

# The Guardian

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## Headlines friday 3 february 2023

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## [UK news](#)

# Nicola Bulley: partner of missing woman talks of search ‘brick wall’

Paul Ansell says mystery impossible to comprehend as potential witness says she does not know anything

Partner of missing Nicola Bulley says she 'vanished into thin air' – video

*[Jamie Grierson](#)*

*[@JamieGrierson](#)*

Fri 3 Feb 2023 05.33 ESTFirst published on Fri 3 Feb 2023 04.40 EST

The partner of the missing woman Nicola Bulley has said every scenario has come to a “brick wall” as he pledged to “stay strong” for their daughters.

Speaking near the scene where she was last seen, Paul Ansell said the mystery of her disappearance was “absolutely impossible” to comprehend.

Bulley, 45, a mortgage adviser from Inskip, Lancashire, vanished while walking her dog after dropping off her daughters, aged six and nine, at school [last Friday morning](#). Her mobile phone and the lead and harness for her dog, a springer spaniel called Willow, were found on a bench close to the River Wyre in St Michael’s on Wyre in the Lancashire countryside.

Ansell told broadcasters on Friday: “I don’t really have anything to say other than what the family said yesterday. My whole focus is the two girls. Stay strong for them. I’m scared that if I put any focus on to anything else it’s going to take my focus off that.”

He went on: “I just can’t believe that we’re a week on, and as yet, it seems we’re no further on. It just seems absolutely impossible. It’s like a dream, I can’t get my head around any of it.”

“Every single scenario comes to a brick wall,” he added. “And then all we’re doing is sitting there going round and round going through every scenario. Back to the first scenario and do the whole thing again. All day long, that’s all we’re doing.”

Asked how he was coping, he said: “I don’t know how I’m coping. I don’t want to think about it. It’s just about the girls. I’m there for them. I don’t really want to elaborate on that. I don’t want to take my eye off that.”

He thanked the community for the support shown, adding: “We’re never going to lose the hope, of course we’re not. It’s as though she has vanished into thin air. It’s insane.”

## [Map](#)

Meanwhile, a woman approached as a potential witness by police investigating the disappearance said she “doesn’t know anything”. Christine Bowman, 67, had been identified as someone who may have been one of the last people to see Bulley before her disappearance as she walked her dog near the river.

Bowman, a retired teacher, was traced following a police appeal and told the Daily Mirror she had already spoken to officers. She added: “It has made local women fearful. If they have husbands or partners, they have been taking the dogs out instead.”

Lancashire constabulary have launched a huge search operation and have said despite “unanswered questions”, people should not “speculate or spread false rumours” about Bulley’s disappearance.

Police divers using specialist equipment have been seen searching the River Wyre below where Bulley’s items were found on the bench. She was last seen at 9.10am last Friday while walking her dog. She had logged on to a work Teams call, which ended at 9.30am while she was still logged on.

Bulley and her family are originally from Essex but moved to Lancashire about 25 years ago.

Lancashire constabulary have said they do not believe any crime has been committed and are treating the incident as a missing person inquiry.

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## Childcare

# Tory backbenchers plan to put pressure on Hunt to cut childcare costs

Exclusive: Group led by Siobhan Baillie want chancellor to use budget to relax rules and eliminate business rates for nurseries



Britain is among the world's most expensive countries for childcare, with families spending more than a quarter of their income on it. Photograph: Gary Calton/The Observer

*[Kiran Stacey](#) Political correspondent*

Fri 3 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 04.16 EST

A handful of influential Tory backbenchers have created an informal pressure group to push the chancellor, [Jeremy Hunt](#), to cut the costs of childcare at next month's budget, as experts say the sector is in crisis.

The MPs, led by Siobhan Baillie, have been meeting regularly in recent weeks to discuss a range of measures they want Hunt to introduce to help

parents afford care for young children and get back to work.

Their proposals include changing subsidies and relaxing employment regulations in an attempt to bring down costs quickly, with Britain among the most expensive countries in the world for childcare.

Liz Truss, the former prime minister, planned a radical shake-up of regulations, which she argued would help bring costs in line with those in other countries. Those proposals were reportedly dropped by her successor, Rishi Sunak, earlier this year, leaving many Conservative backbenchers worried they could face a backlash from working parents unless they came up with alternative plans.

Baillie said: “I am absolutely clear that the chancellor cannot say nothing about childcare at the budget. It is an important part of the discussion over economic inactivity.”

She is being supported by a number of other backbenchers, including Robin Walker, the chair of the education select committee, and Edward Timpson. Members of the group have met increasing frequently in recent weeks, Baillie said, as they plan to increase pressure on Hunt.

Walker said: “There is quite a groundswell of opinion that this is something we need to be doing more about. Everyone agrees that childcare needs to be made to work better, even if they have a range of opinions on how to do so.”

Britain has the third highest childcare costs among developed countries, [according to the OECD](#), with only Slovakia and Switzerland more expensive.

In the past five years, costs have risen by an average of 21% across the UK, according to [a recent report](#) by the thinktank Onward. It found families now spend more than a quarter of their joint incomes on childcare, compared with an OECD average of just 9%.

Truss made cutting costs one of her highest priorities, and was planning to increase the number of hours of free care that parents could claim, while scrapping rules dictating the number of children allowed for each carer.

Those plans threatened to be expensive and unpopular, however, and Sunak is reported to have scrapped them.

Hunt is planning to focus his budget on getting “economically inactive” people back into work, government officials say, and his colleagues want him to make sure parents of young children are among those.

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Baillie and her colleagues are not proposing to relaunch the idea of scrapping childcare ratios. Instead, they want Hunt to relax other regulations that they say could help more people join the childcare industry and allow parents to claim the benefits to which they are entitled.

One demand is that the government makes it easier for parents to apply for the tax-free allowance to which they are entitled, of up to £2,000 a year. [A report for the Treasury](#) found that as of March 2021, only about a fifth of eligible people were signed up to the scheme.

Another suggestion is to change the childcare element of universal credit so parents do not have to pay as much upfront before claiming it back.

Members of the group have also suggested eliminating business rates for private childcare providers, with [a recent report](#) by the National Day

Nurseries Association finding the average nursery paid about £13,000 in business rates last year.

The Treasury would not comment on measures under consideration for the budget. But a spokesperson for the Department for Education said: “We recognise that families and early years providers across the country are facing financial pressures and we are currently looking into options to improve the cost, flexibility, and availability of childcare, ensuring that any plans we bring forward focus on improving outcomes for children.”

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## [US news](#)

# Pentagon says it is monitoring Chinese spy balloon spotted flying over US

Officials say balloon has been watched for a few days but decided not to shoot it down for safety reasons

Chinese 'spy balloon' spotted flying over US – video

*Julian Borger in Washington*

Fri 3 Feb 2023 05.57 ESTFirst published on Thu 2 Feb 2023 18.06 EST

The Pentagon has said it is tracking a Chinese spy balloon flying over the US but decided against shooting it down for safety reasons.

Defence officials said the balloon had been watched since it entered US airspace at high altitude a couple of days ago. It has been monitored by several methods including crewed aircraft, and has most recently been tracked crossing [Montana](#), where the US has silo-based nuclear missiles.

As a precaution, flights from Billings Logan airport were suspended on Wednesday.

The Chinese government has not confirmed if it owns the balloon, and state-backed media have used the incident to taunt the US.

“The balloon itself is a big target,” the state-backed nationalistic tabloid the Global Times wrote in English on Twitter, which is banned in [China](#). “If balloons from other countries could really enter continental US smoothly, or even enter the sky over certain states, it only proves that the US’s air defence system is completely a decoration and cannot be trusted.”

On Friday afternoon, China Daily said the spy balloon claims were a lie. “To spy on the US with a balloon, one must both fall far behind to use a 1940s

technology and be advanced enough to control its flight across the ocean. Those fabricating the lie are only exposing their ignorance,” it said.

After the Pentagon’s announcement, Canada’s national defence department said it too had detected a high-altitude surveillance balloon and was “monitoring a potential second incident”. US officials said earlier that the balloon had travelled over part of Canada on its way to Montana.

Canada’s defence authorities made clear there was no public danger, adding: “Canada’s intelligence agencies are working with American partners and continue to take all necessary measures to safeguard Canada’s sensitive information from foreign intelligence threats.”

The Pentagon said: “The balloon is currently traveling at an altitude well above commercial air traffic and does not present a military or physical threat to people on the ground. Instances of this kind of balloon activity have been observed previously over the past several years. Once the balloon was detected, the US government acted immediately to protect against the collection of sensitive information.”

The incident comes just before the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, was expected to visit China this weekend to meet the president, Xi Jinping. The trip has not been formally announced, but Beijing and Washington have been talking about his imminent arrival.

Blinken’s visit, amid bilateral attempts to repair relations, has also coincided with other points of friction. Beijing this week strenuously objected to a deal between the Philippines and the US in which Manila has granted the US expanded access to its military bases. Under the deal, the US will have additional access to Philippine bases for joint training, storing equipment and supplies, and building facilities, though not to establish a permanent presence.

Analysts have said the deal fills a crucial gap in US military positioning in the region, enhancing its ability to monitor the South China Sea and around Taiwan. Both are significant areas of concern regarding Chinese military activities. On Thursday, China’s ministry of foreign affairs spokesperson

accused the US of “exacerbating regional tension and jeopardising regional peace and stability” with the deal.

There was intense speculation among analysts on Friday about how China might explain the spy balloon. A senior US defence official said the US had “engaged” with Chinese officials through multiple channels about the seriousness of the matter.

A spokesperson for China’s ministry of foreign affairs said Beijing was “verifying” the situation. “I would like to emphasise that until the facts are clarified, speculation and hype will not be helpful to the proper resolution of the issue,” Mao Ning told a daily press conference.

Mao said China had no intention of violating the territory and airspace of any country, and that the government hoped to handle the matter with the US “calmly”, according to state media.

Pentagon officials said there was “high confidence” that the balloon was Chinese, and that Joe Biden had been briefed on the situation. The president asked for military options, but it was decided there was too great a danger of debris harming people on the ground were it to be shot down.

### [Map tracking possible route of balloon](#)

It was also judged that although it was flying over sensitive nuclear sites in Montana, it did not appear to be gathering any intelligence that could not be collected from satellites.

Montana is home to one of the nation’s three nuclear missile silo fields at Malmstrom air force base. All air traffic was halted at Montana’s Billings Logan international airport from 1.30pm to 3.30pm on Wednesday as the military readied fighter jets and provided options to the White House.

Congressional leaders were briefed on Thursday afternoon. The House speaker, Kevin McCarthy, later tweeted: “China’s brazen disregard for US sovereignty is a destabilising action that must be addressed.”

The Montana governor, Greg Gianforte, said he was briefed on Wednesday about the situation after the state’s national guard was notified of an ongoing

military operation taking place in its airspace.

The object first flew over Alaska's Aleutian Islands and Canada before appearing over Billings on Wednesday, officials said.



The Pentagon says the suspected Chinese spy balloon 'does not present a military or physical threat to people on the ground'. Photograph: Eva Hambach/AFP/Getty Images

Military experts say the use of high-altitude balloons is likely to increase. They are cheaper than spy satellites, are hard to spot by radar and difficult to shoot down, sometimes lingering for days after they have been punctured. They can "steer" by changing altitudes, using computers to calculate how to use winds going in different directions at different layers of the atmosphere. As well as surveillance, they could also carry bombs in times of conflict.

In 2019, [the US military](#) used up to 25 experimental solar-powered high-altitude balloons to conduct wide-area surveillance tests across six midwestern states. The balloons were equipped with hi-tech radars designed to simultaneously track many individual vehicles day or night, through any kind of weather, and were intended to be used to monitor drug trafficking and potential homeland security threats.

Tensions with China are high on issues ranging from Taiwan and the South China Sea to human rights in China's western Xinjiang region and the clampdown on democracy activists in Hong Kong. Other irritants are China's tacit support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, its refusal to rein in North Korea's expanding ballistic missile programme, and ongoing disputes over trade and technology.

Some Montana residents reported seeing an unusual object in the sky during the airport shutdown, but it is not clear if what they were seeing was the balloon.

From an office window in Billings, Chase Doak said he saw a “big white circle in the sky” that he said was too small to be the moon. He took some photos, then ran home to get a camera with a stronger lens and took more photos and video. He could see it for about 45 minutes and it appeared stationary, but Doak said the video suggested it was moving slowly.

“I thought maybe it was a legitimate UFO,” he said. “So I wanted to make sure I documented it and took as many photos as I could.”

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[China](#)

[Explainer](#)

## Spy balloons: what are they and why are they still being used?

The idea emerged during the French revolutionary wars, so what is their appeal now, in the age of the satellite?

- [Pentagon says it is monitoring Chinese spy balloon spotted flying over US](#)

Chinese 'spy balloon' spotted flying over US – video

[Helen Sullivan](#)

[@helenrsullivan](#)

Fri 3 Feb 2023 01.14 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 18.33 EST

On Thursday, the Pentagon said it was tracking [a Chinese spy balloon flying across the US](#). They may not hold the same intrigue as a buttonhole camera or arsenic hidden in a tooth, but spy balloons have been used for centuries – and, experts say, their use is likely to increase in future.

## What happened above the US on Friday?

A suspected Chinese spy balloon has been flying over the United States for a couple of days, US officials said, ahead of a planned trip to Beijing by US secretary of state Antony Blinken.

Fighter jets were readied but military leaders advised President Joe Biden against shooting the balloon out of the sky for fear debris could pose a safety threat, advice Biden accepted, US officials said.

The Pentagon [said in a statement](#): “The balloon is currently traveling at an altitude well above commercial air traffic and does not present a military or physical threat to people on the ground.”

Later on Thursday, Canada’s National Defence released a statement saying that it was monitoring a “potential second incident”.

## What are spy balloons?

A contemporary spy balloon is a piece of spying equipment, for example a camera, suspended beneath a balloon that floats above a given area, carried by wind currents. The equipment attached to the balloons may include radar and be solar powered.

Balloons typically operate at 24,000 metres – 37,000 metres (80,000-120,000 feet), well above where commercial air traffic flies – airliners almost never fly higher than 12,000 metres.

## Why use spy balloons rather than satellites?

“For the last few decades, satellites were *de rigueur*. Satellites were the answer,” says John Blaxland, professor of international security and intelligence studies at the Australian National University and the author of the book, *Revealing Secrets*. But now that lasers or kinetic weapons are being invented to target satellites, there is a resurgence of interest in balloons. They don’t offer the same level of persistent surveillance as satellites, but are easier to retrieve, and much cheaper to launch. To send a satellite into space, you need a space launcher – a piece of equipment that typically costs hundreds of millions of dollars.

Balloons can also scan more territory from a lower altitude and spend more time over a given area because they move more slowly than satellites, according to a 2009 report to the US air force’s Air Command and Staff College.

## When were they first used?

The French are the first recorded users of reconnaissance balloons, initiated at the Battle of Fleurus against Austrian and Dutch troops in 1794, during the French revolutionary wars. They were also used in the 1860s, during the American civil war when Union men in hot air balloons, binoculars at the ready, would try to gather information about Confederate activity further away. They sent signals back via morse code or a “piece of paper tied to a stone”, says Blaxland.

The US has revived the idea in recent years, but has tended to use balloons only on US territory.

“Over somebody else’s atmosphere, you are required to seek permission,” Blaxland says. “Or if you’re going to do it [without permission] then expect that it won’t be well received.”

The Pentagon itself said in its short statement on Friday that: “Instances of this kind of balloon activity have been observed previously over the past several years.”

Craig Singleton, a [China](#) expert of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told Reuters that such balloons had been widely used by the US and Soviet Union during the cold war and were a low-cost intelligence gathering method.

## Why is China doing this?

Blaxland thinks it’s unlikely that the Chinese weren’t expecting to be caught: being caught was probably the goal, with two outcomes in mind. The first reason the balloon was launched, he believes, was to embarrass the US, and all the better if it captured some intelligence along the way.

“It’s hard to think how they could have thought that it wouldn’t have been detected. American airspace is so closely studied, by the US civil aviation authorities, by the US air force, the US space force, the weather networks – it’s extremely scrutinised airspace,” he says.

The second reason is to make the US aware of the fact that China has been secretly keeping up with its technology and replicating it.

“Chinese security agencies are masterful at copycat behaviour. They’re very, very good at establishing what technology is and then seeking to replicate it,” Blaxland says.

It’s a case of “anything you can do we can do better”, and is “just the tip of the iceberg”, says Blaxland. China’s spying happens “on an industrial scale”, with small bits of intelligence gathered and transmitted in countless ways. Together, these form detailed pictures.

Singapore-based security analyst Alexander Neill told Reuters that while the balloon was likely to provide a fresh irritant to China-US ties, it was probably of limited intelligence value compared with other elements China’s modernising military has at its disposal.

“China has its own constellation of spy and military satellites that are far more important and effective in terms of watching the US, so I think it is a fair assumption that the intelligence gain is not huge,” says Neill, who is an adjunct fellow at Hawaii’s Pacific Forum thinktank.

## **What can we expect in the future?**

“There’s no limit to what kind of technology you can stick at the bottom of the balloon,” says Blaxland.

“The whole point is higher ground. Strategists and military campaigners talk about dominating the higher ground. And in this day and age, it’s been space. With space now being so congested and contested and now so vulnerable, that sub-space domain, the upper atmospheric domain, has developed a whole new utility and importance for international surveillance and espionage that we had thought was passed and is obviously back, centre stage,” he says.

This article was amended on 3 February 2023 to note that the first confirmed use of spy balloons was by the French in 1794 rather than by the Union side in the US civil war.

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## 2023.02.03 - Spotlight

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## Interest rates

# ‘I’m really worried’: homeowners and would-be buyers on UK interest rates

As the base rate reaches 4%, we hear from people concerned about rising mortgage costs



Chris Felix-Hill and his wife, Adeline, who are having to stay with his mum.  
Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

[Jedidajah Otte](#)

Fri 3 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 14.32 EST

**Chris Felix-Hill**, 47, and his wife, **Adeline**, from Steeple, Essex, are struggling to keep alive their dream of one day becoming homeowners, after “demoralising” house price rises during the pandemic and yet another [interest rate rise](#) from the Bank of England on Thursday, to 4%, a 14-year high.

“Today’s announcement just means more disappointment and frustration,” says Felix-Hill, who works in the adult education sector. “We’ve been saving for a few years and fortunately can live with my mum and her partner, which has allowed us to save up a £30k deposit.

“However, we couldn’t keep up with rising house prices last year. We found a property for £299,000, but because of higher rates and the cost of living, the amount we were allowed to borrow was slashed from over £300,000 to £262,000, so we couldn’t get it.”

Prices in the area have not come down much, he says. Instead, sellers unwilling to lower their prices have decided not to sell at the moment.

“There are a few properties within our price scope listed here, but I’ve looked at Halifax mortgage deals today, and with current interest rates of around 5.2%, repayments for a £300k two-bed would be around £1,600 a month, and rates could go up further.

“I’m nearly 50; in a few years’ time, I won’t be able to get a mortgage. I have a good degree and we earn just under £30,000 each; you’d think this would be enough to get a two-bed cottage of your own. It’s just depressing. I’m really worried I will have nothing in the future.”



Stephen, from Hampshire. Photograph: Stephen/Guardian Community

**Stephen**, an IT professional in his late 30s from Hampshire, said the latest interest rate rise had cemented his and his wife's fears that the mortgage repayments for their two-bedroom property would rise dramatically this spring.

"Our two-year fixed rate of 1.4% expires on 24 March. With the Bank of England having raised its rates to 4%, we're looking at an increase to about 4.28% on a two-year variable rate, raising our monthly payments to around £1,500, from currently £880," he says.

"We have a household income of around £80k, but we've stopped saving and will have to effectively put our lives on hold to get through this. We were hoping to do our honeymoon this year, which is now unlikely, and these extra costs mean it's also becoming less likely we'll have children. If rates don't come down, we may have to move to a cheaper part of the country."

For **Philip**, 42, a police officer from Horsham, West Sussex, the Bank's announcement means his family's mortgage repayments will rise by 50% soon – and become unaffordable unless he and his wife generate higher earnings.

He has to refix his £260,000 mortgage by the end of March, and is looking at a provisional rate of 4.9%, which would add £500 to his current payments of £1,050 a month.

"The increase from our current 1.5% is eye-watering, and adds to our overall sense of financial insecurity, especially with bills rising also. Our household income of £85k is not enough to keep paying our mortgage. We've got two young children, childcare costs and no financial wriggle room," he says.

"We're unlikely to meet payments from April unless we find more work. I need to seek overtime, my wife will have to work additional hours. We may have to deploy family members to provide more childcare.

“We can’t save, so have no resilience if anything significant goes wrong. If inflation continues, we may have to take on a third job between us, or downsize to a smaller property. In the worst-case scenario, we have to move in with parents – unthinkable a couple of years ago, but now very much a consideration.”

**Rebecca Grundy**, a mother of three and an administration assistant from Bolton, views the latest interest rate rise from a different perspective.

“I’m a prospective buyer, and ahead of today’s announcement, I’ve been thinking I’d rather interest rates came up a bit,” she says. “We’ve been in rented accommodation since we outgrew and sold our two-bed house in 2020. We were outbid multiple times – prices just increased so quickly.

“Our mortgage affordability has reduced 20%-30% over the past 12 months, and today’s rate rise will definitely force us to lower our budget again. But I’d rather have a higher interest rate of up to 5% and lower asking prices.

“We have a very high buy-to-let-landlord population here in town, as low interest rates drove demand for second homes and investment properties, pricing buyers on local salaries out. There are various properties here that have sold and been relisted in the past two, three years. Price histories show how overvalued they are now – some have had little more than a lick of paint since the last sale, but are almost 40% higher in price than two years ago. It’s just not sustainable.

“Many sellers are still currently expecting unrealistic prices that most normal working families can’t afford – our household income is £40k. Will prices ever come down to something normal again? Perhaps higher rates will help with that.”

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# Arlo Parks on burnout, boundaries and budding romance: ‘I have to remind myself to take it easy’

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/feb/03/arlo-parks-on-burnout-boundaries-and-budding-romance-i-have-to-remind-myself-to-take-it-easy>.

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## You be the judge: should my husband stop throwing away his ‘old’ clothes?



Illustration: Joren Joshua/The Guardian

He chuck's out garments with the slightest stain or tear. She thinks he should wash or repair them. Who's being stitched up? You decide

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



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

Fri 3 Feb 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 21.05 EST

## **The prosecution: Martina**

*Jon bins perfectly good clothes as soon as they have a tiny hole or stain, which is so wasteful*

We live in a society that doesn't like repairing things. People just throw out clothes and appliances rather than trying to fix them, and my husband Jon is one of them.

He's always been like this and I have pretty much accepted it, but it does annoy me. Sometimes I forget how wasteful he is until he does something reprehensible in front of me. The other day, he was getting dressed for work

and pulled out a white shirt which had a tiny ketchup stain on it. He immediately said: “Oh, that’s going in the rubbish,” and put it straight in the bin. I was like: “What are you doing? You can just wash it.” He said it was pointless; the shirt was ruined.

I think that’s incredibly wasteful; you can easily take out stains with stain remover – the mark wasn’t even that big. Or the shirt could have gone to a charity shop, but when Jon gets something into his head, that’s it.

Once I found a pair of gym shoes in the recycling bin

He throws out perfectly good shorts, trousers and shirts with tiny holes or minuscule stains. He wouldn’t be organised enough to sort through his items and donate them. Once I found a pair of gym shoes in the recycling bin. When I challenged him he said that there was a rip on the back. I took the shoes to a local cobbler and returned them to him. He was very grateful but said: “Why did you do this? It’s easier to buy new ones.”

Recently he dropped his Macbook and a couple of the buttons on the keyboard fell off. Instead of taking it to be repaired, he just ordered a brand new laptop. I lectured him on this too.

We make decent money as a couple and I suppose we can afford to buy new items every time something gets tatty, but I would prefer not to.

I think I am opposed to waste because I was raised in a working-class home, and my mum would always sew patches on my school jumper instead of buying a whole new one. So my brain is wired differently from Jon’s, who grew up with more money.

I’ll sometimes just get his stuff repaired for him, but I think Jon should learn to see the value in that himself.

## The defence: Jon

*There’s no point holding onto things you don’t want. I throw them straight in the bin*

I don't like wearing clothes that have stains or holes. It makes you look tatty and dirty. And I also think, what's the point in holding on to things that you don't want?

I like my wardrobe – and my life – to be full of things that I actually value. So when something is no longer providing value, I throw it out. It's more efficient to live that way. I have an office job so I can't wear dirty items, which is why I threw out the ketchup-stained shirt. Martina knows my job has a smart-casual dress code, so I'm not sure why she would want me to keep clothes that don't cut the mustard.

Martina is more thrifty than I am and perhaps that's because she grew up with less money than me

I also have no qualms about throwing out things that don't suit me or are past their best. She says I can be wasteful, but I don't really have the time to sort through my shirts and trousers every morning, seeing which ones are stained and which ones aren't. I'd rather keep a collection of entirely clean clothes.

With the gym shoes that I threw out, perhaps I was a bit hasty. I did appreciate Martina getting them mended as it was just a little hole at the back. Though if I'm honest, I would probably never do that myself. I wouldn't even know where to find a repair shop like that.

Martina is a little more thrifty than I am and perhaps that's because she grew up with less money than me. She's very good at stopping me from chucking things straight in the bin. She'll say: "Hang on, someone will get a second wear out of that," and then takes it to the charity shop. Of course I like the idea of donating clothes but I just don't have the time. When something no longer serves a purpose it usually goes straight in the bin without a second thought.

But in regards to my broken laptop, I will defend my decision there. The keyboard didn't work so I couldn't use it at all, and it was easier to buy a new Macbook. I'm lucky that I can afford to do that, but Martina thought I

was being ridiculous. I guess I could try to be a bit less wasteful and get more things repaired, but I will always prioritise saving myself time.

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## **The jury of Guardian readers**

**Should Jon stop and think before throwing slightly damaged items away?**

Jon's last sentence says it all: he's prioritising his own laziness over doing what he knows is right. Martina isn't advocating keeping broken things, just taking small steps to fix stuff. Jon can afford to discard and replace things as and when, but that doesn't negate the environmental impact of doing so.

**Archie, 23**

Jon sounds like a bit of a nightmare but he seems to have the cash to support his shirt and laptop habit – and Martina is fighting a losing battle. So she should a) give up trying, b) divorce him, or c) get him to buy her some gorgeous silky shirts to keep her sweet.

**Anya, 24**

I think Jon sees himself as efficient and focused, but he comes across as a company man who's too busy for "little people" stuff. His readiness to jettison serviceable products suggests a shallow understanding of value.

**Gareth, 39**

Jon is bad news for the environment, but it's not actually causing Martina harm. Jon's an independent adult and Martina can't control what he decides to throw away. She needs to accept that sometimes the people you love can be really irritating.

**Lisa, 43**

Jon is wasteful. I'm unsympathetic to his repeated lack-of-time excuse, as he finds time to buy new things. Perhaps Martina could change his mindset by getting him to donate to a charity he cares about.

**Shaun, 60**

## **Now you be the judge**

In our online poll below, tell us: should Jon stop and think before throwing away slightly damaged items?

**The poll closes on Thursday 9 February at 10am GMT**

## **Last week's result**

We asked whether Yetunde should [empty the vacuum cleaner](#) after every use?

**6%** of you said yes – Yetunde is guilty

**94%** of you said no – Yetunde is not guilty

- This article was updated on 3 February 2023. An earlier version misnamed Martina as "Marina" in Jon's response.
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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/feb/03/you-be-the-judge-should-my-husband-stop-throwing-away-his-old-clothes>

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**Opinion**[The Great British Bake Off](#)

## How Junior Bake Off taught me to be a better adult (and make uglier cakes)

[Barbara Speed](#)



Watching children beam with pride over disastrous desserts helped me overcome my own perfectionism



A technical challenge in series three required the bakers to make pig swiss rolls. In the words of guest judge Paul Hollywood, ‘It’s like a sandwich that someone’s sat on.’ Photograph: Channel 4

Fri 3 Feb 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 09.45 EST

The prospect of a televised competition that pits knife- and blowtorch-bearing children against one another is not exactly a relaxing one. And so, for years, I stuck to the adult version of [The Great British Bake Off](#), for fear of seeing a nine-year-old set themselves on fire or experience the disappointment that was already devastating enough on the face of a 46-year-old [banker](#) from Brentwood. But, deep into one of the lockdowns, I gave it a go, and found I had been entirely wrong – this was, in fact, the Bake Off that the format was born for, and it would change my outlook on more than just baking.

Where the adult competition is now populated by [quasi-professionals](#), the bakes in the junior tent (whose latest series concludes on Friday evening) are often hideous, usually inedible, and only very occasionally impressive. The two hosts – Ravneet Gill and former adult Bake Off contestant Liam Charles – deserve some kind of television award for eating them all without gagging. (Then again, they are also responsible for choosing the challenges – you want to eat multiple rounds of glutinous [frogs poached in syrup](#)? Cooked by children? Really?) And yet despite the lurid mush they regularly serve up to

the judges, these children appear to be made of steel. There are occasional tears, and downcast moments, but they bounce back instantly – they are, as it turns out, far more resilient than their adult counterparts. On coming seventh out of seven bakers in a challenge, this season's Poppy shrugged and said: "At least I didn't come eighth!"



Junior Bake Off contestant Imogen and presenter Harry Hill in series four.  
Photograph: Mark Bourdillon/Channel 4 / Love Productions

Granted, Rav and Liam's feedback errs on the generous side, but that still doesn't explain these children's ability to gesture at a haggard "mosaic biscuit diorama" not even their own mother would eat and declare it to be "excellent". It's common for a contestant to stare down the barrel of the camera and declare that, given they came last today on almost every metric, they are resolved to be star baker – the best baker in the tent – tomorrow. No shame, no fear, no humility. "I am making my jam," one contestant narrated this season, "which is the best jam in the world."

Our junior bakers' wonderful efforts depicting their heroes in bread. Featuring a special teacher, Captain Sir Tom Moore, baker and YouTuber 'Cupcake Jemma', two Frida Kahlos, an inspirational uncle, and Everton's [@ToniDuggan](#). [#GBBO](#) [pic.twitter.com/ia1K0qQQpo](https://pic.twitter.com/ia1K0qQQpo)

— British Bake Off (@BritishBakeOff) [January 12, 2022](#)

Yet the more that I think about it, the less surprising it is. One thing most children get in spades is failure – the expected learning curve at age nine is steeper than anything we face as adults. [Children](#) attempt things they've never done before all the time, such as learning the English language from scratch, or algebra, or whatever "jazz tap" is. They're used to getting things wrong, and being told they're brilliant anyway. Yes, children on a baking show might not be representative of their cohort – but if anything you'd think their high-achieving ways would make them more sensitive to the hard knocks of a national competition, where someone has to win and everyone else has to lose.

Perhaps as a result of their cast-iron confidence, the junior bakers are more generous than the adults, too. Contestants help each other, sometimes before their own bakes are even finished. "Don't worry, you can do this!" rings out across the tent as four children [crowd round a bench](#) to finish off someone's piping. The upper age limit has only recently been brought down from 15 to 12, yet none of the children seemed to notice the unfairness of small children competing against teens twice their height, who could feasibly be their babysitter.

Well done to our Bread Day Star Baker - nine-year-old Annabel! Her 'Jasper's Naughty But Nice, Cinnamon and Carrot Rolls' Showstopper - in honour of her dog - was hailed by Rav as the best bread she's ever had on Junior Bake Off! ☺️ [#GBBO](#) [pic.twitter.com/ckVe9RxyRc](https://pic.twitter.com/ckVe9RxyRc)

— British Bake Off (@BritishBakeOff) [January 25, 2023](#)

As the children make mistake after mistake, covering themselves in food dye and creating haunting [bread likenesses](#) of Captain Tom, I regularly find myself lost in admiration. I love baking, but can easily tip into perfectionism or [obsession](#): it's a chemistry more than an art. You can't throw in a pinch of this, or a pinch of that. You have to follow the recipe. Tell that, though, to Charlie, who, on realising he had added "all the salt" rather than a teaspoon, shrugged and said: "Well, this is going to be quite salty now." Tell that to

Fyn, who added a whole pot of chilli power to his bread dough, “gassing out” everyone in the tent, and later told an [interviewer](#) he found the whole thing “super-funny”. (“I had to remake it,” he added, in case you were in any doubt.) In this context, it’s more than a little embarrassing that I, as an adult woman, can spend a whole day mourning an unset mousse.

I’m not sure when they teach us to fear failure so much, to give imperfectly completed, insignificant tasks the power to upset us. Maybe it’s in the envelope when they hand out GCSE results. But for the corrective you need, switch on [Channel 4](#) at 5pm. And then whip yourself up a garish, collapsed, enthusiasm-filled cake.

- Barbara Speed is a Guardian Opinion deputy editor
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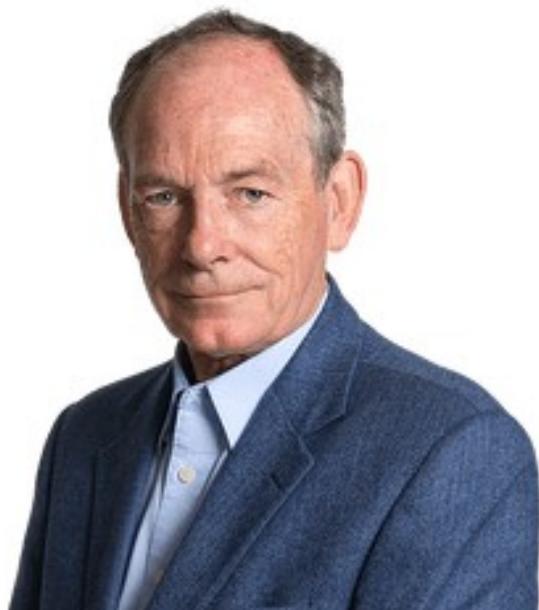
## 2023.02.03 - Opinion

- Royal commissions transformed Britain in the 1960s – we desperately need them now
- Criminals, oligarchs and kleptocrats still own large chunks of the UK – and they’re using this loophole to stay anonymous
- Nadhim Zahawi: it was the paltry size of his tax bill that should shock us
- Bollywood is obsessed with Pakistan. We’d be flattered if it weren’t so nasty

**OpinionPolitics**

# Royal commissions transformed Britain in the 1960s – we desperately need them now

[Simon Jenkins](#)



These independent inquiries would rise above the party-political deadlock over reform for the NHS and housing



Royal commissions, notably into homosexuality, divorce and crime, helped transform Britain ‘from one of the most archaic nations in Europe into that of the swinging 60s’. Young people meet the radio DJ Tony Blackburn on Carnaby St, London, in 1967. Photograph: Chronicle/Alamy

Fri 3 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 06.54 EST

Britain’s once-famed welfare state seems unable to deliver. Public services are riven with conflict and starved of funds. Nothing works. Yet there the argument ends. The government defends the status quo, the opposition claims it is all about money. The Treasury rules. Reform ossifies. Progress is zero.

Scratch the surface of [this week's strikes](#) and it is clear that each of the services has suffered from a longstanding absence of constructive reform. The triaging of health treatment is plagued by bottlenecks. [Home care of elderly people](#) is withering. School teaching is oppressed by obsessive examinations. Housing policy is led by builders’ lobbies, not by housing need. Energy policy has become [obscene](#), even to the most ardent advocate of privatisation.

So what should change? The answer is desperately opaque. Everyone agrees that the NHS is fine in principle but no longer fit for purpose at the frontline.

Britain's drug laws have not changed in half a century, and are now so unenforceable that drugs dominate urban crime and imprisonment. While Germany, Portugal, California, [New York](#) and [Vancouver](#) can tackle drugs reform, Britain is in a state of frozen impotence. As for the constitutional future of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, it is near unbelievable that federal systems can allay separatist sentiment across all of Europe yet be anathema to Westminster politicians.

The most remarkable period of domestic reform in modern times took place in the late 1960s, under [Harold Wilson](#). The home secretary, Roy Jenkins, managed in just two years to stop hangings, decriminalise homosexuality in England and Wales, permit abortion (although it was not decriminalised in Northern Ireland until 2019) and drastically ease divorce. He went on to abolish theatre censorship and initiated the banning of sex and race discrimination. It was an astonishing period.

Crucial to each of Jenkins's reforms was not support from public opinion – many were fiercely opposed – but a consensus of informed liberal debate. This was led by [a series of royal commissions](#) that had preceded him, notably into homosexuality, divorce and crime. Britain was transformed from one of the most archaic nations in Europe into that of the swinging 60s. Jenkins said in his memoirs merely that he felt “civilised reform to be the duty of a Labour government”.

There is no shortage of ideas for reforming public services, but there lacks a conveyor belt to turn them into policy. An explosion of partisan thinktanks has, if anything, led to a decline in consensus building. Just as parties rely more on “their” thinktanks – which all boast their influence to their backers – so their opponents do likewise. There is little likelihood of the Centre for Policy Studies (Tory) joining hands with the Resolution Foundation (Labour) in agreeing a grand reform of housing, health or crime.



Roy Jenkins canvassing in south London with Labour candidate Harry Lamborn in 1972. Photograph: David Thorpe/ANL/Rex/Shutterstock

The media duly exaggerates this partisanship into full-blown polarisation. Every opposition editorial, every BBC interview, ends in “more money surely”. Last month a number of senior politicians – including the Tories’ Sajid Javid and Labour’s Wes Streeting – did bravely moot NHS reform. Some suggested eroding “free at the point of delivery” with [means-tested payments](#), others collaboration with the private sector or a [change in GPs’ contracts](#). The result was a torrent of abuse and counter-abuse from their respective backwoods. The result is nothing. Independent health thinktanks such as the Nuffield Trust and the King’s Fund are left crying in the wilderness.

Likewise, any move towards the legalisation and regulation of drugs falls foul of Tony Blair’s terror of what the tabloids would say. Housing policy is dominated not by a concern for homeless people – who cannot afford their own thinktank – but by a construction lobby obsessed with nimbys and housing ladders. As for any hope that Keir Starmer might imitate Wilson in the 1960s, all his advice apparently screams no. Mimic Blair. Don’t frighten the horses. Just insult Rishi Sunak and anything he might say. Maintain heat, not light.

Faced with this policy desert, a recent paper from the library of parliament boldly suggested [a return to the tradition of the royal commission](#). No fewer than 400 commissions guided the great age of British reform from the 1830s to the 1900s, as such inquiries did Jenkins's 1960s programme. Commissions are not thinktanks but adjudicators of thinktanks, digesters of evidence. Their conclusions may be only as good as their members, but they are supposedly above the partisan fray. They are above all concerned simply with the question in hand.

Royal commissions have declined since the 1980s because Margaret Thatcher hated them for taking too long – some as much as two years – and thus impeding action. She had no problem with speed of reform. In addition, many recent ones had been on aspects of the constitution, such as local government (1969), devolution (1973) and [press freedom](#) (1977), where agreement was hard to achieve, even when the reports were well informed. But all of them promoted open-minded debate. They elevated rather than depressed politics.

At present, we know only that reform of the public sector is not working. Debate is corrupted by party politics and duly gets nowhere. Something needs to change. So bring back the commissions and put them to work – fast.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist
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[\*\*OpinionProperty\*\*](#)

# **Criminals, oligarchs and kleptocrats still own large chunks of the UK – and they're using this loophole to stay anonymous**

[\*\*Oliver Bullough\*\*](#)



The clampdown on the rich Russians using shell companies to buy up London, launched after Putin invaded Ukraine, hasn't worked. Here's why

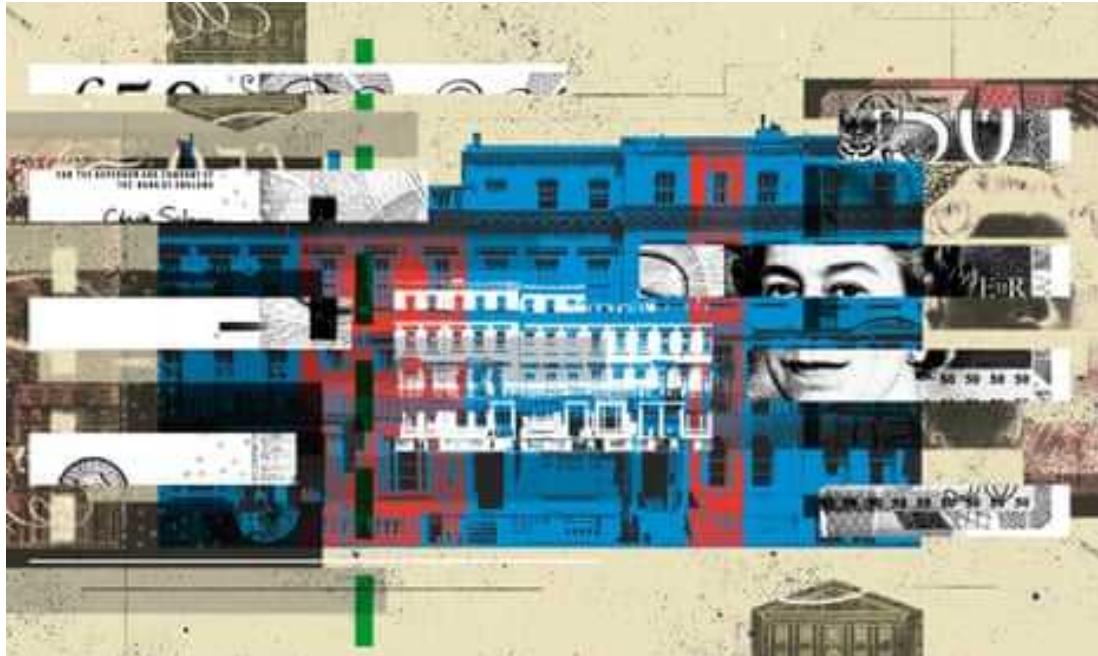


Illustration by Nate Kitch.

Fri 3 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 11.52 EST

When Vladimir Putin launched all-out war on Ukraine a year ago, the British government realised that letting Russian oligarchs buy large chunks of west London had been foolish. The long-cherished belief that the civilising air of Eaton Square might turn kleptocrats into democrats was finally – if belatedly – abandoned.

The fruit of the government's realisation is the [new register of overseas owners](#) of UK properties, which ended the anonymity that oligarchs enjoyed by hiding their mansions behind offshore-registered shell companies. The register has had some teething problems, in that [13,000 companies missed the January deadline to reveal their owners](#), but surely the bigger picture is that this enduring loophole in our transparency rules is finally closed, and the playing field levelled, right? Wrong. A huge loophole still exists, which renders last year's reform pretty much meaningless, and which almost no politicians have noticed.

Last March's [Economic Crime Act](#), which created the register, was just the final step in a long journey taken by successive governments to end the advantages of owning property via offshore companies.

That journey began almost a decade ago, with the introduction of the [annual tax on enveloped dwellings](#) (ATED), which imposed a special levy on any home held via a company. If your house is worth £20m – and, for an oligarch, that's pretty pokey – you have to cough up a quarter of a million quid a year for the privilege of owning it offshore. ATED proved, in the words of Boris Johnson when he was foreign secretary, “extremely lucrative for the exchequer”. Then came changes to capital gains tax, inheritance tax and stamp duty, all of which made a shell company less and less attractive.

But it is a fundamental principle of the British justice system that if new regulations affect wealthy people, lawyers will seek ways around them. And so it proved, although it took years for anyone to notice it was happening. In 2021, Anna Powell-Smith, director of a non-partisan thinktank called [the Centre for Public Data](#), became interested in how many offshore-based individuals owned property in the UK. The number of foreign companies – about 95,000 or so in England and Wales – was public by that stage, but we had no idea about offshore-based people.

Powell-Smith has been working for years to reveal who owns the UK and this seemed like an interesting gap in our knowledge, so she submitted a freedom of information request to the Land Registry, and discovered [something extraordinary](#).

While the number of offshore shell companies owning property had remained broadly flat for a decade, the number of overseas individuals had increased by fully 250% over the same period. More than twice as many titles were owned by overseas-based individuals in England and Wales as by offshore companies. And these people were based in exactly the same jurisdictions as the problematic shell companies. By 2021, the single most popular place for foreign-based owners of houses to be based was Hong Kong, whose residents owned 23,584 properties; up from just 2,170 in 2010.

There were also dramatic increases in the number of home-owning residents of Jersey, Singapore, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, the United Arab Emirates and the British Virgin Islands, all of them the kind of places that hosted the shell companies we rightly got concerned about.

And the places where these individuals were buying were the same ones favoured by the shell companies: Westminster has the largest number of titles, with fully 9% of properties in the borough owned by overseas-based individuals, and other parts of London are well-represented on the list too. In recent years, there has also been substantial investment in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham.

There are clearly many reasons for such a dramatic increase in the number of foreigners buying chunks of the UK, including the weakness of the pound since the Brexit referendum, which has made our houses relatively cheap for those who earn in a foreign currency. As such, it's hard to know what are the main drivers of this surge of investment, although the continued attractiveness of UK property does undoubtedly make it clear the government could be charging significantly more tax on these transactions than it currently is.

But one thing is obvious: this is not being driven by a sudden surge in the number of BV Islanders, Manxmen or Jerseywomen buying property here. These supposed property-owners are acting as nominees for someone else; effectively they are offshore shell people doing a job once done by shell companies. And, despite the promises made last year that the government's new registry would "require anonymous foreign owners of UK property to reveal their real identities", we the public still have no idea who the actual proprietors of these offshore-owned properties are.

"If the government thinks it's solved the offshore ownership problem, these figures make clear that it hasn't. In fact, they show that the problem is far larger than anyone appears to realise," Powell-Smith told me. "Oligarchs or any criminals could own far more of Britain than we realise but, unless we get to grips with this new loophole, we have absolutely no way of knowing who they are, what they own, and how concerned we should be."

This is not to say their identity is unknown, however. If an oligarch uses an offshore trustee to own property, he has to tell the Trust Registration Service at His Majesty's Revenue and Customs. The authorities will therefore know about his ownership; it's just that ordinary members of the public will not. What concerns me is whether, in the light of revelations such as the Treasury giving a sanctioned oligarch access to his money to sue Eliot Higgins, we

can trust our rulers to act in all of our interests when dealing with wealthy investors.

“Calling this offshore ownership a loophole suggests that it is something the government has missed, but I don’t think that’s true. I think they have taken a considered view that if the regulatory authorities know something, that’s good enough for them,” one tax lawyer told me. “The question for you and your readers is whether that’s good enough for you.”

In short, the battle is not won. If we truly want transparency of property ownership, we have to open up trusts, too.

- Oliver Bullough is the author of [Butler to the World](#): How Britain Became the Servant of Tycoons, Tax Dodgers, Kleptocrats and Criminals
  - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*
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**Nadhim Zahawi**

## **Nadhim Zahawi: it was the paltry size of his tax bill that should shock us**

[Arun Advani](#)

Former Conservative chair received a tax break that the poor can only dream of



The only tax Nadhim Zahawi was required to pay on £27m was £3.7m.  
Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Fri 3 Feb 2023 04.18 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 14.28 EST

Nadhim Zahawi's [tax row](#) reveals an even bigger scandal: the rich are getting a tax break that those on low incomes can only dream of.

While the revelation that the former Conservative chair had to pay a tax penalty was shocking, the bigger concern is that the only tax he was required to pay on £27m was £3.7m. That implies an average tax rate of less than

14%, lower than the rate for someone working full-time on the minimum wage.

Two weeks ago, the [Guardian broke the story](#) that Zahawi had been fined by HMRC for not taking reasonable care in his tax affairs. This “carelessness” meant he had not paid £3.7m in tax that he owed from the sale of £27m worth of shares in YouGov, the company he co-founded in 2000.

His belated payment of the tax bill, plus interest and a fine, while he was chancellor, led to a total payment of about £5m. The revelation ultimately led to the ethics investigation that was his downfall.

Assuming Zahawi’s bill was related to unpaid capital gains tax, his startlingly low rate was possible because capital gains are taxed at much lower rates than other income.

While the tax rate for someone earning a salary of £270,000 is 47%, made up of 45% income tax above £150,000 and 2% national insurance contributions above £50,000, someone taking home 100 times as much can pay the much lower 20% capital gains tax rate.

These low tax rates tend to benefit the wealthiest in society, the asset-rich

And some gains can qualify for either business asset disposal relief or investors’ relief, bringing the rate on those gains down to 10%, and further reducing the average rate.

These low tax rates tend to benefit the wealthiest in society, the asset-rich. Capital gains are the returns that someone makes on selling an asset that has grown in value – be it a property, shares or antique vase.

But most capital gains come not from the sale of second homes by the upper middle classes but from the sale or dissolution of businesses by individuals who both own and manage those businesses. And those gains are incredibly concentrated: [half of all taxable gains in the entire country go to about 5,000 people](#), who each receive more than £1.5m in gains.

Perhaps this would be worth it if there was compelling evidence that these low rates had beneficial side-effects for growth and employment. But the current structure of capital gains tax is neither good for growth nor good for all of those who receive money in the form of gains.

It is bad for growth because the gap between capital gains tax and income tax rates encourages people who could be brilliant employees to instead be mediocre self-employed managers, contributing to the long “tail” of unproductive firms in the UK. Someone taking home £1m in gains would pay up to £370,000 less tax than if they were earning the same as a salaried employee.

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It is also bad for those actually investing serious cash in companies, because in times of high inflation they can pay large amounts of tax on increases in the value of those investments, even if this increase doesn't keep up with the price of ordinary goods and services.

So what is the answer? One not particularly radical solution would be to largely go back to the capital gains tax structure imposed by the Conservative chancellor Nigel Lawson in 1988. Lawson taxed capital gains at the same rate as income, and provided an allowance for inflation. A move

back in this direction, with also some “smoothing” to account for gains being received less frequently than income, would be eminently sensible.

As a bonus it would [raise about £16bn](#). This could pay for quite a lot of wage increases for teachers, nurses and firefighters who are striking because their incomes are falling relative to the cost of living. Or for green investment. Or for the tax cuts the chancellor so desperately craves.

*Arun Advani is an associate professor of economics at the University of Warwick and a research fellow at the Institute for Fiscal Studies*

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## **Bollywood**

# **Bollywood is obsessed with Pakistan. We'd be flattered if it weren't so nasty**

[Fatima Bhutto](#)



Try as the industry might, Modi's quasi-fascist politics cannot be set to jaunty music and helicopter stunts



Fans of Shah Rukh Khan celebrate the release of *Pathaan* in Kolkata on 25 January. Photograph: Sankhadeep Banerjee/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

Fri 3 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 06.25 EST

If recent [Bollywood](#) films are any indication, it is fair to say that India's film industry is obsessed with Pakistan. Obsessed. Like standing outside your apartment and trying to peek through your windows at night with binoculars obsessed.

If the films were smarter or more daring, [Pakistan](#) might be flattered. Instead, we are beginning to be mildly confused by all the attention.

Even though our common neighbour China has taken – without too much of a struggle and aided by a helpful press blackout in [India](#) – 38,000 sq km of Indian land in Ladakh, on which they are building homes and bridges, you won't find any Bollywood films with Chinese villains or bad guys.

No, all the nasties in Indian cinema are Pakistanis, usually wearing military uniforms, and always Muslim.

Bollywood has always reflected Indian political trends; the films of the 1950s mirrored the optimism and romance of the newly independent

country, the 1970s hero was a proud but disenfranchised man fighting against the powerful and corrupt. In the 1990s, there were endless films about neo-liberal yuppies who worked in Dubai, danced in London discos and drove shiny Mercedes. Since [Narendra Modi](#) and his rightwing party, the Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP, came to power nearly nine years ago, Bollywood has readily embraced his menacing politics.

In 2018, the starlet Alia Bhatt headlined Raazi, a film about a woman who marries a Pakistani army officer in order to spy on the country during the 1971 war with India. In 2019, Bollywood released Uri, a military flick about Indian special forces launching a “surgical strike” on Pakistan after a supposed terror attack. Though Uri was based on a real incident that nearly brought two nuclear-armed states to war, it played fast and loose with the facts.

All this is especially unpleasant as Pakistanis have traditionally been enthusiastic audiences for Bollywood – the industry brought us songs and fun and the profound knowledge that our neighbours look and live just like us, demonstrating the incredible power of culture done right.



A Shah Rukh Khan fan dances before a screening of Pathaan. Photograph: Sankhadeep Banerjee/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock



Shah Rukh Khan at a media event for *Pathaan* last month. Photograph: Sujit Jaiswal/AFP/Getty Images

It is well-known that Bollywood's three biggest stars, the three Khans – Shah Rukh, Aamir and Salman – all happen to be Muslim, as were many of Bollywood's earliest stars, including Dilip Kumar and Meena Kumari. Raj Kapoor, the original heartthrob of Indian cinema, was born in Peshawar and at its founding, Bollywood enthusiastically celebrated India's many religions, histories and fables. Muslims not only acted and made music for the industry but their legends were beautifully translated on screen. One of Bollywood's most beloved and lavish epics, *Mughal-e-Azam*, was set in the Mughal court of Emperor Jahangir. But those days are far behind us now. Today, it is clear that India's fascination and anxiety over its neighbour points to darker political imaginings.

This month, Shah Rukh Khan returned to the big screen in his first film in years, *Pathaan*, an action film that's smashing box office records. The film opens in Lahore, where a Pakistani general with just three years to live hears the news in his oncologist's office that Narendra Modi's government has revoked article 370 of the Indian constitution, which guaranteed Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state, autonomy and special status. The general decides to use his remaining years of life to "bring India to its knees" and immediately calls a deranged terrorist to get all this organised.

Pathaan's plot is nonsensical, and no one wears many clothes as they dance in bikinis and shorts trying to save India and therefore the world. It is naturally unconcerned with facts – article 370 was the instrument that allowed Kashmir's ascension into the Indian union; if it is declared null and void, then so too is Kashmir's ascension to India, but why bother with facts or what any actual Kashmiris think or feel? There aren't any in this insipid film anyway.

I interviewed Khan, or SRK, as he is known to his hundreds of million fans around the world, for a book five years ago and noticed even then that he straddles an uncomfortable role as the ever grateful Muslim who is really, really, really Indian. As India embraces the Hindu majoritarian politics of its ruling BJP party, high-profile Muslim figures like Khan are increasingly seen as fifth columnists. Trolls and angry protesters often beseech Muslim stars to “go back to Pakistan”, though they have no roots there. Today in India, anyone who questions the government or dissents from popular discourse is slandered as “anti-national” and told to go live in Pakistan.



Narendra Modi, center, at a rally in Mumbai last month. Photograph: Indranil Mukherjee/AFP/Getty Images

Khan's father fought in the Indian freedom movement against the British. Yet SRK has never said a word against Modi's government, globally known

for its anti-Muslim persecution after robbing Muslims of their citizenship; the ominous National Registry of Citizenship Act declared 700,000 of India's Muslims to be illegal immigrants. Admirers of Modi's BJP and its politics lynch Muslims, filming their brutal killings on mobile phones to pass around WhatsApp as viral trophies.

On the prime minister's birthday, Khan tweeted to Modi: "Your dedication for the welfare of our country and its people is highly appreciated. May you have the strength and health to achieve all your goals." Quite a thing to wish a man who as chief minister allegedly oversaw the murder of 2,000 Muslims and systematic rape of hundreds of women in Gujarat during the 2002 riots.

The writer Pankaj Mishra has said that Bollywood provided the "mood music" for Modi long before he took over the country.

Khan's film Pathaan provides cover and does much needed glamour work for the Indian state and the gross abuses that the abrogation of article 370 resulted in: the longest internet shutdown to take place in a democracy, the arrest of thousands of Kashmiri protesters, the sending in of thousands of paramilitary troops and untold other human rights violations. To set up an event such as the degradation of Kashmir as a fun plot point – those who are against the revocation of article 370 are homicidal maniacs and those who defend it, such as Khan, are valiant government agents with pectoral muscles – is beyond tragic. The political project of Modi's quasi-fascist BJP cannot be set to fun music and helicopter stunts, try as Bollywood might.

And it certainly does try. January also saw Netflix release Mission Majnu, a lazy drama about Indian spies finding out about Pakistan's nuclear program. Think of it as a spy thriller led by Dora the Explorer. Tariq AKA Majnu AKA Romeo is a research and analysis wing (Raw) agent who finds out that Pakistan is building a nuclear bomb. He does this through a series of cunning ploys such as asking a general if Pakistan is building a bomb (the general says yes, and soon), buying books on nuclear physics from roadside stalls which apparently only sell books on how to build atom bombs, and visiting the Rawalpindi library a few times. Though it's based loosely on real events, the history is backwards and laughably wrong. Dora was learning how to spell as she explored the world, but Mission Majnu can't

even write Urdu correctly in this drama, putting signs outside mosques transliterated straight from English into Urdu script.

Never mind the Indian assassins wearing necklaces that say LOVE in gold block letters – weirder still is the latent Israeli hero worship. A byproduct of Modi's visceral hatred of Muslims has been a strengthening of ties between India and Israel during his tenure. In 2017, Modi became the first Indian premier to visit Israel, where he and Benjamin Netanyahu enacted the bromance of two image-obsessed prima donnas by posing barefoot on beaches. Beyond photo ops, trade between the two countries now amounts to close to \$8bn, with India now the largest buyer of Israeli military equipment in the world.



The Bollywood actors Rashmika Mandanna and Sidharth Malhotra at the Mumbai trailer launch for Mission Majnu last month. Photograph: Sujit Jaiswal/AFP/Getty Images

Many have argued, myself included, that Pakistan, burdened as it is by a failing economy, decades of terrorism and the humiliations of the war on terror is [undergoing a cultural renaissance](#). Pakistani film-makers are making movies about trans love stories, female desire and the toxic societal power of patriarchal fundamentalists, and producing music that questions the divisions and partitions between us and our Indian brothers and sisters. And

so it is doubly strange to watch what is happening across the border, where culture is no longer a medium used to extend conversation but rather a means to snuff it out.

At the same time as these ridiculous films are produced and marketed, the Indian government has ordered YouTube and Twitter to take down links to a two-part BBC documentary, India: The Modi Question. The documentary examines Modi's role in sanctioning the carnage in Gujarat in 2002 during his time as chief minister as well as his transparently Islamophobic two terms as prime minister of the largest democracy in the world. It makes for chilling viewing, even for those of us who have followed Modi's sinister rise, carried aloft by religious incitement and dark rage. Watching the documentary, it is hard not to wonder if Modi became prime minister not despite the riots but because of them.

It is not surprising that little has been said of India's panicked banning of a two-hour documentary or that police in New Delhi arrested students who attempted to screen the BBC episodes. The ailing west needs India as a buffer against China's global ambitions. But if mainstream Indian cinema is not able to put up a principled fight against this suffocating wave of hatred, then decades of Bollywood having been a medium that brought joy and wonder to south Asian audiences – rather than cycles of alternating dread and boredom – will have been for naught.

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[Twitter](#)

## Some popular accounts likely to disappear from Twitter as Elon Musk ends free access to API

Move to pay-for-access application program interface continues platform owner's push for revenue

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Twitter said its application program interface (API) would be cut off and replaced with a paid version from 9 February. Photograph: Dado Ruvić/Reuters

[Josh Taylor](#)  
[@joshgnosis](#)

Fri 3 Feb 2023 01.39 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 01.40 EST

The latest set of changes to Twitter will likely spell the end of some of your favourite accounts, tools and features, as the platform's owner, [Elon Musk](#), continues to look for ways to increase revenue.

In a post on Thursday morning, Twitter's developer account announced free access to its application program interface (API) would be cut off and replaced with a paid version from 9 February.

Starting February 9, we will no longer support free access to the Twitter API, both v2 and v1.1. A paid basic tier will be available instead ☺

— Twitter Dev (@TwitterDev) [February 2, 2023](#)

The API provides access to Twitter data, which can be used to create third-party apps, automated bots, customer service tools for brands, and enables researchers to report on trends or patterns on the site.

While many larger companies already pay for access, it is unlikely some of the smaller developers of popular tools and accounts will be able or willing to pay.

Here's a roundup of some popular tools and accounts that could disappear once the pay-for-access API comes into effect.

## Thread readers

When someone posts a long thread of tweets on a topic, often someone will @ the thread reader app, which will generate the content of those tweets in a more readable format.

I'm [@ThreadReaderApp](#) a Twitter bot here to help you read threads more easily. To trigger me, you just have to reply to (or quote) any tweet of the thread you want to unroll and mention me with the "unroll" keyword and I'll send you a link back on Twitter ☺

— Thread Reader App (@threadreaderapp) [November 25, 2017](#)

## Possum photos every hour

Many automated accounts are made for fun, such as those that tweet out photographs or artwork at regular intervals.

Regretfully, the Possum Every Hour account has already announced it will cease operating once the changes are brought in, but it says its work will continue on Twitter's rival network Mastodon.

Hi All, I regret to announce you all that this bot will stop working on 9th of February (Next week) due to new Twitter's API policy. I have no intention on paying Twitter for basic API usage.

You can continue to follow the bot on Mastodon:<https://t.co/tGsVdbTKyu>

It's been fun <https://t.co/bNwJ4eqLjG>

— Possum Every Hour (Please See Pinned Tweet) (@PossumEveryHour) [February 2, 2023](#)

## Auto-delete services

Twitter lacks a function to allow you to delete your tweets en masse or automatically, so third-party apps using Twitter's API have filled that gap.

Many of them charge, which suggests they might already pay Twitter for API access, but the changes could spell doom for others.

If you think it's time to delete tweets, we are here for you: <https://t.co/Znwc7AQSpI>.

— TweetDeleter (@TweetDeleter) [October 28, 2022](#)

## **Weather, environment and health trackers**

Earthquake bots and other accounts set up to post automatic updates on the weather, environment or health issues such as Covid can be extremely useful. They generally work by scraping data from other sites and automatically tweeting it using the Twitter API.

Often they're run on a volunteer basis, and not-for-profit, so they could also be in trouble following the changes.

A 1.4 magnitude earthquake occurred 9.94mi E of Seven Trees, CA.  
Details: <https://t.co/ZNz9Ia3Wo3> Map: <https://t.co/hMGZWEovN9>

— SF QuakeBot (@earthquakesSF) [February 3, 2023](#)

## **Brand customer service accounts**

If you're a social media manager at a big company, you might use Hootsuite or a similar platform to keep tabs on the company's social accounts and track customer complaints. That too relies on Twitter's API.

The first hint Twitter would clamp down on use of the API was in mid-January when Twitter suddenly shut off access for Tweetbot, a third-party Twitter app optimised for Apple products. The move was not initially explained, but the company later said it was enforcing a long-held policy.

Say Goodbye to Tweetbot.

We've been proud to serve you over the last 12+ years, but due to circumstances beyond our control, we have to shut down Tweetbot.

Thank you so much for your patience and outpouring of support over these tough times at Tapbots. <https://t.co/PjHePIkCpbpic.twitter.com/e45XXU7ugF>

— Tapbots (@tapbots) [January 20, 2023](#)

Twitter's move to charge for API access is the latest in a string of changes Elon Musk has made since he took over the company in an effort to make it profitable.

Twitter has not said what it will charge for basic API access, nor has it indicated whether the charge will apply to all users of the API, including researchers.

Twitter no longer has a communications department to approach for comment, but questions were sent to the email address previously used by the organisation to field press enquiries.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/feb/03/some-popular-accounts-likely-to-disappear-from-twitter-as-elon-musk-ends-free-access-to-api>

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[Japan](#)

## Wave of ‘sushi terrorism’ grips Japan’s restaurant world

Signature cuisine is at the centre of a police investigation after customers at revolving sushi restaurants posted video clips of themselves meddling with dishes



Several acts of what is being called ‘sushi terrorism’ in Japan have emerged on Twitter and other social media in recent days. Photograph: Philip Fong/AFP/Getty Images

*[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo and agencies*

Fri 3 Feb 2023 01.12 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 07.15 EST

There are breaches of etiquette – drenching your rice in soy sauce, for one – and then there are heinous acts of “sushi terrorism”.

Japan’s signature cuisine is at the centre of a police investigation after customers at revolving sushi restaurants posted video clips of themselves

interfering with food and playing pranks on other customers.

The incidents have sent shares plummeting in a leading *kaitenzushi* chain and prompted operators to rethink how they serve their dishes.

Several acts of what is being called “sushi terrorism” have emerged on Twitter and other social media in recent days, although some apparently date back weeks, and even years.

A clip of the most egregious culinary crime, which has been viewed almost 40m times on Twitter, shows what appears to be a teenager licking the open top of a communal soy sauce bottle and the entire rim of a teacup, which he then places back on a shelf.

If that wasn’t bad enough, the 48-second [clip](#) shows him licking his finger and using it to touch two pieces of sushi, presumably ordered by another customer, as they travel past on the conveyer belt.

The video, filmed at a branch of the Sushiro chain in the central city of Gifu, prompted stocks in the restaurant’s parent company to plunge nearly 5% on Tuesday.

Other videos show people at other chains putting wasabi on passing pieces of sushi and licking the spoon from a container of green-tea powder that is used by multiple diners.

While the small number of incidents hardly points to a sushi crime wave, the videos have sparked uproar in [Japan](#), where the industry is worth an estimated ¥740bn (£4.7bn/\$5.7bn).

Most of the outrage is reserved for those who show contempt for the country’s high standards of hygiene.

“This is sickening,” one Twitter user wrote, with another adding: “I can’t go to conveyor belt sushi restaurants any more.”

Sushiro, the market leader, said this week that the man who made the viral video had apologised, along with his parents, but added that it had filed criminal and civil cases.

The clips prompted Sushiro to replace all of the restaurant's soy sauce bottles and rewash its teacups. It has also stopped placing condiments and utensils on each table at the restaurant in question and others located nearby, and is asking diners to collect them from a serving point, Japanese media reports say.

Two other chains, Hama Sushi and Kura Sushi, have also said they plan to take legal action, with the latter planning to install cameras above conveyor belts to monitor customers, Jiji press agency reported.

While some social media users spoke of their nausea after watching the clips, others voiced sympathy for kaitenzushi operators.

"I've always wanted to go to Sushiro but haven't been able to because it's always crowded," the singer Yuya Tegoshi tweeted. "But the situation now is the absolute worst for them, so I'm definitely going to visit."

The firm's president, Kohei Nii, said he had been overwhelmed by the outpouring of support, tweeting: "I'm so grateful I could cry."

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/03/wave-of-sushi-terrorism-grips-japans-restaurant-world>

## [Adani Group](#)

# Adani crisis: Indian group has value cut in half after stock market rout

Traders sent shares down more than 25% on Friday despite attempts to restore investor confidence following fraud claims



Gautam Adani, the chair of Adani Group. More than US\$115bn has been wiped from the value of Adani companies in the two weeks since Hindenburg Research's accusations. Photograph: Indranil Mukherjee/AFP/Getty Images

*[Jonathan Barrett](#) and [Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#)*

Fri 3 Feb 2023 02.52 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 02.53 EST

The beleaguered empire of the Indian billionaire Gautam Adani is spiralling into crisis, as an escalating [stock rout triggered by fraud claims](#) cuts the value of his conglomerate in half.

Traders sent shares in the listed flagship [Adani](#) Enterprises down more than 25% shortly after markets opened in Mumbai on Friday, despite attempts by the company to restore investor confidence. Other listed entities, such as Adani Green Energy and Adani Ports, were also down sharply.

The relentless selling has now wiped more than US\$115bn from the value of Adani companies in the two weeks since US-based Hindenburg Research accused the conglomerate of stock manipulation and accounting fraud.

Adani companies were worth a combined US\$220bn before the report was published.

The companies, spanning ports, power, coal and renewables, [accused Hindenburg in a 413-page rebuttal of engaging in a calculated attack on India](#), while noting that the US investor, an activist short seller that profits from falling share prices, is making money from the chaos.

The plunging share prices raise questions about how Adani, which runs Australia's contentious Carmichael coalmine and rail project in Queensland, can raise capital when the market has turned so aggressively against it. There is also the prospect of forced asset sales.

Reuters reported that Adani entities made scheduled payments on outstanding bonds on Thursday, adding that the conglomerate plans to issue a credit report by the end of the week to address liquidity concerns.

Pressure on Adani's finances intensified this week after it abandoned a [much-vaunted US\\$2.5bn share sale](#), which would have been used, in part, to pay down debt. The fundraising was pulled because participating investors would have suffered large losses should the sale have gone ahead given falling share price movements.

"We have an impeccable track record of servicing our debt," Adani said in a video address after abandoning the fundraising. "This decision will not have any impact on our existing operations and future plans."

The billionaire chairman has support from a prominent Abu Dhabi investor with ties to the royal family, along with investor and political support from within [India](#).

On Friday, Adani responded to critics of his apparent close ties to India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, dismissing claims his companies had avoided oversight.

"The fact of the matter is that my professional success is not because of any individual leader," he told India Today television, according to an AFP report.

Political opposition groups in India are pressuring parliament to debate the impact of the Adani fraud claims on investors and the country's banking sector. There are also calls for an independent probe into the allegations.

The most dramatic claims refer to what Hindenburg calls a "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme" that has driven up the price of the listed Adani companies, and inflated the net worth of its billionaire chairman.

Hindenburg alleges that this is done by using shell companies to manipulate the price of the listed ones by holding large positions.

Adani has denied the allegations and said any dealings with related parties were properly accounted for.

The chairman's [personal net worth has taken a significant hit](#), according to the Bloomberg billionaires index. After sitting alongside Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates among the world's richest just a couple of weeks ago, Adani has dropped out of the top 20 once Friday's share price falls are taken into account.

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## ChatGPT

# Colombian judge says he used ChatGPT in ruling

Juan Manuel Padilla asked the AI tool how laws applied in case of autistic boy's medical funding, while also using precedent to support his decision



The case in Colombia has raised a discussion over the use of AI in law.  
Photograph: Adrien Fillon/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

*[Luke Taylor](#) in Bogotá*

Thu 2 Feb 2023 21.53 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 07.47 EST

A judge in [Colombia](#) has caused a stir by admitting he used the artificial intelligence tool ChatGPT when deciding whether an autistic child's insurance should cover all of the costs of his medical treatment. He also used precedent from previous rulings to support his decision.

Juan Manuel Padilla, a judge in the Caribbean city of Cartagena, concluded that the entirety of the child's medical expenses and transport costs should

be paid by his medical plan as his parents could not afford them.

While the judgment itself did not cause much fuss, the inclusion of Padilla's conversations with [ChatGPT](#) in the ruling has been more contentious.

Among Padilla's inquiries with the chatbot, the legal documents show Padilla asked ChatGPT the precise legal matter at hand: "Is an autistic minor exonerated from paying fees for their therapies?"

ChatGPT's response corresponded with the judge's final decision: "Yes, this is correct. According to the regulations in Colombia, minors diagnosed with autism are exempt from paying fees for their therapies."

The case has raised a discussion over the use of AI in law and has been criticised by some of Padilla's peers.

[ChatGPT scours text across the internet](#) to generate informed responses but has been shown to provide different answers to the same question. It also fabricates information on occasion to make inventive and compelling lies.

The nascent platform has caused alarm in recent weeks, including in schools, where teachers fear OpenAI's platform could be used by students for plagiarism.

Padilla defended his use of the technology, suggesting it could make Colombia's bloated legal system more efficient. The judge also used precedent from previous rulings to support his decision.

Padilla told Blu Radio on Tuesday that ChatGPT and other such programs could be useful to "facilitate the drafting of texts" but "not with the aim of replacing" judges.

Padilla also insisted that "by asking questions to the application, we do not stop being judges, thinking beings".

The judge argued that ChatGPT performs services previously provided by a secretary and did so "in an organised, simple and structured manner" that

could “improve response times” in the justice system.

Prof Juan David Gutierrez of Rosario University was among those to express incredulity at the judge’s admission.

He called for urgent “digital literacy” training for judges.

Colombia approved a law in 2022 that suggests that public lawyers should use technologies where possible to make their work more efficient.

Octavio Tejeiro, a judge in Colombia’s supreme court, said AI caused moral panic in law as people feared robots would replace judges, but he predicted the tool would probably soon become accepted and commonplace.

“The justice system should make the most of technology as a tool but always while following ethics and taking into account that the administrator of justice is ultimately a human being,” Tejeiro said. “It must be seen as an instrument that serves the judge to improve his judgment. We cannot allow the tool to become more important than the person.”

Tejeiro told the Guardian he had not used ChatGPT but would consider using it in future.

The chatbot itself was more apprehensive about its new role in the justice system.

“Judges should not use ChatGPT when ruling on legal cases … It is not a substitute for the knowledge, expertise and judgment of a human judge,” it responded to a question from the Guardian.

“Journalists should exercise caution when using quotes generated by ChatGPT in their articles,” the bot added.

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## [Australia news](#)

# Britain ‘relaxed’ about Australia omitting King Charles from new \$5 banknote, high commissioner says

‘It is for Australia to decide what it wants on its coins, and on its notes,’ Vicki Treadell says

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Britain wouldn’t dream of commenting on Australia’s decision to replace the monarch on the \$5 note. Photograph: Amer Ghazzal/REX/Shutterstock

*[Mostafa Rachwani](#)  
[@Rachwani91](#)*

Thu 2 Feb 2023 21.54 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 00.06 EST

The British high commissioner to Australia, Vicki Treadell, says Britain is “relaxed” about the prospect of not having [King Charles III](#) on the \$5 note.

The Reserve Bank announced on Thursday that it will not replace the image of Queen Elizabeth on the \$5 note with King Charles, but with an image that honours the culture and history of First Australians.

Treadell said the UK was “not at all” offended by the move.

“It is for Australia to decide what it wants on its coins, and on its notes,” she told ABC radio on Friday.

“You are a realm in your own right.”

The RBA said it had consulted the federal government on the decision, and had the government’s support.

The bank will consult First Australians in designing the \$5 banknote, which will take some years to be designed and printed.

Indigenous Australians and designs have appeared on Australian currencies since decimal currency was introduced in 1966, while the queen has featured on the nation’s notes since 1923.

The first \$1 note, designed by Gordon Andrews, featured imagery of Indigenous rock paintings and carvings with a bark painting by artist David Malangi Daymirringu.

After the \$1 note was taken out of circulation, it wasn’t until the \$10 polymer note was introduced in 1988 that a note featured Indigenous designs again.

The queen also featured on the paper \$1 note from decimalisation until it was discontinued. The current \$5 design, updated in 2016, is the last Australian banknote design to feature the monarch – with Canberra’s Parliament House on the other side. The \$10 has Dame Mary Gilmore and Banjo Paterson, the \$20 Mary Reibey and Rev John Flynn, the \$50 David

Unaipon and Edith Cowan, and the \$100 has Sir John Monash and Dame Nellie Melba.

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Treadell said Britain was “relaxed” about Australia’s move to remove the reigning monarch.

“We have our own position and our own relationship with the royal family, and we wouldn’t dream of imposing or indeed having views or commenting on what Australia chooses to do in their own right.”

It comes after the opposition leader, Peter Dutton, demanded the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, “own” the move, which he said was “woke nonsense”.

“I think it’s another attack on our systems, on our society and our institutions,” he told 2GB radio on Thursday.

“There’s no question about this. It’s directed by the government … He [Albanese] would have been central to the decision-making.”

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Dutton said the “silent majority” of Australians disagreed with the decision.

Australians for Constitutional Monarchy accused the government of a “forlorn and futile attempt” to clear the path towards republicanism.

“It will do them no good. Australians will see through this. The Albanese government is behaving as if the people have already decided to turn Australia into a politicians’ republic.”

Dean Smith, a Liberal senator and staunch monarchist, said the decision was disappointing and a “missed opportunity”.

“A design incorporating both our new king and an appreciation for Australia’s Indigenous heritage and culture would be a better and more unifying approach,” he said in a statement.

“This decision misses a unique opportunity for both the RBA and Anthony Albanese to merge these two important aspects of Australia’s story.”

“Although not totally unexpected, breaking with this long tradition will come as a disappointment to many Australians, who have never known anything different.”

The Australian treasurer, Jim Chalmers, said the change to the \$5 note was the right decision.

“This is a good opportunity to strike a good balance between the monarch on the coins and a First Nations design on the fiver,” he said. “It’s important to remember that the monarch will continue to be on our coins.”

Voters said in a survey held by the [Sydney Morning Herald](#) in October that they would prefer the \$5 note to feature an Australian, with only 34% saying King Charles was their choice.

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## **Headlines monday 30 january 2023**

- [Conservatives No need for Nadhim Zahawi to step down as MP, insists minister](#)
- [NHS Rishi Sunak set to unveil emergency care plan to slash waiting times](#)
- [In full The letters between Zahawi, Sunak and his ethics adviser](#)

## Rishi Sunak

# Rishi Sunak vows to ‘restore integrity’ after sacking Nadhim Zahawi

Prime minister says he acted decisively to dismiss Tory party chair for breaches of ministerial code

- [UK politics live – latest news updates](#)

'As soon as I knew': Rishi Sunak claims he acted 'decisively' over Nadhim Zahawi tax affair – video

*Peter Walker* Political correspondent  
[@peterwalker99](#)

Mon 30 Jan 2023 07.09 ESTFirst published on Mon 30 Jan 2023 03.53 EST

Rishi Sunak has said he can “restore the integrity back into politics” as he began a fightback against the political damage from sacking [Nadhim Zahawi](#) as Conservative party chair for breaches of the ministerial code over his tax affairs.

The prime minister, answering questions after an NHS-themed address at Teesside University in Darlington, said he had acted “decisively” [to dismiss Zahawi](#) on Sunday after receiving the findings of an investigation by his ethics adviser, Laurie Magnus.

Magnus’s conclusions meant he was “able to make a very quick decision that it was no longer appropriate for Nadhim Zahawi to continue in government”, Sunak said.

“It relates to things that happened well before I was prime minister, so unfortunately I can’t change what happened in the past,” he said.

“What you can hold me accountable for is: what did you do about it? What I did, as soon as I knew about the situation, was appoint someone independent, looked at it, got the advice and then acted pretty decisively.”

Sunak has now lost two senior ministers – [Gavin Williamson resigned](#) after less than a fortnight into the new government – and his deputy prime minister, Dominic Raab, is under severe pressure amid an inquiry into [multiple claims of bullying](#), which Raab denies.

Sunak, who entered No 10 pledging to restore “integrity and accountability” after the Boris Johnson era, said his swift action on Magnus’s report demonstrated this was still his mission.

“That should give you some confidence that these things matter to me, and that I will take whatever steps are necessary to restore the integrity back into politics, and you can have confidence that the process works,” he said.

Earlier, a former health department colleague of Zahawi said there was no need for him to step down as an MP despite his breaches of the ministerial code.

The comment by the social care minister, Helen Whately, who was a minister at the health and social care department when Zahawi was in charge of the Covid vaccines programme, comes amid signs of a pushback from Zahawi after he was sacked.

Asked if Zahawi “got a fair hearing”, Whately told Times Radio: “I would say so, yes.”

In a later interview on BBC Breakfast, Whately rejected the idea that Zahawi should step down as the MP for Stratford-on-Avon.

“Nadhim was elected as an MP by his constituents back in the last general election,” she said. “We’re all accountable to constituents. And it’s not that long again until there will be another general election in which voters will again make those decisions.”

Sunak's judgment in reappointing Zahawi has come under question from some Conservative MPs, while others felt that the prime minister, who acted within hours of receiving Magnus's report on Sunday morning, should have sacked him earlier.

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The Labour party has written to Sunak about a series of issues connected to Zahawi, including when he first knew about the tax affairs and why he previously said the matter had been settled.

“There are serious questions for [Rishi Sunak](#) to answer,” the Labour chair, Anneliese Dodds, told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme on Monday. “What did he know about the investigation into Nadim Zahawi, the amount of money he had paid in unpaid tax and the penalty he had to pay?

“Why did Rishi Sunak say in parliament that there weren’t questions to be answered about Mr Zahawi’s tax affairs and why do we see our prime minister continuing to prop up such a rogues’ gallery of ministers?”

In his letter to the prime minister on Sunday, Zahawi said he would support Sunak as a backbencher, but did not apologise or even explicitly mention the findings of the inquiry into his tax affairs, instead criticising some of the media reporting about his case.

In a further sign of Zahawi perhaps believing he has been unfairly treated, unnamed allies of the former Tory chair briefed [the Spectator](#) on Sunday about what they believed were inconsistencies in the No 10 case about what Zahawi had told officials about his tax.

According to the article, the allies say Zahawi did tell officials about the HMRC investigation and the penalty he subsequently paid when he was made chancellor under Boris Johnson, and that the Cabinet Office was thus “fully in the picture” when he became party chair.

Other sources told [the Times](#) that a “furious” Zahawi believed he was not given the chance to properly put his case to Magnus, and may publish his own formal response to the sacking.

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## [Health](#)

# Rishi Sunak set to unveil emergency care plan to slash NHS waiting times

Experts warn plan does not address staff vacancies and £1bn fund pledged is not new money



The prime minister will pledge 800 new ambulances, with 100 specialist mental health vehicles. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

*[Andrew Gregory](#)* Health editor

*[@andrewgregory](#)*

Sun 29 Jan 2023 19.01 EST Last modified on Sun 29 Jan 2023 19.03 EST

Rishi Sunak will vow to rapidly slash long waiting times for urgent [NHS](#) care with a promise of thousands more beds, 800 new ambulances and an expansion of community care backed by a dedicated fund of £1bn.

The health service is engulfed in its worst-ever crisis, with urgent and emergency care in particular under unprecedented pressure in recent months.

The prime minister will describe his blueprint for resolving the problems as “ambitious and credible”.

However, the Guardian understands the £1bn dedicated fund being pledged to finance the strategy is not new money. It will come out of cash announced last year for health and social care in the autumn statement. There were also no precise details on who will staff new ambulances and beds.

In the two-year plan for England, the government and NHS England will promise 800 new ambulances, including 100 specialist mental health vehicles, and 5,000 more hospital beds.

A major element of the strategy is to expand urgent care in the community, keeping people away from hospitals and seeing more treated at home.

Same-day emergency care units will open in every hospital with a major A&E. Ministers hope this measure will see thousands of people each week avoiding an overnight stay in hospital.

There are also plans for pilots of new approaches to NHS step-down care, with patients receiving rehabilitation and physiotherapy at home in some instances. Over the weekend, the government said 3,000 “hospital at home” beds will be created before next winter, with the aim of about 50,000 people a month eventually being cared for at home each month.

There is an increasing reliance on virtual wards to combat NHS pressures, which see patients treated from home while monitored by medics via daily visits or video calls.

Sunak will visit an A&E unit in the north-east of England to highlight the new strategy. “Cutting NHS waiting times is one of my five priorities,” he will say. “Urgent and emergency care is facing serious challenges but we have an ambitious and credible plan to fix it.”

“It will take time to get there but our plan will cut long waiting times by increasing the number of ambulances, staff and beds – stopping the bottlenecks outside A&E and making sure patients are seen and discharged quickly.”

However, NHS leaders expressed doubts that initiatives such as creating more virtual wards to keep people out of hospital would succeed in reducing pressure while there remained a workforce crisis. There are currently 133,000 vacancies in England alone.

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“We desperately need action to tackle the vast workforce shortages, staff exhaustion and burnout,” said Saffron Cordery, interim chief executive of NHS Providers.

Patricia Marquis, the Royal College of Nursing director for England, said: “Without investment in staff, this plan won’t make a difference.”

Matthew Taylor, the chief executive of the NHS Confederation, said: “The NHS has been at the mercy of a sluggish and short-term approach from the government in its response to the crisis facing emergency services this winter.

“The NHS needs the right numbers and mix of staff in place if it is to truly recover the performance of emergency care and other services long term.”

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**Nadhim Zahawi**

## In full: the letters between Nadhim Zahawi, Rishi Sunak and his ethics adviser

What was in the letters sent between the prime minister, the former chancellor and Sir Laurie Magnus



Nadhim Zahawi. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

*Guardian staff*

Sun 29 Jan 2023 09.56 EST Last modified on Sun 29 Jan 2023 11.08 EST

Rishi Sunak has sacked the Conservative party chair, [Nadhim Zahawi](#), after he was found to have breached the ministerial code by failing to declare the HMRC investigation into his tax affairs.

An investigation by the prime minister's ethics adviser, Sir Laurie Magnus, concluded that Zahawi had committed a “serious breach” of the code by not

telling officials he was under investigation by the tax body when he was appointed chancellor by Boris Johnson.

Here are the letters between the prime minister, his ethics adviser and Zahawi in full.

Sunak to Zahawi:

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Zahawi to Sunak:

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Magnus to Sunak:

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- [Warming winter dishes The 20 best easy comfort food recipes](#)
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## **‘A lot of the demons seem a little cheesy now’: Sarah Michelle Gellar on Buffy, her burnout and her comeback**

[Elle Hunt](#)



Sarah Michelle Gellar: ‘This is such an interesting time for me.’ Photograph: Matt Doyle/Contour by Getty Images

Shaken by the death of her sitcom co-star Robin Williams, the actor put her career on hold for the best part of a decade. Now she’s back battling supernatural beings in *Wolf Pack* – but will she ever revive the *Slayer*?



Mon 30 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 07.17 EST

When Sarah Michelle Gellar was sent the script for a new supernatural teen drama, her first instinct was to let the dead lie. “I was like, ‘I’m not reading it,’” she says firmly. “Werewolves? No, thank you – been there, done that.”

After all, 20 years after Gellar laid down her stakes and scythe, audiences are still obsessing over Buffy the Vampire Slayer. The TV show, which ran for seven seasons from 1997 to 2003, inspired [an academic discipline](#), with journals, conferences and scholars known as “Buffyologists”. Now, the #buffy hashtag has nearly 400m views on TikTok, as younger generations connect with “the chosen one”, Buffy Summers. The other characters, too – father figure Rupert Giles, Willow the lesbian witch, platonic best friend Xander – have left an outsized mark.

The series’ enduring appeal feels “amazing”, says Gellar. “As an actor, you hope you do something that holds up, that people still watch and that still means something to them.”

But, while Buffy’s following has grown since the finale, Gellar herself has opted to avoid the limelight since a string of high-profile roles (*I Know What You Did Last Summer*, *Scream 2*, *Cruel Intentions*, *Scooby-Doo*, *The Grudge*) around the millennium.

For most of the past decade she was on a career break, prioritising family life with her husband of 20 years (and 00s co-star) Freddie Prinze Jr and their children Charlotte and Rocky (born 2009 and 2012). On Instagram she presents herself to her 4 million followers as a homebody and a hands-on mum.

Now, however, Gellar is getting back to work. Last year she had a small but well-received part in Netflix’s teen comedy *Do Revenge*, her first film role since 2009 and a homage to her part in 1999’s *Cruel Intentions*; today she is in the new Paramount+ series *Wolf Pack*, playing an arson investigator on the trail of supernatural forces.



Gellar in the teen comedy *Do Revenge*. Photograph: Kim Simms/Netflix

Does it feel as if she's making a comeback, I ask her. "It does," she says, her face lighting up. "It's such an interesting time for me."

This morning in Los Angeles, Gellar, 45, is holed up in her home study, escaping the chaos of the school run. Behind her are bookshelves bearing an MTV people's choice award, an autographed copy of the programme for *Hamilton* and many books – among them first editions, which she collects.

She had just started thinking about returning to work when the pandemic struck. Since then, she says, it has been "about waiting for the right thing". Alongside director Jennifer Kaytin Robinson, Gellar developed her part in *Do Revenge* to be a "first step back – to make sure that this is really what I want, and that my family can handle it". Charlotte tagged along for the shoot, helping out and learning behind the scenes.

Her role was well received, and reminded Gellar how much she loved acting. "The next step was to do something in the other genre that has been so good to me," she says: teens battling bloodthirsty beings.

What won her over to *Wolf Pack* was the script, she says, by *Teen Wolf* (and *Criminal Minds*) creator Jeff Davis. "Jeff wasn't just looking for 'SMG' to

be part of a werewolf show,” she says. “He was looking to modernise the tale, and deal with what we’re all facing now.”



With Rodrigo Santoro in *Wolf Pack*. Photograph: Curtis Bonds Baker/MTVE

On top of werewolves, the show’s teenage characters struggle with social media, anxiety and the threat of California wildfires: issues that strike close to home for Gellar (the latter literally – in the 2019 blaze, she and her family were evacuated from their house for a week).

“Buffy dealt with the horrors of adolescence,” she says. “Our monsters, the scary part, is the manifestation of the mental health crisis we’re facing, the isolation and then, on a lesser note, what we’re doing to our planet.”

That ambition and complexity are what ensured Buffy’s staying power, Gellar believes. On top of its formal experimentation (there was one singing-and-dancing episode, and another without dialogue), the show stood out for its feminist slant and its thoughtful interpretation of themes such as sexuality and grief.



Gellar in Buffy the Vampire Slayer – the show that made her name.  
Photograph: Everett/Rex Shutterstock

“A lot of the demons are a little cheesy now, because of how far graphics have come – but it doesn’t change how the story makes you feel.”

For all its similarities to Buffy, Wolf Pack has one key difference: this time Gellar is in a position of influence, as an executive producer as well as the lead.

The title can be almost meaningless, a way to sweeten the deal for a star, but Gellar says she told Davis: “I’ve been doing this for 40 years. I have a lot of experience, and I have a lot to bring to the table. If you’re just looking for an actor that just wants to have the credit, I’m not your person. I’m going to have ideas, and I’m going to be vocal about them.”

A born-and-bred New Yorker, the only child of a nursery school teacher and a garment worker, Gellar has been acting since she was five, when an agent spotted her at a restaurant. In 1981, she made her small-screen debut – in a Burger King advertisement in which she criticised McDonald’s, leading to a lifelong ban. She laughs when I ask whether the ban is still in place: “Honestly, I wouldn’t know.”

When Gellar was seven, her parents divorced. (She later became estranged from her father, and remained so until his death in 2001.) Raised in Manhattan by her mother, for a time she attended a private school on a partial scholarship, where she was bullied for her lesser privilege. A self-described “nerd”, she continued to earn good grades even as acting took over her life.

She moved to the west coast aged 16, weeks after graduating from a New York high school for child actors. At 17, she shot the pilot for Buffy. “I was young,” she says. “I remember, in the first season, people would go to a bar after work, and I was years away from going to a bar – which did also help with my being able to just focus on the amount of work.”



With Linda Cardellini in Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed.  
Photograph: Warner Bros/Allstar

Gellar has often spoken of the pressure she was under to carry the series, working all week with no outside life. Today she shrugs it off. “Twenty-two episodes burn everybody out, not just the writers ... Now we live in a world where TV can be eight to 10 episodes, and not murder you.”

Buffy’s success was also a double-edged sword, forcing Gellar to turn down roles in some of the 00s’ defining films: Fight Club, American Beauty, The

Wedding Planner, Gangs of New York. She says she is not troubled by what might have been: “I also made a great television show.” Nor does she resent her lost childhood. “My mom was a single mother, working just above the poverty line, and I got to travel the world, to see and do things that would never have been afforded to me.” Besides, she adds, she is a workhorse by nature. “I love what I do – which is work, work, work.”

You can still burn out, I say. “And I did.”

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When we lost Robin Williams, it was a whole reset for me. I needed to be at home for a while

The turning point came in 2014, with [the death of Robin Williams](#), Gellar’s co-star on the sitcom The Crazy Ones. It had been Williams’ first regular TV role since Mork & Mindy; Gellar, a fan, had lobbied to play his on-screen daughter. Reviews praised the leads’ chemistry and warmth.

“When we lost Robin, it was this whole reset for me: ‘Everything’s going by really fast, and I’m missing it,’” says Gellar. “When I did the pilot for The Crazy Ones, my son was two months old – it was nonstop, and I needed to be at home for a while.”

She knew taking a break was risky: “Your job may not always be there. You can be surpassed by other people; interests change.” But she had already started to find herself in a limbo. “When you are mid- to late 30s in this business, and you look young like I do, you’re not getting the meaty wife or mother roles, because you don’t look old enough – but you’re too old for the ingenue. It’s a weird position to be in.”



With Robin Williams in *The Crazy Ones*. Photograph: CBS Photo Archive/CBS/Getty Images

Superhero movies, too, swallowed those off-kilter but broadly appealing roles that Gellar had shone in. “Genre is where women can really succeed and hold an audience,” she says. “Every time a Marvel movie tries to do a female cast, it just gets torn apart ... Unfortunately, audiences weren’t as accepting. There’s still this mentality of ‘the male superhero’, this very backwards way of thinking.”

It is not just audiences that have been hostile to women, but sets. In recent years, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* has attracted controversy, with showrunner Joss Whedon accused of misogynistic behaviour behind the scenes.

Since the actors Ray Fisher and Gal Gadot talked in 2021 about their negative experiences with Whedon during the making of the DC film *Justice*

League, some of Gellar's co-stars have shared their stories. Charisma Carpenter, who played Cordelia Chase in Buffy, claimed Whedon victimised her while she was pregnant, and Michelle Trachtenberg, who played Buffy's younger sister while still a teenager, claimed there was an unwritten rule that Whedon was not allowed to be alone with her.

When I grew up, people screamed on sets: actors, directors, everybody. It doesn't happen any more

Whedon has denied all wrongdoing: “I think I’m one of the nicer showrunners,” [he said last year](#).

Gellar’s response was limited to an Instagram post in February 2021, expressing support for “survivors of abuse”: [“While I am proud to have my name associated with Buffy Summers, I don’t want to be forever associated with the name Joss Whedon.”](#)

Today, Gellar declines to say more. “I’m never going to go into detail because it doesn’t help anything, it doesn’t solve anything … My heart goes out to people who are willing to tell their truths and their stories and their experiences. I just know that, for me, rehashing things – there’s nothing to be gained for me, in that experience. Where I gain is making sure that there’s better experiences for the next generation.”



Scream queen ... Gellar in *I Know What You Did Last Summer*.  
Photograph: Columbia/Allstar

There has already been positive change in the industry, says Gellar. “There’s not a day goes by where you don’t pick up a trade magazine and hear about some showrunner being ousted for behaviour that is just unbecoming. When I grew up, people screamed on sets: actors, directors, everybody. It doesn’t happen any more. If someone comes out on set screaming, it’s like: ‘Peace out!’ No one needs to be treated like that – we’ve established that.””

From her position of power on *Wolf Pack*’s set, Gellar was able “to set up an infrastructure for the younger cast”, she says. “Something that I know for sure that I didn’t have on any of my jobs.”

What would Gellar have benefited from, as a young star?

“Somebody that was there to listen. There are things in place in the business now – there was no such thing as an intimacy coordinator when I was there – but also, you don’t know that person. It’s much easier for the cast to come to me if a crew member’s making them uncomfortable, or if someone doesn’t like their hair and makeup or wardrobe.”

I still don’t get taken seriously by men on sets. I can point out my experience now; 10 years ago I probably couldn’t

All that said, Gellar admits: “I still don’t get taken seriously by men on sets. I still feel the need, sometimes, to read [out] my résumé, like: ‘How many of these shows have you done? How many experiences have you had at 2am with 250 extras, a late shot, a stunt – all of these things? I not only have produced it, but I’ve also been in it. Listen to me, because I know where I’m coming from.’”

“I can speak like that now, where I think 10 years ago I probably couldn’t.” Gellar adds with a smile: “If there’s one thing children teach you, it is patience.”

For now, her aim is to do a select few projects a year, acting and producing – then, when her children leave home for college, “I feel that that’s the full-full throttle. I love what I do, and I’m really loving it in a different and much more joyous way.”

Growing up, her dream was to make it as a jobbing actor, Gellar points out. “I didn’t dream of success like this, so now I’m in the fun phase where it’s all gravy. I’ve been on all the magazine covers, I have awards, all that stuff – I want to just have fun.”

She sees one limit to her comeback. Fans have long been calling for a Buffy revival, not least to [exorcise the spirit of Whedon](#). But while Gellar agrees that “there are more stories to tell”, she would not want to take part. “I’m really happy with what I contributed. Even if I did a cameo, it would just be compared. You want to give someone a chance to create from scratch.”

Now, Gellar says, Buffy belongs to her fans. She is reluctant to share her ideas about where the character went after season seven. But she’s happy with the way the “chosen one” finally got to share her burden with a host of new Slayers. “I love the ending. I love the fact that the whole idea was that every girl who wants the power can have the power. Isn’t that the ultimate lesson?”

*Wolf Pack is on Paramount+*

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## The 20 best easy comfort food recipes



Nigella Lawson's chicken barley. Food and prop styling: Polly Webb-Wilson. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

Nigel Slater's baked croissants with ham and cheese, Nigella Lawson's chicken barley and Ravneet Gill's blueberry pancakes – these warming dishes will bring you cold-weather comfort

*[Allan Jenkins](#), compiled by [Molly Tait-Hyland](#)*

Mon 30 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Wed 1 Feb 2023 11.56 EST

Start your day with Nigel Slater's savoury croissants or Ravneet Gill's brilliant blueberry pancakes. For lunch or dinner? Nigella Lawson's easy cheesy chilli, Yotam Ottolenghi's perfect baked potatoes, or Nathan Outlaw's toad in the hole. Your midweek treat: Uyen Luu's noodles or Amy and Emily Chung's cheap and cheering family dal. Finish with Olia Hercules's baked apples or Lopè Ariyo's cobbler. A recipe list that almost reads like a lullaby.

