

Press review
January 13th to 19th 2025

[California Fires](#) [Live updates](#) [Map](#) [Before and after images](#) [How did the fires start?](#) [Santa Ana winds](#) [How to help](#) [Photos](#)

Death toll rises to 24 as region braces for dangerous winds

Updated January 14, 2025 at 1:31 a.m. EST | Published January 13, 2025 at 12:49 a.m. EST



Crews sifted through burned-out homes in Altadena, California on Jan. 12, searching for human remains. (Video: Alice Li, Joshua Carroll/The Washington Post)

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Strong winds threaten 'explosive fire growth'

Updated January 15, 2025 at 2:00 a.m. EST | Published January 14, 2025 at 1:25 a.m. EST



Auto Fire breaks out in Ventura County

0:57

A new brush fire broke out at a river bottom in Ventura County, Calif., on Jan. 13 and quickly grew 56 acres overnight. (Video: The Washington Post)

Active fire perimeter

Evacuation order

Evacuation warning



4 takeaways from Pete Hegseth's confirmation hearing

Awkward exchanges about the defense secretary hopeful's past were plentiful as Democrats went after the first embattled Trump pick to face a confirmation hearing.



1. Sen. Kaine laid a few gloves on Hegseth

The most memorable part of the hearing on Tuesday is likely to be a tense exchange between Hegseth and Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Virginia).

Kaine was the first senator to ask tough questions about parts of Hegseth's past that have dogged him, including affairs and allegations of sexual assault, alcohol abuse and financial mismanagement. Kaine wound up laying some gloves on Hegseth, who strained to talk around the subjects the senator was broaching.

2. Hegseth tried to massage his past opposition to women in combat

A major subplot of Hegseth's confirmation process is his shifting position on women in combat roles in the U.S. military.

He had said for years that women shouldn't serve in combat. But he recently walked that back after meeting with Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), a combat veteran who initially balked at his selection. Ernst and multiple Democrats on the committee broached the subject at the hearing.

3. Democrats suggested Hegseth is being protected from scrutiny

Democrats made a point throughout the hearing to suggest that Hegseth and Republicans were trying to avoid tough questions.

They repeatedly noted that Hegseth hadn't met with Democrats on the Armed Services Committee, despite their requests.

They also pushed repeatedly for a second round of questions, which Chairman Roger Wicker (R-Mississippi) denied.

