Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°41**

Police officers 'mocked and ostracised' for paternity leave in England and Wales

Police officers have described being ostracised for taking paternity leave, as it is revealed that back-office staff in the Metropolitan police are entitled to proportionately nearly three times as much paternity pay as frontline fathers. A freedom of information request has revealed that most serving police officers in England and Wales only take one week of paternity leave, with some describing being on "blue lights" duty and carrying Tasers a week after the birth of their babies.

Among the 44 forces that replied to an FoI by the paternity rights campaign group the Dad Shift, 75% provided one week paternity leave at full pay, with a second week on statutory pay. Thirty-five forces provided data on paternity leave take-up. In the 30 forces providing only one week full pay, 60% of officers returned to work after seven days. In the five forces that provided data and offered two weeks' fully paid leave, only 12% of officers went back to work after a week.

One former officer, who said the strain of his family was one of the biggest reasons he left the force, said he was "treated very poorly" and "slagged off behind his back" for taking two weeks' unpaid leave to care for his partner after an emergency caesarean. "Overall the police service doesn't support fathers fairly at all," he said. "[The] culture makes men feel like they need to be back at work asap. If you're not, you're looked down on or treated differently."

The Met police, the largest force in England and Wales, offers civilian staff – in roles such as administration or 999 call handling – three weeks of paternity leave at full pay. However, frontline officers get one fully paid week, with the second paid at the statutory rate of £184.03 a week, a quarter of the starting salary for a Met officer.

The Met said in a statement: "Officers and staff have different terms and conditions, set separately. For officers, these are governed nationally via police regulations and for staff, set by the Met. Fair terms and conditions are important to everyone. "Paternity leave for police officers is governed by police regulations, set by the Home Office", the National Police Chiefs' Council said. Forces have to offer one week at full pay and one week at statutory pay for qualifying officers.

However, at least nine forces across England and Wales now offer a second week of paternity leave on full pay. British Transport Police and the Civil Nuclear constabulary give officers three weeks' leave on full pay, while Derbyshire, Greater Manchester, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands give two weeks' full pay.

A survey from the Police Federation found that more than one in five officers were ready to quit the service in 2023 – up from 18% in 2022 and 12% in 2021. Of 2,654 officers who left the police between 2017 and 2024, 27% resigned before they reached pension age, with 63% saying the impact on their family life was a critical factor.

The Guardian/ Alexandra Topping/ 30th March 2025

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Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°42**

Gen Z students in Manchester to learn 'soft skills' such as empathy and time management

Thousands of gen Z students in Greater Manchester are to learn "soft skills" such as empathy and time-management in a UK-first trial aimed at teaching "everyday but essential" tools.The pioneering programme will teach young people how to thrive in the workplace after employers said "digital natives" were too afraid to speak on the phone or do job interviews.

Prof Sandeep Ranote, a leading child psychiatrist, said those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s – known as gen Z – had grown up in a very different global world that had left them lacking some key social skills. "Young people are going into a world with huge challenges that certainly I didn't have," she said. "I call it the five Cs: they lived through Covid, climate change, cost-of-living, cyberspace and conflict."

Skills 4 Living was launched this week in Greater Manchester by the Unesco-partner non-profit Higher Health, which began the project six years ago in South Africa. The curriculum will primarily be delivered online, although students will be expected to complete assessments by interacting in person with others. It will also include seminars on spotting fake news, staying safe on the internet, how to challenge racism, sexism and homophobia, gambling awareness and avoiding scams.

It aims to reach 10,000 young people in the city-region by September and has partnered with a number of higher education providers, including the University of Manchester, University of Salford and Manchester Metropolitan University. The UK programme comes as industry leaders are thinking increasingly about how to recruit and retain talent from gen Z, who are expected to make up about 27% of the workforce this year.

Last month one of Britain's leading accountancy firms, Forvis Mazars, launched a social skills course to teach gen Z lessons on "picking up the phone" and simulations of client meetings. A survey of 3,000 employers in Greater Manchester in 2023 raised concerns that young recruits were missing "essential life skills" like empathy, time management, speaking to customers, problem-solving and critical thinking.

Ranote, the chair of Higher Health's UK body, said companies were reporting that young recruits struggled with "face-to-face interviews, speaking on the phone – things that we took for granted". Data suggested gen Z had fewer "everyday but essential" communication skills than older generations, Ranote said, largely due to the advent of social media. "This is a toolkit to prepare young people for, even in the space of 25 years, a very different global world. "Ramneek Ahluwalia, the chief executive of Higher Health in South Africa and the UK, said studies by Harvard and Stanford Universities in the US had found that 85% of job success came from "soft skills".

He added: "But if you look at the traditional education system … it's all about hard skills. The issue is [that] the world, as it is changing, is wanting a holistic youth, a person who is mental health strong."

The Guardian/ Josh Halliday/ 21st April 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°43**

What's more vacuous than an endless vacuum? It's Lauren Sánchez and Katy Perry's party in space

Well, I watched every second of the buildup, flight and aftermath of the first Blue Origin all-female space trip. This was one giant leap backwards for womankind. I'm kidding! What could be more empowering or something than watching Lauren Sánchez make going to space sound like brunch with the girrrrrls. Sally Ride could never.

Anyway, if you missed this, Jeff Bezos's fiancee took an 11-minute trip to the edge of space on one of his Blue Origin craft on Monday, alongside some all-female passengers – sorry, "crew" – who included CBS anchor Gayle King and pop star Katy Perry.

Given the mixture of freebie rides and seats sold to the super-rich, the thing people always say about Blue Origin tickets is that prices range from zero to $28m dollars. Here, the anchors and reporters kept explaining that – unlike when men went to space in the past – this mission was all about emotions. But look, it's great that we're valorising emotions above all things, because it gives me permission to say how very much I hated this entire, hilariously vacuous spectacle.

Lauren already bills herself as a children's author, helicopter pilot, journalist and philanthropist, and kept being told she was adding "astronaut" to the world's longest multi-hyphenate. How did she find the trip? "I don't really have the words for this, like … ?" OK but can you at least try? "I can't put it into words but I looked out the window and we got to see the moon."

Amid extremely stiff competition, the most hardcore gibberish emanated from Perry, who served up an entire word salad bar involving the "feminine divine" and being "super-connected to love". Imagine going to actual space and talking instead about therapy-speak "space". When Buzz Aldrin beheld the surface of the moon, he described it as "magnificent desolation."

In an Elle magazine joint interview with the passengers, Lauren showed off the hot space suits she'd personally commissioned, inquiring rhetorically: "Who would not get glam before the flight?" "Space is going to finally be glam," agreed Perry. Still want more? "This dichotomy of engineer and scientist, and then beauty and fashion. We contain multitudes. Women are multitudes. I'm going to be wearing lipstick."

I always thought space travel was futuristic, but this was the first time it came off as travelling back in time, in this case using their little capsule to take us back to the most ludicrous inanities of 2010s girlboss feminism.

Ultimately, it felt like a sign of the times that everything was about personal growth rather than affording any new understanding of wider humanity. As King put it: "I'm so proud of me right now." It all made me realise how much I miss humans not permanently crying on TV, and being able to find words that don't sound like they could be printed above a picture of a crossroads sign on Instagram, or maybe some sandy footprints on a beach.

The Guardian/ Marina Hyde/ 15th April 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
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NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°44**

What does France export to the US?

Certain French sectors are especially reliant on exports to the United States and risk being hit hard by the 20% tariffs announced by Donald Trump on Wednesday.

Donald Trump launched a large-scale global trade offensive on Wednesday, April 2, and did not spare the more than €47 billion worth of French goods exported to the United States, which will be taxed at 20%. The US is France's fourth-largest export market, behind Germany, Italy and Belgium, according to French customs.

France imports more goods from the US (€52.7 billion in 2024) than it exports there and relies less on American exports than other European countries, such as Germany (3.8% of its GDP, compared to 1.6% for France). However, certain sectors are particularly exposed to exports to the US and risk suffering from the 20% tariffs announced on Wednesday.

One-fifth of France's exports to the US are related to aeronautics. France exported €9 billion worth of "aircraft and spacecraft" to the US in 2024.

The European aircraft manufacturer Airbus, with its operational headquarters located in Blagnac, a suburb of Toulouse, claims to be the leading client of American aerospace industry exports. "We have taken note of the announcements and are assessing the potential impacts," an Airbus spokesperson told Agence France-Presse on Thursday. The company could be partially protected by its industrial presence in the US: It inaugurated a final assembly plant in Mobile, Alabama, in 2015, from which 500 A320 and A220 single-aisle aircraft had rolled out by the end of 2024.

Airbus also pointed out that it purchases more than $15 billion worth of parts each year from its approximately 2,000 American subcontractors, spread across 40 states, and claims to support 275,000 US jobs. Its American industrial footprint is expected to increase further in 2025 with the planned inauguration of a second final assembly line for the A320, which will create "1,000 new jobs" in the Gulf of Mexico region.

Dassault Aviation, a French aircraft manufacturer that sells between one-third and half of its private jets to the US, had announced at the beginning of March that its 2025 financial forecasts largely depended on the level of US tariffs.

France exported €4.5 billion worth of luxury goods to the US in 2024. Not all French luxury goods, highly prized in the US, are necessarily exports. Among the major French brands, LVMH owns production sites in the US, where it generates a quarter of its revenue. The luxury clientele, often affluent, is less sensitive to price and thus to any potential increase in tariffs. "The company is almost 190 years old; we've experienced tariffs before," said Hermès luxury group's manager Axel Dumas in mid-February. "If tariffs increase, we will raise our prices to compensate," he said.

Le Monde/ April 3rd 2025

'Fear of missing out' keeping girls and young women online despite sexism

Girls and young women are seeing more unwanted sexual images and suffering more cyberstalking online, but still don't want to take a break from social media because of a fear of missing out, a survey for Girlguiding has found.

"Fomo" is keeping more than half of 11- to 21-year-olds on apps such as TikTok, Snapchat and WhatsApp despite nearly one in five saying they have been being stalked online and more than a third saying they are seeing sexual images they didn't wish to see, the survey of more than 2,000 girls and young women found.

The incidence of both online harms is up year on year, according to the findings, which also showed half of girls and young women aged between seven and 21 feel anxious about their futures, and only a quarter feel very confident in their life.

The findings came as thousands of parents and schools signed up to a pact for a "smartphone-free childhood" amid official figures showing that only one in 10 UK 12-year-olds does not have their own smartphone. "In my daily life, I see how the constant pressure to meet unrealistic beauty standards and the normalisation of sexism leaves girls feeling vulnerable and unsupported," said Jiya, 17, a Girlguiding advocate. "Being online all the time amplifies this. While we're 'more connected', we're also more exposed to judgment and comparison – through body shaming, sexist jokes, online harassment and objectification. This fuels loneliness and erodes our confidence, which only makes it harder to feel positive about the future."

Eight-five per cent of those who responded to the survey said they experienced sexism in their daily lives, just over half from sexist comments in real life rising to almost three-quarters online. Girlguiding said: "This appears to be having a knock-on effect on girls' sense of safety, with almost half of girls (47%) aged 11 to 21 revealing sexism and misogyny makes them feel less safe, more than double the number of girls who reported feeling this way 10 years ago."

Angela Salt, the chief executive of Girlguiding, said it was "devastating to see girls feel less confident about themselves and their futures". "Sexism continues to be pervasive, leaving many girls feeling vulnerable and unsafe," she said. "We're glad to see the government is taking rising levels of misogyny seriously. Now it's been acknowledged as a problem, we are determined to make sure the voices of girls are heard as part of the solution."

The Home Office has said that it intends to start treating extreme misogyny as a form of extremism and announced a rapid review of how best to crack down on this and other harmful ideologies in August. Girlguiding is calling for new relationships, sex and health education resources in schools, "to tackle sexism and misogyny and encourage better, healthier relationships". On the upside, 44% of girls and women between seven and 21 said they feel hopeful and a similar number are curious about the future.

The Guardian/ Robert Booth/ 8th October 2024

The British Public Wants Stricter AI Rules Than Its Government Does

Even as Silicon Valley races to build more powerful artificial intelligence models, public opinion on the other side of the Atlantic remains decidedly skeptical of the influence of tech CEOs when it comes to regulating the sector, with the vast majority of Britons worried about the safety of new AI systems.

