Sixty seconds on . . . breaking lockdown rules
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Who were the UK’s biggest rulebreakers?
Politicians and their advisers must be up there. Under Boris Johnson, 10 Downing Street seemed to host more parties during lockdown than most people do in “normal times,” a day trip by the PM’s aide Dominic Cummings did more to promote Barnard Castle than decades of work by the local council, and health secretary Matt Hancock and pandemic modeller Neil Ferguson were hardly role models for compliance.

Hmmm. Is this a male thing?
Previous surveys have shown women were far more likely to opt to wear a mask during lockdown than men. Some researchers and commentators have suggested that this was because men are less altruistic than women. Not even the fact that they were more likely than women to get seriously ill and die was enough to encourage some men to don masks. Studies also found that men were less likely to comply with handwashing and other hygiene recommendations.

So are men always the villains?
No. A report published on 6 September from the University of York and funded by the Nuffield Foundation found that women were nearly twice as likely as men to break laws prohibiting meeting with others indoors.

Rebel women?
Women were not “wilfully non-compliant,” the report says. In many instances they broke the law for caring purposes, such as enlisting grandparents to help with childcare or meeting with other mothers for support. Women were bearing the brunt of trying to balance childcare with work commitments by “forming ‘bubbles’ out of necessity before it was officially allowed.”

But what about the new health secretary?
It’s true that Thérèse Coffey likes to party. Before the pandemic, she was notorious for hosting late night “karaoke sessions” in her Commons office. During lockdown, her team at the Department of Work and Pensions apparently had frequent boozy office gatherings, although karaoke was apparently not part of these.

That’s one thing, I suppose?
Singing was considered a seriously risky activity in this period, so at least she listened to her former boss Boris Johnson and followed his “good solid British common sense” principles, even if the rules themselves may have been bent.

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