

Must do better

COVID-19 has thrown science into the spotlight and created a [pandemic effect](#) - inspiring more people to apply for science courses at university. But [recent research by the Wellcome Foundation](#) paints what Director Jeremy Farrar describes as “a shocking portrait of the research environment – and one we must all help change.” Key findings include that the research culture enables unhealthy competition, bullying and mental health issues:

- 78% of researchers think that high levels of competition have created unkind and aggressive conditions. 61% of researchers have witnessed bullying or harassment; 43% have experienced it themselves
- 53% of researchers have wanted professional help for depression or anxiety

It also highlights a lack of managerial skill

- Most researchers (80%) are confident in their people management skills - but only 48% have received any training. Those being managed often miss out on critical aspects of good management – only half have received feedback on their performance (55%) or had a formal appraisal (49%) in the past year

Critically, perhaps, the report highlights that creativity - one of the most commonly cited features of an ideal research culture - is being squeezed out by a system that favours quantity over quality:

- 75% of researchers believe creativity is being stifled
- 69% of researchers think that rigour of results is an important research outcome - but one in five junior researchers and students (23%) have felt pressured by their supervisor to produce a particular result
- 43% believe the workplace puts more value on metrics than on research quality

Wellcome sets out [a challenge to the community](#): to make meaningful progress against the inequalities in the sector and to build the culture researchers want to see. A culture, of course, that will make science a better career for all those inspired to enter it and join the global fight against disease.