

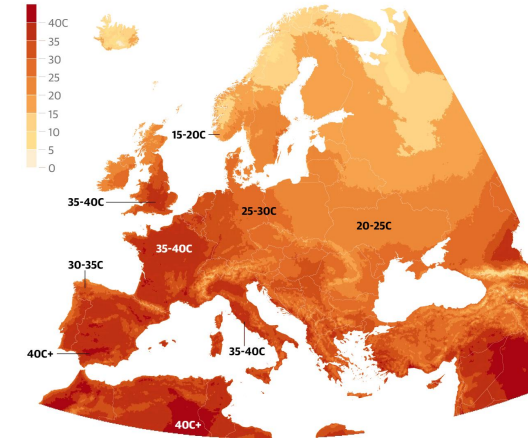


SUMMER 2026

Press Review



Much of western Europe can expect temperatures above 30C today
Forecast temperature at 15.00 GMT, Thursday 13 August 2026



IN THE UK

Andy Burnham becomes Britain's new prime minister – The Latest

(The Guardian, 20 July 2026)

Andy Burnham has become **the sixth UK prime minister in a decade** after a transfer of power from his predecessor Keir Starmer.

In his first address outside Downing Street, he said his arrival in power would be a 'circuit breaker' moment for Britain and that his government would bring the 'biggest changes in 40 years'



<https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2026/jul/20/andy-burnham-britain-new-prime-minister-the-latest>

What you should know:

Keir Starmer won a big majority in the general election of 2024... but **resigned** (as Labour leader and Prime Minister) **on June 22, 2026**.

His government had become very unpopular, and Labour MPs had lost confidence in him and believed they needed a new leader to have a better chance at the next election.

Major issues: **the economy, the NHS, immigration, ...**

In Britain, if the Prime Minister is replaced **within the same governing party** (= **Labour**, here), the party can choose a new leader who then becomes Prime Minister. That's what happened here, there was no general election (NB: In the UK, a **general election normally happens every 5 years**)

Problem: **Reform UK and Nigel Farage taking votes from Labour, especially in working-class areas.**

Hence the choice of **Andy Burham**: became an MP in 2001 and served as a minister, was also Health Secretary.

Was made famous as **Mayor of Greater Manchester** (from **2017 until 2026**), winning re-election twice. During that period, he became extremely popular in northern England and developed the nickname "**King of the North**". He has **a proven relationship with voters outside London** and « ordinary people ».

Count Biface

Count Biface is a novelty candidate persona adopted by a British writer and comedian to contest British elections. Biface is presented as an "intergalactic space warrior" who wears a dustbin-shaped helmet.

Biface stood against the prime minister, Boris Johnson, in Uxbridge and South Ruislip at the 2019 general election, and the 2023 by-election which followed Johnson's resignation as a member of Parliament.

Biface stood at the 2026 Makerfield by-election, which was won by Andy Burnham. [see picture][?]

Biface was the primary contender against Nigel Farage at the 2026 Clacton by-election amidst a boycott by the other major parties. He came second with 27% of the vote!

