

Brief Summary of NIH Foreign Interference Cases

Patricia Valdez¹, Erik Runko¹, Dolan Ghosh¹, Komi Messan¹

¹National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research (OER)

7/30/25

Overview

This report summarizes the characteristics and outcomes of NIH foreign interference compliance reviews as of March 13, 2025. Since 2017, NIH has received allegations involving 667 scientists. Figure 1 shows the number of allegations received each year (from 2018 through 2024), along with the number of cases in which NIH contacted institutions. In this report, we will focus on the 263 cases in which staff from the NIH Office of Extramural Research have contacted institutions from 2018 to 2024.

Case Characteristics

Table 1 shows characteristics of foreign interference cases according to the original source of concerns. The most common source was internal, that is agency staff discovering discrepancies in grant documents and published materials. Self-disclosures have increased in the last three years, while referrals from the FBI have decreased. Most affected scientists are self-reported as Asian, which is not surprising giving the well-described recruiting efforts on the part of the government and institutions of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The proportion of white scientists is greater for self-disclosed cases, but nearly one-fourth of these came from one institution (Moffitt Cancer Center). [As noted by NIH](#), PIs provide demographic data on a strictly voluntary basis, and these data are not used for making funding decisions. The PRC accounted for the vast majority of foreign interference concerns. Figure 2 shows the number of new cases according to the year when we contacted the institution. The number of cases peaked in 2019 and has been declining since. Most cases from 2018 and 2019 are closed, while the majority of more recent cases remain open.

Case Outcomes

Compliance Reviews

Table 2 show outcomes of compliance reviews to date. Even though some reviews are still open, we have already determined that for over 80 percent of cases there was at least one serious compliance violation (that is undisclosed grant support, undisclosed talents award, undisclosed equity, undisclosed patent, or other undisclosed financial conflict of interest). Less than 10 percent were found to have no violation (that is, no undisclosed foreign affiliation and no serious violation). Over half of scientists were removed from NIH grants (either through institutional separation or other internal institutional actions). Table 3 show the same data according to the original source of concerns.

Criminal and Civil Actions

There have been few cases that have led to criminal and civil actions. To date there have been three convictions ([Charles Lieber at Harvard University](#), [Xiao-Jiang Li at Emory University](#), and [Song-Guo Zheng at Ohio State University](#)) and three false-claims civil settlements ([two with Van Andel Research Institute](#) and [one with Cleveland Clinic](#)).

Repayments

In 50 cases, the United States government received or reached agreement regarding repayments totaling \$36,916,316. Department of Justice actions (criminal or civil) led to the final resolution in 6 cases (\$17,683,600). Thus, in the majority of cases, repayments were secured through administrative means.

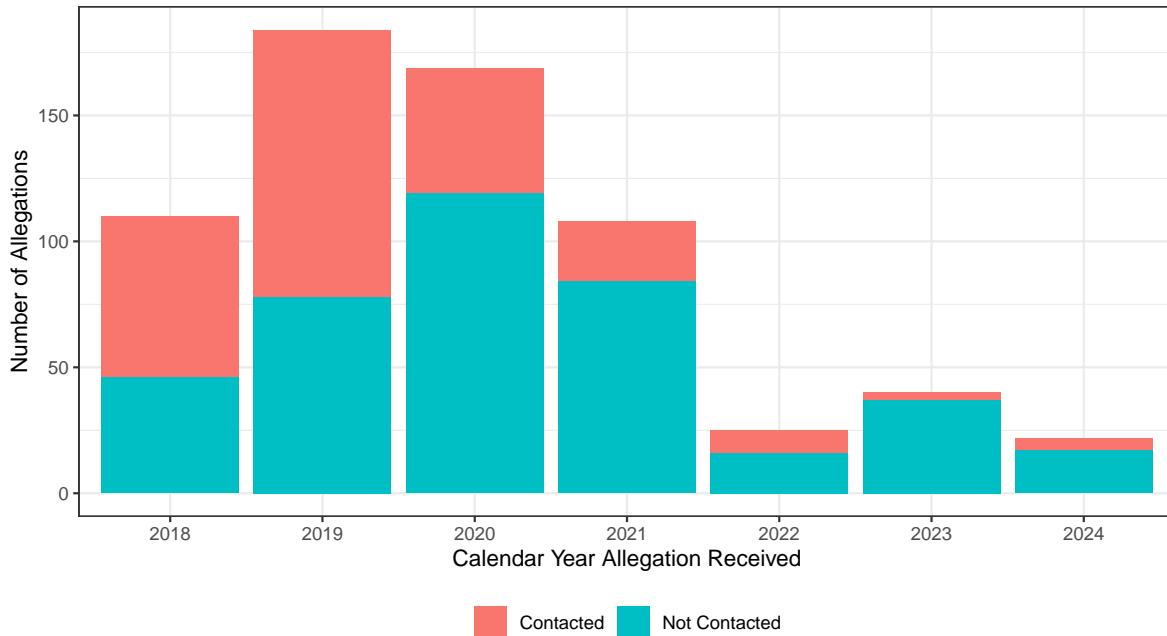


Figure 1: Number of allegations and number of institutions contacted according to the calendar year that the allegation was received.

Table 1: Characteristics of foreign interference cases reported to the NIH Office of Extramural Research (OER) according to the original source of concerns. Values shown are for cases in which NIH Staff have contacted the Institution. Values shown are Number (column %). % data in each column represent values based on Total N (263). Percentages do not necessarily add up to 100 due to missing or withheld values. PRC = People's Republic of China.

