

Why geneticists are moving away from using the term ‘race’ — but not its meaning

Geneticists are moving away from using the term “race” in their papers, but the meaning of replacement descriptors such as “ancestry” and “ethnicity” can be unclear, [Science reports](#).

Researchers led by the National Human Genome Research Institute’s Vence Bonham examined the use of such terms in the *American Journal of Human Genetics* between 1949 and 2018. As Bonham and his team [report in the same journal](#), the terms “ancestry” and “ethnicity” appeared in between third of and a quarter of papers published between 2009 and 2018, respectively, while “race” appeared in 4 percent of papers from that timeframe. They additionally found that continental labels like “African,” “Asian,” and “European” have increased in use.

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The researchers say that these changes in language may reflect geneticists’ realization of “race as a social category with biological consequences,” but note that continental-based labels have also been criticized for their close resemblance to race-based terms.

Science notes that when the term “race” does now appear in papers, it is often in combination with the terms “ancestry” and “ethnicity,” which it says could stem from the terms’ ambiguity. It adds that the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine has established a committee to develop a consensus report on population descriptors.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.**](#)