

## Form and function: The debate over junk DNA

*The following is an edited excerpt.*

Science is at the mercy of its language.

One enduring debate has been resurrected by ENCODE, the Encyclopedia of DNA Elements — an ongoing multimillion-dollar project to catalogue the functional elements of the human genome. A headline-grabbing claim, first made in this publication last September, was that roughly 80% of human DNA had been ascribed some “biochemical function” thanks to the efforts of more than 440 scientists ([The ENCODE Project Consortium \*Nature\* 489, 57–74; 2012](#)).

That percentage is remarkably high, in part because of a broad definition of ‘function’.

**View the original article here: [Form and function](#)**