

Royals and reality TV stars: Famous COVID rulebreakers

From reality TV star Kim Kardashian to the Dutch royals and now tennis superstar Novak Djokovic, a slew of politicians and celebrities have found themselves in hot water for falling foul of COVID etiquette. Here are some of the most famous offenders:

Selfie schtick

South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa broke social distancing rules to pose for a selfie with two women who approached him in the street in May 2020. Laughing, he joked: "Come before we get arrested." He wasn't arrested but the video went viral sparking outrage.

Party on

Paraguay's deputy health minister Juan Carlos Portillo resigned after he was filmed at a party in June 2020 just after he had helped bring in new restrictions.

Downing Street follies

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's top adviser Dominic Cummings caused uproar in Britain after breaching lockdown rules in May 2020 to travel the length of England to be with his parents. He later said he took another trip in a car to "check his eyesight" before eventually being forced to step down. It was to be the first of a long line of COVID-related scandals to rock Johnson and his government.

Kiss me quick

British Health minister Matt Hancock resigned for breaking the COVID rules he had himself set after being caught on film in a steamy clinch with his mistress in his ministry in June 2020.

Parties and quizzes

Johnson has since been undermined by a long string of revelations about boozy parties and quizzes at Number 10 that were allegedly in breach of the rules, with the prime minister photographed at one in his garden. His father Stanley has also been caught not wearing a face mask and flying to his villa in Greece when only non-essential travel was permitted, claiming he went to make it "COVID-safe".

Royal pardon

The Dutch royal family had to apologize last month when they invited 21 people to celebrate the 18th birthday of future queen Princess Amalia when only four were allowed. It was one of a string of COVID faux pas committed by the House of Orange with King Willem-Alexander repeatedly breaking social distancing rules by shaking hands and the family going on holiday to Greece during a partial lockdown.

Kardashian birthday bash

Reality television star Kim Kardashian sparked anger in October 2020 by throwing a party on a private island to celebrate her 40th birthday, with photos showing revelers without masks.

Costly meal

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki apologized in May 2020 after posing for official photographs with staff in a restaurant when his own advice to others was to dine out only with close family.

Irish golf gala

European trade commissioner Phil Hogan was forced to resign in August 2020 along with two senior Irish politicians after they attended a parliamentary golf gala dinner for 80 when only six people were allowed to meet indoors. The head of the country's tourism board Catherine Martin was also forced to quit after going for a break in Italy when people were being told to holiday at home.

'Bad mistake'

California governor Gavin Newsom was forced to admit he made a "bad mistake" in November 2020 by attending a friend's birthday dinner during a spike in cases.

Match halted

A hugely anticipated clash between South American football giants Brazil and Argentina had to be halted in September after five minutes with officials claiming four Argentine players based in England had given them false information to get around COVID rules. — AFP



The PolMOVE autonomous race car from Politecnico di Milano (Italy) and University of Alabama in pit row during the Indy Autonomous Challenge during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) at the Las Vegas Motor Speedway in Las Vegas, Nevada.



An attendee plays a game of red light green light against a LiDAR sensor at the South Korea-based SOS LAB company booth during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas.

Car gadgets proliferate as health concerns rise

With personal health a rising priority around the world, the auto industry is on the hunt for new gadgets and accessories to make the car cockpit feel safer for the driver and passengers. Items on display at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) include air purifiers, car seat alarms and intelligent sun visors.

The objective is to transform the automobile "into a sort of health cocoon," Christophe Perillat, deputy chief executive of Valeo said at a press conference at the show held in Las Vegas. The French auto supplier's wares at CES include devices to monitor drivers' attention and air filters and systems that allow personalized climate controls for passengers.

The company's filtration system for cars and buses clears out more than 95 percent of viruses, including COVID-19. CabinAir and Marelli also showcased car air purification systems that could be installed inside the cockpit or in a cup holder. Another offering by Gentex is a sensor composed of nano-fibers capable of surveying the air and identifying contaminants.

