



wellcome

Grant funding data report 2019/20

March 2021

Key points

- Wellcome's current **grant portfolio** has increased in total value by 38% (from £3,725m to £5,150m) since 2015/16.
- Our current **international** grant portfolio has grown by 128% (from £696m to £1,586m) since 2015/16, and now accounts for 31% of our total grant portfolio.
- Our funding is **concentrated within a few organisations**. 75% of our grant portfolio is held by 20 organisations, and 38% is held by University of Oxford, Wellcome Sanger Institute, University of Cambridge and University College London.
- 704 grants worth a total of £1,015m were awarded in 2019/20. 369 of these grants, totalling £306m, were awarded on our standard **response-mode schemes**.
- We received 3,584 **applications** in 2019/20, a reduction of 47% from the previous year. This is due to the closure of many of our high-volume, low-value award schemes, which have been replaced by block awards or third-party funding.
- The overall **applicant success rate** for competitively assessed schemes was 11% in 2019/20 – down from 15% in 2015/16. Success rates for men and women were the same, but those for UK-based Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) applicants (8%) were significantly lower than for UK-based White applicants (14%), with Black applicants having the lowest success rates. Women and BAME applicants were less likely than men and White applicants to apply for higher value or more senior schemes.

Headline facts and figures: 2019/20



Current Portfolio

£5.1bn

Value of the current grant portfolio, an increase of 38% (£1.4bn) over the past five years

3,561

Number of awards in our current grant portfolio, an increase of 8% over the past five years

£3.8bn

74% of our grant portfolio is in Science; 9% (£456m) is in Innovations; 4% (£221m) is in Culture & Society; 6% (£292m) is in priority areas; 5% (£249m) is in Wellcome Leap; 2% (£99m) is cross-divisional



Applications & Awards

£3.7bn

Requested in 2019/20 for grant funding, from 3,584 preliminary and full grant applications

47%

Decrease in number of applications in 2019/20

11%

Award rate in 2019/20, down from 15% five years ago (including preliminary and full applications)

£1,015m

Funding committed in 2019/20, on 704 grants



People we fund

15,000

People supported on our grants (12,000 UK, 3,000 in other countries)

46%

Proportion of grant awards in 2019/20 made to women (the award rates for men and women are the same)

8%

Award rate for UK-based BAME applicants in 2019/20, compared with 14% for UK-based White applicants



Places we fund

488

Organisations funded in 91 countries, including 242 UK organisations (76 of which are higher education institutions)

£1.6bn

31% of the grant portfolio funds international research

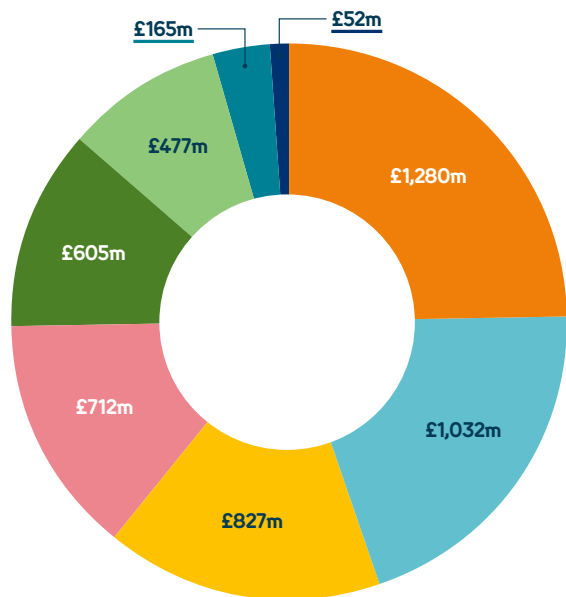
£3.9bn

75% of the grant portfolio is held by 20 organisations

Current portfolio in 2019/20

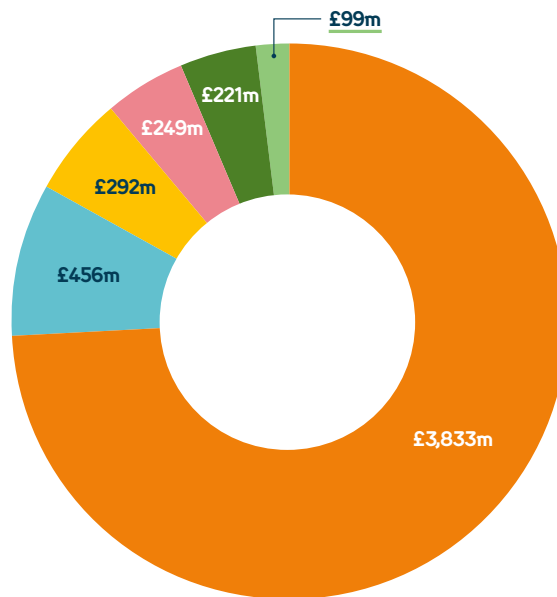


Grant portfolio value by area of activity



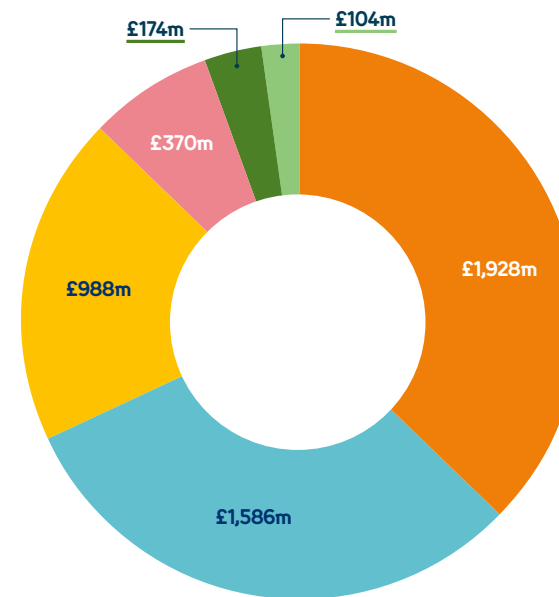
- Infectious disease and immunobiology
- Genomics, genetics and epigenetics*
- Development and ageing
- Cross-area activities**
- Neuroscience and mental health
- Population, environment and health
- Cultural and social contexts of health
- Public engagement

Grant portfolio value by Division and budget



- Science (Primary Fund)*
- Innovations (Primary Fund)
- Priority Areas (Reserve Fund)
- Wellcome Leap (Reserve Fund)
- Culture and Society (Primary Fund)
- Cross-divisional (Primary Fund)

Grant portfolio value by type of support



- People
- Teams
- Places*
- Miscellaneous
- Resources
- Seed Funding

- The distribution of our current grant portfolio between areas of activity and types of grant has changed little since 2015/16. Funding has risen by over 25% for all activities.

