

A person is shown from the side, wearing a white lab coat, writing on a clipboard with a pen. The background is a blurred clinical or office environment with a plant and a desk.

Key findings

Context

Profile of respondents

Working hours

Time for research activities

Impact on research

External peer reviewing activities

Funder support

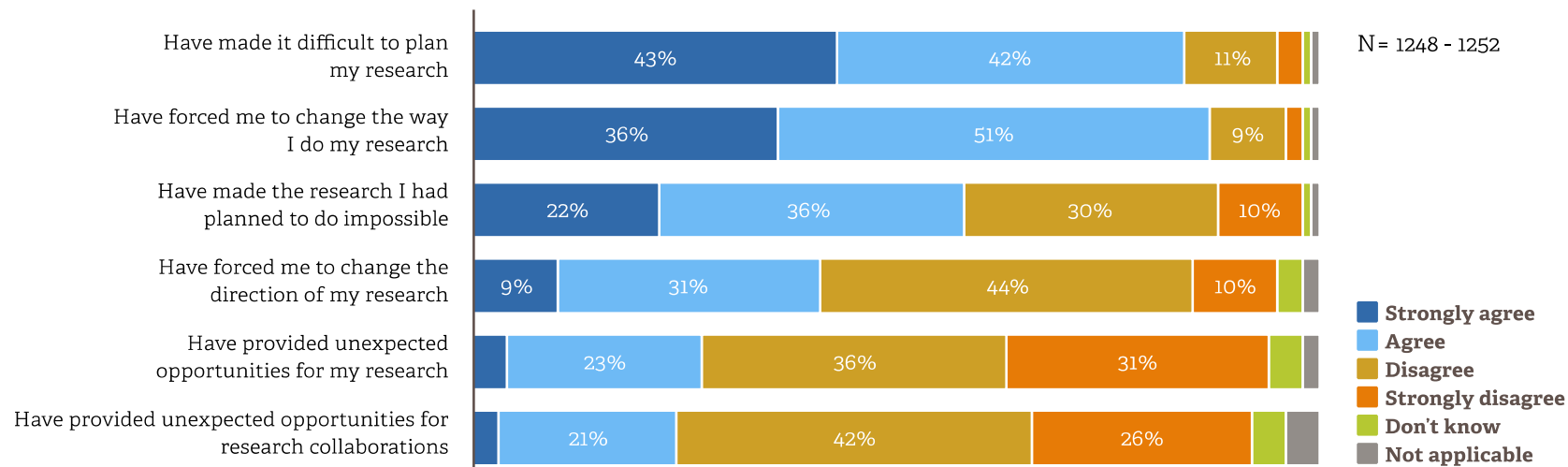
Health and wellbeing

Next steps



40% forced to change research direction while 27% identified unexpected opportunities

Since the start of the academic year (Oct 2020), ongoing Covid-19 restrictions



- **Ongoing Covid-19 restrictions have impacted research activity across the system. 87% agreed Covid restrictions over this academic year had forced changes in the way they do their research. Slightly less likely to agree in Panels C (82%) and D (80%) and PGRs (83%).**
- **85% agreed it made it difficult to plan their research.**
- **58% agreed it made it impossible to do the research they planned, with 66% of researchers with caring responsibilities agreeing Covid-19 made it impossible, compared to 52% without. Research staff were least likely to agree (48%) that Covid-19 restrictions made it impossible to do the research they planned.**
- **40% were forced to change the direction of their research, compared to Wave 1 when 49% of respondents reported exploring new research directions to some extent. PGRs were mostly likely to report having changed direction (55%).**
- **27% agreed Covid-19 had provided unexpected opportunities for their research. Senior researchers were most likely to agree (36%), with PGRs least likely (17%). While Panel C respondents were most likely to agree (42%), Panel B were least likely to agree (18%).**
- **There were no gender differences.**

Lack of in-person contact has had the biggest impact on ability to undertake planned research

