Frogmore Cottage, his former official home on the Windsor estate, where he isolated before Saturday's funeral.

Family members living closest to the Queen, who may be able to see her, are the Duke of York, Princess Eugenie, and the Earl and Countess of Wessex.

The Queen also has an official birthday, which this year falls on 12 June. The manner in which that will be marked is still being worked out at Buckingham Palace. The sovereign's birthday parade, Trooping the Colour, is normally held in London. But last year a socially distanced military parade was held at Windsor Castle instead.

Even before the duke's death, at the age of 99 on 9 April, it is understood the Queen had not wanted her birthday to be marked in any meaningful way. Instead she was said to be keen for the focus to be on Philip's 100th birthday celebrations, which would have taken place on 10 June.

The Queen, senior royals and their households continue to observe royal mourning until Friday – two weeks after Philip's death.

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## Gig economy

# Just Eat to offer 1,500 Liverpool couriers minimum hourly rate and sick pay

Food delivery group promises to expand worker model already operating in London and Birmingham



A Just Eat delivery worker in London. Photograph: Pietro Recchia/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

A Just Eat delivery worker in London. Photograph: Pietro Recchia/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

*Sarah Butler*

*@whatbutlersaw*

Tue 20 Apr 2021 19.01 EDT

Just Eat is to offer 1,500 takeaway couriers in Liverpool minimum pay, sick pay and holiday pay by the end of the year as it shifts away from using independent contractors.

The food delivery group, which recently began building its own courier network in the UK alongside putting customers in touch with takeaways that carry out their own delivery, said it would expand a worker model for couriers that it was already operating in London and Birmingham, where 2,000 riders had signed up.

The latest expansion comes after the Just Eat boss, Jitse Groen, said he wanted to end gig-working across Europe at his company. Like rivals including Deliveroo, most of the takeaways delivered via Just Eat are transported by self-employed contractors without guaranteed pay or paid sick leave. Some are under direct contracts and some work via courier firms such as Stuart.

The group's new model stops short of giving riders full benefits enjoyed by employees, but as "workers" – employed via the independent Randstad agency which Just Eat's parent company uses across Europe – they are entitled to more than the legal minimum in hourly pay, pension contributions and benefits including holiday pay and sick pay.

Riders also work set shifts, are provided with e-bikes or e-mopeds, which are maintained by the company, and will have the option to operate from a central hub, where they can pick up equipment and take breaks. They can no longer work for several other apps at the same time as delivering for Just Eat.

Andrew Kenny, the UK managing director of Just Eat, said: "We recognise our responsibility to provide couriers with the best possible opportunities and we're delighted that almost 2,000 jobs have already been created as part of our worker model. We've reached this milestone significantly ahead of schedule and following a positive response in London and Birmingham, we're excited to roll this out to Liverpool, creating 1,500 more roles this year.

“We believe giving couriers access to the benefits and security associated with a model like this is the right thing to do and we’re hugely ambitious to grow this further out across the UK.”

The Independent Workers Union of Great Britain said Just Eat’s new model was “a step in the right direction but still not where it should be to offer a sustainable job that people can build a life around”.

Alex Marshall, the president of the union, which represents gig-economy workers, said riders were paid little more than the legal minimum wage per hour. He added that gig-economy riders working for the likes of the courier firm Stuart, which had been previously delivering takeaways ordered via Just Eat in many UK cities, were not being offered first choice of the new roles.

“It would be good if they spoke to workers about what they want rather than a PR stunt,” he said.

Just Eat said that its new worker roles were “open to anyone that wants to apply to them and [current] riders are not discouraged from applying”.

The changes in the UK come after the [f6.2bn merger](#) of Just Eat with the Dutch business Takeaway.com, which was finalised earlier this year as well as a shift in sentiment towards the employment of independent contractors, who are not entitled to sick pay, holiday pay or the minimum wage.

Gig economy companies are having to consider change after Uber was [forced to pay](#) its UK private hire drivers minimum wage and holiday pay when the UK supreme court backed a 2016 employment tribunal ruling [that its drivers should be classed as workers](#).

The takeaway courier business Deliveroo’s stock market debut [was hit](#) by concerns about the employment status of its workers after it emerged that the company had [set aside £112m](#) to cover potential legal costs relating to efforts to improve their rights.

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## [Poetry](#)

# ‘A surge of hope’: public helps create poem celebrating coming of spring

Writer Elizabeth-Jane Burnett brings together 400 voices for optimistic riposte to events of past year



People walk beneath blooming magnolia trees at the National Trust’s Glendurgan Garden in Cornwall. Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA

People walk beneath blooming magnolia trees at the National Trust’s Glendurgan Garden in Cornwall. Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA

[Steven Morris](#)

[@stevenmorris20](#)

Wed 21 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

Some described chance encounters with birds and animals beginning to chirrup and scurry as the days lengthened and warmed; others focused on

feelings of relief, hope and lingering melancholy after a long and challenging winter.

The observations, thoughts and sentiments of members of the public who were invited to contribute to a crowdsourced poem celebrating the coming of spring 2021 have been weaved together into a new poem by the nature writer [Elizabeth-Jane Burnett](#).

Burnett took the 400 voices and created [a poem called Spring, An Inventory](#), which she sees as an optimistic riposte to the grim statistics – deaths, Covid-19 cases, hospital admissions – that have been such a feature of the past 12 months.

The National Trust and the Arts and Humanities Research Council [asked people to send in their contributions to the poem](#) on the first weekend of spring – 20 and 21 March.

Burnett was struck by the number of times certain sights, sounds and feelings cropped up and so was inspired to turn her poem into a sort of list – “fifty-one blossoms on the cherry swell ... Fifty-four hopes in the hardwood held.”



Elizabeth-Jane Burnett's crowdsourced poem, Spring, An Inventory, was in the form of a list. Photograph: PR

“It was a privilege to share in so many people’s experience of spring in this way,” Burnett said. “I chose the form of an inventory for the poem as a way of mapping common themes across submissions and presenting a more hopeful tally of numbers than we have been used to seeing in the past year – in fact, the word hope itself recurred 54 times.”

Young and old took part, sharing observations from their gardens, local fields and woods or simply through their windows.

Some expressed pure optimism. Margaret Anderson wrote: “An incredible surge of hope and happiness wells up into my heart which almost hurts. [Spring](#) is full of promise.”

Sarah Hawkins saw profundity in the sight of a shy robin. “I hushed my breath and willed it to stay, Just going about as it may. For I felt it comforting to share, To coexist together there.” Josephine Corcoran wrote simply: “Spring arrives like an exhaled breath.”

Jess Rippengale hinted at the mixed feelings many people are still experiencing in her contribution: “A week of walking” – “Day 1. I mistake the sky reflected in drops of water for blossom buds on the end of a twig. Too soon for spring. Day 7. I mistake blossom buds on the end of a twig for drops of water. A pessimistic elongation of winter.”

Caitlin Phillips was one of those who was observing nature from her home and wondered if more heartache was to come: “I’ve been here before ... Through my window, under the gnarled and barren fig, I observe a cluster of primroses nestling together. Like ducklings without the mother duck ... Is this the prelude to a new beginning, I wonder, or just part of a repeating cycle?”

Even babes in arms got involved. Amy Gallacher sent in a contribution from her 20-month-old daughter, Naomi, that she believed summed up spring just perfectly: “Birds, more birds!”

*An extract from Spring, An Inventory by Elizabeth-Jane Burnett*

Fifty-four hopes in the hardwood held,

slow, the hour brightens  
through damp roots and fused shoots the pressure wells,  
fifty-one blossoms on the cherry swell,  
tiny beech leaves ripen.

Fifty-four hopes in the hardwood held  
slow, the hour brightens.

Forty-four trees in the waking woods,  
forty-one spilling gardens.

Five cherry trees where the blackbirds stood,  
thirty-five joys through their gleaming broods,  
thirty-eight buds nectar-guarding  
in forty-four trees in the waking woods,  
in forty-one spilling gardens.

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- [Medication UK in drive to develop at-home Covid stoppers](#)
- ['Double mutant' Why is India seeing such a huge surge in Covid-19 cases?](#)
- [India Delhi warns hospitals running out of oxygen](#)
- [Financial support Thousands of vulnerable people missed out on support at start of pandemic](#)
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## Coronavirus

# How vaccines are affecting Covid-19 outbreaks globally

Despite their life-saving capabilities, many countries have yet to administer enough doses to reap the full benefits

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Wed 21 Apr 2021 00.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 21 Apr 2021 00.01 EDT

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## Coronavirus

# UK in drive to develop drugs to take at home to 'stop Covid in its tracks'

Taskforce aims to 'supercharge' search for antivirals to roll out as soon as autumn, says government

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01:56

Boris Johnson: government to fast-track development of drugs to 'stop Covid in its tracks' – video

*[Sarah Boseley](#) and [Jessica Elgot](#)*

Tue 20 Apr 2021 13.34 EDT

People with mild Covid-19 could take a pill or capsule at home to prevent the illness turning serious and requiring hospital treatment, under government plans to fast-track development of treatments for the disease.

The government is launching an antivirals taskforce to find at least two drugs by the autumn that people can take to stop coronavirus in its tracks and speed up recovery from it.

Boris Johnson said the plans were part of the UK adapting to a new reality. The prime minister told a Downing Street press conference on Tuesday: "The majority of scientific opinion in this country is still firmly of the view that there will be another wave of Covid at some stage this year."

Johnson suggested the antivirals research would form part of a three-pronged approach to tackle this anticipated third wave, including booster

jabs in the autumn to combat new variants as well as continuing mass testing.

However, he said that the reopening of the economy would proceed as planned, despite the warnings. “I see nothing in the data now that makes me think we are going to have to deviate in any way from the roadmap, cautious but irreversible, that we have set out.”

The government hopes the antivirals taskforce will match the success of the vaccines taskforce, which bought a range of effective Covid jabs for the UK and has put the country ahead of most of the world in immunisation against the coronavirus.

The new drive aims to find drugs that work against the virus – and its variants – in the early stages of disease. Most of the drugs discovered so far have been for use by people severely ill in hospital. Dexamethasone, a cheap steroid already in widespread use, was the biggest breakthrough. It was identified in the UK’s [Recovery trial](#) and is now saving lives all over the globe.

Now that there are far fewer deaths in the UK, more attention is being paid to drugs that could help stop mild Covid-19 infection from progressing to a more serious illness.

The taskforce is likely to focus on antiviral monoclonal antibodies – proteins made in the laboratory to fight the virus as the immune system does. The former US president Donald Trump was given an antibody cocktail that may have speeded his recovery from Covid. However, they are expensive and there have been questions over whether these drugs will be fully effective against variants.

The prime minister and health secretary both referenced the vaccines taskforce in the announcement of the new body. “The success of our vaccination programme has demonstrated what the UK can achieve when we bring together our brightest minds,” said Johnson.

“Our new antivirals taskforce will seek to develop innovative treatments you can take at home to stop Covid-19 in its tracks. These could provide another vital defence against any future increase in infections and save more lives.”

The health secretary, Matt Hancock, said he was “committed to boosting the UK’s position as a life science superpower and this new taskforce will help us beat Covid-19 and build back better”.

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### Share your stories

If you have been affected or have any information, we'd like to hear from you. You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish or contact us [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Only the Guardian can see your contributions and one of our journalists may contact you to discuss further.

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The UK was leading the world in rolling out treatments for Covid, he said, mentioning dexamethasone and also the hospital drug tocilizumab. “In combination with our fantastic vaccination programme, medicines are a vital weapon to protect our loved ones from this terrible virus,” Hancock said.

“Modelled on the success of the vaccines and therapeutics taskforces, which have played a crucial part in our response to the pandemic, we are now bringing together a new team that will supercharge the search for antiviral treatments and roll them out as soon as the autumn.”

Some of the drugs administered in hospital are given intravenously or by infusion, which makes them hard to use at home. “Antivirals in tablet form are another key tool for the response. They could help protect those not protected by or ineligible for vaccines. They could also be another layer of defence in the face of new variants of concern,” said the government’s chief scientific adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance.

The vaccines taskforce was until recently led by the businesswoman Kate Bingham. The government has said there will be a competition to decide the chair of the antivirals taskforce. The new taskforce will work alongside the [therapeutics taskforce](#), led by the deputy chief medical officer, Prof Jonathan Van-Tam, which identifies potential Covid drugs and steers them into trials and eventually the NHS.

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## [India](#)

# Why is India seeing such a huge surge in Covid-19 cases?

A ‘double mutant’ strain, lack of medical supplies and the relaxation of lockdowns have combined to foment disaster



Despite the Covid-19 surge, crowds have been allowed to gather for Kumbh Mela in Haridwar, India. Photograph: Anushree Fadnavis/Reuters

Despite the Covid-19 surge, crowds have been allowed to gather for Kumbh Mela in Haridwar, India. Photograph: Anushree Fadnavis/Reuters

[Martin Farrer](#)

Wed 21 Apr 2021 01.33 EDT

India has seen a [terrifying increase](#) in coronavirus cases in the past few weeks. Tuesday saw another new record when the country racked up 295,041 new cases, up from around 273,000 from the previous day, with no sign that the surge is abating.

The capital, New Delhi, was placed in lockdown for a week from Monday, and Maharashtra state, the centre of the surge and home to the financial capital, Mumbai, further tightened restrictions on shops and home deliveries from Tuesday.

The US Centers for Disease Control on Monday advised against all travel to India, and the [UK imposed restrictions on arrivals](#) from the country.

India has recorded more than 15m cases of Covid-19, second only to the US, and has the fourth highest death toll at more than 180,000.

What has caused the resurgence, which Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, described on Tuesday as "[like being hit by a storm](#)"?

## Lack of preparedness

At the beginning of February, India appeared to have the virus under control. Daily cases were barely more than 10,000 a day – considered low for a country of 1.3 billion people.

### [india](#)

But since then the number has spiked twentyfold, catching the government off guard and underprepared. The health minister, Harsh Vardhan, said in March that the country had entered the “endgame” of the virus but cases were already beginning to take off by that point. Bhramar Mukherjee, a biostatistician at the University of Michigan who has been tracking India’s pandemic, told the Associated Press that India had failed to learn from second or third surges in countries including Brazil and the UK, to ensure it was ready for a similar situation.

## ‘Double mutant’ variant

The discovery of a new variant of Covid-19 in India has caused widespread concern and has been blamed as one of the [main factors](#) driving the wave of cases. The variant is known as B.1.617 and has caused alarm because it has two spike proteins rather than one. This so-called “double mutant” variant is believed to be more transmissible than previous strains. Although scientists

are still not certain exactly how dangerous it is, the rapid spread of the variant through [Maharashtra](#) and then the rest of the country is key reason why the UK has banned travel from India.



Health workers take Covid-19 swab samples at a sample collection centre in Prayagraj. Photograph: Prabhat Kumar Verma/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

## Health system overwhelmed

There are multiple reports of people being unable to find hospital beds, with desperate relatives pleading on social media for help to find care. There is also a severe shortage of medical supplies, [especially oxygen](#). A hospital at Burari on the outskirts of Delhi reported on Monday that it had only two days' worth of oxygen left and that suppliers had run out.

['A tsunami of cases': desperation as Covid second wave batters India](#)

[Read more](#)

Just as was the wider health system, laboratories were unprepared for the steep rise in demand for testing that came with the surge. Everyone was “caught with their pants down”, according to A Velumani, the chairman and managing director of Thyrocare, one of India’s largest private testing labs.

He told the Associated Press that the demand was now three times that of last year.

## Lockdowns eased too quickly

India was praised for its swift lockdowns last year but there has been criticism of the government for allowing restrictions to ease too quickly. Modi, who has resisted suggestions that nationwide measures should be reintroduced has attracted fire for holding rallies without proper social distancing. Hindu festivals have also been allowed to go ahead, most notably the massive [Kumbh Mela gathering in Haridwar](#) which has attracted as many as 25 million people since January, including about 4.6 million last week alone, with most people ignoring Covid-19 guidelines.

## Vaccine rollout

India launched a massive vaccination program but it has not been enough to stem the tide. More than 100m doses have been delivered but the country has been hampered by lack of supply. The government said last week it had fewer than 27m doses left, enough to last about nine days. India is the world's biggest producer of vaccines and is now expected to divert some production to domestic use, causing alarm over [shortages elsewhere in the world](#).

*Associated Press contributed to this story*

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## [India](#)

# Delhi warns hospitals running out of oxygen amid India's devastating Covid wave

City government calls for help on social media, saying major hospitals only have enough oxygen to last eight to 24 hours

- [Why is India seeing such a huge surge in Covid-19 cases?](#)
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Medical workers at a Delhi banquet hall that has been converted into a Covid quarantine centre. India's surge in coronavirus infections has led to shortages in oxygen supplies. Photograph: Anindito Mukherjee/Getty Images

Medical workers at a Delhi banquet hall that has been converted into a Covid quarantine centre. India's surge in coronavirus infections has led to

shortages in oxygen supplies. Photograph: Anindito Mukherjee/Getty Images

*Reuters*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 00.44 EDT

Indian authorities scrambled to shore up supplies of medical oxygen to hospitals in the capital, Delhi, on Wednesday as a fast-spreading second wave of coronavirus stretched medical infrastructure to breaking point, officials and doctors said.

India, the world's second most populous country, is reporting the world's highest number of new daily cases and is approaching a peak of about 297,000 cases in one day that the US hit in January.

Delhi's government issued a call for help on social media, saying major government hospitals only had enough oxygen to last eight to 24 hours while some private ones had enough for just four or five hours.

[Why is India seeing such a huge surge in Covid-19 cases?](#)

[Read more](#)

One hospital, the GTB hospital, received some oxygen supplies just before it was going to run out of stocks for its 500 patients, media reported.

"We had almost lost hope," one relieved doctor, speaking on condition of anonymity, told India Today. "All of us were in tears when we saw the oxygen tanker arrive."

The city of 20 million recorded 28,395 new cases and 277 deaths on Tuesday, its highest tally since the pandemic began. Every third person tested for coronavirus was found positive, the state government said.

The prime minister, Narendra Modi, said India faced a coronavirus "storm" overwhelming its health system.



A worker waits to transfer the body of a patient who died of coronavirus at a crematorium in New Delhi. Photograph: Anindito Mukherjee/Getty Images

“Oxygen demand has increased,” Modi said in a televised address to the country on Tuesday evening. “We are working with speed and sensitivity to ensure oxygen to all those who need it. The centre, states and private companies, all are working together.”

### [What do we know about the Indian coronavirus variant?](#)

[Read more](#)

Modi faces criticism that his administration lowered its guard when coronavirus infections fell to a multi-month low in February, allowing religious festivals and political rallies, some of which he addressed, to go ahead.

“The situation was manageable until a few weeks ago,” Modi said in his address. “The second wave of infections has come like a storm.” He urged citizens to stay indoors and not panic amid India’s worst health emergency in memory.

India has launched a vaccination campaign but only a tiny fraction of its population have received shots. Delhi is under a six-day lockdown to try to

stem the transmission. The western state of Maharashtra, home to the financial capital, Mumbai, also plans to impose a stringent lockdown this week to try to halt the rise in cases, according to the cabinet.

Modi ordered a stringent lockdown of India's 1.3 billion people when coronavirus was detected last year but his government has always been wary of the huge economic costs of tough restrictions. On Tuesday he said a lockdown should only be a last resort.

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## Coronavirus

# Thousands of vulnerable people missed out on support at start of pandemic

‘Poor data’ meant it took too long to identify up to 800,000 people who should have been shielding

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



Free food boxes being delivered to the clinically vulnerable in Tonbridge, Kent. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

Free food boxes being delivered to the clinically vulnerable in Tonbridge, Kent. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

*[Rajeev Syal](#)*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

As many as 800,000 clinically extremely vulnerable people may have missed out on government support at the start of the Covid pandemic, with some elderly and blind people struggling to access food, parliament's spending watchdog has found.

The Public Accounts Committee said "poor data" meant that it took too long to identify more than a third of the 2.2 million people who should have been shielding at a time of urgent need.

Of those who slipped through the net, almost half – 375,000 – could not be contacted due to missing or incorrect telephone numbers in their NHS records.

In a report released today, MPs also found that the selective application of "at risk" criteria meant some elderly and vision-impaired people were not advised to shield, leaving them struggling to get enough to eat.

Meg Hillier, the committee's chair, said that while the plans were eventually "sensibly" devolved to local authorities, it raised questions about the balance between central decision-making and local knowledge.

"The shielding response in the Covid pandemic has particularly exposed the high human cost of the lack of planning for shielding in pandemic-planning scenarios. It also highlights the perennial issue of poor data and joined-up policy systems," she said.

"People were instructed to isolate, to protect themselves and others – but the cost of this protection was reduced access to living essentials like food, and an untold toll on the mental health and wellbeing of the already most vulnerable."

In March last year, the government asked those in England considered the most vulnerable to "shield" and drew up a £308m programme to support them with food, medicines and basic care.

Those defined as "clinically extremely vulnerable" included people in treatment for cancer, transplant recipients, those suffering from severe respiratory and kidney conditions, and people with Down's syndrome.

Initially, NHS Digital drew up a list of 1.3 million people who would be eligible for support while they were required to isolate at home but that rose to 2.2m over the next six weeks.

[A year inside: what shielding has meant for the most vulnerable - podcast](#)  
[Read more](#)

The committee said the process became a “postcode lottery” after local GPs and hospital doctors were invited to review the list and use clinical judgment to add or remove people.

The resulting increase in the numbers ranged from between 15% and 352% depending on the local authority area, with the list more than doubling in 33 authorities. The committee said that this represented an “unacceptable level of variation”.

An £18.4m central contact centre set up to trace people who did not respond to an initial letter advising them to shield failed to reach 800,000 people. Officials from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) told the committee they had tried to engage with those affected – by post, email and phone.

After failing to make contact with clinically extremely vulnerable people, it took the government a month for the central contact centre to pass details to local authorities, according to the report.

The committee said the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government still did not know whether these people had been contacted by their local authorities.

“The programme suffered from the problems of poor data and a lack of joined-up systems that we see all too often in government programmes,” it said. “As a result, government took too long to identify some clinically vulnerable people at a time when their need was urgent.”

Some groups who were not initially advised to shield were made more vulnerable as a result, the committee found.

“Charities have told us how the over-70s and the blind and partially sighted, who were not advised to shield, and therefore not eligible for support through the programme, struggled to access food,” MPs said. They added that the Royal National Institute of Blind People had said that the “government’s ‘one size fits all’ approach left many blind and partially sighted people behind”.

DHSC has since developed a new risk assessment tool, [QCovid](#), to identify vulnerable people based on wider factors that make them at more risk from Covid. “These risk factors include ethnicity, BMI, postcode and age. DHSC used this tool to identify an additional 1.7m clinically extremely vulnerable people in February 2021,” the report said.

The government called the report’s findings “disappointing and misjudged” saying the initial shielding guidance had been agreed by the four UK chief medical officers on the basis of the latest available evidence. “Since then we have learned more about the virus and adapted our approach, which has enabled us to protect those most vulnerable by providing them with shielding guidance and prioritising them for vaccination,” a government spokesperson said.

“During this globally unprecedented emergency, we worked across multiple government departments to build and deliver an urgent national scheme in record time, identifying 1.8 million clinically extremely vulnerable people and providing them with vital food and medicine to help them shield effectively.

“We made significant efforts to contact people by letter, text and telephone and worked closely with councils to ensure we reached them. Many people chose not to take up the offer of government support as they felt they didn’t need it.”

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[Coronavirus live](#)

[World news](#)

# Coronavirus live news: India reports over 200,000 cases for seventh straight day; Japan mulls new restrictions

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[Japan](#)

## Japan to declare state of emergency in Tokyo amid pre-Olympics Covid surge

Fourth coronavirus wave hits densely populated parts of country as experts say mutant strains driving latest outbreak

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



A Covid health sign at a train station in Tokyo's Shinjuku district.  
Photograph: Kazuhiro Nogi/AFP/Getty Images

A Covid health sign at a train station in Tokyo's Shinjuku district.  
Photograph: Kazuhiro Nogi/AFP/Getty Images

*[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 03.15 EDT

[Japan](#) is poised to declare a state of emergency in Tokyo and two other regions amid a surge in [coronavirus](#) cases just three months before the start of the Olympic Games.

Domestic media said the government was considering tougher measures for Tokyo, Osaka prefecture and neighbouring Hyogo prefecture, as experts warned that mutant strains of the virus were driving new outbreaks that are straining health services.

Osaka has reported record infections in recent days, prompting the governor, Hirofumi Yoshimura, to request a third state of emergency since the start of the pandemic.

The governor of Tokyo, Yuriko Koike, planned to issue a similar request this week, local media reported.

[Tokyo 2021: Olympic chief to visit Japan to approve safety amid Covid cases surge](#)

[Read more](#)

Japan has [avoided](#) the catastrophic outbreaks seen in Europe, the US, Brazil and India, but cases have risen in recent weeks as the [country struggles](#) to get its vaccine rollout under way.

As of Tuesday, Japan had reported a total of [542,000 infections](#) and more than 9,700 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

The arrival of a fourth wave in densely populated parts of [Japan](#) has caused alarm among medical experts, and could further frustrate preparations for the Olympics, which are scheduled to open on 23 July.

Tokyo has so far reported more than [130,000 infections](#) and 1,850 deaths. On Wednesday it added 843 cases – up from 591 from the same day last week.

Japan this month put Osaka, Tokyo and eight other prefectures under quasi-states of emergency, with shorter business hours for restaurants and bars and

stronger calls for teleworking. But the measures have had little impact on infection rates.

### [cases](#)

Under the next state of emergency – which would be Japan’s third since April last year – restrictions on opening hours will remain in place, but local authorities could also request the closure of shops, theme parks and other facilities, adding to concerns about the impact the virus is having on the world’s third largest economy.

The total economic loss from a renewed emergency in the three regions would be ¥1.156tn (£7.6bn), the Nomura Research Institute said in a report.

Japan’s authorities do not have the legal powers to impose business closures or force people to stay at home. Instead, it has used subsidies and fines to persuade commercial facilities to fall into line, while urging residents to avoid non-essential outings and companies to allow employees to work remotely.

The prime minister, Yoshihide Suga, who on Wednesday cancelled a trip to India over Covid-19 fears, said he would make a “swift” decision after assessing the situation in Osaka and Hyogo, home to the port city of Kobe.

Koike is expected to ask that a state of emergency be declared in Tokyo from 29 April to 9 May, a period that coincides with the Golden Week public holidays, the Mainichi Shimbun reported.

[100 days to Tokyo: Pessimism and fear remain in Japan as Games loom | Justin McCurry](#)

[Read more](#)

Jiji Press said another region – Kyoto prefecture – was considering requesting similar measures. An emergency declaration covering the four prefectures would cover almost a quarter of Japan’s population of 126 million.

Suga has said new emergency measures would not affect plans to hold the [Tokyo Olympics](#). Opinion polls show [a large majority of the Japanese public opposes holding the Games](#) this summer, due to fears they could trigger a fresh outbreak of Covid-19.

The pandemic has already brought disruption to the torch relay since it started in Fukushima at the end of March.

On Wednesday, a lighting ceremony was held inside an empty park in the city of Matsuyama after local authorities requested it be kept away from public roads. The Osaka leg of the relay was similarly affected earlier this month, while torchbearers will also be forced off public roads on Okinawa prefecture's biggest island next month.

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[\*\*Lockdown living\*\*](#)[\*\*Health & wellbeing\*\*](#)

## **'I wash my hands and genitals – the rest I gave up': how the pandemic changed our hygiene habits**

Lockdown affected all our routines when it comes to showering, bathing, shampooing and deodorant. Will regular washing ever resume?



‘With no one around except my flatmate, I don’t see the point in keeping clean’ (posed by model). Photograph: Aaron Amat/Alamy

‘With no one around except my flatmate, I don’t see the point in keeping clean’ (posed by model). Photograph: Aaron Amat/Alamy



[Emine Saner](#)

[@eminesaner](#)

Wed 21 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

Without much strenuous activity, a pair of underpants will last for two days before they go into the wash, while socks “are good for three days, if you aren’t tramping around too much”, says Simon Clifford, an electronics designer from Great Yarmouth. Showers? Every other day is fine. He is still using deodorant and, since it promises “48-hour protection”, he may as well test it to the limit. Does he smell? It’s hard to say, since he lives alone. But he has been back at work since the beginning of the month. “Nobody has complained,” he says. “And I’ve got a couple of good friends at work who would say something. I can’t find any indication that there’s any need to wash any more than I am.”

In the year since the pandemic took hold in Britain, we have been [both washing more – our hands, at least](#) – and probably washing the rest of us less. In February a [YouGov survey](#) found 17% of Brits were showering less often than before (although 10% were showering more), while nearly a third said they were less likely to put clean clothes on, and a quarter were washing their hair less frequently. Sales of deodorant are in decline – according to figures from the retail analysts Mintel, 28% of people have been using less.

For younger people, this is even more marked – 45% of generation Z and 40% of millennials are dodging deodorant. A survey for GSK Consumer Health found only 9% of people had improved their oral health routine, despite snacking a lot more; 5% said it had declined. We have become the great unwashed.

Working from home, shielding, not socialising or just losing the will to blow-dry appear to have had many of us questioning whether our pre-pandemic personal hygiene and grooming habits were really necessary. And, with routines disrupted, it is perfectly possible to get to the end of the day before wondering if you have brushed your teeth. Or putting off your morning shower until you have done some lunchtime exercise, and then not bothering to do that either.

Before the pandemic, Clifford would shower every day and wear clean clothes. “Lockdown and long weeks working from home revealed the necessity for scrupulous personal hygiene was rather less important in practice than we’d previously considered,” he says. A request for stories from Guardian readers revealed similarly more relaxed new standards. Jack, who being in a high-risk group rarely left home, said he hadn’t washed his hair since February 2020, “and I only shower if I need to leave the building”. In full lockdown, with his shopping delivered, that meant going for up to a month without showering. “I washed my bits,” he adds (a flannel wash). “My skin feels so much healthier.” He didn’t notice body odour, only starting to feel grimy after about three and a half weeks.

Another reader says: “I started to brush my teeth once a day most days, instead of two. I definitely use less deodorant. I bathe less than three times a week. I do pay attention to my hand hygiene as well as my genital hygiene, but the rest I kind of gave up.” Another, working from home in London, has gone nearly a week without having a shower. “With no one around except my flatmate, who I rarely see apart from at dinner, I don’t see the point in keeping clean.” And for some people, personal hygiene standards have slipped from operating-theatre clean to merely extremely clean. “I may have just one bath a day instead of two,” says Evie, a PA from Essex.

There has been increased focus on hand sanitisers and wash, says Emilia Greenslade, a personal care analyst for Mintel, and for some consumers,

wellbeing and self-care routines have been comforting. However, she says, “some areas have become less of a priority, such as deodorants, haircare and hair removal, with consumers using these products less often. Social distancing has meant that consumers don’t feel the need to keep up with appearances as much, so they’ve dropped deodorant or shaving from their routines. The dating scene has also been massively impacted, so that removes motivations for many.”

For some people, the different routines of working from home have altered the timing of their hygiene habits, as well as the frequency. Pete, a software engineer who, pre-pandemic, would run 10km most days, found his motivation lacking during the first lockdown. “I decided enough was enough,” he says. He changed his morning routine – after a brief shower, he would put on his running kit before starting work. Then he would go for a run during his lunch break, come home for “a proper shower, followed by deodorant and aftershave”. His teeth also got a bonus brush. Another reader was paying more attention to their oral hygiene during the pandemic as they were “terrified at the thought of needing a dentist during lockdown”.

Aside from potential health benefits, using less water and energy – as well as fewer products, with their manufacturing impact and use of plastic – is clearly far better for the environment. But the grimy truth is that for some, a decline in self-care is a sign of poor mental health exacerbated by the stress and anxiety of living through a pandemic. Jill, a retired civil servant in Hertfordshire, who has been shielding, says this last lockdown has been hard. “I suffer a bit with anxiety and depression and the self-care thing has kind of gone out the window. Partly that’s a symptom of the depression, but even my husband is not bothering to shower every day, and he’s normally quite scrupulous. There’s a definite shift this time.” She went through a period of brushing her teeth only every other day, and her first dental hygienist appointment in months was painful, so now she is making an effort to look after her oral health, but there have been some benefits to her approach. “Because I can’t be bothered to wear makeup every day like I used to, my skin has been better. I’ve discovered that my skin is actually OK without being plastered in makeup.”



Can you be bothered to shower? Photograph: skyneshers/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Other women are discovering that lower standards bring a higher quality of life – and hair. Danielle Wardell, a civil servant from Pencaitland near Edinburgh, went from washing and blow-drying her hair every night to once a week. “The amount of time you spend, washing it, blow-drying it, straightening it ... I’ve just got so much time back.” She says it has taken her hair nearly a year to adjust to less frequent washing (she uses a dry shampoo on day three or four), but now it’s healthier than ever. “It’s more resilient, it’s not getting as greasy as quickly. It’s more glowing.”

It is only extremely recently that our standards of personal cleanliness have been so high, points out James Hamblin, a [doctor and the author of Clean: The New Science of Skin and the Beauty of Doing Less](#). For much of the history of human civilisation, Hamblin points out in his book, washing had a ritualistic as opposed to hygienic purpose. Early soap – made from animal fats and lye – was used sparingly, only when people or clothes had become really dirty, and was harsh on skin and fabrics. Then artisans in places such as Marseille started making soap that only the rich could afford, and it became a luxury item. From the mid-19th century, affordability – thanks to industrialisation and an end to the “soap tax” (in Britain) – combined with the unstoppable froth of capitalism and advertising overturned the idea “that

bathing was a sinful luxury. Quite the opposite: it was a necessary element of basic decency,” writes Hamblin.

Even in very recent years, in Britain and other developed countries, we have become even cleaner (a shocking luxury, when one in 10 people around the world still don’t have close access to clean water). Older readers will remember it being perfectly normal to bathe once a week at most, and indoor plumbing wasn’t always a given. I grew up in the 80s, and a Sunday night bath was normal, with flannel washes in between; now I bathe my children every day.

“There’s a big industry that is predicated on the idea that soap is good and washing is good, and more is better,” says Hamblin, over the phone. “Like anything – water, vitamins or sleep – you can have too much. More is not necessarily better. There’s a point at which it becomes useless, and then a point at which you can have negative effects.” Overwashing, particularly with soap, “depletes the oils that are naturally secreted by your skin”. It can exacerbate conditions such as acne, eczema and psoriasis. “This is not life-threatening stuff, but it sometimes becomes quite an issue for people, especially those given to atopic dermatitis,” he adds.

There is also a growing understanding that washing – particularly with antibacterial products, of which we have become increasingly fond – can disturb the skin’s microbiome, the population of bacteria that live on us, and this may have negative consequences. Inflammatory and autoimmune diseases are linked to decreased exposure to beneficial microbes.

Hamblin showers with water. He doesn’t use soap or deodorant, though he is a regular soap-and-water handwearer. As he notes in his book, the microbiologists he interviews also shower “conservatively”. Other scientists differ. Anjali Mahto, a consultant dermatologist and spokeswoman for the British Association of Dermatologists, suggests daily washing is preferable, especially after exercising or if you are quite sweaty generally. “If you live in a city, there is dirt and pollution, so it probably is a good idea that you make sure that your skin is properly cleansed every day. For certain body sites – armpits and groin for example, and where body folds meet – I think it is important that you use something that’s going to properly help remove dirt, sweat and grime from the skin surface,” she says, explaining why water

alone won't always cut it. "Provided you're not taking super-hot baths and showers, or using things that are very heavily fragranced, there's no damage to your skin from doing it every day."

Hamblin doesn't like to be prescriptive about how often people should or shouldn't wash. Showers and baths may be a form of relaxation for people and "culturally, there are big differences in terms of what people feel is expected of them and what they enjoy, so it's a very personal decision. My hope is that the pandemic allows people a little more individual liberty to experiment and feel less beholden to societal standards and more in touch with what works for them. If that involves doing less, that can be, in most cases, very safely accomplished."

This has been the experience for many. Before the pandemic, one Guardian reader had stopped washing her hair with shampoo, using only water; now she doesn't use body wash either. "Other than my hands, which I wash with soap, I no longer use soap at all," she says.

Guy, who works in finance, and lives in Leicester, doesn't shower any less often than he did but he no longer uses deodorant. He would notice that he would smell if he sweated when feeling stressed or anxious, but not after a run. "If I had a really stressful day in the office, I'd pong at the end of it. But because I'm working from my spare room now, the social anxiety sweat, I guess, doesn't have a chance to arrive." It wasn't a conscious decision not to use deodorant, but he noticed he was applying it less frequently; he says his husband hasn't noticed.

Will any of these new habits last? The personal care industry is considering that the shift may be long-lasting. "Working from home is set to become the next normal, which will continue to subdue demand in areas such as deodorants and haircare," says Greenslade. "However, now that lockdown restrictions are easing, we know that people are looking forward to getting back to some level of normality. This means that personal care routines will pick up again, although not quite to previous levels."

Wardell will stick to the weekly, rather than nightly, hair-wash. "I get so much time back. I'm showering every day, but getting ready is a quick 10 minutes rather than half an hour." But Guy says he will use deodorant once

he has to go back to the office. “It’s more a social crutch. Even if you don’t smell, it’s the fear of lifting your armpit.” Jack – he of the monthly shower – says he will “definitely” be going back to daily washing once he is back in the office. “It was a bit of an experiment really. It’s like the only opportunity I think I’ll ever get to not wash.”

*Additional reporting by Alfie Packham*

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**This is Europe**

## Pills in the post: how Covid reopened the abortion wars

As some European countries rolled out ‘telemed’ abortion, others shut down access completely. Illustration: Mari Fouz

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**George Floyd**

## **'The work continues': Black Americans stress that police reform is still needed**

The Obamas and Bernice King were among those to encourage justice for other victims of police brutality after the Derek Chauvin guilty verdict

01:57

'Accountability, not yet justice': how the US reacted to the Chauvin verdict – video

*[Adam Gabbatt](#)*

*[@adamgabbatt](#)*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

Prominent Black Americans expressed relief after white former Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin was [convicted of murdering George Floyd](#), but warned that police reform, and justice for other victims of police brutality, are still necessary.

While Chauvin was found guilty of all the charges he faced – second- and third-degree murder, and manslaughter – by the jury in [Minneapolis](#), the families of other Black Americans killed by police in recent years have yet to see their killers jailed, or even face a jury.

Former president Barack Obama was among those to call for change, [tweeting](#): "Today, a jury did the right thing. But true justice requires much more."

['I cried so hard': teen who filmed killing of George Floyd celebrates guilty verdict](#)

[Read more](#)

Bernice King, the daughter of Martin Luther King Jr and CEO of the Martin Luther King Jr Center for nonviolent social change, was among those to mark the guilty verdict.

“Oh, that [George Floyd](#) were still alive. But I’m thankful for accountability. The work continues. Justice is a continuum. And America must bend with the moral arc of the universe, which bends toward justice,” King wrote on Twitter.

She added: “God knew just how much we could bear. This is a turning point. Let’s continue to correct everything that stands against love. That is true [#justice](#). ”

Oh, that George Floyd were still alive.

But I’m thankful for accountability.

The work continues.

Justice is a continuum.

And America must bend with the moral arc of the universe, which bends toward justice.

— Be A King (@BerniceKing) [April 20, 2021](#)

King’s call for justice was echoed by Jamaal Bowman, a prominent progressive Black congressman for New York.

“We’ve known Chauvin was guilty since the second we saw him murder George Floyd on film – but we also know of the racism inherent in our carceral and policing systems. This verdict doesn’t change that racism, or the work ahead needed to transform those systems to serve us,” [Bowman said](#).

He added: “We need justice for Daunte Wright, Adam Toledo, Tamir Rice, Breonna Taylor[.] And everyone else we’ve lost.”

We've known Chauvin was guilty since the second we saw him murder George Floyd on film — but we also know of the racism inherent in our carceral and policing systems.

This verdict doesn't change that racism, or the work ahead needed to transform those systems to serve us.

— Jamaal Bowman (@JamaalBowmanNY) [April 20, 2021](#)

In their [statement](#), Barack and Michelle Obama said they “stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all those who are committed to guaranteeing every American the full measure of justice that George and so many others have been denied”.

“True justice requires that we come to terms with the fact that Black Americans are treated differently, every day,” the Obamas said.

“It requires us to recognize that millions of our friends, family, and fellow citizens live in fear that their next encounter with law enforcement could be their last. And it requires us to do the sometimes thankless, often difficult, but always necessary work of making the America we know more like the America we believe in.”



Black Lives Matter demonstrators gather in Times Square in New York City after the Derek Chauvin verdict. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

For Derecka Purnell, a human rights lawyer, organizer, and author of the upcoming book *Becoming Abolitionists: Police, Protests and the Pursuit of Freedom*, the conviction of Chauvin did not represent true justice.

“I cannot emphasize enough that convictions are not justice for George Floyd,” Purnell [wrote on Twitter](#).

“We will never know because justice requires the participation of the people impacted by it. The dead cannot participate. There is relief, punishment, but not ‘justice’.”

i cannot emphasize enough that convictions are not justice for George Floyd. We will never know because justice requires the participation of the people impacted by it. The dead cannot participate. There is relief, punishment, but not “justice”

— derecka (@dereckapurnell) [April 20, 2021](#)

Cliff Albright, founder of the [Black Voters Matter](#) organization which seeks to enhance Black voter engagement, pointed out the lengths it took for George Floyd’s killer to be found guilty, including the bystander’s video and the ensuing historic summer of protests.

Reflecting on how much had to happen to get to this verdict:

1. A bystander’s video
2. Historic summer of protests
3. Assignment of case to an AG/prosecutor who would actually prosecute the case aggressively
- & more.

It shouldn’t be this hard to get some justice. [#chauvinverdict](#)

— Cliff Albright (@cliff\_notes) [April 20, 2021](#)

Keith Boykin, founder of the National Black Justice Coalition civil rights organization, pointed out the importance of bystanders on the scene filming Chauvin's actions.

Boykin posted the press report Minneapolis police initially sent out in relation to Floyd's death, which said: "Officers were able to get the suspect into handcuffs and noted he appeared to be suffering medical distress. Officers called for an ambulance. [Floyd] was transported to Hennepin County Medical Center by ambulance where he died a short time later."

Boykin said:

"This fabricated police story might have become the official account of George Floyd's death if concerned citizens had not intervened and recorded the police."

Color of Change, a civil rights organization founded by Van Jones and James Rucker, echoed the message of others that the guilty verdict brought a sense of relief, rather than any cause for celebration.



People pose for pictures in front of a mural for George Floyd in Minneapolis. Photograph: Morry Gash/AP

“We’re relieved this Hennepin county jury has held Derek Chauvin accountable for the murder of George Floyd. We’re holding the Floyd family in our thoughts right now,” Color of Change [tweeted](#), adding: “This doesn’t get George Floyd back.”

The organization joined calls for serious reform of police departments in the US.

“We need to divest from the police and invest in communities because even guilty convictions don’t get Black community members back.

“This fight for accountability is about more than a cop or a police department. It’s about upending a system that fails to keep Black people safe.”

We need to divest from the police and invest in communities because even guilty convictions don't get Black community members back.

This fight for accountability is about more than a cop or a police department. It's about upending a system that fails to keep Black people safe.

— ColorOfChange (@ColorOfChange) [April 20, 2021](#)

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## Balearic Islands holidays

# Walking around Menorca: my lockdown project is never staying still



Writer Laura Coffey walking the Camí de Cavalls in Menorca. Photograph: Laura Coffey

Writer Laura Coffey walking the Camí de Cavalls in Menorca. Photograph: Laura Coffey

Having ‘washed up’ on the island due to travel restrictions, our writer finds joy in hiking the Camí de Cavalls coastal trail and swimming in secluded coves

*Laura Coffey*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 01.30 EDT

I’m walking along a sandy path through a forest high above the flashing kingfisher-coloured coast. It smells of hot pine and wild rosemary. The sound of bells deep in the wood stops me in my tracks. Have I finally lost

my mind, after months of piloting solo through the pandemic on this small island far from home?

From between the trees step a herd of cows, as if from a child's picture book, caramel coloured, soft noses, liquid eyes and each with a collar from which a large bell swings. Mystery solved, I pick up my water bottle and keep going.



Signpost on the Camí de Cavalls. Photograph: Andy Arthur/Alamy

Having sauntered out of a job with spectacularly bad timing just before the first lockdown, and ended an unsatisfying relationship right after lockdown started, I've washed up on Menorca for complicated reasons. They involved a two-week holiday to Italy in autumn, which unspooled into an accidental journey through Europe as the UK's Covid travel regulations shifted and changed, with me choosing to remain in motion at a time of stillness, rather than go back to another lockdown alone in the grey of my couldn't-swing-a-cat flat.

The Camí de Cavalls was created by Iberian King James II in 1330 to improve Menorca's defences. Islanders had to keep an armoured horse on standby and patrol the 185km path that encircles the coastline. The path wasn't much help though: the island was constantly under attack from

pirates and then invaded repeatedly in the 18th century by European powers who valued its strategic position at the heart of the Mediterranean.