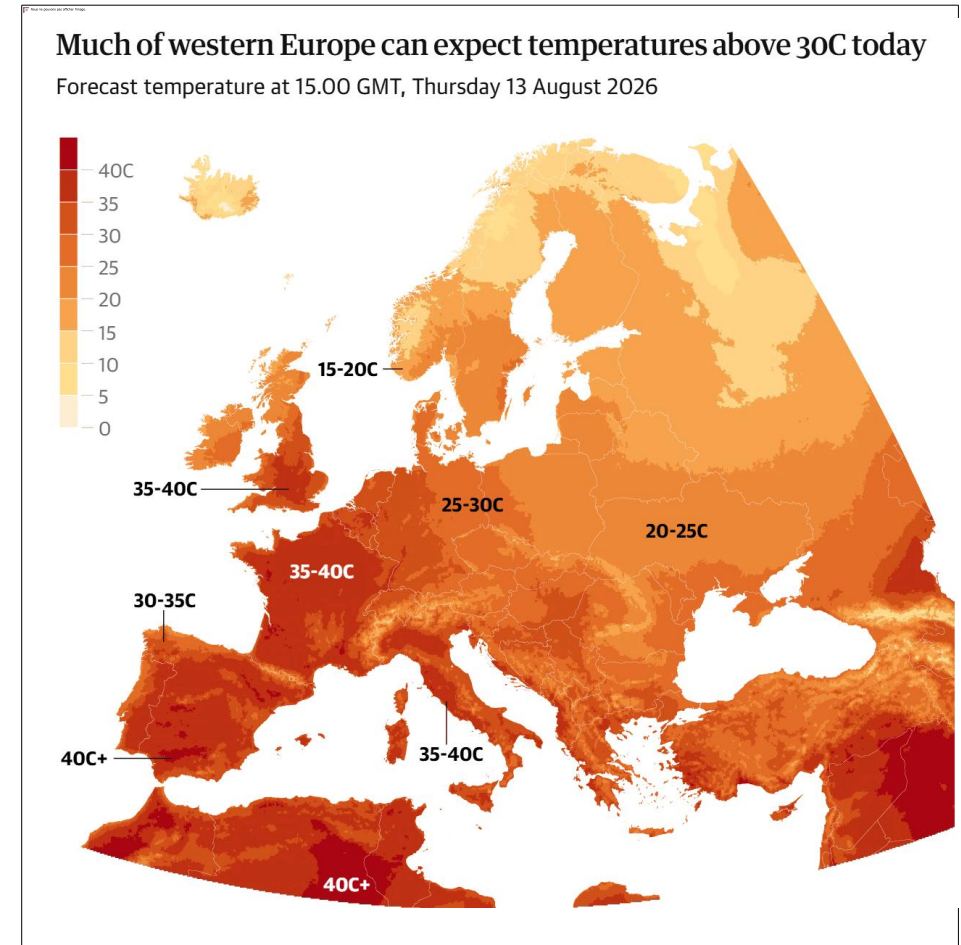


UK records hottest day of year as fifth summer heatwave reaches peak Kew Gardens in London hits 38.1C and 40C-plus recorded in parts of Europe with continent **trapped under heat dome (The Guardian, 13th August 2026)**

The UK has recorded its hottest day of the year so far with a provisional temperature of 38.1C in southern England as Europe **sweltered** under a major heat dome.

As temperatures on the continent surpassed 40C at the peak of the summer's fifth heatwave, the thermometer at Kew Gardens in west London on Thursday surpassed the previous high of 38C on 28 June, the Met Office said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/aug/13/uk-records-hottest-day-of-the-year-fifth-summer-heatwave-peak>



Britain could face food shortages as drought continues, farmers warn. Farmers battle to salvage what they can of their crops as heatwave set to continue

Gavin Lane, the president of the Country, Land and Business Association, warned that for many farmers this could be their last harvest.

He said: “Farmers are telling us this is the worst harvest in years. A sodden winter followed by drought has left wheat at half its usual height and some crops not worth harvesting.

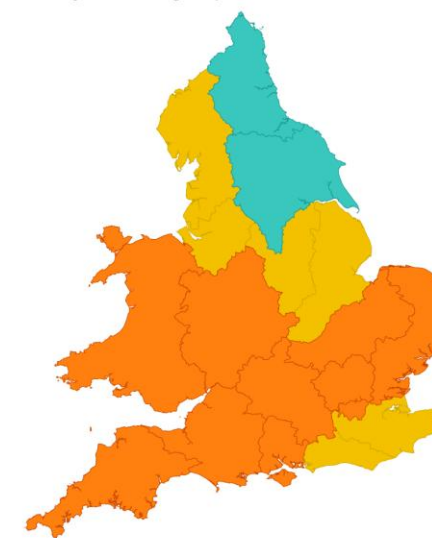
Farming is becoming unprofitable as the government removes the EU-derived subsidies that once kept the industry afloat and the climate crisis causes extreme weather that can wipe out any profits from crops. A recent report found a third of British farmers were making a loss.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/aug/02/britain-food-shortages-drought-continues-farmers>



Drought situation on 30 July

■ Drought ■ Prolonged dry weather ■ Normal



Guardian graphic. Source: Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales. Note: EA water management areas shown

Jason Arday was a British sociologist who became **the youngest Black professor in the history of the University of Cambridge**, when he was **appointed** Professor of Sociology of Education in 2023, aged 37. His rise attracted considerable attention because of the extraordinary story he told about overcoming autism, being unable to speak until the age of 11, and learning to read and write only at 18.

The controversy began with **allegations of plagiarism in his PhD thesis** and other academic work.

Arday strongly denied plagiarism. An earlier investigation did **not find plagiarism or academic misconduct**, although it concluded that there were some similarities.

The resulting debate became much bigger than the allegations themselves, because it touched on **race, DEI, institutional vetting** (=vérifications), **media responsibility and academic standards**.



Arday **resigned** before Cambridge's new investigation was completed.

He died suddenly in London on 13 August 2026, aged 41, shortly after resigning.

IN THE USA

America's 250th birthday: On July 4, the United States celebrated 250 years of independence, with major events across the country. The celebrations were also marked by political divisions over President Trump's role in the festivities.



“One of the most controversial celebrations was a MMA/ UFC(Ultimate Fighting Championship) fight held on the White House lawn, combining the 250th anniversary with Trump's 80th birthday.”

“Trump ordered a \$14 million renovation of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool for the 250th anniversary, but the new blue **coating** quickly peeled off and algae returned. The administration initially blamed vandals, but **prosecutors** later concluded that the problem was mainly due to poor workmanship.”



The war with Iran

The conflict that began earlier this year (February 2026) continued to dominate US **foreign policy**. By August, the Trump administration was shifting from **military action** towards tougher **economic sanctions**, while tensions around the **Strait of Hormuz** remained high.



