

5 biggest differences between 23andMe, MyHeritage and AncestryDNA

1) Extra Offerings

In addition to their well-known ancestry tests, each of these companies also has extra features that can provide insight into your personal background.

For example, MyHeritage and AncestryDNA are owned by two of the world's biggest genealogy companies. If you subscribe to either of their genealogy services, you can build a big family tree on their websites. They will also pull from literally billions of historical records that help bring your familial past to life.

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2) Ancestry Focus

Genealogy aside, the ancestry information that 23andMe provides is a lot more rich and detailed than what you'd receive from the other two companies.

For example, your 23andMe report includes:

The story of your maternal and paternal lineages going back tens of thousands of years. This shows how you've descended through various haplogroups from the common ancestors of all people living today.

Insights into your Neanderthal heritage and how this may be reflected in your physical traits, such as your height, what type of hair you have on your head, and your body hair.

Discussions of the genetic traits that are typical of your DNA family (i.e., other 23andMe customers who are related to you) in comparison to the general population, such as your ability to wiggle your ears or your tendency to sweat while sleeping.

If all you want is an ancestry report, without subscribing to a genealogy service, what you receive from 23andMe is much more substantial than what you get from either MyHeritage or AncestryDNA.

3) Number of DNA Tests Completed

In a contest of which company has the largest DNA database, AncestryDNA is the winner by a long shot. They've collected samples from 15 million people... If you're aiming to find new relatives by means of your DNA test, your family members are mathematically more likely to appear in a database of 15 million people than in a database of two million people.

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4) Number of Geographical Locations Analyzed

To pinpoint the various ethnicities represented in your DNA and where those ancestors lived, testing companies have to divide the world up into a certain number of geographical regions and compare your DNA to samples collected from people in those regions.

23andMe has divided the world into 1500+ regions. AncestryDNA has divided it into around 500. MyHeritage has 42 geographic regions.

Why does this matter?

Theoretically, breaking the world into more regions should allow greater precision in locating where your ancestors came from.

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This factor is probably less relevant if your ancestors all descend from ethnicities that are very well represented in DNA companies' datasets – Western European, for example. But if you're trying to trace your roots back to a less common and more specific ethnicity, such as a particular tribe in sub-Saharan Africa or South America, I'll bet it makes a big difference.

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