

Hello, everyone.

It's January. It's Dry January.

It's cold. It's dark. It's miserable.

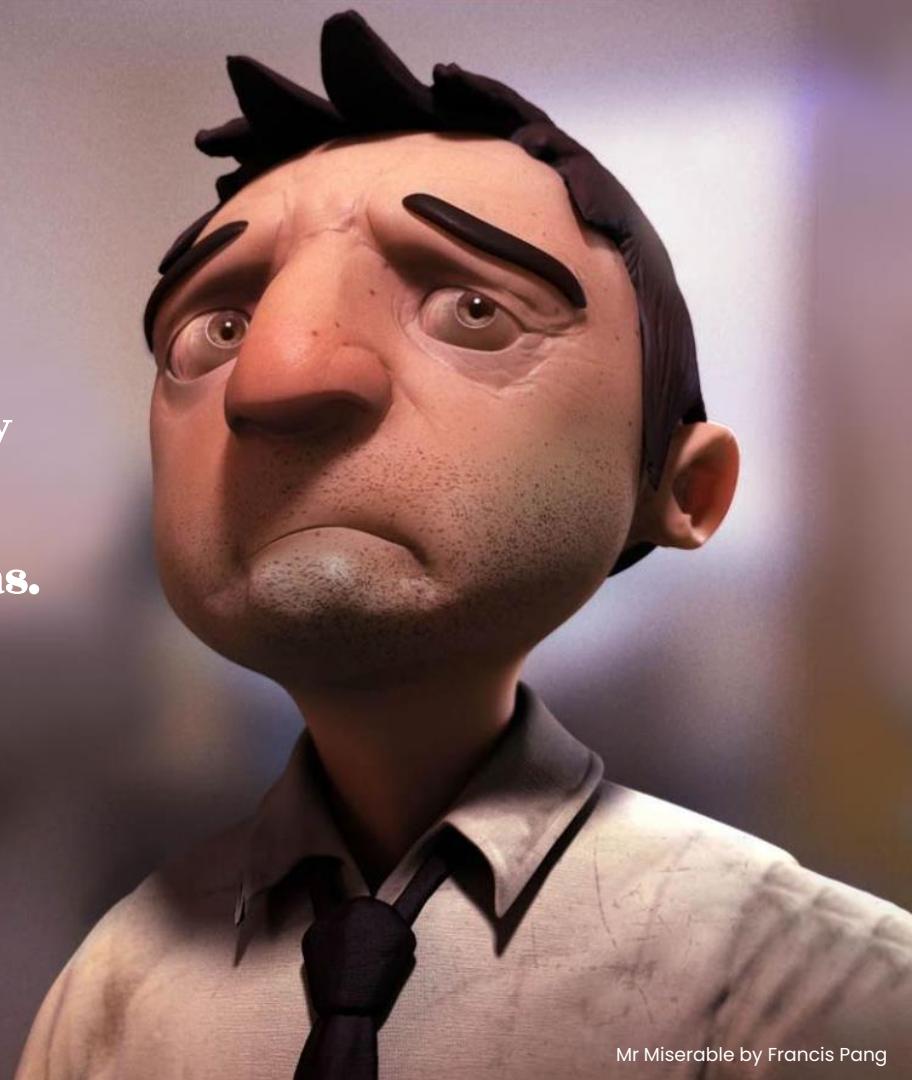
**You've got a deep-rooted evolutionary
'negativity bias' towards bad news.**

You had to buy a labubu for Christmas.

You work in advertising.

**You've got to spend the next
15 mins listening to me.**

Things can't get a lot worse.



26 1/2

*reasons
to be cheerful
in 2026*

This will be full to the Brim with optimism.

Hopefully you will feel a bit more cheerful by the end of it.

Hopefully you will leave with a spring in your step and an idea in your head.



NB: Campaign said no sales pitches, but there might be some subliminal advertising for Ace of Hearts.

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#1

Optimists live longer

Optimists have a 13–15% lower risk of dying from any cause compared with pessimists.

That translates to around an extra 7 years of life.