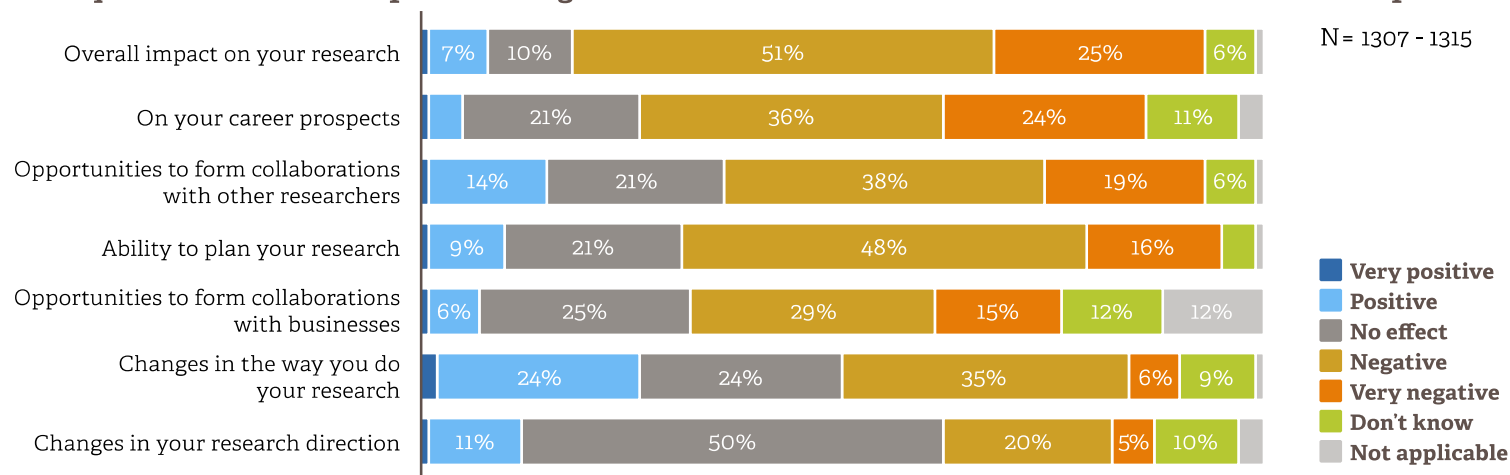
Top five activities* where Covid-19 restrictions have had the biggest impact on ability to undertake planned research

1. In-person contact with research group members
(2.9; in top five for 85% of respondents)
 2. Access to research facilities
(2.9; in top five for 73% of respondents)
 3. Access to research materials and infrastructure
(e.g. to equipment, computing facilities, archives, samples, libraries, or collections)
(2.2; in top five for 66% of respondents)
 4. Attendance at conferences and in-person events
(1.7; in top five for 69% of respondents)
 5. Ability to undertake fieldwork / trials / engage research users
(1.4; in top five for 66% of respondents)
- PGRs and research staff were more likely to identify lack of access to research facilities (3.5; 3.9) and infrastructure (3.0; 2.3); they were less likely to identify lack of in-person contact (2.2; 2.7), attendance at events (1.4; 1.6) and fieldwork (1.0; 1.3).
 - REF Panels A & B were more likely to identify lack of access to research facilities (3.3; 3.4); Panel C inability to undertake fieldwork (3.0); Panel D lack of access to research infrastructure (3.3).
 - Those with caring responsibilities were more likely to identify lack of in-person contact (3.1) compared to those without (2.7). There were no notable gender differences.

* Respondents were offered 13 choices. Responses were scored: 1st = 5 points; 2nd = 4 points, etc. Maximum score = 5

Majority predicted a negative impact over the next three years on their research, ability to plan, form collaborations and career prospects

Consequences of current ways of working due to Covid-19 restrictions on research over the next three years?



