

With the year 2020 having been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, one might expect there to be a voluminous research record on new or re-emerging viruses that can infect humans. There is not. There were just 7 471 publications on this topic in 2019, 35% of which were produced by scientists in the USA alone (Figure 2.1). Global output on this broad topic progressed by just 2% per year between 2011 and 2019, slower than global scientific publications overall: 3.8% per year.

Growth was much faster in individual countries which had to marshal science to cope with other viral outbreaks over this period (Figure 2.1). The 2014–2015 Ebola outbreak in Liberia and neighbouring Guinea and Sierra Leone stamped its mark on these countries' scientific

international scientific collaboration in tackling pandemics (Figure 2.5). This high level of scientific collaboration augurs well for the fight against Covid-19.

Prevention is better than a cure

The current focus in tackling new or re-emerging viruses tends to be reactive, rather than proactive. A workshop report published in October 2020 by the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), which is co-sponsored by UNESCO and