* £518m in core support for the Wellcome Sanger Institute.

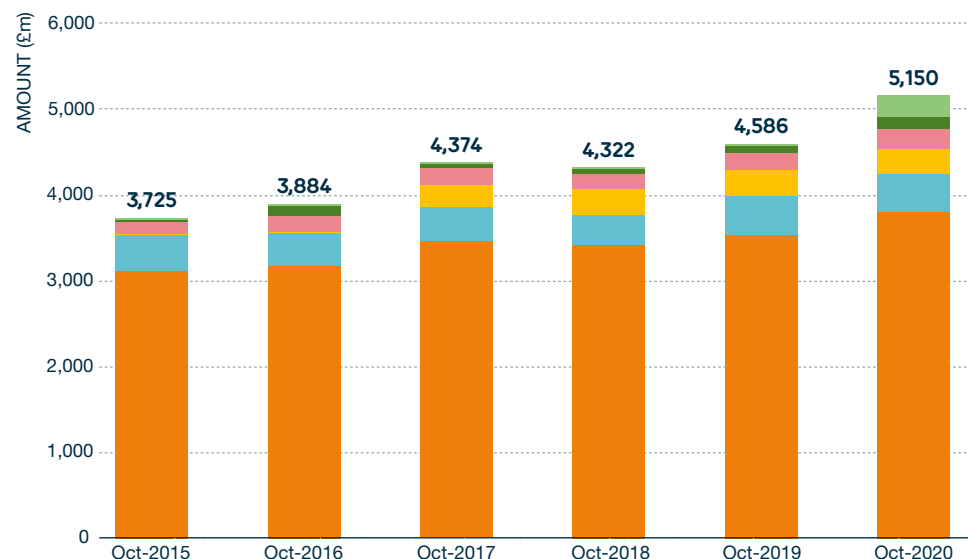
** Includes India Alliance, Diamond Light Source, Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst, Open Access block awards, Institutional Strategic Support Fund, Institutional Translational Partnership Awards and Wellcome Leap.

Portfolio trends



Our grant portfolio has risen steadily over time

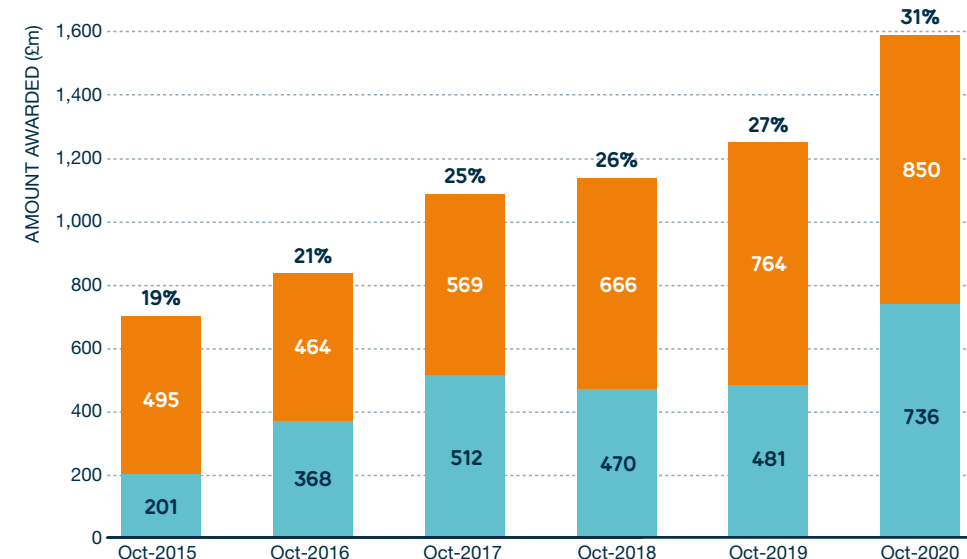
Grant portfolio value at 1 October 2015-2020



Our grant portfolio has grown by 38% in value (from £3,725m to £5,150m) and 8% in number (from 3,280 to 3,561) over the past five years.