Source: Meta-analysis by Boston University,
Lee, James, Zevon, Kubzansky (2019)



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#2

it's easier to bring ideas to life

I had to have one on AI... I'm getting it out the way early.

It's never been easier to get ideas out of your head and into the world.

And it's getting even easier every day as AI confounds Moore's Law.



Image Source: The Guardian

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#3

Mamdani is mayor of NYC

The Muslim Democrat was sworn into office in 2026.

'Tonight we have spoken with a clear voice: 'hope is alive'. And while we cast our ballots alone, we chose hope together. Hope over tyranny. Hope over big money and small ideas. Hope over despair. We won because New Yorkers allowed themselves to hope that the impossible could be made possible.'

Source: Zohran Mamdani victory speech



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DOOM SCROLLING is set to decline

The average 18 year old will spend 25 years scrolling, but 2026 is predicted to be the 'year of unplugging'.

The smartphone-free childhood movement is gathering pace, starting with the ban in Australia.

Could your brand be part of the IRL revolution?

Source: Fluid Focus, The Times, The Guardian (2025)

This year, I have seen a glimmer of hope: people are ditching a life led on screens for the real thing

John Harris



Whether it's nightclubs banning phones or a drop in online dating, there are signs that we're rediscovering the joy of being in the moment

Sun 14 Dec 2025 13.00 GMT

Share

377



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#5

Football's coming home

After a 100% record in World Cup qualification our chances have never been better.

England are the second favourite according to the bookies, with 10% probability of winning.

Expect a wave of football fan optimism this summer and plenty of opportunities for brands.

Source: The Athletic, Oddschecker



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#6

Pinterest predicts lots of fun

2026 trends include...

- ‘Fun Haus’ (circus inspired stripes and clownish charm)
- ‘Gimme Gummy’ (ASMR overload, bendy, rubbery)
- ‘Throwback Kid’ (playful, vintage-inspired nostalgia)
- ...so lots of fun stuff for brands to tap into.

Fun Haus

About the trend

Big top, bigger personality. In 2026, circus-inspired home décor will be on the rise: think bold stripes, sculptural silhouettes and just a wink of clownish charm. The trick is balance. Pair punch-line patterns with pared-back palettes for an elevated, but



Copy link

Gimme Gummy

About the trend

In 2026, we're going full-on gummy. Gen Z and Millennials are behind this ASMR overload—picture bendy phone cases, elastic cheek tints and probiotic treats that have that spring-back bite. Expect rubberized nail art and 3D jewellery to become your new tactile obsession.



Copy link

throwback kid

About the trend

In 2026, childhood gets a throwback twist with vintage-inspired outfits, classic toys from the '60s and upcycled baby looks. Crocheted play mats will bring cosy vibes to any nursery, while Baby Boomers and Gen X will thrift mini 'fits. Let's go back in (play)time.



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#7

Traitors is Back and it's bigger and better

Record-breaking viewing figures for 2026.

It's terrible. It's brilliant. It's must watch.

If you aren't already watching it, you can catch up.

Turns out TV is not dead after all.



The Traitors attracts record-breaking viewing figures for return episode

More than six million people tuned in as Claudia Winkleman welcomed a new set of contestants to the Traitors

Lauren Del Fabbro
Friday 02 January 2026 12:20 GMT



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#8

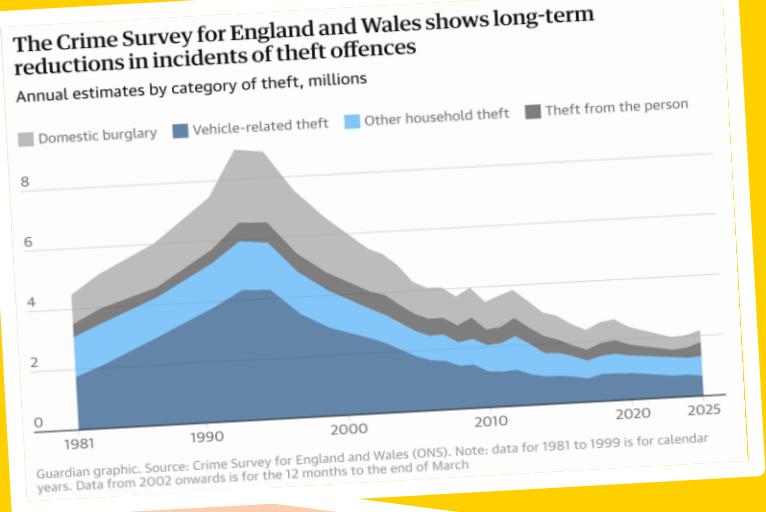
Life's never been better

If you look longer term, things look up.