4. Hegseth avoided terrible moments, but his confirmation hangs in the balance

Hamas and Israel have agreed Gaza ceasefire deal, Qatari PM says

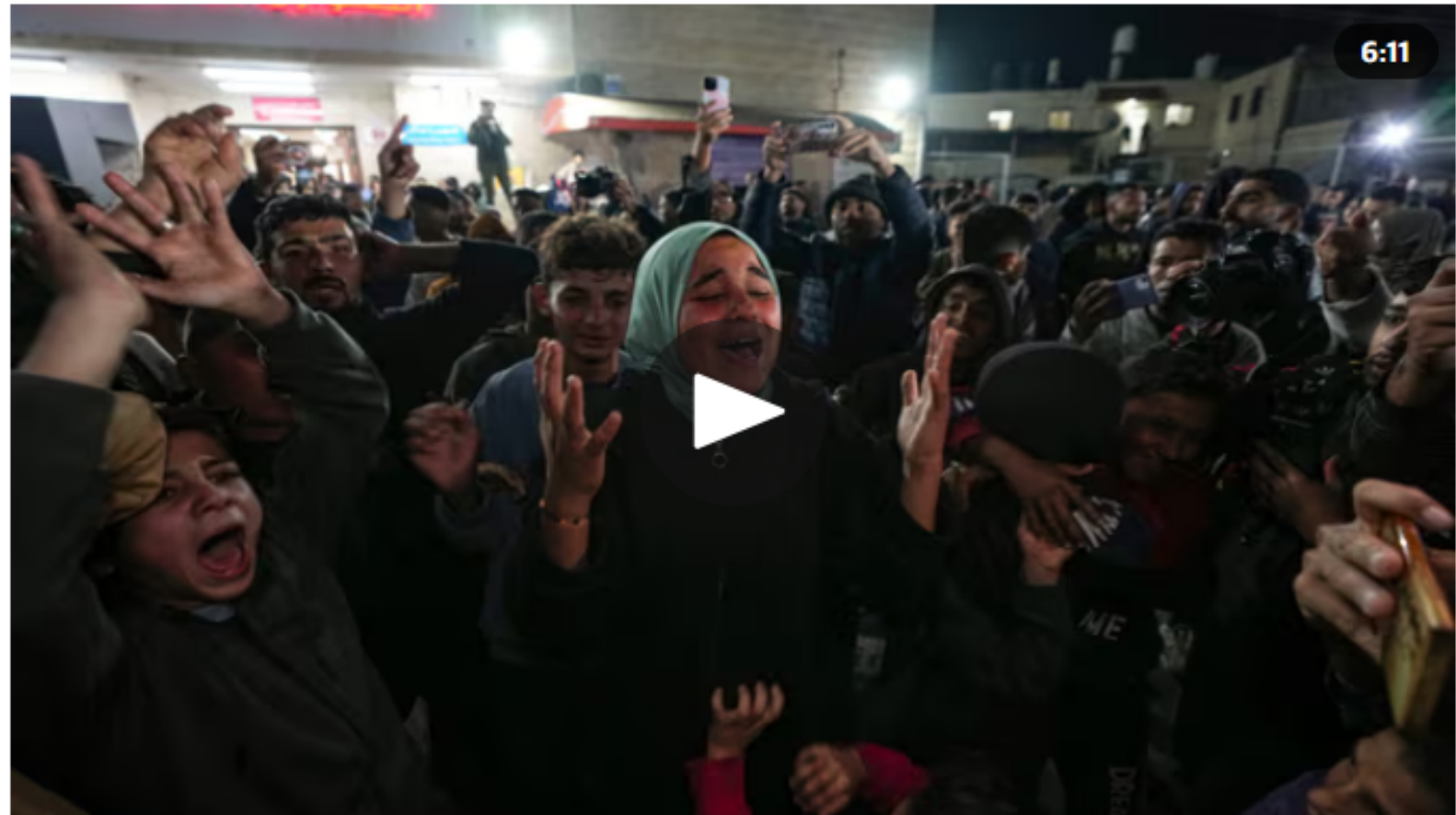
Deal to pause 15-month war expected to be officially accepted by Israel after cabinet meeting

● [Israel-Gaza war - live updates](#)

Bethan McKernan and **Lorenzo Tondo** in Jerusalem and **Julian Borger**

Thu 16 Jan 2025 05.41 CET

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Biden warns of the rise of a new American 'oligarchy'

From the White House that he will soon cede to Trump, Biden likens the current crop of tech moguls to the 'robber barons' of the 19th century.

January 15, 2025

🔊 9 min 🔄 📌 🗨️ 2929



Biden warns 'oligarchy is taking shape in America'

1:32

In his farewell address from the Oval Office on Jan. 15, President Joe Biden warned that a "dangerous" concentration of wealth and power was forming in the U.S. (Video: The Washington Post)

TikTok says it will 'go dark' in US on Sunday unless Biden acts

App used by 170m people in US will become unavailable unless outgoing president directs DoJ not to enforce law, company says

Dara Kerr

Sat 18 Jan 2025 03.30 CET

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TikTok says it “will be forced to go dark on January 19” in the United States unless the Biden administration assures service providers that it will not enforce a law banning the Chinese-owned social media app that was upheld by the [US supreme court](#) on Friday.

The nine justices voted unanimously in a decision that sides with the majority of the US Congress and the US Department of Justice that the hugely popular social media app is a threat to US national security.

“We conclude that the challenged provisions do not violate petitioners’ first amendment rights,” the justices wrote. “The judgment of the United States court of appeals for the District of Columbia circuit is affirmed.” In December, a Washington DC appeals court upheld the ban.

TikTok says it is restoring service in US after Trump vowed to delay ban

President-elect says order to give company extra 90 days to find buyer and suggests that US take a 50% stake

Michael Sainato *in New York*

Sun 19 Jan 2025 19:20 CET

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TikTok **said** on Sunday that it was restoring services in the US after Donald Trump **pledged** earlier in the day to give the video app a reprieve on its US ban.

