

Sharing of science is most likely among male scientists

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Even though science is becoming increasingly competitive, scientists are still very willing to share their work with colleagues. This is especially true for male scientists among each other and less so for females among each other or between the sexes. These patterns of sharing among scientists were discovered by a team of Austrian, Dutch and German researchers led by Jorg Massen of the Department of Cognitive Biology at the University of Vienna, and the results of their study have been published in the scientific journal *Scientific Reports*.

Humans are considered to be very prosocial in comparison to other animals, and many experiments have confirmed this idea. However, most of these experiments have tested psychology students in rather [artificial environments](#). To gain insight in how prosocial humans act in an everyday situation where competition may also play a role, Massen and his team chose to test the willingness to share within a highly competitive field of [work](#), namely that in which they work themselves: science.

In their experiment the researchers tricked almost 300 of their colleagues, from all over the globe, into participating in their study by sending them a request to share some of their work, while offering them nothing in return. The team was, however, not per se interested in that work, but just in whether they would receive a positive, a negative or no response at all to that request.

In general, the majority of the scientists that received a request reacted

positively to it. Interestingly however, male scientists that were contacted by a male were more than 15% more likely to respond positively than males that were contacted by a female, [females](#) that were contacted by a male or females that were contacted by another female. "Such [gender differences](#) may reflect the increased competition female scientists experience, old fashioned academic conventions with male exclusive networks, and/or our evolutionary history in which particularly male-male alliances were favoured", says lead author Jorg Massen. "Future studies are needed to examine if this is a peculiarity of scientists, or whether this is a general pattern" he ends.

More information: Jorg J. M. Massen et al, Sharing of science is most likely among male scientists, *Scientific Reports* (2017). [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-017-13491-0](#)

Provided by University of Vienna

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