

The **Researcher Protection** Critique

View: Early-career researchers and those in competitive fields may be disadvantaged by having to share unpublished work, risking idea theft or premature critique.

While the ideals of Open Science—equity and transparency—are laudable, we cannot be naive about the realities of the academic world. The system is highly competitive, and for a researcher just starting their career, their novel ideas are their most valuable currency. A blanket mandate for "radical openness" can be dangerous for the most vulnerable members of the scientific community. An early-career researcher who shares a brilliant but half-formed idea or a preliminary dataset risks having it "scooped"—stolen and published by a larger, better-funded lab that can work faster.

Furthermore, science is a process of trial and error. Subjecting preliminary, exploratory work to public critique before it is fully developed can stifle creativity and risk-taking. Researchers may become afraid to pursue unconventional hypotheses for fear of premature judgment. This viewpoint does not reject Open Science, but it argues that we must proceed with caution and empathy. Before we mandate openness, we need to build a culture and infrastructure that protects researchers. This means establishing clear and enforceable standards for citing and giving credit for shared data, developing platforms that can embargo ideas for a set period, and shifting the academic incentive structure away from a "first-to-publish" race. Without these protections, Open Science could inadvertently harm the very people it's meant to help.