Trump wrote on Truth Social that after taking office on Monday he would sign an executive order allowing the Chinese-owned video app additional time to find a buyer before facing a total shutdown, and proposing that the US or an American firm take a 50% ownership stake.

“By doing this, we save **TikTok**, keep it in good hands and allow it to say (sic) up,” Trump said. “Without US approval, there is no TikTok. With our approval, it is worth hundreds of billions of dollars - maybe trillions.”

 TikTok stopped working in the US for 170 million users late on Saturday. Photograph: Kiichiro Sato/AP

The Trump Cases

Justice Dept. releases Trump special counsel report on Jan. 6 case

President-elect Donald Trump had tried to prevent the release of special counsel Jack Smith's report before taking office next week.

If Donald Trump hadn't won the presidential election in November, the Justice Department would have had ample evidence to convict him at trial of trying to obstruct the 2020 election results, special counsel Jack Smith said in a report released early Tuesday.



For 137 pages, Smith detailed the incriminating evidence he says he collected against Trump over his two-year investigation, portraying the former and now incoming president as a man who wielded his power to deceive state lawmakers, Republican Party activists and presidential electors to claim victory in an election he knew he lost.

The Justice Department posted the report on its website shortly before 1 a.m. — less than an hour after a court order barring its release expired. The report serves as the final public record of a historic Justice Department prosecution that never made it to trial, with the federal government abandoning the case in November after its criminal defendant became the president-elect.