## **[Nigella Lawson's chicken barley recipe \(pictured above\)](#)**

A thick, creamy pottage that's a cross between a stew and a slightly soupy, sticky risotto

## **[Nigel Slater's recipe for baked croissants with ham and cheese](#)**



Nigel Slater's recipe for baked croissants with ham and cheese. Photograph: Jonathan Lovekin/The Observer

Croissants cooked in the style of pain perdu, stuffed with dark curls of speck and pools of melted fontina

## [Trine Hahnemann's favourite winter stew recipe – labskovs](#)



Trine Hahnemann's favourite winter stew recipe – labskovs. Photograph: Columbus Leth

This is classic Scandinavian comfort food, a mash cooked with meat and lots of flavour, served with chives and pickled beetroot

## [Straight-up macaroni cheese recipe by Laura Goodman](#)



Straight-up macaroni cheese recipe by Laura Goodman. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

For a classic macaroni cheese, you need to stand over a large pot of bechamel and personally load it with cheddar

## Nathan Outlaw's toad in the hole recipe



Nathan Outlaw's toad in the hole recipe. Photograph: David Loftus

Full of childhood memories, toad in the hole is simple and warming – just don't take it out of the oven too soon

## [Yotam Ottolenghi's jacket potatoes with egg and tonnato sauce](#)



Yotam Ottolenghi's jacket potatoes with egg and tonnato sauce. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

This brings together two of the most simple and comforting dishes: a baked potato and a soft-boiled egg

## [Dal – pe hin recipe by Amy Chung and Emily Chung](#)



Dal – pe hin recipe by Amy Chung and Emily Chung. Photograph: Martin Poole

This dal – ideal for a midweek meal – is such easy-to-make comfort food: nutritious, filling and cheap

## [Pumpkin and cardamon soup recipe by Yasmin Khan](#)



Pumpkin and cardamon soup recipe by Yasmin Khan. Photograph: Matt Russell

Enriched with coconut milk and the headiness of cardamom, this soup soothes and comforts beyond measure

## [Nigel Slater's potato, camembert and dill recipe](#)



Nigel Slater's potato, camembert and dill recipe. Photograph: Jonathan Lovekin/The Observer

A cold-weather dish, heavy with starch, cream and cheese that takes its inspiration from tartiflette

## Rukmini Iyer's cherry tomato, leek and artichoke bake with feta recipe



Rukmini Iyer's cherry tomato, leek and artichoke bake with feta recipe. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

Think of this as a cross between a frittata, a toad in the hole and a delicious giant savoury pancake

## Savoy cabbage, roasted cauliflower and cashew chilli noodles – mì xào chay recipe by Uyen Luu



Savoy cabbage, roasted cauliflower and cashew chilli noodles – mì xào chay  
recipe by Uyen Luu. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

There is something so moreish and savoury about butter and fish sauce, which turns this midweek dinner into a real treat

**[Cheddar on toast with sweet leeks recipe by Emily Scott](#)**



Cheddar on toast with sweet leeks recipe by Emily Scott. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

There is something so good about leeks and cheese together. Nothing else is really needed

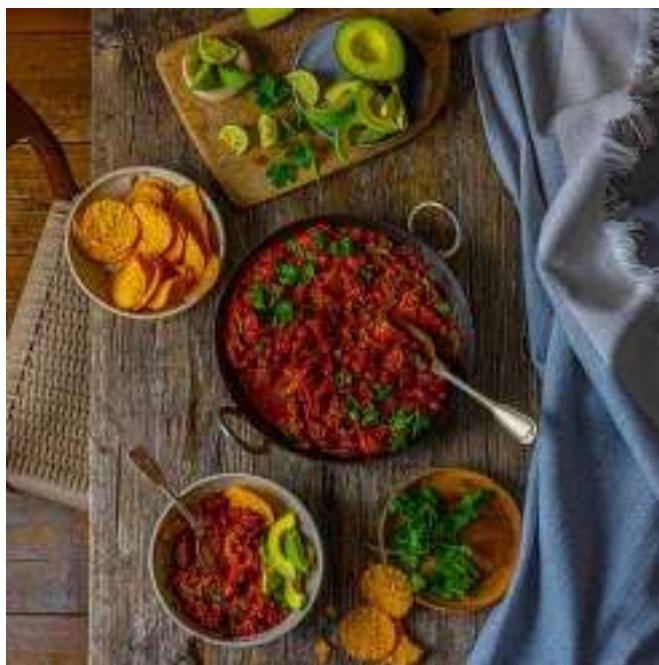
**Multigrain porridge with kale, hazelnuts and smoked fish recipe by Claire Ptak**



Multigrain porridge with kale, hazelnuts and smoked fish recipe by Claire Ptak. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

Start the day with a savoury porridge that's nourishing and great for wintertime. Add an egg for extra protein

## [Nigella Lawson's cheesy chilli recipe](#)



Nigella Lawson's cheesy chilli recipe. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

Chorizo sausages combine with mince and mozzarella to make a quick Tex-Mex-inspired bowl of chilli

## [Ravneet Gill's recipe for blueberry pancakes](#)



Ravneet Gill's recipe for blueberry pancakes. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

Perfect for a weekend breakfast, these pancakes can be made thick or thin, depending on who you're feeding

## [Peanut and sweet potato stew recipe by Melissa Thompson](#)



Peanut and sweet potato stew recipe by Melissa Thompson. Photograph: Patricia Niven

With influences from west Africa and Jamaica, this aromatic vegetarian stew can be ready in less than half an hour

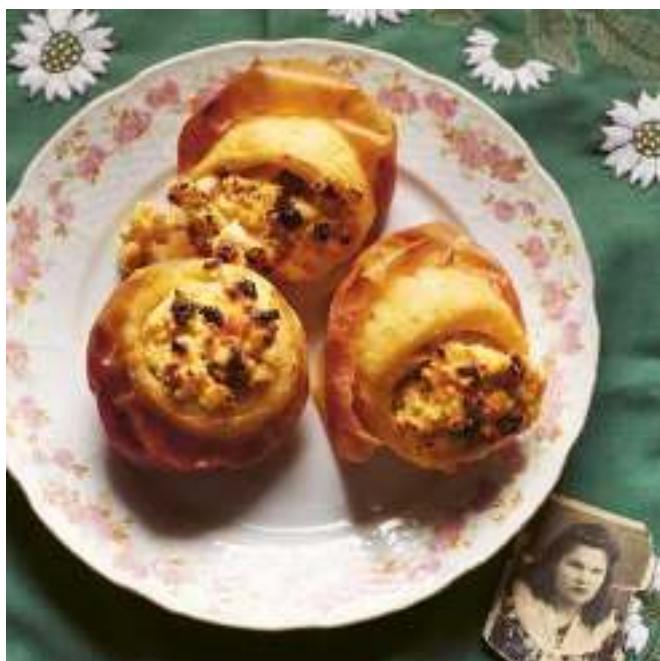
## **Fish pie with a rosti topping recipe by Rosie Sykes**



Fish pie with a rosti topping recipe by Rosie Sykes. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

There's no need to mash potato or make a white sauce with this crunchy-topped fish pie

## **Baked apples with ricotta and raisins recipe by Olia Hercules**



Baked apples with ricotta and raisins recipe by Olia Hercules. Photograph: Joe Woodhouse

Bake these apples until the skins burst, the flesh is fluffy and the ricotta is caramelised on top

## **Plantain cobbler recipe by Lopè Ariyo**



Plantain cobbler recipe by Lopè Ariyo. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

Like a cross between a cake and a scone, this plantain pudding is drenched in a tropical syrup

## [School-skive semolina cake recipe by Nisha Katona](#)



School-skive semolina cake recipe by Nisha Katona. Photograph: Yuki Sugiura

A cake that's elegant while remaining warming, nutty and completely comforting

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## **A new start after 60: I survived cancer – and learned to respect my amazing body**



‘Instead of feeling vulnerable, I now feel my body is strong and resilient’ ...  
Boulay. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

For decades Sylvie Boulay agonised about her weight, happy when it fell, miserable when it rose. After two brushes with death, she has finally found peace

[Paula Cocozza](#)

[@CocozzaPaula](#)

Mon 30 Jan 2023 02.00 EST

Sylvie Boulay was in her 60s when she finally fell in love with her body. Growing up in Paris, she felt that her shape didn't fit. At ballet class, the girls were slim and long-legged. From her mother, and society, she acquired "a very strong feeling that French women had to look a certain way". It took a long time – decades, she says – "to realise there was nothing wrong with me".

Boulay, who is now 71, packed her bags the day after she got her baccalaureate results and moved to London. She had visited England each summer to learn the language. By the time she was 18, she had friends there, and a boyfriend. Studying economics at UCL, she was free of the French dress code, but "in an environment with lots of young women who worried about their weight. I had friends who were dieting and friends who had eating disorders," she says.

"I would define myself by how much I weighed. I felt good with my body at a certain weight and terrible at another. I yo-yoed between feeling I was slim and feeling I was fat." Over the decades – through two marriages, two divorces, three degrees, a career in housing, counselling, then addiction counselling – the dial on her scales pinged between 9 stone (57kg) and 14 stone (89kg).



Drawing by Sylvie Boulay.

Then, in 2005, Boulay was diagnosed with blood cancer. A friend who worked in palliative care asked her favourite doctor to speak with Boulay, then 54. The doctor explained that “she didn’t look at blood test results first. She always checked how the person felt. Her advice was: ‘Trust your amazing body.’”

At the time, Boulay felt so vulnerable that those words didn’t resonate. “I went through all sorts of emotions – panic-stricken, thinking ‘I’m going to die, terrible things are going to happen to me, it will turn into a much worse cancer.’” But she came through it.

Just before her 60th birthday, she learned that her daughter was pregnant, and decided to move from the Midlands to London to be nearer her. That same year, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, and went into “panic mode” all over again. “I made a deal with the god I don’t believe in: ‘Give me just five years – but, if you can, 10 would be even better.’”

That was 12 years ago, “and the drama has long passed”, she says. Her treatment was minimal and effective. She takes a daily chemo tablet. But something much deeper has shifted in her relationship with her body.

She visited the gym, found an adult ballet class, tried tai chi, and continues to join [parkruns](#) near her home in north London. “I really feel that my body needs movement,” she says. Helping to look after her granddaughter has kept her on her feet, and she has made friends through Parkrun. “It’s changed my social life.”

Most of all, she says, she has “a growing admiration and respect for my amazing body”. She uses the cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) that she practised when working with people with addictions to help herself. “Instead of feeling vulnerable, I now feel my body is strong and resilient – and something to be admired,” she says. “My body is doing a grand job.”

In her addiction work, Boulay had been fascinated by “the principle of natural recovery”, when people get better by themselves. Sometimes, she says, a life event can “tip the balance”. Is that how her relationship with her body changed too?

“Absolutely,” she says. “Because it wasn’t a diet or anything. It was just the importance of keeping fit so I could ... saying ‘keep alive’ is really dramatic. But I guess I had a special reason to stay alive, because of my family, and I knew that not being fat, and moving, was going to help me.”

She wrote a CBT manual for people who struggle to stick to diets, and now she is working on a graphic novel to “tell what it is really like to be an old woman – the joys and the horrors”.

These days, her weight fluctuates on a much smaller scale. Besides, she says. “I’m much less focused on how I look. I am more interested in my voice and having something to say. The limits aren’t there in the same way.”

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## **Ashley Judd on her fight to keep images of suicide private: ‘We can avert misery and death for others’**

[Ramon Antonio Vargas](#)



Ashley Judd with her mother Naomi Judd at the premiere of the movie Olympus Has Fallen in Hollywood in 2013. Photograph: Patrick Fallon/Reuters

Actor speaks of the retraumatization she endured after some news outlets published images of the scene of mother's death and her push to reform the state law that gave media outlets access

Mon 30 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Mon 30 Jan 2023 14.46 EST

Even if she could do it in anonymity and privacy, the actor [Ashley Judd](#) would be struggling to recover from the suicide of her mother last year.

But a couple of sensational, insensitive and – experts say – dangerous tabloid media reports containing graphic details about Naomi Judd's death forced the Grammy-winning country musician's daughter to "double down" on the trauma counseling work that she's done as she has grieved, she told the Guardian in an interview on Friday.

Ashley Judd explained how she had spent three months during last fall in outpatient sessions of eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, a physically and mentally taxing type of psychotherapy known as EMDR

which involves patients moving their eyes in a specific way while they process traumatic memories.

It can take weeks, if not longer, for the therapy to relieve the mental distress associated with just a single such memory. And the actor known for her roles in Double Jeopardy and Kiss the Girls was done with that series of sessions when media outlets earlier in January published pictures of the scene of her mother's death and the content of a brief Post-It note her mother had written.

Judd, who had unsuccessfully fought [in court](#) in her mother's home state of Tennessee to keep those salacious details out of the public eye, has since said she needed to go back to EMDR.

"I re-enrolled myself ... just to make sure that my healing was concretized and stout and was going to hold," Judd said.

Judd's revelation about her need to resume EMDR not only illustrates the re-traumatizing effect that an editorial decision like the one made by the outlets which chose to publicize the note and death scene pictures can have.

It also gives the public insight into what Judd is grappling with as she and her family push to reform the state law that gave the media outlets access to the information, which they hope protects others from having to endure something similar.

"The dark past, in God's hands, becomes our greatest asset," Judd said of the legislative effort she's helped mount. "With it, we can avert misery and death for others."

With [a lengthy history](#) of anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder, Naomi Judd died by suicide at her home during the morning of 30 April. It was a day before she and her daughter Wynonna were to be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville after a run that saw their duo – the Judds – rack up 14 No 1 hits, five Grammy wins and more than 11m album sales.

Ashley Judd found her mother on the day she died and called first responders for help without realizing that photographs, officers' body-worn

camera video and other evidence taken by police could be obtained through public records requests. Media outlets filed requests for that material, citing a Tennessee state law which they argued considered it a matter of public record.

Each workplace should be held to the highest standards of decency, professionalism, respect and humanity

*Ashley Judd*

Naomi Judd's survivors, citing their rights to privacy, filed a lawsuit arguing that there was a provision in the statute which should have blocked the materials' release. A local judge had ruled against the Judds after preliminary proceedings before the state supreme court sent the case back for a full hearing, but the family ultimately dropped the lawsuit in part because media outlets walked away from their requests for images of Naomi Judd's body.

Nonetheless, other materials remained legally obtainable. And the outlet Radar Online published photographs of a large bloodstain at the scene as well as a Post-it note suggesting that Wynonna not be allowed at the funeral. Other outlets, including the Rupert Murdoch-owned New York Post and Sun newspapers, reported on one or both images.

Those pieces blatantly violated standards on how to safely and responsibly report on such a death, said Dr Christine Moutier, who is the chief medical officer of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

In its [guidelines](#) on how the media should report on suicides, the foundation says outlets should exclude graphic depictions of such deaths while avoiding details about their location or publicizing any notes left behind.

For one, suicide notes do not reflect what the people who write them "would be thinking or saying when they are in their baseline or more well state of physiological, cognitive health," Moutier said.

Moutier added that the recommendations against publicizing the contents of such notes, along with graphic depictions of scenes where suicides

happened, are rooted in research which shows that it can actually bring people who are at risk of dying like that closer to doing so.

Furthermore, an expert in psychological trauma who has worked with Ashley Judd since her mother's death said it was "profoundly disempowering and retraumatizing" for those grieving a loved one who died by suicide to be reminded of that loss so callously and publicly.

"For these sensationalistic media outlets to just profit – you know, just draw clicks and sell ads based on [this] family's suffering, and the images and the note and things like that – is ... horrific journalism," said Harvard medical school psychologist Jim Hopper.

But as she both works to overcome the trauma associated with her mother's death and some of the objectionable media coverage surrounding it, Ashley Judd and her family have chosen to be what the world of psychology refers to as "wounded healers", Hopper said.

Ashley Judd, for one, has called on all media outlets to familiarize themselves with and adopt the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's guidelines on responsibly covering newsworthy suicides to spare others from being treated how her family has.

I have some precedent in my life from taking sharp pain – devastating calamity, really – and directing it toward purpose

*Ashley Judd*

"Each workplace should be held to the highest standards of decency, professionalism, respect and humanity," Judd said. "When we know better, we do better, and the outlets that chose to publish in such a flagrantly depraved way were obviously ... pandering to the crudest monetization of salaciousness."

She declined an opportunity to directly comment on the editors who made the final call to publish the pictures of the note and the bloodstain. But she did say: "I do believe that I can't hurt another person without hurting myself.

And so if that is true, then on a spiritual plane, I believe that they're hurting themselves, too, in some way.”

Meanwhile, Naomi Judd's daughters and widower, the former Elvis Presley-backing vocalist Larry Strickland, have been advocating for a change in Tennessee law that would keep confidential many records pertaining to deaths under non-criminal circumstances.

The family's attorney, Michael Shipman, said he was drawn to the case in part because his father died by suicide, and many who have gone through losing a loved one like that in Tennessee don't even realize how much can become public and how difficult it could be for them if that happens.

Shipman said the Tennessee state senate's Republican majority leader, Jack Johnson, filed a bill for the 2023 legislative session that would introduce limits on what is releasable in non-criminal deaths, protections that are somewhat similar to ones in place in California and Florida, which have relatively public records-friendly reputations.

It had not been brought before the legislature for consideration. But, Shipman and Ashley Judd said, they are hopeful it will pass because there has been bipartisan support for it, especially after some negative reader reactions to the tabloid reporting on the scene of Naomi Judd's death.

Shipman, Hopper and Moutier lauded Ashley Judd for carving out the time and energy to lobby for the legislation as she manages her trauma therapy, professional career and responsibilities to her family.

But on Friday she downplayed her involvement. She suggested she was simply following an instinct that she knew she had when she was the lone named interviewee in the original October 2017 New York Times investigation that documented sexually predatory acts by movie producer [Harvey Weinstein](#) against women in the film industry.

The article that quoted Judd – who won a sexual harassment lawsuit against the since-convicted rapist Weinstein – helped kick off the #MeToo social justice movement.

“I have some precedent in my life from taking sharp pain – devastating calamity, really – and directing it toward purpose,” said Judd, who has described herself as a “[three-time rape survivor](#)” in public before. “It’s a decision that doesn’t require much decision from me.”

Ashley Judd also said that she hopes memories of how her mother died eventually give way to a renewed focus on how she lived. The actor said she got a reminder of that when she hosted a party for what would have been her mother’s 77th birthday on 11 January.

One of the guests was a woman who spent three weeks as a teen at a hospital where Naomi Judd worked as a nurse before her famous music career.

As attendees dined on cake, fried chicken and biscuits, that guest regaled Ashley Judd with stories of her mother’s “compassion, empathy and her sense of humor”, and how a man who was at the hospital for an extended stay fell in love with the nurse and woman who was born Diana Ellen Judd.

“I had never heard stories from the perspective of a patient of mom’s,” Ashley Judd said. “And it was just beautiful.”

This article was amended on 30 January 2023 to remove some incorrect personal details.

- In the US, the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) is at 988 and [online chat is also available](#). You can also text HOME to 741741 to connect with a crisis text line counselor. 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 Australia, the crisis support service [Lifeline](#) is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at [www.befrienders.org](http://www.befrienders.org)

## 2023.01.30 - Opinion

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## OpinionConservatives

# **England's old boys' club has evolved into 'the network', made up of high rollers and City slickers**

[Nesrine Malik](#)



Scandals involving such senior MPs as Zahawi highlight the shift in powerbrokering from landed gentry to financiers and businessmen



‘Nadhim Zahawi’s ascent is more to do with what the Tory party rates and indulges than his contribution as a politician.’ Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/REX/Shutterstock

Mon 30 Jan 2023 00.46 ESTLast modified on Mon 30 Jan 2023 06.10 EST

The old boys’ club. We don’t hear about it as much as we used to, do we? The phrase seems a little dusty, a bit of a throwback. Harrovians, Etonians, Wykehamists and other privately educated politicians may constitute 80% of [Britain’s prime ministers so far](#); but they increasingly sit cheek by jowl in parliament with others who did not go to fee-paying schools, are not male, not white – and not only did not go to Oxbridge, but are not university educated at all.

And yet here we are, riffling through the seedy dealings of a small connected group of people at the top. The past few weeks of [Conservative scandals](#) are proof that this network is still alive and well. What these scandals also reveal is an evolution in the network’s character – high finance and mercantilism are becoming a fast track for new members into this particular political elite’s ranks.

Let us untangle the web of connections between the City, the government and its friends. The BBC chair, Richard Sharp, [faces two separate](#)

[investigations](#) amid allegations he helped the former prime minister Boris Johnson secure a loan of up to £800,000, weeks before Johnson recommended him for the BBC job. Our current prime minister, Rishi Sunak, worked in hedge funds and is a Goldman Sachs alumnus. Sharp, many years ago, was [Sunak's boss at Goldman Sachs](#), and then years after, an economic adviser to Sunak during the pandemic. Sunak, as chancellor, was building on a long tradition of moving between the two worlds of politics and finance. Sajid Javid made his fortune at Deutsche Bank and had a [second job at JP Morgan](#) while a sitting MP. George Osborne took a job [with BlackRock](#), and lately the investment bank Robey Warshaw.

There are other paths to and from the centre that involve making so many millions that you [can claim to be “careless”](#) about figuring out how many of them you owe in tax. Take Nadhim Zahawi, who was sacked as chair of the Conservative party for breaking the ministerial code by failing to declare the HMRC investigation into his tax affairs. Zahawi makes much of his unorthodox profile and journey into elite British politics as an immigrant who couldn't speak English [until he was 11](#). He even valorised himself in his own letter [responding to his sacking](#). His forthcoming memoir (if it ever now sees the light of day) is titled A Boy from Baghdad: My Journey from Waziriyah to Westminster. But his ascent is more to do with what the Tory party rates and indulges than his contribution as a politician. His wealth and dynamic fixing for oil companies, and finance companies such as David Cameron's Greensill, gained him status as a well-connected deal-cutter and risk-taker in a party that rates high-wire entrepreneurship, rather than raising worries about the blurring of lines between his political duties and large business empire.

The capital from trading and banking is also protected by those with cultural capital in parts of a billionaire-owned press. Sunak's support team on the way to No 10 has been a small group of privately and Oxbridge-educated media and comms specialists; a second generation that is walking the highly rewarding, profile-boosting path from media to politics that Boris Johnson and Michael Gove ploughed. James Forsyth (Sunak was reportedly best man at his wedding) went from lavishing praise on Sunak in his Spectator column to becoming [Sunak's political secretary](#). Forsyth's wife, Allegra Stratton, became director of strategic communications for Sunak at the Treasury, then No 10 press secretary. Following a brief hiatus after falling on her sword for

mocking [breaking social distancing laws](#), she is now back in the fold at Bloomberg.

The shared political, personal and financial interests of this network are the glue that binds them, turning them into a sort of family, one whose members are forgiving of each other. The outside world recedes into a distant hostile plane, where the rules apply differently. The faces of the public that the politicians are meant to serve blur into irrelevance, whereas those of their friends and peers are clear, sharpened by common experiences, memories and social interactions. Democracy doesn't "die in darkness", it dies at dinner.

The values these intimacies create – rather than money – inevitably trickle down into policy. As prime minister, to take one recent example, Sunak is rolling back post-financial crisis regulations to create space for more City activity after Brexit, a potentially destabilising move that the Bank of England governor has [warned against](#). Sunak will risk dismantling crucial industry safeguards to figure out ways for financiers to make more money, but he will not look into how that money could be more usefully taxed, through a range of wealth taxes that could raise [almost £40bn](#) for public services. So when nurses and other essential workers are reduced to striking for a tiny increase in salaries, they are told the money simply does not exist. It does, but it is out of bounds. Britain, the Financial Times [chillingly summarises](#), is a poor society with some very rich people. I would argue that Britain is a poor society *because* it is run in the interests of very rich people.

What is to distinguish this from oligarchy? About 200 years ago, in The Black Book: An Exposition of Abuses in Church and State, [John Wade wrote](#) that "Government has been a corporation, and had the same interests and the same principles of action as monopolists." This summary would not be an entirely inaccurate description of modern Tory government. It has become a corporation at the heart of a large lattice of interests. It may not look exactly like that referred to by Wade, composed of the high-paid sinecures of the aristocracy of the 1800s; but it is finding new, even more slippery ways of handing out favours and jobs.

"It has been supported by other corporations," wrote Wade, "the church has been one, the agriculturists another; the boroughs a third, the East India

Company a fourth, and the Bank of England a fifth: all these, and interests like these, constituted the citadel and out-works of its strength, and the first object of each has been to shun investigation.”

Powerbroking in Britain has passed from the hands of this old landed gentry and colonial trading class to the players of international finance. This is the network, not the old boys’ club: more accessible, less toffy, more colourful, with women in the fold, but just as steely and determined in its purpose to maintain its power, look after its own and shun investigation.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist
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**OpinionBereavement**

# I'm turning into my mother – and it makes me so happy

[Emma Beddington](#)



Almost 20 years after Mum died, I find myself spoiling my son just like she spoiled me. Suddenly she feels very close



'I remember that small woman meeting up with her daughter and infant grandson.'

- Photograph: Oliver Rossi/Getty Images

Mon 30 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Mon 30 Jan 2023 02.35 EST

Turning into your parents is a loaded notion. A gesture, a jawline, a phrase that emerges from your mouth without conscious thought, maybe something about carnations, or soup, or men in shiny shoes. "I'm turning into my mother" (or father) is rarely said with simple joy. But when they are no longer around, it can be obscurely comforting. It's a reflection the literary critic Johanna Thomas-Corr made in [a lovely piece of writing](#) about her mother's recent death. "I have come to like images of myself, simply because they remind me of her," she wrote. "I rather like the fact I now look a bit like my mother did. I find I am not fighting it."

I don't see much of my own mum in myself; I wish there was more. We weren't physically very similar and she died nearly 20 years ago, so inevitably I've lost that sense of her as a flesh and blood person. It would be nice to conjure her up with a too-swift glance at my reflection in a shop window or have silk-soft skin like hers.

But I've found something else recently that makes me feel a bit like her: using my semi-regular trips to London to see my son for a quick hug and chat, exacted in return for a bag of groceries or some quickly shovelled-in food. She did that all the time when I lived in London: agreeing to meetings that could probably have been a phone call, then suggesting lunch or coffee as a way to see me, to spoil me.

Walking through Russell Square on this most recent trip, I remembered it was one of the last places we met before she died, remembered her purposefully coming towards me across the square, a small woman in her good coat, on a perhaps not wholly necessary work trip, meeting up with her daughter and infant grandson. As a small woman in her good coat on a possibly non-essential work trip, returning from filling that grandson (now 20) with food, I felt her with me for a moment.

Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

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# I tell my children real stories, not fairytales. Should I worry about their love of true crime?

[\*\*Emma Brockes\*\*](#)



They listen to adult stories and ask mature questions. I just hope it doesn't rob them of a playful aspect of childhood



Lynette Dawson was murdered in 1982 by her husband Chris. He was not convicted until 2022. Photograph: Supplied

Mon 30 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Mon 30 Jan 2023 09.46 EST

On the walk to school every morning my children ask for a story, and their tastes – formed by my own – skew towards real-life drama. They like natural disasters; shark attacks; plane and shipwrecks; cases of mistaken identity; gruesome accidents; the paranormal; and stories with an element of revenge, enabling their favourite catchphrase: “That’s what you get.” This week, owing to a dearth of suitable material on my end and an appetite for injustice on theirs, I shared with them, hesitantly, the cold case of a woman [murdered by her husband](#) in 1982.

The disappearance of Lynette Dawson is the subject of [The Teacher’s Pet](#), a podcast by the Australian journalist Hedley Thomas that has, to date, been downloaded more than 60m times. It is as brilliant and addictive as any TV show, with a list of witnesses – many of whom were never contacted by the police – so willing to share their memories of Lynette’s husband’s wrongdoing that it can make it hard to believe what you’re hearing. It is also infuriating, revisiting as it does the case of a woman who disappeared from her home in Sydney in January 1982, leaving behind two children under the age of five and a husband who, two days after her disappearance, moved his

16-year-old lover into the house. Despite all the evidence of foul play, Chris Dawson, a former rugby league star and golden boy of the couple's upscale suburb, lived undisturbed for more than 30 years, while police accepted his story that his wife had run off. It strikes one with the dull familiarity of so many stories – the Yorkshire Ripper, most forcefully – of police failures around the murder of women.

My eight-year-olds were fascinated. “Why didn’t he just divorce her?” asked one.

“He’d have had to sell the house and split the assets, plus she’d have taken the children.”

“How do they know she’s dead if there isn’t a body?”

“She left without taking her clothes, or her jewellery.”

“Or her phone?”

“There weren’t phones, but if there had been, her phone.”

“Oh, there’s no way she’s coming back.”

This was a cheerful conversation, as these conversations tend to be. To my children, “1982” is as mythical a place as medieval times and their main takeaway from the story had, seemingly, nothing to do with police failures, or violence against women, or the world being a frightening place, but rather how mad things were in the olden days. (Primarily, obviously, the fact that no one had phones. But also the absolute conviction that “If that happened today, they’d do an investigation straight away!”) I redacted the domestic violence stuff, and the fact that the 16-year-old was still at school when she started seeing Chris Dawson, who was her teacher. But the rest of the story – right up to Dawson’s arrest and conviction last year – I let stand.



Chris Dawson (left) outside court in Sydney in May 2022, ahead of his trial for the murder of his wife. Photograph: Dean Lewins/AAP

Kids, of course, are interested in cruelty; they experience it the minute they set foot in a classroom. They have a keener, more ferociously patrolled sense of fairness than we do. They're also capable of moral seriousness that is often missing from modern children's books. I sometimes think I would love to be the type of parent who, asked by her child to tell a story, whistled up something whimsical and full of delight – magic, and fairies, and things going up into the sky – as I have seen friends do with their kids. It bores me, so I don't do it, while wondering how deeply these early choices can affect the development of a child's sensibility. The last book we read together was *The Diddakoi*, by Rumer Godden, in which seven-year-old Kizzy is picked up by bullies and rammed headfirst into a tree, almost killing her. Unlike the flippant cruelties in Roald Dahl, this is, essentially, an adult novel with child protagonists, the lesson of which, is – some of the bullies come right in the end – that people can be more than one thing. We talked about it for a long time afterwards. It was more gratifying than a slog through the anodyne whimsy of the *Magic Tree House*.

Still, an anxiety remains that I am bypassing some playful aspect of childhood in which podcasts about men murdering their wives don't intrude. Chernobyl and the Titanic are one thing, but we've done so many plane

crashes, plus the Bermuda Triangle, plus when-rollercoasters-go-wrong that I half expect to have ruined air travel and theme parks for them. I can only hope that, while these stories are told purely to interest and entertain, it teaches them the value of reaching outwards to understand the world.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist
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## Sleep

# Sleeping late isn't a sign of laziness. Stop the circadian-rhythm shaming

[Matthew Cantor](#)

Fellow night owls, take comfort: our sleep-wake schedule is part of our genetic makeup, not a moral failing



A person's daily sleep-wake schedule, called a chronotype, is genetic. And bias against night owls is 'purely cultural'. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

Mon 30 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Mon 30 Jan 2023 10.42 EST

It's January, the month of new year's resolutions and other doomed efforts at self-improvement. And what better way to make more of one's life than rising earlier to seize the day?

At least that's what the voice in my head says as I hit the snooze alarm for the 10th time at 9.30am. Then it's time to get up, racked with guilt at my laziness, as if sleeping in were some kind of ethical lapse.

It's not, of course. People's sleep/wake cycles are inherently varied, and if you, too, are a late to bed, late to rise person, you're simply a night owl – or, in clinical terms, you have a delayed sleep phase.

It's time for this circadian-rhythm-shaming to end. It's nothing new – centuries ago, Benjamin Franklin [made the shockingly biased claim](#) that “early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise”. In a 2018 essay in [the Cut](#), Edith Zimmerman wrote that “waking up early gives you a surge of power; you feel superior, smug”. More recently, a [Reddit user](#) put it simply: “Night owls suck,” the person wrote. “Your sleep habits are an [obstacle] in the path of every plan that constantly needs to be worked around.”

But night owls, take comfort: as Robin Williams once said to Matt Damon, it's not your fault. Your daily sleep-wake schedule, called your chronotype, appears [to be mostly genetic](#). Assessments of how common it is to be a night owl vary: experts who spoke to the Guardian had heard estimates around 15%, while a recent study in Finland found 10% of men and 12% of women to be “evening types”. A [2007 study](#) found that the most common chronotype, accounting for 14.6% of people, slept from 12.09am to 8.18am in the absence of “social obligations” – but half the population slept later. In any case, night owls: you are not alone.

Our chronotype is “part and parcel of who we are”, says Dr Beth Ann Malow, a neurologist and sleep expert at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. “It's not something like: ‘I'm gonna choose to be a night owl, and I'm lazy.’ It's a biological preference.”

Dr Phil Gehrman, a clinical psychologist who specializes in behavioral sleep medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, agrees. Bias against night owls is “purely cultural”, he says, citing Franklin, who helped found his university. (Ben Franklin was also a proponent of [something akin to daylight savings time](#), which is [a whole other circadian mess](#).)

The 9-5 schedule might be good for earlier risers, but it works against those who need to sleep later. And that might not just be the owls: a [2014 study](#) found that, in general, the later work and class started, the more sleep

participants (who were not all owls) got. “It’s the combination of early work start and long commute that is driving short sleep,” the study’s lead author, Dr Mathias Basner, director of Penn’s unit for experimental psychiatry, division of sleep and chronobiology, wrote in an email to the Guardian.

The problem comes when we have jobs or classes that don’t align with our circadian rhythms. When the obligations of waking life clash with one’s sleep schedule so badly that it’s difficult to function, night owlism shifts from a tendency to a condition known as delayed sleep-wake phase disorder, in which one’s circadian rhythms make daily functioning difficult. About [0.2% to 1.7% of adults](#) have this condition.

“What’s crazy,” Malow says, is that whether a person’s sleep habits are viewed as a disorder or simply a tendency “is going to depend more on their lifestyle and their employment than it is anything else.”

Malow says treatment often starts with seeing if people can adjust their work schedules to suit their biological rhythms. She describes a patient who struggled in high school but blossomed when he began working as a chef; or students who are able to sign up for late classes.

In an ideal world, she says, we’d be less rigid about work start times – in health terms, the best-case scenario would be finding ways to adhere to our own body clocks. Instead of trying to match social demands, “I would much rather [patients] stay on a consistent schedule where they’re going to bed at two and waking up at 10 or 11.” Of course, many people aren’t lucky enough to have such shifts as an option – in which case the disorder can be treated with light exposure, melatonin and exercise. Such techniques make it possible to change circadian rhythms, Gehrman says, but people have varying success rates (he has coined a term for this: circadian flexibility).

But outside of concerns over work schedules, are there fundamental health benefits to waking up early? Research has, for instance, [suggested a link](#) between late rising and poor mental health or [unhappiness](#). But according to Gehrman, the jury is very much still out on this.

“There are a lot of epidemiologic studies showing that being a night owl is associated with higher rates of depression and anxiety and all these things.

But the open question is: is it the fact that you're a night owl? Or is it the fact that most night owls are forced to follow a schedule that's earlier than their circadian rhythm – what we often refer to as a mismatch,” he says. Recent studies have pointed to the latter, he says: “It’s certainly not conclusive, but that’s what we think is going on.”

The upshot is: if you’re a night owl, don’t feel bad about it, and if you’re an early bird, go easy on your night-owl friends. In fact, by painting late sleepers as lazy, you might just be supporting The Man: the British researcher [Dr Paul Kelley has speculated](#) that we stick to a 9-5 schedule because it suits fiftysomething bosses, whose age means it’s easier to get up earlier.

“People shouldn’t change their schedule because of the belief that following their schedule is bad for them,” Gehrman says. “As humans, we always seem to say if someone’s different from us, they’re therefore wrong.

“I think people should look at circadian rhythm differences the same way they look at any other differences between people.” So don’t come at us with your judgments – especially not before noon.

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## 2023.01.30 - Around the world

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## [Tunisia](#)

# Tunisian election records 11% turnout in rejection of president's reforms

Tunisians expressed their dismay at president Kais Saied's seizure of powers by failing to turn up to vote



Many polling places were almost empty on Sunday as Tunisia voted in parliamentary runoff elections which had a participation rate of just 11%.  
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

*Guardian staff and agencies*

Sun 29 Jan 2023 21.43 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 07.14 EST

A mere 11% of the electorate voted in Tunisia's parliamentary runoffs, with critics of president Kais Saied saying the empty polling stations were evidence of public disdain for his agenda and seizure of powers.

Sunday's runoff vote was however higher than December's first round, which had [a participation rate of 8.8%](#).

“Almost 90% of Tunisian voters ignored this piece of theatre and refused to be involved in the process,” Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, head of the country’s main opposition the National Salvation Front, told journalists.

“I call on political groups and civil society to join hands to work for change, in the form of Kais Saied’s departure and early presidential elections.”

About 887,000 voters cast ballots from a total electorate of 7.8 million, the electoral commission said. Final results were not expected on Sunday. The main parties boycotted the vote and most seats are expected to go to independents.

Sunday’s poor participation was another blow to Saied, who has stripped the legislature of its powers and granted himself far-reaching authority since his dramatic 2021 power grab.

On 25 July 2021, Saied sacked the government and froze parliament before dissolving it and pushing through a new constitution, granting him almost unlimited powers.

The latest poll was seen as the final pillar of Saied’s transformation of politics, ushering in a new legislature that will have almost no authority to hold the president or government to account.

Opposition groups have accused Saied of a coup for shutting down the previous parliament in 2021, and say he has trashed the democracy built after Tunisia’s 2011 revolution – which triggered the Arab spring.

Saied has said his actions were both legal and necessary to save Tunisia from years of corruption and economic decline at the hands of a self-interested political elite.

Though his new constitution passed in a referendum last year, only 30% of voters took part.

Economic decline in Tunisia, where some basic goods have disappeared from shelves and the government has cut subsidies as it seeks a foreign

bailout to avert bankruptcy, has left many disillusioned with politics and angry with their leaders.

“We don’t want elections. We want milk and sugar and cooking oil,” said Hasna, a woman shopping in the Ettadamon district of Tunis on Sunday.

Many Tunisians appeared initially to welcome Saied’s seizure of powers in 2021 after years of weak governing coalitions that seemed unable to revive a moribund economy, improve public services or reduce stark inequalities.

But Saied has voiced no clear economic agenda except to rail against corruption and unnamed speculators, whom he has blamed for rising prices.

On Friday, Moody’s credit rating agency downgraded Tunisia’s debt, saying it would probably default on sovereign loans.

*Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report*

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## Peru

# Peru's president renews call for elections this year to bring end to protests

Dina Boluarte threatens constitutional reform if lawmakers fail to bring forward national vote



Anti-government protesters in Peru's capital on Saturday demanded the resignation of president Dina Boluarte  
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

*Agence France-Presse*  
Mon 30 Jan 2023 00.00 EST

Peru's president, Dina Boluarte, has made a renewed appeal for congress to hold early elections as a way to end weeks of deadly protests, warning that otherwise she would seek constitutional reform to make a vote happen.

The South American country has been embroiled in a political crisis with near-daily protests since 7 December, when then-president Pedro Castillo was arrested after attempting to dissolve congress and rule by decree.

Over seven weeks of demonstrations, 48 people have been killed in clashes between security forces and protesters, according to the Peru ombudsman's office.

Last month lawmakers moved elections due in 2026 to April 2024, but as protests show no sign of abating, Boluarte has asked they be held this year. [On Friday she urged congress to move the vote up further.](#)

However, at a plenary session that ended early Saturday, congress rejected the proposal, with 45 votes in favor, 65 against and two abstentions.

The legislature is scheduled to convene Monday to discuss the election timetable.

Boluarte said that if lawmakers refused to bring forward the vote, she would propose a constitutional reform so that a first round of elections would be held in October and a runoff in December.

Demonstrators are calling for immediate elections, as well as Boluarte's removal, the dissolution of Congress and a new constitution.

"Nobody has any interest in clinging to power," Boluarte said on Friday. "If I am here it is because I fulfilled my constitutional responsibility."

On Saturday, hooded protesters wielding shields, stones and pieces of cement fought with police in a fog of teargas as Lima became the scene of scuffles and the city's first death from the protests was recorded.

Over recent weeks, Castillo supporters have blocked highways, causing shortages of food, fuel and other basic supplies.

The unrest is coming mainly from poor, rural Indigenous people from southern Peru who had identified Castillo – who is Indigenous and from that

same region – as one of their own who would fight to end poverty, racism and inequality from which they suffer.

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## South Africa

# Eight people shot dead at birthday party in South Africa

Sunday's attack in Eastern Cape province highlights country's problems with violent crime



Members of a forensic team at the scene of a mass shooting in Gqeberha on Sunday. Photograph: Luvuyo Mehlwana/AFP/Getty Images

*[Jason Burke](#) in Johannesburg*

Mon 30 Jan 2023 04.54 EST Last modified on Mon 30 Jan 2023 05.13 EST

Eight people were killed and three others wounded when gunmen opened fire at a birthday party in South Africa's Eastern Cape province, local officials said.

Sunday's attack is the latest in a series of shootings that has highlighted the country's problems dealing with violent crime and the increasingly widespread use of deadly weapons.

The attack was carried out at a private home by two men late on Sunday afternoon in Kwazakele, Gqeberha, a spokesperson for the South African police service said in a statement.

Local media [reported that seven people – three women and four men – were killed](#) almost immediately. Four others were taken with gunshot wounds to hospital, where one died from their injuries.

The gunmen fled after the attack and no arrests have been made, police said. They are investigating the circumstances and possible motives for the attack. Police have not named the victims but confirmed the owner of the house was among them.

"These victims were killed by criminals, and we will not rest until we find out what happened and who was responsible for [this] callous and cold-blooded attack on these unsuspecting victims," said the Eastern Cape SAPS commissioner, Nomthetheli Lillian Mene.

South Africa has long been blighted by high levels of violent crime, one of many legacies of decades of rule by the [repressive, racist apartheid regime](#) but killings with guns have been rising year on year for a decade.

Four attacks within days in July focused attention on the problem. In the most serious incident, gunmen used automatic rifles and handguns to kill 15 people and injure a further eight in a mass shooting at a tavern in Johannesburg's Soweto township on 10 July.

A key witness to the attack, in the Nomzamo informal settlement in the Orlando East neighbourhood, [disappeared last week and is feared dead](#).

Most deaths in these incidents were the result of personal quarrels between individuals, experts say, but an increasing proportion of killings are the work of groups including vigilantes, politically motivated criminal networks and organised gangs. Between April and the end of June 2021, 5,760 homicides

were committed in South Africa, one of the highest per capita rates in the world. About a third of violent crimes recorded each month involve firearms.

The continued inability of the country's police forces to enforce the rule of law in parts of the country has led to fierce criticism from opponents and some allies of the ruling African National Congress, which has been in power since the end of apartheid in 1994.

Many say gun crime is part of much wider problems of governance and the rule of law in South Africa, which suffered during the nine-year rule of Cyril Ramaphosa's predecessor as president, Jacob Zuma.

The shootings have revived a fierce debate over the reform of gun laws in South Africa. An attempt to end the right to own a gun for self-defence ran into stiff opposition when mooted last year.

Opponents argued the high level of violent crime meant that "denying people the right to defend themselves amounts to a denial of the right to life, security, and psychological and bodily integrity", and called instead for better policing.

Campaigners said there was no evidence to back such claims and that the new laws would help reduce the number of weapons available to criminals, making everyone safer.

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[Ryanair](#)

## Ryanair reports bumper profits amid pent-up demand

Airline says customers are keen to book Easter and summer flights as people want to escape ‘bad news’



Ryanair said it was able to maintain its low prices thanks to the fact it had hedged the cost of fuel. Photograph: Artur Widak/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

[Kalyeena Makortoff](#)

[@kalyeena](#)

Mon 30 Jan 2023 04.18 EST Last modified on Mon 30 Jan 2023 10.01 EST

Ryanair made record third-quarter profits as the budget airline benefited from pent-up travel demand from cost-conscious customers.

The budget airline increased its full-year profit guidance after the strong performance, as profit after tax surged to €211m (£185m) between October

and December. That is compared with a loss of €96m during the same period in 2021 and more than double its €88m profit in the same three months in 2019, before the pandemic.

Ryanair said there was “strong pent-up travel demand” during the October half-term break and the Christmas and new year period.

There was “robust demand” for Easter and summer flights driven by the return of Asian and American tourists being encouraged to visit Europe because of the strength of the US dollar, the chief executive, Michael O’Leary, said.

The carrier cheered the performance, which was the first in recent years not to be affected by Covid restrictions or geopolitical events, including Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

That is despite the cost of living crisis, which has put a strain on household finances and forced many consumers to pull back on non-essential spending. But Ryanair’s chief financial officer, Neil Sorahan, said customers were turning to low-cost airlines like Ryanair for an escape.

“I think people want to get away from all this bad news,” he told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme. “They’re keen to get some sun on their back and they’re booking in their numbers. And in fairness, we’ve got the lowest cost of any airline in Europe.”

Sorahan said the airline was able to maintain its low prices thanks to the fact it had hedged the cost of fuel. About 80% of its expected fuel use for 2023 has been hedged to date, Ryanair said.

However, the airline is preparing for a loss in the fourth quarter, covering the three months from January to March, partly due to the timing of Easter holidays, which again will fall in April this year. That is despite strong bookings in recent weeks, as customers keen to get away are locking in current prices for the summer holidays.

Ryanair reiterated its full-year profit guidance of between €1.3bn and €1.4bn. Over the weekend, Ryanair started capitalising on [the collapse of the regional UK airline Flybe](#), which left passengers stranded and hundreds of crew without jobs. Ryanair has set up fast-track hiring and planned a recruitment drive for former Flybe staff at Birmingham airport for 2 February.

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Sorahan said he expected further consolidation across European airlines over the coming years, as rival carriers come under strain. “If you don’t have a strong balance sheet and you don’t have a low cost base, such as we have, it’s very difficult in this post-Covid environment to be a strong survivor,” he said.

“I mean, we’re almost unique in reporting profitability at this point in time. We’re unique in the balance sheet that we have and I think you’re going to see more consolidation across Europe, and possibly in the UK, over the next number of years.”

The airline said it was hiring Ukrainian pilots and cabin crew so that it would be ready to return to the country when the war ends.

“We are very committed to returning to Ukraine as soon as it is safe to do so,” O’Leary said.

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## Belgium

# **Belgium: family say death of Belgian-Tunisian woman in custody not suicide**

Death of Sourour Abouda casts spotlight on treatment of minority ethnic citizens by Belgium's police



A picture of Sourour Abouda at her vigil in Brussels. Photograph: Présence et Action Culturelles

*[Jennifer Rankin](#) in Brussels*

Mon 30 Jan 2023 00.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 30 Jan 2023 00.01 EST

The death of a Belgian-Tunisian woman in police custody earlier this month has been rejected by her family as a case of suicide, while casting a spotlight on the treatment of minority ethnic citizens by Belgium's police.

Sourour Abouda, a 46-year-old NGO worker, was found dead in a police cell early in the morning of 12 January, after being arrested several hours before. She had been found drunk in the fashionable district of Place Châtelain in

Brussels and taken to a police station in the city centre, according to local media reports that have not been officially confirmed.

Her family were told she had killed herself by strangling herself with her jumper, a hypothesis close relatives have robustly rejected. “My sister was not someone suicidal,” an unnamed relative told Belgian’s francophone public broadcaster RTBF. “She had a son of 19 years old who she lived with and who meant everything to her. She would never have abandoned him.”

A lawyer acting in the case, Selma Benkhelifa, said the family “did not believe at all” the suicide hypothesis, adding that it seemed impossible Abouda had strangled herself with her own jumper.

Writing on Instagram, Sourour Abouda’s son, Allan, described his mother as an “extraordinary person who loved life” and “exemplary mother” to him and other children who crossed her path.

“Whatever happened, procedural mistakes were made,” he wrote. “I think it is clear to all of us that a death in a police station is abnormal, impossible and unforgivable. The police are only there to protect us. Something like this should never happen.”

The case has now been referred to “Committee P”, the Belgian police watchdog, which is analysing CCTV footage from the cells.



People attend a vigil for Sourour Abouda outside the Rue Royale police station. Photograph: Présence et Action Culturelles

In a preliminary finding, the Brussels prosecutor's office has ruled out foul play by the police, or anyone else in Abouda's death. "Based on initial findings and an interim report from the autopsy, it would seem there was no intervention by a third party," the Brussels prosecutor said on 16 January, adding that the results of a toxicological analysis would be available in the coming weeks. Contacted on Friday, the Brussels prosecutor said there was nothing to add to this previous statement and the investigation remained ongoing.

A spokesperson for the local police station declined to comment, citing the ongoing investigation.

Sourour Abouda is the third person of north African origin to die at the same police station on Brussels' Rue Royale in controversial circumstances in two years. In January 2021, a 29-year-old Algerian national, Ilyes Abbedou, was found dead in a cell, after being arrested for not having the right to stay in Belgium. In December 2021 a second Algerian man, Mohamed Amine Berkane, born in 1995, died in a cell in the same station, despite efforts by an ambulance crew called to save him. In both cases, following autopsies, the authorities ruled out any intervention by a third party in their deaths.

Both official investigations remain open and the Brussels prosecutor declined to comment on the cases.

In the days after Sourour Abouda's death, about 100 people held a vigil on a rainy night outside the Rue Royale police station, an event organised by Sarah de Liamchine, co-director of Presence and Cultural Action, the NGO that employed Abouda.

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Speaking to the Guardian, de Liamchine said there were questions to answer about the death of her colleague. "There are a series of cases when following a police intervention people have died – and in 95% of these cases they are people of foreign origin," she said, also referring to the deaths of the two Algerian men and [a two-year-old Kurdish girl shot dead by police in a high-speed pursuit of suspected people smugglers](#).

De Liamchine said anyone arrested for drunkenness should be seen by a doctor before being put into a cell: "The procedure was not respected and that we know already. A person arrested by the police in a state of intoxication should be safe in the custody of police. On no account should that person be found dead either by their own hand or some other means."

The afternoon before she died Sourour Abouda joined a few dozen colleagues at the NGO for a staff gathering, where she seemed like her usual self, recalled de Liamchine. Abouda had talked to colleagues about an upcoming holiday to Portugal and her plans for the year ahead. “Everyone was shocked [by her death], because everyone said she was no different from her usual self.”

De Liamchine recalls her colleague as someone who liked her job and was always ready to help out. “She was truly someone who turned towards others, very participative at work and very sociable.”

The case is also being followed by Tunisia’s government. In a message to its citizens in Belgium, Tunisia’s embassy said everything necessary was being done, in coordination with Belgian authorities, to find out the exact circumstances of the death of a Tunisian national in police custody on 12 January, without naming the individual.

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- [Charities UK groups to launch emergency appeal after Turkey and Syria earthquakes](#)
- [At a glance What we know so far on day four](#)
- [‘It seems too late’ Hope fading in Turkey’s search for earthquake survivors](#)

## Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023

# Turkish and Syrian deaths pass 21,000 – as it happened

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## Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023

# UK charities to launch emergency appeal for Turkey and Syria earthquakes

Disasters Emergency Committee coordinates rapid response by 14 charities including British Red Cross

- [Turkey and Syria earthquake – latest news updates](#)



Search and rescue efforts in Aleppo, Syria, after a devastating earthquake.  
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

*PA Media*

Thu 9 Feb 2023 03.44 EST Last modified on Thu 9 Feb 2023 09.14 EST

British humanitarian charities are to launch an appeal to raise funds for people affected by the earthquakes in [Turkey](#) and Syria.

The [Disasters Emergency Committee](#) (DEC), which is coordinating a joint rapid response by 14 charities including the British Red Cross, Oxfam and Save the Children, is acting after at least 16,000 people were killed in the disaster.

The foreign secretary, James Cleverly, said the government would match any donations made by the public.

“When disasters like these terrible earthquakes strike, we know the British people want to help,” he said. “They have shown time and again that few are more generous and compassionate.

“That is why we are match-funding public donations to DEC’s appeal to provide urgent humanitarian assistance, as part of a wider package of support from the UK that will be used to provide lifesaving interventions to those who need it most in the region.”

The first [7.8-magnitude quake hit the Turkish city of Gaziantep](#) in the early hours of Monday, reducing thousands of homes and buildings across the south of the country and northern Syria to rubble as people slept.

A series of aftershocks has left tens of thousands injured and survivors are feared trapped under thousands of collapsed buildings.

Cheers erupt as rescuers save family in Syria after deadly earthquake – video  
Saleh Saeed, the DEC’s chief executive, said funds were “urgently needed” to deal with the “heartbreaking” situation.

“In Turkey alone, 6,000 buildings including schools and health centres have collapsed, with infrastructure vital to everyday life such as sanitation and water supplies badly damaged,” he said.

“Funds are urgently needed to support families with medical aid, emergency shelter, food and clean water in freezing, snowy conditions.”

Relief efforts have been hampered by damaged infrastructure, freezing winter temperatures and limited medical facilities.

The DEC said it expected humanitarian needs to grow over the coming days, with access to shelter, clean water and warmth all potential problems.

Salah Aboulgasem, who is working with the charity Islamic Relief in Gazientep, said there was “a lot of screaming” in the devastated areas.

He said: “The priority right now is saving lives by clearing the rubble. The next priority is supporting people who have lost their homes and gone through huge trauma.

“People need medicines and warmth. There is a lot of screaming, people are trying to find relatives. A lot of people are sleeping in cars because they are scared to go back into the buildings due to aftershocks. The cars are freezing cold.”

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## Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023

# Turkey and Syria earthquake: what we know so far on day four

Deaths toll passes 19,000; first aid convoy reaches north-west Syria

- [Turkey and Syria earthquake – latest news updates](#)



Rescue workers search for survivors among the rubble of a destroyed building in the Rihawi area in Latakia province, north-west Syria, on 8 February 2023. Photograph: Xinhua/Rex/Shutterstock

*[Jon Henley](#)*

*[@jonhenley](#)*

Thu 9 Feb 2023 06.53 EST First published on Wed 8 Feb 2023 19.46 EST

- **Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan**, has said the death toll in his country from Monday's devastating earthquake has now reached

16,170, bringing the combined total of fatalities in [Turkey](#) and Syria to 19,362. A total of 3,162 have been reported dead by Syrian government officials and a rescue group in the rebel-held north-west of the country.

- **The first aid convoy to reach north-western Syria** since Monday's devastating earthquake has crossed the Bab al-Hawa border crossing from Turkey, with six trucks carrying tents and hygiene products.
- **The United Nation's special envoy for Syria**, Geir Pedersen, has said the country, already ravaged by more than a decade of civil war, needs "**more of absolutely everything**" amid a humanitarian crisis that was already worsening before the quake, adding that emergency aid "must not be politicised".
- **Rescue workers in Turkey pulled an injured 60-year-old woman** from the rubble of an apartment block in Malatya, **77 hours after the first quake**, but hopes of finding more survivors in temperatures as low as -5C are fading. Experts say the survival rate of people trapped in rubble is 74% within 24 hours but falls to 22% after 72 hours and 6% by the fifth day.
- **Access to Twitter has been restored in Turkey** after talks between the social media platform and Turkish authorities. A Turkish infrastructure minister said he had reminded Twitter of its responsibility to cooperate on "on disinformation and false reports, [and take] swift action against fake accounts".

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# ‘It seems too late’: hope fading in Turkey’s search for earthquake survivors

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## OMG! Is swearing still taboo?



Illustration: Sophie Winder/The Guardian

A judge ruled last week that using the F-word in work meetings was now 'commonplace'. So is it acceptable to say whatever we like, wherever we

are?



[Emine Saner](#)  
[@eminesaner](#)

Thu 9 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 9 Feb 2023 09.14 EST

If it were the 14th century, your name was Robert Clevecunt and you lived on Pissing Alley, you wouldn't have hesitated to tell anyone your name or address. Such words were common enough to be unremarkable. It is easily offended 21st-century humans who would change our name by deed poll and lobby the council to change its road signs.

However, we may be becoming more relaxed about swearwords. It was reported last week that an employment judge, presiding over a case of unfair dismissal and discrimination, had decided that using the phrase "I don't give a fuck" in a "tense" meeting was not necessarily significant. "The words allegedly used in our view are fairly commonplace and do not carry the shock value they might have done in another time," said the judge.

Swearing is everywhere. It is on TV, on social media, in music. Young children use "WTF" and "OMG". For many of us, workplace swearing seems so normal that it doesn't even stand out any more (this was one

theory, in that employment tribunal, as to why others in that meeting couldn't remember if that particular swearword was used).

Parents report teenage children dropping the F- and C-words at home far more freely than they did at the same age. Dorothy, 65, whose daughter is 22, is shocked by the extent of her child's swearing. "The F-word is quite common in her conversations. I was concerned she would use it in the wrong situation, but she moderates it around older people. With her friends, and with her brothers, it's not a thing that bothers them – it's acceptable." She used to ask her to stop, but then gave up. Dorothy, who admits to using words such as "bloody", never swore like that in front of her parents. "Good grief, no."

[A 2021 survey](#) for the British Board of Film Classification found that three-fifths of people said strong language was part of their daily lives, while one-third used such language more than they did five years ago. [A 2020 report by Ofcom](#), the TV and radio regulator, found that swearing-related complaints had halved in five years; a year later, swearing accounted for only 1% of complaints, reflecting a "trend of increasingly relaxed attitudes about the use of swearwords" (this did not include slurs and discriminatory language).

German TV reporting on UK politics. [pic.twitter.com/DQMG0QWeAb](https://pic.twitter.com/DQMG0QWeAb)

— No Context Brits (@NoContextBrits) [October 20, 2022](#)

This isn't to say that anything goes – witness the broadcasters braced for impact whenever they need to mention [the chancellor Jeremy Hunt](#), or Krishnan Guru-Murthy, who was [taken off Channel 4 news for a week](#) for being overheard, off-camera, using the C-word to describe Steve Baker, the Northern Ireland minister.

The shambolic few weeks of Liz Truss's tenure as prime minister gave rise to some good swearing – not quite the magnificent creations from The Thick of It, but punchy nonetheless. "I am fucking furious and I don't give a fuck any more," the then deputy chief whip, Craig Whittaker, [was reported to have said](#); a German news clip of apolitical correspondent recounting it

verbatim [went viral](#). During the economic turmoil that was unleashed, the Financial Times reported that allies of Truss described stories of tensions between her and the then chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, as “weapons-grade bollocks”.

Has swearing finally lost its power? Timothy Jay, a professor of psychology at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and a swearing expert, sighs. “I’ve been answering that question for 50 years,” he says. “The offensiveness of any word is entirely dependent upon context. All of us carry the calculus for who, what, where and when. If I went in my dean’s office, I wouldn’t swear in there; a student wouldn’t swear in there, but they would swear in a dorm room or a bar.”

In a copy of *Vanity Fair* from the early 20th century, the word ‘damn’ was disguised with dashes

Richard Stephens, a senior lecturer in psychology at Keele University, agrees: “It is nuanced. I think what the judge was saying [in the tribunal ruling] was that, in the specific context of that conversation, the F-bomb wasn’t too offensive, but it’s all about context. Within that situation, it’s using swearing as a linguistic tool, as opposed to using it as an insult, or to offend or belittle people. We swear for many different reasons – to show emotion, to show we really mean it, sometimes for humour, to intensify what we’re saying. It is still very context-driven.” As Karyn Stapleton, a senior lecturer in communication at Ulster University, says, there have always been workplaces where swearing is acceptable and, in fact, “part of the culture”.

“We are exposed to more swearing than ever in history – all of the media that we consume,” says Jay. “However, that doesn’t mean that the average person swears more. Again, it depends on the context.” [Language](#) evolves and taboos weaken. Stephens found a copy of *Vanity Fair* from the early 20th century in which the word “damn” was disguised with dashes. “Then, that was an unprintable word, but now we’re comfortable with that. I think we are more comfortable with the four-letter words now than we have been.” What is driving that? “This is just my opinion, not a research-informed answer, but society is becoming more open and we’re freer with language like we’re freer with lots of other things.”

But it is not right to say swearing has entirely lost its power. “Even though we are in quite a comfortable place with swearing and four-letter words, you’re never quite sure how a swearword is going to land, so it’s still a risk to pop one into the conversation. It’s that unpredictability that helps to keep swearing current.”

In her book [Holy Sh\\*t: A Brief History of Swearing](#), Melissa Mohr – she of Pissing Alley and many other brilliant examples – writes that, in the English middle ages, there was little taboo around bodily functions or sex, so some of the words we find most offensive now would not have been considered so. Things started to change in the 14th century. “Combined with the rise of Protestantism, and with it a strain of puritanism, this civilising process slowly transformed innocuous words into what modern observers would recognise as obscenities.”



Mouthing off ... swearing can produce responses such as increased sweating and raised heart rate. Photograph: Sergio Mendoza Hochmann/Getty Images. Posed by a model

Religious swearwords, or profanities, were considered most offensive. In the early 17th century, Mohr says, parliament passed an act making it illegal to use references to God mockingly, including shortened versions such as “zounds” (meaning God’s wounds). Then, over the next couple of centuries,

there was a decline in the shock power of profanities, but a rise in obscenity – anything bodily – that the Victorians considered so horrific that the power in those words lives on today.

The big swearwords are relatively unchanged. “It’s all convention,” says Jay. “Institutions of power – school, church, your parents, the media, the sports team you’re on – set standards, then police these standards and punish people who break the rules. That’s why we’ve maintained all of these words over the years.” The church has lost its power, which is why most people consider it completely harmless to say or hear “oh my God”, whereas you would never have heard it, says Jay, in early radio broadcasts.

What worries Emma Byrne, the author of [Swearing Is Good for You](#), is that as words such as “fuck” lose their impact, worse words might take their place. “Swearing tends to lose its power as it loses its taboo status,” she says. “The terms that remain taboo tend to be slurs, derogatory terms for other people, and I would much rather the bodily functions stayed as our outlet.”

People use swearwords to overthrow restraint. Swearing helps you nudge over to a don’t-hold-back mindset

*Richard Stephens*

A huge number of racist, homophobic, ableist and misogynistic terms are used regularly online – and the words change, says Byrne, to evade filters and hate speech laws. “The bodily functions unite us – there’s something about ‘fuck’ and ‘shit’ that we can relate to on one level or another. I’m very concerned as to what’s left if those words are no longer considered taboo. Slurs are used as weapons in a way that ‘fuck’ and ‘shit’ never were.”

More encouraging is the emergence of a nuanced approach in professional life, she says. “I think workplaces are becoming more aware of the distinction between swearing and abuse. You can be swearing with your colleagues about ‘how fucking stressful this quarter’s been’, or you can consistently undermine and belittle someone and never use a swearword at all. One of those I would say is OK and the other is not. Taking our focus off

swearing and putting it more on bullying and abuse is something to be welcomed.”

Stephens’ research has shown that swearing has benefits – which in itself may make people more comfortable with it. In one study, he got participants to dip their hands into ice-cold water and repeat either a swearword or a neutral word, to see if swearing helped them cope with the pain. It did. “They’ll keep their hand in the water longer in the swearing condition,” he says.

The researchers also tested the effect of swearing on strength, testing the force people create using a hand-gripping device. “People will grip that with more force when they’re repeating a swearword over repeating a neutral word,” says Stephens. “We’re still not sure how it works, but it’s looking like it’s something to do with being disinhibited. People use swearwords to overthrow restraint, stop being so controlled, be a little bit freer, not overthink, that sort of thing. Swearing helps you just nudge over to a bit more of a don’t-hold-back mindset.”

Cold, hard evidence … the Royal Institution re-creates Keele University’s ice-water test.

Jay has shown that, contrary to widespread belief, swearing is not the refuge of those who are lacking in vocabulary. “Swearing is a wonderful evolutionary advantage – for humans to be able to express their emotions abstractly. It allows me to vent, it allows me to express frustration, anger, but also surprise, joy. It allows me to express that and communicate it to you very effectively. When you say ‘fuck you’ to someone, it’s almost like punching them, but it’s not punching them.”

Young children, he says, “progressively learn how to express their anger, which originally is very physical – tantrums, biting, scratching – and then it becomes much more abstract. I can yell ‘fuck you’ to someone across the street and I don’t have to hit or bite them.” As offensive or upsetting as it might be, he says, “it’s better than shooting someone. We have enough of that crap here [in the US].”

Swearing can produce responses such as increased sweating and raised heart rate and is thought to be processed differently from other forms of language. “Somebody swearing for humour, or to express frustration with some third party, is possibly processed differently from the automatic, emotional, maybe pain-driven, swearing,” says Stapleton. It may be associated with strong childhood and adolescent memories and the responses to those, he adds. This could include a parent telling you off for swearing, but it could also be positive – “maybe bonding with peers, or receiving acceptance or admiration”.

Children start using swearwords as soon as they start talking, says Jay, but he isn’t convinced this is new, more that now we have more ways of observing them. Different cultures have similar kinds of swearwords. “In places where you have a strong presence of the Catholic church, you have a lot of religious profanities,” says Jay. “But everybody has sexual terms, scatological terms, ancestral allusions – bastard, motherfucker, son of a bitch – and animal names.”

Even chimps might swear. “The two things that are sufficient for swearing to emerge are a taboo and the means to express it,” says Byrne. For the chimps that were studied, that was bowel movements and learning a sign for “dirty”. “They used that sign as a way of expressing frustration, of telling someone they’re not happy with them, and also joking. They have a really scatological sense of humour and would wind up the humans by basically doing what my six-year-old does, which is say ‘poo’ all the time at the table.

“I loved that, as soon as you have a taboo and the means to express it, at least in one other species, we’ve seen that used in the same way as we use it.”

Her favourite example of swearing, though, she says with a laugh, tells us much about how swearwords deliver far more than the sum of their parts – how they can convey frustration, intensity, shock and humour, but also sufficient emotion regulation and language skills, where once there would have been an angry physical reaction. It was when her toddler turned to her, looked her dead in the eye, and said: “Mummy, get me out of this fucking highchair.”

This article was amended on 9 February 2023. An earlier version said that a viral German news clip featured a newsreader. This should have said political correspondent.

***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)***

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# Portrait of a killer: art class in one of Mexico's most notorious prisons

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## Headphones

### Review

# OnePlus Buds Pro 2 review: good-sounding earbuds with spatial audio for Android

Noise cancelling buds are some of the first to support Google's new surround sound feature



The OnePlus Buds Pro 2 have a solid battery, compact case and can be used with Android or iPhone. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian



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

Thu 9 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Thu 9 Feb 2023 05.09 EST

Finally, an Android rival to the AirPods Pro has arrived. OnePlus's new Buds Pro 2 noise cancelling earbuds are some of the first on the market to support Google's new spatial audio virtual surround sound tech, giving them a boost in a crowded market.

The earbuds cost £179 and compete directly with the similarly priced [Pixel Buds Pro](#) and £249 [AirPods Pro](#), but with the added advantage of having an app for Android and iPhone so they are truly cross-platform.

The Buds Pro 2 have a fairly simple design and are slightly more compact than most rivals, including the AirPods Pro 2, making them light and comfortable to wear for long listening sessions.



The earbuds have a metallic flourish on the stalks and traditional silicone tips that stay put well in my ears. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The stalks are squeeze-sensitive for playback controls. Squeeze and hold to turn noise cancelling on and off, while taking out an earbud pauses the music. There's no option for adjusting the volume so you'll have to reach for the buttons on your phone for that.

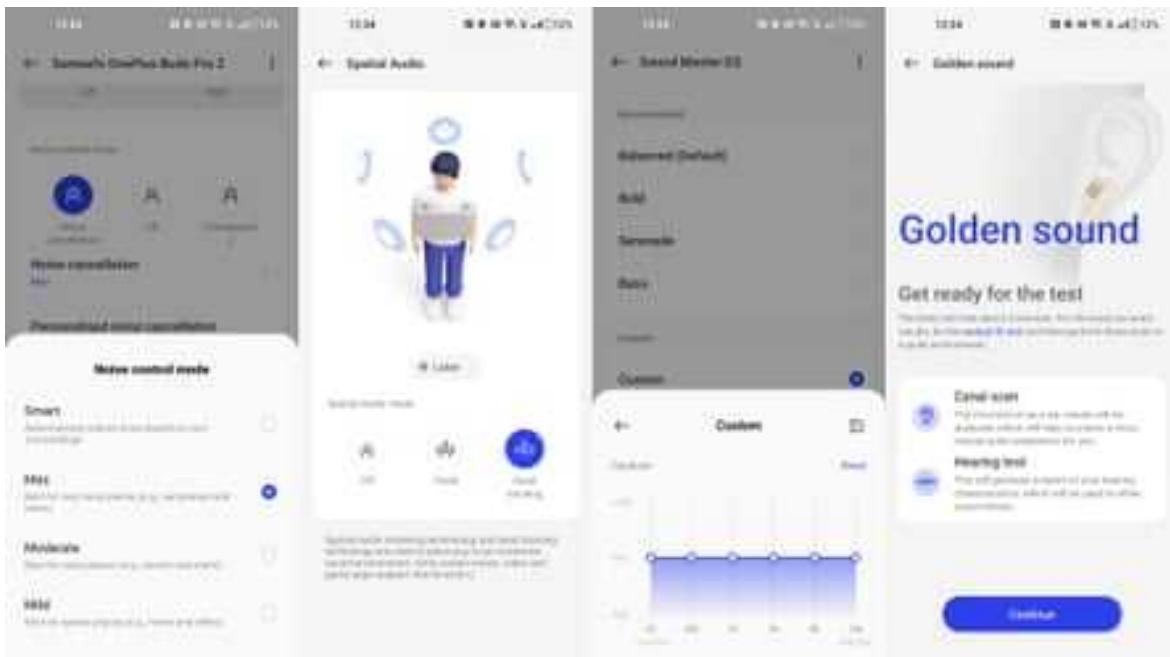
The earbuds last up to six hours between charges with noise cancelling turned on, and charge just over three times from the little flip-top case for a total of 25 hours playback. The compact case is nice and pocketable, and charges in 100 minutes via USB-C but also has Qi wireless charging.

## Specifications

- **Water resistance:** earbuds IP55 (sweat resistant); case IPX4
- **Connectivity:** [Bluetooth](#) 5.3, SBC, AAC, LC3, LHDC
- **Battery life:** with ANC 6h earbud, 25h with case (9/39h ANC off)
- **Earbud dimensions:** 24.3 x 20.9 x 32.2mm

- **Earbud weight:** 4.9g each
- **Driver size:** 11 and 6mm
- **Charging case dimensions:** 61 x 50 x 25.4mm
- **Charging case weight:** 47.3g
- **Case charging:** USB-C, Qi wireless charging

## Connectivity



The HeyMelody app for [Android](#) and [iPhone](#) takes care of updates and settings, including spatial audio and sound customisation. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The Buds Pro 2 tick all the Bluetooth connectivity boxes. They support the latest Bluetooth 5.3 with Fast Pair for Android, plus AAC, [LC3](#) and [LHDC](#) audio standards, making them suitable for a wide array of devices. Either earbud can be used on its own for mono audio or calls, they support seamless switching between devices and can connect to two gadgets at once.

## Good sound and spatial audio



Three sizes of the oval-shaped silicone earbud tips are included in the box.  
Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The Buds Pro 2 generally sound very good for the money, comfortably keeping up with similar easy-listening competition at this price. They produce a nicely rounded sound with detailed highs, well-balanced mids and enough bass for most, even if they can't quite reach the very deepest of notes. Separation of tones and their handling of complex tracks is good, and while they suit most music genres, some such as Britpop can occasionally sound a little flat.

The companion app has a full equaliser as well as a sound customisation system that performs a five-minute hearing test and tweaks the audio to your personal hearing profile accordingly.

The earbuds are among the first on the market to support Google's new implementation of [spatial audio virtual surround technology](#), which is baked in to Android 13. It works in a similar way to the popular feature [used by Apple for AirPods](#) with the iPhone, producing a more immersive, cinematic-like experience on the go, even if music is typically best left in stereo.

The Buds Pro 2 also have sensors in them that can track the position of your head in relation to your phone so that the centre channel of a movie,

typically the dialogue, always sounds like it's coming from the screen. It works very well.

Spatial audio requires games, music and video streaming apps to be updated, with the feature live for YouTube at the time of testing and other big firms expected to follow suit in the near future.

## Noise cancelling



The earbuds can detect when they're being worn to pause the music and change noise-cancelling mode when one is removed. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The earbuds have adaptive active noise cancelling that can ramp up or down depending on ambient noise, but it is fairly weak, meaning it was best left on its maximum setting. Even then they struggle with higher notes, including a car tyre noise, the typing of keys in an office and wind noise.

They will dampen the drone of engines or the roar of a plane, but can't [challenge the best](#) for the ability to [remove everyday distractions](#). The noise cancelling also changes the sound of the earbuds, making it a bit more forward and punchy, which isn't necessarily bad. The transparency mode

sounds fairly natural and is good enough for listening out for traffic or announcements, but is a bit quiet in conversation with other people.

Call quality was pretty good, but while my voice remained clear for the caller the earbuds let a fair amount of background noise through in busier environments.

## Sustainability

OnePlus rates the batteries for at least 80% of their original capacity after 500 full-charge cycles but they are not replaceable nor are the earbuds repairable, ultimately making them disposable. The earbuds are not made from recycled materials and the company does not publish environmental impact reports or offer trade-in or recycling.

## Price

The OnePlus Buds Pro 2 cost £179 (\$179) shipping on 16 February.

For comparison, the [Nothing Ear 1](#) cost [£149](#), the [Google Pixel Buds Pro](#) cost [£179](#), the [Bose QuietComfort Earbuds 2](#) cost [£279.95](#) and the [Apple AirPods Pro 2](#) cost [£249](#).

## Verdict

The OnePlus Buds Pro 2 are some of the first Bluetooth earbuds to come to market supporting Google's new spatial audio surround sound tech for Android.

They sound a cut above most easy-listening sets about this price and the spatial audio system works well for movies. The active noise cancelling does a decent job of reducing the roar of engines, but is weak against higher tones and so can't compete [with the best](#).

With an app available on Android and iPhones, they can be fully used with either platform, unlike some competitors. Support for connecting to two devices at the same time is a rare but welcome feature. A comfortable fit,

decent battery life and a nice and compact case also make them easy to live with.

The lack of on-board volume controls is a little disappointing, but the biggest issue is that like most other true wireless earbuds the battery cannot be replaced, ultimately making them disposable and losing a star.

**Pros:** comfortable, good sound, spatial audio with Android, Fast Pair and multipoint Bluetooth, noise cancelling, cross-platform app, compact case, squeeze playback controls.

**Cons:** noise cancelling weak against higher tones, irreparable, no on-board volume control.



The compact case is one of the best, and easily pocketable, charging via USB-C or Qi wireless. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

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## Life and style

# Why Marjorie Taylor Greene dressed like that at the State of the Union

The congresswoman was trying to highlight Biden's lack of comment on China's spy balloon, an aide says



Marjorie Taylor Greene at the State of the Union on Tuesday night.  
Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

[Alaina Demopoulos](#)

Wed 8 Feb 2023 16.45 ESTFirst published on Wed 8 Feb 2023 16.22 EST

Cruella de Vil, Kid Rock, Dr Zhivago – the internet was ablaze discussing who Marjorie Taylor Greene most looked like in the white knee-length coat and furry collar that she wore to the State of the Union. It turns out the question shouldn't have been *who* but *what*.

Greene apparently wanted to match the Chinese spy balloon that flew over the country last week. So she picked a white coat because, I guess, the

balloon was also white.

Nick Dyer, the congresswoman's communications director, told the Guardian in an email that the [\\$495 Overland coat](#) – made with alpaca wool and fur trim – was meant to “highlight” the president’s lack of comment on the balloon during his State of the Union speech. “Biden refused to mention it, just like he refused to stop the intelligence-gathering operation that traversed the United States and surveilled some of our most important military facilities in the country,” Dyer said.

Greene purchased the piece in Wyoming, Dyer said, while campaigning against Liz Cheney and fundraising for Harriet Hageman, who is now a US representative for the state.

Political Twitter had its own feelings about what the coat represented. “I dunno why but Marjorie Taylor Greene in that white coat screaming at Biden gave me a powerful ‘Russian Karen vibe’,” [tweeted](#) Politico Europe journalist [Nika Melkozerova](#).

“Marjorie Taylor Greene’s coat is made from the dogs George Santos said he was rescuing,” [joked](#) the former department of defense aide Adam Blickstein.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene in a white fur coat  
[pic.twitter.com/YJZ5XzJSwa](https://pic.twitter.com/YJZ5XzJSwa)

— Danielle Vermeer | Teleport □ (@DLVermeer) [February 8, 2023](#)

Greene wasn’t the only divisive figure to make some choices when it came to styling. The Arizona senator Kyrsten Sinema, known for her striking dress sense, wore a canary-yellow dress with voluminous sleeves that [drew comparisons](#) to Big Bird and out-there red carpet outfits.

Quick - what is Kyrsten Sinema thinking [pic.twitter.com/LREAYc3wKi](https://pic.twitter.com/LREAYc3wKi)

— Lauren McKenzie (@TheMcKenziest) [February 8, 2023](#)

Not long ago, if anyone was going to communicate a political message through their clothing at nights like these, it would be the first lady. In simpler times, these outfits were meant to symbolize unity, strength, or a vague sense of patriotism. There are staff who spend weeks wrangling outfits from designers. But – quick – do you remember what Jill Biden wore last night?

I needed Google to remind me: a magenta dress. Purple, as color theory tells us, is a mix of the colors red and blue, and it has become something of a shorthand for outfits that encourage bipartisanship. That's [why](#) so many people, from Kamala Harris and Michelle Obama to Elizabeth Warren and Hillary Clinton, wore it to Biden's 2021 inauguration.

But no one's tweeting about Jill Biden's dress today. (Her [on-the-lips kiss](#) with second gentleman Doug Emhoff? That's another matter and why #Swingers trended on the app this morning.) But Greene's night-stealing outfit succeeded as a yet another ploy for attention, not unlike the [white balloon she carried](#) around Capitol Hill before the speech began.

By the next morning, Greene's outfit was being dissected on The View, with the co-host Farah Green pulling up a photo of Greene next to one of her puppy. If [reports](#) are true that the congresswoman is vying for a spot as Trump's 2024 running mate, she's certainly leaning into his playbook – get on television by any means possible, even if it means dressing up as a balloon.

This article was amended on 9 February 2023. The headline of an earlier version misspelled Marjorie.

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## 2023.02.09 - Opinion

- The serious side of ‘mansplaining’ has been lost. That’s where the harm begins
- The Prevent review feeds a political lie: that fighting the far right lets Islamist terrorists off the hook
- My friend is driving a freezing-cold Porsche – and the schadenfreude is delicious
- Hooked on a feeling: why do certain songs go round and round – and round – our heads?

[OpinionGender](#)

## **The serious side of ‘mansplaining’ has been lost. That’s where the harm begins**

[Rebecca Solnit](#)



The key context of the word inspired by my 2008 essay is that mansplaining is one part of a huge problem – of who gets listened to, and who gets believed



‘Serena Williams was at first dismissed when she reported a postpartum pulmonary embolism.’ Williams at the Wimbledon championships in 2016.  
Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 9 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 9 Feb 2023 07.27 EST

I have a file on my desktop titled Mansplaining Olympic Tryouts, mostly screenshots of some of the most epic specimens I’ve come across on social media or that people have steered my way. They’re grimly hilarious: a man explaining vaginas to a noted female gynaecologist, a man telling Sinn Féin adviser Siobhán Fenton to read the Good Friday agreement (she replied with a picture of herself with the book she wrote on that agreement), and the famous incident with Dr Jessica McCarty, about which she tweeted: “At a Nasa Earth meeting 10 years ago, a white male postdoc interrupted me to tell me that I don’t understand human drivers of fire, that I def needed to read McCarty et al. I looked him in the eye, pulled my long hair back so he could read my name tag. ‘I’m McCarty et al.’”

The word mansplaining was coined by an anonymous person in response to my 2008 essay [Men Explain Things to Me](#) and has had a lively time of it ever since. It was a New York Times word of the year [in 2010](#), and entered the [Oxford English Dictionary in 2018](#); versions of it exist in many other languages from French to Icelandic, and the essay itself has appeared in many languages including Korean and Swedish. People often recount the

opening incident in that almost 15-year-old essay, in which a man explained a book to me, too busy holding forth to notice that I was its author, as my friend was trying to tell him.

But pretty briskly the essay moved from the amusing to the terrifying: I then recounted an incident in which a middle-aged man explained to a very young me, chuckling, that when his neighbour ran out of the house naked in the middle of the night screaming that her husband was trying to kill her, he was confident that she was crazy and her husband was not murderous, simply because of his assumptions about gender.

Here's what almost everyone seems to miss about mansplaining, including those doing the formal studies as well as the people telling the funny stories. It's one corner of a colossal problem, in which biases, statuses and assumptions warp everyday life and allocate more credibility, audibility and consequence to some people than others. All this creates what I think of as inequality of voice. Whether you're trying to convince doctors that your pain is real or neighbours that your husband is trying to kill you, it can be a life-or-death issue. It matters in offices, classrooms, conferences, boardrooms, in hospitals, on the street, in bedrooms and at dinner tables.

One high-profile recent incident of people who assumed they had the authority to control the narrative came with the [police murder of Tyre Nichols](#), one of many incidents in recent years where video told a very different story to the one told by the police. Somehow they seem to assume that they have the impunity that comes with controlling the narrative, which in cases like this mean literally expecting to get away with murder. Inequality of voice is one of the most powerful elements of inequality of all kinds. Children and elderly people are routinely treated as incompetent witnesses to their own lives and needs. Poor people, immigrants and people with disabilities are likewise treated as subordinates and incompetents.

Non-white people are too often assumed to be less trustworthy, less qualified to speak and act in many kinds of situation, and – to state the obvious – too often regarded as criminal simply on the basis of colour.

There are a lot of stories about people of colour being assumed to have stolen the vehicles they drive or be the servants at posh gatherings; I've heard from some of the latter first-hand. There have been many studies about how often women and people of colour are ignored or disbelieved when they report pain, sickness and injury, and how that impacts health outcomes. Black women in the US have a disproportionate incidence of dangerous medical experiences related to pregnancy and birth because of unequal access to care – and to credibility. Even tennis star [Serena Williams was at first dismissed](#) when she reported a postpartum pulmonary embolism.

People have also tried to render the word gender-neutral, which would make it meaningless. We have lots of other words – arrogant wanker, patronising idiot, [Dunning-Kruger](#) prize winner, for example – for acts of misplaced condescension. But reducing the issue to incidents of being merely patronised in conversational exchanges misses what matters. A phrase I often use is “dosage is cumulative”. If you spend your life being assumed to be less competent, less qualified to speak and less worthy of being listened to, more likely to be mocked, ignored or insulted, it inhibits your willingness to speak up and participate. So it's not just what happens in the moment that matters, but how it shapes how we perceive ourselves and others in the long run.

The credibility gap turns into a hugely harmful thing with sexual assault and gender violence, in which men have historically been believed over women. It often brings on victims' despair about reporting such abuse, because if you will not be believed, and if you will be mocked, shamed, harassed or even criminalised for reporting abuse, why would you bother? Almost all sexual abuse involves a perpetrator with higher social status, and a big part of that status is the ability to control the story and suppress other versions. It's what serial rapists like Harvey Weinstein and serial child molesters like gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar relied upon during decades-long criminal careers. [Inequality](#) of voice isn't just what happens after such crimes; it's too often what perpetrators count upon beforehand.

It's great that the word mansplaining exists, along with spin-offs such as whitesplaining and westsplaining (the latter for North Americans and western Europeans explaining the invasion of Ukraine and eastern European

politics with narratives centred on our political histories rather than theirs). But everything loses meaning when it loses context. Mansplaining's meaning requires the broader context of intersecting inequalities and assumptions that play out in everyday life, with consequences that are occasionally amusing but too often nightmarish. My goal always was to advocate for a democracy of voice, for equality in who gets to speak, who's heard, and who's believed and respected when they speak, across all categories.

- Rebecca Solnit is a Guardian US columnist
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## [Opinion](#)[Prevent strategy](#)

# The Prevent review feeds a political lie: that fighting the far right lets Islamist terrorists off the hook

[Sunder Katwala](#)

Many hoped for an impartial examination of the threat, what works and what doesn't. Those hopes have been dashed



‘If we did not have a programme attempting what Prevent aims to do, there would be calls to invent it. But a central question for prevention is what actually works.’ Armed police on the streets responding to terror alerts.  
Photograph: Charlotte Ball/PA

Wed 8 Feb 2023 13.27 EST Last modified on Thu 9 Feb 2023 04.49 EST

William Shawcross’s [review of Prevent](#) has been a long time coming. It was not only four years, but also four prime ministers ago that Theresa May’s government committed to an independent review. That had been

championed by former [counter-terror reviewer](#) Lord Anderson as a way to defuse the polarised debates about the role of Prevent, and encourage more focus on the evidence of what worked in tackling extremism. But the Shawcross review will disappoint those hopes. It is already reheating and repolarising the debate around Prevent, engaging in a stale tug-of-war about which threats from extremism really matter.

The review concludes that Prevent's definition of Islamist ideology has been "too narrow", while the parameters of extreme right views have been "too broad". Shawcross argues that "the most lethal threat in the last 20 years has come from Islamism, and this threat continues". Pitting the two against each other in this way risks simply relitigating old arguments, as though efforts to contain one of these threats necessarily undermines the other. Brendan Cox, whose wife Jo Cox MP was murdered by a far-right terrorist, tells me that he has little doubt that Islamist-inspired terrorism is currently the most serious threat. "The question is whether in five or 10 years that will still be the case. Are increasing far-right referrals a sign of a growing problem or a temporary issue? Will the 'incel' movement become a bigger thing? We don't know all the answers," he says. It undermines legitimacy and trust if choices about which threat really matters sound like a fixed ideological position, rather than a response to the shifting intelligence.

And crucially, messengers matter. Shawcross was bound to be a polarising choice. He [had vocally defended](#) the detention of suspected al-Qaida militants at Guantánamo Bay, and the torture technique of waterboarding as a necessary response to urgent terror threats. Many critics of the Prevent programme, including Amnesty International and the Muslim Council of Britain, cited Shawcross's description a decade ago of Europe's relationship with Islam "as among the greatest, most terrifying problems of our time" as a reason they could not engage with the review. Shawcross attributed his fear to the combination of "all European countries [having] vastly, very quickly growing Islamic populations" and "frighteningly large numbers of ... young men turning to radical Islamism".

Shawcross has not responded directly to the controversy, though his letter introducing himself to Prevent practitioners emphasised that he recognised the vital importance of differentiating Islam from Islamism. The review

seeks to observe the boundary, though his earlier comments had badly blurred it. He does insist on the importance of naming the problem as Islamism, and views alternative language such as “faith-based terrorism” as unhelpfully euphemistic. Shawcross offers footnotes naming and shaming Muslims he would like to see excommunicated from any engagement with Prevent. But this would exacerbate a more significant problem – that the government already has a widespread non-engagement policy of ever-shrinking circles of civic Muslim engagement, that is so much narrower than with any other major faith group.

Because Prevent sits on the boundary of hard-edged enforcement and preventive, pre-criminal intervention, alienating those who could carry out the latter creates real problems. “A serious attempt to wrestle with these trade-offs is greatly needed. Sadly this review does not provide it,” says Harvey Redgrave of the criminal justice consultancy Crest. Yet Crest’s research also constructively challenges the political perception that polarisation about Prevent is inevitable. Indeed, Muslim attitudes face parallel caricatures on both right and left. If the right underestimates the breadth of commitment within the community to challenge extremism, the left significantly exaggerates the idea of Prevent as a “toxic brand”. The research demonstrates that most Muslims have never heard of Prevent, that there is broad support in principle for its goals, and challenges as to whether government engages fairly across communities and threats are generally constructive.



‘Home secretary Suella Braverman will use the Shawcross review to redefine what constitutes counter-extremism.’ Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK Parliament/AFP/Getty Images

If we did not have a programme attempting what Prevent aims to do, there would be calls to invent it. But a central question for prevention is what actually works. This review, often rather journalistic in tone, provides disappointingly little evidence about that. Shawcross reports that he visited six of the 79 Prevent-funded civil society organisations. He reviews 15 civic projects, which strengthens his feeling that too few are directly challenging Islamism. He writes that the behavioural insights team(also known as the “nudge unit”) had referenced an overarching review of the impacts of certain projects, but reports that nobody at the Home Office can find it for him. The fragmentary evidence base long predates the Shawcross review, but he makes only the sketchiest contribution to filling the void.

Home secretary Suella Braverman will use the Shawcross review to redefine what constitutes counter-extremism (which might sometimes, ironically, undermine prevention). “Prevent is a security service, not a social service,” she told the Commons. But the Sunak administration will have neither the time nor the bandwidth for a sustained reform agenda before an election. Shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper told the Commons that the Shawcross review had been a missed opportunity to build a broader

consensus for reform. The next government may need to repeat the exercise. As Brendan Cox suggests: “Next time we review it, let’s please make sure it’s independent.”

- Sunder Katwala is director of British Future and former general secretary of the Fabian Society

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# My friend is driving a freezing-cold Porsche – and the schadenfreude is delicious

[Adrian Chiles](#)



You thought spending six figures on a car might guarantee someone will fix it? Think again



The world's most expensive fridge ... the Porsche Taycan. Photograph: Martyn Lucy/Getty Images

Thu 9 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Thu 9 Feb 2023 13.39 EST

Schadenfreude is a dark and powerful force, although, upon looking it up, it's not quite what I thought it was. Malicious pleasure in the misfortunes of others, says Chambers. Mine's not exactly like that – it's better, and worse. Better in the sense that my pleasure isn't malicious; it's less about malice than amusement. But it's worse in that it's not all "others" I apply it to. Just my friends.

One of my closest friends has a [Porsche](#) Taycan, a reassuringly expensive electric sports car. To his distress, the heating has gone kaput. Now, I thought the whole point of spending six figures on a motor was that a) it would never break down and b) if it did, a quick phone call to a special number would be enough to get a helicopter full of German engineers dispatched to your home address to put things right. Maybe they'd abseil on to the drive if they can't land in the garden.

Not so. He was told that he'd have to take it to a dealer where they'd need five days to triage it. Triage! Yes, really. Do they dress up as nurses to do it?

Anyway, it will probably take several weeks to fix because, [as Porsche has acknowledged](#), there is a known issue with the Taycan's "heater matrix" (me neither) and supply chain issues mean no new matrixes will be falling from the sky in a hurry.

In the meantime, until a temporary car of some kind is issued, the poor bloke is effectively driving around in the world's most expensive fridge. He's been out and bought a new hat, gloves and scarf for his daily commute. I'm sorry, but the schadenfreude – appropriately, I suppose, for a German car – is overwhelming. I love nothing more than calling him on his way in to work and listening to his teeth a-chattering as he tries in vain to form words. It seems likely that other Taycan drivers around the country, and elsewhere for that matter, are in the same freezing boat. Even if you're the kind of motorist who considers Porsche owners to be on the flash side of acceptable, do try to have a heart and keep an eye out for them on the road, blue with cold as they forlornly scrape the ice from the inside of their windscreens.

- Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist
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**OpinionPop and rock**

## **Hooked on a feeling: why do certain songs go round and round – and round – our heads?**

[Emma Brockes](#)



Streaming of Linda Ronstadt's Long Long Time rose by 4,900% the day after it featured on The Last of Us. It wasn't all because of me



'Linda Ronstadt deserves to be listened to on repeat forever': the singer in Los Angeles in 1979. Photograph: Anonymous/AP

Thu 9 Feb 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 12.31 EST

I've been here before, but not for a while. The last attack, from memory, was Cyndi Lauper's [Time After Time](#), but that was quick – I was in and out in two days. Same goes for Petula Clark's Don't Sleep in the Subway. There was a weird period when the needle stuck – no judgment – on Dan Stevens (Dan Stevens!) singing [Evermore](#) from the Beauty and the Beast soundtrack, which must have had to do with my then very young children and had to be borne with patience until it worked itself out. There was Macca doing [Golden Slumbers](#). Which reminds me, oh God, of the week I lost to In My Life, except, crucially, it was the 1991 Bette Midler cover version not the Beatles' 1965 original. All I can say is it made sense at the time.

Last week, like the return of a fever dream, I fell into a deep, unfightable obsession with a single song, that in the last seven days I have played on a loop probably hundreds of times. I have listened to it while I'm stacking the dishwasher and making the kids' lunches. It has taken me round the supermarket, and back and forth to a doctor's appointment. My apartment has never been so tidy, tidying providing me with an excuse to put off work for another five minutes so I can get in two more revolutions. At night, I've warned my children that if they fall off the sofa and start screaming I won't

hear them because I've got my Pods in and, for reasons I can't explain but that they may one day understand, I am compelled to listen to Linda Ronstadt over and over and over and over until suddenly, just as abruptly as it started, it stops.

The embarrassing thing about this is not the doing of it, but the fact that this time around the song in question – which is, don't get me wrong, amazing – came via a TV show. It feels somehow less good to do things at the same time everyone else is doing them, in this case listening to Long Long Time. Ronstadt recorded it in 1970 and it resurfaced last week as the soundtrack to episode three of [The Last of Us](#), HBO's zombie series which, taking time out from the flesh-eating apocalypse, told the tear-jerking love story of two men. The day after the episode aired, demand for the song on streaming services [jumped by 4,900%](#), and daily sales had [risen by 13,782%](#).

Nick Hornby has written about falling down obsessive wormholes like this as a question of trying to figure out the puzzle of a song. It's like code breaking, an attempt to internalise the structure of the thing until it holds no more secrets. The key changes that surprised or moved, the break in the voice in the penultimate phrase; you listen greedily, trying to absorb it at cellular level. When, as in this case, a song is from a TV show, there is something else going on. Long Long Time is a great number and Ronstadt deserves to be listened to on repeat forever but a large part of the legs of that song have, obviously, to do with the emotional resonance of Murray Bartlett and Nick Offerman in a beautifully rendered piece of telly. (The episode's other theme – Max Richter's [On the Nature of Daylight](#) – almost dragged me down a simultaneous wormhole, which I just about managed to resist. I don't have the time to do two of these at once!)

Sadly, Ronstadt hasn't profited from the explosion of interest. She sold the rights to her master recordings in 2021, but in any case, [according to her manager](#), never owned Long Long Time because of her original Capital Records contract. She has, however, been very gracious about Gary White, who [wrote the song](#) in 1969, still being in a position to pick up the royalties.

Even more sadly (for me), once I come out of the other end of an obsession like this, the song is dead to me, if not forever then for at least six months. And it's never as good again. It's sucked dry, used up, like that bit in the movie Ghost when Patrick Swayze jumps into someone else's body, then jumps out again all limp and spent. I can feel the turn coming, but I'm not quite there yet. In fact, I can't wait to finish this piece so I can get in one, two, at a pinch maybe, three more plays before I have to run to wake up the kids.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist
  - This article was amended on 10 February 2023. An earlier version said that streaming figures for Linda Ronstadt's Long Long Time rose by 13,782% in the week after The Last of Us aired. This figure was in fact for the rise in daily sales the day after the show.
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- [Australia Chinese-made security cameras to be removed from government buildings](#)
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## Surveillance

# Downed balloon one of a ‘fleet’ of Chinese surveillance devices, US alleges

US ‘not the only target’ of Chinese surveillance, warns US secretary of state, as FBI investigates balloon wreckage



US Navy sailors recover the wreckage of the downed Chinese surveillance balloon off the coast of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Photograph: PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS TYLER TH/US NAVY/AFP/Getty Images

*[Julian Borger](#) in Washington*

Wed 8 Feb 2023 22.29 ESTFirst published on Wed 8 Feb 2023 17.43 EST

China has a “fleet” of surveillance balloons of different shapes and sizes, which it has deployed over five continents, US officials have claimed.

The allegations on Wednesday came as salvage work continued off the South Carolina coast for the debris from a high-altitude [Chinese balloon](#) a

[US jet fighter downed](#) on Saturday after it had crossed the whole of the continental US.

“We’re not alone in this,” said the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken. “We’ve already shared information with dozens of countries around the world both from Washington and through our embassies. We’re doing so because the United States was not the only target of this broader programme which has violated the sovereignty of countries across five continents.”

On Thursday, Japan said cases of suspected balloons flying over Japan had been confirmed, including in the waters off the south-western region of Kyushu in 2022. Tokyo was exchanging data with the US, said government spokesperson Hirokazu Matsuno.

“We will continue to monitor the situation with utmost interest and gather information,” he said.

The Pentagon spokesperson, brigadier general Patrick Ryder, said the FBI and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service were working to catalogue the wreckage of the downed balloon and transfer it to the mainland for further examination. The Pentagon has published photographs of sailors on small navy boats gathering parts of the balloon from the surface, but most of the equipment payload – said to be the size of a regional passenger jet – has sunk to the sea bed.

President Joe Biden said Wednesday that the US was “not looking for conflict” with China despite tensions over the balloon. “We’re going to compete fully with China, but ... we’re not looking for conflict – and that’s been the case so far,” he said in an interview with the PBS network.

Asked if the incident had caused major damage to the relationship with Beijing, Biden said: “No.”

The Pentagon assesses that Chinese surveillance balloons flew over parts of the US three times during the Trump administration and once previously under Biden’s tenure, and escaped immediate detection. One [Chinese spy balloon](#) “drifted past Hawaii and across Florida” as it “circumnavigated the

globe” in 2019, according to a US air force intelligence account reported by CNN.

Ryder said the US had found a way of spotting the approaching balloons and the most recent one was tracked from the time it approached in the Aleutian islands in the north Pacific.

“When you look at the scope of this programme – and the fact that we know that these balloons have been spotted operating over at least five continents and regions like Latin America, South America, south-east Asia, east Asia and Europe – it demonstrates why, for the department of defence, China remains the pacing challenge,” Ryder said. “It calls into question why China feels that it’s OK to violate the sovereign airspace of nations in a way that is inappropriate and unacceptable.”

At a meeting with Blinken, the Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, was asked if he was aware of overflights of other members of the alliance, but did not answer directly.

“What we see is that [China](#), over the last years, has invested heavily in new military capabilities, including different types of surveillance and intelligence platforms,” Stoltenberg told reporters.

“We also see increased Chinese intelligence activities in Europe, again on different platforms. They use satellites, they use cyber, and – as we’ve seen in the United States – also balloons. So we just have to be vigilant. We need to be aware of the constant risk of Chinese intelligence and then step up what we do to protect ourselves.”

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## [Australian security and counter-terrorism](#)

# **Chinese-made security cameras to be removed from Australian government buildings**

More than 900 products made by Hikvision and Dahua discovered at 250 federal premises

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Chinese-made security cameras will be removed from government buildings across Australia. Photograph: Fred Dufour/AFP/Getty Images

*[Henry Belot](#)*

Wed 8 Feb 2023 19.12 EST Last modified on Wed 8 Feb 2023 19.14 EST

The federal government has committed to removing Chinese-made security cameras at government buildings across Australia, admitting there is a potential security problem that needs to be addressed.

An audit of surveillance equipment, conducted by the shadow cybersecurity minister, James Paterson, has confirmed that more than 900 products built by Chinese companies Hikvision and Dahua are installed at government locations.

The US and the UK have already banned these products at government locations, with the US Federal Communications Commission warning of an "unacceptable risk to national security" due to possible espionage and spyware.

Australia's defence minister, Richard Marles, confirmed that an audit of surveillance technology has been launched after reports at least 913 cameras have been installed at more than 250 governments buildings.

"Where those particular cameras are found, they're going to be removed," Marles told ABC Radio on Thursday. "There is an issue here and we're going to deal with it.

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"I don't think we should overstate it but I think it is right to be doing the assessment and making sure that we deal with that and that's what we're going to do."

Marles said significant issues had been identified and the federal government was determined to "fix" them, although he didn't give a timeline.

"That [risk has] obviously been there, I might say, for some time and predates us coming into office but, that said, it's important that we go through this exercise and make sure that our facilities are completely secure," Marles said.

Anthony Albanese said he did not believe removing the cameras would have an impact on diplomatic relations with China.

“We act in accordance with Australia’s national interest, we do so transparently, that’s what we’ll continue to do,” the prime minister told reporters at a press conference in Canberra.

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Paterson’s audit conducted revealed that there are 195 Chinese-made surveillance devices used by the Attorney General’s Department across 29 locations. There are 154 more at the Department of Climate Change and Energy and 134 more at social services offices.

