

DNA Databases

Criminal Justice

How national profile databases are used, and the questions they raise.

A search tool that produces leads, not conclusions.

How they work

Hold profiles from people and from scenes

Searches return candidates for follow-up

Chance matches rise as databases grow

Familial searching points to relatives

Retention rules decide who stays on

Contested issues

Whose profiles are retained, and how long

Over-representation of some groups

Use of consumer genealogy databases

Consent, and the position of relatives

Match statistics misread in court

Educational reference. Retention rules differ sharply by jurisdiction and have been changed by human rights litigation.