An increasing proportion of funding is spent on international activities

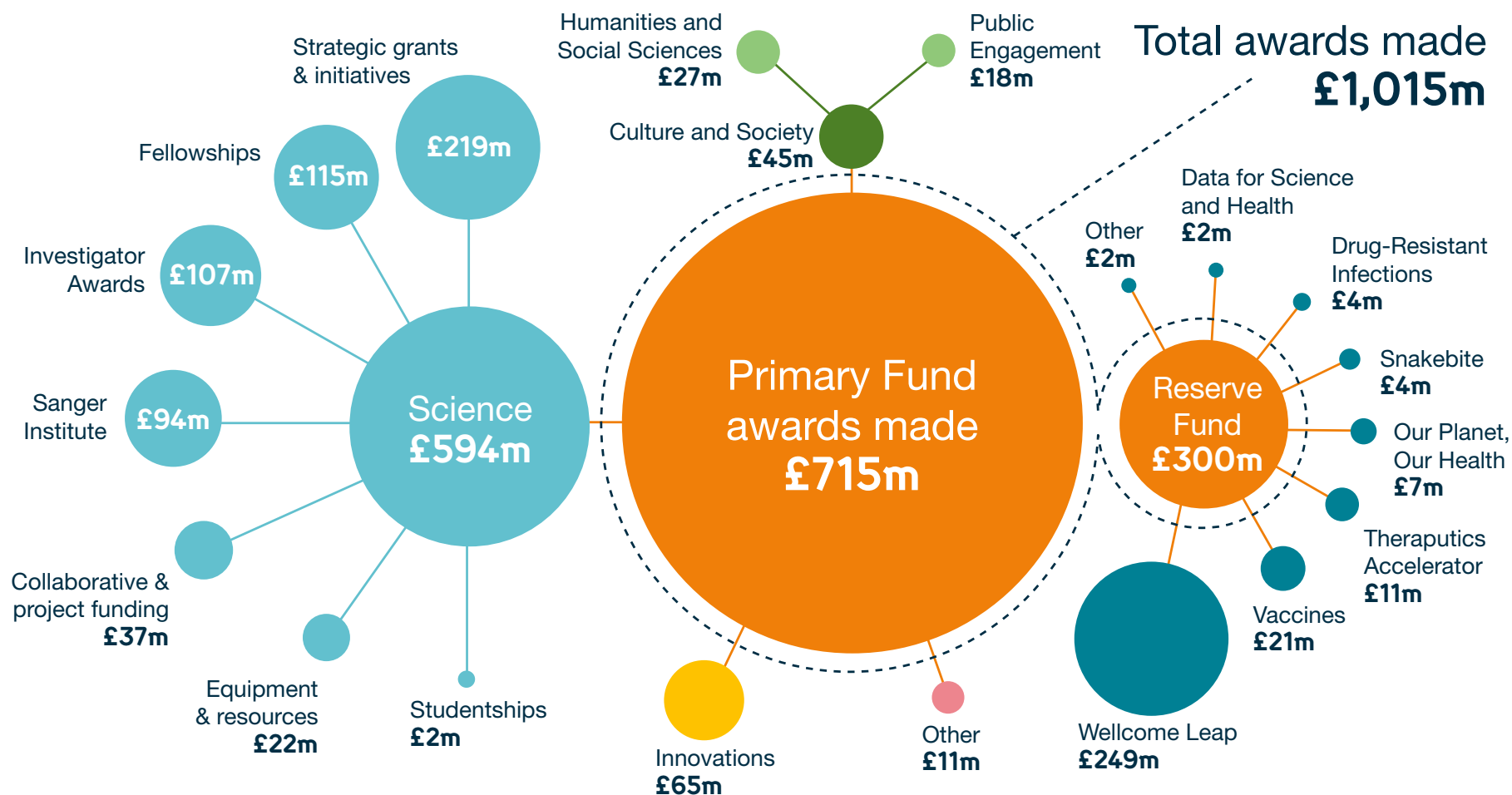
International grant portfolio value at 1 October 2015-2020



Grant support for research outside the UK has risen by 128% over the past five years, from £696m to £1,586m. This increase is largely driven by:

- Larger-value core funding renewals for the Africa and Asia Programmes.
- One-off international initiatives (CEPI, CARB-X, DELTAS, H3Africa, Wellcome Leap, Zika and Ebola research support initiatives).
- An increase in international team awards (e.g. Collaborative Awards).

Funding committed in 2019/20



This data captures the activities we support through our grants and awards. The figures differ from those in our Annual Report and Financial Statements because they:

- include full commitment values for awards made as Programme Related Investments

- exclude directly funded activities, including Wellcome Collection
- exclude supplements, funds written back and other adjustments

Full information about our funding each year is in our Annual Report and Financial Statements.

Funding trends

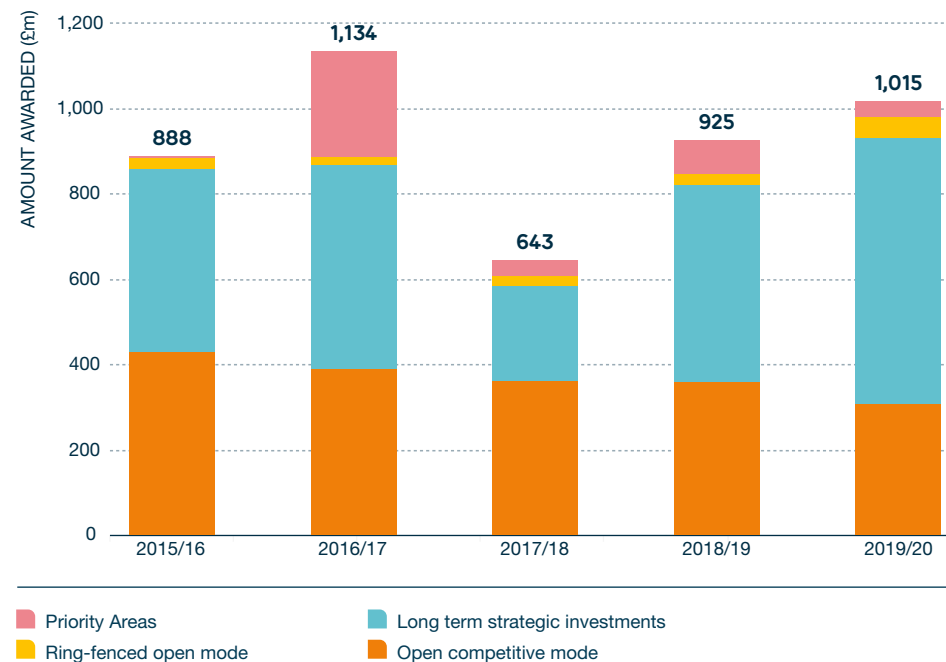


Funding fluctuates from year to year depending on timing of major commitments

Over the past five years our funding has been committed as follows:

- 40% (£1,845m) on **open competitive mode** calls (e.g. Collaborative Awards, Investigator Awards, Fellowships).
- 3% (£144m) on thematic **ring-fenced open mode funding** (e.g. coronavirus, Ebola & Zika initiatives, Global Health Trials, discretionary awards).
- 48% (£2,047m) on **long-term strategic investments** (Sanger, Wellcome Leap, Centres, Africa & Asia Programmes, Innovations Flagships and Priorities, India Alliance, Diamond, Biobank, PhD Programmes, ISSF)
- 9% (£401m) on **Priority Areas** (e.g. Vaccines, Drug Resistant Infections, Our Planet Our Health).