The new poll shows that 87% of Brits would back a law requiring AI developers to prove their systems are safe before release, with 60% in favor of outlawing the development of "smarter-than-human" AI models. Just 9%, meanwhile, said they trust tech CEOs to act in the public interest when discussing AI regulation.

The results reflect growing public anxieties about the development of AI systems that could match or even outdo humans at most tasks. It is against this backdrop that 75% of the Britons polled told YouGov that laws should explicitly prohibit the development of AI systems that can escape their environments. More than half (63%) agreed with the idea of prohibiting the creation of AI systems that can make themselves smarter or more powerful.

The findings of the British poll mirror the results of recent U.S. surveys, and point to a growing gap between public opinion and regulatory action when it comes to advanced AI.

In Britain, where the YouGov survey of 2,344 adults was conducted over Jan. 16-17, there remains no comprehensive regulatory framework for AI. In January, for example, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced that AI would be "mainlined into the veins" of the nation to boost growth—a clear shift away from talk of regulation.

The polling was accompanied by a statement, signed by 16 British lawmakers from both major political parties, calling on the government to introduce new AI laws targeted specifically at "superintelligent" AI systems, or those that could become far smarter than humans.

"Specialised AIs – such as those advancing science and medicine – boost growth, innovation, and public services. Superintelligent AI systems would [by contrast] compromise national and global security," the statement reads. "The U.K. can secure the benefits and mitigate the risks of AI by delivering on its promise to introduce binding regulation on the most powerful AI systems." Miotti argues, the U.K. could impose "narrow, targeted, surgical AI regulation" that only applies to the most powerful models posing what he sees as the biggest risks.

"What the public wants is systems that help them, not systems that replace them," Miotti says. "We should not pursue [superintelligent systems] until we know how to prove that they're safe."

The polling data also shows that a large majority (74%) of Brits support a pledge made by the Labour Party ahead of the last election to enshrine the U.K.'s AI Safety Institute (AISI) into law, giving it power to act as a regulator. Currently, the AISI – an arm of the U.K. government – carries out tests on private AI models ahead of release but has no authority to compel tech companies to make changes or to rule models are too dangerous to be released.

TIME/ Billy Perrigo/ 6th February 2025

Education for peace: the effort to teach children how to rebuild societies after WWII

The second world war marked a pivotal period in how young people have experienced the horrors of war. During the 1940s, children faced unprecedented mobilisation and violence. Millions of children were directly affected by these atrocities, while countless others endured the indirect consequences: shortages, family separations and grief.

In the aftermath of the war, childhood experts such as pediatricians, psychologists and nutritionists, as well as political leaders and humanitarian workers, feared for this potentially "lost generation". With recognition of the vulnerability of children as a social group, there was a transnational push to implement protective measures. This shared awareness led to milestones such as the establishment of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in December 1946 and, later, the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

The period from 1939 to 1949 not only highlighted the need to protect children worldwide, but also underscored their importance in building a peaceful future. As detailed in La Seconde Guerre mondiale des enfants (The second world war of children), published in September 2024 by Presses Universitaires de France, children embodied hope for postwar nations.

After 1945, schools became central to Europe's social reconstruction. Seen as spaces of socialisation that included nearly all children, schools were viewed as critical for rebuilding society. Children, particularly those aged 6 to 14 (the typical age for compulsory education in Europe), were tasked with preserving the memory of fallen soldiers, resistance fighters and civilian victims. They cleaned and adorned graves, attended public ceremonies and paid homage to the dead.

However, postwar education went further. In some countries, particularly those that formerly had authoritarian or totalitarian regimes such as Italy and Germany, school curricula underwent significant transformation. Lessons on democratic governance and peaceful figures were either reinforced or reintroduced, and history classes began emphasising cultural, political and economic exchanges between nations. These reforms aimed to counteract the nationalist ideologies that had fuelled war and division.

Unlike the post-WWI era, the years after 1945 saw efforts to strengthen ties between nations by fostering connections among their youngest citizens. Germany hosted one of the most ambitious programs: the US-led "World Friendship Among Children Program". This initiative included pen-pal projects, student travel and even the symbolic adoption of war orphans by classrooms. Classrooms became miniature societies where students elected class representatives, voted on school matters and debated everyday and political issues.

While schools are indeed the cornerstone of global peacebuilding, debates about fostering peace go beyond the classroom to encompass all aspects of children's lives. This surge of post-WWII initiatives underscores the fact that educating for peace and democracy was a European – if not global – project. In France, West Germany and Italy, the project was rooted in liberal ideals; in Eastern Europe, it reflected a different understanding of democracy.

Regardless of ideological differences, these post-1945 initiatives left a lasting legacy. Their influence can still be seen today in school activities such as student elections and class trips, which continue to echo the democratic ideals of that era.

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°48**

The Conversation/ Camille Mahé/ 12th February 2025

Harry and Meghan call for stronger social media protections for children

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are calling for stronger protections for children from the dangers of social media, saying "enough is not being done."

"We want to make sure that things are changed so that... no more kids are lost to social media," Prince Harry told BBC Breakfast in New York. "Life is better off social media," he added, saying that he was "grateful" that his children were still too young to be online.

"The sad reality is the kids who aren't on social media normally get bullied at school because they can't be part of the same conversation as everybody else."

The children's images were shared by parents who are part of the Parents' Network. This is a support network, set up by Prince Harry and Meghan's Archewell Foundation, for parents whose children have experienced harm from social media. They have backed calls to technology firms that say parents should be able to gain access to information on the phones of children who have died, despite arguments about privacy.

The prince said tech firms were "getting away with it" by arguing they didn't need to disclose information to UK families because of privacy considerations. "You are telling a parent, you are telling a dad and a mum that they can't have the details of what their kid was up to on social media because of the privacy of their kid. It's wrong," he said. She praised the parents who were speaking out. "I think in many ways what we see through these parents is the hope and the promise of something better, because... they just want to make sure this doesn't happen to anyone else," said Meghan.

Ellen Roome, from Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, was among the families.She believes her 14-year-old son Jools died after an online challenge went wrong in 2022. She says his social media accounts could provide evidence. An inquest into his death found he took his own life "There was nothing that gave us any indication that there was a problem."

Mark Kenevan, whose son Isaac died aged 13 in 2022, said: "All we're asking is... please help us protect our children." A coroner ruled that Isaac died as a result of misadventure, but the Kenevans say social media platforms were also to blame.The Kenevans filed a wrongful death lawsuit against TikTok in the US earlier this year alongside three other British families.

The lawsuit accuses the platform of pushing dangerous prank and challenge videos to children to boost engagement time. Meta shares the goal of keeping teens safe online. The firm said it had recently introduced "teen accounts" with enhanced protections. "We believe teens deserve consistent protections across all the different apps they use - not just our platforms," Meta said in a statement. In the UK on Thursday, the media regulator Ofcom published measures intended to improve protections for children online, including requiring tougher age checks and more robust action to prevent children accessing harmful content.

BBC News/ Sean Coughlan & Jon Kay/ 24th April 2025

The World's Biggest Polluter, China, Is Ramping Up Renewables

On Wednesday, China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) announced that the country would be investing in major renewable energy projects—developing new offshore wind farms and large scale clean energy bases that combine solar and wind farms. China's renewable energy dominance has been a long time coming, experts say.

In 2020, China announced that the country would reach peak carbon emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060. Since then, the country has been making strides towards adopting clean energy. That same year, the Chinese government pledged to double its renewable energy capacity by 2030—only to reach that goal six years ahead of schedule.

China currently produces 31% of its electricity from renewable sources including wind, solar, hydroelectricity, and geothermal. While the country is still heavily reliant on coal, estimates predict that by 2026 solar will overtake the fossil fuel as China's leading energy source. "China wants to supply green energy goods for the world," says Samantha Gross, director of the energy security and climate initiative at the Brookings Institution.

Despite the country's green transition, China is still heavily reliant on coal—the world's biggest single source of greenhouse gas emissions per unit of energy. "China uses coal for a lot of its electricity generation because that's what they have," says Gross, who notes that the fossil fuel helps ensure the country's energy security amid increasing demand. The coal industry is also a major economic hub in many Chinese provinces, presenting a sore spot for the country's environmental goals.

In the U.S., China's green energy push helped shape the Biden-era Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), a nearly $400 billion green industrial policy that aims to ramp up U.S. clean energy production. "[China] has spent a lot of money subsidizing and helping their electric vehicle industry, battery, solar panel, and they are world leaders in those industries as a result," says Gross. "The Inflation Reduction Act was an attempt by Congress and the Biden Administration to to compete with that." While China's Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Accords—which lays out a country's plan for how it will help meet the Paris goals—says that the country will "peak" emissions by 2030, it doesn't specify a cap. In comparison, some countries, including the majority of the E.U. nations are beginning to see their emissions decrease.

Given that China is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gasses, a firm commitment from the country to stabilize and then reduce emissions is the only way the world will be able to meet global climate goals. "If the peak is very high, it's going to make it very difficult for the world to limit emissions to a level that would hold warming at 1.5 degrees or even 2 degrees," says Lewis. "We are not seeing enough signs—even with the really impressive build out of renewables—that China is getting on that path quickly enough."

TIME/ Simmone Shah/ 7th March 2025

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NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°50**

What the Founding Fathers Said About Kings

President Donald Trump has a fondness for giving himself nicknames: "very stable genius," "Honest Don," and now "the king."

Trump bestowed on himself the monarchical moniker on Wednesday after proclaiming victory over New York's new car-traffic toll plan for Manhattan. Trump posted on Truth Social: "CONGESTION PRICING IS DEAD. Manhattan, and all of New York, is SAVED. LONG LIVE THE KING."

Governor Kathy Hochul added that "New York hasn't labored under a king in over 250 years. We sure as hell are not going to start." Some Trump defenders claim the posts are harmless trolling, a reference flown over liberals' heads.

Over the weekend, Trump posted a Napoleon-inspired statement suggesting he's above the law. And in an interview alongside adviser Elon Musk that aired on Fox News on Feb. 18, Musk suggested—not for the first time—that Trump ought to have supreme authority, unrestricted by the courts. "If the will of the President is not implemented, and the President is representative of the people," Musk said, "that means the will of the people is not being implemented, and that means we don't live in a democracy, we live in a bureaucracy."

The Founding Fathers envisioned America as a republic—defined by James Madison as "a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people, and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior."

Amid public concerns that the crafters of the Constitution would create a monarchy, according to the University of Houston's Digital History Project, a Philadelphia newspaper reported on the negotiations, quoting a delegate, who said: "Tho' we cannot, affirmatively, tell you what we are doing, we can, negatively, tell you what we are not doing—we never once thought of a king."

The Constitution that resulted outlined a separation of powers between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, serving together as a system of checks and balances to prevent the kind of tyrannical rule that the colonies fought to free themselves from.

"The American solution," summarized writer Richard Hurowitz in an essay for TIME in 2018, was "an executive strong enough to be effective but checked enough to prevent tyranny." But even the Founders realized that such a solution, as Hurowitz put it, "remains unfortunately dependent to some degree on the character of the President and the electorate that supports him."

In 1814, John Adams, by then a former President, wrote that unchecked democracy can be just as pernicious as monarchy and "never lasts long." "It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet, that did not commit suicide. It is in vain to say that democracy is less vain, less proud, less selfish, less ambitious, or less avaricious than aristocracy or monarchy."

TIME/ Miranda Jeyaretnam/ February 20th 2025

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NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°51**

'French parents are the European champions of parental pessimism'

French parents are the European champions of parental pessimism. 41% of French parents believe that children "encroach on their freedom," compared to only 9% in Norway, 14% in Denmark, 7% in Iceland, and 5% in Finland. By combining two criteria – equality in the professional sphere and equality in the private sphere (domestic and parental tasks) – we find that there are three "gender regimes" in Europe: a traditional regime, where equality is weak both in the professional and private spheres; a regime based on "symmetric roles," where equality prevails in both spheres.

Family policies significantly impacted the first phase of the gender revolution – women's access to the labor market – but very little sharing of domestic and parental tasks. The rate of French women in work is one of the highest in Europe – but they continue to take on the vast majority of tasks within the home.