Watchtower on the Camí de Cavalls. Photograph: Laura Coffey

The Camí is peppered with old Spanish- and English-built watchtowers, erected by alternating powers, and bydisused bunkers around the beaches dug as defences by Franco, the Spanish dictator opposed by the island. Franco liked to hold a grudge, so he denied the “minor island” access to the public funds that supported the development of Ibiza and Mallorca, which had been loyal to him. In some respects this turned out to be a blessing, and is part of the reason that Menorca is relatively unspoiled today.

For such a small island the geology changes dramatically as you walk around its edges. It claims to have more beaches and coves than the other Balearic islands, and is a [protected Unesco biosphere reserve](#). Even if you’re not much into rocks or birds, you can’t help but notice them as you walk. Some still ride horses along the path, but it is mainly used by hikers and mountain bikers, although usually I’m alone for long periods as I walk.



View of the Camí de Cavalls en route to Cala Pilar beach in the north of Menorca. Photograph: Alamy

I have grown to love the tranquil off-season vibe, the shuttered restaurants, empty beaches and ghostly coastal villages waiting for summer. The first lockdown here, a year ago, was strict and the Balearic islands now have Covid firmly under control. The island feels safe and relatively normal, with just some light restrictions and a curfew in place, although tourism is the main economy and locals are worried about the summer season, which starts in May.

This walk is a sort of pilgrimage for my father who is unwell in the UK, or at least an attempt to “find in motion what was lost in space” to quote Tennessee Williams. The Camí is divided into 20 sections and signposted by wooden milestones. I started walking without any particular intention, and it unfolded as a project to complete. Now, I walk a couple of sections each weekend, usually five or six hours a day, including plenty of time to swim and wonder.



Basilica at Es Cap Des Port. Photograph: Tolo Balaguer/Alamy

Most of the trail passes through wilderness, so I take everything with me. I've found that Menorcans traditionally snack on salted sunflower seeds and fried maize as they hike. I bring *pastissets*, a biscuit a bit like shortbread but even better. I also check the wind direction before selecting which stage to walk, heading to the coast in the opposite direction from the wind to reduce my chances of jellyfish stings when I stop for a swim. This was a lesson hard-earned: the more I am stung, the more I pay attention to the wind.

Another day on the trail and I'm in clover, literally: it's pinking-red, interspersed with big, optimistic daisies and growing around a paleo-Christian basilica at Es Cap Des Port, nearly halfway along the north coast. I sit and watch as booted eagles circle and call in their strange, thin voices, preparing their nests and hunting for bunnies.

I have found swimming a tonic for these unsettling times. I strike up a conversation with a fellow cold-water addict at Cales Coves on the south coast, where more than a hundred burial chambers are carved into the cliffs, forming a bronze-age necropolis, a great city for the dead that was more recently occupied by hippies. Turns out the other swimmer lived in these caves as a child, and her mother gave birth to her last two children there with "just my father and the neighbour with a knife".



The writer swimming at Cala Rafalet. Photograph: Laura Coffey

Mitjana beach, about 30km further along the path, is a more traditional bathing spot. Here you can slice through emerald water to reach its little sister, tiny Mijaneta. For something more dramatic, go east to Cala Rafalet, where tall cliffs cradle the sea and the way to reach it feels like a secret. The little path twists down through a dark-green forest to a deep ravine, one of the most striking places to swim on the island. The sand on the beaches changes from silky Caribbean in the south to a pinkish honey colour in the wilder north, and there are plenty of tiny unnamed rocky coves if you're after your own private beach to swim nude.

In the west the landscape shifts: no pine or holm oak forests; instead it's stark, rugged and windswept, just rocks, long lines of dry stone walls and stone sheep huts. I stop to tie my jumper over my ears to protect them from the Tramontane wind that shaped this landscape. In contrast, when the path cuts along the south it goes through little valleys of low stone walls that mosaic tiny fields and runs alongside flower meadows, pastures with grazing horses, orchards and patches of wild olives.



Son Bou beach. Photograph: vivoo/Alamy

On one of the southern sections I detour off the Camí to visit Torre d'en Galmés, a [Talayotic site](#). This culture is unique to the Balearics. You can pray in the honey-sun shaft that lights the corner in the remains of the temple, and cry secretly for your father who you haven't seen for almost eight months, then remember you're British and pull yourself together to explore the ruined city.

In the wetland behind the long beach of Son Bou on the south coast, I watch through binoculars as a marsh hawk prowls for a distracted duck to pounce on. Javier, the [bird walking tour guide](#) I hired to accompany me on sections of the trek, names each of the birds in English, Spanish and Catalan, which, frankly, is far too much information. I stop him when he tries to tell me their Latin names, too.

Menorca has 200 species of bird and it's the tiny ones that entrance me most, moving through the air like musical notes, folding their wings mid-flight to drop and bounce. I love the Sardinian warbler, all puff-plump and joyful, although the hoopoe is more iconic, a rebel spirit in this time of confinement, with its punk-rock mohican and its looping butterfly flight.



Hoopoe. Photograph: Dmitrii Gromov/Alamy

Turns out Javier is a dab hand at “catching” slender stems of wild asparagus as well, and after a long day’s hike I cook them and savour the intense, almost spicy taste of the woods. Soon, he tells me, the scent of camomile flowers will fill the air along the trail and bright bee-eaters will return from Africa, along with pink flamingos and other migrant birds, to feast on mosquitoes all summer long.

The need to explore, to circumnavigate, to map and chart has long been part of human nature and it feels especially grounding to be on the move at this static time, to have a project to complete. Who knows what this shifting-sand world will bring next. For now, the air is fat with birdsong and sun pours through the trees. I stop to stare, to float a flower into the sea, an offering for my father. Then I turn back to the path, for, to quote poet Robert Frost “I have promises to keep / And miles to go before I sleep.”

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## European Super League

# PM sides with fans in Super League outcry – but will he stay with them?

Analysis: Mindful of ‘red wall’ voters, Johnson protested, but the question remains whether he can give the game long-term help



Boris Johnson playing for England v Germany in a ‘legends’ charity match in Reading in 2006. ‘The view that football needs regulation has been hardening among Conservative politicians.’ Photograph: Michael Regan/Action Images

Boris Johnson playing for England v Germany in a ‘legends’ charity match in Reading in 2006. ‘The view that football needs regulation has been hardening among Conservative politicians.’ Photograph: Michael Regan/Action Images

*[David Conn](#)*

Tue 20 Apr 2021 19.00 EDT

The spectacle of Boris Johnson, acme of an old Etonian rugby man, [weighing in on the side of football fans](#) against the breakaway European Super League, is a collision of political and sporting cultures that has been brewing for 30 years.

The abortive participation in the venture of England's "big six" clubs, all owned by investors from overseas, is the culmination of a financial carve-up that began with English football's own breakaway, the 1992 formation of the Premier League. The then big First Division clubs were determined not to share the new pay-TV riches with the clubs in the Football League's other three divisions. As their fortunes subsequently boomed, British owners made multimillions by selling their shares.

[Abramovich is billed saviour of people's game: but Super League fight isn't over](#)

[Read more](#)

As the Premier League roared to unprecedented wealth and global popularity, supporters' groups warned successive governments that the cherished heart of the game and clubs' beloved character were at risk from the ruthless imperatives of mega-commercialisation. Many fans alarmed by the acquisition of their clubs as financial investments educated themselves, and came to admire [the German sporting model](#), which embeds football's social role, keeps match tickets affordable and blocks corporate takeovers by requiring clubs to be more than 50% controlled by their supporters. It has been striking that while England's six clubs – three, Liverpool, Manchester United and Arsenal, owned by US investors, Manchester City by Sheikh Mansour of Abu Dhabi, Chelsea by the Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich and Tottenham by the Bahamas-based currency trader Joe Lewis – signed up to the Super League, Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund, great German clubs still formally controlled by their fans, [refused](#).

This exact scenario was explicitly predicted for years if the commercial juggernaut were not slowed: a tiny group of clubs would grow much richer than the rest and irresistibly dominate, with a European breakaway a logical final destination.

Yet while UK governments have dabbled, prompted by a string of select committee inquiries, none has been prepared to decisively intervene. New Labour came closest with a “task force” that produced some progressive reforms, but that was as long ago as 1998; its administrator was a young Andy Burnham, now mayor of Greater Manchester. As governments held off, insufficiently concerned and generally dazzled by the game’s reinvention, the big clubs’ demands escalated to this point where [Johnson threatened a “legislative bomb”](#) to stop them.

His sudden discovery of football as turf for the Conservatives to park on clearly falls within the Tories’ strategy of appealing to their new voters in the north and Midlands former “red wall” seats, taken from Labour in 2019 in the fallout from the Brexit referendum. The Tories do not need their [relentless focus groups](#) conducted with these voters to understand that many of them are football fans. Hence Johnson leaping immediately into action after the clubs dropped their own Super League bomb, the Conservative prime minister [writing in the Sun](#) that although, he acknowledged, he is “far from an expert on the beautiful game”, he would give the breakaway “a straight red”.

The appeal to red wall voters is apparent in his and other ministers’ language, similar to that in which the promises of “levelling up” come wrapped, funds to make small-scale improvements in selected provincial towns.

“Football clubs in every town and city and at every tier of the pyramid have a unique place at the heart of their communities, and are an unrivalled source of passionate local pride,” Johnson’s piece propounded.

This championing of football’s traditional values has come just days after Johnson was [revealed](#) to have wanted a takeover of Newcastle United by a Saudi Arabian sovereign wealth fund to go ahead last year. Yet the apparent contradiction between that support for a Saudi takeover and his condemnation of the “ludicrous” Super League plan does not mean his threats of legislation are necessarily empty talk.

The view that football needs regulation has been hardening among Conservative politicians, particularly after the culture, media and sport select

committee, chaired by Damian Collins and now Julian Knight, inquired into the truly grim 2019 [collapse of Bury](#), a Football League member club since 1894. Tracey Crouch, the former sports minister newly appointed to lead yet another inquiry, [the government's promised “fan-led review,”](#) is thought to be prepared for it to recommend meaningful reform this time. The [Football Supporters' Association](#), which has campaigned against corporate takeover and over-commercialisation all these years, is to have a central role in the review.

## [All six Premier League clubs withdraw from Super League plan – live!](#) [Read more](#)

Whether Johnson’s government will produce legislation for football given the outcry against the Super League remains to be seen, but the clubs have certainly been jolted by the volume of opposition, and a prime minister exercising himself about it.

Seasoned campaigners are rolling their sleeves up now for another round, while also lamenting the missed opportunities and warnings, that the heritage heart of the people’s game needed to be preserved while its top clubs were enjoying the fruits of their modern bonanza.

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[\*\*Apple\*\*](#)

## **Apple launches new iMac, iPad Pro, AirTags and Podcast subscriptions**

More powerful M1-powered computers and tablets join raft of new products and services



The redesigned 24in iMac leads a new line of M1-powered computers, joining the MacBook Air and iPad Pro. Photograph: Apple Inc handout/EPA

The redesigned 24in iMac leads a new line of M1-powered computers, joining the MacBook Air and iPad Pro. Photograph: Apple Inc handout/EPA

*[Samuel Gibbs](#) Consumer technology editor*

Tue 20 Apr 2021 15.42 EDT

Apple launched a series of new iPads, Macs and tags on Tuesday at an event broadcast from California, as it continued its switch to processors of its own design.

During a recorded video, the firm's chief executive, Tim Cook, unveiled the products that Apple hopes will continue the momentum with its computers and tablets driven by home working and schooling in 2020.

## New 24in iMac



The redesigned 24in M1 iMac comes in a range of bold colours. Photograph: Apple Inc. Handout/EPA

The most significant of Apple's new products is a redesigned version of the company's iMac all-in-one computer with the M1 chip. The new machine is significantly thinner at just 11.5mm thick, and looks like a giant tablet from the side.

Apple said that with the M1 chip, previously used in the MacBook Air, MacBook Pro and Mac mini computers, the new iMac was up to twice as fast as the previous generation machine.

The iMac has a 24in 4.5k retina screen squeezed into a body only slightly larger than the previous machine with its 21.5in screen. The more powerful six-speaker system is capable of spatial audio when playing movies with Dolby Atmos soundtracks, while the 1080p FaceTime HD camera and beamforming mics are designed for better video calls.

The computer has a new power adaptor with magnetic cable and at least two Thunderbolt ports, with higher-end models having an additional two USB-C ports and an ethernet port in the power adaptor. Apple also added its Touch ID fingerprint scanner to a new [Bluetooth](#) keyboard, allowing biometric login and user switching similar to its laptops.

The new iMac – available in seven different colours, reminiscent of the original model from 1998 – will be available from £1,249 in the UK and \$1,299 in the US, shipping in the second half of May. Apple did not update the larger 27in iMac, which still uses Intel chips.

Use of the new M1 chips in the iMac will be an important test for Apple's custom processors; their introduction to [the MacBook Air](#) and low-end MacBook Pro laptop lines proved successful, but in machines not restricted by batteries the onus will be on raw performance to handle the more demanding tasks commonly asked of desktop computers.

Issues with software compatibility, particularly with the big, expensive and often dated packages used by businesses, will be tolerated less for volume purchasing by corporations – potentially making the Apple Silicon models a harder sell than “safer” Intel-based versions or competitors.

Paolo Pescatore, an analyst from PP Foresight, said the “star of the show” was the redesigned iMac “thanks to the power of Apple Silicon”, adding: “We are now seeing the fruits of Apple Silicon, by leveraging this system on a chip architecture across its portfolio. The M1 is transforming its products, form factors and capabilities far beyond what users can do today.”

## New iPad Pro with M1



The new iPad Pro has the same powerful chip as Apple's laptops and desktop computers. Photograph: Apple Inc. Handout/EPA

Apple also announced an improved [iPad](#) Pro equipped with the same M1 chip as the firm's computers and 5G connectivity. The use of a computer processor, rather than a version of its smartphone chips, was reported to offer a 50% faster performance and enable the addition of a full Thunderbolt/USB 4 port, rather than the slower USB-C port, allowing desktop-class connections to a range of docks, drives and external displays.

Apple also fitted a mini-LED display to the larger 12.9in iPad Pro, making it one of the first devices to use a significantly improved technology hitherto only available in high-end TVs. The Liquid Retina XDR is one of the brightest LCD screens available, matching Apple's £4,599 professional computer display; the firm said it could show types of HDR video used by professional videographers.

The iPad Pro also comes with a new 12-megapixel TrueDepth camera that has an ultrawide lens and an automatic panning and zooming feature called Center Stage for improved video calls, similar to some smart displays and dedicated video-call screens.

The 11in iPad Pro starts at £749 in the UK, while the 12.9in version sells for £999.

The power upgrade for the iPad Pro follows a [full redesign in 2018](#) and addition of new lidar and camera sensors in the [2020 iPad Pro](#), alongside new keyboard accessories and mouse support that further turned it into a laptop replacement.

Spurred by the demand for remote working tools during the Covid-19 pandemic, there was unprecedented demand for tablet sales in 2020, up 13.6% year-on-year, following several years of decline.

Apple's various iPads took the lion's share, accounting for 36.5% of the market and growing 19.5% during the fourth quarter of 2020, [according to data from IDC](#), driven by refreshes of the [iPad 10.2in](#) and [iPad Air](#) models.

But Leo Gebbie, a senior analyst with CCS Insight, said: "The new iPad is a tough sell. Despite numerous updates, including the M1 chip, the previous generations of iPads are strong enough to make this is an iterative update when compared to the new iMac."

## AirTags, Apple TV 4K and Podcast subscriptions



Apple's AirTag is a Tile-like tracker you can attach to objects enabling you to find them with your iPhone. Photograph: Apple Inc./Reuters

Apple also announced its AirTag tracker device, which uses "Find My" software, operating in a similar manner to the [Tile Bluetooth trackers](#) and Samsung's [SmartTag](#).

The small disc-like AirTag can be personalised. When used with iPhones with the U1 chip, such as the iPhone 12, the system can also guide people directly to the AirTag using the ultra-wideband technology used for several years for Apple's AirDrop filesharing system. AirTags cost £29 in the UK and will be shipped on 30 April.

The company's smart TV streaming box, the Apple TV 4K, was also updated with a faster A12 Bionic chip as used in [the iPhone XR](#) from 2018 and enabling high-frame rate HDR. Apple also showed off a colour-calibration feature that uses an iPhone to automatically tune the colour on TVs, and a redesigned Siri remote, which ditches the touch-panel controller. The Apple TV 4K will cost from £169 in the UK.

Apple also announced that it was opening up paid-for subscriptions within its podcast app. The redesigned app and service will launch in 170 countries with new channels and recommendations. Subscriptions will provide ad-free listening, extra content and the ability to support favourite content creators.

Finally, Apple announced it was expanding its payments drive in the US with Apple Card Family, which allows two people to own an Apple credit card sharing the credit lines and building credit history together. Parents can also share the Apple credit card with children over 13 with access to parental controls.

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## Dance

Interview

# **‘You just want to be around her’: inspiring stage sensation Vicki Igbokwe**

[Lyndsey Winship](#)

The celebrated choreographer talks about realising artistic ambitions, occupying space and why making a living from dance shouldn’t be a dirty concept



‘There is always a way to overcome’ ... Vicki Igbokwe. Photograph: John Cassidy/The Headshot Guy®

‘There is always a way to overcome’ ... Vicki Igbokwe. Photograph: John Cassidy/The Headshot Guy®



Tue 20 Apr 2021 15.00 EDT

When [Vicki Igbokwe](#) was 16, she was working full-time in a jewellers. One day she said to her manager: “I think I want to be a choreographer. I don’t quite know what they do, but I know they make dances that make people happy.” Igbokwe remembers this epiphany vividly, she tells me over Zoom. “I have no idea what you’re talking about,” said her manager.

It wasn’t the obvious career path for someone with no formal dance training, nor for someone who at the age of 14 had become the carer for her seriously ill mother (and three younger siblings), taking on adult responsibilities that left little time for pursuing artistic plans. But Igbokwe went home that evening, applied for a BTec and set off on a career that led to her creating her own blend of house, contemporary and west African dance styles, founding the company [Uchenna Dance](#), working on the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony and this year being the first recipient of the [AWA Women in Dance award](#).

Unusually, the AWA award was not given for Igbokwe’s choreography, but for her leadership, the award being part of a mission to redress the gender imbalance in dance. Even though the dance world is full of women, there are significantly more men in senior creative and management roles. Igbokwe is

“one of the best female leaders we have in the UK sector”, according to AWA Dance founder [Avatâra Ayuso](#). Not because she runs a large organisation, but because she inspires and empowers everyone she works with. “You just want to be around her,” says jury member and dance curator Eva Martinez. “She finds the potential in people and she has this very natural leadership ability to really make you feel you can do things.”



Mayowa Ogunnaike, Esme Benjamin, Rudzani Moleya and Marc Stevenson in Hansel and Gretel by Vicki Igbokwe at the Place, London, in 2018. Photograph: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian

It was the difficult experiences of her teenage years that taught Igbokwe she could achieve what she hoped for. “It was really, really tough,” she says of her late mother’s illness. “But at the same time it’s definitely given me the foundation of who I am today, in terms of being resilient and fearless and just going, no matter what life throws at you, there is always a way to overcome.” At the time, being “14 going on 44”, dance became her mode of escape. “Having all this responsibility, dance was the one thing that allowed me to be my age in that moment.” Without formal training, she danced only at school and family events. “My mum was part of these African women’s associations and once they’d had the meeting, the food would come out and the music and the kids and everyone was dancing.”

But dance was never considered a career. Igbokwe was expected to become a barrister like her father (who died when she was a child), yet her mum, a Labour councillor in north-west London, inspired Igbokwe's confidence to follow her own path. "Her thing was never to become a statistic," says Igbokwe. "Don't let society or other people dictate who you can be. If there's a glimmer of something in the future that you can see, you owe it to yourself to make it happen."

Igbokwe is now busy helping other people believe that. She works with organisations having difficult conversations – such as those around race, something the AWA jury felt she was instrumental in during last summer's resurgence of [the Black Lives Matter movement](#). She also coaches individuals on realising their artistic vision and, more importantly, making a living from it. "You want to make money from your career? In the arts it feels like such a dirty concept – it's like you just swore!" laughs Igbokwe. "You've got bills, you might have kids, you might want to have a holiday, all of the things my friends who are not in the arts get to do and talk about without any shame."

Igbokwe's attitude is: no guilt, no apologising. "Being yourself, being who you are, should be the easiest thing to do in life," she says. "And a lot of time it's the hardest. There are external pressures, to look a certain way, to be and speak a certain way, the idea that you have to have a certain upbringing to occupy particular spaces, and that's all a fallacy."

### [Masked moves and ballet in the bath: a year of digital dance](#)

[Read more](#)

When it comes to change in the dance industry, she sees people making "the big loud gestures". "But what's the thing you can be doing that's little and often, an actual practice that becomes part of your office, your team, your everyday?" At a panel discussion asking where the female choreographers are, Igbokwe once theatrically pulled out and started reading a long list of all the women she knew making dance. "We're out here, but if you're not looking for us, why would you see us?" she says. "If you're always feeding John, if he gets all the opportunities, then no wonder Jessica isn't going to match up."

While Igbokwe has criticisms of the industry, she also thinks women can help themselves. “We need to be able to make ourselves the priority and not feel guilty about that,” she says. And to not be afraid of not being good enough. “There’s always going to be a bit of fear,” says Igbokwe. “But on the other side there’s always going to be a breakthrough.”

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[\*\*TV review\*\*](#)[\*\*Television & radio\*\*](#)

## Glow Up review – Bake Off for makeup offers joyful fun

From Dolli's vision of Afrofuturism to Ryley's transformation of her port wine stain into a thing of sequinned, seascapey beauty, it's a pleasure to watch these young makeup artists



Ryley – one of the makeup artists on Glow Up. Photograph: Guy Levy/BBC/Wall To Wall

Ryley – one of the makeup artists on Glow Up. Photograph: Guy Levy/BBC/Wall To Wall



[Lucy Mangan](#)

[@LucyMangan](#)

Tue 20 Apr 2021 18.45 EDT

Stacey Dooley's out, due to scheduling conflicts with her new, demented-but-works-like-crack show [This Is My House](#), and Maya Jama – best known as a radio presenter – is in. Apart from that, in the third season of [Glow Up: Britain's Next Make-Up Star](#) (BBC One), all is as it was (especially as Jama brings much the same energy as Dooley – a blend of warmth and enthusiasm that remains charming rather than cloying. She is a great choice). Industry experts Val Garland (statement glasses-wearer and L'Oréal Paris's global makeup director) and Dominic Skinner (statement-moustache sporter and Mac Cosmetics global senior artist) are on hand to pass judgment. Each week, the contestants face two makeup challenges, with one sent home, and the series winner receiving a contract as assistant to various professional makeup artists (MUAs) in a couple of months' time.

[‘We cried, it was emotional’: Maya Jama on being herself as new Glow Up host](#)

[Read more](#)

As someone who regretfully declined the offer of a Girl's World Styling Head on numerous occasions throughout the 80s because I knew already the parlous state of my own artistic skills, and could not, would not see the bodiless beauty desecrated so, I am always left awed by the Glow Up participants – often self-taught, often working on beauty counters and honing their more exotic skills and creations in their leisure time.

This time round, the guest judge was the beauty journalist and activist Ateh Jewel, and the series opened with the task of designing an eyecatching look for a beauty campaign for Superdrug's inclusive makeup range. So WHAT our Craig was thinking with his subtle, natural look for his snowy-haired model, well, NONE of us knows! Is that supposed to entice Superdrug's customers through the doors of any one of the 800 stores whose windows it would be hung in! I think not! Think bigger, Craig!

You get like this very quickly with Glow Up. Fully invested, fully emotional, fully convinced of your own latent expertise despite – see Girl's World above – the lack of any scintilla of evidence thereof. Nic, the founder of a biodegradable glitter company, was indecisive and lost time. Ryley's base colour-matching was a DISASTER. But Sophie's was "fun, playful" and let the details of the model's skin shine through. She looked to be in with a chance until Samah blew them all out of the water with a design full of coloured spots of eyeshadows round brow and cheekbones and left you marvelling, as all the best bits of these kinds of shows do, about the ineffable, unquantifiable difference between executions that work, that have it – whatever the particular it is that is under pursuit – and those that don't. They might not at all or they might nearly. But, either way, they don't. It's the perennial fascination at the heart of all such competitions, whether you're baking, throwing pots or making clothes. Talent, style, creativity, inventiveness. It's so human, so much the best of us, so lightly done.

Glow Up also has the rare advantage of the traditional deadlines set for competitors actually making some kind of sense. In the real world, they will have to work to tight timetables, make changes at short notice, come up with new plans on the hoof. The arbitrary imposition of a time frame in other cases grates because it is so purely and plainly there to manufacture drama. Just let the people make their lovely things! No one ever needed an emergency cheese set – yes, [Great Pottery Throw Down](#), this was an absurd

challenge in the 11 minutes or whatever it was you gave them and I remain upset – or perfume bottles in two sizes with handmade stoppers ([Blown Away on Netflix](#) – get over there if you haven’t already and see what human hands and breath can do to liquid glass).

Anyway. There are marked reversals of fortune in the second challenge for our MUAs – the creative brief, involving making up their own faces to tell their personal stories. Dolli creates an extraordinary vision of Afrofuturism, Ryley turns her facial port wine stain into a thing of sequined, seascapely beauty, and Alex – whom we love anyway because she looks like As Seen on TV-era Victoria Wood – would have been a wonderful “parakeet on an estate, because I’m a rough street bird” if she hadn’t kept losing faith in herself. In the end, she was only a pale imitation of the psittacine glory she could have been. No matter. She survived the first cut and will surely find a moment to soar.

Complainers will complain that it’s not a rerun of AJP Taylor’s lectures, of course, because they always do. But it’s joyful, harmless, celebratory fun and there is, as ever, a rightful place for that.

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## 2021.04.21 - Opinion

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[Opinion](#)[George Floyd](#)

# The Derek Chauvin verdict won't stop cops murdering black people. We still aren't safe

[Kellie Carter Jackson](#)

A prison sentence will not protect black people from the violence of the police



‘The stakes of white supremacy do not start or end with this verdict.’  
Photograph: Stephen Maturen/Getty Images

‘The stakes of white supremacy do not start or end with this verdict.’  
Photograph: Stephen Maturen/Getty Images

Tue 20 Apr 2021 18.49 EDT

Since last May, the world has been waiting for justice for [George Floyd](#), who was killed on the streets of Minneapolis after trying to use a counterfeit \$20

bill at a convenience store. Today, the jury found police officer Derek Chauvin guilty on all counts: second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. It was an emotional verdict, in what has been an emotional year since his killing. How are we to receive this moment?

This verdict has been a long time coming. And it's been a painful, difficult wait. Many times, I have had to remind people that it was Derek Chauvin who was on trial, not George Floyd. Over and over, people questioned Floyd's history, his drug use and his actions – anything, that would shift the blame for his own death away from Derek Chauvin. As WEB Du Bois once wrote: "Nothing in the world is easier in the United States than to accuse a black man of a crime." That is still true today.

[We must end ‘qualified immunity’ for police. It might save the next George Floyd | Killer Mike](#)

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Despite all we have gone through – despite all the protests, activism and calls for justice – we still see black people as criminals. Perhaps the most arduous task of the prosecution was not to prove that Chauvin played a role in Floyd's death, but to prove that Floyd was in fact, a human being. A deep-seated and pervasive culture of racism is to blame for the fact that his humanity was ever in question.

As historians, the greatest opposition we can show white supremacy is to tell the truth. I have grown tired of politicians and pundits claiming that Chauvin was a bad apple or an anomaly. No, the truth is, he is a mirror of white supremacy. The violence he committed was white supremacy in its purest form.

For some, to mention this obvious fact is to be “divisive”. On Fox News, Tucker Carlson issued a hateful diatribe about the trial, in which he said that: “No one on CNN actually cares about George Floyd now. What they care about is you and your role in the systemic racism that supposedly killed George Floyd.”

01:57

## 'Accountability, not yet justice': how the US reacted to the Chauvin verdict – video

The purpose of speaking about racism, Carlson said, is to “punish you and to change America”. That, he said, is “why they are replaying that video of George Floyd dying on the sidewalk, to remind you of all of that, of your culpability in his death”. Carlson goes on to say that, “If the Floyd [Chauvin] trial ends in acquittal, there could be riots. We accept that as a fact of life in this country. No civilized country should accept that, but suddenly we do.” Apparently, Carlson thinks a civilized country should accept black Americans being killed in broad daylight by police.

A black athlete like Colin Kaepernick can’t peacefully kneel on the ground in protest without backlash. Yet, a white police officer can kneel on a black man’s neck until he dies

Much as Carlson and his ilk would like us to keep silent about white supremacy, we cannot and will not. Since this trial began three people a day have been killed by the police, over half of these victims are black and Latino people. We will repeat it over and over and over again, until black people stop being murdered in the streets by police.

This is the audacity of white supremacy: that a white police officer could, in broad day light, while being recorded among a gathering of witnesses, kneel on a black man’s neck until he died. He kneeled despite the fact that Floyd told him he couldn’t breathe. And he kept kneeling despite the fact that Floyd told him he was going to die. In this country, a black athlete like Colin Kaepernick can’t peacefully kneel on the ground in protest without backlash. Yet, a white police officer can kneel on a black man’s neck until he dies. The verdict doesn’t take away from that fact.

It’s hard to know if Chauvin ever recognized Floyd’s humanity. That’s what made the weeks of questions and cross-examinations of witnesses that took place so grueling to watch. I watched Chauvin’s body language throughout the trial. He always appeared indifferent. What notes was he taking? What, if any testimony, moved him to feel empathy? In the 9 minutes 29 seconds that Chauvin’s knee was on Floyd’s neck, all I saw was defiance on his part. He

was a belligerent cop who was not going to be told how to do his job. Chauvin never exhibited remorse. But even if he did, remorse does nothing to further justice. Rendering Floyd's death as a series of unfortunate events does nothing to alter violent outcomes for black people.

Make no mistake, a conviction for Chauvin is not equivalent to a vaccine that will protect us from death and injury. A prison sentence will not protect black people from the violence of the police. Black men, women, and children are still being killed by the police. There are no winners in this outcome. An acquittal is not justice. A conviction is not justice. In America, we have never seen justice because justice is a system that fully recognizes black humanity – and we are far from a justice system like that.

The stakes of white supremacy do not start or end with this verdict. Floyd's family will never recover his life, love or laughter. Black Americans will not cease to be seen as threats. And Chauvin will walk away as the exception and not the rule.

- Kellie Carter Jackson is the Knafel assistant professor of the humanities in the department of Africana studies at Wellesley College. She is the author of Force & Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence
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[Opinion](#)[Climate change](#)

# Why is the Science Museum still being contaminated by Shell's dirty money?

[George Monbiot](#)



It is extraordinary that the museum is receiving funding from a fossil fuel giant for an exhibition on, of all things, the climate



‘Although many other great institutions have cut their ties with fossil fuel industries, the Science Museum seems determined to tar and feather itself.’ Extinction Rebellion protesters outside Shell Tower in London. Photograph: Dave Rushen/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

‘Although many other great institutions have cut their ties with fossil fuel industries, the Science Museum seems determined to tar and feather itself.’ Extinction Rebellion protesters outside Shell Tower in London. Photograph: Dave Rushen/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Wed 21 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

Taking money from fossil fuel companies today is like taking money from tobacco firms in the 1990s. The damage public institutions inflict on themselves by receiving this sponsorship exceeds any benefits. Just as their hands were once stained with nicotine, now they are stained with oil. The tobacco experience suggests that it can take many years to expunge these damn’d spots and restore their reputations.

This is the position in which the Science Museum now finds itself. It appears to have learned nothing from the reputational harm it caused itself by accepting money from the [oil companies BP and Equinor](#). Last week it revealed that Shell was funding – wait for it – its new [exhibition on climate breakdown](#).

Although many other great institutions – such as the National Galleries in London and Scotland, the Tate Galleries, the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Southbank Centre, the American Museum of Natural History and the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam – have [cut their ties with fossil fuel industries](#), the Science Museum seems determined to tar and feather itself. Its director, Sir Ian Blatchford, [told journalists](#): “Even if the Science Museum were lavishly publicly funded I would still want to have sponsorship from the oil companies.” Something tells me this will not age well.

[‘A great deception’: oil giants taken to task over ‘greenwash’ ads](#)

[Read more](#)

The exhibition, called [Our Future Planet](#), emphasises the technologies that might capture the carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels, or extract it from the air once it has been released. The Science Museum tells me that Shell had no influence over its design or content. I believe it, but to my eye the exhibition aligns neatly with oil company agendas. For years, oil firms have sought to delay the retirement of their reserves for as long as possible by emphasising technofixes. If carbon dioxide can be captured, this could buy time in which their discovery and drilling, landgrabs and leaks, pollution and profits can continue for longer than society might otherwise permit.

As Culture Unstained (which seeks to bring oil sponsorship to an end) points out, most of the technologies the exhibition promotes are either speculative, extremely expensive or, despite ample opportunity, [simply not happening](#). For example, carbon capture and storage (CCS) – extracting carbon from the exhaust gases of power stations, then piping it into geological formations – has been noisily promoted as a leading solution for 20 years. But so far only [26 plants of any kind](#) are using it, and 22 of these are rigs using the CO<sub>2</sub> they pump underground to drive more oil out of the rocks (a process called enhanced oil recovery).

The [commitments to CCS](#) in Shell’s latest annual report are vague and generic. Yet many of its promises to cut net emissions rely on a combination of this technology and offsets. While capture technologies are generally failing to materialise, the scale of the necessary carbon cuts means that [offsetting emissions](#) is no longer viable. We need both to maximise the

retirement of fossil fuels and maximise the drawing down of carbon, preferably through the [rewilding of ecosystems](#). One is not a substitute for the other.

Yes, we should explore any technologies that might help to prevent climate breakdown. But we should not allow them to be used as greenwash. Unless fossil fuel companies retire their reserves at a rate commensurate with preventing more than 1.5C of heating, they remain a lethal threat to human wellbeing and the survival of other lifeforms. So far, none of them, even on paper, have plans compatible with preventing more than 2C of heating, [let alone 1.5C](#). Shell's programme was [criticised by environmental groups](#) last week as being hazy and halfhearted.

The [company argues](#), correctly, that its targets are conditional on being “in step with society”. Otherwise it “will be trying to sell products that our customers do not want”. But by producing ads that [exaggerate its commitment](#) to reducing emissions, it seeks to assuage public opinion and, I believe, delay the demand for a transition from fossil fuels. In my view, the exhibition at the Science Museum has the same effect.

Worse still, while Shell has cut its ties with some lobby groups, it is still a member of several, such as the [Consumer Energy Alliance](#) and the [Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association](#), which have sought to [stymie climate policies](#). It hopes that much of its future profit will come from the rising production of plastics. Last year, the [American Chemistry Council](#), to which Shell also belongs, lobbied for trade rules that would rip down [Kenya's strict measures](#) on single-use plastic, and force the country to keep accepting plastic waste from other nations. It wanted to turn Kenya into “a hub for supplying US-made chemicals and plastics to other markets in Africa”.

When I challenged the museum, it pointed me to an article by Blatchford, in which he argued, “we believe the right approach is to engage, debate and challenge companies … to do more to make the global economy less carbon intensive.” So do I. But how does accepting their funding help? It doesn't exactly enhance your power, does it? “Do what we say or we won't take your money any more.”

This, I believe, is a zero-sum game. The credibility that Shell might gain from its association with the Science Museum is credibility the Science Museum loses. What [Shell seeks](#), as its CEO admits, is “a strong societal licence to operate”. By sponsoring august cultural institutions, oil companies hope to normalise an ecocidal business model. In doing so, they contaminate anyone foolish enough to take their money.

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

# Pinky Gloves are just the latest ludicrous attempt to monetise the vagina

[Arwa Mahdawi](#)



If ever you feel you're not good enough, try channelling the confidence of a man who invents pointless feminine hygiene products and pitches them on TV



Pinky Gloves ... ‘the perfect example of a solution in search of a problem.’  
Photograph: Instagram/pinky\_gloves

Pinky Gloves ... ‘the perfect example of a solution in search of a problem.’  
Photograph: Instagram/pinky\_gloves

Wed 21 Apr 2021 02.00 EDT

Do you ever lie awake at night thinking up ways to monetise the vagina? Judging by the number of ridiculous “[feminine hygiene](#)” products out there, many people do. The latest are the [enterprising German men](#) behind [Pinky Gloves](#): single-use pink gloves you can wear when removing a tampon so you don’t get your hands dirty. Because, as [any fule kno](#), if even the tiniest bit of menstrual blood comes in contact with your skin, it can’t be washed off with soap and water – the poison is absorbed into the body and you spontaneously combust. The gloves, which cost €11.96 (£12) for a pack of 48, can also apparently be used to dispose of period products when a bin isn’t available.

While Pinky Gloves may be the perfect example of a solution in search of a problem, its creators didn’t exactly struggle to find funding. I regret to inform you that the idea was pitched on the German equivalent of Dragons’ Den *Die Höhle der Löwen* (The Lions’ Cave); one of the male judges was impressed enough to invest €30,000 in the company. When the internet

caught wind of Pinky Gloves last week, however, it was not quite so impressed. In fact, it saw red. After [the outcry](#), the Pinky People [apologised on Instagram](#) and announced they will have a long hard think about the stigmatisation of menstruation.

You know what the most depressing thing about Pinky Gloves is? It's not even close to being the worst feminine hygiene product ever invented. Despite the fact that the vagina is equipped with impressive self-cleaning technology, marketers have spent decades telling women we need to buy their products in order to stop being so disgusting. Some are simply a waste of money, others are downright dangerous. Talcum powder, for example, used to be marketed to women to freshen up "down there". It has now been linked to [ovarian cancer](#).

Anyway, are you a woman who has ever thought to yourself: "Maybe I'm not good enough?" In the future I implore you to brush these doubts aside and remember Pinky Gloves. Whenever you are worried you have come up with a stupid idea, try channelling the confidence of a man who not only invents completely ludicrous genital gloves, but proudly pitches them on national TV.

- Arwa Mahdawi is a Guardian columnist
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## OpinionYahoo

# How is babby formed? RIP Yahoo Answers – your eccentricity will be missed

[Joanne McNeil](#)

After 16 years, the ‘knowledge sharing’ site is being closed down – and without much thought about its community



‘On Yahoo Answers, humans rather than algorithms provided information and vetted it for one another.’ An internet cafe in New York in 2002.  
Photograph: Mario Tama/Getty Images

‘On Yahoo Answers, humans rather than algorithms provided information and vetted it for one another.’ An internet cafe in New York in 2002.  
Photograph: Mario Tama/Getty Images

Wed 21 Apr 2021 02.00 EDT

On the internet, warped humour and word salads are commonplace, but the material posted to Yahoo Answers regularly achieved new heights of bizarre. The perhaps best-known question posted to the social “knowledge sharing” platform is representative of the particular talents of its user base: “[how is babby formed?](#) how girl get pragnent?” Anyone with a Yahoo account was free to answer it. The question, misspelling and all, has been a celebrated meme in the decade since it first appeared under the category Pregnancy & Parenting.

Was the question meant to be a joke or posted in a state of sincere befuddlement? I guess we’ll never know. After a 16-year run, Yahoo has announced it will [shut down Yahoo Answers](#) on 4 May. And with it the head-scratching charms of “babby” and countless other posts will go dark.

Volunteers have already begun [archiving Yahoo Answers](#), but given the short notice from Yahoo, they might not capture all of the posts. Yahoo’s swift decision to terminate a popular platform – to the surprise of its users – just goes to show how corporate control of social media will only end in frustration for those who participate in it.

Yahoo has a history of careless disregard for its online communities. Around the time it launched Yahoo Answers in 2005, the company hoped to compete with Myspace, the juggernaut platform of that era. It acquired beloved social media sites in the 2000s such as Flickr, Upcoming and Del.icio.us, and each wilted under the new corporate structure. Issues such as content moderation and even technical matters became bureaucratic struggles, due to the elongated chain of command. “Any decision was [an endless discussion](#),” said Del.icio.us founder Joshua Schachter in an interview with New York magazine in 2008, reflecting on the “miserable environment” he entered after his company was acquired. In 2013, Yahoo’s acquisition of Tumblr resulted in a mass exodus. Yahoo has since sold off each of these social media sites, but in the process of changing hands many users have given up on them, and the vibrancy of their communities has been lost.

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[Are you joining us on Reddit ?](#) Favourite answer:

No, I gave Reddit a try... can't stand that site unfortunately.  
I've moved over to Similar Works  
much nicer over there.

‘It’s tempting to dismiss the very premise of Yahoo Answers.’

In 1994, if you had a question about Yahoo, you could contact Jerry Yang, its co-founder, who listed his email at the bottom of the webpage. He ran the site out of a trailer on the Stanford University campus along with fellow grad student David Filo. At first they called it “Jerry and Dave’s WWW Interface” and with simple HTML code, they provided a directory of “[COOL links](#)” organised by subject. You’d click on a category like “[Science](#)”, then “[Biology](#)”, and arrive at a list of relevant websites to visit. It was useful, especially for a newbie user. There were fewer than [3,000 websites](#) in 1994 and many people would log on to the internet without any idea of where to look or what to do.

In the late 90s, venture-capital backed and incorporated, [Yahoo](#) launched new services such as webmail and [Yahoo](#) Finance, but the [Yahoo](#) Directory remained its keystone. The internet, meanwhile, began to outgrow what the directory offered. By 2004, there were more than 50m websites. It wasn’t humanly possible for two guys to find and recommend all the “cool” ones. [Yahoo](#) staff continued to update the directory, but it all seemed quaint in comparison with Google’s swiftly efficient PageRank algorithms.

In some sense, Yahoo Answers was a return to the company’s roots. Google had the superior search engine, but Yahoo had made a name for itself with

its directory of links that humans recommended to other humans. On Yahoo Answers, similarly, humans rather than algorithms provided information and vetted it for one another. The difference is that Jerry and Dave owned “Jerry and Dave’s WWW Interface”. The [humans on Yahoo Answers](#) were simply users; they and the corporate executives at Yahoo were not the same. There were no open channels of communication between them to decide things like how information on Yahoo Answers might be archived one day.

It’s tempting to dismiss the very premise of Yahoo Answers. An online forum for random users to ask questions and random users to answer them sounds like an invitation for misinformation and harassment. Many times it is, but on some platforms this format works – at least, sometimes. People turn to Quora to ask questions about things such as what the workplace culture is like at certain employers. On Reddit, users ask for help navigating [unemployment benefits](#). Neither is perfect, but the systems of moderation on Quora and certain Reddit “subreddits” have been superior to the Yahoo Answers free-for-all approach, which in recent years has led to a rise of partisan conspiracy theorising on the website in addition to the regular “babby” weirdness.

### [‘Can babies see ghosts?’ The best of Yahoo Answers](#)

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Metafilter, an independent online community, shows there’s still another way forward for social media. Thousands of users participate in its forums, including its Q&A subsite, [Ask Metafilter](#). The website is almost as old as Yahoo, but it is financed largely by its users, with funds allocated to pay for community moderators. The site’s owner, Josh Millard, is one of the moderators and an active participant. As with Yang in the 90s, you can find his email and write to him.

Millard told me the staff and community regularly discuss end of life care for Metafilter. It isn’t an easy discussion, says Millard, but the community has invaluable memories wrapped up in its archives, which, dating back to 1999, are also significant to internet history. The ideal archiving process, he says, should be flexible and ongoing when it happens. “I feel strongly about keeping the archive intact as much as possible,” says Millard. “But it’s also

important to me that people who have regrets or privacy concerns have the ability to take stuff down.”

Yahoo, the company, hasn’t extended that care to the users of Yahoo Answers, which for all their eccentricities have something of a community. They have also contemplated what the end would mean for them. Eight years ago, [someone asked on the platform](#), “WHAT WOULD YOU DO if yahoo answers shut down forever?” “Raise my glass and down it in memory of another electronic domain flushed down the tubes,” another user answered. “RIP answers.yahoo.com … let’s see what Youtube has, now.”

- Joanne McNeil is the author of Lurking: How a Person Became a User
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## [First Dog on the Moon](#)[Climate change](#)

# Tonight I do want to address the elephant in the ballroom – climate change

[First Dog on the Moon](#)



It will be dealt with by salt of the earth scientists and farmers - the sort of Australians people like you only ever have to think about when you fire them

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Wed 21 Apr 2021 03.09 EDT

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**Guardian Opinion cartoon**

**Boris Johnson**

## **Steve Bell on Boris Johnson's super league — cartoon**

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## [Opinion](#)[European Super League](#)

# The greed of the European Super League has been decades in the making

[David Goldblatt](#)

The time for compromise is over. We must wrest football back from the coterie of billionaires who have deformed it



‘We must rewrite the rules, remake the institutions, and reassess our role as fans.’ People gather in protest against the European Super League at the Emirates Stadium, London. Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

‘We must rewrite the rules, remake the institutions, and reassess our role as fans.’ People gather in protest against the European Super League at the Emirates Stadium, London. Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

Tue 20 Apr 2021 09.29 EDT

It is a measure of football’s remarkable cultural weight that the plot to create a breakaway European Super League (ESL) has dominated the media since

it was [announced late on Sunday night](#) – and provoked a furious response not simply from every corner of the football world, but [from 10 Downing Street](#) and the Élysée Palace.