“ASIO Director General Mike Burgess has said the data collected by Hikvision and Dahua cameras ‘and where it would end up and what else it could be used for, would be of great concern to me and my agency’,” Paterson said.

“Our Aukus partners and closest security allies, the United States and UK, announced in November 2022 that they were banning the devices from all government buildings because of the national security threat that they pose.”

Paterson has also raised concerns there may be Hikvision and Dahua cameras inside Parliament House, noting that he had not received confirmation from the Department of Social Services.

On Wednesday the newly appointed chair of the Australian War Memorial, Kim Beazley, confirmed that several Chinese-made security cameras would be removed from the location in “[an abundance of caution](#)”.

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## [Germany](#)

# German politicians and military chiefs suggest return of conscription

Berlin government attempts to pour cold water over prominent voices seeking to reverse Merkel-era phase out



Germany's defence minister, Boris Pistorius, visiting soldiers at a military training area in Altengrabow in January. Photograph: Ronny Hartmann/AFP/Getty Images

[Philip Oltermann](#) in Berlin

[@philipoltermann](#)

Thu 9 Feb 2023 03.44 EST

Political and military figures in [Germany](#) have suggested a return of compulsory military service after the new defence minister described the 2011 phase-out of general conscription as a “mistake” that had contributed to alienating the general public from civic institutions.

The German parliamentary commissioner for the armed forces, Eva Högl of the centre-left SPD, on Wednesday urged the government to ask itself whether some form of obligatory civic service was required to address staff shortages in the German army's ranks.

"We definitely need more personnel in the Bundeswehr," Högl told the Augsburger Allgemeine newspaper.

The chief of the German navy, Jan Christian Kaack, also recently proposed a return of mandatory military service along the Norwegian model, whereby men and women are called in for an examination upon turning 19, but only a small, motivated percentage of each year group is drafted into the army.

"I believe that a nation that needs to become more resilient in times like these will have a higher level of awareness if it is mixed through with soldiers," said Kaack.

The government, for which the growing debate is above all a headache, has been quick to try to pour cold water over the debate. "All of our efforts have to be concentrated on strengthening the Bundeswehr as a highly professional army," the finance minister, Christian Lindner, told Süddeutsche Zeitung, describing it as a "phantom dispute".

Steffen Hebestreit, a government spokesperson, on Monday described the debate as "nonsensical", adding that turning the Bundeswehr from a conscript to a professional army "could not be reversed from one moment to the next".

The debate was kicked off by an interview in which Boris Pistorius, the new defence minister who took office last month, said it had been a mistake to phase out conscription more than a decade ago.

From 1956 until 2011, German men were obliged to perform some form of civic service upon turning 18, with those who did not want to serve in the army having the option to instead carry out *Zivildienst* in civic institutions such as hospitals or homes for elderly people.

With the staffing requirements of a downsized army shrinking after the fall of the Berlin Wall, both services were suspended under Angela Merkel's rule in 2011, though a clause allowing the state to draft men into the armed forces remains part of the German Basic Law.

Recently army officials have complained of their struggles to fill the ranks of a Bundeswehr no more than 183,000 strong, while social institutions bemoan the lack of young care workers for whom a *Zivildienst* spell used to work as a door-opener into the sector.

When Pistorius described the phase-out as a mistake, he was explicitly referring not to the threat faced by an aggressive Russian state, but the social acceptance of armed forces in German society. "Back in the day there was a conscript at every second kitchen table", he said. "Which meant there was always a connection to civic society at large."

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Citing attacks on firefighters and police officers, Pistorius told Süddeutsche Zeitung "it appears that the people have lost the awareness that they themselves are part of the state and of society. [...] Taking responsibility for a set period could open eyes and ears for that".

A return of obligatory military service would require the state to spend millions of euros to rebuild and upgrade barracks and buy in weapons and equipment for training, not least because the number of eligible conscripts would be higher than in the past: as in Norway, a modern version of military conscription would probably have to apply to women as well as men.

Since modern armies require staff trained in increasingly complex military hardware, conscripts serving for only a few months would be of little use.

“The Russians would lead a different war against us,” said Carlo Masala, a professor of international politics at the University of the Bundeswehr, Munich, and a noted conscription-sceptic. “You don’t need mass armies, you need professionals with excellent training.”

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## North Korea

# North Korea puts on biggest ICBM display yet, with Kim Jong-un's daughter centre stage

Kim Ju-ae attends anniversary military parade and banquet at which Kim Jong-un praises 'strongest army in the world'



Daughter Kim Ju-ae is flanked by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and his wife Ri Sol-ju at a banquet to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the military in Pyongyang on Tuesday.

Photograph: KCNA/Reuters

*[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo and agencies*

Thu 9 Feb 2023 00.30 EST Last modified on Thu 9 Feb 2023 16.37 EST

[North Korea](#) has put on its biggest display yet of long-range missiles at a parade to mark a key military anniversary, as speculation grows that the

country's leader, [Kim Jong-un](#), is grooming his daughter as a possible successor.

State media said the nuclear-armed North displayed multiple long-range missiles at a parade late on Wednesday to mark the 75th anniversary of its army, with analysts saying they included what appeared to be a new, solid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

The parade was attended by Kim's daughter, [Kim Ju-ae](#), and was held a day after she accompanied Kim on a visit to an army base and at an official dinner to mark the military anniversary.

Photos released by KCNA showed Ju-ae seated between her father and her mother, [Ri Sol-ju](#), and surrounded by military officers at the banquet, thought to have taken place at a hotel in Pyongyang.



The parade at Kim Il-sung Square in Pyongyang displayed the biggest number of ICBMs yet. Photograph: KCNA/Reuters

Kim and his daughter wore black suits and white dress shirts and held hands as they walked down a red carpet alongside Ri. Kim told guests that it was his “greatest honour” to be the supreme commander of an army that is

“fulfilling the call of the times and history as the strongest army in the world”.

The presence of Kim’s second child, who is believed to be aged nine or 10, at public events has fuelled speculation that she is being primed for a future role in the regime, and possibly the leadership.



Kim Ju-ae attends a parade to mark the 75th anniversary of North Korea's military. Photograph: KCNA VIA KNS/AFP/Getty Images



Staff clap at a banquet attended by the Kim family in Pyongyang.  
Photograph: KCNA/Reuters

The missiles at Wednesday's parade demonstrated the country's "greatest" nuclear strike ability, the official KCNA news agency said on Thursday, although many experts believe the regime has yet to develop a nuclear warhead small enough to be placed on a missile.

The record-breaking number of weapons North Korea tested last year included those that could theoretically carry nuclear warheads and [strike targets as far away as the US mainland](#).

Satellite imagery from the US-based firm Maxar Technologies showed military vehicles and crowds in Kim Il-sung Square in the capital, Pyongyang, on Wednesday night.

The array of hardware reportedly included as many as 11 Hwasong-17s – North Korea's biggest ICBM to date – followed by what appeared to be four solid-fuel ICBMs. Some analysts said the solid-fuel missiles might have made an appearance at a 2017 parade and had so far not been tested.

Most of the regime's biggest ballistic missiles use liquid fuel, which requires them to be loaded with propellant at their launch site – a time-consuming process.

"This is cumulatively more ICBM launchers than we've ever seen before at a North Korean parade," Ankit Panda of the US-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said, adding that if equipped with multiple warheads, such a large number of missiles could be enough to saturate existing US missile defence systems.

In December, Kim supervised a test of a "high-thrust solid-fuel motor" for a new strategic weapon he said would be developed in the "shortest span of time", which experts said likely referred to a solid-fuel ICBM.



Pyongyang sees regular displays of North Korea's military hardware.  
Photograph: KCNA/Reuters

The use of solid fuel would boost North Korea's attack capability, since it offers greater mobility for missiles and reduces their launch preparation time, making them more difficult to detect and destroy in mid-flight.

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said Kim had "let North Korea's expanding tactical and long-range missile forces speak for themselves".

He added: "The regime has staked its legitimacy on nuclear weapons at the expense of diplomacy and the economy. Military parades largely serve to justify Kim's policies to a domestic political audience. The message Pyongyang wants to send internationally, demonstrating its capabilities to deter and coerce, will probably come in the form of solid-fuel missile tests and detonation of a miniaturised nuclear device."

State media showed Kim, dressed in a black coat and fedora, smiling and raising his hand as he watched thousands of troops march past.

The [first public appearance](#) of Kim's daughter, Kim Ju-ae, came in November last year, when she joined her father at the test-launch of a

Hwasong-17 missile, and she has since been seen at a meeting with military scientists and at a ballistic missile inspection.

Some observers believe Kim is using her to remind the world he has no intention of giving up his nuclear arsenal, viewing it as his best insurance against any attempt to topple his regime and bring an end to decades of rule by the Kim dynasty.

In a sign of her possible elevation in public life, state media referred to Ju-ae as Kim’s “respected” daughter – having previously described her as his “beloved” daughter – according to South Korea’s Yonhap news agency.

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## Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023

# Race to find quake survivors – as it happened

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## Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023

# Syria accused of playing politics with aid in aftermath of earthquake

Dispute with Damascus over who controls aid hinders efforts to get supplies into rebel-held north



Boxes of rescue aid delivered by an Iraqi air force plane at Damascus airport on Tuesday. Photograph: Sana/AFP/Getty Images

*[Patrick Wintour](#) Diplomatic editor*

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Syria was accused of playing politics with aid after the Syrian ambassador to the UN, Bassam Sabbagh, said his country should be responsible for the delivery of all aid into [Syria](#), including those areas not under Syrian government control.

The dispute over the control of the aid – along with the weather, destroyed roads and closed crossing points – is hampering aid efforts into northern

Syria, which is held by rebel groups.

The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said many roads were blocked as a result of damage and snow, adding that before the disaster as many as 4 million people were dependent on aid from across the border. Unicef, the UN children's agency, said it feared thousands of children had been killed on both sides of the Syria-Turkey border by the earthquake.

The death toll in government controlled areas in the regions of Aleppo, Latakia, Tartous and Hama rose to 769 deaths and 1,448 injured, most of which were in the cities of Aleppo and Latakia. More than 790 were reported dead in opposition held areas.

Turkish vice-president, Fuat Oktay, said 3,294 search and rescue personnel had reached Turkey from abroad, adding: "Over 70 countries have made requests, 14 of them are actually in the field." The EU said it had mobilised 27 search and rescue and medical teams, more than 1,150 rescue workers and 70 search and rescue dogs from 19 European countries.

But in northern Syria, the death toll is likely to increase dramatically as there are hundreds of families under the rubble, and many towns where no rescue teams have arrived.

Andrew Mitchell, the UK aid minister, acknowledged the problem of sending aid into northern Syria, but said the UK would be working with the White Helmets civilian defence force as it has for many years in the region. But he said more crossing points from Turkey into northern Syria needed to be opened.

The government in Damascus allows aid to enter the region through only one border crossing. It has been resistant to opening up aid into northern areas because it regards the aid as undermining Syrian sovereignty and reducing its chances of winning back control of the region.

"The areas worst affected by the earthquake inside Syria look to be run by the Turkish-controlled opposition and not by the Syrian government," said Mark Lowcock, the former head of UN humanitarian affairs. "It is going to

require Turkish acquiescence to get aid into those areas. It is unlikely the Syrian government will do much to help.”

Sabbagh told reporters in New York that António Guterres, the UN secretary general, “assured us that the UN will do all it’s possible in helping Syria in this very difficult situation”.

Sabbagh was asked whether Syria would agree to allow the UN to deliver aid through other crossing points from Turkey, if it was feasible. He did not respond directly, but said the government was ready to help and coordinate aid deliveries “to all Syrians in all territory of Syria”.

More than 1,400 people have died in Syria as a result of the earthquake, according to Damascus and authorities in the north-west part of the country controlled by anti-regime forces.

Ned Price, a spokesperson for the US secretary of state, ruled out delivering aid via the Syrian government, saying “it would be ironic, if not even counterproductive, for us to reach out to a government that has brutalised its people over the course of a dozen years now – gassing them, slaughtering them, being responsible for much of the suffering that they have endured.

“Instead, we have humanitarian partners on the ground who can provide the type of assistance in the aftermath of these tragic earthquakes. These partners, who unlike the Syrian regime, are there to help the people rather than brutalise them”.

He added: “The people of Syria need humanitarian access. NGO actors, these organisations, many of whom have been active in parts of Syria over the course of a dozen years now, need to have access to be able to go back and forth across the border, to deliver humanitarian assistance.”

Quataiba Idlibi, Syria’s lead at the US Atlantic Council thinktank, said the insistence of the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, on “cross-line aid [aid delivered from government held areas into rebel-held areas] is not about how aid is routed into affected areas, but about who distributes the aid and controls the economy of the humanitarian operations in the north-west.

Make no mistake, the Assad government has no capacity to implement any aid operation in north-west Syria.”

The flow of UN aid from Turkey to north-west Syria has been temporarily halted due to damage to roads and other logistical issues related to the earthquake that struck the two countries on Monday, a UN spokesperson said.

Madevi Sun-Suon, from the OCHA, said: “Some roads are broken, some are inaccessible. There are logistical issues that need to be worked through. We don’t have a clear picture of when it will resume.”

There is a wider concern that Turkey, facing larger loss of life, is focused understandably on saving its own citizens and will not be able to prioritise help into areas of Syria where forces that it backs have been operating. The distribution of the aid effort, and a possible clash between the Russian- and western-backed aid effort, is likely to prove problematic in the days ahead.

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## Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023

# UK to send aid to Turkey and Syria despite budget ‘strain’, says minister

More than 70 rescue specialists and sniffer dogs to help with efforts after thousands killed in earthquake-hit region

International teams arrive in Turkey and Syria as search for earthquake survivors continues – video

*Jessica Elgot Deputy political editor*

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UK aid will be sent to Turkey and Syria despite “very considerable strain” on the development budget, the cabinet minister Andrew Mitchell has said, after earthquakes [killed thousands](#) in the region.

Mitchell, who as a backbench MP opposed cuts to the aid budget, said there were specific funds allocated for major humanitarian disasters.

Hundreds of international rescue missions are en route to Turkey and Syria after a [series of powerful earthquakes](#) that have killed at least 4,800 people – with numbers expected to rise because of so many still trapped in rubble.

Support to Turkey has not yet left the UK, having been due to leave on Monday night. More than 70 rescue specialists and sniffer dogs will help with the efforts.

Speaking on Sky News, Mitchell, the minister for development, said: “The aid budget is under very considerable strain. But Britain always carves out a certain amount to cope with humanitarian crises. That is what people in Britain expect us to do. Britain is always there first and in strength to help when these appalling catastrophes take place. And we will be there this time.

“And the humanitarian budget is in a way slightly separate from the steady state international development budget, and it is there specifically to respond to crises like these. The humanitarian budget is very carefully coordinated and set and it reacts to the need on the ground.

“You could never tell at the beginning of the year what humanitarian crises are going to take place and therefore it has to be a flexible part of what we do.”

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Mitchell said the first three days of the [rescue effort](#) would be the most critical. “Britain is sending 76 people who specialise in getting people out of the rubble and four sniffer dogs, and also an emergency response team,” he told GB News. “The critical thing in these circumstances is the first 72 hours. These significant British assets are waiting to leave Birmingham. They were ready to leave last night.

“It has to be coordinated with the Turkish authorities. I expect them to leave within the next couple of hours so that they land in daylight. And then this British expertise will be helping what is a huge, international effort to save lives.”

He added: “It’s being coordinated very professionally by the Turkish authorities. They were ready to leave last night. But my information is that they will be leaving imminently and of course they will be landing in daylight, and that is the time where they can be most effective.”

The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned the death toll could rise to more than 20,000 people. Catherine Smallwood, the WHO’s senior emergency officer for Europe, said: “There’s continued potential of further collapses to happen so we do often see in the order of eightfold increases on the initial numbers.

“We always see the same thing with earthquakes, unfortunately, which is that the initial reports of the numbers of people who have died or who have been injured will increase quite significantly in the week that follows.”

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## Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023

### Explainer

# Syria earthquake aftermath: why is situation so bad in war-ravaged country?

Beset by crumbling infrastructure and food shortages, Syria's war-ravaged population was unprepared for the deadly quake



Rescuers search for survivors trapped under the rubble in north-western Syria. Photograph: EyePress News/Rex/Shutterstock

[Jonathan Yerushalmy](#)

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Syria bears the scars of 12 years of brutal war, the effects of which are likely to hamper aid efforts in the areas worst hit by the quake. Beset by conflict, food shortages, economic collapse and a recent cholera outbreak, the

country's national infrastructure has been at crisis point for years, barely able to support its war-weary population.

And that was before the worst earthquake to hit the region in decades struck.

## **Why has the earthquake caused so much damage?**

On average, there are fewer than 20 quakes over 7.0 magnitude in any year, making Monday's 7.8 event severe.

The region most affected in Syria – the northern area that borders Turkey – had already been decimated by years of war and aerial bombardment that destroyed homes, hospitals and clinics.

Buildings in [Aleppo](#) – Syria's prewar commercial hub – often collapse due to the dilapidated infrastructure, which has suffered from a lack of oversight during the war. In January, 13 people were killed when a five-storey residential building fell down in the city.

Aleppo bore the brunt of the combined Russian-Syrian offensive against rebel-held areas, facing relentless aerial bombardment until the rebel groups were driven out six years ago and the government reclaimed it.

Since then, many Syrians have been living in damaged buildings as there has been no systematic reconstruction of residential areas. State services remain minimal.

## **Can aid get to the areas that need it?**

The UN says damage to roads, fuel shortages and harsh winter weather will make it difficult.

The province of Idlib, in the country's north-west, was among the areas worst hit by the earthquake. Idlib is the country's last rebel-held enclave. After more than a decade of fighting, millions of refugees have settled in this region, which remains outside government control.



Residents, aided by heavy equipment, search for survivors amid the rubble of collapsed buildings in Syria's rebel-held Idlib province on the border with Turkey. Photograph: Omar Haj Kadour/AFP/Getty Images

"The infrastructure is damaged, the roads that we used to use for humanitarian work are damaged, we have to be creative in how to get to the people ... but we are working hard," the UN resident coordinator, El-Mostafa Benlamlah, told the Reuters news agency.

The government in Damascus also only allows aid to enter the region through one border crossing. The Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity has said [all crossings must be opened on an emergency basis](#).

Syria has been resistant to allowing aid into a region serving more than 4 million people because it regards the aid as undermining Syrian sovereignty and reducing its chances of winning back control of the region.

"The areas worst affected by the earthquake inside Syria look to be run by the Turkish-controlled opposition and not by the Syrian government," said Mark Lowcock, the former head of UN humanitarian affairs. "It is going to require Turkish acquiescence to get aid into those areas. It is unlikely the Syrian government will do much to help."

## **What was the situation in the north before the earthquake hit?**

The frontlines of Syria's war have been largely frozen for years, but a deepening economic crisis has led to fuel shortages, increased power cuts and growing deprivation.

The UN estimates that more than 4 million people in north-west Syria – many displaced by the conflict and living in camps – depend on cross-border aid for their day-to-day survival.

In the past, the opposition has accused Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, of withholding services from districts where the rebellion against him flared, in order to punish residents.

Additionally, dozens have been killed in a cholera outbreak that has been attributed in part to the country's crumbling infrastructure.

## **Will aid to Syria need to be increased?**

Even before the earthquake hit, the United Nations said the number of people in need of humanitarian support was greater than at any point since the war began, with 70% of the population requiring aid.

Last week, the World Food Programme warned that hunger rates in Syria were at their highest point since the war began; 2.9 million were at risk of sliding into hunger, while a further 12 million did not know where their next meal was coming from, the UN agency said.

### [Map of earthquake](#)

The UN estimates 90% of the 18 million people in Syria are living in poverty, with the economy blighted by conflict, drought and the Covid pandemic as well as the fallout from the financial crash in neighbouring Lebanon.

Benlamligh says the earthquake will only make the situation worse. “They are the same people – suffering more,” he says.

But despite the rolling crises through which most Syrians are forced to live, international support remains underfunded. The UN received less than half of the \$4.4bn (£3.7bn) it required from donors to meet growing needs in 2022, and if that trend continues, Benlamligh said the prospects for a recovery from the Syrian crisis could dim.

*Additional reporting by Patrick Wintour, Reuters and Agence-France-Presse*

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## **‘Following fashion? It’s a waste!’: Patricia Field on dressing SJP – and changing the world’s wardrobe**

[Morwenna Ferrier](#)



Patricia Field photographed this month at her gallery in New York.  
Photograph: Krista Schlueter/The Guardian

Field styled Sex and the City, The Devil Wears Prada and Ugly Betty, ran her own boutique, and claims to have invented leggings. She describes her wild life, and what it's like to dress Patti Smith, Madonna and Cardi B



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It is midday, and in New York the costume designer Patricia Field is gearing up to talk about *Sex and the City*. A “costume person and a fashion person”, Field, who turns 81 this week, is best known as the woman who put Carrie in a tutu and Samantha in Giorgio di Sant’Angelo bodysuits, convincing us along the way that a newspaper columnist could fit 200 pairs of shoes inside a Manhattan studio apartment. There was nothing in the script, but the party line, according to one of Field’s costume assistants, is that Carrie had a storage container in Brooklyn.

She is also the person who put Aidan Shaw, Carrie’s lapdog-of-a-suitor, in turquoise jewellery and expected us to get behind him. “He [John Corbett] had just done some sapless show and he wanted to repeat the look,” she says of his necklaces, while rolling her eyes. “I was like, OK, this is gonna be tricky.”

It was his clothes, too – particularly a suede jacket and white cowboy shirt – that supposedly thawed Carrie’s cold heart, yet somehow looked all wrong. “I know what you mean,” Field says. Was it the jacket? Or maybe the shirt was too tight? “Maybe it was the casting … but that’s not my department.”



Sarah Jessica Parker is ‘the person I’ve enjoyed dressing the most’: Field (front left) talks to Parker on the film set of *Sex and the City 2*. Photograph:

## Tina Paul

Field is about to publish her memoir, a colourful and compelling tell-all about her life and career before and after the show that made her name. In it, she describes *Sex and the City* (SATC) as like “an in-law that just won’t get out of your life”. But she also named the book *Pat in the City*, describes Sarah Jessica Parker (who played Carrie) as “the person I’ve enjoyed dressing the most” several times, and knows better than to gloss over what she calls “its mix and match fashion”. She writes about how Carrie’s aversion to scrunchies – a detail that would later become a plot line – was Parker’s idea; how Parker believed that her character shouldn’t wear tights, even in snow; and how Field managed to construct up to 50 outfits for each episode.

Sitting in her basement office below her gallery in the Bowery – “I always have offices in basements, I don’t know why” – Field appears on Zoom, fizzing with energy and dressed ready to hit Studio 54, one of her old haunts. Her cherry-coloured hair is barely contained by a red Hermès hat, and she stands up to show me her outfit: colour-block Versace jeans, a black scarf and a pair of black leather sleeves – they run from wrist to tricep. I have never seen a pair of leather sleeves. Her assistant directs me to Field’s website, where she sells them for \$250 (£208). For \$80 more, you can buy a Carrie necklace in yellow gold. Many do – it is still one of her bestsellers. Most of the stuff she sells is a mix of old and new, but all unusual – incongruous yet fabulous, much like Field. The outfit is very Milan, I say. “I like that about Italy. They’re absurd,” she says in a low, thick New York accent, and laughs.

That’s the thing about Field: she loves the absurd, and hates trends. She describes her aesthetic, personal and professional, as “happy” clothes. “Following fashion trends? It’s a waste,” she says. “To me, fashion is a cousin of art. And like art, originality is what counts. When it starts to feel intimidating, it’s time to change.” This might sound odd coming from the woman who has styled the most fashion-adjacent TV and films of the millennial age, including *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Ugly Betty*, *Emily in Paris* (on which she was a consultant) and, of course, SATC. But it is probably why, decades later, it is the clothes that you tend to remember.



Field on the runway for her Art Fashion Runway show at Art Basel in 2019.  
Photograph: Frazer Harrison/Getty Images

Take Carrie's tulle skirt in the opening sequence, which Field found in a \$5 bin at a fashion showroom, and chose not only because Parker used to be a ballerina but – in a sentence that is the best encapsulation of Carrie I've come across – because the character has “princess syndrome”. The snag was that Darren Star, SATC's creator and Field's longtime collaborator, didn't get it. “Darren is not fashion ... but that's not his role – it's mine. And if we put something that is trendy on the opening moments, and if this show is a hit, this trendy thing is going to get stale. And PS, it did become a hit.”

Field has little to say about its sequel, *And Just Like That*. She didn't work on it because of a schedule clash with *Emily in Paris*. But like everyone, she was “up in arms that [Kim Cattrall] didn't go”, she says. “But I get it, that was personal with her, and it doesn't matter now.”

Field was raised surrounded by clothes, at some points literally. She is half-Armenian, half-Greek, but US-born: her maternal grandparents emigrated from Lesbos to New York, where her mother began working at a laundry. Here she met Field's father, an Armenian tailor. He died of TB when Field was young and her mother got remarried, to a man she met through a dry-

cleaning business. In the book, Field jokes that she has “[Greek] mercantilism woven into my DNA”.

She grew up believing fashion and costume were interchangeable. Her mother dressed her in Peter Pan collars but Field loved the Lone Ranger, and dressing up as a cowgirl. She also knew how to put together an outfit. Her favourite piece of clothing was a Burberry raincoat with woven leather buttons bought on Madison Avenue, which she wore with prim Pringle cardigans and clumpy boots.

She didn’t plan to go into fashion, instead going to New York University to study philosophy and government. The book is littered with references to Plato and Socrates, and when we speak she is reading Aristophanes. At one point, she likens the bathroom at Studio 54 to Plato’s Symposium, “with gay men talking about eros”.

“I found my way at college,” she says. “That’s fairly typical.” It is also where she met her first partner, Susan, though she insists this was “no big gay pronouncement”. (Field has had several long-term girlfriends, but is currently single.) After graduating, she worked as a sales assistant to make money, but found that she was better at draping the mannequins. She became a buyer, and then opened her own place in Greenwich Village in 1966.

Field got the SATC gig after meeting Parker on the set of the 1995 romantic comedy Miami Rhapsody, one of her earliest gigs as a costume designer, and it was Parker who introduced her to Star. They had already shot the pilot for SATC with another costume designer, but if you rewatch it, you can see it looked too 90s, and too realistic. In one painfully familiar scene, Carrie is working from home in a baggy blue shirt and grey jogging bottoms. Field would change all that.

If I were a fish, the hook that used to catch me was how someone put themselves together. I just looked for creativity

While you can usually see Field’s hand in something before you see her name in the credits, the reception to the outfits in Emily in Paris was mixed. Field was only a consultant (she hired Marylin Fitoussi as the costume

designer) and, after two seasons, pulled out of that too. “I don’t know Paris and Paris fashion well enough to do it,” she says. “I also got too homesick. I missed my doggies, I missed my bed.”

Before filming started, though, she insisted on doing a recce, to get a handle on Parisian style. “So off I go, and I get outside and everyone is in cut-up jeans and sneakers,” she says, in mock horror. “French chic is dead, I said to Darren, but it’s not dead with me. Long live Pierre Cardin.” She does, however, blame Americans for bringing ultra-casual, distressed clothing to Paris. “I call it depression-wear,” she says, shrugging.



‘I don’t know Paris and Paris fashion well enough to do it.’ Field, who was a consultant on *Emily in Paris*, explains why she pulled out after two seasons. Photograph: Stephanie Branchu/Netflix

I’m surprised to hear how down she is on casual wear given that, in her book, she claims to have “invented leggings” (her executive administrator later admits that it has never been backed up). Regardless of this, Field’s came in spandex and cost just a few dollars to make, but flew off the shelves when she sold them in the late 70s, early 80s. It was, she says, all about timing, “because then, I saw Olivia Newton-John in these leggings and I was like, oh my God”.

The success of her TV work led Field to *The Devil Wears Prada*, and its layered necklaces and cerulean-blue jumpers. That was “a lot of fun”, she says, except for the part involving the character of the editor, Miranda Priestley, and her hair. Meryl Streep, who played Priestley, decided she wanted it to be white. “I thought, fabulous, it would work so well with all the editor clothing,” she says. “But the producers were men, stuck in their groove, and they think white hair is for old ladies so I said: ‘Meryl, you have to sell the idea. Only you will get your way.’” In the end, they agreed to give Priestley an ice-cream whip hairstyle. It was based on that of Christine Lagarde, who later became chief of the International Monetary Fund.

It is strange to think that costume design was a late-life career for Field. But for 50 years, from 1966 to 2016, she ran her boutique, Patricia Field, and its namesake label, House of Field. The space was small and the boutique would change address three times. She ran it throughout her career as a costume designer because, sensibly, she knew real estate was a safe bet. If Studio 54 and Paradise Garage were the places to party, her shop was the “place to be”.

Its success hinged around Field’s celebrity reach, but also, the “colourful people” she hired, that perhaps other people at the time wouldn’t – trans people, club kids and performers such as Amanda Lepore and Armen Ra. “I’m not a campaigner,” she says. “If I were a fish, the hook that used to catch me was how someone put themselves together. I just looked for creativity,” she says.



Field (right) on the set of *The Devil Wears Prada* with Meryl Streep. The male producers were against the idea of Streep having white hair for the part. Photograph: Cinematic Collection/Alamy

It became a magnet for celebrities. Her second shop in the Bowery was “sub-sidewalk, six steps down”, so she could usually see people coming. “The first time Patti Smith came down to the store, I was like: ‘Who is this ragamuffin?’” she says. “She was wearing these wrinkled-up pants and top. Then the second time, she had an olive-green mink coat which she just threw on a chair. She picked out this chiffon blouse I’d got from Paris and said: ‘I guess you’re wondering where I’m gonna wear this?’ I said, yeah. She said: ‘For the final night of my tour. Do you wanna come?’ So I did, and there she was, on stage in this \$250 blouse, all wrinkled up.”

The shop’s staff and customers sound like a glossary of New York characters from the early 70s to the late 90s. Britney Spears, Ronnie Spector, Paris Hilton and Lenny Kravitz were all regulars. She sold Keith Haring’s “Free South Africa” T-shirts, and he would also do her window displays. Jean-Michel Basquiat would sit on the floor, drawing on Tyvek jumpsuits with a marker pen (the jumpsuits sold for \$25 each). At one point, she says, Basquiat used to rehearse with his band, Gray, in her loft apartment because she had a baby grand piano there.

Field is wry, sharp and funny, but occasionally her memory fails her. Some of the book's more granular anecdotes, of which there are many, were obtained through its co-author, the journalist Rebecca Paley, who interviewed former employees. Such as the time Madonna had to wait outside until the shop opened (she had arrived at 10am and they didn't open until 11am) or how Cardi B used to pay for clothes with single dollar bills (she used to be a stripper). Or how Matt Dillon never wore underwear when trying on jeans.

But she remembers the dark times, how living and working in New York during the 70s and 80s meant she was in the thick of the Aids crisis. This is partly why she became involved in the ballroom scene, getting the fashion journalist André Leon Talley to judge, and Debbie Harry to attend. This scene, she says, had become more than a competition; it was a respite from what was going on.

Field didn't fixate on it. "The nightlife was still alive," she says. "But it was shocking." She lost several friends to the crisis, including the designer Halston, her store manager Tim, and her good friend Little Michael, who introduced her to Studio 54. What struck her was the silence, and the speed of it. "I remember when Little Michael one day said: 'Pat, I have the gay disease.' I said: 'What gay disease?' Less than a month later, he was dead. He was 22."

No one, least of all Field, predicted this many career changes, and certainly not the success of most of them, particularly SATC. But if the show's longevity hinges on the writing, and the chemistry, it wouldn't have lasted without the clothes. Does she get fed up talking about it, all these years later? "Sometimes, I get a little sick of talking about it – but I don't want to get too jaded," she says, laconically. "Bottom line, I'm glad it happened and I'm glad people enjoyed it."

*Pat in the City. My Life of Fashion, Style, and Breaking All the Rules by Patricia Field, published by 4th Estate, is out on 14 February.*

This article was amended on 8 February 2023 to say that Patricia Field will turn 81 this year, not 82 as an earlier version of this article said.

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## Real estate

# ‘We owe our landlord £1m in rent – but they’ve left us with substandard homes’

Homeless charity’s fight over rent arrears adds to property funds’ woes, including rising interest rates and sceptical investors



Commercial property faces a perfect storm of rising interest rates, a strained economy and sceptical investors. Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images



[Julia Kollewe](#)

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Matt Fearnley's charity owes almost £1m in rent to its landlord – but that bill is likely to keep growing unless his long list of complaints ranging from black mould to leaking ceilings is addressed.

Fearnley, the chief executive of homelessness charity Noble Tree Foundation, has withheld several months' rent from Home Reit, a London Stock Exchange-listed real estate investment trust, over what he says is £3.2m owed for repairs and insurance that have not been forthcoming.

“The model hasn’t worked for the tenants,” says Fearnley, whose charity manages 421 homes with 1,013 beds in Northampton, Newcastle, Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton and London. “We’ve got properties that are unfit for people to live in and we’ve had to shut some of them down because they are just not right for anybody, let alone a vulnerable person.



A Home Reit property in Northampton managed by Noble Tree. Both say the residents – a mother with her young child – will be rehoused. Photograph: Noble Tree Foundation

“We’ve been promised an amount of money that hasn’t been delivered. We pay for refurbishments as best as we can, but we can’t pay for everything. Tenants are living in substandard accommodation.”

Home Reit was established in 2020 as the first London-listed property fund tackling homelessness, and had ambitions to grow into a £1bn fund and take 10,000 people off the street. Now, it has been embroiled in a ballooning crisis over rent arrears, and has fallen prey to short sellers that bet on falls in a company’s share price.

Its crisis mirrors wider problems across the listed property sector – spanning offices to shopping centres – as rising interest rates, working from home and the weakening economy pile pressure on landlords.

“City institutions like Scottish Widows and M&G bought into [Home Reit] because there was a nice social promise, and it’s worked in the United States,” says Fearnley. “But it only makes sense if you have a long-term relationship with the charities to make sure the tenants are looked after.”

Noble Tree faces potential court action from its landlord, but it is not alone in withholding rent. Home Reit's biggest tenant, Liverpool-based Big Help Group, has also stopped paying rent, along with another major tenant, Wolverhampton-based Lotus Sanctuary, which is on the brink of collapse.

Home Reit has let 2,470 properties, with 11,861 beds, to registered charities and housing associations on leases ranging from 20 to 30 years.

Images provided by Noble Tree show two properties in Northampton in poor condition, one of which lies empty. The other one is occupied by a woman and her young son.



A Home Reit property in Northampton managed by Noble Tree Foundation, which it says lies empty and needs a full refurb. Photograph: Noble Tree Foundation

A spokesperson for Home Reit said: "Home Reit is shocked to learn of the state of disrepair at the property. When Home Reit acquired the property it was in fair condition although the building survey identified some areas that required addressing as part of the agreed refurbishment, and the company understood there was a plan in place by the tenant with the developer to undertake this."

“Home Reit has been trying to gain access to the property since August 2022 as part of our regular inspections and this has not been given. Now we have been made aware we are trying to find a solution to move the resident out of the property as soon as possible.”

The company, which counts Peter Cardwell, the talkRadio political editor and a former special adviser to Conservative cabinet ministers, among its non-executive directors, faces legal action itself from shareholders angered by the near-70% drop in the share price in the past year.

Home Reit’s shares were suspended on the first stock market trading day this year because the firm missed a deadline to publish its annual financial report. Accountants BDO have embarked on a deep-dive into its books, with “enhanced audit procedures”.

Home Reit says the funds Noble Tree is owed relate to a dispute Noble Tree has with the developer of the properties. (Noble Tree said both were responsible to the charity to provide good quality property.)

The firm has become a target for short sellers, including [UK firm Viceroy Research](#), run by Fraser Perring. Viceroy Research previously took on Germany’s Wirecard, which later filed for insolvency amid a fraud scandal.

Globally, real estate is the most shorted business sector and in Europe, the second-most shorted sector, behind consumer services, according to Matt Chesselum, securities finance director at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Chesselum says the most-shorted companies in Europe include UK shopping centre group [Hammerson](#) as well as Home Reit, along with the Swedish real estate company SBB and Luxembourg-based Adler Group. “I can’t see that changing anytime soon given rising interest rates.”



The most-shorted companies in Europe include UK shopping centre group Hammerson  
Photograph: Omar Marques/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Viceroy Research has accused Home Reit of buying properties at inflated prices, and questioned the ability of charities to service 25-year leases. Home Reit rejected the claims in a detailed rebuttal.

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Oli Creasey, equity research analyst at Quilter Cheviot, says: “The short-selling report makes a raft of allegations against the company, some of which don’t hold water, but others which could be very damaging.”

Home Reit recently said its investment adviser Alvarium had hired Simpact Group, which it described as a specialist social housing property manager, to help with rent collection and review the company’s portfolio and tenants. It said it was working with its auditor, BDO, to publish its delayed results “as soon as is practically possible”.

However, the appointment of Simpact has raised eyebrows. Simpact is run by its founder and chief executive Joseph Kahan, 31, and says it manages a social housing portfolio in England and Wales across more than 100 local authorities. It declined to provide further details on its portfolio. Simpact is the trading name of Krea Group Ltd, a company established a year ago that has one director, Kahan, and has yet to file accounts, [according to Companies House](#).

Home Reit declined to comment. A spokesperson for Simpact says it has started reviewing the company’s portfolio, adding: “Simpact’s team of senior strategic housing advisers, former commissioners and care professionals is recognised for its track record in change management and operational experience in social housing.”

Concerns have also been voiced over other property funds including Civitas Social [Housing](#), targeted by the short seller ShadowFall in 2021, and Triple Point Social Housing, which both provide housing to adults with complex care needs.

Charities such as Crisis and Women’s Aid and politicians are worried about the business model of Reits. [The Regulator of Social Housing is concerned](#) that Reits award long leases to their tenants, including inexperienced housing associations, which can lead to badly managed housing.

“We have been concerned for some time about the worrying growth in inadequate, poorly managed exempt accommodation, often driven by investment vehicles such as Reits,” says Matt Downie, chief executive of the homeless charity Crisis.

“Unfortunately, all too often we hear stories of people living in such properties who are living in unacceptable conditions, leaving people in vulnerable situations with inadequate support.”

Triple Point declined to comment. Civitas has rejected ShadowFall’s claims relating to acquisitions and leases, and says it has made some changes: “Civitas’s latest fully audited results show that the Civitas model provides high levels of care (average 50 hours a week) and value for money to the taxpayer.”

However, ShadowFall, which does not have a short position in Home Reit or Civitas at present, still harbours concerns. Its managing partner Matthew Earl says the issues flagged in two open letters to the board of Civitas in 2021 “are storing up significant risk, not only to Civitas’ shareholders but also carry systemic risk to other stakeholders within the sector”. Civitas declined to comment on this.

Another critic is David Robertson, founder of The Boatman Capital Research, usually a short seller, which this time has bought shares in Home Reit to push for change in the leadership.

“You’ve got a number of macro factors that make this sector look troubled. You’ve got a decline in property prices, which is going to force these companies to re-evaluate their property portfolios,” said Robertson.

“You’ve got higher interest rates, which is going to increase their cost of borrowing and they are making most of these acquisitions with quite a bit of leverage, so you can see that higher rates would hit them quite hard. You’ve got governments squeezing spending, another round of austerity, and local governments are going to feel the pinch.”

Elsewhere in Europe, Luxembourg-based Vivion, which invests in offices and hotels in Germany and the UK, has been shorted by the American firm Muddy Waters Research, founded by Carson Block in 2010. [Muddy Waters says](#) that Vivion’s real estate portfolios are overvalued. [Its claims have been rejected by Vivion.](#)

“We are looking at situations where we think the companies are seriously broken,” says Block. “It’s depressing to see us [short sellers] being so demonised. I’m one of the few people in the market who are not spinning a happy story.”

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## Women

# ‘Loud, dirty and simple’: Leicester’s punk collective for older women

‘We write our own music and we’ve got a lot to say about everything we’re angry about. I’ve been enraged for years’



Members of Unglamorous Music, a collective of 11 all-female punk/garage bands. Pictured (l-r) Carole Jasilek, Steph Smith, Chrissie Riedhofer, Ruth Miller and Abi Masih. Photograph: Fabio De Paola/The Guardian



[Amelia Hill](#)

[@byameliahill](#)

Tue 7 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 04.20 EST

Alison Dunne – stage name Fish – has formed a punk band at the age of 58 because, as she said: “I’ve got no fucks to give any more about what anyone thinks of me.”

She does care about one thing though: “This is definitely not a ‘cutesy grannies have a go at punk’ band – this is serious fun,” she said. “We write our own music and we’ve got a lot to say about everything we’re angry about. I’ve been enraged for years,” she added.

Fish is just one of the older women from all classes and ethnicities who have joined the the Leicester-based, [Unglamorous Music project](#). Founded last year by 61-year-old Ruth Miller, the aim is to create a local punk scene for older, all-female bands who write their own music. Prior musical experience is immaterial – enthusiasm is everything.



Unglamorous Music, a collective of 11 all-women punk/garage bands in Leicester. Photograph: Fabio De Paola/The Guardian

“There is a very limited range of hobbies that are acceptable as an older woman,” said Miller. “If you like music, for example, then you’re expected to join a choir.

“The genius of punk is that you don’t need to have played an instrument before starting. The main thing is your lyrics,” she added. “Most bands are young, white men aged 19 to 23 and their lyrics are about their experiences. But put together women whose ages range from late 20s to early 70s, and their experience of life, their humour, their anger – these songs are absolutely brilliant.”

The success of the project has, Miller says, been “overwhelming”. At a gig on International Women’s Day last March – just three months after setting up the project – Miller put five bands on stage. This March, there will be 12 bands ready to rock. A lavishly produced, compilation vinyl of their music is in production.

Fish, a former theatre producer, had no musical experience beyond playing the ukulele “to a very basic level” until she joined Unglamorous last year.

Punk appealed to her because “it’s time for the anarchic, loud, shouty stuff to happen again”.

“You just get in there with punk,” she said. “It’s loud, dirty and simple. It frees me from the fact that older women disappear in our culture; that we get looked at as old boilers – which is why our band is called *Boilers* – who have nothing of interest or importance to say. Punk enables me to refute that – at volume.”

Fish isn’t alone. Chrissie Riedhofer will be 60 in April. Last month she started playing drums, guitar and bass, and co-formed the punk band Virginia’s Wolves.

“When I was young in the 70s, I was interested in punk but people told me I couldn’t be black and into punk,” she said. “It’s taken me a long time but I no longer care what people think.”

Nor does Abi Masih, the 48-year-old Indian drummer for The Wonky Portraits, who had “zero skills” in drumming before joining the band last year. “Being in a punk group is almost like having a secret life,” she said. “It makes me feel there’s more to me than just being a parent, a teacher and a daughter. It’s edgy. Rebellious.”

Not caring what people think is “definitely part of the punk ethos”, said Carole Jasilek, the 70-year-old drummer for Venus Attax. “Punk was anarchic and what’s more anarchic than older women letting rip?” she said.

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Ruth Miller, founder of the Unglamorous Music project. Photograph: Fabio De Paola/The Guardian

Steph Smith, the 71-year-old guitarist for Velvet Crisis is very keen on letting rip. “All my life, I’ve kept it all bottled up inside,” she said. “I’ve had to be respectable and then watch as I aged and became invisible to society. But we’re not invisible on stage. We’re not little grannies. Our songs are full of anger and frustration.”

Velvet Crisis were asked to perform at a neighbourhood party recently. “We had to turn them down,” said Smith. “They didn’t know what they were asking really. The language we use on stage is far too bad for a safe, local party.”

Punk has become so important to many of the group’s members that they cram it into already jam-packed lives. Janet Berry, the 53-year-old guitarist and bass with Velvet Crisis, is a full-time working mother who lives in [Leicester](#) and works in London.

“It’s hard but I make it work because it’s just so incredible that people are actually listening to us,” she said. “It means I can say that I’m still a really big part of society – that I’ve got views. That I’m a useful person.”

## Punk Generation by Miller’s band, The Verinos

*Not gonna do the things we’re supposed to do  
We’re not gonna do them; not gonna do them  
You may look and you may stare  
Raise your eyebrows; we don’t care  
‘Cos we’re not gonna do the things we’re supposed to do, oh yeah  
Invisible women  
Punk generation  
Grey hair pink hair  
Punk generation  
Should we sit in the garden? (No!)  
Should we go to a spa? (No!)  
Do some out-of-town shopping (No!)  
Fancy gin in a bar (Maybe ... )  
Should we go back to bed?  
Should we wait for the end?  
With daytime TV  
And an Instagram friend?*

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## A month in AmbridgeRadio

# Charlotte Higgins on The Archers: radio to make you weep recklessly

Isn't it strange that we can become so fond of invisible characters made of vibrations in the air? As Ambridge loses one of its patron saints, I mourn deeply – and I cannot be alone



She was at the heart of The Archers ... rest in peace. Photograph: Sally Anderson/Alamy



[Charlotte Higgins](#)

Tue 7 Feb 2023 02.00 EST

January went quite nicely, at first. Jazzer and Tracy finally got engaged despite much fumbling interference from Brad and Chelsea. Justin, for reasons as yet mysterious, decided to put himself forward for shifts in the village shop. Sales of chenin blanc and luxury truffles have never been higher.

The Archers has long had a thing with brothers. Of the Cain-and-Abel, Romulus-and-Remus, chalk-and-cheese variety: William and Ed; Rex and Toby; David and Kenton. This January, it was the turn of Jakob, the “easy on the eye” (Lilian’s words) veterinary surgeon, to produce a sibling.

Erik, who parked himself in the Rookery for a few days in Jakob’s absence, proved to have all the aesthetic appeal of his brother, combined with a flirtatious charm entirely lacking in Jakob. Kirsty invited him for a swim in the Am. (I know! Wild swimming! It’s Guardian-reading, tofu-eating wokery gone mad!) Despite the hypothermic chill, they kissed afterwards over hot chocolate and a crackling bonfire. Later, they memorably scaled Lakey Hill together. One wished them well.

And so the month meandered on. Until it juddered, shockingly, suddenly and without warning, into something else: Jennifer Aldridge is dead.

Her voice has been part of my life as far back as memory takes me

Is it normal to weep recklessly in the kitchen because of a story on the radio? I know I was not alone. “Jenny darling” – as Brian so often called her – was at the heart of *The Archers*. She was born in 1945 to Peggy and Jack Archer, and her voice has been part of my life as far back as memory takes me. She had her faults – a snobbishness and pride in the material; a certain blindness to things, not least her own daughter’s alcoholism. But she was admirable, even saintly, as she strained to keep the peace between her quarrelsome brood. There were four children by three fathers, then her husband’s child Ruairi, born from an affair that nearly destroyed her, and whom she brought up, at first hesitatingly, and then with devotion. Her life had layers. She had a past (one of scandal, when, unmarried, she became pregnant in 1966) and one of some creative ambition: she wrote novels, a history of Ambridge, journalism. She was a contradictory person, as are we all.

How does one become so fond of the invisible creatures who speak to us from the radio? These complicated people who, after all, are made only of sound waves, of vibrations in the air? Time, I think: time is the great silent character in *The Archers*. Jenny’s life once walked in lockstep with our own. Now she falls silent. She died because she had too weak a heart: something that could never have been said of her, in life.

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## 2023.02.07 - Opinion

- From demands about avocado rotation to staff in tears, working for the Tories can be perilous
- Jeremy Hunt says focus on the ‘economically inactive’. I say he is scapegoating the sick
- GPs are under enormous pressure - but mine is still somehow brilliant
- As the detective who inspired TV’s Prime Suspect, I know this: the misogyny of David Carrick lives on

## OpinionBullying

# **From demands about avocado rotation to staff in tears, working for the Tories can be perilous**

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



The party of workplace scandals simply cannot be trusted with looking after our employment laws post-Brexit



‘It’s still a subjective judgment as to whether leaving junior officials in tears, as Dominic Raab is said to have done, is a sacking offence.’ Photograph: Mark Thomas/Rex/Shutterstock

Mon 6 Feb 2023 12.29 EST Last modified on Mon 6 Feb 2023 14.35 EST

When Hazel Settas took a job as housekeeper to a wealthy Tory MP, she evidently wasn’t ready for what she found.

Her [instructions](#) for running the former minister Jonathan Djanogly’s £7m home read more like the backstage rider of a particularly demanding pop diva than something out of Mrs Beeton. Rules on the management of avocados alone ran to 100 words, with a strict system of rotation between bowl and fridge to maintain ripeness (“check to see if there are eight soft avocados in the fridge … if not add up the missing number of soft avocados and put this number of hard avocados into the fruit bowl”). Phone calls were to be answered within four rings, and there were instructions on carrying items correctly from the coffee table to the sink. Settas, who lasted only a fortnight in the job, said she had to work until 10 or 11 at night to complete her tasks and that the MP’s wife, Rebecca Silk, allegedly shouted at her to “hurry up”; the housekeeper cried, she says, in her room at night.

“I was shocked she would behave like that when her husband was an MP,” Settas told the Sunday Mirror, after successfully pursuing Silk through the courts for £886 in wages that she argued she was owed. But, given how some of Djanogly’s colleagues have been behaving lately, perhaps it won’t have come as much of a shock to readers. A second, unnamed housekeeper, who also took legal action after working for the Djanogly-Silk household, was awarded £3,148 in unauthorised wage deductions, overtime and annual leave, with the judge concluding that Silk had “sought to deprive” her of important working rights.

By grim coincidence, all this hit the headlines just as the House of Lords was due to [debate the fate](#) of employment laws post-Brexit – amid concerns that a raft of protections derived from the EU could be swept away at the stroke of a ministerial pen – and Downing Street was grappling with a series of workplace [bullying allegations](#) against deputy prime minister Dominic Raab (which he denies).

Working for the rich is famously never easy, and the same can be true of cabinet ministers under pressure. What’s fascinating about both these cases is that they fall into a grey area of workplace behaviour that’s becoming more and more crucial to define.

Withholding pay is obviously against the law; nothing grey about that. But being strangely controlling about avocados isn’t illegal. The ministerial code does specifically outlaw bullying at work, defined by the civil service as intimidating or insulting behaviour. But it’s still ultimately a subjective judgment as to whether leaving junior officials in floods of tears, as Raab is said to have done, is a sacking offence or still just within the boundaries of what one ally tactfully calls [behaving “like a CEO”](#). When does being the kind of scary boss many of us have occasionally encountered tip over into being the kind of boss nobody should have to tolerate? Or to put it another way: how far should anyone, in any walk of life, be allowed to behave like a jerk?

On the one hand sits a “never did me any harm” brigade, who think it’s feeble to complain about the sort of ritual hazing that happened all the time when they were young. On the other are people who recognise that that was

30 years ago, and that Tory MPs who have spent a decade or more in parliament – as arcane a workplace, in its way, as the mansions of the super-rich – may have lost touch with what they fondly imagine the outside working world to be like.

Mark Price, another former Tory minister and the former managing director of Waitrose, who is now running the digital career development platform WorkL, warned at the weekend that his firm's research suggests 33% of British workers are considering leaving their jobs. That's unusual, on the brink of a recession, but is a marker of changing times, where workers can – if only temporarily – afford to be more picky, with more vacancies lying open than a shrunken post-Brexit workforce can currently fill. Keeping people happy, Price told the Sunday Times, is now paramount for employers; the biggest driver of job satisfaction is a good relationship with your manager, yet on average British bosses dish out far more criticism than praise.

Maybe the Ministry of Justice should get him in for some pointers. Or better still – and ideally before ministers run the red pen over all those hard-won employment rights – maybe this administration could accept that the world has moved on since the 1990s, and that whatever the 2023 definition of being “like a CEO” involves, it isn't making people cry.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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## OpinionDisability

# **Jeremy Hunt says focus on the ‘economically inactive’. I say he is scapegoating the sick**

[Frances Ryan](#)



The chancellor's rhetoric, echoed by the rightwing press, makes his view clear: that being too ill to work is a lifestyle choice



‘If you’re off work to spend more time on the golf course, you could get tax breaks. If you left because you were diagnosed with Parkinson’s, you may get a call from the fraud squad.’ Photograph: Jordan Pettitt/PA

Tue 7 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 05.38 EST

As the government lurches between screw-ups, sleaze and scandals, it is ironic that one of its key policy agendas is based on the premise that the rest of us aren’t working properly. The chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, has highlighted the “economically inactive” as a key issue facing the UK. The number of working-age people either unable or unwilling to take a job has increased by about 630,000 since 2019, according to government estimates, resulting in a staggering 9 million people missing from the job market.

Broadly, Hunt is concerned about two camps: the over-50s who took early retirement during the pandemic, and the increasing number of people who can’t work because of long-term health conditions and disabilities – a state of affairs put down to factors ranging from soaring NHS waiting lists to long Covid.

Hunt’s strategies to bring the two groups back into the workforce, however, are stark in their differences. Ministers are reportedly looking into a “midlife MOT” to coax older workers back to at least part-time roles, including

financial incentives and mentoring schemes. The Treasury is also reportedly considering exempting over-50s who return to work from income tax for up to a year.

Contrast this with their tactics towards people who are off work through no choice of their own due to illness or disability. The government is obliging 600,000 claimants on universal credit to meet a “work coach” so they can increase their hours or earnings, even though many will have health problems or caring responsibilities. Meanwhile, ministers are said to be planning to target the partners of people on benefits to push them into paid work. Stay-at-home mums whose partners receive universal credit could be “blitzed” with an ad campaign to get them into the labour market. Middle-class mums, presumably, will be permitted to stay at home. Then there’s the new anti-fraud drive. Just as long-term sickness shot up, the government announced £280m of fresh investment to “crack down” on benefit fraud and errors for the next two years – despite that accounting for just 4% of total benefit expenditure last year.

If you’re off work because you’re spending more time on the golf course, you could get tax breaks. If you left your job because you were diagnosed with Parkinson’s, you may get a call from the fraud squad. The government is trying a carrot and stick approach to fix the labour gap, except the over-50s get the carrot and the long-term sick get the stick. Reports in the Sunday Times about the upcoming review by the work and pensions secretary, Mel Stride, into the labour market gap suggests more progressive measures to help ill and disabled claimants may yet to be unveiled. These range from cash for occupational health assessments and flexible home working, to enabling those who are able to return to at least part-time work to still receive sickness benefits. These have the potential to be genuinely helpful policies. That ministers are also said to be considering bolstering the sanctions regime and requiring some long-term sick people to meet work coaches more regularly, however, is a worrying sign of their true agenda.

This is in part a story of intergenerational inequality, where the boomer generation can afford to retire early with paid-off mortgages while their children struggle to afford the rent. But it is largely one of class and health, in which those with the means are seen by those in power as “contributors”

offered rewards to return to work, while those without are “takers” penalised for being unable to.

Just look at the way the rightwing press has been reporting on the issue. [The Sun](#)’s report gleefully described the government’s plan to get mums back into the workforce as a way to “drag them off benefits”. The Mail [screams](#) of an “epidemic of inactivity”. [The Spectator](#), meanwhile, claims to have “proof” that more than 5 million people are now on out-of-work benefits, as if there are hordes of claimants hiding under official figures. Whether it is ministers or the press, the implication of such rhetoric is clear: being too ill to work is a lifestyle choice.

In the past few years, as the Tories have focused on the spectacle of Brexit and culture wars, the anti-“welfare” strategy that dominated the early 2010s under David Cameron has been noticeably quieter. But the increasing hardship of the cost of living crisis, coupled with the implosion of support for the Conservative party in the polls, offers a chance to bring it back to the foreground. At a time when many workers can’t afford to put the heating on, it is fertile ground for convincing voters that the work-shy sick are scamming the system.

A government that was genuine about closing the labour gap would actually address the reasons for it. That means providing NHS and social care investment, affordable childcare, tackling disability prejudice from employers, and acknowledging that Brexit robbed us of migrant’s talents.

[Research](#) by the Institute for Fiscal Studies published last week showed that successive waves of welfare changes have trapped people in dead-end low-paid work, with many still needing top-up benefits to survive. This just shows how self-defeating a drive to get claimants back to work at any cost can be.

Instead of fearing excess claims for disability benefits, the government could start by recognising that a decade of tightening eligibility for out-of-work sickness benefits, on top of cuts to rates, means disabled people are actually [far more likely](#) to be incorrectly found “fit for work” than awarded benefits they don’t need.

The tragedy is, this would involve an intellect and morality current ministers are severely lacking. Scapegoating the sick is altogether easier.

- Frances Ryan is a Guardian columnist
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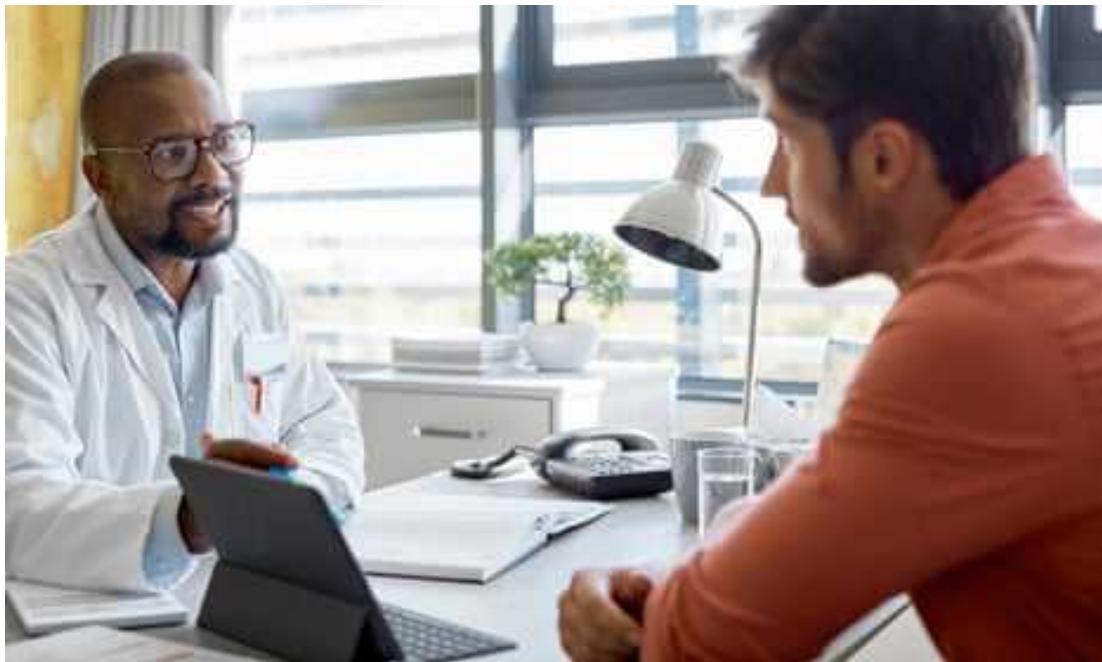
[\*\*OpinionHealth\*\*](#)

## **GPs are under enormous pressure – but mine is still somehow brilliant**

[\*\*Zoe Williams\*\*](#)



General practice is overstretched and chronically underfunded, but many doctors still offer an almost magically good service



‘We should be able to acknowledge the pressure GPs are under, while still noting that they are good.’ Photograph: Morsa Images/Getty Images (Posed by models)

Tue 7 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 09.25 EST

I have a great GP. I’m not saying that to show off, or to rub anyone’s nose in anything. I’m not saying it to undermine the case overall that general practice is on its knees, in the middle of a recruitment crisis, nationwide burnout and deliberate, long-range underfunding. It just feels as if patients have been backed into a corner where, if we complain about our access to general medicine, some tax-avoiding Tory pops up to suggest that we should pay for appointments, while, if we say it’s fine, they say: “There you go – it’s all going great and nobody knows what doctors are complaining about.” There ought to be some space between these two options where you can acknowledge the pressure [GPs](#) are under, while still noting that they’re good. It is fashionable to call this “nuance”, but truthfully, it’s not that complicated.

Anyway, while my GP is great, I didn’t know if I could say the same for my mother, and I’d offered to call and get her an appointment because she hates getting up for 8am. Obviously, I then forgot and didn’t call until the tumbleweed hour – 8.29, to be precise – when all the appointments are gone and you have to admit to your mother that you’re useless. But, if I live in a

kind of Scandinavian GP world, where everything is timely and running the way it should, my mum lives in medical Narnia. Same-day appointment, not too early (they somehow have it in her notes that she is not a morning person) with the loudest doctor (they also know she is deaf, but diplomatically call it “hard of hearing”, which is ironic, because it’s much harder on everybody else). When they asked if she’d like a mid-morning call from a receptionist, to reassure her that the doctor would call her later, it began to sound like a guilt trip. It’s great when a GP is solicitous, but this was making me look bad.

Anyway, GPs – very overstretched, chronically underfunded, ceaselessly undermined by a rabid media, still doing a great job. That wasn’t so complicated, was it?

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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**OpinionCrime**

## **As the detective who inspired TV's Prime Suspect, I know this: the misogyny of David Carrick lives on**

[Jackie Malton](#)



I hope the rapist's sentencing will offer closure to victims, but fear the Met will be weeding out abusive officers for some time

- Jackie Malton is a former senior police officer



Protesters outside Southwark crown court in London as the sentencing trial of David Carrick begins on 6 February. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Tue 7 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 02.12 EST

We have now heard for the first time from David Carrick's victims – the women a serving Met police officer raped, controlled, threatened and abused. Their victim statements, read out by prosecutor Tom Little during Carrick's sentencing hearing on Monday, painted a picture of terror, violence and control; of being made to feel “worthless”, “degraded”, “ashamed”, “like a piece of dirt on his shoe”.

I hope that Carrick's sentencing for his 49 offences will bring some sense of closure to his victims. But it should offer no sense of an ending to the [Metropolitan police](#). Because a running thread in the victims' statements was Carrick's job. He was not just a police officer who happened to be a rapist – he used his badge, his status, and even his police firearm to threaten and coerce women. “Every time I see a police car,” one victim said, “I freeze and hold my breath.” The Met failed to properly vet Carrick, and failed to take action following eight complaints about his conduct with women.

More than 30 years ago, I voiced my own experiences as a female detective chief inspector (DCI) to the writer Lynda La Plante, to inform her groundbreaking TV drama, Prime Suspect, and its lead character, DCI Jane Tennison (played by Helen Mirren). I recounted the bigotry of an institution dominated by white men, and the impact it had on the way police forces investigated crimes, based on lazy assumptions about victims of sexual assaults and domestic violence. The show's transmission led to a flurry of debate about the cult of masculinity within policing.



Helen Mirren in Prime Suspect. Photograph: ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

On some fronts, huge progress has been made since that time: I was one of only three female DCIs in the Met when I first began working as a consultant on Prime Suspect, and all chief constables in the country were male. Now, many of them are women. Yet despite the changed leadership profile and greater societal repudiation of discrimination, it appears that a toxic culture of misogyny and racism still pervades in some parts of the organisation. Collective jaws dropped to the floor in 2021 when the then serving officer Wayne Couzens was found to be the man responsible for the abduction, rape and murder of Sarah Everard. Then there was evidence of deeply disturbing misogynist and racist views in some pockets of the Met.

And there is clearly more bad news to come. The Met is in the process of [reviewing](#) 1,633 cases of domestic violence or sexual abuse, relating to accusations levelled against 1,071 officers and police staff over the last decade, to check the appropriate decisions were made. A new hotline for the public, set up by the Met, is generating new cases – some relating to police officers in other forces. Met commissioner Mark Rowley has already warned of “more painful stories” ahead.

When it comes to turning the culture around, it is vital that officers are able to speak up about concerns they may have about colleagues – yet this is difficult in a job where a strong team spirit is integral, and where any raising of issues risks being seen as “letting the side down”. I speak from experience. In the mid-1980s, I endured a harrowing year after reporting the concerns of “Stella”, a colleague who suspected someone higher up the ranks of wrongdoing. The officer in charge of our station was furious that I had reported it through the appropriate channels, rather than keeping it in-house. It wasn’t only his wrath that I had to contend with, but also that of colleagues.

Word soon got around that “Stella” and I had reported one of “our own”. A group of officers manifested their disgust by standing up and walking out when I went to get a cup of tea in the canteen. I was told of graffiti in the men’s toilets about my sexuality, and – in what seemed unlikely to be a coincidence – appalling porn was pushed through my letter box at home at midnight. “Stella” had it no easier, with excrement smeared on her car handle and her tyres deflated. When she moved on to a new station, she was told there was a “trust” issue as a result of her reporting on a senior colleague – even though she had been proved to be right. Should she ever need “urgent assistance” on the streets, she was told, none would be forthcoming.

This occurred almost 40 years ago but it seems that on this front, not enough has changed, as an October 2022 [interim report](#) into the culture and standards at the Met by Louise Casey recently laid bare. “Too often”, said the report, people who had reported wrongdoing said that they found the system “stacked against them”. Many officers and staff said that they were made to feel as if they were the problem for speaking up. “We heard that

supervisors and managers are actively dissuading their staff from reporting misconduct,” the report continued. A police officer [has told Sky News](#) that she, too, was raped by Carrick, but didn’t report it because it would have been “the end of my career”; that colleagues would have “laughed” in response.

After Casey’s report came out, Rowley vowed to [root out](#) racist and misogynist behaviour in the Met; leaders who turn a blind eye, he said, are “as guilty as the offender”. He is right. Ultimately, nothing will change until leaders right across the organisation make raising concern about colleagues a less punitive and lonely experience. Elsewhere, reviews triggered by ministers are under way around [vetting, disciplinaries and dismissals](#).

All eyes are now on Rowley, with much at stake: without the public’s engagement, police officers will struggle to do their job, and our streets will be less safe. Added to that, we risk losing talented police officers who are fed up with being tarred with the same brush.

There’s no way round the fact that meaningful change in an organisation as vast as the Met will take time. Rowley has already warned that kicking out those not fit to wear the uniform won’t be a speedy affair, and it is likely to be a painful one too. To get on with the job, he needs to be free of the usual kneejerk expectation from politicians in search of quick results. Patience is the order of the day.

- As told to Hélène Mulholland. Jackie Malton is a former senior police officer who inspired the character of DCI Jane Tennison in Prime Suspect. She is the author, with Hélène Mulholland, of The Real Prime Suspect: from the beat to the screen
  - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*
-

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## 2023.02.07 - Around the world

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[\*\*China\*\*](#)

## **War of words over downed Chinese spy balloon continues as US recovers debris**

Beijing lodges formal complaint with US embassy as Washington throws criticism back at China



The high-altitude Chinese balloon falls to the ocean after being shot down off the coast of Surfside Beach, South Carolina. Photograph: Randall Hill/Reuters

*[Verna Yu](#) and [Julian Borger](#) in Washington*

Mon 6 Feb 2023 18.44 ESTFirst published on Mon 6 Feb 2023 10.39 EST

The diplomatic row has escalated over the Chinese high-altitude balloon that flew across the US before being shot down, as the first wreckage was salvaged off the Atlantic coast.

Beijing on Monday accused the US of “overreaction” and the “indiscriminate use of military force” in shooting down a Chinese balloon,

warning of damage to bilateral relations.

Joe Biden said that relations between Washington and Beijing had not been weakened by the incident, telling reporters: “We made it clear to [China](#) what we’re going to do. They understand our position. We’re not going to back off.”

A state department spokesperson, Ned Price, pointed out that the secretary of state, Antony Blinken, had warned his counterpart, Wang Yi, on Friday that the US would take “appropriate actions to protect our interests”.

“It should not have come as a complete surprise” to Beijing when the balloon was shot down the following day, Price said.

If it had been a US airship over China, “you can only imagine the response from Beijing”, he added.

The moment a suspected Chinese spy balloon is shot down over east coast of US – video

The Pentagon said the first bits of debris had been found on the ocean surface off the South Carolina coast, while work continued to find the bits and pieces that had sunk to the sea bed. It called on the public to report any fragments that washed up on shore.

The White House national security spokesperson, John Kirby, said the United States was able to study the balloon while it was flying and officials hope to glean valuable intelligence on its operations by retrieving as many components as possible.

The head of North American Aerospace Defence (Norad) Command, General Glen VanHerck, described the balloon as being 200 feet (61 metres) high, with a surveillance payload the size of a regional passenger jet.

When it was first spotted passing over the US Aleutian Islands, the general said he decided not to shoot it down.

“It was my assessment that this balloon did not present a physical military threat to North America – this is under my Norad hat – and therefore, I could not take immediate action because it was not demonstrating hostile act or hostile intent,” VanHerck told reporters.

He said the aircraft was able to manoeuvre to some extent by taking advantages of different wind directions at different altitudes, and that the balloon’s route appeared to have been deliberately planned to navigate those currents.

China has claimed the aircraft was a weather balloon that had been blown off course. The country’s vice-foreign minister, Xie Feng, lodged a formal complaint with the US embassy on Sunday over the incident, accusing Washington of overreacting to an accident “caused by force majeure”, according to [a statement](#) posted on the Chinese foreign ministry website.

“The facts are clear … but the United States turned a deaf ear and insisted on indiscriminate use of force against the civilian airship that was about to leave the United States airspace. It obviously overreacted and seriously violated the spirit of international law and international practice,” Xie was quoted as saying.

He accused Washington of “dealing a serious blow” to efforts and progress in stabilising China-US relations since Joe Biden’s summit with Xi Jinping in November.

“China resolutely opposes and strongly protests this, and urges the US to refrain from taking further actions to harm China’s interests and to escalate tensions,” he said.

VanHerck said that an amphibious dock landing ship, the USS Carter Hall, would serve as the command vessel for the debris search, and that a navy oceanographic vessel was mapping below the surface to search for debris.

Rough seas have hindered the search, but he said navy divers on rigid inflatable boats had begun work on Monday morning with the help of

unmanned underwater vehicles, and that by the afternoon, more would be known about the location of large pieces of submerged debris.

The incident came amid tensions over issues including Taiwan, trade and human rights. It also prompted Antony Blinken, the US secretary of state, to postpone a visit to Beijing.

On Monday, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the incident tested “the US’s sincerity in stabilising and improving Sino-US relations”.

She said: “The US deliberately exaggerated and hyped [the incident] and even used military force to attack. This is unacceptable and irresponsible.”

She also admitted that the balloon spotted over Latin America belonged to China but said it was a civilian airship used for flight tests that entered the airspace of Latin America and the Caribbean “by accident”.

Yoshihiko Isozaki, the Japanese deputy chief cabinet secretary, said on Monday that a flying object thought to be Chinese and similar to the one shot down by the US, had been spotted at least twice over northern Japan since 2020, the Associated Press reported.

China has previously objected when foreign military surveillance planes flew off its coast in international airspace. In 2001, a US navy plane conducting routine surveillance near the Chinese coast collided with a Chinese fighter plane, killing the Chinese fighter pilot and damaging the American plane, which was forced to make an emergency landing at a Chinese naval airbase on the southern island of Hainan. China detained the 24-member US navy aircrew for 10 days until the US expressed regret.

Prof William Hurst, the deputy director at the Centre for Geopolitics at the University of Cambridge, said the balloon incident had occurred in a much more negative climate than the spy plane incident. “The public revelation complicated domestic politics in the US, which were already fraught,” he said. “Its effect will likely be smaller, but take longer to unwind.”

VanHerck, the Norad chief, said the military had not detected previous spy balloons before this one and called it an “awareness gap.”

However, he said US intelligence determined previous flights after the fact based on “additional means of collection” of intelligence.

*Xiaoqian Zhu contributed research.*

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## [Abortion](#)

# Google targets low-income US women with ads for anti-abortion pregnancy centers, study shows

Exclusive: research finds ads directing women in two cities to crisis pregnancy centers when they search for abortion care



Anti-abortion pregnancy crisis centers have been known to use shady tactics to convince women to keep their pregnancies. Photograph: Nicholas Kamm/AFP/Getty Images

*[Poppy Noor](#)  
[@PoppyNoor](#)*

Tue 7 Feb 2023 00.01 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 11.37 EST

Low-income women in some cities are more likely than their wealthier counterparts to be targeted by Google ads promoting anti-abortion crisis

pregnancy centers when they search for abortion care, researchers at the [Tech Transparency Project have found](#).

The research builds on previous findings detailing how Google directs users searching for abortion services to so-called crisis centers – organizations that have been known to pose as abortion clinics in an attempt to [steer women away from accessing abortion care](#).

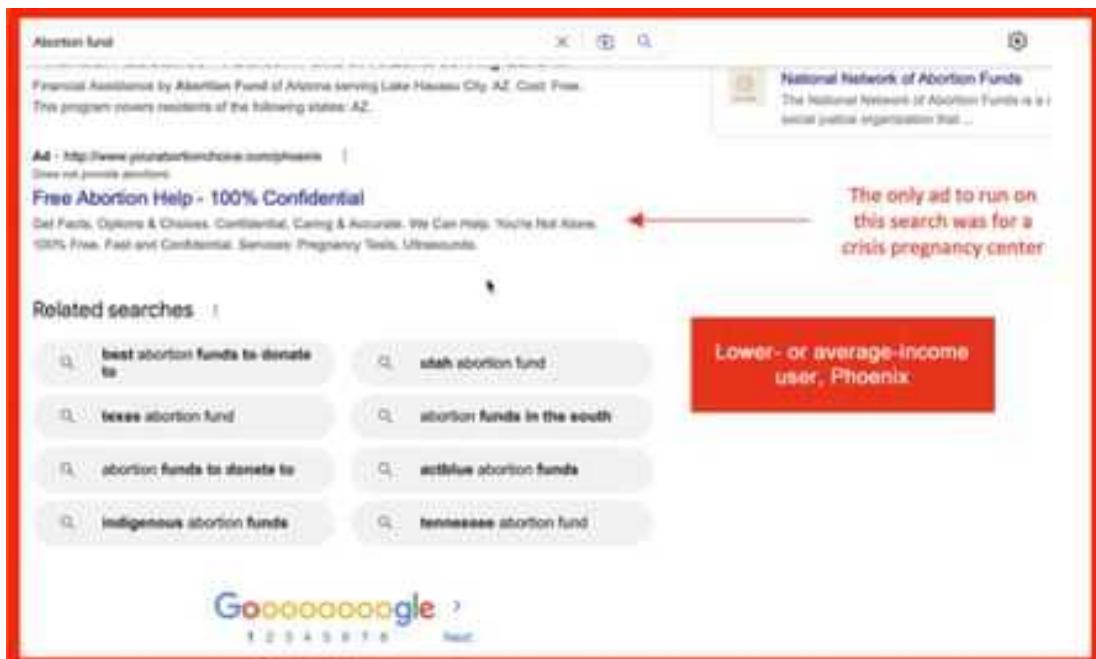
The researchers set up test accounts in three cities – [Atlanta](#), Miami and Phoenix – for women of three different income groups suggested by Google: average or lower-income rate, moderately high-income rate and high-income rate. They then entered search terms like “abortion clinic near me” and “I want an abortion”. In Phoenix, 56% of the search ads shown to the test accounts representing low- to moderate-income women were for crisis centers, compared with 41% of those served to moderately high-income test accounts and 7% to high-income accounts. In Atlanta, 42% of ads shown to the lower-income group were for crisis pregnancy centers, compared with 18% for moderately high-income women and 29% for high-income women.

In Arizona and Florida abortion is banned after 15 weeks of pregnancy. In Georgia, it is banned after six weeks, at which point many people do not know they are pregnant.

“By pointing low-income women to [crisis pregnancy centers] more frequently than higher-income women in states with restrictive laws, [Google](#) may delay these women from finding an actual abortion clinic to get a legal and safe abortion,” says Katie Paul, the director of the Tech Transparency Project.

“The time window is critical in some of these states,” she adds.

Lower-income women are the group least likely to be able to travel for abortion care because traveling can cost thousands of dollars in lost work, transportation, babysitting and accommodation fees.



In Phoenix, a Google search by a lower- or average-income test account searching for ‘Abortion fund’ yielded an ad for a crisis pregnancy center with the header ‘Free Abortion Help – 100% Confidential’. Photograph: Tech Transparency Project

“Lower-income women are being targeted, and they’re the ones that are going to suffer the most under these policies,” Paul says.

The results were not the same in all cities. In Miami, researchers saw the inverse result: high-income women were more likely to get ads from crisis centers than lower-income women. The researchers say they cannot be certain why Miami diverged from the other cities but speculate that crisis pregnancy centers might more actively target low-income women in more restrictive states. (While Arizona and Florida both ban abortion after 15 weeks, the former has more restrictions layered on the 15-week limit.)

While pregnancy crisis centers offer pregnant women resources such as diapers and pregnancy testing, they have also been known to employ a number of shady tactics to convince women seeking an abortion to keep their pregnancies. Those include posing as abortion clinics online though they do not offer abortion care, refusing pregnancy tests for women who say they intend to have an abortion and touting widely disputed research about abortion care to patients. Crisis centers, which go largely unregulated despite

offering medical services, have been [known to target low-income women](#) precisely because they find it harder to travel out of state for abortion care.

Although companies buying ads with Google can selectively target the groups they want to reach – including by income – Paul adds that many users won't be aware they are being targeted by Google in this way.

"Google has a large share of influence, particularly in the United States when people are trying to search for authoritative information. And people generally tend to consider Google's search engine as an equaliser. They think the results they get are the results that everyone's going to get. But that's just not the case," Paul says.

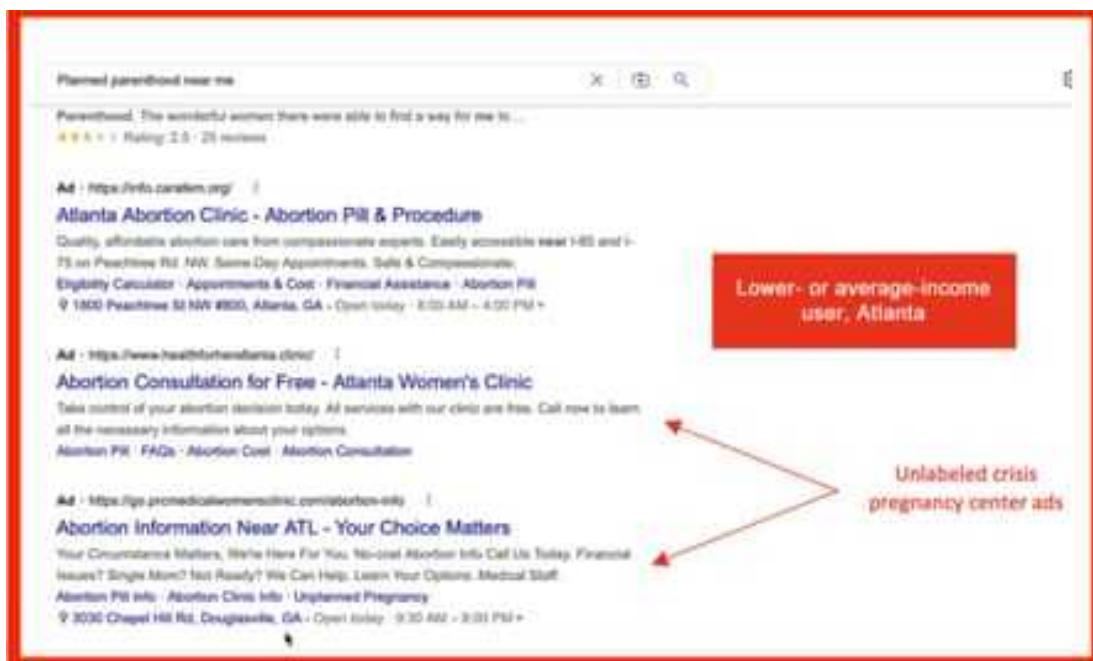
Last year, Google came under fire after [a Tech Transparency Project investigation](#) found the company was serving people with ads for pregnancy crisis centers suggesting they offer abortions even though they do not – violating the platform's own rules on misleading advertisements.

Google has repeatedly been pressed to make changes to its search engine to curtail these issues. In 2022, Senator Mark Warner of Virginia and Representative Elissa Slotkin of Michigan wrote to the company twice, urging it to stop misdirecting users searching for abortion care [to these crisis centers in Google Maps](#). The lawmakers also called on Google to limit the way crisis centers appear in search results and ads, and to [add disclaimers clearly indicating whether a search result is an organization](#) that provides abortions or not.

Google responded by pledging to clearly [label](#) these facilities in the future. But researchers in the study also found a number of ads still being served to users suggesting centers offer abortion care when they do not.

In Phoenix, a Google search by a lower- or average-income test account for "Abortion fund" – an organization that provides financial and other forms of support for abortions – yielded an ad with the text "Free [Abortion](#) Help – 100% Confidential", for a crisis center.

Similarly, when the lower- or average-income Atlanta test account searched for “Planned Parenthood Atlanta”, Google produced a single ad that read “Abortion Consultation for Free”, with an ad linking to a crisis pregnancy center called Health for Her in Atlanta. Although some of the ad results in the Tech Transparency Project’s study included a label stating “Does not provide abortions”, this one, along with several others, did not – in contravention of Google’s own labeling rules.



These ads for crisis pregnancy centers do not include the disclaimer that they do not provide abortions, despite Google’s previous commitments.  
Photograph: Tech Transparency Project

Slotkin said she was disappointed to learn the company is still failing to regulate crisis centers on its platform, despite having been in touch with them twice about the issue.

“Michigan has roughly 100 pregnancy crisis centers that explicitly do not provide abortions, and these clinics should not be listed among abortion providers,” Slotkin said.

“We sent a second letter in November because Google was still failing to consistently apply disclaimers to misleading ads. Despite our action – and assurance from Google that they would only show verified abortion

providers when a woman was seeking the procedure – these findings from TTP [Tech Transparency Project] prove there's clearly more work that needs to be done,” she said.

Senator Mark Warner’s office added: “Ads from ‘crisis pregnancy centers’ that reference ‘Free Abortion Help’ or ‘Abortion Consultation’ are obviously not in compliance with Google ads policies that forbid ads ‘that deceive users by excluding relevant product information or providing misleading information’. I urge Google to take action to prevent these deceptive advertising practices meant to trick users, especially low-income women.”

The Guardian contacted Google for comment and on Monday evening an unnamed spokesman sent a response.

“We don’t allow advertisers to specifically target a ‘low income’ bracket with ads, and we have strict rules about how location can be used to serve locally relevant ads. It’s important that people seeking abortion-related resources know what services an advertiser actually provides, so we require any organization that wants to target queries related to getting an abortion to be certified and clearly disclose whether they do or do not offer abortions. Last year, we updated these disclosures to make them more visible for users,” the response said.

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[Hong Kong](#)

## Simpsons censored in Hong Kong for mentioning China ‘labour camps’

Episode removed from Disney+ is the second of the cartoon to be made unavailable in Hong Kong



A photograph of Disney+ in Hong Kong shows an episode of The Simpsons missing. Photograph: Peter Parks/AFP/Getty Images

*[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei*

*[@heldavidson](#)*

Tue 7 Feb 2023 00.12 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 00.15 EST

An episode of the Simpsons that references “forced labour camps” in China has been removed from Disney+ streaming services in [Hong Kong](#).

The episode is the second in the long-running US cartoon’s latest season. One Angry Lisa sees Marge buy an interactive training exercise bike, similar to a Peloton bike. On an interactive tour, the guide takes Marge to the Great

Wall of [China](#) with its wonders of “bitcoin mines, forced labour camps where children make smartphones, and romance”.

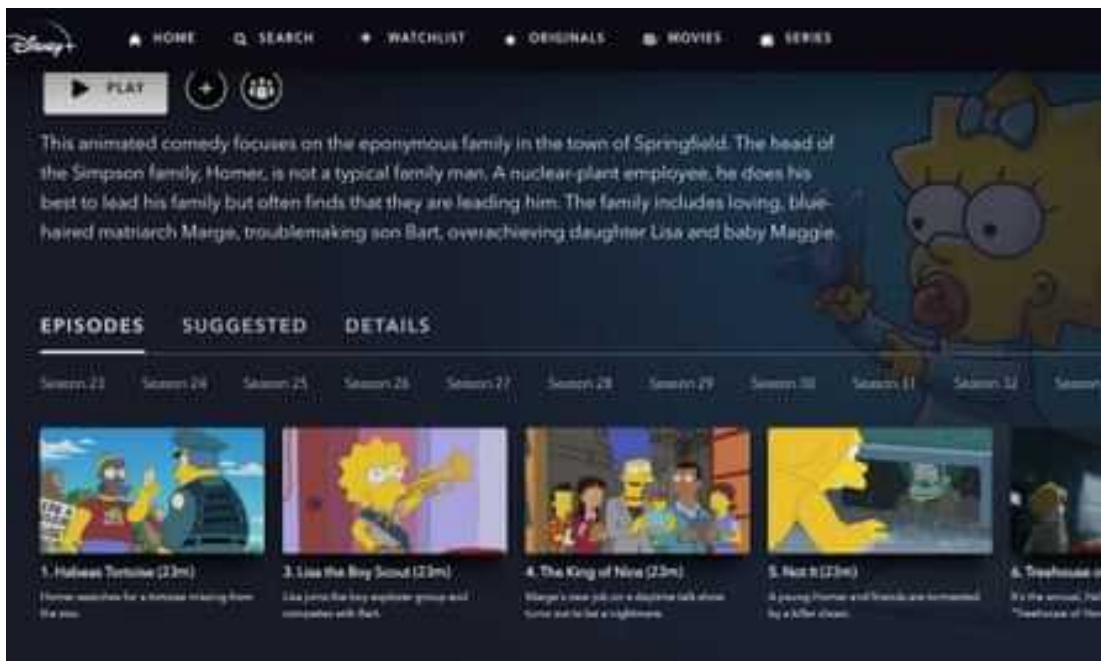
China’s government has long faced accusations of operating forced labour camps, particularly with Uyghur workers from the Xinjiang region.

The Guardian has confirmed, as first reported by the Financial Times, that One Angry Lisa is not available in Hong Kong, with the streaming platform showing all other episodes from the season.

The Walt Disney Co was contacted for comment.

Hong Kong is a special administrative region of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), but until recently had maintained far greater cultural, political, and social freedoms.

After a crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in 2019, it has come under increasing control of the PRC government, with [intensifying censorship](#) of political expression. [Media outlets](#), political parties, bookshops and libraries, [human rights websites](#), museums, and [children's books](#) have all been targeted by authorities hunting out anti-government sentiment.



Screenshot from Disney+ in Hong Kong shows episode two of The Simpsons' latest series missing. Photograph: Disney+

In 2021, Hong Kong's legislature passed a film censorship law to "safeguard national security" but officials said at the time that the law did not apply to streaming services.

The Hong Kong government said the film censorship law was aimed at content deemed to "endorse, support, glorify, encourage and incite activities that might endanger national security".

One Angry Lisa is at least the second episode of the Simpsons to be made unavailable on official platforms in Hong Kong. When Disney+ launched in Hong Kong in November 2021, episode 12 of the 16th season was not included. In that episode the family visit Tiananmen Square and see a plaque reading "on this site, in 1989, nothing happened". Tiananmen is the site of a deadly 1989 crackdown against pro-democracy protesters.

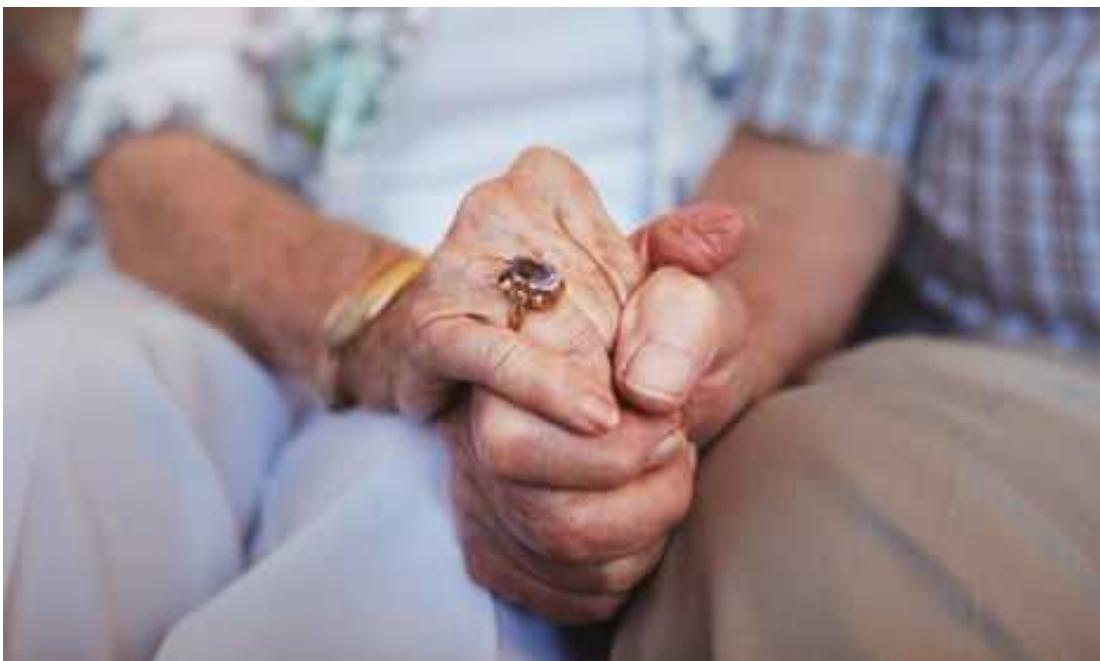
*Reuters contributed to this article*

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## Diabetes

# Cohabiting adults have lower blood sugar levels, study finds

Researchers say couples need not get along to benefit, and social isolation may increase type 2 diabetes risk



They researchers found the effects were the same regardless of whether the relationship was harmonious or acrimonious. Photograph: jacoblund/Getty Images/iStockphoto

*[Rachel Hall](#)*

*[@rachela\\_hall](#)*

Mon 6 Feb 2023 18.30 EST Last modified on Mon 6 Feb 2023 18.54 EST

People who cohabit with a partner have lower blood sugar levels, even if they do not get along with them, according to a study that warns social isolation may increase the risk of type 2 diabetes.

The researchers believe that living with someone is an important source of social support for adults in mid to later life, according to the study published in the British Medical Journal's diabetes journal. They found the effects were the same regardless of whether the relationship was harmonious or acrimonious.

The lead author, Katherine Ford, formerly of the University of Luxembourg and now at Carleton University in Ottawa, said: "Increased support for older adults who are experiencing the loss of a marital/cohabitating relationship through divorce or bereavement, as well as the dismantling of negative stereotypes around romantic relationships in later life, may be starting points for addressing health risks, more specifically deteriorating glycemic regulation, associated with marital transitions in older adults."

The study builds on previous work that has identified health benefits from marriage and cohabiting, particularly for older adults, along with studies that have concluded that type 2 diabetes risk is associated with social isolation, loneliness and social network size.

The team from Luxembourg and Canada investigated if there was an association between marital status and marital quality with average glycemic levels in older adults, using biomarker data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA). This is a sample of adults living in England aged 50 and older and their partners, who provide data biannually, of whom the researchers used data from 3,335 adults aged 50 to 89 without previously diagnosed diabetes between 2004 and 2013.

Participants gave blood samples to measure their average glycemic or blood glucose levels, and were asked whether they had a husband, wife or partner with whom they lived, along with questions to measure if the relationship was supportive or strained.

Information on several factors was also gathered such as details about age, income, employment, smoking, being physically active, depression, body mass index, and having other social relationship types in their social network (child, other immediate family, friend).

The study also tested the odds of prediabetes, which were lower among those who were married or cohabiting.

Analysis of the data over time showed that people whose relationships changed, for example through divorce, also experienced significant changes in their blood sugar levels and odds of pre-diabetes.

Surprisingly, the quality of the relationship did not make a significant difference to the average levels of blood glucose, suggesting that having a supportive or strained relationship was less important than just having a relationship at all.

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As an observational study, the researchers said they were unable to establish cause, or, for example, whether people in worse health were more likely to get divorced.

Ford said the researchers treated marriage and a cohabitating partnership as the same, meaning they do not know whether marital status confers any benefits relative to living together. The research also did not explore the benefits of living with a friend or housemate, but Ford suspected that it “would not have the same effect” because housemates don’t necessarily

“share in your life”, although she thought living with a friend may have benefits, depending on the closeness of the friendship.

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## [Africa](#)

# Rights abuses often ‘tipping point’ for extremist recruitment, UN study finds

Quality education and exposure to different cultures identified as key preventive factors in African survey



Newly trained al-Shabaab fighters in Somalia in 2011. Photograph: Farah Abdi Warsameh/AP

*[Jason Burke](#) Africa correspondent*

Tue 7 Feb 2023 00.01 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 00.03 EST

Human rights abuses committed by security forces and economic deprivation are among the most important drivers of recruitment to extremist groups in [Africa](#), a survey has found.

Researchers working for the UN Development Programme (UNDP) interviewed more than 1,000 active or recent militants across eight countries in Africa in the pioneering study.

Their report – Journey to Extremism in Africa: Pathways to Recruitment and Disengagement – is one of the biggest anywhere in the world on the motivations of militants, and comes against a background of [increasing extremist violence](#) across a swath of the continent.

Though deaths worldwide from terrorism have declined over the past five years, attacks in sub-Saharan Africa have more than doubled since 2016, and in 2021 they comprised almost half of the global total.

The Sahel region has been particularly badly hit, with Islamic militancy fuelling acute political instability, but violent extremism has also spread or worsened in other parts of the continent, such as Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

“Sub-Saharan Africa has become the new global epicentre of violent extremism with 48% of global terrorism deaths in 2021. This ... threatens to reverse hard-won development gains for generations to come,” said Achim Steiner, the UNDP administrator.

The report calls for greater emphasis on prevention and lists dozens of factors that make individuals less likely to be drawn into extremism, including quality education, exposure to different cultures and parental attention when young.

“All else being equal, a one-point increase in the childhood happiness rating decreases the odds of voluntary recruitment by around 10%. A one-point increase in the parental involvement rating decreases the odds of voluntary recruitment by around 25%,” the report says.

Though it confirms findings of other similar surveys as well as much reporting of extremism around the world, the UNDP report is likely to have a greater impact due to its scale and the way researchers sought to isolate factors leading to radicalisation by comparing the responses of people involved in violence with those of others of similar age, background and life experiences who had not joined extremist groups.

The study focused on eight countries – Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan – and found that a quarter of

voluntary recruits to extremist organisations cited job opportunities as their reason for joining. Forty per cent said they were in urgent need of livelihoods at the time of recruitment.

Many militant groups pay salaries to fighters and almost all ensure basic needs of their members are met. They also offer status and protection.

In recent years, even [Islamic State](#), long seen as the most extreme of factions active in sub-Saharan Africa, has made efforts to win community support and recruits through provision of basic services such as food distribution, administration of justice and rudimentary healthcare.

The strategy of co-opting and coercing local communities has helped IS extend its reach from north-east Nigeria across the Sahel region, with territory that now stretches across thousands of miles as far north as the Libyan border and as far south as parts of Benin and Ghana. [Al-Shabaab](#) have pursued a similar strategy in Somalia.

Few governments on the continent have been able to pursue comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies tackling the deeper roots of violent extremism, and most have relied on security services that are often brutal or clumsy. Successive offensives by government and regional forces, backed by US air power and specialists on the ground, have succeeded in inflicting tactical defeats on [al-Shabaab](#) but little enduring damage, for example.

A decade of intervention by French troops in Mali ended in ignominious withdrawal amid massive political instability and advances by extremist insurgents. Government forces in Mali, reinforced by Russian paramilitaries from the Wagner group since 2019, have been repeatedly accused of violence towards civilians.

Nirina Kiplagat, the report's lead author, said nearly half of those interviewed by the UNDP cited a specific trigger event pushing them into extremism, with a striking 71% pointing to human rights abuse, often by state security forces, as "the tipping point".

The report also concludes that extremists often have less exposure to other ethnic and religious groups, suggesting religious pluralism helps to mitigate

violence.

More than half of the “control group” of interviewees who did not join groups claimed to have had friends from other religions growing up, but only 40% of voluntary recruits to extremist factions did so. In contrast, those who became extremists were considerably more inclined to express negative views about religious diversity.

Religion was given as a primary reason for joining by only 17%, with four of five recruits admitting to having limited knowledge of religious texts.

“When we look at religion, [it] has a conflicting dual element in the journey to extremism because on one hand it’s used as a vector for the mobilisation of grievances. And on the other, it also represents an important source of resilience. The role individual religious leaders can play can [be] very important. We need quality religious education,” Kiplagat said.

More than 500 women were interviewed for the study, revealing that very few had joined extremist groups voluntarily. About half said they had been heavily influenced by their families, especially their husbands. Kiplagat said this reflected roles within often conservative societies.

Currently, about 70% of the [United Nations](#) counter-terrorism budget is spent helping states build capacity to combat terrorism, often through expanding and equipping security services, compared with just 24% that goes to “addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism”.

Steiner said: “Security-driven counter-terrorism responses are often costly and minimally effective, yet investments in preventive approaches to violent extremism are woefully inadequate. The social contract between states and citizens must be reinvigorated to tackle root causes of violent extremism.”

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## **Headlines saturday 11 february 2023**

- [Exclusive Jared O'Mara should never have been a Labour candidate, says Rachel Reeves](#)
- [US Unidentified object shot down over Alaska by military, White House says](#)
- ['My eyes were full of tears' Shooting the defining image of the Turkey earthquake](#)
- [Live Turkey-Syria earthquake: death toll passes 24,000 as calls for aid intensify](#)
- [Turkey and Syria Survivors pulled from rubble 100 hours after quake as toll passes 24,000](#)

## Labour

# Jared O'Mara should never have been a Labour candidate, says Rachel Reeves

Comments about ex-Sheffield Hallam MP come as key figures in Bolton North East quit over selection process



Rachel Reeves was speaking on a visit to the Openreach apprenticeship training centre in Bolton on Friday. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

*[Helen Pidd](#) North of England editor*

Sat 11 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Sat 11 Feb 2023 10.22 EST

The disgraced former MP Jared O'Mara “should never have been selected as a Labour candidate” and deserves his [four-year jail sentence](#), the shadow chancellor has said.

Rachel Reeves was talking to the Guardian in the Bolton North East constituency on Friday, hours after key figures in the local party [quit in](#)

protest at how Labour's national executive committee (NEC) was controlling the parliamentary selection process for the next general election.

The entire selection committee in Bolton North East resigned after they were not allowed to choose the shortlist, an increasingly common practice in Keir Starmer's Labour party, saying: "Yet again, it appears that the Labour party is seeking to promote the views and attitudes of a clique in London, rather than local members in the north."

They added: "This goes against the attitude necessary to win back the red wall, which is so desperately needed to deliver a Labour government."

Reeves said: "I don't know what the circumstances are of what has happened in Bolton, but I do know that those being selected are strong candidates, often with very strong roots in their communities."

There has been particular unhappiness that Leigh Drennan, the chair of Labour North West and aide to the Jeremy Corbyn-supporting Warrington North MP Charlotte Nichols, was not longlisted to try to win the seat back from the Conservatives, despite garnering nominations from four big trade unions.

