

Policy Matters



Your weekly digest of policy reports that **matter**.
Edited by [Toby Green](#) and [Gary Price](#) of *Policy Commons*.

Climate

- **Records “smashed”**
 - The World Meteorological Organization’s [annual stocktake on climate](#) found that records in 2023 were “once again broken, and in some cases smashed” for key indicators such as greenhouse gasses, ocean heat, and glacier retreat.
- **...but how accurate are emissions data?**
 - But what if the data are wrong? Yale’s E360 program reckons UNFCCC’s emissions data undercount the true picture, because slow reporting from countries make the numbers “[out of date, inconsistent, and incomplete.](#)”
- **Big Oil—not aligned with Paris targets**
 - Carbon Tracker [assessed the production and transition plans of twenty-five Big Oil companies](#) and found none aligned with the 2015 Paris Agreement’s central goal to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Ukraine-Russia

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine [issued its report](#) on Russia’s treatment of civilians and prisoners of war to the UN’s Human Rights Council.

Forced to work

[Forced labour in the private economy](#) generates an average USD10,000 profit per victim, an increase of nearly 20% since 2014. Forced commercial sexual exploitation accounts for more than two-thirds of the illegal profits. The total number of people forced to work around the world is up, too.

Please, sir, can we build a new transmission line?

[A recent forecast](#) showed that demand for electricity is about to soar—all those shiny new EVs need to be powered up somehow—but building new grid infrastructure puts pressure on federal permitting, not least because there’s a lack of centralized data to help planners. To help avoid a future logjam in building a reliable, affordable grid, [this report from Clean Air Task Force](#) looks back on how federal permitting inhibited the construction of new transmission lines in the US from 2010 to 2020.

School bullies earn more

[A new paper](#) from the Institute for Social and Economic Research finds that those who are aggressive at school go on to do better in the labor market.

Happiness across the generations

In Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, the later stages of life are portrayed as deeply depressing. But the latest [World Happiness Report](#) shows a more nuanced picture, not least that those with better well-being are less prone to dementia.

Two headaches for the UK’s Treasury

There’s more bad news for the UK government in an election year. Thousands of women in the UK are owed compensation because of failings when the government hurried up changes to the state pension age, [a long-awaited official report](#) has ruled. Meanwhile, the Resolution Foundation issued a paper on the [UK’s unique, chronic, and growing long-term sickness problem](#), which is now affecting the under twenty-fives as well as the over fifties.

Horizon: Europe has a new research plan

The Horizon Europe [strategic plan for 2025-2027](#) sets out to steer research and innovation funding for the final years of the EU’s largest R&I programme to date.

Trust in politicians and “freedom-restricting harassment”

Three reports in the past week illustrate that all’s not well in the UK’s public sphere. UCL’s Constitution Unit reckons [governance by seven constitutional watchdogs needs strengthening](#) if the public’s trust in politics is to be regained; a Commission on Political Power proposed new ways to fund politics [to hinder corruption and build trust](#); and an independent adviser to the government was shocked by the extent of what she calls “[freedom-restricting harassment](#)” in UK society.

Ending publisher profiteering from publicly funded research

The Australia Institute has just published a paper on “[tackling the academic publishing oligopoly.](#)” (But why didn’t they include their own publishing method in the recommendations □?)

What’s going to be in our new *Public Health and Social Care* module?

In the weeks leading up to its launch in May, we’re sharing examples of what you’ll find in our forthcoming *Policy Commons* module. This week: We all know about Big Tobacco’s long history of masking the dangers of smoking. It now looks as if the same game is being played by Big Methane, [who are alleged to be hiding the health dangers of cooking with gas.](#)

Read more about our new *Public Health and Social Care* module [here](#).

Editors' Choice 2024

Many thanks to those who have shown appreciation for Policy Matters; we're flattered. Some have asked that we compile a list of our weekly selections—so here it is, [our Editors' Choice list for 2024](#). Do share. And if you have recommendations of reports we've missed, [please let us know](#).

If you have announcements you'd like to put in front of our readers, please [drop us a line](#).

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