To support mothers' employment, the French government developed facilities welcoming children as young as 3 months. But who handles registration procedures and getting the children ready in the morning? Mostly mothers. In France, as in all "frustrated equality" regimes, women have entered the world traditionally reserved for men – that of work – but men have remained at the doorstep of the world traditionally assigned to women – that of family.

In the 1970s, during the golden age of social democracy, Sweden inaugurated a model that later spread to Norway, Iceland, Denmark, and, to a lesser extent, Finland: Women enter the world of men, but men also enter the world of women. In the Nordic countries, the gendered nature of both worlds has largely been erased. The introduction of this parental leave in the 1970s was accompanied by a profound tax reform. The individualization of taxation avoided the French system of the family quotient, which favors couples with different income levels, constituting a subsidy for the male breadwinner model.

In public discourse Sweden has promoted the idea that men, like women, should not only have the responsibility but also the pleasure of spending time with their children: This is the so-called "double emancipation" model. In a way, Scandinavian countries have not put in place this idea of child-kings but that of parent-kings – all of society is designed for them to enjoy parenthood harmoniously.

In countries that stigmatize the "raven mothers", those unworthy women who work even though they have young children, there is strangely a form of "parental optimism." The well-oiled mechanism of sphere distribution preserves traditional roles. Each person stays in their domain, everyone is in their place, and apparently, many parents are satisfied with it. If France waits idly for gender equality to reach the private sphere, it will wait a long time... What separates the Swedish model from the French model is not a difference of degree but a difference in nature: The French regime produces structural, not transitional, inequality. This is what studies on the distribution of domestic and parental tasks show. Since the 1980s, figures have hardly changed.

Le Monde/Anne Chemin/ April 6th 2025

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NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°52**

Even if the ocean were to boil, climate skepticism would persist. The 'marketplace of ideas' theory is invalidated.

Fifteen years ago, on March 10, 2010. Valérie Masson-Delmotte, a researcher at the Laboratory of Climate and Environmental Sciences, passionately defended the scientific consensus on global warming against former French education minister Claude Allègre, a champion of France's "skeptics."

The outcome of the debate held particular significance in the context of the late 2000s, marked by the failure of the COP15 in Copenhagen and the rise of narratives denying the reality of climate change. However, many scientists, educators, or journalists interested in the controversy believed the battle against denial was, in any case, unlosable in the long term.

The persistence of climate-skeptical discourse in its various forms was therefore unthinkable. Indeed, since the famous debate between Masson-Delmotte and Allègre, the average temperature of the lower atmosphere has risen by half a degree. Yet, "skepticism" still floats around. Major media outlets do not hesitate to promote it repeatedly. In three months, nearly 130 instances of misinformation or falsehoods were identified by the authors of the study, as well as over 370 "discourses of inaction."

Climate skepticism is certainly not widespread, and it is now limited to some TV and radios channels. But it is still there. Moreover, climate-skeptical narratives are increasingly amplified by social media and find renewed resonance in publishing and certain print media. The high "permeability" is reflected in public opinion. Climate skepticism still circulates and remains highly entrenched in France. According to a 2022 survey the OECD, about 43% of French people held opinions on climate that significantly diverge from the scientific consensus. This relative stability of climate skepticism over time shows that we have underestimated the capacity of public discourse to construct alternative worlds, to make reality disappear, and to perpetually revive failed ideas. The ocean could be boiling, and there would probably still be a way to keep a certain level of "skepticism" in public opinion.

This persistence offers a remarkable case study that alone refutes the theory of a "marketplace of ideas" from which the strongest ideas supposedly emerge spontaneously at the expense of others. This pseudo-theory is weaponized by the Trump administration and the tech oligarchy around it. First, to target universities, on the grounds that they supposedly skew this "marketplace of ideas" by excluding some narratives from their curriculums for ideological reasons, and second, to refuse any regulation of the content of digital platforms.

The case of the climate shows beyond reasonable doubt that this does not allow for an informed democratic choice. In 2018, Steve Bannon, then adviser to Donald Trump, described in chosen terms all the interest he found in this "marketplace of ideas": organizing confusion between facts and opinions, glossing over inconvenient realities, offering a choice between proven facts and falsehoods, and so on. The goal, he said in a podcast, was to "flood the zone with shit" and leave his opponents to deal with it. And for now, it must be recognized that this strategy is fruitful.

Le Monde/ Stéphane Foucart/ April 22nd 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°53**

Australia's Leader Takes On Social Media. Can He Win?

The press conference starts like any other: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is grilled on everything from affordable housing and war in the Middle East to his relationship with U.S. President Donald Trump. Then, Lana, 11, picks up the microphone. "Do you think social media has an impact on kids?" asks the suburban Canberra primary-school student.

"It certainly does, and that's why we're going to ban social media for under-16s," Albanese replies resolutely. On Dec. 10, in a bid to carve out and ring-fence that space, Australia will implement a 16-year-old age limit for users of platforms such as Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and X. While most platforms have a self-imposed age limit of 13, enforcement is laughable; kids can simply input a false date of birth. Rather than targeting underage kids, the Australian law will punish companies that fail to introduce adequate safeguards with fines of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars ($31 million) for as yet undefined "systemic breaches."

It's a bold move, directly targeting some of the world's most influential companies run by its richest and most powerful men. For its proponents, however, the law is a critical first step toward checking social media's toxic influence on children. The upshot: Australia has now come to serve as a beachhead for others to prepare their own defenses. In the U.S., the bipartisan Kids Off Social Media Act (KOSMA) to restrict social media for kids under 13 and bar platforms from pushing targeted content to users under 17 is advancing through the Senate.

That's not to say there aren't detractors—and not just the social media companies. Some mental health experts, meanwhile, say blocking kids from social media will drive them to darker, less regulated corners of the internet.

For Albanese, an imperfect plan is better than no plan at all. "We acknowledge that this won't be absolute," Albanese tells TIME. "But it does send a message about what society thinks and will empower parents to have those conversations with their children."

Kelly believes Charlotte took her own life at their suburban Sydney home in large part because of the toxic effect of social media. Charlotte had suffered bullying at school, but her parents say it was social media that rendered that cycle of acceptance and rejection unbearably acute. The night before her passing, Charlotte had been upbeat, enjoying her favorite pasta dinner and baking banana bread for the next day. "I kissed the happiest girl in the world good night," says Kelly. Something happened after she got to her room. A friend later told Kelly about the vile, hateful message her daughter received via Snapchat.

Kelly O'Brien explained the devastating effects of social media on Charlotte in a letter to Albanese as part of the 36 Months campaign—a grassroots movement to raise and properly enforce the age limit for social media to 16. "When you hear firsthand about a parent losing their child then it undoubtedly has an impact," says Albanese.

TIME/ Charlie Campbell/ April 3rd 2025

How bad are video games for your grades?

Released in September 2020 by a Chinese developer, the online game "Genshin Impact" became a big hit. A year after its release, it was attracting more than 13m monthly users in China and more than 50m worldwide. However, China's government worry that gaming addiction poses a threat to teenagers. In 2021, a newspaper complained that online games were contributing to myopia, bad grades and alienation, often described as "spiritual opium", it said.

In 2019 China's government limited children under 18 to an hour and a half of online game-time a day during the school week. In 2021 it went further, permitting only three hours a week. The limits were part of a crackdown on consumer-tech firms that horrified entrepreneurs and investors. Researchers make use of the government's imposition of time limits and the arrival of Genshin Impact. They show that mobile-phone apps are contagious: students will use their phone more if roommates do. The study also demonstrates some digital harm: grades suffer along with a graduate's initial job offers.

The study authors have access to the university records of thousands of undergraduates who enrolled at a mid-tier university in an unnamed southern province from 2018 to 2020. More remarkable, they also have access to mobile-phone records—calls made, apps used, locations visited—for millions of subscribers. Because customers provide their national-identity number when they register for a phone, the researchers can match the university records of 6,430 students to their phone data. The data provide a detailed portrait of undergraduate life. Students spend 93 hours a month on mobile-phone apps, including 12 hours on games. A third of the students use their phones at least 210 hours a month—equivalent to 7 hours a day—and a third spend 30 hours a month on games. After the arrival of Genshin Impact, the average student arrived at their study hall 18 minutes later and returned to the dorm 25 minutes earlier, according to the data from their phones.

Gaming can be a way to retreat from the people around you. Yet the scholars show that app use is social. Extroverted students use games more than their less outgoing peers. Students who report more game-time also report better relationships with roommates. Also, a difficulty in capturing the effects of phone habits is reverse causality: students doing badly at school may seek escapist comfort.

So, what if gaming limits were extended to undergraduates? Scholars estimate it would cut a student's monthly game time from 12 hours to under eight, partly because friends and roommates would also play less. The restraint would raise their grades and lift their wages after graduation by 0.9% or 48 yuan ($6.80) a month. Games like Genshin Impact, which are free to play, exact a real cost. For some spiritual opium-eaters, intent on discovering other kinds of treasure, even lost wages may seem a small sacrifice.

The Economist/ 26th October 2024

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°55**

Donald Trump's antics mean new boldness is needed in UK-EU links

The pace of geopolitical change seems more hectic by the week. A planned UK-EU summit in London on May 19th is an important chance to start improving post-Brexit relations. Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine and, especially, Donald Trump's recent antics on tariffs have injected new urgency into Europe. That is likely eventually to bring Britain and the EU closer together—but there are some obstacles along the way.

The place to start is European defence. American presidents have for decades demanded that Europeans do more to defend themselves. Now at last Europe is responding with a degree of seriousness. Germany and Poland are leading the way. If it comes to shouldering more responsibility, Sir Keir Starmer has been a prominent voice in a "coalition of the willing" that takes in most EU members, plus Norway, Ukraine and even Australia and Japan. The EU plans a new European defence instrument to lend up to €150bn ($170bn) to members, alongside a European defence-industry programme.

The new deal will instead allow any country that signs a security-and-defence agreement with the EU, and is willing to pay its share, to draw on EU funds. The bigger question is whether progress to include Britain in EU defence plans could speed up a broader reset of economic and trade relations. Sir Keir wants to start with a veterinary deal to eliminate most barriers to food trade. The EU would like a youth-mobility scheme, and hopes Britain might rejoin the Erasmus system of student exchanges.

So far, the signals on both sides do not suggest that closer security relations will do much to boost a bolder reset. The European Commission still bears scars from the long Brexit negotiations, is broadly happy with the TCA as it is and remains wary of British efforts to "cherry-pick" access to its single market without accepting the four freedoms of movement of goods, services, capital and people. For his part, Sir Keir remains nervous of losing red-wall pro-Brexit voters to Nigel Farage's Reform UK. Never mind that public opinion has shifted: a recent poll for Best of Britain, a pro-EU lobby group, found 53% of respondents saying closer relations with the EU would be positive, against 13% disagreeing.

Mr Trump's erratic behaviour may also complicate hopes for a broader EU-UK deal. He is a fan of Brexit and loathes the EU, which he claims was set up to screw America. Sir hopes to strike a trade deal with the United States. Yet any such deal is unlikely to scrap Mr Trump's baseline 10% tariff. And because the Americans may insist on greater access for their farm produce, it could also kybosh a veterinary agreement with the EU.

If Britain and Europe are to devise their best response to Mr Trump, they badly need to come together. That will require more ambition on the British side and more flexibility on the EU side. Next month's summit should be a golden opportunity for Europe's political leaders to begin stepping up to this challenge.

The Economist/ April 26th 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°56**

Crap jobs, fewer homes, less money, toxic politics. And peak happiness eludes the young: who knew?

So there are two studies, one commissioned by Weetabix, one by the UN, saying the same thing: 45 is now the age of peak happiness. A massive 77% are more content with their lives after they hit 40, with two-thirds saying they no longer cared what other people thought, and 59% having attained self-actualisation – or, at least, they say they "now know what really matters in life". Which is probably about as self-actualised as it gets.

The UN, meanwhile, has survey results from the UK, Ireland, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and kicks off cheerfully enough – happiness used to be conceived in a U-shape, when it was bliss to be alive in youth, miserable in middle age, and then picked up again as you got older. Now it's more of a straight upward trajectory.