The war in Iran has had a major impact on **oil and gasoline prices** because of the disruption around the Strait of Hormuz. US gas prices have risen above \$4 a gallon, increasing inflation and putting pressure on American households. This is also hurting Trump politically, because he had promised lower prices and no long wars.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll in August found his approval rating at **33%**, while only **31% of Americans supported the US military action against Iran**. Support for the war has also fallen among Republicans.

Wildfires in Canada: an American crisis



Canada's **wildfire** season turned into a major North American crisis, with smoke spreading into the US. Trump threatened Canada with higher **tariffs** over its handling of the wildfires as the smoke **marred** the image of the US during the football World cup. Those **wildfires** were **fueled** by **climate extremes**.

Trump's trade war: Tariffs remain a major issue, affecting relations with China, Canada, Europe and other trading partners. The administration continued to use tariffs as a central tool of its economic and foreign policy.

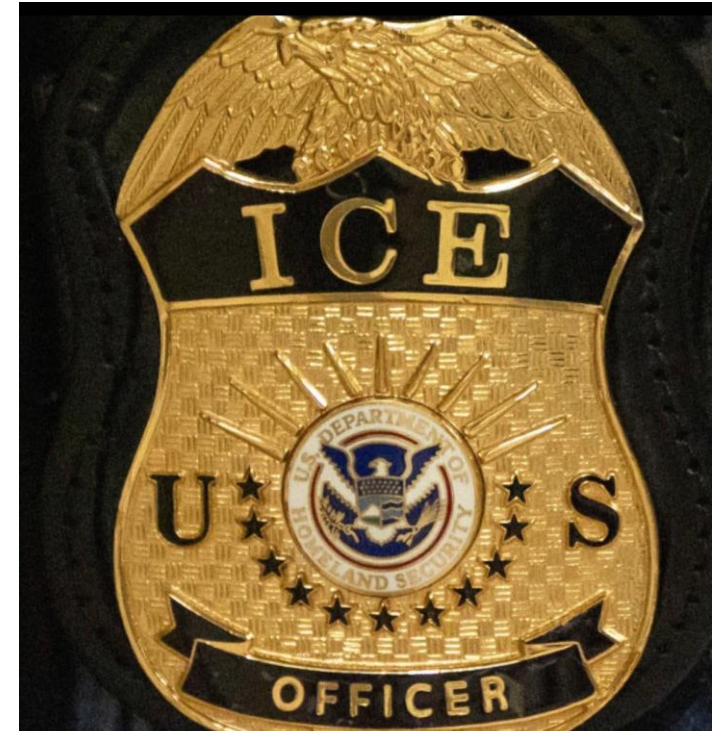
Mass deportation campaign inside the US

Immigration remains one of America's most divisive issues. **Trump dramatically intensified deportations, with ICE** making a record 50,000 arrests in July.

Critics say the crackdown **increasingly targets people with no criminal record**, while Trump supporters argue that the administration is simply **enforcing** immigration laws.

In July: 49,571 arrests

ICE = *Immigration and Customs Enforcement*



<https://apnews.com/article/border-immigration-customs-enforcement-data-statistics-f07f56a34bda225e5afa356781ac1740>

Bluebonnet learning

“Bluebonnet [= *lupin bleu*] is the state flower of Texas, so the name reflects Texas identity and pride.”



The **controversial** Bluebonnet Learning **curriculum** has been adopted by a number of schools in **Texas**. It is **blamed/criticised** for not only infusing Christianity into public school lesson plans, but also for talking about biblical material **poorly**.

Ex: some reading lessons include Bible passages, raising concerns about religion in public schools.

In some other English-speaking countries

Australia's government has taken significant steps to regulate artificial intelligence.



In July, **Prime Minister Anthony Albanese** announced plans for new national AI standards, including stricter rules for large data centres. These facilities will be required to minimise their water consumption, improve energy efficiency and help fund or provide the additional power they need. The government also announced the creation of a new **Office of AI**, which will coordinate AI policy across government and help develop the new national standards.



The measures reflect **growing concerns** about the **environmental impact of the rapid expansion of AI data centres**, particularly their huge demand for electricity and water.

Australia has been strengthening its engagement with the Pacific Islands, as competition for influence in the region continues to grow.

Australia is seeking to **deepen** its relationships with Pacific island countries through cooperation on **security, climate change, infrastructure and economic development**. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has stressed that Australia wants to be a reliable long-term partner for its Pacific neighbours.



The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) began on 30 August 2026 in Palau and runs until 4 September.

The meeting has highlighted not only Australia's growing engagement in the Pacific, but also the **broader** strategic competition between Australia, its partners, and China.

The Cockroach movement in India



The “Cockroach Movement” is a Gen-Z youth protest in India, born from satire, against unemployment, exam leaks and government failures.

The name comes from a **controversial remark by India’s Chief Justice** comparing unemployed young people to “**cockroaches**”; activists reclaimed the insult and created the satirical **Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)**.