Funding committed by mechanism

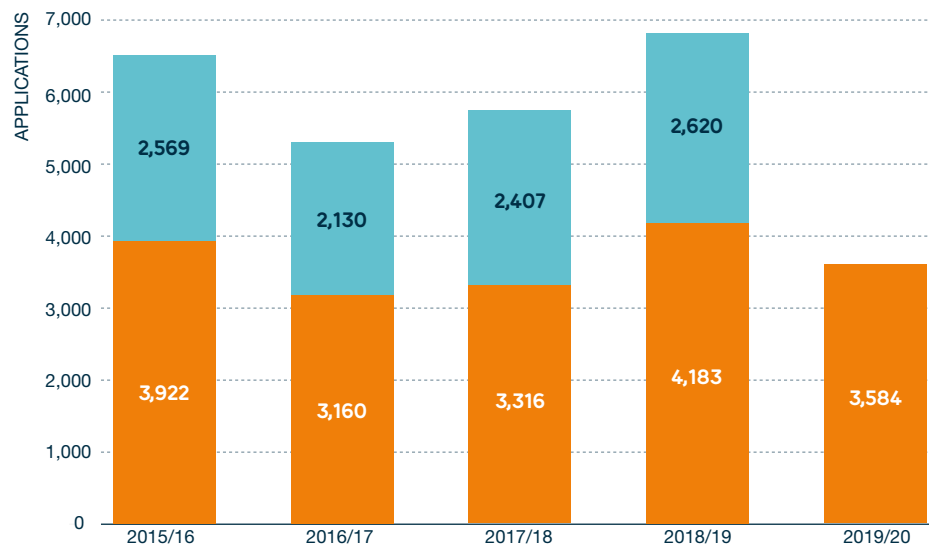


Funding trends



Application numbers fell substantially in 2019/20

Application numbers

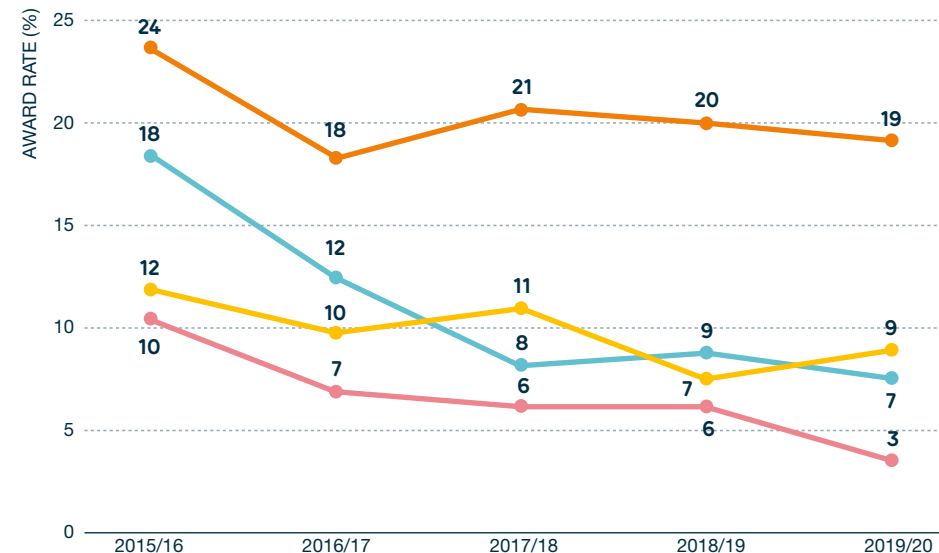


- Terminated schemes
- Current schemes

- In 2019/20 we received 3,584 preliminary and full applications and made 704 awards.
- The number of applications fell by 47% in 2019/20, due to the closure of several low-value award schemes: Vacation Scholarships, Seed funding, HSS Small Grants, Public Engagement Fund. These activities are now supported through block awards or third party funding.
- The total amount requested in applications in 2019/20 fell by 8% (from £3,868m to 3,556m).

Award rates have declined over time

Award rates



- Investigator Awards & Senior Fellowships
- Early Career Fellowships
- Intermediate Fellowships
- Collaborative Awards

Over the past five years:

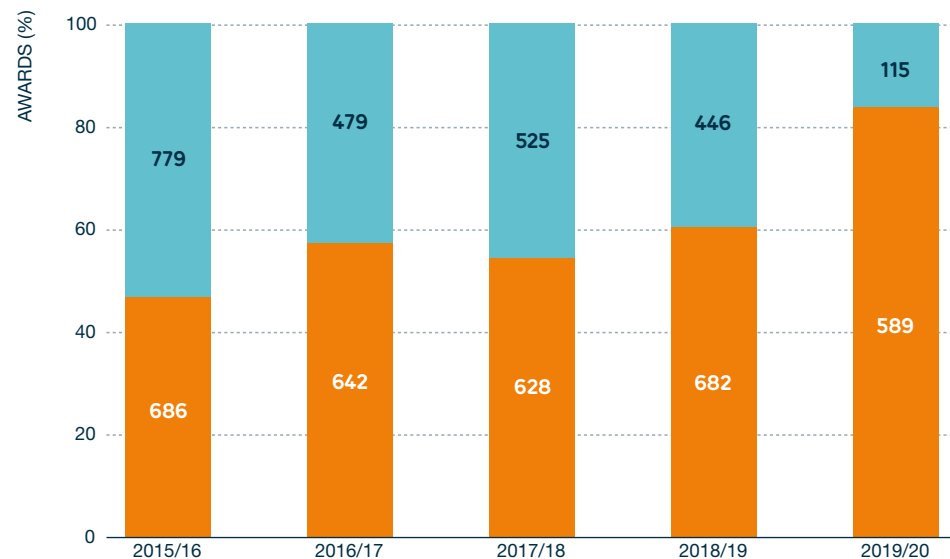
- The award rate for applications (including the preliminary stage) for all currently active schemes has fallen from 15% to 11%.
- The award rate for full applications only has also fallen, from 24% to 20%.