The problem with the UN's research is that it's pretty clear about what's driving this change, and – newsflash – it isn't pilates. Economist David Blanchflower, co-author with Jean Twenge, is blunt: there's a "crisis in wellbeing among the young". They've become isolated, they don't go out, they're not carefree, they don't have sex. Separate research has demonstrated, repeatedly, that there's a mental health crisis in the under-35s, with more than 500,000 excluded from the workforce. The proportion of young people out of work owing to mental health problems has nearly doubled since 2012.

There are so many explanations for this that crumble as soon as you pick them up. Covid is often thought to have hit the young harder: it disrupted school and warped exam results; those at university paid the price for the best years of their lives without actually enjoying them. Trying to make sense of that, people in their 40s and 50s often fall back on the snowflake hypothesis. Too hung up on identity politics, too easily offended, too ready to protest over offence they've taken, too keen to diagnose themselves with things, and then too strident in asking for allowances – just too fragile for the world.

Increasingly, though, these narratives seem more like elevator music than coherent melody; it's just not plausible that digital natives would be so much more affected by online behaviour. There are much more obvious explanations: student debt, the immense barriers to well-paid work for those without a degree, the fact that even high-quality jobs are no longer secure, and the fact that wages have stagnated yet housing costs have done the opposite.

Young people face hard-scrabble living standards, a political discourse that says it's your own fault for buying too many lattes, and a wellness culture that centres individual discipline. It seems the only way to keep yourself sane is to organise collectively. As soon as you do, though, you're most likely to join the fight against the climate crisis, where you find yourself in the same position. I suspect the range of and capacity for joy is the same across every age group; we're the same people, dealing with different facts.

The Guardian/ Zoe Williams/ 6th March 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°57**

Amazing: of all the books in all the world Mr Free Speech Zuckerberg wants to ban, it's the one about him

I am shocked that Mark Zuckerberg is going all-out to block a memoir by Facebook's former director of global public policy, Sarah Wynn-Williams. I thought information wanted to be free? He recently binned off all his factcheckers to "dramatically reduce the amount of censorship". Yet here we are reading stories of how Meta this week launched an emergency action in the US to ban Wynn-Williams promoting or further distributing copies of her book.

Honestly, Mark: TOUGHEN UP! It was only about 10 minutes ago that you were telling Joe Rogan that corporations needed more "masculine energy". If something's wrong or dangerous or really seriously harmful, just let everyone keep seeing it – because, freedom – but pop a "community note" on it. The grounds for Meta calling in emergency lawyers to block Wynn-Williams's book seem to be that she has gone against the terms of her severance. Luckily, none of us has a "non-disparagement clause" against Zuckerberg, who on this evidence and so much more should be disparaged every minute of every day in the countries where he operates, and even in the ones he doesn't.

In conversation, I overuse the phrase "the worst people in the world", Meta top brass really are up there. The book is that simultaneously satisfying yet horrifying thing – an insider account shows you that absolutely every single one of the awful things you already suspected apparently really did go on behind closed doors. Shortly after turning this offer down, Wynn-Williams nearly dies in childbirth. Once she's back at work, her male boss tells her she was insufficiently "responsive" during the period. "In my defence," says Wynn-Williams, "I was in a coma for some of it." For light relief, we meet a shadowy Zuckerberg aide who supposedly games his boss's own algorithm so his posts have mega-engagement.

And that's just the office politics stuff. The hardcore business – what we might call the politics politics stuff – is so much worse. Meta is currently insisting Wynn-Williams was ultimately fired for "poor performance and toxic behaviour". But it's amazing to think anyone at Meta could get fired for "toxic behaviour."

Meanwhile, the world's children have simply been allowed to become hideously and destructively addicted to their products by politicians who either implicitly – or, as is often claimed in this book, explicitly – thank the companies for assisting their electoral success. So on Meta sails. There are words and phrases for these supranational organised enterprises that harm societies and seemingly do whatever they like, and none of them is the nerdily bland "tech firm". What was it that the Indians used to call the period of chaos and social instability wreaked by the East India Company? Ah yes: the anarchy. We live in a modern form of it now, thanks to Zuckerberg and others, and it's way past time we did more than simply scroll defeatedly on.

The Guardian/ Marina Hyde/ 14th March 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°58**

The Guardian view on a new deal for travel in Europe: bring back student exchanges

Strong hints that a rebranded "youth opportunity scheme" will top the EU's wishlist at next month's EU-UK summit are good news for anyone who regrets the diminished travel opportunities that were one result of Brexit. Rising expectations of new European train routes – possibly including direct trains from London to Italy – can only add to the appeal of a potential rule change.

There were more consequential impacts of Brexit than restrictions on travel. The disruption of trade, which is predicted by the Office for Budget Responsibility to cause a 4% reduction in long-run productivity, is far more significant economically. Drug shortages continue to create risks to people's health, and cause problems for doctors and pharmacists.

But the cancellation of the UK's membership of the Erasmus student exchange programme, the removal of the automatic right for UK citizens to work in EU countries (and the reciprocal right for EU citizens), and the erection of numerous other obstacles to travel, have together made for a big change in the cultural weather. Collectively, and as Brexiters intended, we have become more cut off from our neighbours.

Spending extended periods in Germany, Spain, France or another EU country was never something that most young adults did. Yet in 2019-20 almost 17,000 UK students and trainees undertook placements under Erasmus, while 22,000 European young people came for similar stays in the UK. Theresa May proposed a youth exchange scheme as part of her Brexit agreement. This was dropped under Boris Johnson. But since foreign travel is widely regarded as one of life's great pleasures, and most people want the next generation to thrive, it is not surprising that a recent poll found 66% of the British public are in favour of relaxing the rules – including large majorities in Brexit-voting areas.

Partly owing to the powerful pull of London, and the wish of millions of European young people to learn English, EU governments are keen to rebuild arrangements so that more young people have the chance to live in the UK. But when proposals for a new agreement were floated by the European Commission last year, they were briskly shut down by both Rishi Sunak, who was prime minister at the time, and Labour. New schemes would involve a special visa allowing citizens, probably up to age 30, to work or study abroad for up to four years. While the UK government has already shown an interest in bilateral schemes, it appears that the EU will negotiate any deal as a bloc.

Particularly given the recent actions of the Trump White House, the UK ought to be seeking strengthened economic and political ties as well as cultural ones. The renewal of a youth exchange scheme might seem unimportant by contrast. But while it would not be utterly transformative, at a time of geopolitical tumult, its importance shouldn't be understated. Sir Keir Starmer should embrace the idea without delay. There is no easier way to signal that he is serious about closer cooperation.

The Guardian/ 20th April 2025

Microplastics found in human ovary follicular fluid for the first time

Microplastics have been found for the first time in human ovary follicular fluid, raising a new round of questions about the ubiquitous and toxic substances' potential impact on women's fertility. The new peer-reviewed research published in Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety checked for microplastics in the follicular fluid of 18 women undergoing assisted reproductive treatment at a fertility clinic in Salerno, Italy, and detected them in 14.

Follicular fluid provides essential nutrients and biochemical signals for developing eggs. Contaminating that process quite likely has implications for fertility, hormonal balance and overall reproductive health, the authors wrote. The findings represent a major step toward figuring out how and why microplastics impact women's reproductive health, but are also "very alarming", Luigi Montano, a university researcher said.

"This discovery should serve as an important warning signal about the invasiveness of these emerging contaminants in the female reproductive system," the study states. Microplastics are particularly dangerous because they can contain any number of 16,000 plastic chemicals. That includes highly toxic compounds like Pfas, bisphenol and phthalates, which are linked to cancer, neurotoxicity, hormone disruption and developmental toxicity.

Montano's latest paper is part of a larger project he's leading for which he has also detected microplastics in human urine and semen, and examines the impacts on fertility. He said he suspects microplastics are among chemicals driving plummeting sperm counts and a drop in overall sperm quality. Though men are more susceptible to the substance's toxic effects, he added, women are also possibly impacted. Animal research has linked the presence of microplastics to ovarian dysfunction and health problems, like reduced oocyte maturation, and a lower capacity for fertilization.

The paper notes a "possible presence of correlation between the concentration of microplastics" and reproductive health in the women who participated in the new study. Montano added that the bisphenol, phthalates, Pfas and other highly toxic chemicals that use microplastics as a "Trojan horse" to get into the body, and into the ovaries, are "very dangerous". The chemicals are already well-known for disrupting hormones and harming women's reproductive health.

The follicular fluid paper offers a "very important finding", said Xiaozhong Yu, a University of New Mexico microplastics researcher, but he added that more work is needed to determine the dose and level of exposure at which adverse effects start to happen.

The substances' ubiquity makes it difficult to avoid, but reducing the amount of plastic used in the kitchen – from packaging to storage to utensils – can likely reduce exposures. Pesticides can contain microplastics, or in some cases are a form of microplastics, so eating organic may help.

Therefore, experts advise that people avoid heating plastic, or putting hot food and liquid in plastic. Single-use paper coffee cups, for example, can shed trillions of bits of plastic when hot liquid is added. Similarly, tea bags can release billions of particles, and microwavable plastic is also a problem. Plastic utensils that briefly come into contact with hot pans can also leach chemicals; wood and stainless steel alternatives are less harmful.

The Guardian/ Tom Perkins/ 19th April 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°60**

AI may help us cure countless diseases – and usher in a new golden age of medicine

AlphaFold might be the most exciting scientific innovation of this century. From Google DeepMind, and first reported in 2020, it uses artificial intelligence to figure out a protein's 3D structure. The technology has already been used to solve fundamental questions in biology, awarded the Nobel prize (in chemistry – to Demis Hassabis and John Jumper) and revolutionised drug discovery.

A protein's structure gives us clues about its function, and helps us design new drugs. AlphaFold, which was trained on a huge database of experimentally solved structures called the Protein Data Bank, predicts a protein's structure based on its amino acid sequence.

In the past, the first step would be to produce a vast amount of protein – using litres of a bacterium, or a virus. You'd pray for the protein to assemble into a crystal lattice (notoriously difficult), and then fire high-energy X-rays at it. This is called X-ray crystallography, and it could take years. Now, AlphaFold can do it in minutes (and a hell of a lot more cheaply, too).

At its first appearance, AlphaFold became the state of the art. Now, there are approximately 250,000,000 protein structures in the AlphaFold database, which has been used by almost 2 million people from 190 countries. Maybe I could have even used it to make a new drug. Now, I can go to the AlphaFold server and produce a structure in five minutes that would have consumed my whole PhD.

So what does drug discovery with AlphaFold look like? In this recent Science study, researchers used AlphaFold to predict the structure of the serotonin receptor, which controls mood. What they found was a series of molecules that bound much more tightly than drugs generated via the conventional – experimental – approach, which could be new drugs for mood disorders.

Solving a decades-old problem: the structure of the nuclear pore complex, one of the biggest structures in the cell. This complex is the guardian of entry to the nucleus, which holds the cell's DNA. Finding a new liver cancer drug. In a lab (not in patients), the drug, which targets the cancer protein CDK20, prevented liver cancer growth.

AlphaProteo uses AlphaFold's structures to design molecules that can bind to and modulate other proteins. Also from DeepMind, AlphaMissense tackles the problem of missense mutations – minor changes to genes, with uncertain functional impact. AlphaMissense models the structure of the mutations using AlphaFold: if the protein structure changes, it's probably pathogenic. This could transform the diagnosis and treatment of rare genetic diseases.

In the future, AlphaFold could enable new medicines to be discovered by individuals, could find drugs for undruggable targets, and could unlock the secrets of molecular life.

If the first generation of drug discovery was the nature generation, which gave us aspirin (from willow tree bark), and the second was the biotech generation, which gave us Ozempic, then we've now moved to the third generation: the AI generation.

The Guardian/ Samuel Hume/ 28th March 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°61**

How a French researcher being refused entry to the US turned into a diplomatic mess

On his way to Houston, Texas, on Sunday, March 9, to attend a scientific conference, a French researcher from the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) had no idea that he would soon find himself at the center of a diplomatic mess. He was detained by police at the airport for over a day before being sent back to France, leaving his work computer and cell phone in the US.