- **76% of respondents predicted a negative overall impact on their research due to Covid-19, with Panel C respondents least likely to predict a negative impact (67%).**
- **64% reported a negative impact on their ability to plan their research, increasing to 72% of mid-career researchers.**
- **41% reported a negative impact on the way they do their research, while 25% reported a positive impact.**
- **50% reported that Covid-19 will have no impact on the direction of their research, with mid-career (56%) and senior researchers (57%) most likely to predict no impact. Male researchers (56%) were more likely to predict no impact than female researchers (45%). While 12% of all respondents predicted a positive impact.**
- **Between 20 – 25% report no effect over the next three years on their ability to plan, collaborations with researchers or businesses, or their career prospects.**
- **34% of PGRs and 28% of research staff predicted a very negative impact of Covid-19 on their careers. Those with child-caring responsibilities (65%) and female researchers (62%) were more likely to predict a negative impact on their careers than those without (57%) and male researchers (56%).**

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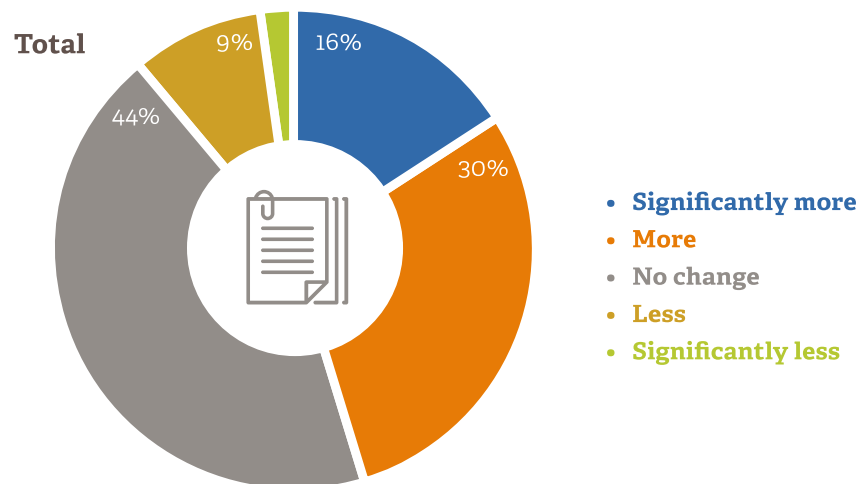
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Almost half of peer-reviewers reported increased external requests to review research papers



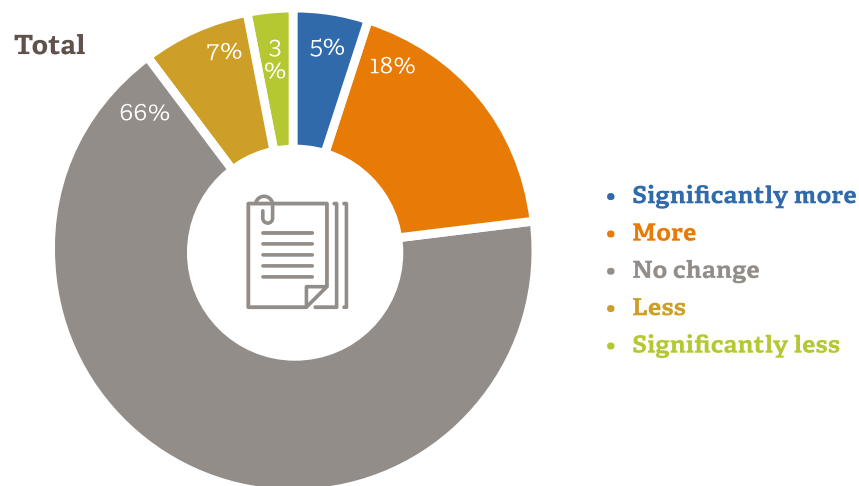
- **46% of respondents involved in peer reviewing activities* had seen an increased number of requests to peer review papers. There were no gender differences.**
- **Researchers in Panel A had seen the largest increase at 51%, while Panel D had seen the lowest increase at 33%.**
- **44% of mid-career and 56% of senior researchers reported an increased number of requests.**

Of those receiving additional requests, 66% were unable to meet them.** 73% of mid-career and senior researchers and those with caring responsibilities (74%) were less likely to be able to meet additional requests.