Funding trends



We fund fewer low-value awards

Number and percentage of awards by value

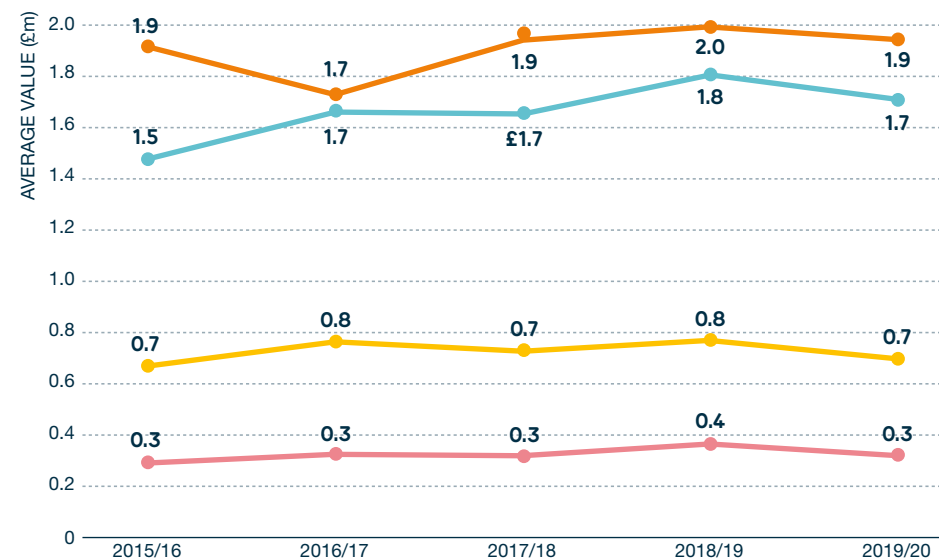


■ Under £100k
■ £100k or more

Over the past five years, the proportion of awards for less than £100,000 has fallen from 53% in 2015/16 to 16% in 2019/20, following the closure of low-value, high-volume schemes (Vacation Scholarships, Seed Awards, HSS Small Grants, Public Engagement Fund).

The value of awards has risen by up to 15%

Average award value by scheme



■ Early Career Fellowships
■ Intermediate Fellowships
■ Investigator Awards & Senior Fellowships
■ Collaborative Awards

Over the past five years:

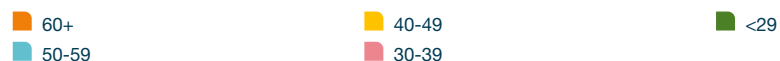
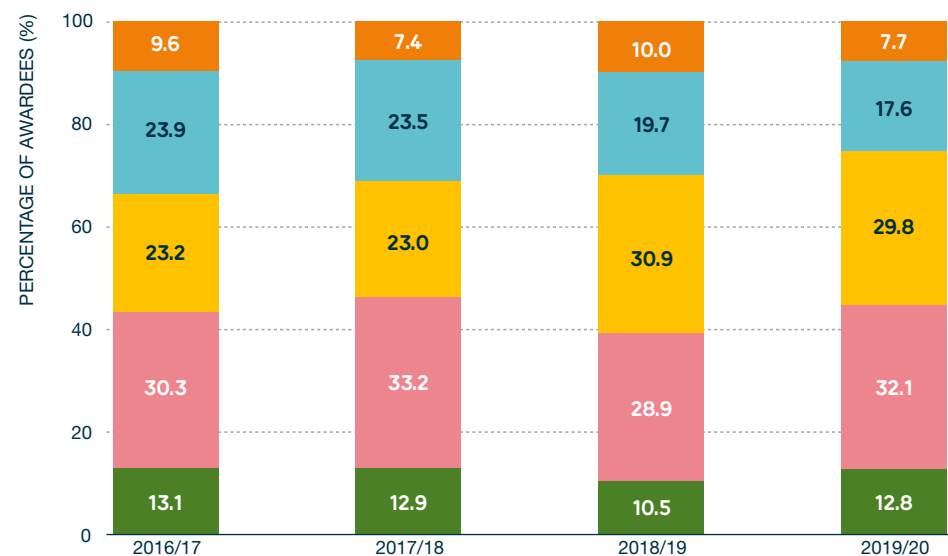
- The average value of Investigator Awards and Senior Fellowships has by 15%.
- We have increased the average value of Early Career Fellowships by 10%.
- Average award values for other types of funding have changed little.
- Costs requested on applications have shown the same trends.

People we fund



The age profile of our awardees has not changed

Number and percentage of awardees by age range



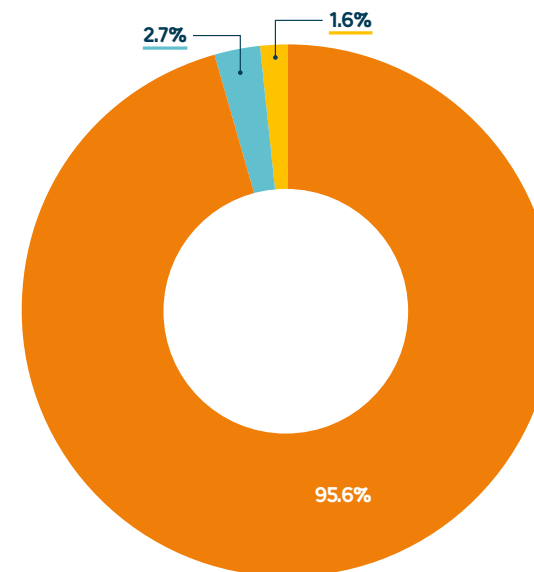
Over the past four years:

- The median age of awardees for most competitively assessed schemes has not significantly changed (e.g. Investigator Award recipients 49-50 years; Senior Fellows 43-44; Intermediate Fellows 37-38; Early Career Fellows 32-34).
- Wellcome has also funded nearly 800 students awarded directly by our PhD Programmes during the past four years who are not included in the figures above. 70% of these PhD students are aged <29.

Data on applications and awards made on schemes discontinued in 2018/19 has not been included.

The proportion of awardees who identify as disabled remains very low

Percentage of disabled awardees*



- 3.8% of applicants (n=122) for competitively assessed awards in 2019/20 identified as disabled. This is slowly increasing although we do not know if this reflects a greater proportion of disabled applicants or higher disclosure rates. To compare, approximately 4.5% of UK academic staff identify as disabled (2018-19 HESA data), and the UK government estimates 19% of working age adults are disabled.
- Over the past four years, the success rate for disabled applicants (10.7%) is lower than for non-disabled applicants (13.4%). The small number of disabled applicants and awardees prevents more detailed analyses.

