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POP THEORY

THE ANGER ISSUE

Rage rooms, angry music and potholes

Back in 2024, the Guardian posited that we have entered the '[age of rage](#)'. With anger becoming the UK's baseline emotion. In [ITV's latest mood of the nation report for 2026](#) we found that 79% of brits believe we are becoming more angry as a society, a 3% increase since 2025. So in this edition of Pop Theory we wanted to interrogate the idea of 'angry Britain' and how our collective anger is impacting mainstream popular culture, and what that means for brands...

As always, we love a chat, so pop us an email at lucy.irving@itv.com if you'd like to hear more about our proprietary research.

COMING-OF-RAGE

Britain's women are embracing rage rooms, scream queens and gory fiction

While male anger dominates our headlines, a quieter rebellion happening in britains female population. Women are reporting higher levels of anxiety, exhaustion and stress than the UK's men ([ITV's What Unites a Kingdom 2026 research](#)). This potent combination is manifesting in increased levels of anger. According to a [worldwide Gallup poll](#), the gap between men and women reporting feeling anger has been increasing since 2017 (incidentally when the metoo movement went mainstream). With women being 6% points more likely to report feeling angry than men, post covid.



But the majority of the nations women aren't smashing up phoneboxes or rioting in the streets, instead they are finding novel outlets for their inner angst...

"Rage rooms", rooms where punters can smash up cars, TV and fridges in safety gear, have seen a boom in business over the past year, with [The Guardian](#) reporting bookings at Virgin's Ultimate Xtreme Rage Room increasing by 219% and Weston-super-Mare's Activity Dome surging by 150%. They report that 90% of those bookings are being made by women.

Anger is also influencing female audiences cultural tastes, "[Fem-gore](#)" as a horror subgenre has exploded over the past few years. "Fem-gore" is female (and non-binary) authored content about people (usually women, usually young) who "[stalk, slash, bludgeon, infect, slice, dismember and cannibalise](#)". Books like Eliza Clark's "Boy Parts", Asako Yuzuki's "Butter" and Bella Mackie's "How to Kill Your Family" have dominated booktok reading lists. With the subgenre benign branded "American Psycho for girls" and their protagonists as "Patricia Bateman's".

This taste for female psychopathy is shaping our screens too. Sleeper hits such as Showtime's "[Yellow Jackets](#)" (also available on [ITVX](#)) and Sky's "Sweet Pea" - '[coming of rage](#)' series interrogate young female anger. In film, the horror genre has seen a shift from women as victim/ avenging hero to rage fuelled perpetrator. Quoted in [BBC Radio 4's Sideways podcast](#), Elizabeth Erwin, researcher in film and media at LeHigh University, states that in horror movies the nature of women's screams has changed from one of fear to one of catharsis and rage. She states "*we more of a place where the scream is more intentional and overt..it used to be that scream queens were just victims and now we see them as survivors...what I'm seeing in more horror movies is... screaming giving voice to that trauma*".

TV, film and fiction are embracing women's anger, so why not advertising? [Geoff Copps](#),

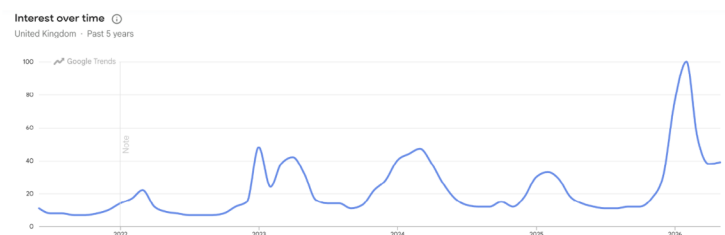
[head of research at IPG Mediabrands UK](#), says "One valuable property of anger is that it is deeply felt. In a world in which trust is at a premium, anger can act as a signifier of authenticity." Notable examples of brands harnessing female anger to positive effect include [Always "like a girl"](#) campaign and Plan UK's recent '[terms and conditions](#)'. For brands who's target audiences is women; harnessing and speaking to their anger could be a valuable way to build trust and feel authentic.

WHAT IS RAGEBAITING BRITAIN?

The answer lies at our feet...

The cost of living crisis and difficulty getting NHS appointments are getting Brits riled up, but its the ground beneath our ties (or lack of it) thats really feeling our collective wrath. Yes thats right, potholes are what is really getting Britain's goat.

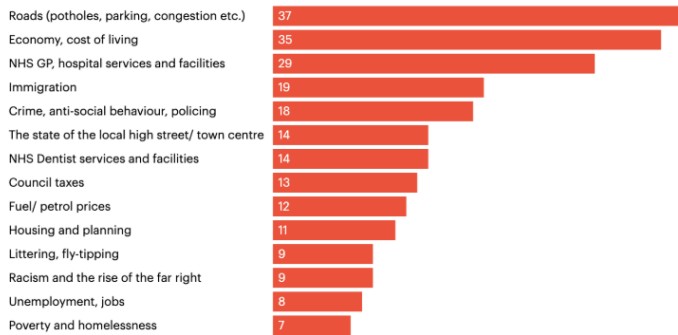
Potholes have been an eternal source of pain for Brits, but in 2026 they are getting more attention than ever. Google searches for them are at an all time high.



According to data from [YouGov](#) potholes (alongside the overall state of Britains roads) are the top issue for Brits ahead of the local elections, ahead of the economy, NHS and immigration.

Ahead of the local, mayoral and devolved elections, what do Britons say are the most important issues facing their local area?

What do you think are the most important issues facing your LOCAL AREA at this time? Please tick up to three. %



Social PR agency [Block Report](#) recently conducted a deep dive into Britain's pothole obsession. This obsession, isn't completely unfounded, pot hole related breakdowns have increased by 19% with an estimated 6 potholes per mile in the UK. As a result pot hole related content is booming, ITV news second most engaged TikTok ever is about accident caused by a pot hole. Articles and viral videos focusing on novel solutions or protests from disgruntled residents consistently go viral.

So what does this mean for brands? Well as Block report suggest, if you want to 'be part of culture' start by fixing the damn potholes!

RAGING AGAINST THE MACHINE

Brits are seeking catharsis through angry music

Music is getting angrier, more insular and sadder; at least that is according to a study from the [University of Innsbruck](#). They found that the lyrical content of music over the past half a century has become a lot more self-centred whilst also showing a decrease in positive, joyful lyrics and a rise in those that express anger, disgust or sadness.

This rise in angry music is reflected in the genres Brits are connecting with. LiveNation the world's largest concert promoter, said

[heavy-rock shows are up 14% year-over-year](#), with the likes of nu-metal bands Korn, Deftones and Linkin Park anchoring festivals alongside mainstays like Metallica and Iron Maiden. The [BPI](#) recently reported that last year rock music claimed its highest share of the UK singles market in nearly a decade in 2025.

So what's behind this rise in popularity of angry music? Well, it could be rising frustration, 75% of Brits believe society needs to change (WUAK 2026), a 5% increase since last year. It could also be attributed to a wider need for collective catharsis. The [British Psychological Society](#) reports on metal as an alternative to positive wellness language, instead honoring and playing with the intense emotions felt when going through difficult circumstances. In ITV's new [What Makes Content Catch](#), that decodes popular culture, we found in that uncertain times we tend to find a feeling of solace and safety by engaging with darker themed content - such as angry music.

