

How the March for Science splits researchers

Nature asked members of the scientific community whether or not they plan to march on 22 April — and why.

Erin Ross

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Calls from US President Donald Trump to [roll back environmental regulations](#) and [slash funding for health, environmental and research agencies](#) have raised alarm in the scientific community. Earlier this year, a commenter on the social-media website Reddit made an off-hand remark about the need for scientists to march on Washington DC. That thread has since grown into an international movement. The March for Science now includes more than 500 events — including marches, rallies and teach-ins — planned for locations around the world.

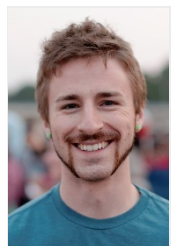
But support for the march, set to occur on 22 April, has been far from unanimous. Some, who think that science should remain non-partisan, are concerned that the movement will politicize it. Others have voiced concerns about diversity and inclusiveness. *Nature* spoke with people around the world about the reasons they will or won't attend a March for Science event. The answers below have been edited for length and clarity.

Kellie Dean is a lecturer at University College Cork in Ireland, specializing in biochemistry and cell and molecular biology.

"I am going so I can stand up for evidence-based policies and the scientific method. I also support robust funding of science and transparent reporting of scientific results. The current wave of 'anti-science' rhetoric goes against everything that I am trying to do as a scientist and an educator. I keep telling my students that I'm going because science is worth protecting: for them, and for all of us."



Kellie Dean



Nathan Gardner

Nathan Gardner is a postdoc at the University of Chicago School of Medicine in Illinois, where he studies protein science.

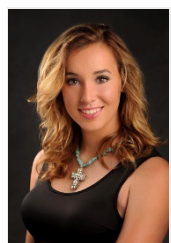
"I am not going to the March for Science, because some people in America view science as leftist. Maybe it's because [former US vice-president] Al Gore launched 'An Inconvenient Truth'. I've seen articles from right-wing outlets that are framing the march as focusing on gender equality and identity politics. I think it could easily politicize science because, even though the march's mission statement isn't anti-Trump, the marchers seem anti-Trump."

David Leaf is a cell biologist who teaches at Western Washington University in Bellingham.

"I am deeply concerned about the anti-scientific stance of the Trump administration, and the effects of their policies that disregard research on the environment, human health and the US economy. I hope that the march will send a message to Congress that there are a significant fraction of voters who consider supporting science and scientists to be high priority."



David Leaf



Danielle Peltier

Danielle Peltier is an undergraduate student studying geology, anthropology and chemistry at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces.

"I want to share why science is important — not only in education and everyday lives, but in politics and world issues. As someone whose field is palaeontology, which involves evolution, I want to help people understand that science and religion are not mutually exclusive. I live in New Mexico. I'm from a smaller town, which is usually more conservative and very, very religious. I want to share that science isn't partisan and doesn't take sides. I wanted to go to the march in Washington DC, but since I couldn't go, I joined the local planning committee here. I'm trying to be as active as I can."

Xieergai Jiang is a student at Tacoma Community College in Washington, where he is working on an associate's degree in science, and plans to pursue a future degree in bioengineering.

"Not once in my life have I thought of myself as someone who would go to marches, protests or pickets. But science has been, is and will be the reason that humanity moves forward. It is the voice of reason inside the huge organism we call the human race, and I will not let this voice be unheard. I hope this march will bring public attention to science. I want it to be a subject of discussion at dinner tables,

coffee shops, classrooms and any other social place. I don't care if the publicity is positive or negative. Any publicity is good publicity.



Tesfay Teamir

Tesfay Teamir is a PhD student in physics at Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey. He supports the march, but cannot attend because there are currently no marches scheduled in Turkey.

“Getting funds to participate in important scientific activities is already difficult for people from developing countries. Even if you get the funds, it can be difficult to get the visa. One of the objectives of the scientific community is to disseminate science, and these barriers test that. I was offered the chance to present an abstract on my research at the American Physical Society meeting in March. But I could not go because the United States embassy in Ankara rejected my visa because I am from Ethiopia in Africa.”



Xieergai Jiang

Taylor Tobin is a graduate student in astronomy at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

“Initially I was planning on going, but now I'm not so sure. I agree that we need to fight to hold this administration accountable about the truth and, specifically, climate change. But the way many of the March branches have bungled inclusion and the needs of scientists as a diverse set of humans has given me second thoughts. Associated leaders of certain branches have been actively harassing women of color on social media, and I've seen people label the push for equity and inclusion in the March as divisive. But if you shy away from inclusivity, that's divisive, too. I've heard that the Champaign-Urbana March is making efforts towards equity, so I'll probably go to that one. I do plan on making multiple signs to hold up: some about truth in science, and some about equity and inclusion. They're both big problems that need to be addressed.”



Taylor Tobin



Luke Schwerdtfeger

Luke Schwerdtfeger is a PhD student in neurobiology at Colorado State University in Fort Collins.

“Those who remain silent in the face of national policy that attacks scientific creativity and discovery will only contribute to further public opposition to the scientific community. We must, as scientists, have our voices heard on a national level, not just in speaking to like-minded individuals.”

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Clarifications

Clarified: Nathan Gardner's quote was modified to clarify the point that he thinks some people in America view science as leftist, not all people.