Reeves said she had nothing to do with candidate selection, but added: "I do know that it's really important that we have rigorous processes for who can be longlisted and who can be shortlisted."

O'Mara was imprisoned for four years this week after a jury found he had submitted fake expense claims totalling £52,000 in an attempt to fund his cocaine and alcohol abuse.

Many people have suggested he was not properly vetted by Labour when he was selected to fight Nick Clegg, the former Liberal Democrat deputy prime minister, in Sheffield Hallam in 2017's snap general election.

Asked if the O'Mara debacle was looming large in the minds of Labour's NEC, Reeves said: "I don't want to suggest in any way that anyone not on a shortlist is a cocaine user. But Jared O'Mara was a terrible case. He should never have been selected as a Labour candidate; he should never have been

an MP. He used public money, it's absolutely right he's received his sentence.”

The O'Mara circumstances were “pretty exceptional”, said Reeves, but she acknowledged: “There are important lessons to be learned for the Labour party and all political parties on the selection of candidates. But I would also say, in this parliament we have seen the constant undermining of standards in politics, not least by a succession of prime ministers and fines and parties and standards falling well short of what you could expect.”

She added: “One thing I would say about the Labour party is that when people do wrong, they lose the whip. And that's just not the case in the Conservative party.”

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Reeves was in Bolton to meet apprentices at a training centre for Openreach, which provides the UK's broadband network.

After watching apprentices climb up pretend telegraph poles at the £1.7m site, Reeves discussed Labour's plans to overhaul the apprenticeship levy, which forces larger firms to put aside 0.5% of their payroll to fund apprentices.

Businesses complain the levy is too inflexible. For example, said Reeves, Openreach “wants to retrain people who work on copper to work on fibre, but the apprenticeship levy doesn’t have that flexibility around retraining”.

Reeves said Labour would change the levy so companies could use the money to retrain employees in industries such as the automotive sector and those currently fitting gas boilers.

“We need them as part of the energy transition to net zero to be learning the skills to work on electric vehicles or fitting heat pumps or hydrogen boilers. We want those people to be retrained to get the skills that they need to succeed. And yet the apprenticeship levy is stacked up against them. Businesses want greater flexibility and young people starting off in life or older people who want to retrain to make sure that their skills are relevant for the future,” said Reeves.

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**US military**

## **Unidentified object shot down over Alaska by US military, White House says**

Spokesman John Kirby says object, the size of a small car, was ordered by President Biden to be downed

[Chinese ‘spy balloon’ wakes up world to new era of war on edge of space](#)

US confirms 'high-altitude object' taken down over Alaska – video

*[Julian Borger](#) in Washington*

Fri 10 Feb 2023 17.04 ESTFirst published on Fri 10 Feb 2023 14.52 EST

A US fighter jet has shot down an unidentified high-altitude object over [Alaska](#) that was the size of a small car but the nature, purpose or origin of the object remains unclear.

US officials said the targeted aircraft brought down on Friday was considerably smaller than [the Chinese balloon downed last Saturday over the Atlantic](#), and carefully avoided characterising it as a balloon, drone or plane, giving nothing away about the description of the object other than its rough size, its altitude and its direction of travel.

John Kirby, the spokesman for the national security council, said the pilot of the F-22 Raptor fighter which fired the missile that brought down the object judged it to be unmanned.

A salvage effort is under way off the Alaskan coast near the Canadian border to recover debris from the object, involving the navy, coast guard and FBI.

“The president ordered the military to down the object,” Kirby said. Unlike with the balloon which was shot down on Saturday following an eight-day

trip across North America, the origins of this aircraft could not be estimated, he said.

“We don’t know who owns this object,” Kirby said.

The Pentagon spokesman, Brig Gen Pat Ryder, told reporters that the object had been travelling at an altitude of 40,000ft (12,190 meters), which is about the same altitude as jet airliners, so – unlike the Chinese balloon – it was quickly seen as a threat to civilian air traffic. Alaskan airspace was temporarily closed.



The US said an F-22 fighter jet (file image) had shot down the object.  
Photograph: Grzegorz Michałowski/EPA

Ryder said the object was first spotted on Thursday, and US warplanes were launched to intercept and examine it. It was shot down at 1.45pm Washington time on Friday by an AIM-9X Sidewinder heat-seeking missile fired from an F-22 fighter which took off from Elmendorf airbase near Anchorage.

“The object was about the size of a small car so not similar in size or shape to the high-altitude surveillance balloon that was taken down off the coast of South Carolina on February 4,” Ryder told reporters.

[ABC News](#) quoted a US official as describing the object as “cylindrical and silver-ish gray” and giving the appearance of floating.

Asked if it was “balloon-like”, the official said: “All I say is that it wasn’t ‘flying’ with any sort of propulsion, so if that is ‘balloon-like’ well – we just don’t have enough at this point.”

Meanwhile, Ryder said the marine salvage effort off the South Carolina coast for the Chinese balloon had made progress.

“While I won’t go into specifics due to classification reasons, I can say that we have located a significant amount of debris so far that will prove helpful to our further understanding of this balloon and its surveillance capabilities,” he said.

China has insisted that the downed balloon was for meteorological purposes and has denounced the US decision to shoot it down as an excessive use of force. The US insists that it was a surveillance balloon, and that an inspection of its payload by a U2 spy plane while it was still in the air, showed antennae and other equipment for intercepting and geolocating communications in the US.

Late on Friday, the US Department of Commerce announced that it had blacklisted six Chinese companies for supporting Beijing’s military modernization efforts, particularly relating to aerospace programs.

Companies added to the entity list are restricted from accessing US items and technologies without government authorization.

China’s use of high-altitude balloons “violates our sovereignty and threatens US national security”, said Alan Estevez, the undersecretary of commerce for industry and security. “Today’s action makes clear that entities that seek to harm US national security and sovereignty will be cut off from accessing US technologies.”

The image on this article was amended on 11 February 2023. An earlier version showed an F-35 fighter jet, rather than an F-22.

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## Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023

# ‘My eyes were full of tears’: shooting the defining image of the Turkey earthquake

Adem Altan came across a father holding his dead daughter’s hand – who asked him to take her photo

- [Turkey and Syria earthquake – latest news updates](#)



Mesut Hançer holds the hand of his 15-year-old daughter, Irmak.  
Photograph: Adem Altan/AFP/Getty Images

[Deniz Barış Narlı](#) in Adana and [Sam Jones](#)

Sat 11 Feb 2023 00.00 EST Last modified on Sat 11 Feb 2023 02.47 EST

Adem Altan can’t compare the picture he took on a cold morning this week with any of the tens of thousands he has shot in his 41 years as a photojournalist.

Shortly after driving from Ankara to the southern Turkish town of Kahramanmaraş on Tuesday, and picking his way through the aftermath of the 7.8-magnitude earthquake, he came across a collapsed apartment complex.

Families were digging through the rubble in search of their buried loved ones, but it was a man in an orange coat who sat quietly amid the debris who caught Altan's eye.

"When I looked closer, I saw that he was holding a hand," says the photographer, "so I began to take photographs."

The man was called Mesut Hançer and the hand he was holding was that of his 15-year-old daughter, Irmak, who had been killed in her bed when the quake brought the building down. Hançer spotted Altan. And then he asked him to carry on.



The world has seen Adem Altan's image, 'but I can't say I'm happy', he said. Photograph: Volkan Nakiboglu/AFP/Getty Images

"'Take a photo of my child,' he called out. Then he let go of the hand he was holding and showed me his child. I saw a person's head under the rubble. I asked his name. 'Mesut Hançer,' he said. Then I asked his child's name. He

was a little far away, and I had trouble understanding. He said his daughter's name was Irmak."

The photographer did as he had been asked and carried on taking pictures as Hançer took his daughter's hand again.

"What unbearable pain, I thought to myself," says Altan. "My eyes were full of tears and I had a hard time not crying as I took the pictures. I waited for a bit after taking the pictures, expecting someone to come and take the girl away. Unfortunately, no one did."

Altan had to leave Hançer and Irmak to carry on documenting the destruction for Agence France-Presse, where he has worked for the past 15 years.

"But I was curious about what had happened to them and so the next morning, I went back to the ruins where the father and daughter had been. I don't know what happened to the father. He wasn't there when I arrived the next day and neither was his daughter."

The photojournalist knew he had taken an extraordinarily poignant picture of the pain the earthquake had caused, but he didn't expect it to become perhaps the definitive image of the disaster.

"It got a lot of attention both in Turkey and around the world" he says. "Hundreds of people shared it on social media and I got hundreds of messages saying things like 'A very powerful photograph showing the pain of the earthquake' and 'A photograph we will never forget until we die.'"

For Altan, the picture has done its job: it shows the physical and emotional destruction of the earthquake; it documents a father's undimmissible love for his daughter, and it asks: "Is there any greater pain than this?"

"I can't compare it with any photograph I've taken before," he says. "The photo attracted a lot of attention, yes. But I can't say I'm happy. This is a catastrophe."

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## Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023

# Turkey-Syria earthquake: death toll passes 25,000 as Erdogan warns against looting – as it happened

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## Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023

# Survivors pulled from rubble 100 hours after quake as toll passes 24,000

Hundreds of thousands more people have been left homeless in often sub-zero winter conditions

- [Turkey and Syria earthquake – latest news updates](#)



A boy is carried out on a stretcher by search and rescue teams in the Turkish city of Antakya on Friday. Photograph: Emre Can Yadoglu/Depo Photos/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

*Jon Henley  
@jonhenley*

Fri 10 Feb 2023 17.46 ESTFirst published on Fri 10 Feb 2023 07.56 EST

A second convoy of aid trucks has crossed into stricken north-western Syria from [Turkey](#), as rescuers continued to pull survivors – including a newborn

baby – from the rubble 100 hours after an earthquake that has killed more than 24,000 people.

Hundreds of thousands more people have been left homeless and short of food in often sub-zero winter conditions after 7.8- and 7.6-magnitude quakes [struck within hours of each other on Monday](#). Dozens of countries have pledged help and sent emergency teams.

In Samandağ in Turkey's southern Hatay province, a 10-day-old boy named Yagiz was retrieved from a ruined building overnight, while in Kırıkhan, German rescuers pulled 40-year-old Zeynep Kahraman alive out of the rubble more than 104 hours after she was buried and carried her to a waiting ambulance.

“Now I believe in miracles,” Steven Bayer, the International Search and Rescue team leader, said at the site. “You can see the people crying and hugging each other. It’s such a huge relief that this woman under such conditions came out so fit. It’s an absolute miracle.”



Yagiz, a 10-day-old baby who was rescued in the Samandağ district of Turkey's Hatay province. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

A 10-year-old boy was also saved overnight with his mother in the Samandağ district of Hatay after being trapped for more than 90 hours, while in Diyarbakır in the east, 32-year-old Sebahat Varlı and her son, Serhat, were pulled out alive 100 hours after the first quake.

Hopes were fading, however, that many more people would be found alive. Barely 6% of earthquake victims who have not been rescued within five days survive, experts say, compared with 74% after 24 hours. The freezing conditions are likely to significantly reduce survival expectancy.

In the Syrian town of Jindires, a Reuters reporter spoke to Naser al-Wakaa, sobbing as he sat on the pile of rubble and twisted metal that had been his family's home and burying his face in the baby clothes that had belonged to one of his children.

"Bilal, oh Bilal," he said, shouting the name of one of his dead children.

Rabie Jundiya, a rescue worker in Jindires, said: "The civil defence teams will not withdraw ... until the last corpse is recovered from under the rubble."

In Gaziantep, Turkey, where the temperature was -3C (26.6F) on Friday morning, thousands of families spend the night in cars or makeshift tents, unable to return to damaged or destroyed homes. "I fear for anyone trapped under the rubble in this," Melek Halıcı told Agence France-Presse, holding her two-year-old daughter in a blanket.

The International Organization for Migration said on Friday the 14 aid trucks bound for north-west Syria were carrying desperately needed heaters, tents, blankets and other supplies. This is an area where civil war has left 90% of the population – about 4 million people – relying on aid even before the quakes struck.



An aerial view of search-and-rescue efforts among collapsed buildings in Jindires, Syria. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

The lorries, heading for Idlib, followed a convoy of six UN trucks that crossed the only border crossing open on Thursday, at Bab al-Hawa. The World Food Programme said on Friday that it was fast running out of stocks in the area and called for more crossings to be opened.

Turkey and Syria broke off diplomatic ties more than a decade ago, but Turkish officials have said the country was considering reopening a crossing into Syrian government-held territory, plus a second into the rebel-held north-west.

Officials and medics said 20,655 people had died in Turkey and 3,553 in Syria. The confirmed total now stands at 24,208.

Experts have said the toll is expected to continue climbing for some time yet since most people were asleep in their flats when the first quake struck, and whole districts in some towns have been reduced to rubble. The UN has estimated 24.4 million people have been affected in Syria and Turkey.

The death toll from the quake has surpassed the more than 17,000 killed in 1999 in an earthquake in north-west Turkey, and the disaster ranks as the seventh deadliest this century, higher than Japan's 2011 tremor and tsunami.

The US has offered an \$85m (£70.3m) aid package that it said would go on delivering “urgently needed aid for millions of people”, including through food, shelter and emergency health services as well as support for safe drinking water and sanitation.

The World Bank has said it would give \$1.78bn in aid to Turkey. Top aid officials are planning to visit affected areas, with Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the World Health Organization head, and UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths both planning trips.

The Syrian president, [Bashar al-Assad](#), made his first reported trip to affected areas since the quake on Friday while his Turkish counterpart toured his country’s stricken south amid continuing criticism of the state’s disaster response.

Speaking in Adiyaman province, the Turkish president, [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#), conceded that the Turkish authorities’ response to the quake was not moving as fast as the government wanted. He said some people were stealing from markets and attacking businesses.

The disaster has cast doubt on whether Turkey’s 14 May election will go ahead as planned. The government’s response to the quake, widely criticised as slow and inadequate, is likely to prove a significant factor if and when the vote, expected to be the tightest for Erdogan since he came to power in 2014, does go ahead.

Amid opposition claims that the government’s “lack of coordination, lack of planning and incompetence” was as big a disaster as the quake itself, the president has called for solidarity and condemned what he described as “negative campaigns for political interest”.

The Syrian government, which is under heavy western sanctions, has appealed for UN aid, but insisted it must be delivered through Damascus and not directly to rebel-held areas. Assad visited a hospital in Aleppo on Friday.

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*Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report*

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## 2023.02.11 - Spotlight

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## **The truth about Andrew Tate: ‘His home is less Hollywood hideaway, more rundown meat factory’**

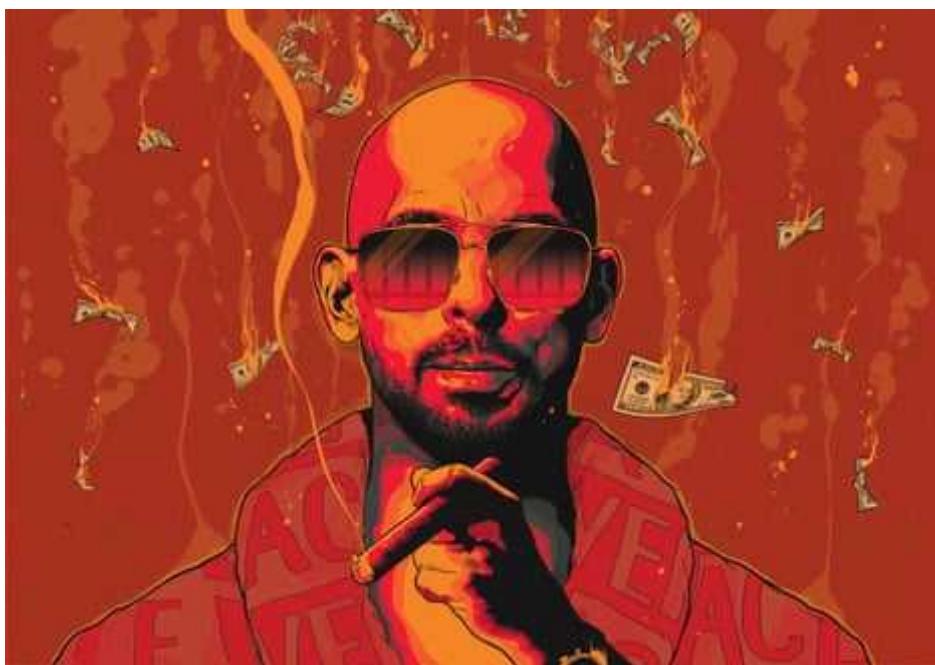


Illustration: Tim McDonagh/The Guardian

The former kickboxer has achieved global notoriety by peddling violent misogyny to millions, and claims to have made ‘trillions’ – but is his life of fast cars and luxury a facade?

*Paul Kenyon*

Sat 11 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Sat 11 Feb 2023 10.38 EST

Andrew Tate used to cruise along these scruffy suburban streets about 10 miles from the centre of Bucharest in Romania. Past a litter dump and a sprawling cemetery and a line of semis that wouldn’t have looked out of place on the TV soap Brookside. Rolling by in his Lamborghini or Bugatti or any other of his fleet of supercars. Puffing a cigar and adjusting his Michael Corleone sunglasses. Beating his tattooed chest at the red light.

Tate, who likes to call himself Top G (in street slang G stands for gangster), says he’s done nothing wrong. He might look and behave like a gangster. He might have boasted of gangsterish pursuits and claim to have made billions. But now, as a current guest of the Romanian penal system, he says he’s not an actual gangster at all. He says he’s a good guy.

His arrest on 29 December by armed members of Romania’s anti-corruption unit – the ones who arrest gangsters – was over allegations of people trafficking and rape. Officers wearing balaclavas stormed Tate’s compound by cover of night, and say they found guns, knives and large sums of cash. Top G and his younger brother, 34-year-old Tristan, were led away in handcuffs. Two Romanian women, Georgiana Naghel, and a former police officer called Alexandra Luana Radu, were also detained. The four are suspected of being part of a human trafficking group, although they say they are innocent.

I’m on my way to Andrew Tate’s home. I’d never heard of Tate until last summer. I usually cover wars, international crises, old-school corruption. Tate sounded like another self-obsessed attention screecher on social media. “He’s not,” said a colleague. “He’s one of the most Googled people on the

internet. He gets more views on social media than Rihanna. Oh, and he told a Twitch Stream that he's the world's first trillionaire."

Young, disaffected men began to follow him in their droves. They wanted more. Tate responded by ramping up the controversy

But how could that be true? How does a former kickboxer from Luton convert notoriety on social media into his claimed Musk-scale wealth? And more pressingly, for Tate at least, what will the Romanian investigators discover about his money-making activities? If he is found guilty, he could be detained in a Romanian jail for the best part of 20 years.

Andrew Tate is a social media phenomenon. His content on TikTok has been viewed more than 12.7bn times. No one else on the platform comes close. He claims to have mastered the social media algorithms that sends posts ripping through cyberspace like a plague. He is a master of buzzwords, hashtags, soundbites and inflammatory language.

His career didn't begin online – he was a kickboxer. A successful one. In 2009, he was ranked number one in his division in Europe. Commentators squawked about his "multilayered techniques" and "sharp punches to the body". But by 2016 Tate had left the ring and entered another pugilistic arena, Big Brother. He appeared to be a born provocateur: "I don't care if nobody likes me," he told the other contestants. "I know I'm the most intelligent person in the house. Fact!"



Andrew Tate in the gym in 2021. Photograph: @Cobratate/Twitter

A few days later, Tate was thrown out after footage emerged of him beating an ex-girlfriend with a belt (although both Tate and the woman deny abuse and say the clip showed consensual sex). It's since come to light that he was also being investigated by Hertfordshire police over allegations of rape. In 2019, the Crown Prosecution Service decided [not to pursue the allegations](#).

Tate moved on. He set up a webcam business in the UK, streaming live sex shows featuring women he recruited. He grew his brand on social media, becoming Tate the “alpha male” influencer. He railed against radical feminism and declared that young men needed to seize back their masculinity. “Life is war,” he said. “It’s a war for the female you want. It’s a war for the car you want. It’s a war for the money you want. It’s a war for the status. Masculine life is war!”

Young, disaffected men began to follow him in their droves. They wanted more. Tate responded by ramping up the controversy. On social media, he talked about beating women, about grabbing them by the neck. Then in 2017, he declared that women who were raped bear some of the responsibility. Unsurprisingly, he was [banned from all the major social media platforms](#) in 2022.

In the last couple of years, it is Tate's followers, not the man himself, who have helped to grow his presence on TikTok. They come from all social classes, creeds and countries. Having publicly converted to Islam in October last year, Tate was recently seen [carrying a copy of the Qur'an](#) to court in Romania, boosting his popularity among young Islamic men. Schools in the UK are so concerned about Tate's radicalisation of their students that [teachers are being given guidance](#) on how to combat his misogynistic views.

Undermining the protestations of his global fanbase and doing little to help Tate's defence are his bizarrely self-incriminating social media lectures

Tate's digital army of followers say his arrest in Romania is a setup, orchestrated by what they call "the Matrix" – a worldwide conspiracy of mainstream media and politicians who are trying to silence and control him. I'm part of the Matrix. You probably are, too. Anyone who thinks Tate's brand of violent misogyny is a bad thing is part of the Matrix. "The Matrix has attacked me," Tate tweeted after his arrest, "but they misunderstand, you cannot kill an idea."

Undermining the protestations of his vast global fanbase (Tate fans took to the streets in Athens to protest his innocence) and doing little to help Tate's defence are the bizarrely self-incriminating social media lectures that he has made over the years. Possibly useful when trying to burnish his gangster credentials for a credulous online audience, but less so when faced with a real-world Romanian prosecutor trying to prove you are involved in organised crime.

When Tate first arrived in Romania six years ago, aged 30, he was asked why he chose to relocate. "I like eastern Europe as a whole," he said, "because corruption is far more accessible." In the UK, he mused, only those of high status get away with crimes, implying that Romania was open to all.

Pushing through the gears, he then complained about how rape allegations in the UK were pursued a little too vigorously for his tastes – perhaps a reference to his own experience. "In western legal systems," he said, "whether England, America, or any of them, if a girl says something she

needs zero proof ... and they will come and arrest you. It's insanity and I thought, I can't live under this system any more, so I had to move somewhere with common-sense rules."

Those common-sense rules have led the Romanian prosecutor to keep Tate and his brother behind bars in what they call "preventive custody" to stop them fleeing, tampering with witnesses or igniting some kind of Trump-esque disruption at the Romanian courtrooms. The pair can be kept until the end of June. Then they must be released or put on trial. Romania has no jury system. If they are put on trial, judges will decide their fate.

The Romanian legal system has never experienced such global scrutiny, and the Tate brothers are already invoking the Matrix as the cause of all this. Leaving a failed appeal hearing in January, Tristan shouted to waiting camera: "Ask the politicians, ask the judges, you're getting closer to the truth."

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I'm driving towards Tate's pad, listening to a recording of him from a post that appeared on Twitter. It's a tutorial, of sorts, delivered at a gallop in a mangled American-Luton accent: Tate was born in the US, his parents emigrating to the UK when he was about five. His father, Emory, was a trailblazing African American [chess champion](#) who died suddenly during a tournament in 2015. His mother used to work as a catering assistant in Luton and is now said to be in Kentucky, staying with Tate's sister, a lawyer. Tate himself claims to have been a chess prodigy. I continue to listen to the recording as things take an ugly turn. "There's no such thing," he says, "as having girls who work for you who you've not fucked. It's impossible. You have to fuck them, and they have to love you. It's essential to the business, because otherwise women have no loyalty."

Tate speaks about curing low self-esteem in young men – undoubtedly an issue – and tells his online audience to rise early, train at the gym, build their bodies and minds, push themselves to find self-actualisation. He says they'll achieve nothing by sitting in front of their screens all day (I know – that's where they're watching him), and talks fiercely about the need to "suffer" in order to succeed, a reference to the years he spent in the kickboxing ring, where he says he saw people die.

The tutorial has moved on. Tate wants to teach his devotees how to recruit women into the webcam industry to feature in sexual content for which viewers pay between \$2 and \$10 a minute. Some receive a lot more. Romania has the biggest webcam industry in Europe – reputedly employing around 200,000 women – likely another reason Tate chose Bucharest as his home.

Tate's voice fills my car. He's explaining how to recruit women who are reluctant to undress in front of camera. "If you're on dates and you try to mention [the webcam business], shit, it doesn't work, it puts them off. You continue as normal," he says. "No mention of webcam. You fuck the girl, after you've fucked the girl ... then you start mentioning things like, 'You're always busy at work, you can come and work for me.'"

Given the billionaire hype, and his postings about his private jets, his yachts, and his fleet of supercars, Tate's residence is somewhat underwhelming

To close the deal, you should take her out to dinner with a webcam girl already in your employ who will help turn the screw. "Martinis, martinis, martinis," he says, clinking imaginary glasses, "bang, threesome ... put both girls on camera together the first day, give them a bottle of vodka." The money will come pouring in, he says, and they'll be hooked. "That's how you recruit girls," he says emphatically. "You can't recruit girls any other way."

You can imagine Tate's legal team hearing the recording for the first time. It sounds like textbook psychological coercion. Tricking a woman into thinking she's your girlfriend, then pressuring her to strip in front of a camera. In Romania, the authorities accuse him of the "loverboy" method. In the UK, it sounds like what we would call grooming.

We pull up on a patch of waste ground beside Tate's home in the Pipera district of Bucharest, a mix of aspirational new villas and ugly post-communist blocks. Stray dogs bark in the distance. The gate is suitably masculine: heavy, black and sliding. The door into the compound looks like it might be bomb proof. Tate's not there of course, but two of his heavies

dressed in black suits patrol a modest pool, where I've seen Tate posing shirtless in online images.

Go around the side and you realise Tate's home is less Hollywood hideaway and more like a rundown meat factory. Faux brickwork, dripping gutters, dark windows. There's a pile of rubble where you'd expect the garden to be, and a broken Ikea lamp. Given the billionaire hype, and his regular postings about his private jets, ocean-going yachts, and his fleet of supercars, Tate's residence is somewhat underwhelming.

There are plenty of exclusive neighbourhoods in Bucharest, crammed with beautiful villas. They're equipped with tennis courts and pool houses and staff quarters, and they cost millions. If Tate really has the wealth he says he does, why doesn't he live in Primaverii (Ceaușescu's former neighbourhood), Kiselev, or Dorobanti? His followers say he needs to be "in hiding" in his weird lair to keep a low profile. But there are plenty of mafiosi in Bucharest who live in smart neighbourhoods and keep a low profile by not blurting out their every move on the internet or acting like "gangsters".



With one of the supercars that have been seized by the Romanian police.  
Photograph: @Cobratate/Twitter

Around the corner, on the Brookside estate, we're told that Tate rents a semi for some of his webcam performers. We wander across, stumbling through a sodden building site. The house is neat, whitewashed, and in better order than Tate's, although its jarringly small windows make it look like a custody centre. On the porch is a young woman.

Jasmina is a Romanian in her mid-20s, pretty and charming. She has a lot of tattoos. One, on her arm, says "Tate". Others are branded in a similar way: "Tate's girl" or "Tate's property". We meet a second woman the following day at the same address. She is branded too.

An ex-girlfriend of Tate's in the UK claims she was manipulated by him. "Sophie" doesn't want her real name out there because Tate's followers can get quite nasty online. She says Tate first contacted her on Facebook. "There were no red flags at all in the beginning," she says. "He just took an interest in my day-to-day life, wanted to know what I was into, what made me happy." Sophie flew to Bucharest without ever having met Tate, excited about seeing her new boyfriend. She lived in the house with Tate and his brother. After a while, she says, Tate raised the issue of webcam work. "You should do it, you'd make a fortune – but if you don't want to, you don't have to." Then she says the pressure started. "If you love me, you'd do it. If you care about me, you would do it."

Sophie had done some modelling and pole dancing before, so she wasn't a complete stranger to this world. It's probably why he approached her in the first place. But she went to Bucharest to be Tate's girlfriend, and fell in love with him. Then she says he started chipping away at her.

If Tate is to be believed, his webcam business was extremely fruitful. He said he had 75 women working for him, making him \$600,000 a month

In the end, she agreed to the webcam work. She says she was under Tate's spell. She would have done anything to win his approval. Sophie had never seen his online tutorial on how to convince women to perform on webcams.

One day, she says, he pinned her to the wall and slapped her hard. On another occasion, during rough sex, she says he strangled her until she passed out. Sophie is now assisting the Romanian prosecutor with the investigation. She is the first British complainant, and you can understand why she's worried about a backlash.

The two branded women we meet at Tate's rented house have been with him for years. They are both being treated as victims by the prosecutor, but both say they're not victims at all. "I've never seen [either] of them being aggressive or rude. They've always respected people," Jasmina told Romanian TV station Antena 1. Seemingly unaware of the possibility of psychological coercion, she told reporters: "The girls were never deprived of their freedom ... the door was always open."

If Tate is to be believed, his webcam business was extremely fruitful. He told a podcast that, at its height, he had 75 women working for him in four different locations, making him \$600,000 a month. We found two of them in Bucharest. An insider at the Romanian prosecutor's office said they certainly didn't find the 75 webcammers that Tate claims.

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In the centre of Bucharest is a former shopping mall converted to offices. On the sixth floor is Best Studios, one of the biggest and most successful webcam outfits in the city, with around 200 women on its books. One of its bosses, Maria Boroghina, shows me around the 40 or so bedrooms where large beds await the day's activities. Smartly dressed in an expensive silk blouse, her hair cropped and bleached blond, she is a former webcam model herself, and made \$20,000 a month back in 2012. Now in her late 30s, she's the operations manager and travels the world representing Romania's webcam industry, attending summits in Colombia and Portugal.

Maria knows everyone in the industry. Does she know Tate? Not until she saw his arrest on television. Is it possible he could have earned tens of millions from the webcam industry? "Oh!" she says, puzzled. "If he claims that, I would like him to come and train me, because we are not able to do that." Then, more firmly. "It's not realistic in this industry to win that much money with just a few models."



Tate goading Greta Thunberg on Twitter. Photograph: Twitter

There are many more Tate companies, though. Perhaps he earned his trillion elsewhere. As we make calls to the company records office, we stop at a smart Bucharest coffee shop. Well-heeled teenage boys have congregated from a prestigious local high school. Have they heard of Tate? There is a rush of excitement. “The Top G!” A 16-year-old with a bookish air takes charge. “We love Andrew Tate,” he says, smiling. “He teaches us important lessons about life and things that we are not taught at school.”

Like what?

“Like how to act when you want to set up a business.”

Now, for the sake of completeness, there is more to Tate’s teaching than threesomes and vodka. Some of his site’s business advice is relatively orthodox. But it’s difficult to get beyond the misogyny.

I ask if they think bullying women is OK. “It depends on the girl really,” someone shouts. There’s laughter and a few whoops. “If you find an educated girl, then he won’t [bully] that girl … but if you talk to a whore …” The boy shrugs his shoulders and gives me a knowing grin.

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Romania is my spiritual home. I met my wife in Bucharest nearly 30 years ago. Back then, intolerance of all sorts was rife. Homosexuality could land you in jail. There has been huge progress, particularly since the country joined the EU in 2007. But traditional views on gender roles remain. It's not unusual, or offensive to most, to be told that a woman's place is in the home rearing children. Wives cook; husbands are fed. Men are expected to be tough and protective, and to look like men. Long hair is not much liked.

Sexual offences have not traditionally been a priority for the Romanian courts. Neither has human trafficking. Particularly if the accused is of high social status and the female complainant is not. That's changing. But would the Romanian authorities have been pursuing this so assiduously if the Tate brothers' first complainant had been a poor Romanian woman?

In fact, she was a US citizen. In April 2022, the brothers' mansion was raided by police following a tipoff from the US embassy that a 21-year-old American woman was being held against her will. Police officers took the brothers away for questioning. They were soon released, but the raid and the information gathered were the catalyst for the brothers' arrests just after Christmas.



Being led away after the raid on his home in Bucharest, Romania, in December 2022. Photograph: AP

In Bucharest, we're still following the money. And casinos are in the frame because Top G says he owns a chain of them. It's a natural fit for Tate. "The story is," he tells his followers in a video clip, "there were three brothers, mafia guys (naturally) who owned 400 casinos across eastern Europe. I went to them ... " He claims he got involved. Made a fortune. Designed a business model.

Tate says he owns a chain of 15 casinos and that they earn him \$1m a month. Well, apparently not, according to the company records in Bucharest. We search high and low, and find no evidence that he owns a single casino. Not of the Bond and martini variety, at any rate. There is a weak historical link to a chain that operates slot-machine arcades, end-of-the-pier stuff. Yes, they're known as casinos in Romania. But they're not. That company is currently under investigation for alleged extortion and organised crime involving the Romanian mafia.

Tate has spoken before about owning some arcades in Romania in a business arrangement with the slot-machine arcades company. His tactic at one was to divert queues from a neighbouring Starbucks. He'd offer free coffee to tempt people inside, and they'd shove their lunch money into his one-armed bandits. Enterprising. But enough to earn him \$1m a month?

Curiously, shortly after the police knocked on Tate's door in April last year, it seems he offloaded a Romanian company called Groundbreaking Developments, a consultancy for business and management, and put it into the name of a woman who was later arrested as part of the same trafficking case. The company was transferred again to another woman, who turns out to be a pornographic actor from Grimsby. It has now been moved to Dubai, and we can't see how much remains in its accounts.

I tweeted about Tate's finances, suggesting he may not have as much money as advertised. It got 2.3m hits and I was called a moron, parasite, fake journalist and worse

It's tough to find out how much Tate's Romanian companies are actually worth. We can find tax returns for only one: Talisman Enterprises, listed as a web portal business. That has £1.2m of debt.

I tweeted about Tate's finances recently, suggesting he may not have as much money as advertised. It received 2.3m hits and colourful responses from young men wearing Maga baseball caps. They thought they could detect the hand of the Matrix. I was called a moron, parasite, fake journalist and much worse.

One Tate business venture stands out as the likely source of his income. (It's not as if Tate is on the breadline; something must explain the €3.6m worth of supercars and watches the Romanians say they seized from his home.) In 2021, Tate set up something called Hustlers University, which promised financial freedom through online tutorials with professors who are "world class multimillionaire experts". The website looks like a Vin Diesel film. Explosions. Fireballs. Drifting Ferraris. But when you get into the meat of it, there appears to be some sound investment advice. The lecturers look like Bond villains. But they're at Hustlers University. What do you expect? One has his face pixelated.

Hustlers University had an unorthodox recruitment method. Students were paid a cut of the subscription fee for any new student they managed to bring in. That provided Tate with a highly incentivised sales force overnight. If you think it sounds like a pyramid scheme, you wouldn't be the first. Tate says it's not.

Subscriptions cost \$49.99 month. Tate claims he had more than 100,000 students. That seems a little far-fetched – one student said it was more like 30,000. But even that would have made Tate rich. Hustlers University has effectively rebranded and opened again as The Real World.

If Tate really does have immense wealth, I'm struggling to find it. There is one place we haven't been able to look though, and that's the blockchain. Tate regularly talks up crypto on social media, and in an October 2022 podcast he told listeners that he flipped a \$600,000 bitcoin investment from March 2020, turning it into a \$12m profit.

He does seem to have at least one digital wallet, but we can't look inside. Romanian law enforcement can't either, but they can track any transactions in or out. There's legal precedent, at least, for them to freeze whatever's there.

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Back at Tate's Bucharest compound, the supercars have long gone, seized by the authorities in connection with the investigation into alleged human trafficking. A neighbour wanders by loaded with shopping. "They've never done any wrong," he says, gesturing at Andrew Tate's home. "It's the politicians behind all of this. They're trying to stop him getting to his money." Tate would doubtless agree.

He and his brother are not likely to be home for a while. The courts have until the end of June to start a trial or release them. An insider in the Romanian prosecutor's office said they expect a trial to begin earlier than that, at which point the Tate brothers will be moved from a holding centre to a penitentiary, where conditions will likely be more severe. And the mood music isn't good. The judge extended their detention in January referring to the brothers' "capacity and effort to exercise permanent psychological control over the victims ... including by resorting to constant acts of violence".

If convicted, it's possible they could be looking at many years in a Romanian jail. Tate, a man created in cyberspace, would see his money reduced to binary code locked in a virtual wallet that no human can reach.

*Andrew Tate did not respond to a request to comment for this article.*

Paul Kenyon is a journalist and author of the book [Children of the Night: the Strange and Epic Story of Modern Romania](#). His team's investigation into Tate, [Living With Andrew Tate](#), is available on BBC File on 4 and BBC Sounds.

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## **Blind date: ‘He said he asked for someone more introverted’**



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Composite: David Levene/The Guardian

Bruno, 44, who works in aviation, meets Lydia, 36, a teacher

Sat 11 Feb 2023 01.00 EST



## Bruno on Lydia

### **What were you hoping for?**

A night with someone special, with great food, wine and some banter.

### **First impressions?**

She looked cool and was much more relaxed than me. She was not the type of woman I would normally date.

### **What did you talk about?**

Family. Work. Her disaster dates. Her dad trying to match her with random guys he meets at his local Tesco.

### **Most awkward moment?**

When the waiter offered us wine and she said she was not drinking. It was a sacrifice, but I had to drink the whole bottle myself.

**Good table manners?**

Yes.

**Best thing about Lydia?**

She seems to be a force for good.

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

I guess so, but I don't see that happening.

**Describe Lydia in three words.**

Smart, self-assured, foodie.

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

Hopefully my name will not be added to her disaster-dates list.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

I half-heartedly said it would be silly to go for a nightcap as she was not drinking. She quickly agreed.

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

A kiss was never in the cards.

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

It was a nice evening, but no spark.

**Marks out of 10?**

6.

**Would you meet again?**

If I bump into her in a pub, it would be nice to have a chat over a drink.



Bruno and Lydia on their date.

## Q&A

### **Want to be in Blind date?**

Show

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

### **What questions will I be asked?**

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

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

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

**Can I pick the photograph?**

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

**What personal details will appear?**

Your first name, job and age.

**How should I answer?**

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

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

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

**Will you find me The One?**

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

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

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

**How to apply**

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

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.



## **Lydia on Bruno**

### **What were you hoping for?**

A fun evening that was different from dating via an app.

### **First impressions?**

He was tall and a little bit nervous.

### **What did you talk about?**

Our jobs – he travels a lot for work. Our families. Terrible past dates.

### **Most awkward moment?**

The end was a bit awkward as you don't often just say bye to people and then walk in different directions.

### **Good table manners?**

Yes, I think so. We both had our elbows on the table but who cares about that any more?

### **Best thing about Bruno?**

He has a lot to say on every topic.

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

As a potential partner no, but Bruno is a lovely person so as a friend, yes.

**Describe Bruno in three words.**

Chatty, friendly, confident.

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

I'd say he thinks I'm outgoing. After some of the solo travel stories I told him, he probably thinks I'm bonkers.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

No, he offered but I had to be up early.

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

No.

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

We are both extroverts and used to carrying the conversation, and Bruno said he asked for someone who was more introverted, which I think would have worked better.

**Marks out of 10?**

The restaurant was amazing and Bruno was chatty and friendly. So 6.5.

**Would you meet again?**

No. I don't think there was a spark and Bruno is away for work a lot.

*Bruno and Lydia ate at [Angelina, London E8](#). Fancy a blind date? Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)*

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[The watcher](#)[Television & radio](#)

## Prue and Danny's Death Road Trip: this might be the best assisted dying debate ever

Ignore the clunky title, this documentary – which sees the Tory MP and his famous TV chef mother spar over death – is fascinating. Not least because of their weird relationship...



To be or not to be ... Prue Leith and Danny Kruger in Prue and Danny's Death Road Trip. Photograph: Channel 4

[Joel Golby](#)

Sat 11 Feb 2023 02.00 EST

I personally love turning the television on and just seeing two Tories there, waiting for me – “This Morning is a British daytime magazine programme that is broadcast on ITV1” – so thank you Channel 4 for the addition of Prue

and Danny's Death Road Trip (Thursday 16 Feb, 9pm), which is exactly that. Just spinning the TV idea generator wheel here, hold on: [Prue Leith](#) and ... her MP son ... go on a road trip ... about assisted dying. Yeah, that'll do. Does anyone have two cameras and a big van?

We should start with my [Prue Leith](#) impression, which is amazing. It works better in real life but sort of translates here: "Mm, yes – well you can certainly taste the booze." Imagine I am wearing a really fun pair of glasses. It's good, isn't it? And after a tough six years of just doing that over and over again on [Bake Off](#), she's off to Seattle, Atlanta, Vancouver and Toronto (but, crucially, not Switzerland) to chase the hottest of hot potatoes, the assisted dying debate, across the 10 US states where it is legalised but frowned upon. Mm, yes – well you can certainly taste the pentobarbs.

I have to say, Prue and Danny's Death Road Trip, despite the clankingly inelegant title, is a fascinating documentary for two reasons. First, it truly is one of the better-framed "debates" I have seen on British TV in the last ... well, how old am I, 35 years? Prue is extremely pro-dignity in dying, after watching her brother's long, painful death despite being surrounded by palliative care: she's been campaigning for the practice to be introduced to the UK for 12 years. Danny Kruger is very anti- (what he calls) "assisted suicide", predominantly because he worked with a charity that helped former prisoners reform, and as a result sees it as a system open to abuse. Both lean on the centre-sides of the debate, both have varied points of view on why assisted dying is right or wrong (pain management, human empathy, the mortal fear of being a burden, religion, mental health, suffering, the effectiveness of the techniques used), and both are willing to hear each other out in various roadside diners and on the top decks of ferries. No one is ever really right and no one ever really gets it wrong. It's a curiously engrossing watch.



Leith with her son in Prue and Danny's Death Road Trip. Photograph: Channel 4

If you're not into that – I'm not, because I already have perfect politics so don't need Danny Kruger telling me what to think from one of the safest seats in Britain – it's purely fascinating on a human level to see Prue Leith and her son interact with about the same fondness I have for people I just met in a long queue at the airport. You realise quite early on in life that every family is different – how big their TV is, how tidy their house is, what weird things they believe are normal to put in a pasta bake – but I've rarely seen that represented quite so vividly on screen. To watch Danny walk into a gorgeous farmhouse kitchen, behold a plate of crumpets and say a brisk: "Hello Mum, OK, very good," is to know once and for all that you are normal.

There are a lot of profound moments, though, thanks to the generosity of the interviewees planning an assisted death as well as the empathy of the film-making around them. We meet Jan, a retired carpenter living with advanced Parkinson's, at his first consultation to qualify for Canada's Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) programme. As the (incredible) doctor peppers him with deliberately antagonistic questions about his life, his level of pain, and other care solutions available to him, he is calm and resolute. "I know what life should be like," he says. "I know what I want to be."

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Later, Prue – who is 82, and talking rationally about a possible medical situation that could arise in, say, 10 years’ time – has a frank discussion with Danny about her will. “I think everyone should think about death,” she tells us, “even if it just makes them appreciate life.” With the Canadian government debating whether to open MAiD up to those suffering with long-term mental health issues such as PTSD, the documentary enters into its most divisive and sticky territory, but comes out with clean hands. It’s rare you see a hot button topic done well – normally you have to watch Jimmy Carr flamethrow a Hitler painting to get this sort of nuance – so it’s refreshing to see it here. Right, time to switch over and watch some Ant and Dec.

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## [Culture](#)

# ‘Everyone is going to talk about it’: the making of a \$7m Super Bowl ad

Sunday’s big game offers brands an expensive opportunity to put together a celebrity-fronted spot and get maximum attention in the shortest amount of time



Jennifer Coolidge in a Super Bowl commercial for Elf Cosmetics.  
Photograph: YouTube

[Rob LeDonne](#)

[@robledonne](#)

Sat 11 Feb 2023 02.09 EST Last modified on Sat 11 Feb 2023 02.11 EST

“Having an ad in the Super Bowl is very high pressure,” says Scott Bell, chief creative officer of the advertising company Droga5, from their office in New York City. “It’s the one thing you do when you know everyone is going to talk about it and have an opinion. The rest of the year, nobody cares. For the Super Bowl, everybody cares!”

So it goes in the life of the advertising companies that try to grab America's attention every year with a slate of eye-popping ads during the sole night of the year when the commercials in between are just as important, and for some even more important, than the actual game itself. That's part of the reason why 30-second ad slots for [Super Bowl LVII](#) were selling for over \$7m.

For Bell, his team has multiple ads running during this year's game including for the beer giant Molson Coors and streaming service Paramount+. It marks the grand culmination of what amounts to a six-month-long journey to Super Sunday.

"Sometimes you have a really long lead time and other times clients come to us three weeks out and say we have an idea," says Bell. Case in point: it was only a month ago on the red carpet at the Golden Globes when Jennifer Coolidge said her dream role would be to play a dolphin. This Sunday, she partly achieves that dream in a spot for Elf Cosmetics. (It was written by her White Lotus collaborator, Mike White.)

In Bell's case, the team at Droga5 knew that Molson Coors wanted a spot sometime last summer and with that in mind, they went to work. "We started off with at least 100 ideas internally," says Bell. "Finally, we went into one meeting with six different approaches." What they landed on was a partnership with the gambling site DraftKings which is being positioned as the very first commercial you can officially bet on.

For ad executives, formulating a Super Bowl campaign is a delicate balancing act during which multiple interests are at play. "You want to show something that leaves a mark, is relatable, is connected to the brand and maybe makes people laugh," said Ciro Sarmiento, the chief creative officer for ad company Saatchi & Saatchi. This year, he helped mastermind a spot for the detergent company Downy starring the actor Danny McBride. "It also has to be an idea that lives beyond the TV ad."

That means teasers that premiere well before the game, and hooks that give viewers something to chatter about long after a winner is announced. For

Sarmiento, he and his team started with 60 Downy ideas. “Then we filtered them down to 20, then 10, then five and then out of those, three made the cut. Finally, you pick the one you want to push for.” Playing on the idea that Downy’s new scent-boosting product Unstoppables freshens clothing for 12 weeks, the ad was teased exactly 12 weeks in advance of its premiere.

“It’s like how Christmas started happening earlier and earlier every year,” says Bell. “Every year teasers get released earlier and earlier.”

When it comes to other recent trends, celebrities continue to reign supreme. Along with Coolidge and McBride, other boldfaced names to look for include Steve Martin and Ben Stiller for Pepsi, as well as Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez for Dunkin’. Meanwhile, Squarespace recruited the actor Adam Driver. And playing on their names, Jon Hamm and Brie Larson will pitch Hellmann’s mayonnaise.

“If you’re gonna be spending this much money on a spot, they want to be sure there’s a certain amount of built-in talk value,” says Bell.

With both Bell and Sarmiento’s ads complete, their Super Sunday duties aren’t finished until they all air. “It’s the most exciting day of the whole process,” says Sarmiento of what’s dubbed the War Room, a newsroom-like atmosphere in which everybody involved in the ads gather to watch their work unfold.

“All of our clients are flying to our offices in New York to join us, our partner agencies and the whole team to enjoy the game and see how we can engage with whatever happens on social media,” says Sarmiento. “So we all have to pay attention. Then, Monday morning will be a little more relaxing.”

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## 2023.02.11 - Opinion

- The official ‘party toolkit’ for Charles’s coronation is lame - but don’t worry, I have another
- It’s not just that Lee Anderson is wrong about hanging: he’s also the wrong man to stop the Tories sinking
- Putin is gambling on the west growing impatient with Ukraine. We have to prove him wrong
- People of Britain – how can you look at our leaders and say there is nothing to laugh about?

## OpinionKing Charles III

# The official ‘party toolkit’ for Charles’s coronation is lame - but don’t worry, I have another

[Remona Aly](#)



Connect the dots, coronation aubergine – there’s little joy in the official guide. But there are ways to endure, even enjoy the day. Trust me



King Charles visiting Leighton House, London, 9 February. Photograph: Reuters

Sat 11 Feb 2023 04.00 EST Last modified on Sat 11 Feb 2023 04.02 EST

Let the bells ring out, raise the bunting. But what else? The problem looming with coronation day, when the artist once known as Prince Charles will be crowned with pomp and ceremony, is that no one really knows what to do about it. How would they? He's the first new British monarch in 70 years.

And so, courtesy of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, we have a toolkit to help us celebrate the illustrious moment. There are games, coronation chicken-style recipes and a Spotify playlist featuring King by Years & Years (obvs), Boney M's Daddy Cool and, without a whiff of woke, Grace Jones's Slave to the Rhythm.

But it's the people's day, and with no guarantee that all will find the government's kit of joy to their liking, many are already seeking alternatives. The options, I find, are endless.

## 1. Revive It's a Royal Knockout

We've largely forgotten it now, but Prince Edward was on to something back in the 1980s when he got members of the royal family to humiliate themselves on national telly. Now they do it all the time. Back then they wore yellow tights, medieval costumes and dressed as giant vegetables. They seemed happy. Why not recreate those magically competitive, watery, custardy moments in a modern setting: Kate v Meghan, Will v Harry, Andrew v Fergie, Andrew v Emily Maitlis, Andrew v the US lawyers. Andrew working up a sweat ... oh no, he doesn't does he?

## 2. Play the ‘damn pen!’ game

There's a join-the-dots game in the official toolkit. Complete the task and create your own royal carriage. But why make the art so abstract? Bring the whole thing to life by having the youngsters recreate the king's irritation during a signing session, when he rantend volubly at the inadequacy of his leaky “damn”, “bloody thing” fountain pen. “Oh God, I hate this,” he said. The teams could re-enact the scene and chant that. Talk about happy and glorious. Protector of the faiths, priest of the petulant.

## 3. Adapt the playlist

Harry will be there, by all accounts, so the impassioned Release Me by the veteran crooner Engelbert Humperdinck would seem right for the Spotify playlist.

“Please release me, let me go/ For I don’t love you any more,” sang Humpty Bumpy, Lumpty Dumpy as he was known. Night after night, on TV and in Las Vegas, he wrung pathos, pain and hopelessness from his situation. Could be a song for any of them really: a follow on, perhaps, from Slave to the Rhythm.

## 4. No to the ‘coronation aubergine’: have a very cheeky Nando’s

It's there in the official toolkit, but surely it's time to move away from coronation-themed food choices. What has coronation chicken, the curried mayo has-been said to have been devised during preparations for Queen

Elizabeth's coronation banquet, ever done for us – or good taste? Go your own way: get Nando's, the Portuguese mother clucker swiftly becoming a national heritage dish. Apparently it's [Harry's fave](#). Camilla? Not so much.

## 5. Morris dance – to Stormzy

The royal website spiel says we are truly a nation that looks forward as well as being [rooted in the past](#), so why not fuse the much admired/much reviled English folk tradition of [morris dancing](#) with a bit of grime. [Big for Your Boots](#): that's Stormzy's grimy anthem, but it's also the Windsors' with bells on, as it were. Stormzy once bumped into Prince William [at the gym](#) apparently. One of them was working out: the other isn't known for working at all.

## 6. Diversify the day: stream the Goodness Gracious Me sketch: Going for an 'English'

Sanjeev Bhaskar, Meera Syal, Kulvinder Ghir and Nina Wadia played a cast of Indian characters [in a sketch](#) parodying stereotypes of white English people going out for "an Indian". How about friends and family role-playing the Windsors going for a German. Instead of, "12 bread rolls", "16 of your *blutwurst* sausages, if we may".

## 7. Enjoy your protector of the faiths pop-up postcard

Since King Charles has expressed genuine interest in, and even championed, other faiths in the UK, and to mark his oath on coronation day, when he will become not just defender of the faith but also a "[defender of faiths](#)", you could celebrate inclusion and diversity with your own interfaith pop-up. The downloadable pop-up would feature the happy, smiley faces of Sikhs, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and the like, all united under the union jack. The fun continues until a pop-up Indian says we want our [Koh-i-noor diamond](#) back. At that point, the fun is over. Cheers, *namaste, salam, sat sri akal*. And God save the King!

- Remona Aly is a journalist and broadcaster with a focus on faith and lifestyle
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**OpinionConservatives**

## **It's not just that Lee Anderson is wrong about hanging: he's also the wrong man to stop the Tories sinking**

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



Hankering for the death penalty may get the party's deputy chair attention, but it won't attract working-class voters with genuine problems



Lee Anderson, the new deputy chairman of the Conservative party, speaking in the House of Commons, December 2020. Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

Fri 10 Feb 2023 12.17 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 16.46 EST

Lee Anderson thinks we should [bring back the death penalty](#). Because say what you like about hanging, but dead people don't commit crimes.

Sometimes, admittedly, it turns out they didn't even commit the crimes they were actually executed for, but Anderson seems to think there are ways around that. He also believes too many food bank users are wasting money on fags, booze and Sky TV, and that the real problem is people not knowing how to cook. He once suggested nuisance tenants should be made to [live in tents](#) and pick potatoes all day and ... well, you get the gist.

Only in the House of Commons would trotting all this out make people call you an original or a breath of fresh air, given there's a Lee Anderson propping up the bar in most pubs. Why you'd want to make one of them [deputy chairman of the Conservative party](#), however, seems less obvious.

The question isn't whether some voters share Anderson's views – of course they do – or even whether it's incredibly useful for a government overseeing

so many people plunging into poverty to have as its human smokescreen a man who was once hard up himself, but still seems to think poor people have it too easy. The real question is whether he's the right person to help the [Conservatives](#) avoid a thundering electoral defeat, which is his actual job description.

The official Tory line on Anderson is that if what he says upsets you, then you're a snob or out of touch. That's an interesting way to describe a significant number of Conservative voters, plus a prime minister immediately forced to clarify that actually he doesn't agree with Lee about the death penalty. Voters who do agree with him can now presumably look forward to the government repeatedly disowning his views, in a way they'd never have needed to do had he still been just a backbencher, while the hard-right Reform party carries on wooing them by saying what mainstream parties can't say.

Ah, we're told, but this is a cunning double act! [Greg Hands](#), the new party chairman, will reassure all the soft, remain-voting southern Tories currently fleeing to the Liberal Democrats, while Anderson talks to northern leavers. But that works only if Anderson intends to operate on some weird bat frequency that potential Tories in Winchester or Guildford are somehow too posh to hear, and vice versa for Hands. Like a warring couple who only stayed together for the sake of their now grownup children, the two halves of the Conservative electoral coalition, brought together by Brexit, increasingly have little else in common. Giving each their own party spokesman seems more likely to highlight the differences than solve them.

And while Hands is a canny electoral survivor, holding on to his Chelsea and Fulham seat even amid a Tory wipeout in London, Anderson's reputation as a "red wall" whisperer is less assured. A former Labour councillor, he ran the office of the outgoing Ashfield MP Gloria de Piero, before defecting to the Tories and standing for the same seat in 2019. It was a bitter campaign – the day I went to Ashfield, someone had just smashed the window of Labour's campaign office – and while the new Labour candidate seemed impressive, I came away privately thinking she was doomed. After all, De Piero had only just held on at the previous election, and the tide was flowing strongly against Jeremy Corbyn's party in towns

such as this. But interestingly, even in the year of what turned out to be the great Tory landslide, the Conservative vote actually [fell slightly in Ashfield](#) compared with 2017 – although fortunately for Anderson, Labour’s vote collapsed even further.

What’s baffling about this appointment is that there are red wall Tory MPs out there who also understand and reflect the communities they serve, but have more thoughtful ideas for pulling their towns out of the doldrums than bringing back hanging. Crime is a huge and underrated issue in many of their seats, as [recent reports](#) from the centre-right levelling-up thinktank Onward and the more centrist [More In Common](#) network make clear.

But short of bringing back the death penalty for smashing up bus shelters, it’s unclear that Anderson’s brand of Conservatism has the answers. Both reports were picking up on frustration with the kind of petty violence, vandalism and antisocial behaviour that makes older people scared to leave the house, and makes town centres or parks look depressingly rundown. The focus groups that Onward ran in Oldham, Greater Manchester, or Clacton, in Essex, wanted more police around, but they also wanted more youth clubs and things for teenagers to do; tough on crime, you might say, but also tough on the causes of crime.

Similarly, while some Tory voters do share Anderson’s views on supposed welfare “scroungers”, soaring energy and food bills seem to be shifting the needle. Six in 10 Britons [now want targeted support](#) for people struggling with these basics. In other words, most people still want practical solutions to practical problems, from making ends meet to feeling safe going to the shops; it’s a narrow and in some ways equally out-of-touch view of working-class voters that assumes otherwise.

Mirror people’s gut feelings back at them, and it’s true you’ll always have a hearing in the pub. But unless you can also offer a decent job and home and a better future for their kids, what’s the point of them putting you in government?

Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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[\*\*OpinionUkraine\*\*](#)

# **Putin is gambling on the west growing impatient with Ukraine. We have to prove him wrong**

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



A year into his country's fight for its very survival, Volodymyr Zelenskiy knows some in Europe are looking for a way out



Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy and Rishi Sunak visit Ukrainian troops being trained to use Challenger 2 tanks by British forces in Dorset on Thursday, 9 February 2023. Photograph: EyePress News/REX/Shutterstock

Fri 10 Feb 2023 12.15 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 13.48 EST

The image was stunning, the optics perfect: a war leader addressing the nation in an ancient hall, the rays of stained-glass sunlight all but crowning him with a halo. And yet there was something wrong with that picture. Volodymyr Zelenskiy was not stiffening the resolve of his own people, who after a year of war, bereavement and pain might be forgiven for losing heart. Rather, he was [in Westminster](#) to steady the nerves of British politicians – and, later, European ones – to ensure they do not abandon a fight that has cost them so much less.

His official request was [for fighter planes](#) – “Give us wings,” he said – but he had a wider purpose. His lightning trip to London, Paris and Brussels was aimed at ensuring the west does not grow impatient, that as the first anniversary of Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine approaches, it does not start looking at its watch – and for an early way out.

It’s odd that it should be this way around. It is the Ukrainians who are doing the suffering; it is on their soil that trench warfare is once again under way –

the kind of combat that many assumed had been banished into history, to be glimpsed only via lavish [Netflix re-enactments](#). It is Ukrainian men who are living in the ground, in networks of trenches and subterranean shelters along a frontline that stretches for 1,500km (930 miles) – and yet it is fear of quiet on the western front that preoccupies Zelenskiy.

You can see why. Admittedly, the calls for Kyiv to agree to an immediate ceasefire and negotiate with Moscow are fairly marginal right now. It fell, for example, to the former Pink Floyd frontman Roger Waters to make that case [to the United Nations this week](#), his stance as an anti-war campaigner neutral between the two combatants only slightly undermined by the fact that he spoke as the invited guest of the Russian delegation, and has described well-documented accounts of Russian war crimes as “[lies, lies, lies](#)”.

Ukraine will join the EU, says Zelenskiy during speech to European parliament – video

But others less easily dismissed have also begun to drum their fingers on the table, reminding Zelenskiy that all conflicts end in talks eventually, and so he should start thinking pragmatically now – among them no less than the former US secretary of state [Henry Kissinger](#).

Whether articulated by the arena rock left or the establishment right, it sounds like the reasonable, humanitarian position: who could be against an immediate end to this horrendous war? But it’s a hollow call.

For one thing, the conditions simply do not exist for the two sides to negotiate now. To quote a recent [Prospect essay](#) by Jonathan Powell, who played a critical role in brokering the Good Friday agreement, which turns 25 this spring: “Successful peace negotiations usually require both a mutually hurting stalemate (a specific concept in diplomacy) and leadership on both sides prepared to take political risks for peace. Neither condition currently exists,” in the case of Ukraine.

In Northern Ireland, neither the British government nor the IRA could see a path to military victory: it was that stalemate that made negotiations

possible. But, wrote Powell, “Both [Ukraine](#) and Russia still think they can achieve their objectives militarily.”

What complicates things further is the specific figure of Putin. It’s not clear that the traditional carrot-and-stick calculus works with him. If Ukraine and its western allies were to de-escalate, Putin’s past conduct suggests he would see that as weakness and press harder. But if Kyiv and its backers were to escalate, the same track record suggests an identical response: he would feel compelled to appear strong and hit back. Nor does the huge number of casualties on his own side count as any kind of pressure on Putin: given the clampdown on all internal dissent inside Russia, public grief is scarcely a consideration. He is happy to keep sending his young men into the meat grinder.

Watch the third episode of Norma Percy’s riveting new BBC documentary series [Putin vs the West](#), and it becomes clearer still that the traditional methods don’t apply. Zelenskiy tells Percy of his repeated requests to join Nato: the alliance kept rebuffing him for fear of antagonising Putin. Several European nations extended that caution into the rest of their dealings with Putin, attempting emollience even in early 2022, hoping not to provoke him into invading Ukraine. But it was all in vain: Putin invaded anyway.

Still, let’s say that could be overcome, and somehow it was possible to get Putin and Zelenskiy to agree an immediate ceasefire. It would not end the suffering. Contemplate for a moment the fate of those places conquered by Putin, which would remain in Russian hands under an armistice that would freeze the current map in place. Think for a moment of what has happened already in those places: the [mass rape in Bucha](#); the [massacre in Mariupol](#); the [torture chambers in Izium](#); the [mass deportations](#) of Ukrainians to Russia, including the transfer of [hundreds of thousands of children](#), to face forced adoption and “Russification”. Those crimes would not end if there were a ceasefire. They would continue, except now Russia would have an even freer hand.

And who believes that Putin would stop there? What grounds would a Ukrainian have to trust that the Russian leader would be content to pocket the gains he had won and leave it at that? One would have to ignore

everything that has happened these last two decades. Much more likely is that Putin would simply regard an armistice as a pause to regroup for the next push. After all, he is not after a mere adjustment of boundaries: [he has been clear](#) that he regards the very existence of an independent Ukraine as an affront to Russia. Vadym Prystaiko, Ukraine's former foreign minister, tells Percy: "You cannot bargain with him. Putin does not need anything from us. There is no reward, no building or city or prize. He wants us not to exist."

Of course, enemies in every conflict would say their adversary is uniquely evil or impervious to reason. Often that assessment is wrong. But sometimes the world really does face a threat of a different order. Putin's dictatorship inside Russia's borders and his repeated territorial expansion beyond them – whether in Georgia in 2008, Crimea in 2014 or the rest of Ukraine in 2022 – suggest a man bent on reviving the spectres that haunted [Europe](#) in the middle of the last century. He has played the long game and is playing it again now, gambling that he can absorb more death and devastation than we can, that we have less stomach for it, even when it's not our people who are doing the dying. He believes he has greater strength and greater patience. It's no exaggeration to say that the fate of Europe depends on proving him wrong.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist
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**OpinionComedy**

## **People of Britain – how can you look at our leaders and say there is nothing to laugh about?**

[Nels Abbey](#)



If there is a laughter deficit in this country, perhaps we are to blame. It's a target-rich environment



Puppets of Suella Braverman, Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss at the world premiere of Idiots Assemble: Spitting Image Saves the World, Birmingham, 7 February. Photograph: Jacob King/PA

Fri 10 Feb 2023 11.08 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 11.53 EST

In a commendably shameless attempt to promote their comedy slate, the good folk over at Sky recently conducted a [survey of 2,000 great Britons](#) to find out when the last time was that they, ie we, had laughed out loud. Their findings were no laughing matter: “42% of Brits admitted that they cannot remember the last time they laughed out loud, with 32% of those surveyed believing they haven’t as much as giggled in the last month.”

Laughter, merriment: it’s a serious business. It brings immense [health benefits](#): it helps relax the body, boost the immune system, release endorphins (our natural feelgood chemicals) and burn calories. Laughter may even help you live longer. If I were confident it would not inspire this government to dream up further budget cuts, I’d max out and say laughter could ease pressure on the NHS.

So where are we supposed to turn for humour in such straitened times?

Laughter is, in the main, closely associated with happiness. But it can be linked to adversity and misery; a need to defend one's sanity.

A 2011 Gallup poll found Nigeria, a place plagued with problems but home to highly motivated and progress-driven people, to be the happiest nation on Earth. Two sayings you regularly hear in Nigeria may help explain this: the self-explanatory “if I don’t laugh, I will cry”, and “I can’t come and kill myself”. This is not about self-harm; it simply means “you shouldn’t over-stress yourself about things that are not going well”. Might as well laugh at it. This laughter is omnipresent in places such as Lagos and Abuja, in a way that it is not always in, say, London and Aberdeen. Perhaps we Britons have something to learn from the Nigerians in, as Fela Kuti put it, [looking and laughing](#), at finding hilarity in misery and decline.

We might laugh, without spelling it out in full, at the “B-word”. In democratically choosing to erect an imaginary wall in the Channel, Britain joined an elite group of nations that have sanctioned themselves into economic peril. How could you not find the funnies in the fact that the sanctions we inadvertently placed on ourselves turned out to be more effective than the [sanctions much of the west placed on Russia?](#)

The fallacies, fortunes and forays back into politics of failed prime ministers (that is, prime ministers who failed us) could be a source of immense hilarity. In 2009 Boris Johnson, then mayor of London, suggested that the £250,000 a year he received for his second job as a newspaper columnist was “chicken feed”. It turns out this was no empty brag – in the months since leaving office Johnson, a moonshine Churchill whose actual full-time job is campaigning to get his old job back, has “earned” an [estimated £5m in fees for writing and speaking](#). Meanwhile, the unstoppable Iron Lady Liz Truss, our 49-day fling, returned to politics, apparently intent on reminding people why our fling lasted only 49 days. After reading her 4,000-word excuse for trashing the economy, we can all prepare to laugh at whichever publisher shells out more than a packet of crisps for her memoirs.

With the [highest electricity bills](#) in the world we have helped ensure that those patriotic friends of the British people and the environment, the great British oil companies, are belly-laughing all the way to the bank. Meanwhile, rapidly rising interest rates in our debt-heavy nation – one in

which the average person's wealth is in mortgage-funded property ownership – means the banks are laughing at all of us.

In dead white men news, Britain's most iconic blue-chip racist Enoch Powell, who died 25 years ago this week, may be chuckling in what he would consider hell (ie a diverse room in which he or at least someone else white does not "hold the whip hand"), as he watches his legacy supposedly disowned but then effectively upheld by some ethnic minority members of the Conservative party.

By appointing Lee Anderson as deputy chair of the Conservative party, Rishi Sunak was surely crafting his tilt at 2023 joke of the year. Sadly for Sunak, Anderson bested him, observing that the death penalty enjoys a "100% success rate" as "nobody has ever committed a crime after being executed". Lee's a gag machine.

We have Nadine Dorries, ululating despair on Murdoch's TalkTV, and a Fawlty Towers reboot from anti-woke warrior John Cleese, to be set on a multiracial Caribbean island. Already that's hilarious, in that everything about it, especially him, sounds so unfunny.

So if there is a laughter deficit, perhaps the problem is us. Pretend you're a careworn Nigerian in Lagos, then look at Suella Braverman. OK, stop now, you'll do yourself an injury.

- Nels Abbey is a writer, broadcaster and former banker. He is the author of the satirical book Think Like a White Man
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## [Israel](#)

# Child among two people killed in Jerusalem bus stop attack

Palestinian driver rams car into people on outskirts of city, in incident described by PM as terrorist attack



People lighting candles at the site of the attack on Friday. Photograph: Atef Safadi/EPA

*Reuters in Jerusalem*

Fri 10 Feb 2023 10.45 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 10.51 EST

Two people including a child have been killed and several injured after a Palestinian driver rammed his car into a group of people at a bus stop on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

A police spokesperson said the driver, who was shot at the scene, was dead. An Israeli security official identified him as Hussain Qraqaa, 31, a resident of Issawiya in East Jerusalem.

The Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, described the incident on Friday as a terrorist attack and ordered security forces to be reinforced.

A volunteer medic with United Hatzalah ambulance service, Ariel Ben-David, told Army Radio: “Everyone was lying out, thrown about, in very bad condition. To our regret, one child did not survive.”

The incident occurred during a period of rising anxiety in Israel over security after an attack in which a lone Palestinian gunman killed seven people outside a synagogue last month.

Israeli forces have carried out hundreds of arrests over recent months during near-daily raids in the occupied West Bank during which there have been bloody gunbattles with Palestinian militants.

At least 42 Palestinians, including gunmen and civilians, have been killed so far this year.

A spokesperson for Hamas, the Islamist group that runs the Gaza Strip, praised Friday’s attack as a “heroic operation” but did not claim responsibility.

A man who said he had witnessed the attack from his car told Israel’s Channel 12 news that an armed civilian had shot the attacker before a police officer arrived and also shot into the car.

A six-year-old boy and a 20-year-old man were killed. The six-year-old’s brother was critically injured in the incident, Channel 12 News said.

Footage circulated on social media showed a blue car that had crashed into a pole in front of the bus stop in the Ramot area, a part of Jerusalem that was annexed by Israel after the 1967 Middle Eastern war. Israel considers the land within the Jerusalem city limits.

The hardline security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who is responsible for police forces in the area, visited the scene and was greeted by angry crowds who surrounded him, some chanting “Death to terrorists!”

“Nothing is more difficult than arriving at an incident in which a child has been killed,” Ben-Gvir said. “I have said more than once that I want to institute the death penalty for terrorists.”

He said he had instructed police to set up checkpoints around Issawiya, the area in East Jerusalem where the suspected attacker came from.

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## Bogged: the toilet laws that could spell end of the road for New Zealand's van lifers



Castle point with Suzanne Lustig Photograph: Bastiaan van Druten

Travellers who enjoy the simple freedoms of their humble van face a major roadblock in the form of legislation requiring a fully plumbed-in toilet



[Tess McClure](#) in Auckland

[@tessairini](#)

Fri 10 Feb 2023 14.00 EST Last modified on Sat 11 Feb 2023 01.25 EST

When Bastiaan Van Druten moved to [New Zealand](#) from the Netherlands about seven years ago, a van was his first major purchase. He spent a week in his driveway, converting a HiAce into a livable home on wheels. Jamming in double mattresses, wardrobes, cabinetry, and concealed gas cookers into a few square metres, the design combined ingenuity with a willingness to sacrifice creature comforts.

For months, he and his partner travelled the country, visiting its small towns, waking up to surf and eat breakfast. “We noticed that New Zealand had a big van tourist scene,” he says. The country’s isolated coastlines and natural landscapes became suddenly accessible, and affordable. “The van really opens all of that up.”

But for Van Druten and hundreds like him, this season may be the last of the cheap, accessible “van life” summers – at least as they’ve known them. Anger at the unsanitary behaviour of some campers has made them a target, and new laws moving through parliament this year could spell the end of an era for many converted vans. The legislation would require the installation of standalone plumbed toilets that many say are too big to be fitted into their existing vehicles.

“It’s going to limit the kind of tourists that are still able to travel around New Zealand,” Van Druten says. “Because you know, the bigger campers they’re just way too expensive.”

## **‘Not part of our global brand’**

For years, New Zealanders and overseas visitors – particularly the young, adventurous, and those on a strict budget – have embraced the van life, converting vans into DIY campers and taking to the highways to find out-of-the-way nooks and isolated beaches. Amid the growth of remote, laptop-based work, a growing cohort moved into their vans for long stretches and documented their travels, sharing tips for vehicle conversion alongside wanderlust-themed photographs of waking up to unspoiled sunsets and rooftop yoga. Fuelled by social media and word of mouth, the number of freedom campers ballooned, from the low tens of thousands in the early 2000s to just over 250,000 in 2019, according to New Zealand’s ministry of business, innovation and employment.

About five years ago, however, New Zealand’s freedom campers began to come under fierce public scrutiny, after a series of media reports when locals relayed stories of van-borne tourists defecating on their berms and beaches. The stories prompted a storm of outrage at freedom campers and made them a political target, firmly in the sights of tourism minister Stuart Nash. “They pull over to the side of the road and they shit in our waterways,” the minister infamously said in 2020, calling for a total ban on campervans without a self-contained toilet. “That’s not who we are as a nation, it’s not part of our global brand and I don’t think it’s the sort of tourist that New Zealanders want to see in our country.”



Small-van owners say installing a plumbed-in toilet is too onerous given the size of their vehicles. Photograph: Bastiaan van Druten

The new regulations are passing through the select committee stage to their second reading, and at this stage have the cautious support of all of the major political parties.

“There might be creative ways of doing it [plumbing in a toilet], but you’re wasting a third of your space or something for your toilet,” says Van Druten. “So all the smaller vans are basically write-offs for tourists and van life if those new regulations actually happen.”

The government has so far been unmoved by the plight of those smaller vans – saying they can always pay to use campgrounds if they wish to travel.

“There are hundreds of campgrounds and campsites,” said Nash. “They will gladly welcome all travellers, no matter what type of vehicle they have.”

While most political parties broadly support the bill, some have raised concerns about who will get caught up by the legislation. “The vast majority of New Zealanders who like to go camping in their vehicles and don’t have plumbed-in toilets … they can’t get certified,” said opposition National MP Todd McClay during a debate on the bill. “New Zealanders who have a campervan, who are responsible, and they travel around the country drinking

good wine and seeing the sights, and, actually, there will be a great cost to them.”

That cost will be greatest for New Zealanders who have adopted vans as an affordable means to holiday, amid a [growing cost of living crisis](#) and an [unaffordable housing market](#).



There are fears the proposed legislation could see smaller vans edged out in favour of larger vans that are unaffordable for many. Photograph: HDKam/Getty Images/iStockphoto

## A driver for small-town tourism

Like many young New Zealanders, Jasmine Peate-Garrett, a high school teacher in Auckland, had spent years saving for a home. As New Zealand's runaway housing market carried that goal out of reach, she decided to go for a van – a retired volunteer ambulance that she gradually converted into a traveling camper. “I was going to buy a house and then that wasn’t really achievable – I put that money on a van so that I could go do things, travel,” she says. “I’m on a budget, being a teacher, [but] I’ve been able to do quite a lot that I wouldn’t have been able to do otherwise.”

This summer, she drove through the west coast and Marlborough sounds, visiting family and friends along the way – and says that taking to the road shouldn't be restricted to the full-size motorhomes that can accommodate a toilet.

“It should be accessible for New Zealanders to be able to visit these nice spots.”

For Van Druten, he objects to the implication that van-lifers aren't valuable as tourists – saying that while they may not spend as much as cruise ship passengers, they take it to small communities that would otherwise miss out.

“It might be less money, but it's more spread out,” he says “Because from my experience, tiny little towns usually have a dairy or a fuel station or the fish and chip shop – or maybe even a little gallery. That's where the van-lifers end up.”

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## [Iowa](#)

# ‘It’s just crazy’: Republicans attack US child labor laws as violations rise

Changes lawmakers are seeking, such as expanding types of approved work, will potentially ‘put kids in dangerous situations’



Signage advertising hiring for 16- and 17-year-olds is displayed on a cash register inside a store in Las Vegas, Nevada. Photograph: Patrick T Fallon/AFP/Getty Images

*[Michael Sainato](#)*

Sat 11 Feb 2023 02.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 11 Feb 2023 02.01 EST

As child labor law violations have been on the rise in the US, some state legislators are pushing for changes at state and federal levels to roll back protections in what some see as a threat to return child labor to the country.

The laws aim to expand permissible work hours, broaden the types of jobs young workers are permitted to do, and shield employers from liability for

injuries, illnesses or workplace fatalities involving very young workers.

Child labor law violations have increased in the US, with a [37% increase](#) in fiscal year 2022, including 688 children working in hazardous conditions, with the number likely much higher as the recorded violations stem from what was found during labor inspections.

The Department of Labor issued a [press release](#) in July 2022 noting child labor violations and investigations have increased since 2015.

Several high-profile investigations involving child labor have been exposed over the past year, including the use of child labor in [Hyundai and Kia supply chains](#) in Alabama, at [JBS meatpacking plants](#) in Nebraska and Minnesota, and at fast-food chains including [McDonald's](#), [Dunkin Donuts](#) and [Chipotle](#).

Amid these increases in child labor violations, legislative efforts have been introduced in several states to roll back child labor protections.

In Iowa, Republican legislators introduced a [bill](#) in January to expand the types of work 14- and 15-year-olds would be permitted to do as part of approved training programs, extend allowable work hours, and exempt employers from liability if these young workers are sickened, injured or killed on the job.

“It’s just crazy to me that we are re-litigating a lot of things that seem to have been settled 100, 120 or 140 years ago,” said Charlie Wishman, president of the [Iowa AFL-CIO](#), which is opposing the bill.

It’s just crazy to me that we are re-litigating a lot of things that seem to have been settled 100, 120, or 140 years ago

*Charlie Wishman, president of the Iowa AFL-CIO*

Wishman added: “All of these protections have been put in place for a reason. Child labor law is there to make sure that kids are working in age-appropriate work activities or occupations that are appropriate for their age.

We think this is a rewrite of our child labor laws in Iowa that are going way, way, way too far and has the potential to put kids in dangerous situations.”

The [bill](#) would permit the director of Iowa workforce development or the Iowa department of education to grant exceptions from any provision that restricts the types of jobs 14- and 15-year-olds can do if the work is classified as part of a work-based learning program and also strips workers’ compensation rights for these workers.

The protections being sought for companies are of particular concern to labor activists.

“In the Iowa legislation, one of the provisions is to exempt employers from civil liability due to the company’s negligence. It is astounding that they would have the gall to knowingly acknowledge that more young people will be harmed, but focus on exempting businesses,” said Marcy Goldstein-Gelb, co-executive director of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health.

Goldstein-Gelb explained that throughout her career she has worked with families and co-workers of young workers who have died on the job, oftentimes in violation of child labor laws that industry groups have fought to repeal, such as in a case where a [16-year-old](#) in Massachusetts was killed in 2000 while operating a golf cart on the job.

Young workers have [much higher rates](#) of non-fatal injuries on the job and the [highest rates](#) of injuries that require emergency department attention, Goldstein-Gelb noted. She argued that due to the vulnerability and inexperience of young workers, data on these workers is likely an undercount due to fears or barriers in being able to speak up and report dangerous situations or child labor law violations.

“I think there is this myth that you need to put young people in any possible job because there are openings. I think we are moving into a new age where we need to recognize that workers of all ages are seeking to earn a sustainable living and not put themselves in harm’s way,” added Goldstein-Gelb. “That’s why there are workers taking actions around the country and that needs to be supported rather than just saying we’re going to find people

who have no alternative, the most vulnerable, and put them in jobs that are completely inappropriate.”

Other states are currently or have pushed similar legislation to roll back child labor protections.

In Ohio, legislators reintroduced a bipartisan [bill](#) this year to extend working hours for 14- and 15-year-olds with permission from a parent or legal guardian, and [called](#) on Congress to adopt the same rollbacks at the federal level.

Legislators in Minnesota introduced a [bill](#) in January 2023 to extend work hours for 14- and 15-year-olds.

Republicans in Wisconsin passed a bill that was [vetoed](#) by Governor Tony Evers in this month that would have expanded work hours for 14- and 15-year-olds. The New Jersey governor, Phil Murphy, [signed](#) a similar law in 2022 that expanded work hours for 14- and 15-year-olds to work longer hours during summer months and on holidays and expanded allowable work hours for 16- and 17-year-olds.

At the federal level, Republican congressman Dave Joyce of Ohio drafted a [bill](#) in 2022 to expand working hours for 14- and 15-year-olds during periods when school is in session.

Advocates for legislative efforts to roll back child labor regulations have cited labor shortages, particularly in industries that rely on young workers, and have been [strongly backed](#) by the National Federation of Independent Business.

We think these laws are really ill advised and just asking kids to have negative educational impacts

*Reid Maki of the Child Labor Coalition*

“We think these laws are really ill advised and just asking kids to have negative educational impacts,” said Reid Maki, director of child labor issues and coordinator at the Child Labor Coalition, who argued it took significant efforts to enact child labor laws over 100 years ago, when there were

thousands of children working long hours in unsafe jobs such as factories and mines.

Maki added: “Now there are states that want to go back toward that direction to deal with labor shortages by using teens, even to the extent of placing them in dangerous work environments – [it] doesn’t make sense. It’s disregarding their welfare.”

He argued that child labor laws in the US need to be strengthened and updated, including closing existing loopholes that permit young workers, some as young as 12 years old, to work unlimited hours in many jobs in the agriculture industry with parental permission when school is not in session.

An estimated 300,000 to 500,000 minors work in the US agriculture industry annually, with 48% of all young worker fatalities between 2001 to 2015 occurring in the agriculture industry.

“In my office, we can’t bring in a 12-year-old to make copies, 12 is too young, but we will take that same 12-year-old and put them in a field. The actual law allows them to work unlimited hours as long as school is not in session,” added Maki. “There is basically no protection.”

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# China ‘spy balloon’ wakes up world to new era of war at edge of space

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[France](#)

## French-Iranian academic Fariba Adelkhah released from Iran prison

In 2020 Iranian authorities sentenced Adelkhah to five years in jail on national security charges, which she denied



Iranian authorities released French-Iranian academic Fariba Adelkhah from prison on Friday. Photograph: Thomas Arrive/Sciences Po/AFP/Getty Images

*Reuters*

Fri 10 Feb 2023 21.23 EST

Iranian-French academic Fariba Adelkhah was released from Iran's Evin prison, [France](#) said, but it was unclear what the conditions of her release were.

Adelkhah has been in prison since Iranian authorities [arrested her in 2019](#) during a visit. She is one of seven French nationals detained in Iran, a factor that has worsened relations between Paris and Tehran in recent months.

“It is essential that all of Ms Fariba Adelkhah’s freedoms are restored, including returning to France if she wishes,” the French foreign ministry said in a statement on Friday.

Iranian authorities sentenced Adelkhah in 2020 to [five years in prison on national security charges](#). They moved her to house arrest later but in January she returned to jail.

Adelkhah has denied the charges. France has called them “politically motivated” and repeatedly called for the release of Adelkhah, a researcher affiliated with Paris’ prestigious Sciences Po university.

In recent years, Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guards have arrested dozens of dual nationals and foreigners, mostly on charges related to espionage and security.

Rights groups have accused Iran of trying to extract concessions from other countries through such arrests. Iran, which does not recognise dual nationality, denies taking prisoners to gain diplomatic leverage.

“France reiterates its demand that all French nationals arbitrarily detained in Iran are released immediately and without conditions,” the foreign ministry said.

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## **Headlines monday 6 february 2023**

- [Live Turkey and Syria earthquake: at least 640 dead after 7.8-magnitude quake](#)
- [Full report Fears casualties will rise after powerful earthquake](#)
- [What we know so far Turkey and Syria quake](#)
- [In pictures Destruction strikes at night as huge quake hits](#)

[Turkey](#)

# Thousands killed in major quakes – as it happened

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[\*\*Turkey\*\*](#)

# **Earthquake in Turkey and Syria kills thousands and devastates cities**

7.8-magnitude tremor hit early on Monday, with second major quake mid-morning hampering rescue efforts

- [Turkey and Syria earthquake live updates: follow the latest news](#)
- [What we know so far](#)
- [Destruction strikes at night – in pictures](#)

Second earthquake hits Turkey less than 12 hours after first – video report

*Ruth Michaelson in Istanbul and Deniz Barış Narlı*

Mon 6 Feb 2023 11.07 ESTFirst published on Sun 5 Feb 2023 21.35 EST

More than 2,000 people were killed when an earthquake struck central [Turkey](#) and north-west Syria, in one of the most powerful quakes in the region in at least a century, while a second powerful tremor hours later threatened to overwhelm rescue efforts.

Thousands more were injured as the quake wiped out entire sections of major cities in a region filled with millions of people who have fled the civil war in [Syria](#).

The magnitude-7.8 quake, which hit in the early darkness of a winter morning, was followed by a second 7.7 quake in the middle of the day on Monday, as rescuers in both countries were still attempting to search for survivors. The Turkish state broadcaster TRT showed images of panicked people sheltering in the street as buildings around them quaked during the aftershock in the town of Kahramanmaraş, north of Gaziantep.

Turkey's vice-president, Fuat Oktay, said the death toll had surpassed 1,500 people in Turkey alone by the early evening. Yunus Sezer, who heads Turkey's disaster relief agency Afad, said at least 8,500 were injured in the country's south. "One hundred and thirty aftershocks have been recorded after the earthquake. Nearly 15,000 search-and-rescue personnel have been deployed to the region," he said.

In Syria, already wrecked by more than 11 years of civil war, the health ministry said more than 326 people had been killed and 1,042 injured. In the Syrian rebel-held north-west, rescuers said 147 people had died.

## [Map](#)

The toll was expected to rise as rescue workers and residents searched frantically for survivors under the rubble of crushed buildings in cities on both sides of the border.

The quake struck at 4.17am local time (0117 GMT) at a depth of about 17.9km (11 miles) near the Turkish city of Gaziantep, which is home to about 2 million people, the US Geological Survey said.

Television images from Turkey showed shocked people standing in the snow in their pyjamas, watching rescuers dig through the debris of damaged homes. Buildings were levelled while many people were still asleep.

Tremors were felt as far away as Lebanon, Greece, Israel and the island of Cyprus.

In the southern Turkish town of Gaziantep, 150 miles from the border with Syria and 50 miles from the epicentre of the earthquake in Kahramanmaraş, people felt aftershocks hours later.

"We woke up with a jolt, as the electricity was off. We laid still and waited for the shaking to finish. Our house was full of broken glass," said Sinan Şahan, a tradesperson in Gaziantep. "We used our phone's flashlight so we could get dressed, and hurried out of the house. Anyone able to save themselves has now fled somewhere. I have relatives in Kahramanmaraş, their houses were destroyed."

He added: “I was in Istanbul when the big earthquake hit in 1999, this was more severe than that.” He broke off as another aftershock hit.

Images from Gaziantep appeared to show that the earthquake caused the collapse of the city’s historic castle, an ancient and imposing stone structure atop a hill used as an observation point during Roman times.

Historic castle in Turkey badly damaged by earthquake – video

The head of the Turkish Red Crescent, the biggest humanitarian organisation in Turkey and part of the International Red Cross, said it was mobilising resources for the region and urged people to evacuate damaged homes. The head of Turkey’s disaster management agency [said](#) “all capabilities of our state were mobilised” after the quake, warning civilians to keep communication to urgent texts only to help emergency services find survivors.



People try to help victims at the site of a collapsed building in Diyarbakır, Turkey. Photograph: Deniz Tekin/EPA

Images on Turkish television showed rescuers digging through the rubble of levelled buildings in Kahramanmaraş and neighbouring Gaziantep, where entire high-rise blocks were destroyed. A fire lit up the night sky in one image from Kahramanmaraş, although its origin remained unclear.

Buildings also crumbled in the cities of Adiyaman, Malatya and Diyarbakır, where people rushed on to the street in panic.

People in the town of Pazarcık said they feared for those trapped under fallen buildings. Nihat Altundağ said the powerful shocks from the earthquake woke his family.

“Our house looks solid from the outside but there are cracks inside. There are destroyed buildings around me, there are houses on fire, there are buildings that are cracking. A building collapsed just 200m away from where I am now,” he said. “We are waiting for the sun to rise so that we can see the scale of the earthquake. People are all outside, all in fear.”



The partially damaged Yeni mosque after the earthquake in Malatya, Turkey.  
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

“Pazarcık is in ruins,” said another resident, Hüseyin Satı. “The building where I live is not so tall, and was built in compliance with earthquake regulations, so it didn’t collapse. But still there are cracks on the walls. A neighbour of mine broke his back while jumping from the balcony during the earthquake and is now in hospital.”

Satı said civilians were desperately trying to help dig their neighbours out

from under collapsed buildings. “Two of my friends are under the rubble now, we are trying to reach them,” he said.

The Turkish president, [Recep Tayyip Erdođan](#), who will be under pressure to oversee an effective response to the disaster heading towards an election on 14 May, said search and rescue teams had been dispatched to the affected areas. “We do not know how high the number of dead and injured will go. Our hope is to get through this disaster with the least loss,” he said in a speech.

“This is the biggest disaster we’ve experienced in the last century after the 1939 Erzincan earthquake,” he added, citing an incident in which more than 32,000 people were killed in eastern Turkey.

Vahap Altinok, an official with the local opposition Republican People’s party (CHP) in the town of Malatya, 162 miles from the epicentre, described the tremor as “the biggest earthquake I’ve ever experienced, the longest and the strongest”.

“Lots of buildings were destroyed, there’s rubble everywhere,” he said. “People are overwhelmed. There is heavy snowfall and it’s badly affecting rescue efforts,” he said.

The Syrian health ministry reported damage across the provinces of Aleppo, Latakia, Hama and Tartus, where Russia is leasing a naval facility.

### [Castle map](#)

Even before the tragedy, buildings in Aleppo, Syria’s prewar commercial hub, often collapsed due to the dilapidated infrastructure after more than a decade of war as well as little oversight to ensure safety of new construction projects, some built illegally.

The Syrian Civil Defence, a rescue service known as the White Helmets that works to save those trapped under debris from airstrikes, [said it had declared a state of emergency](#) to rescue the many people feared trapped under collapsed buildings in areas around Idlib and across opposition-held areas in north-western Syria.

Multiple apartment buildings have collapsed after a powerful earthquake in southern Turkey [pic.twitter.com/wydrBj94RL](https://pic.twitter.com/wydrBj94RL)

— BNO News (@BNONews) [February 6, 2023](#)

In a statement, the organisation described “a catastrophic situation with buildings collapsed or suffering major cracks, hundreds injured and stranded, dozens dead and a lack of services as well as safe shelters and assembly points in stormy and snowy weather conditions and low temperatures”.

The group also added a plea for aid from the international community “to prevent the situation from worsening” and to pressure both the Syrian government and their backers in Moscow to hold back on airstrikes in the area to prevent further tragedy.

People in Damascus, as well as in the Lebanese cities of Beirut and Tripoli, ran into the street on foot and took to their cars to get away from their buildings in case of collapses, witnesses said.

Horrific news of tonight’s earthquake in [#Turkey](#) & northern [#Syria](#) — the damage looks extensive.

The epicenter region is home to millions of refugees and IDPs, many of whom live in tents & makeshift structures. This is the absolute nightmare scenario for them. And it's winter.  
[pic.twitter.com/oACzWYtWb2](https://pic.twitter.com/oACzWYtWb2)

— Charles Lister (@Charles\_Lister) [February 6, 2023](#)

“Paintings fell off the walls in the house,” said Samer, a resident of Damascus, the Syrian capital. “I woke up terrified. Now we’re all dressed and standing at the door.”

Aid groups fear the disaster will worsen the situation for Syrians already displaced after a decade of civil war. “This is a disaster that will worsen the

suffering of Syrians already struggling with a severe humanitarian crisis,” said Carsten Hansen, of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

He added: “Millions have already been forced to flee by war in the wider region and now many more will be displaced by disaster. In the midst of a winter storm and an unprecedented cost of living crisis, it is vital that Syrians are not left to face the aftermath on their own.”

Turkey is in one of the world’s most active earthquake zones, with land stretching over the Anatolian fault line in the north of the country that has caused large and destructive tremors. İzmit and the surrounding Kocaeli region, close to Istanbul, was rocked by a 7.4-magnitude earthquake in 1999, the worst to hit Turkey in decades.



A view of destroyed settlements and damaged vehicles in Aleppo, Syria.  
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

The quake killed more than 17,000 people, including at least 1,000 in Istanbul, amid widespread destruction. Experts have long warned a large quake could devastate Istanbul.

Naci Görür, an earthquake expert with Turkey’s Academy of Sciences, urged local officials to immediately check the region’s dams for cracks to avert potentially catastrophic flooding.

*Reuters, Agence France-Presse and Associated Press contributed to this report*

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## [Turkey-Syria earthquake 2023](#)

# Syria and Turkey earthquake: what we know so far

Two powerful earthquakes struck Turkey and Syria within 12 hours on Monday, killing at least 2,600 people, with the death toll expected to rise

- [Here's what we know so far on Tuesday 7 February](#)
- [Turkey and Syria earthquake live updates: follow the latest news](#)

Second earthquake hits Turkey less than 12 hours after first – video report

*[Geneva Abdul](#), [Martin Belam](#) and agencies*

Mon 6 Feb 2023 13.46 ESTFirst published on Sun 5 Feb 2023 23.36 EST

- At least 2,600 people have been killed after two powerful earthquakes struck **Turkey** and Syria within the space of 12 hours. The death toll is expected to rise, with search and rescue operations under way across the region as many buildings have collapsed and there are thought to be many people trapped in the rubble.
- Official figures from **Turkey** said 1,651 people were killed in 10 provinces, with another 11,119 injured, according to the country's health minister. The death toll in government-held areas of **Syria** rose to 968 people, with 1,280 injured, according to data from the Damascus government and rescue workers in the north-western region controlled by insurgents.
- More than 10 search-and-rescue teams from the **European Union** had been mobilised since the earthquake, a spokesperson for the European Commission said. The **US**, **UK**, **Canada**, **Israel**, **Russia** and **China** were among other nations to have offered assistance, and calls have emerged for the **international community** to relax some of the

political restrictions on aid entering north-west Syria, the country's last rebel-held enclave and one of the areas worst hit by the earthquake.

## Interactive

- **The first quake struck as people slept, and measured magnitude 7.8**, one of the most powerful quakes in the region in at least a century. It was felt as far away as Cyprus and Cairo. The European Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC) said preliminary data showed **the second large quake measured 7.7 magnitude**, and was 42 miles (67km) north-east of Kahramanmaraş, Turkey, at a depth of 2,000 metres. There have been more than 100 smaller aftershocks registered by seismologists.

Search for survivors after earthquake hits Turkey and Syria – video report

- The partial destruction of a **Roman-era castle in the Turkish city of Gaziantep**, near where the first quake had its epicentre, led to fears that the earthquakes may have damaged other priceless monuments in Turkey and [Syria](#), areas rich in cultural heritage.
- **Turkey's armed forces set up an air corridor** to enable search-and-rescue teams to reach the zone affected.
- Turkey's **Akkuyu nuclear power plant**, which is under construction, was not damaged by the earthquake, an official from the Russian company building the plant said.
- The **International Rescue Committee** (IRC) has called for increased funding for humanitarian aid in Syria, saying that many people in the north-west of the country have already been displaced up to 20 times, and that medical care in the region was “strained beyond capacity, even before this tragedy”.
- The **World Health Organization** (WHO) said it was concerned about areas in Turkey from which there had been no news since the earthquake.

## Historic castle in Turkey badly damaged by earthquake – video

- In 1999, a tremor of similar magnitude to today's quakes in Turkey devastated İzmit, killing more than 17,000. Turkey's president, **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**, has described Monday as the worst disaster for the country since 1939, when an earthquake killed more than 32,000 people and injured more than 100,000.
- There were **no reports of British deaths** in the earthquakes that hit Turkey and Syria, said the UK foreign secretary, James Cleverly, acknowledging the relief effort was still at an early stage.

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# Destruction strikes at night as huge earthquake rocks Turkey and Syria – in pictures

Buildings lie in ruins after an earthquake hits Turkey and Syria at 4.17am local time. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

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## 2023.02.06 - Spotlight

- [Forget regret! How to have a happy life – according to the world's leading expert](#)
- ['Someone threw a brick at my car' What's it like to play a terrible TV villain?](#)
- ['They used our hijabs to gag us' Iran protesters tell of rapes, beatings and torture by police](#)
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## **Forget regret! How to have a happy life – according to the world's leading expert**

[Emine Saner](#)



‘The good life is a complicated life’ ... Dr Robert Waldinger. Photograph: M Scott Brauer/The Guardian

For 84 years, the Harvard Study of Adult Development has tracked the lives of hundreds of Americans. Now its director, Robert Waldinger, is explaining what it has taught him about health and fulfilment



[@eminesaner](#)

Mon 6 Feb 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 07.13 EST

In the 1980s, when data from the world's longest-running study on happiness started to show that good relationships kept us healthier and happier, the researchers didn't really believe it. "We know there's a mind-body connection and we all pay lip service to it," says Dr Robert Waldinger, the director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, which has been running for 84 years. "But how could warmer relationships make it less likely that you would develop coronary artery disease or arthritis? How could relationships get into the body and affect our physiology?" Then, other studies started to show the same. "We thought: OK, we can begin to have confidence in this finding."

It was still a surprise, says Waldinger, but so convinced is he of this fundamental truth that the new book he has co-written with Dr Marc Schulz, *The Good Life*, focuses mainly on relationships and how to improve them. There are other components, of course, and they tend to be similar across countries, cultures and social grades (he points to the [UN's annual World Happiness report](#)). These include good health and a healthy life expectancy, plus the freedom and capacity to make significant life decisions. Trust is important, he says – not just in friends and neighbours, but also in governments. "One interesting thing that people mention around the world is generosity and opportunities to be generous," says Waldinger.

Money – or, rather, economic security – is important. "We are less happy when we struggle for food security and housing and all that, which is obvious," he says. What is less obvious is that, above a certain income level, happiness doesn't go up by much, at least according to [a 2010 study](#) that set the threshold for US households at \$75,000 (£49,000 at that time). The enduring factor is relationships with other people. Waldinger has boiled down his definition of a good life to this: "Being engaged in activities I care about with people I care about."

Waldinger, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard medical school and a practising psychiatrist, became director of the study in 2005; he is the fourth steward of the research, which began in 1938. Originally, there were two unrelated studies – one group of 268 students at Harvard, another of 456

boys from deprived areas of Boston – but they later merged. Over the years, whole lives have been recorded in real time: health, employment, details about friends and spouses, religious beliefs, how they voted, how they felt about the births of their children, what they worried about in the middle of the night. The list seems endless.



John F Kennedy at Harvard in 1938. He was among the first cohort of study participants. Photograph: Hulton Archive/Getty Images

“I’m sort of a voyeur,” says Waldinger, beaming through my screen when we talk on a video call. “I’ve followed all these lives – you can take someone’s folder, thousands of pages, and you can flip through a life. Yes, we do a lot of sophisticated number crunching, but being able to read a life is pretty amazing.”

The study has its limits, he acknowledges. All the original participants were male (Waldinger introduced women by including their partners and children) and white, although this will change gradually as the more diverse third generation is brought in. For the book, he and Schulz include many other, more diverse, studies from around the world, but he stresses that they all show a similar pattern: the more socially connected you are, the more likely you are to live longer and live well.

Loneliness is now considered to be as bad for your health as smoking – and there is a loneliness epidemic. “The best hypothesis for which there’s good data is the idea that relationships help us manage stress,” says Waldinger. “We know that stress is a part of life. What we think happens is that relationships help our bodies manage and recover from stress. We believe that people who are lonely and socially isolated stay in a kind of chronic fight-or-flight mode where, at a low level, they have higher levels of circulating stress hormones like cortisol, higher levels of inflammation, and that those things gradually wear away different body systems.”

Can we really learn about happiness from white men, some incredibly privileged (John F Kennedy was a participant), born in the US in the 1930s? Yes, says Waldinger: “So much of this is about the basic human experience, which does not change.”

Waldinger subscribes to the theory that happiness falls into two categories. Hedonic wellbeing can be summed up as “am I having a good time right now?” he says. Then there is the Aristotelian idea of eudaimonic wellbeing: “That sense of life being meaningful and basically good.”