Over the last decade, theft is down and literacy is up. Productivity is 3.7% higher than 2019.

Max Rosen argues if a newspaper was published every 50 years it would be far more likely to discuss long term positive trends (like the global child mortality rate dropping from 14 percent to 4 percent).

Source: Office for National Statistics, National Foundation for Educational Research



FT FINANCIAL
TIMES

The chances of living a healthy, informed and self-directed life have never been better.
(30th Dec 2025)

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#9

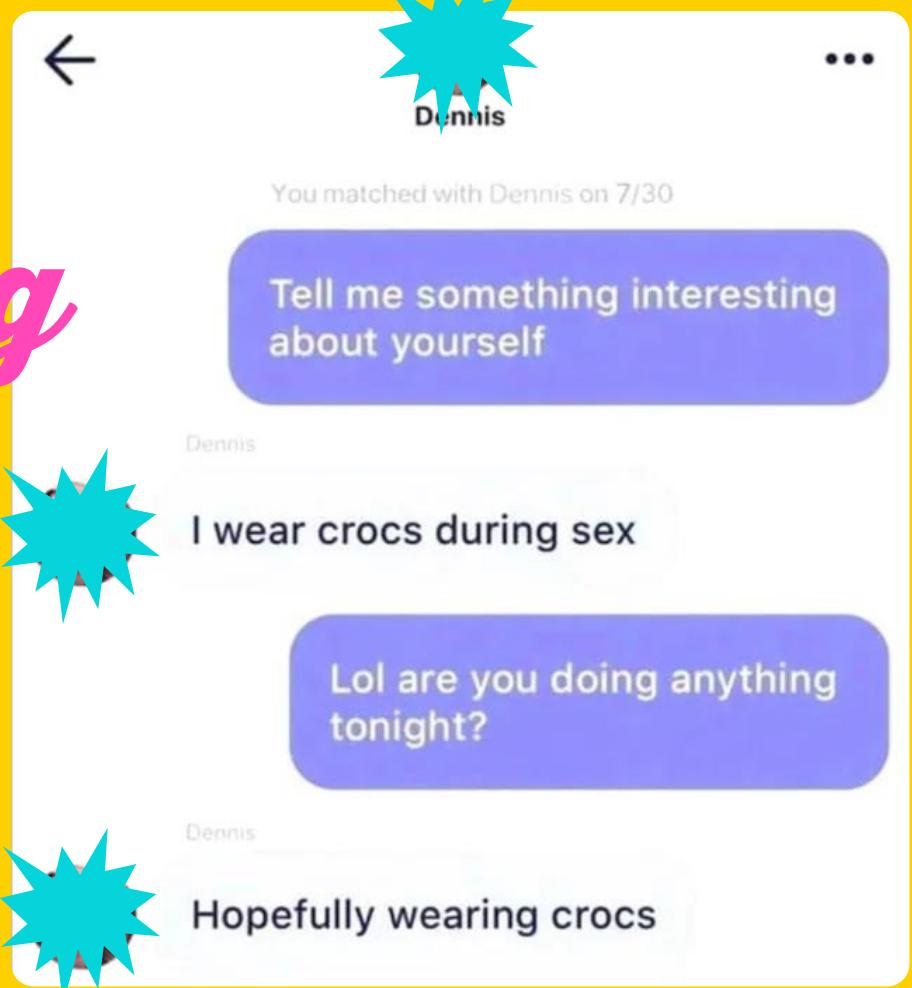
IRL *dating* set to return

Young people are switching off dating apps – Tinder lost 594,000 users, while Hinge dropped by 131,000, Bumble by 368,000.