Philippe Baptiste, French higher education and research minister, made the denial public. He regretted the decision as having been "taken by the American authorities because this researcher's phone contained exchanges with colleagues and friends in which he expressed a personal opinion on the Trump administration's research policy."

Le Monde has learned that on his arrival at Houston airport, the academic was stopped as he passed through customs. Once arrested, he complied with requests for access to his personal computer and phone. He was then questioned about a WhatsApp text message conversation he had had with an American colleague. It has been described as a harmless discussion about American and French researchers' respective abilities to organize demonstrations denouncing the Trump administration's attacks on science.

With regard to the confidential documents that were allegedly in his possession, the scientist did, indeed, work for the Los Alamos laboratory and, like many other French researchers, continues to collaborate with this institution.

The question of whether or not the inspection he underwent was random remains: According to the CBP, the agents are authorized to inspect electronic devices held by any traveler crossing the border, although, the agency added, such checks are rare. In 2024, fewer than 0.01% of international travelers' electronic devices were inspected upon arrival.

The incident has sent shockwaves through the French scientific community, part of which demonstrated on March 7, as part of "Stand Up for Science" demonstrations conducted in support of American researchers.

In a statement on Friday, the French Academy of Sciences called on international scientific institutions to "denounce this authoritarian drift, which is harmful to science." The learned society spoke out "vigorously against this practice," which "seriously challenges the fundamental freedoms of the academic world: Freedom of thought, expression and travel."

The affair has led the Research Ministry to reiterate, in a statement to higher education and research establishments and academies, "the instructions relating to the protection of sensitive data and to security when traveling abroad" said Christophe Peyrel, a senior civil servant for defense and security.

This memo, which did not specifically mention the US, is a particularly restrictive one. Over and above these reminders, the French researcher's case could lead some scientists to reconsider their plans to travel to the US for professional reasons, even if the Research Ministry has issued no official warning to this effect.

Le Monde/ Laure Belot, Sandrine Cabut, Arnaud Leparmentier, Hervé Morin and Piotr Smolar/ March 22nd 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°62**

In Spain, teenagers are as free as the air

It was 7:00 pm on Sunday, March 30, when Mathilde, 12, crossed the gates of Bravo Murillo Park in Madrid with three friends to enjoy the start of the evening. "Since I have school tomorrow, I have to be home by 9:00 pm. On Friday or Saturday, I can stay out until 10:00 pm. " explained the girl.

With the arrival of warmer days in Spain, crowds of kids on the verge of adolescence occupy the parks and streets of Madrid and its suburbs until late in the evening. Starting at 12, they wander with their pandilla, their group of friends, until 10:00 or 11:00 pm on weekends, or even later during the summer. When a fair comes to town, parents even allow them to stay out well past midnight. At 15, young people gather for a botellón, a tradition where they sit on the ground in a circle, passing around bottles of beer or Coca-Cola mixed with wine.

Spanish teenagers are actually very free, and their parents have unwavering trust in them. "Adolescence is meant to give our children more freedom so that they can become more autonomous. It's not a time to live in fear but to help them transform into adults," said Amanda Serna, 51, a mother of two boys aged 11 and 14. Her eldest has been staying out "until 10:00 or 11:00 pm on weekends" since he was 12 and a half.

"In Spain, it's a safe country, the streets don't scare parents. There is a sense of security built around the idea that the community is watching over the children," explained Eulalia Alemany, director of innovation at the Foundation for Aid Against Youth Drug Addiction (FAD Juventud).

According to the 2023 Estudes report by FAD, about 55% of young Spaniards aged 12 and 13 go out at night at least once a week, and 35% have already consumed alcohol. "The night is their space, both a temporal and spatial place where they feel at home, without adults," noted Juan Maria Gonzalez-Anleo, a researcher at the Ibero-American Youth Observatory. "At the same time, we shouldn't idealize this so-called freedom."

They also experience total freedom in the pueblo, as they call the villages of their great-grandparents. "At five, we let them wander alone in the village square, keeping an eye on them from a distance, and gradually, we let them expand their territory. Today, the two older ones often come home after 1:00 am," said Juan Luis Carreras, father of three daughters.

Begoña Dubon, 55, mother of 16-year-old twins, has come to terms with it: "Since we can't always be with our daughters, we've decided to trust them," she said. She imposes only one control: they must be geolocated at all times. "I would have preferred they didn't get drunk at 13, didn't get piercings, didn't smoke, but I'm telling myself it's the age for mischief. I also know that if I forbid something, they'll want to do it even more..."

Le Monde/ Sandrine Morel/ April 5th 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°63**

'You Think We're Afraid of America?' Chinese manufacturers seem ready for a trade war

Yiwu is the world's largest wholesale market. Products as varied as padlocks, luggage tags, and inflatable pools each get a dedicated Costco-size zone. Roughly half a trillion dollars' worth of Chinese goods, or 15 percent of China's total annual exports, are imperiled by the trade war, but Chinese President Xi Jinping has shown no signs of backing down. Beijing has retaliated with 125 percent tariffs on U.S. imports, endangering more than $140 billion worth of goods a year. Unlike Donald Trump, Xi is not beholden to elections.

Trump's whirlwind policies have already throttled Yiwu's supply chains. Purchase orders have dried up, and shipments have been postponed. For more than 20 years, Yang Langhua has operated a factory that makes Christmas-themed plush toys. Around Trump's "Liberation Day" announcement, a longtime customer in the United States, where Yang conducts 20 percent of her business, asked Yang if she could lower her prices by 10 percent. The customer had ordered $3,000 worth of goods in February, and Yang was ready to ship it. "I said, 'I can't accept that,'" Yang told me. "I only make 10 percent profit total—if I cut it, I'd have no profit at all."

"I say the whole world should unite and stop doing business with the United States," Yang went on. "Let them fend for themselves." Her son-in-law is earning a Ph.D. in computer science in America. Now she hopes he returns home. "We're already the second-biggest power," she said. "And in many technology areas, we've caught up."

In some ways, Trump's tariffs might already be helping China. Many Chinese businesses are applying lessons learned from the previous trade war. David Xu works for an auto-parts company based in Shanghai that used to export mainly to the Los Angeles area. Over the past three years, he told me, he's dropped his U.S. exports by 40 percent and replaced them with a roster of Latin American clients. "China isn't afraid of tariffs anymore," Xu said.

The broad message I heard in Yiwu was this: Trump had overestimated America's leverage. At the end of this standoff, China, not America, would come out stronger: more self-reliant at home and more respected abroad.

Trump's tariffs present China with the long-anticipated opportunity to pivot its economic engine from exports to consumption. Chinese exports have ballooned as a result, escalating tensions with trading countries who wish to have more onshore manufacturing. The trade war "might have given China the urgency to rebalance its economy," Cui Zhiyuan, political economist at Tsinghua University told me.

As Cui reminded me, the Chinese word for crisis consists of the characters for danger and opportunity. While the White House sees the tariff war as a referendum on China's exploitation of global trade, Chinese officials are making it a referendum on American egotism and hypocrisy. The rest of the world will decide which message is more compelling. Washington thinks it's isolating Beijing, but it could very well be isolating itself.

The Atlantic/ Chang Che/ April 21st 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°64**

Achieving Sustainable Growth Requires Rethinking the Economy

Since 2015, when the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were introduced, trillions of dollars have been invested in sustainability efforts, thousands of initiatives have been launched, and countless global forums have convened to drive change. Yet, despite all this, the scale of progress pales in comparison to the powerful economic and political forces that continue to jeopardize our ecosystem.

For growth to truly drive progress, it must be sustainable. What if we could reimagine a system that creates wealth without deepening inequality, drives growth without destroying resources, and fuels innovation without leaving people behind? That's the foundation of "Sustainomy"—a new economic paradigm that focuses on how we collectively generate wealth and the ways in which we do so.

The economy is built on three fundamental forms of capital: prosperity, people, and the planet or the three Ps. Yet, in pursuit of efficiency, we've automated jobs and deployed AI to cut costs—all while sidelining the very workforce that drives the economy. The solution, however, lies in fostering a symbiosis of intelligence between that of humans and machines. "Sustainomy" looks to further "artificial" intelligence to "Authentic" Intelligence, a model in which AI is used not to replace human expertise, but to enhance it. A well-functioning AI-human ecosystem requires investment in human capital.

Governments must take a leading role by prioritizing broad-based development—strengthening purchasing power, improving job security, and investing in education and skills. Economic resilience cannot rely on short-term financial aid but requires structural shifts for long-term stability. Meanwhile, corporations must invest in skills that complement AI, such as critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence.

The global economy is in constant flux, with industries rising and falling at different speeds. "Sustainomy" doesn't just acknowledge this volatility—it builds resilience into the system by ensuring a balanced approach to economic development.

To unlock this potential it is essential to recognize not only the role of the global middle but also the interconnectedness of all economic levels. The top level, consisting of developed countries, large enterprises, multinational corporations, and high-income citizens, has the most readiness in terms of capital and competency. The middle level, which includes developing countries, SMEs, and middle-income citizens, holds immense potential for scaling economic growth. At the bottom level, underdeveloped countries, low-income citizens, and those in fragile economic conditions must focus on building up competencies that will allow them to move up the ladder.

When developing countries, SMEs, and middle-income earners have the resources to grow, they drive broader economic expansion, creating new markets, jobs, and opportunities that benefit everyone. It isn't about expanding wealth only at the top or simply redistributing it downward—it's about strengthening the middle.

Transitioning from the existing economy into "Sustainomy" requires an integrated, holistic and collaborative approach. The transition won't happen overnight, but the steps are clear. This is how we create the kind of economy that works for us and something bigger than ourselves—everyone around us, our community and the place we call home: Earth.

TIME/Piyachart Isarabhakdee/ April 7th 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°65**

Africans need jobs. The rest of the world needs workers

Africa is on the move. At least 20 million emigrants live outside the continent, a three-fold increase since 1990. It may seem otherworldly to predict that this will continue, given the fierce backlash against immigration across the West. But as we explain, African migration is an unstoppable force that will long outlast today's populists and help define the 21st century.

Demography is one cause. It is well known that in the developed world the number of people of working age (roughly defined as those between 15 and 64) will decline, exacerbating labour shortages. In Africa, the working-age population is forecast to increase by around 700m people by 2050. Also, many African countries are entering a phase in their development in which people are still poor enough to want to leave but, for the first time, have enough money to travel.

This raises two big and controversial questions, one about the consequences for Africa and the other about the attitude of the rest of the world. It is obvious that emigration is often in the interests of those who leave. Their lives can be transformed by earning several times more in richer countries than they would at home.

But African economists have a perennial concern about a brain drain. If the best and the brightest leave, does that mean the worst are left in charge? And in autocratic countries like Zimbabwe, such regimes endure in part because the middle class they immiserate chooses to leave rather than protest.

In general, though, the problems with emigration are soluble. African graduates are underemployed at home. The remittances they and others send back are worth more than foreign direct investment and overseas aid. One study suggests that a typical African-trained doctor sends back almost twice as much in remittances as the cost of their initial training. And emigration can also lead to a "brain gain." A deal struck last year between Kenya and Germany could be a model. Kenya agreed to speed up the removal of illegal migrants in Germany and to help recruit workers at home; Germany pledged support for language skills and vocational training.

The second controversial question is whether the rest of the world will welcome more Africans. President Donald Trump was including the continent when he spoke of "shithole countries" in his first term. Stephen Miller, his adviser, has said that "If you import the third world, you become the third world."

Yet in the long run, the demographic pressures and economic incentives will prove too strong. Migration from Africa will continue apace, even if it falls elsewhere, because the rich world will need workers, even if the current hostility towards migrants does not fade. They are better educated and more likely to work than people born locally, and they support American values such as freedom and opportunity.

Today's politicians mostly want to block migration. As demographic reality bites, tomorrow's will be forced to turn to the task of how to manage it better and make the most of it.

The Economist/ April 24th 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°66**

The man Britain cannot ignore: Nigel Farage's return means a new, more volatile era in British politics

A refreshingly dull election was being fought between Rishi Sunak and Sir Keir Starmer, a pair of sober-suited, workaholic technocrats with conventional economic ideas.