We don’t necessarily enjoy the things that contribute to eudaimonic wellbeing. The example Waldinger likes to give is having to read the same story to your child at bedtime when you are exhausted after a hard day. “Are you having fun? Is it hedonic wellbeing? No. But is reading that book for the seventh time the most meaningful thing you could do right then? Yes. Often, there’s this difference between what’s fun right now and what we are invested in.” Everyone needs a bit of both, he says. The problems tend to come from chasing only hedonic happiness, rather than the more mundane, but ultimately more meaningful, kind.

I can take someone’s folder, thousands of pages, and flip through a life

We are also not very good at knowing what will make us happy. It is partly cultural – we receive messages constantly that we will be happy if we buy something, or if we have more money, or if we succeed at work. “There was this really interesting survey where they asked millennials what they thought

they were going to need to have a happy life, and fame was a really prevalent goal,” says Waldinger.

But it is also due to human nature. When researchers in one study asked people to talk to strangers on a train on their morning commute, those who had predicted it would be a negative experience discovered it was the opposite. “Talking to strangers is a little risky,” says Waldinger. “Even calling a friend is risky, because you don’t know whether your friend is going to want to hear from you. Human relations always have that element of unpredictability.” This is why staying in alone rather than going out can feel preferable. “If I stay home and watch something on Netflix, it’s a predictable evening for me. Part of it is this path of least resistance – away from relationships and towards something more predictable and manageable.”

Waldinger’s parents were from the same generation as the study’s first cohort. He had a happy childhood, although there were times when his mother, Miriam, didn’t seem content – she was a clever woman who was unfulfilled as a housewife. They lived in Des Moines, Iowa – “midwest, small town” – and the family was Jewish. Waldinger’s father, David, went to law school, but couldn’t get a job when he left. “That’s what life was like for Jewish professionals in the United States in the 1930s.” He went into business instead, but he didn’t love it; the lesson his son learned was to pursue work that was enjoyable and meaningful.

How aware was Waldinger of antisemitism as a child? “A bit,” he says. “We were not significantly discriminated against, but it was there.” It was under the surface, but in day-to-day life, he says, people were basically decent to each other. “That’s one of the things that’s so hard now, because the right wing in the US and around the world is taking the lid off some of these prejudices – racism, antisemitism – and that’s what I find so disheartening. It’s there to be tapped, it always has been, but in many times we’re able to keep the lid on it.”

Watch Waldinger’s TedX talk.

He didn’t want to be a doctor; he wanted to be an actor and did drama alongside his academic studies. Before going to medical school, he came to

the UK, where he had a fellowship at the University of Cambridge, and continued theatre. “I had such a good time, but I knew I wasn’t good enough to be a professional. I was too thin-skinned; I wouldn’t be able to take the rejections.” (Anyone who has watched [Waldinger’s 2015 TedX Talk](#), which has had more than 44m views, will notice how that early theatre experience has translated into stage presence.) Once he became a doctor, though, he found that he loved psychiatry. “I was just fascinated by people’s lives and how their minds worked.”

He looks incredibly happy – and he says he is. “I’m in my early 70s and basically my health is OK. I’ve done my best to take care of myself, but that’s not the whole story. My happiness depends in part on luck, it depends in part on privilege. I have a partner and it’s a good partnership.” He and his wife, Jennifer, a clinical psychologist, have been married for nearly 37 years and have two grownup sons.

Waldinger is also a Zen master, having discovered the Buddhist practice in his 30s. He leads a weekly Zen group and does his own daily 25-minute meditation. “My wife calls it my great big hobby,” he says. How important is religion or spirituality to happiness? The study has found that religious people are not more or less likely to be happy, but that they find faith a solace in times of stress.

Relationships don’t just make us happy; they also help us weather the unhappy times

He hasn’t always been happy, of course. The times he describes as less happy are characterised by disconnection from other people. As a smalltown boy who got a place at Harvard, he was miserable and lonely for at least his first year, until he made friends. Later, when his children were small, his parents died. “It was a really difficult time for a couple of years,” he says. “That was one of those life crunches. People go through those times and it can be really hard to sustain your happiness.”

It is unrealistic to be happy all the time, which sounds obvious, but the message has become that if you are not happy, you are not doing life *right*. Similarly, there is an idea that happiness is something you can achieve and

then relax. “The good life is a complicated life for everybody,” says Waldinger. “We study thousands of lives. Nobody is happy all the time – no one person on the planet that I’ve ever encountered. The myth that you could be happy all the time if you just do all the right things is not true. Happiness waxes and wanes.”

Happiness “happens” to us, he says (assuming – and it is a big assumption at present – that your basic needs are met). “But there are things we can put in place in our lives that make us more likely to feel happiness more of the time.” Taking care of your health, diet, sleep and exercise are big ones: “If you are in better health, you are more likely to be happy.” But so is taking care of your relationships. “That’s partly because they help us with the flip side: they don’t just make us happy; they also help us weather the unhappy times, the challenges.”



A queue for rations at Times Square, New York City, during the Great Depression. Photograph: Bettmann/Getty Images

In a world ravaged by Covid and [economic crisis](#), we might feel that we are in particularly challenging times, but so did the first participants of the Harvard study, who had grown up in the Great Depression and, when the study started, were months away from the outbreak of the second world war (many participants fought in it).

“We asked them what got them through it and everybody said something about people. Soldiers said: ‘It was the people writing to me from home, and fellow soldiers.’ When people were asked about the Great Depression, it was the neighbours pulling together and sharing what limited resources they had,” says Waldinger.

“What we find is that if people maintain a network of good relationships, they’re more likely to weather the storms and they’re more likely to be happy.”

Every generation feels that the world is “going to hell”, he says, “but there are some unique things happening to us”. Economic inequality is rising. “It really matters. We know that collective wellbeing goes up when more people have their needs met.” There is increasing social disconnection. “Loneliness is on the rise, but also tribalism, and that is fuelled by the digital revolution.” The study is starting to ask questions about social media usage and its effect on wellbeing. “Other research is showing that, if we use social media actively to connect with each other, that’s more likely to enhance wellbeing. But if we passively consume, that often lowers our wellbeing.”

The study has made him pay more attention to his own behaviour, he says. “I don’t just let my wife run our social life. I used to say: ‘Just tell me where to be.’ Now, I’m more careful about my own relationships and making sure that I keep them up.”



Something as simple as meeting friends for coffee can sustain the relationships. Photograph: ViewApart/Getty Images/iStockphoto

He describes it as “social fitness”: you don’t go to the gym once or twice and then assume your physical fitness has been addressed, he says. The same applies to friendships. “Good relationships wither away from neglect. There doesn’t have to be a problem of any kind, but if you don’t keep them up they fall out of your life. We find that the people who maintain vibrant social networks are the people who make an effort.” It doesn’t have to be big or time-consuming – a regular text, a coffee, a walk. “These can be tiny actions, but if you do them repeatedly it keeps those networks vibrant.”

The quality of the relationship is important, regardless of who it is with – friend, partner, sibling, neighbour. “We asked people at one point: ‘Who could you call in the middle of the night if you were sick or scared?’ We believe that everybody needs at least one or two people like that,” says Waldinger. “If you don’t have that, you’re probably hurting.

“But then, beyond that, it really varies – a good relationship could be somebody you go to the pub with. Maybe you don’t talk about anything personal, but you don’t need to. Maybe you talk politics and it helps you feel connected and like you belong.”

Casual connections – a smile or a short conversation with the cashier in the supermarket or the bus driver – can also bring benefits. Ultimately, it comes down to connection and belonging. Join that club, don't use the self-service checkout, text a friend and meet them, read that story again to your child – your health and happiness depend on it.

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## Television

# ‘Someone threw a brick at my car’: what’s it like to play a terrible TV villain?

Feared on set, abused in the street, besieged by hate mail ... as Happy Valley’s Tommy Lee Royce blazes into history, stars from The Sopranos, Bad Sisters, Brookside and more tell all about playing evil incarnate



Chilling ... James Norton in Happy Valley. Photograph: Matt Squire/BBC/Lookout Point

[Michael Hogan](#)

Mon 6 Feb 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 6 Feb 2023 04.55 EST

## ‘Getting an erection in my coffin was weird’

*Claes Bang, 55, played evil husband John Paul Williams in Apple TV+ whodunnit Bad Sisters.*

I laughed when I read the Bad Sisters script and realised the opening episode, called The Prick, was named after my character. I don't have a problem playing baddies. It's like playing with a fun toy. I never thought of JP as a villain in the classic sense. Villains can be cool, clever, charming or sexy. I didn't see any of that with JP. We just needed to pile everything on him so it justifies murder. A weird task but a fascinating one. There's something strangely enjoyable about being allowed to go on set and be horrid. [Anne-Marie Duff](#), who played JP's wife, Grace, is the loveliest person in the world. I'd never dream of saying anything mean to her but in character, I could be vile. In a perverse way, it's very fulfilling.

To root JP's behaviour in something, it seemed to me that it all sprung from insecurity. He thinks his sisters-in-law are a threat, so he needs to defend himself. [Sharon Horgan](#)'s scripts were full of delicious details, like how he called his wife "Mammy." I probably went overboard with the Mammies. At one point, the director said: "Claes, could we have a maximum of three Mammies per scene?" I was saying it every other word.

I've seen people on social media say they know someone like JP, so we must have nailed a type. People fucking hate him, but the reaction was exactly like we hoped. I'm proud the show shines a light on toxic masculinity and coercive and abusive relationships. To portray that, I drew on all the darkness I've seen during my 55 years on this planet.



‘I’ve never worried about being typecast’ ... Claes Bang with Anne-Marie Duff in *Bad Sisters*. Photograph: Natalie Seery/Apple TV+

For my coffin scene, JP needed to look like he had an erection. Pretty much everyone on set was female, so there were 10 women stood around me, trying different dildos, carrots and bananas to see what worked best while I just lay there. That was a weird day at work.

I’ve never worried about being typecast. Even if I was, villains are fun roles, so it’s fine. My next two parts are also nasty pieces of work. Maybe people are trying to tell me something!

## ‘My wig came off as Tony Soprano killed me’

*Joe Pantoliano, 71, played combustible henchman Ralph Cifaretto in HBO’s The Sopranos.*

I’d known the show’s creator David Chase for years but when *The Sopranos* rolled around and he offered me a part, I said no. I’d had my fingers burned with a CBS gangster series called *EZ Streets* which got cancelled after 10 episodes. I told David: “I want a home run!” He laughed and, a year later, called me with a new character. “They’re all scumbags,” David said, “but this guy’s a real scumbag. I want him to be charming and funny. He’ll be

around for two seasons, then he'll bump heads with Tony and lose." I said OK right then.



'They're all scumbags but this guy's a real scumbag' ... Joe Pantoliano in *The Sopranos*. Photograph: PictureLux/The Hollywood Archive/Alamy

One of the first choices I made was his wardrobe. I said, look, this guy's a big earner, so he shouldn't be underdressed like the other guys. Ralphie had wanted to be a wiseguy his whole life, he probably saw *The Godfather* 40 times and wanted to emulate Michael Corleone when he becomes Don. So we kind of copied his blazers and cravats. He had a serious cocaine problem, which you don't realise at first but it explains why Ralphie is wired and volatile. I had to empathise with him, so I figured he was abused in childhood by his mother's boyfriends. I guess Tony was the father he never had. He wanted Tony's respect, maybe even his job.

I'm a character actor, so I just want interesting parts. Antagonists are always way more fun than protagonists. My job is for the audience to hate me. If they don't have a visceral reaction to my presence on-screen, then I suck. When Ralphie showed up, he wasn't the guy you loved to hate. He was the guy you hated to like. Yet the reaction was always complimentary, which confused me. The public love bad guy characters, I don't understand why.

My death scene was a brutal fight with Tony. The groundwork had been laid for that. Ralphie had a thing for swords-and-sandals films. He talks about Spartacus and re-enacts scenes from Gladiator. So this was like two gladiators, duelling to the death. There was this darkly comic business with Ralphie's wig coming off. David had a personal beef with the wig because he was always getting continuity notes about it. That was him getting even.

In 2003, I won an Emmy for the role. I grew up with undiagnosed dyslexia and ADHD, and had a traumatic youth. When I decided to become an actor, my family disapproved but my stepdad always supported me. When I won that award, it was like: "This is for you."

Did I get any feedback from real mobsters? Well, those guys don't carry business cards but, truth be known, my stepfather was one of them. He spent nearly half his life in a federal penitentiary. Once, in a New York restaurant, I met this connected old man who ran the neighbourhood. When I told him who my stepfather was, he said: "Fuck The Sopranos – he was a real wiseguy!"

## **'I got wired snorting glucose instead of cocaine'**



'Surely not!' ... Zöe Lucker, right, in Footballers' Wives. Photograph: Itv/Sportsphoto/Allstar

*Zoe Lucker, 48, played ‘superbitch’ Tanya Turner in 00s ITV melodrama Footballers’ Wives.*

Tanya Turner was a piece of work but I absolutely loved her. I was a big fan of Sharon Stone’s character Ginger in the film Casino, her sense of doomed glamour. That influenced my portrayal. Her first dark deed was putting Frank, the football club chairman, in a coma but that was an impulsive act. As the show went on, she became more calculating and did some terrible things. Those scenes were my favourite to play, without a doubt.

The costume designer would take me out shopping for Tanya’s clothes. We’d come back with tonnes of Versace and Moschino. We’d finish off her look with fabulous hair pieces, false eyelashes and long nails, which were highly impractical but felt right. When Tanya took cocaine, we used glucose powder but if I had to do loads of takes, I’d be absolutely wired. It was like drinking 20 bottles of Lucozade.

My favourite storyline was the baby swap, which was funny if deeply inappropriate. You’d look at scripts and go: “Surely not!” Nothing was too much. Tanya shagging Frank to death became infamous but I haven’t watched that back for 20 years. The thought is rather horrifying. I feared I’d get abuse in the street but viewers loved the show and still do.

Eventually I got to work with Joan Collins, which was a dream come true. When I was a little girl, I used to sneak downstairs and try to watch Dynasty. I loved the glitz and melodrama. I’d left Footballers’ Wives the previous season but the executive producer rang and said: “Would you come back if Joan Collins was your nemesis?” Who could say no?

The Wagatha Christie trial was like something from the show. Storylines often had similarities to stuff in the papers but Footballers’ Wives was very much a drama, not a documentary. The writers picked up the ball and ran with it, even if it could cause offence. I don’t think we’d dare do that now.

## **‘I was a Nazi, a Victorian gent, then Rasputin’**



'I got to keep my tissue compression eliminator' ... Sacha Dhawan in Doctor Who. Photograph: James Pardon/BBC Studios

*Sacha Dhawan, 38, played The Master in Doctor Who, arch nemesis of Jodie Whittaker's Time Lord.*

I've played a few villains and never see them as bad people, just complex ones. I deliberately didn't read much about The Master's history or watch previous incarnations. Instead, I homed in on the relationship between him and the Doctor. There's centuries of animosity between them but also a lot of love. I also latched on to the idea that The Master doesn't like himself and prefers disguises. I arrived in the show as an MI6 scientist, later a Nazi officer, a Victorian gentleman and Rasputin.

The brilliant thing about Doctor Who is there's so much room to play – a whole universe of possibilities. That's why the role was such a joy. I've never wanted to be labelled as a British-Indian actor, I'd rather be a versatile character actor. Playing villains has given me the opportunity to do that.

I'm the first non-white actor to play the role – and also, as a fan said recently, the only one to pronounce Master in a northern way, as opposed to Mar-ster. Playing him put me on the map. British South Asian actors aren't

often given these opportunities, so it's been gratifying to resist being pigeonholed.

After filming my last episode, I got to keep my Tissue Compression Eliminator – The Master's version of a Sonic Screwdriver – and my full costume. That was special because I'd collaborated on his look. My vision was steampunk meets Arctic Monkeys' Alex Turner. I was made up to keep it, although I doubt I'll ever wear it unless I'm playing The Master. I'd love him to reappear at some point, because I feel there is unfinished business.

The Doctor Who fans were so welcoming, it was overwhelming. There has been hardly any negative reaction. The Master might be a villain but he's so charming, people relish him. It's lovely to see fans dress up as him. The fanbase even encouraged me to talk about myself publicly in a way I've never done before. I've been [open about my mental health](#) and the fact that I have Crohn's disease.

In fact, the only time I've had a hostile public response was when I played a bent copper in Line of Duty. Grownups shouted abuse at me from across the street. I would have to explain that I wasn't a real police officer and didn't try to kill Keeley Hawes!

**‘Women would say: Ooh, I hated you’**



‘People realised I was nothing like Jim. Thank God’ ... Jack Ellis in ITV’s Bad Girls. Photograph: Shed Productions

*Jack Ellis, 67, played corrupt prison officer **Jim Fenner** in ITV’s Bad Girls.*

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Jim Fenner was ridiculously over-the-top evil. Playing a baddie is a lot more interesting than being the hero. Look at Shakespeare. Mercutio is way more

fun than Romeo – and you get to the pub earlier because you’re not in the second half.

I created a backstory for Jim where he had an abusive upbringing, then got thrown out of the army. He entered the Prison Service and that’s where he exorcised his demons. Jim and top dog Shell Dockley had this duelling villain dynamic, which was hugely enjoyable. My other favourite storyline was the gay governor, Neil Grayling, trying to seduce Jim. That allowed us to tackle the issue of homophobia. Jim went from predator to prey, which absolutely dislodged him.

Tabloids called him “Grim Jim” but 9.5 million viewers tuned in, so we were clearly doing something right. In the street, “Fenner!” became an insult. People would yell it at me, then laugh and come over. Women would say: “Ooh, I hated you” but with a twinkle that suggested they liked me really. I never got hate mail. People realised I was nothing like Jim. Thank God, because I’d be banged up.

Real-life prison staff told me there really were Jim Fenners in the service. Jim was like a kid in a chocolate factory. He could do what the hell he liked. Eventually, he was stabbed with an icicle, which was the perfect murder weapon because it melts and disappears. That scene was hell to do, though. I spent an entire day scrabbling around in dirt, covered in fake blood.

I moved to France for love a decade ago, so I don’t get recognised so much, although there’s a lovely Moroccan lady at the local market who’s seen every episode. When she serves me, she’ll say to another customer: “Do you know he’s very famous?” I’m really not, but there is a lot of nostalgia for Bad Girls. I picked up some stuff from London recently and this lad said: “Fenner’s come for the keys again, has he?”

**‘I was buried under a patio for two years’**



‘Every female in the building has taken three steps back from you’ ... Bryan Murray, right, and Sandra Maitland in Brookside. Photograph: Mersey Television Company Limited

*Bryan Murray, 73, played abusive husband **Trevor Jordache** in Channel 4’s Brookside.*

I happened to be in Liverpool and met up with a friend at the Granada [Television](#) building. While we had coffee, word came down that an executive producer wanted to meet me. He said he was in charge of Brookside and wanted me to consider a part: Trevor Jordache, who looks perfectly innocent but soon begins to abuse his wife, Mandy, played by Sandra Maitland. Eventually she stabs Trevor and – with the help of their daughter Beth, played by Anna Friel – buries him under the patio.

When I read the scripts, I started to imagine what was going on in Trevor’s mind. You have to try to get inside your character, no matter how monstrous they are. I enjoyed playing him, which might sound odd, but what a role. He only appeared in 12 episodes, but the public had a lot to say about him – much of it shouted at me in the street. I got hate mail, including one letter about how I’d upset a woman who’d been abused by her ex and now her new chap was coming to the studio to get me.

The morning after the first scene of me abusing Sandra, she came over and whispered: “Have you noticed how every female in the building has taken three steps back from you?” Trevor was buried under that patio for two years, until he was accidentally dug up. In that time, hardly a day went by without someone shouting: “How are ya, Trev?” at me.

## ‘She chose to punch me, rather than do a slap’



‘It would’ve been better to be the puncher,’ ... Amita Dhiri, left, as Milly and Natasha Little as Rachel. Photograph: BBC

*Natasha Little, 53, played conniving lawyer **Rachel** in BBC Two drama *This Life*.*

This Life was a cool show whereas I was – and still am – entirely uncool. I joined for series two but wasn’t fashionable enough to have seen the first series. Suddenly I was in the cool gang – rather like my character Rachel, the new girl in the solicitors’ office. She tried to ingratiate herself in a sly way and Milly, one of the leads, took against her. Come on, sister! That’s not kind.

I’m still defensive about her. Rachel was always described as passive-aggressive or scheming but she was just trying to navigate a new workplace

which wasn't terribly welcoming. I concede she was annoying, but you always fall a little bit in love with your characters. You lose objectivity about them, which means you can justify all the terrible things they say or do.

It all climaxed with the infamous wedding punch. Rachel exposed her affair, so Milly marched up to her. Amita Dhiri, who played Milly, chose to punch rather than slap me, which was way better. Before she gets decked, Rachel protests: "It wasn't me." Hmm, incriminating! I was surprised by how strong the anti-Rachel reaction was. I was like: "God, Milly's the one having the affair!"

When you've played one part, people can imagine you doing it again. I've since played everything from murderers to terrible mothers. Casting directors think: "I've seen that darkness in her soul!" But it's useful because I'm quite shy and obedient in real life. Playing destructive, spiteful people is liberating. You can save up your negative feelings for work. It probably would've been better to be the puncher, not the punchee, but neither of us look terribly glamorous.

It was scrambly and messy, rather than a beautifully choreographed fight scene, which was in tone with the show. Rachel is not a fighter, she's a sidelong-looker. Succession is my current favourite drama. Maybe Rachel could go and work at Waystar Royco. She'd fit right in.

## **'Everyone wanted to see who I'd kill next'**



‘You know you’ve made it when you get a tabloid nickname. I had two’ ...  
Brian Capron in Coronation Street. Photograph: ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

*Brian Capron, 75, played Coronation Street serial killer **Richard Hillman**.*

Corrie wasn’t doing well when I was cast. EastEnders was winning the ratings war and all the awards. So they decided to go back to longform storylines and luckily homed in on my character. I worked hard establishing Richard’s relationship with Gail Platt and her kids, being very tender and loving, as a springboard into his dark side. The first glimpse of villainy was him leaving his business partner, Duggie, to die. Nancy Banks-Smith wrote in the Guardian: “He’s like Raskolnikov, scurrying around Weatherfield.” I was thrilled with that.

You often hear people on the news say about psychopaths: “Such a nice family man, always said hello, always washed his car on Sundays. What a surprise!” That was the key to the character for me. My wife deserves credit, too. When I first got threatening lines, I tended to overplay them. She said: “No, do it quietly, with a menacing look.” That was much more powerful.

Richard was almost a pantomime villain. One of my favourite scenes was when he walked down the cobbles and passed his mother-in-law Audrey, who was his next target. She went, “Hello, Richard” and he said, “Goodbye,

Audrey.” He smashed Emily Bishop over the head with a crowbar but she survived because of the hairspray on her wig. When Maxine Peacock walked in on them, he beat her to death, too. She was a popular character, so murdering her was a big deal. Everybody wanted to see who else he would kill.

Another wonderful line was: “Norman Bates with a briefcase”, which Helen Worth delivered beautifully during the two-hander episode when Richard confessed. It’s always an accolade to get a two-hander in a soap. You know you’ve made it when you get a tabloid nickname. I had two: “Tricky Dicky” and “Richard Killman”. It got huge viewing figures, almost 20 million. I won five British Soap Awards in one night and ran out of things to say in my acceptance speeches.

Viewers loved to hate him and I had some ridiculous encounters. The odd person attacked me. One guy shouted out “Hillman!” and threw a brick at my car that hit the roof. A woman bashed me with her umbrella and told me I was a horrible person. Even last year, I was in Mallorca when a bloke walked past and muttered: “Murderer.”

I was in the centre of a press storm and got chased around, which was difficult for my family. I did Strictly Come Dancing a few years later and my dance partner, Karen Hardy, noticed I had a stoop. It was because I spent two years walking down the street with my head down so I didn’t catch anybody’s eye.

This article was amended on 6 February 2023. An earlier version misnamed James Norton as Andrew Norton in the main image picture caption.

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## **‘They used our hijabs to gag us’: Iran protesters tell of rapes, beatings and torture by police**



More than 500 people have been killed since protests erupted following Mahsa Amini's death in custody. Composite: Getty/AFP

As human rights organisations report an escalation in the brutal treatment of detainees, we speak to some of those who say they have suffered at the hands of state security forces

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Mon 6 Feb 2023 02.00 EST

On the evening of 15 October 2022, when the [street protests in Iran](#) following the death of Mahsa Amini were at their peak, 25-year-old Dorsa\* was stopped at a checkpoint while driving through a city in the country's northern Gilan province.

The checkpoint was chaotic; 25 to 30 heavily armed security officers were shouting and screaming at people to get out of their vehicles.

Dorsa was with her sister and two male friends. Their car was searched and when two cans of spray paint were found in her sister's bag, all hell broke

loose.

The sisters claim they were blindfolded and had their hands tied behind their back before they were pushed into the rear of a police car. Dorsa says they were taken to a building where they were forced to sign a confession saying they had been protesting, before being separated. Alone in an interrogation room, Dorsa says she could hear the screams of her two male friends being tortured nearby.

I've treated at least five female protesters under 30 who came in with vaginal infections and told me they were assaulted in police custody

*Nurse, Gilan province*

When it was her turn to be interrogated, Dorsa says she was beaten and punched repeatedly while security forces screamed that she was a whore and a traitor. She claims to have been force fed the little plastic balloons that protesters had been filling with red paint to use against police on the streets. Finally, she was taken to another room.

"[They] covered my face with my scarf and I couldn't see anything. I was stripped naked and told that a lady doctor would come into the room and examine me. Minutes later, someone came to the room and when they touched me, I knew it was a man," she says.

"He kept touching me everywhere and then took an object and inserted it inside my vagina. He kept penetrating me with the object, while with the other hand, he was rubbing all over my body. I froze and was still in pain from the punches I had received during interrogation. I lay there for I don't know how long. He then left."



A screengrab from a video filmed in October 2022 shows female protesters being roughly handled by Iranian security forces in Gilan province. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

More than four months after [the death of Mahsa Amini](#), the Kurdish woman who died in custody after being arrested for incorrectly wearing her hijab, the Iranian authorities' attempts to crush nationwide protests have seen more than 500 people killed by security forces, including 70 children. Four protesters have so far been [executed by the state](#), with many more facing the death sentence.

According to the latest report by [Human Rights Activists in Iran](#), 19,603 individuals have been arrested in connection with the protests and remain in detention.

Dorsa was driven around for hours before being released at a remote location outside the city at 3am. When she got home, she vomited and lay awake for the rest of the night.

When they were approaching me to cover my mouth [with my hijab], I asked why were they now OK to have my hair uncovered? They responded with kicks

*Sara*

In the days that followed, Dorsa says she saw a doctor who confirmed she had been raped with an object, which had caused an infection. This took months to heal. She says she has suffered a mental breakdown.

"I am traumatised and have been seeing a psychiatrist. I'm on medication and I panic every time I have to go to hospital for checkups," she says. "I'm just completely broken."

This week, [Amnesty International released a detailed report](#) confirming allegations of rape, violence and "extreme torture" of protesters in detention.

Amnesty International says that three young protesters – Arshia Takdastan, 18, Mehdi Mohammadifard, 19, and Javad Rouhi, 31 – were subjected to "gruesome torture including floggings, electric shocks, being hung upside down and death threats at gunpoint". The human rights organisation also said that one of the men was raped and another sexually assaulted by guards while in detention.



A still from a video reportedly showing security forces firing on the faculty of medical sciences at Kurdistan University in Sanandaj, October 2022. Photograph: UGC/AFP/Getty Images

The Guardian has spoken to 11 protesters, women and men, who claim that they were also subjected to rape, sexual violence, beatings and torture while

being detained by security forces. Some say they were assaulted in a police van or on the streets; others while in custody in police stations or prisons.

A nurse from a hospital in Gilan says she has encountered several women in the past few months who showed signs of sexual assault and rape.

“I’ve treated at least five female protesters under 30 who came in with vaginal infections and told me they were assaulted in police custody. Some of them were bleeding from their genitals,” she says.

Sara\*, a woman in her 40s from Sanandaj, in the Kurdistan region, says security forces have used sexual violence and beatings to quell the protests since they erupted across [Iran](#) last September.

She says she was arrested during that first wave of protests and sexually assaulted by security officers.

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Governments seeking to hold Iran accountable for rights violations should pay special attention to the serious abuses against detainees

*Human Rights Watch*

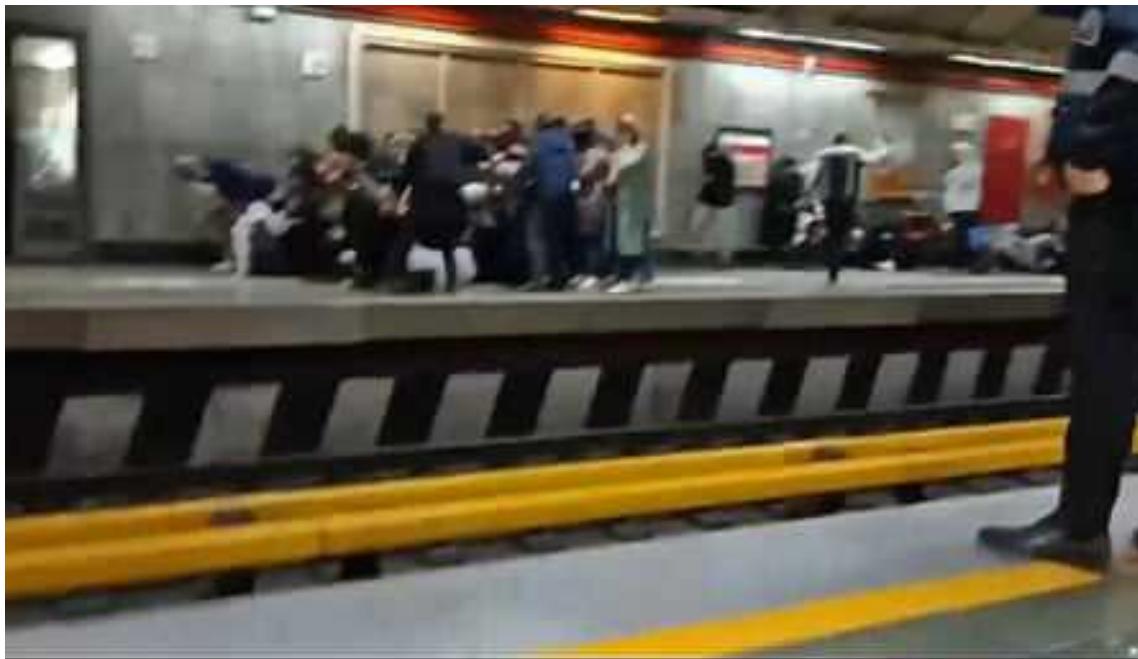
“There were eight officers and they dragged me to a waiting car. All the while, they kept kicking me violently. They were touching my breasts, my buttocks, putting their hands between my thighs and pressing against my private parts,” she says.

“There were three more girls already in the vehicle who were arrested before me. They used our hijabs to gag our mouths. When they were approaching me to cover my mouth, I asked why were they now OK to have my hair uncovered? They responded with kicks to my back and legs. One of these women was so badly beaten that she lay paralysed. She didn’t move an inch. She was later taken to hospital.”

When the police finally took her to prison, she says there were 70 other women there, all showing signs of beatings and assault. Sara was interrogated for hours every day for two weeks before being released.

“I haven’t told my husband about being sexually assaulted. He loves me and this will break him,” she says. “I don’t know if I should confide in my family. I guess this is the price to pay for freedom.”

Human Rights Watch (HRW), which has also documented serious abuses and sexual assault of protesters in detention, said the international community was failing to try to stop the torture.



Iranians at a metro station in Tehran fleeing as gunshots are heard, November 2022 Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

“Iranian authorities have dramatically escalated abuses against protesters in custody,” said an HRW spokesperson. “Governments seeking to hold Iran accountable for rights violations should pay special attention to the serious abuses against detainees.”

Condemning the reports of torture and rape, members of the European parliament have also called on the western authorities to designate Iran’s Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) as a terror group.

Kamyar\*, a 30-year-old from Mashhad, claims that he was sexually assaulted by police in a van on 9 November as he joined protests to [mark 40 days after “Bloody Friday”](#), where dozens of demonstrators were gunned down in the city of Zahedan by security forces.

“We weren’t even chanting slogans when male officers approached me and took me to a police van,” he says “There were two of them – one rubbed himself on my penis from the front, and the other assaulted me from behind. I still find it hard to talk about. I don’t even remember their faces. I don’t want to.”

As the regime continues to hand down long prison sentences, protests have dwindled across the country. However, protests are continuing in the Kurdish regions and Sistan-Baluchistan province despite a growing crackdown by the security forces.

Kamyar said the security forces believe sexually assaulting activists will stop them from protesting.

“Somehow they think the humiliation is pinned on us. It’s on them. One of them told me, ‘It’s been 60 days and we have not been able to sleep because of you protesters.’ He slapped me after every insult,” he says. “But I don’t pity myself, I pity these men who are disgusting and live small lives. They should be the ones who feel humiliated, instead of us victims.”

\* *Names have been changed*

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## **Happy Valley finale review – one of TV's greatest trilogies gets a fiery farewell**



Our magnificent valley girl ... Catherine Cawood (Sarah Lancashire) in the finale of Happy Valley. Photograph: Screen Grab/BBC/Lookout Point

This awe-inspiring drama's ending was full of redemption, justice and bitter laughs. Together, Sarah Lancashire and Sally Wainwright are invincible

[Happy Valley finale recap – Sarah Lancashire is utterly monumental](#)



[Lucy Mangan](#)  
[@LucyMangan](#)

Sun 5 Feb 2023 17.10 EST Last modified on Mon 6 Feb 2023 08.56 EST

Brutal, tender, funny, compelling and heartbreaking to the last – there is nothing left to do now but look back on [Happy Valley](#) and bid all its denizens and their creator an awed farewell.

After three seasons, [Sally Wainwright](#) has concluded one of the greatest trilogies in modern television. She always planned to tell her bereaved protagonist's story in three parts; you feel that even if she hadn't felt like keeping her word, Catherine Cawood herself would have stepped in and made sure she did.

Catherine (Sarah Lancashire), of course, is the centre of Happy Valley's dramatic universe. The partnership between Lancashire (who inhabits the role so fully that it is impossible to imagine anyone else in it) and Wainwright is drama's equivalent of Victoria Wood and Julie Walters. Separately, they are brilliant. Together, they are invincible.

In her professional capacity, Sgt Cawood knows every bad 'un (generally "twats", sometimes "shitpots"), good 'un and doing-their-best 'un in the Calder Valley. Outside work, she is a sister to a recovering alcoholic, Clare (Siobhan Finneran), the former wife of Richard (Derek Riddell), a mother of two and a grandmother of one. She is also a woman who will go to her grave mourning the loss 16 years ago of her 18-year-old daughter, Becky, who died by suicide after being raped and impregnated by the shitpot of shitpots, Tommy Lee Royce (James Norton). We have spent three seasons seeing Catherine wrestle with that grief, watching her try not to be consumed by her hatred of Tommy and to find her way through the fear, love, worry and resentment that were an inescapable part of raising Ryan, the baby Becky left behind.



Blood on his hands ... Faisal Bhatti (Amit Shah). Photograph: BBC/Lookout Point

The penultimate episode left a general sense of there being an awful lot – possibly too much – to do in the finale, even with an extended running time of 70 minutes. Tommy had escaped from prison and made contact with Ryan (Rhys Connah), encouraging him to run away with him to Spain. Catherine and Clare's relationship had been sundered seemingly irreparably by the deepest betrayal.

There was nothing yet allowing the police to connect Faisal (Amit Shah) to the murder of Joanna (Mollie Winnard); although most viewers would have been happy to see her abusive husband, Rob (Mark Stanley), go down for it, that didn't seem to fit with the arc of Wainwright's moral universe. The nailing of Halifax's answer to the Sopranos, the drug-running Knezevics, also seemed a long way off. A showdown between Catherine and Tommy was surely coming, but how – and who, if anyone, would survive it – was up for grabs.

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“Don’t doubt Wainwright” was the lesson of the finale. As surefooted as any fell-walker – and aided by a cast without a weak link – she took us through to neat but truthful resolutions to every part of the story. It had redemption, justice, bitter laughs and fire in its blood.

Wainwright works her plots beautifully, and yet Happy Valley’s greatness lies elsewhere. It lies in the compassionate portrait of Clare as someone too kind and too weak to do no harm. It lies in the pin-sharp depictions of all the forms of aggression and violence women meet from men throughout their lives. It lies in the bone-deep weariness of Catherine – be she levering herself off the sofa when the secretary tells her the chief constable is going to be half an hour late for their meeting (“I’ve got stuff to be doing”), running another colleague through how to do their job properly, or closing her eyes for a moment before a drink of tea.

It is in the brief, desperate banging of her head against a shop window when an image of Becky floats before her and she has to knock sense into herself. It lies in her stopping to make sure Ryan’s tea won’t spoil while she is tearing him off a strip. It lies in Catherine and Wainwright’s profoundly, unreservedly, unapologetically northern, middle-aged, female point of view – the point of view of people in charge of clearing up all the mess that twats leave behind as they make their careless way though life.

And now it is over. Farewell, then, to our magnificent valley girl. Let’s hope Catherine finally gets some peace where she is going.

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[Happy Valley: episode-by-episode](#)[Happy Valley](#)

## **Happy Valley recap: series three finale – Sarah Lancashire is utterly monumental**

What an absolutely electrifying ending. Sally Wainwright masterfully wrongfooted viewers, while the show's star was outstanding. Baftas surely beckon

[Happy Valley finale review – one of TV's greatest trilogies gets a fiery farewell](#)



A last day like no other ... Catherine Cawood (Sarah Lancashire) in the finale. Photograph: Matt Squire/BBC/Lookout Point

[Michael Hogan](#)

Sun 5 Feb 2023 17.10 EST Last modified on Sun 5 Feb 2023 17.12 EST

*Spoiler alert: this recap is published after [Happy Valley](#) airs on BBC One in the UK. Do not read on if you haven't watched episode six.*

Sally Wainwright's enthralling West Yorkshire epic took us on a nerve-jangling ride in its extended finale. Would there be a happy ending in the valley? Here's your forensic report on the last ever episode.

## **Uber driver rating: no stars**

As dawn broke over the slate rooftops and tower blocks of the Calder Valley, fugitive Tommy Lee Royce (James Norton) was on the move. He had been hunkered down with "borscht grandad" Surroje (Matthew Zajac), waiting to complete the escape plan engineered by Darius Knezevic, when the crime kingpin's brother Zeljko (Greg Kolpakchi) arrived with two henchmen. They needed to relocate, claiming it wasn't safe there any more. Smelling a rat, Tommy refused to hide in the car boot. When he spotted a petrol can in the car, he snuck back to arm himself with Surroje's beetroot knife.

As they drove into the countryside, alarm bells rang louder. Tommy sprang violently into action, stabbing both sidekicks, strangling them with seatbelts and slitting their throats. Zeljko swerved off the road into a field and leapt from the car. From the backseat, Tommy managed to stop the vehicle using the handbrake, but Zeljko drew his own blade (not one for chopping veg) and closed in for the kill. A grunting, gruelling knife fight ended when Tommy bludgeoned his adversary to death with a rock.

He lay wounded and gasping on the ground until he heard Ryan's voice telling him last week: "I'm not allowed anywhere near home." Leaving three corpses on the ground, Tommy climbed back into the car, complete with its blood-smeared windows (nothing to see here, officer), and drove off to meet his fate.

## **When did you last see your father?**

The day before her well-earned retirement, Sgt Catherine Cawood (Sarah Lancashire) woke up on the cramped couch of Alison Garrs (Susan Lynch) after a mere two hours' kip. No rest for those fighting the wicked. She took grandson Ryan (Rhys Connah) to be quizzed by the manhunt team.

Although he hadn't seen Tommy since his crown court breakout, Ryan admitted they had spoken via his games console the previous night. Attaboy. Many commenters had predicted a three-way face-off, paralleling the series one finale, or predicted he would lure Tommy into a trap. "Revenge is a dish best served cold," after all. Instead, Sally Wainwright subverted expectations by having Ryan simply come clean, 15 minutes into the finale. Nurture beat nature. He passed the moral test with flying colours. DSI Andy Shepherd (Vincent Franklin) mistook Ryan for a new recruit and he looked quietly thrilled. A hint that he will follow his grandmother into the force? Happy Valley: The Next Generation here we come.



Back in the fold ... Clare Cartwright (Siobhan Finneran). Photograph: BBC/Lookout Point

Tracing the IP address of his console, police raided Surroje's house, but Tommy was gone. As Catherine said: "He's still out there, angry, desperate and dangerous." Ryan confessed about the Marbella escape plan, insisting he never had any intention of going. A weight lifted from our heroine and she fondly patted Ryan's back. A small but significant gesture after not reciprocating his "I love you" last week.

For three series, she had worried that Ryan would take after his biological father. Despite the odd burst of bad behaviour, he was "a happy, well-

adjusted, pretty flipping normal kid". This wise head on 16-year-old shoulders even encouraged Catherine to reconcile with Clare (Siobhan Finneran). They duly did so when Catherine admitted she shouldn't have been so frightened of Ryan meeting Tommy. "Are you stopping?" asked Clare. "Yeah," said Catherine. Praise be.

## **'I'm not a violent person ... normally'**

Having found blood all over the house and bone fractures during the postmortem on Joanna Hepworth (Mollie Winnard), DSI Shepherd deduced that the toxic PE teacher Rob (Mark Stanley) had been beating her for years and brought him in for questioning. Detectives knew about his affair with a colleague, Abigail Oates (hence that "getting your Oates" gag), whom Hepworth had told: "Life would be easier if Joanna didn't exist." Forensics found his fingerprint in a fresh bloodstain on a kitchen chair. It didn't look good for the gaslighting git. He admitted domestic violence – victim-blaming, naturally – but denied murder.

Cut to the real culprit, pharmacist Faisal Bhatti (Amit Shah). When he saw a local news report about gang gofers Matija (Jack Bandeira) and Ivan (Oliver Huntingdon) being arrested, Faisal breathed a sigh of relief. Was Mr Muscle going to get away with his crimes? Did new decking beckon?

## **Honey, I'm home**

Expecting Catherine's house to be empty, Tommy donned a disguise – glasses and headgear, like series one – and broke into her basement. She had also been drawn back there, after a vision of her dead daughter, Becky, told her to "Go home, Mum". She fondly leafed through the family albums before dozing off in an armchair. Well, it had been a long few days.

Cue an agonisingly tense sequence as Tommy snuck up the stairs towards her, neither aware of the other's presence. Woken by a phonecall, Catherine was saved by the bell and left. Tommy picked up the photo album, chuckling at Ryan and blubbing over Becky – sentimentality mingled with self-pity over the stab wound in his stomach.

After that false start, the domestic duel came later. Some viewers hoped for fireworks, but, again, Wainwright wrongfooted us. The final reckoning took place where it belonged – across a kitchen table, two indelible characters hitting each other with home truths. When curtain-twitching neighbour Winnie – a nice nod to unseen octogenarian actor Angela Pleasence – spotted the broken window, she called Catherine, who returned home, Taser drawn. She found Tommy suicidally self-medicating with whisky and painkillers. “Hello?” she called. “Hiya,” he replied softly, echoing the Catherine versus Clare cafe confrontation three weeks ago.



On the case ... Catherine. Photograph: BBC/Lookout Point

In an electrifying 15-minute scene, she offered to call an ambulance. He refused and instead came clean. Contrary to his police statement, he *had* been present when Darius killed Gary Gogowski eight years ago. He had lied under oath, but Darius hadn’t kept his side of the bargain. Tommy wanted to take him down in revenge.

Catherine triumphantly told Tommy that Ryan had seen through him (“That boy is a prince”). Tommy claimed he could have been a good father, given the chance. Catherine had denied him that, but he “forgave her” (more echoes, this time of episode two’s prison-chaplain scene). He now realised she had given Ryan “a nice life”. As the pendulum swung, Wainwright

played with our sympathies beautifully. You almost felt for traumatised Tommy – until Catherine reminded him of his heinous history. He had appeared to relish those fatal blows to Zeljko, too.

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As they traded verbal punches, Catherine seemed to be goading him into violence. For once, Tommy didn't take the bait. They were both "just tired now". Might the two warriors exit the arena together? The final straw came when Tommy claimed he had loved Becky and blamed Catherine for driving them apart. As Catherine's Taser trigger-finger twitched, he doused himself with petrol, but he didn't want Catherine to go down with him. He wanted her here, caring for Ryan. Glimpses of redemption?

Determined not to return to prison, he struck a match. Catherine smothered the flames with a blanket, but burned, poisoned and stabbed, Tommy fell into a coma. She staggered away, bloodied but unbowed, only collapsing into sobs when out of sight of her colleagues. Clare arrived and held her. The sisters were as one again. But loose ends still needed to be tied up.

## All in a last day's work

As Catherine cleared her desk, plot resolutions flew thick and fast. Hepworth had been charged, but not with murder – for indecent images found on his phone. He had been blackmailing a pupil to send them, which put his grooming of Ryan and predatory looks into chilling light. Perma-coated Poppy (Bonnie Stott) and her sister would be looked after by their granny. Dead mother, violent father, kinship carer. Remind you of anyone?

The investigation into Darius for murder could now be reopened, putting paid to his run for council election. He was “untouchable” and “Teflon” no longer. “Royce and Knezevic, all in one day,” said DSI Shepherd admiringly, but there was still more to come.



Caught at last ... Faisal Bhatti (Amit Shah). Photograph: BBC/Lookout Point

Having found a blister pack in Alison's flat, Catherine learned that the knock-off blue pills belonged to her corrupt probation officer. Alison came good, as we knew she would, and found out that she had brought them from that “funny little fella” who runs the local pharmacy. What's more, Faisal lived 100 yards from diazepam-addicted Joanna. Shepherd strode off. The cold-blooded pharmacist wouldn't get away with murder after all.

Having cracked a third case, Catherine snuck away from her own leaving do, standing up the chief constable for the second time. We next saw her at Becky's graveside, giving it a kiss goodbye before embarking on her Himalayan road trip. A text from Insp Mike Taylor (Rick Warden) pinged in, confirming Tommy's death in hospital. Catherine smiled up at the sky, donned her shades and swaggered off into a bright future. The sheriff was leaving trouble town. The only thing that's pretty, after all, is the thought of getting out.

A mighty finale, led by a monumental performance from Lancashire. En route to Nepal, how about a comfort break at the Baftas to collect a couple of gongs?

## Line of the week

“We’ve had another bit of a tussle. I won, obviously. I think I might’ve singed one of your crochet blankets” – Catherine’s typically understated summary of events to Clare.

## Notes and observations

- You can’t have it all inside 70 minutes, but Ann (Charlie Murphy) and Richard (Derek Riddell) were notable in their absence. At least it meant they survived. Dastardly Darius was mentioned, but never seen. No sign of those alien lifeforms, either.
- The last three episodes were masterly directed by Fergus O’Brien, who had teased that this finale would “slap you in the face and wallop you across the room”. He wasn’t fibbing.
- Ivan never did make it to the altar. Nicked two hours before his wedding with £30,000 of dirty money? Couldn’t happen to a nicer bloke.
- The opening episode of this series has now been watched by 11.3m viewers, making it the UK’s biggest on-demand show across all

platforms so far this year. This finale was expected to break more records. Rightly so.

*Thanks for your wise and witty company this series, fellow Valleycats – even the commenters correcting my Yorkshire geography, which is no more than I deserved. For one last time, please share your thoughts, theories and series verdicts below.*

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## 2023.02.06 - Opinion

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- Blair’s failures over the Omagh bombing have become outright hostility to the truth under the Conservatives
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[\*\*Opinion\*\*](#)[\*\*Breast cancer\*\*](#)

**I thought knowing I had the ‘cancer gene’ would cast a shadow over my life. Now I have it, I realise how wrong I was**

[Hilary Osborne](#)



Despite the history of breast cancer in my family, I chose to be blithely ignorant. Now I have the disease, I realise that knowledge is power



Illustration: Nathalie Lees/The Guardian

Mon 6 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 06.19 EST

The results of the genetic test didn't really come as a surprise. My mum died of breast cancer in her mid-30s, and I'd recently had it confirmed that my great-grandma on her side had it on her death certificate too.

Yet when I was diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer last year – the most likely to be linked to a gene mutation – I hoped against hope that it wasn't inherited. In part because of what it means for my relatives, in part because of what it means for my children and their children, and in part because I didn't like to think that what I was going through now had been pretty much inevitable from the minute I'd been conceived, and I'd made no effort to find out about it.

Only between 5% and 10% of breast cancers are believed to be hereditary, but if you have a mutation in either the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, your chance of developing the illness involves some much bigger percentages. With the BRCA2 mutation that I have, the chance of developing breast cancer by the age of 80 is about 70%; in the general population of women, the chance is just 12-13%. With the mutation I carry, I have a 50% chance of passing it on to my children.

Until last year, I had no idea of this. I could have known – the information is out there. But, despite what happened to my mum, I'd not really looked into it. And no one had really suggested I should – except my grandma. She insisted I got checked out after suffering a breast abscess when I had my son in 2010. I had a mammogram and met someone who asked me about my family history. At that point I only knew for sure that my mum had died of it; my grandma and her sister were still fighting fit, and it was decided there was nothing to worry about.

Three years later came [Angelina Jolie's revelation](#) that she had the BRCA1 gene, and had decided to have a double mastectomy. The story topped the news, and was written about for days afterwards.

Despite what happened to my mum, I'd not looked into it. And no one had really suggested I should – except my grandma

I thought about it fleetingly. Should I ask a doctor if I could, or should, have a test? But I was more concerned about what I would do with the information. Would I have to declare it to insurers? Currently you don't need to disclose a positive test result, but I wondered if this might change.

Would I ever want to have preventive surgery (the double mastectomy that Jolie chose was, and still is, the only option)? And, I suppose, I was concerned about what the information would do to me. If I didn't have surgery, would I panic at the first sign of a twinge? Would I live under the shadow of the worry? Would I make myself ill in some other way as a result? Would it make the decision to have more children more stressful?

So I carried on, blithely ignorant. And by the time I saw the stats, there was a 100% chance I'd got it.

Now, of course, I look back and wonder why I didn't do things differently. Given my mum's age when she died, I should have qualified for NHS testing, but I didn't know that. Even having experienced cancer, I'm not sure I would have wanted a mastectomy at first. If I'd found out I had the gene in my 20s, I'd have wanted to know the chance of getting cancer in my 30s and

40s, not just by the time I was 80. Luckily, that type of information is available to people being tested now.

If I had found out in 2010, when I had the mammogram, I would not have wanted preventive surgery because I hoped to have another child, and I wanted to breastfeed again.

But I could have accessed regular screening. During Covid, there was a chance of it being cancelled, so I could have ended up in the same position I am in now. But there's also a chance I would have had my cancer picked up earlier, and that would have meant less of the worry and pain it has caused. I was in physical discomfort by the time I went to the doctor, and when I was diagnosed, my immediate thought was that it had spread. For more than two weeks, while tests were carried out, I was convinced it had travelled to my brain, and that I was going to be told that I had just months to live. I could have avoided that heartache by knowing it had been caught early.

I'm suddenly relieved to not have a daughter, but I know that my son has a 50% chance of having inherited the gene. If he has, it raises the chance of him having breast, prostate and pancreatic cancer in later life, and will no doubt bring him his own worries. But treatment is progressing at speed, so I hope that it won't mean difficult decisions for him.

So, too, is the support structure for people with the mutation. Before and after my test, I had phone appointments with the genetics team at Great Ormond Street hospital in London, and they talked me through what it all meant and offered referrals if I wanted to find out more. The cancer charities have lots of information for those affected, and around the country there are groups of people with the mutation who support each other. I haven't joined one yet, but I plan to.

Finding out about the mutation has been a blow, despite all the reasons I had to suspect it was there. But knowing has empowered me to make decisions about what happens next. After the genetic test results came back, I was offered a calculation of my chance of getting breast cancer again. The software said my risk of getting it again by the age of 80 was 81%, while the risk of it happening again in the next 10 years was put at 35%.

With those odds, it's no surprise that the doctors have recommended a double mastectomy. And, although it has still been a daunting thing to sign up for, the statistics suggest to me that it's the right thing to do. I don't want to put myself or my family through this again if I can help it, and 35% is too high for me.

And it has empowered the people treating me – there are new, targeted drugs coming on track for people who carry the mutation and aim to stop the cancer coming back. Now that I know how powerful the knowledge is, and that there is support, I wish I hadn't waited.

- Hilary Osborne is the Guardian's money and consumer editor
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**Opinion****Omagh bombing**

## **Blair's failures over the Omagh bombing have become outright hostility to the truth under the Conservatives**

[Fintan O'Toole](#)



A new inquiry into the 1998 massacre may help the bereaved. But Rishi Sunak's government wants to be rid of the legal mechanism that allowed it



Omagh bomb campaigners Michael Gallagher, left, and Stanley McCombe on Campsie Street, Omagh, close to the site of the 1998 bombing.  
Photograph: Oliver McVeigh/PA

Mon 6 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Mon 6 Feb 2023 14.05 EST

It is hard to imagine anything worse than the Real IRA's bombing of the market town of Omagh on 15 August 1998. It was the deadliest single atrocity of the Troubles in [Northern Ireland](#). The 29 people who were slaughtered that day included toddlers, primary school kids, teenage girls volunteering in the Oxfam shop and a young woman who was pregnant with twins.

Yet for those left behind, and for the 220 people injured that day, there was in fact one thing worse: the tormenting thought that it could all have been prevented. The bereaved and the survivors have had to live with the haunting possibility that the police and the intelligence services could have saved them from this unspeakable calamity. Only now, with the [announcement](#) by the Northern Ireland secretary, Chris Heaton-Harris, of an independent inquiry into what the security services knew in advance of the attack, can they hope to lay those ghosts to rest.

The inquiry should have been established 20 years ago. In December 2001, Nuala O’Loan, then the police ombudsman for Northern Ireland, published a report on what the Royal Ulster Constabulary may have known before the Omagh massacre. Her remit did not go beyond the RUC, and O’Loan could not investigate the British intelligence services or indeed the police across the border in the Republic, where the bomb was prepared. Yet even this limited perspective revealed some very disturbing evidence.

On 4 August 1998, 11 days before the bombing, the RUC received an anonymous telephone call warning that there would be an “unspecified” terrorist attack on police in Omagh on 15 August 1998. The caller gave a detailed account that identified two putative attackers by name. The officer who took the call was convinced that the informant was genuine.

This warning was given to special branch, but never passed on to the relevant divisional commander in Omagh. According to O’Loan: “When he was shown the intelligence two years later, on the anniversary of the explosion, he said he would have set up vehicle checkpoints.” Those checkpoints would probably have blocked the bombers.

Three days before the bombing, a reliable informant, known as Kevin Fulton, who spied on the IRA for MI5, told his handlers that the Real IRA was about to “move something north over the next few days”. Fulton had earlier told them that a known associate of the Real IRA “smelled of fertiliser”, which was used in making the bomb. While the car bomb was being moved into position in Omagh on 15 August 1998, a call was made from this same man’s mobile phone to one of those later thought to have been responsible for the atrocity.

No attempt was made to assess this intelligence, let alone act on it. Records of the handler’s meeting with Fulton seem to have disappeared from the special branch files. Likewise, when a review of the RUC’s own handling of the Omagh case was conducted in 2000, these warnings were initially withheld from the investigators. The record of the anonymous call was specifically marked as “Intelligence does not refer to Omagh”.



Nuala O'Loan delivers her report into the Omagh bombing in December 2001. Photograph: Paul Faith/PA

Most egregiously, we know that intelligence reports relevant to the atrocity were never passed on to the police team that was supposed to be bringing the perpetrators to justice. O'Loan identified at least 280 such documents, and believed there were probably more.

Does any of this really matter? None of it changes the essential truth that the massacre was the work of a gang of IRA dissidents seeking to destroy the peace deal created a few months earlier through the Good Friday agreement. None of it can now make up for the failure to convict anyone for this horrendous crime. (The Real IRA leader, Michael McKevitt, who was almost certainly involved in the Omagh bomb, was convicted in the Republic for the less specific offence of “directing terrorism”.)

It matters, though, for two big reasons – one human, the other political. First, there is the pain of the bereaved and the injured. It is unconscionable that their suffering has been deepened both by the failure to bring the perpetrators to justice and by what looks very like a covering up of information that would help them to understand what happened. They should not have to wade through waters that have been deliberately muddied.

The demands of basic decency aside, however, there is a wider political context. The refusal of the state for more than 20 years to engage with the aftermath of Omagh is part of a wider failure to deal with the legacy of the Troubles. O’Loan’s report appeared shortly after a much more spectacular terrorist atrocity, the 9/11 attacks in the US. [Tony Blair](#), who was then prime minister, was “moving on” from Northern Ireland to other (disastrously ill-conceived) missions. Raising awkward questions about the uses and abuses of intelligence became, in the run-up to the Iraq war, increasingly undesirable.

This neglect of duty by Blair has turned, under Conservative governments, into active hostility to truth-seeking. The Omagh families are finally getting an inquiry because the high court in Belfast recognised that they have a right under the European convention on human rights to a proper investigation of their loved ones’ murders. But ending the UK’s adherence to the ECHR is an obsession of the Tory right.

Even worse is the government’s Northern Ireland Troubles legacy and reconciliation bill, now before the House of Lords, which seeks to close down all further criminal and civil actions related to crimes committed during the Troubles. It will even shut down inquests – 23 of which are pending.

The vindication of the Omagh families after more than two decades of official obfuscation is a reminder of why the ECHR is necessary – without transnational standards of human rights, the UK’s duty to stand up for its own citizens can be brushed aside. And the concession of an inquiry into Omagh contradicts the British government’s belief that “reconciliation” can be achieved by burying the pain of the Troubles.

Every bereaved family has the right to know as much of the truth about how their loved ones died as can be recovered from the pit of shame, amnesia and evasion into which so much of it has been cast. Whether the perpetrators were loyalists or republicans, soldiers or police, the agony of not knowing is the same. Only a comprehensive truth recovery process in which immunity from prosecution is dependent on honest accounting for what was done to the victims can stop the past from being a living torment. So long as that imperative is postponed, ghosts will continue to haunt the land.

- Fintan O'Toole is a columnist with the Irish Times
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[\*\*Opinion\*\*](#)[\*\*Coronavirus\*\*](#)

# Covid was devastating – why are we pretending it didn't happen?

[Emma Beddington](#)



A recent book about the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic details a ‘collective forgetting’ of the period. Our lack of Covid reckoning suggests history is repeating itself



'It came into being as a reaction to the lack of any official equivalent' ... the Covid memorial wall in London. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Mon 6 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 09.48 EST

My best friend has been ill and it's taken both of us back to March 2020. For her, it's reawakening the real trauma of getting very poorly and waiting, struggling to breathe, for an ambulance that never came. I was far luckier, but it's revived memories of trying to keep in touch with her, waking each morning terrified she wouldn't answer my messages, as our robustly fit and healthy neighbour died in hospital, his partner unable to visit.

Covid was so bad for so many – why aren't we talking about it more? My friend, who suffers badly from long Covid, struggles to understand the refusal of many people to think or talk about the pandemic; their reluctance to understand what it has taken from her and from so many others. She's baffled by the apparent desire to pretend it never happened, or that it wasn't a big deal.

Then there's the absence of formal memorialising: [the Covid memorial wall](#) came into being as a reaction to the lack of any official equivalent. The third anniversary of the first UK case being detected in York near where I live came and went with little more than a tweet from the local paper. I suppose

the lack of a definitive end point makes that harder. There's no armistice; we're living through a fizzle (at best: there's always the fear it could get worse again). It's hard to tell ourselves a clear story about Covid when we don't know how it ends.

This happened with Spanish flu, too: [Laura Spinney's book on the 1918 pandemic](#) describes the "collective forgetting" and the absence of official memorials. It was, Spinney says, remembered "personally, not collectively ... as millions of discrete, private tragedies".

But surely that's no longer possible now, when digital life means we're all enmeshed in one another's experiences to an unprecedented degree. I certainly can't forget the private tragedies I saw and read about. But I discovered something else in Spinney's book: the word *nallunguarluku* – "pretend it didn't happen". It's what elders in one Alaska community devastated by successive epidemics apparently advised people to do. Have we all just decided to *nallunguarluku*?

Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

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## Why I quitAutism

# I've stopped saying I 'have autism' – for me, being autistic is brilliant, not a burden

[Nick Ransom](#)



I want the language I use to describe myself to celebrate all the things my neurological difference has given me

Nick Ransom is a journalist and founder of the Neurodiverse Media Community



Self Portrait by Jack Denness, part of the Project Art Works presentation by neurodivergent artists for the Turner Prize 2021 Exhibition. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Mon 6 Feb 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Mon 6 Feb 2023 05.02 EST

I don't see being autistic as "having" a disorder. Instead, I look at it as a very positive thing. From a young age, it has helped me direct a laser-like focus on achieving my goals. My obsessive mindset and lack of real motivation to socialise accelerated my career in a way that would not have been possible if I had other interests. Achieving my ambitions would have been so much harder if I had not been autistic.

But there is an increasing tendency to use language that demonises this neurological difference. Phrases such as "Nick has autism" or "Nick's autism" make me cringe as they suggest an ailment that controls and burdens, which feeds into a narrative of struggle, disability and a lack of agency.

Others may feel differently. We are not a homogeneous group, and I recognise a lot of autistic people, particularly the non-verbal community, may have a different lived experience. Learning difficulties and other comorbidities can add an extra complication. But for me there are plenty of

positives associated with being autistic, which is why language is so important.

Detail is at the heart of my autistic experience. Pinpointing, examining and finessing brings me the most extraordinary satisfaction, and these traits are, of course, highly useful [in the workplace](#). Unlike many neurotypical people, I feel the most stress when not working. Work offers me structure, routine, order and motivation that helps me thrive and channels my busy mind, which also happens to make me a highly productive member of society.

That's not to say it is always easy being autistic. At home, I can struggle to contain my emotions, and my partner has to deal with the worst of me. I experience meltdowns when there are communication challenges, unexpected noises or day-to-day tasks that I just can't complete. I find household chores such as washing and cleaning more overwhelming than the average person. Getting stuck in traffic or just knocking my knee on the side of the bed can be the start of a downward spiral.

Being autistic can be disabling, but changing the way we talk about neurodivergence can inspire confidence. "Being autistic" rather than "having autism" promotes the idea of difference, rather than disability. You can be diagnosed "as autistic" without needing to use the word autism at all, in my view.

One in five of us has a difference in brain function. This includes those who are autistic, dyslexic, dyspraxic, have ADHD or another form of neurodiversity. Despite this, we are routinely excluded from society. Neurodivergent people are more likely to be unemployed than the neurotypical – and autistic people have one of the [lowest rates](#) of employment.

As Britain focuses on growing its economy, I see a huge section of the [workforce being underutilised](#) and undervalued. With the right support, far more neurodivergent people could enter employment and help this country thrive. It feels more urgent than ever to start highlighting the strengths of neurodiversity, rather than always focusing on people's difficulties.

The challenge is not insurmountable. It relies on us as a country learning to treat neurodiversity with more positivity – that means being intentional with our language, and how we present autism and other neurodivergent conditions in the media. It relies on us being more accommodating in corporate settings. Companies must recognise diversity, in all its shapes and forms, as a vital way of bringing a new perspective – the spark we all need in our businesses.

More conversations about neurodiversity are already being had. Now we need more research, training and awareness. And as we look to the future, I hope we will continue to strive for better.

- Nick Ransom is a journalist and founder of the Neurodiverse Media Community
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## US military searches territorial waters for Chinese spy balloon wreckage

Recovery of the wreckage could give the United States insight into China's spying capabilities, officials say



A helicopter scans the sea during efforts to recover remnants of a suspected Chinese spy balloon shot down in South Carolina, United States, on 5 February. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

*Reuters*

Sun 5 Feb 2023 21.20 EST Last modified on Sun 5 Feb 2023 22.14 EST

The US military said it is searching for remnants of the suspected Chinese surveillance balloon it [shot down](#), in a dramatic spy saga that has further strained American-Chinese relations.

The US navy is working to recover the balloon and its payload and the coast guard is providing security for the operation, general Glen VanHerck,

commander of the North American aerospace defence command and US northern command said on Sunday.

A successful recovery could give the United States insight into China's spying capabilities, though US officials have [downplayed the balloon's impact on national security](#).

A senior defence official told reporters that the nature of the debris was still being assessed but recovery options, including navy divers at the scene, would "seek to recover all debris and any material of intelligence value", according to a [transcript](#) published by the US department of defence.

"The debris is in 47 feet of water, primarily. The recovery that will make it fairly easy, actually. We planned for much deeper water," the official said adding that the wreckage "would have fallen at least in a seven-mile radius".

A US air force fighter jet on Saturday shot down the balloon off the coast of South Carolina, a week after it first entered US airspace near Alaska. VanHerck said the incident took place over US territorial waters.

China protested the response as an "obvious overreaction", but analysts said that any counter-move by Beijing will likely be finely calibrated to keep from worsening ties.

On Monday, China urged the United States to not escalate tensions or harm China's interests.

"China firmly opposes and strongly protests against this," China's vice foreign minister Xie Feng said in remarks to the US embassy in China on Monday. "The Chinese government is closely following the development of the situation."



A suspected Chinese spy balloon seen flying in the sky over Billings, Montana. Photograph: Chase Doak/AFP/Getty Images

Republican lawmakers on Sunday criticised president Joe Biden for waiting days to shoot down the balloon as it floated over the United States, accusing him of showing weakness toward China and initially trying to keep the breach of US airspace undisclosed.

“I think part of it is the president’s reluctance to take any action that would be viewed as provocative or confrontational towards the Chinese communists,” said Republican Tom Cotton, a member of the senate armed services committee.

Former president Donald Trump and his former national intelligence director, John Ratcliffe, denied defence secretary Lloyd Austin’s assessment that similar balloons had transited the United States during his presidency.

“China had too much respect for ‘TRUMP’ for this to have happened, and it NEVER did,” Trump wrote on social media site Truth Social.

But Republican representative Michael Waltz backed up Austin, telling the Washington Post that the Pentagon had notified Congress that Chinese

balloons were spotted near the United States several times during Trump's tenure.

He said balloons had been spotted near Texas and twice near Florida, as well as previously known sightings near Hawaii and Guam.

Democrats said Biden's decision to wait to shoot down the balloon until it had passed over the United States protected civilians from debris crashing to Earth.

"The president called for this to be dealt with in a way that balanced all of the different risks. That's exactly what happened," US transportation secretary Pete Buttigieg said on CNN's State of the Union program.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer dismissed the Republican criticism as "premature and political."

"The bottom line here is that shooting down the balloon over water wasn't just the safest option, but it was the one that maximised our intel gain," he said at a news conference.

The Pentagon will brief senators on the balloon and Chinese surveillance on 15 February, Schumer said.

Republican Mike Turner, chairman of the House of Representatives intelligence committee, said he believed China was using the balloon to figure out how to counter US nuclear weapons and missile defence systems.

"The president has allowed this to go across our most sensitive sites and wasn't even going to tell the American public," Turner said on NBC's Meet the Press program.

Republican Marco Rubio, vice-chair of the senate intelligence committee, told the ABC News program This Week that China was trying to send a message that it could enter US airspace. Rubio said he doubted that the balloon's debris would be of much intelligence value.

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## Automotive industry

# Australian startup Recharge wins bid for collapsed UK battery company Britishvolt

Recharge, which is also planning a factory in Victoria, revives goal to build £3.8bn ‘gigafactory’ in north England



Recharge Industries' takeover of Britishvolt revives plans for a battery plant in Blyth, Northumberland. Photograph: Britishvolt/Reuters

*[Jonathan Barrett](#) and [Graham Readfearn](#)*

Mon 6 Feb 2023 02.28 EST Last modified on Mon 6 Feb 2023 02.37 EST

An emerging Australian company yet to construct a major project will be responsible for delivering on UK hopes to electrify its automotive industry after outbidding rivals to take over collapsed battery maker Britishvolt.

In a whirlwind fortnight, Recharge Industries put together an aggressive package that also revives plans to build a £3.8bn (A\$6.7bn) “gigafactory” in the north of England to supply the next generation of UK-built electric vehicles, free from Chinese materials.

The Australian company, which sits under New York-based investment firm Scale Facilitation, beat three other offers to become the preferred bidder to take Britishvolt out of the hands of administrator EY.

The deal still needs to be finalised, which would trigger a process of paying back creditors.

“After a competitive and rigorous process, we’re confident our proposal will deliver a strong outcome for all involved,” Scale Facilitation’s Australian-born founder and chief executive, David Collard, said in a statement on Monday.

The ambitious startup strategy means Recharge will now work simultaneously on rebuilding Britishvolt and its planned facility while also pursuing pre-existing plans to build a battery facility in Geelong, a former car manufacturing hub in Australia.

Recharge’s pitch to administrators lent on strategic and diplomatic ties, and received support from the British government’s trade envoy for Australia, ex-English cricketer Ian Botham. The startup plans to build lithium-ion batteries free of materials from China or Russia, reducing risks to supply chains.

“I strongly believe any premium we may end up paying is reflective of our bullish view on the untapped opportunity the UK market provides us,” Collard told the *Guardian* late last week.

Britishvolt was planning to build the 30GWh factory on a vast site near Blyth in Northumberland in phases to take advantage of rising EV demand ahead of the UK’s 2030 ban on new petrol and diesel cars. The plant was expected to employ about 3,000 workers when operating at full capacity.

If completed, the factory would be the fourth-biggest building in the UK.

Britishvolt had £100m in conditional financing from the British government but failed to meet various hurdles to receive the funding.

Bidders were particularly interested in Britishvolt's intellectual property, according to one person close to the administration process, which includes patents, designs, supply chain partners and territorial licences that give the holder a dominant position in the UK.

Administrators also received bids from existing Britishvolt investors, private equity firm Greybull Capital and HSBC-backed Saudi British Bank, the Financial Times reported.

Recharge's management team includes several people with military backgrounds in a nod to the company's plans to build batteries for defence industries.

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“The defence industry is renowned globally as an innovator and an industry that is dependent on batteries and storage for a whole suite of applications,” the Recharge chief executive, Rob Fitzpatrick, said in an interview last month.

Recharge relies on battery technology from American lithium-iron battery developer C4V. If the Britishvolt deal is finalised, Recharge could potentially make batteries using Australian minerals, US technology and British manufacturing, representing the same three countries in the Aukus trilateral security pact.

The Australian government last week launched formal consultations to develop a national battery strategy to promote Australia as a source of battery minerals and expertise around the world.

Australia is the world's dominant lithium producer but has historically struggled to develop processing facilities for its mineral riches.

Shannon O'Rourke, the chief executive of the government-backed Future Battery Industries Cooperative Research Centre, said it "takes a lot of time and money to manufacture high-quality batteries at scale".

But he said Recharge likely had a head start over rival bidders for Britishvolt because it had key partnerships like its C4V battery technology arrangement in place.

"Batteries, like energy, are important to national interest. Secure supplies of batteries are also essential to underpin electric vehicle manufacturing ecosystems," O'Rourke said.

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## [Hong Kong](#)

# **Hong Kong: landmark national security trial of 47 democracy advocates begins**

Protests as former politicians, activists, campaigners and community workers appear in court accused of ‘conspiracy to commit subversion’



Police stand guard as a prison vehicle arrives at the West Kowloon magistrates court building. Photograph: Tyrone Siu/Reuters

*[Helen Davidson](#) and [Kelly Ho](#) and [Candice Chau](#) in Hong Kong*

Mon 6 Feb 2023 07.11 ESTFirst published on Sun 5 Feb 2023 21.35 EST

Hong Kong’s [largest national security trial](#) began on Monday, involving 47 of the city’s most high-profile democracy advocates, in a hearing that has been labelled a trial of the territory’s pro-democracy movement itself.

The group of former politicians, activists, campaigners, and community workers are accused of “conspiracy to commit subversion” over the holding of unofficial pre-election primaries in July 2020.

The case is at the centre of the [Hong Kong](#) and Beijing governments' crackdown on opposition and dissent in the city, after the mass pro-democracy protests in 2019.

Among the accused are legal academic [Benny Tai](#), former lawmakers [Claudia Mo](#), Au Nok-hin and Leung Kwok-hung, and well-known activists [Joshua Wong](#) and Lester Shum. Gwyneth Ho, 32, a former journalist turned primary candidate, is among those pleading not guilty.

On Monday prosecutors told the West Kowloon magistrates court that the accused had conspired to seriously interfere, disrupt or undermine the duties and functions of the Hong Kong government, "with a view to subverting the state power". An amended filing revealed the prosecution had dropped one accusation that the group intended to use "the threat of force", a change noted in court by Ho.

The trial opened with the court reading out the charge and formally taking pleas from 18 defendants in front of three national security judges – Andrew Chan, Johnny Chan and Alex Lee. All 18 repeated that they would plead not guilty except Ng Kin-wai, an ex-district councillor, and Mike Lam, a merchant.

Ng, who indicated his intention to change his plea to guilty last November, told the three judges: "I did not succeed in subverting the state power. I plead guilty."

Lam also officially confirmed that he pleaded guilty to the charge, after he informed the court of such intention last month.

Leung, on the other hand, said in court that there was "no crime to admit" when he reiterated his not guilty plea. "It is not a crime to act against a totalitarian regime," he said.

Those who have pleaded guilty will not be sentenced until after the trial, which is expected to run for 90 days.



Joshua Wong (left) and other winners of the unofficial democratic primaries pose at the end of a press conference in Hong Kong in 2020 after pro-democracy parties held primary polls. Photograph: Anthony Wallace/AFP/Getty Images

Those accused of being “principal offenders” could face life in prison. The court has heard that four people will give evidence as witnesses for the prosecution – Shum, Au, Lam, and former district councillors Andrew Chiu and Ben Chung.

The case has been condemned by human rights and legal groups, who accuse the government of using the [national security law](#) and changes to the justice process – including the justice secretary barring a jury from this trial – to crush dissent.

On Monday, Judge Chan told members of the public to “respect” the hearing, after some people laughed while the democrats were taking pleas. Chan also warned the defendants not to disturb the proceedings or shout from the dock, threatening to put them “behind the door”.

Hundreds of people had lined up outside the court before its expected start, vying for one of 39 tickets allocated for the public to sit in the main court room. Some of those waiting [told Hong Kong Free Press](#) they did not know

what case they were waiting for, or gave the name of a separate case involving the media mogul and activist Jimmy Lai. Several told others not to talk to reporters, while some filmed and photographed journalists. A group of women who had obtained tickets were later seen leaving before the hearing commenced.

There was a heavy police presence, including police dogs checking nearby bushes, and a small protest by members of the League of Social Democrats, one of Hong Kong's last active pro-democracy groups.

Chan Po-ying, the chair of the group, was heard saying "hope reporters are all filming this" as officers surrounded and shoved her. Chan and a colleague, who held up a banner, were moved to another area behind a barricade.

"Crackdown is shameless," read the banner. "Immediately release all political prisoners."

Robin, a journalism student at the University of Hong Kong, was the first in line outside the court building. He said that he arrived at 6pm on Sunday, wanting to attend the hearing "out of his own interests".

"I just heard that all the most outspoken activists are here, like Joshua Wong, Gwyneth Ho, and Benny Tai, and all the others, so I just want to come and see what happens there."

Representatives from the UK, US, Sweden, Germany, the Czech Republic, Austria, Italy, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, European Union, and France were also among those queueing up.

Laurence Vandewalle from the European Union Office to Hong Kong and Macau, said the EU had been observing trials across the world "as a sign of commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law".

The accused were arrested more than two years ago, over the holding of unofficial pre-election primaries in July 2020. They were accused of conspiring to paralyse the government over a plan to win a majority of seats

and use the mandate to block legislation and perhaps force the resignation of the chief executive.

The primaries aimed to select the strongest candidates among the pro-democracy movement to run against the pro-Beijing establishment parties. Unofficial primary polls had been a common feature of elections in the past, across the political spectrum, but days later Beijing declared the democracy camp's event to be illegal. In dawn raids on 6 January 2021, 47 organisers, candidates and campaigners were arrested.

Most have been in jail for almost two years, having been denied bail. Legal observers have criticised the national security law for reversing the presumption of bail for defendants.

More than 600,000 people voted at the primaries, in what was viewed as a sign of protest against the government crackdown.

The case continues on Tuesday.

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## [Melbourne](#)

# Buddhist temple in south-east Melbourne gutted by fire

Five-storey blaze at Springvale's Bright Moon hall drew a crowd of onlookers, firefighters say

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The fire-damaged Bright Moon Buddhist temple in Springvale, Melbourne, on Monday morning. Photograph: Diego Fedele/AAP

[Natasha May](#)

[@natasha\\_may](#)

Sun 5 Feb 2023 18.25 EST Last modified on Sun 5 Feb 2023 19.15 EST

A fire has gutted the Bright Moon Buddhist Society temple in Melbourne's south-east.

Sunday night's fire in Springvale could be seen for many kilometres and drew a crowd as orange flames engulfed the temple roof and a pillar of smoke rose from it.

The assistant chief fire officer Paul Foster called it a large, "rather spectacular" fire – the temple was about 150m by 100m and five storeys tall.

"It drew hundreds and hundreds of onlookers as well as a large contingent of firefighters," Foster said.

looks like temples gone :([#temple](#) [#springvale](#) [#sad](#)  
[pic.twitter.com/EID7OXXXe3](https://pic.twitter.com/EID7OXXXe3)

— Bitvan (@hhpham112) [February 5, 2023](#)

Fire Rescue Victoria said crews had been called to the place of worship about 8pm and had arrived within minutes. Approximately 100 firefighters brought the fire under control by 10.30pm.

Foster said by the time they arrived the fire was well established.

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Approximately 30 residents in the surrounding area had to be evacuated, and others were advised to remain indoors, close doors and windows and turn off heating and cooling systems.

No members of the public or firefighters were injured.

On Monday morning fire investigators were on the scene trying to investigate the cause but Foster said it was still too early to work out how it started.

The devastation from the temple fire in Springvale, clearer in daylight. One firetruck dampening out black spots, water cascading the steps, and the building destroyed [@sunriseon7](#) [@7NewsMelbourne](#)  
[pic.twitter.com/g53akhnD5f](https://pic.twitter.com/g53akhnD5f)

— Teegan Dolling (@tdolling) [February 5, 2023](#)

Fire Rescue Victoria had been mindful of the cultural sensitivities of the community losing their place of worship, he said.

“A fire is a fire when you have to put it out but obviously there’s cultural sensitivities that we have to be aware of.”

“Not only is this a place of worship for the Buddhist community, it’s a place of meeting for the local residents and it’s taken many many years to build and as such, you know, the local residents do feel the loss quite deeply.”

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The Bright Moon Buddhist Society originally used a garage in Springvale as a prayer hall for chanting when it formed in 1980. When numbers increased, a hall at a local Masonic Centre was leased as a temporary place of worship before the former sports complex at Springvale South was purchased.

The sports hall was converted into the Dharma Hall with minor renovations.

Foster said as the incident controller he had worked with the local committee from the temple and their president all through the evening and would continue to do so on Monday to understand their concerns.

The representatives have told authorities the remains of former congregation members were stored in the temple, but due to concerns about the building's structural integrity, authorities cannot let anyone enter until it is deemed safe.

“That’s a concern for us. We want to make sure that we look after and are respectful of the people that are [left] behind in there.”

Authorities are hopeful the remains are intact, Foster said, because they were in a part of the building that was protected.

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## [Cyprus](#)

# Cyprus presidential election goes to runoff with ex-foreign minister in lead

Nikos Christodoulides emerges as frontrunner and will face Andreas Mavroyiannis in vote next Sunday



Nikos Christodoulides, flanked by his family, casts his ballot. The former foreign minister won 32.04% of the first-round vote. Photograph: Katia Christodoulou/EPA

*[Helena Smith](#) in Athens*

Sun 5 Feb 2023 14.55 EST Last modified on Sun 5 Feb 2023 16.57 EST

The race to become the eighth president of [Cyprus](#) will extend into a second week after the Mediterranean island's former foreign minister Nikos Christodoulides emerged as the frontrunner but failed to gain enough support to win outright.

The 49-year-old independent will face Andreas Mavroyiannis, a veteran career diplomat backed by the leftist Akel party, in a runoff on 12 February.

Results released by the interior ministry showed Christodoulides winning 32.04% of the vote in Sunday's election and an unexpectedly strong showing of 29.6% for his opponent.

With all votes counted, Averof Neofytou, fielded by the centre-right Disy party of the twice-elected outgoing president, Nicos Anastasiades, trailed with 26.11%. The outcome will be seen as a surprise as Mavroyiannis was regarded as an outsider.

A first-round win required a candidate to garner more than 50% of the vote.

Christodoulides, who broke away from Disy to run his own campaign with the aid of parties traditionally tough on talks to solve the country's decades-old division, had been tipped to emerge as the victor although it had been predicted the first-round poll would not produce a clear winner.

"The day after elections should find us all united," he told reporters after casting his ballot in his hometown of Paphos in the island's south-west, alongside his wife and four daughters. "The elections will end, but the challenges and problems lie ahead of us."

A record 14 candidates ran for president. Others included the leading human rights lawyer Achilleas Demetriades, who had campaigned on a ticket of expediting peace talks with the island's internationally isolated Turkish Cypriot community living on the other side of a UN-patrolled ceasefire line. Demetriades gained 2.1% of the vote.

Cyprus has been split since Ankara sent in troops in 1974, seizing its northern third in response to a coup orchestrated by the junta then in power in Athens aimed at uniting the country with Greece.

A week of frantic horse-trading is expected to follow before next Sunday's runoff as the first-round winners try to bolster support by forming alliances with opponents who failed to get through.

In a debate on the eve of the election, Christodoulides seemingly refused to rule out joining forces with any party including the ultranationalist Elam.

“A lot of people in Cyprus find the prospect of such an alliance, which would be a legitimisation of the far right, extremely worrying,” said Christoforos Christoforou, a political analyst specialised in elections. “At 6.1%, Elam won more votes than opinion polls had forecast,” he added.

For seasoned Cyprus-watchers this is the most significant presidential poll since the country won independence from Britain 63 years ago.

With peace talks deadlocked since 2017, commentators say it is the island’s ethnic division that is ultimately at stake as concerns grow of its partition being formalised with each passing year.

In an election campaign dominated by other issues – not least the cost of living crisis, migration and corruption – ever more Greek Cypriots, comfortable in the knowledge of their recognised state already being in the EU, appear to have given up on a settlement.

Reunification efforts will require herculean efforts by the incoming president to persuade the international community that Cyprus’s majority population not only wants to resume talks but is willing to make the concessions necessary to make a permanent peace possible.

Since the collapse of the last UN-supported process aimed at creating a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, Turkish Cypriots in the breakaway north have also hardened their stance with the [election of a nationalist leader, Ersin Tatar](#), who has sought to reset the agenda by [demanding a two-state solution](#). Chasms that have remained unbridgeable since the invasion have only widened.

“Whoever wins will face the challenge of having to convince the UN that resuming negotiations will produce results,” said Christoforou. “This is the first time since 1974 that there has been such a long period without talks and since then both the atmosphere and situation on the ground has deteriorated dramatically.”

Christodoulides has proposed appointing a special EU envoy to facilitate negotiations, while Mavroyiannis, who led peace talks under Anastasiades, has suggested exploiting Cyprus's offshore natural gas deposits with Turkish Cypriots as a way of easing the process.

About 560,000 Greek Cypriots were eligible to cast ballots although officials said only about 400,000 turned up at polling stations.

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## Headlines tuesday 31 january 2023

- [Live Sunak marks Brexit anniversary by claiming benefits will ‘continue to empower communities’](#)
- [Brexit Decision is a ‘complete disaster’ and ‘total lies’, says Tory billionaire](#)
- [Economic growth Britain the only G7 economy forecast to shrink in 2023](#)
- [Live Business: Britain to be worst-performing major economy this year, warns IMF](#)

[\*\*Politics live with Andrew Sparrow\*\*](#)[\*\*Politics\*\*](#)

# No 10 warns public of ‘significant disruption’ tomorrow because of mass strikes – as it happened

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## **Business**

# **Brexit is a ‘complete disaster’ and ‘total lies’, says former Tory donor**

Private equity veteran Guy Hands says Boris Johnson ‘threw the country and the NHS under the bus’

'Complete disaster' and 'total lies': Tory billionaire lambasts effects of Brexit – audio

*[Julia Kollewe](#)*

Tue 31 Jan 2023 10.00 ESTFirst published on Tue 31 Jan 2023 04.21 EST

Guy Hands, a leading City figure, has called Brexit a “complete disaster” and a “bunch of total lies” that has harmed large parts of the economy.

Speaking on the third anniversary of the UK’s departure from the EU, Hands, the founder, chair and chief investment officer of the private equity firm Terra Firma, said: “It’s been a complete disaster. The reality is it’s been a lose-lose situation for us and Europe. Europe has lost more [in financial services] but we’ve lost as well. And the reality of [Brexit](#) was, it was just was a bunch of complete and total lies.

“The only way that the Brexit put forward by Boris Johnson was going to work was if there was a complete deregulation of the UK and we moved to a sort of Liz Truss utopia of a Singapore state and that was just never going to happen,” Hands, a former donor to the Conservative party, told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme.



Guy Hands founded the private equity firm Terra Firma. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

“The British population was never going to accept a state in which the NHS would be demolished, where free education would be severely limited, where regulation with regard to employment would be thrown apart. It was just complete and total absolute lies.”

He added: “The biggest issue about it, and you can take the Brexit bus as a good example, is the lies that Boris Johnson and the Conservative party told about the NHS. In fact what they did was throw the country and the NHS under the bus.”

According to the polling expert John Curtice, on average polls now suggest that [57% people in the UK would vote to rejoin the EU.](#)

Eddie Truell, a City veteran and strong Brexit supporter who set up the private equity firm Duke Street Capital and is co-founder of the Pension Insurance Corporation, expressed disappointment at the speed of deregulation in the UK’s financial services sector.

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“I hoped we would see faster deregulation than has been the case,” he said, also speaking on Today. “We saw an enormous positive explosion in the City after big bang in the 1980s: I was hoping we would see the same thing.”

He said Britain had the largest trade surplus in financial services in the world, of \$87bn, up 10% from 2020. “The UK’s trade surplus in financial services is gargantuanly important for the UK. All the rest of the economy benefits as a result of financial services,” he said.

“Leaving the EU did mean that financial services found it much easier to trade with other countries outside of the EU. It was lose-lose in my opinion,” Truell said. “The EU probably lost rather more from failing to reach proper agreements on financial services, but the UK clearly didn’t benefit either. But overall the City managed to pivot its exports to other parts of the world, particularly the US, Singapore, Switzerland, etc.”

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## Economic growth (GDP)

# Britain the only G7 economy forecast to shrink in 2023

IMF says UK economy is likely to contract 0.6% as rising interest rates and higher taxes take toll



Shoppers on the high street in Southend-on-Sea. The IMF says 2023 will be ‘challenging’ for the UK as it slips to the bottom of the G7 league table.  
Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

*[Larry Elliott](#) Economics editor*

Mon 30 Jan 2023 20.30 EST Last modified on Tue 31 Jan 2023 03.25 EST

Britain is expected to be the only major industrialised country to see its economy shrink this year after the impact of Liz Truss’s brief premiership prompted a sharp growth downgrade from the International Monetary Fund.

Adding to growing political pressure on Rishi Sunak after the sacking of the Conservative party chair [Nadhim Zahawi](#), the Washington-based IMF

warned on Tuesday it expected the UK economy to contract by 0.6% this year – 0.9 percentage points worse than it had pencilled in just three months ago and slower even than sanctions-hit Russia.

The IMF said that while the prospects for every other member of the [G7](#) group of leading developed nations had improved or remained unchanged since October, rising interest rates and higher taxes had made the outlook for the UK gloomier.

Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, the IMF's economic counsellor, said 2023 would be “quite challenging” for the UK as it slipped from top to bottom of the G7 league table. “There is a sharp correction,” he added.

The UK chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, last week warned a [sense of declinism](#) was hampering the UK's economic recovery, and has come under pressure to come up with a credible plan to boost growth. His speech, which focused on “enterprise, education, employment and everywhere”, was widely criticised by business leaders as being devoid of policies.

The UK growth downgrade came in the IMF's update to its half-yearly [World Economic Outlook](#) (WEO) – a health check on the global economy published in April and October.

The October 2022 WEO was completed before the tax-cutting [mini budget](#) from the then-chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, in late September and pencilled in growth of 0.3% for 2023. In its update, the IMF said the UK had performed more strongly in 2022 than anticipated, growing by 4.1% rather than the 3.6% expected three months ago.

But it said the outlook for 2023 had deteriorated, with its updated forecast reflecting the higher taxes announced by Hunt after he replaced Kwarteng, the increase in interest rates from the Bank of England, tougher financial conditions for borrowers, and still-high energy prices. The Bank is expected to raise interest rates from 3.5% to 4% on Thursday.

“With inflation at about 10% or above in several euro-area countries and the United Kingdom, household budgets remain stretched. The accelerated pace

of rate increases by the Bank of England and the European Central Bank is tightening financial conditions and cooling demand in the housing sector and beyond,” the IMF said.

### [IMF forecast chart](#)

Treasury sources said the IMF’s focus on the high level of inflation reinforced the need to tackle the UK’s cost of living crisis. They added that in 2021 Britain had outperformed forecasts made by the IMF and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Hunt said in response to the IMF forecasts: “The governor of the Bank of England recently said that any UK recession this year is likely to be shallower than previously predicted, however these figures confirm we are not immune to the pressures hitting nearly all advanced economies.”

Hunt, whose plan for growth includes developing the UK equivalent of California’s Silicon Valley, added: “Short-term challenges should not obscure our long-term prospects – the UK outperformed many forecasts last year, and if we stick to our plan to halve inflation, the UK is still predicted to grow faster than Germany and Japan over the coming years.”

Gourinchas said the UK’s high dependence on still-expensive natural gas, the “scarring” effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the size of the workforce, and higher mortgage costs would have an impact on growth.

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“All together these factors will lead to a fairly sharp retrenchment in activity this year,” the IMF official said. Of the other G7 countries, it revised up its growth forecasts for the US, Germany, Italy and Japan, while leaving them the same for France and Canada. Russia’s growth prospects have markedly improved, the IMF said, with higher military spending and buoyant energy exports leading to forecast expansion of 0.3% in 2023 – a 2.6 point upgrade.

Overall, global growth is forecast by the IMF to be 2.9% this year, 0.2 points higher than anticipated in October, while the projection for 2024 has been revised down by 0.1 points to 3.1%.

Gourinchas said even after the modest improvement in the global picture for 2023, growth would remain weak by historical standards, as the fight against the strongest inflationary pressures in four decades and Russia’s war in Ukraine took their toll.

“Despite these headwinds, the outlook is less gloomy than in our October forecast, and could represent a turning point, with growth bottoming out and inflation declining.

“Economic growth proved surprisingly resilient in the third quarter of last year, with strong labor markets, robust household consumption and business investment, and better-than-expected adaptation to the energy crisis in Europe.”

The IMF’s economic counsellor said he was also encouraged by signs that inflation rates were falling in many countries, even though core inflation – which excludes energy and food prices – had yet to peak in most cases.

“Elsewhere, China’s sudden re-opening paves the way for a rapid rebound in activity. And global financial conditions have improved as inflation pressures started to abate. This, and a weakening of the US dollar from its November high, provided some modest relief to emerging and developing countries,” Gourinchas said.

“On the upside, a stronger boost from pent-up demand in numerous economies or a faster fall in inflation are plausible. On the downside, severe health outcomes in China could hold back the recovery, Russia’s war in Ukraine could escalate, and tighter global financing conditions could worsen debt distress.” Financial markets might also respond badly to higher than expected inflation news, the IMF added.

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**Business live****Business**

# **Britain to be worst-performing major economy this year, warns IMF; UK mortgage approvals tumble and company insolvencies surge – as it happened**

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## 2023.01.31 - Spotlight

- ['They filmed me without my consent' The ugly side of #kindness videos](#)
- [Putin vs the West review Like a gripping, terrifying soap opera](#)
- [The 'green comet' What is it and how can you see it?](#)
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[TikTok](#)

## **‘They filmed me without my consent’: the ugly side of #kindness videos**

Some social media users are building a following through ‘feelgood’ videos, in which, for instance, they give flowers to a stranger. The stranger then becomes their clickbait. Is there anything we can do to stop this?



When a man suddenly gives you flowers ... that's probably TikTok.  
Photograph: Dmitrii Melnikov/Alamy



[Elle Hunt](#)

Tue 31 Jan 2023 01.00 EST

Maree only wanted to buy some shoes. A pair that she liked the look of had gone on sale, so she made a trip into the city to try them on. It was late in the day in June, mid-winter in Melbourne, and the shopping centre was quiet. After making her purchase, Maree stopped for a coffee. “And that’s when it happened,” she says.

A young man approached her holding a posy of flowers. He asked Maree to hold them for him as he put on his jacket. “I wish I’d trusted my instincts and said no,” she says. “It was all so quick.” Maree took the flowers – then the man walked away, wishing her “a lovely day”. She held them out after him, bemused.

Then Maree noticed two men operating a camera on a tripod, a few feet away. “I said: ‘Did you film that?’ and they denied it,” says Maree. “I even said to them: ‘Do you want these flowers? I don’t want them.’ They just looked stunned.”

Maree went home with her new shoes and the flowers. That evening, her partner received a text from a friend with teenage children: Maree was in a

video going viral on [TikTok](#). Not active on social media, Maree “didn’t think anything of it. I thought: ‘Who watches these TikToks anyway? Oh well.’ I didn’t even know what viral meant.” She paid the video no mind until she saw an article about the interaction in the Daily Mail.

The man who had handed the flowers to Maree was Harrison Pawluk, a 22-year-old TikToker with a following of millions for his “random acts of kindness”. Among videos showing him offering hugs to strangers and paying for people’s groceries, Pawluk had posted the clip of Maree with the caption “I hope this made her day better”, with a red heart emoji and the hashtag “#wholesome”. In a little over a week, it had garnered 52m views and 10m likes. “I’m not crying, you are” was one representative comment.

Such “feelgood” content has long been a feature of the social web, dating back to the first days of BuzzFeed and Upworthy – but, since the switch to video, these stories of the kindness of strangers have taken on the form of stunts and social “experiments”. On TikTok, the hashtag [#randomactsofkindness](#) has 416m views, while [#helpingothers](#) has nearly 850m; although not exclusively stunts, [#kindness](#), [#wholesome](#) and [#positivity](#) are well into the billions.

After the video went viral from Pawluk’s profile, the Mail published a story about his “heartwarming” gesture, declaring that the woman – Maree – had been moved to tears. But Maree did not recognise herself as the “elderly woman” depicted – and she took umbrage with the assumption that Pawluk’s intrusion on her day had been welcome. “That was just cruel, I thought, to do that to a person – the whole ‘pathetic’ scenario … I am in my 60s, I have got grey hair, but it kind of upset my sense of how I’m perceived – I’d never really thought of myself as looking old,” she says.

She had to act, for her own sense of self. In mid-July, she shared her experience on air with ABC Radio Melbourne’s Virginia Trioli, saying [she felt “dehumanised” by the interaction](#) with Pawluk. “He interrupted my quiet time, filmed and uploaded a video without my consent, turning it into something it wasn’t; and I feel like he is making quite a lot of money through it … I feel like clickbait.” Maree had come forward because she wanted to warn others, she said. “If it can happen to me, it can happen to anyone.”

Over the past decade or so, stories about people unwittingly going viral on social media have become common. Many people working in stock images have spoken out about the surreal experience of their work being turned into memes, from the model who became known as “[“Hide the Pain Harold”](#) to the photographer responsible for taking [the picture that became “distracted boyfriend”](#). “It’s not easy,” said a Spanish man now renowned internationally as [“the worst person you know”](#) after his portrait was used to illustrate a satirical news article.



Andras Arato AKA Hide the Pain Harold. Photograph: Bela Doka/The Guardian

But, increasingly, people are being made to go viral without their participation or even knowledge, such as the couple whose dramatic breakup on a plane made headlines in 2015 after it was live-tweeted by a fellow passenger. In December last year, a 64-year-old man was [filmed at Fabric nightclub in London](#) and went viral in a post mocking his dancing. What were once irregular viral stories have become more frequent as the “content economy” has grown. Worldwide, millions of people make a living from their online followings. Especially since TikTok took off, digital-content production has been frenetic. Now, all the world’s a stage – and all of us run the risk of being reduced to mere players in someone else’s production.

It highlights a growing tension between content creators' right to freedom of expression, even if it may come at someone else's expense, versus others' right to privacy, even though they may be in a public place. Stunts like Pawluk's may not even immediately register as intrusive to audiences accustomed to viewing strangers' lives on their screens. "We live in an incredibly visual age, where anyone can point the camera at anyone," says Sonia Livingstone, a media and communications professor at the London School of Economics.

One challenge is that the category of content creator or influencer is not easily defined, let alone subjected to ethical or professional codes, encompassing people with vast followings and small ones, big brand deals or day jobs.

What counts as harm is also up for debate when the consequences of going viral vary hugely, and individuals' thresholds for the spotlight differ. "People are living very clearly in different worlds," says Livingstone. "There's no chance that my mum has any idea of what's going on on TikTok – but TikTok might decide to sweep her up in its embrace."

To some, the online spotlight may seem fortuitous. Syndie Germain and her boyfriend went viral in December 2021 not for being the recipients of an act of kindness as such, but for a kind-hearted post. A masked stranger had offered to take their photo while they were out to dinner and it turned out to be Cher, who shared the shot with her 4 million followers. "When we were coming out of movie I saw beautiful Couple," [the singer tweeted](#) in her trademark chaotic style. ".... Had my mask on so they didn't Know Who I was. MAYBE Just a crazy woman.. THAT ME."



The picture of Syndie Germain and her boyfriend, snapped by Cher.  
Photograph: Twitter/@cher

As [a lifestyle-content creator herself](#), Germain is more comfortable than many sharing herself online. Even so, she found the attention overwhelming. She was glad when it passed; now her run-in with Cher is just a “fun fact about me”.

In the case of so-called “kindness influencers”, the attention may be understood to be welcome. These content creators are giving away money or doing good deeds with the stated aim of inspiring others to do the same. Of course, it can pay off for them, too. Such blandly “uplifting” content can reach huge audiences, allowing the most successful creators to claim big sums in brand partnerships and sponsorship deals.

Pawluk has more than 3 million followers, earning him [a reported monthly income](#) of between A\$10,000 and A\$15,000 (£5,500 and £8,300). He is studying for a double degree in design and business – but only to please his mum, he says over a video call from his bedroom in Melbourne. “Being a video creator is my ultimate purpose.”