[Boris Johnson threatens to use ‘legislative bomb’ to stop European Super League](#)

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The ESL would be a midweek competition among a closed and self-selecting circle of top clubs – essentially a replacement for the existing Uefa Champions League. The 12 founder members include six from England and three each from Spain and Italy, who claim they will continue to participate in their domestic leagues. They expect the new league to command enormous digital revenues, which will remain theirs alone, without the inconvenience of sharing Champions League broadcast money with the rest of European football, or subjecting themselves to Uefa regulations. The absence of promotion and relegation from this charmed circle, combined with these income streams, is designed to ensure that their privileged position will be secure in perpetuity.

It barely needs reiterating why this is such an appalling idea: the already corrosive imbalance in most European domestic leagues will be made even greater by this hoarding of the spoils. The sight of any ruling elite making inequality ineradicable is contemptible, but set against football’s core mythology – of level playing fields and sporting chances – it is an act of cultural desecration. No less so, is its careless destruction of [65 years](#) of European football as a grand, inclusive, continent-wide narrative and shared ritual experience.

Even so, and despite the huge wave of opposition emerging from government ministries, the European Union, football associations and leagues, fans and their organisations, this kind of football politics is not going away. What changes in European football have brought us to this pass?

The ESL has its roots in plans first floated by Silvio Berlusconi, then owner of AC Milan, [in the 1990s](#). They have resurfaced from time to time – then, as now, deployed by the biggest clubs as a threat to Uefa, ensuring that

European competitions deliver an ever greater share of the money into their pockets. But this time, the clubs seem to have actually gone over the top.

This scandalous announcement may be the product of a sort of prisoner's dilemma, in which multiple actors who don't trust one another end up making a bad collective decision for fear of being left out. Some of these big clubs, such as Barcelona, with a [debt of around €1bn](#), are especially desperate for funds. But there are deeper trends at work here that reflect the pathologies of contemporary capitalism as much as elite football.

First, European football, like everything else, has become much more unequal, with revenue concentrated in a decreasing number of nations, leagues and clubs, while many systems of redistribution have been removed or reduced. One consequence of this inequality is that a handful of top clubs dominate their domestic leagues, and they now feel that only an elite European league will suit them. Like many of the world's ultra-rich, they cannot accept that the way to solve the problems created by extreme inequality is simply to reduce inequality, rather than seal yourself in a protected bubble with your plutocratic peers.

Second, the last decade has seen a sharp increase in the role of investment banks, venture capital and [hedge funds in football](#) – as investors and club owners. JP Morgan are the bankers to the ESL; AC Milan are owned by a US hedge fund, while Fenway Sports Group, the owner of Liverpool, is cut from the same cloth. For these investors, and the billionaires that own Juventus, Spurs and Manchester United, there is a relentless determination to increase profitability and eliminate risk: as a board member of one of the breakaway Premier League clubs [told Sky Sports](#), the owners believe their “primary job is to maximise our revenues and profits. The wider good of the game is a secondary concern.” But all of these owners are already fantastically rich; if profit was their aim, there would be less destructive ways to achieve it. They pose as the custodians of their historic clubs, but they are in fact mere rentiers and wreckers.

Third, there has been a considerable politicisation of club ownership. Berlusconi turned his ownership of AC Milan into a political movement that helped him [dominate Italian politics](#) for decades. Roman Abramovich has used Chelsea to extricate himself and his fortune from the deadly politics of

Putin's Russia. Manchester City and PSG – who have so far declined to join the ESL – are the symbolic linchpins of the foreign policy of the UAE and [Qatar](#). The Gulf states do not need football's money, but they have other goals that are better served by an absence of public regulation, whether from national football associations or Uefa.

While these changes help explain the motivations among these clubs, the decision to actually act upon them is a reflection of two further shifts, both rendered more clear by the impact of the pandemic. For some time, European football audiences and revenues have been tilting from the local to the global, while the character of matchday has hovered between the real and the digital. The emptying of stadiums and the miraculous resilience of audience interest has, in the eyes of the ESL clubs, shifted the balance decisively toward the global and digital. In the amoral calculus of the banker and the oligarch, there is no longer a need to prioritise fans in stadiums, or the deep local and national stories that have brought them there: capital is confident that a global digital product will earn more than it loses.

Nothing is inevitable, and the opponents to these plans have some serious options. [Fifa and Uefa can ban](#) these clubs and their players from international competitions; football associations could force them out of their domestic leagues; fans could organise, protest and refuse to attend. But all of us have, hitherto, failed to deliver on these kind of threats.

We have already allowed this coterie of billionaires to own and deform the game for some time. This particular circus may yet fold, but the economic and political shifts that made it possible will still be with us. Now we need to do more than call their bluff and settle for the compromise of an expanded Champions League. We must rewrite the rules, remake the institutions and reassess our role as fans – for we all, collectively, allowed them to contemplate this gambit, and to believe they could get away with it.

- David Goldblatt is the author of *The Ball is Round: A Global History of Football and The Game of Our Lives*
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**OpinionLabour**

# The future of the United Kingdom depends on a Labour revival in England

[Rafael Behr](#)



English opinions will not decide a Scottish referendum, but the union would be easier to sell if it offered more than Tory rule



The Scottish Labour leader, Anas Sarwar, with Keir Starmer in Edinburgh last week: ‘Labour is trapped between historic attachment to the union and the compulsion to be against whatever Johnson is for.’ Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

The Scottish Labour leader, Anas Sarwar, with Keir Starmer in Edinburgh last week: ‘Labour is trapped between historic attachment to the union and the compulsion to be against whatever Johnson is for.’ Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Tue 20 Apr 2021 11.14 EDT

Filling in the census recently, I hesitated before choosing British over English from the menu of national identities. The correct answer is both. Team GB for the Olympics, England for the World Cup. After that, it gets hard to separate the different cultural elements that connect me to the country in which I was born but that my immigrant parents chose. In the chemistry of belonging, Britishness is a compound, not a mixture.

I resented the strain of Brexit demagoguery that sought to narrow patriotic affiliation, excluding those of us who felt an attachment to Europe. I have Scottish friends who dread the prospect of a second independence referendum because their preference for staying in the UK will be cast as deficient national pride.

If that plebiscite were held, and won by nationalists, two countries would be hatched – a post-union [Scotland](#) and a truncated Britain. Neither would be entirely new, in the long view of history, but both would be unfamiliar, and only one of them would have voted for its altered status.

That is not an argument for some kind of all-UK ballot. The whole point of self-determination is that Scotland decides its fate without having to seek permission. England's numerical supremacy, generating [Westminster regimes](#) with no Scottish mandates, has been recent history's most generous supplier of arguments for independence.

Brexit is prominent in that category, since two-thirds of Scots were against it. Being outside the EU also makes the practical business of setting up [an independent Scotland](#) much more complicated and expensive, but for the time being that argument is not getting equivalent traction. An aggravating factor is the radicalism of a Brexit model imposed by a prime minister whose reckless, arrogant style is its own [catalogue of reasons](#) to escape the rule of English Tories.

The policies of one government should not be decisive in settling constitutional matters. Boris Johnson's misrule is temporary; rupture from England would be permanent. But in practice, the case for the union is obscured when the whole political foreground is taken up by Johnson in his pomp.

Unionism is not the property of the Conservative party. That should hardly need saying, but Labour's claim to be a party for the whole of Britain is diminished when it looks [so far from taking control](#) at Westminster. Commons majorities of 80 are not generally overturned in a single election. The task is made more challenging still by fragmentation in Labour's vote share. The core is split on axes of geography, demographics and culture – older, working-class, former industrial heartlands and younger, more affluent, metropolitan centres. Appeals to one audience repel the other and efforts to straddle the divide alienate both – as happened with Labour's tortured equivocation over Brexit.

Of course it is more complicated than that. A more subtle (but still gloomy) account of the problem is contained in [Hearts and Minds](#), a collection of

essays by Labour MPs, published this week by the Fabian Society. The analysis mostly absolves Keir Starmer of blame for his party's weak poll performance, given how deep the rot goes and how few opportunities he has had to address it during the pandemic. But when the audience is readier to listen it will not be easy, preaching a political gospel that stirs hearts in Hartlepool as well as Hampstead.

Fusing disparate voting blocs into a winning whole is possible. The Tories won Workington and Winchester in 2019. The former was 61% for leave in 2016; the latter was 60% for remain. Johnson's majority is not fashioned only from Brexit, but it is very English.

Labour is the main party of government in Wales. It also dominates devolved politics in London, Manchester and Liverpool. But Starmer will not be prime minister unless his party enjoys a simultaneous surge in Scotland and England. That is a unionist ambition even if it is not yet branded as such.

The Fabian pamphlet briefly mentions Labour's Scottish mission, only to set it aside as a discrete (and by implication, even more perplexing) problem. But the party's mass expulsion from formerly safe Scottish seats was, in many respects, a harbinger of what awaited it in areas captured by Johnson years later. There was a "[tartan wall](#)" in Scotland, like the English "red wall", and they crumbled for similar reasons: voters resented being taken for granted by a party deemed complacent by years of local monopoly and culturally remote from the people it represented.

[Let's not go back to the denial and delusion of the Thatcher years | John Harris](#)  
[Read more](#)

The shift away from Labour was faster and more decisive in Scotland because nationalism offered an alternative allegiance without the requirement to overcome visceral hatred of Tories. And since opposition to independence is led by Tory governments, Labour is trapped, tactically and emotionally, between historic attachment to the union and the compulsion to be against whatever Johnson is for.

That dilemma is not confined to Scottish Labour. There are English voters whose strongest political allegiance in recent years has been rage against Brexit. And while they would also grieve separation from Scotland, they can see why independence appeals to their neighbours as a remedy to Tory rule (especially with Nicola Sturgeon so adept at playing the role of steady-handed physician).

English opinions will not decide a Scottish referendum, but the vitality of non-Tory opposition in England affects the climate in which the issue is debated. It is hard to sell a democratic partnership of nations from a stall that only stocks Conservative governments. Unionism needs a Labour revival in England. As if Starmer's burden were not heavy enough already, the existence of the British state in its current form depends on him as much as it does on Johnson. Maybe more. There is a mode of Britishness that is cultural, not political – an identity of shared belonging to one island. But without the credible prospect of regime change at Westminster, staying in Britain will always sound, in Scotland, like submission to Tory England.

- Rafael Behr is a Guardian columnist
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## US foreign policy

# Joe Biden faces major test building US credibility at climate summit

President will unveil new emissions reduction target while much will hinge upon cooperation between China and US



Joe Biden at the White House on 15 April. Photograph: Andrew Harnik/AP

Joe Biden at the White House on 15 April. Photograph: Andrew Harnik/AP

*[Oliver Milman](#) in New York*

*[@olliemilman](#)*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 02.00 EDT

Joe Biden's desire to re-establish US leadership on the climate crisis will face a severe test this week at a summit the president hopes will rebuild American credibility and kickstart a sputtering international effort to stave off the effects of global heating.

Biden has invited 40 world leaders to a two-day virtual gathering starting on Earth Day, Thursday, as the opening salvo in negotiations leading to crunch United Nations talks in Scotland later this year. Scientists say [the world is severely lagging](#) in tackling the climate crisis and its heatwaves, storms and floods, with planet-heating emissions [set to roar back](#) following a dip due to coronavirus shutdowns.

[Carbon emissions to soar in 2021 by second highest rate in history](#)

[Read more](#)

Much will hinge upon cooperation between China, the world's worst producer of planet-heating emissions, and the US, historically the worst polluter. On Saturday, John Kerry, Biden's climate envoy, [struck an agreement](#) in Shanghai to urgently address what Kerry called the "beyond catastrophic" consequences of allowing temperatures to spiral upwards.

The compact is broadly seen as encouraging but comes amid US-China tensions on issues including human rights and trade. The US also faces a deficit in credibility after the presidency of Donald Trump, which saw the country leave the Paris climate accords and [dismantle environmental protections](#).

Biden has returned the US to the Paris agreement but a spokesman for the Chinese foreign ministry [said](#) the move was "by no means a glorious comeback but rather the student playing truant getting back to class".

The US is suffering from a "credibility gap" due to years of oscillating policy, according to Josh Busby, an expert in climate governance at University of Texas-Austin.

"The US return to climate diplomacy may be taken seriously so long as the Biden administration can keep its climate policy agenda alive," he said.

On Monday Antony Blinken, the secretary of state, acknowledged America was "falling behind" [China](#) in producing solar panels and electric vehicles but promised a muscular approach in prodding other countries to do more.

“Our diplomats will challenge the practices of countries whose action, or inaction, is setting us back,” Blinken said.

“When countries continue to rely on coal for a significant amount of their energy, or invest in new coal factories, or allow for massive deforestation, they will hear from the United States and our partners about how harmful these actions are.”

The centerpiece of Biden’s summit will be the unveiling of the new US emissions reduction target, which may be the only significant new pledge at the event. The goal is expected to be at least a 50% cut by 2030, based on 2005 levels, a target broadly backed by environment groups as well as the UN secretary general, António Guterres, who has said 2021 “must be the year for action” to avoid an “abyss” of climate disaster.

Anything below a 50% cut will be seen as “completely unacceptable” to US allies in Europe, said Samantha Gross, director of energy security at Brookings Institution.

“All eyes are on the US plan – it will be crucial to American climate diplomacy,” said Rachel Kyte, an expert in international relations at Tufts University and a UN adviser.

“If it is robust and they can walk the talk and actually implement policies, that will help build momentum. Time is our enemy, it is the one resource we don’t have. There is so much catching up to do from the last four years and we really need to gather speed.”

Joanna Lewis, a specialist in Chinese energy policy at Georgetown University, said the US-China climate commitment was an “encouraging step”, including language that suggests China could make deeper emissions cuts than previously promised.

“It’s important that Biden puts an ambitious target on the table but it’s equally important that he implements legislation to meet those targets,” she said. “Barack Obama set goals but wasn’t able to do the meaningful legislation, unlike, for example, the UK.”

Biden also faces pressure at home. Scientists and lawmakers are pressing for specific curbs on methane, a potent greenhouse gas released during oil and gas drilling. Some activists were underwhelmed by Biden proposing just \$1.2bn in international climate aid in his first budget. Others are keen for Biden to reinstate a US ban on crude oil exports.

“I am risking my life to stop the reckless destruction of my community,” said Diane Wilson, a shrimper who has been on hunger strike for two weeks to protest the expansion of an oil export terminal in Lavaca Bay, Texas.

“Oil and gas export terminals like the project I am fighting pollute our air, water and climate, only to pad the pockets of fossil fuel CEOs. The Biden administration needs to stop the dredging and stop oil and gas exports.”

While the Biden administration is expected to largely focus on its emissions reduction target during the summit, it has been keen to stress it shares environmentalists’ sense of urgency.

“If America fails to lead the world on addressing the climate crisis, we won’t have much of a world left,” said Blinken.

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## Global climate talks

# China's Xi Jinping to attend Joe Biden's climate summit

Virtual summit on Thursday will be the first meeting between the two leaders since Biden took office



China and the US have rediscovered a common interest in battling climate change. Photograph: Paul J Richards/AFP/Getty Images

China and the US have rediscovered a common interest in battling climate change. Photograph: Paul J Richards/AFP/Getty Images

*Guardian staff and agencies*

Tue 20 Apr 2021 22.38 EDT

China's President [Xi Jinping](#) will attend a US-led climate change summit on Thursday at the invitation of President Joe Biden, in the first meeting between the two leaders since the advent of the new US administration.

Biden has invited dozens of world leaders to join the two-day virtual summit starting on Thursday, after bringing the US back into the 2015 Paris agreement on cutting global carbon emissions.

Xi will attend the summit via video and will deliver an “important” speech, Hua Chunying, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, said in a statement on Wednesday.

Beijing and Washington have persistently clashed over a range of issues, from alleged [human rights abuses](#) to [China’s economic clout over other nations](#).

### [US and China commit to cooperating on climate crisis](#)

[Read more](#)

In Alaska last month, US and Chinese officials held the first high-level in-person talks that bristled with rancor and yielded no diplomatic breakthroughs.

But the two countries, the world’s two biggest greenhouse gas emitters, have rediscovered a common interest in battling climate change.

Last week the US climate envoy, John Kerry, travelled to Shanghai to meet with his Chinese counterpart in the first high-level visit to [China](#) by a Biden administration official. Both agreed on concrete actions “in the 2020s” to reduce emissions.

The talks also marked a resumption of climate dialogue halted during the Donald Trump administration, who withdrew from the Paris agreement.

Kerry and Xie Zhenhua had said they were “committed to cooperating” on tackling the climate crisis, even as sky-high tensions remain on multiple other fronts.

No global solution on climate change is likely without both the US and China onboard, since the world’s top two economies together account for nearly half of the world’s total greenhouse gas emissions.

China – the world's top carbon emitter – has vowed to reach peak emissions by 2030 and become carbon neutral 30 years later.

Biden is expected this week to announce new US targets on reducing carbon emissions as part of the summit, amid mounting global alarm over record-breaking temperatures and increasingly frequent natural disasters.

Beijing has said the US needs to take more responsibility on climate change, with the foreign ministry spokesperson calling Washington's return to the Paris accord "a truant getting back to class".

Xi joined another virtual climate summit with France and Germany last week, where he said developed countries should "set an example" in reducing emissions and support developing nations' responses to climate change, according to the state news agency Xinhua.

*with Reuters and Agence France-Presse*

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## Humanitarian response

# Humanitarian system is failing people in crisis, says UN aid chief

**Exclusive:** coordinator of UN's relief operation to say agencies not listening to needs of those in need



Mark Lowcock: 'The humanitarian system is set up to give people in need what international agencies and donors think is best.' Photograph: Salvatore Di Nolfi/EPA

Mark Lowcock: 'The humanitarian system is set up to give people in need what international agencies and donors think is best.' Photograph: Salvatore Di Nolfi/EPA

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[About this content](#)

*Patrick Wintour* *Diplomatic editor*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 00.00 EDT

The world's multibillion-dollar humanitarian system is struggling because unaccountable aid agencies are not listening to what people say they need and instead are deciding for them, the UN's humanitarian agency head will say this week.

In a startling analysis of the programme he oversees, Mark Lowcock, the coordinator of the UN's aid relief operation since 2017, will say he has reached the view that "one of the biggest failings" of the system is that agencies "do not pay enough attention" to the voices of people caught up in crises.

"The humanitarian system is set up to give people in need what international agencies and donors think is best, and what we have to offer, rather than giving people what they themselves say they most need."

A former British civil servant, Lowcock will deliver his remarks to the Washington-based Center for Global Development thinktank on Thursday.

In the speech, seen by the Guardian, he will call for increased funding for vital UN services that are overstretched and argue that millions of people are still being helped despite the severe funding shortages.

However, he will also call for the appointment of an independent commission to make aid agencies accountable. The commission would be tasked with listening to people in crisis and grading the quality of agencies' work.

At present, he will say, the stated needs of those requiring help is not sufficiently part of the discussion of humanitarian agencies with the result that bothh people do not get enough of the help they say they want and the money could be more efficiently used. The UN this year hopes to raise \$35bn (£25bn).

“In Chad and Cox’s Bazar [in Bangladesh] and other places too, people in dire humanitarian need are frequently selling aid they have been given, to buy something else they want more – a clear indication that what is being provided does not meet people’s needs and preferences.

“After the [central Sulawesi earthquake in 2018](#), almost half of displaced households reported shelter as one of their most important and immediate priorities. Yet only a small fraction of people got immediate help with that.

“Unfortunately, these are not isolated examples. Last year, more than half the people surveyed in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, Somalia and Uganda said that the aid they received did not cover their most important needs.

“In Chad, only 12% of people surveyed were positive about the aid they received.”

Lowcock admits the need for agencies to be more sensitive to the views of those in need of aid has been part of the development reform agenda for two decades. But there has been limited “piecemeal” progress, he will say, owing to the lack of any incentive structure for aid agencies to respond.

“In many places, we have information on what people want and how they want it. The problem is we are not consistently acting on that information.

“Ultimately, organisations or decision-makers can choose to listen to people and be responsive, or they can choose not to. There are no real consequences for the choice they make. There are weak incentives to push them in the right direction.”

He will propose an “independent commission for voices in crises” to hold the system to account and judge whether agencies have listened to those in need.

“If we hold such a mirror up to the system, humanitarian agencies collectively will see that we are simply not adequately listening and responding to what people say they want.”

The results would provide donors with powerful levers with agencies, he will say.

While his blunt criticism will draw the most attention, Lowcock will stress that transparency is the best route to shoring up confidence in the aid sector. He will argue that humanitarian relief is an absolute necessity, especially as UN appeals have been underfunded by 40% on average over the last five years.

Lowcock will say this level of underfunding is unsustainable unless the causes of humanitarian need – famine, displacement, conflict and climate change – are addressed at the source.

“Today one in 33 people worldwide needs humanitarian assistance or protection – more than at any time since the second world war. Almost 80 million people are displaced by conflict and violence. Wars last twice as long as in the early 1990s.”

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## Rights and freedomMigration

# Nearly 17 child migrants a day vanished in Europe since 2018

Investigation finds one in six were solo and under 15, as experts say cross-border cooperation ‘nonexistent’



A child migrant waiting for a train to Serbia at Gevgelija, on the Macedonian-Greek border. Last year alone, 5,768 children disappeared.  
Photograph: Dimitar Dilkoff/AFP/Getty

A child migrant waiting for a train to Serbia at Gevgelija, on the Macedonian-Greek border. Last year alone, 5,768 children disappeared.  
Photograph: Dimitar Dilkoff/AFP/Getty

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# HUMANITY UNITED

[About this content](#)

*Ismail Einashe and Adriana Homolova*

[@IsmailEinashe](#)

Wed 21 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

At least 18,000 unaccompanied child migrants have disappeared after arriving in European countries including Greece, Italy and Germany.

An investigation by the Guardian and the cross-border journalism collective [Lost in Europe](#) found that 18,292 unaccompanied child migrants went missing in Europe between January 2018 and December 2020 – equivalent to nearly 17 children a day.

In 2020 alone, 5,768 children disappeared in 13 European countries.

[How EU red tape forces refugee children into the arms of people traffickers | Daniel Howden](#)

[Read more](#)

Most of the children who have gone missing over the past three years came to Europe from [Morocco](#), but Algeria, Eritrea, Guinea and Afghanistan were

also among the top countries of origin. According to the data available, 90% were boys and about one in six were younger than 15.

The investigation, which collated data on missing unaccompanied minors from all 27 EU countries, as well as Norway, Moldova, Switzerland and the UK, found the information provided was often inconsistent or incomplete, meaning the true numbers of missing children could be much higher.

Spain, Belgium and Finland provided figures only up to the end of 2019. Denmark, France and the UK provided no data at all on unaccompanied missing children.

The findings of the investigation raise serious questions about the extent European countries are able or willing to protect unaccompanied child migrants.

Federica Toscano, head of advocacy and migration at [Missing Children Europe](#), a non-profit organisation that connects grassroots agencies across Europe, said the data was “extremely important” for understanding the scale of the problem in Europe. “The high number of missing children is a symptom of a child-protection system that doesn’t work,” she said.

She said unaccompanied children were among the migrants most vulnerable to violence, exploitation and trafficking. “Criminal organisations are increasingly targeting migrant children,” said Toscano, “especially unaccompanied ones and many of them become victims of labour and sexual exploitation, forced begging and trafficking.”

In March 2019, the Guardian and Lost in Europe found that at least 60 Vietnamese children had disappeared from Dutch shelters. Dutch authorities suspected they had been [trafficked into Britain](#) to work on cannabis farms and in nail salons.



A child clutches some bread at a camp for migrants and refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos. Photograph: Yara Nardi/Reuters

Herman Bolhaar, the Dutch national rapporteur on human trafficking, said the investigation showed the urgent need for cooperation at the European level to address why thousands of unaccompanied migrant children have disappeared without a trace. “We cannot lose sight of these children,” he said. “They deserve our protection.”

While almost all of the countries in the investigation have detailed procedures in place intended to deal with the disappearance of unaccompanied minors, they do not always work well in practice, according to a [2020 report from the European Migration Network](#), part of the European Union. Problems include failure to follow up when children are reported missing and insufficient cooperation between police and asylum or child protection authorities.

[‘They can see us in the dark’: migrants grapple with hi-tech fortress EU](#)  
[Read more](#)

“Very little is recorded in a file of a missing migrant child,” said Toscano, “and too often it is assumed that a migrant child is somewhere safe in

another country, although cross-border collaboration on these cases is practically nonexistent.”

There are multiple reasons why children go missing, she said, including “the lengthy and burdensome procedures to obtain international protection or to be reunited with their family”. Many were also held in inadequate facilities, often with no access to education, she added.

A spokesperson for the European commission said there was “deep concern about children going missing”, adding that member states needed “to take action to prevent and respond to the disappearances of children in migration ... by improving data collection and cross-border collaboration.”

- Ismail Einashe and Adriana Homolova are members of the Lost in Europe cross-border journalism project, which investigates the disappearance of child migrants in Europe

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## Global development

# Killing of female polio vaccinators puts Afghan eradication campaign at risk

Rise in cases feared as murders halt campaigns and leave many women too afraid to work



The funeral of one of the three female polio workers who were killed in Jalalabad on 30 March 2021. Photograph: Ghulamullah Habibi/EPA

The funeral of one of the three female polio workers who were killed in Jalalabad on 30 March 2021. Photograph: Ghulamullah Habibi/EPA

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[About this content](#)

[Ruchi Kumar](#)

Wed 21 Apr 2021 02.30 EDT

Gul Meena Hotak was on her regular rounds, going door-to-door giving polio vaccinations in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad, when she heard gunshots.

The 22-year-old's immediate concern was for the safety of her friend Negina and other colleagues nearby. "Negina and my supervisor were in a neighbourhood close by when a gunman approached and shot at them. My supervisor escaped with gunshot injuries, but Negina was killed on the spot," Hotak said.

Traumatised and afraid, Hotak went back to her office where she learned other colleagues had been targeted by a separate bomb attack. Two more female polio workers – Samina and Basira, who like Negina, were known by only one name – died in Jalalabad city.

[Taliban denies killing three female Afghan polio workers](#)

[Read more](#)

No group has claimed responsibility for the murderous [attacks on 30 March](#), part of a wave of assassinations in Afghanistan since the US signed a deal with the Taliban last year. The [Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission](#) recorded [2,250 assassinations in 2020](#) – an increase of 169% since 2019.

After the killings, vital polio campaigns across the province were put on hold, and remain suspended in at least three districts including Jalalabad city. “The situation in the south and eastern provinces has been problematic for many years because of the bans imposed by the [Taliban](#) as well as the Islamic State, which briefly controlled parts of the country. They didn’t permit the door-to-door vaccination campaigns,” Merjan Rasekh, head of public awareness of the ministry of health’s polio eradication programme, said.

Afghanistan is, alongside Pakistan, one of the last two countries in the world where polio is endemic.



A bloodied polio vaccine cooler box, discarded after female vaccinators were killed by gunmen in the city of Jalalabad, Afghanistan, on 30 March.  
Photograph: AP

The Taliban, Rasekh said, were not against vaccinations as such but did mistrust the campaigns, fearing that the polio workers are being used to gather intelligence on their whereabouts. “But the recent killings of female workers were shocking and unprecedented in the history of our immunisation activities,” he said.

The increase in violence has been aimed at women active in public life. In Jalalabad city there had been six killings in the four months before the polio workers were targeted. “We had received no threats or warning [ahead of the attack], but violence and assassinations are becoming part of our everyday life. They are killing female journalists, activists every day,” said Hotak, who now fears for her life.

Even without the security issues, female workers in Afghanistan face many challenges. In a deeply conservative society, working women are breaking stereotypes and cultural norms. “We get harassed, abused; some use abusive language. There are times when people kicked us out of their neighbourhoods, but we continue our job,” Hotak said.

[Afghan TV station 'can't hire women' over security fears after four killed](#)  
[Read more](#)

As a result of the killings, many Afghan women have quit their jobs. “There is tremendous pressure on women (from their families), and many of our volunteers are unwilling to rejoin the campaigns. At least half of them are now afraid of stepping out of their homes,” said Hotak. Enikass TV, a media outlet in the eastern province, asked its female employees to temporarily stop coming into work after [four female staff were murdered](#).

Forcing women out of public life would, undoubtedly, have an adverse impact on society, in this case on the campaign against polio, Rasekh said. “In the Afghan context, the female workers are among the most important frontline workers. Because culturally, Afghan mothers in conservative households are not allowed to go outside or allow a male worker inside the house to vaccinate their children. But female vaccinators can directly enter the households and even convince caregivers who may have doubts about the vaccines.”



A polio worker administers the vaccine to children in Herat, Afghanistan, 31 March. Photograph: Jalil Rezayee/EPA

With fewer women willing to volunteer or work in the campaign, the polio department fears a rise in cases in the coming months and a reversal of years of progress. The country has already had 56 cases – the highest in 20 years – during the pandemic lockdowns. “We only had two cases in the eastern region in 2020, thanks to the efforts of the many women polio workers. But now we are very concerned about an increase in cases if women are not able to resume due to security problems,” said Dr Jan Mohammad, a coordinator for the national campaign.

But despite the challenges, some refuse to step back. “Yes, I am scared, but I can’t give up now because it is a matter of life and death for these children,” said Hotak, who is determined to return to work as soon as the campaign resumes. “If we leave the country to the hands of the insurgents, they will destroy it.”

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## Employment

# Lesotho firm first in Africa to be granted EU licence for medical cannabis

Breakthrough could create thousands of jobs for villagers and help exports to other markets



Lesotho women harvest cannabis leaf inside a greenhouse operated by MG Health, which grows legal cannabis near Marakabei. Photograph: Guillem Sartorio/AFP/Getty Images

Lesotho women harvest cannabis leaf inside a greenhouse operated by MG Health, which grows legal cannabis near Marakabei. Photograph: Guillem Sartorio/AFP/Getty Images

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[About this content](#)

[Silence Charumbira](#) in Maseru

Wed 21 Apr 2021 03.00 EDT

A company in [Lesotho](#) has become the first in Africa to receive a licence to sell medical cannabis to the EU.

The country's top medical cannabis producer, [MG Health](#), announced it had met the EU's good manufacturing practice (GMP) standards, allowing it to export cannabis flower, oil and extracts as an active pharmaceutical ingredient.

It will export its first batch to Germany later this year.

The GMP guidelines are the minimum requirements a manufacturer or producer must meet to ensure products are safe and of a consistent high quality. They are used to control the licensing for sale of food and pharmaceutical and medical products.

[Nigeria launches 'biggest job creation scheme' in its history after long delay](#)

[Read more](#)

The company had hoped to receive accreditation last year, but Covid-19 restrictions prevented inspectors from travelling to Lesotho in June.

The company is optimistic accreditation will open doors to business with more EU countries and other international markets. It has already received inquiries from France, the UK and Australia.

A report in August last year [forecast](#) the European cannabis market will be worth \$37m (£26m) by 2027.

Located 2,000m above sea level in the mountain region just outside the capital Maseru, the company employs 250 people on its 5,000 sq metre farm. But it has plans to increase its workforce to 3,000, “which is almost the entire population of the community”, said Nthabeleng Peete, the company’s community liaison manager.

“Corporate social responsibility developmental projects will also take off and eventually reduce crime and poverty among the villagers,” said Peete.

MG Health’s chief executive officer, Andre Bothma, said: “We are sitting in a rural area where there is hardly any income. More business for the company will create a knock-on effect on the locals too, because we also acquire some products and services from the villagers. Some supply us with vegetables, milk and beans, among other [products]. An increase in the workforce means an increase in the villagers’ income, too.”

The tiny mountain kingdom was the first in [Africa](#) to license the growing of medicinal cannabis in 2017. The crop is widely produced in the country, although cannabis possession and use is illegal.

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## [Wyoming](#)

# ‘I’m not your food’: Wyoming jogger reasons with bear in face-off

Runner talked his way out of being mauled by large bear that pursued him for several minutes in Grand Teton national park



Although a black bear many are brown in color. Photograph: Duncan Selby/Alamy Stock Photo

Although a black bear many are brown in color. Photograph: Duncan Selby/Alamy Stock Photo

*[Jada Butler](#)*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 03.00 EDT

A runner talked his way out of a face-off with a large bear that pursued him for several minutes in Grand Teton national park in [Wyoming](#), a showdown the runner captured in a three-minute video that went viral.

## [North Carolina man saves wife's life in bobcat attack](#)

[Read more](#)

Evan Matthews said he often sees bears on his runs, but none had dared to come so close.

“This one was interested in me, so I had to change its mind,” he [wrote](#).

Rather than use his bear spray, which he deemed a last resort, Matthews opted to reason with his ursine inquisitor.

In the [video](#), the “cinnamon phase” black bear is seen stepping out of the woods and on to a road, despite Matthews’ stern objections.

“Hey – no!” Matthews shouts. “I don’t care if you’re hungry. I’m not your food.”

The bear continues to advance.

“Sure,” Matthews says, “we could take a walk if you want. You don’t get any closer, though.”

One defense [experts](#) say can ward off bears in the wild is to play dead. But Matthews chose not to do so, both because this was a black bear and because, he said, a solo bear with this much interest in a person “is not trying to eliminate a threat – it is trying to find an easy target. Don’t be one.”

Matthews retreated towards his car and continued talking to the bear, seeking to convince it he was human and “not to be mistaken with any other animal”.

After stalking the runner for half a mile, the bear ran back into the woods.

“Well, now, that’s the first time I’ve been kind of run up on by a bear,” Matthews chuckled. “That was exciting.”

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## Wildlife

# Genetic diversity in salmon has declined since fish farming introduced – study

Researchers say loss of diversity in Sweden's Atlantic salmon population could compromise ability of fish to adapt to climate change



Salmon chosen by so-called hatcheries are generally the same – they are selected for fast growth but are largely devoid of the special survival skills embodied by wild stock. Photograph: Robert F Bukaty/AP

Salmon chosen by so-called hatcheries are generally the same – they are selected for fast growth but are largely devoid of the special survival skills embodied by wild stock. Photograph: Robert F Bukaty/AP

*Natalie Grover* Science correspondent

Tue 20 Apr 2021 19.01 EDT

Fish farming may have been devised as a remedy to reinvigorate dwindling fish stocks but this human solution has spawned another problem: lower

genetic diversity.

Now, a study shows that the genetic makeup of Atlantic salmon populations from a century ago compared with the current stock across 13 Swedish rivers is more genetically similar than distinct, which researchers say could compromise the ability of the fish to adapt to climate change.

In the study, researchers compared DNA retrieved from 893 archived Baltic salmon scales collected by fishermen and fishery biologists in Sweden from the 1920s with 787 contemporary samples. Of the 13 rivers in focus, five solely harbour salmon populations that have been reared by humans, the researchers [wrote in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B](#).

In the 1920s and 30s, there was very little industry in the area – but by the 50s and 60s the hydropower sector was booming. This is when large-scale fish rearing – formally called stocking – took off as a mitigatory measure. It is apparent the genetic changes started taking place in tandem with the stocking, said the lead author, Dr Johan Östergren of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

The problems with stocking begin at the very outset: salmon chosen by so-called hatcheries are generally the same – they are selected for fast growth but are largely devoid of the [special survival skills embodied by wild stock](#). If reared salmon escape their pens or stray away from their designated water body, and end up mixing with wild species, they all but guarantee their offspring an inferior draw in the genetic lottery.

For example, if reared salmon from river A strays into river B, which exclusively has wild salmon, the genetic diversity as a result of reproduction between the two in river B will technically be enhanced. But overall, the species in two rivers will become genetically more similar, which could diminish the ability of the salmon to adapt to environmental changes. In fact, given that mixed offspring are likely carry inferior genetics and are therefore less likely to survive, stocking may not even reverse the decline in salmon populations in the long run.

“All these decisions [to rear fish] were taken in the 1950s and 60s ... but since then, they’ve never been reviewed scientifically. Maybe it’s time to

actually have a more scientific base,” said Östergren.

Carlos Garcia de Leaniz, the director of the centre for sustainable aquatic research at Swansea University, who was not involved in the study, said this latest research added merit to arguments that stocking was not the solution for salmon conservation, nor could it compensate for lost or degraded habitats.

“It is another nail in the coffin of stocking, the ... techno-arrogance approach to salmon conservation, one that simply addresses the symptoms (fewer fish) and not the causes (less water, less habitat, more fragmented rivers) by simply releasing fish,” he added.

“This is a very solid study that adds to the growing body of evidence that shows that stocking is at best a waste of time, at worst an additional problem for the same populations it is trying to restore.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/apr/21/genetic-diversity-in-salmon-has-declined-since-fish-farming-introduced-study>.

## [Hong Kong](#)

# Hong Kong woman, 90, conned out of \$32m in phone scam

The elderly millionaire fell prey to con artists posing as Chinese security officials who told her she was the victim of identity fraud



The view from The Peak district of Hong Kong where scammers preyed on a wealthy 90-year-old woman. Photograph: Lam Yik/Reuters

The view from The Peak district of Hong Kong where scammers preyed on a wealthy 90-year-old woman. Photograph: Lam Yik/Reuters

*Agence France-Presse*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 00.20 EDT

A 90-year-old [Hong Kong](#) woman has been conned out of US\$32m by fraudsters posing as Chinese officials, police have said, in the city's biggest recorded phone scam.

Police said on Tuesday that scammers had targeted an elderly woman living in a mansion on The Peak, Hong Kong's ritziest neighbourhood.

Last summer criminals contacted the unnamed woman pretending to be Chinese public security officials. They claimed her identity had been used in a serious criminal case in mainland China.

['He lost everything': how a phone call led to £110,000 loss and homelessness](#)  
[Read more](#)

She was told she needed to transfer money from her bank account into ones held by the investigation team for safekeeping and scrutiny, the South China Morning Post reported, citing police sources.

Police said several days later a person arrived at her house with a dedicated mobile phone and SIM card to communicate with the fake security agents who persuaded her to make a total of 11 bank transfers.

Over five months the elderly lady gave a total of HK\$250 million (\$32 million) to the scammers, the largest sum recorded yet by a phone con.

Police said the scam was only spotted because the elderly lady's domestic helper thought something suspicious was happening and contacted her employer's daughter who then alerted officers.

After an investigation a 19-year-old was arrested for fraud and has been released on bail, police said.

Hong Kong has one of the world's highest concentrations of billionaires, many of them elderly, making them vulnerable to scammers.

Reports of phone scams rose 18% in the first quarter of 2021 with fraudsters pocketing some HK\$350 million (US\$45m) over the period. In 2020, police said they handled 1,193 phone scam cases where a total of HK\$574m (\$74m) was stolen.

Last year a 65-year-old woman was duped out of HK\$68.9m (\$10m) after a similar scheme where people posed as mainland security officials.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/21/hong-kong-woman-90-conned-out-of-32m-in-phone-scam>

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**Business live**

**Business**

# UK inflation rises to 0.7%, pushed up by fuel and clothes – business live

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## George Floyd

# Oscar Grant's family on the Chauvin conviction: 'This is huge. We've been let down so many times'

Oscar Grant's death in 2009 in Oakland, California, was the first high-profile killing by police caught on cellphone video that went viral



Cephus "Bobby" Johnson stands in protest of the release of Johannes Mehserle, the transit officer who fatally shot his nephew Oscar Grant in 2009. Photograph: Nick Ut/AP

Cephus "Bobby" Johnson stands in protest of the release of Johannes Mehserle, the transit officer who fatally shot his nephew Oscar Grant in 2009. Photograph: Nick Ut/AP

*[Sam Levin](#)  
[@SamTLevin](#)*

Wed 21 Apr 2021 02.00 EDT

For the family of Oscar Grant, who was killed by police in 2009, the [guilty verdict](#) for Derek Chauvin was a rare moment of accountability – and a potential turning point in their fight against police brutality.

“This is a huge moment in the last 12 years of our struggle,” Grant’s uncle, Cephus Johnson, told the Guardian on Tuesday, an hour after a Minneapolis jury [convicted the former officer](#) of second- and third-degree murder, and manslaughter. “To be able to actually witness a conviction on all three charges was extremely emotional. We’ve been let down so many times.”

Reverend Wanda Johnson, Oscar’s mother, said she felt relieved: “I’m hopeful that this will be a moment that things will begin to change.”

[This US city was working to cut its police budget in half – then violent crime started to rise](#)

[Read more](#)

The guilty verdict in the murder of George Floyd offered the kind of court win that is [denied to nearly all families](#) of victims lost to [police killings](#). To some in the US, where police [fatally shoot](#) nearly 1,000 people each year and are almost never charged with a crime, the conviction offered a sense of comfort and hope.

For the Grant family, there were mixed emotions.

Oscar Grant was 22 years old and unarmed when he was killed on a train platform on New Year’s Day, 2009 in Oakland, California. It was the first high-profile killing by police that was caught on a cellphone video that went viral. The shooting sparked mass protests in California that spread across the country and paved the way for the Ferguson uprisings and [Black Lives Matter movement](#). The killing was later made famous by Ryan Coogler’s 2014 film Fruitvale Station, named after the site of the death.



Protesters call for justice in the killing of Oscar Grant on 13 June 2011 at the US district court building in Los Angeles. Photograph: Nick Ut/AP

“There’s an all-time high of dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system. And I think that has helped people realize that it’s time to stop allowing these police officers to just go home,” said Cephus, an activist also known as Uncle Bobby X. “This was a major victory. And this comes after many years of us fighting for accountability and transparency. So there is real hope that maybe we’re going in the right direction … I think a window of opportunity has opened up for us.”

Wanda said the verdict gave her hope that people no longer accept police lies about violence that the public can see for themselves on camera: “It can no longer be said, like it was said in my son’s case, that what you see is not happening. People will not be fooled any more … I hate that George Floyd, Oscar and others had to be an example, or a sacrifice. But I am grateful that our society is waking up. I believe people will no longer be silent, that they will stand up for what is right.”

For the family and their supporters, however, there were reasons to be cautious about celebrating this week’s ruling: they were intimately familiar with the limits of a criminal conviction.

Johannes Mehserle, the officer who shot Grant in the back, was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter in 2010 after claiming in court that he meant to draw his Taser, not his gun. A judge later backed the defense's claims that the killing was an accident, dismissed an enhancement that would've sent the officer to state prison and ultimately sentenced him to spend less than a year in county jail.

"We were left brokenhearted," Cephus said, recalling the court process.

"I'm happy the [Chauvin] jury got it right. But I also know that the way the justice system works, you cannot let down your guard," added Adante Pointer, one of the civil rights lawyers who represented Grant's family. "The journey to justice when you're a victim of police misconduct is long, painful and torturous. And we learned with the Oscar Grant case that there are two different systems in place: one for regular people, and one for police officers."

It took a decade and the passage of a new state law for records to become unsealed in the Grant case, with disclosures in 2019 revealing that police had called him racist slurs and punched him without justification before killing him – and that investigators at the time did not believe Mehserle's defense that it was an accidental firing.

The 2020 uprisings after Floyd's death prompted local Oakland prosecutors to reopen the Grant case and consider possible charges for a second officer, but the district attorney announced in January of this year that there was not enough evidence for new prosecution.

Wanda said she is still pushing for prosecution: "I am definitely not just going to let it go without a fight. This will be not just for Oscar, but to give other families hope ... The officer in my son's case ended up doing 11 months in jail. And I always say, 'What was Oscar's life worth?'" And we're seeing now what African American lives are worth. So we'll be watchful of the [Chauvin] sentencing."

Cephus said that while the Floyd family was hopefully able to get a good night's sleep for the first time in a year, "The family also knows that this is not over."

There were other reasons to be skeptical of the long-term impact of the conviction, Cephus said: “I’m cautious, because police might just be throwing [Chauvin] under the bus. It doesn’t mean that police shootings are going to stop. The racism will continue.” He was also fearful of the police reaction to the verdict, having witnessed officers escalate violence in the wake of protests or victories for accountability: “Harm could come to us because of the backlash.”



People leaves messages at a memorial to Oscar Grant in Oakland, California on 5 October 2010. Photograph: Paul Sakuma/AP

The events of last month have offered repeated reminders to Grant’s family that little has changed since his killing. An officer had pinned Grant down by [putting his knee on him](#) in the same manner as Chauvin’s murder of Floyd was described at trial.

“The same knee that was on George Floyd’s neck was on my son Oscar’s neck, and Oscar kept telling him he couldn’t breathe,” Wanda said.

And the officer who [killed 20-year-old Daunte Wright](#) during a traffic stop this month, just 10 miles from the Chauvin trial, has also claimed that she mistook her gun for a Taser, officials say, echoing Mehserle’s claims a decade prior. The revelation that Wright had called his mother as he was

being stopped further reminded Cephus of how Grant called his fiancee just before his killing.

“The similarities to what Oscar experienced on that night, the accumulation of all of this in one episode, it just really brought back Oscar so vividly,” Cephus said. “Oscar’s murder did not build the foundation to prevent all of these episodes from happening again.”

During the events of the last few weeks, Wanda said she was thinking of the history of American police forces, which were founded to catch runaway slaves: “Our culture of policing evolved from that. So we have to look at the system our policing was built on, and we really have to go back and work to tear down that system – and rebuild it again.”

She added, “I hope this is a turning point for our society.”