* Data have been normalised by removing 'not applicable' responses. (N=1018)

** Sample sizes are small.

Almost a quarter of peer-reviewers reported increased requests from funders to peer review research proposals



- **23% of respondents involved in peer reviewing activities* had seen an increased number of requests from funders to peer research proposals (66% no change; 10% less). There were no gender differences.**
- **25% of mid-career and 31% of senior researchers reported an increased number of requests. There was no difference for UKRI-funded researchers.**

Of those receiving additional requests, 58% were unable to meet them.** Female researchers (63%) and those with caring responsibilities (69%) were less likely to be able to meet requests.

* Data have been normalised by removing 'not applicable' responses. N=871

** Sample sizes are small.

A person is shown from the chest down, wearing a light-colored top. They are holding a clipboard with a silver clip and a pen, writing on a piece of paper. The background is a blurred office environment with a desk, a chair, and a potted plant. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent dark grey bar.

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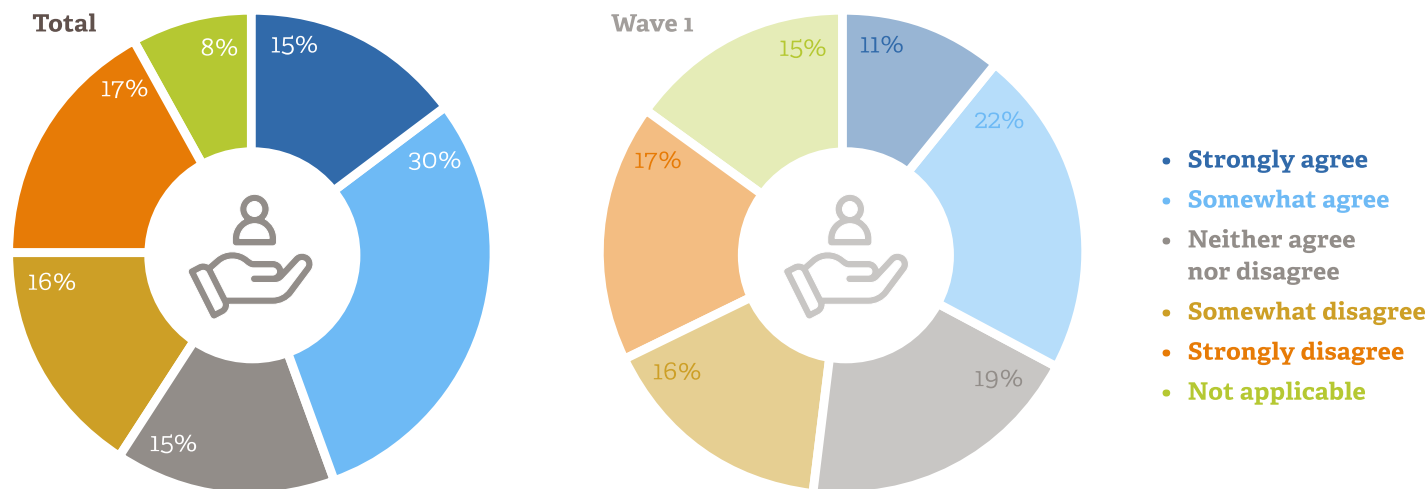
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Improved, but still mixed views on funder support during Covid-19 restrictions

My (principal) funder has provided clear information on how they will support me to manage any changes in my ability to continue my research.