The value of shares in Match Group have dropped by nearly 80% since the pandemic.

Match acknowledged that younger people were seeking “a lower-pressure, more authentic way to find connections”.

Source: Ofcom, November 2024



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#10

UK ad spend will GROW

Look at all that predicted 2026 growth – up 6.6% to a whopping £49.1bn.

That will mostly go to VCCP.

ADVERTISING
ASSOCIATION

WARC

2024 2025 2026 2027 2028

6.6%

Forecast increase for UK ad market
in 2026, to £49.1bn

AA / WARC Expenditure Report Q2 2025

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#11

UK cinema is GROWING

UK box office is booming – revenue to return to pre-COVID levels, growing at a 6% YOY rate until 2028.

Industry optimism is driven by blockbuster films and people wanting out-of-home experiences.

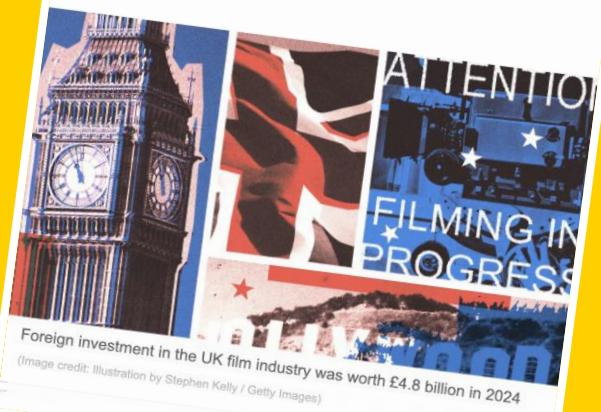
Highly anticipated releases in 2026 include:
Avengers, Toy Story 5, Shrek 5, Dune 3 and Spider-Man 4

Source: PwC



Hooray for Bollywood: the UK's film industry is booming – *** ***
US production giants are flocking to film in British studios
hidden for optimistic purposes

BY CHAS NEWKEY-BURDEN, THE WEEK UK
LAST UPDATED 3 OCTOBER 2025



Foreign investment in the UK film industry was worth £4.8 billion in 2024
(Image credit: Illustration by Stephen Kelly / Getty Images)

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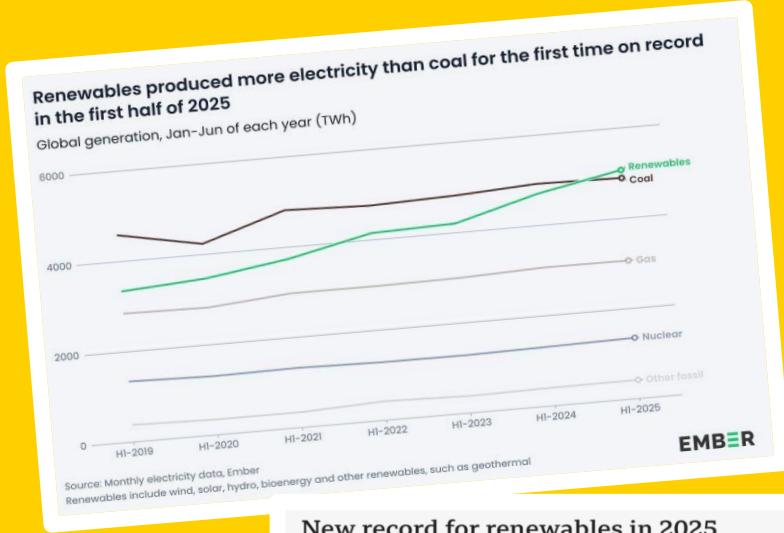
#12

RENEWABLES overtake coal

Maybe we can tackle climate change?

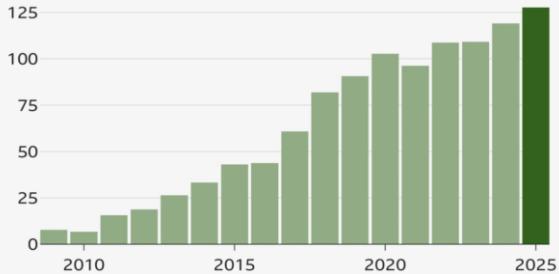
'The central reason for optimism is the coming age of radically cheap renewable energy. The exponential growth in solar energy has stunned forecasters, growing 10 times faster than predicted'. (The Guardian).

