



HOW DO UK FUNDERS REACT IN A GLOBAL CRISIS? THE COVID-19 CASE STUDY

Early in the pandemic, research funders recognised the need to coordinate COVID-19 research funding at all levels to prevent duplication and improve impact. To support the response, UKCDR & GloPID-R's COVID CIRCLE has continually mapped & analysed global COVID-19 funding trends through its comprehensive [COVID-19 Research Project Tracker](#).

This case study examines how UK research funders have responded to the global COVID-19 pandemic, using data from the Tracker - with lessons for enhancing the coherence of the research response, defining priority areas and future rapid funding schemes.

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MAJOR UK FUNDERS



UK FUNDERS COVID-19 RESEARCH RESPONSE IN NUMBERS



- Only **200 projects** (5.6% of UK-funded projects) took place in **low- and middle-income countries** (LMICs)
- **Institutions awarded highest no. of projects:** University of Oxford (74), University College London (58) and Imperial College London (48)

7 FUNDER PRINCIPLES FOR RESEARCH IN EPIDEMICS & PANDEMICS

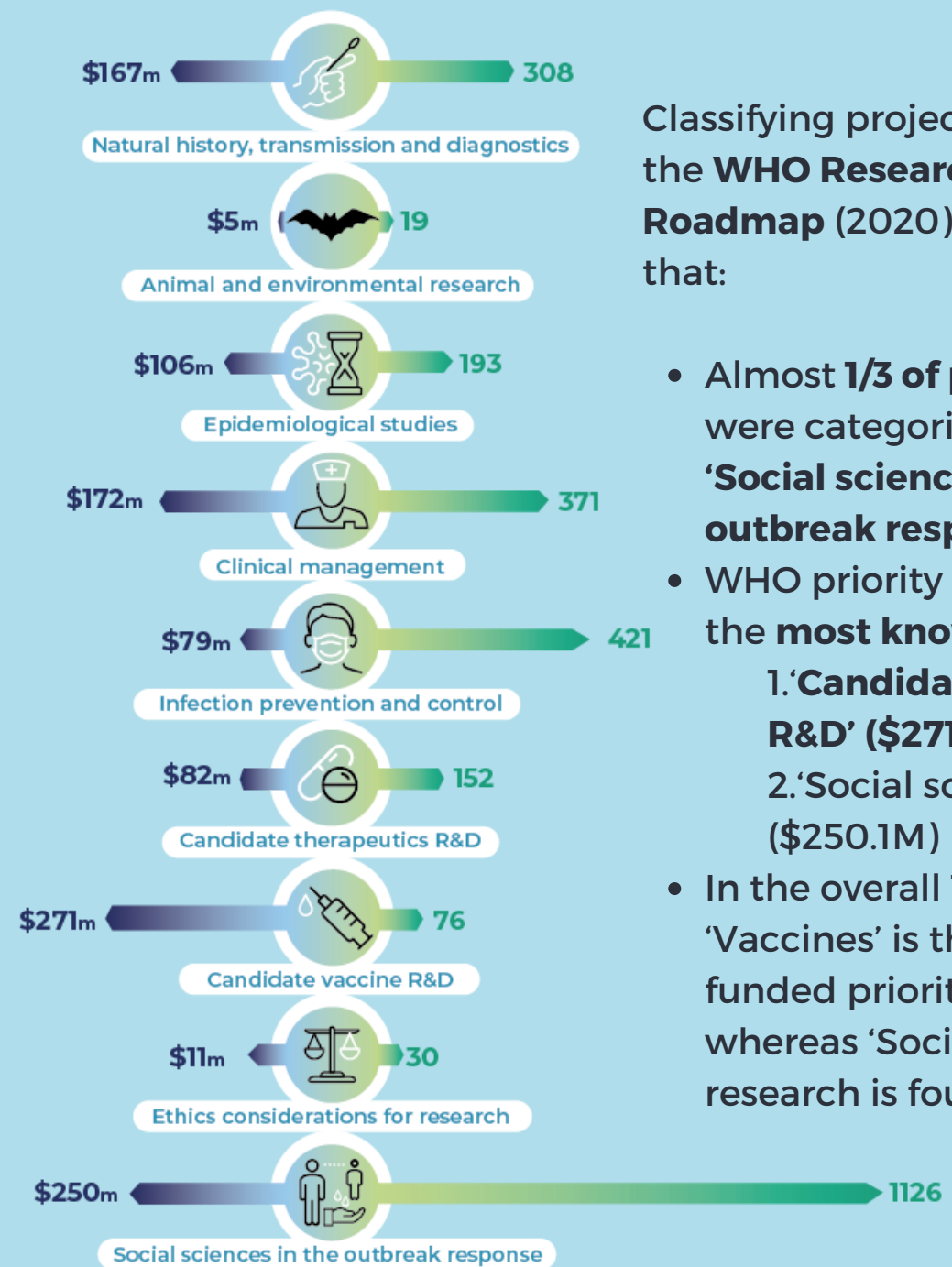


LESSONS FOR FUNDERS & RESEARCHERS FROM 1ST YEAR OF PANDEMIC

- Utilising local expertise ensured 'voices from the ground' were heard
- Delay in regional priority setting a hindrance
- Early development of WHO COVID-19 R&D Roadmap priorities appreciated