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## **Headlines monday 19 april 2021**

- [European Super League Boris Johnson says government will try to stop breakaway competition](#)
- [Live European Super League: fan fury at plans for football breakaway](#)
- [Football Premier League ‘big six’ sign up to European Super League](#)
- [Explainer How will the new European Super League work?](#)

## [European Super League](#)

# Boris Johnson says government will try to stop European Super League

Prime minister vows to ‘look at everything we can do’ amid rising anger over breakaway competition

- [European Super League – live updates](#)

03:19

European Super League: what does it mean for football? – video explainer

*Peter Walker* Political correspondent

[@peterwalker99](#)

Mon 19 Apr 2021 06.46 EDT

Boris Johnson has promised the government will “look at everything we can do” to block a [plan by six leading English football clubs](#) to join a breakaway European Super League, amid rising anger among politicians and fans over the idea.

Officials in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport are understood to be urgently examining possible options for preventing the scheme and looking at wider ideas to reform the governance of English football.

While it remains unclear what powers ministers may have to impose change, possible options include action to stop the plan under competition laws, or imposing club ownership structures with greater fan involvement.

Downing Street has held open the possibility of legislation to block the plan, with Johnson’s spokesman saying the government was “not looking to rule anything out at this stage”.

He said: “We are considering a range of options. I’m not able to set out full details at this point. We’ll set them out in due course, once we’ve considered all possible options.”

Further details are expected when Oliver Dowden, the culture secretary, makes a Commons statement at about 5pm on Monday.

Speaking on a visit to Gloucestershire, the prime minister said: “I don’t like the look of these proposals, and we’ll be consulted about what we can do.”

Johnson added: “We are going to look at everything that we can do with the football authorities to make sure that this doesn’t go ahead in the way that it’s currently being proposed. I don’t think that it’s good news for fans, I don’t think it’s good news for football in this country.

“These clubs are not just great global brands – of course they’re great global brands – they’re also clubs that have originated historically from their towns, from their cities, from their local communities. They should have a link with those fans, and with the fanbase in their community. So it is very, very important that that continues to be the case.”

## Quick Guide

### **How Uefa's new 'Swiss system' Champions League works**

Show

### **New UEFA 'Swiss system' for the Champions League**

From the 2024/25 season, the UEFA Champions League will be expanded to 36 teams. Replacing the group stage is one 'Swiss system' league table, and each team is guaranteed to play ten matches, five home and five away. Fixtures will be determined by seedings.

The top eight sides in the league table after the ten matches will qualify for the knockout stage. Teams finishing in ninth to 24th place will compete in a two-legged play-off to secure their place in the last 16 of the competition.

From the Round of 16 onwards, the traditional two-legged home and away knockout ties take place, culminating in a one-off final at a neutral venue.

Similar format changes will also be applied to the UEFA Europa League and the new UEFA Europa Conference League competition, which may also be expanded.

### 'European Super League' proposal

On 18 April 2021, twelve clubs had announced that they intended to be the founding members of a new "European Super League". The clubs were: AC Milan, Arsenal, Atlético de Madrid, Chelsea, Barcelona, Inter Milan, Juventus, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United, Real Madrid and Tottenham Hotspur

Their proposal document stated that there would be "clubs participating in two groups of 10, playing home and away fixtures, with the top three in each group automatically qualifying for the quarter-finals. Teams finishing fourth and fifth will then compete in a two-legged play-off for the remaining quarter-final positions. A two-leg knockout format will be used to reach the final at the end of May, which will be staged as a single fixture at a neutral venue."

The project faces collapse in the face of overwhelming opposition from fans, clubs not invited, and the footballing authorities, after the six founding English clubs announced they would withdraw..

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Separately, the chair of the Commons culture, media and sport committee condemned what he called “a dark day for football” and said his committee would examine what more could be done in a meeting on Tuesday.

The Conservative MP Julian Knight said: “What’s needed is a fan-led review of football with real teeth and here we have more evidence to strengthen the case for it. Football needs a reset, but this is not the way to do

it. The interests of community clubs must be put at the heart of any future plans.”

Labour has called on ministers to use the announcement of the plan, [made late on Sunday night](#), as the impetus to tackle wider governance issues in the English game, a change some Conservative MPs had already been calling for.

Under plans for the midweek competition, which its organisers want to start in August, Manchester City, Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham would join three teams from Italy and three from Spain, and three more to be confirmed, as “founder” clubs, which would always take part.

The merchant bank JP Morgan announced on Monday it would be financing the proposed new league.

Ahead of the announcement of the format, Johnson [tweeted](#) that the plan would be “very damaging for football and we support football authorities in taking action”.

Alison McGovern, the shadow sports minister, said the government must step in immediately, and introduce wider changes for the sport in England.

“For too long, the very fans who built football in this country have been treated as an afterthought,” she said. “We’ve seen communities lose their clubs, foreign owners strip assets and wealth, the neglect of the women’s game and fans priced out.

“That must now change. The government must get on with the fan-led review it has promised. There must be an independent regulator established. And these must all focus on long overdue action to ensure that fans can never again be separated from their clubs.”

[Share your views on the European Super League](#)

[Read more](#)

Also commenting before full details of the plan emerged, the Labour leader, [Keir Starmer](#), said the idea of a super league with some clubs guaranteed participation “cuts across all the things that make football great. It diminishes competition. It pulls up the drawbridge.”

Johnson is also set to face pressure from his own benches. In January, the Conservative MP and former sports minister Helen Grant [proposed a bill](#) for an independent football regulator for England, with powers to review finances and redistribute incomes.

In a statement on Monday, Grant said the clubs’ plan “only reinforces the need” for such a watchdog. She said: “A regulator is urgently needed to stand up for the interests of the wider game of football in our country and to put football’s governance on a fairer and more sustainable footing.”

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This article was downloaded by [calibre](#) from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/apr/19/ministers-urged-to-take-action-over-european-super-league-plan>

## European Super League

# European Super League: government vows to block English clubs – as it happened

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/live/2021/apr/19/european-super-league-latest-reaction-to-breakaway-football-competition-live>

## European Super League

# European Super League: Premier League ‘big six’ sign up to competition

- Statement confirms involvement of 12 clubs
- Uefa, Premier League and politicians condemn proposal
- [Analysis and reaction to football’s ‘civil war’](#)



Six English clubs – Manchester City, Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham – have signed up to the breakaway competition. Photograph: [thesuperleague.com](http://thesuperleague.com)

Six English clubs – Manchester City, Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham – have signed up to the breakaway competition. Photograph: [thesuperleague.com](http://thesuperleague.com)

*[Ed Aarons](#) and [Sean Ingle](#)*

Sun 18 Apr 2021 18.52 EDT

European football was thrown into turmoil on Sunday night after new plans for a European super league were revealed that would mean six English clubs – Manchester City, Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham – joining the breakaway competition alongside three teams from each of Italy and Spain.

[Only someone who truly hates football can be behind a European super league](#)

[Read more](#)

After a dramatic day that earlier saw Boris Johnson and the French president, Emmanuel Macron, both condemn proposals that had been met with widespread criticism from around the continent, a statement just after 11pm UK time from the newly formed [European Super League](#) confirmed plans to begin the new competition as early as this August.

The plans, which would represent one of the biggest changes ever made in the football calendar, threaten not only the future of the [Champions League](#) but could have a seismic impact on the entire structure of the club game. In England the Premier League had urged clubs “to walk away immediately before irreparable damage is done”.

“Twelve of Europe’s leading football clubs have today come together to announce they have agreed to establish a new mid-week competition, the Super League, governed by its founding clubs,” it read. “AC Milan, Arsenal FC, Atlético de Madrid, Chelsea FC, FC Barcelona, FC Internazionale Milano, Juventus FC, Liverpool FC, Manchester City, Manchester United, Real Madrid CF and Tottenham Hotspur have all joined as founding clubs. It is anticipated that a further three clubs will join ahead of the inaugural season, which is intended to commence as soon as practicable.”

03:19

European Super League: what does it mean for football? – video explainer

[Explainer: how will the new European Super League work?](#)

[Read more](#)

The statement added: “Going forward, the founding clubs look forward to holding discussions with [Uefa](#) and Fifa to work together in partnership to deliver the best outcomes for the new League and for football as a whole. The formation of the Super League comes at a time when the global pandemic has accelerated the instability in the existing European football economic model. Further, for a number of years, the founding clubs have had the objective of improving the quality and intensity of existing European competitions throughout each season, and of creating a format for top clubs and players to compete on a regular basis.”

According to the ESL, the new format will involve midweek fixtures, with all participating clubs continuing to compete in their respective national leagues, “preserving the traditional domestic match calendar which remains at the heart of the club game”.

“An August start with clubs participating in two groups of 10, playing home and away fixtures, with the top three in each group automatically qualifying for the quarter-finals. Teams finishing fourth and fifth will then compete in a two-legged play-off for the remaining quarter-final positions. A two-leg knockout format will be used to reach the final at the end of May, which will be staged as a single fixture at a neutral venue. As soon as practicable after the start of the men’s competition, a corresponding women’s league will also be launched, helping to advance and develop the women’s game.”

We are one of 12 Founding Clubs of the European Super League

— Arsenal (@Arsenal) [April 18, 2021](#)

Uefa and the [Premier League](#) had earlier strongly condemned the proposals, with the former describing the plans as a “cynical project founded on the self-interest of a few clubs”. Its statement, which was also signed by the [Premier League](#), the Football Association and their counterparts in Spain and Italy, reiterated the threat to ban any players involved from “any competition at domestic, European or world level”.

[European Super League: how did the clubs get to this point?](#)

[Read more](#)

Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich have so far insisted they have not signed up so it remains to be seen whether the others will carry out their threat to turn their backs on their domestic leagues and risk their players being barred from all competitions, including the World Cup. PSG's reluctance to turn their back on Ligue 1 despite major issues with its new TV rights deal could be down to proposed stringent financial regulations in the new competition that would be similar to Uefa's financial fair play regulations.

The impetus for the breakaway league has come from the Real Madrid president, Florentino Pérez – who will be chairman of the new organisation – along with Joel Glazer of Manchester United and Andrea Agnelli of Juventus, who will be vice-chairmen.

“We will help football at every level and take it to its rightful place in the world,” said Pérez. “Football is the only global sport in the world with more than four billion fans and our responsibility as big clubs is to respond to their desires.”

[‘Pure greed’: Gary Neville takes aim at clubs involved in European super league](#)

[Read more](#)

Agnelli added: “Our 12 founder clubs represent billions of fans across the globe and 99 European trophies. We have come together at this critical moment, enabling European competition to be transformed, putting the game we love on a sustainable footing for the long-term future, substantially increasing solidarity, and giving fans and amateur players a regular flow of headline fixtures that will feed their passion for the game while providing them with engaging role models.”

Uefa is due to sign off new plans for an expanded and restructured Champions League on Monday but the timing of the latest development could now put that in jeopardy. “We will consider all measures available to us, at all levels, both judicial and sporting in order to prevent this happening,” said Uefa’s statement. “Football is based on open competitions and sporting merit; it cannot be any other way.”

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The project faces collapse in the face of overwhelming opposition from fans, clubs not invited, and the footballing authorities, after [the six founding English clubs](#) announced they would withdraw..

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

After the announcement, Fifa, the world game's governing body, said it "can only express its disapproval to a 'closed European breakaway league' outside of the international football structures ... Fifa always stands for unity in world football and calls on all parties involved in heated discussions to engage in calm, constructive and balanced dialogue for the good of the game and in the spirit of solidarity and fair play. Fifa will, of course, do whatever is necessary to contribute to a harmonised way forward in the overall interests of football."

Plans for a European Super League would be very damaging for football and we support football authorities in taking action.

They would strike at the heart of the domestic game, and will concern fans across the country. (1/2)

— Boris Johnson (@BorisJohnson) [April 18, 2021](#)

The clubs involved must answer to their fans and the wider footballing community before taking any further steps. (2/2)

— Boris Johnson (@BorisJohnson) [April 18, 2021](#)

The Premier League's chief executive, Richard Masters, is believed to have written to all 20 of the league's clubs in England to state his organisation's opposition to the new proposals.

A separate statement added: "The Premier League condemns any proposal that attacks the principles of open competition and sporting merit which are at the heart of the domestic and European football pyramid. Fans of any club

in England and across Europe can currently dream that their team may climb to the top and play against the best. We believe that the concept of a European super league would destroy this dream.

“A European super league will undermine the appeal of the whole game, and have a deeply damaging impact on the immediate and future prospects of the Premier League and its member clubs, and all those in football who rely on our funding and solidarity to prosper. We will work with fans, the FA, EFL, PFA and LMA, as well as other stakeholders, at home and abroad, to defend the integrity and future prospects of English football in the best interests of the game.”

The culture secretary, Oliver Dowden, also said the plans “could create a closed shop at the very top of our national game. “Sustainability, integrity and fair competition are absolutely paramount and anything that undermines this is deeply troubling and damaging for football,” he added. “We have a football pyramid where funds from the globally successful Premier League flow down the leagues and into local communities. I would be bitterly disappointed to see any action that destroys that.”

The former United manager Sir Alex Ferguson led criticism of the new proposals, telling Reuters that a super league would be “a move away from 70 years of European club football”.

[Women’s Champions League holders Lyon crash out against PSG](#)  
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“Everton are spending £500m to build a new stadium with the ambition to play in Champions League. Fans all over love the competition as it is,” he said. “In my time at United, we played in four Champions League finals and they were always the most special of nights. I’m not sure [if] Manchester United are involved in this, as I am not part of the decision making process.”

“I am disgusted by Manchester United and Liverpool the most,” added former United defender Gary Neville on Sky Sports. “Liverpool, they pretend [with] You’ll Never Walk Alone [they are] the people’s club, the fans’ club. Manchester United – 100 years, born out of workers. And they

are breaking away into a league without competition, that they can't be relegated from?

“It is an absolute disgrace. Honestly, we have to wrestle back power in this country from the clubs at the top of this league, and that includes my club.”

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The organisation Football Supporters Europe described the plans as “illegitimate, irresponsible, and anti-competitive by design” which “will be the final nail in the coffin of European football”.

It added: “It is driven exclusively by greed. The only ones who stand to gain are hedge funds, oligarchs, and a handful of already wealthy clubs, many of which perform poorly in their own domestic leagues despite their in-built advantage.”

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## [European Super League](#)

# Explainer: how will the new European Super League work?

Questions and answers on plans unveiled by 12 leading European clubs to launch a breakaway midweek league

03:19

European Super League: what does it mean for football? – video explainer



[Marcus Christenson](#)

[@m\\_christenson](#)

Sun 18 Apr 2021 20.52 EDT

On Sunday night 12 European football clubs announced [the formation of a new competition](#), the Super League, to widespread criticism from governments, their own domestic leagues, football federations as well as Uefa and supporters around the world.

## [European Super League: Premier League ‘big six’ sign up to competition](#)

[Read more](#)

It would be the biggest shake-up in the history of the European game although [Uefa](#) has said it will fight what it called “a cynical project founded on the self-interest of a few clubs”. Here we look at what the 12 clubs are proposing.

### **Who are the 12 ‘founding members’?**

Milan, Arsenal, Atlético Madrid, Chelsea, Barcelona, Inter, Juventus, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United, Real Madrid and Tottenham.

### **What about the big German and French clubs?**

They have said that they are currently not interested in joining the project. Those clubs include Bayern Munich, last season’s [Champions League](#) winners, and Paris Saint-Germain, the beaten finalists who will play Manchester City in one of the [Champions League](#) semi-finals.

### **Will the 12 clubs leave their domestic leagues?**

At the moment they are hoping to remain playing in those competitions but the leagues have all issued strong-worded statements condemning the clubs and the new breakaway league.

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### **How much money is involved?**

A lot, as you can imagine. The statement from the 12 clubs said: “Founding clubs will receive an amount of €3.5bn solely to support their infrastructure investment plans and to offset the impact of the Covid pandemic.” It added: “The new annual tournament will provide significantly greater economic growth and support for European football … and [solidarity payments] are expected to be in excess of €10bn during the course of the initial commitment period of the clubs.”

[Only someone who truly hates football can be behind a European super league | Jonathan Liew](#)

[Read more](#)

## **How would it work?**

There would be 20 participating clubs, with 15 founding clubs and a qualifying mechanism for a further five teams to qualify annually based on achievements in the prior season.

## **When would matches be played?**

There would be midweek fixtures with all participating clubs hoping to compete in their respective national leagues. There would be two groups of 10, playing home and away fixtures, with the top three in each group automatically qualifying for the quarter-finals. Teams finishing fourth and fifth would then compete in a two-legged play-off for the remaining quarter-final positions. A two-leg knockout format would be used to reach the final at the end of May, which would be staged as a single fixture at a neutral venue.

## **When is it due to start?**

The clubs said in their statement that they were looking to start the competition in August.

## **What about women's football?**

The clubs said: "As soon as practicable after the start of the men's competition, a corresponding women's league will also be launched, helping to advance and develop the women's game."



Florentino Pérez, president of Real Madrid, will be the first chairman of the European Super League. Photograph: Quality Sport Images/Getty Images

### **What did the organisers claim?**

Florentino Pérez, president of Real Madrid and the first chairman of the Super League, said: “We will help football at every level and take it to its rightful place in the world. Football is the only global sport in the world with more than four billion fans and our responsibility as big clubs is to respond to their desires.” Perez’s vice-chairs will be Joel Glazer of Manchester United and Andrea Agnelli of Juventus. Glazer said: “By bringing together the world’s greatest clubs and players to play each other throughout the season, the Super League will open a new chapter for European football, ensuring world-class competition and facilities, and increased financial support for the wider football pyramid.”

### **What has the reaction been?**

There has been widespread disgust at the idea with Gary Neville, the former Manchester United defender summing up most people’s feelings when he said: “I’m disgusted with Manchester United and Liverpool the most. They’re breaking away to a competition they can’t be relegated from? It’s an absolute disgrace. It’s pure greed, they’re impostors. The owners of Man

United, Liverpool, Chelsea and Man City have nothing to do with football in this country. They're an absolute joke. Time has come now to have independent regulators to stop these clubs from having the power base. Enough is enough."

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## 2021.04.19 - Coronavirus

- 'If we catch Covid, we die' UK shielders reflect on still feeling unsafe
- Cambodia Government accused of using Covid to edge towards 'totalitarian dictatorship'
- Medical research Covid: trial to study effect of immune system on reinfection
- US Workers who risked their lives to care for elderly demand change

## Coronavirus

# ‘If we catch Covid, we die’: UK shielders reflect on still feeling unsafe

Many of those with medical conditions are concerned and nervous about the risk of leaving their homes



Sarah Spoor, whose two adult sons have complex medical conditions.  
Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

Sarah Spoor, whose two adult sons have complex medical conditions.  
Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

*[Jessica Murray](#)*

Mon 19 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

Sarah Spoor and her two adult sons have spent the past 14 months shielding in a one-bedroom apartment, with no garden, in west London. Her youngest sleeps in the bedroom, his brother has a pull-out bed in the kitchen, while Spoor takes the living room in another fold-out bed.

All three have complex medical conditions that leave them vulnerable to Covid, and despite the strain of living in such close quarters, they don't feel safe leaving home any time soon.

"If we catch it, we die; it's that simple. In the 14 months, I have probably been out about four times, and that's usually in some dire emergency," said Spoor, who provides round-the-clock care for her sons, 20 and 24, after their medical team decided it was too risky for their usual carers to continue visiting.

"We're having to sleep in shifts. I'm probably having three to four hours' broken sleep a day. It's like a wartime situation. All we're doing is just surviving and I'm not unique; that's what other carers are doing."

Spoor said she has looked on in horror as people have flooded to shops, outdoor bars and restaurants, as part of lockdown easing last week, even while case rates remain high in some parts of the country and surge testing is under way for variants.

[A year inside: what shielding has meant for the most vulnerable - podcast](#)  
[Read more](#)

"It's horrific, the pandemic is not over, where did anyone get that idea from? The whole thing is madness. I just look longingly at Taiwan, China, New Zealand, Australia [where cases are low or nonexistent], I wish we could just ship out there for a couple of years."

The family has yet to be vaccinated as they have a rare autoimmune disorder which results in a range of conditions, including, among other things, type 1 diabetes, adrenal insufficiency, pernicious anemia and thyroid failure. Spoor says the disorder means they are likely to experience a severe reaction leading to hospital admission, and they are concerned about the risk of catching Covid in hospital when cases are still prevalent.

Spoor is not alone in fearing a return to life after lockdown, with disability charity Scope estimating 75% of disabled people plan to continue shielding until after their second vaccine dose, and some for longer.

“I think there is a potential long-term impact that groups of people become squirrelled away and it’s potentially easy for governments and local authorities to forget about them,” said James Taylor, executive director of strategy and social change at Scope. “We’re really worried that, in the long-term, lots of the rights that disabled people have fought for, the visibility, the recognition of disabled people as equal, that all falling away and going backwards.”

After a year in the safety of home, many shielders are nervous about the thought of accessing busy spaces full of people. Craig Harrison, who has rheumatoid arthritis, has been shielding alone at home in Derby for a year, and thinks he will continue in some extent for another year. “It’s become normal now. I can’t imagine it changing, not until the majority of Covid has gone away. I’m not going to be queueing up outside Lidl on a Monday morning just because I can do that, it seems pointless.”

There are also concerns about disabled people being unable to participate in activities as lockdown eases due to their vulnerabilities, particularly after it was announced [clinically extremely vulnerable people would be barred from the Carabao Cup final in April.](#)

“There’s a potential risk that we end up with a bit of a two-tier society, where we go back to attitudes that were quite prevalent 10-15 years ago, where disabled people were only seen as needing to be cared for, as getting in the way, as being a vulnerable group, which is completely wrong, and not where we should be as a society,” said Taylor.

For Spoor and her sons, there’s a long road ahead before they can envision anything like the life they lived before Covid-19. “I imagine it’s probably going to be another year. [The scientific advisers] were saying we won’t go back into lockdown again, we’ll just have a few more deaths. Well, that’s going to be us. It still feels like we’re going to get it and die.”

This article was updated on 20 April 2021 to clarify some details about the Spoors’ medical condition.

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## Global development

# Cambodia accused of using Covid to edge towards ‘totalitarian dictatorship’

New law means people could face 20 years in prison for lockdown breaches, as campaigners warn of ‘human rights disaster’

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



A police officer stops motorists to check their documents during a 14-day lockdown in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 16 April 2021. Photograph: Cindy Liu/Reuters

A police officer stops motorists to check their documents during a 14-day lockdown in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 16 April 2021. Photograph: Cindy Liu/Reuters

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[Sarah Johnson](#)

Mon 19 Apr 2021 02.15 EDT

Cambodians who break Covid rules could face 20 years in prison under a new law that human rights groups say takes the country “a step towards a totalitarian dictatorship”.

Prime minister Hun Sen warned that Cambodia was “on the brink of death” as [a two-week lockdown was imposed in Phnom Penh](#) on Thursday to try to control the spread of the virus.

The law means those convicted could face fines of up to \$5,000 (£3,627) as well as prison terms, and grants the government the power to ban or restrict any gathering or demonstration indefinitely.

“For the Cambodian people, the Covid-19 pandemic has been not only a public health and economic tragedy, but also a human rights disaster courtesy of a government determined to move the country step by step towards totalitarian dictatorship,” said Phil Robertson, deputy director of the Asia division at Human Rights Watch.

Sopheap Chak, executive director at the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, said the new law, which was introduced last month, lacked transparency, used “vague and broad terminology” and had no oversight.

She said: “The law’s ill-defined offences open the door to subjective interpretation and arbitrary enforcement, and the disproportionate criminal sanctions they carry represent a threat for critical and dissenting voices in Cambodia, against whom the repressive legislative framework has frequently been used as a weapon in recent years.”

Cambodia has among the fewest coronavirus cases in Asia, but an outbreak that started in late February has seen cases rise to 5,480 within two months and 38 fatalities.

Police have barricaded areas in Phnom Penh to prevent people from travelling over Khmer New Year and checkpoints were set up between areas under lockdown.

“Please my people – join your efforts to end this dangerous event,” [the prime minister said in a recorded address](#) on state-run television on Wednesday night.

“We are on the brink of death already,” he said. “If we don’t join hands together, we will head to real death.”



Military personnel prepare beds for Covid patients at a wedding party hall turned field hospital in Phnom Penh. Photograph: Tang Chhin Sothy/AFP/Getty

A group of UN special rapporteurs has written to the prime minister calling for a review of the legislation, expressing “serious concern” over measures that undermine fundamental human rights, including freedom of movement, peaceful assembly and the right to work.

At least four people had been arrested since the “law on measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and other serious, dangerous and contagious diseases” took effect, and several others had been sent to quarantine, the UN experts said.

Robertson said dozens of people had been arrested and held in pre-trial detention for criticising the government’s Covid response.

[Jailed for a Facebook post: garment workers' rights at risk during Covid-19](#)  
[Read more](#)

In a statement, the senate said [the law was aimed at protecting public health](#) and mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic.

“The law demonstrates the government’s willingness to assume greater responsibility for the protection of people’s lives, security and public order as the country faces threats by Covid-19 and other contagious diseases,” it said.

While noting the challenges for any government dealing with a pandemic, Rhona Smith, the UN special rapporteur for Cambodia, told the Guardian: “[The law] is unnecessarily punitive and it’s difficult because most people won’t be able to pay the fines.”

She added: “It’s a matter of public record that prisons in Cambodia are massively overcrowded. The government is aware but if they start putting people into prison for Covid violations, that adds further to overcrowding and also to concerns about the potential of spread of Covid-19 through prisons.”

Smith and her UN colleagues are concerned that fears over the use of their personal data will deter people from getting tested, or vaccinated. Since 3 April, the Phnom Penh city administration has published private details of 976 people who tested positive for the virus, including their name, age, workplace and address.



Garment factory workers and staff wait to receive the Sinovac vaccine.  
Photograph: Cindy Liu/Reuters

Authorities in other provinces are also publishing personal information. “The public disclosure of personal data, including names of those who have contracted the virus, is a deplorable breach of the right to privacy and can lead to discrimination and stigma,” the experts said.

Human rights groups fear the law and other measures taken since the pandemic began are a sign that human rights are disintegrating in Cambodia.

“This law is in line with Hun Sen’s continuous approach to use the Covid-19 crisis to increase his authority and control over Cambodia, and see into the law books quite expansive powers that he can employ virtually at will,” said Robertson.

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## Medical research

# Covid: trial to study effect of immune system on reinfection

Oxford scientists will track whether participants are reinfected when re-exposed to coronavirus

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A pharmacist fills syringes with a Covid-19 vaccine. Photograph: Joseph Prezioso/AFP/Getty Images

A pharmacist fills syringes with a Covid-19 vaccine. Photograph: Joseph Prezioso/AFP/Getty Images

*Nicola Davis* Science correspondent  
[@NicolaKSDavis](#)

Mon 19 Apr 2021 02.16 EDT

The immune response needed to protect people against reinfection with the coronavirus will be explored in a new human challenge trial, researchers have revealed.

Human challenge trials involve deliberately exposing healthy people to a disease-causing organism in a carefully controlled manner, and have proved valuable in understanding and tackling myriad conditions from malaria to tuberculosis and gonorrhoea.

The first [human challenge trials for Covid](#) began this year, with the study – a partnership led by researchers at Imperial College London among others – initially looking at the smallest amount of virus needed to cause infection among people who have not had Covid before.

Now researchers at the [University of Oxford](#) have announced that they have gained research ethics approval for a new human challenge trial involving people who have previously had coronavirus. Recruitment is expected to start in the next couple of weeks.

“The point of this study is to determine what kind of immune response prevents reinfection,” said Helen McShane, a professor of vaccinology at the University of Oxford, and chief investigator on the study.

McShane said the team would measure the levels of various components of participants’ immune response – including T-cells and antibodies – and then track whether participants became reinfected when exposed to the virus.

Participants must be healthy, at low risk from Covid, aged between 18 and 30, and must have been infected with the coronavirus at least three months before joining the trial. As well as having previously had a positive Covid PCR test, they must also have antibodies to Covid. Given the timing criteria, McShane said it was likely most participants would have previously been infected with the original strain of the virus.

The first phase of the trial will initially involve 24 participants split into dose groups of three to eight people who will receive, via the nose, the original strain of coronavirus. The idea is to start with a very low dose and, if necessary, increase the dose – up to a point – between groups.

“Our target is to have 50% of our subjects infected but with no, or only very mild, disease,” said McShane, adding that once the dose required to achieve this is determined it will be administered to 10-40 other participants to confirm the dose.

The second phase of the study – expected to start in the summer – will involve a new group of participants and will study closely their immune response before and after exposure to the virus, as well as the level of virus and symptoms in those who become reinfected.

Should reinfection be confirmed, or symptoms develop, in either phase of the trial, participants will be given a monoclonal antibody treatment.

Participants will be reimbursed just under £5,000 for the full study, as each volunteer will need to quarantine for at least 17 days during the trial, and be followed up for 12 months.

The team says the study could not only reveal what level of the different aspects of immune response are needed to prevent reinfection, but also shed light on the durability of protection, and aid the development of treatments and vaccines.

“If we can determine the level of immune response above which an individual cannot be infected, then that will help us determine whether new vaccines will be effective without necessarily having to test them in phase three efficacy trials,” said McShane.

McShane added that future challenge trials could probe similar questions about protection for individuals exposed to a different variant of the virus to that which caused their first infection.

Prof Danny Altmann of Imperial College London, said he welcomed the trial.

“Human challenge studies can be done safely and ethically to fast-track discoveries in infectious disease and vaccine research,” he said. “Some of the key points that can’t easily come out of other, less controlled studies are the earliest immune correlates of the response to infection.”

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## US news

# US workers who risked their lives to care for elderly demand change

Nursing home and home care workers worked long days with inadequate protection during the pandemic – now they want better pay and conditions



An LED display at a protest calling on Congress to invest in care jobs in Washington DC last month. Photograph: Jemal Countess/Getty Images for National Domestic Workers Alliance & Service Employees International Union

An LED display at a protest calling on Congress to invest in care jobs in Washington DC last month. Photograph: Jemal Countess/Getty Images for National Domestic Workers Alliance & Service Employees International Union

*[Michael Sainato](#)*

Mon 19 Apr 2021 05.00 EDT

During the coronavirus pandemic, Shantonia Jackson, a certified nursing assistant at a nursing home in Cicero, Illinois, worked through Covid-19 outbreaks in which more than 250 residents tested positive for the virus, and one of her co-workers and friends passed away along with several residents.

Jackson described working 16-hour days, seven days a week, as dozens of employees were often out sick or in quarantine. Caring for 70 residents at once, she still made time for those she cared for to use her cellphone to make video calls to loved ones they were no longer able to see. Adequate personal protective equipment was a constant issue and concern. At home, Jackson quarantined herself from the rest of her family, only interacting with her daughter through video calls even though they live in the same house.

In November 2020, Jackson and her co-workers went on [strike](#) for 12 days during new contract negotiations between management and her union, SEIU, for better pay and improved working conditions.

It took until March 2021 for Jackson, her co-workers, and residents to begin [receiving](#) vaccines.

“This industry is broken. Nobody cares about the elderly any more,” said Jackson. “We need to improve the way people perceive home care and nursing home work. There needs to be a big reform, and not letting it be about numbers and greed, not worrying about the head count a facility can get, it should be about proper care.”

Jackson is just one of many workers in the nursing home and home care industries who have held [rallies](#) with [labor unions and organizations pushing](#) for systemic changes in long-term care after the coronavirus pandemic’s impact on Americans living in nursing homes or dependent on home healthcare medical services. Workers are calling for higher pay, better training and advancement opportunities, safe staffing ratios and greater investments in long-term care.

“Why do people not respect nursing home and home care workers? People think because you clean shit, you are shit, but if nobody cleaned up the shit, the world would be full of shit,” added Jackson. “This is the most people

we've had who are elderly of all time and the baby boomer generation is just getting older. We have a lot of elderly people. This is everybody's fight."

Over 1.4 million long-term care residents and employees contracted Covid-19 in the US, and more than 181,000 deaths occurred as a result, according to data compiled by the Kaiser Family Foundation. An analysis by the Associated Press estimated another 40,000 excess deaths occurred in these facilities between March 2020 and November 2020 that were not from Covid-19.

Charles Sloan, a certified nursing assistant at a nursing home in Detroit, Michigan, for 10 years, characterized the pandemic's impact on nursing homes as a "storm".

"We made a lot of sacrifices," said Sloan. "There were staff who left, residents who lost their lives, staff members who lost their lives, people who contracted the virus."

Though he noted things had calmed down due to the rapid vaccine rollout in the US, there needs to be greater recognition of what workers in healthcare went through during the pandemic and greater investment in healthcare.

"We really need to look at the healthcare industry in a completely different way," added Sloan. "Workers have made sacrifices and tireless efforts to try to get things back on track. We just want people to be remembered and we want to have procedures in place so that we don't have to go through this again."

A March 2021 report published by Human Rights Watch found widespread problems in US nursing care facilities that worsened during the pandemic, ranging from understaffing, lack of oversight and accountability of these facilities, and prolonged isolation and neglect of residents due to Covid-19 safety protocols.

Laura Mills, the author of the report, explained family visitors often serve significant roles in providing care to loved ones living in long-term nursing facilities as understaffing and high turnover in the industry was common

even before the pandemic. A separate [study](#) in March 2021 of turnover rates in 15,645 nursing homes found the average annual rate was 128%.

“All of those longstanding issues like staffing, they really blew up during the pandemic,” said Mills.

She also noted the decreased levels of accountability for the industry during the pandemic, from inspectors and monitors who were unable to visit facilities as often, to the wave of immunity laws extended to nursing home corporations during the pandemic. [At least 32 states](#) throughout the US passed laws or issued executive orders shielding nursing homes from civil liability during the Covid-19 pandemic. The report called for repealing these immunity laws, enacting federal staffing ratios, improving wages and benefits for workers, among other calls for increasing oversight, regulation and transparency in the industry.



SEIU members attend a rally in Chicago. Photograph: Aaron Cynic/Courtesy Service Employees International Union

“There was nothing inevitable about Covid-19 and neglect in nursing homes,” added Mills. “We basically failed to deliver tests and PPE to nursing homes and to actually enforce infection control before the pandemic so that we could have stopped the disease from getting in.”

Home healthcare workers also experienced significant issues that worsened during the pandemic, as these workers are often low-paid amid widespread staffing shortages in the industry.

Nearly nine out of 10 workers in home care are women, nearly two-thirds are people of color and about one-third are immigrants. The median hourly wage for home health and personal aide workers in 2019 was \$12.15 per hour.

These low wages have contributed to high turnover rates in the industry, estimated between 40 and 60%, as demand for direct care employees is expected to increase significantly over the next few years in response to a surge in the elderly population, projected to grow by over 40 million people by 2050.

“We don’t get enough pay. We don’t even get enough to afford PPE. During the pandemic, it was either buy your own PPE or possibly get sick, and if you didn’t have your own PPE, you couldn’t work,” said Adarra Benjamin, a home care worker in Chicago, Illinois, for nine years and a member of the SEIU union.

The Service Employees International Union, which represents about 1 million caretakers around the US, lobbied aggressively for the Biden administration to include massive funding for investments in long-term care, nearly \$400bn over eight years as part of the White House’s American Jobs Plan, though the specifics in the plan are still being worked out in Congress.

“We’re a necessity. People want to be around their family and, as caregivers, we provide them with the ability to live with dignity and still be at home,” said Jesse Kisamore, a home care worker in Uniontown, Pennsylvania and a SEIU member who currently makes about \$11 an hour.

He explained he would like to see workers receive better compensation, especially as agencies employing direct care workers have received millions in federal coronavirus relief funding.

“The company I work for pays me a certain amount of money, they bill the state to get reimbursed, and they get more back than what they paid me.

With all the money they've allotted for home care in the state of Pennsylvania, I don't see why if they're getting more money, why shouldn't we get it as well?" he added.

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## 2021.04.19 - Spotlight

- [The Guardian picture essay ‘Respect the water’: RNLI lifeguard training in Cornwall](#)
- [‘Hijacked by a devil’ Laura Dockrill on parenting, paranoia and postpartum psychosis](#)
- [Sewage island How Britain spews its waste into the sea](#)
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# ‘Respect the water’: RNLI lifeguard training in Cornwall

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## Mental health

Interview

# Laura Dockrill on parenting, paranoia and postpartum psychosis: ‘I thought I’d been hijacked by a devil’

[Emine Saner](#)



‘I’m grateful now that my illness was as bombastic as it was because everybody couldn’t help but stop and pay attention’ ... Dockrill.  
Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

‘I’m grateful now that my illness was as bombastic as it was because everybody couldn’t help but stop and pay attention’ ... Dockrill.  
Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

A month after the birth of her son, the writer, poet and illustrator was on suicide watch in a psychiatric ward, experiencing severe delusions. Now her podcast is raising awareness of a condition that affects one in a thousand new mothers



[@eminesaner](#)

Mon 19 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

Laura Dockrill told herself she was the worst case the psychiatric hospital had ever seen, and was untreatable. But that was only one of her delusions. Dockrill thought her father-in-law had hypnotised her. She would stalk the hospital corridors, feeling “like this badass”, as if she were a trained assassin. The reality was painfully different, but in Dockrill’s words it comes coloured with a comic touch.

“I was frumpy, quiet, wore my sister’s cupcake socks and a pink T-shirt with breast milk blooming over my boobs,” she says, smiling, her neon pink lipstick beaming through my laptop screen. There were times when she was on to her partner’s devious “plan” to take their newborn baby away from her, but would act like some kind of femme fatale, convinced he couldn’t resist her dangerous sexiness. He would play along – Dockrill’s psychiatrist had advised him not to try to reason with her – while gently reminding her that she would get better.

Dockrill did, and last year she published her memoir, [What Have I Done?](#), about her experience of postpartum psychosis, which she developed after the birth of her son, Jet, in 2018. It is a mental illness that affects around one in

a thousand new mothers, with sufferers experiencing symptoms including delusions, hallucinations, paranoia and manic moods, but is still little talked about. Dockrill, a writer, poet and illustrator, is determined to change that, and has just launched a podcast, [Zombiemum](#), to talk about the aspects of new parenthood that feel shadowy and shameful, and challenge the idea that anything that falls short of bliss and serenity is a failure.

After a year in which many of us have experienced stress and isolation, it seemed like the right time, Dockrill says. “The pandemic makes for an even lonelier environment to raise a baby, which is a culture mental illnesses can thrive in,” she says. “New parents more than ever need reassurance and comfort.” People may be reluctant to seek help, or to “waste” healthcare professionals’ time during this period, “when that is absolutely not true. A&E is open, mother-and-baby units are open; the podcast is to validate and encourage people to ask for help should they need it.” She wants people to hear about others who “have gone through this and made it to the other side and say it is treatable”. Dockrill’s world is bright and colourful – she is sitting in her office, painted pink; a room that was carved from the living room of her London flat for her to work in – and even at a distance, over Zoom, she radiates cheerfulness and charisma.



‘The pandemic makes for an even lonelier environment to raise a baby – new parents more than ever might need reassurance and comfort’ ...

Dockrill. Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

Her first guest, the singer Paloma Faith, talked about the pressures she put herself under after the birth of her first child; her second is Catherine Cho, who wrote a book, *Inferno*, about her own experience of postpartum psychosis. Few of the experiences will be as extreme as Cho's and Dockrill's, but she wants to open up the conversation around parenthood and mental health more broadly. "I'm grateful now, looking back, that my illness was as bombastic and as huge as it was because everybody couldn't help but stop and pay attention," she says. "I had to get hospitalised; my illness was an emergency." But she sees (probably undiagnosed) mental struggles in new mothers all the time. She will go to the park and see "this kind of glazed-over look, grieving who you were, grieving the position you've got yourself into and thinking: 'What have I done?' This is not 'baby blues' if you're not feeling like yourself for months on end."

When Dockrill wrote a blog post six months after she started to get better (which preceded her book), it went viral. "Even if people haven't had the illness that I had, it was quite shocking to see how many people could relate. I was like: why is nobody speaking about the psychological side-effects of this?" Her book is darkly funny in places but mostly unflinching about the animal meatiness of new motherhood, and spares its author no corner to cower in. "I felt this urge to kind of rip the mask off the killer, and as soon as you do that, it loses its power," she says. "I guess I wanted to make the podcast that I wished existed when I was recovering. You can't read a book when you've got a newborn."

I posted my picture holding a glass of champagne, like: 'Hey world, I'm a mum!' And it was a complete lie – I was ill

In recent years, what we think about mental health has been transformed, although there remains a stubborn stigma around postnatal mental health (and especially around illnesses that can be frightening, involving hallucinations and psychotic episodes). "I do feel like there is silence," says Dockrill. "There's an expectation you should be the perfect mother, and now the pressure's extra to also work, get your body back, be good on social media and look great all the time. When my baby was born, I put a picture

up of myself holding a glass of champagne with my makeup on, like: ‘Hey world, I’m a mum!’ And it was a complete lie – I was ill.” Six days later, she was admitted to a psychiatric unit. Then there is the shame and the “dark fear that you’re going to have your baby taken away from you” if you admit to not coping. “It’s a lot of catastrophising, which doesn’t help.”



Dockrill with her husband Hugo White and their son, Jet. Photograph: Image supplied by Laura Dockrill

Dockrill had never experienced mental illness before (the causes of postpartum psychosis are unknown, and may be related to changes to hormones and sleep patterns after birth, although women who have bipolar disorder or schizoaffective disorder are at higher risk). For Dockrill, 34, who would be the first to admit to a charmed and privileged life – a busy, bohemian and largely happy childhood in south London, close family, career success, strong relationship – it came out of the blue, like being struck by lightning. “It just wasn’t your day,” a psychiatrist later told her, which she found comforting. By the time Dockrill was hospitalised, she was suicidal and delusional. She had given birth barely a month earlier – a traumatic experience that ended in an emergency caesarean, with an underweight baby – and although she was becoming more and more ill, postpartum psychosis was not picked up by any of the health professionals who saw her. One GP

said it was postnatal depression, which is more common, and prescribed antidepressants.

It was her friend, the singer [Adele](#) (they have been friends since they were at the Brit school together), who had Googled the condition and suggested it to Dockrill's partner, Hugo White, a musician. "This has been one of the hardest bits of the book, especially now, because of the pandemic and how incredible the NHS have been," says Dockrill of her struggle to get a diagnosis. "You don't want to be that one person being like ..." She pauses. "I feel like I was doing a pretty OK job of explaining that I didn't feel normal. I requested my medical notes and you can see that I'm saying I've got severe insomnia, I believe every ambulance is coming for me, something bad is going to happen, that I'm incapable, I feel like a failure."

It was, she says, an "enormous relief" when she was admitted to a psychiatric unit, which is where she spent her first Mother's Day, four weeks after giving birth, scared, confused and still recovering from major surgery. She was paranoid and didn't trust anyone, but part of her also understood she was ill. In hospital, she says: "I didn't have to pretend that I was OK any more. I had permission to be ill. I just remember the first thing I thought was: 'Thank God somebody is listening to me.' Because this is the thing with mental illness: although it can, in many cases, get too big to hide, often it's invisible. And that's why if you see these symptoms, treat it like suspicious luggage at a train station; it could be nothing but it's better to get it checked out."



'I wanted to make the podcast that I wished existed when I was recovering. You can't read a book when you've got a newborn' ... Dockrill. Photograph: Michael Bowles/Rex/Shutterstock

Dockrill spent two weeks in hospital, where she was put on suicide watch and anti-psychotic medication, went to group therapy and coped with the guilt and heartache of not being with her newborn son. White brought him to visit Dockrill often, even though she had become sure White was about to launch a custody battle and was conspiring with the nurses to keep her medicated and locked in the unit. At one point, Dockrill became convinced she was pregnant again. When she was discharged, it wasn't because she was miraculously cured. A deep, debilitating depression followed. "I did not prepare for that," she says. "That overwhelming heaviness feeling, just like there's no future, there's no point in doing anything. That was terrifying."

This is the thing with mental illness: although it can, in many cases, get too big to hide, often it's invisible

She stayed on medication for a while, and was active in her recovery: she had regular therapy, read every book she could about depression, anxiety and other people's experience of psychosis, and taught herself cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). "Finding CBT just coloured in the last piece for

me. I saw it like learning a new language,” she says. “At first I was like, ‘I’m never going to get this in my brain’, and now I apply it to everything. Having these tools has made me a better mum, and it’s been amazing for this pandemic stuff. Probably it would have freaked me out before, and I can deal with it because being locked in your house is nothing compared with being locked in your mind.”

There is joy in her son. “Watching Jet get older, more responsive, loving me unconditionally, not blaming me. I would say to Hugo in the middle of the night: ‘He’s angry at me.’ And now I’m like ‘no’. I don’t feel like I’m in debt any more. That’s the ugly thing about it: you feel like you’re in debt to everybody for taking time out. You know, I didn’t go to the Maldives, snorkelling, I went to a psychiatric ward.” She laughs. She thought her relationship with White would be damaged for ever (he also sought help to cope with the trauma), but it seems unbreakable; they got married last year, a month before the first lockdown. “We had the biggest blowout party because it really marked something extra for us as well,” she says of getting through that period. “So everything felt special and celebratory, and then we were plunged into the pandemic.”

But this pandemic year has had its positive aspects. She had only been off antidepressants for a month, and the wedding “was probably a little bit too much”. Her book was out in May, and, instead of the big tour and [Q&A with Adele at the London Palladium](#) that had been planned to mark its launch, “where I needed to be was with Jet and Hugo at home doing nothing, and so it made me feel really safe and bolstered”.