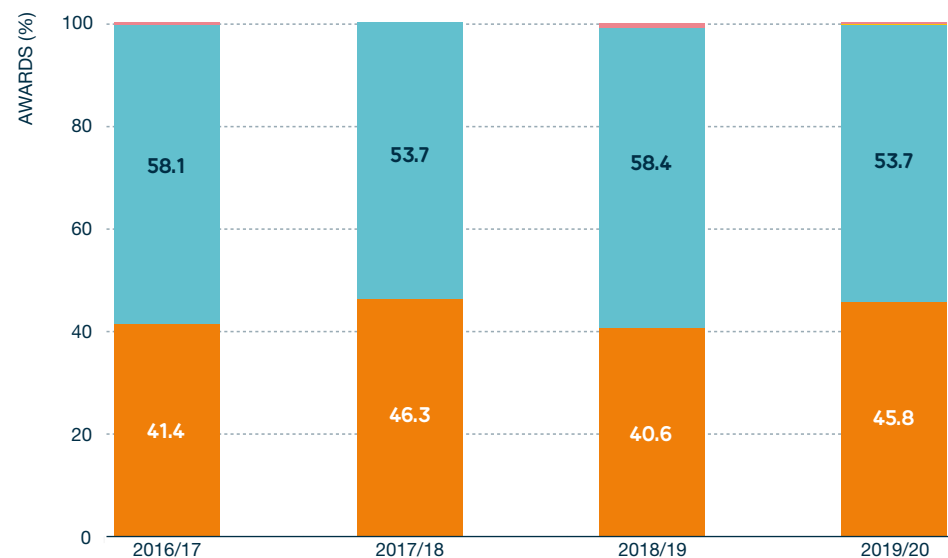
*Based on 367 awards. Data on age missing for 4.5% and disability missing for 3.5% of competitively assessed awards. Data on applications and awards made on schemes discontinued in 2018/19 has not been included.

People we fund



Women receive 43% of awards

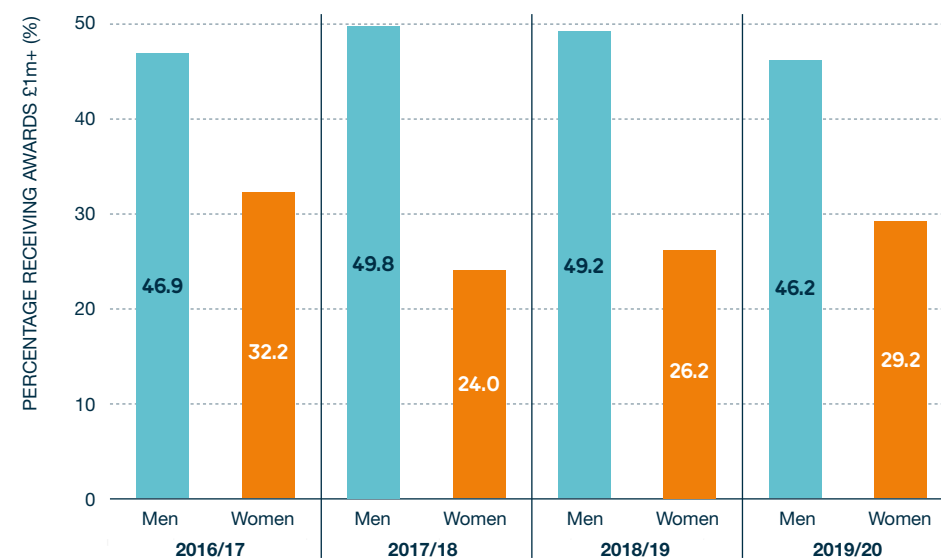
Percentage of awards made by gender



- Over the past four years, women have received 43% of competitively assessed awards (35.9% in Science, 68.9% in Culture & Society).
- The overall success rates for men (13.0%) and women (12.7%) are not significantly different over the past four years.

Women receive fewer grants above £1m

Percentage of awards for £1m or more by gender



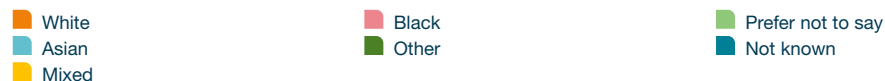
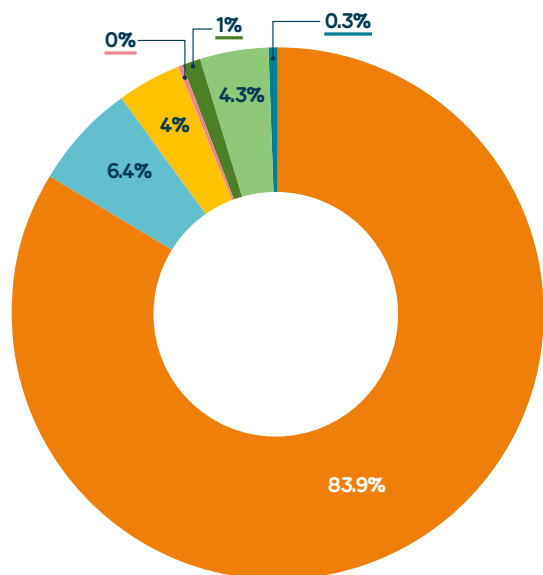
- Women make up a smaller proportion of applicants and awardees for more senior level awards and those with higher financial value on competitively assessed schemes. As a consequence, men are awarded more than twice the total amount of funding as women per year (e.g. in 2019/20, men were awarded c.£250m, women £115m). At scheme level, on average men request and are awarded 10-15% more funding on Science competitively assessed schemes.

People we fund



BAME, and particularly Black, researchers are underrepresented among UK-based awardees

Ethnicity of awardees*



For competitively assessed awards based at UK organisations (excluding international schemes) over the past four years:

- The proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) applicants rose from 14.8% to 18.2%. The proportion of BAME awardees has fluctuated but not increased. In 2019/20 no awards were made to applicants reporting their ethnicity as Black or Black British. To compare, 14% of the population in the UK 2011 census were BAME, and 17% of UK academic staff are BAME (2018-19 HESA data).

*Based on 299 awards. Data on ethnicity not available for 0.1% of applicants and 0.3% of awardees for UK competitively assessed awards. Data on applications and awards made on schemes discontinued in 2018/19 has not been included.

Success rates for BAME applicants remain lower than for White applicants

Award rate by ethnicity



- Success rates are lower for BAME applicants (10.3%) than for White applicants (16.1%). Success rates are similar for BAME men and women. Success rates are lowest for Black applicants (8.6%).