Solar is now the fastest growing source of electricity ever.



New record for renewables in 2025

Terawatt hours of electricity generated from renewable sources each year, 2009-2025



Note: Renewable sources include wind and solar, and hydro and biomass from major power producers. Biomass only appears in the data from 2017-18; solar from 2013. Excludes storage

Source: National Energy System Operator, data to 31 December 2025

BBC

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#13

people are kinder than you think

People are far more likely to return dropped wallets than you think.

There was a 'benevolence bump' around the world post-covid - benevolent acts are about +10% above their pre-pandemic levels.

Donating is up, volunteering is up, and helping strangers is up +18% vs. pre-pandemic.

How can your brand spread some kindness?

Source: World Happiness Report (2025)



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#14

it's not as **BAD** as it seems

Harper Lee was (mostly) right – things are never (usually) as bad as they seem.

Psychologists have shown that we overpredict how bad things will feel and we underpredict how quickly we will recover.

Brands can help people look on the bright side.

IT'LL
BE
REET



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#15

mushrooms *are magic*

They can save the world in 2026.

They can clean up pollution, be an alternative to plastic and polystyrene packaging, restore ecosystems and detox the human body.

Magic mushrooms are being studied to treat PTSD and OCD, and being micro-dosed at some leading agencies.

They can also now play the keyboard.



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#16

hedgehog highways are a thing

Hedgehogs are under threat due to urbanisation, but if you cut tiny holes in urban garden fences, they can come and go as they please.

There are now more than 120,000 highways across Britain.

Guarantee 5 stars on System 1 by featuring this little guy.



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#17

WOMEN *are winning*

In 2025, Lady Gaga performed at the highest attended concert of a female artist ever, Sanae Takaichi became Japan's first female prime minister, Polly founded Ace of Hearts, Sian and Rosie joined Ace of Hearts, and boyfriends became embarrassing.

In 2026, Frida Kahlo's retrospective exhibition at Tate Modern is set to be their most popular show by a woman in history.

Let's keep this winning streak and create more opportunities for women to win in 2026.



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#18

OPTIMISM sells

Campaigns evoking emotions such as 'awe', 'upliftment', or 'bliss' are associated with 2.4x, 2.3x and 2.2x stronger business effects respectively.

In 2026, let's entertain and get the nation smiling and laughing along.



Source: Orlando Wood, Lemon, Gregory and Kelly, Defying The Doom Loop, Campaign 2025

Lemon.

Orlando Wood

IPAG

This advertising brain has stopped working properly. It has lost its power to persuade, its ability to make people feel, and its talent to entertain. How has this happened? And is there anything we can do about it? In this challenging book, Orlando Wood argues that a golden age for advertising technology has been far from a golden age for advertising creativity. He shows how today's analytical culture has sent the industry's admired reputation for creativity into reverse. In place of a creative Renaissance, he maintains, we are now witnessing counter-intuitive solutions of his own. If the advertising brain has stopped working properly, maybe this is the repair manual.

Lemon.

Reducing what was once dazzling artform to dreary mediocrity. So how should agencies and clients correct the wrong turn we have taken? Orlando offers some surprisingly counter-intuitive solutions of his own. If the advertising brain has stopped working properly, maybe this is the repair manual.

IPA

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#19

GEN Z aren't lazy and useless

'Gen Z are substantially more educated than previous generations. Beyond their abundance of university degrees, the digital age has made it easier than ever for people from all backgrounds to learn a language, launch a side hustle, work remotely, broaden their knowledge and connect across borders'.

Avoid the lazy media stereotypes – they are people with potential and they are the future.

Gen Z are the micro-influencers in every home

- #1
- 93%
- 72%

Gen Z are the most sought after generation for advice by everyone across all major categories

Of all adults say every generation should be open to learning from different age groups

Of Gen Zers want to spend more time with older generations

Leo | Pop pulse

LOVE
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#20

cancer cures are getting closer

In 2025, scientists identified the “roadmap” that cancer cells use that “paves the way for treatments that will tackle cancer before it can spread”.

