

# Brief Summary of NIH Foreign Interference Cases

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2024-06-09

This report summarizes the characteristics and outcomes of NIH foreign interference compliance reviews as of May 29, 2024. Since 2017, NIH has received allegations involving 651 scientists. Figure 1 shows the number of allegations received each year (from 2018 through May 29, 2024), along with the number of cases in which NIH contacted institutions. In this report, we will focus on the 258 cases in which staff from the NIH Office of Extramural Research have contacted institutions.

## 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 DOJ or 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 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). Note that we do not collect data on citizenship or national origin. 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 two indictments ([Lin Yang at the University of Florida](#) and [Mohammad Faghihi at the University of Miami](#)) and three convictions ([Charles Lieber at Harvard University](#), [Xiao-Jiang Li at Emory University](#), and [Song-Guo Zheng at Ohio State University](#)). There have been three false-claims civil settlements ([two with Van Andel Research Institute](#) and [one with Cleveland Clinic](#)).

## **Repayments**

In 48 cases, the United States government received or reached agreement regarding repayments totaling \$35,879,048. Department of Justice actions (criminal or civil) led to the final resolution in 5 cases (\$17,683,600). Thus, in the majority of cases, repayments were secured through administrative means.

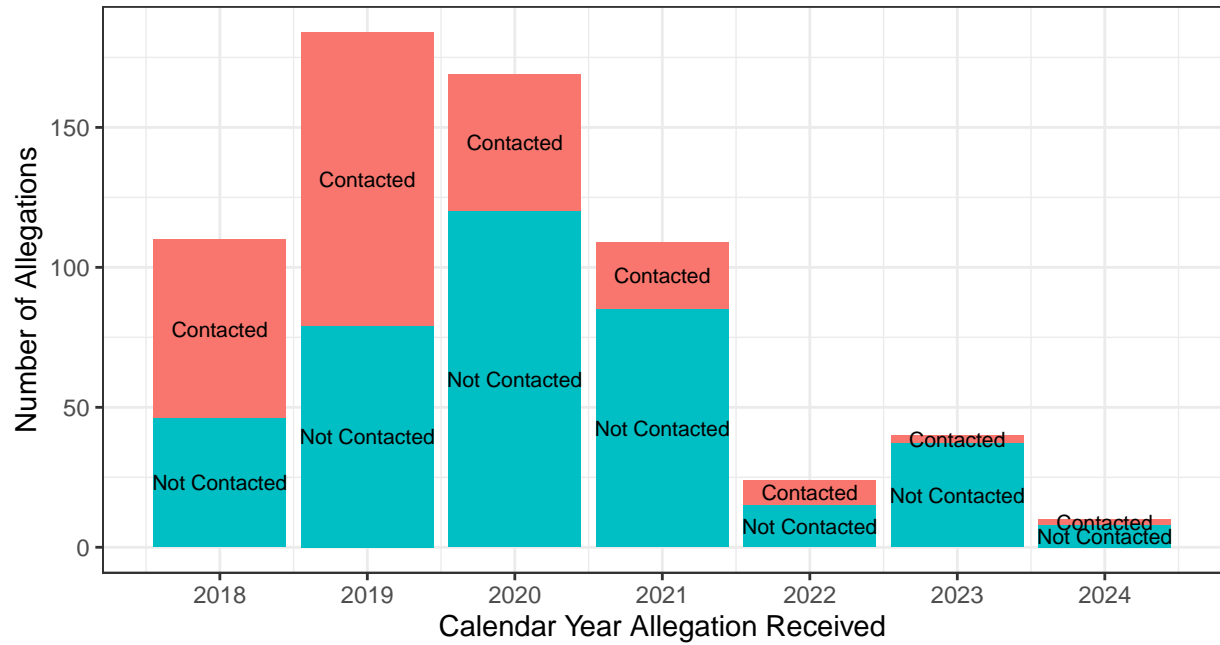


Figure 1: Number of allegations and number of institutions contacted according to the calendar year that the allegation was received. Data for calendar year 2024 are up to May 29, 2024.

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 %). Percentages do not necessarily add up to 100 due to missing or withheld values. PRC = People’s Republic of China.

Characteristic		Internal	Self Disclosure	DOJ or FBI
Total N (%)		124 (48.1)	81 (31.4)	53 (20.5)
Year Institution Contacted	2018 to 2019	95 (76.6)	20 (24.7)	43 (81.1)
	2020 to 2024	29 (23.4)	61 (75.3)	10 (18.9)
Gender	Male	100 (80.6)	67 (82.7)	39 (73.6)
	Female	19 (15.3)	10 (12.3)	10 (18.9)
Race	Asian	97 (78.2)	52 (64.2)	41 (77.4)
	White	19 (15.3)	22 (27.2)	3 (5.7)
Country of Concern	PRC	112 (91.8)	67 (83.8)	53 (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 %).