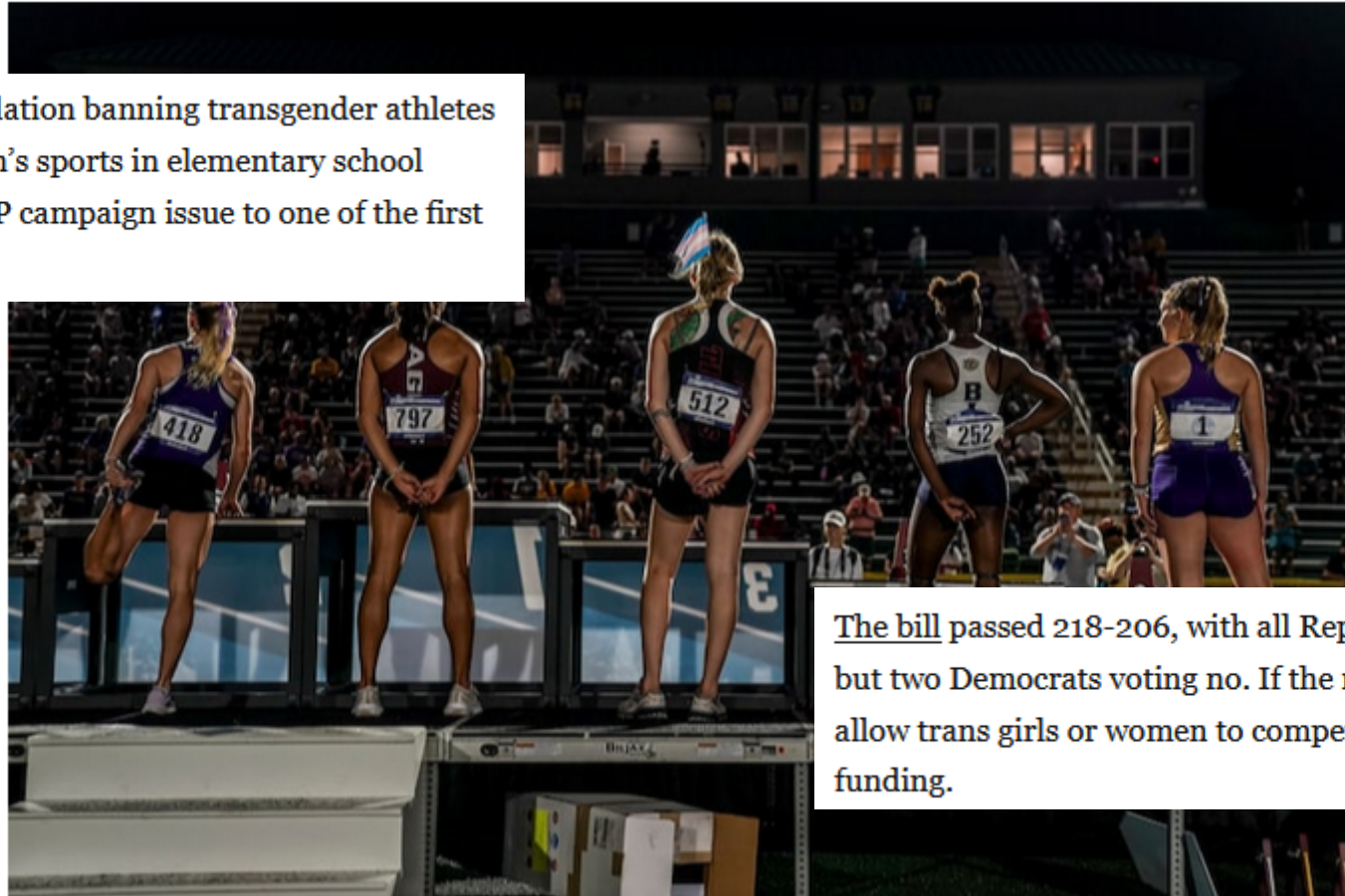


Special counsel Jack Smith announces the indictment of former president Donald Trump on Aug. 1, 2023. (Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)

House votes to ban transgender students from girls' sports

The new House made transgender students in sports one of its first priorities for 2025. The bill's path in the Senate is unclear.

The House on Tuesday passed legislation banning transgender athletes from competing in girls' and women's sports in elementary school through college, elevating a top GOP campaign issue to one of the first priorities in the new Congress.



The bill passed 218-206, with all Republicans present voting yes and all but two Democrats voting no. If the measure becomes law, schools that allow trans girls or women to compete could lose federal education funding.

A transgender sprinter wears a trans flag in her hair at the 2024 NCAA Division III outdoor track and field championships at Doug Shaw Memorial Stadium in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. (Jahi Chikwendiu/The Washington Post)

One in five Britons aged 18-45 prefer unelected leaders to democracy, poll finds


Exclusive: Voters overall are downbeat about politics and almost six in 10 think 'the UK's best years are behind us'

Rowena Mason *Whitehall editor*

Mon 13 Jan 2025 12.59 CET

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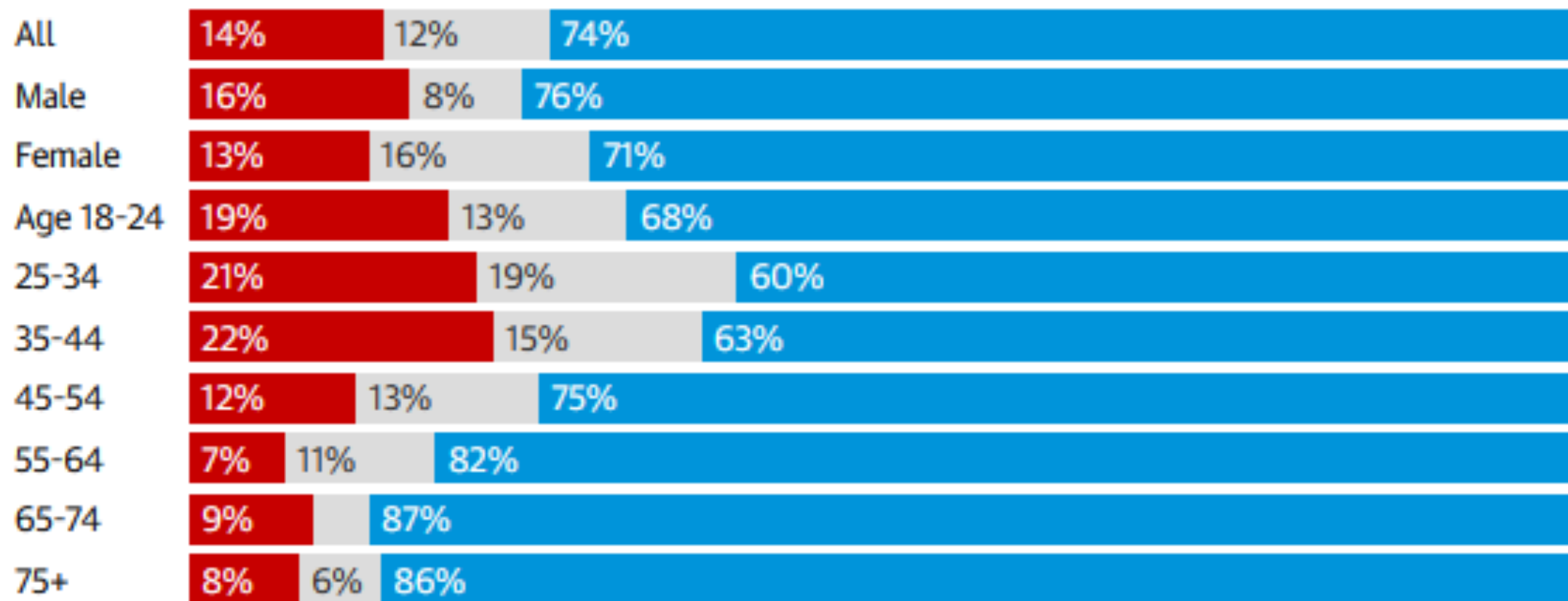


