

Health and forensic databases may contribute to racial disparities

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There is too little attention paid in national and international public policy circles to the digital divide in health and law enforcement databases, says a new article in this week's PLoS Medicine.

These are the conclusions of Peter Chow-White from Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, Canada and Troy Duster from University of California, Berkeley, USA who examined the question of whether the "digital divide" in health and forensic DNA databases is contributing to [racial disparities](#).

Over the last decade, the authors say, the majority of [DNA samples](#) in population studies are from individuals of European origin and individuals from Asian, African, Latino, and aboriginal groups are underrepresented. As a result, the authors argue, "forensic DNA databases are growing to mirror racial disparities in arrest practices and incarceration rates. Racial disparities in forensic DNA databases between European and African American and Latino groups is inverted from health DNA databases."

More information: Chow-White PA, Duster T (2011) Do Health and Forensic DNA Databases Increase Racial Disparities? PLoS Med 8(10): e1001100. [doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001100](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001100)

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