

## Bias in science

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Sir, – It seems to me that it is much too simplistic, and rather dangerous, to blithely assert without qualification that “human bias affects all scientific research, regardless of the study” or “the pursuit of pure objectivity . . . is as futile as a lab rat’s efforts to outrun a spinning wheel” (“[Biased research: Science and the quest for pure objectivity](#)”, February 16th).

The problem with such statements is that they fail to explain why modern science has given us such reliable information about the world – there is a reason aircraft rarely fall from the sky and bridges rarely fall down.

To be sure, scientific experiments are designed and carried out (to a large extent) by humans and are no doubt subject to many different biases. But the scientific method contains many safeguards against such biases, not least the simple demand that new results must be replicated by other scientists around the world before they are accepted.

It’s worth noting that almost all of the examples of bias quoted in the article pertain to the social sciences. The author then asserts that such shortcomings also apply to the “hard sciences”, on the basis of a single flawed study of bacteria. Tellingly, the author misses the point that this research was quickly corrected by subsequent studies. It is precisely this self-correcting aspect of science that is its strength.

In an era of post-truth and alternative facts, let’s not throw out the baby with the bathwater! – Yours, etc,

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