Correspondence

Fleeing Russian researchers seek Western support

Thousands of Russian scientists initially spoke up against their country's invasion of Ukraine (see go.nature.com/3tikx92), but such expressions are now criminalized in Russia. Under these circumstances, many researchers find it morally impossible to continue working there. They have fled to neighbouring countries in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Baltics, where most are stranded without a visa, work permit or access to their savings.

These are some of the best brains of Russia. Their exodus is a massive blow to the long-term technological prowess of the oppressive regime of Vladimir Putin. Although Western governments are working to provide visas for Russians who have advanced degrees, visas alone are not enough. What is urgently needed is funding for new research positions.

When Hitler came to power in Germany in the 1930s, hundreds of German scientists relocated to the United States with emergency fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation. Included in this group were six future Nobel laureates.

We call on government and private agencies in the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom to set up similar emergency programmes for scholars escaping Putin's Russia.

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Survey data must be top-notch to tackle societal crises

High-quality surveys that include adequate sampling methods and repeated data collection can provide policymakers with valuable societal insights in times of crisis. Data from such surveys have shed light on refugees' living and health conditions, as well as their integration needs (see, for example, go.nature.com/3gxqjb4). The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were found to vary between different groups of society (see go.nature.com/3hcecap). And time trends in survey data have revealed Ukrainians' strong and persistent determination to resist Russia's invasion of their country (see go.nature.com/3zhs2pt).

Collecting cross-national research and longitudinal data is costly, however, so less-rigorous surveys are sometimes relied on. Online panel surveys that are conducted at one point in time, for example, are becoming increasingly popular in social research. It is important that such surveys are used appropriately: they can be powerful when combined with experiments, but they are not representative of the general population and cannot track shifts in developments or causal relationships.

Decision-makers would be better informed if funding agencies and grant reviewers were to focus more on the quality than on the costs or quantity of survey research.

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Mars: do we still need astronauts?

You report that robotic exploration of the Moon doesn't need "big rockets, massive space programmes or vast coffers" and that six nations are planning such enterprises (*Nature* **605**, 208–211; 2022). As artificial intelligence and sensor technologies advance, such exploration will become yet more cost-effective. We can look forward to similar projects to Mars and beyond.

The capability gap between humans and robots is narrowing year by year. So it's perplexing that you extol NASA's 'Artemis' plans to return humans to the Moon at a cost of US$93 billion (see *Nature* **605**, 194; 2022 and *Nature* **605**, 212–216; 2022). The cost difference between crewed and uncrewed lunar missions remains huge. It would be particularly large for a NASA-style trip to Mars, because astronauts would need to be sustained on a six-month voyage and then returned safely to Earth.

In our view, the funding of crewed voyages should be left to billionaires and private sponsors (see D. Goldsmith and M. Rees *The End of Astronauts*; Belknap Press, 2022). These funders can then launch thrill-seekers on cut-price voyages that would carry a greater risk than publicly funded NASA could impose on civilians. The inspirational value of risky human endeavours would have us all cheering those heroes on.

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Industry versus academia — a mid-life career switch

Nature's 2022 careers survey will look at graduate-student experiences (see *Nature* https://doi.org/hx7b; 2022), extending the findings of last year's survey on job satisfaction (see *Nature* **600**, 8; 2021) Scientists must choose environments that best support their interests and professional goals, be that in academia or in industry.

I was a principal investigator in academia before moving to the pharmaceutical industry, where I now work as a manager in medical communications. This mid-life career switch has surpassed my expectations. I have more control over decisions that affect my work. It has been easier to shape a successful career and I enjoy better job security. I work hard, but my 50-hour weeks driven by academic pressures are largely a thing of the past. Furthermore, I am now in an employees' — rather than an employers' — market, where competitor demand accelerates career development.

As more scientists come to realize their value in the private sector, the default mode of researchers staying in academia could shift. Academic institutions might have to invest in improving employment conditions to retain talent (see *Nature* **606**, 211–213; 2022).

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