

False criminal convictions all too common due to failings of forensic science

The Washington Post [revealed](#) that in 268 trials dating back to 1972, 26 out of 28 examiners within the FBI Laboratory's microscopic hair comparison unit "overstated forensic matches in a way that favored prosecutors in more than 95 percent" of the cases. These included cases where 14 people have since been either executed or died in prison.

While these revelations are certainly disturbing — and the implications alarming — the reality is that they represent the tip of the iceberg when it comes to flawed forensics.

In a landmark 2009 [report](#), the National Academy of Sciences concluded that, aside from DNA, there was little, if any, meaningful scientific underpinning to many of the forensic disciplines. "With the exception of nuclear DNA analysis ... no forensic method has been rigorously shown to have the capacity to consistently, and with a high degree of certainty, demonstrate a connection between evidence and a specific individual or source," reads the report.

There is one thing that all troubling forensic techniques have in common: They're all based on the idea that patterns, or impressions, are unique and can be matched to the thing, or person, who made them. But the validity of this premise has not been subjected to rigorous scientific inquiry. "The forensic science community has had little opportunity to pursue or become proficient in the research that is needed to support what it does," the NAS report said.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Five disturbing things you didn't know about forensic "science"](#)