Characteristic	Reported Source		
	Internal	Self Disclosure	FBI
Total N (263)	Total	130 (49.4%)	81 (30.8%)
			52 (19.8%)
Year Institution Contacted	2018 to 2019	96 (73.8%)	20 (24.7%)
Year Institution Contacted	2020 to 2024	34 (26.2%)	61 (75.3%)
Sex	Female	21 (16.2%)	11 (13.6%)
Sex	Male	109 (83.8%)	69 (85.2%)
Race	Asian	102 (78.5%)	53 (65.4%)
Race	White	23 (17.7%)	24 (29.6%)
Country of Concern	PRC	117 (90.0%)	68 (84.0%)
			52 (100.0%)

Table 2: Outcomes of NIH foreign interference cases. Values shown are for cases in which NIH Staff have contacted the Institution. Any serious violation means one or more of the following: undisclosed grant support, undisclosed talents award, undisclosed equity, undisclosed patent, or other undisclosed financial conflict of interest. No violation means no undisclosed foreign affiliation and no serious violation. Removed from grants refers to cases with institutional separation or other internal institutional actions. SFI = significant financial interest. Values shown are Number (column %). % data in each column represent values based on Total N (263).

Outcome	Number (%)
Total N (263)	263 (100%)
Undisclosed Affiliation	233 (88.6%)
Undisclosed Grant Support	190 (72.2%)
Undisclosed Talents Award	139 (52.9%)
Undisclosed Equity, Patent, or SFI	51 (19.4%)
Any Serious Violation	228 (86.7%)
No Violation Found After Compliance Review	7 (2.7%)
Termination or Resignation	116 (44.1%)
Institutional Exclusion from Grants	57 (21.7%)
Removed from Grants	173 (65.8%)
Removed from Peer Review	210 (79.8%)
Compliance Review Open	41 (15.6%)

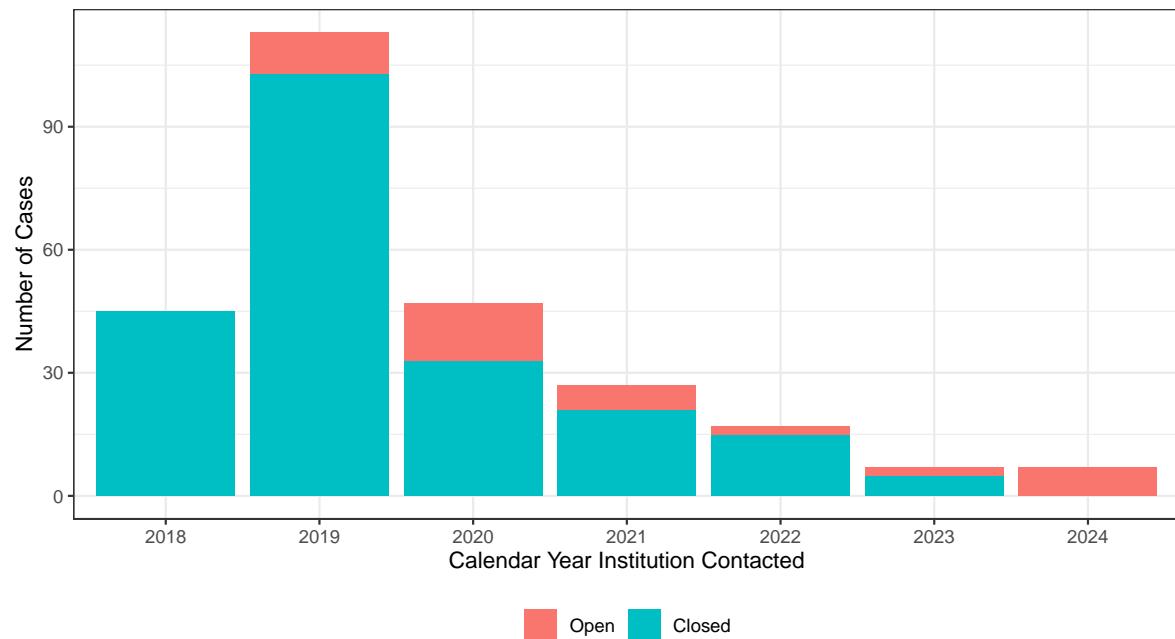


Figure 2: Number of cases and current status (Open or Closed) according to year in which OER contacted the institution.

Table 3: Outcomes of NIH foreign interference cases according to the original source of concerns. Values shown are for cases in which NIH Staff have contacted the Institution. Any serious violation means one or more of the following: undisclosed grant support, undisclosed talents award, undisclosed equity, undisclosed patent, or other undisclosed financial conflict of interest. Removed from grants refers to cases with institutional separation or other internal institutional actions. SFI = significant financial interest. Values shown are Number (column %). % data in each column represent values based on Total N (263).

Outcome	Internal	Self Disclosure	FBI
Total N (263)	130 (49.4%)	81 (30.8%)	52 (19.8%)
Undisclosed Affiliation	110 (41.8%)	73 (27.8%)	50 (19.0%)
Undisclosed Grant Support	96 (36.5%)	53 (20.2%)	41 (15.6%)
Undisclosed Talents Award	50 (19.0%)	41 (15.6%)	48 (18.3%)
Undisclosed Equity, Patent, or SFI	20 (7.6%)	22 (8.4%)	9 (3.4%)
Any Serious Violation	108 (41.1%)	70 (26.6%)	50 (19.0%)
Termination or Resignation	45 (17.1%)	45 (17.1%)	26 (9.9%)
Institutional Exclusion from Grants	36 (13.7%)	13 (4.9%)	8 (3.0%)
Removed from Grants	81 (30.8%)	58 (22.1%)	34 (12.9%)
Removed from Peer Review	95 (36.1%)	70 (26.6%)	45 (17.1%)
Compliance Review Open	17 (6.5%)	21 (8.0%)	3 (1.1%)