[‘A small, sanitised existence’: what effect will the pandemic have on today’s babies?](#)

[Read more](#)

Parenting in a pandemic has been full of ups and downs, in a flat without a garden. “You think, if I was just with Hugo, I’d be rolling around naked and watching Netflix all day, but I’m sure that must get boring. Mustn’t it?” She laughs, wide-eyed at the idea of such luxury and little responsibility. Having a small child (Jet recently turned three) has “given me routine and purpose, so that’s been great. They remind you to be in love with the little things in life. We had a day where we would get an empty jar and just fill it with

things we'd find and he loved that so much. He really helped me see the beauty of that." She has worried on his behalf about not socialising with other children, but she has not missed the performative side of parenting that goes along with that. "To know how to deal with your child when they fall over in front of other people, how to discipline them if they snatch something from others." Most parents experience it, but when you've been ill, she says, "I think you feel extra-watched, like 'How is she with the child?' And all of that's gone."

She and White share the childcare, splitting the day, and Dockrill has been impressively productive, despite the small matter of recovery from a severe mental illness, parenting a toddler and the global pandemic. It has been a creative period: as well as the memoir, the past year has seen her working on a TV adaptation of the book, the release of a children's book, with another on the way, and the podcast. Working has helped her recovery: not just the writing of the memoir, and the way she wrangled a chaotic and frightening time into some form of order, but her work in general. It helped her rediscover "who I actually was, because I lost all of that and more after I had a baby; not just because of the illness, I don't think, but in general."

For a while, Dockrill did not want her illness to be part of her life story but now she feels "protective of it. I'm proud of what I've done with it. I'm so proud that I asked for help, that I said I was struggling, even though I was embarrassed and ashamed. There is an element of saving your own life with that stuff." She is an ambassador for the charity Action on Postpartum Psychosis, and the book, podcast and (hopefully) TV drama will bring it to more people. "I promised myself that, if I did make it through, I wouldn't stop talking about it. The amount of women who write to me who say: 'I had this 30 years ago, nobody believed me, it wasn't taken seriously, it wasn't diagnosed.' There will always be somebody who goes: 'I haven't heard of it', or 'I think my grandma had that.' Knowledge is power and had I had those conversations, I might have understood a little bit more, not thought that I'd been hijacked by a devil." She smiles, bewildered at the absurdity and terror of it: "Which would have been helpful."

*In the UK and Ireland, Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123 or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie). In the US, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255). In Australia, the crisis support*

*service Lifeline is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at [www.befrienders.org](http://www.befrienders.org).*

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## Seascape: the state of our oceans**Water**

# Sewage island: how Britain spews its waste into the sea

Untreated waste regularly flows into waters across England and Wales. Is it time to radically rethink sewerage – or do away with sewers altogether?



A combined sewer overflow, sanitary sewage and stormwater runoff discharged on to a beach at Boscombe, Dorset. Untreated wastewater was discharged on to English and Welsh beaches on 2,900 occasions last year.  
Photograph: FLPA/Rex/Shutterstock

A combined sewer overflow, sanitary sewage and stormwater runoff discharged on to a beach at Boscombe, Dorset. Untreated wastewater was discharged on to English and Welsh beaches on 2,900 occasions last year.  
Photograph: FLPA/Rex/Shutterstock

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[Amy Fleming](#)

Mon 19 Apr 2021 06.51 EDT

The pandemic has not been the only crisis we've been wading through over the past 12 months: 2020 was a banner year in much of Britain for sewage spills. Last July a [Guardian investigation](#) revealed that raw sewage had been pumped into English rivers via storm overflows more than 200,000 times in

2019. In November, Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) published [data](#) showing that untreated wastewater was discharged on to English and Welsh beaches on 2,900 occasions in a year.



Raw sewage in the River Lea from a Thames Water overflow pipe at London's Olympic Park. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Then last month, under mounting pressure, the Environment Agency published, for the first time, [full data on raw sewage discharges last year](#), showing a 37% year-on-year increase: 3.1m hours of human effluent flows, pumped via storm drains into English waters in some 400,000 occasions.

Not since SAS was founded in 1990 – when untreated wastewater piped directly into the sea and flowing back on to British shores caused a scandal – has so much untreated faeces spread so far. Hugo Tagholm, SAS's chief executive, says the country is facing “a second wave of sewage pollution”.

The prevalence of raw sewage in British waters is not only about the horror of swimming amid human waste but about the health and environmental threats of microplastics (especially from laundry water), endocrine disruptors ([chemicals that interfere with hormones](#) found in plastics, detergents and cosmetics), [phosphorus](#) (which causes algae blooms),

antibiotic-resistant bacteria and even Covid-19 – all spread through wastewater.

All overflows reach the same place. “All of our waterways are connected,” says Tagholm. “It’s one cycle: what goes into our rivers ends up in our ocean.”

We’re looking towards more green infrastructure, that slows surface water or prevents it getting into the sewers

*Keith Davis, Environment Agency*

The country is belatedly waking up to the crisis. New ideas are being proposed – sustainable drainage, use of artificial intelligence (AI), even doing away with sewers altogether. Meanwhile, communities and increasing numbers of wild swimmers, surfers and paddle boarders are piling on pressure, because the solutions do not only involve water companies and sewers but the fabric of our cities, towns and villages, as well as farms taking responsibility for their polluting runoff.

“Despite the progress that investment has made,” says Tagholm, “we still see thousands of sewage pollution events each year emanating from the combined sewer overflow network on our coastline, and particularly in our rivers.”

In short, Britain literally oozes sewage. How did it come to this? Most Britons don’t think about what happens when they flush their toilets. It probably involves a “combined sewer network”, fed by rainwater – including road and land runoff – and buildings’ waste drains. After the 1990 sewage crisis, the urban wastewater directive stipulated that water companies must treat sewage rather than dump it in the sea. So, on a good day, wastewater flows to the sewage treatment works, where it undergoes filtering, dewatering, processing and recycling.

But good days are increasingly rare. Previously, only freak storms would fill the system to the point that the toxic soup would spill out into waterways (to avoid the even grislier prospect of it spouting back up our drains). Now, however, both the number of houses and the frequency of storms have

increased. The system is so far over-capacity that in some areas drizzle can make it overflow – and blockages and fatbergs can cause overflows even when it's not raining.



Construction works for the Tideway ‘super sewer’, London. About 39m tonnes of sewage empties into the Thames each year. Photograph: John Zammit/Tideway/PA

“We’ve got 15,000 storm overflows,” says Keith Davis, the Environment Agency’s water-quality regulatory development manager, “and the majority are on the combined sewer network, with about 100,000km of combined sewer in England alone.”

That’s a lot of sewer to manage at the best of times, which these are not, he says. “We’ve got climate change, population growth and urban creep,” meaning the loss of permeable surfaces to absorb rain. “A small-scale example is someone paving over their front garden to provide parking. If a number of people do it, it will increase the runoff.”



Inside part of the Tideway sewer. The main section will run from Acton in west London to Beckton in the east. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

In London, sewage overflowing into the Thames has been an urgent problem for many years, with about 39m tonnes spewing into the river each year. The £4.2bn [Tideway super sewer](#), under construction since 2016, aims to tackle this. It has been built to last 150 years, but what happens after that? Even bigger and deeper concrete structures? And what about the rest of the country?

James Harrison, head of wastewater assets for Yorkshire [Water](#), thinks hard engineering alone is not a feasible solution. “You can’t typically invest your way out of it by enlarging sewers, pouring lots of concrete and having big tanks. That costs an awful lot of money, and it contains a lot of embedded carbon.”

[Can Spain fix its worst ecological crisis by making a lagoon a legal person?](#)  
[Read more](#)

Davis has reached a similar conclusion. Vast tanks, such as those under the promenades in Blackpool and Brighton, have been built to hold excess stormwater, so it can be fed back into sewers once the water levels in the

sewers drop. But he argues this “grey infrastructure approach” is not a long-term solution.

“We’re looking at a move towards more green infrastructure, that slows surface water or prevents it getting into the sewers,” Davis says.

A key example of green infrastructure solutions are sustainable drainage systems, [known as SuDS](#). These allow the environment to absorb, slow and divert water. They use wetlands, ponds and green ditches called swales, as well as green roofs, rainwater-harvesting systems and replacing nonabsorbent surfaces with porous asphalt or gravel.



An illustration of Xinyue Park, Wuhan, China, designed to improve a natural storm corridor. Photograph: Obermeyer

Most prominently, SuDS have been used to stunning effect in China, where flood-prone cities, such as Wuhan, have come to be known as “[sponge cities](#)”, full of beautiful, biodiverse parkland that holds on to water. Other examples include Malmö in Sweden, which blazed a trail for “blue-green cities” at the turn of the century after introducing a series of trenches, ponds and wetlands to absorb up to 90% of its stormwater. Davis says the Environment Agency is also looking at “Copenhagen, as well as some of the

American and Canadian examples – Seattle and Vancouver – where they’re trying these different approaches”.



Green ditches, or swales, can absorb runoff from nonabsorbent surfaces such as paved areas or car parks and provide more sustainable drainage.  
Photograph: Gado Images/Getty

Some SuDS have already been retrofitted in the UK. The combined sewer system in the seaside town of Llanelli in south Wales regularly polluted its shellfish-rich waters. But over the past decade it has had a £15m blue-green makeover, costing a quarter of the estimated amount needed for building a bigger sewer.

As part of the Llanelli project, a swale was constructed to take runoff from the road network. A swale, says wetland engineer and chair of the Constructed Wetland Association, Geoff Sweeney, is a shallow, grassy ditch that slows the flow of water. “The particles of oil and other road pollutants in road runoff will get filtered, rather than running straight into drains or rivers,” he says. So not only do swales help stop sewers from overflowing, they also keep them cleaner. Although, Sweeney notes, “We still have a lot to learn – there is some incredibly complex stuff happening with the chemistry of wetland environments.”

The SuDS concept has been around since the 1990s. But until now, says Sweeney, “adoption, and the enforcement of the legal requirement to include SuDS in all new developments, has been very weak”.

One issue is that wetlands require maintenance. “If you imagine a pond or wetland in the middle of a city,” says Sweeney, “if no one’s looking after it, it just ends up getting full of shopping trolleys. If it falls on the local authority – and local authorities don’t have the money – then that’s a bit of a disincentive for them.”

However, by working with local government, industry, environmental and community organisations, they can work. Sweeney is developing a [SuDS project](#) near Fleetwood in Lancashire for the Wyre Rivers Trust.

“There’s a brook that has basically become a drain. We’re creating a new wetland floodplain alongside the stream and diverting surface water drains from the housing estate through the wetlands.” The landscape architecture firm involved is designing a wetland walk with boardwalks; the local water company, United Utilities, is “on side”.



River Wharfe in Ilkley, Yorkshire. The site has been given bathing status, which means it will be subjected to a much tougher water-testing regime. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty

However, SuDS and concrete tanks are not the only weapons in the anti-sewage spill arsenal. Fatbergs and other blockages can trigger sewage pollution events, so having a better idea of what's going on underground is essential. Harrison says Yorkshire Water is working with [Siemens on a pilot “fuzzy logic” network](#) around Ilkley, which uses real-time rainfall data, AI and sensors to better predict blockages. So far, the project has been able to predict nine out of 10 blockages – three times more accurate than existing statistical modelling – while reducing false alarms by half.

After months of campaigning, Ilkley is celebrating becoming England's [first designated inland bathing site](#). This has greatly sped up plans to improve how it [deal with its sewage](#). “Putting technology and instrumentation out in the network could help us make better operational decisions,” says Harrison. “Holding flow back up in the network, and then introducing it in a more gradual way, and responding where issues may be developing. Until now, it's been quite a manual approach.”

The EU set river water-quality standards – and the UK was regularly fined for failing to meet these standards

*Callum Clench, International Water Resources Association*

A more radical solution to the sewage crisis is to do away with sewers altogether. Peter Cruddas, senior lecturer in water and environmental engineering at Portsmouth University, started researching flushless toilets for developing countries, and is now considering how these could apply to the rest of the world. He does not, however, envisage “getting someone on the 20th floor of a high-rise in the middle of Birmingham to deal with their own waste to create compost”.

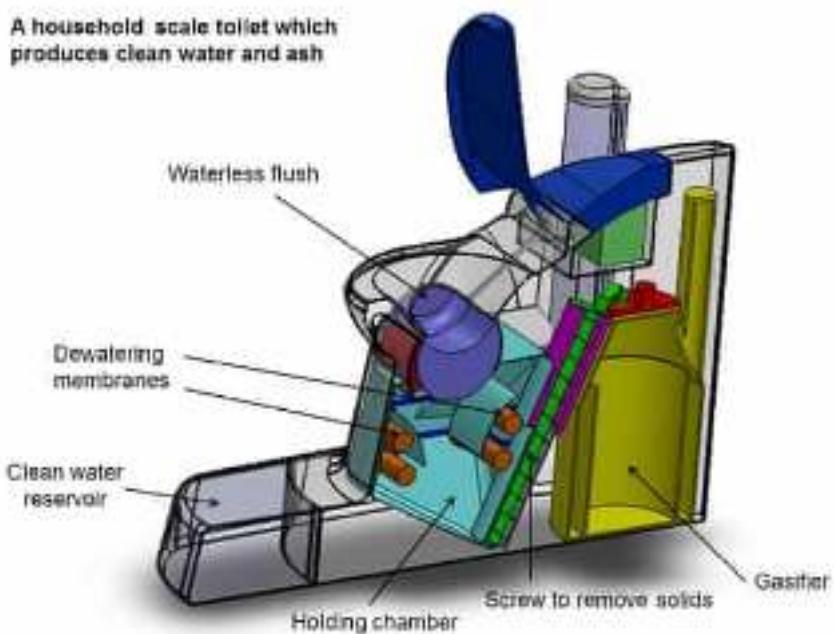
Instead, Cruddas has identified three designs that could complement one other, depending on local circumstances. For people with gardens, waste would be sanitised and deodorised within the toilet unit, “and the end-product would be made available directly to the user: this would likely involve heat-treatment as the best way to stabilise and dewater the waste as much as possible”. The sanitised waste could then be added to compost heaps.



A nano-membrane toilet being trialled in South Africa. Photograph: Pedro Talaia, Cranfield University.

Another concept is to use a municipal collection system, says Cruddas, “where the product is combined with garden or food waste collections, for minimum disruption to existing infrastructure. You would be replacing a costly and environmentally damaging water-based system with a system that’s already in place.”

A third approach, the most “hands-off, although also the most wasteful”, says Cruddas, would be “to just destroy the waste in the toilet”, resulting in “very small quantities of ash that could be disposed of in a normal black bin, or used on gardens if desired”.



How a nano-membrane toilet works. Photograph: Cranfield Water Science Institute

This is the idea behind a project Cruddas previously worked on: the [nano-membrane toilet](#), developed by Cranfield University. Liquids undergo evaporation, killing many pathogens in the process, and can then be used for washing or irrigation, while solids are burned, producing enough energy to power the unit. While this approach fails to “recover some of the useful resources in human waste”, Cruddas says, “at least you wouldn’t be wasting millions of litres of water every day to flush toilets, while damaging the environment through the stormwater outfalls”.

Cruddas is seeking funding to develop these design ideas, and present them to industry, as well as political and regulatory bodies. Some agencies seem aware that big changes are needed. For example, the [net zero routemap](#) of Water UK, the water companies’ trade body, says SuDS “will cut the carbon emissions associated with unnecessary treatment of surface water at sewage works”. It adds that they boost biodiversity, too, and reed beds’ cleaning abilities are impressive.

Reed beds are already used to bring water from some sewage works up to a safe standard for release into rivers, and can even [clean wastewater from chemical plants](#). They can process raw sewage naturally, too, as a passive

alternative to sewage works – a technique commonly used across rural France, and now [being trialled](#) in the UK.

[George Eustice says water firms must cut sewage releases into rivers and sea](#)  
[Read more](#)

All this is possible, but as Callum Clench, of the International Water Resources Association, points out: “The EU set river water-quality standards – and the UK was regularly fined for failing to meet these standards.” Now Britain is no longer in the EU, he says it is vital that communities keep up pressure on the government to ensure the UK does not lower its standards.

It also falls on all of us to plan for our local land. We can apply for natural swimming spots to become designated bathing areas, requiring real-time pollution reports. We can monitor the health of rivers. We can avoid paving, artificial turf and asphalt. We can harvest roof runoff in water butts. We can be strict about not putting oil and wet wipes down drains.

“We’ve got to look at this in big blocks of time,” says Tagholm. “In 2030, we want to look back on a decade where we really made a difference to our rivers and coastline.” The era of flush and forget may have finally had its day.

The main photograph on this article was changed on 19 April 2021 as the caption from the picture agency that supplied the original photo incorrectly identified a pipe from a peat bog in Borth as a sewage outflow.

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**Samsung**

## Galaxy S21+ review: the big-screen Samsung phone for slightly less

Top chips, good camera and four-year support make for a lot of phone if bought at a discount



The Galaxy S21+ offers the big-screen, top-spec experience for slightly less than Samsung's very best. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The Galaxy S21+ offers the big-screen, top-spec experience for slightly less than Samsung's very best. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

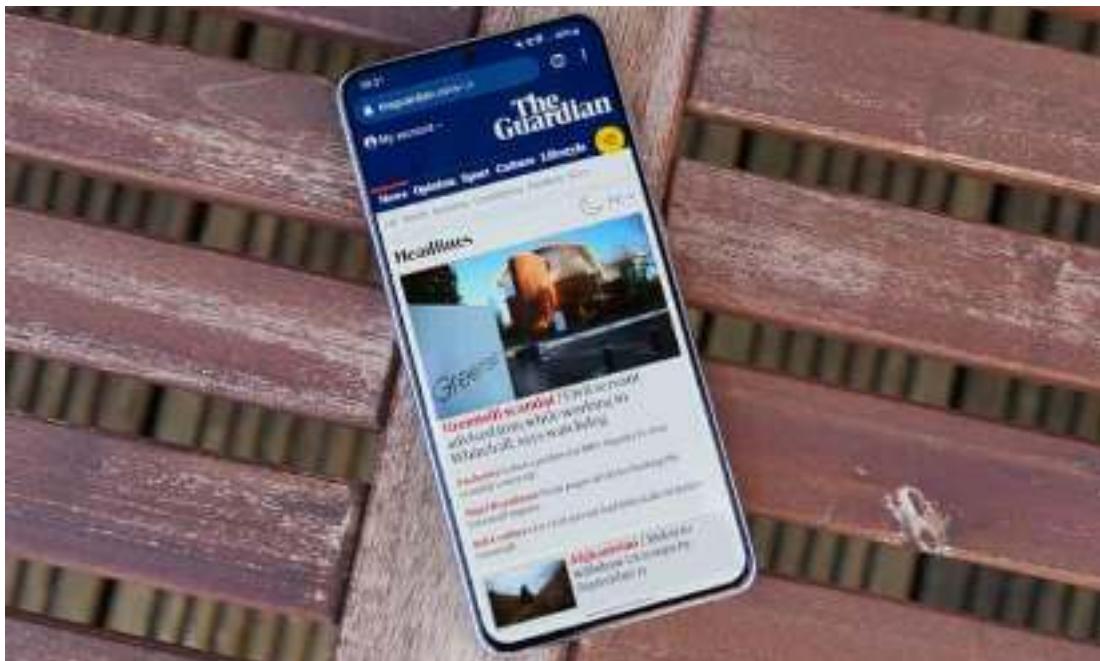
*[Samuel Gibbs](#) Consumer technology editor*

Mon 19 Apr 2021 02.00 EDT

The Galaxy S21+ is Samsung's cheaper flagship handset that tries to be a more mainstream big-screen option than its more expensive stablemate, the S21 Ultra.

The new [Android](#) phone has an RRP of £949 – making it £200 cheaper than the top-of-the-line S21 Ultra – but shop around and you'll find it for less than £750, which makes it much more palatable.

It has the same metal and glass sandwich design as the majority of smartphones on the market and, unusually for Samsung phones, the 6.7in screen is flat, not curved at the sides. The screen is nevertheless bright, colourful and fast, with a refresh rate of up to 120Hz to keep everything super smooth when scrolling.



The display has a slightly lower FHD+ resolution than Samsung's top phone and some competitors with QHD+ screens but it was only noticeable when comparing them up close. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The S21+ is 27g lighter than the S21 Ultra but its 200g weight and lack of an edge to grip on its sides makes it harder to hold than similar rivals [such as the OnePlus 9 Pro](#) – meaning some [form of phone grip](#) is a good idea.

## Specifications

- **Main screen:** 6.7in FHD+ Dynamic Amoled 2X (394ppi) 120Hz

- **Processor:** Samsung Exynos 2100 (EU) or Qualcomm Snapdragon 888 (US)
- **RAM:** 8GB of RAM
- **Storage:** 128 or 256GB
- **Operating system:** One UI 3.1 based on Android 11
- **Camera:** Triple rear camera: 12MP wide, 12MP ultra-wide, 64MP 3x “hybrid” telephoto; 10MP front-facing camera
- **Connectivity:** 5G, dual nano sim, USB-C, wifi 6, NFC, Bluetooth 5, UWB and location
- **Water resistance:** IP68 (1.5m for 30 mins)
- **Dimensions:** 165.1 x 75.6 x 7.8mm
- **Weight:** 200g

## **36 hours of battery life**



The phone fully charges in 74 minutes, hitting 50% in 26 minutes using a 25W USB-C fast charger (power adaptor not included). Fast wireless charging and reverse wireless charging are available. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The S21+ ships with Samsung's Exynos 2100 processor in Europe or Qualcomm's Snapdragon 888 in the US with 8GB of RAM.

Performance matched the S21 Ultra, feeling noticeably snappier than last year's S20 series. From unlocking the phone to launching apps, every action happens just a little bit quicker.

The phone easily outlasts a full day of heavy usage on battery. I got in excess of 36 hours between charges – 7am on day one until 7pm on day two – including more than 5.5 hours of screen-on time split between chat apps, Chrome, Gmail, Evernote, the Guardian, Spotify and many others, shooting about 15 photos and spending about two hours on 5G, the rest on wifi.

## Sustainability



The silver version of the phone shows blue hues in bright sun and more purple indoors. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

Samsung 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 phone is [generally repairable](#) and comes with a [24-month warranty](#). Screen repairs cost no more than £219, while the battery is replaceable by authorised service centres at a cost of no more than £59.

Samsung offers [trade-in](#) and [recycling schemes](#) for old devices but the smartphone does not include any recycled materials. The company publishes [annual sustainability reports](#) but not impact assessments for individual products. The S21+ does not ship with a charger or earphones.

## One UI 3.1



Samsung's One UI interface now integrates most of Google's services, including its 'Discover' news aggregator. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The S21+ ships with Samsung's latest version of Android 11 called One UI 3.1, which is the same as [that running on the S21 Ultra](#) and other Samsung devices.

It inherits most of the [new features from Android 11](#), including the separation of conversation, media and other alerts in the notifications shade, conversation bubbles, additional privacy controls and other permissions.

Overall One UI 3.1 continues to be one of the most refined and best heavily customised versions of Android, while Samsung has significantly sped up updates. The company has also pledged to [support four years](#) of major Android updates and [monthly security patches](#), which is very good for Android devices, but behind Apple's five-plus years of support for its phones.

## Camera



The camera app is simple to use and Samsung's single-take feature, which captures videos, photos and produces animations all at once, is great fun but there is no dedicated macro mode. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The S21+ has a triple camera system on its rear featuring a 12MP ultrawide, 12MP wide and 64MP 2x "hybrid" telephoto camera, plus a 10MP selfie camera on the front of the device.

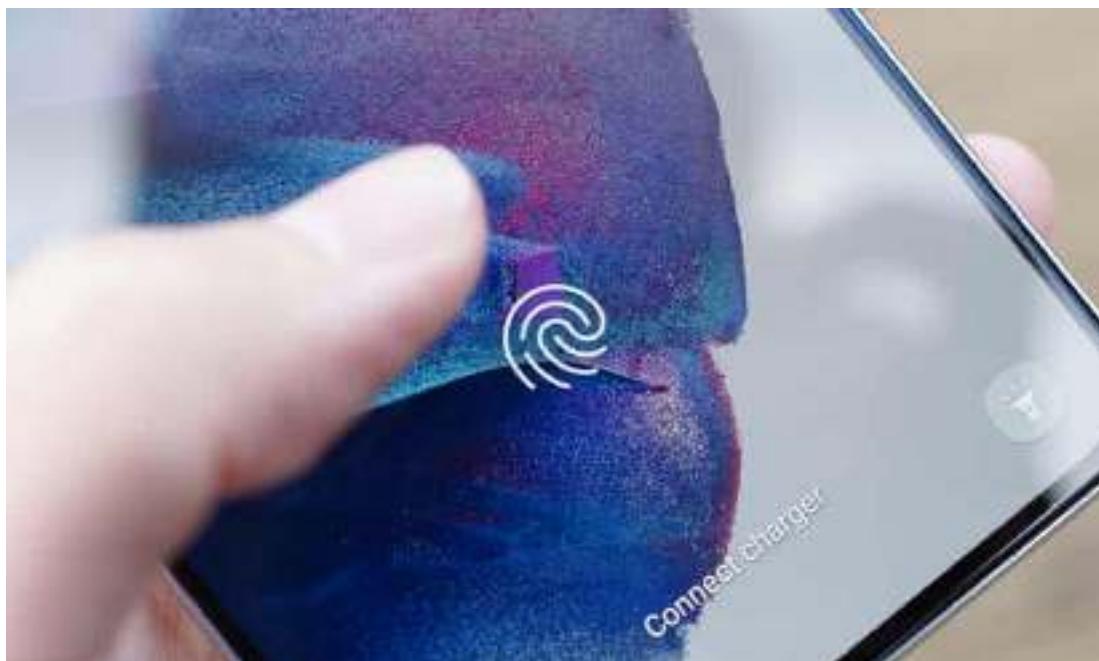
The main wide camera captures really good images in a variety of different lighting conditions with improved low-light performance over previous

iterations. The ultra-wide camera is also solid but struggles a bit in middling light levels, often losing detail and sharpness. The 3x telephoto camera is good for what it is but pales in comparison to extended optical zooms on rivals and the S21 Ultra – anything beyond the 3x “hybrid zoom” starts to look like an oil painting.

By default, the camera shoots at 12MP across all three lenses but can capture photos at 64MP in good light using the telephoto camera but at 1x magnification. Video capture is equally good across all three lenses, with up to 4K at 60 frames a second possible on two of them. The 10-megapixel selfie camera is good but can be a little soft on detail in lower light levels.

Overall, the S21+ camera is good enough to keep up with most rivals but falls some way short of the class-leading camera on the S21 Ultra.

## Observations



Samsung's significantly faster and more accurate second-generation ultrasonic fingerprint sensor sits under the screen. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

- The stereo speakers are really good for a phone.

- Call quality was really good both normally and on speaker.

## Price

The Samsung Galaxy S21+ has an RRP of [£949](#) with 128GB of storage or [£999](#) with 256GB, although is frequently available at a significant discount.

For comparison, the Galaxy S21 costs [£769](#), the [Galaxy S21 Ultra](#) costs [£1,149](#), the [Galaxy Note 20 Ultra](#) costs [£1,179](#), the [Galaxy Z Flip](#) costs [£1,300](#), the [Galaxy Z Fold 2](#) costs [£1,799](#); the [Oppo Find X3 Pro](#) costs [£1,099](#), [OnePlus 8 Pro](#) costs [£799](#) and the [Apple iPhone 12 Pro Max](#) costs [£1,099](#).

## Verdict

The Samsung Galaxy S21+ is a good phone but one totally overshadowed by a far better model that is very similar in dimensions – the S21 Ultra.

The S21+ has a good 120Hz screen covered by the latest in hardened glass, excellent performance, premium build, solid battery life and good software support for at least four years from release. It is a big phone, however, and not as easy to handle as narrower rivals. While good, its camera is quite some way behind Samsung's best.

At its RRP of £949, it is a hard sell but discounted to more like £750 the S21+ offers a lot of great phone for the money.

**Pros:** 120Hz screen, 5G, good camera, dual sim, One UI 3.1/Android 11, wireless charging and powershare, good performance, long battery, fast fingerprint scanner, four years of software support.

**Cons:** big, no headphone socket, only 2x optical zoom, a little unwieldy, screen lower resolution than some rivals.



The S21+ looks, works and feels great but may be a little too big for some.  
Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

## Other reviews

- [Samsung Galaxy S21 Ultra review: the new king of Android phones](#)
- [OnePlus 9 Pro review: super slick, rapid charging Android phone](#)
- [Oppo Find X3 Pro review: Chinese smartphone champ can't beat Samsung](#)
- [iPhone 12 Pro Max review: Apple's longer lasting superphone](#)
- [Fairphone 3+ review: ethical smartphone gets camera upgrades](#)

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## 2021.04.19 - Opinion

- Compulsory worship of national symbols is the sure sign of a culture in decline
- My son serves his I-told-you-sos silent – which is very lucky for me
- Britain can't slash emissions without clamping down on the 'polluter elite'
- Is the 'new muon' really a great scientific discovery? For now, I'm cautious

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**OpinionPolitics**

# **Compulsory worship of national symbols is the sure sign of a culture in decline**

**Nesrine Malik**

Those who think our flags and statues must be protected from blasphemers have taken a step down a sinister road



Nigel Farage at the European parliament, Brussels, in January 2020: ‘The flag has come to symbolise today a false but potent claim of liberation from fictional oppressive forces.’ Photograph: John Thys/AFP via Getty Images

Nigel Farage at the European parliament, Brussels, in January 2020: ‘The flag has come to symbolise today a false but potent claim of liberation from fictional oppressive forces.’ Photograph: John Thys/AFP via Getty Images

Mon 19 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

Though we often hear that depictions of the prophet Muhammad are forbidden in Islam, [artworks bearing his image](#) can be found in museums in Europe and the United States. He is [on a bronze medallion](#) in the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, holding a book. He is in a Persian miniature in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, ascending to the heavens on a horse. And he is in many carefully curated private collections of Islamic art, appearing from time to time in the catalogues of prestigious auction houses when these artworks change hands.

The prohibition of images of the prophet, no matter how anodyne, is [widely accepted today](#) – but, as these examples show, it is a distinctly modern edict. The religious justification for the ban is far less clear than its proponents believe: there is no such instruction in the Qur'an. There is, of course, a pre-Islamic aversion to idol worship shared by all the monotheistic religions, and over the centuries this aversion gradually wore away depictions of Muhammad in Islamic art. But this was only a prelude to the modern charge of blasphemy – which arrived only in the 20th century, after the Muslim world had fractured into nation-states.

The modern majority-Muslim nation-state is a weak and unwieldy creature. Across Africa and south Asia, colonial forces lumped together disparate tribes and languages, drew boundary lines around them, and then abruptly decamped to Europe. For many citizens of these new nations, [Islam](#) was the only common denominator. In the absence of any coherent political programme beyond the maintenance of their own power, ruling elites fastened on to [Islam](#) as a binding agent. From there it was an easy step to pick out some sacred icons, such as the image of the prophet, and to draw arbitrary theological red lines, useful for dispensing with political opponents. The story of blasphemy in contemporary [Islam](#) isn't about doctrine. It is about decline and dictatorship.

There is a lesson in this tale for all of us: the more that a society is preoccupied with its symbols, the more insecure it has become. In the UK, the Conservative government and its court press have seized upon the [veneration of national symbols](#) as a consolation for a decade of economic pain and social fracture. We used to visit our historic landmarks; now we must swear allegiance to them. We are not meant to study and scrutinise a figure such as Winston Churchill; he is now an icon who must be protected

from blasphemers. Britain's statues are now symbols of national anxiety: each one a sort of concrete voodoo doll, which if pricked will cause the whole country to bleed. They now enjoy over-the-top police protection, with political bodyguards introducing harsher punishments to protect statues from "[baying mobs](#)".

And then, of course, there is the flag, the latest icon to be [invested with a sanctity](#) that demands it be flown longer and larger. The government has decreed that after the summer the flag should fly over official buildings [every day](#) rather than 20 days a year. No longer is it just jolly bunting on special occasions. This is the endpoint of a journey that began when Nigel Farage took a small union flag and placed it in front of him at the European parliament. In all its absurdity, that moment comes closest to representing what the flag has come to symbolise today – a false but potent claim of liberation from fictional oppressive forces.

[Let's not go back to the denial and delusion of the Thatcher years | John Harris](#)

[Read more](#)

That contrived sense of persecution and affront inspires powerful emotions that can easily turn dissent into treason. In a chilling episode last month, a BBC presenter had to apologise [for liking tweets mocking](#) the size of a flag in a minister's office. The BBC's new director general hastened to reassure the furious public that his staff are "very proud of being British" – and, in fact, a union flag flies "proudly over Broadcasting House" on most days. It is a very short step from demanding that sort of prostration to the holiness of national emblems to wielding it to marshal people into line. Over the past few months, Tory MPs have tried to burnish their political credentials by posturing more and more aggressively about the flag, demanding that it be [compulsory in all schools](#) (and that anyone who has concerns can be "educated" into compliance). It is an even shorter distance between that public, official intimidation and private citizens taking matters into their own hands. Earlier this year, one mayor in Cornwall [received death threats](#) for removing flags that had been put up without the council's permission.

"You can't eat a flag," said John Hume, one of the architects of the Northern Ireland peace process. When Muslim countries [erupt with rage](#) over images

of Muhammad, I see governments who cannot feed their people, or provide them with dignity or democratic rights, so they feed them false pride instead. The images we see on the news from Cairo or Khartoum of protests against cartoons or authors, are pictures of astroturfed anger, whipped up and bussed into town squares in government vehicles. Some of that anger seeps into corners that then become impossible to scrub. The worship of icons, whether flags or statues, may seem like a harmless performance on the part of a government that has little else to offer. But behind it lurks the threat of something much more sinister.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist
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**OpinionKent**

## **My son serves his I-told-you-sos silent – which is very lucky for me**

[Zoe Williams](#)



He told me my hopes would be dashed when we went in search of pure happiness in Ramsgate. Because while the pubs are now open, the arcades remain desolate



‘Eventually, the manager just unlocked the case and gave it to us. He couldn’t bear to watch any more waste ...’ Photograph: Islandstock/Alamy

‘Eventually, the manager just unlocked the case and gave it to us. He couldn’t bear to watch any more waste ...’ Photograph: Islandstock/Alamy

Mon 19 Apr 2021 02.00 EDT

My stepmother, P, lives in Ramsgate, but has caring responsibilities up the wazoo elsewhere, so she hasn’t been in her house for a year. I’m here to check the plants haven’t died, but she knows that isn’t really why I’m here. It’s because I love it. The regular reader will recall that [I’ve been barred from the Wetherspoon’s](#), the most magnificent pub in Europe, but I still love the town. The intensity of the skies, the smell of whelks, the harbour that thinks it’s so fancy (because it is), the neighbourliness – so colourful, so cheerful; every morning is like the establishing shot of a Disney musical – and, most of all, the arcades.

There’s been an awful role reversal in the family over lockdown – worse than TJ, the boy child, getting taller than me. He’s become the manager of *my* expectations. He spent the entire journey down here explaining why the arcades wouldn’t be open. “They’re not essential by anyone’s terms. Even if you were addicted to gambling, and the 2p machines were like your methadone, that still wouldn’t be essential.”

“How do you know about methadone?”

“Telly.”

“Inessential shops are open,” H, female, interjected. She is much more of my mind. Everything you want to be open shall be open, because that’s how the universe works.

“Yes: a) she’s right, they are essential, they are the vendors of dreams, and what could be more important? And b) non-essential shops are also open, which is how we spent last week in H&M and everyone shouted at me for calling it Hennes.”

“I’m just saying, don’t get your hopes up,” TJ said mildly, but that ship had totally sailed. Our hopes were through the roof.

We arrived and I disarmed the burglar alarm – the only pin I’ve never forgotten, thanks to the most intense argument I’ve had or witnessed about a passcode. My dad, who died in 2004, explained to all of us once: “You can remember it because it’s my date of birth, only with two different digits,” and my sister said: “I have no idea what year you were born,” and my maths brother said: “That is the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard – you might as well say: ‘You can remember it because it has four numbers in it and two of them aren’t the same.’”

We went round like that for, honestly, hours, spinning off into other territories – did he remember any of our birth years? Who in the gene pool was the best at maths? – until it was two in the morning, with the result being that I have never forgotten it, while my brother would doubtless forget it on purpose. Who cares about their eardrums when they could be right?

We checked the houseplants, which by some witchcraft were all still alive. We marvelled at the state of the place. Some people are born so tidy that they can infuse a place with order even from 60 miles away. Or maybe one of her neighbours has been coming in and dusting, while singing a song, assisted by starlings and squirrels. We’d better get moving, I said, or we’d miss the arcades. It was 5.32pm. A neighbour was on the doorstep saying

hello and her eyes took on an evasive shadow. What did she know that I didn't?

"Annie," I said, point blank. "Are the arcades ... not open?"

"I don't know – I've never been in an arcade. I'm 71 years old."

This seemed reasonable. But why did she look so shifty?

"We've already missed the arcades!" TJ was calling from within. "We should have got here in 2019."

"Right," said H. "Where is all my money? I'm going to need a load of money."

"You haven't got any money, you doughnut, you spent it all on lip gloss in Hennes."

"OK, *you're* going to need a load of money."

Once, we spent 25 quid trying to win a treasure chest made of plastic, with gold plastic coins inside it, retail value £1.99, tops. Eventually, the manager just unlocked the case and gave it to us. He couldn't bear to watch any more waste.

We sailed down the broad, majestic boulevard to the beach, sea on one side, on the other some artificial caves where generations of teenagers have scratched in the names of all the people who have performed obscene acts over the years. (Really, if you tried to double-source whether Ross had shagged an eel, you would realise he probably didn't.) We approached the street of delight, noting who was open. Ice-cream parlour? Check. Bars named after maritime events? Check. The whelk stall, the seal-watching boat expedition, the seaside-accessory-monger, selling sunscreen for a joke? Check, check, check. The signs were good at this point. I monitored my first-born carefully for signs that he might be thinking: "Maybe I'm wrong." Ha. Not a chance.

We got to the arcade. It wasn't merely closed. It was desolate: dust everywhere, Pikachu dangling lifeless from the ceiling like a warning.

There wasn't even a sign saying they'd closed down. It looked like Poundland Pompeii. I looked over at my son, but he serves his I-told-you-sos silent. I like that in him.

Tomorrow, we try Margate.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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**OpinionClimate change**

## **Britain can't slash emissions without clamping down on the 'polluter elite'**

**Peter Newell**

To move towards zero carbon, the government must focus on overconsumption by the wealthy and powerful



'Behaviours such as flying frequently, maintaining large yachts, heating and cooling multiple large homes and driving large cars have a disproportionate impact on global heating.' Photograph: Johannes Eisele/AFP via Getty Images

'Behaviours such as flying frequently, maintaining large yachts, heating and cooling multiple large homes and driving large cars have a disproportionate impact on global heating.' Photograph: Johannes Eisele/AFP via Getty Images

Mon 19 Apr 2021 05.00 EDT

While the government gears up to hold the Cop26 summit in Glasgow, it continues to bail out Britain's biggest polluters by granting tax credits to major oil and gas firms and slashing taxes on [domestic flights](#) within the UK. This is precisely the wrong way to go about meeting the Paris climate targets. If ministers are serious about the government's environmental agenda, they should be enforcing policies that dramatically reduce the carbon footprints of society's richest, and severing political ties with polluting industries.

In a recent [report](#) that I co-authored with a team at Sussex University, we argue that governments must focus on addressing the overconsumption of the rich in order to successfully drive down emissions. According to one recent [analysis](#), emissions from the poorest 50% of the EU population fell by 24% from 1990 to 2015, while the carbon emissions from the most affluent 10% of EU citizens grew by 3%, and emissions from the wealthiest 1% – the super rich – grew by 5%. As work on the “[polluter elite](#)” shows, this problem is made worse by the [political power](#) and influence that these groups have over government policy, an issue that has once again come to the fore in the UK.

After a long period of neglect, the issue of sustainable behaviour change is now rising up the climate policy agenda. For years, behavioural change has been regarded in environmental circles as an individualist solution to a collective problem; as the environmentalist [Mary Heglar](#) puts it, the idea that the climate crisis “could have been fixed if all of us had just tweaked our consumptive habits is not only preposterous; it’s dangerous”. Heglar is right, but the issue is not about all of us, or all behaviours: it’s about the behaviours of the most polluting sections of our society.

[Boris Johnson told to get grip of UK climate strategy before Cop26](#)  
[Read more](#)

The responsibility to act is not evenly shared. Behaviours such as flying frequently, maintaining large yachts, heating and cooling multiple large homes and driving large cars have a disproportionate impact on global heating. And those who are most likely to do these things are the rich. Across the world, just 1% of the population is responsible for [50% of CO2 emissions](#) from commercial aviation. If we’re to keep warming below 1.5C

or 2C, it's clear we'll need to shrink and share, reducing carbon budgets and sharing resources more equally. Tackling key behaviours such as how much people fly, how much energy they use and consume, and whether they eat meat, could alone save as much as [15bn tonnes of carbon](#) by 2060.

We also need to move the debate about behavioural change away from what individuals and households do, and towards addressing the problem of consumption at a societal level. This would mean recognising the relationship between long working hours and consumption patterns, and taking seriously proposals for a [four-day working week](#). It would also mean limiting advertising that glamorises frequent air travel, introducing frequent flyer levies and banning SUVs and other highly polluting vehicles.

To encourage environmental behavioural changes, ministers should also focus on building affordable, low-carbon housing, and green transport and energy infrastructures. Most immediately, the government should reverse the recent announcement to cut green grants for homes. All of this will involve working with unusual allies and opening up new spaces for citizens to have the difficult conversations about how to shrink and share remaining carbon budgets.

Transitioning to a low-carbon economy requires social buy-in and a sense that we're addressing an existential threat through our collective efforts. As long as richer consumers and businesses continue to receive state backing or are not seen to pull their weight, efforts to build a zero-carbon society will be jeopardised.

While there is a tendency to talk in terms of “nudges” as the best way of changing people’s behaviour, the challenge is more profound and deeply political than this. We need to shift power away from those who control our unsustainable economy and the institutions that govern it. And we need to change the societies and cultures built around the wasteful use of resources, which have put us on a path to climate chaos. Meeting the goals of the Paris agreement depend upon it.

- Peter Newell is professor of international relations at the University of Sussex and lead author of the Cambridge Sustainability Commission on

# Scaling Behaviour Change

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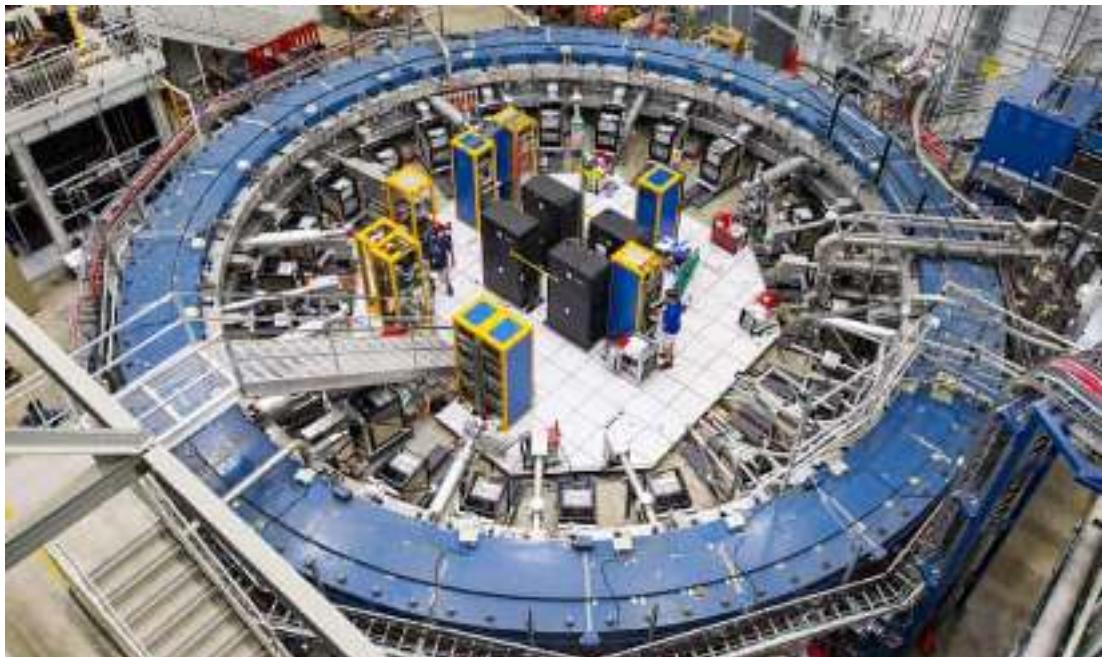
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## OpinionScience

# Is the ‘new muon’ really a great scientific discovery? For now, I’m cautious

[Carlo Rovelli](#)

Physicists are always looking for eureka moments – but we should be careful with headline-grabbing announcements



Fermilab in Illinois, announced a new measurement of the ‘magnetic moment’ of the muon – one of the universe’s elementary particles.  
Photograph: Reidar Hahn/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

Fermilab in Illinois, announced a new measurement of the ‘magnetic moment’ of the muon – one of the universe’s elementary particles.  
Photograph: Reidar Hahn/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

Mon 19 Apr 2021 02.00 EDT

There is something curious about the great experiments and discoveries in fundamental physics from the past few decades. They have covered [black holes](#), [gravitational waves](#), [the Higgs particle](#) and [quantum entanglement](#). They have led to Nobel prizes, reached the front pages of newspapers and made the scientific community proud. But they haven't told us anything new: they have confirmed what we expected about the world. All these phenomena were in the university textbooks I studied almost half a century ago. Their existence was predicted by our best established theories. I do not mean to diminish the awe. On the contrary. It is amazing that the phenomena were observed, and even more amazing that they were figured out before we could see them. Their detection is a celebration of the power of scientific thinking to see into the unseen. Yet a malignant voice could have whispered in our ears at each step: "What's the great surprise? We expected this." Fundamental experimental physics has long been, in this sense, quite conservative. It has simply been confirming the best theories of last century over and over again.