The latest generation of technologies comes after earlier efforts focused initially on the trucking industry, where lengthy periods behind the wheel marred physical health, said Carla Bailo, head of the Center for Automotive Research. After developing more ergonomic seats, auto suppliers have begun focusing on tools to help drivers get ahead of other health problems such as cardiovascular issues, and to maintain driver awareness.

Alerting parents

Some of the systems follow government requirements on autos. The Italian startup Filo developed an alarm system

for children's car seats following a law in its home country intended to prevent kids from being left in the car on hot days. The company was in Las Vegas to launch the technology for the United States, where there are dozens of casualties each year due to hyperthermia.



French startup Wisear cofounder Yacine Achiakh holds a pair of prototype earbuds that allow him to stop the music playing on his smartphone simply by moving his jaw through a technology that enables a connected device to detect and interpret electric signals sent by the brain to a muscle during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada.

"With the hecticness of life, stress, et cetera, sadly, it happens more than we would like to admit that parents actually have on occasion lapsed... and they leave their children in the car," said Rudolf Jantos, who works in marketing for Filo. The company's Bluetooth-based system will alert if a child remains in the seat when the driver moves away from the vehicle. Other child-protection devices employ cameras, radars, vibra-

sors, Ramsay said. These new devices have also been boosted by the rise of autonomous driving systems, which employ cameras and radars, said Jacques Aschenbroich, chief executive of Valeo.

"We had been focusing before more on the comfort of the seats and of the heating," he said. "Now our clients also ask for more visual comfort and safety applications" based on these cameras and radars.



The Tata Pad by Filo, a smart baby car seat alarm to alert when a child is left in a vehicle, is displayed during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada. Air purifiers, sensors to prevent a child from being forgotten in the car, intelligent sun visors: there are more and more tools available to make motorists feel safe in their car.

ed. "The key point is to use technology to really improve the customer experience, not to seem invasive," Bailo said. "There's a fine line between 'we're trying to keep you safe, we're trying to keep you healthy,' and 'we're watching what you're doing.'" — AFP



The Hexagro Living Farming Tree, a soiless indoor garden for vertical aeroponic farming, is displayed during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas.



Takuma Iwasa, Shiftall CEO, demonstrates Haritora X, a full body tracking system for VR, at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. A jacket equipped with sensors that let wearers feel hugs or even punches encountered in virtual reality was among the innovations giving the metaverse a more realistic edge at the Consumer Electronics Show. — AFP photos



In this file photo, Kim Kardashian's husband rapper Kanye West performs during his concert in central Yerevan early. The mercurial Kanye West anticipates traveling to Moscow later this year, according to a Billboard article published - a trip that will see him hold a Sunday Service performance and meet with President Vladimir Putin. — AFP

Kanye West planning to perform in Russia, meet Putin

The mercurial Kanye West anticipates traveling to Moscow later this year, according to Billboard, a trip that will see him hold a Sunday Service performance and meet with President Vladimir Putin. West heads to Russia as he works on new business deals with Aras Agalarov - the Azerbaijani-Russian billionaire businessman with ties to Donald Trump - and Agalarov's musician son Emin, the music outlet said, citing West's advisor Ameer Sudan.

"He will be spending a lot of time" in the country, Sudan told Billboard, saying it will

be "a second home" for Ye, who legally changed his name last year. The rapper's Sunday Service shows are church-esque concerts featuring gospel choirs that he began holding in 2019. Ye, 44, is no stranger to questionable forays into the political world, having launched an unsuccessful bid for the American presidency in 2020 as an independent candidate of the Birthday Party.

In 2018 he met with then-president Trump for a surreal tete-a-tete that included a hug between the two and an on-camera rant. Neither the prospect of travel restrictions nor potential criticism over building ties in Russia would deter Ye, according to Sudan. "Kanye knows what's going on more than the average human being, he's well aware of things. And it's nothing against the United States or to cause conflicts, but Ye is Ye - he can't be controlled," Sudan said. — AFP