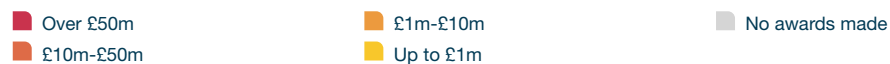
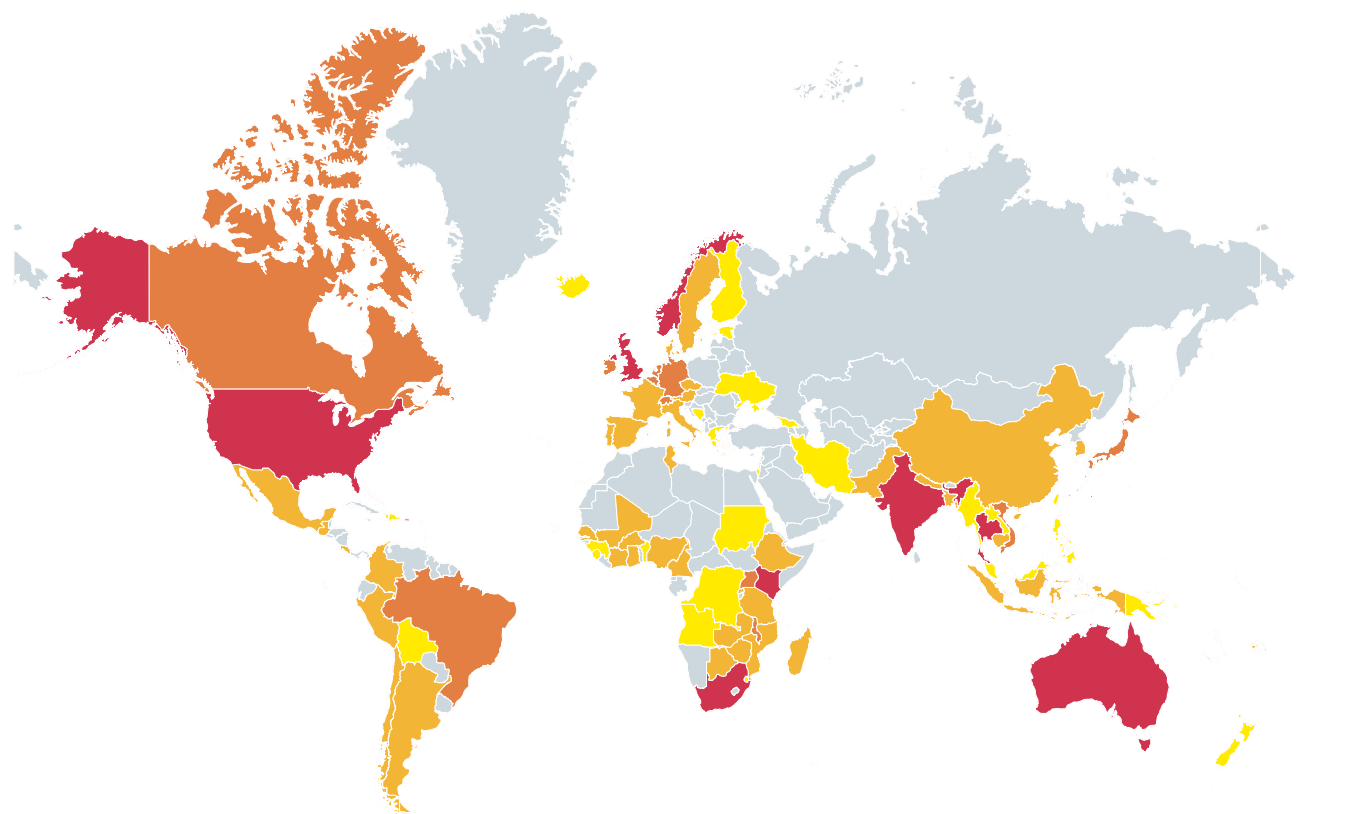
BAME researchers make up a smaller proportion of applicants and awardees for more senior awards and those with higher financial value.

If international schemes and awards to non-UK based organisations are included, over the past four years 28.6% of applicants and 19.3% of awardees are BAME. Award rates are 9.6% for BAME applicants and 15.3% for White applicants.

Places we fund worldwide



Funding by country



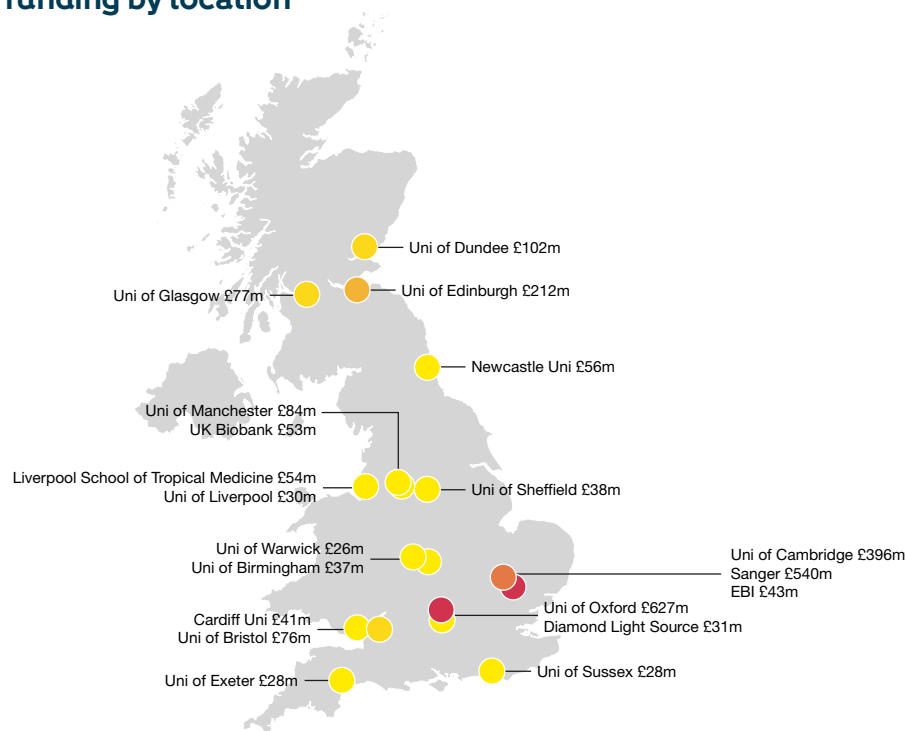
- **31%** of our current grant portfolio supports research in **91** countries outside the UK.
- **17%** of the portfolio (£850m) has been awarded directly to organisations outside the UK (including £125m CARB-X, £120m India Alliance, £120m African Academy of Sciences and £81m CEPI).
- **14%** (£736m) has been awarded indirectly through UK institutions for research carried out in other countries (including £249m to Wellcome Leap, and £171m to the Africa and Asia Programmes in Thailand, Vietnam, Kenya, Malawi and South Africa).