Today populism is back in Britain with a vengeance. In council elections in England on May 1st Reform UK, the party led by the architect of Brexit, Nigel Farage, is poised to inflict heavy losses on the Conservatives. The idea that national office is within Mr Farage's grasp probably sounds fantastical. Britain has a Labour government with a supersize majority; Mr Farage took eight attempts to enter Parliament and he now leads a faction of just four MPs. Many of his views are unpopular, but he is harder and more determined than he was a decade ago.

What makes Reform a contender is a quirk in Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system. Reform has been polling at 20-26% since December, up from 14% in last year's election. Today's polling could give Reform over 230 seats; just a 2% increase might take its total close to 300, only 30 or so seats short of an absolute majority.

The next election is still as much as four years away. But when it comes, this slot machine could give Mr Farage a jackpot. If he thinks a majority is unlikely, he could strike a pre-election pact with the Tories to carve up the electoral map, and share power with them in government. The trouble with Mr Farage is that his ideas would, once again, make Britain poorer and more dysfunctional. Mr Farage promises a "net-zero" immigration policy, which would cripple all those public services that depend on migrants to fill vacancies.

If Mr Farage were actually in government, bad ideas would be compounded by chaos. His career on the fringes has taught him to avoid delegating power to his colleagues. You might think that the Conservatives would take advantage of this turn of events to dominate the centre ground, where elections are won. It is not so simple. Brexit radicalised the party. Many Tories today share Mr Farage's populist instincts. They fear that their party will haemorrhage support unless it steals Reform's clothes. They worry, with some reason, that moving towards the mainstream will shed more votes to the right than will be won back from the centre.

Labour is in a stronger position. For as long as the vote on the right is split, it may find that power comes its way more easily. But voters will eventually tire of Sir Keir and his uninspiring record, possibly as soon as the next election. And that will be Mr Farage's moment.

The Labour victory contained the promise of a virtuous circle. If Sir Keir wastes that opportunity, a different future could open up. Britain could become locked in a doom-loop of low growth, an angry electorate, and governments that run from unpopular reforms or pursue investment-killing ideas. Britain has already spent one decade struggling to get by in the world Mr Farage created. It can ill afford a second.

The Economist/ April 24th 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°67**

Ireland's government has an unusual problem: too much money

Across Europe fiscal policy is causing headaches. The governments of Britain and France are both raising tax rates sharply. Germany is hobbled by a self-imposed debt brake. Ireland faces a different problem: the government is so flush with cash it does not know quite what to do with it.

In September the European Court of Justice delivered a verdict in a long-running legal battle over whether Apple had benefited from unfair (and now closed) loopholes in Ireland's tax code. As a result, the American tech firm will have to hand over €13bn ($14bn) to the Irish tax authorities, along with over €1bn of interest—an amount equivalent to 4.8% of the country's annual national income.

The Irish economy is doing exceptionally well. Modified gross national income, which takes account of distortions created by the high number of multinational firms based in the country, is expected to grow by 4.9% this year and 2.7% in 2025. The government's fiscal position was already looking solid before the Apple-related juicing (see chart). It ran a surplus in 2022 and 2023, and was expecting another this year. Ministers now predict a surplus worth 7.5% of national income this year and 2.9% in 2025, even after increasing spending and cutting taxes.

Ireland has offered competitive corporate-tax rates in order to attract foreign firms since the 1950s. The strategy has reaped big rewards in recent years. In 2015 corporation-tax receipts were €7bn. By last year they had reached €24bn. And the finance ministry expects them to rise to €30bn a year by the late 2020s. The government agreed in 2021 to raise the corporate-tax rate, as part of a deal involving over 140 countries to set a global minimum.

The rise in tax receipts has two main explanations. In the mid-2010s some of America's largest tech firms reorganised their tax arrangements after criticism from European governments on the use of loopholes.

Irish policymakers are aware that the tax base is narrow as well as bountiful. In 2022 just ten firms accounted for three-fifths of corporate-tax receipts. Recognising this vulnerability, the Irish government intends to treat the Apple windfall in the same way that Norway treated North Sea oil revenues: it will set up a sovereign-wealth fund. Ministers hope their combined value will reach €100bn by 2040, at which point they will start to spend the income generated.

There is also space for giveaways. With an election due early next year, a recent budget contained treats. Child benefits were also lifted and income-tax thresholds raised. The problem confronting Irish policymakers is a lack of slack in the economy. Ireland's jobs market is tight. Any additional moves by the government to cut taxes or increase spending are likely to push up inflation. Full details on how some of the Apple windfall will be spent are due to arrive in January. The politics of closing a deficit are never easy. Nor, it seems, are the politics of running an enormous surplus.

The Economist/ October 31st 2024

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°68**

The Rise of Silent Services

It can be easy to go a day without talking to another human, especially if you work remotely. But increasingly, people are avoiding talking to one another when they leave the house, too, thanks to businesses and activities that allow them to request quiet time.

Silent haircuts—in which the stylist is instructed ahead of time not to make small talk—are just one of the silent services becoming increasingly available across the U.S. Both Uber and Lyft allow riders to choose a silent ride, meaning the driver won't chat with them. Some massage studios offer a silent massage, in which the therapist won't try to engage with the client. One Japanese retailer even allows shoppers to choose to hold a blue bag when they enter the store, signaling they don't want a salesperson to talk to them.

Ichiran, a restaurant with 85 locations globally, offers individual booths resembling cubicles in which patrons eat alone. The U.S. is the largest market for self-checkout at business, which makes it possible for people to go into a pharmacy or grocery store and avoid having to interact with a clerk.

People also appear to be embracing quiet in their free time. There are silent book clubs in cities across the country, where people show up with a book they want to read and sit together doing so in silence.

"It's a way for people who might opt for the quiet Ubers to be social in a way that's welcoming for them," says Laura Gluhanich, who founded Silent Book Club in San Francisco with Guinevere de la Mare after friends wanted to join their tradition of sitting and reading together in restaurants.

Some people want to avoid talking because of how polarized the country has become, says Jessica Methot, a professor of human-resource management at Rutgers University who studies social networks. But we lose something when we embrace solitude and avoid small talk, Methot says. Research suggests that brief interactions can be energizing, and that most people underestimate the value of conversation. Small talk, which makes up about one-third of our conversations, "is the social glue of our lives and our workplaces," says Methot, who worries that in an age of remote work, Zoom calls, and silent services, people may be getting lonelier.

But for many, silent services offer a needed respite. Now people book a silent hair appointment so they can take a nap, or get work done on their laptop, or just stare off into the distance.

Edwards says he initially didn't know how the experiment would work—he believes that half of a stylist's job is cutting hair, and the other half is talking to people. But he says clients seem to like the idea. "We're always on the move, getting called and texted and emailed," he says. "Sometimes it's good to take a break."

TIME/ Alana Semuels/ November 18th 2024

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°69**

Don't overlook the many benefits of plastics

Few people are more synonymous with wonder at the natural world than Sir David Attenborough, a nonagenarian television presenter. In recent years, Sir David has been campaigning fervently for an end to the plastic that his film crews find scattered across the planet. The first statement is reasonable, but the second is not—for it disregards the extraordinary benefits that plastics, and the industry which produces them, have provided both to humans and to the environment.

Plastics have made possible a bewildering range of new materials that can replicate the properties of existing ones, and can do things they cannot, while being lighter, more durable, and cheaper and easier to manufacture.

Take food as an example. Plastic packaging prevents perishable foodstuffs from spoiling, making possible global trade in meat, fish, fruit and vegetables. A one-litre plastic bottle weighs 5% as much as a glass one; plastic packaging thus reduces shipping costs and emissions. Plastics have also eased the world's reliance on older materials, and on the living beings from which many of them came.

Just as the benefits of plastics are often unseen, however, so are some potential harms. Now there is growing concern about what happens when they break up into microscopic fragments invisible to the naked eye. In the past decade such "microplastics" have been found in food chains, in human brains and even in the apparently pristine snow of Antarctica.

It can be mere testimony to the acuity of the instruments in use. But history shows that ubiquitous industrial materials can do unintended, unexpected and widespread harm that is recognised much too late: think of lead-based paint and leaded petrol, which cause health and developmental problems.

To deal with the scourge of pollution the best approach is not to ban plastics, but to manage them more carefully. The proportion of plastics which end up being recycled has doubled in the past two decades, but it is still only 9%. It is because recycling is harder and more costly than most people realise.

Technical difficulties and the onerous sorting required mean that recycled plastic is almost always more expensive than the virgin stuff, which makes it hard to set up a virtuously circular market. The UN estimates that 59% of all plastic waste ends up being sorted by roughly 20m informal workers worldwide, frequently in terrible conditions.

Greater use should therefore be made of landfill. When properly managed and well monitored, this is far less environmentally ruinous than often portrayed, and can be simpler and more effective than poorly executed recycling. Incinerators, which can both produce energy and allow the resulting carbon to be captured, are a useful option too, though they are also unpopular. Fortnum, a Finnish company, has found a way to turn the hydrocarbons released from waste incineration back into plastic feedstock. Such innovation should be built on. When it comes to plastics, the benefits are very much greater than most people will allow—and so is the potential for managing the costs.

The Economist/ April 16th 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°70**

Exelon CEO Calvin Butler on How Diversity Helps His Company Excel: 'DEI Is Core to Who We Are'

The concept of the "American dream" has changed over time for Calvin Butler, the president and CEO of utility company Exelon. Speaking on a panel titled "Conscious Leadership: Bridging Purpose and Prosperity" at the TIME100 Summit in New York City on Wednesday, April 23, Butler said that in order to find success, Americans must redefine what prosperity means to them.

Butler was joined on stage by Caroline Feeney, global head of retirement and insurance at Prudential Financial, Inc.—a sponsor of the TIME100 Summit—and Indra Nooyi, former chairman and CEO of PepsiCo. During the panel, moderated by TIME senior correspondent Charlotte Alter, the trio of business leaders discussed how, in their view, many Americans feel that the "American Dream" is "slipping away."

"The majority of these people are feeling unprepared and scared to enter retirement because they don't feel like they're going to have economic security," she told the audience. "We have to be there for our customers and for our clients for the long haul, not just for a one-year period of time."

Butler also commented on the growing responsibility of purpose-driven leadership, pointing to his continued support of DEI measures being of "value" to him and his company, stating that Exelon is "that good" because of the diversity in their leadership, not in spite of it. "DEI is core to who we are," he said. Butler's work leading the company goes beyond delivering shareholder value as he works to serve as an example to young people, he said, specifically, as an African American CEO while DEI is "under attack."

"As one of eight African American CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, I'm requested to show up and be present a lot more than some of my peers," he said. "I have to be very intentional about community impact and how I show up, and how our company shows up, because I recognize that eyes are on us."

Nooyi, the first female CEO of PepsiCo, discussed how CEOs of multinational companies must operate carefully in countries with different values and political scenes—something she said has become more precarious since she stepped down as PepsiCo CEO in 2018.

"To run a multinational [company], you're actually exporting soft power from the United States. And so you are a beneficiary or victim of the foreign policy of the country of domicile," Nooyi said, emphasizing how the "American brand" has changed in recent times. "So, you've got to navigate the world very, very carefully.

The TIME100 Summit convenes leaders from the global TIME100 community to spotlight solutions and encourage action toward a better world. This year's summit features a variety of speakers across a diverse range of sectors, including business, health and science, AI, culture, and more.

Speakers for the 2025 TIME100 Summit include human rights advocate Yulia Navalnaya; Meghan, Duchess of Sussex; comedian Nikki Glaser; climate justice activist Catherine Colman Flowers; Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos, and many more, plus a performance by Nicole Scherzinger.

TIME/ Rebecca Schneid/ April 23rd 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°71**

Heartbreaking: Elon Musk Just Made a Great Point About Free Speech

"Free speech" was the battering ram that Elon Musk used to justify his pursuit of Twitter in 2022. He talked about the platform as the new digital town square. "I hope that even my worst critics remain on Twitter, because that is what free speech means," he wrote after agreeing to a $44 billion takeover. Musk unbanned a bunch of right-wing (and even some left-of-center) accounts, pitching that as an anti-censorship move. But he also banned and suspended accounts, like the one that did nothing more than share public information about his own private jet usage.