Google’s AlphaFold is discovering potential treatments for cancer faster than humans could.

“You cannot imagine what you’re going to see over the next 30 years. The pace of advancement is in an exponential phase right now.” Barney Graham



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#21

The new space age is here

Satellite broadband is bringing internet access to remote parts of the world.

Asteroid mining could supply trillions of dollars' worth of rare materials back on Earth.

The James Webb telescope has found water vapour on alien planets.

NASA will put people on the moon again this year and it's increasingly likely that you can join Katy Perry in space.



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#22

global poverty is declining

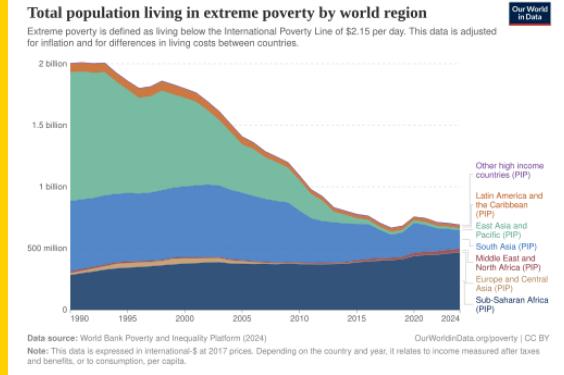
You've never seen a newspaper run the headline "137,000 people escaped from extreme poverty yesterday" – yet this incredible statistic has been accurate every day for decades now.

Since 1990, more than a billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty, with the impoverished share falling from 38% of the global population down to 9.1% today.

Source: Steven Pinker, World Bank



Image from TED Talks/Bruno Vincent/Flickr/2005, used under CC BY-NC 2.0



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#23

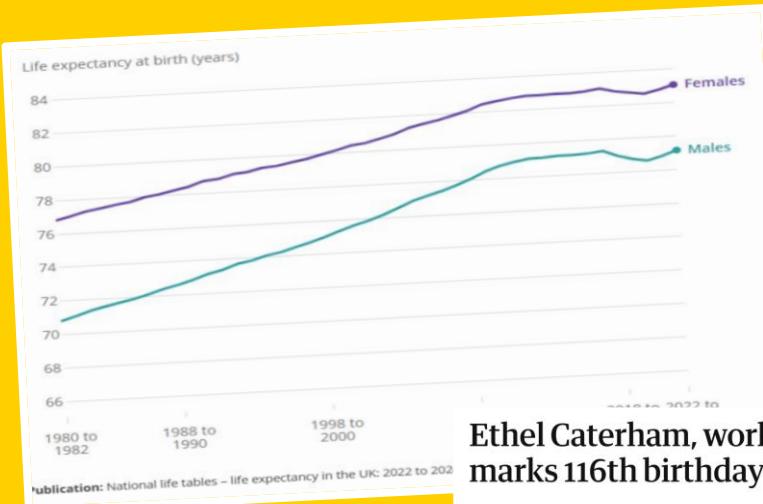
YOU SHOULD LIVE *longer* *than ever*

Life expectancy in the UK will continue to increase in 2026.

An average person born today can expect to live more than twice as long as someone born around 1900.

The oldest person in the world lives in the UK (and is still alive, I checked just now).

Don't forget all the oldies out there with your next campaign.



Ethel Caterham, world's oldest person, marks 116th birthday

Caterham was born in Hampshire in August 1909, when Edward VII reigned, and now lives in care home in Surrey



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#24

UK economy should be more cheerful

In 2026, EY forecasts around ~0.9% growth

PwC projects ~1.2% GDP growth in 2026, with inflation easing and the Bank of England rate edging down

CBI forecasts growth around ~1.3% in 2026, slightly higher than earlier estimates

There are reasons to be cheerful about UK plc in 2026. Here are four

Heather Stewart



Be it better prospects for consumer spending or the tentative signs of rising productivity, the doom and gloom of 2025 could be behind us