Outcome	Number
Total N (%)	258 (100.0)
Undisclosed Affiliation	217 (84.1)
Undisclosed Grant Support	178 (69.0)
Undisclosed Talents Award	134 (51.9)
Undisclosed Equity, Patent, or SFI	47 (18.2)
Any Serious Violation	216 (83.7)
No Violation	17 (6.6)
Termination or Resignation	112 (43.4)
Institutional Exclusion from Grants	55 (21.3)
Removed from Grants	167 (64.7)
Removed from Peer Review	197 (76.4)
Compliance Review Open	61 (23.6)

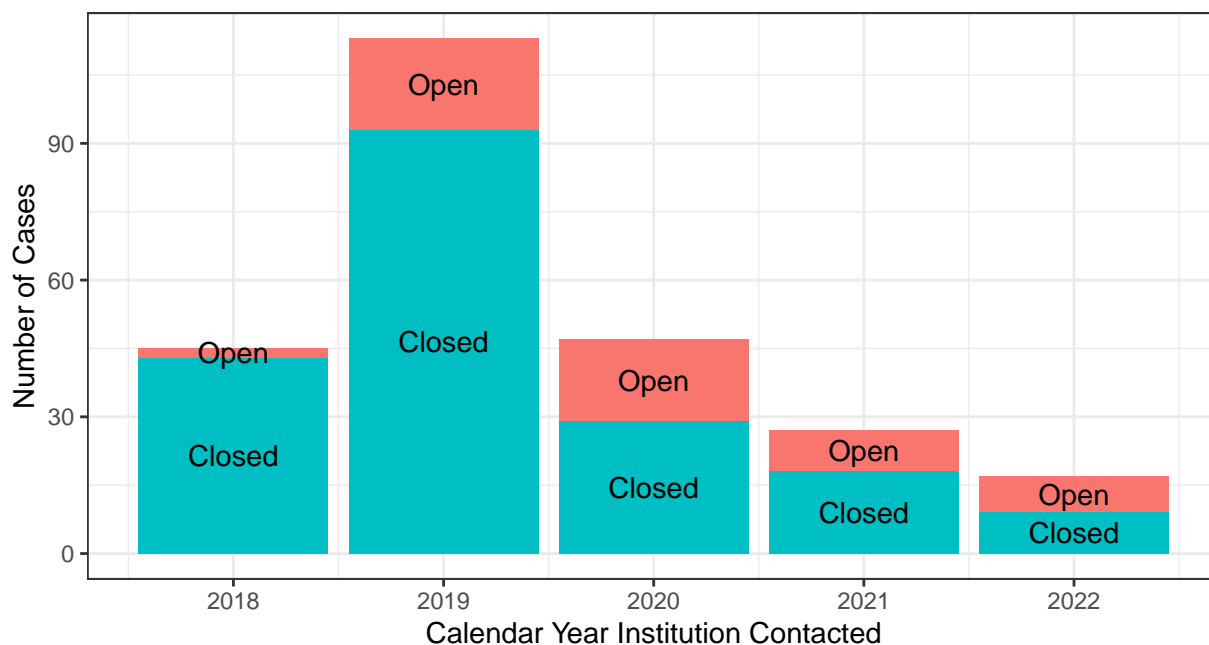


Figure 2: Number of cases and current status (Open or Closed as of May 29, 2024) according to year in which OER contacted the institution. Data for cases opened in 2023 and 2024 are not shown due to small numbers.

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 %).

Outcome	Internal	Self Disclosure	DOJ or FBI
Total N (%)	124 (48.1)	81 (31.4)	53 (20.5)
Undisclosed Affiliation	99 (79.8)	68 (84.0)	50 (94.3)
Undisclosed Grant Support	90 (72.6)	47 (58.0)	41 (77.4)
Undisclosed Talents Award	48 (38.7)	37 (45.7)	49 (92.5)
Undisclosed Equity, Patent, or SFI	18 (14.5)	20 (24.7)	9 (17.0)
Any Serious Violation	101 (81.5)	65 (80.2)	50 (94.3)
Termination or Resignation	43 (34.7)	43 (53.1)	26 (49.1)
Institutional Removal from Grants	34 (27.4)	13 (16.0)	8 (15.1)
Removed from Grants	77 (62.1)	56 (69.1)	34 (64.2)
Removed from Peer Review	87 (70.2)	64 (79.0)	46 (86.8)
Status of Compliance Review Open	22 (17.7)	28 (34.6)	11 (20.8)