 The FGS Global Radar report found 14% of people want 'a strong leader who doesn't have to bother with elections'. Photograph: Rui Vieira/PA

Which would be the best system for running a country effectively?

% agree

■ A strong leader who doesn't have to bother with elections ■ Don't know ■ Democracy

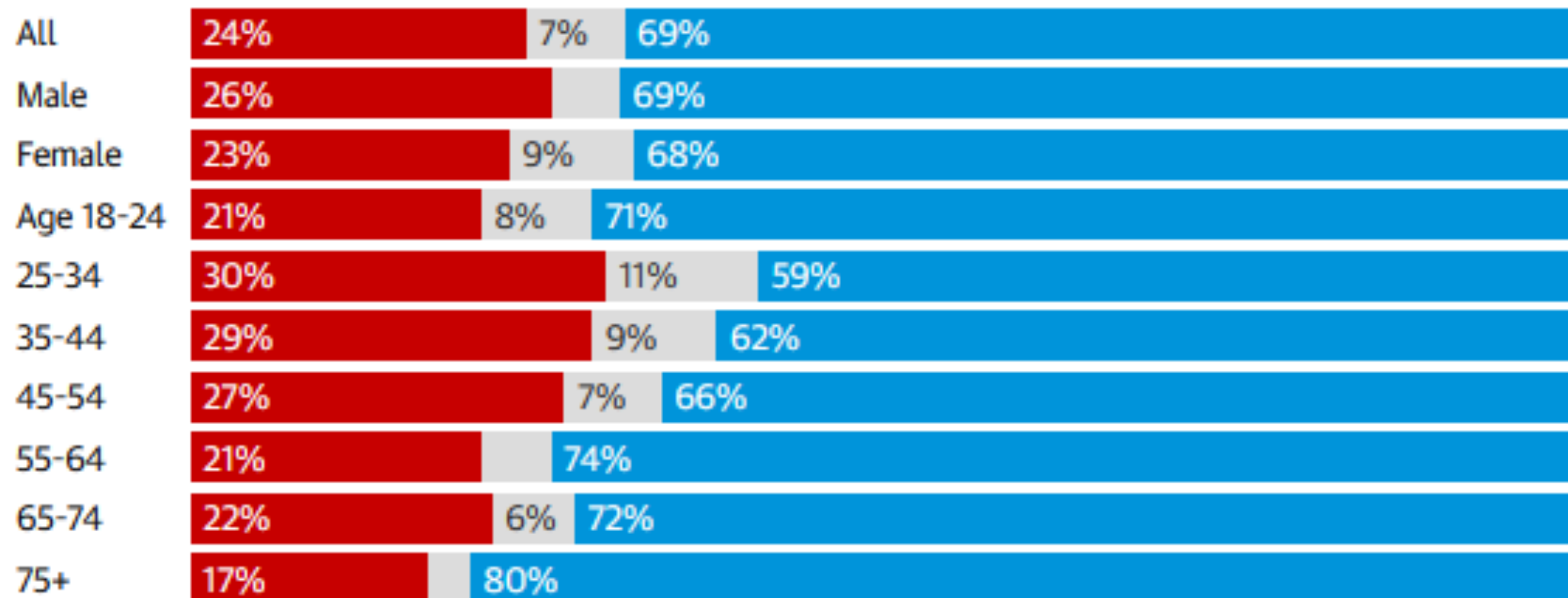


Guardian graphic. Source: FGS Radar poll of 2,084 UK adults. Note: participants were asked to choose between a pair of conflicting views and indicate which they agreed with most, even if neither represented exactly what they think. Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Does voting make a difference?