Last week findings from Fermilab, the US's particle physics and accelerator laboratory, appeared to contradict what we thought to be the case. The laboratory announced a new measurement of the "[magnetic moment](#)" of the muon – one of the universe's elementary particles, a heavier brother of the electron. The measured value of the muon seems to disagree with the value predicted by the theory. It is an observation that does not complement our established theories; it clashes with them.

Physicists crave this type of result. To learn something unexpected about the fundamental laws of nature, we need to observe phenomena that do not fit the established frameworks: quantum theory, the standard model of particle physics and general relativity. There are reasons to expect that these frameworks are not the complete story. Hence, theoretical physicists spend their time trying to guess what happens beyond them. Nature has been conservative, but physicists love to think of themselves as radical. They want to walk in the shoes of Rutherford and Wu, Einstein and Heisenberg, the experimentalists and the theorists who opened up the knowledge of new levels of reality.

This is why at every minimal hint of the unexpected, physicists jump up with excitement. Over and over again, I have seen this thirst for novelty.

New forces, new particles, discrepancies between data and predictions. Neutrinos faster than light. Anomalies in the data of the big particle physics machines. So far, each wave of enthusiasm has turned into disappointment. Sometimes it was a just statistical outlier. In many random variables, you always find some strange ones. Sometimes an experimental mistake is the cause, even a poorly connected plug (this is what turned out to be behind the [neutrino-faster-than-light false alarm](#)). Sometimes it's a theoretical mistake.

Years ago, we got excited because the magnetic moment of the electron was not as predicted. It turned out to be down to a mistake in the theoretical calculations – two terms had been computed with a different convention about signs (plus or minus), something your first-year university professor tells you to be careful about. The history of supersymmetry – a theoreticians' speculation – is particularly telling: I do not remember a time without some colleague talking about “hints” that new supersymmetric particles had been “nearly discovered”. Decades have passed, and they haven't yet.

So when I hear my colleagues cry wolf, as they did last week, I can't help but be cautious. Could the new muon result be the real thing? Maybe, maybe not. On the same day news of the measurement was greeted with enthusiasm, a paper [appeared](#) in the scientific journal Nature presenting the results of a theoretical calculation using supercomputers indicating that the previous theoretical estimates of the muon were slightly off. Taking this into account, the theoretical value may be closer to the value measured last week. There might be no contradiction after all.

I understand the excitement of my colleagues. Some of them spend their lives searching for the wolf. If they see a hint of the tail, they'll be happy. But I also think that we scientists should be cautious. Journalists can be quick to translate a “could” into a “can” and a “can” into an “is”. The public may like to see us struggling, watching our excitement and our disappointment, but may also get bored by big announcements that then go nowhere. The risk is losing credibility.

What's truly surprising about our understanding of nature that has been developed over the last century is how durable it appears to be. General relativity was long seen with suspicion, its predictions too outlandish. The

standard model of the particle was initially considered a bad patchwork, and violations of its predictions were expected at every single run of the particle experiments. Quantum mechanics is so strange that people considered its predictions implausible. But they're still the best we have. Do we now have hints of something really new? Perhaps. But if we cannot expect what we know about nature to be definitive, neither should we expect it to be so easily wrong.

- Carlo Rovelli will be speaking to Guardian science editor, Ian Sample, about his new book Helgoland in a livestreamed Guardian Live event on Tuesday 4 May, 7pm BST | 8pm CEST | 11am PDT | 2pm EDT. Book tickets [here](#)
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## 2021.04.19 - Around the world

- 'What do they want from us?' As Russian forces amass, a Ukraine frontier town feels fear and despair
- Alexei Navalny Allies call for mass protests in Russia to save his life
- Poland Activists urge people to think before ticking Catholic box in census
- Tesla Two die in Texas crash with 'no one' in driver's seat
- Mars helicopter Ingenuity Nasa about to try historic flight

# **‘What do they want from us?’ As Russian forces mass, a Ukraine frontier town feels fear and despair**

[This is Europe](#)  
[Ukraine](#)

# **‘What do they want from us?’ As Russian forces mass, a Ukraine frontier town feels fear and despair**

Caught on the frontline between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists, Marinka is a town forgotten by the world

[Oksana Grytsenko](#) Marinka, Ukraine

Sun 18 Apr 2021 13.16 EDT Last modified on Mon 19 Apr 2021 14.58 EDT



Marinka, a small government-controlled town in eastern Ukraine, 80km from the Russian border. Photograph: Anastasia Vlasova/The Guardian

Vera Basova stands by her house holding a local newspaper. The front page headline says [Russia](#) is bringing tanks to the eastern Ukrainian border. “What do they want from us? Why are they dragging those tanks here?” Basova asks her neighbour.

The 90-year-old worries she will have to go back to hiding in her basement to escape shelling in the war between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists in the eastern Donbas region that recently entered its eighth year and has taken more than 13,000 lives.

A massive buildup of Russian combat troops near Ukraine’s eastern border – the largest since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, according to Nato – and the effective collapse of a ceasefire have sparked alarm in the west that Moscow is preparing to invade. Joe Biden [has urged](#) Vladimir Putin to de-escalate but [Russia’s threat](#) on Saturday to expel a Ukrainian diplomat it accused of spying drew a warning of retaliation from Kyiv, further fanning tensions.



Vera Basova at her home in Marinka. She has survived the second world war and eight years of fighting between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russia

separatists. Photograph: Anastasia Vlasova/The Guardian

Basova lives in Marinka, a small government-controlled town just 23km south-west of Donetsk, a stronghold of the separatists and 80km from the Russian border. A pair of kittens jump on and off Basova's wooden fence next to a cherry tree that has been wrapped with tape since a military vehicle bumped into it.

Donetsk's mines and slag heaps are perfectly visible from Basova's street, where nearly every house has signs of war damage. The neighbours' children play outside to the sound of birds singing and gunfire and skirmishes in the distance. From time to time an armed Ukrainian soldier walks down the street.

Before the war, many of Marinka's residents commuted daily to Donetsk for work and shopping. Battles raged for control of Marinka in 2014 and 2015. There was direct artillery shelling on the town centre and heavy casualties, civilian and military.

Basova recalls running away from "fireballs in the sky" and temporarily lost her hearing after suffering a concussion.

When the frontline stabilised and Ukraine's hot war evolved into a simmering conflict, Marinka became one of the crossing points connecting government-controlled and insurgent-held sides of the Donetsk region. That was until the spring of 2020 when the pandemic closed the checkpoint and separated many families living on different sides of the so-called "contact line".

Basova starts to cry as she talks about missing her daughter, who lives in Donetsk and has been unable to visit for over a year. Svitlana Derkach, Basova's 50-year-old neighbour, feels the same: she hasn't seen her newborn grandson in Donetsk. Derkach shows off a nicely packed teddy bear she made for the little boy.

"First, we got used to the war, but then coronavirus dealt us a new blow," she says.

Derkach remembers bombs falling in her yard in 2016 and 2017. One of them killed her cat and another shattered the windows.

She tries not to let herself panic, she says, about what it could mean for her if Russia's actions are not just sabre-rattling but the prelude to a full-scale invasion. "If something happens, I [will] just pull myself together," she says.



Svitlana Derkach tending her garden in Marinka. 'Neither Europe nor the US needs us with our problems,' she says Photograph: Anastasia Vlasova/The Guardian

In the meantime she seeds her garden with flowers and plans to bake *paskas*, the traditional cakes for Orthodox Easter in early May, with a new oven courtesy of a French humanitarian NGO.

After talks with President Macron in Paris on Friday, Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, called for a summit between Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France. [Nato](#), the US and EU have all assured Ukraine of "unwavering" support for its "territorial integrity".

But like most people in Marinka, Derkach has little faith that the west will help Ukraine if Russia invades. "Neither Europe nor the US needs us with our problems," she says. But caught on the frontline of this conflict, Marinka seems to have been largely forgotten by the rest of [Ukraine](#) as well.

When the war began in 2014, natural gas supplies were cut and have still not been restored. Most of the town's businesses were either destroyed by the fighting or ceased trading. Many of the fields in the agricultural hinterland are mined, which makes farming impossible. Drinking water has to be bought since the water in taps and wells is contaminated.

Local people now mostly rely on their gardens for food, though the military advise them to work outdoors before noon, when there are fewer risks of being shot.



Alina Kosse, director of a government-run arts and training centre in Marinka. She is doubtful of an economic revival for the town. Photograph: Anastasia Vlasova/The Guardian

“Life ends here in the second half of the day,” says Alina Kosse, 62, director of the local government-run Creative Hub, an arts and training centre. Kosse is regretful but realistic about the chances of economic revival or of anyone reinvesting in Marinka. It used to have a population of 10,000 but nearly half of the residents have gone, either evacuating in the crisis of 2014-15 or leaving the town in the aftermath.

Among those who remain, allegiances are divided and Kosse says she believes many local people are pro-Russian because they get their news

from Russian TV and Ukraine has been unable to block broadcasts from Donetsk. Russian is the first language for most of Marinka's inhabitants although Ukrainian can be heard spoken by some older people.

Kosse says explosives were thrown at her house because she helped the Ukrainian army. At the beginning of the war civilian volunteers donated new socks and underwear to the ill-equipped Ukrainian soldiers. Now help comes in the form of optical systems for weaponry and military drones. "Our army is incomparable to what it was in 2014," she says. "If Russia dares to attack us again, it will bring about Russia's end soon. Believe me."

Increased [defence spending](#) by Kyiv and seven years of combat experience have transformed the Ukrainian army from the disorganised volunteer force it was in 2014.



Kaba, a Ukrainian soldier, says the Russians have 'nasty combat lasers that burn your retina if they hit your eyes'. Photograph: Anastasia Vlasova/The Guardian

In the courtyard of an abandoned house in Marinka, just 400 metres from the nearest military positions of the separatist forces, a Ukrainian soldier, who goes by the nom de guerre Kaba, is confident Ukraine will be able to resist Russia. "If our allies close the sky to Russian aviation and prevent Russian

ships from attacking us in the sea, we will be able to fight Russia on the ground,” he says.

The 48-year-old sniper says his unit has Canadian and American rifles alongside Ukrainian weapons. They had also received training from British instructors. But he admits that they have been facing sniper fire from Donetsk since February which he believes is coming from highly trained and equipped Russian soldiers. “They have nasty combat lasers that burn your retina if they hit your eyes,” he says.

Kaba is from Kherson, a city in southern Ukraine and was originally an activist in the Euromaidan revolution which in 2014 forced the then president, Viktor Yanukovych, out of office. Russia subsequently annexed Crimea and backed the seizure by pro-Russian forces of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Snipers and landmines are now the most common cause of death in the war zone, Kaba says. In mid-March, a Ukrainian soldier was killed by a sniper bullet near Marinka, while there are regular reports of people killed and wounded along the frontline. Amid the ongoing escalation soldiers pay little attention to Covid-19 although they are now being vaccinated.

In the evenings Marinka is deserted apart from occasional groups of teenagers and stray dogs roaming the centre. A few men quietly fish at a local pond, ignoring the signs that it is mined.



A charity-run bakery opened in 2016 by a Protestant church produces 1,000 loaves of bread a day. Photograph: Anastasia Vlasova/The Guardian

Marinka's old bakery was destroyed by shells in 2014. A charity-run bakery was opened in 2016 by a Protestant church and is one of the few functioning enterprises here, turning out 1,000 loaves of fresh bread every morning.

The pastor, Roman Riazantsev, 38, organises the dispatch of free or discounted bread and buns and says many of his parishioners are worried. Their windows are rattling from the shelling and they need to prepare bomb shelters again, they tell him. "People got used to it being quiet, they repaired their houses and now everything is coming back," he says. "The fear they used to live in had faded and now it is returning."

Basova survived the second world war and says she never thought she would have to endure another, even longer, war at the end of her life. When she hears shooting or shelling, she reads her prayer book to calm herself. "What do they want from us? Do they need money?" Basova says. "I will give them my whole pension to stop the shooting."

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## [Alexei Navalny](#)

# Alexei Navalny allies call for mass protests in Russia to save his life

Kremlin critic's team want showdown as Vladimir Putin delivers state of the nation address



Alexei Navalny could be dead in days, according to his allies. Photograph: Moscow City Court press service/AFP/Getty Images

Alexei Navalny could be dead in days, according to his allies. Photograph: Moscow City Court press service/AFP/Getty Images

*[Luke Harding](#)*

Sun 18 Apr 2021 11.01 EDT

Allies of [Alexei Navalny](#) have called on his supporters to stage mass protests on Wednesday in towns and cities all across Russia, amid a dire warning that the jailed Kremlin critic and opposition leader is now dangerously ill and could die "at any minute".

Navalny's team said the situation had got so desperate that there was no time to delay. They had previously said street protests would resume once they reached 500,000 signatures in support – with the current tally about 50,000 short.

In [a video posted on Navalny's YouTube channel](#) his deputies [Leonid Volkov](#) and [Ivan Zhdanov](#) said Navalny's health had deteriorated so dramatically that a mass public display was the only way to save him. Volkov urged citizens to gather at 7pm on Wednesday in squares across the country.

The appeal sets up [a showdown between Navalny's followers and Vladimir Putin](#), who is due to deliver his annual state of the nation address at the same time. In January the Kremlin used [brutal force to break up pro-Navalny street protests, with thousands of people arrested](#).

"Have you ever seen with your own eyes how a person is murdered? You're seeing it right now," Volkov said. He added: "If we don't speak up now, the darkest times for free people are at hand. [Russia](#) will descend into total hopelessness."



Leonid Volkov, right, and his colleague Ivan Zhdanov appeared in a video on YouTube. Photograph: AP

In a further clampdown, Russia's prosecutor's office is set to designate Navalny's [FBK anti-corruption foundation](#) and his regional headquarters as extremist organisations. This would allow the authorities to jail Navalny's colleagues as "terrorists" for up to six years.

Over the weekend Navalny's allies said he risked cardiac arrest at "any minute" and could be dead in a matter of days. He has been on hunger strike for almost three weeks and has demanded – without success – that an independent medical team be allowed to examine him.

On Sunday Navalny's daughter Dasha pleaded on Twitter for her father to be given the care he needs. "Allow a doctor to see my dad," she wrote.

Allow a doctor to see my dad.

— Dasha (@Dasha\_Navalnaya) [April 18, 2021](#)

Navalny [returned to Moscow in January](#) from Germany after recovering from an assassination attempt. A secret unit from Russia's FSB spy agency [poisoned him last summer with the nerve agent novichok](#) while he was on a trip to Siberia, he alleges. The Kremlin denies the claim.

Navalny was immediately arrested. He was then convicted in a case he and western governments say is politically motivated. Navalny has recently complained of losing feeling in his legs and arms. His wife, Yulia, who visited him last week said he now weighed 76kg – down 9kg since starting his hunger strike – and was so weak he had to lie down.

There are few signs the Kremlin is willing to relent or give in to demands by the US president, Joe Biden, and other western leaders for Navalny to be released from custody. On Sunday Russia's ambassador to the UK, Andrei Kelin, accused Navalny of attention-seeking behaviour.

"He will not be allowed to die in prison, but I can say that Mr Navalny, he behaves like a hooligan, absolutely," Kelin told the BBC. The ambassador added: "His purpose for all of that is to attract attention for him[self]."

Navalny, 44, was imprisoned in February and is serving two and a half years on old embezzlement charges in a penal colony in the town of Pokrov about 60 miles (100 km) east of Moscow.

Navalny's personal doctor, Anastasia Vasilyeva, and three more doctors, including cardiologist Yaroslav Ashikhmin, have asked prison officials to grant them immediate access.

"Our patient can die any minute," Ashikhmin said on Facebook on Saturday, pointing to the opposition politician's high potassium levels and saying Navalny should be moved to intensive care. "Fatal arrhythmia can develop any minute."

Having blood potassium levels higher than 6.0 mmol (millimole) per litre usually requires immediate treatment. Navalny's were at 7.1, the doctors said. "This means both impaired renal function and that serious heart rhythm problems can happen any minute," said a statement on Vasilyeva's Twitter account.

[Putin residence has cryo chamber and stables, Navalny team alleges](#)  
[Read more](#)

The doctors said he had to be examined immediately "taking into account the blood tests and his recent poisoning".

Navalny's spokesperson, Kira Yarmysh, who accompanied him when he collapsed on an internal flight after the poisoning in August, said the situation was critical again. "Alexei is dying," she said on Facebook. "With his condition, it's a matter of days."

She said she felt like she was "on that plane again, only this time it's landing in slow motion", pointing out that access to Navalny was restricted and few Russians were aware of what was actually going on with him in prison.

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## [Poland](#)

# Poland activists urge people to think before ticking Catholic box in census

Campaigners hope more accurate picture of country's makeup will challenge government narrative of near-universal Catholicism



Thousands of people across Poland have made formal acts of apostasy to renounce their religious beliefs. Photograph: Krzysztof Zatycki/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

Thousands of people across Poland have made formal acts of apostasy to renounce their religious beliefs. Photograph: Krzysztof Zatycki/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

*[Weronika Strzyżyska](#)*

Mon 19 Apr 2021 04.50 EDT

Activists in Poland are asking people to consider if they are truly Roman Catholic when filling out a national census, hoping a more accurate picture

of the country's makeup will challenge a government narrative of near-universal [Catholicism](#).

In the previous census, completed a decade ago, 96% of respondents claimed they were Roman Catholic. This has been used by the rightwing Law and Justice (PiS) party to justify a series of controversial hardline changes it supports, including stopping public funding of IVF treatments and [a near-total ban on abortion](#).

However, campaigners believe the census was wrong and claim that people tick the box automatically or because many young residents have their census filled in by their parents. They intend to challenge the assumed religious hegemony for the country's 2021 census, which will close at the end of September.

["I want to count"](#) is a social media campaign that seeks to encourage Polish residents to choose alternative answers such as "Christian", "Atheist", or "Deist". The effort has been endorsed by the National Women's Strike, the group behind the [nationwide pro-choice protests](#), and various LGBT+ rights groups.

"The census from 10 years ago presents a very monolithic and homogenous [Poland](#)," said Oskar Żyndul, the campaign's leader, "while so many people in [Poland](#) do not go to church – even according to church's own data, only 28% of Poles attend mass".

The Catholic church had enjoyed considerable political and social authority in Poland following the fall of Communism in 1989, having played a key role in dismantling the old regime. At that time, restrictions on abortions and publicly funded classes for Catholic teaching, the catechism, in all state schools were quickly introduced.

However, the religion appears to be quickly losing currency among Poles – especially those under 30 – with [thousands across the country](#) committing formal acts of apostasy to renounce their religious beliefs.

"Paradoxically, people who grew up with catechism classes at school are the least religious," said Monika Mazurek, a sociology professor at the

University of Gdansk. She added that the recent abortion ban and the accompanying protests had acted as a catalyst that prompted many to rethink their formal affiliation with the church.

Mazurek said she was not sure that the loss of respect for church institutions would necessarily translate to a shift in the way people identify, as many see themselves as “officially” Catholic regardless of privately-held beliefs. “Catholicism in Poland is mostly cultural,” she said.

“In the private sphere people have stopped attending church … however, the public sphere is still dominated by Catholic traditions.”

However, according to the census campaign, even a significant minority of declared non-Catholics could have tangible political effects. “When officially we only have a small, 4% group [of non-Catholics], it can appear that this group does not have a voice and does not have the right to make political demands,” Żyndul said.

“If we can show that there are more of these people, then perhaps progressive bills and ideas will be proposed with more conviction.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/19/poland-activists-urge-people-to-think-before-ticking-catholic-box-in-census>

[\*\*Tesla\*\*](#)

## **Two die in Tesla car crash in Texas with 'no one' in driver's seat, police say**

Car ran off road and hit a tree north of Houston, before bursting into flames, local media says

00:37

Tesla car crashes in Texas with 'no one in driver's seat' – video report

*Reuters*

Sun 18 Apr 2021 20.10 EDT

Two men died after a [\*\*Tesla\*\*](#) vehicle, which was believed to be operating without anyone in the driver's seat, crashed into a tree north of Houston, authorities said.

"There was no one in the driver's seat," Sgt Cinthya Umanzor of the Harris County Constable Precinct 4 said of the crash on Saturday night.

The 2019 Tesla Model S was traveling at high speed when it failed to negotiate a curve and went off the roadway, crashing to a tree and bursting into flames, local television station KHOU-TV said.

After the fire was extinguished, authorities located two passengers, with one in the front passenger seat while the other was in the back seat of the Tesla, the report said, citing Harris County Precinct 4 police officer Mark Herman.

Tesla and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

[\*\*'Peak hype': why the driverless car revolution has stalled\*\*](#)

[Read more](#)

The accident came amid growing scrutiny over Tesla's semi-automated driving system following recent accidents and as it is preparing to launch its updated "full self-driving" software to more customers.

The US auto safety agency said in March it has opened [27 investigations into crashes](#) of Tesla vehicles. At least three of the crashes occurred recently.

The Tesla CEO, Elon Musk, said in January that he expects huge profits from its full self-driving software, saying he is "highly confident the car will be able to drive itself with reliability in excess of human this year".

The self-driving technology must overcome safety and regulatory hurdles to achieve commercial success.

Umanzor said the two crash victims were born in 1962 and 1951.

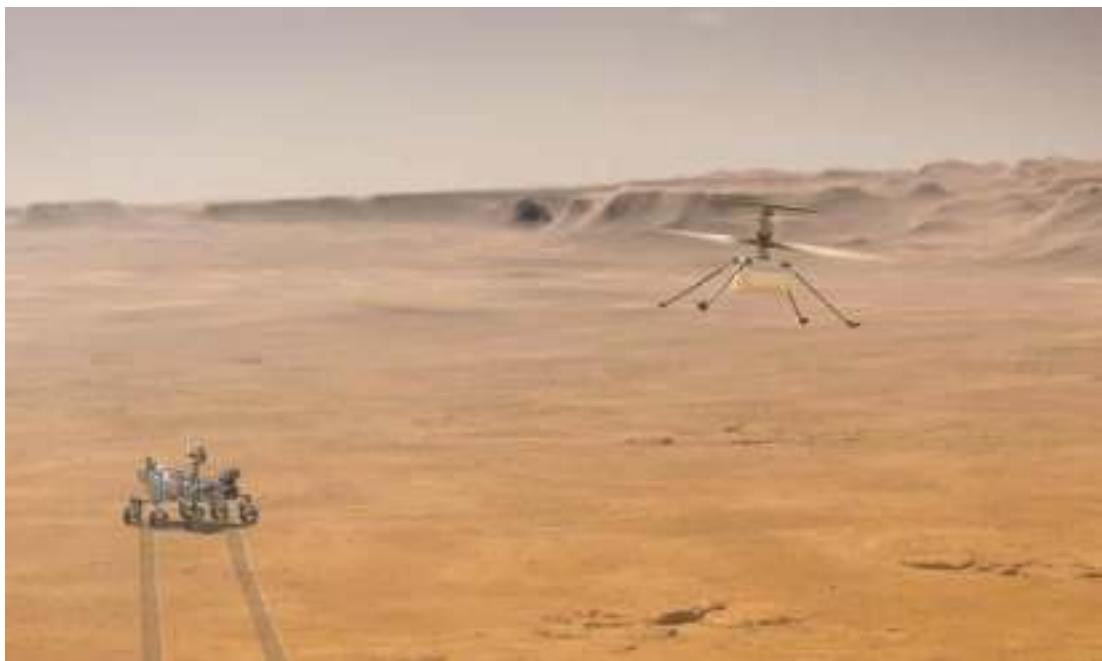
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[Nasa](#)

## Mars helicopter Ingenuity: Nasa about to try historic flight

If all goes to plan, craft will ascend to 10 feet above the surface of Mars, hover for 30 seconds, then rotate before descending



Artist's impression from Nasa of its Mars 2020 Perseverance rover and Ingenuity Mars Helicopter. Photograph: NASA/JPL-Caltech/PA

Artist's impression from Nasa of its Mars 2020 Perseverance rover and Ingenuity Mars Helicopter. Photograph: NASA/JPL-Caltech/PA

*Reuters*

Sun 18 Apr 2021 22.00 EDT

Nasa on Monday will attempt to fly a miniature helicopter above the surface of [Mars](#) in what would be the first powered, controlled flight of an aircraft on another planet.

If all goes to plan, the 1.8kg helicopter will slowly ascend to an altitude of three metres above the Martian surface, hover for 30 seconds, then rotate before descending to a gentle landing on all four legs. The flight is due to take place at 3.30am US eastern daylight time (8.30am BST/7.30am GMT). But data confirming the outcome is not expected to reach [Nasa](#) until about three hours later.

The test flight will take place 173 million miles from Earth, on the floor of a vast Martian basin called Jezero Crater. Success hinges on Ingenuity executing its pre-programmed flight instructions autonomously.

['I'd call for a tow': Mars Perseverance rover sounds a bit scratchy in first recorded drive](#)

[Read more](#)

“The moment our team has been waiting for is almost here,” said the Ingenuity project manager, MiMi Aung. Nasa is likening the experiment to the Wright Brothers’ feat 117 years ago – a tiny swath of wing fabric from the original Wright flyer is affixed under Ingenuity’s solar panel.

The robot rotorcraft was carried to the red planet in the belly of Nasa’s Mars rover [Perseverance](#), which touched down on 18 February in Jezero Crater after a nearly seven-month journey through space.

['Dare mighty things': hidden message found on Nasa Mars rover parachute](#)

[Read more](#)

Nasa hopes to receive images and video of the flight from cameras mounted on the helicopter and on the Perseverance rover, which will be parked 76 metres away.

If the test succeeds, Ingenuity will undertake several additional, lengthier flights in the weeks ahead, though it will need to rest four to five days in between each to recharge its batteries. Prospects for future flights rest largely on a safe, four-point touchdown the first time.

“It doesn’t have a self-righting system, so if we do have a bad landing, that will be the end of the mission,” Aung said. An unexpectedly strong wind

gust is one potential peril that could spoil the flight.

Nasa hopes Ingenuity – a technology demonstration separate from Perseverance’s primary mission to search for traces of ancient microorganisms – paves the way for aerial surveillance of Mars and other destinations in the solar system, such as Venus or Saturn’s moon Titan.

While Mars possesses much less gravity than Earth, its atmosphere is just 1% as dense, presenting a special challenge for flight. Engineers equipped Ingenuity with rotor blades that are four feet long and spin more rapidly than would be needed on Earth for an aircraft of its size. The design was successfully tested in vacuum chambers built at JPL to simulate Martian conditions, but it remains to be seen whether Ingenuity will fly on the red planet.

The small, lightweight aircraft already passed an early crucial test by demonstrating it could withstand nighttime temperatures dropping as low as -90C, using solar power alone to recharge and keep internal components properly heated.

The planned flight was delayed for a week by a technical glitch during a test spin of the aircraft’s rotors on 9 April. Nasa said that issue has since been resolved.

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## Headlines tuesday 20 april 2021

- ['Whole range of sanctions' UK government may legislate to stop European Super League, says minister](#)
- [Live European Super League: backlash builds against breakaway plan](#)
- [Revealed The unpublished document justifying breakaway](#)
- [Analysis What can PM do about the European Super League?](#)

## [European Super League](#)

# Boris Johnson threatens to use ‘legislative bomb’ to stop European Super League

Prime minister will offer ‘unwavering support’, he tells FA, Premier League and fans

- [European Super League: backlash builds against breakaway plan](#)

03:19

European Super League: what does it mean for football? – video explainer

*[Peter Walker](#), [Damien Gayle](#) and [Jessica Elgot](#)*

Tue 20 Apr 2021 08.20 EDT

Boris Johnson has promised football groups that the government will consider using what he called “a legislative bomb” to stop English clubs joining a breakaway [European Super League](#), as official efforts to thwart the plan were stepped up.

The prime minister and Oliver Dowden, the sports and culture secretary, held a meeting with the heads of the Football Association and Premier League, as well as representatives of fans’ groups from Liverpool, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur, three of the clubs involved.

At one point, according to sources, Johnson told the event: “We should drop a legislative bomb to stop it – and we should do it now.”

Plans to legislate would seemingly pass through parliament easily, with Labour saying it would support a law on the issue. “If the government is determined to do something about it, we will back them,” Keir Starmer told

a separate event with fans. “There is no block in parliament to action if action is needed.”

According to a formal No 10 statement, the prime minister told the online meeting that he would give “unwavering support” to football authorities over the issue, and condemned the ESL’s “closed shop” plan, under which 15 of the 20 league members would have permanent status, and be free from the risk of relegation.

Downing Street said Johnson “was clear that no action is off the table and the government is exploring every possibility, including legislative options, to ensure these proposals are stopped”.

Separately, No 10 confirmed that ministers would consider cutting off support for breakaway clubs in areas such as work visas for overseas players and the policing of matches as a way to exert pressure.

### [The European Super League: what can Boris Johnson do about it?](#)

[Read more](#)

Johnson’s spokesperson declined to specify what possible moves could be taken, saying: “I don’t think you would expect me to have full, worked-out detail one day after that. But we’ve been clear that we are exploring a range of options, including legislative ones.”

Asked if areas such as work visas and policing were being considered, he said: “All these options are on the table at the moment.”

The Liberal Democrats, who have also pledged to back action to stop the ESL, have suggested the possibility of passing a law that would oblige clubs wanting to join a new competition to first get the approval of season ticket holders.

“I am sure the billionaire owners of clubs that use expensive PR agencies to communicate their commitment to fans should welcome this change,” said Ed Davey, the Lib Dem leader.

Addressing MPs on Monday, Dowden said the government's first hope was that football authorities could stop the six English clubs – the other ones to sign up were Arsenal, Manchester City and Chelsea – from joining the midweek league alongside teams from Spain and Italy.

If that failed, Dowden had said, one option would be to refer the matter to competition authorities over the league's non-competitive element, with only five of the planned 20 participants being selected annually on merit.

01:34

Real Madrid's Florentino Pérez 'wants to save football' with Super League – video

The Competition and Markets Authority watchdog has said it would carefully consider the proposals for the super league, after Labour pressed for an investigation over whether the plans would breach laws to uphold fairness.

Other options include the withdrawal of official support, or longer-term measures to change the governance and ownership structures of English football, potentially including a rule like that used in Germany whereby fans' groups are guaranteed a majority stake in clubs. No German sides have signed up to the ESL.

The government has separately announced a wider review into the structure of English football, to be led by Tracey Crouch, the Conservative MP and former sports minister.

In a sign that this review could take a robust line, Crouch said on Tuesday that she would be perfectly happy for the Premier League to eject the six clubs if they did not change course.

Crouch told TalkRadio: “[In effect] they are tempting, or teasing, the likes of the Premier League, saying, ‘Well, come on them, if you think you can survive without us, then kick us out.’ Frankly, I’d say kick them out.”

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## European Super League

# Super League plan facing collapse as Premier League clubs withdraw – as it happened

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/live/2021/apr/20/european-super-league-backlash-builds-against-breakaway-plan-live>

## European Super League

# Revealed: unpublished Super League document justifying breakaway

- Document claims plan will benefit fans and all of football
- Talk of ‘technology-enhanced rule implementation’



Liverpool, Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City, Tottenham, Real Madrid and Barcelona are among the clubs involved in the Super League project. Photograph: Pierre-Philippe Marcou/AFP/Getty Images

Liverpool, Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City, Tottenham, Real Madrid and Barcelona are among the clubs involved in the Super League project. Photograph: Pierre-Philippe Marcou/AFP/Getty Images

*Exclusive by [Sean Ingle](#)*

*@seaningle*

Mon 19 Apr 2021 13.25 EDT

The Guardian has uncovered an unpublished [European Super League](#) document in the hidden code of its new website which seeks to justify the controversial breakaway by saying it will give fans “what they want”.

In comments that will raise eyebrows, it also claims [the breakaway](#) will offer “a sustainable and competitive environment for the whole football pyramid” – by providing more than three times the level of solidarity payments to smaller clubs than currently exist. It also reveals that the clubs are considering intriguing new ideas, including “technology-enhanced rule implementation” that are not backed by the authorities, although it does not go into details. But it seems to drastically underestimate the public criticism of the proposals. “Unanimity of view is rarely the case where fundamental change is involved,” it says. “We welcome this debate as sport is all about passion and differences of opinion are an essential part of being a fan. But in the end, we are confident that when fans are welcomed back into the stadiums and the first Super League matches are played, fans will enjoy the greatest competition club football has ever seen.”

That such a document was so easily discovered by someone with little specialist knowledge of coding will be embarrassing to the European Super League. However, its underlying message is that the 12 clubs – including six from the Premier League – had no choice but to act because of the financial costs they were facing. Citing Covid, it warns that the accumulated losses of top-level clubs exceed €5bn (£4.3bn). “The value of live media rights is stagnating or declining as some of our competitions fail to meet the needs of fans and new generations seek entertainment in ways which didn’t exist 10 years ago,” it says.

03:19

European Super League: what does it mean for football? – video explainer

“The weaknesses in the foundations of football have been known for many years, Covid simply exposed their severity and none of the game’s stakeholders have come up with a solution. Inaction is no longer an option.”

When creating the Super League, the document says the 12 breakaway clubs had “four guiding principles”:

Exceed fan expectations: “Our aim is to deliver to fans the best football possible while providing access for qualifying clubs to ensure the vibrancy of the competition and to maintain a strong commitment to the principle of sporting merit.”

Solidarity and sustainability: including “affordable ticket prices” and “reinvestment into the football pyramid via ongoing and substantial solidarity payments”. The document adds: “Super League solidarity payments will grow automatically with overall league revenues and will be more than three times higher than payments coming from the current European championship.”

Commitment to domestic leagues: “The new Super League has been designed around the principle of maintaining strong and vibrant local leagues and we will continue to compete each weekend in our national competitions as we always have.”

[Government pledges to stop English clubs joining European Super League](#)  
[Read more](#)

Readiness to change: “The Super League ownership and governance structure is designed to allow us to rapidly adopt and incorporate new ideas into the competition. Whether it’s changes in live match distribution formats, technology-enhanced rule implementation or player development, we can no longer rely on external bodies to drive progress in these areas.”

The document says that while Uefa and the Premier League have made “good faith” attempts to improve things, fundamental change is needed. “It is a new format that will sustain the drama, passion and most importantly, the unpredictability that is the lifeblood of our sport,” the document claims. “We believe it will be the most dynamic and competitive sports league in the world.

“At its heart, this is a comprehensive solution to the critical issues facing the sport. It starts with the fans of the game, giving them what they want and deserve; the best players and the world’s top clubs competing with each other throughout the year.”

The Super League did not comment when the Guardian contacted but it later hid the code after we published the story.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/apr/19/revealed-unpublished-super-league-document-justifying-breakaway>.

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## European Super League

# The European Super League: what can Boris Johnson do about it?

**Analysis:** The PM has set himself against the elite club plans. Here are some ways they could be challenged



Boris Johnson promised the government would ‘look at everything we can do’ to block plans by six leading English clubs to join the breakaway league.  
Photograph: Toby Melville/POOL/AFP via Getty Images

Boris Johnson promised the government would ‘look at everything we can do’ to block plans by six leading English clubs to join the breakaway league.  
Photograph: Toby Melville/POOL/AFP via Getty Images

*Peter Walker* Political correspondent  
[@peterwalker99](#)

Mon 19 Apr 2021 12.52 EDT

While ministers might [be united](#) with fans and opposition parties in pledging to oppose a European Super League (ESL) including six English clubs, precisely how that might happen remains unclear for now – and is by no means straightforward. Here are some possible options:

## A change to the law

This would pass easily through parliament, with [Labour saying](#) it would back emergency legislation to stop Manchester City, Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham breaking away to join the new league.

However, it remains unclear what form a new law would take. One option under consideration is to oblige English football clubs to have the German-style model of ownership by which fans are guaranteed a majority of share ownership, with the only exception in Germany being for people or companies that have invested for 20 or more years continuously.

This would almost certainly stop English clubs joining the new league, with leading German clubs [turning down](#) the chance to do so. However, it would also have an impact on the flow of investment into English football, particularly from overseas.

## Action under competition rules

This would be based on the argument that the proposed format of the ESL – with 15 “founder” teams guaranteed permanent status and only five clubs taking part on merit each year – amounts to an anti-competitive closed shop. It would be “a theoretical argument to make - but it’s a difficult one”, according to Neil Baylis, a competition lawyer with the law firm Mishcon de Reya.

There is nothing intrinsically illegal about fixed-participant tournaments, for example the Six Nations in rugby union, meaning competition law would only be breached if it could be shown that the ESL was shutting out other teams from significant revenue.

“It’s quite a tough argument to run here,” said Baylis. “It’s not stopping the Premier League from carrying on, and with midweek games it’s deliberately trying not to compete head on with the Saturday afternoon timetable. So it’s far from obvious that everyone [is] going to only want to watch the Super League games.”

If a competition rules route was chosen, this could happen via official regulators such as the UK’s Competition and Markets Authority or its equivalent in countries where other ESL teams are based, or via the courts. With regulatory cases tending to take “months if not years”, the latter seemed more likely, Baylis said.

Complicating matters even further is the fact that ESL teams might themselves have recourse to the same laws if, as threatened, participating teams were thrown out of other competitions, or their players were barred from international tournaments, on the basis that this was an attempt to stifle competition.

The only precedent for any similar cases, Baylis said, had been in far smaller sports – [ice skating](#) and [showjumping](#) – where organising bodies were challenged for preventing sportspeople from taking part in non-affiliated events.

## **Removing government support**

The culture secretary, Oliver Dowden, raised this idea in a Commons statement, saying the government could look at what it does “to facilitate matches, and facilitate those clubs – and looking at whether we should continue to provide that support”.

He did not specify what this might involve, but it could potentially mean, for example, being less willing to grant work permits for overseas players at UK-based ESL teams.

## **Restricting TV rights**

Another potential lever for government could be controlling or restricting television rights, which would be the key income stream for the new league.

But again this appears difficult, given the proliferation of TV and web-based streaming options now available.

One official route on televised sport is to add events to the so-called crown jewels, which under Ofcom regulation have to either be shown live or as highlights on free-to-air TV. This list, however, is rarely updated and very limited. For football, aside from the FA Cup final (and the Scottish Cup final on Scottish TV), it covers only the finals of the World Cup and the Euros.

## Fan boycotts

Not under the control of government, obviously, but given the almost unanimously negative response from fans to the idea of the ESL, it is always possible that its undoing is something much less formal: a realisation among teams tempted to sign up that this could tarnish their brands for years, and shed far more money in customer boycotts than is gained via TV rights.

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## 2021.04.20 - Coronavirus

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[\*\*Lost to the virusCare workers\*\*](#)

## **Joven Flores worked long hours in a care home. Was he too rundown to survive Covid?**



Joven Flores ... well known for baking cakes for the residents' birthdays  
Illustration: Paul Ryding/The Guardian

Joven Flores ... well known for baking cakes for the residents' birthdays  
Illustration: Paul Ryding/The Guardian

He came to the UK from the Philippines to create a good life for his family, but his job was demanding and relentless. Should he and other migrant workers have been better protected?



Sirin Kale

Tue 20 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

For most of his life, all Joven Flores did was work. Back-to-back shifts as a chef, working weekends, overtime. Uncomplainingly, Joven tossed, marinated, sliced, kneaded, ordered produce, wiped down worktops and stacked plastic food boxes. On his occasional days off, Joven would prepare meals so that his family wouldn't have to cook during the week. Then he'd collapse on the sofa. Then TV, sleep, an early morning drive through deserted streets and more work.

Joven was born in the village of Patimba, in the province of Laguna in the Philippines. Growing up, he lived in a simple house, made of wood and concrete. Joven's father died when he was young. His mother, Mely, worked as a housekeeper for a middle-class family, and also sold fruit and vegetables in the market to support Joven and his three sisters. Money was tight. Sometimes, Mely would have to beg for credit at the shop to buy a sack of rice. In adulthood, if one of his children spilled food on the floor, Joven would get upset, and tell them: "When I was young, my mother didn't have enough money to buy us rice."

But most of the time, Joven didn't say much at all. He was taciturn, the type of person who would show you how he felt through his actions, not his words; and besides, he was tired. Joven was the head chef at Magna Care Centre, a 63-resident care home in Poole, Dorset, run by the Caring Homes Group, which [owns 69 homes](#) across the UK. In the home, Joven was well known for baking cakes for the residents' birthdays. "The salary was very low," says his wife, Aurora, 64; he earned £11.50 an hour. "But my husband loved his job, and he was dedicated."



'He was the type of person who would show you how he felt through his actions ...' Joven with Aurora. Photograph: Handout

Aurora also used to work at Magna Care Centre, but moved jobs to care for people with dementia, for which the pay is better, even if the work is harder. "They shout at you," says Aurora. "Sometimes they spit at you. They open their bowels in the corridor. That's dementia."

Before coming to the UK in 2001, Joven and Aurora lived in Kuwait, where they worked as a chef and a nurse. The hours were brutal: six days a week, 12 hours a day, for 18 years. They were always sending money home. Joven built his mother a concrete house to replace the wooden one. The couple couldn't afford to have their three boys with them in Kuwait, so they left them with Mely, and paid for their education. Only when the children were

teenagers, and Aurora found work as a nurse in the UK, were they financially stable enough to send for them, and live as a family for the first time.

In middle age, Joven could feel his body giving out from standing up all day. His right hand hurt because he used it to mix food. Aurora would rub pain relief gel on his wrist. She felt that he looked older than he was, his face prematurely aged by the heat of the kitchen. In the evenings, after work, he'd be so exhausted that he could barely talk.

This was how Joven entered the Covid pandemic: shoulders stiff, legs sore, wrist sticky with anaesthetic gel. He knew his mother was safe and provided for. His eldest son, Jehtro, 30, was a qualified nurse, and Jerrold, 24, was an accountant. Jericho, 22, who has special needs, lived in an assisted living facility nearby. All his labour was for them. They had made it. It was a better, more prosperous existence than the life Joven had been born into.

But Joven wouldn't get to enjoy his old age, see his mother again or sleep in the house he built. He died of Covid-19 on 6 February 2021. He was 59.

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Because Filipino people in the UK often work in frontline health and social care jobs, they are disproportionately susceptible to the virus. Research from Health Service Journal looking at NHS workers' deaths in the first wave found that Filipinos were the [single largest](#) group by nationality, after British people, with Filipino nurses (just 3.8% of all NHS nurses) accounting for more than a fifth. The first Filipino healthcare workers to die were [Elvira Bucu](#) and [John Alagos](#), who both died on 3 April 2020. Alagos, a nursing assistant at Watford general hospital, was only 23. After he died, Watford town hall [flew its flag](#) at half-mast to honour him.

Filipinos are one of the world's largest diaspora communities, spanning more than 100 countries, but mostly concentrated in the US, the UK, Australia and the Gulf states. In the UK, [22,043 NHS workers are Filipino](#), the third-biggest national group, after British people and Indians. In adult social care, 9% of the English [workforce](#) are non-EU nationals, and [about 7% of those workers are Filipino](#), making them the fourth-biggest non-British nationality after Romanians, Poles and Nigerians.



John Alagos and Elvira Bucu, the first Filipino healthcare workers to die, in April 2020. Photograph: Facebook & gofundme

The foundations for this mass migration of Filipino workers were laid in the late 19th century, when the US colonised the Philippines. According to Prof Rhacel Salazar Parreñas of the University of Southern California, the US adopted a policy of “benevolent assimilation”, introducing the US education curriculum in the Philippines. “The population was schooled in English,” Salazar Parreñas says. One goal, she says, was to have Filipinos working in the healthcare sector, so they set up nursing schools. As a result, by the 1940s, there was an accessible labour pool of Filipino nurses who had been required to pass English language exams. The US started bringing them over in the 40s, as a solution to nursing shortages, but it ramped up recruitment in the 1960s.

From the 1970s onwards, Filipino workers also migrated to the oil-rich countries of the Gulf, encouraged by the government of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. “Marcos pivoted towards a labour-export economy,” says Prof Catherine Ceniza Choy of the University of California, Berkeley. “By exporting Filipino labourers abroad, they remit part of their earnings in foreign currency back to the Philippines. That became a multimillion-dollar moneymaker for the Philippine government.”

Both academics are critical of this labour-export economy. “It separates parents from their children,” says Choy. It also takes a toll on those left behind, like Mely. “There is a large pool of women who end up taking care of these kids,” says Salazar Parreñas. “Often, the grandmothers are physically ailing, and they find themselves being caregivers all over again.”