- Greater support for open science & data sharing needed
- Partnerships built during inter-epidemic periods more easily activated for rapid funding
- Greater funder collaboration needed

MEETING THE WHO RESEARCH PRIORITY AREAS

Known funding amounts | Number of Projects

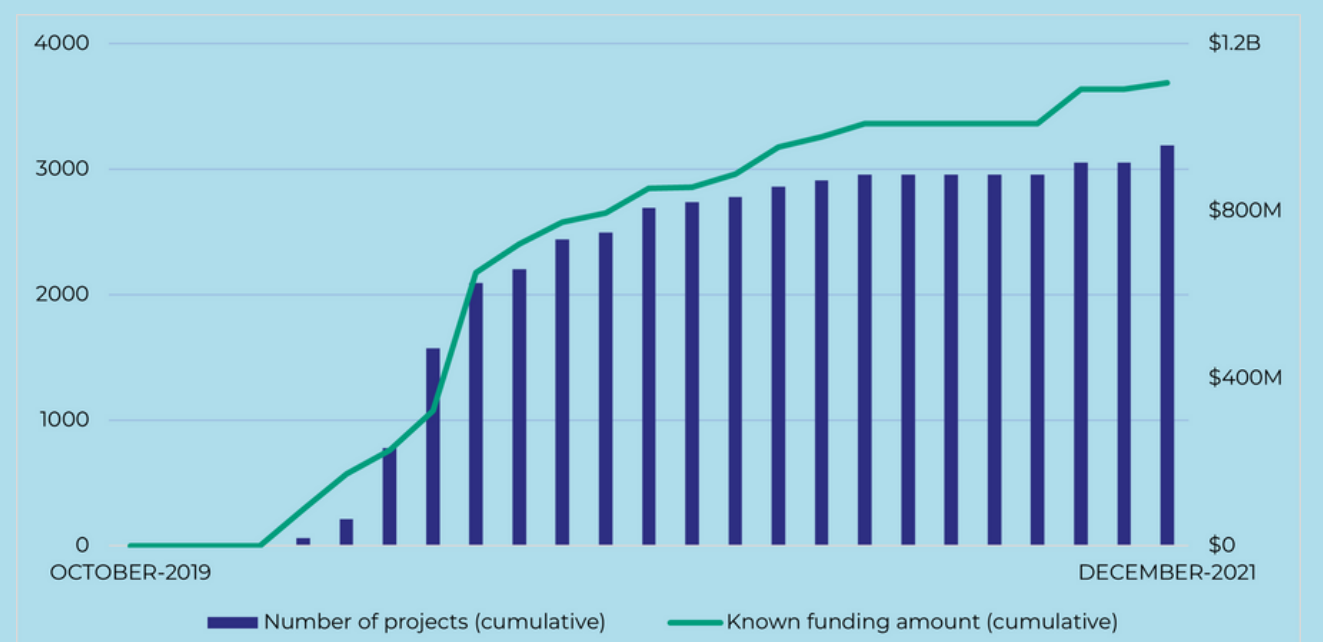


Classifying projects against the **WHO Research Roadmap** (2020) revealed that:

- Almost **1/3 of projects** were categorised against **'Social sciences in the outbreak response'**
- WHO priority areas with the **most known funding:**
 1. 'Candidate vaccines R&D' (\$271.2M)
 2. 'Social sciences' (\$250.1M)
- In the overall Tracker, 'Vaccines' is the highest funded priority area, whereas 'Social sciences' research is fourth

TIMELINE OF UK'S RESEARCH FUNDING RESPONSE

This timeline shows the cumulative growth of the UK funder's portfolios, by no. of projects funded and known funding amount (where publication dates were available).



- **Highest no. of projects between June and August 2020.** In just three months, projects awarded increased from 214 to 2,093 by end of August 2020
- After which projects increased at a slower rate. Between August 2020 and December 2021, project numbers increased by only 1,097
- **August 2020 also saw the highest known investment in projects,** with a total of \$329.6M (> 28% of total funding portfolio)
- More trends captured in UKCDR & GloPID-R's [Living Mapping Review](#)