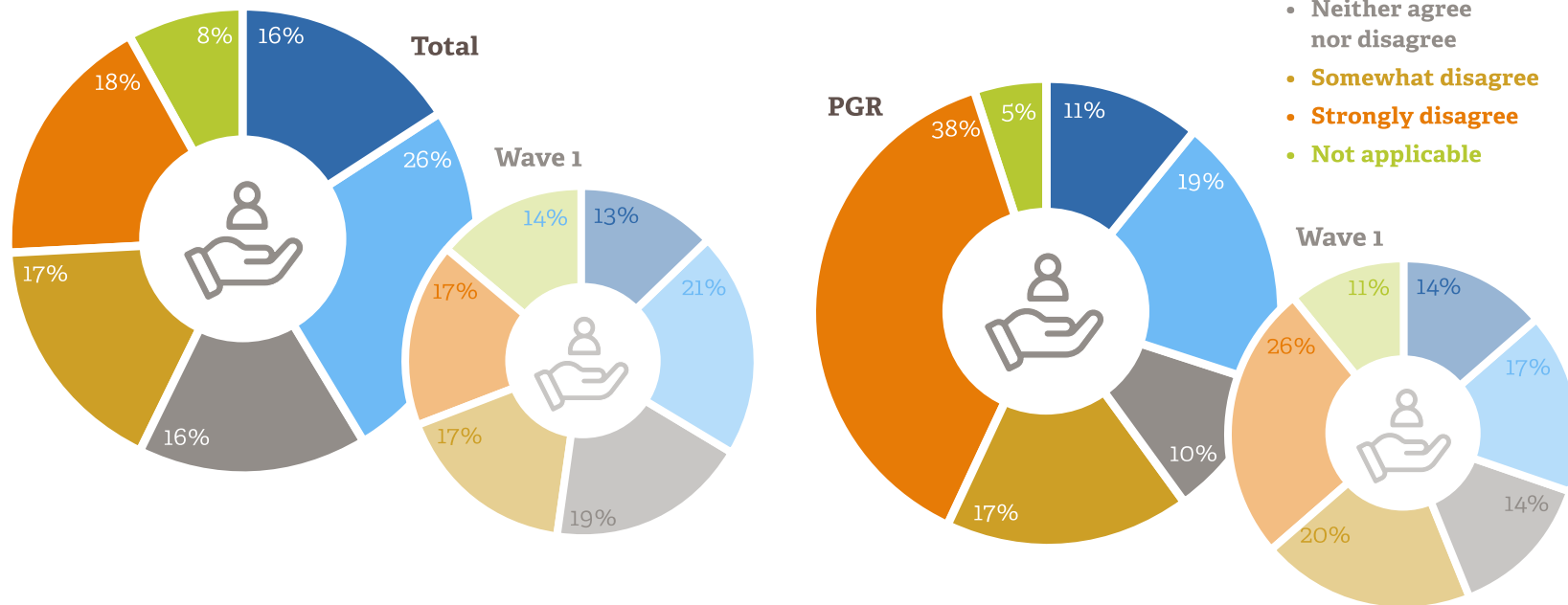


- Overall 45% of respondents agreed their (principal) funder provided clear information since 16 March 2020 when social distancing came into effect on how they will support them to manage any changes in their ability to continue their research. This compared to 33% of respondents agreeing in Wave 1 in June 2020.
- Senior researchers most likely to agree (56%) in February 2020 compared to 40% in Wave 1.
- 39% of UKRI-funded researchers agreed compared to 54-62% for researchers funded by charities, academies and NIHR.
- A larger percentage of all PGRs (51%) disagreed that they had received clear information compared to 41% of PGRs in Wave 1.
- There were no differences by REF Panel, gender or caring responsibilities.

* 53% of PGRs funded by UKRI; 11% by charities, academies and NIHR collectively.

More PGRs disagree that their funder had done all they could to support their research compared to June 2020

My (principal) funder has done all I believe they can / should do to support my research at this time.



- **55% of PGRs disagreed that their (principal) funder had done all they could / should do to support their research since 16 March, when social distancing came into effect. This compared to 46% of PGRs disagreeing in Wave 1.**
- **All other career stages reported lower levels of disagreement (17% - 24%) compared to PGRs and to Wave 1 (26% - 30%).**
- **For all UKRI funded researchers 34% agreed* compared to 52% - 58% for researchers funded by charities, academies and NIHR.**
- **No differences by REF Panel, gender or caring responsibilities.**

* 53% of PGRs in the sample funded by UKRI; 11% by charities, academies and NIHR collectively.