So it's notable that lawmakers in Minnesota—Democratic ones, at that—have given Musk an opening to sell himself as a free speech guy in a manner that is not just a fugazi. One can see the idea behind Minnesota statute 609.771 ("USE OF DEEP FAKE TECHNOLOGY TO INFLUENCE AN ELECTION"). A.I. deepfakes could bork our information ecosystem even worse than it is already borked, making it so that people can sparsely tell what is real online and what is not. The most glaring issue with the Minnesota law is that if you CTRL-F your way through it (and again, it's not long), you will not find the words parody or satire or any collection of words pointing in that direction.

But in the world we have now, criminalizing political deepfakes without a satire exemption is like fighting gravity. No, it's not essential to democracy that you be able to look at a sloppy deepfake of FBI agents hauling Donald Trump into custody. No, the American experiment does not rest on your ability to see a made-up image of Kamala Harris and Barack Obama carrying on an affair. But criminalizing parody opens up enough dangerous doors that even the most self-interested people who oppose it are onto something, and it sure does seem like this law could criminalize parody.

Enter Musk, who is not the first person to sue over Minnesota's law but knows a layup when he sees one. Musk brings the suit through X. He has a business case for being involved, arguing that the law turns the government into a social media moderator and imposes unfair liability on sites like Musk's. Musk's lawyers use some overcooked language that may remind you who they are working for. They claim that the law will create "blanket censorship," a line that may make your eyes roll out of the back of your head when you remember that Musk now co-runs the executive branch with someone who sues media companies over coverage he disfavors and muses about making it easier for public figures to prove libel.

The Venn diagram of what advantages Musk and what advantages the free flow of ideas in a democracy has historically just been two circles that have nothing to do with each other. But here, the diagram has the tiniest overlapping section in the middle. You just have to squint at it for a minute.

Slate/ Alex Kirshner/ April 25th 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°72**

Alcohol Warning Labels May Not Be Enough to Change Americans' Behaviors

In Jan., the now-former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy called for new cancer warning labels on alcohol-containing beverages. The history of tobacco policy suggests the need for caution. Indeed, when Congress decided to first label cigarette packages in 1965, it was seen as a triumph for public health. But the law, which required the warning, "Caution: Cigarette Smoking May Be Hazardous to Your Health," was so vague and watered down that it did not significantly reduce smoking rates.

Vocal opponents of the tobacco industry, such as Sens. Maurine Neuberger (D-Oreg.) and Warren Magnuson (D-Wash.), took up the mantle in Congress. "What tobacco wanted, tobacco got," wrote Michael Pertschuk, a Senate staffer who shepherded this bill through Congress, in his 1986 book Giant Killers. "That first labeling bill ended up a sorry piece of tobacco knavery." Indeed, the industry would later claim that, with these labels, the public had been forewarned about the risks of smoking—and thus assumed these risks themselves.

So, as tobacco companies filled the airways with advertisements, anti-smoking advocates received millions of dollars of free time to respond. They proved incredibly effective at getting people to quit cigarettes, and the tobacco companies were powerless to stop it. They couldn't collectively stop advertising, lest they trigger anti-trust lawsuits, or withdraw individually, lest they forego market share without really changing the information landscape.

Getting Congress to ban broadcast cigarette advertising was thus the most promising path forward, so the tobacco industry "acceded" to this law and allowed Congress another moral victory. Smoking rates decreased by 7.2% in the three years before the ban, but according to an empirical analysis from University of Michigan economist Kenneth Warner, they increased by 4.5% over the three years that followed.

Over time, cigarette package warning labels were strengthened, both in terms of wording and the diversity of messages. In 1984, for example, Congress passed a set of four new labels, given growing awareness that the old ones were not impacting public knowledge or attitudes. The Institute of Medicine called them "woefully deficient," and more recently, the Food and Drug Administration described how these labels have become "virtually invisible."

Ultimately, the lesson from tobacco policy isn't that public health legislation is always doomed to backfire, but that reform requires caution and vigilance as to not inadvertently serve the industry. The lesson is about standing firm so that special interests cannot co-opt public health language and push for "compromises" tilted toward their own benefit. When done correctly, warning labels are important—not necessarily as a transformative public health intervention but as public recognition of a product's harms and catalyst for further action.

Changing behaviors demands much more. Higher taxes, legal action, and comprehensive anti-smoking campaigns did that. So, if the U.S. is serious about reducing alcohol-related harms, Murthy's cancer warning labels are only a first step. These warnings, alongside a larger suite of regulations, such as higher alcohol taxes, will likely be the most evidence-based, cost-effective way to save lives.

TIME/ Simar Bajaj/ March 17th 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°73**

Cold War History Offers the Solution to the Looming Global Race for Critical Minerals

There's a global race on for critical minerals. Demand for copper, cobalt, and lithium is expected to soar in the years to come. The simmering geopolitical rivalry between the U.S. and China has made supply chains more vulnerable to disruption—heightening the importance of this mineral race even further. The U.S. has responded to concerns that China might restrict the export of minerals by trying to diversify its supply chain.

Seventy years ago, during the Korean War, the U.S. helped to open this mine, in an attempt to avoid imminent shortages of the metal. In the early 20th century, the U.S. underwent a historic shift from relative self-sufficiency when it came to critical minerals like copper and manganese to depending on imports, as economic and military expansion necessitated a greater volume and variety of minerals. But as the Cold War escalated, American officials became concerned that it could impede the imports of cobalt, copper, manganese, tungsten, and uranium. These minerals were critical for the burgeoning electronics industry — and for the weapons demanded by the growing arms race with the Soviet Union.

This prompted President Harry Truman to dispatch American mining engineers and geologists to South Korea to build an industrial complex around one of the biggest tungsten deposits in the world, Sangdong Mine. Success at the mine turned the initiative into a blueprint for policy throughout the 1950s.

With the U.S. desperate for minerals, resource-rich nations had leverage over the administration. In 1954, for instance, Bolivia sent a consignment of poor-quality tungsten to the U.S. that didn't meet the agreed-upon minimum quality standards. Yet, American government officials feared that if they rejected the tungsten, it might jeopardize future shipments.

Efforts to diversify mineral supplies went beyond simply buying what was produced. The U.S. loaned money to expand transport infrastructure in Brazil and Zambia. They also loaned money to companies in Congo to expand hydroelectric dams to power smelters and refineries and to build new mines and refineries in Zambia. The U.S. received repayment in metal: tons of cobalt and copper, equivalent to the value of the loans, were shipped to the U.S. These efforts proved highly successful.

It provides a blueprint that can work again in 2024. Case in point: on Dec. 2, President Joe Biden took his last overseas trip as president — to Angola. In the 1950s, the U.S. invested in transportation infrastructure in the region, and Biden's administration is following suit. The U.S. has committed $3 billion to expand a railway that will link mines in Congo and Zambia with an Atlantic port. This expansion is designed to boost export volumes of copper and cobalt, metals needed for green energy technologies.

The history makes clear that looming mineral shortages ought not be a cause for concern. They are a solvable problem, though one that will come at great expense. Even if China restricts access to certain minerals, the U.S. can build alternative supply chains that will ensure the feared shortages never happen.

TIME/ Duncan Money/ January 8th 2025

Epreuves Orales de Langues Vivantes – Concours 2025
Anglais
NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°74**

Food for Peace Showed How Foreign Aid Can Benefit Both the U.S. and the World

With devastating indifference, President Donald Trump and his special assistant Elon Musk have crippled Food for Peace, a program few Americans have heard of, but one that did tremendous good for over six decades. President John F. Kennedy effectively launched the program in 1961 with the help of a special assistant of his own, George McGovern. Within a year, it was feeding tens of millions of children around the world.

Though some Republicans have critiqued foreign aid as wasteful, the Food for Peace initiative vividly illustrated how foreign aid can do incalculable humanitarian good, while helping the American economy and advancing U.S. foreign policy goals.

Like many Republicans in the 1950s, Kennedy initially saw Food for Peace through a political lens, as a partial solution to the "farm problem" which he could not ignore it during the close 1960 campaign. Kennedy won a narrow victory, but McGovern lost his race for the Senate.

McGovern set out to turn the program into a bona fide progressive instrument of foreign policy by burying the old "surplus disposal" concept and dramatically increasing the volume of food distributed through a variety of initiatives. For example, he marshaled allotments of millions of tons of surplus American food and fiber to fuel labor-intensive economic development projects in a "food for wages" program. For McGovern, this was the way to fight the Cold War—by improving the nutritional health of many millions of people while launching essential public works projects.

Dearest to his heart, however, was the overseas school lunch program, which he worked tirelessly to expand in 17 countries, including Cold War hotspots like South Korea and South Vietnam. Feeding hungry school children did enormous good; it resulted in striking improvements in school attendance (often by 40 and 50%) and in the health of tens of millions of malnourished children. In 1962, McGovern arrived in Bombay to deliver the 14 millionth ton of wheat to India.

McGovern had masterminded the greatest humanitarian achievement of the Kennedy-Johnson era; but it was one that also came with substantial economic and political benefits for the U.S. Further, the program served a Cold War purpose: the abundance produced by American farmers alleviated the worst kinds of human suffering that had spawned tyranny abroad. It was "our most constructive instrument of foreign policy," McGovern would tell audiences. "American food has done more to prevent communism than all the military hardware we've shipped around the world."

In the decades since, Congress has continued to reauthorize the program with an emphasis on international food security in the underdeveloped world. It remained, in Kennedy's words, "a vital force" and the enlightened instrument of practical idealism that McGovern had crafted. As of February 2025, Food for Peace had fed upwards of some four billion people around the world.

In light of the Trump administration's approach to foreign aid, Americans today would do well to recall McGovern's legacy. For it demonstrates how foreign aid can have political and economic benefits while also accomplishing undeniable good.

TIME/ Thomas J. Knock/ April 23rd 2025

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NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°75**

Why Meta's Fact-Checking Change Could Lead to More Misinformation on Facebook and Instagram

Less than two weeks before Donald Trump is reinstated as President, Meta is abandoning its fact-checking program in favor of a crowdsourced model that emphasizes "free expression."

Meta, which operates Facebook, Instagram and Threads, had long funded fact-checking efforts to review content. Zuckerberg, in a video statement, acknowledged that the policy change might mean that "we're going to catch less bad stuff." When asked if the change was in response to his previous threats, Trump said, "Probably."

While conservatives praised the decision, watchdogs and experts warned of its ripple effects on misinformation. Meta's history with combating misinformation underscores the challenges ahead. The company relied on outside organizations to review posts and either remove them or add annotations. But its efforts often fell short. A 2021 study found Facebook could have prevented billions of views on misinformation about the 2020 election, but failed to tweak its algorithms.

As critics clamored for more moderation, a growing contingent stumped for less. Some Republicans felt Meta's fact-checking partners were biased. They were particularly incensed when Facebook, under pressure from the Biden Administration, cracked down on disputed COVID-19 information, including claims that the virus had man-made origins. As criticism grew, Zuckerberg decided to reduce his risk by deprioritizing news on Meta platforms.

Now, Meta will attempt to replicate a crowdsourced system on its platforms, starting in the U.S. Kaplan, previously George W. Bush's deputy chief of staff, announced the decision on Fox & Friends, calling it a move to "reset the balance in favor of free expression." Zuckerberg contended that "fact checkers have destroyed more trust than they've created." He added that restrictions on controversial topics like immigration and gender would be removed.

Meta's announcement was received positively by Trump. Meta's decision may also alter the calculus for congressional Republicans pushing to pass legislation on social media or rewrite Section 230.

Many journalists and misinformation researchers responded with dismay. "Facebook and Instagram users are about to see a lot more dangerous misinformation," Public Citizen wrote. Tech journalist Kara Swisher wrote that Zuckerberg's scapegoating of fact-checkers was misplaced: "Toxic floods of lies on social media have destroyed trust, not fact checkers."

Wirtschafter says Meta's pivot isn't necessarily dangerous on its own. In a 2023 paper, she and Sharanya Majumder found that while X's Community Notes faced challenges, the program's quality improved as the contributor base expanded. "It's a nuanced program with a lot of refinement over years," she says.