% agree

■ Voting doesn't make a difference ■ Don't know ■ Voting makes a difference



Guardian graphic. Source: FGS Radar poll of 2,084 UK adults. Note: participants were asked to choose between a pair of conflicting views and indicate which they agreed with most, even if neither represented exactly what they think. Totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Hospital patients dying undiscovered in corridors, report on NHS reveals


Royal College of Nursing says people 'routinely coming to harm' with vital equipment not available and staff too busy

Denis Campbell *Health policy editor*

Thu 16 Jan 2025 01.01 CET

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 One nurse in the south-east of England told how 'a patient died in the corridor but wasn't discovered for hours'. Photograph: Jeff Moore/PA

Just Stop Oil activists spray-paint '1.5 is dead' on Charles Darwin's grave

Two women arrested on suspicion of criminal damage after protest at Westminster Abbey in London

PA Media

Mon 13 Jan 2025 14.05 CET

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■ '1.5 is dead': Just Stop Oil activists paint over Charles Darwin grave - video

'Mainlined into UK's veins': Labour announces huge public rollout of AI

Plans to make UK world leader in AI sector include opening access to NHS and other public data

- [Why Labour is pinning its hopes on AI to drive UK growth](#)

Robert Booth *UK technology editor*

Mon 13 Jan 2025 00.37 CET

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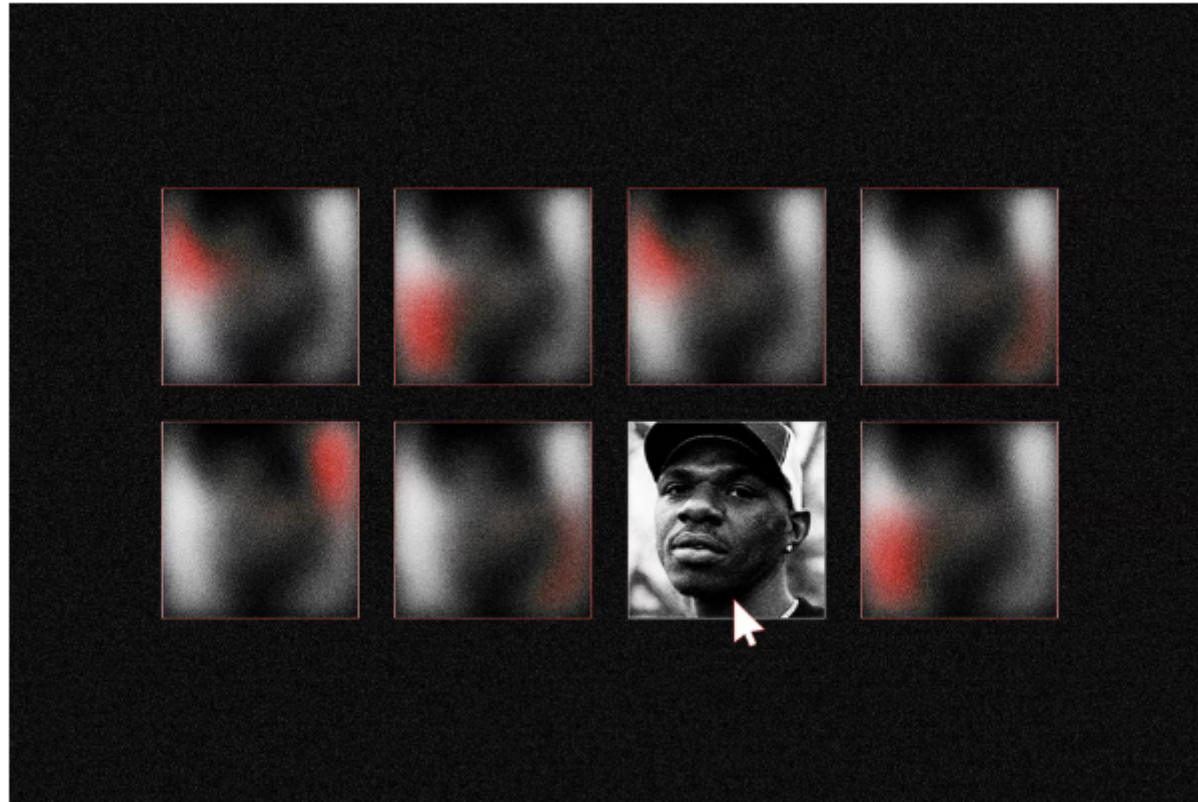


