

The overarching message from these reviews is that there is no ‘silver bullet’ for preventing and treating anxiety and depression in young people – rather, prevention and treatment will need to rely on a combination of interventions that take into account individual needs and circumstances. Higher-quality evidence is also needed, such as large-scale trials using established protocols.

Along with the UNICEF report, the studies underscore the transformational part that funders must urgently play, and why researchers, clinicians and communities must work together on more studies that genuinely involve young people as co-investigators. Together, we can all do better to create a brighter, healthier future for a generation of young people facing more challenges than ever before.

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Protect COVID scientists in the public eye

Researchers are facing harassment for speaking out during the pandemic. Their institutions must do more to support them.

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen more scientists than usual enter the public arena, many of them for the first time. Every day, researchers are interviewed in the media, advise policymakers and write social-media posts. They might be discussing the latest coronavirus data; explaining and interpreting new research; or commenting on government policies. Some are now as recognizable as celebrities.

Clear, accurate public communication from scientists is essential in a pandemic. But for a significant minority, the attention has had unpleasant consequences. *Nature* has surveyed a subset of researchers who have spoken to the media about COVID-19, and found that 47 people – some 15% of the 321 respondents – had received death threats and that 72 had received threats of physical or sexual violence (see page 250). In response to other survey questions, the researchers who reported the highest frequency of trolling or personal attacks were more likely to say that it had affected their willingness to speak to the media in the future.

The results are not a random sample: they represent

those who chose to respond to *Nature*'s survey, which was based on a poll conducted by the Australian Science Media Centre, an organization that connects scientists to journalists. Other science media centres around the world sent *Nature*'s survey on to researchers in the United Kingdom, Canada, Taiwan, New Zealand and Germany, and *Nature* sent it to scientists in the United States and Brazil. Because those who have received threats might have been more motivated to respond, the overall proportion of scientists experiencing abuse might be lower.

But the results are shocking, nonetheless. Intimidation is unacceptable on any scale, and the findings should be of concern to all those who care about scientists' well-being. Such behaviour also risks discouraging researchers from contributing to public discussion – which would be a huge loss, given their expertise, during the pandemic.

Institutions at all levels must do more to protect and defend scientists, and to condemn intimidation. Of those respondents who told their employers about death threats – and not all did – some 20% said their employers were not at all supportive. The proportion was similar for those who had experienced trolling or personal attacks online, although in these cases respondents were less likely to have notified their employer in the first place. Of those who had received death threats, more than 80% had told their employer, compared with just over half of those who had been subject to trolling or personal attacks. Respondents rightly said that scientific societies, funders and governments should talk about the problem and condemn attacks.

Most of the respondents were in Europe and the United States, but threats are being made against researchers all over the world, by both individuals and organized anti-science or anti-vaccination campaigns. The findings show the need for more support, protection and training for scientists in the public eye.

Some researchers in other high-profile fields, such as climate change and animal research, have had to deal with harassment and abuse for many years (see, for instance, *Nature* **562**, 449–450; 2018); partly as a result, their institutions have built up some level of understanding on how to support scientists. The Science Media Centre in London is among organizations that have published advice for those experiencing harassment, including when, whether and how to engage with critics, and who to turn to for support (see go.nature.com/3lyyqlj). Support and information can also be gained from many other fields, ranging from journalism to sport, in which people are targeted by toxic online threats and sometimes real-world attacks.

Taking steps to support scientists who face harassment does not mean silencing robust, open criticism and discussion. The coronavirus pandemic has seen plenty of disagreement and changing views as new data have come in, as well as differing stances on which policies to adopt. Scientists and health officials should expect their research to be questioned and challenged, and should welcome critical feedback that is given in good faith. But threats of violence and extreme online abuse do nothing to encourage debate – and risk undermining science communication at a time when it has never mattered more.

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