23andMe on The Dress: Genes don't settle debate, but age might

In the latest twist in #TheDress, a survey by DNA-testing company 23andMe suggests that genes don't play an obvious role in determining which colors you see, but it does seem to matter if you are old or young.

Those are among the findings of an online poll this week, in which 25,000 users said whether they saw the famous photo of the dress as blue and black (its true colors, haters) or white and gold, 23andMe told BuzzFeed News on Friday. "The huge amount of interest in this weird debate," the startup said, was an opportunity for "an instant genetics experiment."

When the dress first exploded on the internet, scientists hypothesized the differences may be rooted in how the brain filters out different parts of the color spectrum. Whatever the reason for that difference is, there is no clear sign it is genetic, Fah Sathirapongsasuti, a 23andMe computational biologist, told BuzzFeed News. (23andMe's explanation of the results are now available here.)

"Genetics definitely doesn't determine what you see," said Sathirapongsasuti (who, for the record, sees black and blue). "What genetics could do is sort of move you over to one side very gradually." A variant in gene ANO6 did show small signs of affecting how colors were perceived, although that link wasn't strong enough to be conclusive.

What seemed to play a much bigger role was users' ages. Customers around 20 were evenly split among white and gold and blue and black, researchers said. But the white-and-gold contingent grew as ages went up: At the peak, more than three quarters of those polled around age 60 range saw those colors. In particular, the proportion of white-and-gold-seeing men increased by almost 15% around age 40.

That combination started decreasing after 60, however. Only people over 70 saw more blue and black than white and gold, which Sathirapongsasuti attributed to aging.

Read full, original article: The Results Are In: DNA Cannot Explain #TheDress