Typically, Pawluk says, he asks people if they would be willing to appear in a video he is shooting for social media – “and if not, no worries, have a great

day.” The “kindness” stunts, however, Pawluk films without seeking prior permission, so as to capture the desired “wholesome” reaction. Afterwards, he says, “I will try my best in situations like that to be: ‘I’ve just filmed this video, I was wondering if we could use something like this to inspire others.’” Most people agree, he says – although he will delete footage on request.

In the case of Maree, Pawluk says there was a “miscommunication” by his cameraman. He was surprised to hear, on the ABC, how Maree had felt about his video. “It definitely makes me want to make sure that, in the future, consent is given.” Pawluk denies having targeted Maree deliberately as an older woman. After her interview went viral, he was abused online, he says – mostly by older generations.

But, says Anna Derrig, that overlooks the power dynamics at play – not least, who has the privilege of the final cut. Derrig has been researching consent and ethics in memoir and other life-writing for 10 years; she sees parallels between the misappropriation of people’s private stories in print and the “personal damage” increasingly being wrought online.

“It’s a form of theft,” she says. “The person who’s telling the story, the influencer in these cases, is the one in control of the narrative – when that’s on the internet, that’s out there for good.”

Seeking permission is not a magic bullet, says Derrig; what matters is “not just consent but informed consent”, meaning the subject understands all the risks and possible outcomes. In the case of online attention, these are hard to predict – and virtually impossible to control.

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It can easily veer into exploitation. A striking proportion of kindness videos feature people who are living in poverty or otherwise marginalised, and as such assumed to be grateful beneficiaries.

In July, an Afghan asylum seeker said he was “traumatised” by another Australian TikToker swooping in, while he was at the supermarket, to pay for his groceries. In the name of spreading kindness, some content creators even pose as homeless to shame passersby for not giving.

In November, an elderly couple were publicly chastised by an Australian TikToker for ignoring his request for help with opening a bottle of water while he was wearing a prop sling. “They didn’t even notice the sling,” says the couple’s daughter, Amal Awad. ”They saw a very tall man walking towards them with a friend. My mum’s instincts kicked in and she kept walking, and frankly I don’t blame her.”



Amal Awad: ‘It’s not harmless: every time we click on these videos, we’re enabling these content creators to not think bigger and better.’ Photograph:

Jeremy Ong

Many of the comments beneath the video were hateful and racist, Awad says. She asked the TikToker to take it down, but he refused, telling her that it was “still pushing” – meaning it was still getting views.

Awad [wrote a column](#) describing her family’s distress at being landed in a stranger’s “social experiment” and calling for society to reckon with what we risk losing in the race for likes. “It’s not harmless: every time we click on these videos, we’re enabling these content creators to not think bigger and better,” she tells me.

We may be nearing an inflection point. The boundary between online and “IRL” (in real life) has been particularly permeable since the pandemic, while gen Z – for [whom the distinction](#) has always been less clear – is now the dominant force on social media. It is no coincidence that most clickbait casualties now come via TikTok, where [very young people](#) post without the oversight and etiquette of more established platforms. (TikTok declined to comment for this story.)

There is little incentive for platforms to remove material on request or act in accordance with the standards expected of traditional publishers, says Persephone Bridgman Baker, a partner at the law firm Carter-Ruck, who specialises in media, privacy and reputation management.

The merits of any legal action could take into account the motive of the user; any financial gain; the size and nature of the audience reached; the reputational damage done to the subject; any reasonable expectation of privacy; and any public interest in publication. “And what is in the public interest is certainly not the same as what the public finds interesting,” adds Bridgman Baker. There is also the danger of “[the Streisand effect](#)”, she says: that, by trying to tackle compromising material, you risk it circulating more widely.

As more people experience being made into fodder, it seems likely that there will be a cultural shift – although whether it is towards protecting our privacy or casting off what remains of it is yet to be seen. Greater literacy

and robust social etiquette could evolve around posting online in the same way as that mostly observed over sharing pictures of children.

Six months on, Maree remains ambivalent about her brush with the internet, but no longer bruised. “I have weathered my particular storm,” she says. She even seems tickled by how far her point travelled, with some comments in support gaining 2m likes – “not just sticking up for me, but for the idea that we shouldn’t be treating people in this way – that was very heartening”, she says.

But she remains critical of Pawluk: “I just think it’s pretty shabby, really. Maybe I’m old-fashioned … but a lot of people don’t seem to get that it’s about making money, not being kind.”

She is glad that she spoke out to challenge the attempt to “other” her. “I changed the narrative, and I had to do that … It was so ugly and misogynist and ageist. I don’t suppose those kids even thought about that – but even that’s disturbing,” she adds.

Maree worries about the erosion of the expectation of privacy: younger generations may not grasp the extent of what they are exposing themselves to, she suggests. “Now, the ordinary person in the street is fair game.”

She knows that Pawluk’s video is still live, racking up more views and likes. “But I don’t really care any more,” she says. “I know that it’s out there – but it’s not really me.”

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

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

### [Review](#)

# Putin vs the West review – like a gripping, terrifying soap opera

Power players open up about their fraught dealings with the Russian president, but the main takeaway is this: being a world leader seems like one long stream of mic-drop disses and gossip



Competing interests in the EU made it hard to draw up effective sanctions, says François Hollande – here meeting Putin in June 2014, on the 70th anniversary of D-day. Photograph: Thierry Orban/BBC/Zinc Media/Alamy



[Jack Seale](#)

Mon 30 Jan 2023 17.00 EST

The [first anniversary](#) of Russia's [invasion of Ukraine](#) looms. How did we get here? Well timed to answer that is Putin vs the West (BBC Two), a three-part documentary that will consider Russia's involvement in the [Syrian civil war](#), before analysing the run-up to the sorry events of early 2022. Before all that, episode one takes us back to 2014, when Russian forces crept into and occupied the southern Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea, to international outrage. Here is a tale of tense negotiations and uncertain diplomatic manoeuvres.

We begin in late 2013 – when [Vladimir Putin](#) pressed the Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovych, into pulling out of a trade deal with the EU – before revisiting the protests and politicking that brought down Yanukovych, as well as Putin's military response to that slight. The roll call of contributors is impressive: prominent Russian and Ukrainian leaders appear alongside big beasts from the EU such as Jean-Claude Juncker and José Manuel Barroso. The impression we are given is that even at the highest international level – perhaps especially there – politics is an unpredictable, nebulous game of manners.

This is the latest series from Norma Percy, whose style is to retell big political stories in the words of the people who were in the room. The problem with this type of documentary, which has been made in the west and achieves its prestige by interviewing only the most august politicians and their closest aides, is that there is no one credible to interrogate the west's narrative.

Was Russia right, for example, to be outraged when prominent European politicians stood alongside pro-EU protesters on the streets of Ukraine? Was that, as we see Putin saying at the time, a bit like if Russian leaders had turned up to support anti-EU protests in Greece? Probably not, but the fact that any counterarguments tend to come from the clearly painted villains of the piece does sometimes make it feel as if part of the picture is missing.

That said, in the absence of detailed debate, awkward observations still percolate. “In the Italian political class, there was a certain indulgence towards Putin,” says François Hollande, revealing that one of the faux pas committed by these crass apologists was to point out that London happily accommodated numerous dodgy Russian oligarchs. “Which was not wrong,” the former president of France concedes, as he explains how competing interests in the EU made it hard to draw up an effective sanctions regime in response to the Crimean incursion. Elsewhere, the programme highlights divisions within the US about whether to settle for sanctions or respond with force.

Reservations about the journalistic rigour of letting powerful people describe their own motivations evaporate in the face of what this format does unexpectedly well: absurd or trivial gossip. At one point, a crucial negotiation designed to avoid full-on war has to be conducted in a hurry, because the Queen is to attend a formal dinner that evening, which means no one can turn up late.

On another fraught evening, Angela Merkel underlines the severity of the situation by suggesting the gathered leaders forgo the gourmet meal they have planned, instead getting on with trying to stop Ukraine being set aflame. Hollande recalls that the statespeople had to make do with “sandwiches that were not the freshest”. As for the US, Barack Obama causes chaos with a mic-drop diss characterising Russia as a “regional

power”, something a badly offended Putin brings up in several meetings with Europe’s most powerful people.

But what about the most serious and important country in any geopolitical scenario – Britain? Representing the UK is David Cameron, who was the prime minister for six years, but is redolent of that senior management bluffer most of us have worked beneath, the one we suspect knows nothing about what the company does and survives on a knack for guessing who can be squeezed for intel. Remembering a summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2013, Cameron cheerfully admits asking the president of Azerbaijan – “who I always thought was quite a good reader of the situation” – what was going on.

Cameron was then “pretty clear” on the Ukraine problem. Archive footage shows us that, later, when the trouble escalated, he counselled that “we need to send a very clear message” to Putin; in the present day, he recalls: “I said, very clearly … ”

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One of the programme’s best insights is that, even in the gravest circumstances, high-profile politicians are often reliant on empty hype. But their flaws create a gripping soap opera.

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## [Comets](#)

### [Explainer](#)

# What is ‘the green comet’ and how can you see it?

C/2022 E3 (ZTF) was last visible during the stone age so if you miss it this time you’re unlikely to get another chance



C/2022 E3 (ZTF), a rare green comet, last seen about 50,000 years ago.  
Photograph: Dan Bartlett/Nasa/PA

*[Nicola Davis](#) Science correspondent  
[@NicolaKSDavis](#)*

Tue 31 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 31 Jan 2023 07.33 EST

## Jump to

- [Why is this comet special?](#)
- [Why is it green?](#)

- [Can I see the comet without a telescope?](#)
- [Where should I be looking?](#)

An exotic comet is causing excitement this week. We take a look at what we know about the unusual celestial object, and how best to catch a glimpse.

## Why is this comet special?

This particular comet is called C/2022 E3 (ZTF) and was discovered by astronomers in March 2022 at the Zwicky Transient Facility in California. It has been nicknamed “the green comet” because of its verdant glow, and is thought to have come from the Oort cloud – a collection of icy bodies [that are believed to exist in the farthest-flung part of the solar system.](#)

While some comets are relatively frequent visitors – Halley’s comet turns up every 76 years on average – C/2022 E3 (ZTF) orbits the sun every 50,000 years. In other words, the last time it could have been visible from Earth was in the stone age, when [not just modern humans, but Neanderthals, too](#), may have directed their gaze starwards.

## Why is it green?

The green glow isn’t unique to this comet, although it is an interesting feature. The phenomenon is thought to arise from an interaction between light from the sun and diatomic carbon. Diatomic carbon is an unstable, gaseous form of the element in which carbon atoms are bonded together in pairs. [Scientists say it is formed on the head of the comet](#) when larger carbon-based substances are broken down by sunlight as the comet approaches the sun.

When diatomic carbon is excited by ultraviolet rays, it gives off light, resulting in the green coma that has been seen surrounding the nucleus of the comet. However, ultraviolet light can also cause diatomic carbon to break down. This, experts say, explains why the tail of the [comet is not green.](#)

## Can I see the comet without a telescope?

Not all comets are visible to the naked eye, and it is often difficult to predict how bright a comet will be. But reports suggest C/2022 E3 (ZTF) has already been spotted by some observers without equipment once the moon had set, and it is hoped it will remain visible to stargazers when it makes its closest approach to Earth on Wednesday and Thursday, at which point it will be 0.28 AU (26 million miles) from our planet.

That said, you will get a better view if you can get your hands on a pair of binoculars or a telescope.

## Where should I be looking?

Your best bet is to head out on Wednesday night to somewhere really dark – away from the bright lights of a city at night – and look for a smear in the sky.

“The comet is in the north of our skies, currently close to Polaris, the pole star directly due north,” said Jake Foster, a Royal Observatory astronomer. “The comet is best viewed after midnight, when it reaches its highest point in the sky. It will move a significant distance across the sky from night to night as it makes its way towards the constellation of Taurus over the coming weeks.”

Foster added that there were various free stargazing apps that could pinpoint the comet’s location to make the task easier.

“With a pair of binoculars or a small telescope, you should be able to spot the comet as a faint green blob,” he added. “If you are lucky and your skies are particularly dark you may even be able to see one of its vast tails, too.”

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[The Last of Us: episode by episode](#)[Television](#)

## **The Last of Us recap episode three – absolutely magical television**



Devastating ... Nick Offerman as Bill and Murray Bartlett as Frank in episode three of The Last of Us. Photograph: HBO/Warner Media

Is this the TV episode of the year? It's a big call so early on in 2023, but it'll take something incredible to top this brave, poignant, heartbreaking character study

[Andy Welch](#)

Mon 30 Jan 2023 17.30 ESTLast modified on Mon 30 Jan 2023 17.39 EST

*This article contains spoilers for The Last of Us TV series. Please do not read unless you have seen [episodes one to three](#) ...*

Wow. Where to start? I'll just come out and say it – I think that's the single best episode of TV that will be broadcast all year.

A big call, I know, considering it's still January, we're only three episodes into this (excellent) series and [Happy Valley](#) hasn't finished yet. But unless the Mandalorian and Logan Roy show up in Hebden Bridge to help Catherine take care of Tommy Lee Royce, I struggle to see how this will be topped.

Whatever you might want from television was here – high-stakes drama, wit, emotional depth, romance and tons of heart. And the bravery of these writers, to all but abandon their lead characters and main plot just three episodes in to dedicate a feature-length episode to a poignant, moving character study such as this. Hats off. Even without the apocalyptic aspect, Bill and Frank's tale would have made for special viewing, but given the context, it was all the more impressive. And who knew [Nick Offerman](#) and Murray Bartlett were made for playing such low-key heartbreak? Anyone else getting shades of Up's devastating opening montage, with a full relationship deftly captured in just a few scenes?

## The other two

Bookending the episode, we opened with Joel (Pedro Pascal) and Ellie (Bella Ramsey) in the woods, on their way to Bill and Frank's place. Joel, still nursing a fractured hand, was also dealing with a broken heart after Tess's death. Ellie, meanwhile, absolved herself of all blame – “I didn’t ask you to help me” was about the size of her argument. And maybe she was

right? Not sure I believe that's what she thinks, though. And regardless, a few kind words and a bit of gratitude might have been nice.

## Bill and Frank's excellent adventure



Make mine a beaujolais ... Nick Offerman as Bill. Photograph: HBO/Warner Media

Back to 2003 and the meat of the episode. As the outbreak began and normal folk were being rounded up by the military and taken to quarantine zones, Bill (Nick Offerman) was just a regular doomsday prepper with a gas mask, a sophisticated CCTV system and a basement full of food and weapons. It's the kind of behaviour that would see you mocked in normal times, but come the apocalypse, once you've reinstated your gas supply, got a generator working and raided the off-licence, means you can live like a king, isolated from the hell going on in the rest of the world.

Four years into his rule, he met Frank (The White Lotus's [Murray Bartlett](#)), who had been walking for two days and fallen into one of Bill's traps. Initially suspicious of the intruder, Bill softened enough to offer Frank a meal – rabbit, paired with beaujolais! – and a decent rendition of [Linda Ronstadt's Long Long Time](#). How apt.

Frank, taken aback by the emotion, sensed Bill was singing the song for someone special and asked: "Who's the girl? The girl you're singing about." Of course, Frank knew there was no girl involved, then tenderly, reassuringly took Bill to bed.

His promise of staying for a few days turned into three years within the duration of a fade to black, and the pair were now a couple, lovingly taking care of their town, totally self-sufficient and entertaining friends. It also looked as if Bill was showering regularly, not just when Frank told him to. Naturally, we recognised their visitors – Joel and the nice lady Frank had been chatting to on the radio, Tess (Anna Torv). They chatted, they ate and then, while Frank showed Tess around the house, Bill and Joel danced around each other in the garden before the visitors were on their way back to Boston, radio code and supply line established.



Leaves a lump in the throat ... Murray Bartlett as Frank. Photograph: HBO/Warner Media

If Joel's words about armed raiders showing up in the middle of night didn't stick with Bill at the time, they were probably ringing in his ears a few years later when those predictions came true and he took a bullet to the body. Another skip forward in time, to 2023, and we saw that Bill had survived that attack but Frank was now terminally ill and using a wheelchair.

That final day left a lump in my throat, as Bill carried out Frank's final wishes with a fatal twist of his own. "I was never afraid before you showed up," he had said when they were picking strawberries, and here he was, opting not to live alone after his partner's death. Amid such horror, such beauty. Absolutely magical television.

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## Back to Lincoln



Endless wisecracks ... Bella Ramsey as Ellie in episode three. Photograph: HBO/Warner Media

The episode closed with Joel and Ellie arriving at the now rundown town. Bill's letter to Joel contained a few jibes and just enough motivation for him to continue with his mission (Ellie being the one person out there worth living for now Tess is gone), while some of those words will hopefully have reminded Ellie that there's more to surviving than a plucky attitude and endless wisecracks. It was sweet to see her in a car for the first time – "It's like a spaceship!" – and it was a reminder to us that while she might not think twice about stabbing an infected in the head, she's still a wet-behind-the-ears teenager with barely any of the experiences we take for granted.

## Flour power

I'd say we got proof of the infection's origins from the conversation Joel and Ellie had about how it all started. Cordyceps mutated and got into a common foodstuff, said Joel. Probably flour – "bread, cereal, pancake mix" – and infected those who had eaten enough of it. (Joel, remember from episode one, was on the Atkins diet at the time of the outbreak, so no carbs; he forgot to pick up his birthday cake and didn't eat the pancakes Sarah was making. His neighbours, meanwhile, were eating biscuits.) That certainly explains how cordyceps spread so widely so quickly, and why even people on planes

weren't safe. Don't eat aeroplane food is the moral of this story. Or maybe, just maybe, *The Last of Us* is a psyops experiment by the gluten-free industry? Wheels within wheels ...

## Notes and observations

- Last week, I referred to the “virus”. Of course, this is a fungal infection we’re dealing with, not a virus. I knew that – honest – but still made the silly mistake. Apologies. Similarly, some commenters objected to my use of the term zombie, as these monsters are not the undead (*cordyceps* can’t revive the already deceased), but the infected. I would argue I was using the term in a more generic sense, as the infected behave almost exactly as zombies do: infected by bites, eager to murder, killed by headshots/decapitation, etc. But I understand and accept the objection. From here on in, no zombies.
- Great news everybody – HBO has commissioned *The Last of Us* for a second season. I’m going to assume there’ll be a third season, too, but whether [Part III of the video game arrives](#) is up in the air.
- After Frank and Bill gave us their renditions of the song, we were played out with Linda Ronstadt’s version of Long Long Time. Is every adult in this story a Linda Ronstadt fan?
- It had been announced that Con O’Neill, most recently seen as Neil in *Happy Valley*, would be playing Bill but he had to drop out due to a scheduling conflict. Having seen the final result, it’s now hard to imagine anyone other than Offerman in that role.

*What did you make of that? Stunning TV or diversion from the plot? Which shops would you loot if you found yourself alone in an apocalypse? Have your say below, but please, no spoilers from the games ...*

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- Three years on from Brexit, all UK voters are left with is a bitter taste of Bregret
- What kind of society sends young men to jail and ruins lives because of the lyrics in a song?
- There are three types of tax-returners. I am in the stupid group
- When we happily pay £45 for a YouTuber's energy drink, the age of the scammer is truly dead

## OpinionBrexit

# **Three years on from Brexit, all UK voters are left with is a bitter taste of Bregret**

[Polly Toynbee](#)



Most people are now in favour of rejoining the EU, but Labour is right to steer clear of another row over Europe



‘Eurostar deliberately leaves a third of seats empty due to crippling border delays.’ Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

Tue 31 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Mon 6 Feb 2023 08.24 EST

Today’s Brexit anniversary marks three years of political mayhem and economic calamity. It is also 50 years since Britain joined the EEC. Ten years ago this month, David Cameron made his shameless Bloomberg speech pledging a referendum to placate his party and Ukipppers, who he had previously called “[fruitcakes](#)”, “loonies” and “closet racists”.

Cameron wrongly thought Brexiteers could be appeased, but they proved insatiable. The more harm their [Brexit](#) does, the more extreme versions they demand, chasing those impossible phantasms they mis-sold to the country.

“Remoaner” was a clever Brexit epithet for the 48% of us who voted remain. The heartbreak of this act of national self-harm left remainers keening in grief, in a long moan for the loss of an ideal, along with certain economic decline. The ache, too, was over the broken old Labour alliances of interest and belief, cities against towns, old against young, those with qualifications against those with few. With the sorrow there was rage, white-hot and vengeful, against cynical Brexit leaders who knowingly sold snake oil and fairy dust.

Grief ebbs when looking to what comes next. David Lammy, the shadow foreign secretary, last week promised there would be a civilised friendship with Europe under a Labour government. There was talk of reconnecting “a tarnished UK” with its closest allies, “for security and prosperity”; “reducing friction” on trade; unblocking the [Horizon scheme](#); [strengthening student links](#) and pledging a “clean power alliance”.

But there is to be no rejoining, no way back to the customs union or single market, Labour says, so as to deny Tory strategists what they yearn for: a rerun of Brexit at the next general election to distract from the economy, the cost of living crisis and collapsed public services. Distressed Labour rejoinders point to how many leavers are now Bregrettters. With this rapid shift still ongoing, the pollster John Curtice says that 57% of people are [in favour of rejoining](#), with just 43% for staying out, while [49%](#) think Brexit weakens the economy.

Remainer grief eases at signs of a country reuniting against the liars who pulled off this trick. But it’s rash to imagine that even a 14-point lead means a pro-EU referendum would be won: we know what referendums do. Besides, egocentric Britain forgets that Brussels, with a war on its doorstep and its own economic woes, might shun yet more negotiations with the UK. Let’s not forget the MEPs and envoys we insulted them with, the spite and mendacity spread by the likes of Nigel Farage and Daniel Hannan in the European parliament or David Frost across the negotiating table.

There is some cheer: these polls cause such alarm to the Brexit mis-leaders that they are the moaners now – the Bremoaners. Hannan, the ex-MEP and arch-purveyor of Brexit fabrications, is trying to scare defecting Brexit voters back. “There really does seem to be a plot to overturn Brexit,” he warns Telegraph readers. He uses Lammy’s speech as evidence, plus Labour’s resistance to the EU deregulation law. “There is little doubt the Europhile blob is giving it a go,” he writes, “to hold Britain within the EU’s regulatory orbit pending an attempt at re-entry.”

He also [warns](#): “For their plan to have the slightest chance of success, they need to convince the country that Brexit has been an economic disaster.” But that ship has long sailed. Look what Brexit has done: a [4% shrinkage](#) in long-run productivity relative to remaining in the EU, expects the Office for

Budget Responsibility, inflation is higher than in the EU, trade has fallen by [almost a fifth](#), while the government itself says the much-trumpeted Australian deal will raise GDP by [less than 0.1% a year](#) by 2035. Brexit has [raised food prices by 6%](#) says the LSE, while draining the workforce. Eurostar also deliberately leaves [a third of seats empty](#) due to crippling EU/UK border delays.

The Brexit press can't hide these inconvenient truths. Jeremy Warner, the Telegraph's associate editor, challenges Jeremy Hunt's bizarrely Pollyanna-ish assessment of the economy, writing "trade with our European neighbours is faltering badly," due to Brexit, with "the rather awkward fact that the UK is the only G7 economy yet to recover to its pre-pandemic size". "The grim reality is that the country seems to be falling apart on almost every front" and "car production has fallen to its lowest since the 1950s".

All that is why Prof Matthew Goodwin says that "[Bregret is taking hold in Britain](#)" with only one in five thinking [it's going well](#). Brexiters are now the minority, Bremoaning like hell because no amount of Brexit boosterism will bring back those lost supporters who know exactly whom to blame. Few will agree that their pet project has failed because it wasn't "hard Brexit" enough. Eventually extreme Brexiters will subside back into their irrelevant coterie of cultists, unforgiven and moaning all the way.

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This article was amended on 3 February 2023 to exclude – in the context of Brexit – a reference to the subsequent high UK energy price, relative to that of the EU. As a [linked-to analysis](#) noted, the UK's own energy policies have significantly driven UK energy prices.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist
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## OpinionRap

# What kind of society sends young men to jail and ruins lives because of the lyrics in a song?

[Ciaran Thapar](#)



As an expert witness, I have seen case after case in which rap music words become key to a conviction – and it's wrong



Illustration: Tomekah George

Tue 31 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 31 Jan 2023 05.14 EST

Recently, I stood on a raised court podium being cross-examined by a roomful of barristers. I was there as an “expert witness” to the case in hand – a group of young Black men from a small English city charged with conspiracy to possess a firearm – which mostly involved commenting on the extensive use of rap lyrics as evidence.

Local police officers had transcribed, translated and interpreted songs and YouTube music videos, many of which had been recorded and released more than five years before the alleged crime, to make their case. I’d maintained that the vast number of lyrics under consideration were not proof of any wrongdoing. They were violent and perhaps not to everyone’s taste, full of bravado and threats, for sure. But they were also outdated, clearly performative and not to be taken literally.

This experience is one of many during my time over the past two years as a witness in criminal trials where social media and music content has been mined for evidence, usually to demonstrate the guilt of groups of young, Black men. It’s a growing trend: alongside Telegram messages, music videos and lyrics were used in a landmark case in [Manchester](#) last year, which

resulted in 10 Black men being convicted of being part of a violent conspiracy. This development should ring alarm bells about the direction in which British civil society is heading.

As a youth worker and writer, one of the most consistent strands of my professional life, which I've recently started documenting in my newsletter [ALL CITY](#), has been forging a dialogue with young men who rap. I've held check-ins with boys to dissect the lyrics scribbled in the back of their exercise books, funded students to set up recording equipment at home during lockdown, and delivered workshops about music culture at pupil referral units, secondary schools and youth clubs across the UK. Meanwhile, I've interviewed some of the UK's most successful rappers, including [Dave](#), [J Hus](#), [Digga D](#) and [Ghetts](#).



Digga D at the Wireless Festival, July 2022, NEC, Birmingham.  
Photograph: Jason Sheldon/REX/Shutterstock

I've therefore gained a vantage point from which to view the landscape of UK rap and drill music. On the one hand, these genres have become a world-beating micro-economy while churning out award-winning, chart-topping releases. They've paved a path for a whole generation of marginalised young people to follow. On the other, concern about the perceived glorification of violence in lyrics and videos persists.

“Since its original conception, hip-hop and its descendant genres have been the topic of a chicken-and-egg debate,” I wrote in [my first piece about drill](#), six years ago. I went on to ask whether violent lyrics honestly reflect social reality and therefore serve the purpose of empowering their artists, or if they reinforce and exacerbate the issues they describe. The answer probably lies somewhere in the middle.

As serious youth violence soared in 2018, in the media frenzy that ensued there were calls to [apply terrorism legislation to drill rappers](#). The Metropolitan police started issuing criminal behaviour orders (CBOs) – the modern version of antisocial behaviour orders (asbos) – and “gang injunctions” – applied without a need for evidence to anyone over 14 who is suspected of being in a gang – to young, disproportionately Black musicians. They [banned artists from performing](#) and [recording songs without permission](#).

The Met also began requesting the removal of music videos from YouTube. There is no proof that doing so helped to stem violence. Cancelling UK drill music was the PR stunt of a Tory government seeking to give the impression of tackling crime firmly. But it was lazy alarmism.

As the pandemic focused public attention elsewhere, these hardline attitudes have trickled deeper into the criminal justice system. Police and prosecutors now prolifically mine rap lyrics and videos for evidence. Any teenager charged with a crime who might have scribbled some apparently criminal lyrics on their smartphone can suffer perverse consequences .

Lyrics are commonly relied on even when there is a lack of other forensic proof. When it’s a certain demographic of young men, investigators can sit in front of YouTube, listen to lyrics and grab screenshots of videos gathering material sufficient for an argument about a defendant’s bad character or gang membership to crystallise. It is a dangerously wrongheaded approach.

First, rap lyrics are not unequivocally literal. From the pioneering New York sounds of the 1980s and 1990s to the soundsystem and pirate radio clashes of UK grime throughout the 2000s, MCs have long laid lyricism over beats for performance and entertainment. Even when they are ostensibly violent,

their words are generally, like literature, mythology or paintings, artful expressions; simulacra of lived experience.

UK rap and drill music is no different. But because these subgenres have developed in the influencer-driven social media economy, their lyrics blur the line between reality and virtual reality even more. Succeeding can require playing the dirty game of grabbing audiences' shortening attention spans with deceptive, shock-and-horror tactics. Treating videos and lyrics as if they are automatically confessional signals a rushed lack of humility, nuance or cultural sensitivity.

Yet I've seen police officers translate a rapper's taunts about an "opp" (enemy) getting stabbed as a first-person admission of having committed the stabbing. A hyperbolic brag about firing a gun can be turned into an admission of physically owning and using one.

On the very rare occasions that violent lyrics are demonstrably literal and specific, it's still practically impossible to credibly prove the author's involvement in actual wrongdoing to a criminal standard without convincing forensic evidence.

Second, rap lyrics are meant to be heard by a listener, not read off a sheet of paper. Rappers invent slang, ad-lib, switch between flows, hit different time pockets, raise and lower their voices, cry and whisper, sing and state, dominate and soften. Each recording can be a purgation of negative emotions. It can also be an immature moment of adolescent fun. But as soon as raps are transcribed by someone else, their original purity is diluted. Having a police officer, of all people, translating and interpreting them cuts them off entirely from their roots.

Third, the police process of scanning the internet for music content before typing up pages of lyrics and providing specific commentary to vague snippets of musical evidence must be mind-numbingly time-consuming – and a mammoth waste of taxpayer-funded resources.

And there are, of course, repercussions of criminalising music for wider society. It's no bad thing for young musicians to be aware of the law, but forcing them to suppress feelings of exclusion and hide experiences of

violence by demonising what is, for many, their only expressive and creative outlet, will make things worse in the long term.

Society and prosecutors need to think again. Lyrics should be banned as pivotal criminal evidence. This is not about letting people off the hook, being soft on crime or permitting horrific social media content to circulate. It's possible to be strict and critical about these things without being authoritarian.

We should just expect better from our justice system. And we should certainly protect young people who don't otherwise have a voice.

Ciaran Thapar is a London-based youth worker and author of Cut Short. He writes about youth culture, social change and city life and has a weekly newsletter called [ALL CITY](#)

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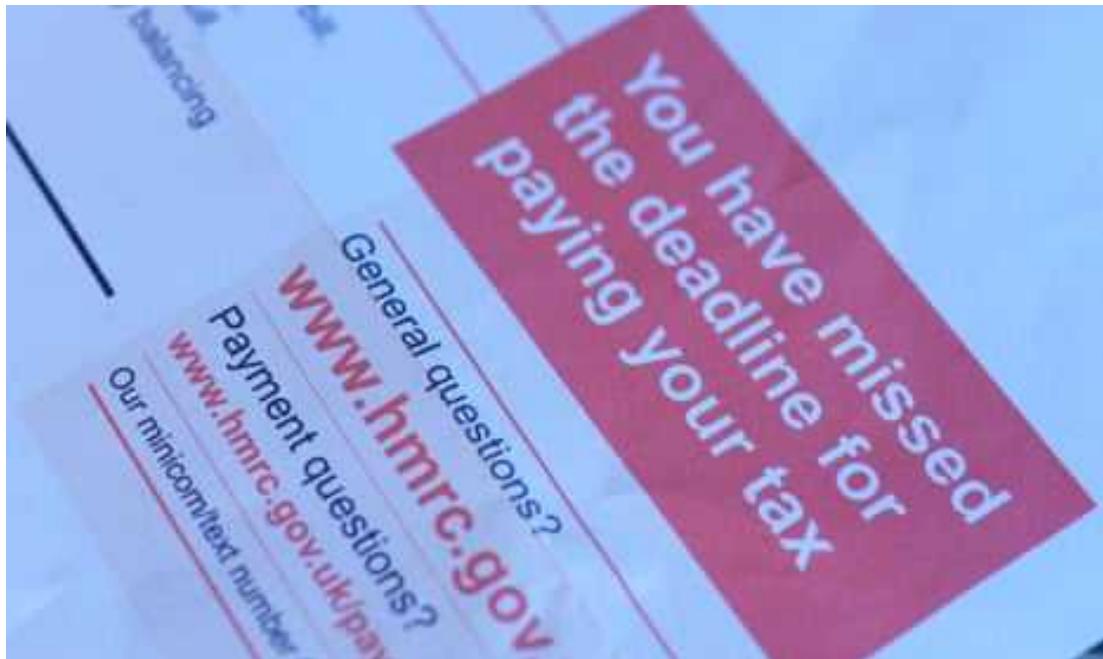
[Opinion](#)[Tax and spending](#)

## **There are three types of tax-returners. I am in the stupid group**

[Zoe Williams](#)



Spare a thought for those like me who have honourable intentions – but fail to meet the deadline every time



‘There are those who believe in the principle of tax, but cannot believe anyone would put something so important in the hands of an idiot like themselves.’ Photograph: Sandy Young/Alamy

Tue 31 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 31 Jan 2023 12.48 EST

When you have a proper job, you never have to think about your attitude to taxation until you’re in a pub trying to bore people. When you’re self-employed, your views, as well as memories, associations and random bits of subconscious apparatus around money and mortality, all rush towards you like a tide at tax-return time, which is either October, sometime in late November before the pre-Christmas rush, or towards the very end of the deadline on 31 January.

If you’re broadly in favour of tax, and recognise its centrality to civilisation and the social state, you’ll file your return in a timely fashion, because deep down you enjoy it. It gives you a fillip, that secure sense of yourself as an upstanding, competent citizen. If you hate tax, particularly a progressive taxation system, believing it to be theft a priori and particularly insulting at the higher rate, you’ll be constantly trying to shave bits off here and there, so you need plenty of time. But you don’t want to do it too early, because that feels like giving in. I bet [Nadhim Zahawi](#) is a November person, not an October or a January person, put it that way.

If you don't recognise yourself in either of those descriptions, don't worry: there is a third type, the person who believes staunchly, even fervently, in the principle of tax, but blankly cannot believe anyone would put something so important in the hands of an idiot like themselves. These people can't get along with any accountant, because how do you get along with someone whose calls you won't answer and whose emails make your heart rate weird? So they end up without an accountant, and now they're an unsupported idiot, undertaking a task so vital the right pay grade for it might not even exist, and is certainly light years above this idiot's. The only thing powering them on is the thought of the 100 quid fine if they're late, but they know they'll be fined anyway because they're fined every year. Something always happens.

Anyway, spare a thought for them – I mean us. We're having a terrible day.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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**OpinionCelebrity**

# When we happily pay £45 for a YouTuber's energy drink, the age of the scammer is truly dead

[Amelia Tait](#)



Post-Fyre Festival, Caroline Calloway and Anna Delvey, being scammed by your idols now has currency



KSI spits out a mouthful of Prime after a boxing bout at the Ovo Arena Wembley, London. He has pleaded with his fans not to pay £45 for the drink. Photograph: Julian Finney/Getty Images

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Some sentiments are so obvious that they should never need to become sentences, but: £45 is too much to pay for a can of pop. I recently walked into my local sweetshop with a mind to buy some candy sticks when I stopped to marvel at a humming fridge lined with pink, orange and blue cans. Each can contained the [energy drink Prime](#), which was “created by” YouTubers Logan Paul and KSI in 2022. And each bore a pale yellow price tag reading “£44.99”.

You may be surprised to hear that this is a bargain. One shop in Yorkshire has been selling bottles of Prime for £100 each, while sold eBay listings show that someone, somewhere paid [£351](#) for a single grape-flavoured drink. While the beverage retails for just £1.99 in Asda, stampedes and scuffles have resulted in shortages – hence the price gouging. On 7 January, KSI urged his adoring fans not to pay over the odds for Prime, [screaming](#) into his front-facing camera: “Oh my God, NOOO!” and “Stop buying it at these prices!”

KSI, it seems, does not want his fans to be scammed – but what does that matter, when they themselves are more than happy to be? For the past three years, media outlets have confidently declared that we’re living in the golden age of the scammer, as evidenced by the fact that [Anna Delvey](#) or Billy McFarland’s Fyre festival need no introduction. Yet I would now like to equally confidently declare that the age of the scammer is over – for in a time of unadulterated celebrity worship, far too many people are willing to be scammed.

In 2019, internet personality [Caroline Calloway](#) became a key figure of the scammer era when she sold tickets to \$165 (£133) creativity workshops, then failed to book venues to host them in. Two years earlier, the Instagrammer [withdrew from a \\$500,000 book deal](#) with Flatiron Books after failing to write her promised memoir; she subsequently had to pay her advance back. Ever since, Calloway has aggressively leaned into her reputation as a swindler: since 2020, she has been accepting \$25 (£20) pre-orders for a new book, Scammer, which has not yet materialised (customers are told “the art will be ready when it’s ready” on her official site). In 2021, Calloway began selling a homemade skincare blend named Snake Oil for \$75 (£60) a bottle.



Billy McFarland leaves federal court after his arraignment in New York on charges of scheming to defraud investors in his company, Fyre Media.

Photograph: Mary Altaffer/AP

Anyone who buys from Calloway knows what they're getting – sometimes nothing. Throughout January, the influencer has been selling signed tarot cards for \$15 a card and fans have leapt at the chance to part with their money. “When Caroline Calloway presented me with an opportunity to get scammed by THE Caroline Calloway, I PayPal-ed her \$15,” one [TikTok user named Kressie said](#). When Kressie discovered that the tarot card she received was unsigned, she was delighted: “I have to respect the grind! She got me!”

In our era of constant content creation, and in the wake of endless TV shows about scammers (Netflix has released shows about Anna Delvey and Billy McFarland, while Disney+ has a show about Elizabeth Holmes and Theranos), being scammed ironically now has currency. Scammers no longer take your money and give you nothing: instead, they give you the opportunity to make a TikTok, [Instagram](#) post or YouTube video about your experiences.

The death of scamming is linked to another phenomenon, which is that it is no longer possible for celebrities to “sell out”. While creatives were once scorned for linking themselves to big brands and shilling products, hustle culture means that fans are delighted to see their heroes earn big – at times, even [declaring they'll buy a product](#) they don’t want or need just to “support” a celebrity. On TikTok, users [joke](#) about the expressions children make when they finally get their hands on Prime, taste it, and declare it delicious despite visibly looking unimpressed.

But it’s not just YouTubers and influencers who have the sway to lure willing victims – after all, numerous parents enrolled their children into Kanye West’s \$15,000-a-year school despite the fact that was [not accredited](#) (following West’s antisemitic social media posts, the Donda Academy is now shut until September). Families reportedly had to sign non-disclosure agreements, so very little is known about the school’s curriculum – but how much do you have to love a celebrity to send your children off to [chant](#) in what appears to be a basement, dressed in all black, knowing they could emerge with zero academic credentials?

If you don't mind, or even actively seek out, being scammed by your idol, then fundamentally you haven't been scammed. The scam era is officially over – phone fraud hasn't gone away, obviously, or those texts from fake delivery men saying you owe them £1.99, but the era of sexy scams, celebrity scams, seven-part series scams needs to be put to bed. They no longer exist – at least, not in a way that deserves the four-letter word. In the coming months, it's likely you'll read countless more stories about celebrity scammers. But when you read them, ask yourself one question: has anyone actually been scammed?

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

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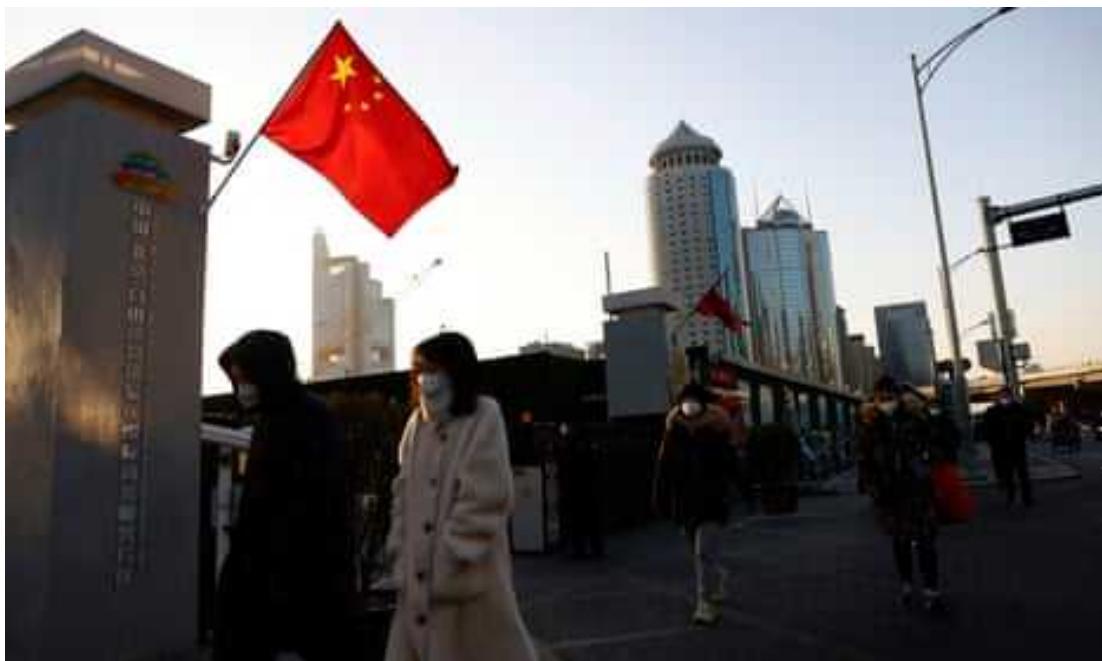
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## [China](#)

# **China claims Covid wave is ‘coming to an end’ as tourism and factory activity rebound**

Government figures, which cannot be verified, showed big rises in travel and hospitality activity during lunar new year compared to the same time last year



China’s CDC claimed there has not been an obvious rebound in Covid cases after the lunar new year holiday.

Photograph: Mark R Cristino/EPA

*[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei and Reuters*

Tue 31 Jan 2023 03.50 ESTFirst published on Tue 31 Jan 2023 00.45 EST

China’s wave of Covid is “coming to an end”, health officials have claimed, saying there had been no sign of a new surge from the lunar new year holiday period, despite a big increase in travel compared to last year.

Government figures released on Tuesday showed big rises in tourism and hospitality activity compared to the same time last year. Factory activity has also rebounded for the first time in four months, an early sign of economic return after the country reported its slowest growth in about half a century during strict Covid controls.

After abruptly lifting zero-Covid restrictions in early December, China was swamped by a wave of Covid cases. Available data on admissions to hospitals and fever clinics released in recent weeks showed an [apparent peak in infections](#) around early January.

There were concerns that the mass travel of hundreds of millions of people for the [lunar new year](#) period could further spread infections.

On Tuesday, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) claimed however, “there has not been an obvious rebound in Covid cases”.

“In this time, no new variant has been discovered, and the country’s current wave is coming to an end.”

Figures from the ministry of transport showed travel in the first 22 days of this year’s travel period was 75.8% higher than in 2022, although it was still only around half the number of trips made during the last pre-pandemic lunar new year in 2019.

Officials had predicted that travel would increase by 99.5% year-on-year over the whole 40 days, and reach 70.3% of pre-pandemic levels, analysis firm Trivium said.

In Dali, a popular holiday destination in Yunnan, hostel owner Fang Yu said she was booked out for the holiday period.

“It feels a bit sudden because I have been lying flat for three years and suddenly there are so many customers, which makes me think about how can I provide the best service, especially when my facilities are now dusty after three years and my labels and signs have not yet been polished,” she told the Guardian.

“So we are really hurry-scurry and are short of staff.”

Fang said the mood among the guests was buoyant, and more understanding after three difficult years.

“The pandemic made people reflect on themselves and look back. They are more likely to treat us as equals, and they generally seemed to be happy and not so picky,” she said. “My employees are also very happy after seeing so many people coming here from everywhere with joy on their faces.”

Other economic figures were mixed, as China grapples with the lingering effects of zero-Covid on its economy. The most positive results were in the tourism and hospitality sectors, which reached almost 81% of pre-pandemic levels.

Domestic tourism trips increased to 88.6% of 2019’s level, the ministry of culture and tourism said, but revenue from consumption-related industries grew by just 12.2% in the first week of the holiday period.

The official manufacturing purchasing managers’ index (PMI) stood at 50.1, compared with a reading of 47.0 in December, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said on Tuesday. The 50-point mark separates contraction from growth.

The IMF also revised China’s growth outlook sharply higher for 2023, to 5.2% from 4.4% in the October forecast after zero-Covid lockdown policies in 2022 slashed the country’s growth rate to 3.0%.

The lunar new year period – which last about 40 days – has been called the largest at of human migration in the world, with hundreds of millions of people traveling across China and the region, including domestic migrant workers returning to home villages and towns to reunite with family. For many, it is the only chance they can go home each year, but the pandemic had prevented many from doing so in recent years.

Even after restrictions were lifted this year, people were urged to reconsider visiting elderly relatives of those relatives had not yet been infected.

The true scale of infections and deaths – particularly outside cities – has not been clear. Estimates of deaths range from about 80,000 – the official figure based on cases in hospitals – to more than a million according to global health experts.

*Xiaoqian Zhu contributed research to this article*

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[\*\*France\*\*](#)

## **Strike action over Macron's pensions plan brings major disruption to France**

Over 1.27 million workers across transport, school and energy sectors rally against government plan to raise retirement age to 64

Police fire teargas at Paris pensions reform protesters – video

*[Angelique Chrisafis](#) in Paris*

*@achrisafis*

Tue 31 Jan 2023 14.17 ESTFirst published on Tue 31 Jan 2023 02.52 EST

More than 1.27 million people have taken part in street demonstrations across France in a second round of coordinated strike action against Emmanuel Macron's unpopular plan to raise the retirement age to 64.

Transport, schools and the energy sector were hit by strike action on Tuesday. Local buses, trains and trams in cities from Paris to Nice, as well as regional and high-speed trains across the country, were “very significantly disrupted”, according to rail operators.

Air [France](#) said one in 10 short- and medium-haul services would be cancelled. About half of all nursery and primary school teachers went on strike, according to the main teachers’ union.

Some town halls run by the left closed fully or partially in solidarity with the protests, including Paris city hall, sparking anger from ministers. At the Paris protest, the socialist mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, accused the government of “shamefaced lies” for arguing that pension change was necessary.



Pension protesters throng the Place d'Italie in Paris on Tuesday. Photograph: Benoît Tessier/Reuters

On 19 January, more than 1.1 million people marched in the biggest demonstrations over [pension changes](#) in over a decade, the largest gathering since the rightwing president Nicolas Sarkozy raised the retirement age from 60 to 62 in 2010.

“The government has lost the ideological battle,” said Philippe Martinez of the leftwing CGT union at the Paris march. He said turnout in small towns and villages across France showed that “politicians should listen to the people”.

Laurent Berger, the head of France’s largest union, the moderate CFDT, said the government could not ignore the protests.

Polls show that a majority of French people disapprove of Macron’s plan to raise the pension age from 62 to 64, with most people supporting the protests. All major trade unions joined in a rare show of unity, and the large street demonstrations are the first big test of the centrist president’s second term in office.

Macron has repeatedly told French people they “need to work more” and he has made the pensions issue a marker of his aim to transform France and

overhaul its social model and welfare system. In recent days, the government has hardened its tone to insist the changes will happen: raising the retirement age for most people and increasing the years of contributions required for a full pension.

The president said on Monday night that the changes were “essential when we compare ourselves to the rest of Europe” and that changes had to be made to “save” the French state pensions system. The French retirement age of 62 is the lowest of any major European economy.

The government has argued that changes are crucial to guarantee the future financing of the pension system, which is forecast to tip into deficit in the next few years. But political opponents and trade unions argue that the system is currently balanced, noting that the head of the independent pensions advisory council told parliament recently that “pension spending is not out of control, it’s relatively contained”.

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Protesters in Strasbourg, eastern France, hold a banner reading ‘Pensions: not one day more, not one euro less’ during a national strike on Tuesday. Photograph: Frederick Florin/AFP/Getty Images

The prime minister, Élisabeth Borne, has said that raising the pension age to 64 is “not negotiable”. But Borne is under pressure to modify the proposals, particularly for mothers who interrupted their careers to look after children and who could find themselves at a disadvantage compared with men.

Many of the street demonstrations across France included women of all ages protesting against inequalities in the pensions system. Clémence Guetté, of the radical left’s La France Insoumise party, said a gender gap in salaries and in pensions was “unacceptable”.

The interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, has used the row to attack the left, saying this weekend that parties on the left were “only looking to screw up the country” and were defending “idleness and champagne socialism”.

The pension changes still need to go through parliament, where Macron’s centrist grouping has lost its absolute majority. The leftwing opposition has submitted more than 7,000 amendments to the draft legislation in an attempt to slow its path through parliament. The government had hoped to pass the bill swiftly with the support of some lawmakers from the rightwing Les

Républicains, but the prime minister still faces the challenge of lining up support in and outside Macron's centrist grouping.

An [Odoxa poll](#) for Public Senat TV and regional newspapers on Tuesday found that the popularity of Macron and Borne had dropped by five points in one month.

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## Global development

# ‘Suspicious death’ of Rwandan journalist prompts calls for investigation

Two weeks on from the death of government critic John Williams Ntwali, police have failed to answer questions over the alleged road accident in which they say he was killed



Ntwali John Williams, editor of the *Chronicles*, was found dead on 18 January. Photograph: Courtesy of *The Chronicles*

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[Caroline Kimeu](#) in Nairobi

Tue 31 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 31 Jan 2023 05.05 EST

Calls are growing for an investigation into the apparent accidental death two weeks ago of a prominent Rwandan journalist and government critic.

John Williams Ntwali, a regular critic of the authorities, was found dead on 18 January. According to [reported police accounts](#), he was killed when a speeding vehicle rammed a motorcycle on which he was riding pillion in the capital, Kigali. A US senate committee said he had been “silenced”. Human rights organisations have joined other activists in raising doubts about the cause of the death of the 44 year-old editor of The Chronicles newspaper.

Amnesty International and the Committee to Protect Journalists, an independent NGO based in New York, are among media and rights organisations calling for an independent investigation.

“Two weeks after the alleged accident, Rwandan authorities have failed to provide a police report, the exact location of the alleged accident, any photo or video evidence, or detailed information on the others involved in it,” a

network of press associations and civil society organisations said in a joint statement on Tuesday.

Signed by more than 60 organisations, the statement said Ntwali, was “regularly threatened and attacked in pro-government media for his investigative reporting” and called on Rwanda’s international partners, including the Commonwealth, “to stand by their stated commitment to media freedom and to call on Rwanda to allow an effective, independent and prompt investigation” into his death.

On Monday, Unesco’s director general, Audrey Azoulay urged the Rwandan authorities to “initiate a full and transparent investigation into this case to fully account for the circumstances of his death”.

[USAid administrator Samantha Power called for action](#) in a tweet on Saturday.

The US, along with the UK, has previously called for Rwanda to improve its human rights record.

Tuesday’s statement said Ntwali was one of only a few journalists in Rwanda covering high-profile, politicised trials of journalists, commentators and opposition members, and posting videos about their conditions in prison.

Days before he died, Ntwali posted a [YouTube video](#) about the unexplained disappearance of a genocide survivor who had reportedly spoken out about police brutality.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), Ntwali told friends last year he had been intimidated by government officers and [feared for his life](#).

Police authorities declined to comment on Ntwali’s death, saying the case had been taken over by the prosecutor’s office. The prosecutor’s office did not respond to requests for comment.

“This is a regime which has a track record of extrajudicial killings, political assassination, disappearances, unexplained deaths involving human rights activists, journalists, opposition leaders and politicians,” said British journalist Michela Wrong, whose book [Do Not Disturb](#) alleges the

involvement of [President Paul Kagame](#) in numerous human rights abuses against prominent Rwandans – allegations he denies. “It’s against that context that [Ntwali’s] death has to be judged.”

Lewis Mudge, central [Africa](#) director at HRW, said: “Rwanda is an incredibly closed country with regard to people’s ability to do free and fair reporting. Journalists know the red lines, and don’t go near them for their own safety. Ntwali was one of the only journalists in Rwanda who would speak about what was happening.”

Rights groups say Ntwali’s death fits within a pattern of political opposition figures, prominent government critics and journalists who have disappeared or been found dead under suspicious circumstances in recent years.

In 2021, the [poet Innocent Bahati](#), whose work was regarded as a “critical expression on issues affecting Rwandan society”, went missing.

The same year, radio journalist Cassien Ntamuhanga was sentenced to 25 years for [conspiracy against the government](#) and complicity in terrorism. After what HRW calls his “[highly politicised trial](#)” he escaped to Mozambique but was arrested there. Mozambican authorities denied having detained him and his whereabouts have been unknown since.



Rwandan singer Kizito Mihigo talks to reporters after his release from prison, in Kigali, Rwanda, 15 September 2018. His death in 2020 raised suspicions. Photograph: Jean Bizimana/Reuters

In 2020, the death of [Rwandan gospel singer and genocide survivor Kizito Mihigo](#) raised suspicions. The singer was convicted of conspiracy against the government [after writing a song](#) that called for empathy towards Hutu as well as Tutsi victims of the genocide, to which he later claimed he was forced to confess. He was reported to have killed himself in police custody – just days after an attempted escape to neighbouring Burundi. Requests for an independent inquiry into his death were unsuccessful.

“There’s just too many cases of people who are [considered to be critical of the government](#) who disappear in these mysterious ways,” said Mudge.

“Ntwali’s death is going to send yet another chilling message to anyone who tries to do independent reporting in Rwanda,” he said. “That if you dare to do investigations and cross the line – you could pay with your life.”

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**Lisa Marie Presley**

## **Priscilla Presley disputes validity of Lisa Marie's will**

Filing in Los Angeles court contests amendment that removed Priscilla as a trustee of her late daughter's estate



Lisa Marie (left) and Priscilla Presley in New York in 2007. Lisa Marie was the only child of Elvis Presley. Photograph: Gregory Pace/BEI/Rex/Shutterstock

*[Adam Gabbatt](#)*

*[@adamgabbatt](#)*

Tue 31 Jan 2023 10.47 ESTFirst published on Tue 31 Jan 2023 03.02 EST

[Priscilla Presley](#) has filed a lawsuit disputing the validity of her late daughter's will, setting up a potential legal battle over Lisa Marie Presley's estate.

In a filing in Los Angeles superior court, lawyers for Priscilla questioned the integrity of a 2016 amendment which removed her from Lisa Marie's living trust, a legal document that serves the function of a will if a separate will is not filed.

That amendment also removed Lisa Marie's former business manager, Barry Siegel, from the trust and replaced him with Riley and Benjamin Keough, Lisa Marie's children from her first marriage.

Benjamin Keough died in 2020. Lisa Marie [died at a California hospital aged 54](#) on 12 January, after paramedics answered a 911 call reporting her to be in cardiac arrest. Lisa Marie was buried in Memphis at her family's [Graceland](#) mansion last week, after a funeral attended by singers Alanis Morissette and Axl Rose.

Priscilla's court filing contends that the 2016 amendment should be overturned and that she and Riley Keough should be named as co-trustees of Lisa Marie's estate.

Lisa Marie inherited \$100m from her late father, the rock'n'roll legend Elvis Presley, at the age of 25 in 1993. In a [2018 lawsuit](#), however, Lisa Marie claimed she was down to just \$14,000, and blamed Siegel for mismanaging her finances.

According to Priscilla's filing, there are several issues that bring the authenticity of the amendment to Lisa Marie's living trust into doubt.

Her lawyers allege that Priscilla was not notified of the changes, even though the trust required that.

Priscilla's lawyers also say her name was misspelled in a document and claim the new amendment was not witnessed or notarized. The filing also suggests an atypical signature by Lisa Marie on the amendment.

It asks a judge to declare the amendment invalid, and for the trust to revert to a 2010 version which placed Priscilla and Siegel in charge.

The filing says that Siegel intended to resign, which, according to 2010 terms of the trust, would leave Priscilla, 77, and Riley Keough, 33, to oversee Lisa Marie's estate.

Lisa Marie left three surviving children. In addition to Riley Keough, she had 14-year-old twin daughters with her fourth husband, Michael Lockwood. Lisa Marie divorced from Lockwood in 2021, but the two were still disputing finances in family court when she died.

Priscilla's filing is among the first of what are likely to be many legal manoeuvres surrounding the estate of Lisa Marie, Elvis's sole heir.

However, it is not clear how much that estate is worth. In her 2018 lawsuit, Lisa Marie accused Siegel of "reckless and negligent mismanagement" of the estate and claimed her cash reserves were squandered because of Siegel's poor investment decisions.

Siegel alleged in a lawsuit of his own that Lisa Marie had frittered away much of her fortune. He demanded \$800,000 in damages for non-payment.

Priscilla Presley recently issued a statement on Twitter that said she and her loved ones were having "a very difficult time" after Lisa Marie's death.

"Thank you all for your condolences. You have touched me with your words," the [statement](#) read. "It has been a very difficult time, but just knowing your love is out there makes a difference."

Elvis's estate was [valued at \\$4.9m](#) at the time of his death, but it had grown to \$100m when Lisa Marie took control of it.

In 2005, she sold the majority of the estate's business shares to Industrial Media but retained control of Graceland.

Lisa Marie spent her early years living at Graceland but moved with her mother to Los Angeles after her parents divorced. Despite the split, Lisa Marie would often fly back to Memphis to spend time with her father at Graceland.

Graceland offers public tours of the mansion and the planes with which Elvis and his team flew around the country during his career. There are also sprawling museum exhibits that have helped make Graceland the second-most visited home museum in the US after the White House, attracting more than 600,000 guests a year.

The looming court battle over the validity of Lisa Marie's will comes after the US actor Austin Butler learned on 24 January that he had been nominated for an Oscar for his portrayal of Elvis in the 2022 Baz Luhrmann biopic titled *Elvis*. The movie is also nominated for awards in cinematography, editing, makeup and hairstyling, production design and sound.

*The Associated Press contributed reporting*

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## [Books](#)

# Donald Trump sues Bob Woodward over The Trump Tapes for \$50m

Washington Post reporter and publisher Simon & Schuster say lawsuit ‘without merit ... we will aggressively defend against it’



Bob Woodward, left, is being sued by Donald Trump for nearly \$50m.  
Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

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

*[@MartinPengelly](#)*

Tue 31 Jan 2023 10.43 ESTFirst published on Tue 31 Jan 2023 01.00 EST

Donald Trump has sued Bob Woodward for a fraction less than \$50m, claiming he did not agree to the veteran Washington Post reporter publishing tapes of their conversations as an audio book.

Woodward's publisher, Simon & Schuster, and its parent company, Paramount Global, were also named as defendants.

In a joint statement on Monday, Woodward and Simon & Schuster said the lawsuit was "without merit and we will aggressively defend against it."

"All these interviews were on the record and recorded with President Trump's knowledge and agreement. Moreover, it is in the public interest to have this historical record in Trump's own words. We are confident that the facts and the law are in our favor."

The Trump Tapes was [released](#) in October 2022, under the [subtitle](#) Bob Woodward's Twenty Interviews With President Donald Trump.

Amid generally positive reviews, the Guardian [called](#) the audiobook "a passport to the heart of darkness" of Trump's presidency.

Woodward also wrote three print bestsellers about Trump and his administration: Fear, Rage and Peril – the last co-written with Robert Costa. The interviews which formed The Trump Tapes were mostly carried out from December 2019 to August 2020, when Woodward was writing Rage.

In the [suit](#) filed in the northern district of Florida on Monday, lawyers for Trump said their case "centers on Mr Woodward's systematic usurpation, manipulation and exploitation of audio of President Trump".

They also alleged that one conversation was deceptively edited, citing a comparison with a recording made by Hogan Gidley, a Trump aide, at Mar-a-Lago in Florida on 30 December 2019.

That recording, the suit says, contains an exchange in which Woodward tells Trump: "This again is for the book to come out before the election."

Rage was published in the US on 15 September 2020, a little less than two months before election day.

Trump is seeking just under \$50m in damages, a figure his lawyers say they reached by looking at sales of Fear, which "sold more than two million

copies, which is the amount of copies that the audiotape can be estimated to sell.

“Based upon the purchase price of the audiotape, \$24.99, the damages President Trump has sustained due to the actions of the defendants as set forth herein are estimated to be at least \$49,980,000.00, exclusive of punitive damages, attorney’s fees, and costs.”

Trump first complained when the audiobook was released. Appearing on CNN, Woodward was asked about Trump’s claim that he “never got his permission to release these tapes”.

Woodward said: “Well, they were done voluntarily, it was all on the record. I had used some of it before. So he’s president and … so he’s out there. And this is out there to the tenth power.”

Trump is beginning to accelerate his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination in 2024, a contest in which he remains the only declared candidate.

He faces legal jeopardy on numerous fronts: over his attempts to overturn the 2020 election, his financial and campaign finance affairs, his retention of classified records and an allegation of rape by the writer E Jean Carroll, which Trump denies.

Trump has often sued media foes, CNN among them. A lawsuit against the New York attorney general was recently thrown out of court.

The section of Trump’s suit against Woodward which alleges deceptive editing, meanwhile, contains an echo of the scandal that made the reporter famous: Watergate, which brought down Richard Nixon in 1974.

In an exchange published in The Trump Tapes, Woodward and Trump discuss Trump’s first impeachment, over his approaches to Ukraine for dirt on political rivals.

Trump says the affair was “peanuts” next to Watergate.

Woodward says: “But as soon as the Watergate burglars were caught, if Richard Nixon had gone on television and said, ‘You know, I’m the man at the top. I’m indirectly responsible for this. I am sorry. I apologize,’ it would have gone away.”

Trump says: “Yeah, Nixon should have done that … But I can’t, I shouldn’t have done that, because I did nothing wrong.”

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## **Headlines saturday 4 february 2023**

- Dominic Raab Deputy PM should step aside during bullying inquiry, says former Tory chair
- Nicola Bulley Sister says there is ‘no evidence’ she fell into river
- US Second spy balloon spotted over Latin America, as Blinken postpones China trip
- England Cold weather warning issued as temperatures set to plunge
- Elon Musk Jury sides with Tesla CEO over 2018 tweets claiming he would take company private

## Dominic Raab

# Former Tory chair calls on Dominic Raab to step aside during inquiry

Jake Berry's comments will heap pressure on deputy PM amid investigation into bullying allegations



Deputy PM Dominic Raab is facing calls to step down while he is investigated for allegations of bullying. Photograph: Daniel Leal/AFP/Getty Images

*[Peter Walker](#) and [Pippa Crerar](#)*

Sat 4 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Sat 4 Feb 2023 02.22 EST

A former cabinet minister and Conservative party chair has become the most senior Tory MP yet to call for Dominic Raab to step aside from his ministerial roles while he is investigated over [multiple allegations](#) of bullying and intimidating behaviour.

Jake Berry, who was party chair and minister without portfolio in Liz Truss's cabinet, said it would be "very bizarre" if someone in a similar position to Raab in any other workplace remained in their role [amid such claims](#).

Downing Street declined on Friday to say whether Simon Case, the cabinet secretary, had been informed of complaints about Raab before Rishi Sunak made him justice secretary and deputy prime minister, placing yet more scrutiny on [what the prime minister knew](#) at the time.

Sunak's spokesperson reiterated the heavily caveated formula that the prime minister was "not aware at the time of appointment of any formal complaints" about Raab, declining to say anything else given an ongoing investigation into the allegations.

Berry told BBC Radio 4's Week in Westminster that it would be "a big help" to Sunak if he was able to straightforwardly suspend a minister who was being investigated, as happens in the private sector.

Asked if he believed Sunak should suspend Raab now, Berry said: "When you have 24 allegations outstanding against you – I read in the newspaper there are 24 – it would be very bizarre if you had someone in any other workplace who wasn't suspended pending that investigation. MPs and ministers are not some form of special human being – I think they should just be treated like anyone else is in their workplace."

Berry's comments place yet more pressure on Sunak to act, given the [inquiry he ordered](#) by Adam Tolley KC is seen as unlikely to be concluded for another couple of weeks at the earliest.

Sunak has faced criticism for his failure to act earlier in [dismissing Nadhim Zahawi](#), the most recent Conservative party chair, after it emerged he received a tax penalty from HMRC when he was chancellor, and also faced scrutiny over whether or not he knew about Zahawi's situation before appointing him.

On Friday, Downing Street refused to comment on a [report in the Times](#) that Case, the most senior civil servant in government, had been personally told

of a written complaint about Raab during his earlier stint in the justice ministry months before Sunak gave him the post again.

Sunak's spokesperson confirmed that in general terms, a written statement made, for example, to a line manager, an HR representative or a permanent secretary would be counted as a formal complaint. However, he refused to say if Case had been informed about the concerns over Raab, and if so whether he had passed this information to Sunak before the prime minister named his government in October, citing Tolley's ongoing work.

"We're not going to get into the process of appointments or the advice that the PM receives, or does not receive," the spokesperson said, adding that Sunak had full confidence in Case.

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At least [24 officials are involved in the complaints](#) about Raab's behaviour. He vehemently denies any wrongdoing.

In another allegation, the anti-Brexit campaigner Gina Miller has claimed Raab was abusive to her and a BBC staffer after they appeared together on Radio 4's Today programme in 2016. Writing [in the Independent](#), Miller said that when they were together in a lift after the broadcast, Raab "stared at me

and said: ‘I can’t make up my mind if you’re naive, got too much money or just stupid.’”

As they left the building, Miller said, Raab reacted furiously to a young staff member who said there was no car arranged for him, shouting: “Go get me a fucking car.”

A source close to Raab told the paper the claims by Miller were “baseless and malicious”.

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[The ObserverLancashire](#)

## **Police seeking ‘key witness’ in search for missing Nicola Bulley**

A woman pushing pram near where the dog walker went missing was captured on CCTV



CCTV images of ‘key witness’ police believe was in the area on the morning of Nicola Bulley’s disappearance. Photograph: Lancashire police

*[Nadeem Badshah](#) and [Tom Ambrose](#)*

Sat 4 Feb 2023 05.50 ESTFirst published on Sat 4 Feb 2023 04.13 EST

Police searching for Nicola Bulley have said they want to trace a “key witness” who was seen pushing a pram in the area near where the dog walker went missing.

CCTV images have been released of a woman, dressed in a yellow coat and pushing a pram, who was in St Michael’s on Wyre on the morning of 27 January, when the 45-year-old mortgage adviser was last seen.

The woman was seen walking along Garstang Road/Blackpool Lane in the village of St Michael's, from the direction of Allotment Lane towards the Grapes pub, at about 8.22am.

She is again seen walking on Allotment Lane towards Garstang Road just under 20 minutes later.

A [Lancashire](#) police spokesperson said: "It is believed that the female in question may have walked along the river path during these times and so detectives want to speak to her and urge her to get in touch."

Search teams from Lancashire constabulary are continuing to trawl the River Wyre, working on the hypothesis that the missing mother of two, from nearby Inskip, could have fallen in when she disappeared.

However, Bulley's sister has urged people to keep an open mind about her disappearance as the search enters its ninth day.

Louise Cunningham asked people to "keep sharing my Nikki" and said there was "no evidence whatsoever" behind a police update that she had fallen into the River Wyre.

Nicola Bulley's friend says there is 'no evidence' behind police theory she fell into river – video

She wrote on Facebook: "Off the back of the latest police media update, please can I add there is no evidence whatsoever that she has gone into the river, it's just a theory.

"Everyone needs to keep an open mind as not all CCTV and leads have been investigated fully, the police confirmed the case is far from over."

Bulley's friend Emma White also cast doubt on the police's theory. "When we are talking about a life, we can't base it on a hypothesis – surely, we need this factual evidence," she told Sky News.

"That's what the family and us are all holding on to, that we are actually no further on than, sadly, last Friday. We still have no evidence, and that's why we're out again in force.

“You don’t base life on a hypothesis.”

### Map showing last known movements of Nicola Bulley

Supt Sally Riley from Lancashire constabulary said the investigators’ main hypothesis was that Bulley had accidentally fallen into the river while walking her dog.

Divers from HM Coastguard, mountain rescue and Lancashire fire and rescue service had all joined the search, and sniffer dogs, drones and police helicopters were also deployed.

At a press conference on Friday, Riley said: “Our main working hypothesis is that Nicola has sadly fallen into the river – there is no third-party or criminal involvement and this is not suspicious but the tragic case of a missing person.

“This is particularly important because speculation otherwise can be really distressing for the family and for Nicola’s children.”

Police think missing dog walker Nicola Bulley fell into river – video

Detectives are also working behind the scenes to analyse CCTV and dashcam videos, while members of the public with footage that could be useful have been urged to come forward.

Police believe Bulley went missing in “a 10-minute window” while she was walking her dog, Willow, close to the river after dropping off her daughters – aged six and nine – at school.

Bulley had logged in to a Microsoft Teams call at 9.01am, which ended at 9.30am with her phone still connected to the call.

She was seen by another dog walker at 9.10am – the last known sighting – and police traced records of her mobile phone as it remained on a bench overlooking the river at 9.20am. It was found by a dog walker at about 9.35am, with Willow nearby.

“Based on all the work we have done so far, we are now as confident as we can be that Nicola has not left the field where she was last seen and our working hypothesis is that she has fallen into the river for some reason,” officers said.

They said she was wearing an ankle-length black, quilted gilet and a black Vector coat underneath, which had long sleeves and came to her waist. Officers added that she was wearing tight black jeans with long green walking socks.

She was also wearing ankle-length green wellington boots from Next, a necklace and pale blue Fitbit. Her hair was tied in a ponytail.

Her partner, Paul Ansell, 44, told broadcasters: “I don’t really have anything to say other than what the family said yesterday. My whole focus is the two girls.

“Stay strong for them. I’m scared that if I put any focus on to anything else, it’s going to take my focus off that.”

Partner of missing Nicola Bulley says she 'vanished into thin air' – video

Police earlier released a detailed timeline of Bulley’s last movements, as follows:

- **8.43am:** She walked along the path by the River Wyre, having dropped her children off at school.
- **8:50am (approximately):** A dog walker – somebody who knows Bulley – saw her walking around the lower field with her dog. Their two dogs interacted briefly before the witness left the field via the river path.
- **8.53am:** She sent an email to her boss.
- **9.01am:** She logged into a Teams call.

- **9.10am (approximately):** A witness – somebody who knows Bulley – saw her on the upper field walking her dog, Willow. Work is ongoing to establish exactly what time this was.
- **9.30am:** The Teams call ended but Bulley stayed logged in.
- **9.35am (approximately):** Her mobile phone and Willow were found at a bench by the river by another dog walker.

Anyone with information or footage has been asked to call 101, quoting log 565 of 30 January.

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## [US news](#)

# Second spy balloon spotted over Latin America, says Pentagon, as Blinken postpones China trip

Secretary of state calls the incident in US airspace a ‘clear violation of US sovereignty and international law’

Chinese 'spy balloon' spotted flying over US – video

*Guardian staff and agencies*

Fri 3 Feb 2023 22.04 EST Last modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 07.12 EST

A second Chinese spy balloon was reportedly flying over Latin America, according to the Pentagon, in comments that came as the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, [postponed a visit to China](#) after the intrusion of a separate high-altitude Chinese balloon into US airspace.

“We are seeing reports of a balloon transiting Latin America,” Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said, a day after the first craft was spotted over US skies. “We now assess it is another Chinese surveillance balloon.”

The Pentagon did not specify the balloon’s exact location, but a US official told CNN it did not appear to be currently heading towards the US.

In South Korea on Friday, Blinken said he had spoken with Wang Yi, China’s top diplomat, and “made clear that the presence of this surveillance balloon in US airspace is a clear violation of US sovereignty and international law”.

Blinken said, however, that he had told Wang that “the United States is committed to diplomatic engagement with China and that I plan to visit Beijing when conditions allow”.

“The first step is getting the surveillance asset out of our airspace. That’s what we’re focused on,” he told reporters.

Channels of communication remained open between the two countries, a state department spokesperson said, stressing that the trip had only been postponed and not cancelled.

Blinken would have been the first US secretary of state to visit China since October 2018, signalling a thaw after a period of friction under former president Donald Trump.

Last month, Blinken said he would use the trip to help establish “guardrails” to prevent the relationship from escalating into all-out conflict.

Blinken postpones planned China visit after high-altitude balloon intrusion into US airspace – video

China apologised for the presence of the craft in US airspace, [claiming it was a weather balloon that had been blown off course](#), but US officials made clear they did not believe that explanation.

Asked about the balloon, the Chinese foreign ministry said on Friday: “The Chinese side regrets the unintended entry of the airship into US airspace ... It is a civilian airship used for research, mainly meteorological, purposes ... The airship deviated far from its planned course.”

A later statement from China’s foreign ministry claimed that some politicians and media in the US were taking advantage of the incident to “discredit” China.

A White House spokesperson said there was a consensus among President Joe Biden and his advisers that Blinken should not travel to China this weekend and stressed the balloon does not pose a military or physical threat.

Republican lawmakers pounced on the balloon incident, casting Biden – who has largely preserved and at times expanded Trump’s hawkish policies on China – as weak.

Michael McCaul, the Republican chair of the House foreign affairs committee, on Friday demanded to know why the administration had not shot the balloon down, accusing the president of allowing it to pose “a direct and ongoing national security threat to the US homeland”.

Republican senator Jerry Moran said on Friday he had received reports of the balloon over north-eastern Kansas.

“China invaded US airspace and the Biden admin needs to take action to address this situation. Further delay is unacceptable,” he said.

A US defence official said earlier that Biden had asked for military options but that the Pentagon believed shooting the object down would put people on the ground at risk from debris.

The balloon had “limited additive value from an intelligence collection perspective”, the defence official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

The Pentagon expected the balloon to continue travelling over US airspace for a few more days, a spokesperson said.

The craft has taken a flight path that would carry it over a number of sensitive sites, officials say. They include military bases in Montana which are home to intercontinental ballistic missile silos.

The postponement of Blinken’s trip, which had been arranged in November by Biden and the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, will set back efforts to resolve several points of friction, particularly over the future of Taiwan, and each side’s military posture in the Indo-Pacific.

Beijing this week strenuously objected to a deal between the Philippines and the US in which Manila has granted the US expanded access to its military bases. Under the deal, the US will have additional access to Philippine bases for joint training, storing equipment and supplies, and building facilities, though not to establish a permanent presence.

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## UK weather

# Health agency issues cold weather warning for England

Temperatures expected to plummet on Sunday evening in two-day cold snap



Bridgnorth in Shropshire. Forecasters said the West Midlands and Welsh borders were expected to be the coldest parts of England. Photograph: MH Country/Alamy

*PA Media*

Sat 4 Feb 2023 03.24 EST Last modified on Sat 4 Feb 2023 04.20 EST

A cold weather warning has been issued for [England](#) by the UK Health Security Agency, which is advising that vulnerable people be checked in on as temperatures plunge later this weekend.

The UKHSA and the Met Office said a cold snap would hit England between 6pm on Sunday and 6pm on Tuesday. Temperatures could fall to -3C in rural areas and frost was expected.

All regions of England would be affected, but forecasters said they expected the West Midlands and the Welsh borders to be the coldest.

Temperatures would plummet at night but were not expected to fall below mid-single figures during the day.

Older people and those with underlying health conditions were urged to keep their heating on at least 18C, and people were advised to look out for those who are most vulnerable in cold conditions.

Dr Agostinho Sousa, a consultant in public health medicine at UKHSA, said: “Cold weather can have serious consequences for health, with older people and those with heart or lung conditions particularly at risk.

“It’s important to check in on family, friends and relatives who are more vulnerable to the cold weather. If you have a pre-existing medical condition or are over the age of 65, it is important to try and heat your home to at least 18C if you can.”

David Oliver, a deputy chief forecaster at the Met Office, said: “From Sunday and into early next week an area of high pressure will dominate the UK’s weather.

“This will bring some cold nights with a widespread frost across the country. However, by day, temperatures will recover to around mid-single figures, near normal for the time of year.”

The Met Office meteorologist Dan Stroud said: “We are expecting a cold front to sink south during the course of Saturday and it is going to really help clear the clouds.

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“It is going to allow overnight temperatures to dip below zero and we are likely to see an increasing risk of overnight frost as we move into the early part of next week. Wrap up warm and close your curtains in the evening to help keep in the heat.

“Daytime temperatures will be responding to the sunshine ... we are likely to see them go to about average or just below average.”

The UKHSA said if people could not heat all the rooms they used, they should heat the living room during the day and the bedroom just before going to sleep. People should wear several layers of thinner clothing rather than one thick jumper, it added.

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## Elon Musk

# Jury sides with Elon Musk over 2018 tweets claiming he would take Tesla private

The verdict comes after a three-week trial that pitted shareholders against the billionaire and company CEO



The case centers on two tweets Musk posted in 2018. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

*[Kari Paul](#) and [Erin McCormick](#) in San Francisco*

Fri 3 Feb 2023 17.45 EST Last modified on Sat 4 Feb 2023 11.41 EST

Elon Musk and Tesla have been cleared of wrongdoing in a lawsuit over a pair of tweets from the executive that investors say cost them billions of dollars.

After less than two hours of deliberation wrapping up a three-week trial, a jury in San Francisco ruled on Friday that the [Tesla](#) CEO had not deceived investors with two tweets posted in August 2018 about a Tesla buyout that never happened.

Musk had tweeted that he planned to take the electric carmaker private at \$420 a share, and had “funding secured” to do so. The posts triggered stocks to surge over a 10-day period before falling back after Musk abandoned the deal, investors argued.

The decision marks an important victory for Musk, who is embroiled in several lawsuits and has aggressively fought any charges that he was guilty. The executive, who now is the CEO of [Twitter](#) after purchasing the company months ago for \$44bn, has repeatedly defended his ability to tweet broadly.

The case was seen as a test of whether or not Musk could be held liable for his freewheeling use of Twitter. The billionaire testified on multiple days of the trial, arguing that his tweets were a democratic way to communicate and did not always affect [Tesla](#) stock the way he expected. “Just because I tweet something does not mean people believe it or will act accordingly,” he told the jury.

“Thank goodness, the wisdom of the people has prevailed!” Musk [tweeted following the verdict](#). “I am deeply appreciative of the jury’s unanimous finding of innocence in the Tesla 420 take-private case.”

The first tweet under scrutiny, posted just before he boarded his private jet, Musk declared he had “[funding secured](#)” to take Tesla private. A few hours later, Musk sent [another tweet](#) indicating that the deal was imminent. The price Musk chose – \$420 – is widely considered to be a marijuana reference, further rankling investors who believed he was not taking the business seriously. Musk claimed during the trial the number was “not a joke” and any associations with cannabis were merely coincidence.

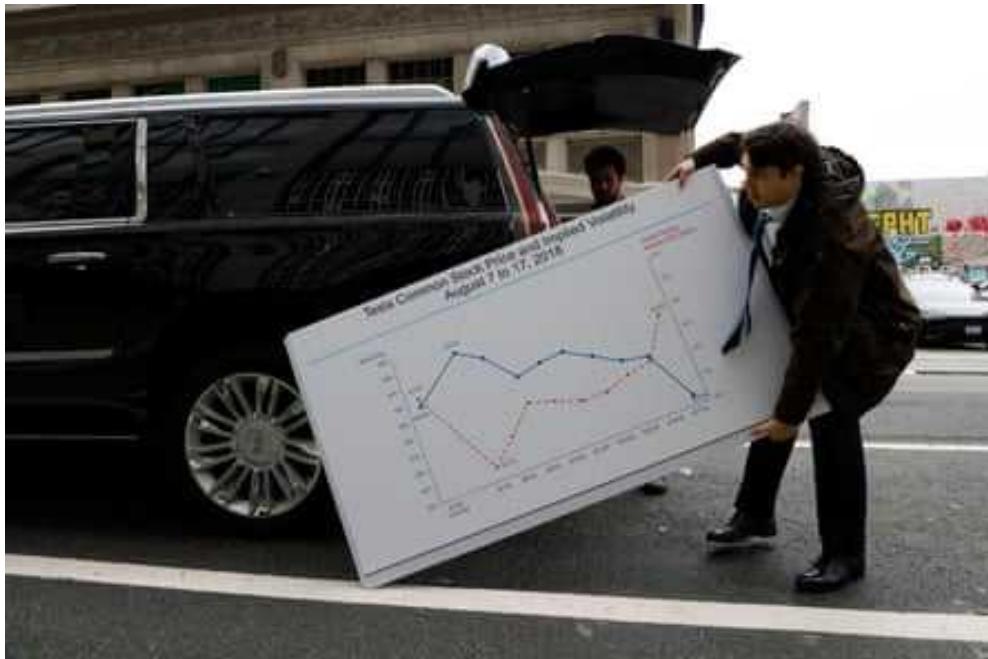
Musk appeared in court on Friday for closing arguments, even though his presence wasn’t required, underscoring the importance of the trial’s outcome

to him. In closing statements he was both vilified as a rich narcissist whose reckless behavior risks “anarchy” and hailed as a visionary looking out for the “little guy”.

Nicholas Porritt, a lawyer for the Tesla shareholders, urged the jurors to rebuke Musk for his “loose relationship with the truth”.

“Our society is based on rules,” Porritt said. “We need rules to save us from anarchy. Rules should apply to Elon Musk like everyone else.”

Alex Spiro, Musk’s attorney, conceded the 2018 tweets were “technically inaccurate”. But he told the jurors: “Just because it’s a bad tweet doesn’t make it a fraud.”



Max Weiss, attorney for the Tesla shareholders, loads a graph board while departing the San Francisco courthouse. Photograph: John G Mabanglo/EPA

US district judge Edward Chen, who presided over the trial, decided last year that Musk’s 2018 tweets were false and has instructed the jury to view them that way.

In addition to the class action lawsuit, Musk faced fraud charges in 2018 from the Securities and Exchange Commission over the tweets, and was required to pay \$40m in penalties. As part of his settlement with the US

agency, Musk had to agree to a requirement his tweets be approved by a Tesla attorney before being published – a clause he has been accused of violating multiple times since.

During his roughly eight hours on the stand, Musk insisted he believed he had lined up the funds from Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund to take Tesla private after eight years as a publicly held company. He defended his initial August 2018 tweet as well-intentioned and aimed at ensuring all Tesla investors knew the automaker might be on its way to ending its run as a publicly held company.

"I had no ill motive," Musk testified. "My intent was to do the right thing for all shareholders."

In his concluding remarks, Porritt told jurors their decision boiled down to their answer to one question: "Do the rules apply to everyone, or can Elon Musk do whatever he wants and not face the consequences?"

Experts observing the case said the outcome showed the jury bought Musk's side of the argument.

"Musk won this one; hang one up on the scorecard for him," said Josh White, an assistant professor of finance at Vanderbilt University, who said he has no doubt the case will be appealed. "So the drama's not over."

He described the closing arguments by Spiro, Musk's attorney, as "almost something scripted out a Hollywood movie".

"He was almost in tears," making the case that Musk truly believed he had the funding to take Tesla private, said White, who is a former financial economist for the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

White said he felt the plaintiffs' attorneys did a "poor job" in making the case that Musk meant to manipulate Tesla's stock price.

"I felt like they never really made the case that Musk's intent in sending the tweet was to move the stock price," he said. "They never went down that path, which I found surprising." White also said Musk managed to turn his own testimony in a direction that may have impressed the jury.

“Musk is really good at testifying,” he said, noting that he often managed to subtly shift the questions asked of him. “He took control of the conversation and rephrased it in a way that benefitted him.”



Elon Musk sits in the courtroom during closing arguments by Tesla attorney Alex Spiro. Photograph: Vicki Behringer/Reuters

Others expressed amazement at the jury’s decisiveness. “I was surprised the jury came back so quickly,” said law professor Stavros Gadinis, director of UC Berkeley’s Center for Law and Business.

“I think they fell for the argument that Musk did not set out to deceive investors, but that he really believed that he had the funding [to take Tesla private].”

Loyola law professor Jessica Levinson said the case may end up influencing how other companies fight security fraud cases in the future.

“Musk was vindicated not just in his defense strategy, but in his decision to go to trial at all,” said Levinson, who said she was also surprised by the verdict and the speed at which it was reached. “Because taking this to trial was hugely risky, right? He potentially faced huge fines and he settled the SEC case.”

She said the case could become a bellwether for companies taken to task for statements made on Twitter and similar sites.

“It’s one of the first big cases where the statements at issue were made over social media,” she said. “It definitely gives a roadmap for companies trying to defend statements made on social media.”

### *Agencies contributed reporting*

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## 2023.02.04 - Spotlight

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- Minnie Driver ‘I had to fake an orgasm in a room full of male execs at an audition for a chocolate bar ad’
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## Think yourself better: 10 rules of philosophy to live by



Illustration: Till Lauer/The Guardian

From Aristotle to Iris Murdoch: what the greatest minds of the past 2,500 years have to tell us about the good life



[Julian Baggini](#)

Sat 4 Feb 2023 04.00 EST Last modified on Sun 5 Feb 2023 07.42 EST

The thing that separates human beings from other animals is our extraordinary capacity for complex, abstract thought. This is what has given rise to our diverse cultures, our scientific achievements, our ability to envisage the future and, hopefully, make it better than what has gone before. But our imperfect minds have also generated terrible mistakes and dangerous ideologies. If we don't know how to distinguish bad thinking from good, we can end up believing what we shouldn't, and behaving in ways that are harmful to ourselves, to others, and to the planet.

Philosophers are, of course, the archetypal expert thinkers. Their discipline is often portrayed as a kind of formal method that lists fallacies to be avoided and distinguishes between deductive and inductive reasoning, invalid and sound arguments. These things have their place. But philosophy cannot be reduced to mere technique. Thinking well also requires adopting the right attitudes and being prepared to nurture effective habits. Without these “intellectual virtues” even the cleverest end up merely playing theoretical games.

Throughout history wise men and women have applied themselves to these problems in the service of their own development and that of humankind. Rather than start from scratch, why not draw on thousands of years of experience, and millions of hours of reflection and practice? Here is what some of the greatest philosophers in history can tell us about how to think – and live – well.

## 1. Be sincere

*“A wrangler is one who aims only at victory, being indifferent whether the arguments which he employs support his own contention or that of his opponent.”*

**Akapāda Gautama**

Written some time between the sixth and second centuries BCE, supposedly by Akapāda Gautama, the Indian classic the Nyāya Sūtras is the first great treatise on the principles of reasoning. Gautama distinguishes between three kinds of debate. In *jalpa* (wrangling) the aim is victory, while *vitanda* (cavilling) is concerned wholly with criticising the other side. But in good or honest discussion, *vada*, the aim is truth.

Sometimes philosophy descends into adversarial combat. But the best thinkers avoid wrangling or cavilling. One such philosopher, [Bernard Williams](#), identified sincerity as one of the two primary “virtues of truth”, alongside accuracy.

The most dangerous enemy of sincerity is not deliberate deception but the desire to be right overpowering the desire to get to the truth. Sincerity in thought therefore requires overcoming an ego that hates admitting being wrong.

## 2. Be charitable

*“People’s real reasons for reaching their practical conclusions are so often not the ones they give in their arguments.”*

**Janet Radcliffe Richards**

It's easier to dismiss people we disagree with if we attribute to them obviously foolish or stupid beliefs. But just as we are not as smart as we like to think we are, other people are not usually as stupid as we take them to be.

The best way to understand any position is to ask what assumptions would make it rational

To avoid what David Hume called the “vulgar error” of “putting nothing but nonsense into the Mouth of the Adversary” we should employ the principle of charity. This requires us to consider the best, strongest version of an opponent’s argument, not only the worst. This may be a better case than they themselves can muster. If you were a remainder during the EU referendum campaign, for example, it would have been all too easy to brush aside some of the crass claims made by the official leave side. But there were more serious, less easily dismissed arguments, and those were the ones that most demanded a response.

Applying the principle of charity can expose flaws as well as strengths. Janet Radcliffe Richards believes the best way to understand any position is to ask what assumptions would make it rational. Why would a family think a drunk relative was a suitable babysitter, but only until they discovered she was an atheist? Their conclusion is rational if you think that the risk of being led into hell is worse than the risk of being harmed through negligence. The family’s reasoning was flawless: it was their premises that were wrong.

### 3. Be humble

*“I’m not clever, I don’t find arguments easy to follow.”*

**Philippa Foot**

[Philippa Foot](#) was one of the best British philosophers of the 20th century. Yet she told me, “I couldn’t give a five-minute lecture on dozens of philosophers. I couldn’t tell you about Spinoza. I’m very uneducated really.”

Mary Warnock was another philosopher with a keen sense of humility, saying: “I haven’t done very much work and I haven’t done it very well.”

Both women's remarks sound ludicrously self-deprecating to anyone who knows their work. In fact, they reveal a self-awareness and honesty that helped them to excel. Foot was probably right to say that she wasn't as good a scholar as many of her peers and wasn't especially clever in the sense of having an ability to process complex logical calculations quickly. Rather than trying to compete with those who were, she played to her strengths: great insight, a penetrating mind, and a good nose for what's right.

Similarly, Warnock's excellence was not as an original thinker. She was a great explainer of others' ideas and, most importantly, a brilliant chair of ethics commissions which helped bring experts together to make public policy. She left a greater legacy than much work by "better" philosophers.

There are times when confidence and conviction are needed. But when we're trying to think as clearly as possible, their absence is a virtue, not a vice. We should all become self-aware about where our intellectual strengths and weaknesses lie. Social media shows how the temptation to opine over and above our competence is strong, and must be resisted through intellectual humility.

## 4. Keep it simple, but not simplistic

*"It is futile to do with more things  
that which can be done with fewer."*

**William of Ockham**

The principle of Occam's razor – one should not multiply entities beyond necessity – was sadly never expressed so clearly by the 14th-century Franciscan friar to whom it is attributed. Sometimes called the parsimony principle, it has come to refer to the idea that all other things being equal, a simpler explanation is preferable to a more complicated one.

Applying the principle, however, is no simple matter. The key proviso is "all other things being equal". All-too-human cock-ups are more common than complicated conspiracies, but some things really are conspiracies. Bombs and bullets are usually fired by adversaries, but there are also false-flag operations.

So Occam's razor really needs the addendum "only expect as much simplicity in an explanation as the thing being explained allows". The preference for simplicity is a virtue so long as it is accompanied by a refusal to deny real-world complexities. We should look for explanations that are neither more convoluted nor more simplistic than is necessary.



Illustration: Till Lauer/The Guardian

## 5. Watch your language

*"What is necessary is to rectify names."*  
**Kongzi**

In the Analects, Kongzi (also known as Confucius) says that the first thing he would do if he were to administer the government would be to "rectify names". He explains: "If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success."

Philosophers have always been keen to define their terms and use language accurately. In the 20th century, this perhaps went too far, with some philosophers thinking that all they could do was "conceptual analysis" – or

figuring out what, precisely, a term might refer to. But even that is a vital task.

Think of how common it is for the misuse of language to assist the misuse of political power: Putin’s “special military operation”, or the labelling of plans to fund care of the elderly as a “dementia tax”.

Getting words right sometimes requires changing them. “Gay marriage” used to be an oxymoron but most have come to agree that it is right that the meaning of “marriage” has evolved. Right now, there is a heated debate about what “woman” and “man” mean in relation to trans people. There is no way of resolving this unless both sides acknowledge that they are engaged in advocacy for their preferred usages, not simply trying to show that one set of meanings is objectively correct.

## 6. Be eclectic

*“I suspect I’ve always been an awful trespasser.”*

**Onora O’Neill**

Onora O’Neill’s self-suspicion captures the value and peril of casting a wide intellectual net. As a leading bioethicist, O’Neill has had to learn from medics, biologists, public health professionals, scientific researchers, civil servants and more. None of these experts is competent to resolve thorny issues like those of gene editing or embryo research alone.

Breadth of thought always requires the sacrifice of some depth – be prepared to move out of your intellectual comfort zones

Many – maybe most – important issues cannot be resolved with just one kind of expertise. To think about how to feed a nation you need to call on the knowledge of dieticians, ethicists, farmers, ecologists, cooks and economists. Climate science isn’t enough to generate a policy response to global warming, you also need to know about technology, geopolitics, economics and agriculture.

Breadth used to be a typical characteristic of philosophers. Aristotle studied nature in a lagoon on the island of Lesbos, Descartes dissected animals as well as concepts, Hume was better known in his day as a historian than as a philosopher. Narrow specialisation is a recent development.

Breadth of thought, however, always requires the sacrifice of some depth. That's why you need O'Neill's acute sense of being a trespasser. We have to be prepared to move out of our intellectual comfort zones, but we also have to be careful, in unfamiliar spaces, to retain a sense of humility.

## **7. Think for yourself, not by yourself**

*“No culture has a monopoly on wisdom, no culture embodies all the great values, and therefore each culture has a great deal to learn from others, through dialogue.”*

**Bhikhu Parekh**

In his essay What Is Enlightenment Kant defined immaturity as “the inability to make use of one’s own understanding without direction from another”, adding that: “‘Have courage to make use of your own understanding’ is thus the motto of enlightenment.”

Has the pendulum swung too far towards striking out on your own, though? As the philosopher Alvin Goldman says: “You can get more knowledge by using social sources, that is by drawing on the experiences of others and what they have to contribute. They have maybe better ideas, maybe better education than you do on certain subjects, or they have just read more about it than you have.”

As Bhikhu Parekh argues, our willingness to draw on outside knowledge should extend to thinkers beyond our own cultures. Just as it is arrogant to think that we as individuals have nothing to learn from our peers, to assume any one tradition has a monopoly on making sense of the world is pure chauvinism. Our minds work best when in dialogue with others.

## **8. Seek clarity not certainty**

*“Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity.”*

**Ludwig Wittgenstein**

Philosophers – and I suspect all of us – tend towards one of two different objectives: clarity and certainty. I think that after more than two millennia of seeing which approach is more fruitful, it is clear, if not certain, that the clarifiers have won. One of the few certainties we have is that certainty of any interesting kind is rarely possible. If you seek greater clarity, on the other hand, new vistas open up.

Another reason to be suspicious of certainty is that it is seductive. For example, psychologists such as Elizabeth Loftus tell us that in court cases witnesses who express certainty about what they have seen tend to be believed more, but confidence is an unreliable indicator of accuracy. Certainty is also the friend of dogmatism, arrogance and fundamentalism. Those who seek it should be careful what they wish for.

## **9. Pay attention**

*“Attention is rewarded by a knowledge of reality.”*

**Iris Murdoch**

Iris Murdoch was a philosopher and a novelist. These two vocations were intimately linked. As her colleague Mary Midgley put it: “On Murdoch’s view of ethics, we learn what is the right thing to do by attending to what is the case and increasing our understanding of reality.” For example, empathy teaches us more about what is needed to treat a person well than moral theory.

Paying close attention, rather than constructing arguments, lies at the heart of the best philosophising

Paying close attention, rather than constructing arguments, lies at the heart of the best philosophising. Descartes is famous for his line “I think, therefore I am” but this is an argument in appearance only. It is a truth arrived at by

observation: when you try to doubt that you are thinking, your doubting shows that you must be existing.

It was also by paying close attention that Hume saw how Descartes was wrong to conclude that this thinker whose existence was certain was an indivisible, mental substance. Hume, like the Buddha, invited us to attend more carefully and observe that we are only ever aware of particular thoughts, feelings and sensations, not an “I” that stands behind them.

Arguments do matter, but assessing the validity of our reasoning requires paying close attention to its progression more than it does knowledge of formal logic. Good thinking is just thinking with full attention.

## 10. Follow the mean

*“Some vices miss what is right because they are deficient, others because they are excessive, in feelings or in actions, while virtue finds and chooses the mean.”*

**Aristotle**

One principle that can be applied almost universally is Aristotle’s incredibly useful doctrine of the mean, a version of which is also taught by Kongzi. This says that for practically every virtue, there is not an opposite vice but an excess and a deficiency. Generosity is the mean between profligacy and tightfistedness, understanding between lack of sympathy and indulgence, pride between self-hatred and arrogance.

The same applies to the virtues of thinking. Aristotle said: “It is the mark of the trained mind never to expect more precision in the treatment of any subject than the nature of that subject permits.” You can be too precise as well as too vague, you can be too understanding of a view you disagree with as well as too dismissive, you can think too much for yourself or too little.

That is why every intellectual virtue needs to come with a warning not to slavishly apply it: follow the argument wherever it leads but don’t follow it to absurdity; question everything but not all the time; define your terms as clearly as you can but don’t think all terms can be defined with scientific precision. Even virtuous habits of thought can become vices if they are

misapplied. The virtues of thinking require balance and judgment – and, thankfully, these are skills any one of us can learn.

- How to Think Like a Philosopher by Julian Baggini (Granta, £16.99). To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.
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## The Q&AMinnie Driver

### Interview

# **Minnie Driver: ‘I had to fake an orgasm in a room full of male execs at an audition for a chocolate bar ad’**

Rosanna Greenstreet

The actor on a bloody encounter with the police, her Daniel Day-Lewis crush, and a sexy washing machine secret



Minnie Driver: ‘I thought I would become more mature about certain things, and it didn’t happen.’ Photograph: Gareth Cattermole/Contour/Getty Images

Sat 4 Feb 2023 04.30 ESTLast modified on Tue 7 Feb 2023 07.12 EST

Born in London, Minnie Driver, 53, gained an Oscar nomination for Good Will Hunting in 1998. She was Emmy nominated for her performance in the 2007 television series The Riches and has a recurring role in Will & Grace. More recent films include Cinderella, Rosaline and Chevalier. She has a

podcast, [Minnie Questions With Minnie Driver](#), and her memoir, [Managing Expectations](#), was published last year. She lives in California with her partner, the film-maker Addison O'Dea, and her son.

**What was your most embarrassing moment?**

When I was starting out, in the early 90s, I had to fake an orgasm in a room full of male ad execs at an audition for a chocolate bar ad. It was grim.

**What makes you unhappy?**

One negative thought attracting all the others and suddenly you are circling the drain.

**What scares you about getting older?**

Not being able to swim and surf and run and dance.

**Who is your celebrity crush?**

Daniel Day-Lewis. I have loved him since I was 12 years old. I watched him play in a football match at my school – and then walked him back to the changing rooms after, and he was so kind and he talked to me about acting.

**What do you owe your parents?**

My love.

**To whom would you most like to say sorry, and why?**

I know I should be more evolved, but the person I would like to say sorry to I'm not ready to say sorry to yet.

**Have you ever said 'I love you' and not meant it?**

I've said it knowing I didn't mean it how the other person meant it.

**Which words or phrases do you most overuse?**

Bollocking shitbags.

**What has been your biggest disappointment?**

I thought that I would become more mature about certain things, and it didn't happen.

**If you could edit your past, what would you change?**

I'd edit out all the awful men I managed to find who confirmed my worst suspicions about my body and my character.

**When was the last time you changed your mind about something significant?**

Until very recently, I felt my son was safe at school in America. I do not believe that any more.

**How often do you have sex?**

When the tumble dryer and the washing machine are going at the same time, because we live in a very small, thin-walled house.

