

Viewpoint: Why ancestry tests shouldn't be 'read as a certainty'

Yes, I'm the kind of person who would take a DNA test with Ancestry and then, curious about whether I'd get the same results, try Helix, another DNA-test site.

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From Ancestry, I learned that I am a muddle of 30 percent British, 29 percent southern European, 15 percent western European and 8 percent eastern European Jewish. ("Mazel tov," my daughter responded to this news.)

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To get a second opinion, I spit into another tube and sent my DNA sample off to Helix, the company handling the Geno 2.0 test for National Geographic. This time, my results were 55 percent Italy and southern Europe ("Ciao, paesani!"), 32 percent northwestern Europe, 9 percent northeastern Europe and just 3 percent "Jewish diaspora."

What gives?

Companies such as Ancestry and National Geographic are taking a snapshot of various DNA markers, said Robert Green, a geneticist at Harvard Medical School who serves as an adviser for Helix. From that snapshot comes a statistical inference, he said. In other words, "Given this pattern, it's likely that you came from this region," Green said. "But it's not a certainty, and shouldn't be read as a certainty."

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In the end, the DNA ethnicity tests that cost from \$69.95 to \$199 could be seen as a pricey way to confirm what you probably already know. It might make more sense just to look in the mirror.

Read full, original post: [Was I part British, part Dutch, a little bit Jewish? The oddness of DNA tests](#)