

# **Survey finds US researchers most concerned about fighting misinformation and tackling increased online abuse**

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# Confidence in research: researchers in the spotlight



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Credit: Economist Impact

Elsevier released the results of a global survey, conducted jointly with Economist Impact, showing that U.S. researchers surveyed believe the public's understanding of the scientific research process actually deteriorated during the pandemic despite increased public scrutiny on research findings. Surveyed researchers also expressed significant concerns about online abuse that they are experiencing as well as a surge in the release of misinformation.

"Over the past two years, we have all witnessed the very public debates on the latest COVID-19 research and who and what to trust and believe," said Ann Gabriel, U.S. Confidence in Research Lead and Senior Vice President of Global Strategic Networks at Elsevier.

"According to the hundreds of U.S. researchers we connected with, expectations of the researcher's role in scientific communication have shifted considerably over the last few years. Something very apparent in our study with Economist Impact was that in addition to their regular research activities, researchers now also work increasingly to combat false and misleading information as well as online abuse, and they want support to do so."

One significant finding from the "Confidence in Research: Researchers in the Spotlight" report shows almost half of U.S. researchers (44%) say they've experienced or known someone who has experienced some form of abuse or acrimonious interaction online—the highest number of any country surveyed. This is all the more challenging, given only 13% of U.S. researchers surveyed said they have high confidence communicating research findings via social media. Top challenges highlighted by U.S. researchers include the politicization of research,

oversimplification of complex research, and a lack of public understanding of how research is conducted.

The global report includes a survey of 3,144 researchers across Europe, North America, Latin America, Middle East, Africa, and Asia, as well as interviews and roundtables with scholars across the world, conducted over the past 9 months. Elsevier worked in partnership with leading science and [research organizations](#), including Research!America. The global data was presented today at the Falling Walls Science Summit in Berlin, Germany.

"The pandemic spotlighted science—a good thing! It also raised questions for scientists and researchers about how they communicate their work. The [research community](#) has an opportunity and a responsibility to improve the public understanding of the scientific process and make changes for the better to help take advantage of science's moment in the spotlight," said Mary Woolley, President, and CEO of Research!America.

"Bolstering researchers' communication skills is key," said Woolley. "Researchers are calling on institutions to better support and reward researchers to develop the skills to facilitate meaningful engagement between researchers and the public. There is much to gain from building these pathways; there is much to lose if we don't."

Of the U.S. researchers surveyed, 78% believe the pandemic has increased the importance of separating good, quality information from misinformation; 79% feel the pandemic increased the importance of science bodies and researchers explaining and communicating their research better. What's more, 27% say they now view publicly countering false or misleading information as an important part of their role in society.

**More information:** For more information on the *Confidence in Research* report visit: [www.elsevier.com/confidence-in-research](http://www.elsevier.com/confidence-in-research)

Provided by Elsevier

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