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**What has been your closest brush with the law?**

I'd been shooting in a remote part of California and I was speeding home at 5am, covered in fake blood, when I got stopped by the police. The cop was suspicious and said, "What have you been doing?" I said, "I've been shooting", and he drew his gun. I have never been so terrified. I said, "No no, I've been shooting a film – I'm an actress!"

**Would you rather have more sex, money or fame?**  
Can I have sleep?

**How would you like to be remembered?**  
With great stories.

**What is the most important lesson life has taught you?**  
That your life is only in this very second.

**What happens when we die?**

It's lights out for the beautiful carbon-based bit, but I believe in the vastness of our ignorance and that our conscious afterlife is somewhere in that.

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## Blind dateRelationships

# **Blind date: ‘She said she was off alcohol, then smashed through four glasses of wine’**

Suraiya, 27, a trader, meets Gary, 30, a TV producer



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Composite: Jill Mead/The Guardian

Sat 4 Feb 2023 01.00 EST



## **Suraiya on Gary**

### **What were you hoping for?**

An evening worth breaking Dry January for.

### **First impressions?**

Nicely dressed and bubbly – my initial nerves disappeared within a few minutes. He had lots of energy.

### **What did you talk about?**

His several encounters with Idris Elba. Kebabs. TV. Birmingham, where we are both from, though I moved to London aged nine. Babies, and his desire to have them.

### **Most awkward moment?**

When I resorted to drinking straight brandy. In my defence, I couldn't drink any more wine and the restaurant had run out of gin and vodka.

### **Good table manners?**

Perfect – he was a gent and let me have the last prawn.

**Best thing about Gary?**

So easy to talk to. He tried an oyster for the first time – pretty impressive.

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

He could get on with anyone.

**Describe Gary in three words.**

Confident, energetic, Brummie.

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

Probably a bit clumsy. I almost walked into a glass door.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

We went to Soho House for a few more drinks. We were hoping to catch a glimpse of a celeb but we were unlucky.

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

No.

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

I'd stick to sparkling wine instead of going rogue with the brandy – my head felt rather sore the morning after.

**Marks out of 10?**

8.

**Would you meet again?**

I would, though I'm not sure there was a romantic vibe.



Suraiya and Gary on their date  
Q&A

### **Want to be in Blind date?**

Show

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

### **What questions will I be asked?**

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

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

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

**Can I pick the photograph?**

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

**What personal details will appear?**

Your first name, job and age.

**How should I answer?**

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

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

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

**Will you find me The One?**

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

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

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

**How to apply**

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

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.



## Gary on Suraiya

### **What were you hoping for?**

An evening of fun, flirting and fish.

### **First impressions?**

Very cute. She rocked up in a leather jacket and told me she was abstaining from alcohol for a couple of months, before proceeding to smash through four glasses of sparkling wine.

### **What did you talk about?**

Her DJing days. I shoehorned Arctic Monkeys into the conversation, but it was met with a blank expression.

### **Most awkward moment?**

When I asked, “Has the booze hit you yet?” while knocking over my own drink.

### **Good table manners?**

She had amazing prawn-peeling skills.

**Best thing about Suraiya?**

Down to earth. She works in finance, but we were soon talking about growing up in the Midlands, travelling and McDonald's.

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

Yes.

**Describe Suraiya in three words.**

Driven, fun, chilled.

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

I've absolutely no idea.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

We had a few drinks at Soho House.

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

We didn't.

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

I ended up with a glass of red, a white and a tumbler of Laphroaig. Trying to neck all of those was a bad idea.

**Marks out of 10?**

Let's go old-school: A\*

**Would you meet again?**

I'm sure we would.

*Suraiya and Gary ate at [The Orasay](#), London, W11. Fancy a blind date?  
Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)*

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[Claire Foy](#)

**Claire Foy on finding her rage: ‘You’ve got to get your anger out, in order to move on’**



Claire Foy: ‘ Photograph: Gustavo Papaleo/The Guardian

The Crown confirmed her as acting royalty, but she has always struggled with self-doubt. Now, after a storm about her salary, she is determined to express her feelings – even the difficult ones



[Rebecca Nicholson](#)

Sat 4 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Sat 4 Feb 2023 06.10 EST

In a cafe in north London, over scrambled eggs and tea, Claire Foy is gearing up to put herself down. When she reads celebrity interviews, she says, she finds herself agreeing with the subjects, as if they have all the answers. “They exercise every day, and they don’t drink any more. They’ve got all these views which are really pertinent and interesting. I really think there’s this feeling that everyone is doing it better, all the time.”

It turns out that she has a habit of being hard on herself, though she often disguises it as a joke. In this case, anyway, she’s wrong, as she is about to express plenty of views that are pertinent and interesting, about all manner of things, from pay disputes, to her struggles with anxiety, to Matt Smith’s bottom. “I just sit there and go, ‘Oh, I don’t know what I’m doing with my life,’” she shrugs.

Foy arrives in the cafe on time, to the minute, and apologises for turning up with wet hair, which will, she says, be massive by the time it's dry. We are here to talk about her latest film, *Women Talking*, which I finish watching barely an hour before we meet. "Oh *God*," she says, half apologetically. "I mean, you might need some time to digest it."



With Ben Whishaw and Rooney Mara in the Oscar nominated *Women Talking*. Photograph: Michael Gibson/Orion

Directed by Sarah Polley and up for best picture at this year's Oscars, *Women Talking* is a beautiful, harrowing, hopeful film, in which Foy stars alongside [Frances McDormand](#), [Jessie Buckley](#) and [Rooney Mara](#). It tells the story of a strict, isolated Mennonite religious community, whose women discover that they have been systematically drugged and raped by some of the men for years. The culprits are arrested and taken to a police station, and as the other men go to bail them out, the women are left with a day alone to decide what they should do. The film shows their debate, in a hayloft. Should they stay and do nothing, stay and fight, or leave?

Foy's character, Salome, makes quite the entrance. "She's trying to scythe some people's heads off," Foy says, brightly. Salome is justifiably furious – her four-year-old daughter has been raped – yet Foy says that in her own life, anger does not come naturally.

On screen, she had to dig in and find the rage. “I had to not pull back. I had to not want to make her smaller. I’ve seen a lot of angry men in films, with their eyes bulging out, and there’s something OK about that. But angry women obviously get told they’re shrill or, what did someone once say to me? *Head girly.*” She winces as she recalls this; it has the ring of a long-remembered insult. “I was never head girl. You have to think so much, as a woman, about how you communicate in order to get your point heard. You have to make sure that it’s palatable in some way.”



Styling: Melanie Wilkinson. Stylist’s assistant: Rosalind Donoghue. Nails: Robbie Tomkins. Hair: George Northwood. Makeup: Kelly Cornwall. Claire wears velvet jacket and trousers, [stellamccartney.com](http://stellamccartney.com). Brogues, [erdem.com](http://erdem.com). Photograph: Gustavo Papaleo/The Guardian

She doesn’t think she grew up seeing many women being angry. “But you’ve got to get it out, in order to move on. I couldn’t. I just lived in denial that I had any.” She did, of course, have things to be angry about, but she didn’t know how to express it. “I’d be a really rageful driver, or I’d be really passive-aggressive, because I couldn’t say what I wanted or needed.”

Is she any better at expressing herself now? “I’m trying.” Foy has a seven-year-old daughter, and she tells her not to be afraid of anger. “Because she doesn’t need to calm down. If she’s angry, OK, be angry then. Get it out,

jump around, really scream. And then it only lasts minutes.” She pauses. “Now, this would be *ideal* parenting. It’s not what I do all the time. Obviously I’m not in control of what’s happening in the world, or to a certain extent, my life.” She smiles, cracks a joke. “Obviously I’m still a rageful driver.”

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Though she had been working solidly since 2008, Foy became properly, internationally famous in 2016, when she played the young Elizabeth II in the first two seasons of *The Crown*. She was 31, and this was already her second monarch. In 2015, when she was pregnant, she played [Anne Boleyn in Wolf Hall](#), the BBC’s adaptation of the [Hilary Mantel](#) novel and its follow-up, *Bring Up the Bodies*. She met Mantel when they were filming. “What a wonderful woman. Magical. And the first thing I said to her was, ‘Oh, what are you having for lunch, Hilary?’” She cringes. “I thought, she’s written me off straight away. I’m dull, I’m uninteresting, I should have said something really fascinating about 19th-century literature, and I’ve just been a moron.”

After [The Crown](#) appeared, and became a massive hit, Foy won two Emmys, a Golden Globe and two Screen Actors Guild awards for her Elizabeth, and was invited to host Saturday Night Live. (Recently, she has been watching her co-star Matt Smith in [House of the Dragon](#), frosty blond wig and all. “I’m a very supportive friend. I think he should dye his hair, because he looked great as [Prince Philip](#) blond, as well. Could have done without seeing his bottom quite so much,” she says.) She returned to the fifth season of *The Crown* with a surprise cameo, in a flashback, much to the delight of fans.



As Queen Elizabeth II, with Matt Smith as Prince Philip, in *The Crown*.  
Photograph: AP

Early in 2018, however, Foy, Smith and *The Crown* were headline news for different reasons. On a TV industry discussion panel, an executive from Left Bank Pictures, the production company that makes the show, revealed that [Smith had been paid more than Foy](#), who was the lead in the series, featured in practically all the scenes and had won all those awards. It came just after Michelle Williams learned that she had [been paid far less than her male co-star](#) Mark Wahlberg for reshoots on the film *All the Money in the World* (reportedly \$1,000, to his \$1.5m), and Foy and the show became the centre of a fierce debate about pay equality.

I want to ask about the pay situation, I begin. Foy crosses her eyes, and then rolls them. You're pulling a spectacular face, I tell her. "Because I don't know whether to be honest or not," she replies. "I don't know how much shit to cause."

I wasn't shocked that Matt Smith was being paid more than me. I was very upset. Not like, boohoo, crying upset. I was very upset

Did she know that Smith was being paid more than her, or did she first hear about it when it was in the news? "That was the first I'd heard about it." At

the time, she said the situation was “embarrassing”. Was she shocked by it? “I wasn’t shocked. I was *very* upset. Not like, boohoo, crying upset. I was very upset.” Were you expressing anger? She puts on a daft, silky voice. “I don’t think I allowed myself to.”

She snaps back to briskness. “I really love my industry, and I think it is made up of lots of honourable, incredibly talented, brilliant, imaginative, amazing people.” But she says it is the same for anyone doing any job they love: writing, music, nursing, anything. “Sometimes, you see something, you hear something, you notice something, or something happens to you, and you just go, ‘Oh God, what am I doing? Why am I doing it? Should I be part of this?’ I found it really heartbreakin.”

At the time, she was polite, almost evasive, saying first that it was “very, very odd” to be at the centre of the storm. She is more direct today. “Suddenly I was getting asked all these questions and being encouraged by certain people involved to be the spokesperson for it. I was like, ‘Absolutely fucking not.’”



Claire wears dress, by Proenza Schouler, from [selfridges.com](#). Gold ring, [completedworks.com](#). Styling: Melanie Wilkinson. Photograph: Gustavo Papaleo/The Guardian

What certain people are we talking about? “Can’t say,” she says, firmly. “I just think everybody wanted me to behave in a certain way, in response to it. And I didn’t.” What certain way? She adopts a breezy tone. “‘It’s *fine!* It’s absolutely *fine* what happened!’ That’s what I think they wanted me to say. I mean, it’s so hard. I don’t think I should be honest about certain things about it, because I don’t think it would be helpful. It would add more fuel to it. We’re still talking about this, however many years down the line. *I* know the extent of it. I still went back on the show. If anything, I just didn’t want my experience of the show and what we all did on it to be overshadowed.” She says she doesn’t think it has been, but for someone so jokey about most things, it’s notable that she can’t bring herself to joke about this. “If I could make a joke about it, I would. It’s best just to shut up and endlessly bore your friends with the actual details, poor things,” she says.

She will say that the row has had “an amazing impact, subsequently. You can’t lie now.” A woman came up to Foy and told her that she had been paid fairly for a job because of what had happened. “She was saying it like I’d done something, and I was like, ‘I’ve literally done nothing at all. A newspaper article, and being really shamed …’” Did it feel like shame? “No. It felt like all the attention was on me. And it shouldn’t be on me. I’m not the decision-maker in this process. Go and talk to them about it. Ask them what their reasoning is. Ask them why they did that. Ask them to be honest about everything. Not me.”

At the time, Left Bank Pictures publicly apologised to both Foy and Smith, claimed sole responsibility for setting actors’ salaries, and pledged to do better. And as Foy says, she did go back to [The Crown](#), even after all that. Did you quadruple your fee, at least? “Ha! No. That would have been great. I think my agent probably enjoyed going back to them,” she says, smiling.

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Foy was born in Stockport, Greater Manchester, in 1984, to a salesman father and a mother who worked in pharmaceuticals, and was the youngest of three kids. When she was small, the family moved around the north, also living in Manchester and Leeds. Her parents divorced when she was eight, and she moved to Buckinghamshire, but until that point she had a northern accent. “When my mum and dad were still together, he had a camcorder, and I was a very precocious, attention-seeking child. There’s a video of me going

[puts on a Mancunian accent], ‘Are yer filming them, Dad? Are yer?’” It’s often the case that actors come from restless backgrounds. “Yes. I suppose we’re all – I don’t want to say ‘damaged in some way’, but something wasn’t quite right, somewhere down the line, and that’s what leads you to want that much attention, or to want to be seen.”

But it sounds as if she has always liked attention, from an early age? “I was told I was an attention-seeker. I imagine it’s because I was the youngest of three kids – there wasn’t a lot of attention to go around. My one waking thought was: must get parents to pay attention to me.” She learned very quickly not to be “too much”, she says, though not because anyone told her she was. “It just becomes what you believe about yourself.”

As a teenager, it shifted, and she found she was desperate not to be noticed. “I was like, [she squeaks this out, in a tiny voice] ‘No, not me, don’t pay any attention to me!'” Yet despite her sudden shyness, she was still telling herself that she was too much. “I was still beating myself round the head, going ‘You’re so annoying.’” She says this so cheerfully that I don’t realise how brutal it sounds until I listen to the conversation back.



Claire wears blazer by Nanushka, from mytheresa.com. Jumpsuit, by Galvan, from selfridges.com. Heels, malonesouliers.com Gold ring,

[completedworks.com](http://completedworks.com). Styling: Melanie Wilkinson. Photograph: Gustavo Papaleo/The Guardian

She worked throughout her teenage years. “Inappropriately aged,” she says. “I was 13 when I got my first job, in a pub.” She was a waitress. “I had an abject terror of getting an order wrong.” She does an impression of someone taking an order with tremendous intensity, her voice trembling. “So it’s right that you want two beef and one lamb?” She worked at Tesco for a while. “It was a pit of teenagers all trying to snog each other all of the time. It was like a youth club with supermarket trolleys.” Her older sister told her she should work. “She was like, ‘Get a job, get out.’ So I’ve always been very clear about that.”

When she first started acting, she struggled with the instability of it. “Because you had to be available all the time. And I was like, ‘What? I can’t temp? How am I going to earn money?’ But luckily, as soon as I started working, I kept getting given little nuggets.” She went to drama school in Oxford, and when she left moved to a shared house in London, where she found herself in a “huge, anxious spiral”. She didn’t know what to do with herself. “My friends were all at work. I was in London thinking, ‘I can’t spend any money.’ The idea of exercise was not a thing. I think I did a Geri Halliwell yoga video. That was the extent of the exercise I knew.”

I wasn’t sleeping, wasn’t really eating. I wasn’t really enjoying my life. All the things I thought about myself weren’t very positive

To call her early jobs “little nuggets” is modest. Foy made her stage debut in a Dennis Kelly play, DNA, at the National Theatre in 2008. While she was there, she found out that she had been cast as the lead in the BBC’s new Dickens adaptation, Little Dorrit. “I grew up watching Pride and Prejudice with my cousins, my aunties. BBC period drama was wildest dreams territory. And I didn’t believe it. I just didn’t believe it was happening.” She was already struggling with her mental health, she says. “I wasn’t sleeping, wasn’t really eating a lot. When I was at the National, I wasn’t really enjoying my life. All the fundamental things I thought about myself weren’t very positive, and [success] was at odds with what I believed about myself.”

She had a breakdown. Eventually, her sister intervened. “She was just like, ‘You’re not well.’” She saw a therapist, at her sister’s insistence. “And he helped me get through it. But it was very overwhelming. I felt like I was 1,000 years old.” She realises now that for most of her friends life in their 20s had been a completely different experience. “I didn’t see acting as something I could take for granted. I was like, ‘I don’t even know why I’ve been given this opportunity, I can’t fuck this up.’ It felt like life was *serious*. I’m really relieved that I’m not doing that now. It was exhausting.”



With Andy Serkis in Little Dorrit in 2008. Photograph: Nick Briggs/BBC

Little Dorrit was a smash, and afterwards Foy, who got rave reviews for it, did a lot of British television, some US television and plenty of films, starring alongside [Nicolas Cage](#), [Ryan Gosling](#), [Benedict Cumberbatch](#). But the two pivotal projects, Wolf Hall and The Crown, both involved playing a queen. Did she know she would have such a royal career? “Oh, no. Ridiculous, really. Actually laughable. I realised when I was doing The Crown that it was my second coronation.” Were you over it, at that point? “Coronations are not fun, I’ll tell you that. They are long. But they were very different things. Anne Boleyn loved it. It was her moment of glory. She lay down on her pregnant belly in the cathedral as she was crowned. Elizabeth was just like, ‘Don’t look at me, don’t look at me, I’m here as the

Almighty's chosen one, don't look at me.' So it was a very different experience of living inside those two moments."

Last summer, Foy shot a film with the director [Andrew Haigh](#), called *Strangers*, with [Paul Mescal](#) and [Andrew Scott](#), "who are dreamy". She is between jobs, but she strikes me as someone who likes to be busy. "Some days are busy, some days are not busy, and I panic, and go, 'Oh my God, what am I going to do?'" For now, she's keeping herself occupied, baking, cleaning, walking her dog. She has just set up a home office, "to try to make myself feel legitimate. Normally I do work around the house and there would just be piles of paper and books and shit everywhere, and nothing would be right, and then I'd have a cup of tea, and I'd knock the tea over." At least now, she says, she has a place for it. "Just a room, with all my crap in it."

From now on, I will always be trying to figure out, not how to be better, but how not to be so hard on myself. Like, just enjoy your life

How is her anxiety these days? "I have become a very sage, wise person who has all the answers," she quips. "No, I think from now on, I will always be trying to figure out, not how to be better, but how not to be so hard on myself. Like, just enjoy your life. Just enjoy it. And if that means bad things are going to happen, bad things are going to happen."

Certainly, Foy has had a tough time of it lately. For legal reasons she cannot talk about it, but in January, after a long legal process, a man was given a [22-month suspended sentence](#) and will be repatriated to the US after subjecting Foy to a horrendous stalking ordeal. He sent her more than 1,000 emails in a month, repeatedly contacted her sister and her agent, and turned up at her house. In a statement read to the Old Bailey at the sentencing, she said it had left her "terrified and helpless in my own home". "I view the world in a much more fearful way as a direct result of his actions," she said.

Originally, Foy wasn't up for *Salome in Women Talking*. She went in to discuss playing Ona, the serene, almost ethereal woman played by Mara. ("I would have been acting all whimsical and trying to be spiritual, and it would have been absolutely horrendous," she goofs.) During her first conversation

with Polley, the director asked her which woman she felt most like. “And I was like, the really angry, annoyed one,” she says, laughing, as if that, like her queens, is somehow ridiculous. But, I have to say, it suits her.

Women Talking is released in cinemas on 10 February.

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[\*\*OpinionIsrael\*\*](#)

## **Netanyahu is an existential threat to Israel. He can be resisted – but only with Palestinian support**

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



The Israeli prime minister's latest power grab should prompt his opponents to turn to an unlikely ally



‘If the supreme court is gutted, that will let Benjamin Netanyahu rule unrestrained.’ Protest against Netanyahu’s judicial reforms, Tel Aviv, Israel, 28 January. Photograph: Abir Sultan/EPA

Fri 3 Feb 2023 11.26 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 14.19 EST

He’s not a usual suspect. He’s known for having won a Nobel prize for economics, and for writing the international bestseller Thinking, Fast and Slow, rather than for manning the barricades or wielding a placard. But this week, I [spoke to Daniel Kahneman](#), who soon turns 89, and was shocked to hear the despair in his voice.

“It’s just a horror,” the Israeli-born professor told me. “This is the worst threat to [Israel](#) since 1948,” the year of the state’s founding, he said – worse even than the Yom Kippur war of 1973, when Israel’s survival seemed to hang in the balance – because this time the damage “may be impossible to repair”.

Kahneman was not speaking about a foreign army massing on the country’s borders, an Iranian nuclear bomb or the gathering prospect of a [third Palestinian uprising](#) (though we’ll get to that), but rather something Israel is doing to itself: what Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, gently

calls his “[judicial reform](#)” plan, but what others describe as the evisceration of the Israeli courts, handing unchecked power to the government.

This week, the visiting US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, delivered a milder, [diplomatic version](#) of the same warning, giving Netanyahu a civics lesson on the importance of an independent judiciary and the rule of law. Meanwhile, hundreds of notables, Kahneman among them, signed an “[emergency letter](#)” denouncing the proposed changes, while the head of one of Israel’s biggest tech companies announced he was [leaving the country in protest](#).

Their objection is to a plan that would limit the supreme court’s power to strike down the decisions of politicians, allow Netanyahu or any future prime minister to override a court ruling by a simple majority in parliament, and make judges the handpicked appointments of politicians. As things stand, the supreme court is the only major curb on government power in Israel: the country has no written constitution and no second chamber. If the court is gutted, that will let Netanyahu rule unrestrained – and let him off the hook, as he stands trial and faces the possibility of jail [on corruption charges](#). Kahneman says Israel will join a club whose charter members are Viktor Orbán’s Hungary and Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Turkey: “Israel will be a pseudo-democracy.”



‘This week, the visiting US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, gave Netanyahu a civics lesson on the importance of an independent judiciary.’  
Photograph: Reuters

Of course, plenty will say Israel has been a pseudo-democracy for nearly 56 years, ever since it became the military occupier of the Palestinian territories gained in the [1967 war](#). For them, the current gloom of Israel’s scholars and tech entrepreneurs might seem a welcome sign that the whole Israeli edifice is about to come tumbling down.

But that fails to reckon with an obvious truth: the losers of the changes now afoot will include dissenting Israeli Jews, to be sure, but among those to suffer most directly will, inevitably, be Palestinians.

That’s true in ways both obvious and not. Start with the obvious. By serving as a brake on the tyranny of the majority, the supreme court has regularly protected the rights of minorities – including the [20% of Israeli citizens](#) who are Palestinian Arab. The judges’ record has been far from perfect, but if these reforms go ahead and the courts are reduced to toothless creatures of the government, things will be far worse.

One example: Netanyahu’s far-right, ultra-nationalist coalition partners are itching to [ban Israel’s Arab parties](#) from standing in elections and sitting in the Knesset. If the supreme court is stripped of its powers, there will be nothing and no one to stop them.

But this goes wider. At that Jerusalem press conference, Blinken reiterated Washington’s longstanding support for the two-state solution: the hope that the conflict will be solved by a secure Israel existing alongside an independent Palestine. That’s been the boilerplate position of the international community for decades. It goes back nearly a century, ever since the [Peel commission](#) first proposed partition when the British were in charge, back in 1937. Its advocates see it as the only possible answer to the Israel-Palestine conundrum. There’s just one problem: it is all but dead.

Talk to those on the ground and they describe not a two-state solution, but a one-state reality. The green line between the Israel established in 1948 and the post-1967 occupied territories has been steadily erased, with settlements,

roads and infrastructure ensuring the two are so entwined that any future disentanglement – necessary for the creation of a Palestinian state – is practically impossible.

The result is that de facto single state, in which the Israeli government is the master (a picture that will only become starker if, as many predict, the [Palestinian Authority collapses](#)). In this situation, the removal of the last restraints on Israeli executive power through “judicial reform” becomes all the more alarming. At Netanyahu’s side are ministerial allies who don’t hide their determination to make life ever more unbearable for the Palestinians who inhabit the one-state reality. One is moving to make [even harsher](#) the conditions in which Palestinian prisoners held on security grounds are kept, another to confiscate an [increased chunk of funds](#) owed to the Palestinian Authority.

A future looms in which the kind of violence witnessed last week – 10 dead Palestinians [in Jenin](#); seven Jews killed [leaving a synagogue](#) in Jerusalem; the arrest of a Palestinian shooter [aged just 13](#) – is repeated in endless, degenerating bloodshed.

Is there any way out? No one talks about talks any more. There is no desire or capacity for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations; the two sides are too far apart. The US has apparently abandoned its role as would-be broker: in a [revealing exchange](#) last week, the state department spokesman refused to even use the word “occupation”.

And yet, there is one move that could be made, one weapon the opponents of Netanyahu have barely picked up. Look at the results that brought this far-right government to power: in terms of votes cast, the Netanyahu bloc’s victory was narrow. The trouble was, Netanyahu’s opponents were split among themselves and failed to draw in enough of the constituency that could make all the difference: the one fifth of Israeli citizens who are Palestinian Arab. Overall turnout in the November election topped 70%, but among Israeli Arabs it [was just 53.2%](#). Had Arabs voted in the same numbers as Jews, Netanyahu would not be prime minister.

To remedy that will require, first, a wholesale change in mindset on the part of the mainstream Israeli left, one that at last listens to Palestinian demands

for equality inside the green line and an end to occupation beyond it. That could, in turn, prompt a sea change among Palestinian-Israelis, a recognition that a de facto boycott of Israel's political institutions might have made sense when a separate Palestinian state seemed on the horizon, but makes no sense now. It only strengthens those bent on making their lives worse.

Netanyahu is on the brink of a power grab that will destroy Israel's oft-repeated boast to be the only democracy in the Middle East. That may be too late to avert, but it would be one of history's great ironies if the only people who can save Israel from itself turn out to be the Palestinians.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist
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[\*\*Guardian Opinion cartoon\*\*](#)

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## **Martin Rowson on gas meters fitted by force – cartoon**

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## OpinionCentrica

**'It's not who we are,' wails British Gas. Sorry but when you're using bailiffs to install meters, that's exactly who you are**

Marina Hyde



It's not the only company filling its boots while poor people have to pay more for electricity. Luckily Grant Shapps is on hand to look busy



Ebbw Vale in Blaenau Gwent, South Wales, November 2022. Photograph: Chris Howes/Wild Places Photography/Alamy

Fri 3 Feb 2023 09.18 ESTLast modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 14.18 EST

We now live in a time when energy firms talk like celebrities who've just lamped someone at the Oscars, or been covertly filmed making racist remarks. On being confronted with the fact that debt collectors in its pay are breaking into the homes of vulnerable customers to forcibly install prepayment meters, British Gas yesterday summoned the full force of theatrical contrition to wail: "[This is not who we are.](#)"

You'll note that statement conforms to the ironclad rule of the this-is-not-who-I-am apology, in that its precise opposite is true. This is, demonstrably, precisely who British Gas are, given that this is what they do. "It's not how we do business," explained the firm, faced with an overwhelming stack of evidence that this is indeed how they do business.

As one debt collector trainer cheerily enlightened a new recruit during [the Times investigation](#) into the practice: "That person could tell you that their entire family of 50 were in a horrific aeroplane crash and were the sole survivor, and we'd still be saying: that's a shame, but we are changing your meter." The bailiff workforce seems to have absorbed this central ethical

message. “If every single mum that starts getting a bit teary you’re going to walk away from,” reasoned one, “you won’t be earning any bonus.” How can it not be the way you do business, if doing it is literally incentivised?

Admittedly, it’s not how British Gas present the way they do business to the outside world. The firm’s website and social channels confront users with a perky message: “[We’re tooled up to help bring bills down](#).” For whatever reason, they omit to mention that the tools are a mortise pick, a mass-issued warrant, and a guy who prefaced setting a locksmith on the door of a single father-of-three by telling the undercover reporter: “I love this bit.” (Whether this man is the biggest tool in the British Gas shed is a matter of debate. I imagine the field is hotly contested.)

The chief executive of the energy regulator, Ofgem, yesterday condemned the practice of forcibly entering people’s homes and switching them to prepayment. He also opened an investigation into British Gas, warning: “No energy CEO can shirk their legal and moral responsibilities to protect their own customers, especially the most vulnerable.”

And yet they can, as everyone from charities to Citizens Advice to a select committee inquiry has been highlighting for a long time now. Perhaps in their submissions to this inquiry, British Gas-contracted bailiffs will claim they are in fact engaged in divinely appointed “moral” work, much in the same way a serial killer argues they are simply cleansing the streets of sex workers once they’ve used them. Surprisingly, that’s not currently the line the firm is going with. If warm words could heat homes, British Gas could do itself out of business.

As for who else is looking busy, the business and energy secretary, Grant Shapps, last week [wrote a letter](#) to energy companies ordering them to stop the practice. Ironically, for firms that deplore their own demands being ignored, they seem not to have opened it. Maybe companies that decline to engage with the secretary of state’s envelopes could be forced to prepay their taxes? British Gas expects to increase its earnings [eightfold this year](#).

Naturally, those unopened ministerial demands are not the only irony in town. Yesterday, Shell reported global profits of \$40bn (£32.2bn), the

highest in its 115-year history. The announcement served as a reminder that our government's longtime refusal to consider extending the windfall tax was opposed, among others, by Shell itself. Last October the firm's then chief executive Ben van Beurden told the Energy Intelligence Forum that governments needed to tax firms such as his to protect the poorest. "You cannot have a market that behaves in such a way ... that is going to damage a significant part of society ... I think we just have to accept as a society – it can be done smartly and not so smartly. There is a discussion to be had about it, but I think it's inevitable." The then chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, finally took not-especially-smart action in the autumn statement; the government always being the last to know.

Before we conclude, it must be said that British Gas is far from the only firm forcibly fitting prepayment meters, often while people are out at work, and shockingly often in the case of disabled customers who rely on electrically operated equipment to manage their lives. Many firms are driving these already vulnerable people on to prepayment meters, where the rate is disgracefully and unjustifiably higher. This is simply inhumane. The fact that it has continued despite the resultant anguish being highlighted is a sign that something much bigger than the bond between a company and an individual customer is broken.

This week the US president, Joe Biden, called for a "junk fee" prevention act, reasoning: "You shouldn't have to pay an extra \$50 to sit next to your child on the plane, pay a surprise 'resort fee' for a hotel stay, pay \$200 to terminate your cable plan, or pay huge service fees to buy concert tickets".

I know it involves taking a vague interest in how people actually live, but you'd think it was even more of a priority for someone in our own government to say that poor people really, really shouldn't have to pay more for electricity via prepayment meters. If they can't even get a grip on that part of the problem, let alone the iceberg it's the tip of, then mounting evidence suggests it might be time for a number of parties in this story to concede: "This actually *is* who we are."

Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

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Digested weekAlec Baldwin

## **Digested week: Alec Baldwin on gun control? Silence would be preferable**

Emma Brockes



Plus Gawker and the end (again) of an era, and Eva Green's WhatsApp mishaps



Actor Alec Baldwin was this week charged with involuntary manslaughter in the fatal shooting of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins. Photograph: David Dee Delgado/Reuters

Fri 3 Feb 2023 18.37 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 19.01 EST

## Monday

When one thinks of [Alec Baldwin](#) – as this week’s news cycle sadly ensures one must – humility isn’t the first quality that springs to mind. Baldwin’s persona hinges on a comedic bombast that the 64-year-old carries over from the screen into life. Even for a man who threatens photographers in the street, yells at airline stewards and rashly tweets and deletes, however, his apparent blitheness in the wake of [checks notes] shooting and killing someone accidentally on the set of his last film has been quite something to behold.

A period of silent reflection, silent contemplation, or silence of any description at all would seem to be the minimum requirement for someone in Baldwin’s position. Instead, in the 12 months following the death of 42-year-old Halyna Hutchins in Bonanza City, New Mexico, he has been bouncing about as usual on Twitter, sharing opinions, making jokes, and

speaking out about – oh, yes, gun control. Perhaps your voice, Alec, isn’t the one America needs on this subject right now.

At the beginning of the week, Baldwin and Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the armourer on the film *Rust*, [were charged](#) with involuntary manslaughter in the killing of Hutchins, the movie’s cinematographer, after Baldwin fired what he thought was an unloaded gun. Both deny responsibility. Both are accused by prosecutors of a flippancy amounting to negligence. A brief Google search shows the 25-year-old Gutierrez-Reed posing with guns on Instagram prior to the accident.

As for Baldwin: prosecutors allege that his pattern of thoughtlessness included not being arsed to turn up to mandatory firearms safety training before filming began, and, when he did show up to a rescheduled session, failing to pay attention because he was on the phone. Perhaps he was talking to his wife, Hillary Thomas from Boston, who, in line with the apparently endlessly flexible realities of the household, snapped at journalists last week in what still appears to be a [fake Spanish accent](#).

## Tuesday

If only the original Gawker still existed, it would be having a field day with all this. As it is, the defunct gossip site, which relaunched under new ownership in 2021 after being put out of business in 2016, [has died](#) (again). Nick Denton’s original Gawker, a much shrewder and less shouty product than the website’s current incarnation, was destroyed, if you recall, by a lawsuit brought by Hulk Hogan, which was covertly paid for – much like the parasitic fungus animating the zombies in the current HBO hit *The Last of Us* – by Peter Thiel. Two years later, Bryan Goldberg, of Bustle Digital Group, picked up the title in a bankruptcy auction for \$1.35m (£1.1m). This week, after struggling to find a place for itself in a media landscape where – see also: Wonkette – it’s hard to attract eyeballs via snark and swearing alone, the closure announcement came from editor Leah Finnegan, with the loss of many journalists’ jobs and the sound of the last whisper of the end of an era.

## Wednesday

Few of us would survive the public exposure of our texts or emails, so it was hard not to feel some sympathy for Eva Green, the actor, this week as her private messages were read out in the high court. Green is [suing](#) White Lantern Films and SMC Speciality finance for alleged non-payment of fees for her appearance in the canned sci-fi movie A Patriot, while the producers are suing her back for breach of contract.

Actually, by the standards of most workplace grumbling, Green's messages struck me as quite mild, the 42-year-old Frenchwoman complaining via WhatsApp that the movie's director was "weak and stupid", that one of the film's investors was a "fucking nightmare", and that the movie itself was "bullshit," all of which, despite her protestations that hearing the chats read out in court had "humiliated" her, made one rather warm to the woman. The only remark that really threatened Green's image was her drive-by reference to the "shitty peasant crew members from Hampshire", the kind of insult that, in the old days, would have required her to go on a grovelling meet-the-peasants PR tour of Basingstoke before she was allowed near a film set again.

## Thursday

Like opening an ancient crypt or disturbing a cave buried for thousands of years, we know it's a bad idea to try to bring something back from extinction. Scientists in their wisdom, however, are confident that with a mere \$150m investment, the dodo, poster boy for extinct species which disappeared from Earth in the 17th century, may have [a shot at being re-animated](#).

Before this ends in a T rex devouring your grandma on the way to the post office, it presents problems of a lower but still aggravating order. If the dodo returns, what, in common parlance, may we say things are as dead as? A passenger pigeon? A Pyrenean Ibex? A sabre-toothed tiger? None quite has the ring of things being as dead as a dodo, a consideration – along with many others – that has almost certainly been overlooked by the gene editing company. This outfit, by the way, which is behind a range of other "de-extinction projects", including bringing back the woolly mammoth, is called Colossal Biosciences, a 100% legit-sounding company and not something that sounds as if it has been made up by a Hollywood hack on tight deadline.

# Friday

We head into a weekend of excitement tinged with sadness as Sunday night brings our last engagement with Sarah Lancashire, her massive jacket and huge fringe, as the final episode of [Happy Valley](#) airs. Sometimes, the old ways are best, and the slow, weekly release of episodes has brought us to a point of unity and anticipation you just don't get from a binge.

Whichever way the shows ends – a tenner says Ryan betrays his murderous dad – there is at least the promise of more good TV on the horizon. While you can keep the magic of White Lotus season two alive by [renting](#) Daphne and Harper's Sicilian villa on Airbnb (for just \$5,957 a night), Mike White, its creator, was [recently spotted](#) at a Four Seasons in Thailand. Stand by for a season three packed with – I'm guessing – high-end Aussie tourists, trespassing British backpackers, and the return of all of our favourite American grotesques.

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## 2023.02.04 - Around the world

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- [Donald Trump Prosecutors likened ex-president to mob boss and had to prove he wasn't insane – book](#)
- [US Audio reveals Trump campaign bid to spread lie of stolen election](#)
- [Dogs Portuguese pooch crowned world's oldest dog](#)

## Tyre Nichols

# Sixth Memphis police officer fired for role in arrest of Tyre Nichols

Investigation finds Preston Hemphill violated rules regarding stun gun use, and video shows him saying ‘I hope they stomp his ass’



People protest on 28 January after the release of the body cam footage showing Memphis police officers beating Tyre Nichols. Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

*Associated Press*

Fri 3 Feb 2023 19.47 EST Last modified on Sat 4 Feb 2023 11.58 EST

A sixth Memphis officer was fired on Friday after an internal police investigation showed he violated multiple department policies in the violent arrest of [Tyre Nichols](#), including rules surrounding the deployment of a stun gun, officials said.

Preston Hemphill had previously been suspended as he was investigated for his role in the arrest of Nichols, who died three days later. Five [Memphis](#) officers have already been fired and charged with second-degree murder in Nichols's death.

Hemphill was the third officer at a traffic stop that preceded the violent arrest but was not present when Nichols was beaten.

On body-camera footage from the initial stop, Hemphill is heard saying that he stunned Nichols and declaring: "I hope they stomp his ass."

Also Friday, a [Tennessee](#) board suspended the emergency medical technician licenses of two former Memphis fire department employees, EMT Robert Long and advanced EMT JaMichael Sandridge, for failing to render critical care.

The firing and suspensions build on efforts by authorities [to hold officers and other first responders accountable](#) for the violence against Nichols, who was Black. Six Black officers have been fired and charged with second-degree murder and other charges. One other officer has been suspended. The justice department has [opened a civil rights investigation](#) into the attack, which was [captured on video](#).

Emergency medical services board member Jeff Beaman said during Friday's emergency meeting that there may have been other licensed personnel on scene – including a supervisor – who could have prevented the situation that led to the death of Nichols. Beaman said he hopes the board addresses that issue in the future.

Board members watched 19 minutes of surveillance video that showed Long and Sandridge as they failed to care for Nichols, who couldn't stay seated upright against the side of the vehicle, lying prone on the ground multiple times.

"The [state] department [of health] alleges that neither Mr Sandridge nor Mr Long engaged in emergency care and treatment to patient TN, who was

clearly in distress during the 19-minute period,” said Matt Gibbs, an attorney for the state department of health.

Board member Sullivan Smith said it was “obvious to even a layperson” that Nichols “was in terrible distress and needed help”.

“And they failed to provide that help,” Smith said. “They were his best shot, and they failed to help.”

Nichols was beaten after police stopped him for what they said was a traffic violation. Video released after pressure from Nichols’s family shows officers holding him down and repeatedly punching, kicking and striking him with a baton as he screamed for his mother.

Six of the officers involved were part of the so-called scorpion unit, which targeted violent criminals in high-crime areas. The [unit has since been disbanded](#).

The killing led to [renewed public outcry](#) over how police forces treat Black citizens with excessive violence, regardless of the race of the police officers.

At Nichols’s funeral on Wednesday, [calls for reform and justice were interwoven with grief](#) over the loss of a man remembered as a son, a sibling, a father and a passionate photographer and skateboarder.

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## [\*\*Books\*\*](#)

# **Prosecutors likened Trump to mob boss and had to prove he wasn't insane – book**

Mark Pomerantz, who was on New York team investigating tax affairs, reportedly compares ex-president to John Gotti



Donald Trump speaks in Columbia, South Carolina last week. News outlets obtained the Pomerantz book on Friday. Photograph: Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

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

Fri 3 Feb 2023 16.59 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 17.02 EST

New York prosecutors building a case against Donald Trump for allegedly lying about his wealth for tax purposes had to show the former president was

“not legally insane”, one of those prosecutors [reportedly](#) writes in an eagerly awaited new book.

The lawyer, Mark Pomerantz, also reportedly compares Trump, the only confirmed candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 2024, to famous figures in the world of organised crime including John Gotti, the “Teflon Don” who [died in prison in 2002](#).

In messages seen by the Guardian on Friday, one former Trump administration official called the comparison “unfair to the late Mr Gotti”.

Pomerantz was part of attempts by the Manhattan district attorney’s office to build a case against Trump, but [quit in February 2022](#) as the DA, Alvin Bragg, decided not to indict.

Pomerantz is now the author of [The People vs Donald Trump: An Inside Account](#), due to be published in the US on Tuesday. The book has angered Bragg, who is still investigating Trump, and the former president, who has threatened to sue.

News outlets obtained the book on Friday. The Daily Beast [reported](#) Pomerantz’s words about Trump and insanity.

“To rebut the claim that Trump believed his own ‘hype’,” Pomerantz writes, the Beast says, “we would have to show, and stress, that [Donald Trump](#) was not legally insane.

“Was Donald Trump suffering from some sort of mental condition that made it impossible for him to distinguish between fact and fiction?”

According [to the Beast](#), Pomerantz writes that lawyers “discussed whether Trump had been spewing bullshit for so many years about so many things that he could no longer process the difference between bullshit and reality”.

The New York Times also [obtained the book](#). It reported that Pomerantz says Trump rose to fame and power “through a pattern of criminal activity”.

“He demanded absolute loyalty and would go after anyone who crossed him,” Pomerantz [reportedly](#) writes. “He seemed always to stay one step ahead of the law. In my career as a lawyer, I had encountered only one other person who touched all of these bases: John Gotti, the head of the Gambino organised crime family.”

A lawyer for Trump, Joe Tacopina, [told the Times](#): “Injecting the name John Gotti into this seems like just another desperate attempt by Pomerantz to sell books.”

Pomerantz reportedly writes that he considered a racketeering case under New York laws used against mobsters, an idea eventually dropped as too ambitious.

Bragg has recently [revived](#) the investigation of Trump’s role in a 2016 hush money payment to an adult film star, Stormy Daniels, who claims an affair with Trump that the ex-president denies.

The Manhattan DA is [reportedly](#) seeking cooperation from Allen Weisselberg, the Trump Organization chief financial officer recently given [a five-month jail sentence](#) for tax offences.

Trump faces legal jeopardy on numerous other fronts, from his attempts to overturn the 2020 election to his retention of classified documents and a rape allegation by the writer E Jean Carroll, a claim Trump denies. The former president also faces an ongoing civil suit over his financial practices brought by the New York state attorney general, Letitia James.

On Friday, Bragg [told the Times](#): “Our skilled and professional legal team continues to follow the facts of this case wherever they may lead, without fear or favor.

“Mr Pomerantz decided to quit a year ago and sign a book deal. I haven’t read the book and won’t comment on any ongoing investigation because of the harm it could cause to the case.”

Pomerantz denies prejudicing investigations of Trump. According [to the Beast](#), he writes that when he was on the team, prosecutors “had a case, but

it was not without issues, and certainly could not be described as a slam dunk”.

He also reportedly describes disagreements within Bragg’s team about how to proceed.

“It was frustrating to feel like we were about to march into battle and were strapping on our guns and equipment, but when we looked around at the rest of the platoon we saw a lot of conscientious objectors,” Pomerantz [reportedly](#) writes.

The Times [said](#): “The book’s description of conversations between Mr Pomerantz and Mr Bragg’s team could arguably complicate the investigation. In particular, Mr Pomerantz detailed Mr Bragg’s opposition to using Michael D Cohen, a longtime fixer for Mr Trump who turned on the former president, as a witness, an awkward disclosure now that Mr Cohen may become one of Mr Bragg’s star witnesses.”

Cohen was [jailed](#) for offences including the payment to Daniels. He [said](#) this week he had once again given his phones to investigators.

In his book, the Times said, Pomerantz calls Bragg’s investigation “the legal equivalent of a plane crash”, caused by “pilot error”.

On Friday, Bragg [told the Times](#): “Mr Pomerantz’s plane wasn’t ready for takeoff.”

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## US news

# Audio reveals Trump campaign bid to spread lie of stolen election

Team in Wisconsin pledged to ‘fan the flames’ of baseless allegations of election fraud after Trump lost there



Trump in Kenosha, Wisconsin just before the election in November 2020.  
Photograph: Carlos Barria/Reuters

*Associated Press*

Fri 3 Feb 2023 09.21 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 10.12 EST

A newly released audio recording offers a behind-the-scenes look at how former US president Donald Trump’s campaign team in a pivotal battleground state knew they had been outflanked by [Democrats](#) in the 2020 presidential election.

But even as they acknowledged defeat, they decided to “fan the flames” of allegations of widespread fraud costing Trump victory there, which were

ultimately debunked – repeatedly – by elections officials and the courts.

The audio from 5 November 2020, two days after the election, is surfacing as Trump again seeks the White House while continuing to lie about the legitimacy of the outcome and Democrat Joe Biden's 2020 win.

The [Wisconsin](#) political operatives in the strategy session even praised Democratic turnout efforts in the state's largest counties and appeared to joke about their efforts to engage Black voters, according to the recording obtained Thursday by the Associated Press. The audio centers on Andrew Iverson, who was the head of Trump's campaign in the state.

"Here's the deal: comms is going to continue to fan the flame and get the word out about Democrats trying to steal this election. We'll do whatever they need. Just be on standby if there's any stunts we need to pull," Iverson said.

Iverson is now the midwest regional director for the Republican National Committee. He deferred questions about the meeting to the RNC, whose spokesperson, Keith Schipper, declined comment because he had not heard the recording.

The former campaign official and Republican operative who provided a copy of the recording to the AP was in the meeting and recorded it. The operative is not authorized to speak publicly about what was discussed but spoke out because Trump is seeking the White House again.

In response to questions about the audio, Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung said: "The 2024 campaign is focused on competing in every state and winning in a dominating fashion. That is why President Trump is leading by wide margins in poll after poll."

Wisconsin was a big part of Trump's victory in 2016 and his campaign fought hard to keep the swing state in 2020 but Biden defeated Trump by nearly 21,000 votes in Wisconsin. The result has withstood [independent and partisan audits](#) and [reviews](#), as well as lawsuits and recounts in the state's two largest and Democratic-leaning counties.

Yet, two days after the election, there was no discussion of Trump having won the state during the meeting of Republican campaign operatives.

Instead, parts of the meeting focus on discussions about packing up campaign offices.

Iverson is heard praising the GOP's efforts while admitting the margin of Trump's defeat in the state.

"At the end of the day, this operation received more votes than any other Republican in Wisconsin history," Iverson said. "Say what you want, our operation turned out Republican or DJT supporters. Democrats have got 20,000 more than us, out of Dane county and other shenanigans in Milwaukee, Green Bay and Dane. There's a lot that people can learn from this campaign."

The meeting showcases another juxtaposition of what Republican officials knew about the election results and what Trump and his closest allies were saying publicly as they pushed [the lie of a stolen election](#). Trump was told by his own [attorney general](#) there was [no sign of widespread fraud](#), and many within his own administration [told the former president](#) there was no substance to various claims of fraud or manipulation – advice Trump repeatedly ignored.

In the weeks after the election, Trump and his allies would file dozens of lawsuits, convene fake electors and pressure election officials in an attempt to overturn the will of the voters and keep Trump in office.

At one point, the Wisconsin operatives laugh over needing "more Black voices for Trump". Iverson also references their efforts to engage with Black voters.

"We ever talk to Black people before? I don't think so," he said, eliciting laughter from others in the room.

Another speaker on the recording with Iverson is identified by the source as GOP operative Clayton Henson. At the time, Henson was a regional director for the RNC in charge of Wisconsin and other midwestern states.

Henson specifically references Democratic turnout and strong performance in Dane county, which includes Madison, the state capital.

“Hats off to them for what they did in Dane county. You have to respect that,” Henson said. “There’s going to be another election in a couple years. So remember the lessons you learned and be ready to punch back.” Henson declined to comment.

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## [Dogs](#)

# Portuguese pooch crowned world's oldest dog

Thirty-year-old Bobi snatched title from US pup in upset; longevity credited to human food and 'calm, peaceful environment'



Bobi was born in the village of Conqueiros, Portugal, on 11 May 1992.  
Photograph: Guinness World Records/PA

[Maya Yang](#)

Sat 4 Feb 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Sat 4 Feb 2023 03.02 EST

It's a dog's life for one small US pup this weekend after a European rival essentially stole his bone.

Two weeks ago, Spike, an Ohio-based chihuahua mix rescue dog, was crowned the world's oldest dog. But two days ago Bobi, a dog that guards

livestock in Portugal, grabbed the title faster than a string of sausages, CNN [reported](#).

At a record-breaking 30 years and 267 days old as of 2 February, Bobi has not only been [declared](#) the latest “world’s oldest dog” by Guinness World Records but also is recognized by the data keepers as the oldest dog on record ever. In contrast, as of 7 December 2022, [Spike](#) was a mere 23 years and seven days old.

According to Guinness, Bobi has lived his entire life in the rural village of Conqueiros, in the Leiria district of central [Portugal](#), with the Costa family. He is a purebred Rafeiro do Alentejo, a Portuguese livestock guardian dog that is named after the Alentejo region of southern Portugal from which it originates. Life expectancy for the breed is typically between 12 and 14 years.



Bobi was nearly buried alive as a pup. Photograph: Guinness World Records

Born on 11 May 1992 in an outbuilding where the Costa family kept their wood, Bobi was part of a litter of four male puppies.

“I was eight years old,” Leonel Costa, now aged 38, told Guinness. “My father was a hunter, and we always had many dogs”

By way of explaining how Bobi had beaten the odds many times over, he added: “Unfortunately, at that time it was considered normal by older people who could not have more animals at home … to bury the animals in a hole so that they would not survive.” But that was not Bobi’s fate.

A day after Bobi and his brothers were born, Leonel Costa’s parents entered the outbuilding while the puppies’ mother, Gira, was away and took the litter – but on her return the mother persisted in visiting the outbuilding.

When Costa followed Gira inside, he discovered Bobi, who it seemed had been mistakenly left behind as his brown fur camouflaged him among the logs.

Now almost 31 years later, Costa put Bobi’s longevity down to his “calm, peaceful environment … far from the cities.”

And, according to Costa, Bobi has always eaten human food. “What we ate … they ate too … Between a can of animal food or a piece of meat, Bobi doesn’t hesitate and chooses our food,” said Costa.

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## **Headlines friday 10 february 2023**

- [Live Business: UK ‘not out the woods yet’, Jeremy Hunt warns, after economy dodges recession](#)
- [Full report UK narrowly avoids recession after figures show growth flatlining](#)
- [Live Dominic Raab says ‘setting high standards’ not same as bullying](#)
- [Dominic Raab 'I always behaved professionally while minister'](#)

**Business liveBusiness**

# **UK ‘not out of the woods yet’ after economy dodges recession by a whisker; Russia cuts oil output – as it happened**

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/live/2023/feb/10/uk-gdp-report-growth-recession-fourth-quarter-december-2022-jeremy-hunt-business-live>

## Economic growth (GDP)

# UK narrowly avoids recession after figures show growth flatlining

Economy contracted in December by 0.5% after expansion of 0.1% and 0.55% in previous two months

- [Analysis: UK can expect year of stagnation](#)
- [Business live updates: UK ‘not out of woods yet’ – Jeremy Hunt](#)

UK economy not yet 'out of the woods', says chancellor – video

*Phillip Inman*  
[@phillipinman](#)

Fri 10 Feb 2023 05.03 ESTFirst published on Fri 10 Feb 2023 02.01 EST

The UK has avoided entering a recession by the slimmest of margins as figures show its trade deficit with the EU hit record levels in the last three months of 2022.

A decline in gross domestic product (GDP) of 0.5% in December was offset by increases in the two previous months to leave the economy's performance in the fourth quarter at roughly the same level as the previous three months.

Negative growth in the fourth quarter would have signalled recession, after the [UK economy shrank by 0.2%](#) in the third quarter – a figure revised up from the initial estimate of a 0.3% contraction. A technical recession is generally defined as two consecutive quarters of negative growth.

The chancellor, [Jeremy Hunt](#), said the figures underscored Britain's resilience, adding that they showed the economy was the fastest-growing in the G7 group of rich nations last year.

However, the economy remains 0.8% below its pre-pandemic peak in 2019, in contrast with the US, which has experienced growth of 5.1% over the same period, and the 2.4% improvement among the 19 members of the eurozone.

### [GDP graphic](#)

Business groups said the situation remained difficult, with one describing the drop in December as “brutal” and a harbinger of a difficult year ahead.

The dismal growth figures came as separate data showed trade with the rest of the world declined during the last quarter along with retail sales, with the normally buoyant shopping period in the run-up to Christmas failing to live up to hopes.

The [Office for National Statistics](#) said the UK’s trade deficit with the EU widened in the final quarter of 2022 to its highest level since records began in 1997 as imports from the bloc rocketed to £82bn against an exports total of £49.2bn.

While the deficit largely reflected the huge increase in gas imports, the ONS said there was a sharp deterioration in the balance of goods and services traded with the rest of the world. It said the shortfall widened £2.4bn to £26.8bn, which the statistics agency said was “driven by lower exports of both goods and services”.

The shadow chancellor, [Rachel Reeves](#), said the economy was “stuck in the slow lane” and called on Hunt to bring forward “a proper windfall tax on oil and gas giants” to prevent a 40% increase in household energy bills in April that she said would make the cost of living crisis worse.

Hunt is under pressure to open his chequebook to maintain a subsidy for household gas bills beyond April by blocking a £500 increase in the energy price cap to £3,000. Many of his MPs believe the economy is unlikely to recover unless he also increases the pay offer to public sector workers to end a string of debilitating strikes.

In a round of TV interviews, he said he could not afford to extend the £2,500 energy price cap and an increase in public sector pay would be inflationary.

The Confederation of British Industry said that without a significant move by the government to aid businesses a recession in 2023 was likely. It said the chancellor needed to take “a bolder approach to tackling labour and skills shortages and falling business investment”.

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Suren Thiru, the economics director at the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, said: “Despite skirting a technical recession for now, December’s GDP fall confirms that the economy took a nosedive at the end of 2022.

“The UK is facing a particularly brutal year, with high inflation, stealth tax rises and the lagged impact of numerous interest rate hikes still likely to push us into a summer downturn by hammering incomes and confidence.”

Strike action across many industries and a drop in school attendance were also blamed for the sharp drop of GDP in December. The ONS said the quarter’s figures were rescued by a return to the office that pushed up activity in the administrative sector.

With the [cost of living crisis](#) eating into household spending power and many small businesses struggling to stay afloat, few economists had predicted a strong performance for the final quarter of last year.

Bank of England policymakers said in their [latest outlook for the UK economy](#) that they expected GDP to grow by 0.1% in the last three months of 2022.

Ben Jones, the lead economist at the CBI, said: “We may have avoided a technical recession late last year but we probably won’t avoid one this year. While we expect that the downturn will be shallow, if we act now, we can make the recession even shorter than predicted.

“All eyes are on the chancellor’s March budget, when businesses will be looking for a bolder approach to tackling labour and skills shortages and falling business investment. In particular, firms will be looking for a permanent replacement to the [super-deduction](#), as well as a focus on innovation and the green economy, to help boost economic growth in the years ahead.”

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**Politics live with Andrew Sparrow****Politics**

# RMT strikes to continue, says Mick Lynch, after members reject ‘dreadful’ pay offers – as it happened

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## Dominic Raab

# **Dominic Raab: I always behaved professionally while minister**

Deputy prime minister says he sought high standards, as complaints of dozens of officials are investigated



Dominic Raab faces multiple allegations of bullying from civil servants, including a formal group complaint that represents the concerns of 27 officials. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

*[Kiran Stacey](#), Political correspondent*

Fri 10 Feb 2023 03.35 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 09.35 EST

Dominic Raab has said he “behaved professionally at all times” as a minister, despite facing criticism of his behaviour from dozens of officials.

In a rare interview, the deputy prime minister [told the Telegraph](#) he wanted to set high standards in office, and added that he believed in “zero bullying”.

Raab has remained relatively quiet since the prime minister, Rishi Sunak, ordered an investigation into eight complaints made about him by civil servants in three departments. [Staff report](#) being given extremely difficult demands on unreasonable deadlines, with a group complaint alleging that some officials had to be signed off work for extended periods of time because of the stress they were under.

The lawyer Adam Tolley has been appointed to investigate the claims, but government insiders say his report could still be weeks from publication. If Raab has to leave office, it will be the third cabinet minister to resign or be sacked since Sunak entered No 10 in October.

Raab told the Telegraph: “I’m confident I have behaved professionally at all times. And I will engage with the inquiry, and of course I would not want to say anything that prejudiced it.”

Asked to compare his behaviour with previous Conservative governments such as that of Margaret Thatcher, he added: “I think it’s difficult to compare different eras. But I think standards of professionalism, whether they’re in the business sector, the voluntary sector or the public sector, should involve setting high standards and zero bullying, and those two things are perfectly reconcilable.”

Separately, he told the BBC: “I’m confident I behaved professionally at all times. Of course I called for the inquiry and I’ll respect the outcome.”

Raab’s comments were criticised by Dave Penman, general secretary of the civil service union, the FDA, who told the BBC’s Today programme on Friday: “What we need is for the inquiry to conclude as quickly as possible, and for the protagonists – who have been reminded of the need for confidentiality – to stop giving comments to the public.”

Penman added: “If you bully civil servants as part of your role as a minister then that is a breach of the [ministerial] code, and the prime minister has to make a judgment whether you should still be in office.”

Raab faces multiple allegations of bullying from civil servants, including a formal group complaint, which [represents the concerns of 27 officials](#). The

complaint says: “The combination of the pressure of work and unreasonable deadlines has had such an impact on some colleagues’ mental and physical health that they have visited their GPs, and some have subsequently been signed off work for extended periods of time.”

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As far back as 2018, a senior official at the Brexit department sent a “[serious expression of concern](#)” about Raab’s behaviour to the Cabinet Office. In August 2021, [officials said](#) the then foreign secretary’s refusal to speak to some staff he considered “time wasters” led to delays and blockages that hampered the evacuation of Afghanistan.

Downing Street has insisted Sunak was not aware of any formal complaints against Raab when he reappointed him to government in late October. The prime minister’s spokesperson has [refused to say](#), however, whether he was aware of any informal complaints.

When a formal complaint was submitted in November, Sunak appointed Tolley to investigate the allegations. Since then, the barrister [has interviewed](#) at least three top civil servants who have worked with Raab in government: Simon McDonald, the former permanent secretary at the Foreign Office, Antonia Romeo, the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Justice, and

Philip Rycroft, who ran the Brexit department while Raab was in charge there.

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## 2023.02.10 - Spotlight

- 'The wounds don't ever heal' 30 years after James Bulger's murder, Bootle cannot forget
- 'We fetishised being young – it's stupid!' Judi Dench and Richard Eyre on ageing, Covid and saving the NHS
- You be the judge Should my girlfriend stop claiming she's a vegan?
- I gave up booze and am having more fun than ever These seven tips could help you do the same

## James Bulger murder

# ‘The wounds don’t ever heal’: 30 years after James Bulger’s murder, Bootle cannot forget

In 1993, the UK was held in horror by the murder of two-year-old James Bulger. From the scene of his abduction to the youth justice system, the distress still reverberates



The Strand shopping centre in Bootle, from where toddler James Bulger was abducted in February 1993. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian



[Josh Halliday](#) *North of England correspondent*

Fri 10 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 09.35 EST

In Bootle's aged shopping centre, billboards promise "there's something changing at the Strand" but the place feels haunted by the past. The butcher's shop where [two-year-old James Bulger was abducted](#) is long gone, as is the Mothercare where dozens of anxious parents bought 60s-style reins in the days after he was taken.

On the lower level, where CCTV cameras captured that haunting image of James being led away by one of his killers, a giant black poster celebrates 50 years of the Strand. It has been here since 2018. Even the big clock at the bus station next door is stuck in the past.

"I wouldn't even say 50% of the shops are open now," said Dave Allen, 52, clutching the hand of his four-year-old grandson on their way into Poundstretcher. "There was a lot more shops back then." Allen, from nearby Kirkdale, is thinking back to 1993. Nobody around here can forget.

The Strand was filled with Friday afternoon shoppers when, 30 years ago on Sunday, James was beckoned from his mother's side by two 10-year-old boys who marched him two-and-a-half miles to a railway line where they

bludgeoned him to death. It remains one of Britain's most shocking, and far-reaching, crimes of the last century.

"It's still in everyone's mind. How can it not be?" Allen asked. His daughter was a similar age to James in 1993 and the memory has passed down generations like a haunted heirloom. "My eldest, his mum, is very protective of him," he said, gesturing to his grandson. "Especially when we're here. It's that long ago but you just can't help it."



Scenes inside the Strand in Bootle. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Thirty years later, the details are as familiar as they are horrific. The toddler with bouncy blond hair had let go of his mother's hand for only seconds when he was lured away by two truanting classmates, Jon Venables and Robert Thompson.

In 91 seconds, they had spirited him out of the Strand and begun the long walk across Bootle and Walton to a railway line where they had a den on the embankment. They were seen by 38 people, most of whom did nothing, perhaps believing, understandably, that no horror could be committed by such young boys. Some thought James was their little brother.

At the railway line, they bludgeoned him with weapons including a 22lb iron bar then left the toddler, wearing his Noddy t-shirt, to his death on the tracks.

Venables and Thompson, both now 40, remain the youngest people to stand trial for murder in the UK. The pair have new identities but only Thompson has remained out of custody since their release in 2001.

Venables has twice been [convicted for possessing child abuse images](#), most recently in 2017 when he was found with a “paedophile manual” and more than 1,100 unlawful photos or videos, a third in the most serious category. Some showed the sexual abuse of male toddlers. He was refused parole in 2020 but is awaiting a new hearing in spring.

The prospect of Venables’ release is a daily nightmare for James’s family, said Robin Makin, the solicitor for the boy’s father, Ralph Bulger, and his uncle Jimmy Bulger. “We are really concerned,” he said in a [Liverpool](#) cafe last week. “As far as Ralph and Jimmy are concerned, he is a real danger.” Makin, who has represented Ralph since his divorce from James’s mother, Denise Fergus, shortly after the murder, said the father had been “completely let down” by the Ministry of Justice.



A corner of the Strand shopping centre in Bootle. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Thirty years on, it is difficult to find anyone satisfied with the judicial and political response to the killing. Fergus, 55, believes Venables should never be let out of prison. “Thirty years does seem like yesterday, the wounds don’t ever heal when you have buried a child, but they certainly can never do so when one of the murderers responsible persists in reoffending and then continues to bid for freedom,” she wrote in new chapters of her memoir, *I Let Him Go*, published to mark the 30th anniversary.

Venables and Thompson were originally recommended by the trial judge to spend eight years in secure children’s homes for the crime he called “an act of unparalleled evil and barbarity”. The then home secretary, Michael Howard, increased their tariffs to 15 years, egged on by a 270,000-strong petition in the Sun newspaper demanding life sentences. But that was quashed by the court of appeal which ruled he had given too much weight to the Sun’s campaign.

In the fevered atmosphere after the murder, the then prime minister, John Major, said society should “condemn a little more, understand a little less” when it came to youth offending. Howard, when he became home secretary, said “we must take the thugs off the streets”. The tabloids were venomous. “Freaks of Nature”, shouted one front page. “How Do You Feel Now, You Little Bastards?” screamed another.

Speaking to the Guardian for this article, Howard said he had no regrets over his handling of the case. People were “absolutely horrified”, he said, that “such an unspeakable crime could have taken place in our country and that the perpetrators were so young”: “It was all unthinkable. It was beyond what anybody thought could happen in late 20th century Britain.”

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It took place against a backdrop of concern about a general social decline in the early 90s. Violence and criminal damage had [almost doubled](#) since 1983, robberies had nearly tripled, sexual offences were up by 50% while total recorded crime had risen by 70% compared to a decade earlier.

The then shadow home secretary, Tony Blair, vowed to be “tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime” as both main parties jostled for a more punitive approach. In 1998, the new Labour government abolished an important legal principle that protected children aged 10 to 14 from being criminalised. Four years later, Blair introduced new police targets that [caused a huge increase](#) in the number of young people in trouble with the law for the first time, peaking at 110,784 in 2006/7. It has since fallen sharply and today stands at just over 8,000, of whom 320 are aged 10 to 12. England, Wales and Northern Ireland remain some of the only nations in the western world to criminalise children under 12.

“It was a catalyst for bringing in more punitive responses [towards children],” said Deena Haydon, a children’s rights researcher who co-authored [a paper](#) on the impact of the Bulger case. “Anti-social behaviour orders, parenting orders, curfew orders – civil orders which became criminal offences if breached.”

Ross Little, a criminologist and trustee at the National Association for Youth Justice, said the UK had become an “international outlier” in its approach to children. “It’s an emotive case and I don’t think we can base our law on one case,” he said. “I think it would be good if after 30 years, we can take this step back a little bit, recognise that it was a terrible, tragic case, but perhaps it’s time for a slightly wider debate in relation to how we treat children in the criminal justice system.”



The rear of the Strand shopping centre. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

David Blunkett was Labour's home secretary when Venables and Thompson were released from secure accommodation in 2001, aged 18. There was, and still is, serious concern about "wild west" vigilante attacks against them, he said. Even writing about the case 30 years on is "like throwing a match into a petrol can".

After the killing, Blunkett, then shadow health minister, took aim at the "paternalistic and well-meaning indulgence" of professionals who tolerated "the sub-culture of thuggery, noise, nuisance, and anti-social behaviour often linked to drug abuse". Today he is more phlegmatic. "We obviously were dealing with incredible sensitivities, and people were so shocked and horrified at the time," he said.

Would society, politicians and the judiciary respond differently if a similar crime happened today? "I think that we would have a different view about the long-term implications for those two young men and how to stop them getting themselves into a situation later in life where they would be once again involved in the criminal justice system."

In a crisp corner of Liverpool, three miles from the Strand, two white marble angels guard the spot where James was buried with his favourite teddy, a toy motorbike, and a torch on 1 March 1993, 15 days before his third birthday. A ninja turtle figurine clings to the tree marked “James’s special place”, which does its best to protect his pristine grave from the elements. This year, like every anniversary, James’s mother will return here to remember her late son. Not that she, or the nation, can forget.

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## **‘We fetishised being young – it’s just stupid!’: Judi Dench and Richard Eyre on ageing, Covid and saving the NHS**

[Catherine Shoard](#)



'I suppose if you've had your four score years and 10, you're going to drop off the bow anyway' ... Judi Dench and Bally Gill during the filming of Allelujah. Photograph: Jem Rigby/Michael Guerrero

Shot in 2021, a film of Allelujah, Alan Bennett's 2018 play set on a geriatric ward, is released next month. How relevant does it remain? Its stars, including Jennifer Saunders and Bally Gill, share their thoughts during production – and more than a year later



[@catherineshoard](#)

Fri 10 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Sat 11 Feb 2023 08.02 EST

I live 10 minutes' walk from a disused psychiatric hospital in north London. Well, partly disused: 40% of St Ann's in Tottenham, with the glossy new assessment centre and low-rise 30s blocks, is still going strong. The other side of the site, built as a fever hospital in 1892, has been gradually abandoned.

There is a Victorian laundry, grand as an ocean liner. A massive castellated water tower, like the rook in a giant's chess set. A gorgeous sprawl of red-brick wards and lodges, with shaped gables, stacked chimneys and blind boxes over intricate windows.

A wildlife survey in 2019 found hare's foot fungi and 59 species of spider. The grounds are full of wild flowers and trees: strawberry, rare in the UK; mulberry; spotted thorns; and scores of true service trees – the legacy of an ambitious gardener poached from Kew in the 1920s.



Names inscribed on bricks at St Ann's.

There are traces of former patients, too. I found an ancient belt buckle in the soil near the railway line. On one external wall are names inscribed in

cursive script in the soft terracotta. My son and I spent a lot of lockdown exploring. We rarely saw anybody else, although ghosts never seemed far off.

Then, in November 2021, huge trucks arrived. The long-threatened property developers? No: a film crew, meaning the wards were scrubbed down and abruptly filled with acting veterans of the highest rank. I turned up one cold morning and walking down the ornate outdoor corridor, so recently filled with traffic cones, came a heavily bruised Julia McKenzie in a nightie.

Judi Dench was also there, in dressing gown and slippers. “It’s very, very strange,” she says. “I think with a building that’s been a hospital or a school, you always feel that kind of presence. But because it’s so potent at the moment, it is a very strange feeling. I wouldn’t have believed they would be able to find a room. You suddenly think: why are there these empty wards?”



The water tower at St Ann's. Photograph: Catherine Shoard

The film *Allelujah*, adapted from Alan Bennett's 2018 play of the same name, shot as Omicron first made headlines. No one knew if this would be the variant to return us to square one, or worse. Hospital admission rates rocketed, mask rules were reintroduced. “You don’t know if it’s today or

tonight or next week,” said Dench. “It is a curiously odd sensation, because everything is so uncertain. It’s made me feel deeply anxious.”

I spoke to Dench, then 87, in her trailer after seeing her shoot a scene: an incredible treat and slightly disquieting. “I think it’s all deeply depressing, I’m afraid,” she said, eyes bright. “I’ve completely lost my rhythm inside.”

She quoted Viola’s “pined in thought / with a green and yellow melancholy” speech from Twelfth Night. “I’ve always thought that’s such a strange thing to say. But now I understand.” Shooting a film that was set pre-Covid offered brief relief. Likewise, a recent trip to Marks & Spencer for Percy Pigs and a sweater: “Just heaven!” But she doubted being able to repeat the treat anytime soon. “You don’t dare put on the radio, because you don’t know what’s going to happen next.”

In Dench’s case, it was an Oscar nomination for Belfast. Three months after we met, she was on the red carpet in Hollywood, the oldest-ever best supporting actress contender. She ended 2022 playing pianola for an impromptu [Abba singalong in Braemar with Sharleen Spiteri](#). Next month, she will be at the Palladium for a gala celebrating Gyles Brandreth’s birthday (proceeds to Great Ormond Street).



Bally Gill, Richard Eyre, Alan Bennett and Judi Dench on set of Allelujah.  
Photograph: Rob Youngson

March will also see the release of Allelujah – timing designed to tee up the 75th anniversary of the NHS. Bennett's play is set on the geriatric ward of a Yorkshire community hospital called the Beth, which is earmarked for closure. Dench, along with McKenzie, Derek Jacobi and David Bradley, play patients; Bally Gill the benevolent Dr Valentine; and [Jennifer Saunders](#) the pragmatic Sister Gilpin, continence her guiding star.

Allelujah's director, [Richard Eyre](#) and Dench have history here: not just Notes on a Scandal and The Cherry Orchard, but Iris, the award-winning film about Iris Murdoch's descent into Alzheimer's. The patients at the Beth are fairly unaffected mentally – unless you count the chronic Bennett-isms. In fact, they are in fairly good nick: in need of care, but not palliative. Mostly mobile, highly responsive to tea and cheer.

It's the sort of institution familiar to Eyre from the experience of his mother, who spent 10 years in an exemplary county hospital in Dorchester. "The care was wonderful. The nurses loved her," he says, sitting swaddled in a ski jacket in an old storeroom at St Ann's. "But then they changed the policy and said: 'We're not having geriatric incurable.' So they pushed her out to a care home. She was dead within a week."

Allelujah is most conspicuously about the [NHS](#). But it's also a film about social care: what happens when pressure on hospital beds means people are discharged too soon, to inadequate accommodation.



Jennifer Saunders as Sister Gilpin. Photograph: Rob Youngson

“When I grew up, everywhere in the south of England seemed to be a convalescent home,” says Saunders, curled up in her trailer at St Ann’s with Olive the whippet. “There was a stopgap. Back then, everyone died in their 70s. We haven’t produced any new thinking.”

Eyre turns 80 imminently. When we caught up last month, he had been reading about half-hour home care visits that were actually three minutes: “Probably very common.”

He continues: “I’m in a privileged position. If I’m unable to look after myself and my family can’t, then I’ve probably got enough money to go into a private care home – and there are some really good ones.” There are also some very poor ones. “There’s always going to be a demand, and if they can provide the minimum care for the maximum income, that’s business.”

This became especially glaring in the early days of Covid, “when the instructions were to decant geriatric patients from hospital into care homes. It was like detention camps! What did they think was gonna happen? Doctors didn’t go in. The homes clearly couldn’t cope. They’re stretched or inadequate at the best of times. A lot of people died.”

Earlier this week, I got an email from Dench. Her abiding memory of Covid, she wrote, was hearing of a close friend unable to enter her mother's care home. "She had to stand at the window to wave at her mother, and sadly that was the last time she saw her. That will haunt me for ever."

Dench lives with her daughter, Finty, 50, and Finty's son, Sam, 24, in the same house she bought 40 years ago with her husband, Michael Williams, so they could accommodate their own parents (it was funded by a Clover butter ad). "It was very successful," she says. "We had to work very hard at it, but my ma and my parents-in-law were very comforted by the fact that we could all be together."

This is a rare setup. Bennett's play doesn't shy from showing how grasping or unfeeling less loving relatives can be. Most are simply absent; patients at the Beth, abandoned to the system, tend not to get visitors.



Dench and Eyre on the red carpet at the film's London premiere.  
Photograph: John Phillips/Getty Images for BFI

It's a sharp critique of an intractable problem, says Eyre. "I don't see how any government can change the culture of families to make them more caring. You accept this is the world we live in, so what are we going to provide for those people who have been disfranchised?" Anyway, the Tories

seem “curiously insulated” from the issue. “It’s strange: surely they must have parents or relatives who are in care or suffering?”

Maybe they just don’t care? “That’s perfectly possible.”

It’s his own generation’s fault, says Eyre. “We fetishised being young. ‘Hope I die before I get old’ – it’s just stupid! There’s no need for us to make such a fuss of the young, to keep mimicking them, showing how envious we are.”

Allelujah does not. We see actors of huge fame and familiarity, in their late 80s, looking their age. For Gill, who is 30, this was disconcerting: “Especially Judi. I used to see her in my mind as M from the Bond films. But this was a very vulnerable, fragile, quiet character.” Seeing her with cardie and cannula was “was quite shocking, even for me. I was like: wow, OK.”

In the first scene of the film, we watch Dr Valentine chat over his iPad with his family back in India: mothers, aunties, nieces, a grandmother to whom he has sent a scarf. It’s this upbringing, the film gently suggests, that has encouraged in him a respect for elderly people.



Derek Jacobi in the film. Photograph: Rob Youngson/Pathe UK

“It is a little bit different in Indian culture,” says Gill. When he shot the film, he had never been in an actual geriatric ward. But he spent a lot of last year in one, visiting his grandmother, who recently died of cancer.

The family found being by her bedside essential, he says. “We had to actively say: look, she needs pain relief. And she needs to have a proper, decent meal. We ended up feeling quite pushy. The system is so strained. We were on them constantly.

“If you’re not kind of pushing, you’ll be forgotten. I did feel sorry for the people who didn’t have family members coming in. There is a feeling, when you get to a certain age, that you have nothing left to provide.”

Eventually, his grandmother was able to be discharged. “As a family, we would rather have her with us. So we looked after her in those last stages of her life and really tried to come together as a community.”

He couldn’t have made the film now, he says: “It’d be a bit too emotional.” Partly because the story is so similar to his grandmother’s, partly because it’s so different. Thanks to the speed of change, *Allelujah* can already feel like a period piece. “What Alan Bennett created is a very different world to what actually is happening and what that care actually looks like,” says Gill.



Gill and Dench on set. Photograph: Photo Credit: Rob Youngson/Rob Youngson

Back in 2021, the cast and crew all expressed hope that Covid would reboot the NHS. More funding, more cheerleaders for its mission. Those first-wave discussions about whether younger patients should be prioritised over older, were resources to become sufficiently stretched, raised “a perfectly legitimate question”, says Eyre. “In Sweden, there is a sort of explicit rationing, and I’m quite in favour of that, because you know where you are, rather than this constant saying: what the NHS needs is more and more money. I’m sure it does, but it also needs clarity of what we are fighting for.”

Even Dench was darkly pragmatic: “I suppose if you’ve had your four score years and 10, you’re going to drop off the bough anyway.” But, on the bright side, “maybe those barriers [between medical and social care] have broken down a bit during Covid. I hope they have. So perhaps a very good thing will come out of it.”

Expectations have since sunk. Meanwhile, the film’s final scene has taken on more weight. This coda, an add-on from Bennett’s play, shows Dr Valentine working in an ICU ward in April 2020. He addresses the camera, imploring support for the NHS. “It’s a wholly utopian plea,” says Eyre. “And, to some extent, it’s what the film feels. I find it immensely moving.”



The exterior corridor at St Ann's, designed to allow staff and patients fresh air and birdsong as they moved between wings. Photograph: Catherine Shoard

Saunders says when she first read the script, she wasn't sure that scene would work. She changed her mind: "You realise how quickly the sacrifices made by medical staff are forgotten." Dench agrees: "We willingly clapped on our doorsteps our appreciation for the NHS, as they were doing a remarkable job. That seems to have been a bit forgotten. And look at the position they are in now, having to strike for more money."

On Monday, public access to 60% of St Ann's was permanently blocked. Soon, the buildings will be demolished for a £200m high-rise development. Work has [already begun bulldozing](#) at least 50% of the foliage – shortly before Haringey council (who signed off the deal, and [declared a Climate Emergency in 2019](#)) publishes its latest Tree and Woodland Plan, highlighting the lack of green provision in the borough.

There is talk some of the inscribed bricks may be saved. I don't hold out much hope for the spiders.

Allelujah is released on 17 March

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[You be the judge](#)[Veganism](#)

## You be the judge: should my girlfriend stop claiming she's a vegan?



Illustration: Joren Joshua

Agnieszka has been vegan for a year but ‘slips up’ occasionally. Dylan thinks she’s being hypocritical. You need to get to the meat of the matter

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



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

Fri 10 Feb 2023 03.32 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 20.57 EST

## **The prosecution: Dylan**

*Agnieszka tells our friends that meat is murder, but then will eat bacon at home*

Agnieszka calls herself a vegan and tells everyone she doesn’t eat meat and animal products as she believes it to be cruel, but when we are at home she is more lax. That’s fine – she doesn’t have to deny herself her favourite foods just to prove some moral or political point. But the performance she puts on in front of other people irritates me sometimes.

We will go to a restaurant with friends and she will make a big deal about refusing to try certain foods. If someone asks why, she will give them the spiel about how meat is murder. That's fine if they are interested, but it can be a bit much.

The most annoying thing is when she gets home and then raids the chocolate or cheesy crackers.

The performance she puts on in front of other people irritates me sometimes

She has been a “vegan” for about a year, so it is still new to her, but it’s funny how often she slips up. A few months into it I was cooking a fry-up and she leaned over and said: “Oh can I have a piece of that bacon?” I said to her: “Aren’t you a vegan? What’s going on?” She told me not to police her choices and ate some. I laughed – I wasn’t policing her, just holding her accountable.

She doesn’t really like it when I joke about her being a bit lax in front of friends and family. One time at the pub I exposed her bacon-eating in front of my brother. It was in jest but Agnieszka was annoyed and said I was trying to embarrass her. That was the one time we really argued, but it wasn’t about her veganism at all; it was about her being hypocritical.

Agnieszka hasn’t tried to ram her opinions down my throat and doesn’t tell me I can’t keep meat in the fridge. I like a lot of the dishes she suggests and am grateful for how she has educated me on issues around food. It’s just that when she slips up, I feel she should own it. I find the performative aspect of being a vegan a bit strange.

## **The defence: Agnieszka**

*I’m adjusting to a new diet and have slipped up a few times. Dylan is being annoying*

When you transition into a new diet, it obviously takes some getting used to. I don't think it's healthy to cut out all animal products overnight. It needs to be a gradual thing.

Dylan's great but he could be a little more supportive. He loves telling people I'm a fake vegan and has made jokes in front of our friends about me being hypocritical. He called me out in front of his brother over eating bacon when I was just a few weeks into my veganism. At the time I just craved the taste of it, but Dylan has reminded me of it so many times since, I don't think it was worth it.

I didn't take it well when he called me a "fegan" in front of his brother. When we got home, I said to him, "Don't ever do that again," because it felt like he was trying to put me down. I hate this weird word: what even is a "fegan"? He did apologise but I was annoyed for days.

Dylan needs to stop making jokes about my lifestyle in public – in private he is actually quite supportive

I don't try to change his habits at home, and I am not controlling about his diet, so why is he trying so hard to get involved with mine? We have lived together for two years and share the cooking. If Dylan wants to eat meat in front of me I have no problem with that. But I have slowly tried to introduce more vegan dishes into his life, which I think he appreciates.

I went vegan because I believe that eating fewer animal products will be better for me and the environment. The production of meat and dairy can be so inhumane, and the fact that so many of us aren't aware of the cruelty is worrying.

I tell people what I know about the brutality of the meat industry only when they ask. When we go out for meals I don't think I am preachy or tell our friends what to eat. Everyone can make their own decisions – I am only concerned with my diet.

Dylan needs to stop making jokes about my lifestyle in front of other people because in private he is actually quite supportive and interested in veganism

– so it's him that's being a bit performative.

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## The jury of Guardian readers

### **Should Agnieszka be more disciplined with her vegan diet?**

Agnieszka should not label herself and eat what she wants. As she says, she's only been vegan for a year so may slip up. She should wait until she's firmly vegan to tell people, so she doesn't look like a hypocrite, or just not label herself at all. But Dylan could cut her some slack.

**Sharna, 38**

Agnieszka isn't at fault here. Adopting a new lifestyle is hard – it sounds like she is setting boundaries where she has control, but it's difficult to resist old favourites sometimes when your partner is eating them at home. Dylan should be more supportive instead of ridiculing.

**Tesni, 27**

Agnieszka isn't “slipping up”, she is purposefully eating animal products at home. This would be OK if she was open about being flexitarian rather than vegan, but to lecture others about their dietary choices is very hypocritical.

Dylan is right to call her out.

**Kay, 32**

Vegan has a very specific meaning and Agnieszka isn't living up to the term. She could say "plant-based" instead. But Dylan doesn't gain anything by publicly mocking her efforts to eat fewer animal products, which is always a good thing.

**Joanne, 36**

It's tough to call, as the two accounts of her alleged preachiness at dinners with friends differ substantially. But to me, it sounds like Dylan's the one making a big thing of this in public. Lay off, Dylan, a few slips don't mean Agnieszka can't proudly call herself a vegan.

**Peter, 42**

## **Now you be the judge**

In our online poll below, tell us: should Dylan stop teasing Agnieszka in public about slipping up with her vegan diet?

**The poll closes on Thursday 16 February at 10am GMT**

## **Last week's result**

We asked if Jon [should stop throwing away his 'old' clothes?](#)

**96%** of you said yes: Jon is guilty

**4%** of you said no: Jon is not guilty

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[Alcohol](#)

**I gave up booze and am having more fun than ever. These seven tips could help you do the same**



‘Valentine’s night becomes a much more romantic occasion when you’re not hammered on pink champagne.’ Photograph: YakobchukOlena/Getty Images/iStockphoto

What’s life like without alcohol? You’ll save a fortune, really enjoy nights out – and even have better sex

[Sam Delaney](#)

Fri 10 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 09.35 EST

When I decided to give up drinking in the summer of 2015, I was convinced it would improve almost every important part of my life: my career, my health, my marriage. But would I be able to handle the boredom? I had been getting drunk pretty regularly since I was an adolescent and was completely inexperienced at having fun without booze. I wasn’t sure it was possible. Happily, I was wrong.

“It has been deeply ingrained in us by the media, culture and our peers that alcohol is the best way to have fun, and therefore sobriety must be boring,” says Veronica Valli, a psychotherapist, recovery coach and author of [Soberful](#). She says: “The truth is, with 23 years of sobriety behind me, I can’t think of anything that *isn’t* more fun without alcohol. But there’s more to stopping drinking than just stopping drinking. We have to learn a lot of new emotional skills.”

It is not just the tendency to use booze to numb stress, sadness and exhaustion, it’s how to behave in the good times too. When I had been sober for three months, I received a really big job offer – the sort that warranted a celebration. But without the option of going straight to the pub to raise a few glasses, I was clueless as to how to express my excitement. In the end, I went for an ice-cream.

In the years since, I have gradually become better at processing highs and lows without the accompaniment of booze. In the meantime, it helps to have some practical stuff up your sleeve to help those early days of sobriety feel like a pleasure, not an endurance. Whether you’re hoping to prolong the

benefits of Dry January a little longer or thinking of going sober more permanently, here are some tips on how to keep having fun while you do so.

## Treat yourself

The money I used to spend when I was drinking was obscene. It wasn't just the booze itself; it was the collateral costs of a night out: the taxis, the late-night burgers and, towards the end of my drinking days, the drugs I would invariably buy after my fourth pint. Then there was the coffee, Coca-Cola, bacon sandwiches and painkillers I would buy in bulk the next morning to try to combat my hangover.

Once I calculated the rough amount all this was costing me every week, I felt a lot less guilty about treating myself in sobriety: from nice meals out to occasional massages and the odd weekend away. A couple of treats like this every month and sober me was still financially better off than drunk me by a long way.



Why not spend the money you used to spend on booze to treat yourself to a massage? Photograph: EmirMemedovski/Getty Images

Other great self-care investments include a personal trainer (the equivalent cost of two rounds of drinks a week), a therapist (the price of a Wednesday

night in the pub) and scented candles (the cost of a cab fare home – I drive myself everywhere these days, or take the tube and read a book). If you want to track your days of sobriety and calculate the money you've saved, I recommend the [Nomo app](#).

"At first, it can feel weird doing your favourite things without drink, but you have to try to keep doing them," says Valli. "Having fun is not a frivolous thing. It is a really important human need. Doing fun things sober quickly becomes your new normal."

## Get more value for money

I have always loved live music but I used to spend at least a third of every gig queueing for the bar or the toilet. At festivals, I would often miss half the acts because I was in a state of drunken disorientation. At Glastonbury 2008 (headliners, Jay-Z and Amy Winehouse), I can't remember anything after Joan Armatrading at two in the afternoon.

"Alcohol is a depressant that makes you slower both mentally and physically," says Dr Niall Campbell, consultant psychiatrist and addiction expert at The Priory, London. "When you stop drinking, you quickly gain better focus and concentration and even greater physical capability. Dancing, talking to people, being quick-witted – all the social skills you need are sharpened."

Nowadays, I go to more live music than ever, engaging with the whole performance, absorbing all the little details that make seeing a band up close so special and even having a dance (yes, it is possible to dance sober) that doesn't result in me stumbling into someone and spilling their drink.



‘Now I go to more live music than ever – and don’t miss half the acts because I’m drunk.’ Photograph: Yuri Arcurs/Alamy

## **Don’t spoil things that are already fun**

I loved Christmas when I was a kid: sitting around with loved ones exchanging gifts, eating delicious food and watching movies is inherently fun. You really don’t need to embellish a day like that with alcohol. In my drinking days, I cancelled out all the joy of Christmas by opening the champagne at breakfast and passing out by late afternoon with a glass of whisky in my hand. Only now do I realise that I was wasting one of the best days of the year; drinking made it just like any other day.

Of course, Christmas and live music might not be your thing, with or without alcohol. But spending time with people you love, in any context, is often more enjoyable when you’re sober. Valentine’s night, for instance, becomes a much more romantic occasion when you’re not hammered on pink champagne. “It isn’t talked about enough, but sober sex is so much better,” says Campbell. “You’re more competent and your senses are sharpened, so you actually feel more.”

Certainly there is something about not needing to keep a bucket on standby beside the bed that reignites the magic in a relationship.

## **Cull your friends**

What if you lose all the mates you enjoy getting plastered with? What if they won't want to hang out with you when you're Mr Diet Coke? Well, you might lose some of them, but not all of them, and with those willing to catch up over a coffee, say, rather than a pint, the conversations often become more meaningful – and I promise you'll still make each other laugh.

"You may get pushback from people who feel like you giving up booze is somehow a judgment on their drinking," says Valli. "They tend to disappear from your life organically. The other thing is that you come to realise that drunk people are pretty boring, repetitive and not fun."

## **Master the French exit**

Personally, I am still happy to go to the pub with pals who are drinking while I nurse an alcohol-free beer. I simply arrive early, when everyone is in a good mood (the first drink is the one everyone seems to enjoy most, from what I have observed) and leave early, just as everyone starts to get repetitive and boring, as Valli puts it. I have become a master of the French exit (disappearing without going through a lengthy and tedious round of goodbyes). Nobody ever notices, cares or remembers when you left.

## **Find a grownup drink**

Fizzy pop is for kids, water is for nerds and drinking more than three cups of caffeine a day will ultimately turn you into a nervous wreck. Find yourself a non-alcoholic drink that feels grownup and a bit of a treat to enjoy at the end of the working day. Over the past seven and a half years, I have tried the full array of non-alcoholic beers (a range that is constantly expanding and now has its own aisle at my local supermarket) and can honestly say that the most readily available options are the best. Heineken 0.0 is crisp, clean and tasty. Guinness 0.0 is rich and flavoursome. I wish I could recommend some more obscure brands but, in my opinion, the bigger breweries have been first to perfect booze-free-booze.



‘I’ve made friends through my sober passion for exercise and fitness.’  
Photograph: Mikolette/Getty Images

## Don’t become a recluse

Harness all that new energy and seek out new ways of having fun every day. “Don’t let yourself become isolated and lonely,” says Campbell. “The opposite of addiction is connection. So find new hobbies and meet new people. It especially helps to spend time with people going through the same thing as you, so find a group if you can.”

[Alcoholics Anonymous](#) is free and available all over the country. Despite its dreary church hall image, I found the atmosphere in most meetings to be surprisingly convivial and often hilariously funny. But if you don’t fancy AA there are alternatives such as [Smart Recovery](#) and various group resources offered by the [NHS](#).

I have found new friends through groups like these. I’ve also made friends through my (inevitable, predictable) sober passion for exercise and fitness. But I also realised that there were already sober people in my life whom I had previously ignored. I spent time looking out for sober role models in my social and professional circles – men of a similar age who were sober but still funny, smart, confident and capable. That was the sober person I wanted

to be. Far from being the boring teetotal cliches I had previously assumed, I discovered that these men were bright, entertaining and dynamic. Cultivating friendships with them made a huge impact on my outlook on sobriety and life in general.

The most important thing is to change your perception of fun. If something seems fun only when you are a bit drunk, then it's not really fun at all and you should stop doing it. For me, that included days at the horse racing, stag weekends in Prague and visits to Winter Wonderland. For you, it might be dreary after-work drinks or that book club that just seems to be a cover for unbridled midweek boozing. But you will be amazed by how many things that you have spent time and money on for years are, in the cold light of sobriety, rubbish.

*Sort Your Head Out – Mental Health Without All the Bollocks* by Sam Delaney is out on 9 February and published by Constable

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/feb/10/i-gave-up-booze-and-am-having-more-fun-than-ever-these-seven-tips-could-help-you-do-the-same>

## 2023.02.10 - Opinion

- No plan, no exit strategy: the UK government is losing face on strikes – and millions of votes
- We are all vulnerable: that's where a new conversation about masculinity begins
- Each day, President Zelenskiy reads my book on military history. I hope he learns these lessons
- Britain is addicted to the wrecking ball. It's trashing our heritage and the planet

[\*\*Opinion\*\*](#)[\*\*Industrial action\*\*](#)

## **No plan, no exit strategy: the UK government is losing face on strikes – and millions of votes**

[\*\*Polly Toynbee\*\*](#)



While local pay bodies are settling with striking workers, Tory ministers are foolishly refusing to back down, and will pay the price



Nurses at St Thomas' Hospital in London strike over pay and conditions on 6 February. Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

Fri 10 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 09.35 EST

This is deeply embarrassing. Today the Fire Brigades Union [called off its planned strikes](#) after being offered 7% for this year backdated, plus 5% next year, by the National Joint Council that negotiates for local authorities. Its members have yet to agree, but [council workers settled](#) for a similar deal because local authorities jointly are free to make their own sensible settlements. Wales and Scotland are also in the process of settling with their health workers. That leaves those in charge of services in England left looking even more obstinate, unreasonable and ideologically fixated.

The GMB's public services national secretary, Rachel Harrison, yesterday morning told me that the offer to the fire brigades was "massive" and said that if her ambulance workers and other strikers were offered that, "we'd definitely suspend action and call it off immediately". Members would have to decide, but the view around the unions yesterday was that a similar deal would settle these strikes.

The government hoped strikers would be weakening by now. Ministers assumed that low-paid public workers, some already using food banks,

would surely be hurting from the many days' pay struck off their payslips by now. A new [payslip system](#) in the NHS deliberately highlights their strike day deductions.

They also hoped that by now the public would have turned against strikers. Surely the resolute prime minister and chancellor would bask in a little 1980s Thatcher glory for their firm stance against "militants"? But that's not how things are working out, not at all. That leaves the government with no plan and no ladder to climb down from their adamant stand.

NHS employers have made their views known, say the unions: the confrontational strikes (minimum service levels) bill is an affront to local managers, who have worked well with their staff to ensure emergency cover during strikes. Ambulance delays have been fewer on strike days, as all the shifts are there on the picket line, and if a category 1 or 2 call comes in, [more staff than usual](#) are available to answer it. "Responders got there quicker, discharged patients into A&E quicker and there were fewer ambulance queues outside hospitals," Harrison says. The bill allows politicians in the Department of Health to specify, by name and job, all those they can ban from striking, instead of leaving it for local managers to arrange with unions, a fundamental breach of the right to strike.

The outrage caused by [Grant Shapps' claim](#) last Sunday that ambulance staff were putting lives at risk by "refusing" to provide information on where they were striking, creating a "postcode lottery" for people having heart attacks, hardened the determination of strikers. "A blatant lie," says Harrison.

What Shapps and the government prefer not to draw attention to is the average [1,000 extra \(non-Covid\) deaths](#) a week, for fear of exposing the effect of the underfunding of the NHS and social and community care for more than a decade.

Instead of fading away, more are joining the strikes: on Wednesday, the [East of England ambulance service trust](#) was the last to vote to join. On budget day, 15 March, another [100,000 civil servants are coming out](#), along with 30,000 from HMRC – presumably losing the state sizeable sums for every day they are not collecting taxes. Unions are balloting and renewing their

ballot mandates, with soaring inquiries by the public to the TUC about joining.

Unions are infuriated by ministers, including the prime minister, who are claiming their “doors are open” when absolutely no negotiations are happening. Paul Nowak, the [TUC](#) general secretary, says this cabinet doesn’t understand negotiation: in public, ministers say they will talk to him – but no talks happen. “It will end, as all disputes do, around the table with an agreement.”

“They misjudged the public mood,” Nowak says. Repeating the mantra that it would be inflationary to give an inch to public workers only influences a third of voters, according to TUC focus groups. That’s because it’s not true, says Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies: “A public sector pay rise is not in itself inflationary” as, unlike in the private sector, there are no prices to rise. And the private sector has seen wages rise far faster than for public servants. He regards the sums required to settle as relatively modest: “Each 1% on the public pay bill costs £2.5bn.” Meanwhile, the union leaders I spoke to said the spectacle of Shell and BP’s grotesque profits had also strengthened strikers’ resolve.

The longer the government delays an inevitable settlement, the longer [NHS waiting lists](#) will grow, and Rishi Sunak will struggle to meet his pledge to cut them by the next election. The plan may be to wait until April and try to hide a climbdown in a fudged deal for next year that will in fact include pay, backdated for this year. But this climbdown will be more embarrassing the longer they delay.

Meanwhile the [Telegraph](#) has published a large poll of 28,000 voters, presumably designed to terrify the living daylights out of the Tories. It finds Labour would win an unthinkable 509 seats, the SNP would be the official opposition with 50, Tories would be third with just 45, and almost every Tory you’ve heard of would be swept away. The [Electoral Calculus poll of polls](#) has Labour on 47.5% and the Tories on 26.3%. There’s a way to go yet to an election, but this does suggest that provoking strikes and revoking the right to strike has been a gamechanger with voters.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist
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## OpinionMen

# We are all vulnerable: that's where a new conversation about masculinity begins

[Susie Orbach](#)

The likes of Andrew Tate want to return to an imagined idyll in gender relations. It would be a disaster for everyone



‘Andrew Tate speaks of how to be a different kind of man.’ Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Fri 10 Feb 2023 04.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 09.35 EST

Can we think a bit more deeply about masculinity? Toxic masculinity has a certain usefulness and punch as a phrase. It expresses what some men put out into the world but it doesn't address the whys deeply enough.

Until recently, and still to this day in many parts of the world, men were raised to be protectors: fighters and economic providers. Conscription – men being trained to kill – only [ended in Britain](#) in 1960. Women, meanwhile, were being raised to be nurturers and carers – to be midwives to their needs, to support their initiatives, whether or not the women worked also outside the home. Men were to be receivers of emotional support, women to be receivers of economic support and “protection”.

The 1970s saw the beginnings of enormous changes between women and men, which led to today’s expanding notions of gender.

These changes are not trivial. Over a 50-year period, girls and women all over the world have been endeavouring to reshape their lives. One of many consequences has been a questioning of the emotional labour that women have provided for men – often when the men haven’t realised they needed or were receiving it. Sometimes, women purposefully withdrew this kind of caring. They went on strike to show what was missing. Other women grew resentful or fatigued by the lack of emotional reciprocity or recognition in this arrangement, and pulled back from giving. The old “protector” bargain wasn’t holding up, as men failed to see women’s longings.

Women then began to look more directly at their own vulnerabilities and their desires in heterosexual (and same-sex) relationships. It was challenging. The charge of neediness and clinginess, which had been hung on women, required understanding. Where had that come from? Was it accurate? If so, why? Did it come from unmet needs in their relationship? Had women foisted on to men longings that their men didn’t see or know how to respond to?

The changing economic climate produced clashes at another level. Women’s work, inside and outside the home, was being quasi-valued as Thatcher and future governments deindustrialised the UK. This removed many men’s skilled occupations, while elevating the prestige afforded to money-making. It destabilised the social contract. Men’s place, women’s place, parenting and the ideas of masculinity and femininity were being shaken up.

The issue of emotional exchange, in which women gravitated to looking after men's vulnerability – often before the men themselves had acknowledged it – and men provided protection to women, wobbled. Households increasingly needed both adults in paid work to get by.

It was an interesting time where, for some, these vast social changes could be addressed. Often, they couldn't be. There were neither the words nor emotional concepts to do so and the world was moving too fast. Voids opened for many men without much explanation: long-term unemployment and the pressures of "social mobility" produced much pain and dislocation. Women, meanwhile, seemed to be advancing. There was an emphasis on girls' education and "empowerment". Shamefully, boys' education was not being creatively revamped. Boys' vulnerabilities weren't being either acknowledged or addressed.