S&P Global Explore S&P Global

Market Intelligence Who We Serve Solutions News & Insights Events Product Login

ECONOMICS COMMENTARY — Nov 17, 2025

UK businesses express optimism for 2026 as growth opportunities help to overcome economic headwinds



David Owen
Economist, Economic Indices, S&P Global

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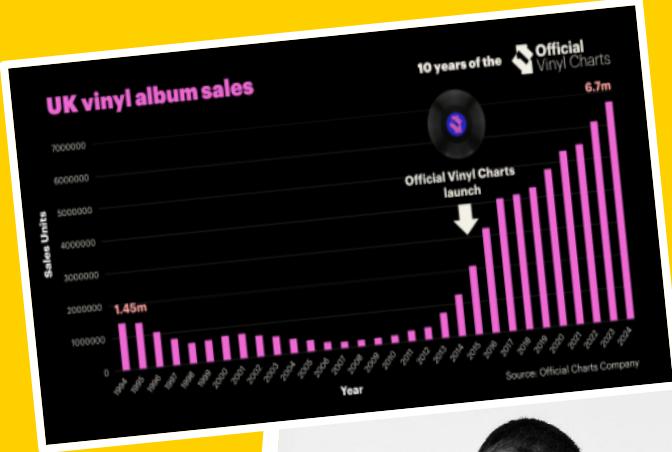
#25

UK music industry is GROWING

The Oasis reunion tour and a clamour amongst Swifties for vinyl, contributed to a boom year for the UK music industry.

Music lovers listened to the equivalent of 210.3m albums by UK artists in 2025.

Music is not only culture boosting its ROI boosting – engaging music is 32% more likely to get a higher ROI



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#26

YOU DON'T KNOW how lucky you are

Ali Binazir calculated that the probability of “you” being born is roughly 1 in $10^{2,685,000}$ (1 in 10 followed by 2,685,000 zeros).

That’s essentially zero — far smaller than the odds of winning the lottery every day for your entire life.

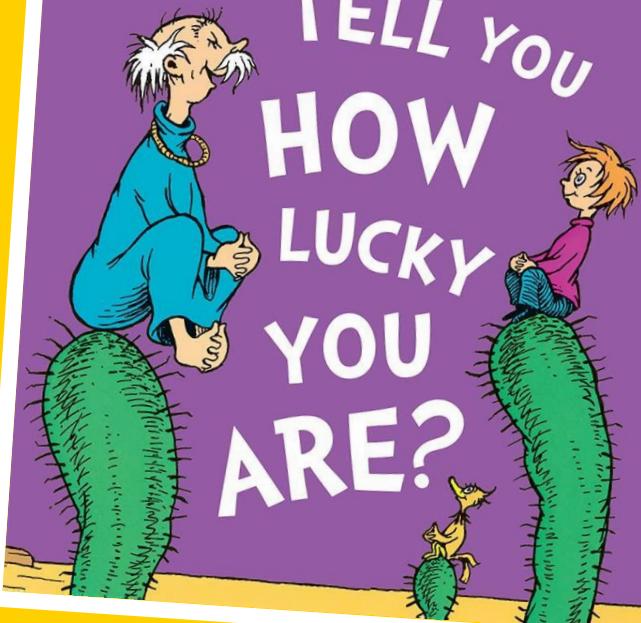
Even conservative estimates, focusing only on your immediate parents, put the odds at around 1 in 400 trillion.

So, now you know how lucky you are.

Dr. Seuss

50th
ANNIVERSARY

DID I EVER
TELL YOU
HOW
LUCKY
YOU
ARE?



LOVE
HATE

#26^{1/2}

hobby horse riding is a thing

It's growing in popularity and there are competitions across the UK looking for brand sponsors.



That's it – **26.5 Reasons To Be Cheerful in 2026**

Hopefully things don't feel as bad as they did 15 mins ago.

I wanted to leave you with a quote:

“The modern world was built and shaped by optimists. We owe it to them to carry the torch. Optimism for the future is not only justified – it’s a weapon in the fight for a higher future, and a moral obligation to ourselves and to future generations.”

John D. Boswell

Yours cheerfully,
Martin