In 1983, the year Joven and Aurora [left for Kuwait](#), 434,207 Filipinos migrated overseas. “It’s no fun,” says Aurora of life in the emirate. “You always work, work, work.” As a nurse, Aurora was one of the lucky ones. Her friends who were domestic workers were routinely raped, beaten and abused. “If you were a domestic helper,” says Aurora, “it was rare for your employers to be good people. Most of them were bad. Maybe 70% bad, 30% good.”

On Fridays, her only day off, Aurora would go to church with the other Filipino workers, and then to a Swiss cafe, where Joven worked in the kitchen. It had the best cakes. “When I went to pay the bill, it was already paid,” Aurora says. “Joven had paid it. I hadn’t even met him yet.” Aurora got shy, and stopped going to the cafe; after that, her friends found they had to pay. “When I was there, it was free,” she laughs. “When I wasn’t there, it wasn’t free.”

Aurora wanted to know why Joven kept paying her bill, so she agreed to let him visit her at her dormitory. Dating in Kuwait was nearly impossible because Aurora and Joven lived in single-sex dorms. “Four beds in one room,” Aurora says. “No privacy.”



From left: Jehtro, Jericho, Aurora, Joven and Jerrold Photograph: Courtesy of the family

Joven wasn't the sort of person to be showy with his affections. "He would only say: 'I love you,' on Valentine's Day or birthdays," says Aurora. "But I could see he loved me. Because of his actions." They married in 1989; they waited because they wanted to be able to send more money to their families back home before starting a family.

After marrying, they had Jehtro in 1991, leaving him in the Philippines to be raised by Mely. "It was the only way," Aurora says. "There are lots of nurses in the Philippines. It's hard to find a job." When Jehtro would ask Mely where his parents were, she'd tell him that they were working in another country, to provide him with a better future, and that they always thought of him. Growing up, Jehtro would stare at the photos of his parents Mely kept in the living room. "I was always asking where they were," he says. Every few years, Aurora and Joven would use their holiday to come back to the Philippines. Jehtro was shy around these strangers who showered him with kisses and gifts. He was sometimes jealous of other children, who got to live with their parents.

He never complained that he was working too hard. That was his way of showing love to us

In 2001, Aurora got a job in the UK. She was able to do so because in the 90s the New Labour government [relaxed the requirements for skilled non-EU migrants to meet staffing shortfalls in the NHS](#). Aurora came first, and Joven followed. “It was cold and green,” Aurora says. “That’s what I liked. In Kuwait, it was never green. It was sandstorms. Full of dust.”

They were able to send for the kids. “It was always Joven’s ambition that we stay together as one family,” Aurora says. In Poole, they struggled with racist neighbours in the first block of flats they moved into. “They were always knocking on our door,” says Aurora. “They told us that we needed to go back to the Philippines. They thought we were here to be supported by the government. I told them: ‘We are here to work.’”

The experience for many Filipino people of moving to the UK can be fraught with stress and uncertainty. “It’s exhausting,” says Susan Cueva of the [Kanlungan Filipino Consortium](#), a charity working on behalf of migrant communities in Britain. “We have to adjust to a country that’s completely different to our own, where we have a big family support system and a sense of community. There’s always a lot of fear because of the hostile immigration environment towards migrants as a whole. We never really settle because we think that if we do something wrong, we will be kicked out of the UK.”

For the first time, Jehtro got to know his father as an adult. “We bonded,” Jehtro says. Joven taught his son how to cook Filipino dishes like *sinigang*, a sour soup. “You could sense from his voice that he wanted me to do it correctly,” Jehtro says. “Because he had his chef training. I overcooked the vegetables, and he told me: ‘Only put the vegetables in during the last three minutes of your cooking.’” Joven continued to support Mely, sending between £80 and £120 for her food every month. In the last years of his life, he travelled back to the Philippines more regularly because Mely was in the early stages of dementia. “He wanted to spend more time with her while she still recognised him,” Jehtro says.

Joven stayed at the Magna Care Centre for 18 years. “He was loyal to that place,” says Aurora. When they were on shifts together, Joven would make Aurora lunch, and bring it to the nurse’s station. On his rare days off, Joven would frequent charity shops; he refused to buy anything new for himself.

Joven would wait until the rest of the family had upgraded their mobile phones, and then use their old handsets.

“His family came first,” says Jehtro. “He never complained that he was working too hard. That was his way of showing love to us. If he was working hard, it was for us.”

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Joven and Aurora easily found work in the UK because the care home sector has long struggled to recruit and retain staff. Pay is low, the job demanding and stressful. Nurses get paid more by the NHS, and there is more opportunity for progression, so many choose to work in hospitals instead. “There isn’t the same path in social care,” says Omar Idriss of the Health Foundation, a charity focused on improving the healthcare of people in the UK. “You’ll be in a low-paid job your entire life.”

Most care worker jobs are minimum wage; people can earn the same in retail or hospitality where there are opportunities for career progression to store manager, or supervisor. As a result, the sector has long relied on migrant workers. People from EU or non-EU countries make up 17% of the workforce, [rising to 38% in London](#). Up to a quarter of social care staff are on zero-hours contracts.

“There’s this widely held misconception that care homes are all large profit-making organisations,” says Adam Gordon, a professor of the care of older people at the University of Nottingham. “While there are some companies that [do pay dividends](#), about 60% of care homes are run by charities, or small companies with a handful of homes. Funding is precarious.” Unlike the NHS, social care is primarily funded by local authorities, and the years of austerity that followed the 2008 financial crisis have led to a [12% real terms cut](#) between 2010 and 2019. The Caring Homes Group, which owns Joven’s care home, [posted a loss](#) of £13.1m in 2019.

Joshua (not his real name) spent eight years working as a care assistant at a residential home in south London. He is Filipino-British, and worked throughout the first wave. But the problems he saw in the sector far predicated the arrival of Covid-19. “It’s a high-skill, physically and emotionally draining job,” he says. Because of the low pay, there was high staff turnover

at Joshua's home, forcing management to rely on agency staff. "Agency staff work the minimum they can," says Joshua. "They won't tire themselves out as much as regular staff, and they're less well trained."

Joshua became so alarmed by how some care workers were handling the residents, who were sometimes left with bruises, that he volunteered as a trainer, teaching staff to use hoists safely. Management did not make this training mandatory, so most staff didn't show up. Nor did they pay Joshua for the additional work of running the sessions.

He stayed as long as he did because he truly cared for the residents' wellbeing. "I can stack shelves, no problem," he says. "But not everyone can come to a workplace where they are making a difference to someone else's life. I would come in, make sure they have a good day, feel good about that and go home happy." He saw many staff come and go during this period, but the migrant workers tended to stay. "I can't commend the Jamaicans and Ghanians who worked in the home enough. When something needed to be done, they always got it done."



Jerrold, Jericho, Joven, Aurora and Jehtro Flores. Photograph: Courtesy of the family

Successive governments have kicked the can down the road when it comes to social care reform. [Between 1998 and 2017](#), there were 12 white papers and consultations on the subject, plus five independent reviews and commissions. “Social care reform is difficult to implement. It costs money,” says Idriss. “We had the financial crisis and the Covid crisis. They’ve been an excuse for governments not to do anything.” Plus, the people who suffer in poorly run care homes that they have to pay for themselves, often through the sale of their home, can’t lobby for reform. They are elderly, and may have Alzheimer’s or dementia. “The majority of people think social care is free, like the NHS,” says Idriss. “They only realise when their family hits the system. And by then, they’re absorbed in caring for that person, rather than agitating for change.”

An overstretched system, then, scraping by with inadequate funding and heroic staff often ground down by the long hours and poverty pay. And then Covid hit, and the people most vulnerable to the virus – elderly people and the low-paid workers recruited from overseas to care for them – were the ones to get sick and die.

The carnage in our care homes is a familiar story by now. Personal protective equipment (PPE) stockpiles [diverted to the NHS](#). A “[protective ring](#)” supposed to protect residents from Covid-19 that crumbled to ashes. At least 24,919 care home residents died [in the period from April 2020 to January 2021](#). But the [death rate](#) among social care staff is less well known. Social care staff are twice as likely to die from Covid-19 as the general working-age population. They die doing a job for which they are paid around as little as £8.72 an hour, often without benefits.

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Aurora thinks that she knows how she got Covid. One of the residents in her care home had the virus, but refused to self-isolate in her room. It’s challenging with people who have dementia. You can’t lock them away. “She kept walking and walking … we couldn’t do anything,” says Aurora. “We couldn’t avoid her. That’s how I became positive.”

Aurora fell ill first, on 27 December, Joven two days later. Jehtro stayed at home, to care for them. He wasn’t unduly concerned. He’d worked in the intensive care unit (ICU) during the first wave of the pandemic, and seen

much older patients pull through. “I thought that it would pass, and everything would go back to normal,” Jehtro says. He set up two TVs in his parents’ bedroom, so his mother could watch her favourite channels from the bed, while Joven watched football, from a mattress on the floor.

Jehtro was monitoring his father’s oxygen saturation levels, and when on 5 January they dropped to 83% (a normal range is 95%-100%), he called an ambulance. Joven hated hospitals, but Jehtro insisted that his father needed to go. “At first, he was really refusing, but I told him that I’d called the ambulance already.” Joven was taken to Poole hospital, where Jehtro worked. They took him straight to the ICU. Over the next month, Joven would be moved from the ICU to a critical care ward, and then back to the ICU again. Jehtro was allowed to visit him after his shifts because he worked on an adjacent ward.

On 14 January, Jehtro visited his father on the critical care ward. It was evening, and he was falling asleep. They talked about the Liverpool v Manchester United game that weekend. Joven was a Liverpool fan, and Jehtro urged him to pay to watch the game on the hospital TV. It would be the last time they spoke. Joven was sedated and placed on a ventilator the next day.

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In recent years, the government has narrowed the options for Filipino people to live and work in the UK. In 2012, the then home secretary, Theresa May, tightened the visa rules for foreign-born domestic workers, making it [harder for them](#) to escape abusive employers and switch jobs. Since 2017, there has been a requirement of a job offer with a minimum salary of [£30,000 for non-EU workers](#). (This threshold was lowered to £25,600 in 2021.) Nurses are exempt, but entry-level [social care workers are not](#). In 2020 the [government increased](#) the surcharge non-British citizens are expected to pay to access the NHS from £400 to £624. (After public outcry, the government scrapped plans to make health and social care staff pay the fee.) Before 2003, applying for indefinite leave to remain was free. Now, it costs £2,389 an applicant. “Isn’t that extortion?” Cueva exclaims. “We’re providing the health and social care services in this country, and we have to pay for it.”

The rising cost of coming to live and work in the UK, and the UK's hostile immigration environment, combine to form an environment in which many frontline Filipino health and social care workers are frightened to speak out. In June 2020, a Public Health England report found that racism drove higher death rates in BAME communities. "Historic [sic] racism ... may mean that individuals in BAME groups are less likely to seek care when needed or as NHS staff are less likely to speak up when they have concerns about PPE or risk," [the report concluded](#). A report by the Kanlungan Filipino Consortium after the first wave found that 19% of [all frontline BAME respondents](#) felt that they had been required to undertake less desirable tasks than their white colleagues.

"As Filipino migrants, we don't know the structure, and we have trust in authority," says Cueva, of the Kanlungan Filipino Consortium. "We think: 'They wouldn't send us to our death, would they?'" She knows of a pregnant woman who died of Covid after being made to work when she was supposed to be shielding, and another nurse who had cancer who was also made to work on a Covid ward, and who also died.

Aurora believes that the reason that Joven was hit so hard by Covid was because he was rundown and overworked. The part-time chef who usually assisted him had stopped working because of Covid. "My husband worked for five months without time off," Aurora says. "That's why he had no resistance or strength to recover from Covid. He was overworked." Even when Joven was sick, he kept working. "He was still ordering the supplies for the kitchen," says Aurora, "because they didn't know what to order, and he was the only one with the password. He had a high temperature, and they were still calling him and he was ordering. Until he couldn't cope. Even when Jehtro rang the ambulance and Joven went to hospital, he was still working – really."

Much of the work that the Kanlungan Filipino Consortium organisation has been doing during Covid is to educate Filipino migrant workers about their workplace rights. "We've been running workshops explaining that people should be more assertive and ask for support, particularly if they have underlying health conditions and need to shield," says Cueva. "But we find that even people who are union members don't go to their union because they fear they will be in trouble with their employers."

When Covid hit his care home, Joshua worked relentlessly to keep his residents safe. There were so many staff off sick that, some evenings, there would be just one care worker to look after 10 residents. (Usually, the ratio was one to five.) Initially, management discouraged staff from wearing masks, because they believed it would frighten the residents. (This changed when the government changed its guidance to [mandate mask wearing](#) on 17 April.) There was such pressure on PPE supplies that the number of gloves usually available in the home dwindled. “They had to get brands that weren’t as good,” Joshua says. “It was a waste of money, and dangerous for staff. The gloves would disintegrate, and you’d be stuck there with an open hand, doing personal care.”

I control myself not to cry because when I start crying it’s very difficult to stop

Perhaps inevitably, Joshua fell ill with Covid, although he made a full recovery. In July, he was offered a better-paying job as a personal care worker to a private client. His new salary is £15-£20 an hour, depending on how much he works. Joshua misses the residents in his old home dearly. “I worry about them every single day,” he says. “I wish I was still working there. They were like my grandparents. I knew what music they liked, what they like to cuddle. I was a part of their lives.”

I ask him how much his old care home would have had to pay him to stay. He thinks for a moment, and says: “£12 an hour. That would have made a difference.”

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On 5 February, a doctor on the ICU ward pulled Jehtro aside at work and told him that Joven’s prognosis was not good. Jehtro went home, to prepare his mother, who had by then recovered from Covid. They went in the next day. “She was really crying,” Jehtro says. “I told her to be strong and that we had to continue to pray and ask for healing, from God. She managed to pick herself up and we went into his hospital room. That’s when she started crying again.”

At the hospital, Jehtro told his father, who had been fighting for his life for a month, that he shouldn’t worry if he had to give up. “I told him that if he

wanted to rest it was OK,” says Jehtro. “We’re going to be OK. I’m going to take care of my mother and brothers.” He believes his father heard what he was saying, even though he was sedated.

“I am used to people in my nursing home dying,” says Aurora. “But it’s really different when it’s your husband.” What stings so bitterly for Aurora is that Joven’s lifetime of hard work had come to fruition. His children were in stable jobs, his mother was taken care of. These were supposed to be their years of rest. “We thought we could spend more time as a family together when we were retired,” Aurora says. “But this is gone.”

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“For 19 years, Joven was a much-loved member of our team,” said a spokesperson for the Magna Care Centre, “and he is deeply missed by his colleagues, the friends he made working here and our residents. We ensured staff were offered increased support and counselling following his death as we understood how popular Joven was at the home.



Margaret Keenan with the Filipina nurse May Parsons after becoming the first person in the UK to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. Photograph: Jacob King/AP

“Our priority throughout the pandemic has been the health and wellbeing of our colleagues and our residents. We are extremely grateful to all our staff

who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to continue to provide high-quality care for our residents. We understand how difficult Covid-19 has been to manage and it has been important for our staff to not feel compelled to work extra hours. This is why we put in place protocols to ensure appropriate staff cover to allow staff to take breaks. We also increased managerial support in the home when needed. When colleagues are unable to work, we always organise relief cover to support them and their team.

“After his wife contracted Covid-19 in December, Joven followed all necessary protocol and quarantined at home. During this time, he undertook a couple of tasks, such as placing a food order, as we believed he did not have any symptoms. As soon as we were made aware that Joven had also fallen ill, we immediately ceased all communications about work and only contacted the family to send our best wishes, offer support and check in on his condition.”

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On 8 December 2020, the British Filipina nurse May Parsons made history by being the first healthcare worker to administer a Covid-19 vaccine. “I’m very proud to be saying to everyone that I’m a Filipina-British [person] today making history,” [she declared](#).

Eight days before Parsons injected 91-year-old Margaret Keenan, the government published its post-Brexit immigration rules. Although nurses like her would still be able to come to the UK under the new regime, [entry-level social care workers](#) would not. “We will not introduce a general low-skilled or temporary work route,” the government [announced](#). “We need to shift the focus of our economy away from a reliance on cheap labour.”

From the [supermarket workers](#) who kept us fed to the care assistants who looked after our grandparents, so-called low-skill workers had helped the UK through its worst crisis since the second world war – but now that the Covid-19 pandemic was receding, it was thank you and goodbye. “We are the frontline,” says Cueva. “We live in overcrowded accommodation. We work hard for long hours. And now the government has turned around and said: ‘Your skills aren’t good enough.’”

This post-Brexit migration strategy looks likely to exacerbate the staff shortages in the social care sector. According to the Health Foundation, the UK will need an extra 140,000 full-time social care staff in the next five years. About 1.4 million adults live without adequate social care support, and there are more than 120,000 vacancies for social care staff. The government has pledged to reform the social care system, but Idriss questions whether these measures will be a far-reaching intervention to meet the needs of our ageing population, or mere tinkering under the bonnet. “It’s not just reform that’s needed. There needs to be proper funding attached to it,” he says.

A staggering 22% of all NHS and social care staff deaths have been British Filipinos. The community is traumatised and grieving. “We Filipinos, we are like a big family,” says Cueva. “Every death in the community is devastating. It’s had a strong effect on us because we know that, as migrants in the UK, we have to support each other. So when someone dies, you feel connected to that person.”

Joven’s car is still parked outside the family home. The sight of it upsets Aurora. “He always gave me lifts to work,” she says. “When I see it, I become very sad. I control myself, not to cry, because when I start crying it’s very difficult to stop. I think of happy moments in my life and try to fight it.” In front of the children, she holds it together. But when she’s alone in her room, she sobs. “If I am sad and alone,” Aurora says, “I pretend God is with me. God is my friend. My comforter. I talk to him.”

It’s hard for Jehtro, too. He has to work at the hospital where his father died. “Whenever I pass critical care, I feel sad,” he says. The house feels empty. His father’s death means that Jehtro has had to step up into his role. Every month he gives Mely money to support her in the Philippines. It’s what Filipino people the world over do. Love each other, support each other – and send money back home.

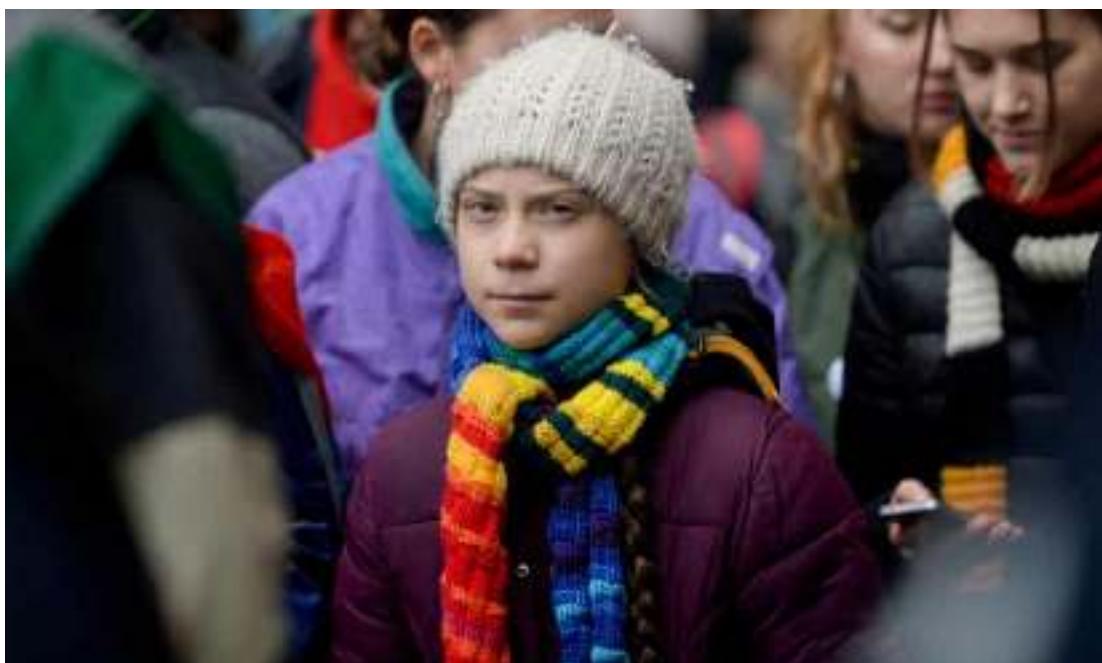
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## Coronavirus

# Greta Thunberg condemns vaccine inequality between rich and poor countries

Climate activist calls for governments and Covid vaccine developers to ‘step up their game’ to address vaccine nationalism

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Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg says it's 'unethical' for high-income countries to vaccinate young, healthy people if it comes at the expense of high-risk groups in poor countries. Photograph: Johanna Geron/Reuters

Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg says it's 'unethical' for high-income countries to vaccinate young, healthy people if it comes at the expense of high-risk groups in poor countries. Photograph: Johanna Geron/Reuters

*Associated Press*  
Mon 19 Apr 2021 20.04 EDT

Teenage climate activist [Greta Thunberg](#) has urged governments, vaccine developers and the world to “step up their game” to fight vaccine inequity after the richest countries bought up most [Covid-19](#) vaccine doses and those in poorer nations have gone without.

Her comments on Monday came as the World Health Organization announced 5.2 million new confirmed virus cases over the latest week, the largest weekly count yet, according to the UN health agency.

The Swedish teen who inspired the climate strike movement chipped in €100,000 (US\$120,000) from her charitable foundation to the WHO Foundation to help buy Covid vaccines for countries where they are needed, especially in poor countries.

“It is completely unethical that high-income countries are now vaccinating young and healthy people if that happens at the expense of people in risk groups and on the front lines in low- and middle-income countries,” said Thunberg, who was invited as a guest for a regular WHO briefing.

[What can moral philosophy tell us about the Covid 'vaccine nationalism' row? | Alexis Papazoglou](#)

[Read more](#)

While Thunberg hailed the development of Covid vaccines in “record time,” she cited estimates that one in four people in high-income countries have received them so far, while only one in 500 in middle- and lower-income countries have.

“The international community, governments and vaccine developers must step up their game and address the tragedy that is vaccine inequity,” she said. “Just with the climate crisis, those who are the most vulnerable need to be prioritised and global problems require global solutions.”

The WHO director general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said new Covid cases rose for an eighth straight week around the globe and deaths have risen for a fifth straight week.

He said infections among people 25 to 59 are “increasing at an alarming rate, possibly as a result of highly contagious variants and increased social mixing among younger adults”.

More than three million Covid patients have died in the pandemic and more than 141 million have been infected, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, but experts say both numbers underestimate the true toll of the pandemic.

Thunberg said people need to “step up for one another.”

“We young people may be the ones who are least affected … by the virus in a direct way,” she said. “Of course, many young people fail to draw that connection.”

“Not all, but some,” she added.

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## Press freedom

# Oppression of journalists in China ‘may have been factor in Covid pandemic’

China placed 177th in Press Freedom Index, with warning that persecution of reporters can have international impact

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Mourners attend a vigil for Dr Li Wenliang in February 2020. He died from Covid-19 after trying to share information on the disease. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

Mourners attend a vigil for Dr Li Wenliang in February 2020. He died from Covid-19 after trying to share information on the disease. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

*[Jim Waterson](#) Media editor  
[@jimwaterson](#)*

Tue 20 Apr 2021 00.00 EDT

Persecution of journalists in [China](#) may have contributed to the global coronavirus outbreak by stopping whistleblowers coming forward in the early days of the pandemic, according to the press freedom group Reporters Without Borders.

China ranks 177th out of 180 countries on the organisation's annual Press Freedom Index, with the organisation warning that persecution of journalists in totalitarian regimes affects citizens in western democracies.

"We can sit in the UK and think it's mostly OK here – but actually what's happening on the other side of the world can affect us," said Rebecca Vincent, director of international campaigns at the organisation. "We've argued and still argue that if the press had been freer in China then it's possible a global pandemic could have been averted."

China initially attempted to restrict reporting of a new infectious outbreak with the state's online censorship tools, keeping other countries in the dark even as the disease began to spread around the world. Officials also persecuted whistleblower Dr Li Wenliang – [who later died from Covid-19](#) – after he tried to share information in late December on patients with a new highly infectious disease in his Wuhan hospital.

Vincent said China's growing global influence meant its government was exporting its attitude to the media throughout the world through state-backed news services such as CGTN: "It's not just a danger for the people of China – they have more journalists in jail than anyone else – but it's trickling throughout our international information systems. They're trying to influence how we get and perceive information everywhere."

Reporters Without Borders' latest index places the UK at 33rd behind countries such as Ghana, Spain and Lithuania, a slight improvement on last year. The organisation praised the government's national action plan to protect journalists from abuse and harassment. But it said concerns remained about the attacks on journalists in Northern Ireland and the treatment of

Julian Assange, who is being held in prison despite winning the latest round of his legal battle against deportation to the US.

The top spot on the press freedom index once again went to Norway, while Australia ranked 25th and the US came in at 44th. The biggest year-on-year fall on the index was in Malaysia, which fell 18 places to 119th, reflecting wider clampdowns on press freedoms across Asia.

The index is based on a survey of Reporters Without Borders' regional correspondents and takes into account issues such as the level of attacks on journalists, media independence, and transparency of government institutions.

As in previous years, the countries with the worst record on press freedom tend to be dictatorships or one-party states such as North Korea or Turkmenistan, although the authors noted growing global animosity towards journalists.

### **Top 10 best countries for press freedom:**

1. Norway
2. Finland
3. Sweden
4. Denmark
5. Costa Rica
6. The Netherlands
7. Jamaica
8. New Zealand
9. Portugal
10. Switzerland

### **Top 10 worst countries for press freedom:**

1. Eritrea
2. North Korea
3. Turkmenistan
4. China
5. Djibouti
6. Vietnam
7. Iran

8. Syria
  9. Laos
  10. Cuba
- 

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[may have been a factor in covid pandemic](#)

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## [Health policy](#)

# Thousands could fly to England from India before it joins Covid travel ‘red list’

UK government accused of acting too slowly as fears grow over new variant discovered in subcontinent

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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01:35

Matt Hancock announces India to be added to UK's travel red list – video

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

Mon 19 Apr 2021 13.55 EDT

Thousands of people could fly from [India](#) to England before it is added to the travel “red list” from Friday, amid growing criticism that the government acted too slowly to restrict the spread of a variant which may be more resistant to vaccines.

In a move announced hours after Boris Johnson bowed to pressure to cancel a key trip to India to boost economic ties, the health secretary, [Matt Hancock](#), said most travel from the country would be banned from 4am on Friday. Only British citizens and residents will be allowed in, and all must quarantine in a hotel for 10 days.

There are 16 direct flights from India to the UK scheduled to land before the deadline and many more indirect ones.

Some 103 cases of the new variant first identified in India have been found “geographically dispersed” across the UK, according to Public Health England (PHE). Hancock said the “vast majority” had links to international travel.

As India faces a deadly surge of the virus, recording more than 250,000 cases a day, UK scientists are working to see if the variant has any “concerning characteristics” such as being more transmissible or resistant to vaccines, Hancock said.

Asked whether current jabs are effective against the variant, known as B1617, Hancock said: “We simply don’t know that … that is the core of my concern.”

Nick Thomas-Symonds, the shadow home secretary, said it was “not good enough to try and shut the door after the horse has bolted, by adding countries onto a red list when it is too late”. Labour has called repeatedly for all travellers arriving in England to be subject to hotel quarantine.

The shadow health secretary, Jonathan Ashworth, said B1617 was responsible for India experiencing “one of the world’s steepest surges right now”. He called for it to be classed as a “variant of concern” by PHE, rather than a “variant under investigation”, adding: “We already know this variant carries mutations of concern in other variants, and if we have learnt anything in the last 12 months, it is that this virus ruthlessly exploits ambiguities, that we must act fast when the situation is controllable because in a few weeks time it might not be.”

Yvette Cooper, the chair of the home affairs select committee, said India should have been put on the red list when it was updated 10 days ago to include countries with “lower and slower Covid rates” including Pakistan and Bangladesh.

She called for the government to publish the criteria behind countries being red-listed “so that we can see where the border gaps still are” and criticised ministers for “delays” in acting, in a week when Hong Kong “has identified 47 Covid cases just on a single Delhi flight”.

The Tory MP Edward Leigh also urged Hancock to “resist those very powerful lobbyists” in the aviation industry and be “absolutely determined in following the evidence out there … in not allowing unnecessary travel and really be tough with this red list”.

Hancock acknowledged that the “biggest risk” to Covid restrictions being eased in England was a “new variant that the vaccine does not work as well against”, and said surge testing would be rolled out “to make sure that we limit the spread as much as possible”.

No data has yet been published revealing where in the UK the India variants have been discovered, but PHE said there was “no evidence of large clusters” in any particular area.

Christina Pagel, a professor of operational research at UCL and a member of Independent Sage, said: “We are not likely to get definitive evidence on B1617 for a few weeks given low sequencing, testing and vaccination rates in India and low case numbers here.”

Earlier, Downing Street announced that a trip Johnson was scheduled to take to India this month to meet India’s prime minister, Narendra Modi, had been cancelled, despite plans being changed last week to press ahead with a scaled-down version. On Sunday, [Labour piled pressure on Johnson](#) to “set an example” by pulling out.

Reuters reported that the number of infections has passed 15m in India - the second highest in the world after the US – and that cases jumped by a record 273,810 in the last day. The UK Department for Transport also said: “The situation in India has deteriorated with an extremely rapid rise in cases,” adding that local infection rates have “almost doubled” in a week to 111 per 100,000 people – “higher than any other point”.

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## 2021.04.20 - Spotlight

- ['We cried, it was emotional' Maya Jama on being herself as new Glow Up host](#)
- ['It blew our minds' The surfers who braved sharks to ride Africa's mightiest wave](#)
- ['Blatantly cynical' Readers across Europe react to Super League plans](#)
- [Terry Pratchett's debut turns 50 At 17 he showed promise of a brilliant mind](#)

## Television

Interview

# **‘We cried, it was emotional’: Maya Jama on being herself as new Glow Up host**

[Iman Amrani](#)



Dolli, one of the young makeup artists (MUAs) in Glow Up. Photograph: Guy Levy/BBC/Wall To Wall

Dolli, one of the young makeup artists (MUAs) in Glow Up. Photograph: Guy Levy/BBC/Wall To Wall

‘Bake Off’ for makeup returns to BBC Three, its new host and judges Val Garland and Dominic Skinner talk about guiding the young, diverse artists through the competition



Tue 20 Apr 2021 05.30 EDT

When lockdown shut the nation indoors, many experimented with sourdough, sculpting and sewing – anything to occupy our hearts, minds and hands to distract us from impending doom. So it seems only natural that the telly world reflected that, serving up our distractions in competition form. Stuart Heritage wrote last week that the Great British formula may have reached saturation point as The Great Pottery Throw Down, The Great British Sewing Bee and all the rest are joined by All That Glitters, taking the format down the jewellery line. However, this week, Glow Up also returns to BBC Three, taking on one thing most of us have done significantly less of over the past year: makeup.

Admittedly, a competition like Glow Up might not be for everyone, but anyone with an Instagram account (or who has a child with an Instagram account) will know that the world of makeup is about more than just contouring and fake eyelashes. The best challenges on the series involve totally transforming faces, with truly impressive results. It's hard to tear your eyes away from the trembling fingers fiddling with prosthetics, especially on well-known film and TV sets with contestants competing under the watchful gaze of award-winning guest judges from the industry.



Glow Up MUA Craig. Photograph: Guy Levy/BBC/Wall To Wall

Glow Up caters more to BBC Three's younger demographic and, as it rolls into its third season, it is clear to see why. Veteran makeup artists and judges Val Garland and Dominic Skinner remain on the show, with 26-year-old presenter [Maya Jama](#) replacing Stacey Dooley – a more natural choice of bubbly presenter and supportive sister to the young contestants. “I don’t know how involved you’re supposed to get in these jobs with people,” she says, fresh-faced and glowing in her sports bra, as she tries to fit in some home workouts between interviews. “We cried at points; it was emotional. Maybe it would have been different if it wasn’t a pandemic because everyone goes home and lives their lives separately, but because it was our whole life for that month and a half, you put your all into it.”

Jama’s trademark cheekiness translates well on screen for the third series, fully glammed up and throwing encouraging words to nervous contestants such as young Riley, who has never done makeup on a model apart from herself before – “Poppin’ the cherry today!” – but she says that working with the young makeup artists (MUAs) also helped her reflect on her own image. “Sometimes in this industry, world, media, you can kind of get lost in it and think that you’ve got to be a certain way like you have to be *this way* and you have to be *proper*,” she says, putting on a faux posh voice. “Whereas, with the MUAs I was just like their mate and how I would be in

normal life and they appreciated that so much ... It was like a confirmation to me that I don't need to change the way I am to do certain shows."



Glow Up host Maya Jama (*centre*) with judges Dominic Skinner (*left*) and Val Garland (*right*). Photograph: David Ellis/BBC/Wall to Wall/Sophie Wade

Part of Glow Up's charm is the wholesome, inclusive content. The format is designed to focus on the contestants and their work with very little bitchiness between them. But Judge Val serves as the competition enforcer, making sure there is an element of pressure to keep contestants on their toes. She deftly dodges a question about which makeup artists (MUAs) she likes most. "For me, it's very important that I give everyone the same sort of attention because it would be unfair to have favourites," she says, diplomatically. It would be a stretch to call her the bad cop to Dom's good cop, but she brings the necessary discipline and trepidation needed for TV, which also translates into real world professionalism required to work in the industry.

"I may come across as a little bit cold. I hope not," she says. "But, I often find myself getting quite emotional because I do want them to be the best. And I know how hard it was for me. You get so many knockbacks, and you've just got to keep bashing on that door until somebody either opens it

or you've knocked it down. And that's the way you succeed in this business."

Things have changed a lot since the judges entered the industry, not least the advent of social media. "When I started out no one knew what [a makeup artist] was" says Skinner – now there is a lot more opportunity to demonstrate your skills online, though there are still barriers when it comes to access to work within the professional industries. "There are cultural reasons, financial reasons," he says. "I came from a very privileged situation where, being [from] an upper-middle-class family, I was able to just go off and be artsy and my parents were going to pay for it. But I know a lot of people don't have that opportunity."



Glow Up MUA Sophie. Photograph: Guy Levy/BBC/Wall To Wall

This is part of the reason why diversity is important on the show. [Makeup](#) naturally lends itself easily to diverse representation. Different faces create different canvases and makeup has long been used as either a mask or a form of expression for people who are grappling with their identity and sense of self. Therefore the show attracts a wide range of MUAs from diverse backgrounds, whether that be race, sexuality or unique facial features not usually seen on TV, such as one MUA's beautiful port-wine-stain birthmark. Though true diversity is perhaps shown most obviously when one contestant

asks another, “Are you pranging about the time?”, in a thick scouse accent, to which he replies “... you mean, like, scared?” in an Irish one.



Glow Up MUA Xavi. Photograph: Guy Levy/BBC/Wall To Wall

“We want to see more inclusion and diversity,” says Garland, “but fundamentally, we should just be looking for great makeup artists – that should be our objective. Not, ‘have we got the right number of people and types?’ in the show. But I have to say that, with Glow Up, it happened naturally and that’s as it should be.”

Overall, the show is designed to bring a bit of hope, creativity and upbeat energy to a young audience, who have been locked at home for a year. “I love this kind of stuff, like the whole dynamic of somebody that has a little dream or a big dream,” says Jama. “And this is like my dream, what I’m doing at the moment ... the message that I try to push out there is that no matter where you’re from, no matter what your start in life is, no matter what situations you’ve been put in or setbacks or losses, you can do whatever you want to do. If you put your mind to it, you can actually chase your dream. It sounds so corny, but it’s real life.”

*Glow Up series three begins 20 April, BBC One, 10.45pm and on iPlayer*

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## Books

# ‘It blew our minds’: the surfers who braved sharks to ride Africa’s mightiest wave



‘Some kids are still quite scared to challenge the hierarchy’ ... Cass Collier at Big Wave Africa, which is held at Dungeons, in 2000. Photograph: Nic Bothma

‘Some kids are still quite scared to challenge the hierarchy’ ... Cass Collier at Big Wave Africa, which is held at Dungeons, in 2000. Photograph: Nic Bothma

Forget the blond California stereotypes. New book Afrosurf captures Africa’s overlooked surf culture – and celebrates its heroes, who’d ride colossal waves at beaches they were often banned from

*Phil Hoad  
@phlode*

Tue 20 Apr 2021 01.00 EDT

To surf Africa's biggest wave, which rises to 50ft and crashes down on waters filled with great white sharks, you first need to take a boat out into the clashing currents of Cape Town's Hout Bay. Then you jump into the maelstrom, paddle like crazy towards the deafening roar of breakwater, and suddenly it's right there under your bracing, twitching legs: [Dungeons](#), as this terrifying colossus is called, propelling you towards the shore. "It blew our minds," says [Cass Collier](#), one of the first surfers to trace a line down this notorious wave's surging facade. "We felt like babies."

It was the late 1990s and Collier's parents, although South African-born, were of Indian heritage, which meant the apartheid regime classified him as "coloured". But in brutal heavy surf, he says, all racial differences ceased to matter. "You've got to have a clear mind and a clear conscience – and know that your fellow surfer in the water with you is your brother. If anything happens, he's the one who's going to help you."

Collier, who went on to become the first non-Hawaiian surfer of colour to hold a world title, is one of the stars of Afrosurf, a resplendent 300-page book charting Africa's overlooked surf culture. Starting with South [Africa](#) – the continent's waveriding mecca – Afrosurf asks a host of characters from a dozen countries what being an African surfer means today. Posing in boxing gloves on his board for the book's cover, Ghana's Sidiq Banda speaks for everyone when he describes surfing's otherworldly appeal: "I used to have wave dreams ... it's like a first-love thing. It's like light-blue walls, and you're flying. That's when you get hooked, when you just need to keep going back because you're constantly dreaming about waves."



A surfer on Tarwka Bay beach, Nigeria. Photograph: Adeleke Togun

The book takes a whirlwind tour of the African coastline, from the empty breaks of the Horn of Africa, to Morocco – pummelled by waves in winter – and the Almadies peninsula in Senegal, a current buzz destination with one of the largest swell windows in the world. Then it swings round Africa’s “bulge” to the sub-Saharan countries – Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Ghana – that have big wave-riding potential if the right Roaring Forties storms dispatch a swell their way. At every pitstop, Afrosurf digs into the culture – music, art, folklore, food, the chances of meeting a hippopotamus where the waves break – that surrounds an activity that’s as much lifestyle as sport.

Perhaps most crucially, the book, which is stuffed with evocative, spray-lashed photos, upends the received narrative that surfing originated solely in Hawaii and was later adopted by white Americans and Europeans, who spread it around the globe. According to Afrosurf’s introduction, in the 1640s Michael Hemmersam, a German goldsmith working for the Dutch West India Company, watched children in what is now Ghana ride waves on wooden boards. He believed, probably erroneously, that this was how they learned to swim – but he inadvertently created the first written account of African surfing.

Three centuries later, American director Bruce Brown landed in Africa to film segments of the classic 1966 surf documentary *The Endless Summer* in Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria. His attitude towards what he viewed as virgin territory hadn't moved on much from colonial times: Brown boasted of discovering "surf that had never been ridden before" – even though, in his own footage, you can see children of Ga ethnicity clearly using traditional paddleboards.



Khadjou Sambe, Senegal's first female professional surfer. Photograph: Zohra Bensemra/Reuters

Kevin Dawson, the former competitive surfer and now University of California academic who wrote the Afrosurf intro, says Brown's attitude typifies the "intentional erasure" of this part of African culture. "Seeing the boards in Ghana doesn't fit into his simple narrative," he says, "so he just swept it under the rug."

It's beyond question now that the sport belongs to a much wider group of people than the blond-haired archetype that became shorthand for "surfer", from the Beach Boys to that [classic cinematic stoner Jeff Spicoli](#). And Collier was one of the first to make a breakthrough. He grew up in the tough Cape Flats area and was pushed by his father to surf at the then whites-only Muizenberg beach as an act of political defiance.

“I weathered through it,” he says, “but a lot of my crew didn’t want to carry on surfing because of that confrontational vibe.” He advanced quickly, trailblazing intimidating breaks like Dungeons, as well as discovering and naming a left-breaking wave – Madiba’s – near Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated. But he was still forbidden from surfing in South Africa’s national events.

When I told my grandfather I was going surfing, he said: 'Oh, are you white now?'

The authorities finally relented, but Collier had already decided to compete abroad. His mastery eventually won out. With fellow Rastafarian surfer Ian Armstrong, Collier won the 1999 Big Wave World Championship at thrillingly named Killers, a wild spot 20km off Mexico’s Pacific coast.

Encouraged and supported by his family, Collier was better set up for success than the average black South African. Even today, although there is no official segregation, watersports are not readily accessible for people in townships, says Chemica Blouw, a coach with the [Waves for Change](#) “surf therapy” programme. “Growing up,” she says, “the beach was a once-in-a-while visit or for a special holiday. We’d see surfers with blond hair, blue eyes and white skin. It was intriguing to us, but we never thought we’d have the opportunity to pursue it. I remember telling my grandparents when I was in high school that I was going to start surfing, and my grandfather laughed and said, ‘Oh, is jy nou wit?’ (‘Oh, are you white now?’)”



Surfers with padua planks in present-day Ghana in 1923. Photograph: Robert S Rattray/Oxford Clarendon Press

The growing prominence of African surfing, and within that the growing involvement of black wave-riders, could finally break down lingering pockets of prejudice. Afrosurf is testimony to the growing diversity on African beaches – and this includes women. We hear the story of Berber surfer Maryam, whose determination to surf her home beach of Tamraght in Morocco earned her a new name: “They called me Mohammed. Because I was surfing like a boy. I was really strong, I didn’t let anyone put me down.”

But competitive surfing still needs to catch up, says Collier. He was disappointed to see no surfers of colour on a recent visit to Jeffreys Bay, the Eastern Cape town that hosts the World Surf League. Asking people if localism – the surfing practice of aggressively discouraging outsiders at a break – was responsible, Collier was told no. He’s still trying to figure out what is keeping black surfers away: “They’re afraid of something, I don’t know what it is. There’s still this taste in everyone’s mouths of the exclusivity of surfing. Some kids are still quite scared to challenge the hierarchy.”

[Holy waters: the spiritual journey of African migrants – in pictures](#)

[Read more](#)

Godspower Pekipuma, one of what he estimates to be 20 Nigerian surfers, has this to say of his homeland: “Most Nigerians don’t know how to swim. They say they are taking risks – and Mami Wata, the goddess of the sea, is going to drown them. They don’t see the value and the therapy of it.” Kevin Dawson has encountered such fears too, but sees a potentially fertile side to them: “Though most people in coastal Africa are Christian, they do still maintain traditional beliefs. And so there does seem to be this blending of western surfing with traditional African beliefs and practices that’ll be really interesting to watch.”

That fusion could give the 21st-century African surfer a unique identity, a sense of connection to the water comparable to Hawaii’s famous spirit of *aloha*. But such talk of deities is simply putting different faces and interpretations on a sensation that is universal and uplifting. As Collier puts it: “If someone goes in the ocean, and feels happy and free, then they won’t be able to come out and live as a slave.”

- Afrosurf is out now, published by Mami Wata. Book surf lessons with Cass Collier at [facebook.com/casscolliersurfacademy](https://facebook.com/casscolliersurfacademy).
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## European Super League

# ‘Blatantly cynical’: our readers across Europe react to Super League plans

Most supporters in England and throughout Europe are against the proposal, although some are seeing the positives



A group of friends play football in front of graffiti at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium. Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

A group of friends play football in front of graffiti at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium. Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

[Guardian readers](#), [Rachel Obordo](#) and [Alfie Packham](#)

Tue 20 Apr 2021 03.00 EDT

## ‘Every club should be able to progress on merit’

Football in every country is dependent on an aspirational pyramid based on promotion and relegation. There are no self-selected elites and every club

should be able to progress through the ranks on merit. The same logic applies to both the Champions League and the Europa League. The proposed [European Super League](#), based on the unmitigated greed of a band of smug, self-important and exclusive clubs, will undermine the entire structure and destroy fans' hopes that one day their team could be "up there".

I have supported Leicester City for nearly 60 years and there are few clubs that exemplify this better. Assuming the Super League goes ahead, not only should Uefa ban the 12 clubs from its competitions but the FAs of England, Italy and Spain should immediately ban them from participating in their respective top flights. **Paul Andrews, 66, academic and Leicester fan**



Suzie Wilde.

## **'Working-class supporters are being betrayed by greedy owners'**

I am completely furious and feel deep shame. I've supported Liverpool since the 1960s and I never dreamed that the fierce working-class supporters would be betrayed by greedy out-of-touch owners. Whatever happens now it will leave a bitter taste of shame. This won't bode well for anyone – including kids like me who never missed a home game until I went to university.

Prices for attendance and television will rocket and the lack of competition will give other clubs no chance of promotion. The whole game is changing because of money. I used to get the train to Southampton to watch Liverpool in the early 1970s and no kid or single parent could afford that now anyway.