 Teachers could use AI to personalise lesson plans under Labour's proposals. Photograph: SolStock/Getty Images

WJ EXCLUSIVE

Arrested by AI: Police ignore standards after facial recognition matches

Confident in unproven facial recognition technology, sometimes investigators skip steps; at least eight Americans have been wrongfully arrested.



(Illustration by Lucy Noland/The Washington Post; Kalli Sullivan for The Washington Post)

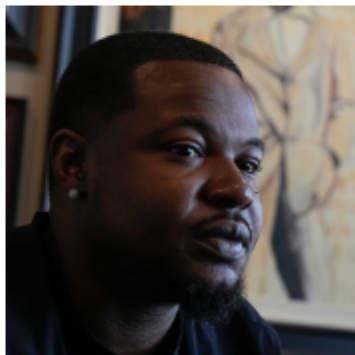
What went wrong

In eight known cases of wrongful arrests involving facial recognition, police failed to take one or more basic investigative steps.

In 6 cases:

Police failed to check alibis

Quran Reid was arrested for allegedly stealing purses from a Louisiana store even though he repeatedly told the officers who arrested him in his hometown of Atlanta that he'd never been to the state. Investigators never sought proof he was at work in Georgia on the day the crime was committed.



(John Bazemore/AP)

In 2 cases:

Police ignored evidence that contradicted their theory

Police in Woodbridge, New Jersey, were so intent on building a case against Nijeer Parks, a robbery suspect, that they cast aside DNA and fingerprint evidence pointing to another potential suspect.



In 6 cases:

Police relied on problematic witness statements

After Detroit police used facial recognition to identify Robert Williams as a suspect in a watch theft at a high-end store, his identity was confirmed by a security person who was not present for the crime.

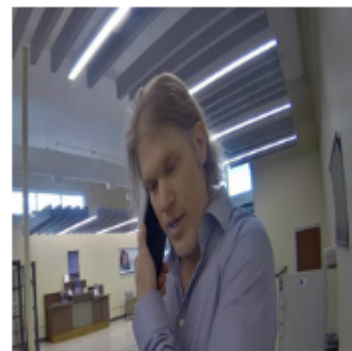


(Court Records)

In 5 cases:

Police failed to collect key pieces of evidence

Jason Vernau spent three days behind bars after he was accused of cashing a fraudulent \$36,000 check at a Miami bank. Police had relied on an image of the wrong person and failed to check Vernau's bank accounts, his defense lawyer said.



(Office of the State Attorney)

In 3 cases:

Police ignored suspects' physical characteristics

Porcha Woodruff was seven months pregnant at the time of the carjacking Detroit police accused her of committing. She was arrested even though nothing in the surveillance images or eyewitness statements indicated the involvement of a pregnant woman.



(Court Records)

Yoon Suk Yeol

South Korea's Yoon Suk Yeol arrested after hours-long standoff at residence

Impeached president questioned over martial law declaration a month after first arrest attempt ended in stalemate

- [Explainer: After the arrest of Yoon Suk Yeol, what happens next?](#)

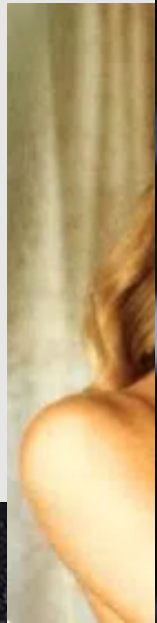
Raphael Rashid in Seoul and Justin McCurry with agencies

Wed 15 Jan 2025 11.28 CET

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South Korea's Yoon Suk Yeol arrested after hours-long standoff - video



"I AM NOT A
I AM A HUM
I...AM...A