These changes weren't uniform. Of course they weren't. Class, race and geography were and are critical spheres of influence, affecting possibilities and limitations. Fear and antagonisms sat beside the story of romance, as the rapid change in declared sexual behaviours occurred alongside expanding gender definitions.

Vulnerabilities unaddressed, often unknown or unnamed by the individual, can end up being expressed in brittleness and toughness. Being able to acknowledge uncertainties to oneself and to others is as an aspect of strength. Cleaving to something unnamed that was missed can produce anger or despair. Boys didn't anticipate that there would be a rupture in nurture as they became adults; in other words, that they wouldn't be able to simply rely on women's solicitations and comforting without showing more of themselves. Girls knew that they were "supposed" to give support but were growing up to think of economic and emotional equality, not protection.

Rap artists said how it was for them. [Jordan Peterson](#), how it was for him. Andrew Tate [speaks of how](#) to be a different kind of man. But a return to a "boys will be boys" ethos hasn't offered masculinity the pleasures of knowing oneself more fully or expanding what masculinities can be. The "crisis" of masculinity was reformulated into a new machismo, which in our [police service](#) protected sexual predators.

Machismo doesn't put us women in our place. That ship has sailed. It has offered a fundamentalist pull which endangers all of us; men, women, children, non-binary and trans people. It's time for a new conversation that opens the door to speaking of vulnerability and nurture as essential for all of us, and as an aspect of strength – as an antidote to toxicity.

- Susie Orbach is a psychotherapist, psychoanalyst and social critic. She is the author of many books including *What Do Women Want?* – co-authored with Luise Eichenbaum
  - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*
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## OpinionVolodymyr Zelenskiy

# **Each day, President Zelenskiy reads my book on military history. I hope he heeds these warnings**

[Laurence Rees](#)



The signs are good. Ukraine's leader is avoiding the mistakes of the second world war – while Putin shows every sign of repeating them



President Zelenskiy honours the memory of people killed in the second world war, in Kyiv, 22 June 2021. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Fri 10 Feb 2023 04.41 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 12.45 EST

The Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy's [speech to parliament](#) on Wednesday was filled with references to the second world war and Winston Churchill. Just as evil was defeated before, he said, so evil will be defeated today. Comparisons with that momentous conflict have been a common theme throughout Russia's invasion of Ukraine – but at least we can rest assured that Zelenskiy knows what he's talking about.

I was flattered when the Economist reported a few weeks ago that Zelenskiy gets up early each morning and reads from my book, Hitler and Stalin: The Tyrants and the Second World War, recently published in Ukrainian translation. I was also impressed that, while trying to win a bloody war against the Russians, he found time to read anything other than official documents.

The only other statesman I could think of who had turned to a history book in a similar situation was John F Kennedy, who was hugely influenced by Barbara Tuchman's [The Guns of August](#) at the time of the Cuban missile

crisis. Having read Tuchman's book, which argued that miscommunications led to the first world war, JFK redoubled his efforts to reach a peaceful solution with Nikita Khrushchev.

My book, alas, can't play a similar role in the current Ukrainian conflict – not least because during the Cuban missile crisis both sides were open to a deal. But, nonetheless, there are still useful things Zelenskiy can learn from the story of Hitler and Stalin during the second world war.

What surprised me when I started listing the potential parallels was that, consciously or unconsciously, Zelenskiy has already learned much of what this history has to offer, whereas [Vladimir Putin](#) has demonstrably not. This is all the more extraordinary because Putin fancies himself as something of an expert on the war.

There are three broad areas of this history that are especially relevant to the conflict in [Ukraine](#). These aren't lessons that can be applied precisely to the present situation. History doesn't work like that – the past never repeats itself exactly. But I do think that history can offer us warnings.



Kharkiv in February 1943 after being liberated by Soviet troops.  
Photograph: Sovfoto/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

The first of the warnings is straightforward: leave strategy to your most talented generals. This is a warning Joseph Stalin did not heed. At the start of 1942, and despite having no military training, he ordered a major offensive against the German army around [Kharkiv in Ukraine](#) (then known as Kharkov). More gifted military minds – including [Marshal Zhukov](#) – saw the idea as needlessly risky and were against it. Nonetheless, Stalin dismissed these concerns and ordered the general staff “not to interfere” with his decision. Stalin, it would transpire, had made a terrible mistake.

Early in the morning of 12 May 1942, the Red Army advanced towards the enemy. But the swiftness of its advance was to be its undoing, as the German army closed behind them, in a classic manoeuvre of entrapment. More than 250,000 Red Army soldiers were lost as a result of the disastrous Kharkov operation. It was a defeat that was all the more humiliating because the Red Army had outnumbered the Germans on the battlefield. But it hadn’t mattered; Stalin’s inept leadership had doomed them to defeat.

Putin, a year ago, was similarly overconfident when the Russians invaded Ukraine. Tens of thousands of his soldiers died, and [are still dying](#), because of his military incompetence. In contrast, from the very beginning of this conflict, Zelenskiy has left the military decisions to his generals.

It wasn’t until the autumn of 1942 that Stalin started listening to his best military leaders – in particular Zhukov. If he hadn’t changed, and stopped thinking that he was a better military thinker than the professionals, the whole course of the war might have been different.

The next warning is this: overpromising in war can have catastrophic consequences. In [September 1942, Adolf Hitler made a speech](#) in which he “assured” the German people that “no one can take us away” from Stalingrad. But within months the Red Army had encircled and destroyed the [German sixth army](#), and liberated the city. The loss of Stalingrad was not just a decisive military defeat for the Wehrmacht, but a turning point in the Germans’ perception of their leader. Hitler had promised that the city would not fall. He had lied. So how could they trust him next time?

Putin is in a similar position. He keeps reassuring the Russian population that the Ukrainians are about to be crushed. But does anyone now believe him? Zelenskiy has taken the opposite approach. If anything, he downplays Ukrainian successes and sets no specific timetable for military action.

The final warning is simple: make sure you are clear just what constitutes victory. Hitler failed to do this. He never said how much territory his army had to conquer in the Soviet Union before “victory” was won. The result was that German soldiers were always unsure what goal they had to achieve in order to bring the war to an end.

Putin is just as vague about what victory looks like for the Russian army in the current conflict. Is it simply holding on to the territory they’ve seized so far? Is it overthrowing the current Ukrainian regime? Who can tell?

Zelenskiy is more coherent in his definition of victory – remove the Russians from Ukrainian territory. The problem he faces is whether this can actually be achieved. For instance, does anyone really believe there are circumstances in which the Russians will ever leave [Crimea](#)?

Of the two leaders – Zelenskiy and Putin – it’s clearly the Ukrainian who is heeding most of the warnings. Perhaps Putin needs to read my book so he can learn this history for himself. Although, since we all hope he keeps performing incompetently, maybe it’s best if he doesn’t.

- Laurence Rees is the author of *Hitler and Stalin: The Tyrants and the Second World War*
  - This article was amended on 10 February 2023. Owing to an error that was introduced during the production process, the date given for a speech made by Hitler was changed to November 1942, when September 1942 was the original and correct reference.
  - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*
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## **Britain is addicted to the wrecking ball. It's trashing our heritage and the planet**

[Phineas Harper](#)



The obliteration of 50,000 buildings a year is crass vandalism – and cost-effective, low-carbon alternatives are being ignored



The Red Road flats, Glasgow, once the tallest residential buildings in Europe, were brought down by controlled explosion in 2015. Photograph: Anita Russo/Rex Shutterstock

Fri 10 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Sat 11 Feb 2023 10.52 EST

Last month, residents of the Wyndford estate in Glasgow barricaded themselves in their flats in a last-ditch attempt to save their homes from demolition. The 600 socially rented dwellings, designed by Ernest Buteux and sitting next to the River Kelvin, were denied listed building status in January, and will now make way for a development of half as many homes – and triple the rental value.

Wheatley, formerly called Glasgow Housing Association, has been demolishing social homes in Scotland for decades. In 2014, Wheatley even planned to “wow the world” by dynamiting 1,326 social homes during the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony. Footage of the dwellings being reduced to rubble was to be beamed on to a giant screen in Celtic Park Stadium and broadcast live on TV. The idea was dropped, having provoked international ridicule, but the estate was razed to the ground shortly after the games, and a decade later remains a fenced-off heap of rubble.

The Wyndford residents' fight to save their homes has been replicated elsewhere. Since the introduction of the devolved parliament, [77,745 homes](#) have been demolished in Scotland, while the UK as a whole obliterates [50,000 buildings a year](#), particularly targeting social housing.

London, which has demolished a [larger proportion](#) of its social housing than any other region in the UK, has [knocked down](#) at least 161 council and housing association estates since 1997, resulting in a loss of around 55,000 homes and the displacement of an estimated 131,000 people. A further 100 London housing estates are [at risk](#), including projects of irreplaceable heritage value such as [Central Hill](#) in Lambeth, one of the few substantial 20th-century housing estates designed by a female architect, Rosemary Stjernstedt.

The environmental harm of this demolition-led development is astronomical; the UK Green Building Council estimates that 25% of the UK's emissions are directly [attributable](#) to the built environment, due in part to the vast energy required to produce new construction materials. Cement production alone accounts for [8%](#) of the world's carbon emissions, and the construction industry consumes 50% of global steel production and 25% of all plastics, and produces 60% of UK waste.

As a rule of thumb, erecting a new building produces more than a tonne of carbon or equivalent greenhouse gases [per square metre](#). This means that demolishing a 100 sq metre home to make way for another of the same size not only produces about 100 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> but wastes all the emissions that were previously produced in building the original. In Wyndford for instance, Wheatley's proposals will, if it goes ahead, produce the equivalent of [22,455 tonnes](#) of carbon dioxide – more than double the ecological impact of upgrading all 600 homes to modern standards.

Britain's addiction to the wrecking ball is not just trashing cultural heritage and polluting the planet, but crushing communities too. Property developers like to emphasise the benefits new buildings can bring, but they rarely acknowledge the *harm* demolitions cause. Paul Watt of Birkbeck University, who has studied the social impact of demolition, says: "There may be umpteen reports, but they never ever drill down into the long-term effect of these projects on people's health. There's a protracted process of physical

and social degeneration that can roll on for decades. Residents know their home is going to be demolished but they don't know when or where they'll be going – it is very disconcerting.”



Plans to demolish the Aylesbury estate in London were tabled more than 20 years ago. Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

Plans to demolish the Aylesbury estate, [for instance](#), a 1977 south London neighbourhood of 2,700 homes designed by Hans Peter Felix Trenton, featuring wide balconies and large green spaces, were first tabled more than 20 years ago but it still hasn't been completed. As local councillors pointed out in a [planning hearing](#) last month, “If you were born when it began, you could have graduated university by now.”

The decades of neglect and demolition have led to marked declines in social infrastructure and cultural life, while the many vacant homes have enabled an [uptick in crime](#). “When we looked at the Aylesbury in 2014, there were a lot of real strengths in that community, particularly around support for people from different migrant backgrounds,” says Nicola Bacon, former Director of Policy at Shelter, who has led [research](#) into the impact of the demolitions on residents. “When we went back in 2021, a lot of that social life had gone and won’t come back.”

There are outstanding refurbishments that exemplify a more ecological and compassionate alternative to demolition, notably the extensive overhaul of Grand Parc in Bordeaux. There, 530 flats were upgraded in just two weeks without any residents being evicted. While in the UK evictions are still far too commonplace, the reworking of Park Hill in Sheffield by architects Mikhail Riches, which completed in December, shows how a careful refurbishment can breathe new life into the most challenging estates.

Such inspiration is sorely needed. The obliteration of 50,000 British buildings a year is disgraceful – a pattern of myopic greed and unthinking vandalism that is wiping out the heritage of our cities while tearing apart neighbourhoods and accelerating climate breakdown. Cost-effective and low-carbon refurbishment opportunities that have proved themselves overseas are being ignored at the expense of people and planet. To get a grip on its emissions and protect its communities, Britain must end its addiction to demolition.

This article was amended on 10 February 2023. The UK Green Building Council estimates that it is 25% of the UK's emissions that are directly attributable to the built environment, rather than "about 40%" as an earlier version said due to incorrect source information.

- Phineas Harper is chief executive of charity Open City, whose Stewardship Awards celebrate urban care of buildings, infrastructure and open spaces
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## 2023.02.10 - Around the world

- [Alec Baldwin Halyna Hutchins' family sues actor over fatal Rust set shooting](#)
- [Donald Trump Pence subpoenaed in special counsel investigations – reports](#)
- [US Capitol attack January 6 rioter with Confederate flag sentenced to three years](#)
- [Adidas Firm could take €1.2bn revenue hit if it writes off Kanye West's Yeezy stock](#)

## Rust film set shooting

# Alec Baldwin sued by Halyna Hutchins' family over fatal Rust set shooting

Lawsuit, filed by parents and sister of cinematographer, accuses actor and others of battery and negligence



Alec Baldwin departs his home in New York City on 31 January.  
Photograph: David Dee Delgado/Reuters

*[Dani Anguiano in Los Angeles](#)*

*[@dani\\_anguiano](#)*

Thu 9 Feb 2023 17.59 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 09.36 EST

The family of Halyna Hutchins, the cinematographer killed on the set of Rust, have filed a lawsuit against [Alec Baldwin](#) and others involved with the film.

The lawsuit filed on behalf of Hutchins' parents, Anatolii Androsovych and Olga Solovey, and sister, Svetlana Zemko, accuses Baldwin and others,

including the film's armorer, of battery, negligence, intentional infliction of emotional distress and loss of consortium.

Baldwin, who faces criminal charges for his role in the 2021 death along with the film armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, has previously settled a lawsuit with Hutchins' husband and son. This lawsuit is separate and aims to provide accountability and justice to her parents and sister, who depended on the cinematographer for emotional and financial support, said the attorney Gloria Allred.

"It's clear to us that the relationships of all of our clients have been damaged and that they will not be able to enjoy life in the same way as they did when their precious Halyna was alive," said Allred, who is representing the family, at a press conference on Thursday.

Hutchins, 42, died on 21 October 2021 shortly after being wounded during rehearsals for the western on a ranch on the outskirts of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Baldwin, who was also a producer on the film, had been pointing a gun at Hutchins during a scene when it went off, hitting her and wounding the director. The bullet that hit both Hutchins and the director was a live round. The killing sparked outrage and calls for greater safety on film sets.

Hutchins' parents and sister have been devastated by the loss, Allred said, all while they have been enduring the war in Ukraine. Hutchins' mother is an emergency operating room nurse in a hospital in Ukraine, she said.

"Halyna was the light in their lives," she said. "Of course for all of our three clients the tragic loss of their daughter and sister is heartbreakingly but now in addition to this tragedy they have to try to cope with that loss while living in Ukraine in the mist of Putin's war."

The family, who did not attend the press conference, appeared in a video shared by Allred. In the video translated into English, Svetlana Zemko said her sister's death was "one of the biggest losses of my life".

"Even more devastating is to see the utter suffering of our parents and how their health has sharply declined," Zemko said. "It is for this reason that I

would like those who are at fault ... to carry that responsibility, and not just someone, but that very someone who is truly responsible for this. I believe to let this go and to leave this unpunished is unallowable.”

The family has not received an apology from Baldwin, Allred said, or any outreach at all. “We want accountability and justice for them. It’s as simple as that,” Allred said.

The lawsuit comes after Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed, who supervised weapons for the film, were criminally charged with involuntary manslaughter over the shooting. Authorities allege there was a pattern of criminal disregard for safety on the film set. Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed, who both maintain their innocence, have vowed to fight the charges.

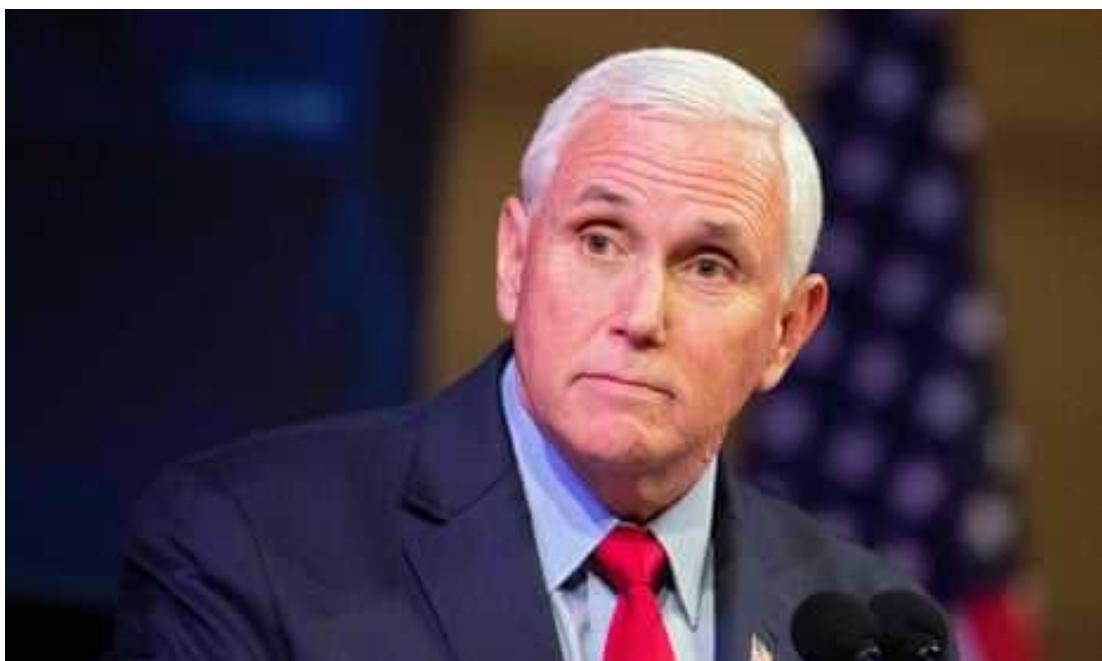
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## US news

# Mike Pence subpoenaed in Trump special counsel investigations – reports

Former vice-president and former Trump official Robert O'Brien issued subpoena though nature of requests is not known



Mike Pence has been subpoenaed by the special counsel leading investigations into classified documents found at Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence. Photograph: Ryan M Kelly/AFP/Getty Images

*Reuters*

Thu 9 Feb 2023 19.47 EST Last modified on Thu 9 Feb 2023 20.51 EST

Former US vice-president Mike Pence and the former national security adviser Robert O'Brien have been subpoenaed by the special counsel leading investigations into classified documents found at former president Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence and efforts to overturn the 2020 election result, according to media reports on Thursday.

Pence was issued a subpoena by special counsel Jack Smith, though the nature of the request was not immediately known, ABC News reported, citing sources. The action follows months of negotiations involving federal prosecutors and Pence's lawyers.

O'Brien has been asserting executive privilege in declining to provide some of the information that prosecutors are seeking from him, according to CNN.

Pence's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Smith's office declined to comment on both reports from CNN and ABC.

Trump's former acting Department of Homeland Security secretary, Chad Wolf, was interviewed by justice department lawyers in recent weeks as part of the ongoing special counsel investigation related to 2020 election interference, the report added, citing sources.

The US attorney general, Merrick Garland, named Smith as special counsel in November to oversee investigations of Trump, shortly after Trump said he would seek the Republican nomination for president again in 2024.

The first investigation involves Trump's handling of highly sensitive classified documents he retained at his Florida resort after leaving the White House in January 2021.

The second investigation is looking at efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election's results, including a plot to submit phony slates of electors to block Congress from certifying Democrat Joe Biden's victory.

Grand juries in Washington have been hearing testimony in recent months for both investigations from many former top Trump administration officials.

Last month, Garland named a separate special counsel, Robert Hur, to probe the improper storage of classified documents at Biden's home and former office.

In late January, Pence said he was not aware though he takes "full responsibility" after classified documents were found at his Indiana home.

The documents were discovered after a review of his personal records was conducted in the wake of classified material being found at Biden's home in Delaware.

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## US Capitol attack

# January 6 rioter with Confederate flag sentenced to three years

Kevin Seefried threatened a Black police officer with a pole attached to a Confederate flag during the Capitol attack



Kevin Seefried, at the US Capitol on 6 January 2021. Photograph: Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP

*Associated Press*

Thu 9 Feb 2023 17.22 ESTLast modified on Thu 9 Feb 2023 18.14 EST

A Delaware man who threatened a Black police officer with a pole attached to a Confederate battle flag as he stormed the US Capitol was sentenced on Thursday to three years in prison.

[Kevin Seefried](#), 53, tearfully apologized for his participation in the 6 January 2021 riot before US district judge Trevor McFadden sentenced him.

“I never wanted to send a message of hate,” Seefried said.

McFadden said it was deeply troubling that Seefried wielded the flagpole as a weapon against the officer. “Bringing a Confederate flag into one of our nation’s most sacred halls was outrageous,” the judge said.

McFadden allowed Seefried to remain free until he must report to prison at a date to be determined.

Justice Department [prosecutors had recommended a prison sentence of five years and 10 months](#) for Seefried, a drywall mechanic from Laurel, Delaware.

Seefried and his adult son, Hunter, stormed the Capitol together after attending the “Stop the Steal” rally, where then President Donald Trump addressed thousands of supporters in Washington. Kevin Seefried was the 12th rioter to set foot inside the building that day, according to prosecutors.

In October, McFadden [sentenced Hunter Seefried to two years of imprisonment.](#)

Widely published photographs showed Kevin Seefried carrying his Confederate flag inside the Capitol after he and his son, then 22, entered the building through a broken window.

Kevin Seefried told an FBI agent that he did not view the Confederate flag as a symbol of racist hate. FBI agents said they did not find any evidence linking him or his son to any far-right extremist groups.

Seefried is embarrassed and ashamed that many may view him as a racist, his lawyers said in a court filing.

“He had brought the flag as a symbol of protest, but had not considered the logic of those who see the flag as a symbol of American racism,” they wrote. “Now that photos of him with the flag have become iconic symbols of the horror of January 6, Mr. Seefried completely understands the harm he has caused.”

Within a minute of entering the building, Kevin Seefried jabbed his flagpole at Capitol Police officer Eugene Goodman and joined other rioters in chasing the officer up a flight of stairs, a harrowing scene captured on video. Seefried was the first rioter to encounter Goodman near the base of the staircase, prosecutors said.

Goodman, who testified at the Seefrieds' trial, said Seefried cursed at him and jabbed at him with the base of his flagpole three or four times without making contact. Goodman recalled that Seefried asked where members of Congress were counting the votes and said: "You can shoot me, man, but we're coming in."

"That flagpole was not only a weapon capable of causing serious injury; a Confederate Battle flag was affixed to it and it was brandished by a man standing at the front of a volatile, growing mob towards a solitary, Black police officer," prosecutors wrote in a court filing.

Goodman led rioters away from the Senate chamber as senators and then Vice-President Mike Pence were being evacuated. He also directed Senator Mitt Romney to turn around and head away from the mob.

McFadden convicted the father and son of riot-related charges in June after hearing two days of trial testimony without a jury.

Nearly 1,000 people have been charged with federal crimes related to the January 6 riot. More than 500 of them have pleaded guilty, mostly to misdemeanors. Approximately 400 have been sentenced, with over half getting terms of imprisonment ranging from seven days to 10 years.

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## Kanye West

# Adidas could take €1.2bn revenue hit if it writes off Kanye West's Yeezy stock

German sportswear company cut ties with rapper in 2022 over his antisemitic comments



Adidas is still deciding whether it should ‘repurpose’ any of the Yeezy products for sale. Photograph: Seth Wenig/AP

[Mark Sweeney](#)

[@marksweney](#)

Fri 10 Feb 2023 04.39 EST Last modified on Fri 10 Feb 2023 09.35 EST

Adidas has warned that it could take a revenue hit of €1.2bn (£1bn) and slump to a loss this year if it decides not to sell its remaining stock of products made in collaboration with Kanye West, after it [cut ties with the rapper](#) over his antisemitic comments.

The German sportswear giant said its decision last year to end the partnership to produce the Yeezy range with West, now known as Ye, will hit operating profits by €500m in 2023.

Shares in Adidas plunged 10% in early trading on Friday after it issued the profit warning – its fourth since July – and said it was still deciding whether it should “repurpose” any of the Yeezy products for sale.



Kanye West was suspended from Instagram and Twitter over offensive posts. Photograph: Evan Agostini/Invision/AP

The company said that if it decided to scrap all the stock then it would take a further €500m hit to operating profits.

“The numbers speak for themselves. We are currently not performing the way we should,” said Bjørn Gulden, the chief executive of Adidas, who joined the company last month. “2023 will be a year of transition to set the base to again be a growing and profitable company.”

The sportswear company ended its relationship with West in October, after the artist was [suspended from Instagram and Twitter over offensive posts](#). It said his actions were “unacceptable, hateful and dangerous, and they

violated the company's values of diversity and inclusion, mutual respect and fairness".

Adidas expects one-off costs of €200m this year as part of a strategic review the company is conducting to "reignite profitable growth" from 2024.

"We need to put the pieces back together again but I am convinced that over time we will make Adidas shine again," said Gulden, who joined from rival Puma. "But we need some time."

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Adidas said its operating profit for 2022 fell to €669m, a two-thirds fall on the €2bn it made in 2021.

In March, the company said it would close its stores and suspend online operations in Russia. Adidas has also been hit by China's strict Covid restrictions put in place to curb a new wave of the virus late last year.

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## Headlines thursday 2 february 2023

- [Shell Anger as company makes ‘obscene’ £32.2bn in profits](#)
- [Live Labour renews call for ‘proper’ windfall tax as Shell declares record £32.2bn profit](#)
- [Nigeria Nearly 14,000 people take Shell to court over devastating impact of pollution](#)
- [Environment Shell’s actual spending on renewables is fraction of what it claims, group alleges](#)

[Shell](#)

## Calls for bigger windfall tax after Shell makes ‘obscene’ \$40bn profit

Sunak government under pressure after gas prices fuel ‘outrageous’ doubling of profits at Anglo-Dutch group

- [Shell’s spending on renewables ‘a fraction of what it claims’](#)
- [Nearly 14,000 Nigerians sue over pollution impact](#)



Analysts had expected Shell to report adjusted earnings of \$7.97bn for the fourth quarter and \$38.17bn for the year. It made \$9.8bn. Photograph: Paul O'Driscoll/BLOOMBERG NEWS

[Alex Lawson](#) Energy correpondent

Thu 2 Feb 2023 09.13 ESTFirst published on Thu 2 Feb 2023 02.17 EST

The government is under pressure to rethink its windfall tax on energy companies after Shell reported one of the largest profits in UK corporate

history, with the surge in energy prices sparked by Russia's invasion of [Ukraine](#) pushing the oil company's annual takings to \$40bn (£32bn).

Opposition parties and trade unions described Shell's bonanza, the biggest in its 115 year history, as "outrageous" and accused Rishi Sunak of letting fossil fuel companies "off the hook".

On Thursday, the UK headquartered company confirmed it had paid just \$134m in British windfall taxes during 2022. It paid \$520m under the EU "solidarity contribution" – Europe's equivalent of the windfall tax.

The company was [criticised](#) in October when it said it had paid no UK windfall tax up to that point, but on Wednesday said it was likely to contribute \$500m in 2023.

Boosted by record oil and gas prices, Shell posted profits of almost \$10bn in the final quarter of last year, taking its annual adjusted profits to \$40bn in 2022, far outstripping the \$19bn notched up in 2021.

### [Shell profits](#)

The performance puts Shell on a par with the £38bn British American Tobacco made in 2017, but still behind the £60bn Vodafone achieved in 2014, when the telecoms group sold its US business.

The shadow climate change secretary, Ed Miliband, said: "As the British people face an energy price hike of 40% in April, the government is letting the fossil fuel companies making bumper profits off the hook with their refusal to implement a proper windfall tax."

Miliband added: "Labour would stop the energy price cap going up in April, because it is only right that the companies making unexpected windfall profits from the proceeds of war pay their fair share."

The Liberal Democrat leader, Ed Davey, said: "No company should be making these kind of outrageous profits out of [Vladimir] Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine."

“Rishi Sunak was warned as chancellor and now as prime minister that we need a proper windfall tax on companies like Shell and he has failed to take action.”

Paul Nowak, the general secretary of the TUC, said the profits were “obscene” and “an insult to working families”.

The step up in Shell and its competitors’ profits during 2022 prompted the government to introduce a windfall tax on North Sea operators, which was later [toughened by the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt](#).

Nowak said windfall taxes should be increased. “As households up and down Britain struggle to pay their bills and make ends meet, Shell are enjoying a cash bonanza. The time for excuses is over. The government must impose a larger windfall tax on energy companies. Billions are being left on the table,” he said.

“Instead of holding down the pay of paramedics, teachers, firefighters and millions of other hard-pressed public servants, ministers should be making big oil and gas pay their fair share.”

Shell has benefited from a surge in oil prices caused by embargoes on Russian oil imposed since the invasion of Ukraine, and Russia’s decision to cut off gas supplies to continental Europe.

Analysts had expected Shell’s new chief executive, Wael Sawan, to report adjusted earnings of \$7.97bn for the fourth quarter and \$38.17bn for the year, in his City debut. It represented an increase on the \$9.45bn registered in the third quarter, aided by a bounceback in earnings from its liquefied natural gas trading arm.

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Sunak's official spokesperson said No 10 was aware the public would view Shell's profits as extraordinarily high, which was why the government had introduced its windfall tax comparable to those seen in other countries, he added.

“We think it [the profits levy] strikes a balance between funding cost of living support while encouraging investment in order to bolster the UK’s energy security,” they said. “We have made it clear that we want to encourage reinvestment of the sector’s profits to support the economy, jobs and energy security, and that’s why the more investment a firm makes into the UK the less tax they will pay.”

Sawan announced a boost in payouts to shareholders, with a 15% increase in the final quarter dividend to \$6.3bn.

He also announced \$4bn of share buybacks over the next three months. In total, Shell distributed \$26bn to shareholders in 2022.

Asked how it felt to make huge profits while people struggle with their bills, Sawan said: “These are incredibly difficult times, we’re seeing inflation rampant around the world … When I go back home to Lebanon some of the challenges I see people going through, sometimes without electricity for a full day, are the the challenges that we see in many, many parts of the world. The answer to that is to make sure we provide energy to the world.”

Shell has also been [accused of overstating how much it is spending on renewable energy](#), and faced calls this week to be investigated and potentially fined by the US financial regulator.

Shell invested \$25bn overall during 2022, up from \$20bn in 2021. The firm spent \$12bn on oil and gas projects, compared with \$3.5bn on its renewable energy division.

The Greenpeace UK senior climate justice campaigner Elena Polisano said: “World leaders have just set up a new fund to pay for the loss and damage caused by the climate crisis. Now they should force historical mega-polluters like Shell to pay into it.”

Jonathan Noronha-Gant, a senior campaigner at Global Witness, said: “People have every right to be outraged at the enormous profits that Shell has made in the midst of an energy affordability crisis that has pushed millions of families into poverty.”

The company, which has a stock market valuation of \$165bn, last week embarked on a review of its division supplying energy and broadband to homes in Europe, putting 2,000 UK jobs at risk.

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**Politics live with Andrew Sparrow****Politics**

## **Sunak tells Piers Morgan ‘biological sex matters’ – as it happened**

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## [Nigeria](#)

# **Nearly 14,000 Nigerians take Shell to court over devastating impact of pollution**

People from Niger delta areas of Ogale and Bille seeking justice in London's high court



Oil pollution in Bille. Photograph: Handout

*[Sandra Laville](#)*

Thu 2 Feb 2023 01.01 EST Last modified on Thu 2 Feb 2023 03.03 EST

Nearly 14,000 people from two Nigerian communities are seeking justice in the high court in London against the fossil fuel giant Shell, claiming it is responsible for devastating pollution of their water sources and destruction of their way of life.

The individuals from the Niger delta area of Ogale, a farming community, lodged their claims last week, joining more than 2,000 people from the Bille area, a largely fishing community. In total 13,652 claims from individuals, and from churches and schools, are asking the oil giant to clean up the pollution which they say has devastated their communities. They are also asking for compensation for the resulting loss of their livelihoods. Their ability to farm and fish has been destroyed by the continuing oil spills from [Shell](#) operations, they claim.

Shell, which declared profits of more than \$30bn for the first three quarters of 2022, argues that the communities have no legal standing to force it to clean up. Shell argues also that the individuals are barred from seeking compensation for spills which happened five years before they lodged their claims. The company says it bears no responsibility for the clandestine siphoning off of oil from its pipelines by organised gangs, which it says causes many of the spills.

The case against Shell is taking place as the oil major prepares to leave the Niger delta after more than 80 years of operations which have reaped substantial profits.

Daniel Leader, a partner at Leigh Day, who is representing the claimants, said: “This case raises important questions about the responsibilities of oil and gas companies. It appears that Shell is seeking to leave the Niger delta free of any legal obligation to address the environmental devastation caused by oil spills from its infrastructure over many decades.

“At a time when the world is focused on “the just transition”, this raises profound questions about the responsibility of fossil fuel companies for legacy and ongoing environmental pollution.”

Lawyers argue that the scale of oil spills in the delta masks a human tragedy on an extraordinary scale, with the pollution ingested by local people causing serious health impacts and affecting mortality rates.

A report by the [University of St Gallen in Switzerland found](#) that infants in the Niger delta were twice as likely to die in their first month of life if their

mothers lived near an oil spill – a study which suggested there were 11,000 premature deaths a year in the Niger delta.

Shell has argued for five years that it is not liable for the actions of its Nigerian subsidiary Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) and the claims from the people of Ogale and Bille could not be heard in a London courtroom. But the supreme court ruled last year “there is a good arguable case” that Nigerian communities could bring their claims to the high court.

Shell continues to argue in its defence that it is not liable as the parent company.

As well as the thousands of individual claims against Shell, lawyers are also seeking compensation for alleged damage to communally owned property, to benefit everyone living in the midst of chronic pollution in the 40,000-strong rural community of Ogale, and in Bille, a 13,000-strong fishing community living on a group of islands in the mangrove forest region of the eastern Niger delta.

The stream which is the main source of water in Ogale for farming, drinking, and fishing has been severely polluted by oil contamination, the claims state. The pollution has killed fish, contaminated the drinking water and ruined the farmland. Most of the water coming from the borehole taps or wells in Ogale has a strong stench of oil, and is visibly brown, or covered in a sheen of oil, the claims state.

'We don't drink it': tap water in Ogale visibly brown – video

In Bille, oil spills from Shell's apparatus have caused massive contamination of the rivers around the community, the claims say. Many people live close to the water and smell the oil in their homes. When the tide rises oily water comes right up to their houses, causing damage to their properties and possessions. The oil spills have damaged vast areas of mangrove forest and killed most of the fish and shellfish in the rivers, leaving Bille's fishing population without a source of food or income.

The claims lodged in the high court state that Shell plc and/or its subsidiary SPDC were aware of systemic oil spills from their pipelines taking place over many years but failed to take adequate steps to prevent them or to clean them up.

Shell has been active in Nigeria for 86 years, and its Nigerian operations continue to account for a significant portion of the company's overall profits. In a report in 2011 the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) revealed the devastating impact of the oil industry in Ogoniland, and set out urgent recommendations for "the largest terrestrial cleanup operation in history". It put the cost of an initial cleanup over five years at \$1bn – around 3% of Shell's 2022 profits.

But a report last year by [a number of NGOs](#), said the people of Ogoniland were still waiting for a thorough cleanup of the oil spills.

A Shell spokesperson said: "We strongly believe in the merits of our case. The overwhelming majority of spills related to the Bille and Ogale claims were caused by illegal third-party interference, including pipeline sabotage, illegal bunkering and other forms of oil theft. Illegal refining of stolen crude oil also happens on a large scale in these areas and is a major source of oil pollution."

Shell told the Guardian that it had done cleanup work and remediation of affected areas, and was working with the relevant Nigerian authorities to prevent sabotage, crude oil theft, and illegal refining which were, it said, the main source of pollution. It argued that litigation would do little to help address this issue.

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## Shell

# Shell's actual spending on renewables is fraction of what it claims, group alleges

Non-profit group Global Witness urges US regulator to investigate oil giant and potentially impose fines over apparent ‘mislabeling’



Global Witness alleges just 1.5% of Shell's capital expenditure has been used to develop genuine renewables. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

*[Oliver Milman](#)*

*[@olliemilman](#)*

Wed 1 Feb 2023 08.00 EST Last modified on Wed 1 Feb 2023 12.14 EST

Shell has misleadingly overstated how much it is spending on renewable energy and should be investigated and potentially fined by the US financial regulator, according to a non-profit group which has lodged a complaint against the oil giant.

The US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has been urged to act over Shell's most recent annual report in which it stated 12% of its capital expenditure was funneled into a division called Renewables and Energy Solutions in 2021. The division's [webpage](#), which is adorned with pictures of wind turbines and solar panels, says it is working to invest in "wind, solar, electric vehicle charging, hydrogen, and more".

However, Global Witness, the activist group that has lodged the new complaint with the SEC, argues that just 1.5% of Shell's capital expenditure has been used to develop genuine renewables, such as wind and solar, with much of the rest of the division's resources devoted to gas, which is a fossil fuel.

"What Shell has said about the energy transition is not reflected in what they are doing," said Zorka Milin, senior adviser at Global Witness. "This business unit is fundamentally mislabeled, it has very little in the way of renewables and investors could be lulled into thinking Shell is doing far more on renewables than it is."

"This is greenwashing. Gas, whatever it may be, is not renewable, it's part of the problem. I hope the SEC opens an investigation and imposes appropriate penalties to stop this greenwashing."

Shell does not have a full breakdown of its renewable energy activity in its annual reports but Global Witness said that by examining the document they could find \$288m in wind and solar investment [in 2021](#), which is equivalent to 1.5% of Shell's capital expenditure. Much of the spending by the Renewables and Energy Solutions division appears to be on the trading and marketing of gas.

Should the SEC act over the issue, it will mark the most aggressive regulatory foray yet by the US federal government against a fossil fuel sector that is [facing multiple lawsuits in several states](#) for misleading investors and the public over what they knew about the climate crisis.

Shell, which is headquartered in London but is listed on the New York stock exchange, has denied misleading investors. "We're confident Shell's

financial disclosures are fully compliant with all SEC and other reporting requirements,” said a company spokeswoman.

The Shell spokeswoman said the company budgeted \$20bn for “energy transition activities” in 2022, which is a third of its total operational and capital expenditure spending. This investment went towards renewable energy, hydrogen fuels, capturing carbon at the source of pollution and research and development, she said.

Most of the world’s largest oil companies now accept that burning their product is causing global heating and have committed to the goals of the Paris climate agreement. But their shift away from fossil fuels has been ponderous – only about 5% of oil and gas company capital expenditure went to wind, solar and other renewables in 2022, [according to the International Energy Agency](#). This was up from just 1% in 2019.

Last year was a particularly lucrative one for oil companies’ traditional business model, with soaring fossil fuel costs in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine prompting record profits for some of the wealthiest businesses in the world. Exxon [made a record annual profit](#) of nearly \$56bn last year, while Chevron has reported a \$36.5bn profit for 2022.

Milin said she hoped the SEC, which is separately [mulling](#) new requirements for companies to disclose their greenhouse gases, would act to deter other oil companies. “No more will we allow big polluters to pull the wool over our eyes while the world burns,” she said. The SEC did not respond to a request for comment.

Bruce Huber, an expert in environmental law at Notre Dame University, said the new complaint highlights the external pressure that environmentalists are now placing upon fossil fuel companies.

“What we’re seeing now is climate activists poring over the disclosures of energy firms with a fine-tooth comb, looking for any misstatements that could be the basis for liability or penalty,” he said.

“Whether these tactics will actually induce Shell or its competitors to decarbonize is unclear, but even if not, those firms won’t be able to sneeze

without someone looking for a securities violation.”

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## ‘Some weeks I only speak to the postman’: how to escape learned loneliness – and soar socially



Joining a running group or parkrun can be a surprisingly good way to make friends. Illustration: Mark Long/The Guardian

The time we spend with our close friends has plummeted over the past decade. Here is an expert guide to making new connections and reviving old ones

*Anita Chaudhuri*

Thu 2 Feb 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 2 Feb 2023 11.56 EST

When Jeni Matthewman, 44, recently moved back to rural Devon, she imagined she would have plenty of old friends to reconnect with. However, with a busy schedule as a breath and body therapist, and a husband whose own job took him elsewhere during the week, something slowly began to dawn on her: she no longer had a social life.

“During the week, apart from my work, I wouldn’t see anyone,” she says. “Most of the friends I used to know had moved away or they had kids so we couldn’t meet up the way we used to.” And Matthewman was not a person to make friends casually: she had suffered from social anxiety for most of her life.

Then one day a new hobby offered a solution. “I was out walking when I had this idea. Wouldn’t it be great to start a tarot group at my house, like a book group? I can’t over-emphasise what a big leap this was to contemplate inviting strangers into my home. I’ve never even had a birthday party.”

A Facebook advert attracted an unexpected flurry of interest. “At our first meeting, we had 12 women around my table. It’s great because we are bonding over something we have a shared interest in. We’re bringing people together of all ages, from different walks of life. And my confidence has grown so much.” There is now a buzzing WhatsApp group, a waiting list and plans for a second group.

Not everyone has such a lucky escape. Obviously the pandemic forced us to spend more time at home and reprioritise with whom we mixed. But statistically and anecdotally, it feels as if people’s social landscapes have

permanently changed. [YouGov's 2021 Friendship study](#) reported that one in eight Britons, across genders, said they had only one close friend, while 7% had no friends at all, and 51% said they struggled to make new friends.

"There are some weeks when the only person I speak to is the postman – I'm praying Royal Mail don't go on strike again," quips one home-working friend, who lives alone. "Sure, I'd love to meet up," says another friend. "But I must warn you, I haven't seen anyone or been anywhere really. I won't have much to say."

Meanwhile, in the US, the term "friendship recession" entered the lexicon after census data revealed that Americans were spending an ever-decreasing amount of time with friends. The blame cannot solely be put on the pandemic because the decline has been steady since 2014. A decade ago, people spent six and a half hours a week with close friends, but by 2021 [that figure had plummeted to just 2hr 45min](#).

So what's going on? Have we simply become allergic to other people? Psychologist Marisa G Franco, author of Platonic, believes that many of us are socially adrift without even being aware of it. "The issue we are seeing now is something called 'learned loneliness' – people have adjusted to isolation. It's not that they have gone off socialising, it's that they have learned to live with an unfulfilled need," she says. "A recent study from Pew Research showed that 35% of people feel that socialising is less important than it was before the pandemic."

She says that, when it comes to loneliness, humans are not great at identifying the emotion. "For example, one symptom of loneliness is that you're in a bad mood for no reason." This could explain the rise in abusive behaviour towards workers in shops and call centres since the pandemic. "Ironically, loneliness makes us withdraw and perceive other people as threatening. We devalue how important connection is, we choose not to depend on other people, which makes us more lonely. It's a vicious cycle."

London-based psychotherapist Charlotte Fox Weber has observed a marked increase in the number of people coming to see her about loneliness and problems with friendships. Some are even seeking "friend therapy" to address issues, a suggestion that people are starting to put a higher value on

platonic relationships, realising they can offer things not always available within romantic partnerships.

“Friendship offers shared meaning and perspective, finding threads of continuity over time,” she says. “But unlike romance, with friendship the plot isn’t defined – there’s no predestined progression – which is one of its joys.” However, making friends once the infrastructure of college and first jobs is long gone can be tricky, and it’s a subject that isn’t talked about that much.

“It can take people a while to reveal that they feel lonely or that they wish they had more social connections,” says Weber. “There can be a lot of defensive pride around it, bound up with social status. There’s this weird societal pressure to have lots of friends and that if you don’t then you’re not a good human being.”

The observation that friendship is bound up with virtue was first explored by Aristotle. He identified three distinct types of friendship: friendships of utility (in modern terms, the neighbour who can pick up your kids from school or the woman in your yoga class who you can have coffee with afterwards), friendships of pleasure (those pals who will accompany you on a cheese and wine rampage) and lastly, friendships of virtue, soulmate friends, the ones who will sit with you for hours in A&E and still be making you laugh at the end of it.

If we are seeking to expand our friendship circle, a good starting point might be to stop looking exclusively for the “BFF” ones and start seeking some buddies who like doing the same things as we do. Manchester-based musician Taylor Giacoma signed up for her local parkrun, the running club that meets across Britain every Saturday morning. “I had a couple of friends who were massive fans and I honestly didn’t think I would like it,” she says. “I joined as a fitness thing; I find purely social settings really challenging. To my surprise, I absolutely loved it. You can walk round the course if you want – it’s not about being super-fast.”



Illustration: Mark Long/The Guardian

Giacoma discovered that there was plenty of time before and after the run to chat with people, and often there's the opportunity for coffee afterwards. "I realised how much I'd needed that social contact, having become somewhat isolated. Parkrun led to me joining another running group and doing all sorts of events that I never in a million years thought I'd do."

Some activities are more fruitful for making friends than others, though. Franco suggests being strategic about where you conduct your friendship hunt. "Go for things where there is a lot of interaction – tennis, improv, language classes are all good. What all of these activities do is normalise engaging with strangers. Social permission is assumed." This explains why the conversations I initiate while in the queue at Aldi don't really go anywhere – it's not what other people are doing.

Above all, Franco advises, avoid going to one-off events hoping to instantly make new connections. "A mistake people make is they will go to one networking event or spend the evening at a new bar. But in order to make new friends, we need to capitalise on what psychologists term 'mere exposure' – our tendency to like people the more we see them. Choose a couple of groups and activities and commit to doing them for three months."

She points out that initially, when we interact with someone we don't know, we naturally feel uncomfortable. "The big problem is assuming that because we feel initial wariness then the connection isn't there. That's all part of the process." Thinking back to the first encounters with my closest friends, I definitely think this is true. I met my best friend on the first day of my first job. She was having a meltdown about someone spilling cough syrup on her desk. "Uh-oh," I thought, and gave her a wide berth. But the following week she offered to lend penniless me a beautiful dress to wear to the office party. That was more than 30 years ago.

Another good way to meet people is volunteering. "You're getting out and about, doing something that makes you feel good," says Cheryl Rickman, author of *Navigating Loneliness*. "Also, everyone is there for the same purpose, so you already share something that matters to you."



Holly Tyers (second from left) with the Friends of Batley Station.

Holly Tyers decided to volunteer for the Friends of Batley Station, a group founded by the late MP Jo Cox. On the face of it, meeting every Saturday to pick up discarded beer bottles and tidy up the station platform doesn't sound like an obvious route to transforming your social life. "I moved to the area and didn't know anyone apart from my housemate," says Tyers, who runs a seed subscription business, the 15 Minute Gardener. "It was the gardening

aspect of it that prompted me to get involved. We keep the station looking nice, and maintain the planters. Talking to other human beings and being outdoors was great. There is a pub right outside the station to which we retire, and in the summer we meet in the evenings as well. It sort of forced me to be sociable. I would never go to a bar on my own to meet people or anything like that. I wouldn't have met these friends if I hadn't started going to the group, nor would I have met my lovely partner, who is the best thing that happened to me."

If we are seeking to expand our friendship circle, we sometimes forget to reach out to the people we already know. "Look at those friendships that, for whatever reason, have gone dormant," suggests Rickman. "Usually, you were friends for a reason and it's going to take much less effort and be less daunting than connecting with strangers."

Rather than trying to recreate the past, Rickman advises scheduling activities that will create new memories together, like a day trip. "If you're stuck, think back to things you used to enjoy as a teenager, like going to a roller disco. You might organise an outing for friends to try it again. Another good idea is going to a comedy night or movie. Studies have shown that social laughter creates connection." She is also an advocate of scheduling something regularly with one or more friends so it becomes a ritual. "Maybe the last Sunday of the month you do a brunch or a cycling trip, something that's on the calendar. Or you could invent a seasonal tradition like a bluebell walk or fish and chips on the beach in summer – things you can look forward to."

One of the most vexing aspects about making friends in adulthood is that it's never as effortless as pop culture suggests. Somewhere in my brain, I still feel that everyone apart from me meets up with their gang at a coffee shop like Central Perk or has a Cheers-style local where everyone knows your name.

"The reality is friendship takes hard work and it requires courage," says Weber. "For many of us, the fact that we find ourselves lacking in friends is circumstantial and not really in our control. It can be about having responsibilities and pressures that mean you simply don't have much free

time. It can also be about life stage or geography. Acknowledging your disappointments in this life area and resolving to do something about it, to be brave, is a good starting point.”

All the experts agree that friendships take maintenance. “If need be, set reminders to check in with your friends. Let them know you care,” says Rickman. “Sometimes I send a card or a voice note; you could make a funny video or send them a care package in the post to let them know you are thinking about them, even if you don’t have time to meet up. Stay connected.”

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## Rishi Sunak

# Ratings sink and obstacles amass as Sunak completes first 100 days as PM

Advisers argue he has made progress, but the new intake are frustrated and voters believe he is ‘out of touch’



While he has survived 100 days as prime minister – twice the length of predecessor Liz Truss’s term – focus groups with swing voters were said to be ‘utterly brutal’ for Rishi Sunak. Photograph: Tayfun Salcı/Zuma/Rex/Shutterstock



[Jessica Elgot](#)

[@jessicaelgot](#)

Thu 2 Feb 2023 01.00 EST

Rishi Sunak has now survived 100 days as prime minister – a pretty small feat by historical standards but twice the length of his predecessor's term. But the circumstances he inherited – the lack of mandate, plummeting polls and an economy in freefall – have deeply constrained what he is able to do with his time in office.

Inside No 10, key advisers argue that Sunak has already made significant progress, that the economy is starting to recover, that he has set out a clear stall with five pledges on inflation, national debt, the economy, immigration and the NHS, and that he has largely taken the Tory party infighting off the front pages.

But he is on the brink of losing his third cabinet minister in ignoble circumstances, amid a bullying investigation into one of his closest allies, Dominic Raab. He has already lost Gavin Williamson and Nadhim Zahawi, both to scandals. He has already caved to three rebellions, on planning, onshore wind and the online harms bill.

And the polls have not even begun to turn, with Labour enjoying a healthy 20-point lead and Sunak's own ratings beginning to sink.

"We are under no illusion – there are many traps ahead," one Downing Street source said. "We have Northern Ireland, the budget – both times when we may have to find a way to bring colleagues with us when they might not be always be inclined to."

Sunak's No 10 is a much more functional environment than it was under the last two incumbents, though some say it has been a challenge for him to adapt to the role. Sunak as chancellor had what one aide described as a "party trick" of being able to recall details from the subsections of detailed reports, which he could test officials with by page number.

As PM, he has had to home in on priorities – but some say he is struggling to shake off micromanagement. One person present at a recent meeting of NHS leaders said they were baffled why Sunak was grilling them on the intricate detail of how a particular IT system worked. Another minister observed: "I think at the moment he is still trying to be chancellor, home secretary and prime minister."

But Downing Street sources say this is not true. "He is self-aware – he knows you cannot do that and he is happy to delegate. That's why you have seen him pick the five priorities."

After Liz Truss left office, polls suggested that voters wanted to keep an open mind about Sunak and rated him significantly higher than his party.

That is now beginning to turn. According to senior Labour figures, their most recent focus groups, with swing voters in Southampton, Dewsbury and Bury last week, were described as being "utterly brutal for Sunak", with participants engaging in "open mockery" of the prime minister. Even the most pessimistic members of Keir Starmer's team say they have seen a decisive shift.

Voters were scathing about attempts to tackle the cost of living and suggested they believed fundamental public services like the NHS were broken. From the focus groups, there was a growing feeling many had not

seen much of Sunak since coming to power – though Sunak is trying to shift this narrative with a series of “PM Connect” events across the country, spending well over his allotted time speaking directly to local voters.

But the most common refrain from voters was the one that Tory MPs are also the most nervous about – that Sunak is “out of touch” and that his wealth means he cannot understand voters’ concerns. One voter in Bury told Labour’s researchers that they could not take Sunak seriously when he spoke about the NHS, because it was obvious he had never been on a waiting list.

Sunak gathered his cabinet for an away day at Chequers last week, where the Tory election guru Isaac Levido is said to have told ministers that there was a narrow path to victory because of the number of voters still undecided about Starmer – approximately 20% of the electorate.

But some Tory MPs who have been in discussions with CCHQ about electoral strategy for their seats say some of that briefing paints far too positive a picture compared with what they have seen on the ground. One said they had been warned that those with a majority of less than 10,000 were at risk of losing seats.

Prof Tim Bale, of Queen Mary University, who has authored several books on the [Conservatives](#), said polling currently suggested people “no longer believe the Conservatives have the solutions to everyday problems”.

He said there was very little to differentiate Sunak at present from the public perception of the Conservatives. “Really, it just looks like continuity Conservative government,” he said. “I think generally speaking people do recognise now, after Johnson and all the plotting, that competence is not too bad a thing. But they could also get that from Keir Starmer,” he said.

The places where the Conservatives are likely to face the most difficulty are the north of England and the Midlands, and there is frustration among the new intake that Sunak has almost no one from the so-called “red wall” at any kind of senior level in the government. “I think Rishi actually sees himself as being the northern representative around the table, which I don’t think is helping,” one minister said.

That may change with a rumoured summer reshuffle, though even some of his supporters who were not rewarded with jobs initially say it has been a good idea to keep a number of Truss supporters inside the tent, such as Thérèse Coffey, the environment secretary, Steve Baker, a Northern Ireland minister, or the communities minister Dehenna Davison.

It was once rumoured that Sunak intended to eventually replace Hunt, but senior allies now say that is not the case.

“They get on very well – I think if he had been minded to move Hunt at a summer reshuffle, that won’t happen now,” one key backer said. And Suella Braverman, seen as a scandal waiting to happen by Labour and not Sunak’s natural ally, is also privately viewed more sympathetically. One senior No 10 source said: “She is better than many people think, I have been genuinely impressed.”

MPs are split into a number of camps regarding how to deal with the polling predicament. There are those who believe the election can still be narrowly won, though many of them, including those close to Sunak, believe he needs to be bolder on drawing new dividing lines – including on immigration.

Several of them, including a number of ministers, are pushing for Sunak to commit to leaving the European court of human rights as a manifesto pledge. “I think it’s an issue where you will get most red wall MPs onside, many other colleagues can be convinced of that course and the few who can’t are not really so important,” one minister said.

Another small rump of MPs, including several in the new Conservative Growth Group, are convinced that the resurrection of Johnson is the only remedy, but most will concede that cannot happen until early 2024.

But the majority are focused on working hard locally to try to rescue their own seats, including taking part in rebellions such as those on [housebuilding](#), to send a signal to their electorate. Those who do not need to – mostly younger and still ambitious MPs – are already meeting to think about what comes after 2024, to start building alliances and power bases within the party to determine who will triumph out of the postmortem.

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# Can a mass shooter demand a good death? The strange case that tested the limits of justice

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/02/can-a-mass-shooter-demand-a-good-death-the-strange-case-that-tested-the-limits-of-justice>

## [Fitness](#)

# ‘Watch this creep’: the women exposing gym harassment on TikTok

The hashtag ‘gym weirdos’ has received nearly 2m views as women covertly record their experiences



‘It makes me feel disgusted, anxious, and my survival instinct kicks in.’  
Photograph: Tempura/Getty Images

*[Alaina Demopoulos](#)*

Thu 2 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 2 Feb 2023 09.32 EST

Women have long been hyper-vigilant about unwanted male attention at the gym. But before smartphones, the sense they were being stared at was more of a feeling than a certainty.

Now catching perceived offenders in action has become its own sport on TikTok, with women covertly leaving their phones on record and then

watching the resulting video to see who was staring at their behind while they were doing squats.

On the app, the pitiless hashtag “gym weirdos” has over 1.9m views, with videos showing men attempting to flirt with or pick up women who just want to get through their sets unbothered.

Gina Love is one such TikTok detective. She goes to the gym at least four times a week, because the endorphin boost that comes from a good deadlift counteracts the daily stress of life.

“Watch this creep come over to my personal bubble while doing [Romanian deadlifts],” Love wrote in the caption of an [encounter she posted on TikTok](#), which was liked over 50,000 times. “The gym was practically empty, and so many corners to be in and he chose this one.” In the clip, the man stands directly behind Love as she lifts dumbbells before deciding to leave.

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“I would say I experience creeps 15% of the times I work out,” Love, who is 29 and lives in Atlanta, told the Guardian. This usually manifests as a man staring at her for an “uncomfortably long” amount of time. “It’s almost like they’re trying to undress you in their heads,” Love said.

Some might say inappropriate looks or creepy comments are as much of a feature in the gym for women as broken workout equipment or crowds. One [study](#) from 2021 found that 76% of women feel uncomfortable exercising in public due to harassment. In another [survey](#) from Run Repeat, 56% of women reported facing harassment during their workouts.

Love sometimes leaves the gym when the staring is too much. “It makes me feel disgusted, anxious and my survival instinct kicks in,” she said. “I’ll

typically cut my workout short because I can't get back into feeling comfortable with that person around me." Love swaps stories with friends: one recently told her that a man had tried to secretly record her during a workout.

Comments on her videos, and others posted by women with similar experiences, elicit different reactions. Some commenters agree that gyms feel like predatory spaces. But others dismiss the women's complaints as overreactions.

"It's not your personal space," one person wrote in reply to Love's clip. "WTF is a personal bubble at a public gym?" another asked.

Joey Swoll is a male trainer and TikToker who calls himself the "CEO of gym positivity". He frequently reposts these videos with commentary on gym etiquette, either exonerating the so-called "creep" or validating the frazzled woman's feelings to his 6 million TikTok followers.

Last month, an influencer named Jessica Fernandez posted a video from the gym showing a man glancing in her direction as she worked out. "I hate this, I hate when there's weirdos," she said under her breath in the clip. "Feral, feral, feral, like fucking feral." The man then asked her if she needed help with a weight, and she declined.

Swoll responded to her video, writing: "Women are harassed in gyms and it needs to stop, but you are not one of them. An act of kindness or a glance does not make you a victim." The video was liked over 812,000 times, and Fernandez ultimately apologized for her post. Swoll and Fernandez did not respond to requests for comment.

Why can't men mind their own business at the gym? Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, a historian and author of the new book *Fit Nation: The Gains and Pains of America's Exercise Obsession*, said that gyms had long been gendered spaces. Historically, separate men's and women's gyms existed, or health clubs hosted intentional "ladies' days".

“When I hear about men ogling or hitting on women at the gym, I am often reminded of how for decades, women exercising was considered a kind of sexy spectacle,” Petrzela said.

In June of 1972, for instance, New York held its first Mini-Marathon, which was televised and hosted by the hosiery brand L’eggs. Playboy Bunnies flanked the starting line of the race. “It’s clear from the footage that some of the male spectators were there to leer at, rather than cheer on, the women’s athletes,” Petrzela said. Even as second-wave feminism of the 1970s and 80s encouraged women to sign up for workout classes en masse, late-night hosts constantly joked about watching Spandex-clad personalities like Debbie Drake or Jane Fonda gyrate on TV for something “other than the exercise”.

In the 1980s, after co-ed gyms became the norm, columnists wrote articles about how gyms were “the new singles bars”, a concept that powered the [1985 romantic comedy](#) Perfect, starring John Travolta as a reporter who falls for a perpetually sweating health coach, played by Jamie Lee Curtis.

The majority of today’s gyms are co-ed, and the idea of going back to women-only workout spaces remains controversial. Last year, Connecticut’s supreme court ruled that these areas violated a state law banning discrimination based on gender. Despite this, certain sections of the gym tend to be unofficially sex-segregated.

“Women are overrepresented in the studios and on cardio equipment while men disproportionately flock to the weight floor,” Petrzela said. “But the boom in popularity of women weightlifting, and thus being more present in a part of the gym that has traditionally been more male, means that there are probably more instances of those unwanted advances.”

This means that women like Love, who find so much joy in working out, have to negotiate with their sense of safety any time they want to head to the gym. “This behavior from men encourages me to work out at the earliest time possible, typically when the gym opens,” she said. “I tend to go with a friend because creeps are more timid when there are two girls together. I try to keep my clothing incognito: oversized hoodie and a hat. It’s sad that girls

can't be comfortable wearing whatever they please to work out without being harassed.”

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## The Tories now face a choice: lose office with honour or burn everything in sight

[Rafael Behr](#)



Opposition is a state of mind – and Rishi Sunak’s party is already a long way down the road



Rishi Sunak: ‘Even the government’s supporters start to anticipate defeat as a euthanising mercy.’ Photograph: Oli Scarff/PA

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Governing parties do not become oppositions overnight. Well, strictly speaking, they do. Come an election, regimes fall between polls closing at 10pm on Thursday and ousted leaders conceding on Friday morning.

But there is a more gradual transition to opposition as a state of mind – an exhaustion of the will to govern and a dissolution of discipline into factional rancour. That journey precedes an election defeat but also makes one more likely. MPs lose hope of victory. The leader runs out of inducements to loyalty. Attempts to show strength fail, advertising weakness instead.

Voters smell decay and recoil from the source. Even the government’s supporters start to anticipate defeat as a euthanising mercy. How far down that path have Rishi Sunak’s Tories travelled? Where is the point of no return?

Conservatives comfort themselves that little of the present was foreseen in the past, which suggests that electoral decimation is not fixed in their future. Labour MPs intone the same mantra to ward off complacency.

Years of volatility, the submersion of what used to be “normal” politics by Brexit and the pandemic have bred expectation of the unexpected. But ambitious Tories aren’t betting on a fifth term in government. The list of MPs who are quitting parliament at the next election includes rising stars ([Dehenna Davison](#)), mid-career ministerial midfielders ([Chris Skidmore](#)) and seasoned frontbench veterans ([Sajid Javid](#)), among others of all ages and factions.

A related trend is high-profile figures branching out into the media. [Jacob Rees-Mogg](#) and [Nadine Dorries](#) have done deals to host their own chatshows on GB News and Talk TV respectively. They haven’t done that to support the prime minister.

Preening populism is a competitive market. Success depends on generating news and stirring controversy, which means making trouble for the government. The box office demands blue-on-blue action.

Sunak has been in Downing Street now for [100 days](#), which is more than double the time Liz Truss spent there but still short enough for it to feel premature to write him off already. A case for optimism was made at a recent cabinet away day at Chequers by Isaac Levido, Sunak’s campaign strategist (who is paid to think of reasons why the cause is not lost), and, over dinner, by William Hague (speaking as a survivor of lost Tory causes).

Hope of a Conservative revival rests on the softness of Labour support – people are not excited by [Keir Starmer](#) – and the precedent of 1992, when John Major pulled off a surprise victory over Neil Kinnock. Hague also reminded his audience what happened next: descent into sleaze, perpetual rebellion and landslide defeat.

There are plenty of scenarios between the polls of 1992 and 1997, and no reason why voters in 2024 should faithfully re-enact battles that were fought on a different political landscape in a bygone century.

It is true that the current leader of the opposition lacks Tony Blair’s easy magnetism. The spectre of 1992 might not feel current enough to lift Tory

spirits but it still spooks the hell out of Labour, and Starmer still looks more like a man creeping up on power than one striding purposefully towards it.

Labour MPs privately concede that their poll lead describes flight from the Conservatives more than attraction to an opposition platform that few could articulate in bullet points.

But it is easily forgotten how much that was also true in the mid-90s. The scale of Blair's victory was amplified by demoralised Conservative supporters staying at home and Liberal Democrats picking up votes from people who were focused on getting the Tories out. Fewer people voted Labour in 1997 than had voted Tory in 1992 (13.5 million versus 14.1 million).

An underappreciated ingredient for Labour success is lack of public horror at the prospect of Starmer entering Downing Street. He doesn't have to make pulses race as long as he doesn't make stomachs turn or skin crawl, which has been a problem with his recent predecessors.

In that context, Starmer's style – sounding like a headteacher stepping into a school in special measures – might be the right one, or at least the one that works best within his limited performance range. He has been a big disappointment to those craving socialist evangelism or denunciations of Brexit. Their frustration might depress Labour's vote share, but not in ways that do the Tories much good.

A shortage of eager Starmerites will be a weakness in government, when unpopular decisions have to be taken, but it is not an insurmountable obstacle to being a government-in-waiting. Especially not when the governing party is practically begging to be put into opposition.

Starmer's base is not among politics fans who wear their colours with tribal pride. It is the quiet voters in the middle who are tired of ideological adventures and polarising spectacle. He can satisfy a taste for government that is benignly boring and doesn't induce despair or eye-rolling dismay.

Sunak recognises that appetite, which is why on his first day in the job he [promised a new era of integrity](#) and professionalism. The subsequent 99

days have shown that his party has other ideas. They can't agree on what good government involves for long enough to put on a display.

There is a faction that thinks Liz Truss's economic policy – tax cuts financed by imaginary growth projections – was not a disaster but *too much of a good thing* that financial markets found hard to digest. There is also a camp that thinks Boris Johnson was blameless in his own downfall, traduced by cowards and traitors.

That makes a significant cohort of MPs who think their leader is an agent of decline and a leader who thinks the blockage to recovery is found on his own backbenches. It is not a unique affliction, but nor is it a syndrome that can be resolved in office. The obstruction is no mere question of policy or direction. It goes deeper, entwined and embedded in the guts of the party. It can't be loosened without electoral intervention. It needs voters to flush the lot of them out of power.

Rafael Behr is a Guardian columnist

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## I've left my keys in the bin and my wallet in the fridge. But even I've never mislaid radioactive material

[Adrian Chiles](#)



My heart went out to whoever lost Rio Tinto's dangerous capsule in the Australian outback. There but for the grace of God ...



Oh, there it is ... the capsule retrieved by the side of the road in western Australia. Photograph: Western Australian Department Of Fire And Emergency Services/Reuters

Thu 2 Feb 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Thu 2 Feb 2023 02.28 EST

[Someone lost a radioactive capsule.](#) Someone blundered. I shuddered at the news, because if I had been transporting that tiny object for Rio Tinto in Australia, that someone would have been me. I'm an accomplished loser of things. I may have lost more stuff than I ever had in the first place. This ought not to be possible, but if anyone can make it possible, it's me. Still – losing a radioactive capsule. Wow. This sets a new benchmark among us useless, butter-fingered, forgetful, careless incompetents. I'm almost jealous, annoyed it wasn't me. At least I'd then know I could never lose anything as important as this again.

When I played golf, I'd obviously lose balls. On the only occasion I didn't lose a ball, I lost a club

I leave things in pubs, restaurants, football grounds, airports, aircraft, taxis, buses, tubes and, on one occasion, a dodgem at a fair in Swansea. When I played golf, I'd obviously lose balls. On the only occasion I didn't lose a ball, I lost a club. Another time I drove off after my round without my golf

bag. At home I can't find things that I had in my hand only moments before. It is terrifying when this happens; they could be anywhere. I know this, because more than once I've found that I absent-mindedly dropped my car key in the bin, while on another occasion my wallet turned up in the bottom drawer of the fridge. I frequently put important things away somewhere safe, where no one will find them – including me, because I forget where the safe place was. Some things never ever turn up again.

But sometimes they do. And herein lies the joy to be found amid this life-shortening, enervating misery: the sheer rush of relief and happiness when you find the missing thing. Be it the car key that eludes me for a minute or two, or the potato masher I've not seen for a year and a day, the joy is very real. The more important the thing and the longer it's missing for, the greater the dopamine hit when it turns up.

Now the capsule has been found, how I envy whoever it was who lost it. How I pity those people who never lose things: they know not the joy of recovery. 'Tis better to have loved and lost and found again, than never to have lost the bloody thing in the first place.

- Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist
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[Opinion](#)[George Santos](#)

## George Santos's lies are so big you almost have to admire them

[Emma Brockes](#)



The New York congressman's increasingly wild claims have all the thrill-seeking of a man running across a football field naked



‘George Santos even had the Scooby-Doo, black-rimmed glasses that might have come from a joke shop selling disguises.’ Photograph: Evelyn Hockstein/Reuters

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In retrospect, as it often seems to go in these cases, the evidence appears to have been so glaringly obvious, it’s a wonder we were ever taken in. George Santos – like [Anna Sorokin](#), the “fake heiress” – even had the Scooby-Doo, black-rimmed glasses that might have come from a joke shop selling disguises. When the representative for New York’s third congressional district entered the House last November, he was briefly notable as the Republican’s first openly gay non-incumbent to win a seat.

Now, his fame resides elsewhere. So wild and untrustworthy have statements made by Santos proved to be – Did his granny really survive the Holocaust? Was his mother’s death really related to 9/11? Did he ever appear in a movie alongside Uma Thurman? – that it would come as no surprise, at this stage, to discover that rather than a 34-year-old man, Santos is actually four children piled on top of each other beneath a trenchcoat.

The fascinating thing about Santos, and other practitioners of these kinds of fabrications, is how easily disprovable their falsehoods turn out to be. If

compulsive lying has its roots in something deeper and more complicated than mere self-advancement, you assume the risk-taking is part of the appeal. Psychologically, Santos's claims appear akin in scale, impulse and thrill-seeking to a man running across a football field naked, each more lurid and exposing than the last.

Let's start with the small stuff, like where he went to school and what year he graduated. Per Santos's claims, he attended Horace Mann, a prestigious private school in the Bronx (a representative of the school told CNN it had no record of him ever attending).

After school, Santos claims he studied at Baruch College in New York, graduating with a degree in economics and finance in 2010. (Baruch College has no record of him graduating that year.) He claims to have gone on to study for an MBA at New York University (no record), to have worked on Wall Street for Goldman Sachs (no record) and Citigroup (no record). All of these lies were itemised in a [comprehensive list](#) in New York magazine last week, with citations for where Santos made the claim and where it was later rebutted.

The New York Times, meanwhile, has also handily [uploaded](#) a copy of Santos's two-page CV, which even in the weeds between his biggest tent-pole lies, will make your own CV claim to be “fluent in French” look like a modest inflation.

And that's just the professional stuff. The personal fabrications are, if possible, even weirder in their overreach. Santos appears to have the recognisable, attention-seeking syndrome of claiming association with historical events that on closer inspection he had nothing to do with. His claim to be of Jewish heritage and have grandparents who survived the Holocaust has been thoroughly debunked, as has the claim he made on Twitter in 2021 that his mother was in the South Tower of the World Trade Center on 9/11. (Evidence suggests that, in fact, his mother, Fatima Devolder, was in Brazil in September 2001.)

He has claimed, simultaneously, to own property in Brazil worth up to \$1m, to own 13 rental properties – no record of these properties has so far been

found – and to own no property at all and be living with his sister. The claims and reversals have reached a pitch so chaotic that it's tempting to regard Santos as a conman approaching the level of satirist.

And yet. Before we get carried away by the sheer entertainment value of all this, it's worth reminding ourselves that beneath the improbably fanciful claims, there are suggestions of extremely banal, entirely predictable and straightforwardly self-interested financial impropriety on Santos's part, all of which are now being investigated by federal prosecutors. A complaint has been filed with the Federal Election Commission about his alleged misuse of campaign funds, and the source of that funding, which is also under criminal investigation by the Department of Justice. And, less than a month after being sworn in, there are, of course, calls for the man to resign. Meanwhile, the most Santos has admitted to is “embellishing” his résumé.

It's a serious thing to mislead the electorate and lie to members of Congress, with a much more damaging fallout than the lies of a fake heiress trying to score a free holiday. Still, in both cases, the fascination with the workings of compulsive liars is the same. Scrutinising photos of Santos's blank and babyish face triggers the vertiginous possibility inherent in all really big grifts – and one, possibly, deserving of sympathy, although who knows – that he has come to believe all this stuff himself.

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

[Temperature Check](#)[Climate crisis](#)

## Jordan Peterson's 'zombie' climate contrarianism follows a well-worn path

[Graham Readfearn](#)



The psychologist has turned his hand to exposing new audiences to old arguments from climate change deniers



Sea levels are rising at an accelerating rate, contrary to claims made by guests on Jordan Peterson's YouTube videos. Photograph: Bo Amstrup/EPA

Wed 1 Feb 2023 17.59 EST Last modified on Wed 1 Feb 2023 19.27 EST

Canadian psychologist and darling of conservatives and the alt-right, [Jordan Peterson](#), has been on an all-out attack on the science of climate change and the risks of global heating.

Peterson has 6.3 million subscribers on his YouTube channel, and his videos also run as audio podcasts on platforms including Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

Since December, Peterson has been on something of a crusade publishing four interviews – each more than 90 minutes long – collectively amassing more than 2.2m views on YouTube alone.

The titles of Peterson's latest offerings give a flavour of the content. "The World is not Ending", "Unsettled: Climate and Science" and "The Great Climate Con".

Last year [Peterson came in for scathing criticism](#) from climate scientists after claiming climate models were mostly useless. Peterson had badly

misunderstood how models work, they said, with one saying: “He sounds intelligent, but he’s completely wrong.”

The criticism appears to have done little to discourage him from wading in even further. Peterson’s popularity among conservatives and, judging by many of the comments he receives, his almost God-like status among his fans, is helping to expose new audiences to old arguments on climate change.

One interview with retired MIT meteorologist Prof Richard Lindzen – a well-known veteran of contrarianism among climate science deniers – ran under the title “Climate Science: What Does it Say?”.

Let’s dive in. Lindzen’s answer was predictable. He has been arguing for three decades there is little to worry about from rising temperatures or adding CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels.

During the interview, Lindzen repeated many of his beliefs related to the fundamentals of climate science, such as doubts about how much warming adding CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere will cause.

Prof Steve Sherwood, of the Climate Change Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, described several of Lindzen’s arguments as “very old zombie points” that were never fair “and have become much less true over time.”

## ‘That’s not true’

For example, Peterson argued – and Lindzen agreed – the “putative contribution of carbon dioxide to global warming” might be swamped by the margin of error of the contribution of another important greenhouse gas – water vapor.

“That’s really sad if that’s true,” says Peterson.

“That’s not true,” says Prof Piers Forster, an atmospheric physicist at the University of Leeds. “For more than half a century laboratory measurements, balloon measurements and detailed radiative transfer

calculations have been able to calculate the greenhouse effect of both CO<sub>2</sub> and water vapour to within a few percent.”

Sherwood adds the effect of carbon dioxide on the atmosphere was “not putative,” but rather was “measurable from space and guaranteed by simple physical principles that has been understood for well over a century and have been used successfully for many decades in all sorts of technological applications such as infrared sensors and telescopes.”

## Science from 2001?

Lindzen refers to the findings of a 2001 UN-backed climate assessment – the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Third Assessment report of which he was one of many lead authors – saying it had found the planet had warmed by 0.5C and that this was “mostly” caused by humans.

This was small, Lindzen claimed, and suggested the world was not very sensitive to adding CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere.

Putting aside the question of why a conversation about the findings of the IPCC should discuss a report from 20 years ago when there have been three more up-to-date volumes since, Sherwood says Lindzen’s statement on the sensitivity of the planet to CO<sub>2</sub> “is complete rubbish.”

“Lindzen and other sceptics have produced no refutation to the extensive evidence-based calculations presented in the most recent IPCC report,” Sherwood said, pointing also to [a study he led in 2020](#).

Lindzen also claimed there were almost as many temperature stations around the world showing cooling as there were showing warming.

This was “flat wrong”, Sherwood said, while Forster added “pretty much all the long-term calibrated stations show a warming”.

## Raising sea level

As the oceans heat up and ice sheets and glaciers melt, the world’s sea level has been rising. This has the potential to reshape the world’s coastlines and

increase the risk of flooding in coastal cities around the world.

But Lindzen claimed that in the next 50 to 75 years, there could be only a few inches of sea level rise “but there’s no evidence there will be much more”. Young people of today will have little to worry about, he said.

But observations of sea level tell a different story. Since 1900, the global average sea level has gone up by about 20cm, and [studies show the rate of rise](#) is accelerating and is now more than double the average across the 20th century.

Prof John Church, an expert on sea level change at the University of New South Wales, said even on the current annual rate of 4mm of sea level rise – which was accelerating – Lindzen was underestimating what was known to be coming in the future.

The latest IPCC report says the world can expect 20cm of sea level rise by 2050 from where they were at the end of the 20th century – regardless of how much CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted. By the end of the century, the rise could be approaching a metre or more, depending on how much CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted and how quickly ice sheets melt.

That's more than a few inches.

## Attack the consensus

There's a whole field of academic study on the social and psychological dynamics of climate science denial. Manufacturing doubt erodes public support for climate action. Public awareness that almost all climate scientists agree climate change is real and is caused by humans is seen as an important part of the public's climate literacy.

So attacks on that consensus have been consistent over decades. Lindzen was asked about this.

While he said most scientists – including him – would accept that adding CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere would cause some warming, he attacked one of the

most high-profile studies on scientific consensus that found 97% of climate studies agreed global warming was caused by humans.

Lindzen said: “There are some studies like one by a man called Cook that were just bogus. They ended up looking at 50 papers specially selected... it was nonsense.”

That “man called Cook” is Dr John Cook [whose 2013 study while at the University of Queensland](#) assessed 11,000 scientific papers – not 50 – published between 1991–2011.

Cook said that of 4,000 studies that did state a position on the cause of global heating, 97% agreed that humans were the cause.

Cook said: “Lindzen cherry picks a small part of our data – narrowing in on the studies that quantify the amount of human-causation – then criticises our study for not including many studies.”

Cook’s study is [one of at least seven to have found](#) very high levels of agreement among climate scientists that humans cause climate change.

## **Consistently wrong**

Cook adds: “Ignoring inconvenient scientific research is a common pattern from Lindzen.

“He ignores the many years of scientific research finding that reinforcing feedbacks make our climate sensitive to greenhouse warming. This is why he continues to make the same debunked arguments we’ve been hearing for decades now.”

Forster said Lindzen had been “consistently proved wrong” and since his involvement in the IPCC 22 years ago “warming is increasing at an unprecedented rate.”

“Experts have important roles but science is not just opinion,” he said “We all need to become fact checkers and look to trusted bodies such as the IPCC

– which assesses all published work, including Lindzen’s, and objectively tells it how it is.

“There have been three major IPCC reports since [2001]. All the reports tell us that climate change is real, bad, and getting worse.”

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[Israel](#)

## **Israel carries out airstrikes on Gaza Strip**

Israeli army confirms ‘striking in the Gaza Strip’ early on Thursday, hours after it said it intercepted a rocket fired from the Palestinian territory



Fire and smoke rise above buildings in Gaza City as Israel launched airstrikes on the Palestinian enclave early on Thursday. Photograph: Mohammed Abed/AFP/Getty Images

*Agence France-Presse*

Wed 1 Feb 2023 21.39 EST Last modified on Wed 1 Feb 2023 23.56 EST

Israel conducted airstrikes on the central Gaza Strip early on Thursday, according to journalists and witnesses, hours after the military said it intercepted a rocket fired from the Palestinian territory.

New rounds of rockets were fired from [Gaza](#) after these strikes, and fresh explosions could be heard from Gaza City about 3.15am local time, Agence

France-Presse journalists reported.

In a statement issued at 2.41am, the Israeli army confirmed it was “striking in the Gaza Strip”.

According to local security sources and witnesses, the first strikes – at least seven – hit a training centre of the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas. The centre is located in al-Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip.

A second round of airstrikes by the Israeli army targeted the al-Qassam Brigades’ training centre south-west of Gaza City, according to local security sources.

After the first airstrike, an AFP reporter saw two more rockets fired into Israel from the Gaza Strip, and witnesses said several more rockets were fired from various locations.

A statement by the Israeli army said fighter jets had “struck a production site for raw chemical material production, preservation and storage along with a weapon manufacturing site” belonging to Hamas.

The strikes came “in response to the rocket launch from the Gaza Strip into Israel earlier” on Wednesday.



Smoke rises above buildings in Gaza City early on Thursday. Photograph: Mohammed Abed/AFP/Getty Images

Gaza, densely populated with 2.3 million people, has been under an Israeli blockade since Hamas took power in 2007.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a secular Palestinian armed group, said it had launched rocket salvos at Israel early on Thursday in response to the airstrikes and the “systematic aggression” against Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Earlier on Wednesday, the firebrand Israeli national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, who oversees prisons, said he would push ahead with plans to toughen conditions for Palestinian inmates in Israeli jails.

He claimed the recent bout of rocket fire was due to his decision to close two makeshift bakeries operated by Palestinian militants in Israeli prisons and called the bakeries part of the unwarranted “benefits” that “terrorists” were subject to.

“The launch from Gaza won’t weaken my resolve to continue working toward changing the summer camp conditions of murderous terrorists,” the minister said.

The Israeli prison service said the problems started last Friday when it placed dozens of Palestinian prisoners in solitary confinement after they celebrated the deadly Palestinian attack outside a synagogue in east Jerusalem.

Earlier this week, the US secretary of state, [Antony Blinken](#), finished his Middle East tour with [no breakthrough in reducing tensions](#) between Israelis and Palestinians, saying that it was “fundamentally up to them” to end the violence after days of bloodshed.

Blinken said he had heard “deep concern about the current trajectory” during meetings in [Israel](#) and the occupied West Bank but, beyond calling for a “de-escalation”, he offered no new US initiative.

An Israeli operation in the Jenin refugee camp last week, one of its [deadliest raids in the West Bank for decades](#), killed 10 Palestinians, mostly gunmen but also two civilians, including a 61-year-old woman. The next day, a Palestinian gunman [killed seven Israelis outside a synagogue](#) in East Jerusalem in the worst such attack in recent memory.

Almost two dozen people have been killed over the past week, as heightened tensions have led to retaliatory attacks, including shootings, targeting Israelis and Palestinians.

*Agence France-Presse, Reuters and the Associated Press contributed to this report*

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## [Australia news](#)

# Australia's new \$5 banknote will feature Indigenous history instead of King Charles

Government backs Reserve Bank decision to replace Queen Elizabeth II's portrait with design 'honouring culture and history of First Australians'

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Australian \$5 banknote with portrait of Queen Elizabeth. The Reserve Bank says the new \$5 note will have a design honouring Indigenous culture and history. Photograph: Richard McDowell/Alamy

*[Jordyn Beazley](#)*

Wed 1 Feb 2023 21.50 ESTFirst published on Wed 1 Feb 2023 20.46 EST

King Charles III will not feature on Australia's \$5 note after a decision by the Reserve Bank to replace Queen Elizabeth II's portrait with a design "that honours the culture and history of the First Australians".

With the Australian government backing the decision, the move to balk at the presumed tradition of having Australia's head of state on the note has already generated fierce debate.

Australia's opposition leader, Peter Dutton, weighed in shortly after the announcement on Thursday on Sydney radio station 2GB, saying the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, would "have been central" to not placing King Charles on the note and should "own" the decision.

"I think it's another attack on our systems, on our society and our institutions," he said.

Once the change is made, there will be no portraits of UK monarchs on any current Australian banknote.

The Australian Monarchist League also disapproved, accusing Albanese – who is a long time supporter of Australia becoming a republic – of "trouncing Australian democracy".

"It is virtually neo-communism in action," said Philip Benwell, chair of the league.

However, Australian Greens party senator and Gunnai, Gunditjmara and Djab Wurrung woman Lidia Thorpe called the change a "massive win for the grassroots, First Nations people who have been fighting to decolonise this country".

Thorpe has previously called for the Aboriginal actor and activist Uncle Jack Charles, who died in September, to feature on the note.

We've lost our King ☹ [pic.twitter.com/jvAwiPnXEE](https://pic.twitter.com/jvAwiPnXEE)

— Senator Lidia Thorpe (@SenatorThorpe) [September 13, 2022](#)

“We just lost a king in our own country, who was subjected to colonial violence from the moment he was born,” Thorpe said at the time.

“We owe it to him, and First Nations people, to remember King Jack Charles and end the stolen generation once and for all. Uncle Jack is a great candidate for the \$5 note.”

The Australian treasurer, Jim Chalmers, told reporters on Thursday the change to the \$5 note was the right decision.

“This is a good opportunity to strike a good balance between the monarch on the coins and a First Nations design on the fiver,” he said.

The Australian Republic Movement chairman, Craig Foster, said Australians should only see themselves in national symbols.

“To think that an unelected king should be on our currency in place of First Nations leaders and elders and eminent Australians is no longer justifiable at a time of truth telling,” he said.

According to [polling in October by the Sydney Morning Herald](#), voters preferred the \$5 note to feature an Australian, with 43% voting as such and 34% saying King Charles was their choice.

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In September when the debate on the \$5 note initially flared, Albanese, refused to be drawn on his view. But he said advocates for Australia becoming a republic were urging that an Australian feature on the \$5 note, which is the most widely used note in Australia.

After the Queen's death, the long-term debate on whether Australia should become a republic was reignited, with the Greens leader, Adam Bandt, using his [condolence message upon the Queen's death to push the cause](#). This was in contrast with the Australian Republican Movement, which temporarily suspended campaigning after her death.

Rest In Peace Queen Elizabeth II.

Our thoughts are with her family and all who loved her.

Now Australia must move forward.

We need Treaty with First Nations people, and we need to become a Republic.

— Adam Bandt (@AdamBandt) [September 8, 2022](#)

Australia held a referendum that ultimately voted no on whether Australia should become a republic in 1999. The change to the \$5 note comes as Australia is expected to vote in another referendum by the end of the year – to recognise First Nations Australians in the constitution and enshrine an Indigenous voice to parliament on policy matters that affect them.

A spokesperson for Australia's Reserve Bank said it "has a proud history of recognising the culture and history of the First Australians, including on Australia's banknotes" and will consult with traditional owners on the design. They said the other side of the \$5 banknote would continue to feature the Australian parliament.

"The new banknote will take a number of years to be designed and printed. In the meantime, the current \$5 banknote will continue to be issued. It will

be able to be used even after the new banknote is issued.”

Australia’s \$50 banknote features Ngarrindjeri man David Unaipon, who was an author, activist, inventor, musician and preacher.

Before the introduction of polymer banknotes, paper \$5 notes featured philanthropist Caroline Chisholm.

This article was amended on 2 February 2023 to correct a misspelling of David Unaipon’s surname.

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## European Union

# MEPs launch site for EU officials to report ‘shady lobbying’ by big tech

Exclusive: Dutch MEP hopes site will give early warning of suspicious tactics such as use of front organisations



The European parliament chamber in Brussels. Photograph: Reuters

*[Jennifer Rankin](#) in Brussels*

Thu 2 Feb 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 2 Feb 2023 05.27 EST

A group of MEPs are launching a website for European parliament staff and EU officials to raise the alarm about “shady lobbying” by big tech firms and other interest groups.

Paul Tang, a Dutch Social Democrat MEP who is co-leading the initiative, said the “lobby leaks hotline” would be an early warning system and was necessary as the parliament had faced “shady lobbying” from powerful tech companies seeking to influence its decisions. He cited practices such as so-

called astroturfing, where large companies use front organisations to represent their interests by the back door.

The “hotline” – an encrypted website, [lobbyleaks.eu](https://lobbyleaks.eu) – will enable anyone to leave anonymous tips about suspicious lobbying tactics. It is modelled on a German initiative, and tips will be investigated by the German NGO LobbyControl and a Brussels-based campaign group, Corporate Europe Observatory, which monitors attempts to influence the EU institutions.

Tang, an MEP since 2014, said lobbying was “part and parcel of the work of politics” but became problematic when interest groups attempted to hide behind front organisations or targeted politicians with personalised ads.

When lawmakers were negotiating the [Digital Markets Act](#) and the [Digital Services Act](#), landmark legislation to regulate large internet companies, he had expected intense interest from affected companies but had not bargained for the “unconventional lobbying” that came his way.

Tang only found out after the laws had been passed the extent to which he and other MEPs had been “bombarded” with targeted adverts on their social media. “After the legislation [passed], we concluded that there was shady lobbying going on,” he said.

He also encountered “underground lobbying” from organisations claiming to be the voice of small and medium-sized companies (SMEs), despite being funded by big tech firms.

After that experience, he and two fellow Social Democrat lawmakers made a complaint to the EU transparency register last October, accusing nine industry associations of “impersonating” SMEs while failing to be open about the big tech firms that led or bankrolled their organisations.

The EU transparency register is a database of interest groups, companies and individuals that seek to influence EU decision-making. Managed by the three main EU institutions – the [European Commission](#), the EU council and the European parliament – the transparency register has nearly 12,500 entries. Being on the register is often presented as a badge of legitimacy;

lobbyists can only gain access passes to the European parliament if they are on the database.

Tang said any organisation that had misrepresented itself should be removed from the register.

The MEPs' complaints were prompted, in part, by [a Guardian article](#) by a former European Commission official, Georg Riekeles, who recounted business efforts to dilute EU regulation on targeted advertising. Brussels "had never seen" so many SME and startup organisations turn up to lobby, he wrote. Small and medium-sized enterprises would suffer most from a ban on tracking ads, it was argued.

Riekeles named several industry groups involved in such lobbying, such as SME Connect and Allied for Start ups. SME Connect is linked to Friends of SMEs, whose members include Amazon and Google. Allied for Start ups, which calls itself "a global voice for the startup community", is sponsored by a 14-strong business council that includes Amazon, Google and other big tech companies.

After the complaints were issued, Amazon and Google denied any breach of EU lobbying rules, in [statements to the website TechCrunch](#). Industry associations including SME Connect and Allied for Startups also denied wrongdoing.

Riekeles said he had no reason to doubt the sincerity of the organisations, but argued that they failed to be transparent about who they represented. "These links are surely a matter of public interest, yet they are often not publicised," he said.

The Corporate Europe Observatory documented these practices in [a 2021 report](#) that found that 612 tech companies and business associations spent €97m (£86m) a year lobbying the EU, making the sector the largest lobbying force in Brussels, ahead of oil and gas, chemicals and pharmaceuticals.

Bram Vranken, a campaigner at Corporate Europe Observatory, said the big five tech firms – Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft – spent

nearly €27m a year lobbying the EU, figures based on their latest reports to the EU transparency register.

“[Technology companies] are funding a whole ecosystem of organisations from thinktanks, interest groups to front groups. They have a lot of potential to set the agenda and to weaken the regulation which is in the making,” he said. “Lobbyleaks will help to expose this kind of deceptive and opaque influence that has become central to big tech’s lobbying tactics.”

The website is also prompted by MEPs’ experience of making complaints to the EU transparency register. Tang said he feared that that organisation, run by a secretariat of nine full-time officials, was understaffed.

EU officials at the transparency register are yet to reach a judgment on the nine complaints launched by Tang last October. A spokesperson for the European parliament said they were unable to disclose any information about the complaints, including the timing of any decision. The spokesperson said they were not able to give an opinion on whether the secretariat was understaffed.

Tang said MEPs would be soon be debating important regulation affecting tech companies, including legal proposals to combat child sexual abuse. “Sometimes you need a quick response to these complaints. So this is why we also have the lobby leaks hotline, because you want to have an early warning system. You don’t want to discover after the file.”

The website is also backed by the French radical-left MEP Manon Aubry and the German Green Daniel Freund, a former campaigner with Transparency International. Organisers hope other MEPs from across the political spectrum will announce their support in the coming days.

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## [Fair AccessGlobal development](#)

# Jamaica's women let down by failure of cervical cancer vaccine drive

Covid pressures and ingrained public mistrust mean less than 3% of girls are inoculated, and death rate is among world's highest



A national HPV vaccination programme for girls under 15 was launched in Jamaica in 2018 only to be disrupted by classroom closures during lockdown. Photograph: Michael Dwyer/Alamy

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*Weronika Strzyżyska in Kingston*

Thu 2 Feb 2023 02.30 EST Last modified on Fri 3 Feb 2023 04.48 EST

Plans to prevent one of the deadliest cancers for women in [Jamaica](#) have been significantly set back by the Covid pandemic, new figures reveal.

The scheme to vaccinate schoolgirls against cervical cancer in Jamaica – which is the cancer with the second highest death rate in the Americas – began in 2018, but the Pan American Health Organization says inoculation rates [fell to just 2.71%](#) in 2021. This represents a drastic drop from the 2019 rate of 32%, and far from the [WHO target](#) of 90% by 2030.

The cancer, which is curable if caught early, kills [22 in every 100,000 women](#) in Jamaica. By comparison, in the UK the rate is 2.4 in every 100,000, and in Canada it is 2.

In more than [95% of cases](#), cervical cancer is caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), [thought to effect nearly all adults](#), and which can be sexually transmitted. HPV vaccine, approved in 2006, has been shown to prevent up to 70% of cervical cancers. Regular screening is also key.

A national HPV vaccination programme for girls under 15 [was launched in Jamaica in 2018](#) only to be disrupted by classroom closures during lockdown, said Sebastian Oliel from the Pan American Health Organization.

Even the pre-pandemic performance of the vaccination programme was criticised as ineffective due to [“poor planning, inadequate communication and public distrust”](#). In 2019, its most successful year, fewer than a third of those eligible were vaccinated, mostly due to lack of parental consent.

“The HPV programme concerns three topics which are controversial in Jamaica: young girls, sexually transmitted infections and vaccines,” said Dr Samantha Johnson, the director of Margins to Centre, a Kingston-based health advocacy group for women. “In a culture that values pre-marital abstinence, these three things converged to discourage vaccinations. Parents feel that giving children the HPV vaccine is the same as telling them it’s OK to have sex.



Dr Samantha Johnson, the director of Margins to Centre, a Kingston-based health advocacy group for women. Photograph: Mary Fowles/The Guardian

“Promotion of the HPV vaccine came out almost at the same time as the vaccines were introduced in schools,” she said. “This was not enough time to inform parents and answer their concerns. If you are trying to promote a

new film, you don't start playing trailers the day it starts screening in theatres.”

Prevention of cervical cancer in Jamaica is also hindered by low rates of cervical screenings. HPV screenings are not provided by Jamaica's health service but women are entitled to regular smears that test for cancerous cells. But, according to the latest [Lifestyle and Health Survey](#) from 2017, fewer than half of Jamaican women reported having had a smear test in the previous three years, although 70% did report at least one test in their lifetime.

“Women are afraid of the screening process and potential pain, but there is also a fear of a cancer diagnosis itself,” said Nicola Skyers of Jamaica's Ministry of [Health](#). “Some people just prefer not to know. But I also think that healthcare providers don't offer screenings often enough. If a healthcare provider is really ‘selling’ the pap smear, more often than not the woman will choose to have it.”

Health workers are forced to focus on cures rather than preventions amid staffing shortages and an overburdened healthcare system, said Skyers. “As a doctor, you won't be encouraging every women you see to do a pap smear if you have 40 patients waiting outside.”

Johnson hopes HPV vaccination rates will rise. “I know that nurses are already going back to school to deliver vaccines,” she said, adding that a robust public health campaign was needed. “The campaigns have to be inclusive, not only of parents but also children. Sometimes you find that the child is the one to convince the parent to give them the vaccine.”

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[Philippines](#)

## US seals crucial military deal with the Philippines close to China flashpoints

Deal expands Washington's access to military bases near Taiwan and the South China Sea



The deal was announced by the US defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, seen reviewing honour guards in Quezon City, Metro Manila, on Thursday.  
Photograph: Rolex dela Peña/AFP/Getty Images

*[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) South-east Asia correspondent, and [Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei*

Thu 2 Feb 2023 01.51 EST Last modified on Thu 2 Feb 2023 11.09 EST

The [Philippines](#) has granted the US expanded access to its military bases, greatly enhancing Washington's presence in the region at a time of growing concern about Chinese aggression.

Washington would be given access to four additional military bases in “strategic areas of the country”, the Philippines’ Department of National Defense said on Thursday, without specifying the locations.

The expanded access will fill a crucial gap in US positioning in the region, say analysts, and enable it to better monitor Chinese activity in the [South China Sea](#) and near Taiwan.

The deal has been made under an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) that allows the US access to Philippine bases for joint training, storing equipment and supplies, and building of facilities, though not to establish a permanent presence. The US already has access to five sites.

The arrangement will strengthen the US presence in the Indo-Pacific, where it has military treaties with countries stretching from Japan and Korea in the north, to Thailand and the Philippines and, in the south, Australia. US officials have previously commented that the positioning of [US military](#) equipment in Asia was too strongly oriented towards north-east Asia.

In its statement, the Philippines Department of National Defense said Washington would allocate more than \$82m (£67m) toward infrastructure investments at the five previous bases it was given access to. “The Philippine-US alliance has stood the test of time and remains ironclad,” it said.

## [Map](#)

China’s ministry of foreign affairs spokesperson told a regular press briefing on Thursday the US was strengthening its military deployment in the region “out of its own selfish interests and with a zero-sum mentality”.

Mao Ning accused the US of “exacerbating regional tension and jeopardising regional peace and stability”, and said other countries in the region should be wary of being “taken advantage of” by the US.

In Chinese state media, coverage focused on assessments that the US was expanding its military footprint in the region “to counter China”, and that the Philippines should take care in balancing its relationships with both countries.

The announcement was made during a visit to Manila by the US defence secretary Lloyd Austin, who was scheduled to hold talks with his Philippine counterpart, Carlito Galvez Jr, and national security adviser, Eduardo Año, as well as President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

It has been widely reported that the US asked for access to bases on Luzon, the closest part of the Philippines to Taiwan, and on the island of Palawan, the closest landmass to the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

Such sites were valuable for two reasons, said Denny Roy, senior fellow at the East-West Center, Honolulu. “They are geographically close to the top two flashpoints involving China: Taiwan and the South China Sea,” he said, adding: “Second, additional places in the area where the USA can pre-position forces helps to lessen the problem of concentrating too many forces in a small number of places that might be vulnerable to Chinese missile attacks.”

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An airfield, buildings, and structures on the artificial island built by China in the Spratly Islands. Photograph: Ezra Acayan/Getty Images

The location in Luzon would allow the US to provide operational and logistical support to Taiwan, if needed, said Herman Kraft, professor of political science at University of the Philippines. For now, the access would most likely be used for monitoring purposes, he said.

The expanded access fills a missing link in terms of US positioning in the region that dates back to 1991, when the Philippines refused to ratify a new agreement with Washington, its former colonial ruler, forcing the US to leave, said Kraft. “South-east Asia has always been more or less a gap [for the US],” said Kraft. “They do have a deployment arrangement with Singapore, but it’s a small one.”

Relations with the US had deteriorated under the previous president Rodrigo Duterte, who once said it was “time to say goodbye” to the US, and threatened to scrap a bilateral agreement covering visiting American troops. There is a sense, said Kraft, of Marcos, who took office last year, “wanting to take a more cooperative, less confrontational relationship with the United States”.

The announcement comes amid concerns over China's assertiveness in the disputed South China Sea, a major potential flashpoint. The Philippines, as well as Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei all have claims to parts of the sea, while Beijing claims sovereignty over almost all of it.

A report by the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, found the China Coast Guard maintained near-daily patrols at key features across the South China Sea in 2022, and that its presence was “more robust than ever”.

The report, which analysed automatic identification system data from the commercial provider MarineTraffic, found that the number of calendar days that a China Coast Guard vessel patrolled key features had increased across the board when compared with data from 2020. Features studied included Second Thomas Shoal, Luconia Shoals, Scarborough Shoal, Vanguard Bank, and Thitu Island.

A graphic on this article was amended on 2 February 2023. An earlier version had a map that incorrectly showed where Thailand was.

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