Places we fund worldwide



UK organisations with more than £25m in grant funding

UK funding by location



London organisation funding

● University College London – £407m	● King's College London – £163m	● Medical Research Council – £54m
● Wellcome Leap Inc. – £249m	● The Francis Crick Institute – £125m	● Queen Mary University of London – £30m
● Imperial College London – £181m	● London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine – £77m	● Academy of Medical Sciences – £29m



UK funding is concentrated in a few places

- 85% of our grant portfolio is held by UK organisations.
- 38% of our grant portfolio is held by four organisations: University of Oxford, Sanger Institute, University of Cambridge, University College London.
- Several UK higher education institutions – including Oxford, Cambridge, UCL, Dundee, Birkbeck, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine – receive at least 15% of their total research grant income from Wellcome.

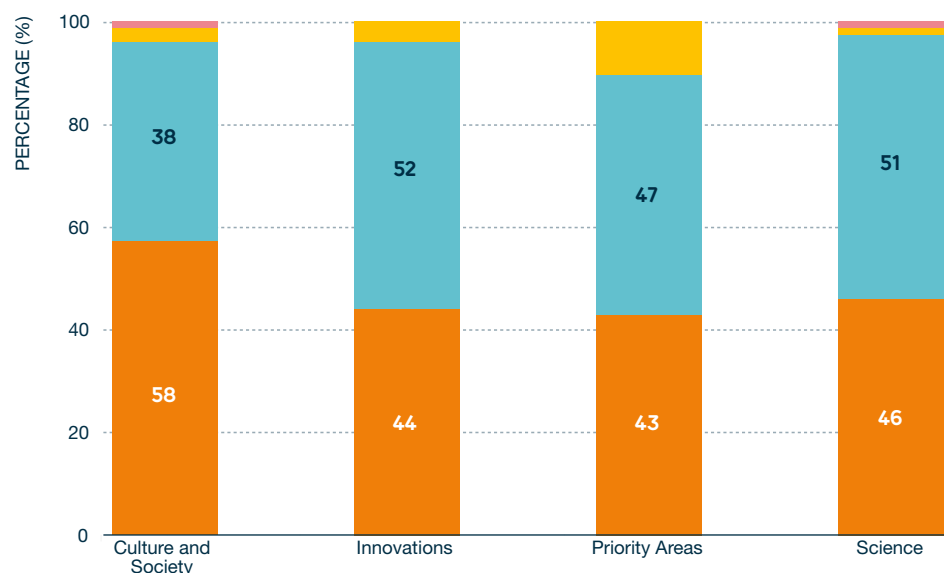
Funding to the Medical Research Council (MRC) includes:

- awards made for activities conducted at MRC Research Institutes (e.g. Laboratory of Molecular Biology Cambridge)
- funding awarded directly to MRC to administer joint initiatives (e.g. our £15m contribution to the Global Health Trials Initiative).

Advisory committees and peer review

We are close to achieving our targets for women and BAME representation on our advisory committees

Gender of 2019/20 advisory committee membership by division



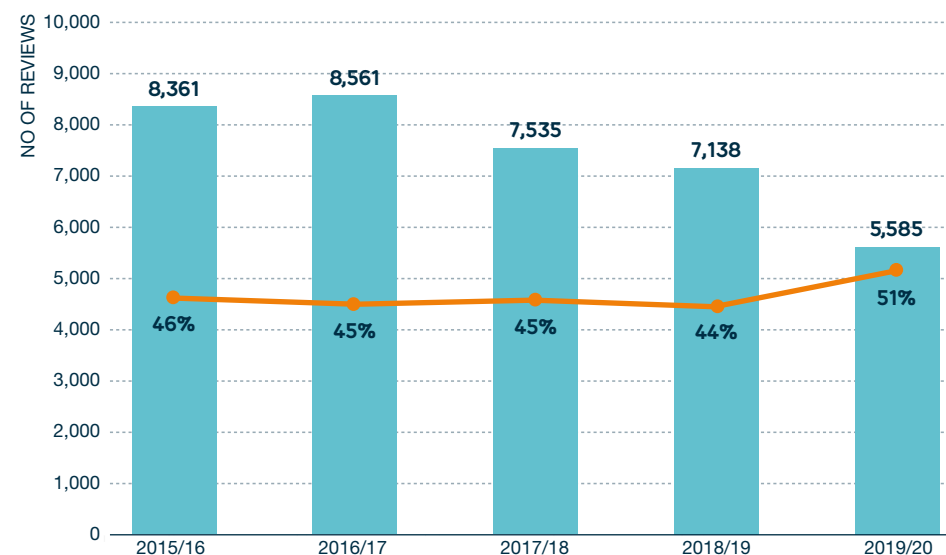
■ Women
 ■ Men
 ■ Not known
 ■ Prefer not to say

- We currently have 377 members of 36 advisory committees.
- In 2019 we introduced targets for committee member diversity to reach in 2021. These targets and the current rates are:
 - **Gender:** target 50% women; current 48%
 - **Ethnicity:** target 15% BAME, current 15%
 - **Location:** target 25% non-HEI, current 20%
 - **Location:** target 30% non-UK, current 39%.

We also have a target for disability, but the target and current numbers are too low to disclose publicly.

Peer review requests are falling

Peer review requests and reviews received



■ Peer review requests
 —●— Response rate

Over the past five years, the number of peer review requests has fallen, because:

- overall application numbers have fallen
- for many schemes, we now use our Expert Review Groups to shortlist applications before seeking external peer review
- clinical PhD support is now assessed at a programme level, not individually.
- 39% of peer review requests are sent to North American reviewers, 30% to UK reviewers, 19% to European reviewers and 12% elsewhere.
- We get the highest response from UK reviewers (60%) and the lowest response from North American reviewers (35%).

Wellcome supports science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone. We support discovery research into life, health and wellbeing, and we're taking on three worldwide health challenges: mental health, global heating and infectious diseases.

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