Meta, in contrast, seems to be rolling out its version with less preparation. Facebook, Instagram, and Threads are all distinct platforms, each with different content and users. "Content moderation helps clear some of the muck," Wirtschafter says. "Thinking the wisdom-of-the-crowd approach will work immediately is naive."

Luca Luceri, of USC, says Meta's broader retreat from moderation is just as concerning as removing fact-checking. "The risk is that any form of manipulation can be exacerbated or amplified, like influence campaigns or bots writing Community Notes," he says.

TIME/ Andrew R. Chow/ January 7th 2025

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NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°76**

The History of Tariffs and Protesting French Farmers

While the United States continues to fuel geopolitical tensions with the implementation of tariffs, which recently led to the protest of American farmers, across the Atlantic, European farmers have protested the elimination of tariffs.

On December 6, 2024, the European Union and Mercosur countries of South America reached a preliminary consensus on a trade cooperation agreement. This deal would eliminate tariffs on over 90% of trade between the E.U. and the Mercosur countries of Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

The deal bears political ramifications for farmers across Europe who find themselves increasingly undermined and outsourced. For well over a year, strike teams of discontented farmers in France, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Italy, Spain, and Britain have been staging “tractor-cades” on major roadways and dumping compost in city streets.

For the small, biodynamic farmer in France, the challenge is even closer to home. Those farmers are not only fighting against E.U. policies such as the E.U.-Mercosur deal but also against the agenda of their most powerful farmers’ union, the FNSEA.

This union originally formed in 1946 to help farmers organize for state price supports and subsidies. But industrializing wasn’t cheap, and farmers took on more debt to purchase modern equipment. Still, prices of agricultural goods had to remain low to prevent wage inflation in other sectors.

And so, farmers protested. On July 12 of that year, 30,000 winegrowers gathered in the southern town of Béziers, parking tractors in the middle of major roadways. In April 1954, 50,000 winegrowers took to the town’s streets.

These blockades represented the state’s success in modernizing agriculture, as well as its failure to fulfill its promises. Although farmers had been promised higher profits and an easier life, the opposite became true. Debt wasn’t consistently rewarded with increased revenues but often brought stress and higher rates of illness and injury.

Since FNSEA leaders tended to already have large-scale operations, they were the ideal vanguard for pushing France into industrial productivism. The FNSEA handpicked landholders to sit as agricultural commissioners. These commissioners helped consolidate fragmented land parcels into larger farms. Critics say the process created an environmental catastrophe.

Referring to themselves as the voice of European agriculture, the FNSEA always prioritized yields—often at the expense of sustainability and community.

FNSEA leaders recently fought successfully for the use of pesticides banned within the EU. They also worked to prevent the sharing of information that these pesticides are toxic to farmworkers.

While modern farmer protests in France may seem to tell the tale of small-time farmers fighting globalization, history shows a more complicated picture. The French peasantry has long been at risk of being disenfranchised by the very structures claiming to support them—often at the cost of both health and land.

TIME/ Michael Overstreet/ April 25th 2025

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Is wealth inequality leading to a class war?

"Wealth" is someone's net worth — that is, their assets (like savings, stock portfolios, and the value of their property) minus their debts (like student loans). "Wealth inequality" is measured by looking at how total wealth is spread out across the population. The more wealth there is at the top, the more inequality there is because there's less to go around for everyone else.

Since 1979, the top 1 percent of earners saw their wages grow by 182 percent; the bottom 90 percent saw their wages grow by 44 percent. As a result, the concentration of money at the top of the income ladder is at the highest it's been in nearly 100 years.

But that's income inequality, which just looks at the distribution of people's wages. What's more extreme is the gap in wealth between rich and poor households. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, the bottom half of households have an average net worth of $51,000. Collectively, they own just 2.5 percent of household wealth in the country. By contrast, the top 10 percent of households had an average net worth of nearly $7 million and own more than two-thirds of household wealth — a share that has only been growing over the last three decades.

Class warfare, or class conflict, happens when the tension between social classes comes to a boil. Sometimes this gets violent, as was the case in the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, when workers in multiple states went on strike after railroad workers saw their wages get repeatedly cut.

In January, for example, Donald Trump, a billionaire, was sworn in as president while being surrounded by other billionaires. It's not just a matter of fairness. It's also dangerous. The fact that so few people own so much wealth is a threat to democracy.

In his farewell address, former President Joe Biden warned the nation that the United States was becoming an oligarchy — a system of government in which power is only shared by a small group of elites. Since Trump returned to the White House, he's handed over a lot of power to Elon Musk, who, with a net worth of hundreds of billions of dollars, stands to be the world's richest man.

Why is it, anyway, that Musk — now an unelected bureaucrat — has so much influence over policymaking? The answer is that Musk likely gained access to so much power because he spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the election last year in an attempt to help Republicans win, and his investment seems to have paid off.

It's not necessarily the case, though, that America is on the brink of a class war, despite the fact that there's so much inequality that billionaires are taking joyrides to space while millions of Americans are struggling to make ends meet. In the 60 years that followed, the gap between rich and poor shrank significantly. Chances are, at some point, that the rich will push their luck and the rest will say enough.

Vox/ Abdullah Fayyad/ 9th March 2025

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NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°78**

Americans' increasing antisocial habits, explained in one chart

Amid the country's reckoning with loneliness and isolation has come a startling truth: Americans are spending far more time alone — and, according to a new finding from the 2025 World Happiness Report, we're also dining alone, too.

The finding, released this week, relies on data from the American Time Use Survey and shows that in 2023 about one in four Americans ate all of their meals alone the previous day, an increase of 53 percent since 2003. The analysis also found that eating meals solo, including at home or out at a restaurant, has become more common in all age groups, but most pronounced among those under 35.

"The extent to which one shares meals," says Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, a professor of economics and behavioral science at the University of Oxford and co-editor of the World Happiness Report, "is an extraordinary proxy for measuring people's social connections and their social capital. It underpins people's social support. It drives prosocial behaviors, and all of that, in turn, leads it to be a very strong indicator — predictor — for people's life satisfaction."

Economic factors, like high income and employment status, are often used as indicators of happiness. But researchers found the ritual of sharing meals to be an even more effective indicator of general well-being than job status and salary. "That surprised us as a research team," De Neve says.

The most obvious driver of solo dining is the rise of solo living. The share of single-person households in the US has steadily increased since the 1940s, when just under 8 percent of homes were occupied by one individual. By 2020, that number had grown to 27 percent. But even those who cohabitate choose to eat their meals alone. In 2023, about 18 percent of Americans who lived with others ate all of their meals alone the day prior, the report found, compared to 12 percent in 2003 — a 50 percent increase.

Because more young people under 35 are dining alone — a 180 percent increase over the last two decades — De Neve suspects the trend is reflective of changing norms: College students choosing to scroll social media on their phones while in the dining hall or young adults opting out of lunch with their colleagues. As social media and smartphones became more entrenched in the 2010s, the less often people shared meals with others.

The finding also points to increasingly individualistic habits. Solitary pursuits branded as "self-care" may have led to increased isolation. The top reason cited by those who considered eating alone in restaurants in 2024 was to get more "me time," according to consumer research polling from OpenTable and Kayak.

The rise of solo dining has implications beyond the table. Research shows that those who eat with others are happier, more satisfied with life, more trusting, have more friends, and are more engaged in their communities. Increased social isolation meanwhile can lead to feelings of loneliness, which, in turn, can lead to cardiovascular health risks and increased feelings of depression, risk, and anxiety.

VOX / Allie Volpe/ March 20th 2025

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The End of Foreign-Language Education

A few days ago, I watched a video of myself talking in perfect Chinese. I've been studying the language on and off for only a few years, and I'm far from fluent. But there I was, pronouncing each character flawlessly in the correct tone, just as a native speaker would. Gone were my grammar mistakes and awkward pauses, replaced by a smooth and slightly alien-sounding voice. "My favorite food is sushi," I said—wo zui xihuan de shiwu shi shousi—with no hint of excitement or joy.

I'd created the video using software from a Los Angeles–based artificial-intelligence start-up called HeyGen. It allows users to generate deepfake videos of real people "saying" almost anything based on a single picture of their face and a script, which is paired with a synthetic voice and can be translated into more than 40 languages. By merely uploading a selfie taken on my iPhone, I was able to glimpse a level of Mandarin fluency that may elude me for the rest of my life.

HeyGen's visuals are flawed—the way it animates selfies almost reminded me of the animatronics in Disney's It's a Small World ride—but its language technology is good enough to make me question whether learning Mandarin is a wasted effort. Neural networks, the machine-learning systems that power generative-AI programs such as ChatGPT, have rapidly improved the quality of automatic translation over the past several years, making even older tools like Google Translate far more accurate.

At the same time, the number of students studying foreign languages in the U.S. and other countries is shrinking. Total enrollment in language courses other than English at American colleges decreased 29.3 percent from 2009 to 2021, according to the latest data from the Modern Language Association, better known as the MLA. In Australia, only 8.6 percent of high-school seniors were studying a foreign language in 2021—a historic low. In South Korea and New Zealand, universities are closing their French, German, and Italian departments. One recent study from the education company EF Education First found that English proficiency is decreasing among young people in some places.

Many factors could help explain the downward trend, including pandemic-related school disruptions, growing isolationism, and funding cuts to humanities programs. But whether the cause of the shift is political, cultural, or some mix of things, it's clear that people are turning away from language learning just as automatic translation becomes ubiquitous across the internet.

Something enormous will be lost in exchange for that convenience. Studies have suggested that language shapes the way people interpret reality. Learning a different way to speak, read, and write helps people discover new ways to see the world—experts I spoke with likened it to discovering a new way to think. No machine can replace such a profoundly human experience. Yet tech companies are weaving automatic translation into more and more products. As the technology becomes normalized, we may find that we've allowed deep human connections to be replaced by communication that's technically proficient but ultimately hollow.

The Atlantic/ Louise Matsakis/ March 26th 2025

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NE PAS ECRIRE SUR LE TEXTE **TEXTE N°80**

How to live with life's inevitable risks

With all these anxieties coursing through modern life, you might suspect the world is a fundamentally menacing place. In 2023, 40 percent of Americans said they felt unsafe walking home alone at night, the highest rate since 1993, according to a Gallup poll.

You would, however, be wrong to assume that danger is everywhere. Violent crime has been down, air travel is as safe as it's ever been, mortality from infectious disease largely fell throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The line between sufficient self-preservation and excessive vigilance is thin and our own miscalculations on what actually constitutes a risk may only muddy the waters.

"An argument began about how you should pay attention to this kind of risk, that the government should step in and try to manage the risk," says Arwen Mohun, a history professor at the University of Delaware and author of Risk: Negotiating Safety in American Society. "The first widely collected data is about public health and about workplace accidents, and those were both big political issues."

Trust plays a huge role in what data, experts, and firsthand accounts we take into consideration, says Jens Zinn, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Melbourne. However, when people believe a source of information is trying to deceive them, they're less likely to trust the information, even if they know it to be true.

The most accurate assessment of risk, Dirk Wulff says, is to marry experience with data and expert-driven advice. But human miscalculations continually threaten that delicate balance. People tend to misjudge the risk for rare and extreme events — they choose to gamble despite the low likelihood of winning, or opt out of swimming in the ocean due to the potential of a shark attack.

"People fear cancer more and heart disease less because they think they have control over heart disease," says David Ropeik, author of How Risky Is It, Really?: Why Our Fears Don't Always Match the Facts, "because the risk factors are [things] they think they can control, and the cancer fear is higher because the risk factors of things they feel they can't. It's wrong."

This tendency to assume highly publicized incidents, from plane crashes to true crime, pose more of a risk to you, personally isn't limited to young people. The popularity of true crime could contribute to people's fear of violence despite evidence of decreasing crime rates. This mismatch between what the evidence says is risky and the appropriate level of fear is what Ropeik calls the risk perception gap. "When our fears don't match the evidence," he says, "the gap between our fears and the facts becomes a risk all by itself."

Just because danger could lurk at every turn doesn't mean life is inherently unsafe. Risk is inescapable, as are death and taxes. But avoiding it means cutting ourselves off from everything pleasurable, too. And that isn't living — it's limbo.

Vox/ Allie Volpe/ April 3rd 2025