**Suzie Wilde, 66, author and Liverpool fan**

## **‘It will be boring for most traditional European fans’**

My team Roma is deeply entrenched in the city and in the lives of ordinary citizens. The American owners have not been successful in bringing titles here – they are distant and distracted. They see a football team only as a money-making machine; players come and go and you hardly remember most of them.

It’s just a natural and logical consequence of a business model that was introduced some decades ago: football as a global industry without roots and traditions. I am happy Roma have not been invited and I hope we will never be part of it. The beauty of the game is the exceptional matches that everybody talks about after years, and sometimes decades. Creating more games does not mean more quality, more interest and more affection. It will be boring for most traditional European fans. **Roberto Mengoni, 53, manager in central government and Roma fan**

## **‘My Newcastle top is in the post’**



Jack Crosby.

I've supported Manchester United since I was a kid, when my dad first took me to watch. I saw Andrei Kanchelskis that day and have worn the No 14 on every football shirt I've owned since. But I have never felt so detached from that memory as when this story broke. I am under no illusion that Manchester United has been run as a business for many years, but at the heart of it there was always a team that went out at the weekend and played in front of the Stretford End, full for the most part of local, working-class people, while other stands became increasingly filled with football tourists.

I agree with Gary Neville; these clubs should be punished immediately. They should be completely ostracised from the footballing community. No international call-ups for their players, no Champions League, no World Cup. But I worry that the footballing bodies are too reliant on these big clubs to increase their revenues that they will eventually fold to their demands. I hope that the reactions from fans, pundits, other clubs, other players show Uefa and the FA that the vast majority of people in the countries where this is happening would sooner pick another club to support than go along with this nonsense. (My Newcastle top is in the post; I hear it's an experience.)

['Pure greed': Gary Neville takes aim at clubs in European Super League](#)  
[Read more](#)

But the money for these big clubs is from everywhere but Europe. China and the US especially are massive markets and I suspect that'll be enough for this to happen. I sincerely hope every game in the Super League is played in front of an empty stadium. **Jack Crosby, 32, Manchester United fan**

### **‘There are more than six big clubs’**

Let those who want to leave go. Expel them from the [Premier League](#), the Football League and the FA. Bar them from the FA Cup, League Cup and European competitions. The [Premier League](#) will be just as exciting without the “big six”. There are more than six big clubs in the Championship who will happily fill their places. Nottingham Forest, Middlesbrough, Birmingham City, Sheffield Wednesday, Blackburn Rovers, Stoke City, QPR and so on.

The list of clubs with extensive past glories is enormous and their fans would be only too pleased to see the good times return. Within a couple of seasons the so-called big six will be forgotten, the new ESL will be a disastrous failure and English football will, in the long run, be better off for it. Hopefully it will instigate a fairer sharing of the money across the leagues, rather than concentrating the majority of the wealth in the hands of a few greedy clubs. This could be for the benefit of all football fans across the country. **Chris Read, 60, archaeologist and West Ham fan**

### **‘Blatantly cold and cynical’**



Peter Brain.

What strikes me is just how blatantly cold and cynical the establishment of a European Super League is. It's probably not wrong to say football has been losing its heart and soul over the last 30 years or so, but at least it has been somewhat behind the scenes. We don't need to think about it, just enjoy the game. Enjoy Leicester winning the Premier League or Wigan winning the FA Cup. Enjoy watching Ajax or Atalanta doing well in the Champions League, or Liverpool's emotional comeback against Barcelona.

The decision to create an “elite” European Super League shows that these teams do not care about the fans; all they care about is the fans’ money. They could not care less about the game or the history of the clubs they pretend to love. The formation of the Super League, with no risk and no relegation, is anti-competitive, anti-fan, anti-football and fuelled by greed.

**Peter Brain, 20, student and Preston North End fan**

**‘I have always wanted to see a European League’**



Tim Diggles.

I think it's a great idea as I have always wanted to see a European League. In 1888 many showed concerns that the Football League would be the "end of football" but like now it was about money and always will be. I hope that it may also be the end of international football, which over the years has become dire – most national teams would struggle in the English third tier. As an armchair viewer of the Premier League and Champions League, my hope would be that the standard would only get better.

Port Vale are not going to figure so I have no team in the fight. I love going there and watching them despite the poor quality but that is another thing altogether. The argument over relegation and so on seems stupid. Do games in the NFL, MLB and so on suffer from it not being a factor? When teams don't do so well it gives them the opportunity to rebuild without the stress they may go down. The clubs could corner the market in players, but don't they do that anyway? Leicester and West Ham seem the only ones who have some and if those six left it would mean more opportunity for younger players to come through. **Tim Diggles, 67, artist and Port Vale fan**

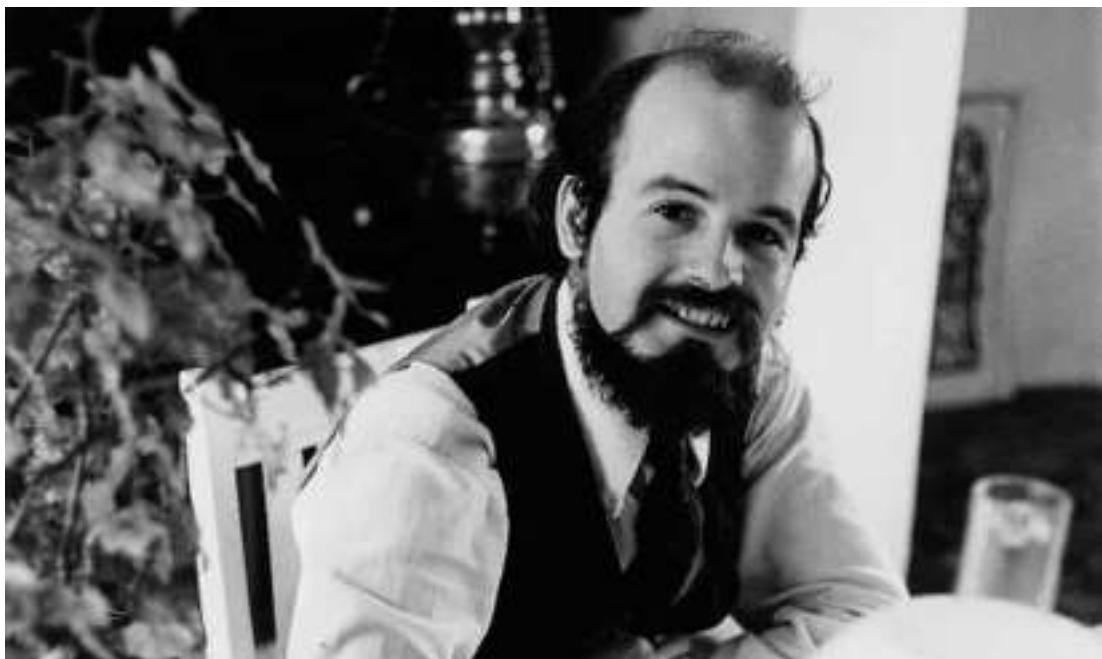
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## Books

# Terry Pratchett's debut turns 50: 'At 17 he showed promise of a brilliant mind'

Written while he was a teenager, published when he was 23 and rewritten when he was 43, *The Carpet People* is being honoured with an anniversary edition



'His imagination was second to none' ... Terry Pratchett in 1971.  
Photograph: Paul Felix

'His imagination was second to none' ... Terry Pratchett in 1971.  
Photograph: Paul Felix



[Alison Flood](#)

Tue 20 Apr 2021 05.00 EDT

In November 1971, a debut novel from a young author was published, to a small but not insignificant splash. Set in a world of tiny people who live in a carpet, it was described by the book trade journal Smith's Trade News as “one of the most original tots' tomes to hit the bookshops for many a decade”, while Teachers’ News called it a story of “quite extraordinary quality”.

The unknown author was [Terry Pratchett](#), and the book was *The Carpet People*. This week, publisher Penguin Random House Children’s is releasing a 50th-anniversary edition, with Doctor Who and Good Omens star David Tennant reading the new audiobook.

“Terry would have loved knowing that David was going to do it,” said Rob Wilkins, Pratchett’s former assistant and friend who now manages the Pratchett estate. “David was a Doctor Who that really mattered in the Pratchett household, so he would have been so thrilled.”

*The Carpet People* by Terry Pratchett, read by David Tennant

**[Listen to the opening of the author's first novel](#)**

00:00:00

00:00:00

Pratchett dreamed up The Carpet People as a teenager; [a 1971 interview](#) revealed that he was “putting the world to rights ... with a friend one evening when the friend got up to emphasise a point and started to pace across the room. ‘Don’t do that’, said Terry suddenly, ‘You’ll disturb the carpet people.’”

“He was,” said Wilkins, “writing early versions of The Carpet People in short stories when he was at school, so this goes way back. He was noodling around with ideas even then. He was thinking about this as a nano world. They’re much smaller than The Borrowers. They couldn’t wield needles as weapons; they would be ginormous to them. He was absolutely fascinated by a small, flat world.”

“In the beginning ... there was nothing but endless flatness. Then came the Carpet, which covered the flatness. It was young in those days,” writes Pratchett. “Then came the dust, which fell upon the Carpet, drifting among the hairs, taking root in the deep shadows ... From the dust the Carpet wove us all. First came the little crawling creatures that make their dwellings in burrows and high in the hairs. Then came the soraths, and the weft borers, tromps, goats, gromepipers and the snargs.”

Pratchett left school in the middle of his A-levels when he landed a job as a reporter at the Bucks Free Press. There, he wrote news as well as more than 60 children’s short stories over 250 weeks, signing them as Uncle Jim.

The Carpet People manuscript was picked up when he interviewed a local publisher, Peter Bander van Duren, and mentioned that he was working on a book. Van Duren’s co-director Colin Smythe took a look, and ended up becoming Pratchett’s first publisher, and later his agent.

“This was written by a 17-year-old, and seemed to me to be showing great promise of a brilliant, if not yet genius, mind – a kid at 17 who was writing so well must logically get better as he improved with experience,” said Smythe. “His imagination was second to none.”



One of Pratchett's illustrations in the original edition of *The Carpet People*.  
Photograph: Terry Pratchett

Around 3,000 copies of the novel, featuring Pratchett's own illustrations, were printed in 1971, when Pratchett was 23. It sold fairly well, said Smythe – after a launch party held in the carpet department of Heal's in London. “We were discussing at the time whether he would write a sequel. He thought it would be a good idea but he was talked out of it by a friend, who said that sequels didn't do well. I disagreed with that,” said Smythe. “Nevertheless, he decided to try his hand at science fiction.” A letter from Pratchett to Smythe, discussing the possibility of a follow-up, is included in the new edition of *The Carpet People*.

Pratchett's sci-fi novels *The Dark Side of the Sun* and *Strata* were published in 1976 and 1981; the first Discworld novel, *The Colour of Magic*, followed in 1983. Pratchett revised *The Carpet People* in 1992 when the Discworld series started to take off and readers began looking for his early work.

In his author's note for the revised edition, Pratchett wrote that the original story “had a lot of things wrong with it, mostly to do with being written by someone who was 17 at the time”. Rereading it, the then 43-year-old Pratchett thought: “Hang on. I wrote that in the days when I thought fantasy was all battles and kings. Now I'm inclined to think that the real concerns of

fantasy ought to be about not having battles, and doing without kings. I'll just rewrite it here and there.”

Pratchett described *The Carpet People* as “not exactly the book I wrote then. It’s not exactly the book I’d write now. It’s a joint effort but, heh heh, I don’t have to give him half the royalties … This book had two authors, and they were both the same person.”

Wilkins said: “It’s such an important novel, because we know now what’s standing on its shoulders. I asked him, ‘What would you have said to your younger self about your early efforts, the 1971 edition?’ He said, ‘Must try harder.’ I thought that was a little bit harsh, but that was very much Terry, with his tongue in his cheek … When you look at master craftsmen like Terry, always honing their skills, they do get better. But, for me, *The Carpet People* is timeless.”

[The Carpet People](#) is reissued by Penguin Random House Children’s Books on 22 April.

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## 2021.04.20 - Opinion

- Britain's falling birthrate will damage our society – and it's not just Covid to blame
- The ESL would destroy football as we know it – it's almost as if they don't care
- Ignore the rhetoric: the UK government still fails to grasp the climate crisis
- An outbreak of post-lockdown teenage mayhem? I'm thrilled to see it

## OpinionPopulation

# **Britain's falling birthrate will damage our society – and it's not just Covid to blame**

[Polly Toynbee](#)



Before the pandemic struck, the Conservative government removed the support for parents put in place by Labour



‘An ageing society is a declining society ... A top-heavy preponderance of the old creates a conservative and fearful electorate.’ An Edinburgh street.  
Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

‘An ageing society is a declining society ... A top-heavy preponderance of the old creates a conservative and fearful electorate.’ An Edinburgh street.  
Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Tue 20 Apr 2021 04.30 EDT

Britain’s birthrate is plummeting. The already fast-falling rate has sunk into yet steeper decline during the pandemic, as people stop having babies when times are hard – and there may not be a bounceback.

The Economic and Social Research Council-funded Centre for Population Change is [predicting](#) a “decline over the next three years leading to significantly fewer births annually compared to pre-pandemic”. Birthrates were already dropping to “historically low levels” pre-Covid, lower than in the 1930s depression. Without official figures yet, the centre has been counting pregnant women attending 12-week scans. Holding the population steady needs a birthrate of 2.1 babies per woman. That had already fallen to 1.6 last year in England and Wales – but now it’s predicted that it could collapse to [1.45 by 2023](#).

All the reasons for this are depressing, signifying hardship, insecurity and anxiety. It tells of a society where bringing up children is too heavy a burden on women, with too many obstacles to earning while parenting. A rapidly ageing country is a sadder place, fraught with economic problems ahead, where the taxes of fewer people of working age pay for the pensions and care of the old, neglecting the needs of the young.

But worse than that, an ageing society is a declining society, in outlook, creativity and inventiveness. Babies mean new life, hope and energy. A top-heavy preponderance of the old creates a conservative and fearful electorate. We are there already – and it's getting worse.

A little recent history: a falling birthrate rose again during the last Labour government. Though Labour never had a baby-making policy, a cohort of women MPs drove family policies that changed the climate. They rolled out free nursery education, childcare tax credits, 3,500 Sure Start children's centres and a child trust fund that endowed every baby with a small nest-egg. Policy energy poured into child development, decrepit schools were rebuilt, with wraparound breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs. Teachers were better paid. But that celebration of childhood is gone now.

How significant that 2012 marked the year when the birthrate began to plunge again, the year the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition's draconian austerity cuts kicked in, targeted at children. The number of babies born in 2019 was down a startling 12.2% on 2012. The Fabian Society has just published a report by leading Labour figures on "winning the working-class vote". Narrow segmenting by class or region may miss the point when victory depends on a wide spread of support. A mighty refocusing on children of all classes did Labour good last time. This isn't just about people who are deprived: designing a way of life that is fit for every child lifts everyone's quality of life. They could set welcoming new babies as a life-affirming aim.

Some expected a Covid baby boom, but the Centre for Population Change is sceptical: parents have been under extreme stress, home schooling while holding down jobs and without other family support – plus there has been fear of catching Covid while pregnant and 200,000 postponed weddings. Young people retreated to live with parents to save rent while working from

home or after losing jobs. Without a secure roof and certainty of food on the table, people dare not have babies.

Rents have shot up 10% in the past year, according to [analysis](#) by Halifax, with house prices soaring under inflationary policies that benefit existing homeowners most. Even with the [government-backed](#) 95% mortgages launched on Monday, Shelter [estimates](#) the average first-time buyer in England needs to earn £59,300.

As the Resolution Foundation's chief executive, Torsten Bell, [points out](#), parental wealth matters now more than ever, with the value of inheritances having doubled in 20 years. The children of homeowners are now three times more likely to buy than the growing third who will rent insecurely for ever, as social housing depletes.

Some other countries face [even lower birthrates](#): Japan, Italy and Spain expect their populations to halve by the end of the century. Immigration has plugged the gap so far, but this government's policies and Brexit make Britain less attractive, with a [net outflow](#) since lockdown. But future numbers are so uncertain that mid-Covid has been the worst time to conduct a census.

A dearth of babies is no answer to solving the climate crisis. An ageing electorate already shows itself less environmentally concerned than younger voters. In the end, survival will depend on enough people willing to do what it takes – and they are the young.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist
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## [SportblogEuropean Super League](#)

# The ESL would destroy football as we know it – it's almost as if they don't care

[David Baddiel](#)



We all knew that eventually, money and corporate interest would mutate the game at the top level into something approaching Rollerball

03:19

European Super League: what does it mean for football? – video explainer

Mon 19 Apr 2021 13.14 EDT

In my children's novel [Future Friend](#), which I began writing in January 2020, the future is imagined as a dystopian universe where the presence of mutant viruses infecting the air mean that no one goes out. When it was published, in the midst of lockdown, I was therefore congratulated by some for my previously unacknowledged psychic powers. A not so noticed feature

of the Future Friend world, however, is that football is still played there: but only in one stadium, above the clouds, and only the super-rich can go and watch games there. So, given [Sunday's Super League news](#), I say, just call me Nostradavidmus.

Or don't bother. Because of course we all knew this was coming. We all knew that eventually, money and corporate interest would mutate the game at the top level, beyond what it already in so many ways has, into something approaching Rollerball.

[Super League players face World Cup and Euros ban, warns furious Uefa chief](#)

[Read more](#)

It may not be worth doing, as I doubt either JP Morgan or Florentino Pérez or the Glazers are concerned with the actual logic of the sport, but let's pause briefly and examine how, using their own statement, the ESL would work in relation to the rest of the game. "Midweek fixtures," the football equivalent of [Chamberlain's piece of paper promises](#), "with all participating clubs continuing to compete in their respective national leagues, preserving the traditional domestic match calendar which remains at the heart of the club game." Because if there's one thing the European Super League is clearly all about, it's heart and tradition.

But weirdly, it's almost as if they don't care about these things, because clearly, that just wouldn't work. Presently, the narrative of top-flight domestic competition is all about reaching the top placements, in order to get into the Champions League. Which would not exist anymore. Aha, say the not-at-all villainous masterminds behind the ESL, we will – our generosity to the smaller football species knows no bounds – offer five qualifying places to, presumably, the winners of the English, French, Spanish, German, and Italian leagues. Except these winners could be the big clubs that are already in it. Or more likely, those big clubs would lose interest in the domestic leagues very quickly, and just play their reserves there. Which would lead to the laughable situation of Man Utd, Chelsea, Man City, Liverpool, Spurs and Arsenal knocking about the bottom half of the Premiership, whilst the other clubs battle it out to join a league with Man Utd, Chelsea, Man City, Liverpool, Spurs and Arsenal in it.

Another issue is the lack of jeopardy. There's no relegation in the ESL for the founding members. So if halfway through the – lets call it a season, although possibly there might be a better, more corporate word – third quarter? – it becomes clear that say, Arsenal aren't going to win, then they have nothing to play for, or rather, as there is when relegation threatens, against. It doesn't matter how glamorous a game against Barcelona is, if there's nothing to play for, it's an exhibition game.



Banners outside Anfield. Photograph: Paul Greenwood/Rex/Shutterstock

But these are, as I say, logical problems thrown up by its own format. The ethical ones – well, one hardly knows where to start. The fact that the ESL is slanted towards fans rich enough to fly to half the games (and that's without knowing how absurdly high ticket prices will be – or how much flying is going to be possible or a good idea by August – I guess the ESL might assume most of its paying clientele own private jets); that it isn't slanted towards fans at all, but only towards advertising, satellite rights and corporate interests; the eradication it means of the romance of the European Cup, a competition which once, in another world, could be won by Nottingham Forest three seasons after they were in the second division (and was still won by lowly Porto in 2004); its weird Western-centric notion of European excellence, which seems to have involved no invitation to great Eastern European clubs with proud histories – no Dynamo Kyiv, Red Star

Belgrade, Sparta Prague – and indeed, no Celtic, no Benfica; and the possibility, clear from the reaction of the football authorities, that what it will do is simply destroy football as we know it, leading the best players out of their domestic leagues and out of all our deeply-looked-forward-to international competitions.

[Only someone who truly hates football can be behind a European super league | Jonathan Liew](#)

[Read more](#)

It's hard not to suspect that there's something American here. Americans have never quite taken to football, because it is a sport that requires a certain tolerance of boredom. As far as sport goes, Americans just want all the top action, all of the time. Which is why they satirised soccer in The Simpsons episode [The Cartridge Family](#), by having a commentator's voice saying "This match will determine once and for all which nation is the greatest on earth – Mexico or Portugal!" And then the match starts, and it's very dull.

Sometimes football is dull. Some football matches are not mouth-watering fixtures. It's what makes the glorious moments more glorious. The problem with every game being the biggest game ever – which seems to me the dream of the European Super League – is that it means no game is the biggest game ever. To return to children's sci-fi, I'm wondering in fact, if the ESL isn't the secret brainchild of Syndrome, the teenage villain in [The Incredibles](#), whose most famous line is, said with desperate sad mocking bitterness: "Once everyone is super, nobody is."

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[Opinion](#)[Climate change](#)

# Ignore the rhetoric: the UK government still fails to grasp the climate crisis

[Chris Venables](#)

Boris Johnson needs a coherent approach to meeting green targets that goes beyond Cop26



Fuel duty in the UK has been frozen for the 11th year in a row. Photograph: Liam McBurney/PA

Fuel duty in the UK has been frozen for the 11th year in a row. Photograph: Liam McBurney/PA

Tue 20 Apr 2021 02.00 EDT

It's been a rollercoaster couple of years for anyone interested in the future of the planet. From thinking we'd forever shout from the sidelines at politicians who'd never listen, to 4 million of us, spurred on by schoolchildren, [taking to the streets](#) across the world to demand climate action. Then a pandemic

that has reminded us how fragile and interwoven with nature our global communal life can be. And now to a government that has pledged to “build back greener” – putting the climate crisis front and centre of its story. But how far should we trust Boris Johnson’s ambitions for Cop26, dubbed the “[green games](#)”, this year? Well, in this case, it’s the raw data we should look to – and it tells a deeply alarming story.

Green Alliance’s [latest tracker](#) of government climate policy shows that, following a decade of hard-won carbon reductions (which [should rightly be celebrated](#)), unless there’s a serious step-change in climate action, the UK’s emissions may start to creep up again. It takes time for policy to take effect and, even on a generous reading of recent government initiatives, the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions will still be nearly 40% higher in 2030 than where we need them to be to give us the best chance of meeting the legally binding 2050 net-zero target. In essence, the data shows that the UK has been coasting for a while, living off the benefits of its highly [successful decision](#) in 2015 to kick coal off the electricity grid. But power is just one of many sectors that make up the loud thrum of the country’s economy, all with climate impacts. Every policy to a degree now will be shaped by concerns around climate change, and the hard truth is that the prime minister needs the unreserved support of all his cabinet colleagues to meet his green ambitions.

The former energy and climate secretary Amber Rudd recently described UK climate progress as “[swings and roundabouts](#)”. The wind turbines might be spinning, but when it comes to greening our homes, we are just going round and round. The latest scheme, the government’s green homes grant, was supposed to be the flagship policy for its Covid green recovery plan. Yet, in less than a year, it has been [scrapped](#) by a Treasury that is yet to grasp either the enormity of the ecological crisis or the scale of the economic opportunity.

Transport is by far the largest emitting sector, responsible for over a third of UK carbon emissions, but recent announcements have been inconsistent. Banning the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030 is a genuinely “world-leading” climate policy, but the spring budget froze fuel duty for the 11th year in a row. The plan to cut air passenger duty for domestic flights contrasts sharply with France’s [proposed ban](#) on flights for journeys that

could easily be taken by rail. The UK's long-awaited Transport Decarbonisation Plan is due imminently – and this will need to be a credible roadmap to a zero-carbon transport system, one that also helps to tackle the [air-pollution crisis](#) that plagues our towns and cities.

The extraction and processing of resources to make consumer products is responsible for over half of global carbon emissions and 90% of the destruction of nature – yet the prime minister's [10-point plan for a green industrial revolution](#) missed a crucial 11th point on reducing resource use. The “whack-a-mole” strategy of targeting only some types of waste, such as plastic straws and stirrers, is so far short of what is needed and doesn’t do anything to prevent extraction in the first place. Our dependence on ever-increasing consumption can’t be tackled without a clear plan. A legally binding UK [target to halve resource](#) use by 2050 would focus minds in the same way climate targets are doing.

Johnson has said that nature loss is happening at a “[frightening rate](#)”, committing his government to taking [immediate action](#). But the continued delays to the flagship environment bill and the England tree and peat strategies strike a strong note of discord between the rhetoric and what is really going on. Whatever the prime minister says, there is a distinct lack of government urgency to restore nature. As one of the [least wooded](#) countries in Europe, with [our rivers in a dire state](#) and [nature in freefall](#), warm words must lead to tangible action right now to drive forward nature recovery. The environmental land management scheme, the government’s new system for funding climate-friendly projects on farmland across the country, must go beyond [pilot schemes](#), so it can actually deliver on its promise to nurture a rural economy that works for nature and farmers alike.

So, all in all, although we’ve come quite far, there is still a very, very long way to go. Understandably, in dealing with the pandemic, other priorities have been put on hold, including the complex, long-term policy-making required to bring an end to the fossil fuel era. But now, as we “unlock” the economy again, that has to change – and the bottom line is this: that if Johnson wants to be seen as a climate leader, he needs to whip his cabinet into shape. No more coal mines approved under an out-of-date planning system. No more departmental dithering on insulating leaky homes and the rolling-out of new, cleaner heating systems. No more free rides for polluting

forms of transport. The prime minister needs to make sure that the whole of government understands the urgency of the climate crisis, and that every minister in every department understands that our collective future on this planet must be at the very heart of their work.

- Chris Venables is head of politics at the Green Alliance
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[Opinion](#)[Young people](#)

## An outbreak of post-lockdown teenage mayhem? I'm thrilled to see it

[Emma Beddington](#)



Kids are reacclimatising, like the rest of us. After a year of boring responsibility, I'm delighted to read reports of them getting stuck in swings and swearing in parks



The kids are all right ... Photograph: Muriel de Seze/Getty Images

The kids are all right ... Photograph: Muriel de Seze/Getty Images

Tue 20 Apr 2021 02.00 EDT

I'm not sure what qualifies as a "spate" (is there official guidance?), but there has been a spate-adjacent number of incidents of teenagers getting stuck in baby swings in York recently, solemnly reported in the local paper. The fire brigade "released the teenager and gave advice", [says one report](#), the advice presumably being: "Do not sit in a baby swing."

I'm delighted by these incidents and what they represent: teenagers being teenagers and doing stupid stuff. [There are neurological explanations for teenage silliness](#): the late maturing of the connections between the prefrontal cortex (involved in regulating decision-making and self-control) and other parts of the brain skews their perception of risk. Sometimes, that means [eating detergent pods](#), duct-taping a friend to a tree or worse; more often it involves the kind of cheery, universal daftness typified by wedging yourself into a tiny swing.

The re-emergence of teenagers, lounging around children's play areas, treading on municipal tulips, mock (or not mock) fighting and abandoning their cans has prompted a panicked surge of disapproval. They are using

“foul” language and causing a “nuisance” and gathering in groups of more than six, people tut, swerving to avoid them. [The neighbourhood app Nextdoor](#) is full of complaints about youths “causing absolute mayhem”, as one user put it.

Let he or she who has not spun a mate dangerously fast on a roundabout for infants cast the first stone. Ask almost anyone about their teenage antics and they will get misty-eyed: we all recall sledging down vertiginous slopes on car parts or pushing each other into rivers. I was a pretty tame teen, but I would climb any railing, however high and deadly; my husband had a moped – enough said, really.

This lot have had no opportunity to do anything silly for most of the past year. They have been stultifyingly, admirably responsible and their reward is a cold shower of adult disapproval. They might be annoying, but I’m thrilled to see them getting wedged in street furniture. Nature is healing: bring on the mayhem.

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## 2021.04.20 - Around the world

- Germany Armin Laschet backed by CDU as chancellor candidate in September poll
- 'Requires urgent action' Millions at risk of famine without urgent help, governments warned
- Rwanda France ‘bears significant responsibility’ for genocide, report claims
- Capitol attack Police officer died of stroke, examiner says, putting prosecutions in doubt
- US Judge orders two Proud Boys leaders held in custody over Capitol attack

## [Germany](#)

# Armin Laschet to run as CDU/CSU candidate in German election

Rival Markus Söder concedes in race to succeed Angela Merkel but vote reveals deep rift in conservative alliance



North Rhine-Westphalia's state premier Armin Laschet, who will run for chancellor as the candidate of the conservative CDU/CSU alliance.  
Photograph: Michele Tantussi/Reuters

North Rhine-Westphalia's state premier Armin Laschet, who will run for chancellor as the candidate of the conservative CDU/CSU alliance.  
Photograph: Michele Tantussi/Reuters

*[Philip Oltermann](#) in Berlin*

*[@philipoltermann](#)*

Tue 20 Apr 2021 06.46 EDT

Armin Laschet will run as the conservative candidate to succeed chancellor Angela Merkel in Germany's elections in September, after the leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) won the support of senior party figures and his rival Markus Söder dropped out of the race.

[Armin Laschet: is the conservative alliance pick ‘too nice’ to be Germany’s next chancellor?](#)

[Read more](#)

Laschet, who has been party leader since January, late on Monday night gained the support of 77.5% of the party board at an internal meeting – 31 votes compared to nine for Söder. “I am ready to run for office on our behalf,” Laschet said after the board voted.

But the internal gathering also revealed a deep divide about Laschet’s candidacy within the CDU board, whose backing of their leader had been unanimous at a more informal show of support a week ago.

Söder, the state premier of Bavaria and leader of CDU sister party CSU, conceded defeat at a press conference on Tuesday, saying he had already congratulated his competitor on the appointment.

“The die has been cast,” said Söder, whose aggressive bid for the chancellor candidacy had paralysed the conservative party bloc for the last week. “Armin Laschet will be the CDU/CSU’s candidate for chancellor.”

Nonetheless, a political divide had emerged. Peter Altmaier, the economy minister and close Merkel ally, switched his support to Söder after saying he perceived a lack of enthusiasm about Laschet in all federal states bar the party leader’s home turf, in North-Rhine Westphalia.

Christian Democrats from the formerly socialist eastern regions also expressed a preference for the Bavarian. On Tuesday, the general secretary of the CSU called Söder the *Kandidat der Herzen*, “the candidate of hearts” – a reference to the time a popular Schalke 04 team lost the Bundesliga title to Bayern Munich in the dying minutes of the 2000/2001 season.

In a conservative party bloc that traditionally agrees on its candidate for the chancellory behind the scenes, there was no formalised procedure for what would happen next. On Monday night, even Laschet seemed to briefly consider putting his candidacy to the vote among Germany's 300-odd regional party bosses.

With Merkel stepping down after the election, the conservatives have been under pressure to present a formidable candidate capable of re-establishing its dominant standing in the polls, pushed down to a one-year low by the chaotic handling of the most recent wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Green party, lying in wait in second place, upped the ante on Monday when it [presented its first ever candidate for the chancellory](#), 40-year-old co-leader Annalena Baerbock, showcasing levels of unity and professionalism previously associated with Merkel's Christian Democrats.

By rooting for Laschet, 60, the CDU elite prioritised its ascendancy in the conservative bloc over the prospect of being led to victory by Söder, 54, who is seen as an ideologically erratic political animal and less of a team-player than the jovial Rhinelander.

Germany's conservatives risk entering the hot phase of the election race led by a politician who is seen as down-to-earth but lacking an ability to inspire even his own party peers.

In North-Rhine Westphalia, the populous western state where Laschet has been premier since 2017, only 26% of those surveyed in a poll this month said they were satisfied with his achievements in government.

[Germany's surging Greens step up election race to succeed Merkel](#)  
[Read more](#)

The conservatives retain a narrow lead in nationwide polls over the Greens, but a Laschet-led CDU will face a formidable challenge to extend its 16-year-old hold on power without Merkel, who has won them four consecutive victories.

Laschet's loyal support of Merkel's open-borders stance at the peak of the 2015 refugee crisis earned him the image of her continuity candidate. But during the pandemic, the former MEP managed to cede that role to Söder, who sided more firmly with the chancellor on lockdown restrictions.

Merkel, who has been in power since 2005, did not weigh in on the conservative candidacy debate, saying last week: "I wanted to, want to and will stay out of it."

Participants at Monday's marathon talks told German media that Merkel sat in on the video conference but did not contribute to the discussions, with some observers reading into her silence a lack of support for Laschet.

Confirming his candidacy at a press conference on Tuesday afternoon, Laschet cited the EU founding father Jean Monnet and expressing his "firm belief in multilateral solutions". The mood music chimed with the message of European stability that Green candidate Baerbock had conveyed in her campaign launch with the day before.

On the environment, the Green challenger and the miner's son from Germany's former rust belt make a less likely match. "Here's to a fair election battle over the leadership of this country", Baerbock congratulated Laschet on Twitter on Tuesday. "And over who can energetically bring about the necessary changes so we can master the challenges."

A Forsa poll last week put support for the conservative alliance at 27%, ahead of the Greens at 23%.

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## Global development

# ‘People are not starving, they’re being starved’: millions at risk of famine, NGOs warn

Open letter backing UN call to action says Covid has exacerbated problems of conflict, climate crisis and inequality



Danssanin Lanizou, 30, holds her month-old baby as a nurse inserts a drip to treat her malnutrition at Houndé hospital in Tuy, Burkina Faso. Photograph: Sam Mednick/AP

Danssanin Lanizou, 30, holds her month-old baby as a nurse inserts a drip to treat her malnutrition at Houndé hospital in Tuy, Burkina Faso. Photograph: Sam Mednick/AP

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[Sarah Johnson](#)

Tue 20 Apr 2021 07.08 EDT

World leaders are being urged to act immediately to stop multiple famines breaking out, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic and caused by conflict, climate crisis and inequality.

In an [open letter](#) published on Tuesday to support the [UN Call for Action to Avert Famine in 2021](#), hundreds of aid organisations from around the world said: “People are not starving – they are being starved.”

Warning that “history will judge us all by the actions we take today”, the aid groups added that people were “being starved by conflict and violence; by inequality; by the impacts of climate change; by the loss of land, jobs or prospects; by a fight against Covid-19 that has left them even further behind”.

They said millions of people in Yemen, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, South Sudan, [Burkina Faso](#), Democratic Republic of the Congo, Honduras, Venezuela, Nigeria, Haiti, Central African Republic, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Sudan faced starvation and appealed to governments to respond to increasing levels

of hunger, stressing that billions of pounds in investment was urgently needed.

In the letter, the organisations including the International Council of Voluntary Agencies and the World Food Programme (WFP) said: “Girls and boys, men and women, are being starved by conflict and violence; by inequality; by the impacts of climate change; by the loss of land, jobs of prospects; by a fight against Covid-19 that has left them even further behind.”

At the beginning of the year, the WFP and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization [warned](#) that up to 270 million people did not have enough food or were at high risk of going hungry.

More than 34 million people were on the brink of starving, they said, and may fall into famine without immediate action. Meanwhile, in Yemen, [South Sudan](#) and Burkina Faso, 155,000 people are already living in areas with famine or famine-like conditions.

[Over 30 million people 'one step away from starvation', UN warns](#)  
[Read more](#)

At least \$5.5bn (£3.95bn) is needed in food and agricultural assistance to avert famine, while millions more is needed to provide healthcare, clean water and other essential services.

The groups warned, however, that funding had dwindled and would not be enough by itself. Governments should step in to end conflicts and ensure humanitarian access, they said.

“The situation requires urgent action, at a scale we are simply not seeing,” the groups said in a separate letter. “If no action is taken, lives will be lost. The responsibility to address this lies with states.”

The letter comes a year after David Beasley, director of the WFP, warned that the world was facing famine “of biblical proportions” because of the coronavirus pandemic.

“We are not talking about people going to bed hungry,” he [told the Guardian in an interview](#) at the time. “We are talking about extreme conditions, emergency status – people literally marching to the brink of starvation. If we don’t get food to people, people will die.”

States had to address rising inequality, and take the political actions needed to stop conflict, which is a main driver of hunger and a barrier to meeting needs, the groups said. “It is imperative that we raise our collective voices to secure the international attention this cause deserves before it is too late,” they added.

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## [Rwanda](#)

# France ‘did nothing to stop’ Rwanda genocide, report claims

Report by US law firm commissioned by Kigali says France bears ‘significant responsibility’ for deaths



A candlelit vigil during a memorial service in 2019 to mark 25 years since the genocide, at Amahoro stadium in Kigali, Rwanda. Photograph: Ben Curtis/AP

A candlelit vigil during a memorial service in 2019 to mark 25 years since the genocide, at Amahoro stadium in Kigali, Rwanda. Photograph: Ben Curtis/AP

*[Jason Burke](#) Africa correspondent*

Mon 19 Apr 2021 14.12 EDT

France “bears significant responsibility” for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 because it remained

“unwavering in its support” of its allies even though officials knew the slaughter was being prepared, a report commissioned by Kigali claims.

The accusation is the latest in the continuing dispute between Paris and the small east-African country over the role played there by France before and during the mass killings.

France has long been accused of not doing enough to halt the genocide.

The 600-page report, by the US law firm Levy Firestone Muse, labels France a “collaborator” of the extremist Hutu regime that orchestrated the murders of about 800,000 people, mainly from the Tutsi minority.

The report, which drew on millions of pages of documents and interviews with more than 250 witnesses, found no evidence that French officials or personnel had directly participated in the killing of Tutsis.

[France not complicit in Rwanda genocide, says Macron commission](#)

[Read more](#)

It follows the publication last month of [a separate inquiry into the same events](#) commissioned by the French president, Emmanuel Macron.

France led Operation Turquoise, a military-humanitarian intervention launched under a UN mandate between June and August 1994. Its critics believe that it was in reality aimed at supporting the genocidal Hutu government.

The French inquiry concluded France had been blinded by its colonial attitude to Africa to events leading up to the genocide and consequently bore “serious and overwhelming” responsibility, but was not complicit in the genocide.

The two detailed reports could mark a turning point in relations between the two countries, despite their contrasting conclusions.

Rwanda’s foreign affairs minister, Vincent Biruta, said the small but strategic country of 13 million people was ready for a “new relationship” with France.

“Maybe the most important thing in this process is that those two commissions have analysed the historical facts, have analysed the archives which were made available to them and have come to a common understanding of that past,” he said. “From there we can build this strong relationship.”

Paul Kagame, the president of Rwanda since 2000, welcomed the recent French inquiry as “an important step toward a common understanding of what took place” but said a decades-long effort by France to avoid responsibility had caused “significant damage”.

Kagame came to power in the aftermath of the genocide after leading rebel Tutsi forces into Rwanda and overthrowing the Hutu extremist regime.

Rwanda and France broke diplomatic ties in 2006 after a Paris judge [accused Kagame and nine aides](#) of shooting down former president Juvénal Habyarimana’s plane in April 1994 – the catalyst for the massacre. Rwanda rejected the charges.

The two countries eventually restored diplomatic ties in November 2009.

In May, [Félicien Kabuga](#), a former businessman alleged to have helped finance the genocide, was [arrested on the outskirts of Paris](#) by French police working with a UN tribunal.

But in July, an appeals court in Paris upheld a decision to [end a lengthy investigation](#) into the plane crash that killed Habyarimana, with whom Paris had cultivated close ties. That inquiry aggravated Rwanda’s government because it targeted several people close to Kagame for their alleged role, charges they denied.

Within a few hours of Habyarimana’s death, extremist Hutu militia began systematically murdering Tutsis and some moderate Hutus, on a scale and with a brutality that shocked the world.

The new report alleges that in the years before the genocide, “French officials armed, advised, trained, equipped, and protected the Rwandan government, heedless of the Habyarimana regime’s commitment to the

dehumanisation and, ultimately, the destruction and death of Tutsi in Rwanda.”

French authorities also pursued “France’s own interests, in particular the reinforcement and expansion of France’s power and influence in Africa”, and in April and May 1994, at the height of the genocide, French officials “did nothing to stop” the massacres, says the report.

“The cover-up continues even to the present,” the report added, saying French authorities refused to cooperate with their inquiry or turn over critical documents pertinent to their investigation.

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## US Capitol breach

# Capitol police officer injured in attack died of natural causes, examiner says

Medical examiner's determination means it will be difficult for prosecutors to bring homicide charges in Brian Sicknick's death



People wait for Brian Sicknick to lie in honor in the Rotunda of the US Capitol in February. Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

People wait for Brian Sicknick to lie in honor in the Rotunda of the US Capitol in February. Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

*Associated Press*

Mon 19 Apr 2021 19.31 EDT

Brian Sicknick, a Capitol police officer injured while confronting rioters during the 6 January [insurrection](#), suffered a stroke and died of natural causes, the Washington DC medical examiner's office ruled on Monday, a finding that lessens the chances that anyone will be charged in his death.

Investigators initially believed the officer had been hit in the head with a fire extinguisher, based on statements collected early in the investigation, according to two people familiar with the case. And they later thought the 42-year-old Sicknick might have ingested a chemical substance – possibly bear spray – that could have contributed to his death.

But the determination of a natural cause of death means the medical examiner found that a medical condition alone caused his death – it was not brought on by an injury. The determination is likely to significantly inhibit the ability of federal prosecutors to bring homicide charges in Sicknick's death.

[Capitol attack: blistering internal report reveals widespread failures by police](#)

[Read more](#)

US Capitol police said that the agency accepted the medical examiner's findings but that the ruling didn't change the fact that Sicknick had died in the line of duty, "courageously defending Congress and the Capitol".

"The attack on our officers, including Brian, was an attack on our democracy," police officials said in a statement. "The United States Capitol Police will never forget Officer Sicknick's bravery, nor the bravery of any officer on January 6, who risked their lives to defend our democracy."

Federal prosecutors have charged two men with using bear spray on Sicknick during the riot. The arrests of George Tanios, 39, of Morgantown, West Virginia, and Julian Khater, 32, of Pennsylvania, were the closest federal prosecutors have come to identifying and charging anyone associated with the five deaths that happened during and after the riot.

Lawyers for the two men had no immediate comment on Monday.

Sicknick died after defending the Capitol [against the mob](#) that stormed the building as Congress was voting to certify Joe Biden's electoral win over Donald Trump. It came after Trump urged his supporters to "fight like hell" to overturn his defeat.

Sicknick was standing guard with other officers behind metal bicycle racks as the mob descended on the Capitol.

“Give me that bear shit,” Khater said before he reached into Tanios’s backpack, according to court papers. Tanios told Khater “not yet” because it was “still early”, but Khater responded that “they just fucking sprayed me”. Khater was then seen holding a can of chemical spray, prosecutors say.

As the rioters began pulling on one of the racks, Khater was seen with his arm in the air and the canister in his hand while standing just 5ft to 8ft from the officers, authorities said.

In February, Sicknick became only the fifth person in history to lie in honor in the Capitol Rotunda, a designation for those who are not elected officials, judges or military leaders. He was interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

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## US Capitol breach

# Judge orders two Proud Boys leaders held in custody over Capitol attack

Ethan Nordean and Joseph Biggs charged with conspiring to stop 2020 election certification and leading Proud Boys to Capitol



Proud Boys leaders Joseph Biggs, left, and Ethan Nordean, right, walk towards the US Capitol on 6 January. Photograph: Carolyn Kaster/AP

Proud Boys leaders Joseph Biggs, left, and Ethan Nordean, right, walk towards the US Capitol on 6 January. Photograph: Carolyn Kaster/AP

*[Jada Butler](#)*

Mon 19 Apr 2021 15.36 EDT

A federal judge has ordered two leaders of the far-right Proud Boys group to be detained in jail pending trial for their involvement in the 6 January attack on the Capitol in Washington DC.

Both were indicted in one of many Proud Boys conspiracy cases to stem from the investigation into the assault on the building that followed a pro-Donald Trump rally.

[Millions of Americans think the election was stolen. How worried should we be about more violence?](#)

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Ethan Nordean of Washington state and Joseph Biggs of Florida, along with two other Proud Boys regional leaders, are charged with conspiring to stop the certification of the 2020 election – and with organizing and leading dozens of Proud Boys to the Capitol.

Many of those followers were among the first to breach the building and cause damages in scenes of violence that shocked the world and led to five deaths.

“The defendants stand charged with seeking to steal one of the crown jewels of our country, in a sense, by interfering with the peaceful transfer of power,” the US district judge Timothy Kelly said as he explained his decision on Monday. “It’s no exaggeration to say the rule of law … in the end, the existence of our constitutional republic is threatened by it.”

The judge’s decision to detain the pair is a reversal of an earlier notion to release them after the Department of Justice argued for pre-trial detention based on new accusations in an updated indictment filed by prosecutors in March.

The judge cited profanity-laced social media posts and encrypted messages sent by the defendants, in which Biggs said it was time for “war” if Democrats “steal” the election and Nordean called for militia groups to contact him.

Though the evidence does not point to the defendants using direct physical violence against others on the day, Kelly said, their communications and movements before, during and after the riot showed they played a part in planning and leading the efforts that day, celebrated the events of the day and have not expressed remorse.

Nordean will be detained in Seattle as opposed to DC after the judge granted his defense attorney's request to cease the transfer, arguing: "Capitol defendants have been violently assaulted in DC jail."

Another alleged co-conspirator, Charles Donohoe, is set for his own detention hearing later on Monday afternoon.

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