

Research highlights lived experiences of supramolecular chemists during COVID-19

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A new research paper by the international Women In Supramolecular Chemistry (WISC) network uncovers the lived experiences of supramolecular chemists through the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the impact of caring responsibilities and the emotional load carried by

research project leaders.

It has already been well documented that women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) academia are disproportionately affected by funding structures, academic culture, research environments and caring responsibilities. The WISC network promotes the growth of networks to support women working in STEM, using an area specific approach to promote changes where there is a lack of gender balance and diversity.

The study, led by Dr. Jennifer Leigh (WISC vice chair for research) and Dr. Jennifer Hiscock (WISC chair) at Kent, alongside WISC's wider team of international researchers, found that the mental health of those with caring responsibilities was significantly negatively affected. The lack of access to laboratories during the COVID-19 pandemic was met with challenges by those who already felt research projects were facing delays, while the gradual return to laboratories with reduced capacity due to social distancing was not much easier. Research project leaders felt stretched between supporting laboratory-based researchers face-to-face and virtually with a reduced laboratory capacity rota.

Dr. Hiscock said: "It is essential that support is put in place to prevent any further loss of diversity from not only the [supramolecular chemistry](#) community but also wider areas of STEM. Any further loss of diversity is something that just cannot be allowed to happen."

Dr. Leigh said: "Individuals working in supramolecular chemistry need to have a platform to reflect on and share their lived experiences so that they are less isolated and marginalized in their day-to-day working lives. The WISC [network](#) aims to support those in need, but a bigger change in the STEM community is required."

Their [research paper](#) titled "Managing research throughout COVID-19:

Lived experiences of [supramolecular](#) chemists," is published by *Chem*.

More information: Jennifer S. Leigh et al, Managing research throughout COVID-19: Lived experiences of supramolecular chemists, *Chem* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.chempr.2022.01.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chempr.2022.01.001)

Provided by University of Kent

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